

## IMPRESSIONISM, PHOTOGRAPHY, SERIALISM:

### Lecture 8: The Impressionist Eye as Camera

- I. New technologies of the visible, ca. 1850s Paris
  - A. Traditions of pictorial devices (*camera obscura*, *camera lucida*)
  - B. Baudelaire and the threat of photography:

*...this industry, by invading the territories of art, has become art's most mortal enemy, and... the confusion of their several functions prevents any of them from being properly fulfilled.... If photography is allowed to supplement art... it will soon have supplanted or corrupted it altogether, thanks to the stupidity of the multitude which is its natural ally.* – Baudelaire, Salon of 1859

- C. Photography and the theater of attractions (Magic Lanterns and other wonders)
  - D. Was photography nothing new? (Varnedoe), or a revelatory new kind of vision showing things that humans had never seen before? (Joel Snyder et al.)
    - 1) The camera lucida and the “pencil of nature” (Talbot) – 1820s-30s
    - 2) Mechanical objectivity
    - 3) The lure of the figure (early montages and photo scrapbooks)
- II. What painting took, and avoided, from the photographic
  - A. Stereoscopy (1833) vs. the mastery of one-point perspective
  - B. Time and “instantaneity” (purely rhetorical until 20<sup>th</sup> c. fast emulsions) vs. the perfected moment
    - 1) Weather and the flux of time
    - 2) happenstance, the moment
  - C. Formal aspects of the photograph
    - 1) The art of the blur
    - 2) Variable focus (depth of field)
    - 3) “Flat” tonality and frontal lighting from flash
    - 4) “Arbitrary” cropping
  - D. Forensic versus “Spirit,” Evidentiary vs. combinatorial aesthetics
- III. Negotiating “Impressionism”
  - A. Optical or phenomenological (Monet)
  - B. Psychological (Manet, Degas)
  - C. Classical yearnings and modern technologies

Salient dates: Nicéphore Niépce first fixed image from camera obscura on metal (pewter): 1826  
William Henry Fox Talbot fixes image on paper: 1835  
Daguerre given lifetime annuity by French government: 1839

See verso for images

Images (selected) for **Lecture 8***machine visions*

Jan Vermeer and the question of the camera lucida  
 Magic Lantern slides

*panoramas, heliographs, and other photo-graphic wonders*

Eadweard Muybridge, Panorama of San Francisco 1877  
 Joseph Nicéphore Niépce, View from Window at Gras, 1826 \* **the first “fixed shadow”**  
 (William) Henry Fox Talbot, Latticed Window August 1835  
 Muybridge, Galloping Horse 1878  
 Etienne Jules Marey, Walking Man, 1885

*the painters, the paintings*

Frederic Bazille, Summer Scene, 1862  
 Monet, Boulevard des Capucines, (two versions) 1872 and 1873  
 Gustave Caillebotte, Rue de Paris, temps de pluie 1877  
 Edgar Degas, M. & Mme. Edouard Manet, 1868-9  
 Degas, Place de la Concorde, 1875  
 Edouard Manet, painting on photograph of The Railway (photograph by J. M. Godet of Manet’s painting ), 1873-4  
 Manet, The Balcony 1868-69  
 Emile Zola, New Version of Manet’s Balcony, photograph, undated (19<sup>th</sup> c.)  
 Monet, Nymphéas, (and detail) 1919-26  
 Le Gray, Effect of the Sun, Normandy, photograph, 1856-59

Degas, Self-Portrait 1857-8  
 Degas, Young Spartans Exercising, 1860  
 Degas, Bellelli Family 1858-60  
 Degas, Au Café, L’Absynthe, 1877  
 Degas, Woman on a Café Terrace, Evening, 1877  
 Degas, Le Viol (The Rape), 1866-67  
 Degas, Dans le salon d’une Maison Close, 1879 (monotype)  
 Degas, Laundress (four variants) 1869, -74, -86  
 Degas, Dance School, 1873  
 Degas, Aux Ambassadeurs (a café) 1877

Monet, Dejeuner sur l’herbe, 1865-6 (and studies)  
 Monet, Lady in the Garden, 1867  
 Monet, Impression, Sunrise 1872-3 (**gave the movement its name**)  
 Monet, Waterlilies/ Nymphéas, 1905-1907 (through the end of his life)

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