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Karin Sagner and Max Hollein, *Gustave Caillebotte: An Impressionist and Photography*, Hirmer Verlag: Munich, 2013. 245 pp. \$75.00 U.S. (cl). ISBN-13: 978-3777459219.

Review by Mary Morton, National Gallery of Art.

Gustave Caillebotte: An Impressionist and Photography catalogues the first major survey in Germany of the work of this lesser known Impressionist painter. The show ran from October 2012 to January 2013 and was organized by Karin Sagner, an Impressionist scholar who published the first German monograph on Caillebotte in 2009. Public holdings of Caillebotte's paintings in Germany are very thin (two late landscapes at the Wallraf-Richartz museum in Cologne, an excellent Argenteuil painting at the imminent Musuem Barberini in Potsdam) and because there is not much more to be found in other museums in Europe, this was an important event for German fans of Impressionism in general and of Caillebotte's work in particular.

When Caillebotte died in 1894, he had been living largely apart from the avant-garde movement he had helped forge in the late 1870s and early 1880s. Caillebotte was a central organizer, supporter and participant in the Impressionist movement, but because he was independently (very) wealthy, he did not sell his work, and when the movement started to lose momentum, he moved out of Paris to the suburbs. Unlike those of his comrades, his work did not make it into private collections, and, eventually through donations, to public collections. In the famous bequest of his Impressionist collection to the French nation in his will, he included none of his own works. Only later did his brother Martial and his friend Renoir add two paintings to the cache that was ultimately accepted and hung at the Palais de Luxembourg in 1897. *The Floorscrapers* and *Rooftops in the Snow* were the sole works by Caillebotte available to the public for decades. Only in the 1960s was a market for his work created, and much of it remains in private hands.[1] Even in the United States, where the majority of publicly held paintings by Caillebotte live, there is no single repository where one can study the artist's work in any depth. One impatiently awaits exhibitions.

For the Schirn Kunsthalle, encouraged by then-director Max Hollein and Gilles Chardeau, president of the Comité Caillebotte, Sagner worked with Ulrich Pohlmann, a historian of photography and Director of the Museum of Photography in Munich, to explore the reference to the aesthetics of photography latent in so much of Caillebotte's work. Examined by Kirk Varnedoe and Peter Galassi in their groundbreaking exhibition and catalogue in 1976, the connection between so much of Caillebotte's oeuvre and a photographic "eye" is both irresistible and historically imprecise.[2] Very little is known about Caillebotte the man, his artistic aims and influences, and his working methods. Having died a bachelor, his personal effects and documents seem not to have been preserved, leaving the onus of art historical research and interpretation largely on the paintings themselves.

From their earliest exhibition at the second Impressionist show in 1876, Caillebotte's paintings elicited correlations to photography. After several decades of development, photography in Paris in the 1870s had transformed artistic vision and practice, and represented both a challenge and a source of anxiety to

painters.[3] Photographic prints were widely distributed in all genres, from nudes and *carte de visite* portraits to architectural records. Artistic use of lens-based optical devices such as the *camera lucida* and the *camera obscura* was also quite broad. Caillebotte's production into the 1880s seemed to embrace photography's visual conventions, such as dramatically plunging perspectives, random croppings of figures and objects, and sharp-focus detail across the composition. Photography seemed to provide a conceptual model for his painterly innovations, and certainly conditioned the critical response of his early work. He also may very well have used actual photographs and lens-based devices in his production, all in the name of an idiosyncratic expressive realism.[4]

While proof of the artist's use of photography and photographic devices may forever elude us, the Schirn project contributed to the topic by bringing together a carefully selected body of photographs that sensitize the eye to Caillebotte's unusual aesthetic strategies. Pohlmann offers an essay on the origins and development of street photography, which depended on decreasing the camera's exposure time in order to capture the moving life of the city. The advent in particular of the stereoscope and the *vue instantanée* made possible by the wet collodion process in the 1860s allowed photographers to capture a sense of the flux and drama of modern urban life. Pohlmann curated a marvelous group of contemporary photographs of Paris, the best of which are by Charles Marville, who was commissioned by the city to record its streets, boulevards and architecture before, during, and after the radical urban renewal project known as "Haussmannization." This massive process of destruction and construction, the crisply designed new spaces as well as the old parts of the city--backstreets not on the renovation plan that retained their irregular, medieval flavor--were all transcribed by Marville's decades-long project.[5]

The majority of the photographs in the exhibition, however, fall later than Caillebotte's active career (roughly 1875 to the mid-1880s) casting his paintings in the position of aesthetic premonition, a retrospective view that helps articulate the artist's project rather than explain its origins. Photographs by Henri Rivière, Eugene Atget and Eadweard Muybridge employ cropping, framing and stop-motion strategies also found in Caillebotte's paintings. Pohlmann has a particular expertise in not only later nineteenth-century photography, but also photography between the world wars, when a loose avant-garde movement referred to as the New Vision asserted itself in Europe. First signaled by Varnedoe and Galassi in 1976, the poignant juxtaposition of photographs by 1920s artists such as Alexandre Rodchenko and André Kertész, as well as Wols and László Moholy-Nagy, with painted compositions by Caillebotte, suggests his role as an artistic pioneer. Again, this is not a case of artistic lines of influence--indeed there was little to no contact between New Vision photographers and works by our Impressionist--but the shared interest in views from above, oblique views, close ups and fragmentation is striking.

The catalogue is divided into sections determined by photographic themes, each related to a group of Caillebotte's paintings. Panorama photography, the advent of the wide angle lens and stereoscopy correlate to Caillebotte's fascination with space in the plunging perspectives and broad views of pictures like *Paris Street, Rainy Day* [not included in the exhibition] and *Pont de l'Europe*. The latter picture in particular revels in the striking new visual forms of modern industrial construction found in the photographs of Auguste-Hippolyte Collard in the 1860s and 1870s. Marville's taxonomy of "street furniture," the kiosks, street lamps, and *pissoirs* that decorated the new boulevards and *places* are echoed in *Traffic Island, Boulevard Haussmann*. As photographers set up their tripods on balconies and rooftops to capture the new cityscape from above, so did Caillebotte with his easel in the newly designed eighth and ninth *arrondissements*. People in movement, and from different angles and viewing positions engaged photographers like Muybridge and Rivière, as well as Caillebotte in scenes of the street and in the striking series of male portraits in interiors. Atget's delight in the range of commercial food displays during the first decade of the twentieth century are juxtaposed with Caillebotte's spectacular series of food still lifes, such as *Calf's Head and Ox Tongue*, among the most astonishing still lifes of the nineteenth century, and *Pheasants and Woodcocks on a Marble Table*.

In Caillebotte's later landscape work, marginalized in the literature as secondary to the tension and audacity of his cityscapes, Sagner finds promising presentiments of twentieth-century abstraction. Although it is most interesting as one of a series, other members of which were not included, *Fields on the Gennevilliers Plain* is singled out for its reductive color-field composition. In a consideration by another catalogue author, Kristin Schrader, the quietly poetic early painting of *The Yerres, Rain*, as well as the late sketch of laundry drying in Petit Gennevilliers are connected to the New Vision tactic of abstracting and fragmenting from nature in order to re-mystify reality, creating out of the mundane a sense of "magic."

The exhibition succeeded in bringing together an excellent group of paintings by Caillebotte representing all genres in which he participated, and including several of his greatest, among them *The Floorscrapers*, *Portrait of Monsieur R*, and *Canoes on the Yerres*, as well as several of those named above: *The Yerres, Rain*, *The Pont de l'Europe*, *Traffic Island*, *Boulevard Haussmann*, and *Calf's Head and Ox Tongue*. These extraordinary works, remarkable in their range and in their individual innovation, are the more powerful when seen together. Exhibition projects like this one, including so many private collection works, are crucial in our on-going discovery of this seminal modernist.

NOTES

[1] For more on Caillebotte's place in art history, see Mary Morton and George Shackelford, "Introduction," *Gustave Caillebotte: The Painter's Eye* (Washington D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2015), pp. 15-21. For Caillebotte and the twentieth-century art market, see Caroline Shields, "Caillebotte's Posthumous Reputation, 1894-1994," *ibid.*, pp. 241-249.

[2] Kirk Varnedoe and Thomas P. Lee, *Gustave Caillebotte: A Retrospective Exhibition* (Houston, Tex.: Museum of Fine Arts, 1976-77).

[3] For the most recent and elucidating account of the role of photography in Caillebotte's oeuvre, see Sarah Kennel, "Photography and the Painter's Eye," in *Gustave Caillebotte: The Painter's Eye*, George Shackelford and Mary Morton (Washington D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2015): pp. 109-22.

[4] See Varnedoe with Galassi, "Caillebotte's Space," in Varnedoe and Lee, *Gustave Caillebotte: A Retrospective Exhibition* (Houston, Tex.: Museum of Fine Arts, 1976-77): pp. 60-73, and Claude Ghez's essay, "Reading Gustave Caillebotte's Pont de l'Europe (1876)," in reviewed book.

[5] For more on Marville, see Sarah Kennel et al., *Charles Marville: Photographer of Paris* (Washington D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2013).

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