

Images of a Capital

The Impressionists in Paris

Museum Folkwang

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The Modern City: Paris 1850–1900

Caroline Mathieu

“Paris has been destroyed,”¹ “Paris disappears and returns,”² “Paris shines in new splendor,”³ “the new Paris and the Paris of the future”⁴ – the city has a firm place in publications, be it books or illustrated magazines. It is at the center of the novels by Zola, whose characters are enthusiastic about this Paris – “chopped up by blows of a saber, its veins bare, feeding hundreds of thousands of diggers and bricklayers”.⁵ Paris is poetic, Paris is melancholic, Paris is the city par excellence, and also the “American Babylon of the future,” as the stern Goncourt brothers deem it to be – but Paris is also lively, liberated, and light, and the urban redesign that took place in the 19th century generated a whole new attitude towards life.

Between 1852 and 1870, Emperor Napoleon III – with the help of Georges-Eugène Baron Haussmann, who had been made Prefect of the Seine Department – gave the city of Paris the guise of a modern metropolis. As late as 1848, the city still looked no different from the Paris of 1789. It was impossible to cross from one side to the other, because the houses were a compact mass intersected only by tiny, winding lanes. The area of the city was very small and its core was restricted to the Ile de la Cité [fig. 1, p. 26], which, over time, increasingly decayed – as Eugène Sue so aptly describes: “The mud-colored houses, their few windows, supported by rotten frames, almost touched at their gables, so narrow were the lanes. In the dirty houses, dark and smelly corridors led to dim stairwells, which were so steep that, when ascending, one had to hold on to a rope hanging from a damp wall.”⁶ The houses and sheds along the river Seine reached all the way to the water’s edge.

Napoleon III, intent on making use of the memory of Napoleon I, took his uncle’s plans up again and, with the help of the architects Visconti and Lefuel, set himself the goal of completing the Louvre in a historic synthesis of styles. He also realized the great dream of Louis XIV – that of connecting the Louvre with the city palace in the Tuileries. With the aim of fighting unemployment and poverty, but also to forestall potential uprisings that could make use of the narrow winding lanes – as had already been the case twice during the revolutionary uprisings of 1830 and 1848 – the Emperor, immediately after coming to power, set about redesigning the city. He also wanted to improve the sanitary conditions and wipe out horrendous epidemics, above all cholera and typhoid, which had decimated the population of Paris. His London exile and journeys to America had revealed to him the beauty of wide avenues and parks, and given him an understanding of the modernization of life such as running water, gas lighting, and a smooth flow of traffic. Finally, it was Napoleon’s personal concern to improve the fate of the poorest in society, the working people; as early as 1844, he had published a brochure entitled *L’extinction du paupérisme* (The Extinction of Poverty).

During the reign of Napoleon III, France was a wealthy and prospering nation with great potential. All that was missing was the right man to make his plans come true. In June 1853, when the new regime had established itself, the interior minister, the Duke of Persigny, interviewed the candidates for the post of Prefect of the Seine Department. In his memoirs, he paints a compelling picture of Georges-Eugène Haussmann: “It was Monsieur Haussmann who impressed me the most. But strangely enough, it was less his remarkable intelligence, which won me over but rather

his character traits. I had in front of me one of the most extraordinary types of person of our age: tall, strong, bold, determined, and, at the same time, subtle and smart. He had no reservations about presenting himself as exactly the person he was. Visibly pleased with himself, he described the major achievements of his administrative career and did not spare me one thing; he would have talked for six hours without a break had we stuck to his favorite topic – himself. In advance, I already enjoyed the thought of letting this large predatory cat loose on the pack of foxes and wolves, which was opposing all the charitable plans of the empire.”⁷

The redesign of Paris was carried out at the behest of the Emperor, and urban planning was made an affair of state. This meant that, from 1851 onwards, the building work was decided by decree, without it being discussed with the legislature. Haussmann had a powerful architectural apparatus, headed by Victor Baltard, at his side. The city was completely restructured and split into twelve, after 1886 into twenty, *arrondissements* (administrative districts) – each of them with a town hall, a school, and a church. This new concept of Paris treated the city as a whole for the first time, like a single monument whose components were firmly linked to one another. A monumental Paris was commissioned, which organized itself anew around major axes, squares, boulevards, and avenues: an exact map of the city was developed that showed three new networks of roads radiating outwards, with the intention of creating the “capital of capitals.” The construction of new roads went hand in hand with great destruction: the miserable living quarters, which were mostly found in the medieval city, had to disappear. Access to the train stations and the connections between them had to be made easier, and space had to be cleared around the large monuments; one wanted to avoid the districts running into one another, yet they also should not be entirely separated. Finally, plans were made for creating a large administrative center (Louvre and the Ile de la Cité).

During the first stage of construction – from 1855 to 1858 – two large axes were drawn, from north to south and from east to west. These allowed people to traverse Paris and formed the “great cross” with the intersection of Rue de Rivoli – which opened up a route from west to east, from the Place de l’Etoile to the Place de la Bastille – and Boulevard de Sébastopol – with its continuation, the Boulevard Saint-Michel, which cuts through Paris from north to south. The building work met with fierce criticism, as a section of the medieval city (especially the district of the Cité) had to be sacrificed for it. Room was made there for the Hall of Justice, constructed in the Classical style, the commercial court with a mixture of Renaissance and Baroque elements, the hospital, and several army barracks that were meant to ensure security in the capital. The second network of roads extended the city towards the west, while the access roads to the new Opera were built with the third network – between 1867 and 1879.

The Boulevard Saint-Germain, constructed on the left bank of the Seine, was added to the network of existing inner-city boulevards; these were all lined with newly planted trees, were given wide asphalted sidewalks for pedestrians, and grand houses were built along them. Squares were created from which roads radiated outwards like the rays of a star, making it easier to travel between the districts – the design of a number of these squares was monumental, like the Place de l’Etoile. The architect Jakob Ignaz Hittorff standardized the previously unbalanced rows of houses by constructing uniform patrician houses with similar facades along each of the avenues setting out from the square. Hittorff was also responsible for the design of the Place de la Concorde, where he had a magnificent fountain built as well as the rostral columns. New bridges led across the Seine in order to facilitate the exchange between the two banks, such as the Pont de l’Alma with the statue of the Zouave figure created by Georges Diébolt.

The rebuilding of Paris progressed with extraordinary speed. 1,240 new houses were built every year between 1851 and 1900; in the suburbs as many as 3,588. This was only possible because strict discipline was imposed on the architects and they had to keep to exact specifications. A law passed in 1859 stipulated the dimensions of off-set walls, overhangs on the street side, the height of gables, the width of houses and openings, so that all that remained was the decorative vocabulary to liven and vary the facades: caryatids, pilasters, columns, arched or triangular pediments, etc.

Haussmann hired two outstanding people to work by his side – the engineers Eugène Belgrand and Jean-Charles Adolphe Alphand. Belgrand was put in charge of the sewer system, and Alphand was to design the parks and green spaces. From 1870 onwards, houses had running water on the ground floor; in less than ten years, an exemplary sewer

and water-supply system was implemented. Fountains were built all over Paris, of which the Fontaine de l'Observatoire (1874) is the most beautiful. It is adorned with *The Four Continents* by Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux, a group of sculptures where the female figures embody the continents. Equally intent on improving the sanitary conditions and eradicating epidemics, Napoleon III ordered the construction of woods and parks where Parisians could go to enjoy fresh air. In the west, the Bois de Boulogne and, in the east, the Bois de Vincennes, which was intended for the workers; in the north-west, the Park Monceau and, in the north-east, the Buttes-Chaumont. They all feature winding paths that convey an atmosphere of English landscape gardens and match the topography of the land.

The construction of the boulevards also brought the destruction of many theaters, which were then rebuilt in the center near the Hôtel de Ville (Théâtres du Châtelet and de la Gaîté) [fig. 2, p. 26] or along the boulevards, almost all of them in the style of the Italian Renaissance, with arcades on the ground floor and loggias on the first floor. The theaters are often surrounded by magnificent large buildings to promote the impression of Paris as an aesthetic whole. A completely different path was chosen by Charles Garnier for the Opera, with the graduation of roofs and the imposing stairway.

The New Opera

The open competition for the design of the new Opera of Paris, for which 171 proposals were submitted, was won in 1861 by 36-year-old, until then unknown, Charles Garnier. In 1862 the foundation stone was laid in a place already decided upon by Haussmann in 1858, the facades were built by 1867, but the war interrupted the building work so that the Opera did not open until January 5, 1875.

Despite being a symbol of the Second Empire, the Opera stands in marked contrast to everything that characterizes the architecture of the time and of the district. In contrast to the austerity of the straight line, it favors curves; regularity gives way to the picturesque and severity to ornamental abundance: multicolored marble as well as green and pink porphyry join forces, bronze elements glow, the copper of the cupola glistens – in complete contrast to the sober gray of the buildings in the style of Haussmann [fig. 3, p. 27]. As far as the interior was concerned, Garnier deliberately decided to go easy on the ornaments for the auditorium, as he did not want to distract the audience from the musical performances. When it came to the design of the foyer and the stairs, however, he gave free reign to his creativity in order to, as it were, lift the viewer – blinded by the magnificent premises – onto the stage.

The Opera is one of the most beautiful examples of the synthesis of the arts. Because the artist wanted to integrate all areas of artistic work, he supervised the work of the painters, sculptors, stuccoers, and mosaic layers himself. But the most daring contribution was made by Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux. Garnier suggested that the sculptor create a group of sculptures depicting dance. His creative urge and his excitement drove the artist to add more and more figures, so that the completed group eventually consisted of seventeen figures. When the work was unveiled in 1869, *The Dance* created a scandal and was branded “an insult to common decency.” Garnier’s Opera nonetheless became a building that set a style, and many theaters in France and abroad – even as far away as Brazil – oriented themselves on its shapes and layout.

In 1870 France’s devastating defeat in the Franco-Prussian War brought the Second Empire to an end. This was followed by the tragic week of the Paris Commune in May 1871, during which Paris was unsettled by bloody and destructive fighting and terrible repression. The city had suffered badly, and the most important public buildings had burnt down such as the Tuileries Palace and a section of the new Louvre (which Lefuel rebuilt), the Court of Audit (in whose place the Gare d’Orsay was erected in 1900), and Boccador’s old Renaissance Town Hall with the priceless archives of Paris. This was the location of one of the large building projects of the Third Republic, overseen by architects Théodore Ballu and Edouard Deperthes. The last third of the 19th century was characterized by a fundamental renewal of architecture and decor. The need for something new and the wish to break with the “disease of the past” – that sometimes so burdensome historicism – could be felt everywhere.

The clients of Hector Guimard, the most famous architect of the Art Nouveau style, mostly consisted of rich merchants and an intellectual bourgeoisie. Between 1894 and 1898, he erected the Castel Béranger, a large building in the 16th arrondissement, in which apartments were available for a reasonable rent. This building is characterized by concise abstraction, colored materials such as ceramic or enameled lava and metal, as well as asymmetry. Later, his most important buildings were also to be constructed in the 16th arrondissement: the houses on Rue Agar (1909–1911), the Mezzara townhouse (1910–1911), as well as his own house on Avenue Mozart (1909–1912). Thanks to Adrien Bénard, a banker and supporter of the Paris Métro, Guimard was commissioned with designing entrances for the Métro, which were to be striking and visible from afar without, however, disfiguring the roads and squares. He used cast iron and, with distinctive lettering, left a conspicuous mark on the Paris cityscape. His design was short-lived, however, as most of the station entrances were later replaced. Jules Laviotte, himself a successful architect, proved his talent with the buildings at Square Rapp or with the Ceramic Hotel on Rue Wagram, where erotic motifs are combined with modeled, colored ceramics.

The Age of Iron

“The general nature of modern architecture is one of expansion. No other civilization has had such an expressed urge to cover large surfaces as ours,” writes Viollet-le-Duc.⁸ Initially only used sparingly in the first years of the 19th century, metal was soon used widely – not only due to technical advances but also because the architecture had to meet the demands of a growing international trade: train stations, covered markets and halls, shops, exhibition areas, and factories had to be integrated into the cities, and all these constructions had to offer as much space as possible – open space that needed as little support as possible. With its ability to be shaped, its load-bearing capacity, and its durability combined with a comparably low weight, metal met the requirements in an ideal way. It required few supports and a small foundation, and, on top of that, it was suited to a transparent way of building. In combination with the development of the glass industry, which was able to produce increasingly bigger panes of glass, the use of metal played a substantially larger role in the creation of the greatest covered places. Other than for the halls and markets, steel was always used in combination with stone, which, to a certain degree, formed a connection with the surrounding buildings and, in this way, enhanced the industrial style of building. Between 1843 and 1850, with the construction of the Library of Sainte-Geneviève, Henri Labrouste, for the first time in a public building, used a skeleton made of cast iron and wrought iron, which runs from the foundations to the crown of the roof. This substantially reduced the risk of fires and the users had the largest amount of space at their disposal. The most beautiful manifestation of this slender and elegant way of building is the reading room of the Bibliothèque nationale, which was created between 1857 and 1868. It is a spacious rectangular building, whose ceiling consists of nine cupolas encased with ceramics, featuring glazed circular openings and supported by tall, very slim iron columns.

“This year Monet has exhibited wonderful interiors of train stations. The thunder of the approaching trains is conveyed in the pictures, one sees the clouds of smoke rising and billowing under the wide concourses,” writes Emile Zola in 1877,⁹ when he saw a series of seven paintings, which Monet had dedicated to the Gare Saint-Lazare, built by Alfred Armand and Eugène Flachet in 1841/42. The development of the railway, the rush of the travelers and traders, as well as the necessity of installing more platforms made engineers and architects design ever larger halls. To this end, roofs had to be built with a large span without horizontal struts to keep the interior space completely free. This necessity was combined with the desire to integrate the train station in the urban space. The French architects emphasized the representative character of their train stations by means of large glazed arches – as at the Gare de l’Est and the Gare du Nord, constructed by Jacques Hittorff. He crowned his three glazed, semi-circular arches with gables and statues, inciting the criticism of rationalist architects since, for them, form and embellishment had to correspond to the metal material.

The market halls – which were built between 1853 and 1866 under the supervision of the engineer Félix Callet and the architect Victor Baltard, and turned into a universal architectural model – were the subject of unanimous admiration. They consisted of two groups of pavilions grouped around a wide path. Each of the pavilions featured a multilevel roof with lanterns [figs. 4 and 5, p. 30]. Just as Napoleon III desired, they resembled airy and weightless “huge unfurled umbrellas.” In his novel *The Belly of Paris*, Zola celebrated them elatedly: “The shadows, in the hollows of the roof, seemed to make the forest of pillars even bigger, and multiply to infinity the delicate ribs, fretted galleries, and transparent shutters. And high above this phantom town, stretching far away into the darkness, there appeared to be a mass of luxuriant vegetation, a monstrous jungle of metal, with spindle-shaped stems and knotted branches, covering the vast expanse as with the delicate foliage of some ancient forest.”¹⁰ All that remains of this “iron giant,” which was torn down in 1972, is a pavilion that has been re-erected in Nogent-sur-Marne.

The World Exhibitions

As a mirror of all experiences and fantasies from the realm of great architectural dreams, the World Exhibitions were a genuine invitation to travel. Initially filling only one exhibition hall, the exhibitions gradually turned into “a geographic fairy tale,” an “ecumenical city,” a “novel and transient city, which nests in the core of the actual city.”¹¹

The idea for a peaceful, international encounter of trade, industry, and fine arts became concrete in London in 1851. At the first World Exhibition in Paris in 1855, the Palais de l’Industrie at the lower end of the Champs-Élysées was planned as a rival to London’s Crystal Palace. Built according to the plans of the architect Jean-Marie Victor Viel and the engineer Alexis Barrault, the building was a three-aisled metal construction with a span of 48 meters, which far surpassed the 22 meters of the Crystal Palace. This may have been a tremendous technical record, but the space created was not exactly in harmony with the labored masonry of the facade and the gate in the shape of a triumphal arch at the entrance [fig. 6, p. 31]. Until 1897 the art exhibitions of the Paris Salon took place at the Palais de l’Industrie – after that, it was demolished and gave way to the Grand Palais and the Petit Palais. For a long time, however, it functioned as a model for the large iron constructions of the Second Empire, which always combined a stone jacket – even if it had no supporting function – with a metal framework.

The Paris World Exhibitions took place every eleven years: 1867, 1878, 1889, and 1900. They increasingly took on the shape of transient cities, which lay in the heart of the city and were a complete contrast to it. In 1855 the World Exhibition covered an area of sixteen hectares; in 1900 this area encompassed an impressive 135 hectares. In 1878 the remarkable Rue des Nations – where 27 nations presented themselves with a facade characteristic of their nation, reminiscent of their country’s golden age – formed the most pronounced contrast to the city Haussmann had designed. Inside the World Exhibition, there were buildings of entirely different heights and colors; plain and coarse architectural styles alternated with highly elaborate, rare, embellished, or even overloaded designs. Outside this area, in the city, sobriety, order, and uniformity reigned.

But such contrasts sometimes pave the way for new things. In 1867 Léon Parvillée, who had restored the great monuments of the Ottoman empire, erected a copy of the green mosque of Bursa on the Champ de Mars, as well as baths and a free-standing Bosphorus pavilion – a copy of one of the old country houses found on the shore of the strait – adorned with paintings, colored glass windows, and enameled bricks. Parvillée founded a brickyard, which also produced that kind of enameled terracotta later found in Parisian houses, bringing a variety of colors to Haussmann’s severe color palette.

The 1878 World Exhibition was an exhibition of revenge. Following the humiliating defeat of 1870, the tragic events of the Commune, and the obligation to pay five billion francs in gold to Germany, France went to great lengths to get its economy going again. The exhibition was meant to show the world that this endeavor was going to be crowned with success. Two large palaces were built – one of them, the Trocadéro on the Chaillot Hill, was intended to outlive the exhibition. The building was realized by the architect Gabriel Davioud and the engineer Jules Bourdais

[fig. 7, p. 32]. It was an extremely eclectic building: one rotunda evokes a Romanesque apse; the towers, resembling “giraffes’ necks,” are as much reminiscent of Islamic minarets as the multicolored design of the facade, where stripes of quarry stone alternate with reddish-violet marble, while the porticoes are Greek-inspired. The Trocadéro was replaced by today’s Palais Chaillot in 1936, which, for its part, was also built on the occasion of a large exhibition, the *Exposition spécialisée* of 1937.

The triumph of the iron constructions dominated the exhibition of 1889: apart from the two large exhibition buildings, the Palais des Beaux-Arts and the Palais des Arts Libéraux, it was above all the Galerie des Machines, the engine hall, and of course the Eiffel Tower, with its height of 300 meters, which stood out. The engine hall, which was destroyed in 1910, was designed by Ferdinand Dutert and Victor Contamin. It covered a pillar-less space with a width of just over 110 meters with the help of portal arches, which were not fixed rigidly to the floor and the key stones. With this elastic construction, the interplay of the immense forces could be balanced. The engine hall boasted an overall area of 79,000 square meters [fig. 8, p. 32], and, with its force and dynamics, its extraordinary monumentality impressed the writer Joris-Karl Huysmans: “Imagine an enormous gallery as never before seen of a width which rises above elegantly curved supporting arches and forms a barrel vault, above this an overwhelming pointed arch which, under the open sky of its glass panels, once again unites its dizzying peaks (...) The form of this hall has been taken from Gothic art, but at the same time it has burst open, has been enlarged in the most insane fashion, and is impossible to build using stone, especially as it is so peculiar with the chalice-shaped bases of its large arches. Considering the artistic merit of this hall, it constitutes the most remarkable achievement metallurgy has ever produced.”¹²

The crowning glory of the exhibition was, of course, the Eiffel Tower with its height of 300 meters [fig. 9, p. 33]. “It haunted the thoughts of the engineers and was begging to be realized.”¹³ On January 28, 1887, Gustave Eiffel started the excavation work and the construction proceeded according to precise calculations until finally – on March 31, 1889 – it stretched to its full height in the Paris sky. It was the subject of a petition by artists, aimed at Alphand, the director general of the building work for the World Exhibition, which was published in *Le Temps* on February 14, 1887. Signatories were, among others, Ernest Meissonier, Charles Gounod, Charles Garnier, Victorien Sardou, Jean-Léon Gérôme, Léon Bonnat, William Bouguereau, Sully Prudhomme, and Guy de Maupassant. They complained about the “useless and monstrous Eiffel Tower”: “Besides, one only has to take a moment to imagine a tower of dizzying ridiculousness, ruling over Paris like a gigantic black factory chimney and which, with its barbaric bulk, will dwarf Notre-Dame, the Sainte-Chapelle, the Tour Saint-Jacques, the Louvre, the Dôme des Invalides, the Arc de Triomphe, in fact, all our monuments. Humiliated and dishonored, they will disappear in this indescribable phantasm.” As expected, the Eiffel Tower was the main attraction of the World Exhibition with 1,953,122 visitors. The takings of 6,509,901 francs and 80 centimes almost covered the cost of its construction, which amounted to 7,457,000 francs. Nonetheless, until 1910, the demolition of the tower was still debated.

In 1900 Paris acquired one of the most beautiful architectural ensembles of its cityscape: the Grand Palais and the Petit Palais together with the Pont Alexandre III. The architects Girault, Deglane, Louvet, and Thomas were in charge of building the Grand Palais. At the Champ de Mars, a gentle osmosis of Western and Oriental shapes took place. The so-called Palace of Electricity, opposite the two palais and the Pont Alexandre III, was a further attraction of the exhibition. It was captivating with its surprisingly subtle and airy ornamentation of beaten zinc. At night, the colored illumination changed constantly – brought about by thousands of colored lights that sparkled on the buildings.

The 1900 World Exhibition affected a universalistic attitude, a geographic, social, intellectual, and scientific syncretism, which was characteristic of the end of the century. The era of the large architectonic displays ended here. But the city of Napoleon III and Haussmann still leaves its mark on Paris – with its spectacular cityscapes, the teeming life, the “landscapes of stone, now swathed in the mist, now struck in full face by the sun.”¹⁴ This Paris retains the “lasting and manifold charm of an aged capital, which has grown old in the splendors and hardships of life.”¹⁵

- 1 Edouard Fournier, *Paris démolé*, 1855.
- 2 Alfred Delvau, Edmond Duranty et al., *Paris qui s'en va et Paris qui vient*, Paris, 1859.
- 3 M. Audiganne, P. Bailly, *Paris dans sa splendeur*, 3 vols., Paris, 1861–1863.
- 4 Victor Fournel, *Paris nouveau et Paris futur*, Paris, 1865.
- 5 Emile Zola, *La Curée*, 1871.
- 6 Eugène Sue, *Les Mystères de Paris*, Paris, 2009, p. 38.
- 7 André Morizet, *Du vieux Paris au Paris moderne: Haussmann et ses prédecesseurs*, Paris, 1932, p. 51.
- 8 Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, *Entretiens sur l'Architecture*, Vol. 2, 1872, p. 110.
- 9 Emile Zola, "Une exposition: les peintres impressionnistes," in: *Le Sémaphore de Marseille*, 04.19.1877.
- 10 Emile Zola, *The Belly of Paris* (1873), transl. B. Nelson, Oxford 2007, p. 20.
- 11 Paul Morand, *1900*, Les éditions de France 1931.
- 12 Joris-Karl Huysmans, "Le fer," in: *Certains*, Paris, 1898, pp. 178–180.
- 13 Vicomte Eugène-Melchior de Vogüé, *Remarques sur l'exposition du Centenaire*, Paris, 1889.
- 14 Charles Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life" (1863), in: *Baudelaire. Selected Writings on Art & Artists*, transl. P. E. Charvet, Cambridge, 1981.
- 15 Charles Baudelaire, *Salon de 1859*, édition H. Lemaître, collection "classique Garnier," Paris, 1971, p. 378.

Paris – Capital of the Civilized World?

Robert Kopp

“In the Twentieth Century there will be an extraordinary nation. This nation will be great, but it will not be known as France. In the Twentieth Century its country will be called Europe, and after centuries, as it still and ever develops, it will be called Mankind. (...) Before possessing its nation, Europe possesses its city. The nation does not yet exist, but its capital is already here. This may seem a prodigy, but it is a law.”

This vision of the future was penned by Victor Hugo as an epigraph to what was undoubtedly the most ambitious guide to Paris ever published. The text – laconically titled *Paris* – which also appeared as a separate pamphlet, formed the introduction to the first volume of the two-part *Paris-Guide*, published to mark the 1867 World Exhibition. It was an enormous work of more than 3,000 pages, with more than a hundred essays by the likes of Jules Michelet, Edgar Quinet, Sainte-Beuve, Dumas fils, Louis Blanc, George Sand, Emile Littré, Ernest Renan, and many more.¹

Napoleon III inaugurated the World Exhibition on April 1 of that year. It was the last great celebration of an empire, which, in spite of liberalization, was by then in the throes of its final decline. The failed intervention in Mexico – news of the execution of Maximilian I by firing squad reached Paris during the exposition – and caving in to Prussian imperialism had clearly revealed his foreign-policy weaknesses. At home, Napoleon III was further undermined both by left-wing parliamentary opposition and by right-wing clerical opposition. The 1863 legislative elections were a wake-up call for the regime. In spite of a solid majority of five million in favor of the government, votes cast for anti-government candidates had more than doubled (to two million) compared to the election of 1857. In Paris, oppositional republicans had taken all nine seats – a result described by Ludovic Halévy in his memoirs as bringing “a hint of insurrection and revolution.”²

Even so, the crowned heads of Europe flocked to Paris one last time for the World Exhibition. And they did so “in such numbers,” according to the irreverently witty Mérimée, “that they are obliged to sleep two to a bed.” One of the first to visit was the Prussian king Wilhelm I, accompanied by Bismarck and Moltke. He was followed by Czar Alexander II, who was a guest at the Elysée Palace along with two of his sons. On June 10, a spectacular reception was held in the Tuileries for these representatives of two powers that had once been allied against Napoleon I. The event was staged to echo Jacques-Louis David’s sumptuous *Feast of the Supreme Being* on the Champs de Mars (1794). Napoleon III – eager for international recognition and willing to do anything to lend his regime a veneer of legitimacy – sought to capitalize on the ballet of nations. Many popular contemporary images and engravings document the constant stream of official events at the time. [fig. 1, p. 38] The exhibition, spread over almost seventy hectares and taking up the entire Champs de Mars, attracted some fifteen million visitors. It was a resounding success. While Hugo’s prophecy that Paris would soon become the capital of a united Europe may not have come to fruition, the demise of the Emperor, written between the lines, was already clearly within grasp.

It was only a matter of time before outward appearances could no longer conceal France’s downward spiral: stagnating population numbers, a slow-down in industrial production, dwindling exports. The economic down-

turn was worldwide, and the effects of the American Civil War were starting to be felt. But only a few recognized the signs and noticed that, behind the bombast of the *fête impériale*, the mood was somber. In a letter to his friend and confidante Madame de Montijo, dated October 16, 1861, Mérimée writes: “There is a shortage of bread and money at present. For some time now, everyone has been following the example of the state, like the scion of a well-heeled family throwing out money with both hands. But now, people are realizing in retrospect that it has all gone far too quickly and they are becoming concerned. Once they start looking a little closer at things, they do not take such a benevolent view. They wonder what kind of people are in government and how they could have allowed such unrest to occur in times of profound peace.”³

In one area, however – that of art and literature – Paris remained unrivaled. For more than half a century, Paris was the capital not only of Europe but of the world. This is clearly evidenced by the many writers, artists, and musicians from all over the world who spent time in Paris or settled there – among them Heine, Manzoni, Wagner, Turgenev, Chagall, Rilke, Unamuno, Picasso, and Stravinsky – and who found inspiration for their work. Tourists, too, were drawn to Paris in increasing numbers from the early 19th century onwards, especially since the Second Empire. So it is hardly surprising to find that more and more guidebooks were being published, praising Paris in the highest tones as capital of the world, capital of the civilized world,⁴ metropolis of modern civilization,⁵ and even metropolis of the universe.⁶ The popular *Guide pour tous. Paris tel qu’il est* (Guide for All. Paris as it is Today), published to coincide with the 1855 World Exhibition, declares: “All across the world, the name of Paris resounds with magical appeal, full of exhilarating promise, irresistible allure, invincible hope (...) The oppressed of all nations look to Paris, while the contented in every place on earth hope that Paris will increase their happiness even more. With each beat of its pulse, Paris makes the world reverberate; its fashion is law, its taste decree, and the revolutions that have sprung from its discontent or rage have shaken the earth from pole to pole, and will one day change the world.”⁷

London, however, claimed the same superiority as metropolis of the modern world,⁸ capital of the world,⁹ mighty ruler of the world,¹⁰ or quite simply world capital,¹¹ according to the title page of another guide. Ever since the 18th century, the two capital cities had been engaged in an increasingly open rivalry stemming from the competition between England and France, which was not only manifested in the American War of Independence, but also in the Napoleonic Wars and later in the colonial division of the African continent.

World Exhibitions

The World Exhibitions – held in London in 1851 and 1862, and in Paris in 1855, 1867, 1878, 1889, and 1900 – were just one indicator of the rivalry between the two cities. However, unlike Paris, London soon abandoned this lavish show of prestige, probably because the expenditure was out of all proportion to the benefits it brought. Paris, on the other hand, systematically expanded these events, making them a tourist attraction so popular that, in 1900, visitor numbers exceeded 50 million. According to the *World’s Guide to London in 1862*, London was the most important city in the world in 1851 and 1862, drawing people from all over to admire its magnificence, which even surpassed that of legendary Babylon and Thebes.¹² At the same time, a French author noted that “the rivalry between France and England is very keen; yet both countries have such distinctive characters that they rarely pursue the same aims. France is undoubtedly superior in all that relates to art, design, elegance, and subtlety (...) while England has strength, power, all that is remarkable, imposing, and useful.”¹³

Indeed, one distinctive feature of the 1855 exhibition in Paris was that the Palais des Arts had been built alongside the Palais de l’Industrie, showing works by Ingres, Delacroix, Meissonier, Scheffer, Couture, Vernet, Gérôme, Cabanel, Flandrin, Bouguereau – together with many English and German sculptors and painters. Gustave Courbet – whose large-format paintings, *The Burial in Ornans* and *The Studio*, had been rejected by the jury – presented forty of his works in his own pavilion under the title “Le Réalisme.” The exhibition proved to be a major attraction, and was reviewed in detail by all the leading critics of the day – from Delécluze to Gautier, from Baudelaire to the Goncourt brothers.

The 1855 exhibition was celebrated as a paean to progress. For the likes of Victor Hugo, Jules Michelet, and George Sand, faith in unbridled progress was the true religion of the future. For Baudelaire, Flaubert, and the Goncourt brothers, on the other hand, it was merely an expression of modern arrogance and ignorance. Its symbol, the steam locomotive – praised by Maxime Du Camp in neo-classicist verse – also appears in Gustave Flaubert’s *Sentimental Education*, in which the artist Pellerin depicts the republic or the progress of civilization as the figure of Jesus Christ driving a locomotive through a virgin forest.¹⁴

The New Paris

The 1867 World Exhibition helped to showcase the radical redevelopment by Haussmann that gave Paris its modern-day urban structure. Broad boulevards running from north to south and east to west sliced through the medieval center, whose streets had been described by guidebooks published in the first half of the century as “narrow, dark, and dirty. Few of them have pavements for the accommodation of foot passengers.” This description from the 1814 *New Picture of Paris* was stated even more clearly in the 16th edition of the same guide in 1831, which described “the air and sun being almost completely excluded, and a stream of black mire running through every street (...) wet and dirty in the middle of summer.”¹⁵ This was precisely the situation that Haussmann sought to address. Not only did he bring air and light into the city center, but running water and gas lighting as well. Sewage was collected in subterranean canals and channeled out of town to flow into the Seine at Asnières – although that did not prevent Monet and his colleagues from portraying the place in the most idyllic light.

Haussmann’s redevelopment radically changed the demographic structure of Paris. Rocketing property prices drove workers, tradesmen, and the lower middle classes out of the center to the periphery and the eastern districts, paving the way for a trend that has continued to this day. Ever since the Second Empire, well-heeled Parisians have preferred the 8th, 16th, and 17th *arrondissements*. Even today, sociologists still note the reduced demographic mix that began there. Apart from the fact that the magnificent town houses known as *hôtels particuliers* gradually passed into the hands of the state, becoming the seats of government ministries, the aristocratic 7th *arrondissement* was barely affected at all by the upheavals.

Haussmann’s redevelopment was limited to the area within the city walls erected under the auspices of Adolphe Thiers. Much as Haussmann would have liked to have had them demolished – just as they had been elsewhere to accommodate a growing railway network – opposition to the idea was too strong and the walls remained in place until 1924. As the first urban planner to view Paris as a single cohesive entity, and taking every district into account, Haussmann pursued several aims: creating urgently needed new housing for a rapidly growing population (many of whom were migrants), increasing security by providing wider and more brightly lit streets, combating crime and preventing the erection of street barricades, improving sanitation and hygiene to benefit the health of the population by advancing the water supply and building a sewage network. Haussmann himself had been able to observe the drastic effects of poor sanitation at first hand: the 1849 cholera epidemic had cost more than 19,000 lives, surpassing even the death toll of the 1832 outbreak.

Haussmann achieved much of what he set out to do. He transformed the patchwork of independent districts into the cohesive city that appears in the novels of Zola. But it came at a price. In 1867 the Catholic journalist Louis Veillot described Paris as a “city of rootless multitudes, an unstable pile of human dust” and warned that “you can grow and become the capital of the world; you will never have any civic-minded citizens.”¹⁶ The workers, or *classes laborieuses*, were pushed out to the suburbs, where the “red belt” of the *banlieues* exists to this day.¹⁷ One of the driving forces behind this process was the real-estate speculation that was condemned by contemporaries at the time, among them Jules Ferry, whose *Comptes fantastiques d’Haussmann*, published shortly after the World Exhibition, caused a sensation,¹⁸ or described by Emile Zola in his novel *The Kill* (1872).

In London, by contrast, things took a very different direction. There, it was the wealthy who began to abandon the city center and move to the western and outlying districts. In doing so, as we know from Dickens' writings, they left the center to the working classes. Many guides of Paris point this out, as do some visitors themselves.¹⁹ Théophile Gautier, for instance, writes that "London, unlike Paris, is not surrounded by a wall that constricts the town like a tightly laced corset. The transition to the suburbs and from the suburbs to the countryside occurs almost imperceptibly. Yet the further one moves from the center in London, the more elegant and wholesome everything looks, adorned with flowers, graceful – it is the opposite of Paris, where the outlying districts are in a state of ugly decay and where shabby, dilapidated, crumbling houses bear witness to poverty and neglect, resembling the huts of Hottentots more than the dwellings of civilized people."²⁰

Paris was often compared directly with London²¹ – as, for instance, by the writer and art critic William Hazlitt, who was a friend of Coleridge and Wordsworth and a great admirer of Napoleon I, and who had undertaken his Grand Tour at the time of the Bourbon Restoration.²² Following the advice given by several guides, Hazlitt first sought to gain a general impression of Paris by climbing the hill of Montmartre, where he found the kind of view that could be had in London only by ascending the five hundred or so steps to the dome of St Paul's. A generation later, La Bédollière drew the same parallel, describing the effort of climbing the 616 steps to the dome of St James's to be rewarded with a view across the world's trading capital and the River Thames, plied by ships from all over the world.²³

Paris, Views

Travelers were encouraged to start by climbing the hill of Montmartre, from which Van Gogh had painted views of the city many times in 1886 and 1887 [p. 53]. They were also advised to follow in the footsteps of Balzac's character Rastignac by visiting the heights of Père Lachaise cemetery. Some guides suggested climbing to the towers of Notre-Dame or viewing Paris from the Panthéon. A handful also pointed out the Trocadéro, where Berthe Morisot had set up her easel to paint *View of Paris* (1871/72). Invariably, the idea was to gain an overview of the teeming city; it was a motif favored by countless painters and photographers. However, this overall view is rarely found in literature. There are, admittedly, some exceptions in the writings of Alfred de Vigny and occasionally in Baudelaire or in Zola's *A Love Episode*.²⁴ Balzac's *The Girl with the Golden Eyes* briefly describes the city's circles of hell and expresses the hope that, one day, Paris will find its Dante. The panorama is clearly an issue that was explored more by visual artists than by novelists and poets. Painters and photographers sought to focus the city within their sight. Tourists did much the same, albeit opening their eyes to see only what they expected to see, as noted in the *Paris-Guide* of 1867: "The visitor, attracted to Paris, arriving in the city for the first time, initially sees only what he imagined in his dreams: the magnificence and the picturesque nature of various viewpoints. At first, he thinks he is in some wonderful world where everything is sensation and spectacle, and where he can live out his fantasies with ease."²⁵

The *grandesse* could be perceived, for the most part, from an elevated viewpoint, and the picturesque by strolling along the banks of the Seine or the city's boulevards. A guide published in 1855 for the World Exhibition advised taking the city in from Notre-Dame or the Arc de Triomphe before walking along the boulevards to see an ever-changing, colorful, pleasing, and unique tapestry of activities that would provide an impression of the richness and unparalleled elegance of Paris.²⁶ Such a tour could also be made in comfort by omnibus, according to the Baedeker Guide, because nothing would give the visitor a better impression of the city and its topography than a tour on the upper deck of an omnibus or in an open carriage.²⁷ From the Second Empire onwards, the boulevards were the main attraction of Paris [fig. 2, p. 39].

No street in London, opined the 1865 Baedeker, could compare to the vibrant *joie de vivre* of the boulevards, advising that under no circumstances should the visitor fail to take a stroll along the boulevards, unsurpassable in their grandeur and vitality. Yet the more enthusiastically the travel guides praised the new street layout of Paris in contrast to its medieval alleys, the more critical they became of the center of London, whose streets were described as

unfitting for a metropolis. According to the prominent geographer Elisée Reclus, “it would certainly be advisable to open up new thoroughfares through the city center and other districts, for many of the most heavily frequented streets are narrow, uneven, and labyrinthine, and accidents occur here with far greater frequency than in the streets of Paris.”²⁸ Just as Paris came to be associated with its Palais Royal and later with its boulevards, so too did London come to be equated with the River Thames and the docks. “Wherever one looks,” wrote Gautier, “one sees the smoking funnels of the steamboats on the horizon and the black or brightly lit elegant silhouettes of ships: everything tells us that we are approaching the Babylon of the world’s oceans.”²⁹ The Thames, symbolizing London as an international trading route, is a cliché used by countless authors. According to the revolutionary socialist Auguste Blanqui, the mouth of the river had been a vast port since medieval times, and the very sight of it represented an almost indescribable panoply of England’s wealth and riches.³⁰

Paris, meanwhile, was increasingly described as a city of pleasures and even of an immoral lifestyle, while London was characterized as a city of earnestness and industry, associated primarily with “work and boundless entrepreneurial energy,” as one contemporary text put it.³¹ Colombel drew a comparison that portrayed “London as a city that astonishes, Paris as a city that pleases; one is a business hub ruled by industry, that modern god which has dethroned art, while the other is a city of pleasure where art, which elevates and beautifies everything, radiates in all its grandeur.”³²

Accordingly, most guides of Paris focused on describing places of recreation and social life: theaters, operas, coffee houses, restaurants, cafés, bars, and parks were described in detail. Yet, none of these descriptions captures the atmosphere of these places quite as compellingly as the artists and writers of the day. The best way of gaining an impression of the atmosphere at the theater is to see the paintings by Daumier, Manet, and Degas, or to read the novels of Balzac and Zola. Renoir and Maupassant bring the restaurants and cafés to life far better than any tourist guide. And anyone wishing to visit an artist’s studio must look to Fantin-Latour or the Goncourt brothers, and read *Manette Salomon*.

Paris After Haussmann

The influence of the Second Empire continued long after its demise. Until the turn of the century and even beyond, it could still be felt, especially in the field of urban planning. Nobody took up Haussmann’s ideas to develop them further. Moreover, those ideas themselves had, incidentally, been based on the much older plans of Jacques Germain Soufflot. Haussmann was a product of the Enlightenment; he believed in what was possible. After his death, all that was done was to continue building according to his plans: the Boulevard Raspail was completed in 1910, and the Boulevard Haussmann in 1922. The new Garnier Opera, for which Napoleon III had laid the foundation stone in 1862, and which he had provisionally inaugurated in 1867, was not opened until 1875. No prestigious public building typifies the style of the Second Empire as it does, and no other building project was documented in such photographic detail.

Few districts in the city were spared the often brutal, though necessary, interventions demanded by Haussmann. In places, a hint of medieval Paris can still be seen to this day – as, for example, in the last remaining narrow, winding streets of the Quartier Latin or the Faubourg Saint-Antoine. Haussmann was the first and, for a long time, the last urban planner to view Paris as a single cohesive entity to be renovated as a whole. Compulsory purchase orders allowed him to implement his plans. Only an authoritarian regime could have granted the Prefect of the Seine such wide-reaching powers. However, that in itself came under increasing criticism and Haussmann was obliged to resign just weeks before the fall of Napoleon III. Nobody was in a position to fill his place. The urban planning situation was further impeded by the fact that there was no elected mayor to look after the city’s interests in the 19th century – nor indeed well into the 20th century. The office of mayor had existed for just a few brief years in the early days of the Revolution, and then again for a few weeks at the beginning of the Second and Third Republics. It was not until Giscard d’Estaing became President that Paris was actually brought into line with other French cities in this regard.

The Prefect of Police and the Prefect of the Seine were appointed by the Council of Ministers and were directly answerable to the state – a state that stood on feet of clay following the Franco-Prussian War of 1870/71 and the Paris Commune.

The defeat described by Victor Hugo in his poems *The Terrible Year* and by Emile Zola in his novel *The Downfall* – with the loss of Alsace-Lorraine to Prussia, which seized such important cities as Metz, Strasbourg, and Mulhouse – clearly revealed the weakness of France. The mood was dismal. Some, such as Paul Bourget, spoke openly of decadence and wallowed in Schopenhauerian pessimism. Others, such as Maurice Barrès, tapped into the cult of energy and nationalism to muster the powers needed for “revanchism.” More emphasis was placed on physical education in schools and on learning the German language in a bid to meet the archrival on equal terms in future. But few could ignore the fact that France had finally lost the position it had held in the 17th and 18th centuries as the predominant power in Europe. Only Paris had risen to shine even more brightly than before as the unrivaled center of art and literature.

Although the official annual Salon exhibition had lost some of its prestige and influence since the inception of the Salon des Refusés in 1863, it still remained the most important art event of the year right through to the 1880s. Since Diderot and Baudelaire, the country’s most renowned writers had been regular critics – among them Zola, Maupassant, Mirbeau, Huysmans, Fénelon, Apollinaire, and many more. The number of works exhibited increased annually, and the state continued to purchase ever more works that appeared to represent the most important examples of contemporary art. In 1874 the Musée du Luxembourg was founded to house the latest acquisitions. That same year, the Impressionists held their first exhibition at Nadar’s studio. The contrast between the academic style of the so-called *pompier*s – which occupy an important place today in the Musée d’Orsay – and the painting that we now regard as modern was becoming increasingly evident. Indeed, this was noted by most of the critics covering the 1878 World Exhibition, all of whom expressed their own preferences.

Zola devoted no fewer than three lengthy articles to the exhibition. Initially, he emphasized the success of the 1878 exposition, comparing it to the one held in 1867, at which there had been many court events attended by the crowned heads of Europe. Such events and celebrations were no longer held. Instead, the general public was much more broadly represented. The city was adorned with flags and fireworks lit up the sky. Visitor numbers had doubled and revenues were huge. It had become a Republican success story instead of an Imperial fiasco.³³ Needless to say, Zola’s description reflected his disdain for Napoleon III. Other observers, and most historians, estimated visitor numbers at the 1867 and 1878 exhibitions to be more or less the same, at around 15 million, and each with a comparable revenue of about 26 million francs. But given that the 1878 exhibition cost almost twice as much to organize (at 55 million francs), its success was relatively modest. According to Mirbeau, the crowds had turned their attention back to their own interests after the inauguration. Finding nothing to see, they had stayed away due to lack of interest.³⁴ Among the painters, Zola reserved his strongest criticism for the representatives of the Academy – Cabanel, Bonnat, Bouguereau, but not Meissonier – and his strongest praise for such landscape painters as Rousseau, Daubigny, Corot, Diaz, and Millet, who had, he maintained, essentially revitalized 19th-century painting, as had Manet and Courbet. However, the Impressionists became increasingly alien to him and his criticism of them became gradually more forthright.³⁵

Zola saw 1878 as a year of celebration for the Republic. The exhibition marked the centenary of the deaths of both Voltaire and Rousseau – but not without some polemical altercations with monarchists and conservatives. The Third Republic was relatively stable, but the memory of the Commune, which had cost some 25,000–30,000 lives and countless displaced persons, weighed heavily on Paris. For a long time, the extent of the carnage was denied. Only recently was there an exhibition of photographs documenting the executions at the Communards’ Wall (*Mur des Fédérés*). The Republic did not want to pin this civil war to its mast. However, as early as 1867, Victor Hugo had lauded Paris as the city of revolution – and indeed of world revolution. “Rome is more majestic, Trier more beautiful, Naples more alluring, London more wealthy. But what characterizes Paris? Revolution. Paris is the fulcrum point on which history turned one day.”³⁶ Revolution also means terror. And Hugo knew that, too; he said so in no uncertain terms in his 1874

novel *1793*. Anatole France reiterated those sentiments in *The Gods Are Thirsty* (1912), which charts the path of a failed painter who becomes a revolutionary fanatic and ends up sending people to their deaths at the guillotine. The question as to how and to what extent the Revolution of 1789 inevitably lead to the 1793 Reign of Terror is still debated today. That same question was posed in 1889 – on the centenary of the Revolution – during the year of the exhibition now immortalized by the Eiffel Tower. At the time, the dramatist Victorien Sardou, addressing the issue in his play *Thermidor*, chose to applaud the beginnings of the Revolution but condemn the excesses under Robespierre. The play was banned and Clemenceau, speaking from the tribune of the National Assembly, declared “La Révolution est un bloc.” There can be no Danton without a Robespierre.

The 1889 exhibition was held after three years of Boulangisme, during which monarchists and bonapartists joined forces against the Republic. But in April 1889, the anti-parliamentary agitator Boulanger had to leave the country, and the moderate Republicans were voted in by a majority. That year’s exhibition was far bigger and far more successful than that of 1878. But it was the exhibition of 1900 that put all its predecessors in the shade. It ran from April to November and drew 50 million visitors. For the first time, a whole new public transport system was unveiled – one which Haussmann himself had envisaged, and which already existed in London: the Métro. Unlike the railway, however, the Métro seemed to have little appeal to artists. It was photographers who documented it instead.

Observation and Recreation – the Flâneur

In spite of the latest developments in transport technology, there was one thing that Paris seemed better suited to than any other city – flânerie. Travel guides and travelogues agree on this. As one mid-century illustrated guide put it: “In London, they seem to know nothing of flânerie, that delightful pastime so beloved of all Parisians who are not actually from Paris. The English people we constantly see strolling along the pavements of Paris revert, the moment they return to London, into the most hurried two-legged creatures to be found on earth.”³⁷ And Hippolyte Taine writes in his *Notes on England* that there is hardly a single appealing shop to be found in the whole of London; not one attractive window display to please the eye – it is quite impossible to indulge in flânerie and there is nothing to do but work, to clasp an umbrella under the arm and hurry to the office or club.³⁸

In this respect, Paris is the counterpoint to London. In one of the countless guides published for the 1855 exhibition, it says: “Parisians are particularly fond of flânerie. But it would be wrong to assume that this is a natural-born trait. It is, instead, something that lies in the air – for even the most anti-Parisian traveler succumbs to it within hours of arrival. Paris is so diverse, full of so many unexpected things, that a planned walk or itinerary does not permit seeing even the least of it. The flâneur, on the other hand, comes and goes, returns, doubles back, leaves the beaten path, gets lost, unconcerned about the passing of time or any particular destination, and misses nothing.”³⁹ Did not Baudelaire, in his 1859 essay on Constantin Guys, write that the painter of modern life and the poet of modern life were the very epitome of the flâneur?

1 *Paris-Guide*, Paris 1867, Vol. 1: *Science et Arts*, 902 p.; Vol. 2: *La Vie*, 2139 p. The text by Victor Hugo was also published separately that same year, and appears in most editions of his collected works, including *Œuvres complètes*, Vol. *Politique*, Paris, 2002, pp. 1–43. (The 1898 translation cited here is reprinted in Charles Harrison et al., *Art in Theory 1815–1900*, Oxford, 1998, pp. 882–883.)
 2 Ludovic Halévy, *Carnets*, Vol. 1, ed. Daniel Halévy, Paris, 1935, p. 36, entry of 6.1.1863.
 3 Prosper Mérimée, *Correspondance générale*, ed. Maurice Parturier, Paris/Toulouse, 1941–1964, 17 vols.; this quote from Vol. 10, p. 377.

4 Louis Montigny, *Le Provincial à Paris. Esquisses des mœurs parisiennes*, Vol. 1, Paris, 1825, p. 145. (A widely read publication that went into its second edition within the year.)
 5 Honoré de Balzac, George Sand, Eugène Sue et al., *Le Diable à Paris*, Vol. 1, Paris, 1845, p. XXXII.
 6 *Guide pour tous. Paris tel qu’il est*, Paris 1855. (Published in various formats within the same year; one edition contains numerous copperplate engravings and maps.)
 7 *Ibid.*
 8 *London as it is today, where to go and what to see, during the Great Exhibition*, London, 1851, p. 5.

- 9 *The Royal Companion of the "Sights of London" and within 25 miles of St Paul's*, London, 1855, p. 28.
- 10 R. Mudle, *Babylon the Great. A dissection and demonstration of men and things in the British capital*, London, 1825, p. 46.
- 11 H.S. Brooke, *The World's Metropolis, or Mighty London*, London/Paris, 1855.
- 12 *The World's Guide to London in 1862 by Day and by Night*, London, 1862.
- 13 Hector Malot, *La Vie moderne en Angleterre*, Paris, 1862, p. 285.
- 14 Gustave Flaubert, *Sentimental Education*, part 3, chapter 1.
- 15 E. Plata, *A New Picture of Paris*, London, 1814, p. 25, 16th ed., 1831, p. 119.
- 16 Louis Veuillot, *Les Odeurs de Paris*, Paris, 1867, p. IX. (Several editions published within the year.)
- 17 Standard works on this subject are the studies by Louis Chevalier, *La Formation de la population parisienne au XIX^e siècle*, Paris 1950, and his *Classes laborieuses et classes dangereuses à Paris pendant la première moitié du XIX^e siècle*, Paris, 1969.
- 18 Jules Ferry, *Comptes fantastiques d'Hausmann. Lettre adressée à MM. Les membres de la Commission du Corps législatif chargés d'examiner le nouveau projet d'emprunt de la ville de Paris*, Paris, 1868. (The title is a reference to E.T.A. Hoffmann's *Tales*, published in France under the title *Les Contes fantastiques d'Hoffmann*.)
- 19 One of the most popular guides was F.-M. Marchant, *Le Conducteur étranger à Paris*, 1811, republished in 1816 as *Nouveau Conducteur étranger à Paris* and 50 subsequent editions, remaining in print until the 1870s; it formed the basis for Gagliani's *Guide to Paris*, 1814, which was updated and republished countless times as the *New Paris Guide*.
- 20 Théophile Gautier, *Caprices et zigzags*, Paris, 1852, p. 211. (Several new editions of which were published within the author's own lifetime.)
- 21 As early as 1802, a comparative description of the two cities was published under the title *Paris et Londres mis en parallèle*, Paris, 1802.
- 22 William Hazlitt, *Notes of a Journey through France and Italy*, London, 1826.
- 23 E. La Bédollière, *Londres et les Anglais*, Paris, 1862.
- 24 Cf. Karlheinz Stierle's essay in the present publication.
- 25 *Paris-Guide* (as note 1), p. 1755.
- 26 *Guide for Strangers Visiting Paris*, Paris, 1855, p. 44.
- 27 K. Baedeker, *Paris, including routes from London to Paris and from Paris to the Rhine and Switzerland*, Koblenz/London, 1865, p. 28.
- 28 Elisée Reclus, *Guide du voyageur à Londres et aux environs*, Paris 1860, in the collection "Guides-Joanne."
- 29 Gautier (as note 20), p. 108.
- 30 A. Blanqui, *Voyage d'un jeune Français en Angleterre et en Ecosse pendant l'automne 1823*, Paris, 1824, p. 127.
- 31 *Guide illustré du voyageur à Londres et aux environs*, London/Paris, 1851, p. 100.
- 32 A. de Colombel, *L'Angleterre et l'Ecosse à vol d'oiseau: souvenirs d'un touriste*, Paris 1853, p. 63.
- 33 The articles were published in 1878 in *Messager de l'Europe* and can be found in most editions of the collected works of Zola, e.g. Henri Mitterand, Paris, 1970, Vol. 14.
- 34 Octave Mirbeau, "A quoi bon les expositions?", in: *Revue des deux mondes*, 10.15.1895.
- 35 On the relationship between Zola and the Impressionists, cf. the essay by Karlheinz Stierle in the present publication.
- 36 Victor Hugo, "Paris," cited in: *Œuvres complètes* (as note 1), p. 19.
- 37 *Guide illustré du voyageur à Londres* (as note 31), p. 102.
- 38 Hippolyte Taine, *Notes sur l'Angleterre*, Paris, 1872. (Another popular work; the 11th edition was published in 1899.)
- 39 T. Faucon, *Véritable Guide parisien pour les étrangers*, Paris, 1855, p. 210.

The Impressionist Cityscape as an Emblem of Modernity

James H. Rubin

Cities today are recognized by their skylines and their key structures – the Vatican in Rome, the Eiffel Tower in Paris, or the skyscraper in New York. Such buildings express the city’s character at the time of their erection – the religious heritage of Rome, the modernity of Paris, or self-confident American capitalism. At its inauguration, indeed, the Eiffel Tower celebrated the widespread idea that Paris was the center of the 19th-century cultural avant-garde. Before Impressionism, however, “the present” was considered an inferior realm for art, untested with regard to significance by history; high art relied on the past for both its themes and its authority. Aesthetically, the recognizable present was the opposite of the timeless, “classical ideal” promoted by the traditional academies and their supporters, who jealously rejected any threats to their preeminence. By contrast, the new Paris and Impressionism together celebrated and embodied the momentous cultural changes, which we call modernity.

In 1845, the poet and critic Charles Baudelaire called for art to celebrate “the new,”¹ redefining the ideal in terms of contemporary social mores and taste.² Baudelaire believed that all great art looked to its own time, refashioning it according to the eye of the beholder. Imitations of the past were both irrelevant and ridiculous. One artistic genre that exemplified originality and freedom was landscape painting, especially the early Dutch and English schools. Yet, there, too, if landscape seemed a neutral terrain, this was mainly because it allowed the viewer to escape the present – if not in time, at least in place. Without the figures and events of subject painting, real places, as long as they were remote, could become a substitute timeless “ideal.” While Dutch and English landscapes often showed country folk in harmony with their surroundings or travelers enjoying picturesque scenery, French landscapes of the so-called “Barbizon School,” which immediately preceded Impressionism, stressed solitude, silence, and reflection. Adjacent to the ancient royal nature preserve of Fontainebleau Forest, the village of Barbizon was a favored nostalgic retreat for painters where, unlike their predecessors, they often painted directly from observation. This practice enhanced the sense of their authenticity, as would be the case for Impressionism, yet the places the Barbizon painters preferred evoked the primitive “state of nature” that Jean-Jacques Rousseau regarded as a resource for both virtue and freedom. By measuring modern civilization against primeval nature, Rousseau derived progressive political values, but in the realm of painting and literature, the rugged and rural countryside served as a conservative refuge from modernity rather than a place of action. Indeed, the cityscapes of Impressionism are an extroverted and cacophonous antidote.

Impressionism and the Modern Landscape

At the formation of their coherent movement in the 1860/70s, most Impressionists began choosing scenes containing obvious signs of modernity: figures in contemporary dress, modern leisure activities, or new buildings and elements of the latest transportation infrastructure. Thus, they turned landscape representation into an aesthetic and ideological battlefield, much as the militant Realist Courbet had done for figure painting in the 1850s. But by 1868, as the critic

and novelist Emile Zola wrote in defense of the young Impressionists – whom he dubbed “actualists” for their insistence on contemporary themes – it was no longer necessary “to plead the cause of modern subject matter.” Its victory was already assured.³

Within landscape painting, no category was more marked by modernity than the cityscape, as no location was more associated with the modern than the city, especially Paris. Under its ruthless prefect Baron Georges Haussmann in charge of Emperor Napoleon III’s urban planning, the city underwent an extraordinary program of renovation, unequaled to that of any traditional city center at the time. As Baudelaire himself famously proclaimed in *The Painter of Modern Life* (1863), modernity was defined by constant change – “the transitory, the fugitive, the contingent ...”⁴ Indeed, much has been written about Second Empire “Haussmannization” and its various consequences, social and economic.⁵ Yet one of its most important effects for art was an extraordinary advancement in the painted genre of urban landscape.

At the first Impressionist exhibition, held in 1874, only two painters could be identified with the practice of cityscapes: Claude Monet and Armand Guillaumin. In contrast to works by other painters listed in the Impressionist exhibition catalog, urban landscapes constituted a significant part of both of their artistic oeuvres. Monet tends to represent Impressionism whereas Guillaumin’s name is relatively obscure. Yet they were in many ways complementary since, despite their different vantage points, they both observed contemporary changes in the city’s infrastructure. At the time, both artists were shockingly modern. In fact, Monet’s early fame, as opposed to Guillaumin’s mere modest success, may be accidental rather than proof of his immediate artistic superiority. For if Guillaumin had exhibited the sketch made in 1869 [fig. 1, p. 70], and if he had called it an “impression,” he might have become famous, too.

At around the same time, their friend and cohort Alfred Sisley produced a number of paintings within the city limits of Paris. The majority of these are not especially urban in their nature and effect, and the only ones that might come close to suggesting modernity are three showing the Canal Saint-Martin, none of which Sisley showed in the early exhibitions. Sisley’s *View of Montmartre from the Cité des Fleurs in Batignolles* [p. 264] is more of a picturesque panorama seen from a distance than a representation of city life. Gustave Caillebotte, on the other hand, may have been a latecomer to the Impressionist group, but his first contributions primarily focused on the rigorous architecture of new city streets and buildings. In certain ways, his perspectives surpass those of his colleagues’ in terms of capturing the real experience of the new city.

Camille Pissarro’s series of factory paintings was produced in the semi-rural setting of Pontoise. Yet in Rouen in 1883, he followed Monet’s campaign of port views, adding a few city scenes taken from the window of his hotel room.⁶ In the following decade, Pissarro would complete several series of cityscapes viewed from a higher perspective – in Rouen [fig. 2, p. 70] and Paris [pp. 122–123], in particular. Already in the 1870s, Pissarro was close to certain Impressionist colleagues with whom he informally defined a “Pontoise School” within Impressionism: Guillaumin and Paul Cézanne, who were later joined by Paul Gauguin, Paul Signac, and, in 1886, Vincent van Gogh. Indeed, it is particularly instructive to compare Van Gogh’s and Signac’s views of industrial suburbs with those painted by their predecessors over a decade earlier.

Monet and the Panoramic View

Among the urban scenes in Monet’s career up to the end of the 1870s are two series and two groups of views of Paris from upper-story windows [fig. 3, p. 71]. The first series contains ten images of the industrial port of Le Havre painted between 1872 and 1874 [fig. 4, p. 72], including Monet’s famous *Impression, Sunrise* [fig. 5, p. 73]; the second comprises ten paintings of and behind the Saint-Lazare station from 1877 [fig. 6, p. 76].⁷ These views of Paris are equally innovative. Monet deserves credit for spearheading the compositional approach that came to characterize the painted Impressionist cityscape. In late 1866 and early 1867, he went to the Louvre with a canvas and palette, but – rather than copying old-master paintings as his contemporaries Edouard Manet and Edgar Degas did – he placed his easel

in front of a window looking east from the famous Louvre colonnade. His position from approximately two floors above ground level enabled him to see across to the Church of Saint-Germain l'Auxerrois [p. 55], disengaged from surrounding buildings thanks to Haussmann's city planning. By demolishing buildings too close to the church and too near to the colonnade facade, Haussmann was able to create a small square with newly planted trees. For another picture [fig. 3, p. 71], Monet could thus look out over the adjacent Jardin de l'Infante to the recently improved Seine embankment, crowded with traffic. Beyond it, the picturesque towers of the gothic Saint-Etienne-du-Mont and Abbey of Sainte-Geneviève, as well as the cupolas of the Panthéon and the Church of Val-de-Grâce, could be seen silhouetted against the sky.

Monet produced three paintings from this vantage point – two of them in horizontal format and one vertical, like a set of urban studies exploring the view from different directions and distances.⁸ With a French tricolor flag unfurled in the breeze over the river, *The Princess Garden* is particularly emblematic of this modernized vision of Paris teeming with pedestrians and visitors.

Three interrelated factors motivated Monet's artistic endeavors. First, Haussmann's renovations helped to "open up," lay bare, and disengage not just the Louvre but other central monuments as well, including Notre-Dame Cathedral, from crowding adjacent buildings, many of which dated from the Middle Ages. Camille Corot's painting, *Quai des Orfèvres* [p. 17], shows the riverbanks and Notre-Dame in their pre-Haussmannian setting. Haussmann's renovations allowed air and light to enter the previously dank warrens where the working-class poor once lived, relegating the latter to peripheral neighborhoods or to industrializing suburbs. Bourgeois dwellers favored new residential apartments offering many new amenities, while also facilitating the circulation of vehicles, goods, and people. In all three of Monet's views from the Louvre, fashionable pedestrians are prominently visible. The second related factor is that the city center became a place of leisure and pleasure, with riverbank promenades, cafés opening on to new green areas, or wide sidewalks along the new boulevards providing views of city monuments. Third and finally, as the city became a site of aesthetic enjoyment and spectacle, photography contributed to a new way of visualizing it. Requiring outdoor light and long exposures, many of the earliest photographs were taken from the upper-story windows of photographers' studios.

These factors altogether contributed to a new way of representing Paris: the city itself, not just individual structures, was a tourist monument – a unified yet infinitely variable edifice for aesthetic enjoyment, like a work of art. Monet's paintings embody this aesthetic, one in which the city and contemporary life within it are as worthy of representation, if not more so, than the earlier themes exemplified by the Louvre artworks to which Monet turned his back. The modernity of the painted cityscape, therefore, embodied a vision and an attitude that were not only facilitated and popularized by, but also intimately associated with new technology and infrastructure. It is not that Monet deliberately imitated photographs or that (in contrast to Guillaumin) he deliberately evoked urban renewal projects, but rather that he drew upon what had become common currency. As conditions of this new vision, Haussmann's building programs and urban photography mutually reinforced each other. In this vein, panoramic photographs – the modern standard for naturalistic representations of the city – evolved into a conventional and accepted form. Although the emergence of similar compositions in the medium of painting was novel, it can hardly be regarded as surprising.

Monet's two paintings of the Boulevard des Capucines, produced during the winter of 1873–74 [fig. 7, p. 76], one of which was exhibited at the first Impressionist exhibition, can be understood both as a continuation of and contrast to the three pictures dating from the Louvre (1866–67). Firstly, the spectacle of traffic itself, rather than picturesque monuments, is their major focus, and the act of looking is emphasized by figures leaning out from a balcony at the picture's right edge. Secondly, as Joel Isaacson observes, the figures themselves are represented less statically than in the earlier set, with a greater freedom of brushstroke and less precise outlines.⁹ Mocked in Louis Leroy's satirical review as "black tongue lickings," they still suggest movement and conform better to the naturalistic evidence of photography that records their displacement in blurs.¹⁰ The relationship to photography is underlined by the specific

vantage point – namely, the former studio of the celebrity photographer Nadar (Félix Tournachon). A friend of the Impressionists, Nadar rented his space to them for their exhibition. The address – 35, Boulevard des Capucines – was in the heart of commercial Paris where many photographers had their premises, along one of Haussmann's newly renovated *grands boulevards*. Boulevard des Capucines was lined by newer buildings that replaced the outdated city mansions, which had been erected along it two centuries before. Rather than well-known monuments, the featured buildings seen across the street were the new Grand Hôtel, an enterprise of the Péreire brothers, and the new Opera, incomplete and not visible, designed by the daring young architect Charles Garnier. Most viewers of Monet's paintings would have known that the latter was under construction facing the Place de l'Opéra, which is the open space in the upper right of Monet's composition. It can thus be said that Monet's urban landscapes heralded Paris's future.

Guillaumin and the Industrial Landscape

In contrast to Monet, Armand Guillaumin focused on quite another aspect of modern Paris that was no less at the center of its modernity and prosperity.¹¹ Just as Monet had, in the early 1870s, prominently featured the activities of Le Havre's seaport, Guillaumin, beginning in the late 1860s, concentrated on commercial activities along the river Seine. Other than occasional forays into more countrified suburbs south or east of Paris, during the 1870s he stayed almost exclusively along a section of the riverbanks extending from his residence on the Ile Saint-Louis, upstream along the right bank to the factories at Ivry, which he could observe from across the river at Charenton. Guillaumin's familiarity with this part of Paris stemmed from his employment in the early 1860s with the Orléans Railway, which had its station (now Gare d'Austerlitz) and its yards near the left bank to the south of the station.

Guillaumin's early pictures of barges on the Seine were not especially innovative. River traffic was hardly a new theme in art but, by the 1870s, Guillaumin gave it a decidedly urban flair. His pictures of *The Pont Louis-Philippe* [fig. 8, p. 77] and *The Seine in Paris* [fig. 9, 78], for example, show workaday activities of the city. *The Seine in Paris* accompanied Monet's *Boulevard des Capucines* at the first Impressionist exhibition but, rather than showing bourgeois citizens in top hats observing the crowds below, Guillaumin illustrates a very different sort of spectacle. Workers on the Quai Henri IV relax and watch, as others across the river transport barrels unloaded from barges for the nearby Jussieu wine market. Ile Saint-Louis is in the background to the right; Notre-Dame, seen from the rear, is on the Ile de la Cité at the center.

Guillaumin knew the wine market well, as he had a studio across from it. It was there that he was visited by Paul Cézanne, who painted a self-portrait in Guillaumin's studio (with Guillaumin's *The Seine in Paris* in the background) as well as the wine market itself [fig. 10, p. 78]. Indeed, Cézanne's views of Paris are rare, but when he did paint them it was in the company of artists such as Guillaumin. One of Cézanne's only Paris street scenes, *Rue des Saules, Montmartre* [p. 261] was actually owned by his mentioned friend, so it is likely that they painted there together. Early in the 1870s, Cézanne made an etching after one of Guillaumin's sketches of barges. Later, he made a painted copy [fig. 11, p. 79] of a picture by Guillaumin [p. 257] featuring a barge-based steam crane and workers dredging the Seine along the Quai de Bercy.

Guillaumin also painted views of bridge construction over the Seine. In central Paris, new bridges were built to facilitate communication between the right and left banks, while old ones were replaced with wider carriageways above and fewer arches below so that larger boats could pass under them. The washhouses in Guillaumin's painting of 1875, mentioned earlier, are examples of structures that could be moved along the Seine. In *The Seine in Paris*, the pedestrian suspension bridge in the background, called the Passerelle de Constantine, was of relatively recent vintage (1836–38), but it would soon be replaced by the vehicular Pont de Sully (1876), which cut across Ile Saint-Louis to join the right bank. In 1866, Guillaumin had left his job at the Orléans Railway and, by 1868, was working at night for the Department of Bridges and Roads. His intimate knowledge of Parisian infrastructure was therefore a professional interest. However, it is doubtful that he or other artists would have brought such imagery into the world of painting

had it not already begun to emerge in the visual culture of popular illustration and photography, where it was celebrated as an aspect of France's industrial revolution. The photographers Hippolyte Collard and Edouard Baldus were employed both by private railroads and the public works administration to document such progressive constructions. Their albums were shown at the Salon of Photography held alongside the Art Salons for at least a decade prior to the Impressionist exhibitions.

Among the most noteworthy publications on the marvels of French industry was Julien Turgan's *Les grandes usines de France* (The Large Factories of France), in eighteen volumes, which devoted several pages and illustrations to the forges at Ivry.¹² Ivry is at the junction of the Seine and its large tributary, the Marne. It was the site of forges and important rubber works, which were hailed in guidebooks as harbingers of progress.¹³ The Ivry forges were the object of Guillaumin's most sustained pictorial campaign. Guillaumin chose the most spectacular specimen of his Ivry series for the first Impressionist exhibition in 1874, where it appeared near Monet's two Le Havre paintings as well as *Boulevard des Capucines. Setting Sun at Ivry* [fig. 12, p. 80] is less surprising for its brilliant lighting effect – a frequent motif in Romantic landscape painting – than for the factory chimneys billowing industrial smoke silhouetted against the orange light. If one includes known drawings, oil sketches, and finished paintings, Guillaumin produced at least seven works as part of or relating to the series over the years between 1869–73.¹⁴ A few of them are winter scenes. In previous generations, so-called “effets” relating to the weather or the time of day were appreciated not only for their aesthetic characteristics, but also as symbols of solitude, rebirth, the bounties of nature, or other allusions depending on the particular phenomenon. In Impressionism – especially in city or industrial views – such effects may have attenuated the harshness of the more recent urban themes, while at the same time enhancing their temporality as scenes observed at precise moments in time. Indeed, Monet's version of *Boulevard des Capucines* at the Kansas City Museum of Art is also a winter scene.

Caillebotte and the Urban Perspective

A third Impressionist painter of urban views, Gustave Caillebotte, joined the second group exhibition held in 1876; in that year and subsequent ones, he exhibited a number of spectacular urban images. Even more than for Monet, photography significantly contributed to his vision, although, like Degas, Caillebotte used some of its characteristics in ways that photographers themselves studiously avoided. It is as if he was more interested in using the photographic lens to *intensify* visual effects than to produce what would at the time have corresponded to photographic naturalism.¹⁵ From the appearance of his work, moreover, Caillebotte's interest in engineering and design (which he later pursued by building yachts) was even more significant. The majority of his outdoor urban scenes are composed with an ostentatiously calculated precision, a contrast to the generalized perspectives of his cohorts. Optical equipment, which he used for sketches and composition, was merely an aid to the rigor of his pictorial imagery.

Therefore, Caillebotte can be said to have been in full sympathy with the Hausmannian ethos of the new Paris. His masterpieces are certainly *Pont de l'Europe* (1876) [p. 101] and *Paris Street, Rainy Day* (1877) [p. 127], both exhibited in 1877. Caillebotte knew both motifs well, since he lived nearby – in the modern neighborhood off the Rue de Rome and not far from Manet. The latter had also taken an interest in Parisian modernity and, in 1874, the same year as the first Impressionist exhibition, he showed *The Railway* (1872/73) [p. 97] at the official Salon. The viewpoint of Manet's picture is a private garden overlooking the sunken railroad yards of Saint-Lazare station, whereas Caillebotte's nearby view is of the street. Manet preceded Monet's series of 1877, but he used the railroad yards as background for his figures rather than his focal point. One is nevertheless drawn to the tracks through the eyes of the little girl whose back faces us. The protective fence, which has the clean lines of an industrial rather than hand-wrought product, is another dominant feature. The picture's title also helps to direct the viewer's gaze, but it is ironic as well, referring to what lies below rather than what would normally attract attention – namely, Manet's notorious model Victorine Meurent, whose gaze was so riveting in the painter's controversial early works, *Lunch on the Grass* and *Olympia*.

Manet's friend Baudelaire had compared forward-looking artistic vision to that of children, who had the ability to see the world innocently and without convention. Here, Manet seems to invite his viewer to put aside preconceptions in order to consider the aesthetic possibilities of modernity.

The Pont de l'Europe was a spectacular metallic structure that crossed the railway tracks in the form of an "X" to join the new neighborhoods on either side. From the vantage point of Manet's *Railway*, the artist could see his studio on the Rue Saint-Petersbourg across the way.¹⁶ It seems fitting, in other words, that painters of modern Parisian life should live in this newly developed area, often called Les Batignolles, daily surrounded by the latest infrastructure. At the right edge of *Railway*, a corner of the bridge can be discerned, whereas the bridge itself is the principle motif in Caillebotte's painting, *Pont de l'Europe*, too, combines social commentary and urban engineering within the framework of optical experience. A man (Caillebotte's self-portrait) throws a backward glance to a woman in fancy dress who walks the street without an escort; another man looks through the bridge's girders onto the railroad yards, where a locomotive is steaming towards the bridge. The viewer is posited as a man walking a dog who is leading the way, and the pointing breed seems to imply that the dog walker is male. One is led into a geometrically emphatic world of rigorous structuring characteristic of the new urban spaces with their straight, wide boulevards and barely distinguishable buildings.

The possibly alienating effects of such modern city streets is sensed in Caillebotte's *Paris Street, Rainy Day* [p. 127] in which figures are separate from each other, and even the man and woman in the foreground seem lost in their private preoccupations. The picture is set at the star-like intersection of several streets between Place de l'Europe and Place de Clichy. Anyone who goes to Caillebotte's exact location will discover the extent to which the painter has exaggerated distances, as if through a wide-angle lens, which emphasizes the effect of distancing. Such intersections were popular with the city planners under Haussmann, whose greatest triumph was certainly the Place de l'Etoile, now also called Place Charles de Gaulle. The principle idea of l'Etoile, which encircles the Arch of Triumph, and other grand traffic islands was typically to feature commemorative monuments, whereas the confluence Caillebotte represented was gratuitously aesthetic. Even on this smaller scale, Caillebotte's "wide-angle" optical approach would have been the only way to include the entire complex. This, in turn, is another point showing how the work differs from the (by now) banal views of monuments, as often found in photography. One can thus conclude that Caillebotte's *Pont de l'Europe* and *Paris Street, Rainy Day* fully demonstrate the convergence between the painter's interest in modern psychology and in modern design.

This convergence is especially true in Caillebotte's extraordinary views of pedestrian islands or trees planted alongside boulevards, with their perspectives from above [p. 238]. Such pictures are so often compared to photographs leading one to forget that, in the few comparable photographs, the focus is a monument and the vantage point is far less radical. Caillebotte's emphasis is on the optical effect rather than on a particular object and, if he was inspired by urban photography, he made sure to use the signs of its technology in startlingly innovative ways. Such vantage points, moreover, were possible only in the new spaces created by urban renovations and from the new buildings that had balconies – as was obviously the case for the observers in Monet's *Boulevard des Capucines*. Certain paintings by Caillebotte show the balconies themselves with figures gazing down towards the street or across the boulevard, making an explicit motif out of what in Monet was a suggestive detail. Edvard Munch evidently visited Caillebotte when he was in Paris in 1891; as if in homage to his host, he painted a closely related view from Caillebotte's own balcony in that same year [p. 124].

The optical approach to perspective in such paintings resembles the perspective employed by Degas in certain images of the circus or opera. Although one can certainly associate such odd angles with the moveable lenses of a camera or binoculars, these effects are used to enhance optical sensations far more than in contemporary photography. Such effects were taken from modern technology in order to emphasize an indelibly modern vision, which was not only appropriate to the modern subject matter but became at least as important. Even Caillebotte's views over the

older rooftops of Paris, such as those exhibited in 1878 [p. 51], would not have been possible from the boulevard side of his building, since buildings of equal height were facing it – another sign that grand vistas were only possible from the constructions of the new city.

Signac and Van Gogh in Montmartre and Clichy

By the early 1880s, many of the first-generation Impressionists, especially Monet, had turned their attention primarily towards suburban leisure or the countryside. Some younger artists, however, had joined the group around Pissarro – Gauguin in the mid 1870s, Signac in the early 1880s, and Van Gogh briefly but with enormous consequences in 1886, the year of the last Impressionist exhibition. At first, they primarily pursued the urban themes most of their predecessors were abandoning. At the same time, this new generation developed a modification of Impressionist style that came to be called Neo-Impressionism. In 1887, reflecting on the question of technique, Pissarro concluded that a contradiction had developed between the Impressionist commitment to modernity and its use of a “romantic” style.¹⁷ If, as Emile Zola had stated as early as 1866, “the wind is blowing in the direction of science,”¹⁸ then a more scientific method should be found for painting; the search for a modern landscape genre should include not just new themes but new techniques. Pointillism was the result.

A characteristic of Pissarro’s painting had always been his attraction to plain landscapes marked by unmistakably modern elements. As mentioned earlier, he executed a group of pictures representing factories but he also painted a number of railroad-related images, including trains, bridges, or crossings. A parallel interest is reflected in a number of Gauguin’s earliest paintings such as *The Seine at the Pont d’Iéna* [p. 256], with its anti-picturesque riverboats and gray skies. In several other pictures painted nearby, Gauguin included factories. Well before Neo-Impressionism, Pissarro and Cézanne had been experimenting with a more methodical, albeit non-science-based approach to paint application than their cohorts. They also emphasized strategies for structuring their works with regard to displaying the productive intellectual and physical “labor” underlying art as a conscious creative endeavor. This stood in contrast to the ostensibly instinctive approach cultivated by the displays of spontaneity in the circle around Monet.

When working with Pissarro, however, Cézanne stayed in the relative isolation of Auvers-sur-Oise which, like Pissarro’s base in Pontoise, lay beyond the urban and suburban environments of Monet, Guillaumin, and Caillebotte. Paul Signac, on the other hand (along with Guillaumin, and in 1886, Van Gogh), stayed closer to the city, painting within the working-class and industrial fringe – as in Signac’s *Snow: Boulevard de Clichy* [fig. 13, p. 81] and *Gasometers at Clichy* [p. 222], or in Van Gogh’s many views of Montmartre and *Factories at Clichy Seen from Asnières* [p. 223].

Van Gogh’s pictures of Paris and its suburbs are of special interest because they reveal the painter’s effort, upon arriving in Paris, to merge the Impressionist palette and its most current technique – Neo-Impressionism – with his predisposition for the modern, working lives of ordinary people. Van Gogh’s development, which was not always linear, can be followed from the relatively restrained palette of his *View from Montmartre* [p. 53] to his still plain but now more clearly structured *Vegetable Gardens and the Moulin Le Blute-Fin Windmill on Montmartre* [p. 265]. If one compares the latter to Sisley’s aforementioned *View of Montmartre from the Cité des Fleurs in Batignolles*, it could be argued that Van Gogh had benefited from exposure to the unobtrusive yet effective structural approach of Pissarro. Rather than adopting a casual, angled view, Van Gogh looks straight onto the horizontal frieze of houses and mills in the middle pictorial space. A more emphatic comparison is apparent between Emile Bernard’s *Quai de Clichy at the Seine* [p. 220] and Van Gogh’s *Terrace and Observation Deck at the Moulin de Blute-Fin, Montmartre* [fig. 14, p. 81]. Already a follower of Gauguin, Bernard makes bold geometric simplifications but he retains the relatively subtle color and meditative quality found in most of Gauguin’s Impressionist pictures from more than ten years earlier.¹⁹ Van Gogh, by contrast, has become emboldened through brilliant color as well as geometric patterning inspired by Japanese prints.

Paul Signac's *Road to Gennevilliers* [p. 225] represents a newly developing suburban neighborhood not far from Clichy's factories to be seen in the background. The painting's geometric coherence derives from the rigorous layout of the streets, with their sharply defined curbstones and newly planted trees. The potentially harsh effect is attenuated through subtle colors that seem to reflect works by Pissarro and Guillaumin. Finally, Van Gogh's *Factories at Clichy Seen from Asnières* [p. 223] makes no effort to conceal the bright, bold, imposing structures of the industrial landscape.

Clichy had already been the site of a small group of paintings by Monet: *Men Unloading Coal* [fig. 15, p. 82] and *The Seine at Asnières* [p. 219], the latter with coal barges in the foreground, painted from the same Clichy side of the Seine as *Men Unloading Coal*. The latter is the most blatantly industrial view ever painted by Monet and includes actual laborers. His other views, of which there are many dating from 1870–78 (including the *Gare Saint-Lazare* series), are almost always taken from a distance; never is there a sense of the repetitive tasks of workers, however choreographic they appear even in *Men Unloading Coal*. In fact, the contrast between industrial Clichy and bourgeois Asnières was a subject for commentary among writers, too. In 1886, Louis Barron wrote: "From this dried-up riverbank, full of the coal dust spread by the workers unloading the barges, bordered by factories covered by soot, by cafés where they drink beef's blood [coarse red wine], and hovels where the derelicts hang out, Asnières produces a charming impression; it seems as gay, carefree, lazy, and green as its facing neighbors are arid, dull, somber, and laborious."²⁰

Van Gogh's *Bridges Across the Seine at Asnières* [p. 221] is a particularly interesting and significant case to study. If one imagines it divided into two equal triangles along a line running from the top left to the lower right, one will notice the rigor with which Van Gogh juxtaposes Impressionist symbols of leisure in one half – rowing boats, a woman with a parasol, and a fisherman – with signs of industry in the other – a tugboat, a railway train, and factories across the river at Clichy. Technically, too, Van Gogh appears to straddle two trends, using brushstrokes whose size approximates that of the Impressionists from the first half of the 1870s, but whose application is more systematic. In the right of *Bridges Across the Seine at Asnières*, he clearly acknowledges Neo-Impressionist color optics by heightening the blue water shaded by the bridge's pier with spots of its complementary color, orange. On the other hand, he refused Pointillism, which had appeared publicly at the Impressionist exhibition of 1886 in works by Seurat, Signac, Pissarro, and Pissarro's son Lucien. Perhaps in compensation, Van Gogh enhances the powerful modern structure of the railroad bridge, representing its thick girder and massive stone supports from a dramatic angle inspired by Japanese prints. Hence, if his technique eschews Pointillism's impersonal, machine-like appearance, his painting embodies the values of modern industry by other means.

As the Neo-Impressionist generation emerged to claim the avant-garde, it became clear that – as an alternative to the countryside scenes that were becoming routine in Impressionism – the urban landscape executed in the boldly geometric and novel Pointillist style presented the image of a constructed and mechanized urban world through an equally constructed and mechanized form of painting. The extent to which the Impressionists provided the foundation for this radical change can be seen by looking back to the pre-Impressionist view by Corot cited earlier of Paris's pre-Haussmannian sandy, tranquil riverbanks and almost traffic-free river, and forward to Luce's powerfully abstracted, almost poster-like *The Louvre and the Pont du Carrousel at Night* [p. 293]. This development was made possible by Impressionism, in which the cityscape of Paris became an expression of and vehicle for modernity in art.

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1 The closing sentence of Baudelaire's review reads: "Puisse les vrais chercheurs nous donner l'année prochaine cette joie singulière de célébrer l'avènement du *neuf!*" ("May the true seekers give us next year that singular joy of celebrating the arrival of the *new!*"). Charles Baudelaire, "Salon de 1845," in: *Œuvres complètes*, Vol. II, ed. Claude Pichois, Paris, 1976, p. 407.

2 "Le beau est fait d'un élément éternel, invariable, dont la quantité est excessivement difficile à déterminer, et d'un élément relatif, circonstanciel, qui sera, si l'on veut, tour à tour ou tout ensemble, l'époque, la mode, la morale, la passion." ("Beauty is made up of an eternal, invariable element, whose quantity it is excessively difficult to determine, and of a relative, circumstantial element, which will be, if you like, whether severally or all at once, the age, its fashions, its morals, its emotions.") Baudelaire, "Le Peintre de la vie moderne," (The Painter of Modern Life) (1863) in: *Œuvres complètes*, Vol. II (as note 1), p. 685.

- 3 Emile Zola, "Les Actualistes," in: *L'Événement illustré*, 05.01.1868, "Mon Salon" (1868), in: Emile Zola, *Ceuvres complètes*, Vol. XII, ed. Henri Mitterand, Paris, 1969, p. 876.
- 4 "La modernité, c'est le transitoire, le fugitif, le contingent ...". Baudelaire, "Le Peintre de la vie moderne," in: *Ceuvres complètes*, Vol. II (as note 1), p. 695.
- 5 The most useful general study of Haussmann's urban renovations is David H. Pinkney, *Napoleon III and the Rebuilding of Paris*, Princeton 1958. On the economic and social aspects of Haussmann's urban renewal, cf. Jeanne Gaillard, *Paris la ville, 1852–1870*, Paris, 1997.
- 6 On the Rouen series, cf. James H. Rubin, "Le Sublime industriel rouennais; Monet, Pissarro et la modernité," in: *Rouen, une ville pour l'impressionnisme*, exh. cat., Musée des Beaux-Arts de Rouen, 2010, pp. 96–123.
- 7 On the Le Havre series, cf. Rubin, *Impressionism and the Modern Landscape: Productivity, Technology, and Urbanization from Manet to Van Gogh*, Berkeley 1980, pp. 57–66; on the Saint-Lazare series, cf. Juliet Wilson-Bareau, *Manet, Monet, and the Gare Saint-Lazare*, exh. cat., The National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 1998.
- 8 The most informative study of the relationship between these three paintings is Joel Isaacson, "Monet's Views of Paris," in: *Bulletin of the Allen Memorial Art Museum*, No. XXIV, Oberlin, Ohio, Fall 1966, pp. 5–22, cf. p. 16.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Louis Leroy, "L'Exposition des impressionnistes," in: *Charivari*, 04.25.1874, in: *The New Painting: Impressionism, 1874–1886: Documentation*, ed. Ruth Berson, San Francisco, 1996, p. 26.
- 11 On Guillaumin's industrial landscapes, cf. Rubin, *Impressionism and the Modern Landscape*, passim.
- 12 Julien Turgan, *Les Grandes usines: études industrielles en France et à l'étranger*, 18 vols., Paris, 1874. For the article "Forges d'Ivry," cf. Vol. 14.
- 13 For example, Louis Barron, *Les Environs de Paris*, Paris, 1886, pp. 174–176.
- 14 A drawing dated 1869 shows the composition of *Sunset at Ivry*, leading me to date it to that year rather than 1873, which is sometimes given. On the group of Ivry works, cf. Rubin, "Armand Guillaumin (1841–1927): The Industrial Impressionist," in: *Visions of the Industrial Age: Modernity and the Anxiety of Representation in European Culture, 1830–1914*, eds. Minsoo Kang and Amy Woodson-Boulton, London, 2008, pp. 43–51.
- 15 J. Kirk T. Varnedoe et al., *Gustave Caillebotte: A Retrospective Exhibition* (exh. cat., Houston and Brooklyn, 1976/77) is the groundbreaking publication on Caillebotte's use of optical devices – in particular, Varnedoe's as well as Galassi's essays. Wilson-Bareau (pp. 65–92) gives a fruitful analysis with diagrams of Caillebotte's urban spaces.
- 16 Wilson-Bareau, *ibid.*, p. 47.
- 17 Pissarro to Lucien Pissarro, 01.10.1887, in: *Correspondance de Camille Pissarro, 1866–1890*, Vol. 2, ed. Janine Bailly-Herzberg, Paris, 1986, pp. 100–103.
- 18 "Le vent est à la science ...". Zola, "Les Réalistes du Salon," in: *L'Événement*, 05.11.1866, in: *Mon Salon* (1866), in: *Ceuvres complètes*, Vol. XII (as note 3), p. 807.
- 19 Cf. Richard R. Brettell and Anne-Birgitte Fonsmark, *Gauguin and Impressionism*, exh. cat., The Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, and the Ordrupgaard, Copenhagen, 2005.
- 20 "De cette rive desséchée, poudrée du charbon que les coltineurs y répandent en déchargeant les chalands, bordée de fabriques enduites de suie, de cabarets sang de boeuf, de masures où traînent des loques, Asnières produit une impression charmante; il paraît aussi gai, insouciant, parresseux et verdoyant que ses voisins d'en face sont arides, mornes, sombres et laborieux." Barron (as note 13), p. 38.

The City Reflected in the New Picture Ground: Manet

Bruno Haas

Picture Grounds

For Walter Benjamin, the city and its crowds created the potential for the kind of experience underlying Charles Baudelaire's poem *A une Passante* (1860). In translation it reads:

To a Passer-By

The street about me roared with a deafening sound.
Tall, slender, in heavy mourning, majestic grief,
A woman passed, with a glittering hand
Raising, swinging the hem and flounces of her skirt;

Agile and graceful, her leg was like a statue's.
Tense as an extravagant, I drank
From her eyes, pale sky where tempests germinate,
The sweetness that enthralls and the pleasure that kills.

A lightning flash ... then night! Fleeting beauty
By whose glance I was suddenly reborn,
Will I see you no more before eternity?

Elsewhere, far, far from here! too late! never perhaps!
For I know not where you fled, you know not where I go,
O you whom I would have loved, O you who knew it!

The peculiarity of the eroticism in this poem, in Benjamin's analysis, is that not only do the crowds wrest the object of desire from the speaker's erotic gaze, it is also, importantly, those same crowds that delivered her up to him, with the result that – precisely because this vision ensues in the context of the anonymity of the modern city – it also triggers that kind of “shock with which an imperious desire suddenly overcomes a lonely man.”²

Although there were sizable towns in the ancient past, the modern city is a specific phenomenon that is characterized as much by the sheer masses of its inhabitants as by the particular way in which these masses and the space they occupy are configured. In the poem, there is talk of a lightning flash ... and then of black night. This “night” is a metaphor for the moment when suddenly there is nothing to be seen, after the woman has disappeared. It comes

about with irreversible abruptness, things happen quickly here, leaving no prospect of any solution. This night is not homely, there is nothing secreted here, this is “infinite blackness,” and – as Baudelaire puts it in his poem “The Blind” – it is the “brother of eternal silence,” in other words, Death, which more than anything else conceals nothing and contains not a single secret: “What! is that all there is to it (death)? / The curtain had risen and I was still waiting.”³ The uncanny, unhomely, non-concealing blackness of night into which the lightning flash sinks is the background, the picture ground, against which the image (the “statue”) of the woman appears.

A black background of this kind did once exist in painting; it came into being – with an almost shocking suddenness, not long after the above poem was written, and with a not-to-be-repeated acerbity – in the painting of Edouard Manet. His keen interest in photography, which was concurrently developing into a widespread picture medium, will come to the fore in our analysis. In order to gain a deeper understanding of Manet’s picture grounds, let us first seek out a contrasting example from the period before Manet was active.

One of the greatest Pre-Impressionist painters was Jean Baptiste Camille Corot, who even painted views of Paris in the early years of his career. His non-return to this theme in later years may already be symptomatic of the far-reaching changes to the phenomenon of the city that were to be reflected in the new *modus operandi* of Manet’s picture grounds.

According to Félix Bracquemond, Corot elevated the phenomenon of *valeur* in painting to the status that it had in his “own day” (1885).⁴ Bracquemond defined *valeur* as the intensity of the brightness, in abstract terms, of a particular color value. Although different colors are used in *valeur* painting, the painter pays particular attention to the relations between different levels of brightness. Thus, the composition is primarily conceived of as the outcome of fundamental light/dark relationships, with color being a mere additional extra. In a certain sense, black-and-white photography seems to be a radical enactment of the principle of *valeur* painting – only it is not entirely indifferent to color insofar as it reduces color to grayscale and excludes any other coloration. However, if we look at Corot’s handling of *valeur*, it clearly has nothing to do with reducing color to grayscale. This is already evident in his early view of the *Quai des Orfèvres*, now on display at the Musée Carnavalet [p. 17]. This composition contains a large amount of white, sometimes added to other colors to various degrees, sometimes (in reflected light and clouds) used to establish gradations of brightness that give the painting a very “naturalistic” touch. Yet the polar opposite to white – black – barely appears at all, only in a few places where a shadow needs accentuation. Here, black functions as an extreme. Between this extreme and pure white, there are countless intermediate tones, although these are never actually gray. However unobtrusively, they always have some color to them. The composition is dominated by an ocher tone, which only derives its very particular character from the contrast with and interference from a cooler gray, tending towards blue. Witness the contrast of the water and the sand along the banks of the Seine.

Valeur painting in the hands of Corot and his contemporaries thrives on this type of interference, which prevents the coloration from collapsing into black and white, and gives the color space a certain breadth of variation. By contrast, the color space of black-and-white photography seems two-dimensional. Its extremes – black and white – can be used to create a spectrum of grays, but only insofar as there can never be two different gradations that have the same level of brightness. All the gradations can be placed along a single line, with the result that a complete model of this type of color space would have only one dimension. The gray does not operate as an independent color, but only as black modified by white. This is in marked contrast to the color spaces in *valeur* painting in Corot’s day. Between the white and the black, there is not only gray here but also an independent, competitive transitional color, namely ocher. As a result, the gray also takes on the quality of an independent color, a kind of “color value.” The viewer registers it as “the Other” to ocher; it develops a bluish tinge. This blue quality can be variously accentuated; it is usually particularly evident in the sky that gleams through the cloud cover here and there in Corot’s view of the *Quai des Orfèvres*.

Insofar as the gray tones in Corot’s *valeur* painting are countered by an ocher tone, they gain an independence that they lack in the color space of black-and-white photography. This also paves the way for an endless multiplicity of

possible gradations with the same level of brightness, with none counting as “neutral” since, as we have seen, this gray – because it has ocher pitted against it – takes on the aspect of an independent “color,” however muted. Since gray only acquires this autonomous status as a color by virtue of its relationship with the ocher tones, ocher also naturally takes precedence over gray. Moreover, this precedence has historical links to the treatment of picture grounds ever since the late 16th century, which were traditionally always laid down in brownish tones. The colors black, ocher, (bluish) gray, and white dominated the overall picture layout in the work of Corot and his contemporaries; any other colors basically feature as opposites or are used to add emphases. This color-space structuring continued to hold sway up until painters such as Eugène Boudin, Johan Barthold Jongkind, and Stanislas Lépine.

It was Manet who was to make fundamental changes to the structure of the color space. We can examine these changes more closely in the New York *Funeral* of around 1867 [p. 49]. Although we see once again the four colors mentioned above (black, gray, ocher, and white), the balance between them has changed. The most striking difference is that gray does not have the same tendency towards blue as in Corot’s paintings, but remains emphatically gray (despite its opposition to ocher) – that is to say, it appears “colorless” and not independent of the two extremes, black and white. Furthermore, in contrast to Corot, Manet does not hesitate to use pure black pigment. To put the difference to Corot’s work in a nutshell, one might say that the natural precedence of ocher in Corot’s paintings has been usurped by gray.

This seemingly secondary shift of weight was, however, to have significant consequences. In the first place, as we have seen, gray loses its autonomy with regard to black and white and becomes colorless, in effect. This results in all the “actual” colors reacting to a colorless ground and standing out more strongly against it. While blue, in Corot’s paintings, might look like an intenser gray – arising naturally from the color space formed by blacks, ochers, grays, and whites – it now clearly contrasts with and derives its intensity from the gray. Much the same may be said of green and even ocher. Thus, the picture ground loses the chromatic breadth that it traditionally had when it was brown from which other colors could emerge; in Manet’s hands, it becomes a ground where all color has been extinguished and against which all colors appear as a contrast. Manet’s picture ground – annihilating all things colored (all things visible) – introduces a new type of pictorial time. While Corot’s view of the *cité* conveys a sense of leisurely ease, where time can gently pass, Manet’s glance is sudden, capturing a moment in time that is fixed for all eternity in the painting, albeit without expressing any form of permanence. “A lightning flash ... then night” as Baudelaire put it in his poem; the things we see in Manet’s painting have that same quality of suddenness.

This may be regarded as a herald of the essence of Impressionist sensibility, which is said to have been rooted in an interest in fleeting impressions of light and times of day. However, the pleasing, even conciliatory elements that certain Impressionists were able to derive from that new situation should not be allowed to obscure the fact that in Manet’s work a very different, fatal dimension of this suddenness comes into play. And we do not make this claim merely because the painting in question contains a burial scene. Its deeper meaning comes to light when we explore who it is that is perceiving what is seen in this picture. People like to maintain – as they have done of Manet – that a painter paints what he sees and how he sees it. As Emile Zola put it: “It was up to him to see Nature as it is, not to see it through the works and opinions of other artists. Thus, he would take some object, person, or thing, place it in a corner of his studio and start to reproduce it on his canvas, seeing and understanding it according to his own capabilities . (...) Thus, the artist would arrive at a work that was his own flesh and blood.”⁵ Accordingly, painters show us in their pictures what they have seen and, by the same token, pictures convey to us what someone else – painter, photographer, etc. – has seen. And for anyone who engages on a deeper level with the picture, it is as though they now occupy the same place as that other person who is showing us something from his or her point of view and inviting us to adopt that same stance. But because that point of view is only on loan to us, we never actually find ourselves at that place and only experience it as it is mediated by someone else.

In Manet’s day, there was nothing new in the idea that painters paint exactly what they are seeing and invite viewers to project themselves into the same place that they have occupied. Corot already worked in exactly that way;

the roots of this artistic attitude go right back into the 18th or even the 17th century. And Manet's compositions also rely on the principle of the transferred gaze. However, there are certain aspects of Manet's approach that are not present in Corot's work. Firstly, there is the anonymity of the gaze in Manet's paintings. It is as though this was not the gaze of a certain person but rather of no one in particular, someone disappearing into the crowd – just anyone. As a result, the view presented by Manet does not seem to have passed through the filter of a personal sensibility. Of course, the fact remains that the discovery and formation of this impersonal gaze was a very personal achievement on Manet's part. However, it also points to an experience that is far greater than Manet as an individual – an experience that surely only became a reality in the 19th-century city. That Manet was always to be concerned with the modern phenomenon of the crowd was already evident to Zola, in his own way: "The human being, the artist, and the works are all familiar to us," he writes, "but there is another element that also has to be recognized if one wants to fully understand this peculiar example of artistry: the crowd (*la foule*)."⁶ Indeed, the crowd is structurally crucial to Manet's compositions insofar as his pictures, on principle, render anonymous the person who has seen what is seen in them. This annihilation of the observer is directly expressed by means of the new picture ground, which, as we have seen, no longer has its own chromatic spectrum but amounts to no more than the simple (one-dimensional) opposition of blacks and whites. "A flash of lightning ... then night!"

As we have shown, Walter Benjamin described the woman "passing by" as being carried towards the poet by the crowd, implying that the phenomenon of loving and desiring in this way was specific to the modern city. Therefore, it may be worth taking the trouble to delve further into the nature of the "crowds" and the city they inhabited around 1860. The first step in this endeavor is to look at the development of the city of Paris. And in so doing we will concentrate, in particular, on the formative impact of industrialization and the related growing use of advertising posters on modern pictorial composition.

Industry

In George Arnald's *View of Paris from Montmartre*, dated 1829, we see the whole city spread out before us [fig. 1, p. 84] (cf. also Auguste Cadolle, *View of Paris from the Arc de Triomphe on the Place de l'Etoile*, [p. 19]).⁷ The viewpoint is on Montmartre, and we can readily identify the Church of the Invalides, the Pantheon, and Notre-Dame. We are close to the city's limits. The city streets lead straight out into the countryside; there is no evidence of industry, no smoking chimney stacks in sight. Yet it is clear from a view of the city painted by Charles Mozin (seen from Passy), which cannot have been made much later than 1830 [fig. 2, p. 85], that Paris did already have factory chimneys by that time.⁸ In this view of the city, we again clearly see the proximity of town and country, with the Church of the Invalides making monumental reference to its rural surroundings. On the left of Mozin's painting, we see a smoking chimney stack. That industry had become part of life on the outskirts of Paris before the July Revolution of 1830, and was a source of alarm to the government, is evident from a letter of October 29, 1828, from Gaspard de Chabrol to the Prefect of Police, Louis-Maurice Debelleye, in which he comments that any potential industrial belt around Paris would "throttle" the city.⁹ The growing importance of the Parisian suburbs with their manufacturing industries in the rebellions and unrest of 1830, 1848, and 1871 has been well documented. In terms of the city's urban development, an industrial belt (albeit not continuous) did indeed come into being, although only after 1850.¹⁰

In the visual arts, this industrial belt did not appear until the 1870s in the paintings of artists such as Armand Guillaumin [fig. 3, p. 88], Berthe Morisot, Camille Pissarro, and after 1880 in the work of others such as Vincent van Gogh, Paul Signac [pp. 222, 225, 253], Maximilien Luce, and Georges Seurat [fig. 4, p. 88]. The speed with which these changes took place comes across in a publication by Edouard Foucaud, with an extremely telling title, which might be translated as "Traveling at Top Speed. A History of Industrial Exhibitions in France from 1798 to 1867"¹¹ and refers to the progress of industry through the six decades of its existence so far. It is also reflected in the rather less euphoric lines by Baudelaire in his poem, "The Swan": "for cities change – alas! – more quickly than a mortal's heart."¹²

Industrialization brought with it not only new social tensions, it also paved the way for an entirely different kind of architecture and urbanism. And it is from painting that we can glean insights into how these functioned, which are scarcely to be had from any other source.

This point is perfectly illustrated in *Palace of Justice, Pontoise* of 1872 [fig. 5, p. 89], in which Camille Pissarro already showed with masterly ease how the chimney stack was shaping and reshaping urban life.¹³ The scene is viewed from the hill above Pontoise; a path occupies the foreground, a few steps further away there are houses. Towards the right-hand edge of the picture, lower down the hill, we see the Renaissance tower of the Church of Saint-Maclou in Pontoise. Despite its marginal position, this church tower still in effect draws together the different elements of Pontoise as a town. To the left of the tower, a chimney stack rises upwards, its tip characteristically blackened. It is situated on the far bank of the Oise, in Saint-Ouen l'Aumône, as we can see on another of Pissarro's paintings from almost exactly the same time [fig. 6, p. 90].¹⁴ This "tower" similarly dominates its surroundings, no doubt considerably taller than the tower on the Church of Saint-Maclou, only it does not draw things together. – On the contrary, it interrupts the continuity of an area, which is orientated and articulated by the church and the town that dominate the bridge (*pont* in French, the root of the name Pontoise) and the valley of the Oise. Insofar as the church belongs to the hill that dominates the valley, because this had always been the point where a bridge connected the two sides of the river, everything has its own place, as though it could never be any different. However, the same cannot be said of the chimney stack in Saint-Ouen l'Aumône. By definition, it could equally well be somewhere else. Places have basically no bearing on a chimney stack. By the same token, it tears a hole in the interconnected mesh of the older places that the church was built to draw together. Pissarro highlights this contrast with great finesse.

The factory became what might be described as a non-site. The structures underpinning this type of non-site can readily be observed in the development of the outskirts of Paris from the mid-19th century onwards.¹⁵ The industrial sites around the edges of Paris separated the city from the countryside more effectively than any toll booths had ever done. These manufacturing suburbs were not designed for through traffic. For the Parisians, these were zones that one basically did not visit, nor was there any need to visit them, as the rail network that had been expanding at top speed since 1837 (the inauguration of the first railway link from Paris Saint-Lazare to Saint-Germain)¹⁶ spared them from any contact with these sectors of the urban landscape. They passed through them in their railway carriages. Now the city started at the station, around which residential areas and workers' housing started to spring up (districts such as the Quartier de l'Europe by the Gare Saint-Lazare [pp. 97, 101]). By 1852, in his *October Nights*, Gérard de Nerval was already describing how he would be taken with the desire to make a trip to Meaux, in order to escape from the city. "Twenty-five miles," he writes, "just far enough not to be tempted to come back that same evening, far enough to be sure you won't be woken up by the same doorbell the following day, far enough to allow you to wedge in a morning of peace between two busy days. I pity those poor souls who, having sought silence and solitude, wake up only to find themselves in Asnières."¹⁷ For Nerval, there was only one way of finding a way out of the city: the train, which had only been operating for eight years at that point. However, because the timetable had changed on October 1, Nerval missed his train (shortly after midday); in order to kill time, he strolled down rue Hauteville, where he ran into an acquaintance, with the result that he missed the omnibus returning to the station (by now it was half past three), so he put off his trip until the next morning. The advent of the train meant that now people skipped over the suburbs. When Nerval was describing this phenomenon, it was still very new – yet it seems perfectly natural in his text. Thus, the increasingly industrialized suburbs encircling Paris became a white zone in any imaginary geography of the city; the train both established this situation and sped up its development.

The increasing segregation of places also brought with it a similar segregation in the population. The manner in which Edouard Foucaud drew his ideal portrait of "the" worker in 1844 demonstrates all too clearly how alien this class had already become to the bourgeois Frenchman by that time.¹⁸

Much could be said about the causes that led to industrial architecture interrupting the continuity of space, with a considerable amount of time having to be devoted to what Marx in his analysis defined as social alienation. For our

part here, we will concentrate on just a few issues that have perhaps received less attention. Compared to the manufacturing process that still prevailed in the early 19th century, the new factories with their advanced technology marked a qualitative leap in the development of what Gilbert Simondon has called the “concrete” machine.¹⁹ Whereas the (relatively) “abstract” machine of the past specifically intervened in natural processes in order to harness and amplify their energy to the advantage of human beings (windmills, water wheels) and were thus dependent on their natural surroundings (renewable energy), the concrete machine tended towards autonomy and systematization – that is to say, while they were likely to be independent of external (natural) circumstances, they also tended towards the formation of reciprocal, extensively ramified logistical interdependencies. Naturally enough, they also mainly utilized non-renewable, readily accumulated sources of energy (coal). The mutual dependence of all the components in a steam engine, for instance, is the natural correlation of the reciprocal dependence of the workers involved in different aspects of its construction, from the mine to the ironworks and the sites manufacturing individual parts, to the assembly site and even the transportation links that enable communication between all these places. The concrete machine is systematic. Although it only progressed step by step from initially simple machines to its more highly developed form, once it existed it could of its own accord reproduce the system to which it belonged – and within which no part could be allowed to fail, if the entire system were not to collapse.

The systematic cohesion of individual work processes – vitally necessary for purely technical reasons – led in turn to a financial network, which the individual user could no longer take in at a glance and certainly could not control. At the same time, because of its structurally determined and comprehensive interdependence, it was in a position to reproduce itself and was hence very stable, albeit not impervious to crises, but by and large structurally irreversible. This type of network existed in an entirely tangible version in the shape of established transportation systems (trains and steam ships) that shrank distances and blurred the distinctions between different places. The concrete machine was not tied to any particular location; that is, it could be set up anywhere and everywhere. Its independence (or rather indifference) to location was one of its salient features. The locations that were chosen in the end were only defined in connection with that same artificial transportation network blurring the distinctions between places. And it seems that the steam engine ousted the water wheel, which had been perfected in the early 19th century, because it operated entirely autonomously, that is, it was not dependent on any natural phenomena and hence wholly unaffected by its location.²⁰

Compared to the potentially self-reproducing, concrete machine, the worker operating it increasingly appeared to be a mere adjunct. The machine was no longer a tool for the worker. If anything, now the worker was the tool serving the machine. And for that reason, too, the type of work that involved serving a machine was fundamentally alienating and was exclusively carried out by dependent workers on a weekly or daily wage. Thus, the worker – compared to the overwhelming concrete machine – became enfeebled, literally impotent. This was then compounded by the self-evident sexual symbolism of the by now highly efficient steam engine, which relies on the conjunction of a heat build-up (fire) and pumping pistons (water): no man, certainly not the worker operating and maintaining it, could compete with that. The outcome of this combination of factors is seen in an extremely succinct form in Seurat’s *Bathers at Asnières* [fig. 7, p. 91]. The bathers are wearing trousers and appear almost sexless; in the distance we see the emasculating chimney stacks. With this highly significant work, Seurat created the prototype of the jointed-doll and puppet figure, the “*homme machine*” that was to have such an influence on early Modernism.

Since the concrete (systematic and autonomous) machine tended to use non-renewable energy sources (coal), it also produced new kinds of waste (carbon emissions, for instance). In more general terms, industrialization saw the emergence of very different types of detritus: people now started to throw away (rather than refurbish) ageing everyday items and replaced them with new ones – a necessary, financial consequence of capitalist over-production. Everyday items became consumer goods. And this in turn led to a new form of theft: organized break-ins, regularly reported on in 19th-century daily papers. Ragpickers come onto the scene, eking out a living amongst society’s leftovers.²¹

But it was not only industrial items that turned into trash by being used; the same was true of industrial architecture. The associated technology aged so quickly that it had to be renewed with striking frequency. At the same time, these measures could be funded from the extraordinary profits from industrial production. Never had there been so many construction sites in Europe, with the building industry able to take advantage of technological progress (using iron in the construction process, for instance). Thus, the urban landscape in Paris during the Second Empire was not only defined by vast construction projects *intra muros* (with gigantic boulevards and whole new districts),²² but also by the construction work that was going on around the perimeter of Paris and the countless temporarily defunct, unused, or abandoned premises. Therefore, the non-site-specific nature of the concrete machine was also matched by its unreliability; it can fail to function, becoming a *terrain vague* and interrupting the continuity of contemporary life.

The problem of these wastelands and the impending loss of spatial continuity may have been felt more acutely in Paris than in other major European cities. The regime of the Second Empire fairly steadily sought to coerce any larger manufacturing companies to move from the center of Paris to the periphery and the suburbs. The new paved boulevards introduced by Haussmann replaced the old alleys with expansive retail zones, designed more like interiors²³ and incorporating the new network of street lighting, first powered by gas and later by electricity (cf. Maximilien Luce, *The Louvre and the Pont du Carrousel at Night*, [p. 293]). With the city now presenting itself as a unified, spacious interior, it also set the seal on its own separation from the countryside; its only connection with the country was now the train, which simply seemed to leap across what the bourgeois Parisian regarded as the anonymous, unusable spaces of the proletarian outskirts.

Posters and “Attention”

As the architects of the Second Empire set about creating a unified, interior-like urban landscape, they were also reacting to the concurrent proliferation of residual spaces – or spatial residues – and seeking to domesticate one of the most significant phenomena to emerge at the time: advertising on posters. These indefinite zones had already started to multiply during the prefecture of Rambuteau after the July Revolution when he started to widen the streets of Paris by having the facades of new buildings set further back than before. This exposed the sidewalls of older buildings, which had never been intended for public view and now turned into a kind of optical *terrain vague* that provided the perfect space for advertising posters. The same was true later on of the countless scaffoldings and gap sites that accompanied the reconstruction of Paris by Haussmann. There is no doubt that these many residual spaces and surfaces presented the ideal opportunity for the development of advertising posters; the first choice to fill these spots were posters with text alone; later on (albeit not in the grand style until the 1880s) images were also used.²⁴ The blossoming of poster design in the 19th century – first and foremost, posters filled with text alone (but also the large-format painted images on the sidewalls of buildings [fig. 8, p. 92]) – turned the city, as Stefan Haas has so aptly put it, into a text.²⁵ Yet from the outset, this text was somehow in competition with the actual city and its widely acclaimed architecture. In fact, the writing invited a form of concentration that wrenches simple existence out of its merely observing relationship to its surroundings.

As early as 1859, Eugène Viollet-le-Duc wrote a curious article in the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* on the conflict between leisurely enjoyment of the city and advertising texts clamoring to be read. A cleric from Toledo, a friend of Viollet-le-Duc who was besotted with Paris, had supposedly sent him this piece in the hope that it would be published. Following a lengthy discourse on the beauties of the city, the writer continues with a question:

“How is it that the Parisians, who have over the centuries demonstrated such exquisite taste in the construction of their town now permit the brazen sully of this jewel? (...) The other evening, when I was out walking at sunset, I crossed the Pont Royal from where the view of the city is so varied, so beautiful; I found myself admiring the way that the line of the Louvre acts as a foil for the sparkling multitude of houses towards the Hôtel de Ville, the way that all these buildings, large and small are so pleasingly formed, and the way that this ensemble is expansive without being

gigantic; I couldn't stop admiring this city, so generously set up with its mighty foundations, the picturesque houses around the Place Dauphine, the spire of Sainte-Chapelle, and the dark towers of Notre-Dame, when my eye was abruptly caught by a huge, golden plaque, on which was written in colossal letters: TEETH FOR 5 FRANCS [fig. 9, p. 92]. From that moment onwards, I no longer saw Notre-Dame, nor the spire of Sainte-Chapelle, which was now no more than a pin, nor the lines of the verdant banks of the Seine, all I could see was TEETH FOR 5 FRANCS. What right, I asked myself, does a dentist have to impose his sign on an entire city, crushing its buildings with his entirely disproportionate notice? So I left the bridge with its view of the city, and continued my walk elsewhere, repeating to myself, TEETH FOR 5 FRANCS, the barbarian! But this monstrous sign had opened my eyes; soon all I could see around me, in the distance, more clearly visible than the buildings, nothing but OVERCOATS ... FOR 49 FRANCS ..., HATS ... FOR SALE ..., 100,000 TROUSERS ..., frock coats twenty meters high, gigantic shoes; I returned home in a fever, and all night long I believed I was running through a city with endless walls covered in signs with letters a hundred feet high, with hats as big as the dome of St Peter's, shoes to rival Leviathan, and, down below this fantastic sight, minuscule toy buildings frequented by Lilliputians who took no notice of the huge signs (...).²⁶

This remarkable critique, echoed a good ten years later – albeit with schoolmasterly overtones – by the architect Charles Garnier,²⁷ documents with rare lucidity the way that people's attention was now divided, leading to a new form of distraction that had become a daily reality through the introduction of the written word into the city's residual spaces (some of which were a direct consequence of the written word). It was not until the 1880s that there was to be any scientific response to this and related phenomena: witness the development of a psychology of attention by Théodule Ribot, for instance – a topic that had previously been comparatively neglected.²⁸ Ribot describes “voluntary” attention as an essentially rare and fragile state, which human beings only mastered relatively late in time and which can be prey to all kinds of disturbances. And the renewed scientific interest in hypnosis, instigated by Hippolyte Bernheim, can also be seen in this context.²⁹ Bernheim took the view that the hypnotic and the waking states were two parallel, mutually exclusive modes of awareness – in other words, a form of divided consciousness. Conscious attention can only ever be directed to one of these states of mind, meanwhile the other would be dormant.

In the 1880s, when the poster came into its own as a vehicle for new aesthetic inventions, it could not – faced with the task of connecting images and text – content itself with outmoded academic models, with ideals such as a self-contained, homogenous pictorial space.³⁰ This forward-looking medium, which naturally found particular favor amongst progressive and Socialist authors (although it by definition primarily served the interests of the Capitalists),³¹ was nevertheless a symptom and vector of the fragmentation of space and correlated to attention, which could have undoubtedly injurious effects. As it happens, the paint techniques of the Pointillists can be viewed as an attempt to recapture and unify the elements of this fragmentation [cf. p. 135]. In fact, Divisionism derived from the fact that the subject matter was broken down into tiny particles and then reconstituted from these, so that even the most disparate material could achieve a new coherence. In that sense, the Divisionism of artists such as Luce and Signac is synthetic in nature.

It goes without saying that the vacant gaze, which is so characteristic of Manet's models (as in *Plum Brandy*, [p. 279]), may well be connected with the phenomenon described above.³² This vacant gaze speaks the language of a floating, actually empty attention, that is to say, inattention and debility, an attitude and mode of existence that could only arise under the conditions described here. And the new type of picture ground introduced by Manet is the natural correlation of that attitude. Its particularity, as we have said, resides in the anonymity of the viewer whose place the picture invites us to occupy, as it were, in a form of annihilation of the viewer. What is annihilated is, specifically, the contemplative sense of being at home with oneself, which is still permitted to the viewer in the paintings of Corot, for example. All the artists in subsequent generations have had to deal with this extreme position taken up by Manet. One of the most radical positions was adopted by Seurat, whose compositions depict something akin to the contents alone of a sense apperception without subject – in a manner that was not attained by other Divisionists. But even painters such as Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Claude Monet, or, above all, Paul Cézanne who strove to

restore the physical presence of the viewer regarding the picture only ever managed to do this by going beyond the manifest annihilation of the viewer and his or her bodily presence, which ultimately paved the way for the abstract painting of the future.

- 1 A une passante
La rue assourdissante autour de moi hurlait.
Longue, mince, en grand deuil, douleur majestueuse,
Une femme passa, d'une main fastueuse
Soulevant, balançant le feston et l'ourlet,
Agile et noble, avec sa jambe de statue.
Moi, je buvais, crispé comme un extravagant,
Dans son œil, ciel livide, où germe l'ouragan
La douceur qui fascine et le plaisir qui tue.
Un éclair... puis la nuit ! Fugitive beauté,
Dont le regard m'a fait soudainement renaître,
Ne te verrai-je plus que dans l'éternité ?
Ailleurs, bien loin d'ici ! trop tard ! jamais peut-être !
J'ignore où tu fuis, tu ne sais où je vais,
Ô toi que j'eusse aimée, ô toi qui le savais !
Translated above by William Aggeler, in: *The Flowers of Evil*, Fresno, CA, 1954.
- 2 Walter Benjamin, "The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire," in: *Selected Writings, Vol. 4, 1938–1940*, eds. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings, Cambridge, MA/London, 2003, p. 25.
- 3 Charles Baudelaire, "Le rêve d'un curieux," in: *Les Fleurs du Mal*, no. 125, translated as "The Dream of a Curious Man," by William Aggeler in: *The Flowers of Evil* (as note 1).
- 4 Félix Bracquemond, "Du dessin et de la couleur," in: *Ecrits sur l'art*, ed. Pierre Sanchez, Dijon, 2002, p. 61.
- 5 (Transl. from) Emile Zola, "Edouard Manet. Etude biographique et critique (1867)," in: idem, *Ecrits sur l'art*, ed. Jean-Pierre Leduc-Adine, Paris, 1991, p. 147.
- 6 Ibid., p. 163.
- 7 Musée Carnavalet.
- 8 Musée Carnavalet.
- 9 "Ce serait un cordon qui l'étranglerait un jour," as cited in: Jeanne Gaillard, *Paris, la ville (1852–1870)*, Lille/Paris, 1976, p. 49 and footnote 143.
- 10 Cf. also Johannes Willms, *Paris, Hauptstadt Europas, 1800–1914*, Munich 2000, p. 234. On the development of industry in and around Paris, cf. Maurice Dumas et al., *Evolution de la géographie industrielle de Paris et de sa proche banlieue au XIX^e siècle*, 3 vols., Paris, 1976, partic. vol. 1, pp. 132ff.
- 11 Edouard Foucaud, *Voyage à grande vitesse. Histoire des Expositions de l'Industrie en France de 1798 à 1867*, Paris, 1867.
- 12 "... la forme d'une ville / Change plus vite, hélas ! que le cœur d'un mortel," from Baudelaire, "Le Cygne," in: *Les Fleurs du Mal*, translated here by Lewis Piaget Shanks, as "The Swan" in: idem, *Flowers of Evil*, New York, 1931.
- 13 Musée d'Orsay (Joachim Pissarro and Claire Durand-Ruel Smollaerts, *Pissarro. Catalogue critique des peintures*, Paris, 2005, no. 265). It seems that very high chimneys really only appeared in France in the 1860s; cf. Maurice Dumas, *L'Architecture industrielle en France*, Paris, 1980, pp. 59–60.
- 14 Private collection, USA (cat. rais., no. 250). This could be compared with the view of Pontoise in Memphis, Brooks Museum (cat. rais., Nr. 264).
- 15 The following analysis of the spatial configuration of the city draws in certain respects on Henri Lefebvre's "spatial science": Henri Lefebvre, *La production de l'espace*, Paris, 1974. See also the dissertation by Petia Radomirova Parpoulova, *Amalgamated Spaces of Modernity*, University of Washington, 2008.
- 16 This was followed by other stations: Montparnasse in 1840, Austerlitz in 1843, Gare de l'Est in 1844, Gare du Nord in 1846, Gare de Lyon in 1854.
- 17 Gérard de Nerval, "October Nights," in: idem, *Selected Writings*, translated by Richard Sieburth, London, 1999, p. 204.
- 18 Cf. Edouard Foucaud, *Paris inventeur. Physiologie de l'industrie française*, Paris 1844, pp. 8f.; for instance, on inebriation as a necessary evil, allowing workers to drown their sorrows.
- 19 Gilbert Simondon, *Du mode d'existence des objets techniques*, Paris 1958.
- 20 Cf. Akos Paulinyi and Ulrich Troitzsch, *Mechanisierung und Maschinsierung. 1600 bis 1840*, Vol. 3 of *Propyläen Technikgeschichte*, ed. Wolfgang König, Berlin, 1997, pp. 353ff.
- 21 Cf. Walter Benjamin (as note 2), pp. 7–9.
- 22 Gaillard puts the figure at 262 new houses per year *intra muros* between 1821 and 1850, but 1,240 per year between 1851 and 1860 (as note 9, p. 67).
- 23 See Sarah Thornton, *Advertising, Subjectivity and the Nineteenth-Century Novel: Dickens, Balzac and the Language of the Walls*, Basingstoke 2008, p. 123: "The poster is no longer an object to be contemplated on a wall but a covering, a partition which creates an inside and which can envelop the viewer." Cf. also Walter Benjamin, "Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century," in: *New Left Review*, No. 48, March–April 1968, pp. 77–88.
- 24 The typology of places where advertising posters were put up has, to the best of my knowledge, not yet been researched. A certain amount of visual information is available in Max Gallo, *L'affiche. Miroir de l'histoire, miroir de la vie*, Paris 2002; other than that, it is found variously in the relevant 19th-century literature.
- 25 Stefan Haas, "Visual Discourse and Metamorphosis: Mental Models of Cities and the Emergence of Commercial Advertising," in: *Advertising in the European City: Historical Perspectives*, eds. Clemens Wischermann and Elliott Shore, Aldershot, 2000, pp. 54–78, partic. p. 60.
- 26 Eugène Viollet-le-Duc, "Requête adressée aux Parisiens par un étranger," in: *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 1859, pp. 165–169.
- 27 Charles Garnier, "Les Affiches agaçantes," in: *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 1870–1871, pp. 490–494.
- 28 Cf. Théodule Ribot, *Psychologie de l'Attention* (1889), eds. Serge Nicolas and Eric Siéroff, Paris, 2007, particularly the introduction, with further reading, by Serge Nicolas.
- 29 Hippolyte Bernheim, *De la suggestion et de ses applications à la thérapeutique* (1886), ed. Serge Nicolas, Paris, 2005. This work was translated into German by Sigmund Freud.
- 30 In the 1880s, the relationship between image and typography entered a new phase. The large-format, brightly colored, lithographed picture poster, developed by Jules Chéret, now integrated the text directly into the image, which soon led to the groundbreaking designs of artists such as Toulouse-Lautrec, Aubrey Beardsley, and Théophile-Alexandre Steinlen.
- 31 For more on the history of the reception of poster art, cf. Martin Hentsch, *Die Entstehung des Plakats. Eine Rezeptionsästhetische Untersuchung*, Hildesheim, 1994.
- 32 Cf. Jonathan Crary, "Unbinding Vision: Manet and the Attentive Observer in the Late Nineteenth Century," in: *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*, eds. Leo Charney and Vanessa Schwartz, Berkeley/Los Angeles, 1995, pp. 46–71.

Paris and Photography between 1839 and 1900

Virginie Chardin

The transformation of Paris into the first modern capital city was a major source of inspiration for photographers of the 19th century. It gave rise to significant works which, deservedly, can be counted among the highlights of the history of photography and to documents whose remarkable formal modernity attracted the attention of the avant-garde of the following generation.

Unlike painting, however, the new “art-science”¹ had to struggle persistently against technical restrictions for decades. In particular, as the result of long exposure times, the city seemed void of inhabitants [fig. 1, p. 146].² The photographic image of the city in the 19th century was subject to this restriction and was shaped by it. Until the end of the century, the strange emptiness remained characteristic of the photographs of the city, whose sprawling aspect was only gradually revealed. The following text will consider the works in the exhibition in the historical context of photography in Paris.

Paris as the Birthplace of Photography

On August 19, 1839 – in front of the members of the Academy of Science and the Academy of Fine Arts assembled at the Institut de France – François Arago ceremoniously announced that France had decided to present the whole world with the gift of Nicéphore Niépce’s and Louis Daguerre’s discovery. In view of the industrial rivalry between England and France, Paris was proud to claim paternity of a discovery that was to revolutionize the history of art and science and, at the same time, to become the first city in the world to be photographed. The general excitement caused by the new invention and the development of a prestigious French school of photography meant that, during the next two decades, Paris remained a prominent exponent of photography. It was not long before discussions focused upon the ability to reproduce the image. As the production of unique photographic proofs by Daguerre’s process could not satisfy the demands of a market whose vast possibilities were already foreseeable, the experiments were soon aimed at developing a negative picture. The Englishman William Fox Talbot had already started to explore this in 1834. With the calotype, he finally managed to obtain a paper negative whose grainy and blurry aspect – close to drawing, lithography, or ink-wash techniques [fig. 2, p. 147] – was the photographic method initially preferred by artists.

In Paris, many of them had been trained at the studio of the painter Paul Delaroche, among them Charles Nègre, Gustave Le Gray, and Henri Le Secq [fig. 3, p. 150]. The latter, a friend of the engraver Charles Méryon, was influenced by a nostalgic fascination for medieval Paris, many of whose traces were soon to be erased.³ Using the new method, Le Secq photographed the building works started by the prefect Jean-Jacques Berger, Haussmann’s predecessor.⁴ One picture, recording the gloomy atmosphere of the demolition at the Place de l’Hôtel de Ville in 1852, immortalized the trace of a turret and dramatized the chimney flues and blackened windows of the half-demolished buildings [p. 179], a motif which was becoming an increasingly familiar sight in Paris at the time.

The same year, his friend Charles Nègre – former student of Jean-August Dominique Ingres and one of the first to show animated Parisian street scenes – depicted the restoration of the Tour Saint-Jacques, which had only recently been freed from the surrounding houses, opposite the Fontaine du Palmier, also known as the Colonne du Châtelet [p. 180]. Charles Marville embarked upon this early attempt at reporting in April 1858, when he photographed curious onlookers watching the relocation of the Fontaine du Plamier, on Place du Châtelet [p. 181].

As with editions of engravings or lithographs, several publishers, such as Blanquart-Evrard or Goupil, commercialized photographic views of Paris. In collaboration with Hubert de Fontenay's photographic workshop, Goupil, for example, published the album *Paris photographié. Vues et monuments* (Paris in Photographs. Views and monuments), containing an exquisite view of the apse of Notre-Dame photographed by Charles-Henri Plaut in 1852, which evokes a classical panorama or a veduta [p. 21].

Photography eventually moved away from the sphere of engraving to follow its own path. In 1851, the Englishman Scott Archer revealed his process of collodion on glass, which permitted shorter exposure times and a greater wealth of detail. With it, the depiction of reality suddenly became accurate, more sharply focused – and more spectacular. It was around this time that the expression “photography” was used for the first time. “(...) whoever has endured the difficult collodion process still remains speechless with admiration when confronted with the flawless execution of these immense images,” wrote Nadar.⁵ Using this technique, the Bisson brothers produced a large picture of the Place de la Concorde, as striking in its wealth of detail as it is in its austerity [p. 24].⁶ Gustave Le Gray, too, produced several views of the river Seine. One of them was exhibited at the Palais des Champs-Élysée, where photography was admitted for the first time in 1859 alongside the Salon des Beaux-Arts.⁷ In a panoramic shot from 1859, he structures his composition around the horizontal line of the Pont-Neuf with the Pont des Arts, the city's first iron bridge, in the foreground [p. 23]. This composition featuring a horizontal axis is characteristic of Le Gray's style. It can also be found in his print of the Pont du Carrousel [p. 22], which was cropped, thus taking the shape of a panoramic shot. It is reminiscent of the superb images of the sea, which made Le Gray one of the greatest photographers of his time and anticipated Gustave Courbet's paintings of the 1860s.⁸ No other photographer who, like Baldus or the Bisson brothers, photographed the Seine from the same angle achieved a mastery in composition and beauty like that of Le Gray's gold chloride prints. In 1852, Le Gray declared: “I wish for photography not to be appropriated by industry and commerce but to enter the realm of art. There lies its only, its true place and I shall always strive to further its progress in this direction.”⁹ But the golden age of photography with its grand, technically accomplished artists was coming to an end at the very moment it was admitted to the Salon – much to the dismay of Baudelaire, who was of the opinion that it should not be more than the “servant of science and the arts.”¹⁰ Le Gray left Paris and photography resolutely entered the industrial age.

The Imperial Building Site – an Image in the Service of Monumentality

The use of the collodion process coincided with Napoleon III's seizure of power and the beginning of Haussmann's gigantic urban reconstruction. Photography arrived just in time for promoting and exalting the Empire's projects; soon this would become one of its essential purposes. At least three monuments symbolizing imperial power, recreational activities, and industrial development – the new Louvre, the Opera, the bridges – gave birth to photographic masterpieces.

The first of these were Edouard Baldus's photographs of the construction of the new Louvre, whose first stage of construction was to be ready for the World Exhibition of 1855 and the visit of the Queen of England. Prussian-born Baldus, who considered himself a “painter-photographer,” methodically documented all the stages of the building's construction between 1854 and 1865, under the direction of the architect Hector Lefuel and with the backing of Achille Fould, the minister of state. A view towards the Tuileries Palace, the emperor's residence, shows an open-air building site where approximately 3,000 people worked day and night.¹¹ This picture was included in the first images

of the album documenting the Northern railway (Chemin de fer du Nord), which Baron James de Rothschild presented to Queen Victoria.¹² A print of the same scene, but in the “grand monde” format, boasting spectacular dimensions [p. 182], can be found in the Musée Carnavalet today. Further albums were sent out to the monarchs and libraries of Europe and the provinces. This striking monograph did credit to the emperor’s image but also, due to its attention to detail and precision of documentation, the architect’s reputation [pp. 184/185]. Baldus himself sold several copies to fine-art institutions, too. In addition, he frequently exhibited the photographs in France and abroad, in this way securing his reputation as the greatest architectural photographer of the 1850s.¹³

Inspired by this example, Charles Garnier – the young architect of the Paris Opera, a site of pleasure and pageantry, which Napoleon III had set his heart on for the entertainment of the Parisian high society – also had the various stages of construction documented from 1863 onwards by Delmaet and Durandelle. Unlike Baldus, Louis-Emile Durandelle, sole author after the death of his business partner Delmaet in 1862, does not seem to have been trained as a painter. As an architectural photographer, he was obviously fascinated by the idea of elevation. His work turned out to be truly visionary: by bringing the lines, the graphic character, the figures, and the interlacing of the materials to the fore and by emphasizing the structure of the building and the beams of the scaffolding, he established a new ‘score’ of forms [pp. 106–109]. With its surreal intensity, his dramatic staging seems like an allegory of construction.¹⁴

The name Hippolyte Collard – former gilder and later head photographer of Atelier Collard, “photographe des Ponts et Chaussées” – remains closely associated with the modern epic of the construction of traffic infrastructure such as the railway, the waterways, the viaducts, and the aqueducts, which also symbolized the imperial politics of urban development and industry. Between 1857 and 1866, Collard photographed numerous Paris bridges for the French state and the city of Paris, always meticulously setting up the scenic arrangement [p. 116].¹⁵ Despite the fact that the classic composition of the photographs seems to be derived from the style of technical drawings, some of them were surprising in their artistic beauty – particularly those images of the metal structure of the bridges¹⁶ [fig. 4, p. 151]. “His specimen prints prove that one can create art even while working for industry,” noted the critic Ernest Lacan.¹⁷ Combining description, rigor, and majesty, Collard ennobled the functional buildings and paid tribute to the dynamic interplay of the lights, the reflections, and the perspectives they projected into the city [pp. 115, 117]. Thus, well before Impressionism, the engineers’ art made its appearance in the urban photographic landscape.¹⁸

Charles Marville or the Metamorphoses of Paris

The controversy raised by Haussmann’s massive demolition works – especially in the historical district of the Cité – prompted him to lay the foundations for a municipal administration in charge of the history of Paris, which, according to the emperor, had become “the most splendid and salubrious capital of Europe.”¹⁹ It is in this context that Charles Marville unobtrusively started a methodical inventory of the streets destined to disappear with the construction of the new major byways.²⁰ This was no new idea. In 1851, by order of the prefect Berger and under the direction of the architect Davioud, drawings of old houses destined to be demolished had been made. It was, perhaps, through the intervention of Davioud, whom he had worked with for a long time,²¹ that Charles Marville was asked to realize a similar project – this time using photography.²²

With this commission, which the prefecture assigned to its newly established *Service des Travaux Historiques*, it pursued an ambivalent goal: on the one hand, Haussmann wanted to legitimate his demolition work by showing that many of the doomed streets were in fact dark, unhealthy, and contained no medieval monuments. On the other hand, he intended to prove his historical awareness by preserving “the memories of the past”²³ and by putting together a collection of authentic documents, which would later be a “genuine monument.”²⁴ Although it is not known what Marville’s precise instructions were for this work dating approximately from 1865 to 1868, his photographs reflect this ambivalence. Trained as a painter and illustrator, Marville originally stemmed from the Romantic tradition of picturesque Paris, and could not help but succumb to the charm of the small alleyways and backstreets. However, his

frequent association with architects – chief among them Davioud, the inventor of a kind of urban furnishings that considerably changed the face of Paris – had made him receptive to the light and space of the new city. The result was a collection of 425 photographic views, which had the air of a topographic index, a documentary inventory, and a melancholic reverie all at the same time [pp. 165, 167, 186, 187]. The sober, plain composition of the carefully printed pictures bears witness to an extraordinary mastery of light. Considered as simple “administrative views,”²⁵ they were buried in the topographic archives of the city of Paris. Those, however, who could see them – such as the photographers Nadar²⁶ and Davanne – were fascinated.²⁷ These somber, silent photographs devoid of people, without any commentary, revealed the manifold signs of urban transfiguration to those who knew how to read them [fig. 5, p. 151]. Their austere and overwhelming beauty evoked in the viewer the strange feeling of being the last inhabitant of a city on its deathbed.

However, Charles Marville also took photographs of modern Paris with its street lamps designed by Davioud, of which he created veritable “portraits.”²⁸ He photographed Baltard’s central market halls, les Halles, and the La Villette district, the outskirts of Paris, and the incredible construction work for the Avenue de l’Opéra and the Boulevard Henri IV [pp. 105, 188–193, 211–215]. At the 1878 World Exhibition, the pictures of this new Paris were shown alongside those of the old city.²⁹ A subtle chronicler of the city in the midst of transformation, Marville undoubtedly remains the greatest photographer of Paris in the 19th century.

Stereoscopic Views and Panoramas in the 1860s

The distribution of the above-mentioned works was limited to their specific use. The general public had no access to them. “The publishers need not worry,” wrote the art critic Philippe Burty in 1859, “photography is not destined for the broad masses, at least not with the technique’s current state development.”³⁰ The demand, however, was enormous and this thirst would be fulfilled by stereoscopic photographs, which were invented in the 1860s, anticipating the touristic view, the picture postcard, and even the cinematograph.³¹ David Brewster, the inventor of the kaleidoscope, had developed stereoscopic photography in 1844. The underlying principle of binocular vision has been known since Antiquity: the overlapping of the separate perspectives of the right and the left eye in the viewer’s brain leads to the perception of spatial depth. Brewster’s stereoscope was presented at the 1851 World Exhibition in London, where it attracted the interest of the Queen and was an instant success.³²

In addition to three-dimensional photographs, the apparatus also made instant photographs possible, due to the smaller size of the plates and shorter exposure times.³³ Photographers and publishers like Adolphe Braun, Ferrier and Soulier, or Hippolyte Jouvin [pp. 194–197] turned into the first photographic documentarists of everyday life by recording the details and goings-on of everyday life.³⁴ Members of the bourgeoisie valued stereoscopy; it provided them with a relatively affordable, solitary pleasure, as the viewer seemed isolated from the world; at the same time, it provided sociable entertainment due to the wonder and excitement it evoked.³⁵ The critics all emphasized the feeling of being on a journey, of opening a window onto the world, of being transported to the scenes of action, or watching a play. This completely new way of showing the city and its intense hustle and bustle created an extraordinary social archive that united workers, members of the bourgeoisie, merchants, passers-by, and people strolling in the same anonymous mass of people [fig. 6, p. 152]. Long before the illustrated press could provide them with photo essays,³⁶ people in the provinces or abroad were able to discover Haussmann’s Paris, whose rectilinear perspectives, carriage-filled boulevards, cafés, parks, squares, and markets seemed incredibly modern. “Thousands of greedy eyes bent over the eyepieces of the stereoscope as if they were the skylights of infinity,” jeered Charles Baudelaire in 1859.³⁷ Extremely popular, these moving and disregarded images are unique in their evocation of Parisian society during the Second Empire.

Formally, the photographers used stereoscopy to explore new angles of vision, took photographs from elevated vantage points, often balconies, and worked with the effect of “freezing a moment,” with which they undoubtedly influenced the way in which painters like Degas, Caillebotte, Monet, or Pissarro looked at the city.³⁸

At the same time that the Paris dreamt up by Haussmann became reality, several publishers began to edit touristic views popularizing the image of Paris and its monuments. Alongside panoramic pictures by Friedrich von Martens or Guevin and Bonoldi, there also exists a surprising anonymous series, the Collection Vieux Paris B.C. dating, for the most part, from the year 1867 [pp. 45–47]. These images are very different from Marville’s photographs, even though they stem from the same era. Paris appears as a utopian city – clean, majestic, and fanciful – inextricably intertwining the old and the new.

The Paris Commune – the City as a Theater of War

The uprising that took place in Paris between March 18 and May 28, 1871, led to an abrupt rupture in photographic imagery, as it marked the emergence of the first reporting of current events. Despite technical difficulties, professional and amateur photographers now tried to instantaneously record an historical event destined to leave a lasting mark on the collective memory.³⁹ Of course, the Communards still posed for the scenes photographed by Bruno Braquehais, Alphonse Liébert, and Hippolyte Collard, since “real” instantaneous photographs were not yet technically possible [pp. 200, 201, 204]. Things are different as far as the corpses that André Adolphe-Eugène Disdéri photographed are concerned: the famous image [p. 205] is traditionally regarded as showing the dead of the Paris Commune and as proof of the brutality of the repression during the “Bloody Week in May,” despite the fact that the identity of the fallen has never positively been verified.⁴⁰ After the Commune, the views of the ruins of Paris, considered picturesque, artistic, and even touristic, became the subject of intensive commercialization – especially in England,⁴¹ while the photographs of the events were banned by law [pp. 202, 203]. Collected secretly, they nevertheless had a far-reaching effect. They fed the iconography of an insurrectionary Paris, which was repeatedly taken up later on – during the marches of the Popular Front in the 1930s, during the liberation of Paris in 1944, or in May 1968.

Iron and Photography – a Repertoire of Forms for Modernity

Throughout the 19th century, photography was closely linked with the inexorable spread of iron architecture with which it was frequently compared.⁴² This alliance – which, as has been mentioned, began under the Second Empire – continued in the service of engineers and industrialists. Photographers did their utmost to optimally depict greenhouses, train stations, passages, covered markets, machines, and mechanical apparatuses. We owe the beautiful photographs of the factories of La Villette [pp. 216, 217] to the Paris Gas Light and Heating Company, which commissioned the Atelier Collard and Albert Fernique to take these images. The use of iron in Paris was still restricted to supporting structures and functional buildings, as Haussmann insisted on stone facades and banned factory buildings to the outskirts; however, during the Third Republic, iron – and later glass – were already putting up a determined fight for their recognition as aesthetic architectural materials [p. 60].⁴³

With the construction of the Eiffel Tower [pp. 62, 63], the most-symbolic monument of Paris, the 1889 World Exhibition sealed the glorious victory of metal architecture. “While art is still seeking intimacy and lingering over old formulas, marking time, embarrassed and timid, looking back to the past, industry is boldly marching ahead, exploring the unknown, conquering new forms,” wrote the novelist Octave Mirbeau.⁴⁴ Numerous writers and artists shared this enthusiasm. After a visit to the Eiffel Tower shortly before its completion, Henri Rivière, the etcher and founder of the shadow theater at the Cabaret du Chat Noir, sent an album with small-format snapshots to Gustave Eiffel, which he had taken with his amateur camera and are characterized by an unprecedented formal freedom. He later used them as the basis for a series of lithographs, *The 36 Views of the Eiffel Tower* [pp. 64–67]. These were the first of the

avant-garde photographic and cinematographic variations on the Eiffel Tower, which reached their peak in the 1920s in films by René Clair (*La Tour* and *Paris qui dort*) or in the photographs of Germaine Krull and André Kertész.⁴⁵

However, the photographer most inspired by contemporary architecture was certainly Louis-Emile Durandelle. This author – until recently relatively unknown – was chosen by the architects of the most emblematic monuments in Paris at the end of the 19th century. Durandelle had no fear of dealing with increasingly geometric figures, which until then had been the prerogative of industrial drawings. He went beyond his purely documentary mission by exaggerating the straight lines, distorting perspectives, and intensifying verticality to the point of abstraction. This tendency was already visible in the photographs of the new Opera house that he had been taking since 1863, and found its ultimate expression in the 1880s in the images of the newly constructed buildings of the Comptoir d'Escompte de Paris, the Gare Saint-Lazare, the Eiffel Tower, and, above all, the Basilica of Sacré-Cœur, which was looked upon as a “cathedral forest”⁴⁷ in a form of hallucinatory expressionism [pp. 63, 102–104, 110–113].

In the words of Françoise Heilbrun, “Durandelle possessed a remarkable intuition for industrial aesthetics, which was to be even more radically expressed at the beginning of the 20th century by photographers and painters such as Fernand Léger, Charles Sheeler, Paul Strand, and Edward Steichen.”⁴⁸ It is not by chance that it was his photograph of a pillar from the Galerie des Machines in 1889 [fig. 7, p. 152], which El Lissitzky later chose for a photo montage on the cover of Roger Ginsburger’s 1930 book, *France*.⁴⁹

Popular Scenes around the Turn of the Century

Towards the end of the 1880s, the more sensitive silver-bromide gelatine plates and improved shutter mechanisms finally made it possible to take snapshots; at the same time, smaller cameras came on to the market, so that the new technology was now also open to a larger circle of people. Early on, artists used photography not only to document their private and family lives but also for artistic research. For example, Pierre Bonnard, Edgar Degas, Edouard Vuillard, Emile Zola, Edvard Munch, or August Strindberg all produced remarkable photographic studies. Apart from the views of the Eiffel Tower, Henri Rivière also took innovative pictures backstage at the Chat Noir, of Montmartre, as well as of the balconies and streets of Paris [pp. 139, 289] [fig. 8, p. 153]. His aesthetic of fragments, taken from above or below, already heralded Alexander Rodchenko or Lázló Moholy-Nagy. Gabriel Loppé, an alpine painter and photographer influenced by the English Pictorialists, was for his part interested in urban nighttime views [p. 288] – even before Alfred Stieglitz and later Brassai. Thanks to photomechanical methods such as autotypy, heliogravure (also photoengraving), and photolithography, it was now possible to print photographs in newspapers and magazines, which led to a wealth of illustrated periodicals and to the production of numerous photo essays and illustrations. A social and popular form of imagery of the Parisian street took form, which anticipated the poetic realism of pre-war films from René Clair to Prévert and Marcel Carné, as well as the “humanist school” from Brassai to Robert Doisneau. Numerous photographers such as Paul Géniaux, a photographer who worked for the illustrated press and publishers of picture postcards [p. 138]⁵⁰ tried to depict the “small trades of Paris,” the flower festival, the carnival, or Montmartre in the fog. Louis Vert, the director of a printing company – who, throughout his life, took amateur photographs and whose pictures occasionally appeared in the magazine *L'Illustration* – took relatively classical photographs of tradesmen [pp. 140, 141] as well as a series of pictures of Parisian clochards that were surprisingly socio-critical [fig. 9, p. 154]. This rather down-to-earth orientation of photography also gave rise to images that the Union photographique française, a workers’ cooperative of photographers, produced of dwellings in Paris that were destined to be demolished or the construction of the Paris Métro [pp. 118, 119, 144].⁵¹

But it was ultimately and, above all, the picture postcard that made the view of Paris streets known the world over [pp. 142, 143]: the explosive growth of its circulation coincided with the 1900 World Exhibition and its heyday lasted until the beginning of World War I. In 1905, approximately 500 million picture postcards were produced per year. The enormous number of postcards, which have always been collected by aficionados, is often forgotten or over-

looked by historians when they examine the history of the photographic image. With its formal standards and the conventions of its use, it remains the picture medium that was the most present in the collective imagination and spread the most representative image of the city in the first decade of the 20th century.

Atget – a Final Look at the 19th Century

One cannot evoke the image of Paris around the turn of the century without thinking of one of the most important photographers of the time – Eugène Atget. In 1897, he single-handedly embarked on a project that was to make a fundamental contribution to the image of the city, on the one hand, and to the history of photography, on the other. For nearly thirty years, the modest photographer made it his business to systematically document the ‘Old Paris’ and its urban life; he sold prints of his work as documents to private persons, businesses, libraries, and institutions. From the start, Atget recorded absence, shadows, and abandonment in his photographs [p. 207]. “(...) in these pictures the city is cleared out like a flat which has not yet found a new tenant,” wrote Walter Benjamin.⁵² The obsessive strangeness of the images and the disquieting atmosphere that they radiate transform the city into the latent scene of a crime [fig. 10, p. 154].⁵³

Atget’s photographs were valued highly, among others, by Man Ray, who published several of them in the magazine *La Révolution surréaliste*. Following Atget’s death in 1927, Berenice Abbott (Man Ray’s assistant at the time), purchased his entire estate and made the photographs known in the USA, where he was then revered as the undisputed master of his discipline by great American photographers such as Edward Weston, Ansel Adams, and, above all, Walker Evans.⁵⁴ Hidden behind the black veil of his camera, superimposing his reflection onto the phantoms that observe us from behind the shop windows, Atget silently prompted the transition of Paris from one century to the next [pp. 208, 209].

- 1 The expression “art-science” was used, above all, to describe the medium during its early days.
- 2 Daguerre’s contemporaries also noticed this immediately – for example, Samuel B. Morse: “Moving objects leave no traces whatsoever. The boulevard, where in fact countless pedestrians and horse-drawn carriages move about all the time was, apart from a person having his shoes cleaned, completely devoid of people.” Letter to his family, printed in *The New York Observer* on May 18, 1839. From: *Du bon usage de la photographie: une anthologie de textes*, ed. Centre National de la Photographie, Paris, 1987.
- 3 Eugenia Parry Janis, “Demolition Picturesque: Photographs of Paris in 1852 and 1853 by Henri Le Secq,” in: *Perspectives of Photography*, ed. Peter Walch, Thomas Barrow, Albuquerque, 1986.
- 4 A valuable album with these photographs, bearing the initials of the prefect Berger, is kept at the Bibliothèque historique de la ville de Paris.
- 5 Felix Nadar, *Quand j’étais photographe*, Paris, 1989.
- 6 Die Brüder Bisson: Aufstieg und Fall eines Fotografenunternehmens im 19. Jahrhundert, exh. cat., Museum Folkwang, Essen et al., 1999.
- 7 *The Photography of Gustave Le Gray*, exh. cat., ed. Eugenia Parry Janis, The Art Institute of Chicago, 1987.
- 8 Dominique Planchon de Font Réaulx, “Contempler le spectacle de votre mer,” in: *Vagues. Autour des paysages de mer de Gustave Courbet*, exh. cat., Musée Malraux du Havre, 2004.
- 9 Sylvie Aubenas, *Gustave Le Gray, 1820–1884*, Paris, 2002, p. 44.
- 10 Charles Baudelaire, Lettre à M. Le directeur de la Revue française à propos du Salon de 1859. Le public moderne et la photographie, in: *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. II, Paris, 1976.
- 11 Le photographe et l’architecte. Edouard Baldus, Hector-Martin Lefuel et le chantier du Nouveau Louvre de Napoléon III, exh. cat., Musée du Louvre, Paris, 1995.
- 12 *The Photographs of Edouard Baldus*, exh. cat., Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York et al., 1994.
- 13 Ernest Lacan, “Exposition photographique de Bruxelles XI,” in: *La Lumière*, No. 47, November 22, 1856, p. 181.
- 14 Elvire Perego, L’Opéra de Paris par Delmaet et Durandelle, in: *Nouvelle histoire de la photographie*, ed. Michel Frizot, Bordas, 1994.
- 15 Isabelle-Cécile Le Mée, “Hippolyte Auguste Collard, photographe d’architectures,” in: *Du réel au simulacre. Cinéma, photographie, histoire*, ed. Centre d’Etudes et de Recherches historiques sur l’image, Paris, 1993. The collection of the Bibliothèque historique de la ville de Paris houses albums with photographs by Collard, featuring the following bridges: Pont Saint-Michel, Pont-au-Change, Pont de Solférino, Pont Louis-Philippe, Pont Saint-Louis, Pont de Bercy, and Pont du Point-du-Jour.
- 16 Elizabeth Anne McCauley, “Collard, the Machine, and the Modern State,” in: *Industrial Madness. Commercial Photography in Paris, 1848–1871*, New Haven/London, 1994.
- 17 Ernest Lacan, “Exposition photographique,” in: *Le moniteur de la photographie*, 1861, p. 96.
- 18 Philippe Néagu, “L’art du calotype en France et le développement du collodion 1855–1870,” in: Françoise Cachin (ed.), *L’art du XIX^{ème} siècle 1850–1900*, Paris 1990; Françoise Heilbrun, “Le paysage dans la photographie française au XIX^{ème} siècle et ses rapports avec la peinture du réalisme à l’impressionnisme,” in: *L’impressionnisme et le paysage français*, exh. cat., Grand-Palais, Paris, 1985; Michel Frizot, *Histoire de voir*, Paris, 2001.

- 19 *Histoire générale de Paris*, ed. Imprimerie impériale, Paris, 1866.
- 20 Letter by Charles Marville to the director of the Travaux de Paris, January 30, 1873, documentation dossier "Marville," Musée Carnavalet.
- 21 Marie de Thézy, *Marville. Paris*, Paris, 1994.
- 22 Maria Morris Hambourg, *Marville, Atget et leurs travaux historiques à Paris*, 1990, documentation dossier "Marville," Musée d'Orsay.
- 23 Note by the first division of the Direction des Travaux de Paris, January 20, 1873, documentation dossier "Marville," Musée Carnavalet.
- 24 *Histoire générale de Paris* (cf. note 19).
- 25 Alphonse Davanne, "Rapport sur la photographie à l'exposition universelle de Vienne en 1873," in: *Bulletin de la Société française de photographie*, 1875, p. 270.
- 26 "Only Marville (another painter) was able to emulate them (Le Gray and Bisson) with his outstanding collections, which he was later to leave to the municipal archive." Nadar (as note 5).
- 27 Davanne (as note 25), p. 270.
- 28 A total of 96 views of these streetlights could be seen at the 1878 World Exhibition.
- 29 Thézy (cf. note 21).
- 30 Philippe Burty, "Exposition de la Société française de photographie," in: *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 1859, p. 211.
- 31 "The phenomenology of the stereoscope produces a situation which is not unlike that of being in the audience of a cinema. Both imply the isolation of the viewer with his picture, from which outside interferences have been excluded. In both, the photograph transports the viewer optically while his body remains stationary." (Rosalind Krauss, *Le photographique. Pour une théorie des écarts*, Paris, Macula, 1990, p. 43.
- 32 Pierre-Marc Richard, *La vie en relief: les séductions de la stéréoscopie*, in: Frizot (as note 14).
- 33 Denis Pellerin, Bernard Marbot, *La photographie stéréoscopique sous le second Empire*, exh. cat., Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, 1995.
- 34 Françoise Reynaud, Catherine Tambrun, Kim Timby, *Paris en 3D, de la stéréoscopie à la réalité virtuelle, 1850–2000*, exh. cat., Musée Carnavalet, Paris, 2000.
- 35 M. A. Gaudin, "1857–1858, résumé des progrès les plus importants réalisés en photographie pendant l'année écoulée," in: *La Lumière*, January 2, 1858, p. 1.
- 36 Magazines such as *Le Journal Illustré*, *La Vie Illustrée*, *L'Illustration*, or *l'Excelsior* did not appear until the 1890s.
- 37 Charles Baudelaire, Letters to the director of the "Revue française" on the 1859 Salon (as note 10), p.137.
- 38 Françoise Heilbrun, "Le paysage dans la photographie française" (as note 17).
- 39 Quentin Bajac, *La Commune photographiée*, exh. cat., Musée d'Orsay, Paris, 2000.
- 40 Quentin Bajac assumes that these could perhaps be unidentified soldiers killed during the battle against the Prussians, cf. *ibid.*
- 41 For example, the album of Alphonse Liébert, *Les Ruines de Paris et de ses environs, 1870–1871*, Paris, 1872.
- 42 As, for example, in this quote by Charles Garnier: "Thus photography, whose calling is to render services, day after day attempts to take over the job of drawing and graphic reproduction; and in this way to replace art with science; and in the same way iron, whose use in all stages of construction is superior to that of wood, forces its way into architecture, alters its typical forms, and ends up supplanting art with industry." (*Le Musée des Sciences*, February 11, 1857, p. 321); also see the special edition *Photographies*, No. 5, July 1984: *Photographie, art moderne et technologie 1850–1950*, with articles on this subject by Jean-François Chevrier, Henri Loyrette, and Elvire Perego.
- 43 Elvire Perego, "La ville-Machine. Architecture et industrie," in: Michel Frizot (cf. note 14).
- 44 Octave Mirbeau, *Encyclopédie d'architecture*, 1889–1890, p. 92.
- 45 François Fossier, Françoise Heilbrun, Philippe Néagu, *Henri Rivière graveur et photographe*, exh. cat., Musée d'Orsay / Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, 1988.
- 46 He was rediscovered in the exhibition *Photo Génie, photographies du génie civil au XIX^{ème} siècle*, organized in 1983 by the Centre National de la Photographie at the Ecole nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts. Cf. also: *Le Grand-Ceuvre, photographies des grands travaux: 1860–1900*, ed. Centre National de la Photographie, 1983; *Photographies*, No. 1, spring 1983, and No. 5, July 1984.
- 47 The expression stems from Perego, Delmaet & Durandelle, in: *Photographies* No. 5, 1984.
- 48 Françoise Heilbrun, "Le paysage dans la photographie française" (cf. footnote 18).
- 49 Roger Ginsburger, Frankreich. "Die Entwicklung der neuen Ideen nach Konstruktion und Form," in: *Neues Bauen in der Welt*, Vol. 3, Vienna, 1930.
- 50 Petits métiers et types parisiens vers 1900: Atget, Géniaux, Vert, exh. cat., Musée Carnavalet, Paris, 1984.
- 51 Paris la rue, un autre 1900: le fonds de l'Union photographique française aux Archives de Paris, ed. Jean-Philippe Dumas, Paris, 2000.
- 52 Walter Benjamin, "Kleine Geschichte der Fotografie," in: *Gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. II.1, eds. Rolf Tiedemann, Hermann Schwepenhäuser, Frankfurt, 1977, p. 379.
- 53 Guillaume Le Gall, "L'invention d'un photographe, visions surréalistes," in: *Atget, une rétrospective*, exh. cat., Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, 2007.
- 54 Maria Morris Hambourg, John Szarkowski, *The Work of Atget*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1985 (Vol. 1, 1981; Vol. 2, 1982; Vol. 3, 1983; Vol. 4, 1985).

A Journey through the Photographic Collections of Paris

Françoise Reynaud

“Paris is a large library hall through which the Seine flows.”¹ This statement by the famous German philosopher Walter Benjamin (1892–1940), who lived in Paris in the 1930s, aptly symbolizes his insatiable curiosity for everything to do with the history of the French capital. Only he could have made a remark like this, as he felt passionately connected with the buildings of the city of Paris. In his eyes, they were – like open books – witnesses of the development of technology, design, and social history. We also know of Benjamin’s keen interest in photography.² This, however, led him to a conceptual analysis of the production and reception of images – and not to the development of a typological inventory or even to the categorizing of entire existing collections of images. The wealth of photographic collections, dotted all over the city, was probably not known to him, as they had barely been opened up at the time. Nowadays, fortunately, photography lovers have access to a whole diversity of photographic collections: in the last thirty years, publications and exhibitions have contributed to the gradual unearthing of a forgotten treasure. So it is tempting to relate Benjamin’s poetic remark to the realm of photography as, on both banks of the river Seine, numerous public, national, and municipal institutions guard substantial collections of old prints, which have been created since the 1850s, showing the most diverse aspects of the changing face of Paris.

Museums, Libraries, and Archives in Paris

The selection of high-quality photographs for the exhibition at the Museum Folkwang required a systematic inspection of portfolios, boxes, and cases of the most important Paris collections. The selection resulting from this work is intended – as a counterpart to Impressionist painting – to give an idea of the medium’s uniqueness and of a way of looking at things that accompanies the then young technology. It was definitely not our aim to illustrate topics shared by painting and photography, but rather to show how the cityscape – in its radical transformation during the second half of the century – could be the source of entirely different, yet complementary kinds of inspiration.

Our logical point of departure was the Musée Carnavalet dedicated to the history of the city of Paris [fig. 1, p. 158]. This municipal museum is situated in the Marais district on Rue de Sévigné not far from the Place des Vosges. Two municipal libraries are close by: the well-known Bibliothèque historique de la ville de Paris on Rue Pavée and the Bibliothèque administrative de la ville de Paris at the town hall (recently renamed Bibliothèque de l’Hôtel de Ville), which is frequently ignored by scholars. In addition, several institutions on both banks of the Seine gave us access to the treasures they house: from the Bibliothèque nationale de France (French National Library) on Rue de Richelieu to Ecole des Beaux-Arts (School of Fine Arts) on Rue Bonaparte, as well as the Musée d’Orsay at the Quai Anatole-France. The examination of further specialized collections resulted in interesting comparisons. Here, the following should be mentioned: the Archives nationales on Rue de Francs-Bourgeois, the Institut Catholique on Rue d’Assas, the Archives de Paris (Municipal Archives) on Boulevard Séruvier, as well as the storage of the collection of the Musée des arts et

métiers (Museum of Arts and Industry) in the suburbs, in Saint-Denis. Ultimately, we also had to go a little beyond Paris, as for the Ecole des ponts (formerly Ecole des ponts et chaussées, a famous engineering school) moved to Champs-sur-Marne several years ago.

We could have visited further institutions such as the Bibliothèque des Arts Décoratifs (Library of Decorative Arts) on Rue de Rivoli or the Médiathèque du patrimoine (a collection dedicated to monuments and architecture), which recently found a new home in Charenton-le-Pont, east of the Parc de Bercy. In Chantilly lies the Musée Condé, which houses a formidable collection assembled by the Duc d'Aumale.³ But the yield was already so substantial that a – sometimes painful – selection had to be made.

The Main Emphasis of the Various Collections

Listing the locations that house photographic material is only interesting if one also describes these locations more closely.⁴ The Bibliothèque nationale de France [fig. 2, p. 158] holds the largest collection in the country, as it is the place where the “dépôt légal” has been stored since 1537: anyone who publishes an article or an image is legally required to deposit a copy in the relevant departments (printed matter, engravings, maps, and plans). Originally, this measure was a kind of censorship; over the course of the centuries, however, it turned into a guarantee for the author's rights to his work, which is still vital even today. Ever since 1851, the time of the first deposits, photography has benefited from this law, because photographs, just like printed matter, are works of which one can produce several copies.⁵ Many photographers – among them also great names – fulfilled their duty to submit a copy, especially if they ran larger professional studios such as the Bisson brothers [p. 24]. But there are also photographers, amateurs, and assignment photographers who were not so interested in their rights being protected and did not submit their images. For the users of the library, the advantage of the requirement to submit copies lies in the fact that an artist or publisher can be identified and the precise date that his work was created can be determined, since providing this information is an obligatory requirement for the recording of the prints. The photographs stored in the Bibliothèque nationale come not only from this legal archiving but also from donations and highly important acquisitions, with the help of which the collection was complemented over the years. The main aim was to represent French production without ignoring foreign works.⁶

Both the national and the municipal archives often stored the photographs as attachments to the records which they received from the different administrative bodies. This is where many of the historical collections ended up, and they are worth studying more closely as they give rise to important discoveries. Furthermore, the traditional teaching methods have been enriched by photography since the 19th century. The Ecole des ponts,⁷ which was set up under Louis XV (1747), or the Ecole des Beaux-Arts⁸ [fig. 3, p. 159], whose library was opened in 1864, have added photographs to documents used for educational purposes; photographic shots of buildings or functional constructions, study sources, historical examples of certain styles, etc. – photography was of practical use for the various disciplines. As far as the libraries and museums created in the 19th century are concerned, photographs were generally used to show the topics characteristic of the respective locations. At the library of the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, for example, photographs of models and motifs illustrate the development of shapes and styles, grouped in various categories.

Recording and communicating the history of the capital is the special task of both the Musée Carnavalet⁹ (founded in 1866 and opened in 1880) and the Bibliothèque historique de la ville de Paris¹⁰ (opened in 1874) [fig. 4, p. 160]. As a result, they house a wealth of photographs of the city.¹¹ The Bibliothèque de l'Hôtel de Ville, for its part – set up at the beginning of the 20th century – has taken on the documentary duties prescribed by the Paris administration and consequently holds important photo albums showing the history of the transformation of the Paris quarters.¹² These three collections complement each other in an informative fashion. In some cases, they contain works by the same photographers such as Charles Marville, Hippolyte Collard, or the Union photographique française. The more recent Musée d'Orsay (opened in 1986), on the other hand, is dedicated to 19th-century art. As early as 1978, the year the

museum was founded, an official decision was taken to include photography as a separate, independent collection¹³ – the first time such a resolution was made by a French museum. As a result, the Musée d'Orsay houses many great classics such as the famous Seine panorama by Le Gray [p. 23], but also avant-garde interpretations such as Rivière's photographs of the iron struts of the nearly completed Eiffel Tower [pp. 64–67].

Despite repeated attempts since the 19th century, there is, paradoxically, no museum in Paris dedicated to photography. The oldest photographers' association in France – the Société française de photographie¹⁴ – was originally a private initiative. In this body, founded in 1854, pioneers and practitioners came together; even today, supported by the Bibliothèque nationale de France, its mission is to preserve its valuable heritage. The second old collection can be found at the Médiathèque de l'architecture et du patrimoine. It stems from the "Mission Héliographique"¹⁵ of 1851, a photographic expedition with the task of photographing historical monuments and the antique and medieval buildings of France with regard to their potential for restoration. The collection mainly contains negatives but also some prints.¹⁶

Finally, two museums dedicated to photography outside Paris must be mentioned: the Musée français de la photographie in Bièvres, not far from Paris, and the Musée Niépce¹⁷ in Chalon-sur-Saône between Dijon and Lyon in Burgundy. The former was founded in 1960 thanks to an initiative of dedicated collectors; the latter was established in 1972 and its site is at the birthplace of the inventor Joseph-Nicéphore Niépce (1765–1833).

From Document to Work of Art: The Status of Old Photographs in the Collections

Today, the name Eugène Atget (1857–1927) is widely recognized. Atget – who specialized in views of a Paris on the verge of disappearing – was unknown during his lifetime and his works were not exhibited despite the fact that he provided a large number of photographs to museums and libraries. His case is exemplary. On the door of his studio was a sign that read "documents pour artistes" (documents for artists), as related by American photographer, Berenice Abbott, who visited him in the 1920s.¹⁸ Atget sold many prints to craftspeople and artists who used them as models [fig. 5, p. 161]. The institutions, to which he sold even more prints, archived them in thematic series, according to the place they were shot (topographically) or the typology of the subject depicted (scenes from everyday life, customs, etc.). Customary for documents brought together in such series, this was done without recording Atget's name. What has become of these photographs now, more than eighty years after his death? Formerly considered simple documents, Atget's images have now become works of art and are deemed masterpieces of artistic photography today. Such a change of judgment initially only concerned the output of this one photographer – due to his international renown – but can now be increasingly observed with his predecessors, especially in the period from 1850 to 1890.

The Musée Carnavalet serves as an example that allows us to take a closer look at this development. In the past, any visitor (as in most similar institutions) was able to come to the museum and view the different collections of the available documents: etchings, drawings, posters, and photographic prints were housed in a single location, the "Cabinet des Estampes" (print room). There, a vast quantity of images was grouped into four subject areas bearing the following labels: "Paris topography," arranged according to depicted districts, quarters, and buildings; "Portraits" of public and private figures who lived in the capital or had dwelt there for a time; "Customs and traditions," i. e. the life of the different social strata in Paris; and, finally, the area "History," where the events depicted were arranged in chronological order. There was no inventory to show what could be found in the individual folders. With the help of the classification table, one had to identify a subject and then look for it among the original documents. If one was lucky, the image sought would be among them. Le Secq's view of the devastation on the square in front of the town hall, for example, was sorted into the "Hôtel de Ville" folder [p. 179], while a view of the barricades during the 1871 Paris Commune by Collard [p. 201] was found in the "Rue Royale" folder.

To allow for a diversity within the collections, this "Cabinet des Estampes" was renamed "Cabinet des Arts graphiques" (graphic arts department) in 1989. It still contains the iconographic portfolios of the four above-

mentioned areas. Today, however, an appointment must be made in order to see them, with a justified reason (e.g. working on a dissertation, a publication, or an exhibition). A part of the photographs is still arranged in the thematic series. A substantial number, however, were removed from 1981 onwards; the prints were considered too valuable, were regarded as rare, or were made by great artists using the technique which was then still in its early days. These works were brought together in a new collection arranged alphabetically according to the artists' names.

Alongside the photographs selected from the documentary series, new acquisitions have gradually enriched the collection. Every photograph in this collection was given an inventory number. Nowadays, computerized databases also make it possible to systematically catalog the collection using a framework of descriptive criteria, and the thematic sections are gradually being treated in the same manner. Catalogued in this fashion, reproduced, and described, the photographs can now easily be found. As a result, the formerly useful classification has become obsolete although, for the sake of convenience, it still remains valid for the four old thematic areas. These steps toward a new classification of the collections are currently being undertaken in numerous French museums; the author of a work is the deciding factor even in cases where the documentary properties of an image remain paramount.

Thanks to the new technologies, the works can remain in their original category and still be inventoried, catalogued, and described; electronic data processing allows for a virtual placement, which is very helpful for actually dealing with the photograph (this includes reproduction, restoration, loans for exhibitions, documentation, bibliographic references, etc.). The images can be placed on the Internet fully documented. The screen provides all relevant information, also on a visual level. Thanks to the impressive magnification possible nowadays, details occasionally become apparent, which cannot even be seen on the print itself. On the other hand, computer technology is not helpful when it comes to assessing the intrinsic quality of a print, the precious nature of the photographic surface, or the brilliancy of the "vintage." Despite modern technology, direct access to the original image still remains imperative for the expertise of a specialist.

The dematerialization of the photograph is the price paid for spreading knowledge; it cannot replace the palpable reality of a work. Its enormous advantage, however, is the increasing cataloging of all collections. With a mouse click, one will soon be able to access all photographs by Baldus [pp. 183–185] or all stereoscopic images of Paris avenues and streets [pp. 196–197]. And what was impossible when dealing with the books and catalogs has now become possible on the Internet, owing to the collaboration of the public and private collections in France and abroad: for example, one day, we can envision the long-awaited comprehensive catalogues raisonnés of Charles Marville or Eugène Atget, including the negatives and the different prints.

Origin and Genealogy of the Photographic Collections

In the 19th century, the goal of all institutional collection activities was to amass as many images and objects on one subject as possible with the aim of producing a comprehensive collection. This reflects the encyclopedic idea characteristic of the time, still reflected in the classification systems we use today. It is nonetheless remarkable that such a large number of photographs could find their way into the collections of the institutions – especially as, following World War I, fewer photographic documents were intentionally acquired. Noticeably decreasing in most of the collections from the 1920s onwards, this collecting activity can be explained by changes in photographic methods, which made it fundamentally possible for everyone to take photographs, as well as by the fact that illustrated publications increasingly appeared on the market.

Where did the photographs come from and how did they find their way into the various collections? The answer to this question is still largely unknown, but interest in it is increasing.¹⁹ For once one has identified the practices enabling collections to be set up, one can better understand the role of photography in the city's history. The examination methods available to the researcher may at times be complicated, but they also yield interesting results: inspecting the records and inventories, more or less legible stamps on the images or their mounts, various hand-

written remarks on the back of the prints, correspondence kept at the institutions themselves or in other archives, documents that were found with the artists' families or in the records of societies, associations, and agencies. Conversations with the curators of the collections and with retired employees can produce important insights, as they often remember events and circumstances long past that were not recorded anywhere. Today, historians are assessing these sources so that they can better understand past methods and procedures.²⁰

The private photographic agencies in the late 19th and early 20th centuries are for their part a fertile field of research, as their development ran parallel to the establishment of institutional collections. Despite the commercial outlook of the agencies, their claim for completeness is comparable to that of the libraries and museums. This was recently shown by a study of the Giraudon agency, founded in Paris in 1877. It provided reproductions of works of art as well as architectural and interior photographs for publishers, connoisseurs, artists, and collectors. Among its clients were important institutions such as the Louvre and the Ecole des Beaux-Arts.²¹ When combining the investigations and research areas, multifaceted information can be found about the history of the collections, and the relationships between the photographers and these institutions. In this way, considerable progress is still to be made – as has already been done regarding knowledge of photographic technique and the artists' biographies.

We know, for example, that many photographs of the construction of the Paris Opera [pp. 106–109] that are kept at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts today owe their existence to an initiative by Charles Garnier, the architect. In the reports of the Archives nationales, we find Garnier's following remarks: "In order to keep the memory alive of the different construction phases of the Opera, photographs were taken every time an important change took place on the building site. (...) If one wanted to write a monograph about the Opera in the future the available photographic material showing it would make such a publication much easier."²² In 1898 his widow bequeathed the albums of the "Nouvel Opéra de Paris," containing the photographs by Delmaet and Durandelle, to the Ecole des Beaux-Arts; in them, there were also photographs featuring the wonderfully decorative details of the statues, which Garnier had photographed before they were heaved to their lofty locations.

Many photographs were commissions, which, in the case of Marville, is revealed in the letters stored at the Musée Carnavalet. In January 1873, the director of the Paris Office for Urban Planning writes: "Before the start of the large construction activities, which redrew the map of old Paris, the administration had considered it interesting to keep mementos of the past and, in this vein, they had commissioned the photographer Marville to supply a series of 425 views of the destroyed lanes or of those about to be destroyed. Marville has kept the negatives and was therefore able to make new prints of these images, which, due to the destruction of all documents kept at the former planning office, are of great interest. His collection could also be extremely useful for the preparation of books about the historical topography of old Paris, a project in which the departments of fine arts (*Beaux-Arts*) and historical building projects (*Travaux Historiques*) are involved."²³ Without mentioning it specifically, this note shows that all the archives kept in the town hall were destroyed in the fires during the 1871 Paris Commune. Now it became necessary to find a budget to fund new prints of the photographs taken in the 1860s, which, like the construction plans, went up in flames. Only a few days after this note was written, a letter by Marville himself made it clear that during the original contract "only one single copy was made of this series. Consequently no trace remains of it."²⁴ This explains how rare and valuable such photographs are; they are images that can rarely be found on today's photography market.

The photographer complied with the new commission by the city administration and once again produced the prints. Today, examples of these can be found in the collections of the city of Paris. They generally bear Marville's stamp – "Photographe des musées nationaux" – which he commonly used for his photographs after the fall of the Second Empire. If one compares Marville's photographs with old plans of those districts in which he took pictures of the streets and junctions, it becomes apparent that he precisely followed the lists of places provided by the planning office. In these, the proposed changes must have been listed in great detail, as every photograph was taken at a clearly defined location in order to document its state before a street was enlarged, a swath was cut, or a building demolished to create a square in that location [pp. 165, 167, 192, 193] [figs. 6–9, pp. 164, 166].

Surprisingly, it is not known how these photographs came to be in the collection of the Musée Carnavalet. No written reference to their source can be found in the entry records. It is possible that the Bibliothèque historique de la Ville de Paris stored them for a while when it was housed in the same building as the museum.²⁵ When the library moved to a neighboring building in 1898, part of the collection was split up between museum and library.²⁶ Since then, the photographer's most beautiful and worldwide most important ensemble has been kept at the Musée Carnavalet – Marville's photographs of Paris are one of the museum's greatest treasures. In contrast to this, we know for certain who gave Marville's remarkable pictures of the building work on Avenue de l'Opéra and Boulevard Henri IV [pp. 190–193], taken at the end of the 1870s, to the Ecole des ponts: in 1896, the engineer André Jozan left them to the collection of the school where he had studied.

Extensive details about acquisitions are the exception. Often, when looking through the entry records of a collection, one notices that the pictures were continuously added over the course of several years – be it through periodic acquisitions of the works of specific photographers, donations by private individuals, or transfers from other institutions. In 1865, for example, the “surintendant des Beaux-Arts,” nowadays roughly equivalent to the Minister of Culture, proposed that the Professor of Construction at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts “make a selection among the photographs in the ministry.”²⁷ The Musée Carnavalet, on the other hand, receives photographs, year after year, from the Commission du Vieux Paris (committee for the protection of the Old Paris), which were taken before the start of the respective municipal demolition and building projects. The Bibliothèque nationale de France received an important donation in 1924, which further enhanced its rich collection of documentary photographs. It came from Paul Blondel, a modest but very careful collector; among these works is the wonderful picture by Le Gray showing the Seine with the Pont du Carrousel [p. 22].

The Future of the Collections

“A collection is not a passive affair. It is a dynamic process,” wrote French curator Jean-Claude Lemagny in 1983, who was the first person to be exclusively responsible for looking after the photographic collection of the Bibliothèque nationale.²⁸ By now, the value of the Paris collections is beyond debate, but there are still important tasks for present and future generations of curators, conservators, documentalists, historians, and other scientists: intensifying their efforts and sharing their knowledge, they will contribute to a better appreciation of all the photographic collections. A significant contribution to this is made by various tools, which are constantly optimized and which ensure that the collections can be stored under the best possible conditions today and made accessible to a wide audience.

- 1 Walter Benjamin, “Paris, die Stadt im Spiegel. Denkbilder,” in: *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Rolf Tiedeman, Vol. 4.1, Frankfurt a.M., 1980, p. 356.
- 2 Walter Benjamin, “Kleine Geschichte der Photographie,” in: *Die Literarische Welt*, Nos. 38–40, Sept./Oct. 1931.
- 3 Nicole Garnier, *La photographie du XIX^{ème} siècle à Chantilly*, Paris, 2001.
- 4 Emilie Bernard, “Les principaux lieux institutionnels dans le secteur de la photographie,” in: *Musées et collections publiques de France*, No. 251 (*Conserver et exposer la photographie au musée*), 2007/2, pp. 91–97.
- 5 Jean-Pierre Seguin, Weston Naef, Bernard Marbot, *Regards sur la photographie en France au XIX^{ème} siècle, 180 chefs d'œuvres de la Bibliothèque nationale*, Paris, 1980.
- 6 Sylvie Aubenas, “Magique circonstancielle, le fonds de photographies du XIX^{ème} siècle au département des Estampes et de la photographie de la BNF,” in: *Études photographiques*, No. 16, May 2005, pp. 210–221.
- 7 Gisèle Excoffon, Jean Michel, “L'Ecole des ponts et chaussées et la photographie 1857–1907,” in: *Les grands travaux. Les Années-Déclic. Niépce en poche*, in: *Photogénies*, No. 2, Paris, 1983.
- 8 Catherine Mathon, “Du fonds à la collection: les photographies anciennes de l'Ecole des Beaux-Arts,” in: *Les chefs-d'œuvres de la photographie dans les collections de l'Ecole des Beaux-Arts*, Paris, 1991.
- 9 Françoise Reynaud, Dominique Baqué, Anne Cartier-Bresson, *Portraits d'une capitale, de Daguerre à William Klein*, ed. Collections photographiques du musée Carnavalet, Paris, 1992.
- 10 Various authors, “Les collections photographiques de la Bibliothèque historique,” *Bulletin de la Bibliothèque et des travaux historiques*, Vol. 11, Paris, 1986.
- 11 Françoise Reynaud, Marie de Thézy, “Guide d'une collection. Collections du musée Carnavalet et de la Bibliothèque historique de la ville de Paris,” in: *Photographies*, No. 3, Dec. 1983, pp. 74–81.
- 12 Various authors, *Des grands chantiers ... hier, photographie, dessin: outils de l'architecte et de l'ingénieur autour de 1900 dans les collections de la Bibliothèque administrative de la ville de Paris*, Paris 1988.

- 13 Françoise Heilbrun, "La photographie entre au musée," in: Françoise Heilbrun and Quentin Bajac, *Orsay la photographie*, Paris 2000, pp. 7–15; *La photographie au musée d'Orsay*, ed. Françoise Heilbrun, Paris, 2008.
- 14 Bernard Marbot, *Une invention du XIX^{ème} siècle, expression et technique, la photographie: collections de la Société française de la photographie*, Paris, 1976.
- 15 A. de Mondenard, *La mission héliographique, cinq photographes parcourent la France en 1851*, Paris 2002.
- 16 The negatives of the Médiathèque de l'architecture et du patrimoine are kept in the photographic archives of Fort de Saint-Cyr, near Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines. The prints are held in the archives of the library of Charenton-le-Pont. A description of the inventory can be found in the excellent work quoted here. However, after this had been published, the collection was reorganized: Philippe Néagu, Jean-Jacques Poulet-Allemagny, *Anthologie d'un patrimoine photographique, 1847–1926*, Paris, 1980.
- 17 François Cheval, "L'Épreuve du musée," in: *Etudes photographiques*, No. 11, May 2002, pp. 4–43; *Photographies histoires parallèles, collection du musée Nicéphore Niépce*, ed. François Cheval, Chalon-sur-Saône, 2000.
- 18 Berenice Abbott, *The World of Atget*, New York, 1979.
- 19 Michel Frizot, "Après l'histoire (de la photographie) ... la photologie," in: *Musées et collections publiques de France*, No. 251 (*Conserver et exposer la photographie au musée*), 2007/2, pp. 20–25.
- 20 An eagerly awaited reference work describing the photographers' activities is due to be published soon. It is the outcome of many years spent combing through the archives of Parisian notaries. Its author, Marc Durand, carried out his research at the Minutier central (the general archive of the Parisian notaries) in Paris, where he examined contracts, the inventories of testator's estates, files, etc.
- 21 The Giraudon agency and the Bulloz agency operated in Paris for many years. They cooperated with Hanfstaengl in Germany, with Mansell in England, with Hermann Heid in Austria, and with Alinari in Italy. These agencies all stored large numbers of negatives and prints. They took part in international exhibitions where they also won prizes. Cf. Monique Le Pelley Fonteny, *Adolphe and Georges Giraudon, une bibliothèque photographique*, Paris/Bourges, 2005.
- 22 Rapport du 01.19.1866, No. 11, travaux pendant l'année 1865 (report dated 01.19.1866, No. 11, Works Throughout the Year 1865), Archives nationales, Paris, Série AJ 13, 531; quoted in: Elvire Perego, "Delmaet et Durandelle ou la rectitude des lignes, un atelier du XIX^{ème}," in: *Photographies*, No. 5, July 1984, pp. 54–75, p. 66 and footnote 19.
- 23 Note du chef de la division des Travaux de Paris (note by the director of Paris Office for Urban Planning), 01.20.1873, dossier held in the archives of the Musée Carnavalet.
- 24 Letter by Charles Marville to the director of Paris Office for Urban Planning, 01.30.1873, dossier held in the archives of the Musée Carnavalet.
- 25 The prints by Marville were mentioned in the records of the Bibliothèque historique de la Ville de Paris.
- 26 Marie de Thézy, "Les photographies anciennes et modernes," in: *Les collections photographiques de la Bibliothèque historique, Bulletin de la Bibliothèque et des travaux historiques*, Vol. 11, Paris, 1986, p. 8.
- 27 Correspondence dated 12.19.1865, Ecole des Beaux-Arts, AJ 52, 444; quoted in: Catherine Mathon, "Du fonds à la collection: les photographies anciennes," in: *Les Chefs-d'œuvres de la photographie dans les collections de l'Ecole des Beaux-Arts*, Paris, 1991, p. 12.
- 28 Jean-Claude Lemagny, "La Bibliothèque nationale, Paris, enrichissements," in: *Photographies*, No. 1, spring 1983, p. 88.

Traffic – The City and its Flowing Elements

Michel Frizot

Shortly after the invention of the first photographic method, the daguerreotype, the Geneva writer and illustrator Rodolphe Töpffer severely criticized the efforts of this fledgling “art” and listed the reasons for the undeniable superiority, as he saw it, of painting and drawing. He compared the work of art created by hand – and hence directly linked to the intellect – with photography, the optical impression or mere reflection: “What the daguerreotypes are lacking, this quality, which for ever separates the miracle of this method from the simple products of an intelligent creation, is the imprint of the human individual spirit, is the soul which transcribes itself on the canvas, is the poetic will, which finds expression in any kind of style (...).”¹ The controversy did not last long, since photography soon established itself as an independent medium of depiction and was no longer a danger for painting, which was incidentally discovering new fields for itself. Painting was now much more than only an imitation of nature, shapes, precision, perspective, or space; painters increasingly concentrated on those things that photography could not express: color, movement, style of painting, nighttime, and symbols – until, thanks to the progress it was making, photography occasionally caught up with them, in the pursuit of ever-new aims and goals whose accomplishment was constantly put forth. In terms of the relationship between the two media, the second half of the 19th century can be considered the story of a contest, a competition whose stakes and challenges were never expressly put into words, but whose impact immediately becomes apparent when one compares the two media, photography and painting, or juxtaposes them, as in the present exhibition. This is in no way a matter of drawing a comparison, but about exploring the respective possibilities and factors that determine the feasibility of an image as well as its underlying motifs.

Töpffer and others after him attacked photography in order to defend the clearly defined territory of painting, which they thought was being threatened by photography. They did, however, acknowledge the advantages and qualities of this “mechanical art” – yes, they even went as far as calling daguerreotypes the “mirror of nature.” The fact that photography, within the space of only fifty years, managed to establish itself and rule all the categories of pictorial representation, including the illustration of magazines and books, is a result of the characteristics of the photographic method and the extraordinary possibilities that go hand in hand with this. These possibilities came to light at the very beginning of the invention of the daguerreotype process and continue to exist today, also in digital photography, as the characteristics of all matters “photographic.”

The Camera in the City

The spectacular nature of the photographic image – which, from 1839 onwards, aroused the admiration of contemporaries – can be ascribed to its mode of production. The picture is created in a darkroom, the *camera obscura*, a box equipped with a lens, initially dubbed “Daguerre’s camera” and later simply “camera.” It primarily depends on two factors, which one has to be aware of in order to understand the system of representation concerned, and which was

developed at the beginning of the 1850s: on the one hand, the laws of optics that determine the path of the light rays and, on the other hand, the light sensitivity of the photographic surface, which is prepared prior to the shot and on which the effect of the light will be seen.

In comparison to manual methods of creating images (drawing, painting), photography therefore exhibits characteristics that led to its immediate success: the precision and clarity of all parts of the image (forms, objects, perspective) as well as its speed of operation. Around 1860 a photograph generally took only a few seconds; in 1900 only about a hundredth of a second. These are the two most important determinants of photography and sometimes they are taken to such extremes that “all” details are visible, even the most unsightly or those one would rather not see. The photographic method does not differentiate in any way and does not filter. The photograph neither requires significant human intervention nor extraordinary talent; one can take a photograph with one’s eyes closed – the picture can be taken “automatically” or rather “autonomously.”

When confronted with a selection of photographs whose central motif is a city, such as Paris, one should always be aware that the photographic process can only take place in situ and only with the use of the appropriate equipment. Photographers must have a camera at their disposal, make sure that it will function by preparing a light-sensitive surface, and find a stable site in the city for their equipment. The “image” is, then, nothing more than a projection of a part of the space, sampled in accordance with the laws of optics.

This contingent relationship between a device, which only operates within a narrow field of vision in a single direction in space, and an entire available panorama extending in all directions is what defines the photographic image. It is impossible to understand the countless photographs – which, by now, following the invention of photography, are in circulation – without having an idea of the conditions under which they were created. Firstly, the image provides a confirmation of the “point of view” or location, a point in space from which the view is recorded, and with it the certainty that this point actually exists and that it is obviously possible to set up a photographic apparatus there. Before a photograph is considered beautiful or extraordinary, awakens interest, or appears nondescript, it is a visual materialization of this “installation.” From the moment photographers set up their camera at a point in space, it is obvious that they can no longer alter the view they will obtain. The fact that the camera must be set in a specific place is a prerequisite. Depending on the reason why a photograph is taken, the choice of location is the first decision to make.

Construction Sites: Views of...

Apart from appropriate technical means as the basic requirement for every photograph, there is also always the question of what motivates a picture. Even we, who are only familiar with the relatively easily executed snapshot, tend to be motivated by something specific (which we are sometimes not even aware of) in order to brave the difficulties of operating a camera, to acquire the necessary skills, to invest time in the taking of a photograph, or to muster the diligence necessary to produce a good print. To put it differently: whoever undertook this activity at a time when it was not enough simply to press a button² had to have the will to “take a picture.” The production of images that complied with the photographic criteria of precision and sharpness was initially defined as an “appraisal” of the urban situation at a specific historical moment in time. With regard to the city, this implies documenting the process of its transformation. Paris, in this respect, is a perfect example, as the city was in a permanent state of transformation during the second half of the 19th century. The work – which started during the Second Empire (1852–1870) and particularly comprised the construction of wide streets and boulevards under the supervision of Georges-Eugène Haussmann – was in no way reduced during the Third Republic; it continued under Jean-Charles Adolphe Alphand and Eugène Belgrand, whereby the emphasis after 1870 was more on the improvement of services and hygiene than on splendor and luxury.

The remodeling of the city produced two principal reasons for taking photographs: one wanted to photograph what was there before demolition or change took place (either that which had already been there for a long time or that which had recently been constructed), and one wanted to document the transformation process, from the destruction of the old all the way to the completion of the new [p. 179]. Many of the photographs were commissioned by different protagonists of the urban transformation: the city administration (the photo album of prefect Berger, for example, contains photographs by Henri Le Secq from 1852), the architectural offices, the companies, the commissions for monument preservation, or the editors of volumes and documentation covering the building sites of the public sector, to mention only a few. It is hard to imagine to what extent Paris resembled a permanent building site for half a century.

Some of the photographers even specialized: Edouard Baldus in the new Louvre building [pp. 183–185], Hippolyte Collard in the bridges, aqueducts, and train lines [pp. 115–117], Louis-Emile Durandelle in the new Opera [p. 106–109], and many others in the buildings of the institutions, the construction sites of the World Exhibition, which took place every eleven years, the design of the new parks, and so forth. Photography – unlike the painted image – was able to function as a record or logbook; it made a survey possible that was even more precise than a written protocol, showing how the construction of the scaffolding and the cutting of the stones progressed, which techniques were used, what the workers workloads were, which construction techniques and materials were used (the introduction of steel girders), or how the sculptors helped with the decorative design of the surfaces. The numerous photographs of building sites evoke the dissection of an enormous body – an endoscopic device provided an insight into the city’s inside. Such a point of view also complies with the idea of the city as an organism: even the photographs documenting the demolition of the buildings (for the creation of streets) reveal this wounded interior and mercilessly expose the traces of a “surgical” intervention.

Traffic: Views of ...

The fact that city views are so widespread in photography is because the photographers, for the most part, took up residence in cities, and because it was easier to transport the equipment (including the heavy glass plates for the negatives) from there to a nearby site than over a long distance. Initially, photographs were taken from a window in one’s own flat (Niépce, Daguerre), from hotel rooms (like Talbot in Paris in 1843), or from a terrace (Bayard). Once the photographers had set up their own studios, which, because of the better light, were located on the upper floors of buildings, they soon discovered the advantages of pointing the camera slightly downwards from a higher vantage point. Now the photograph was no longer a “view” (of a monument or a specific location) – like an architectural drawing – but a “view onto” an urban formation from a specific point chosen for its unrestricted view. In this manner, scattered elements could be combined in a single image. This remark is not universally valid, since the reasons for the photographs vary (a commission, for documentary archives, or to supply to a hypothetical market), but it is striking that the great Paris photographers of the 1850s – Gustave Le Gray, the Bisson brothers, or Edouard Baldus – cultivated panorama shots in the sense of an overview taken from above and looking towards the horizon [pp. 23, 24].

The impulse for this new perspective that gave the city, formerly viewed on the ground at eye level, a different appearance and a new meaning was provided by Victor Hugo’s 1831 novel *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* – and by the protagonist Quasimodo, who was so very familiar with the towers of the cathedral. Photography was now required to transform this imaginary picture, until then only existing “in the imagination” (of an onlooker located on the parapet of a building), into a real one, which people could look at, hold close to themselves, and examine closely – with the possibility of coming back to it time and again, in order to find new clues that it inevitably revealed. This novelty of visual control – initiated by the penetrating, inquisitive gaze and brought to life by numerous realistic details – is what makes all the photographs taken in the city from a higher elevation so special. Such a “view upon ...” combines the bird’s-eye view and the view at eye level, and has the advantage that all the various transportation systems are

shown in the segment of space, which starts in front of the viewer and follows the latter's line of sight. In it, one can see the lanes, the bridges, the pavements, the river, the waterfront; to a certain degree, the eye follows the lines of the traffic networks made of stone and iron.

In the 1850s, when exposure times were still too long to record moving objects (horse-drawn carts or pedestrians), the city appears empty, but it presents itself as a traffic system just begging to be used. The urban transformation documented by the photographers, sometimes also as part of a direct commission, were primarily improvements to the traffic network: the urban web adapted itself to the requirements of commerce, the invasion of the "transport systems," and their speed, which was made possible by the straight lines drafted across the city.

From Here to There: Views Towards ...

At the end of the 1850s, photography was already considered an indispensable testimony of all metamorphoses of the city, which, by then, had become far more than simply a place to live in: the city had become the motor initiating all activities. The newly created boulevards and avenues – lined by commercial premises, theaters, and entertainment venues – generated a sense of urban hustle and bustle. From the historical center that remained static, a star-shaped network radiated out all the way to a kind of ring road, which itself provided an impulse for the new dynamic. No matter where photographers now set up their tripod – often in the middle of the street or in a place seemingly part of the traffic network – they wanted to show that one can move from "here" to "there," on foot, or following one's line of sight. From here, one looks "in the direction of" and no longer head on at the monument or the facades. The photographic object is created with the intention of showing something; it is linked to topographic knowledge and the ability to find one's way in the city [p. 187].

Charles Marville was the first great master of the topography of traffic. Commissioned by the Paris Municipal Office of Promenades and Plantation, he worked for the department called "Travaux Historiques," in charge of historical research and reports, and photographed the historical center of Paris prior to its restructuring (from 1865). A caption for one of his photographs is *Rue de l'Épée-de-bois, seen from Rue Mouffetard in the direction of Rue du Noir*, conveying a dynamic view of the city and demanding a visual positioning within the urban movement or flux. The sense of sight (viewing direction) is linked with the sense of orientation (the walking direction); two views of one-and-the-same street may differ in that the photographs were taken in opposite directions. The photographs of the opening of the Avenue de l'Opéra or Boulevard Henri IV [pp. 190–193] follow the same demonstrative intention as the images from the suburban areas (also by Marville, [pp. 211–215]), even though the latter were not intended for a scientific archive.

In the 1860s, the way the photographers acted in space changed. The photographer became part of a real, perceptible, and atmospheric space, which was no longer as abstract as the space of an architectural drawing. Marville still adhered to a strict method, but many of the pictures that were no longer subject to the same restrictions – such as the stereoscopic views, whose purpose was to convey the impression of the viewer who was part of the urban life – also acted unintentionally as images of the flow of traffic: the countless boulevards, bridges, and squares transport the viewer, and especially the one who catches the spatial depth in these pictures, right into the center of these transport networks. This change is confirmed by the works of Eugène Atget, who seems to stroll down the streets despite the fact that his camera is positioned on a tripod either on the pavement or on the sidewalk.

Flowing Elements

Anyone who wants to produce a photographic inventory of a city like Paris must, as already mentioned, select a point of view and take up a position. A specific direction must be decided upon, the distance determined, and the frame of the picture set according to the "subject." These mental steps (precisely establishing the determinants that govern a

photograph) are seldom described, but they are obligatory even though, admittedly, they take place on different intellectual levels. They are determined in the imagination by a concept, a general idea of the city, and by what will “take place” in the photograph and what can be made visible. The experienced photographers definitely felt the changes in the city of Paris, particularly since they specialized in creating views of it – in the same way as we today observe such changes without necessarily being able to describe them, as if it were a question of “atmosphere” or “moods.”

In order to understand this, one should consult Paul Strauss’ book *Paris ignoré* (The Disregarded Paris) from 1892, which is illustrated with 550 lifelike drawings most of which were presumably created on the basis of photographs. The “disregarded” Paris, which simply is not as well known as the Paris of the monuments, is the Paris of the administration. The author was a member of the municipal council, and he describes life in the city and the life of its inhabitants, giving the reader an idea of this living machinery. While the first chapter is dedicated to the “customs” controlling the import of goods, further parts of the book deal with the different instruments, which, in previous decades, had organized the running of the city. They were the traffic routes, the sewage system, the supply of water, gas and electricity, the Paris harbor, public transport, the postal and telecommunication systems, etc. What becomes apparent here is that the modernity of Paris invoked by the author is connected to the newly organized elements in motion, comprising all kinds of circuits. Among them are the previously mentioned streets, boulevards, and avenues, as well as the numerous bridges (between 1850 and 1900, 16 of today’s 34 bridges were erected or modified), the circulation of the water brought into the city from remote sources via the aqueducts, and the waste disposal via the sewers. Following these, the river Seine as a transport and discharge route, the ingoing and outgoing trains, and – finally, at the end of the century – the Métro running both below and above ground [p. 119]. Further elements that changed life in Paris were gas for lighting and heating³ and electricity, which, at the first International Exposition of Electricity in Paris in 1881, illuminated a thousand light bulbs and, since the 1890s, has been used for lighting both in the public and in the private sphere.

The increased number of streets, pipes, and cables facilitating the flow of traffic came to symbolize the city’s modernity. Mobile bodies and flowing elements circulated via these carriers, which may have become increasingly invisible but whose impact, in everyday life, could be felt in the presence of vehicles (omnibuses) and ships, in the shape of post and tube mail, the ringing of the telephone, and, last but not least, in the form of running water, gas, and electric power. With the expressions used to describe it, the new character of the city, in turn, refers to the idea of the city as an organism: the body of the city is nourished by a flow of substances in the same way as in the human organism; we speak of “arteries” that emanate from the “heart,” we call the market hall the “stomach of Paris,” and the new parks the city’s “lungs.”

Many photographs can be considered a visualization of urban flow and flux, as they reveal the invisible albeit existing circuits, which are at times present only in our thoughts but are nonetheless functional. The photographs are objective indeed – they capture everything, even the things the photographer is not aware of, and, in fact, they surpass his or her expectations. We only have a fragmented idea of this great urban body, which is impossible to comprehend in its totality. The photographs reveal traces of that which we have forgotten.

Reservoirs

In order to create circuits of flowing elements, one must first store them before one can let them flow and direct their flow. The monuments of modernity are the train stations, the market halls, the abattoirs, the warehouses (e.g. the wine cellars of Bercy), the water reservoirs (Montsouris in the South of Paris, set up by Belgrand in 1874, and photographed by Collard, as well as the aqueduct leading to it), and the gasworks [pp. 104, 105, 215–217]. The large iron halls, which take on a variety of functions – as market halls, factories, or train stations – fulfill manifold circulatory purposes: they bring together and route trains, for example, but also, due to their open structure, they help to disperse smoke

clouds and provide fresh air. All of these modern buildings with their industrial architecture, which were extensively photographed in all their functional stages, consisted of supporting pillars, braces, and glass. They were meant to protect and house – yet, at the same time – to permit other elements such as air, steam, and light to flow.

We recall how fascinated Claude Monet or Norbert Goeneutte (who painted numerous views of train stations) were by the interplay of these flowing movements of light and shadow. Without a doubt, the photographers were just as receptive of this even though they had to fulfill a “catalog of requirements.” The albums of Marville, Collard, Fernique [pp. 116, 216], and others comprise many images of vast containers with openings, windows, and holes that allowed the flowing elements to circulate. The photographers themselves, in order to report about them, also had to move through these open systems in which the potential was created to “nourish” the city (another expression from the terminology of metabolism). It was only thanks to these light-permeable places that they were even able to use their cameras there.⁴ The “camera obscura or darkroom” as a term for the camera is a metaphor for one of these points where the external conditions and the flow of traffic converge within the currents and circuits. Marville, working under commission, even photographed all the newer street lamps that helped to bring a modern “design” to the artificial sources of light [pp. 188–189].

Life and Motion

Ever since the invention of photography, there has been a minor spanner in the works stalling or even stopping the photographic process, and that was Man – the living being. Something about Man is constantly in motion, be it only the heart or the eyelids. Man is the opposite of the motionless, constructed parts of the city and very often people passed through the exposure process, taking anything from minutes to a few seconds to fractions of a second – at least during the second half of the 19th century. In the busier parts of town, where the different circuits and dynamics progressively supplanted the stable elements, humans were increasingly in the “company” of other moving elements – above all, of vehicles which, at the time, were drawn by horses. Within the space of fifty years, this era discovered one of the typical features of industrial civilization: speed. And thanks to snapshots, which became possible between 1880 and 1885, photography eventually managed to overcome this problem. One eagerly tried to bring trains, steam-boats, people on bicycles, horses, or dogs – in short, everything that moves – to a standstill in the photograph.

In the early 1860s, however, due to the small dimension of the negatives, stereoscopy had made it possible to reduce the exposure time to a minimum so that even the hustle and bustle on the boulevards, fun fairs, celebrations, and markets [pp. 195–197] could be documented: horse-drawn carts or barouches blocking the streets or moving through the traffic in all directions or animated, blurry pedestrians walking through the picture illustrate the flowing movement that is seen to lack in other photographs. Insofar as people themselves are part of the general flow of traffic (e.g. in this street or on that bridge), they endow the overall traffic flow with a materiality which, today, no longer astonishes us but which, in the eyes of contemporaries, constituted an “impression of life,” which the representational arts have been trying to capture ever since.

Photographs have long alerted us to things that normally remain unnoticed. In doing so, they have undoubtedly contributed to our making sense of the world. Photography has developed from a physical-optical process – thus introducing a system of depiction, the active principle of which is a flowing element. Wilhelm Röntgen owes his discovery of the X-ray in 1895 to photography, and, at the time, one hoped for new insights into further phenomena in this field.⁵ Right from the start, therefore, photography took up the sphere of depicting the flowing, the mobile, and the invisible, in which it challenged painting by constantly redefining the visual points of reference.

- 1 Text from the year 1841 (published 1852), in: Rodolphe Töpffer, *Mélanges*, reprinted in: Heinz Buddemeier, *Panorama, Diorama, Photographie. Entstehung und Wirkung neuer Medien im 19. Jahrhundert*, Munich, 1970, pp. 234–250 (original quote: p. 236).
- 2 “You press the button, we do the rest!” – advertising slogan for Kodak No. 1 (1888), which revolutionized the process of taking a photograph and opened up a new world of images.
- 3 Numerous buildings featured the notice, which the Surrealists famously took up later: “Water and gas on every floor.”
- 4 In the 1830s, Paris was given the name “city of light” due to the large-scale urban lighting, especially in the arcades.
- 5 *Im Reich der Phantome. Fotografie des Unsichtbaren*, exh. cat., Städtisches Museum Abteiberg, Mönchengladbach, 1997. For example, cf. E. N. Santini, *La photographie à travers les corps opaques par les rayons électriques, cathodiques et de Röntgen*, Paris, 1896, or E. N. Santini, *La photographie des effluves humains: historique, discussion, etc.*, Paris, 1898.

Emile Zola and Paris of the Impressionists

Karlheinz Stierle

Paris is a city that has constantly reinvented itself over the centuries. But only in the second half of the 19th century did it evolve into a metropolis – a modern global city. During the July Monarchy from 1830 to 1848, authors such as Honoré de Balzac, Victor Hugo, and Eugène Sue helped to form an urban myth that was to become the model for urban literature the world over.¹ In a second phase in which a modern aesthetics of the city developed, Paris again evolved into an innovative and pioneering site. If, in actual fact, novels and poetry on Paris saw the city as a challenge for literary representation, then Impressionist painting responded to this, turning Paris into a visual celebration through the medium of the image.

In their images of the city, Manet, Monet, Renoir, Degas, Pissarro, Caillebotte, Sisley, and many other Impressionists discovered the modern sides of Paris, with its reflections and refractions of light pulsating in the chromaticity of the moment. The Second Empire under Napoleon III and the Third Republic following its collapse was the great period of Impressionist images of Paris. The new Paris – constructed in ambitious, breathtaking speed under Napoleon III and his chief urban planner Baron Georges-Eugène Haussmann – was the Paris of the world exhibitions, the triumph of Parisian taste and “savoir vivre,” the wide boulevards with their magnificent, extensive perspectives, the bustling large public open spaces, the rapidly constructed iron architecture of the Grand Palais, the Parisian market halls, and the new train stations. It was these new sights of Paris glimpsed between daytime and nocturnal city illumination, which the Impressionists captured in a first moment of fascinated, riveted observation.

No other author followed the artistic group – the members of which named themselves “Impressionists” after the title of Monet’s painting *Impression, Sunrise* (p. 73) from 1873 – with such keen interest and approval, albeit not without a critical eye, than Emile Zola. As an art critic who between 1866 and 1899 regularly wrote on the Paris Salons, the annual official art exhibitions held in the Grand Palais, he was able to trace the development of Impressionist city painting at first hand. Above all, however, Zola’s great novel cycle comprising twenty volumes – *The Rougon-Macquart, Natural and social history of a family during the second empire, 1871–1893* – presents an entire gallery of literary images of Paris, with which Zola almost seems to be competing with other artistic media for the most evocative images of Paris. As a novelist, Zola is to be read in the tradition of the Paris novels penned by Balzac and Hugo. As an attentive art critic, however, he not only follows the development of Impressionist painting, but he also investigates the latter in his novels on Paris. Although inspired by it, he simultaneously seeks to outperform it with his own literary means.

Zola as an Art Critic

In his art criticism, Zola was the first to ardently support the young movement of the Impressionists, including their attack of history painting and its academicism. He particularly defended Edouard Manet and his scandalous painting,

Lunch on the Grass (1862/63). His first series of articles on the Salon of 1866 already sees him taking sides with Manet, the artistic outsider ridiculed and derided by the public, whom Zola celebrates as the misunderstood young champion of a new painting:

“As no one is saying it, I will declare it, proclaim it loud. I am so certain that Monsieur Manet will be one of the masters of tomorrow that I would consider it a good idea – were I to have the means – to buy all his paintings today. In ten years’ time, they will be sold for fifteen, or twenty, times their price, and those costing forty thousand francs will no longer be worth forty francs.”²

In appreciation for Zola’s support, Manet devoted a portrait to the writer in 1868, one of his most beautiful ever painted [fig. 1, p. 228]. The work was accepted by the Salon in the very same year, and Zola did not refrain from praising it excessively – all the more as Manet achieved his breakthrough with this particular Salon.

In spite of Zola’s excessive admiration for the young movement of the Impressionists, a subtle yet ever-more-pronounced criticism of it can be sensed – particularly in the later *Salons* – which does not even bypass Manet. Although Zola regarded the Impressionists as pioneers of a new genre of painting that had succeeded to liberate itself from the restraints of the studio and of academicism, in the Salon of 1879 he already wrote that the Impressionists were in danger of surrendering themselves to the moment and of neglecting pictorial composition: “All those artists take the easy way out. They do away with the consistency of well-constructed works too quickly; and so, alas, they merely point the way for the great artist whom the world is awaiting.”³ Zola primarily accused Monet of working too hastily, thereby corrupting his talent. In his presentation of the Salon of 1880, Zola welcomes the idea that the academy’s authority – and, with it, its unimaginative history painting – was finally diminishing:

“Every year one sees less pictures painted according to the rules of the academy, nude studies of men or women shown to the public under the guise of mythology, classical or romantic subjects, historic works, paintings pushed towards black by tradition; and, in this vein, figures on foot wearing the latest fashion gradually appear, painted *en plein air*, elegant or popular scenes, the Bois de Boulogne, market halls, our boulevards, and our domestic interiors. It is an increasing, irresistible flood of modernity that gradually carries away l’Ecole des beaux-arts, the academy, all remedies and all conventions.”⁴

But in spite of this, he considers the fact that no great masterpiece had as yet emerged from the Impressionist movement: “The great misfortune is that not a single artist of this group has realized powerfully and definitely the new formula that all of them have scattered in their works.”⁵ “They are satisfied too quickly” is Zola’s constant accusation. However, this deficit comes from the very nature of Impressionist painting, which seeks to capture the nuances of the moment as reflected in the eye: “This study of light in its thousand decompositions and recompositions is what has been more or less properly called Impressionism, because, from then on, a painting becomes the impression of a moment experienced in the presence of nature.”⁶ The entire object ultimately seems to dissolve in the patches of light that surround it. The haphazard, autonomous patches of color destroy the picture: “Oh, those ladies who have a blue cheek by moonlight, and a bright red one by the light of a shaded lamp! Oh, those horizons with blue trees, red water, and green skies. It is hideous, hideous, hideous!” – These are the desperate words of the aging Zola in his last critique of the Salon of 1896.⁷

Zola’s Literary Impressionism

In his critique of the Salon of 1880, Zola already asserts the ultimate achievements of the artistic movement for which he believes the names *naturalisme*, *impressionisme*, and *modernisme* are interchangeable.⁸ The great images of the city in his Paris novels – do they not resemble the unpainted images of an ideal Impressionism, an Impressionism not only of the faculties but of its imaginary completion in the medium of language? Is Zola’s real dream – beyond his project of an “experimental novel” – not possibly that of surpassing painterly Impressionism?

In the short article entitled *On Description*, which Zola incorporates as a separate chapter in *The Experimental Novel* from 1880 – a collection of theoretical texts on the Naturalist novel – Zola takes it upon himself to write narrative approximating scientific description.⁹ In a combined gesture of self-justification and criticism, this simultaneously allows him to eschew his own Paris descriptions as found in his great Paris novel, *A Love Episode* (1878), the five chapter endings of which describe Paris seen from the heights of Montmartre at different times of day and in various seasons – subjected to changing weather conditions as well as the subjective dispositions of perception. At the sight of the city and its inexorable energy stretching out beneath a giant sky, Hélène is consumed with a passion that might be strong as the city with its breath of life, and which seems to open up a tempting, wholly unknown world to her:

“It was as the ocean, with all the infinity and mystery of its waves. Paris spread out as vast as the heavens on high. Burnished with the sunshine that lovely morning, the city looked like a field of yellow corn; and the huge picture was all simplicity, compounded as two colors only, the pale blue of the sky, and the golden reflections of the housetops. The stream of light from the spring sun invested everything with the beauty of a new birth. So pure was the light that the minutest objects became visible. Paris, with its chaotic maze of stonework, shone as though under glass. From time to time, however, a breath of wind passed athwart this bright, quiescent serenity; and then the outlines of some districts grew faint, and quivered as if they were being viewed through an invisible flame.”¹⁰

Towards the end of the novel’s subsequent four chapters, the very same panoramic view of the city appears in the changeable lighting conditions of the day and the seasons. The five large aerial-view images of Paris at the end of the five parts of the novel break away from their narrative context to form a great symphony of the city. In this way, Zola is aiming at a kind of Impressionism that is, ultimately, to outshine Impressionism in painting. Before the medium of film will make this possible, Zola uses a dynamic form of vision to set his images into movement, thus uniting both the momentary and successive nature of vision.

With *The Belly of Paris* (1873) – his first great Paris novel, the novel about the milieu of the Parisian central markets, Les Halles – Zola rigorously seems to adhere to his Naturalist program. However, the images of the spectacular modern iron architecture of the market halls are separated from their Naturalist context, gaining an intrinsic aesthetic value as Impressionist images of the city set in language. Florent, a fugitive political prisoner, returns to Paris; early in the morning and sick of hunger, he discovers the wondrous new world of the food markets as they wake up and, slowly, with the early light of dawn receive ever clearer contours. This picture of the modern city is, again, a moving image:

“But what surprised Florent most was the sight of some huge pavilions on either side of the street, pavilions with soaring roofs that seemed to expand and disappear from sight in shimmers of light. In his dazed state he thought that he was looking at a series of enormous, symmetrically built palaces, light and airy as crystal, and catching on their facades, as though filtered through their endless shutters, a thousand rays of light.”¹¹

Florent – who, having fallen unconscious, is taken by the vegetable seller Françoise up into her cart – sinks into the midst of the waking world of Les Halles, while the painter Claude Lantier, whom Françoise knows well, joins them. He has come here to paint a large Impressionist still life in the morning light:

“The piles of greenery were like waves, a river of green flowing along the roadway like an autumn torrent; and they assumed delicate, shadowy hues – pale violet, milky pink, a greenish yellow, all the soft, light hues that turn the sky into a canopy of shot silk as the sun rises. By degrees, as the fires of dawn rose higher and higher at the far end of the Rue Rambuteau, the mass of vegetables grew brighter and brighter, emerging more and more clearly from the bluish shadows on the ground. Lettuces, endives, chicory, open and with rich soil still clinging to their roots, exposed their swelling hearts; bunches of spinach, sorrel, and artichokes, piles of peas and beans, mounds of cos lettuces, tied up with straw, sounded every note in the scale of greens, from the lacquered green of the pods to the course green of the leaves; a continuous scale of rising and falling notes that died away in the mixed tones of the tufts of celery and the bundles of leeks. But the highest notes, at the very top of the scale, came from the bright carrots and snowy turnips, scattered in tremendous quantities throughout the markets, which lit up with their medley of colors.”¹²

Painting impressionistically with words, the captivated author Zola follows his imaginary Impressionist painter Lantier, who is fascinated by the unrivaled modern aesthetic beauty of the masses of vegetables on display amidst the magnificent modern iron architecture of the market halls, the architectural masterpiece of Victor Baltard. In the above passage, Zola composes a crescendo of visual intensity, which essentially surpasses the possibilities of an Impressionist painting and its depiction of an ephemeral moment caught between different nuances of color. It would only be film that would later deliver the technology to convert what Zola narrates as a dynamic event in time. Metaphors and an artistic syntax that create a rhythm of increasing intensity are Zola's literary tools to help contrast his own linguistic Impressionism with that of the painters.

Time and again, Zola exceeds the limits of the Naturalist social novel and devotes himself to an Impressionistic observation of Paris – its new and modern allure – which, at the same time, also evolves into the great subject of Impressionist painting. Having mastered the basics of *plein air* landscape painting, Impressionism now approached the urban landscape of the modern metropolis. Zola's novel *The Ladies' Paradise* (1883) celebrates the city and its great modern iron architecture of the sublime – here, as the triumphant site of a luxurious world of modern commodities available for all and sundry. Enraptured, the eye takes in the new cathedral of commerce in all its supernatural glamour, displaying the commodity as fetish. Zola speaks for the painter, who follows the gaze of a female customer as she enters the modern world of the department store on its opening day:

“When she reached the main gallery, she looked up. It was like the concourse of a station, surrounded by the balustrades of the two upper storeys, intersected by hanging staircases, and with suspension bridges built across it. The iron staircases, with double spirals, opened out in bold curves, multiplying the landings; the iron bridges, thrown across the void, ran straight along, very high up; and beneath the pale light from the windows all this metal formed a delicate piece of architecture, a complicated lacework through which the daylight passed, the modern realization of a dream-palace, of a Babel-like accumulation of storeys in which halls opened out, offering glimpses of other storeys and other halls without end.”¹³

The counterworld to *The Ladies' Paradise* – with its heroine Denise who climbs the social ladder from a simple salesgirl to the director's wife – is that of the “demi-monde,” the half-world where the social classes literally meet and make contact with one another. Their stage is the Passage Jouffroy. And *Nana* (*Nana*, 1880) – the attractive, sensual actress and occasional prostitute, who pulls the utterly infatuated Count Muffat into ruin – is at the center of this world. The highlight of Zola's Impressionism is the following portrait of Passage Jouffroy into which the passers-by crowd, seeking shelter from a sudden rain shower:

“It was a very mild night and there had just been a shower; people had crowded into the narrow arcade for shelter and were slowly and laboriously threading their way between the shop-fronts. The glass roof was gleaming with bright reflections and the passage was ablaze with light from the white globes, the red lamps, the blue transparencies, and blanks of flaring gas-jets depicting giant watches and fans flickering in the air; and behind the clear plate-glass shop-windows, the gaudy displays, the gold of the jewelers, the crystal ware of the confectioners were all glittering in the glare of the reflectors; amidst the motley collection of garish shop-signs, a huge purple glove seemed from afar like a bleeding severed hand held on by a yellow cuff.”¹⁴

Caught amidst the hustling passers-by, Count Muffat now takes in the banality of window displays, while – waiting – he is beset by the suspicion that Nana may have deceived him. To escape their inquisitive glances, “... the count took up his stand in front of a stationer's shop and studied with close attention a display of round, glass paperweights in which flowers and landscapes were floating (...) A passer-by bumped against him, and without realizing it the count left the paperweights and found himself standing absent-mindedly in front of a cheap gift shop displaying notebooks and cigar-holders, all marked with the same blue swallow in a corner.”¹⁵ Never before has an ensemble or array of kitsch been described with such intensity from the perspective of an absent-minded consciousness.

Zola, the Perfecter of Impressionism

The figure of the Parisian painter Claude Lantier, who already appears in *The Belly of Paris*, is at the center of Zola's novel *The Masterpiece* (1886). This is the story of a painter obsessed by the beauty of modern Paris, a painter in search of a new form of pictorial expression beyond the mere artistic routine that Impressionism had evolved into, and which would indeed surpass it – a painting that would be the first to do true justice to the city of Paris. The narrative, however, traces Claude Lantier's utter failure in his artistic endeavors. This is a Naturalist novel about the art world, which Zola – as an art critic – was acquainted with. Yet, at the same time, it is a gallery of images of Paris, which the painter is trying to capture and which increasingly make him lose hope in his infuriating task. Although *The Masterpiece* tells the story of a failing Impressionist, it is to be read as Zola's own self-assertion as an Impressionist – in the medium of language. Time and again, the painter Claude meets his friend, the writer Sandoz, to discuss art and their shared dream of creating new modes of artistic expression each in their respective artistic languages.

The figure of Claude Lantier embodies the story or *history*, so to speak, of Impressionism itself, according to Zola. Claude's first great work with which he tries to force his acceptance into the Salon is a studio painting that is ironically to bear the title "Plein air." The picture, a landscape scene with three nude women and a man wearing a fashionable velvet vest, is clearly an allusion to Manet's *Lunch on the Grass* – and, like it, is rejected but also ridiculed in the Salon des Refusés by an audience lacking in artistic understanding. The oppressive failure of his work compels Claude to move to the countryside with Christine, his beloved, for some years. Only then does he really become familiar with outdoor painting, whereupon he returns to the city as an Impressionist sure of his artistic prowess and ready to appropriate Paris as an artistic subject – in the same way that the *plein air* painters and early Impressionists took to the countryside prior to discovering the big city as an ideal Impressionist subject.

With obsessive determination, Claude now begins to make the city accessible to his art. He paints an image of wretchedness behind the Butte Montmartre, which is again refused by the Salon. A picture of the Square des Batignolles undergoes the same fate and is subsequently destroyed by the artist. A painting of Place du Carrousel dating from the third year after returning to the city seems to afford an artistic breakthrough – an audacious Impressionism of bold colors as never seen before: "But the really startling thing about the picture was its original treatment of light, breaking it down into its components after uncompromising accuracy of observation, but deliberately contradicting all the habits of the eye by stressing blues, yellows, and reds in places where no one expected to see them."¹⁶

This time, his pictorial style is so outré that even his friends begin to have grave doubts and, again, his painting finds no mercy by the Salon jurors. When Claude and Christine's sick, deformed child dies, Claude submits a small painting of him to the Salon where, in a gesture of compassion, it is accepted. At the Salon, Claude has the satisfaction of learning that his former painting "Plein air" had set an artistic precedent and revealed a new aesthetic direction to the taste of the Salon public. Yet it is not he whom the Salon-goers are praising, but rather the versatile opportunist Fageolles, who plagiarizes Claude. Fageolles is an obvious allusion to Claude Monet who, in the eyes of Zola, had stolen Manet's fame and success. With his final painting – an allegory of Paris as a naked woman on a small boat, once more an evocation of Manet's *Lunch on the Grass* – Claude fails yet again; even his friend and wife cease to comprehend the work with which Claude had attempted a masterpiece in order to outperform Impressionism. After all this, the artist subsequently hangs himself in his atelier.

The Masterpiece narrates the story of a failing Impressionist – or, perhaps, of a failing Impressionism? In no other novel did Zola evoke Paris in such grandiose and varied images as in this novel, which he evidently regarded as the masterpiece of his own urban representation, allowing him to surpass, perfect, and even "complete" painterly Impressionism. Zola sees the city through the eyes of his painter, Claude Lantier. He accompanies him on his promenades through the city of Paris in the Second Empire. From the Pont de la Concorde, he joins him as he looks out on to the new layout of the Place de la Concorde and the city lying behind it:

“It was four o’clock, and the day was just beginning to wane in a golden haze of glorious sunshine. To right and left, towards the Madeleine and the Corps Législatif, the lines of the buildings stretched far into the distance, their rooftops cutting clean against the sky. Between them the Tuileries gardens piled up wave upon wave of round-topped chestnut trees, while between the two green borders of its side avenues the Champs-Élysées climbed up and up, as far as the eye could see, up to the gigantic gateway of the Arc de Triomphe, which opened up on to infinity. The Avenue itself was filled with a double stream of traffic, rolling on like twin rivers, with eddies and waves of moving carriages tipped like foam with the sparkle of a lamp-glass or the glint of a polished panel, down to the Place de la Concorde with its enormous pavements and roadways like big, broad lakes, crossed in every direction by the flash of wheels, peopled by black specks which were really human beings, and its two splashing fountains breathing coolness over all its feverish activity. Claude was quivering with delight. ‘Ah! This Paris!’ he cried. ‘It’s ours! All ours for the taking!’”¹⁷

We follow Claude and Christine on their wintertime strolls through Paris – along the Seine when the burning late-afternoon light falls onto the river, the bridges, and the *quais*, and “the vast fairy pictures of space” appear. We see the Place du Carrousel through the eyes of Claude in his desperate artistic struggle. We behold the epiphanic revelation of the city when Claude, in a moment of visual ecstasy, looks at the Ile de la Cité, the heart of the city, from the Pont des Saints-Pères – an experience that seems to reveal to him the sketch of his future masterpiece, his ultimate demise.

It is in Claude’s failure that Zola plays out his own triumph. Paris is perceived through the eyes of the painter, yet it is Zola who puts into words what the painter Claude sees but cannot capture. Zola’s images of Paris are no descriptions of images, but descriptions of an artistic perception that the painter fails to master, thus giving free reign to the representational possibilities that Zola – as a painterly Impressionist or “perfecter” of Impressionism – assumes against his own program of the *roman expérimental*. Did Zola triumph over Claude Lantier and the Impressionism of the Paris painters? Does Lantier’s failed masterpiece, in turn, represent Zola’s triumphant masterpiece? Zola’s identification with his painter-hero is too significant to *not* sense Zola’s personal misgivings about his own literary masterpiece. Does his own representation of Paris not threaten to yield too much to the will of expressivity – and, thus, of going too far in the art of verbal evocation? In spite of Zola’s skepticism of whether or not Impressionism may truly be the highest artistic form of expression of his time, its irresistible vitality certainly asserts itself. Yet the color and freshness of Zola’s own representations of Paris also hold their ground to which the literary myth of Paris – against Zola’s own Naturalist doctrine – owes an important, irreplaceable chapter.

1 On the literary myth of Paris, cf. Karlheinz Stierle, *Der Mythos von Paris. Zeichen und Bewußtsein der Stadt*, Munich, 1993.

2 Emile Zola, *Salons*, eds. F.W.J. Hemmings and Robert J. Niess, Geneva/Paris, 1995, p. 65. The following page references refer to this edition, incorporating Zola’s art criticism for the very first time (transl. A. Kossack).

3 *Ibid.*, p. 227.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 243.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 242f.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 240f.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 267.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 244.

9 “L’emploi scientifique de la description”.

10 Zola, *A Love Episode*, transl. C.C. Starkweather, Marina del Ray, CA, 2008, p. 52f.

11 Zola, *The Belly of Paris*, transl. B. Nelson, Oxford, 2007, p. 8.

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Paris as Seen by the Painters

Monique Nonne

In the 19th century, Paris – thanks to the manifold possibilities it offered – attracted artists from all over the world. Recent publication of their correspondence, writings, and sketch books acquaint us with the artists' everyday lives, with their material or health problems, the difficulties of working as an artist, as well as their connections with art lovers and dealers. 19th-century descriptions of the city remain marginal, even if some artists provide us with virtual illustrations of their surroundings. Their thoughts, allusions, and innuendos, however, offer valuable clues as to their experiences in the capital, which they often explored with great pleasure. The Parisian lifestyle delighted artists: "The city is wonderful!"^{1a} or "What shall I tell you about Paris – other than it still captivates me and that I will most certainly live here one day."² Adolph Menzel calls Paris "Babel."^{3a} But for others, Paris primarily means disillusionment. Kees van Dongen, who arrived on the national holiday – July 14, 1897 – despaired upon finding "a single serious person in this Paris, which I had never seen except in pictures where it appeared far more beautiful than I found it (to be) in reality."⁴

The Flâneur or "Ambulomaniac"

For all those born in the capital or living there, Paris is, above all, an invitation to go for a walk or take a stroll. Antonin Proust, who shared a studio with the young Edouard Manet, reports how they strolled through the streets of the city after they had finished work. "For Manet, the eye played such an important role that Paris had never seen a flâneur of his kind before."^{5a} And elsewhere: "One day, together, we walked up what has since become Boulevard Maiesherbes, amidst the rubble, which alternated with the gaping openings of already leveled patches. The Monceau district did not exist yet. Manet kept stopping. Here, a cedar (...) a bit further away, the demolition workers stood out white against the less-white wall, which collapsed under their blows and surrounded them in a cloud of dust. Manet remained there for a long time, full of admiration and absorbed in this spectacle. 'This is it,' he then exclaimed, 'the Symphony in White Major that Théophile Gautier talks about'."^{5b}

For Edgar Degas, strolling through Paris is something that is beneficial for his health. "Now the days are getting longer, I have to force myself to spend only half of the day in my studio, either the morning or the afternoon, and to go for a walk in the other half. *Ambulare postea laborare*, that is the new motto." The historian Marcel Guérin explains that Degas derived his entire sense of well-being from a genuine "ambulomania."^{6a} In his sketchbooks, Degas records his observations in drawings and notes [fig. 1, p. 236]. For Claude Monet, too, walks are a pleasure. "The way to you," he writes to a friend, "provided me with a wonderful stroll along the Quais and through the Tuileries; it was charming, and I was completely happy."^{7a} Edouard Vuillard feels similarly: "There are even moments in which I am relatively happy, as on that morning when I went on a very pleasant little walk to the Tuileries Garden and the Louvre."⁸ Some even have their own rituals. Jean-François Raffaëlli, for example, strolls along Avenue de Marigny on March 20 every year, in order to admire the chestnut trees in bloom.⁹

He is not the only one who has his favorite routes. The painter Charles Angrand, born in Normandy, also turns out to be a regular flâneur: “Paris is big – even for flâneurs (...) The Place Clichy remains at the center of my efforts. Sometimes, however, I make it all the way to the Louvre and, should I have a wild craving for a cigar, I buy one en route at La Civette.”^{10a} And to Paul Signac he confesses: “I will not tell you what I do. I mostly just wander around. That is my embarrassing confession.”^{10b} Curious, he observes the movements of the crowds: “In keeping with my favorite habit, I keep going to the Place Clichy, and that during the most ‘personal’ hours – you know, by this I simply mean the hours when the most people pass by there. Sometimes I also wander down the boulevard and browse in the magazines at Marpon’s. On top of that, in the evenings, I while away my time by strolling over to the shop of ‘old’ de Boutterville, the ‘manager’ of a blend of Impressionism and Symbolism.”^{10c}

Paris in Paintings

During these promenades, motifs demanding to be painted come through and assert themselves. Degas, who knows of his friend Louis Braquaval’s fondness for the streets of the capital, urges him: “Now then, Monsieur Braquaval, when are you going to come here and paint our streets?”^{11a} With this, he hopes to finally persuade him to visit: “I think you will find painting Paris rather captivating.”^{11b} And he immediately extols his discoveries: “I have found an amazing spot, the Buttes Chaumont. You will see all that.”^{11c} Maximilien Luce strolls along the banks of the Seine: “I have by no means wasted my time – I went for a walk on the Quais and have seen beautiful things. Should the good weather persist, I shall work in Paris.”¹² In the evening, after working in his studio, the Belgian painter Henri Evenpoel walks across the Esplanade des Invalides and along the Quais towards Saint-Michel. “There are very beautiful impressions to render, the play of light in the morning mist, the last shimmering shreds of color of the sunset, etc. envelop the buildings of the city in such a poetic fashion and mysteriously elevate the towers of Notre-Dame to a very simple silhouette.”^{1b}

In 1897 Camille Pissarro, wishing to build on the success of his previous series of pictures, roams through the city in search of a “picturesque side of Paris,”^{13a} which he wants to paint looking out of a window. “I sought a hotel along the Quais but I found absolutely nothing, except on the Quai Voltaire, but there you cannot see anything, even the view from the fourth floor is blocked by trees.” His search is very methodical: “First, I walked along the entire left bank, now I shall take a look at the right bank.”^{14a} Pissarro needed a series of new pictures for the exhibition, which Darand-Ruel was organizing in his gallery. So now he investigates Trocadéro and Passy, and then decides “next week I will go back there, maybe I will find something in the vicinity of the Halles.”^{14b} As we can see, Pissarro keeps going on new, productive expeditions. They take him to the Place du Théâtre Français, the Rue de Rivoli, and to the tip of the Ile de la Cité, not far from the Louvre.

The Beautiful Buildings of the Past

When an artist comes to Paris, he owes it to himself to study in the studio of a master at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. In 1864, “at the beginning of the month of March, I came to Paris to study painting with Monsieur Isabey,” remembers Johan Barthold Jongkind,¹⁵ and later on Evenpoel recounts: “Today I went to the Ecole des Beaux-Arts for the first time. At one o’clock on the dot, from Rue Bonaparte, I entered into the courtyard filled with architectural fragments, colored mosaics, and all sorts of bas-reliefs.”^{1c} Since 1883 Vincent van Gogh had been harboring the wish to study in the capital, which he was already well acquainted with, as he had worked for the art dealer Goupil in 1874/75: “I believe that I can as well learn something in Paris as I can here (...); in the city, however, I’d have the opportunity to learn from the people and see what they were doing, and I’m by no means indifferent to that.”¹⁶ When he sets off for Paris in February 1886 and arrives at the Gare du Nord, he sends a message to his brother Theo in order to arrange a meeting: “Will be at the Louvre from midday, or earlier, if you like. Please reply so that I know at what time you can come to the Salle carrée.”¹⁷

The Louvre is an absolute must as a place of enjoyment and study. Prior to his trip to Paris, the young Edvard Munch enthusiastically writes in a letter to Olav Herman Paulsen: “In five months we shall be in Paris, just imagine, in five months! Hurray! Vive la France! Imagine how we will wear down the floor in the Louvre.”¹⁸ Adolph Menzel spends many hours there and even considers spending an entire day; while others tend to go for excursions, he plans to “spend the whole day at the Louvre with Knaus.”^{3b} Monet, who was given permission to use the paintings exhibited at the Louvre as sources for his own artistic work, discovers the city in unusual perspectives, which he uses for his own paintings of Paris. He requests “special permission to paint views of Paris from the windows of the Louvre and especially from the outer portico,” as he wants to paint a view of Saint-Germain l’Auxerrois^{7b} [p. 55].

There is hardly any talk of the Louvre itself, other than maybe by August Renoir, who speaks up against the latest renovations and extensions: “Why, for example, is the new Louvre, which after all copies the old one, so ugly while the other one is beautiful. In my opinion, it is because the embellishments of the new Louvre are clumsy and banal and on top of that have been executed by randomly hired workers, while the adornments of the old Louvre are graceful and were created by artists.”^{19a}

Notre-Dame, on the other hand, has Renoir – who is normally quite ready to criticize – in complete awe. “There is simply no modern building, which comes close to Notre-Dame, the Hôtel de Cluny, or the old Louvre. Our constructions are the more or less clumsy caricatures of these beautiful buildings.”^{19b} Here, he and Manet, who looks at Paris from Meudon, are in agreement. “Notre-Dame cannot be expressed in words; it is at the same time very small and very large. The men who erected this building were truly daring.”^{5c} Younger artists such as Evenpoel also feel the magic of this place: “I have looked at Notre-Dame. It had a strong impact on me. I must add that I was there at a good time. The very moment I arrived there, the sky was very bright but there was a cloud above the cathedral. So, still blinded by the bright daylight, I entered this enormous ship where it was black, deep black (...) The interior is truly overwhelming and the ornamentation of the side chapels by Viollet-le-Duc is extraordinarily interesting.”^{1d} Ernest Meissonier, on the other hand, was more reserved about the changes made by the architect and restorer Viollet-le-Duc. “How magnificent Notre-Dame was before! How splendid the bas-reliefs around the choir area before they were painted over! Now the gold prevents the visitor from understanding the original design and the modeling.”^{20a}

Notre-Dame and the southern branch of the Seine around the Ile de la Cité fascinate many artists. Luce paints several views from an elevated viewpoint: “Currently, I am painting from a window at the Quai Saint-Michel and can see Notre-Dame, the Quai des Orfèvres, etc. from there (...) This is damned beautiful.”^{21a} Similarly, the Dane Jens Ferdinand Willumsen: “In Paris, I have almost completed a large painting of the Pont Saint-Michel; I painted it from the second-floor window of a house on Quai des Grands Augustins (...)”²² [fig. 2, p. 237].

Modern Paris

The changes that numerous Paris residential districts were subjected to did not find favor with certain artists – for example, with Renoir. His son reports: “My father used every opportunity (...) to steer the conversation towards Haussmann, who had given Paris such an unpleasant make-over (...). ‘What have they done to my poor Paris,’ attacking Garnier, Viollet-le-Duc, etc. (...)”²³ Baltard’s Halles, on the other hand, meet with approval: “The central Halles in Paris are the only buildings, which possess a truly original character and an aspect that reflects their function.”^{19c} He complains about the Palais de Justice, but also about the Opera that “features all the marble statues imaginable (...), badly matched and out of place, they resemble rubber hardened in a mold.”^{19d} Renoir is sensitive to the lack of harmony. For him, an architect has to “avoid a Baroque facade like that at the Opera where Carpeaux’ sculpture *The Dance* is so prominent outside of the building that it necessarily destroys its impact.”^{19e}

Nor does the Eiffel Tower meet with his approval. “This is not art, for such a thing can be reproduced by anybody to whom one describes the tower and who knows about such things.”^{19f} During its construction, the Eiffel Tower is the subject of general controversy among many artists. Painters, sculptors, musicians, and writers submit a public

appeal in *Le Temps* “against the erection of the useless and monstrous Eiffel Tower at the heart of our capital.”²⁴ In 1889 Jean Béraud visits it out of curiosity. “It is very beautiful: when one finds oneself in the middle of this complicated arrangement of iron beams, it turns into a very bizarre work of art: it conveys an idea of a new Gothic style.” For Béraud, the tower is what *makes* the 1889 World Exhibition – “the tower ... yes, the tower!”²⁵ Angrand, who followed its construction, encourages his friend Maurice Dezerville to visit the tower.^{10d} Soon it becomes an integral part of the Paris cityscape: “From my window, I can see the Avenue Rapp with its trees, behind that the house in which I am living (in order to sleep there), and behind that further houses and, finally, the Eiffel Tower rises up majestically.”^{1e} [fig. 3, p. 237]

During the decades it took the build, the Sacré Cœur Basilica on Montmartre provides a clear view of its scaffolding, which anyone arriving at the Gare du Nord could not fail to notice: “Finally, I see Saint-Denis and far in the distance Sacré-Cœur de Montmartre, which rises in the middle of an aureole of scaffolding.”^{1f} writes Evenpoel to his father in 1893.

Besides the newly erected buildings, the transformation of the entire urban infrastructure turns Paris into a gigantic construction site, and Giuseppe de Nittis and Maximilien Luce are enthralled by this. The latter – who pays particular attention to all things man-made – is interested in the construction of the Métro and the new roads: “I am currently working in Paris; Verhaeren has alerted me to the destruction of the Rue Réaumur.” He is given a window there and remarks contentedly: “My accommodation is wonderful (...) I am most interested in this.”¹² Gustave Caillebotte is one of the few painters who chose to live in the Opera district, the area most influenced by Haussmann. The geometry of the avenues fascinates him greatly. “Caillebotte paints the traffic islands of Boulevard Haussmann from his window, so I have been told,” reports Degas^{6b} [fig. 4, p. 238] [pp. 101, 127].

Pissarro is another artist who considers the boulevards to be more than simply a place where one lives; in 1897 he chooses them as the motif for a series of paintings, at the suggestion of the art dealer Durand-Ruel. “He has advised me to paint the boulevards, but of course the very wide ones.”^{14c} Pissarro’s ambition is to capture the hubbub of the streets: “I have taken a spacious room at the Grand Hôtel de Russie on Rue Drouot, from where I can see the streetscape of the boulevards almost all the way to the Porte Saint-Denis, most certainly through to Boulevard Bonne-Nouvelle.”^{13b} [pp. 122, 291] Later, he takes on the Avenue de l’Opéra [p. 123]: “I forgot to tell you that, at the Grand Hôtel du Louvre, I have found a room with a splendid view of the Avenue de l’Opéra and the corner of Place du Palais Royal. It is a very nice motif. Maybe not so aesthetic, but I am delighted to be able to paint the streets of Paris which are normally deemed ugly and which, in fact, are so silvery, so radiant, and so full of life – unlike the boulevards. Completely and utterly modern!!!”^{13c}

Traffic, Crowds, Movement

Those coming to Paris from the provinces or from abroad are amazed by the teeming everyday life in the city – and they quickly submit to it. “During our evening ventures, we weave through thousands of vehicles, and tens of thousands of nameless beings cross our path whom we, once returned to our own four walls, forget again immediately!”²⁶ writes Eugène Boudin in a letter to his brother. One has to be extremely careful, as Munch reports, when crossing the “relentless stream of vehicles”²⁷ on the Paris boulevards. Painters like Pissarro or Luce tried to capture this turbulence on the canvas: “I have started one or actually several studies of the flea market: I am doing this at Besnard’s on Rue des Abbesses and it is fiendishly difficult to capture the movement of the crowd (...).”^{21b} [fig. 5, p. 239]

During the festive season, this turbulence is even greater. “With the coming of Christmas, there is great excitement in Paris. Therefore, everything is extraordinarily busy. The areas around the Louvre or the Bon Marché department stores are teeming with people, and Rue de Rivoli and the Champs-Élysées are chock-full with carriages. One really has to be very careful to get through all this in one piece.”¹⁸ Angrand observed the carnival: “As Parisians, we celebrate *mardi gras*. The entire population is outside (the weather is wonderful) and everywhere the streets and boulevards

are drowning in a sea of confetti and colorful pennants. I, too, after this short letter, shall go downstairs and enter the fray.”^{10c} Pissarro is always ready to wield his paint brush: “During carnival, I painted the boulevards with the crowds of people and the procession of the carnival oxen with the effects of the sun shining on the paper streamers, the trees, and the crowd in the shade.”^{13d} The national holiday on June 30, 1878 – on the closing of the World Exhibition – delighted Monet. “I loved the flags. On the first holiday of June 30, I strolled down Rue Montorgueil carrying the tools of my trade; flags were flying everywhere and the road was full of people; I pick one balcony, go up there, and ask for permission to paint. It is granted. After that, I leave the place again without having been recognized.”²⁸ [fig. 6, p. 242]

A City of Diversions

The artists value the endless variety of amusement, which Paris offers when they leave their studios on Sunday or in the evening. They meet in cafés but visits to the theater or the opera are also popular. Degas – an avid visitor of the ballet, circus, horse races, and other performances – writes from America: “the lack of an opera really makes me suffer.”^{6c} Renoir buys tickets to Lohengrin, hoping that Paul Berard will join him at a café concert.^{19g} Monet, a real gourmet, is a great theater lover, just like his wife: “We had dinner at the Café de Paris, a delicious meal with sole and spinach, quite outstanding (...) After this wonderful dinner, we saw *Free Exchange Hotel*, the well-known play by Feydeau.”²⁹ Frédéric Bazille loves music and regularly attends concerts. Evenpoel is a frequent visitor at the Concerts Colonne. In their flat on Rue de Rivoli, Pissarro and his wife welcome members of the Colonne Orchestra who perform in the couple’s studio salon.^{13c} Menzel visits the Théâtre français as well as the Bal Mabille, and spends time at the Café de la Rotonde^{3b} [fig. 7, p. 242]. With his works, Toulouse-Lautrec contributed to the fame of many artists, which was not always easy: “Paris is black and dusty, but this does not keep me from trudging down the streets after the musicians from the Opera in order to sweet-talk them into smuggling me into the inner sanctum of the arts – and of boredom.”^{30a}

The Artists in their Districts

In order to be close to the studios of the masters and teachers, or in order to be close to their friends, many artists often move from one district to another, while others remain faithful to one district. When Bazille rents a very large studio in Les Batignolles, Montmartre is still an area with a bad reputation. “Mama need not worry – Les Batignolles is a quiet district where one needs less money to live than in the center of Paris.”^{31a} Modest artists feel at home there. Renoir remains in the area all his life, even though he spends part of the year in the South. Luce takes up residence on the hill in 1887 and here he begins, as he writes to a friend, “a sketch from my window in Rue Cortot No. 6, as I have moved from No. 8 to No. 6. A wonderful view, my dear. From Mont Valérien, I can see all the way to Saint-Denis and, in the foreground, there is nothing but gardens. If you see how the sun shines on them and then clouds pass over, you can guess what moods this can create.”³²

Slightly lower down is the Saint-Lazare district, a suitable area for Monet and Pissarro, who live in Giverny and Eragny. While Monet paints the train station, Pissarro – who is a regular at the Hôtel Garnier on Rue Saint-Lazare No. 111 – looks out of his window and begins “a sketch of the Place du Havre and that is very beautiful.”^{14d} Four years later, in 1897, he reports to Lucien: “During my stay here, I was able to paint six small-format paintings with which I will cover the month’s expenses. They are scenes in the snow from Rue Saint-Lazare and Rue d’Amsterdam.”^{13f}

Berthe Morisot, for her part, grew up in the modest elegance of the old Passy district in the west of Paris, in the “province of Paris (...) which is to say this district that was neither city nor suburb,” with its streets, woods, and the “smell of brooks which Baron Haussmann neglected to drain.”³³ But outside the old village, the development of the 16th arrondissement seduces painters such as Signac to settle there.

In November 1897, Signac moves into a flat at the Castel Béranger on Rue la Fontaine No. 14 and writes to Rysselberghe: “My friend Théo, now we are tenants of Guimard (...) and should you be coming to Passy or Auteuil, that would be a great pleasure. I have once more thought about your plans (...) and talked to Cross about them. I am now more and more of the opinion that you are right with your plan to leave Brussels and to sacrifice well-being for beauty.”³⁴ The 17th arrondissement, with its new buildings on Plaine Monceau, attracts the most eminent artists. Jean Béraud buys a villa there, at the end of Rue de Courcelles No. 202. In 1880 the Finn Albert Edelfeldt moves there: “Even though it is rather far from the center, it is still closer to the good districts than the Boulevard de Montparnasse. In all the artists’ districts, the Avenue de Villiers is currently the street with the most artists. Meissonier, Munkacsy, Bastien-Lepage, Sarah Bernhardt, and others live there. I shall be living in the remote part near the fortifications, but the air is still good.”³⁵

Longing for Nature: Parks and the Outskirts

The Panthéon at the top of Montagne Sainte-Geneviève offers a unique view of Paris and leads to the “charming Jardin du Luxembourg,”^{1h} another location, which the painters – among them Degas – liked to visit [p. 275]. Other Paris gardens were redesigned during the Second Empire and opened to the general public – for example, Parc Monceau and the Tuileries. After Monet, who repeatedly painted the Tuileries in 1875,^{7c} they find an outstanding observer in Pissarro, who has “taken a flat with a magnificent view of the park in Rue de Rivoli No. 204, opposite the Tuileries”: “To the left the Louvre, in the background the houses, the Quais behind the trees of the park, to the right the Dôme des Invalides, the bell towers of Sainte-Clotilde behind the chestnut trees. How splendid this is!”^{13g} He will observe the different moods throughout the entire winter – during gray, rainy weather or when it is sunny or when there is snow.

However, the Tuileries are also a painful reminder of the destruction of the Palace during the Paris Commune. The ruins inspire a painting by Meissonier: “I was on my way to the Institut de France with Lefuel, the architect of the Louvre (...) and we passed the ruins of the Tuileries; in these enormous mountains of rubble, the names of two indisputable victories suddenly came to my mind ... Marengo! ... Austerlitz! I could already see my painting.” Soon afterwards, he sits down in a builder’s hut in the middle of the rubble and paints a watercolor that he will later execute in oil.^{20b} [fig. 8, p. 243]

The Seine flows around Notre-Dame and then runs parallel to the Tuileries, and it is omnipresent in contemporary paintings – from Jongkind or Lépine to Vallotton or Matisse [pp. 56, 258, 259]. Evenepoel sums up very aptly what it means to those who are drawn to its banks time and again: “the Seine is always my good friend, she becomes it even more, for the more often one sees her, the more one loves her (...) I dream of pictures to paint there, with figures in the foreground.”^{1e}

The Bois de Boulogne, the large park in the west of the city, is an oasis of peace much valued by Bazille. “For the last week, the weather has been wonderful (...) I make use of this every now and again, and go for long walks in the Bois de Boulogne. Yesterday I left the studio at three o’clock, making my way on foot, and did not return until six o’clock.”^{31b} Later the Neo-Impressionists meet on the island of La Grande Jatte on the northern outskirts of Paris, following the example of Seurat. Even Angrand is willing to go that far. “I could not resist going to La Grande Jatte island (...) I leave at half past twelve and only return around seven o’clock or even later. In the current heat, it is very tiring to regularly walk the six kilometers to the motif to paint and then walk all the way back again. But I enjoy the peace and I am in the company of Seurat there, who has been making this journey everyday for the past four weeks, too.”^{10f} It was during the summer that those Parisians who had not joined the exodus to the countryside or the seaside sought relief from the heat on the Seine. “I shall now go rowing somewhere near Asnières.”^{30b}

In Paris or in the Country

Many artists leave Paris every summer. They use their sojourn in the country or by the sea, in order to prepare for what they will work on in their Paris studios during the winter. "I am hoping to return soon with some canvases and preliminary studies, roughly around October 8 or 9, to execute the paintings in Paris," writes Renoir to Durand-Ruel in 1883.^{36a} In 1886 he stays in Saint-Briac until the end of September because, apart from being able to live very frugally there, he wants to accumulate enough material for the winter in Paris.^{36b} Figurative painters like Renoir find further reasons for staying away from the capital: "I have just devoted myself to rural life in the Champagne, including its inhabitants, in order to escape the expensive models in Paris. I paint the washerwomen or rather the women doing their wash on the banks of the river."³⁷

The fact that so many painters temporarily opt for life in the country is often due to economic reasons, especially at the start of their careers. Renoir, who stays with Monet in Ville d'Avray in 1868, comments: "In Paris I don't always have enough to eat, and here I get by very well."³⁸ Monet has his paintings sent to Le Havre, where he hopes to sell them: "As far as returning to Paris is concerned, I will only be able to go back and settle there when I can afford to have a home there and when my business affairs turn out to be really successful."³⁹ Some – like Gauguin – want to concentrate and leave Paris "to dedicate (themselves) wholly to painting,"³⁹ or because – like Monet – they do not want to be influenced: "In Paris, one is too busy with all those things one sees or hears, no matter how strong one is. And what I will paint here at least has the advantage of not being like anything I have already seen, at least that's what I believe."^{37c}

When the painters set off to distant parts, some of them soon feel a certain yearning – as, for example, Renoir in Naples in 1881: "But I will see you soon, for Italy is beautiful but Paris, oh! Paris."^{36c} Degas speaks of "my dear Paris."^{11d} He writes to Durand-Ruel: "I do pity you in your Parisian prison. And yet you shall see with what exhilaration I shall return there."^{11e}

The South makes the tough life more bearable and many artists find a pleasant mildness there in the winter – such as Renoir at the end of his life, or Cross, who writes to Luce: "Thank you for the delightful news from Paris, which you send me; I have been longing for them for some time. Through you, through Siganc, through Théo, I am closer to the big city I love so much (...)."⁴⁰

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Editor's note: In order to give the reader a better overview of the sources, the numbering of the footnotes deviates from the standard system of references.

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- 1c Evenepoel to his father, 10.30.1892, inv. no. 14513-3, p. 53.
- 1d Evenepoel to his father, 11.02.1892, inv. no. 14515-5, p. 57.
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- 13d Camille Pissarro to Lucien, 03.10.1897, p. 360.
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Paris Aglow

Françoise Cachin

The name “Paris, ville lumière” – Paris, City of Light – goes back a long way. In the 17th century, Paris became the first European capital (shortly before London) to install public street lighting, on the initiative of the Lieutenant-General of Police, Nicolas de la Reynie; metaphorically, the image of a city of light brings to mind the Enlightenment and Paris as the leading center of progressive thinking in the 18th century. The first street lamps were lit by candles until these were replaced by oil; later on, kerosene became the main source of energy for street lighting. Victor Hugo recorded this progress in his diary: “Since yesterday evening, Paris is lit by kerosene.”¹

At the same time, street lighting in Paris was constantly being improved. The first gas lighting system was installed in the 1840s,² and by the second half of the century, pedestrians were able to saunter at night through what had become a much less dangerous city [fig. 1, p. 248]. In 1878 electric lighting was first installed and gradually ousted gas lighting until – a whole century later, in 1962 – it finally reigned supreme.³

Prior to 1870, painters had little interest in the streets of Paris by day, and even less interest in Paris by night, with the exception of Stanislas Lépine [fig. 2, p. 248] and Barthold Jongkind. In 1852 Jongkind wrote to a Belgian friend, Eugène Smits, that it seemed that not a single painter in Paris even noticed the moonlight – “There is no competition” – and he decided to devote his attention to precisely this subject, in the hope of “some success” with his paintings.⁴

It is interesting to note that in May 1879, in a letter concerning the upcoming Impressionist exhibition, Edgar Degas mentioned to Félix Bracquemond that “The firm Jablockof has suggested using electric lighting to illuminate the exhibition.”⁵ In fact, it seems that Degas was the first painter to be truly interested in the city by night, particularly as it appeared in photographs: “Day comes of its own accord, and it is hard; what I need is the atmosphere of lamp-light or moonshine.”⁶ And it was these light effects that he sought to capture in his pastels and other representations of café terraces at night.

Before long, the avant-garde painters of the younger generation were portraying life after dark in shops and cafés or at open-air events – as in Louis Anquetin’s *Avenue de Clichy, Five O’Clock*, 1887 [fig. 3, p. 249] or, from the same year, Georges Seurat’s *Circus Sideshow*⁷. The art critic Gustave Kahn noted that “having painted all day long,” Seurat “would spend the evening sketching at the music hall or the circus. Death took him from us at the point when he was engaged in an intense study of Paris by night and illuminations in the city. He was a follower of Whistler, who described in his ‘Ten O’Clock’ lecture how the painter’s realm begins when day comes to an end and the lamps are lit.”⁸ Also in 1887, Charles Angrand showed his painting *The Accident*⁹ at the Salon des Indépendants, the showcase for independent artists. The critic Félix Fénéon described *The Accident*: “In the gleam from the gas lights and the reflections on the rotund glass carboys a crowd is gathering on the pavement (...). It is a very interesting and difficult task, this attempt to create the feeling of artificial illumination in a painting that is to be viewed in natural light.”¹⁰ The subsequent year, Louis Hayet painted a fairground [p. 292] seen from the street – a topic that would later also appeal to Luigi Loir, Jean-Louis Forain, and Théophile-Alexandre Steinlen [pp. 132, 283, 286].

By the late 1880s and early 1890s, Camille Pissarro followed suit as well as Maximilien Luce – noted, above all, for his views of Paris by night along the banks of the Seine: quays edged with countless lights are seen reflecting in the water between the dark outlines of buildings and boats. Pointillist techniques particularly lent themselves to the portrayal of these subjects, as they utilize a myriad of small dots of light, creating the effect of gas lanterns or electric lights seen from a distance; at the same time – in accordance with the law of contrast – the difference between the deep, dark blue of the sky and the bright yellow of the lights appears all the more striking. That the Neo-Impressionists had such a fondness for nocturnal street scenes and café concerts, or just for people passing by, may partly be put down to the drawings of Georges Seurat. At the last Impressionist exhibition in 1886, Seurat showed not only paintings such as *A Sunday on La Grande Jatte*, but also black-and-white drawings of scenes at café concerts with female singers in the glow of electric lamps or gas lanterns.

In a diary entry of 1889, Edvard Munch described Paris at night as a place where “people breathe easily and are content (...). In the bluish, shimmering light the Champs Elysées stretch out in the setting sun (...). At twilight we were at the Place de la Concorde, where the gas lanterns and electric lamps were on. Reflecting in the windows of countless cafés and on carriages, they created a veritable sea of lights – an endlessly expansive, undulating surface shot through with yellow and white highlights.”¹¹

Later Pierre Bonnard also turned his attention to café terraces, illuminated by electric bulbs, as in his scenes outside the Moulin Rouge, painted in 1896 [p. 282]. This stroll through the brightly lit streets of Paris at night comes to a close with the fairytale, nocturnal view of the World Exhibition of 1900, painted by Maxime Maufra [p. 294].

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- 2 By 1843 there were more gas lights than oil lights, see Simone Delattre, *Les douze heures noires*, Paris, 2000, p. 843.
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- 6 Daniel Halévy, *Degas parle*, Paris, 1995, p. 140 (translated from the French).
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Françoise Cachin, founding director of the Musée d'Orsay in Paris (1986–1994) and director of the Musées de France (1994–2001). Curator of numerous exhibitions, among them *Le Futurisme, 1909–1916* (Paris, 1973), *Camille Pissarro 1803–1903* (London, Paris, Boston, 1980/81), *Manet 1832–1883* (Paris and New York, 1983), *Gauguin* (Washington, Chicago, Paris, 1988/89), *Georges Seurat 1859–1891* (Paris and New York, 1991), *Cézanne* (Paris, London, Philadelphia, 1995/96), *Méditerranée, de Courbet à Matisse* (Paris, 2000). Author of reference works on Impressionism, for example, on Paul Gauguin (1988), Edouard Manet (1994), Georges Seurat (1991), and Paul Signac (2000).

Virginie Chardin, freelance curator of exhibitions such as *Photographies / Histoires parallèles* (Chalon-sur-Saône, 2000), *Willy Ronis à Paris* (Paris, 2005, and Beijing, 2007), *Paris en couleurs, des frères Lumière à Martin Parr* (Paris, 2007), and for the film series *Rien que les heures. Promenades parisiennes* (Paris, 2009). Previous employment as a lawyer, specializing in copyright and image copyright law, consultant at the Conseil supérieure de l'audiovisuel, the Musée Niépce, responsible for the *Prix des Rencontres d'Arles*, coordinator of the *Paris capitale photographique* series of lectures at the Ecole du Louvre, and artistic commissioner of the *Mois de la Photo à Paris* (2004). Author of publications, among them *Paris et la photographie. Cent histoires extraordinaires, de 1839 à nos jours* (2003), *La Photographie à Paris* (2004), *Séeberger Frères* (2006), and *Ernst Haas* (2010).

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Karlheinz Stierle, studied Romance studies, German language and literature studies, and philosophy in Heidelberg, Montpellier, Münster, and Gießen. Dissertation on darkness and form in the *Chimères* by Gérard de Nerval. Chair of Romance philology and literary studies at the University of Bochum (1969–1987), chair of Romance literature and literary studies at the University of Konstanz (1988–2004), honorary professor at Saarland University. Member of the Heidelberg Academy of Sciences and Socio straniero of the Accademia dei Lincei. Publications on literature about Paris, Petarch, and Dante as well as literary theory.

Images of a Capital
The Impressionists in Paris
Museum Folkwang

October 2, 2010–January 30, 2011

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Curator: Françoise Cachin, with Monique Nonne
Curators (photography): Françoise Reynaud and Virginie Chardin
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