This extensively illustrated catalog documents an ambitious exhibit about the work of French painter Gustave Caillebotte (1848-1894). Curated by Karin Sagner, the exhibit was mounted at the Schirn Kunsthalle in Frankfurt, Germany between October 2012 and January 2013. Sagner aimed to familiarize German audiences with Caillebotte’s quiet achievements and his influence on the financial success and eventual acceptance of French Impressionist artists. The main thesis of the exhibit, however, was Caillebotte’s prefiguring of a “New Vision” expressed in photography at the end of the nineteenth century.

Caillebotte has been recognized widely as a friend and patron of many Impressionist artists, whose work he collected and helped exhibit. He financed Monet and promoted the work of Manet and Pisarro. In his will, Caillebotte left his sizable collection of first-rate Impressionist paintings to France, some of which are held by the Musée d’Orsay today.

Supported with the knowledgeable selection of photographs by Ulrich Pohlmann, the exhibit demonstrated Caillebotte’s affinity for photography and his innovative vision-altering perspectives, frozen movements, and fragmentation of urban landscapes. The catalog similarly succeeds by presenting the reader with judicious juxtapositions of Caillebotte’s works with now iconic photographic images. Text and images, working together, persuade the reader that Caillebotte’s work did anticipate, by several years, the unusual perspectives of now renowned photographers.

The catalog includes three critical essays: “Gustave Caillebotte, an Impressionist and Photography” by Karin Sagner; “Reading Gustave Caillebotte’s Ponte de l’Europe” by Claude Ghez; and “Everything as though under a magic spell” by Ulrich Pohlmann. Eight photographic essays, accented with paintings by Caillebotte, provide thinking space between the critical essays and visually engage the reader with varied themes such as: the perception of space; street furniture; the aesthetics of work; flâneurs and dandies; close view of citizens; staging of objects; austere arrangements; and movement. The last section of the catalog consists of an illustrated mini-biography of Caillebotte, written by Gilles Chardeau, author of two books about the painter.

Much like a first-rate exhibit, the catalog includes well-researched didactics and image credits to aid source identification. A useful appendix provides brief, but informative, biographies of more than fifty photographers whose works appear in the catalog. Among these are Atget, Brassaï, Cartier-Bresson and Kertész as well as those of lesser known photographers such as Charles Marville and August-Hippolyte Collard. Marville and Collard documented streets and bridges of Paris.

This well-made catalog (sewn, flat-backed, case binding) will serve the research requirements of curators and advanced scholars as well as engage undergraduates with interest in nineteenth-century art and photography.

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