



# Essay on Gardens: A Chapter in the French Picturesque (Penn Studies in Landscape Architecture)

*Claude-Henri Watelet*

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Claude-Henri Watelet

Published in 1774, *Essay on Gardens* is one of the earliest texts showing the progressive shift in French taste from the classical model of the gardens at Versailles to the picturesque or natural style of garden design in the late eighteenth century. In this formulation of his ideas concerning landscape, Claude-Henri Watelet describes an ideal farm and also his own very real garden, Moulin Joli, near Paris. He advances the theory that the useful and the pleasurable must be combined in the planning, preservation, and decoration of the land by offering a relatively novel design that uses experimental methods to create a comfortable estate. The result is a horticultural and ecological laboratory that includes a residence, a farm, stables, a dairy, an apiary, a mill, walks, vistas, flower beds, an area reserved for medicinal plants, decorative statues, a medical laboratory, and even a small infirmary for ailing members of the community.

Given the wide scholarly interest in the field of garden design and its history, this first English edition of Watelet's small but influential book will interest historians of landscape design as well as students of the history of architecture. Joseph Disponzio's informative introduction to Samuel Danon's masterful translation situates the *Essay on Gardens* within the framework of other landscape and garden treatises of the late eighteenth century.

Although the original text was not illustrated, this edition includes a selection of charming drawings and etchings of Moulin Joli by Watelet himself, Hubert Robert, and others.

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