

LE CLAIRE KUNST SEIT 1982

ÉDOUARD VUILLARD

1868 Cuiseaux (Saône-et-Loire) - La Baule 1940

Square Berlioz, Place Vintimille

Pastel on paper; 1915.

Signed lower right: *E Vuillard*

405 x 510 mm

PROVENANCE: Bernheim-Jeune, Paris (purchased from the artist in 1915; inv. no. 20497) – Paul Valotton, Lausanne (1916) – Swiss private collection

LITERATURE: Antoine Salomon and Guy Cogeval, *Vuillard. The Inexhaustible Glimpse. Critical Catalogue of Paintings and Pastels*, III, Paris 2003, no. X-105, p.1227, repr. [‘current whereabouts unknown’]

This pastel depicts the panoramic view over the Place Vintimille that Édouard Vuillard enjoyed from his apartment on the fourth floor of 26 rue de Calais. It must be early spring: vivid patches of green brighten single trees and bushes while others are still bare. The juxtaposition of light and shade creates dappled light effects on the oval pathway at the centre of the gardens. Dark forms appear in the foreground – strollers enjoying a first taste of spring. Rich gradations of green enliven the composition. Their tone ranges from the lightest yellow-green to a blackish olive, contrasting with the cloudless light-blue sky and the imposing structure of the tall building in the background. Seen from a bird’s-eye view the figures in the gardens remain an unspecified blur. The stone statue of Hector Berlioz, the namesake of the square (it is now named Place Adolphe Max although the names Square Berlioz and Place Vintimille are still in common use), is partly hidden by the benches beneath the tree at the right.

The view Vuillard has captured in the present pastel focuses on the centre of the square with its small public gardens. The soft, feathery weightlessness of the pastel masterfully catches the changing effects of spring light on foliage, paths and façades. Émile Levy, one of Vuillard’s greatest patrons, commissioned a painting of Square Berlioz in the same year. The preparatory sketch shows the motif from an identical angle but with a wider focus. In the sketch Vuillard documents roadwork being carried out on the broad pavement encircling the gardens [fig. 1].

Vuillard took a large number of photographs of the square with his Kodak camera. The format and viewpoint he chose for his pastels was frequently very similar [fig. 2].

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Fig. 1: *Square Berlioz (La Place Ventimille)*, 1915 (reworked in 1923). *A la colle* [glue-based distemper] on canvas, 162,6 x 228,6 cm. (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, L.1996.83)



Fig. 2: *Square Berlioz* photographed by Edouard Vuillard; c.1910-12