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# Constructing Space and Framing the Beholder: Problems and Solutions in Gustave Caillebotte's Compositions

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**Constructing Space and Framing the Beholder:  
Problems and Solutions in Gustave Caillebotte's Compositions**

**Araceli Bremauntz-Enriquez**

A departmental honors thesis submitted to the  
Department of Art and Art History at Trinity University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation with departmental honors

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\*Due to copyright restrictions, some images were unable to be reproduced. Please consult the appropriate footnotes for a reference to the image in a printed source.

<sup>1</sup> Marie Berhaut, *Gustave Caillebotte: Catalogue Raisonné des Peintures et Pastels* (Paris: Wildenstein Institute, 1994), 78.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 180.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

<sup>4</sup> Eadweard Muybridge, *Complete Human and Animal Locomotion*, Volume I (New York: Dover Publications, 1979), 548.

<sup>5</sup> Marie Berhaut, *Gustave Caillebotte: Catalogue Raisonné des Peintures et Pastels* (Paris: Wildenstein Institute, 1994), 84.

In 1876, a young painter exhibited his works alongside canvases by, among others, Edgar Degas, Claude Monet, and Berthe Morisot. Some critics called him “the least bad of the exhibition.”<sup>6</sup> Others commented that his works “astound by their truth, their life, their simple and fresh intimacy.”<sup>7</sup> Maurice Chaumelin asked “who knows Monsieur Caillebotte? Where does Monsieur Caillebotte come from? In what school was Monsieur Caillebotte trained? Nobody has been able to inform me. All I know is that Monsieur Caillebotte is one of the most original painters who has come to light for several years, and I don’t fear compromising myself by predicting that he will be famous before long.”<sup>8</sup> Gustave Caillebotte, only twenty-seven years old at the time, was friends with Edgar Degas who introduced him to the painters that we now know as the Impressionists. The painter came from a wealthy, bourgeois family that were direct beneficiaries of urban changes and modernization. Caillebotte studied under Léon Bonnat and attempted, but ultimately failed to enter L’Ecole de Beaux-Arts in 1873.<sup>9</sup> While Chaumelin aptly described the painter’s originality, his predictions of the artist’s fame were erroneous. Caillebotte had success as an artist in Paris, but he retired to the French country side in 1882, and painted very little in the years leading up until his death in 1894. During his life he bought and collected key Impressionist art works. After his death, Caillebotte was recognized for his patronage, not

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<sup>6</sup>Emile Porcheron, “Promenades d’un flâneur—Les Impressionnistes,” in *Gustave Caillebotte*, trans. and ed. Kirk Varnedoe (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 185. Originally published in *Le Soleil*, April 4, 1876.

<sup>7</sup>Emile Blémont, “Les Impressionistes,” in *Gustave Caillebotte*, trans. and ed. Kirk Varnedoe (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 185-6. Originally published in *Le Rappel*, April 9, 1876.

<sup>8</sup> Maurice Chaumelin, “Actualités: L’exposition des Impressionnistes,” in *Gustave Caillebotte*, trans. and ed. Kirk Varnedoe (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 185. Originally published in *La Gazette (des Etrangers)*, April 8, 1876.

<sup>9</sup> Éric Darragon, *Caillebotte* (Paris: Flammarion, 1994), 15-42.

his contributions to the movement.<sup>10</sup> Beginning in the late twentieth-century, scholars have looked back on Caillebotte's oeuvre and have since been searching to come to terms with his unique brand of Impressionism.

The artist was born in 1848, the same year when Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte (later Napoleon III) became the President of France. In 1852, the leader declared himself Emperor, and soon after he commissioned a complete reconstruction of the capital city. Throughout the artist's lifetime, France's political and economic systems underwent dramatic changes, thus radically affecting social and cultural structures. The relationship between the artist's ambitions and the historical concerns of the time were deeply intertwined and numerous studies into Caillebotte have argued that the artist, despite his bourgeois background, held strong to republican ideals. Academics interpret Caillebotte's canvases of workers and street scenes as statements that advocate for the identity and well-being of the working classes. Furthermore, scholars agree that Caillebotte's compositions express a sense of isolation and lack of individuality as a result of modernization. The artist chose various subjects and applied different techniques of representations throughout his artistic career. From still lives, to family meals, to male and female nudes, Caillebotte's paintings were influenced by the cultural norms of the rising bourgeois class and by the effects of modernization. My study will depart from previous scholarship by addressing the relationship between the artist and modernity in a new light. Art historians have compiled and employed extrinsic evidence of the social, economic, and material conditions of the late nineteenth century to make their claims. However, in their detailed

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<sup>10</sup> Detailed discussions of Caillebotte's role as a patron of the Impressionist movements include: Jeanne Laurent, Pierre Vaisse, and Jacques Chardeau, "The New Caillebotte Affair," *October* Vol. 31 (Winter 1984): 69-90. Pierre Vaisse, "Le legs Caillebotte d'après les documents," *Bulletin de la Société de l'histoire de l'art française* No. 3 (Dec. 1983): 201-210.

accounts of Caillebotte's historical moment, scholars have failed to provide accounts for the diverse and innovative techniques that Caillebotte employed in his compositions. Most interpretations focus on specific works and Caillebotte's background to make their claims, but fail to provide a model through which one can understand how he constructs space, and how he achieves his intended meaning. Therefore, I will seek to expand upon pre-existing assessments on the painter by presenting arguments that focus on close visual analysis of three paintings.

In presenting my account of Caillebotte, I will consider each canvas within the context of a specific problem. I argue that the artist's social moment produced a series of representational issues that the artist creatively responded to by manipulating the representational space of the canvas and the beholder. In my first chapter, I analyze *Young Man Playing the Piano* in light of the artist's construction of space. I argue that the painting implies a sense of realistic space, but depicts distorted, inconsistent space. The ruptures in the space are intended to project different points of view which the artist resolved by imposing a line of sight that lets the viewer enter the space and assume these different points of views. By experiencing and interacting with the different spaces, the beholder is able to integrate the space. My second chapter will respond to *Man at His Bath* by describing and analyzing the temporality and the pose of the subject matter. As I will argue, the painting condenses time and arranges the man so that the subject can be integrated into a quotidian setting. Caillebotte was working against bourgeois sensibilities, and his canvas manages to depict a contemporary male nude by emphasizing his body and engaging the beholder. My final chapter will consider *Pont de l'Europe* in response to noteworthy criticism to argue that the canvas imposes a strict viewpoint on the beholder. In granting the viewer a specific and structured point of entry into the street space, Caillebotte recreates his own experience of modernity in the eyes of the beholder.

The projected viewer, or beholder, is prescribed a specific vision of space. I argue that Caillebotte intentionally organized his compositions so that the viewer tries to make sense of their presence in the depicted scene, but obstacles and barriers--put in place by the artist himself--express the irreconcilability of modern experiences. The beholder of *Young Man Playing the Piano* questions the spatial dimensions of the room's appearance in contrast with the embodied, or experienced space. The viewer of *Man at his Bath* questions the temporal aspect of pictorial space as well as the legitimacy of his own presence. The beholder of *Pont de l'Europe* addresses the narrative aspect of the street, which puts into question the role of the viewer. The parlour, bathroom, and street spaces in each of these paintings are displayed such that the beholder is aware of his presence in the scene. However, the viewer struggles to make sense of the peculiarities of each scene. To argue these points, I will look closely at the artworks and analyze the logic of their compositions.

Representational painting transforms the objects it seeks to represent by emulating a part of the object's visual appearance and arranging it onto the surface of the canvas. Gustave Caillebotte's *Young Man Playing the Piano* of 1876 depicts a man, two chairs, and a piano within a fashionably decorated domestic interior (Fig. 1). The image of these painted objects evoke the idea of the real piano, the real chairs, and the real man—the artist's brother, Martial Caillebotte. However, the room's space does not appear to resemble life-like volume or perspective. Consider the two chairs. The chair on the left appears to have depth, whereas the chair on the right is shockingly flat. Likewise, the chair on the left is significantly larger than its counterpart. But are these two chairs not part of a set? Logically, should they not take up the same amount of space, or at least have comparable volumes? The problem at hand is best explained as an inconsistency between the objects and the space that they occupy. The objects are representational to the extent that they evoke a sense of their own material qualities as well as the idea of the physical, authentic space of 77 Rue Miromesnil, Paris in 1876.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, the construction of space challenges representational coordinate space because of its inconsistencies in scale and perspectives. Instead of depicting a space that was consistently governed by the natural laws of the physical room, Caillebotte constructed a composition that incoherently unfolds in space. The painting is not intending to represent a naturalistic space, yet

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<sup>11</sup> This painting depicts the artist's home at this address. For detailed readings of the social context of domestic interiors within Gustave Caillebotte's time see: Elizabeth Benjamin, "All the Discomforts of Home: Caillebotte and the Nineteenth-Century Bourgeois Interior," in *Gustave Caillebotte: The Painter's Eye*, ed. Julie Warnement (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 85-97. Hollis Clayson, "Threshold Space: Parisian modernism betwixt and between (1869 to 1891)," in *Impressionist Interiors*, ed. Jane Mclean (Dublin: National Gallery of Ireland, 2008), 15-29. Suzanne Singletary, "Le Chez-Soi: Men 'At Home' in Impressionist Interiors" in *Impressionist Interiors*, ed. Jane Mclean (Dublin: National Gallery of Ireland, 2008), 31-51.

the objects and content of the painting represent a real-life situation that was well known to the artist. I argue that Caillebotte constructed the space with reference to the shape of the piano. The effects of this construction fashion a pathway through which the beholder can imaginatively enter and move through the space.

This chapter offers an account of the viewer's experience of the painting's depicted space. My objective is to describe the way the space of this painting is constructed, in order to explain the seemingly incongruous or ambiguous picture plane. The formal qualities of the space, I will argue, ultimately work to bring the beholder's line of sight into the painting, which would normalize the apparent incongruity. In other words, the interaction between the beholder and the painting explains the painting's formal qualities. In investigating Caillebotte construction of space in this composition, I found that multiple viewpoints order the space that Caillebotte constructed, and in turn incites the beholder to imaginatively move through the space.

### *The Painting*

Like the musician who scans his music from left to right, the viewer reads the room—the window, Martial, the piano, and the empty chair by the wall—arranged within a nineteenth-century bourgeois interior. Just as Martial reads and decodes the music in front of him, the viewer is faced with a peculiarly constructed space that she can decipher by attending to the arrangement of the room. The musical notes on sheet music are characterized by their specific location on or in between staff lines. In the same way, the components of this room are individuated by their place in the room. In music, clefs indicate the value of each line and space; in *Young Man Playing the Piano*, I argue that the shape of the piano characterizes and classifies

the differing qualities of the represented space around it. Caillebotte himself is composing and arranging a space in the way a musician would compose melodies. But, the process of reading this composition begins by merely observing the relationship of the contents of the room to each other.

The gleaming lacquer finish of a large grand piano--positioned precisely at the corner of two walls--reflects the room around it. The room's corner is highlighted by a vertical red and gold accent that creates an anchoring point for corner of the piano. The firm receding line of the piano's left-most edge parallels the wall adjacent to it. The perpendicular back wall shares its recession with the piano's back edge. A bearded, well-dressed man, Martial Caillebotte, sits with his legs crossed and arms extended on a red velvet chair. Another, empty, chair sits against the back wall. Light filters in through lace curtains on the two windows, and the viewer catches a glimpse of the street outside.

Looking at left third of the canvas, the spectator approaches Martial posed in profile. The man's arms are extended and his fingers hover over the keys of the piano. The line formed by the man's right arm is parallel to the top rail of the balustrade outside the window, behind him. The chair he sits in is angled toward the piano so that the viewer sees part of the back as well as the side of the chair's frame. The chair's right edge also runs parallel to the window-wall and the right edge of the keyboard. However, the chair's left edge, which is not visible to the viewer, doesn't run parallel to the left edge of the keyboard. Instead, it curves slightly towards the right, just as the man's left arm reaches to the right. That being said, the elements in the left third of the painting point toward the corner of the room at similar angles. Most importantly, the chair and window are scaled in relation to the man. In other words, the dimensions of this sector of the room correspond to each other and they are positioned parallel to each other and diagonally from

the viewer. The viewer is made to look into the space from an elevated angle as he looks down onto Martial's head, the window, and the floor. Martial's feet, almost hidden behind the piano, seem distorted due to the viewer's position. The point of view promotes the illusion of proximity and height.

Within the middle section of the painting, the piano's left and top edges touch the walls. The shape of the piano reinforces the right-angle of the corner. Space in this section holds true to the sense of volume set up by the perpendicular relationship of the two walls. The keyboard, music stand, and back edge of the instrument all run parallel to the back wall. Likewise, the left edge of the piano, the lower edge of the frame, and the window-wall are also parallel to each other. The crossing of these corresponding lines recede into the back corner, emphasizing the exact point where the wall accent meets the piano. Then, the keyboard's rightmost corner becomes the point of entry for the viewer. Like in the left-most portion, the viewer is positioned at a slightly elevated angle. Unlike the previous section, the viewer's position in relationship to the piano is at a slightly further distance, suggesting that the point of view of the canvas is not equivalent in the different sections of the room. If the keyboard and back edge act as an x-axis to a geometric type of space, and the left edge and window wall become a y-axis, then the beholder is placed at the transversal corner. The viewer's position at the edge of the piano reflects the position of to the decorated accent at the corner of the room.

The rightmost third of the painting, perhaps the most noticeably distorted and strange portion of the canvas, is most succinctly described as flattened. The chair's seat not only drops down, disrupting the illusion of volume or space, but its legs confuse the viewer. The lack of foreshortening starkly contrasts with Caillebotte's efforts to render the volume and space of the piano. The chair's back's edge and the seat's front edge are parallel to each other. Despite the

fact that the chair is placed against a diagonal wall, its distorted dimensionality positions it straight ahead of the viewer. This third of the painting is at an ambiguous distance and seen from an uncertain height. The full view of the seat suggest that the viewer is at an extremely high vantage point; however, the white lace covering the back of the chair seems to be looked at from below. Had it been seen from above, the lace would not be covering the top wooden edge of the frame that we see run diagonally in the man's chair.

When viewed with respect to each other, these descriptions of the space make it clear that the space itself, and the viewer's position to the space is inconsistent in the composition. A critic that encountered this painting in 1876, when it was first exhibited in the second Impressionist exhibition in the Durand-Ruel gallery, commented on the effects of the space:

The young man playing the piano arouses in me serious apprehensions. This student of Marmontel is seated before a magnificent Erard of huge size, but whether this beautiful piece of rose-wood furniture is not sufficiently propped up, or whether the laws of perspective, to which I hasten to say, Monsieur Caillebotte normally shows himself more faithful, have not been so strictly observed, the instrument of music threatens to become an instrument of torture; one fears to see it fall at any instant on this nice young man, who without a doubt will be crushed. One should not scare people like that.<sup>12</sup>

Louis Enault's reaction primarily foregrounds the notion that the space is unnatural. His worries suggest an awareness of the inconsistencies in the space. On a deeper level, his comments also beg the question: if the artist is not observing the laws of scientific perspective, then what structures this space? Surely, Caillebotte was not intending to scare people, nor to suggest that

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<sup>12</sup> Louis Enault, "Mouvement Artistique: L'Exposition des Intransigeants dans la Galerie de Durand-Ruelle," *Le Constitutionnel*, Avril 10, 1876, 2. Translated and reproduced in Kirk Varnedoe, *Gustave Caillebotte* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 186.

the piano would fall on his brother. Yet, his attention to depicting space in the canvas must be questioned and considered carefully.

Peter Galassi and subsequent scholars have studied Caillebotte's methods with reference to preparatory sketches and painting that lead up to the final composition.<sup>13</sup> Using the artist's drawings, scholars traced the compositional changes and emphasized the meaning of the final arrangement of Caillebotte's compositions. Galassi argues that Caillebotte arrived at the best way to depict the subject at hand. In Figure 2 and Figure 3, I have superimposed one of Caillebotte's drawings onto to the finished canvas. By changing the size, but not proportions of the drawing, this image speaks for the artist's shifting viewpoints of his subject. In Figure 2, the drawing's detailed study of Martial and the keyboard portrays a specific attempt to raise the viewpoint of this section; the detail with which the artist rendered the sitter's crossed feet is absent the final composition. Another comparison between the drawing and the final painting shows that the angle of the keyboard is different.

Figure 3 shows Caillebotte's study of the relationship of the piano to the back wall and the unoccupied chair. The piano is shown from a slightly different angle than in the finished work and Caillebotte projects the keyboard further out into the viewer's realm. In comparing the painting and drawing, it seems as if Caillebotte has pushed the keyboard back into space. Hinged by the wall, the keyboard appears to have been swiveled back towards the room's corner. In the drawing that only includes the piano, the viewpoint prioritizes the right-most side of the piano over the keyboard. The character of the volume of the room becomes unclear in the painting,

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<sup>13</sup> See Peter Galassi, "Caillebotte's Method," in *Gustave Caillebotte*, ed. Kirk Varnedoe (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1987): 27-40. Also Christopher Lloyd, "Le Dessins de Gustave Caillebotte," in *Caillebotte: Au Coeur de l'Impressionisme*, ed. J. Cosandier and S. Wurhman (Lausanne: Fondation de l'Hermitage, 2005): 41-45.

while it seems to be naturalistic in the drawing. In comparing the final painting to this drawing, it is as if the left corner was swiveled out, enlarged to match the recession of the wall. The right edge and side of the piano appears were unchanged by this transformation.

Figures 2 and 3 suggest a tension between multiple perspective in this composition. Looking at the drawings with respect to the paintings, the form and layout of the painted piano appears swiveled and transformed with respect to the original studies of the scene. The painted piano's dimensions, position, and angles attempt to synthesize both drawings. Therefore, the final composition amalgamates the different perspectives of both drawings. The piano's strong geometric angles that are studied by both drawings can also be seen in the final canvas. Therefore, the piano, central in the composition, acts like an anchor in space, unifying the two points of view. The artist has more flexibility to be represented through different angles and with differing space-values. Effectively, Caillebotte felt the need to depict this room in different portions and by different means. However, he made use of the piano in order to unify them into a single picture plane.

As my initial visual description, contemporary comments, and an analysis of the preparatory drawings suggests, *Young Man Playing the Piano* depicts ambiguous space. The piano unites this space but it poses the problem of multiple perspectives. Since the depicted forms are constructed around the piano, the beholder can imaginatively re-construct the forms in a naturalistic way. In other words, the centrality of the piano gives the viewer certain tools that evoke the real, represented space.

### *The Suggested Picture Plane*

In making his own arguments about Caillebotte's space, Kirk Varnedoe photographed the sites Caillebotte chose to depict in *Paris Street, Rainy Day*, *Pont de l'Europe* and *Young Man at His Window*.<sup>14</sup> Varnedoe's collective arguments about the artist claim that he constructed space by juxtaposing near and far elements, subtly altering the perspective of the urban street paintings, and carefully arranged the people within his paintings to depict a sense of isolation and distance in modern human experiences. As part of his evidence, these pictures sought to document the real space as it exists in order to understand Caillebotte's painted alterations. Unable to recreate the concrete space the painting describes, I'd like to ask my reader to envision the spatial arrangement within the room, as if seen from an aerial vantage point. Caillebotte was not only intimately familiar with the objects depicted, but he was also deeply entrenched in the social and codified happenings within this bourgeois space.<sup>15</sup>

The assertion made by other scholars of Caillebotte's naturalist tendencies would support the notion that he was interested in trying to depict or evoke realistic space. The canvas is not an immediately realistic depiction of space, but certain elements of its composition suggest that it shares a sense of scale and logic with real, lived space. I must point out that Caillebotte had no intention of painting with respect to this aerial view. However, it is certain that he was conscious

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<sup>14</sup> First published in "Caillebotte in Context", and subsequently used in his catalogue Gustave Caillebotte, Kirk Varnedoe visited the locations of two major Caillebotte canvases and photographed the scene in an attempt to capture highlight Caillebotte's compositional arrangements. This study concluded that Caillebotte's compositions arranged buildings, lines of recession, scale and focus in the compositions that hold most authority. Kirk Varnedoe, "Caillebotte in Context," *Arts Magazine* Vol. 50 (May 1979):96-7 and Kirk Varnedoe, *Gustave Caillebotte*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987): 21-3.

<sup>15</sup> For a detailed reading of Caillebotte's social context see Elizabeth Benjamin, "All the discomforts of Home: Caillebotte and the Nineteenth Century Bourgeois Interior," in *Gustave Caillebotte: The Painter's Eye*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 85-97.

of the existence of this coordinate space due to his familiarity with the subject. This exercise and consequent diagram function seek to illustrate what Caillebotte has representing, without confusing it with the exact way that the canvas represented it.

If the painted space revolves around the structure of the piano, it is easy to imagine their layout as if seen from above. The piano sits exactly at the corner of the walls. By simplifying observing compositional and pictorial details, the viewer gets the sense that the corner is a ninety-degree angle, despite the way it appears. Likewise, the viewer knows that the man and his chair are in front of the keyboard, and face straight ahead. The unoccupied chair sits alongside the top wall, close to the end of the piano. This layout is depicted in Plan A, where the objects share a similar scale and proximal relationships to each other in grid-like coordinate space.

Before continuing, I will assign some terms for the sake of clarity and precision in this method of approach. The point and purpose of Plan A is to suggest the possible arrangements of subjects that Caillebotte painted. It establishes a “control” in which space is coordinate and cohesive throughout. Caillebotte’s canvas is expressed as the diagonal line depicted and marked by an arrow in Plan A. I regard this line as the *suggested picture plane*--the surface area of a canvas upon which representation of a suggested coordinate space would materialize.

### *The Chairs*

Returning to address the structural uncertainty in the painting, understanding the unoccupied chair with respect to the leftmost chair is the most vivid example of spatial distortions. As previously stated, the chairs are opposites—they are identical in terms of their color and form but their scale, dimensionality, and positions differ.

The space as suggested is not consistent with the painting. Space in this painting does not adhere to the way it describes the objects within it. The details and clues that hint towards a certain arrangement are undermined by the value, space, and perspective assigned to each of the objects. Of the visual clues that support this claim, the variance between the pair of chairs is perhaps the most apparent. The viewer sees the back, and right side of the Chair Martial sits in. It is legible as a chair, and its volume in space corresponds to what one might expect. The unoccupied chair, however, lacks comparable volume. The curve of its back and the depth of the seat--as one would expect of a chair facing the viewer--are completely stripped of any volume. The seat of the chair is at the same angle as the back of the chair and look flattened and compressed. This second chair seems almost like an afterthought, or a figurative echo of the first one; its color and shape match its occupied version, yet its intrinsic characteristics are not attended to. It does not provide a convincingly horizontal surface for one to potentially sit on. The direction, dimensionality, and even size of the chairs put them in opposition from each other. In a question of scale, the far chair is notably smaller than it should be with respect to its recession into logical space. The scale, detail, and even dimensional differences could be overlooked if the artist had not gone to such lengths to indicate a visual and conceptual sameness in the two chairs. While the viewer can come to understand that these two chairs are the same, their scale and dimensions suggest that they are completely different. Caillebotte includes visual clues of coordinate space, but then overthrows that notion by distorting basically everything else.

This, however, does not affect the fact that the rightmost third has its own cohesive scale. While the ratio of proportions in this third are significantly smaller than the rest of the painting, the chair is still within its own coordinate grid. Consider the space between the viewer and the unoccupied chair; the initial reaction is to doubt the scale of the chair based on its apparent

proximity. Because the patterns on the carpet and wall create a semblance of cohesion in that they stay the same size throughout, one reads the space between the painting's surface and the unoccupied chair as if it were conformed to the scale that the piano imposes. That is not the case. The decorative motifs are one of many visual tricks to simulate the notion of a singular ratio, but by this point it is apparent that the construction of this piece was not constant in any way. Instead, if one reads the space with respect to the ratio established by the chair, the distance grows appropriately; in other words, there is more distance between the viewer and the chair if one divides the space into smaller increments than the piano suggests.

### *The Constructed Picture Plane*

Caillebotte represents objects within one unified area from different perspectives and with different scale values. To come to terms with this, I propose that the picture plane is constructed, not just in terms of the arrangement of objects as critics claim, but also in its whole formation of coordinate space. As I suggested with Caillebotte's drawings, the quality of the space depicted is divided into three sections that each take on their own gradients. To envision this, consider Plan B with respect to the canvas. The objects in the diagram remain in the same layout as in the suggested picture space, yet the diagonal drawn is curved and contains three different arrows indicating three distinct viewpoints. The key to reading Plan B is understanding the relationship of the diagonal line to the perspective and scale within the painting. The dotted lines account for three distinct portions of the composition, which I will argue are cohesive within the depicted boundaries; the arrows account for the three viewpoints of the suggested

space imposed on the viewer. Figure 4 visually superimposes the divisions and assertions made by Plan B.

Within the right third of the painting, the viewer's point of view is drastically different, and almost perpendicular to the other two viewpoints. Plan B argues that the construction of the unoccupied chair is the effect of a drastically new point of view than the rest of the painting. Furthermore, each section in the space is consistent within itself. That is to say, the viewer sees Martial, his chair, and the window behind him from a unified point of view in that section of the canvas. In the same sense, the viewer sees the unoccupied chair and that portion of the wall consistently, but it is radically different than the point of view of the left most third.

### *The Beholder*

In approaching the space depicted, the viewer is not initially aware of the three distinct coordinate areas because they are unified by the line of sight that is imposed by the piano. One imaginatively situates herself on the leftmost third of the painting. Then, Martial's posture directs her eyesight towards the corner along the long axis of the room. The corner's decorative accent gives the eye a point of focus, but its reflection on the surface of the piano eventually attracts the viewer's attention forwards. Thus, by redirecting the line of sight from the depth of the picture outwards, the piano's reflection draws the viewer's attention to the unique unfolding of space around the piano.

The piano's role is not just essential in unifying the viewpoints; the piano's shape also sets the terms for the space's receding scale. A grand piano's keyboard is large and wide; the middle part curves and slims. The end, far part is significantly smaller than the keyboard.

Likewise, this painting's leftmost third is the largest, the middle portion curves and gets slightly smaller, and the rightmost part is stunningly smaller. From this, we can see how Caillebotte has taken the shape of the piano and superimposed it onto the spatial arrangement of the room.

The piano's structural and compositional effects are significant. However, conceptually the reflective quality of the piano furthers the importance of the work conceptually and historically. The reflectivity fits within conventional Impressionist interests, yet the idea of the piano as a reflective surface does not conform to the idea that the space asserts. When one object is reflected upon another, it could be said that the reflected object takes precedent over the reflective because it imposes its image onto another thing. However, the reflective piano in this work does not follow suit, as its shape give form to the space it reflects on its own surface. Instead of simply capturing the reflections on the piano, the reflected motifs reflected masquerade and connect the room's dimensions. The decorative elements--the carpet and wall pair--are consistent across the surfaces of the floor and the wall. However, their appearance as reflections hint at a possible distortion. Simply put, the motifs and the piano both work to establish a concretely ambiguous space. *Young Man Playing the Piano* actively deconstructs realistic space but then subsequently composes the viewer's line of sight, and draws upon the qualities of its subject matter to create a distortedly coherent interior space.

As I discussed in the previous chapter, Gustave Caillebotte's historical moment was marked by rigid social structures--chief among them bourgeois conventions of comportment--that took visual form. Nineteenth century Parisians presented themselves and perceived others in newly shaped settings. Consequently, visibility and "the spectacle" dominated social and artistic concerns of the moment. Caillebotte's *Man at His Bath* (Fig. 5) from 1884 differs from *Young Man at His Piano* because the scene in question takes place in an intimate space. The setting of *Young Man at His Piano* was inside the artist's home, but it was still considered an arena for social interactions to unfold. On the other hand, the scene where *Man at His Bath* unfolds was not a setting for any kind of social interaction. This subtle difference brings forth the problem that this chapter will expand upon: the beholder of *Man at His Bath* is presented a scene that is not meant (by the social standards of the time) to be seen. The difference is the role of the viewer. The rules of social conduct of the moment strictly regulated appearances within society, but this painting exhibits the image of a nude that was not meant to be seen. Yet, Caillebotte systematically works through temporal and gestural problems of depicting the subject, just so that he can be seen by the painting's beholder in a particularly intimate, vulnerable moment.

The beholder of this painting is faced with two pictorial problems at once. The man in the painting is drying himself with the towel around him in what appears to be a moment of activity, yet his pose with respect to the structure of the room seems to be frozen at a specific moment in time. The sense of time in the painting is self-contradictory. The man is in motion, while also at a standstill at a specific point in time. The man's right elbow converges with the meeting point of the wall and the curtain. The man's elbow points to the place where the horizontal line on the wall meets the vertical edge of the curtain. The composition is conflicting because the man is

characterized as mobile, yet the coherence of the whole room depends on his immobility. The beholder perceives this tension between an embodied sense of time and a painted sense of time and struggles to make sense of the problem. While it may seem that the man's static, calculated pose is loaded with potential energy, the details of the painting suggest that time elapses within the depicted moment. The composition has collected a series of moments and arranged them so they appear as one, calculated instant in time.

Secondly, the overall scene challenges the viewer by frankly depicting male nudity in a quotidian context. Previous accounts of this composition have focused on gendered reading and homo-social interpretations of the artist's intent at representing his own sexuality. Because of their focus on the artist himself, those accounts fail to explain the painted surface, and its relationship to a viewer. Essentially, my account in response to this second issue seeks to shed light on the painting's effects on the beholder, rather than the painter's auto-biographical or psychological expression.<sup>16</sup> Caillebotte was working through the problem of representing a nude male within the strict codes of bourgeois appearances, rather than the notion that he painted this subject because of his supposed homosexuality.

While the following argument focuses on the relationship between a viewer and a painting, the first section will focus on the illusion of time and the composition of the painting

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<sup>16</sup> Notable accounts of the painter's sexuality with respect to this painting include: Norma Broude, "Outing Impressionism: Homosexuality and Homosocial Bonding in the Work of Caillebotte and Bazille," in *Gustave Caillebotte and the Fashioning of Identity in Impressionist Paris*, ed. Norma Broude (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 117-174. Tamar Garb, "Gustave Caillebotte's Male Figures: Masculinity, Muscularity and Modernity," in *Bodies of Modernity; Figure and Flesh in Fin-de-Siècle France* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1998), 25-53. Gloria Groom, "Interiors and Portraits," in *Gustave Caillebotte Urban Impressionist*, ed. Adam Jolles (New York: La Réunion des Musées Nationaux and The Art Institute of Chicago with Abbeville Press Publishers, 1995), 178-188. Alan Krell, "Dirt and desire: troubled waters in Realist practice," in *Impressions of French Modernity: Art and literature in France 1850-1900*, ed. Richard Hobbs (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 135-152.

itself. In my second part, I will explain how Caillebotte's particular mode of representing time within the tableau--and the specific role that the subject's body serves with regard to representing time--direct the attention and even control the response of the viewer. The sense that time is specifically constructed within this painting is crucial because it governs the way the subject's body is depicted, and his specific pose. Therefore, the claims that I will make in my second part depend on the assertions of the first.

To recapitulate, Caillebotte was interested in depicting an ordinary contemporary bathroom scene, and posing the male body within this context. The nature of this scene was problematic for Caillebotte partly because of a long-standing tradition of representing classical nude. The male nude was conventionally depicted in a heroic setting. The mundane experience of drying oneself after a bath hardly seemed to fit this convention. The other complication of male nudes is based in society. The rise of the bourgeois class came with a newly found set of codes and comportments that distinguished people. Depicting a bourgeois male without his prescribed set of accouterments compromised his social identity. Furthermore, depicting him from the back, exposing his posterior, was certainly scandalous to the sensibilities of the time. Yet despite these pressures, Caillebotte depicted the scene. To do so, the artist incorporated an elapsed sense of time to integrate the body into its setting. Furthermore, the artist capitalized on the body's position, turning the face, and the man's attention away from the beholder.

### *The Painting*

Within the represented room, a plain white curtain drapes down from an unpainted source, barely touching the brown wooden floor of a plainly appointed bathroom. The lower half

of the walls are painted dark brown while the upper portions are painted a lighter beige color. A copper tub sits at the corner of the room; the water in the tub is not visible to the viewer. However, some water puddles have been left on the by a nude man who is drying himself. Assuming a wide stance, the man vigorously pulls on a towel that covers a portion of his back. The man pulls on the taut towel, producing stress wrinkles that appear as diagonal wrinkles in the fabric. In contrast to the towel that is in use, another white cloth lies motionless and crumpled on the floor, to the man's right-hand side. Apart from registering the obvious fact that he is nude, and despite our attention to his simple action of drying himself, the observer understands that this man is alone. Importantly, he faces away from the onlooker.

The man's status as a solitary figure makes him the only measure of time. Reading his body, one begins to notice a temporal relationship between his stance and the objects that surround him. His right foot points towards to the bathtub, gesturing towards the wet footprints and unused cloth that share that sense of directional movement. The reference toward the bath tub is suggestive of the scenes that came before. In including the footsteps, it's as if Caillebotte were granting the viewer enough visual evidence so that he could imaginatively reconstruct the immediately preceding moments. His left foot points towards his boots, and clothes that lie on a chair. Following on the previous observation, the sense of direction of his left foot is echoed in the angle of his boots. If the right foot references the time that passed, the right foot foreshadows his actions to come. The artist's references to previous and forthcoming events place the man in between two stages of activity--bathing, and getting dressed.

Besides being posed in-between activities, the man's place within the room is vital to the geometric layout of the scene overall. Turning to the structure of the room as a whole, I'd like to point out again that the paint on the walls, the edge of the curtain, and the man's right elbow

come together in the center of the upper right quadrant of the painting. The sense of volume of the room is defined by linear and rectangular motifs within the composition. The receding lines of the floor boards recede and meet the back wall. The corner of the room is accentuated by the multicolored walls. The painterly line at the point where the two walls meet acts like an arrow, pointing out the corner. Furthermore, the man is integrated into the painted space because his body is depicted in a moment in which he corresponds with his surroundings. The linear convergence of the room's parts, man included, heightens the cohesion of the scene.

On the one hand, the painting evokes a narrative. First, the man walked out of the bath. Then, he turned toward the curtain and started to dry himself. Soon, he will begin to get dressed. However, the painting insists on depicting a specific moment in time. What is the viewer's sense of time within the painting if the man is mobile within a room that shows us a static moment? The artist clearly calculated the specificity of this pose, to the extent that it would impose a mode of beholding onto the composition overall. In other words, the sense of time and unity of the painting imply that the pose, of a nude man facing away from the beholder, are intended frame what the viewer sees, and to include her within the painted space, to a certain extent.

### *Temporality*

In discussing how time is represented within a painting, I would like to introduce two opposing senses of time: the instantaneous and the protracted moment. To use a photographic analogy, consider the concept of shutter speeds. In capturing an image on film, a camera allows light to enter through its lens for a predetermined amount of time. If the shutter is open for a prolonged moment of time, the light-sensitive film will record movement or change within the

photographed scene. On the other hand, if the shutter speed is faster, recording a shorter moment, the captured image will reflect an instantaneous view of the photographed subject. In photography, the shutter speed (determined by the photographer, as well as by physical and technical limitations of the medium) impacts the content of what the image depicts. Depending on the subject of the photograph, this could impact the sense of time of the photograph, by blurring movement and depicting elapsed time. In painting, however, time is captured independently of technical means. The artist is responsible for constructing a composition that includes visual details to characterize the event taking place. *Man at His Bath*'s mis-en-scène suggests a conflict in types of temporal representation because of the conflict between the man's mobility and the composition's geometric fragility. Had Caillebotte chosen to depict the man a second before, or a second after what we see, his relationship to the space around him would have been drastically changed. My previous observations of the man (caught in motion and as convergent within the lines of the room) beg the question of how, but most importantly *why* Caillebotte depicted time in his painting.

My employment of a photographic analogy to introduce the problem of time in *Man at His Bath* was deliberate. Caillebotte's ideas of temporal representation were undoubtedly influenced by photography due to the fact that his brother, Martial Caillebotte, was an avid recreational photographer who primarily depicted family members and views of Paris. In understanding the specific means through which Caillebotte incorporated photographic elements, Karin Sagner noted that Edgar Degas (Caillebotte's close friend) and Leon Bonnat (Caillebotte's teacher) attended viewings of Eadweard Muybridge's movement photographs (chronophotographs) in 1881 (Fig. 7). While it is unknown if Caillebotte personally attended such an exhibit, the scholar makes it clear that Caillebotte's imagery and subjects involved an

awareness of the body as it moves through space and time. In reference to *Man at His Bath*, Sagner finds that Caillebotte was working toward depicting the male nude as “muscular, masculine, and yet vulnerable,” therefore he “deliberately eliminated the movement immanent in the picture, thus pointing to a milieu in which work is intellectual and not manual or physical.”<sup>17</sup> Sagner’s reading of this painting closely mirrors my own in that she sees the painting working towards depicting the male nude outside of classical, traditional contexts, and within quotidian, domestic settings. Yet, I offer an account that contrasts with her conclusion of the painting’s temporality and the social implications of such movement. She argues that Caillebotte’s painting is a snapshot in time, which removes the subject from a corporeal realm and instead depicts him intellectually.

Taking a couple of steps back, a closer look at the details in Caillebotte’s depiction of the towels reveals the nature of the man’s movement. Of two cloths in the painting, one is being used while the other lies motionless. Specifically, the towel that the man is using is marked by diagonal strain lines. These lines move upward from left to right along the lower two-thirds of the towel; however, the upper third of the towel has strain lines that move diagonally downward. The middle portion of the towel creases, forming lines that run side to side, almost parallel to the man’s forearm. Furthermore, a small sliver or edge of the towel slips out between the man’s

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<sup>17</sup> Karin Sagner, “Gustave Caillebotte, An Impressionist and Photography,” in *Gustave Caillebotte An Impressionist and Photography*, ed. Karin Sagner and Max Hollein with Ulrich Pohlmann (Frankfurt: Hirmer, 2012), 24-27. Other notable discussions of Caillebotte and photography include Sarah Kennel, “Photography and the Painter’s Eye,” in *Gustave Caillebotte: The Painter’s Eye*, ed. Julie Warnement (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 109-121. Serge Lemoine, “Les frères Caillebotte, peintre et photographie,” in *Dans l’intimité des frères Caillebotte Peintre et Photographe*, ed. Sophy Thompson (Paris: Culturespaces et Skira Flammarion, 2011). Michael Marrinan, “Caillebotte’s Deep Focus,” in *Gustave Caillebotte: The Painter’s Eye*, ed. Julie Warnement (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 23-37.

body and the top layer of towel. By contrast, the cloth on the ground is crumpled consistently. The difference between these materials highlights the active function of the former cloth in light of the static quality of the latter. The towel in use has different parts, that are each being pulled and manipulated in different directions; the unused towel lies on the floor uniformly. On a basic level, the difference between the two towels simply highlights the man's movement. However, the four types of tensions seen within the same towel point to the idea that the scene depicts more than one moment in time.

An instantaneous scene of time, as Sagner suggests, would imply that while the body is shown like a freeze-frame, in such a way that the man's movement cannot be seen. I read the stress wrinkles on the cloth and the man's arm movements as indicative of a condensed sense of time. The difference between my argument and Sagner's is best expressed by understanding representational time Muybridge's chronophotographs. An instantaneous moment in a painting would be comparable to a single frame in a movement photograph. Sagner claims that Caillebotte chose a specific frame that would disguise movement in the painting. In contrast, I argue that the painting is a representation of several frames collapsed onto each other, synthesizing several instants into one. The man and his towel are seemingly integrated, but upon careful speculation, it becomes apparent that the tautness of the towel does not correspond to what we might expect given the man's efforts to pull on it. The man's arms are both bent, but his right hand moves towards his body, while his left is further extended. The stress wrinkles in the fabric, however, suggest that there is an equal strain coming from both of the man's arms. Movement, in this painting, is emphasized by the man's flexing muscles, and the towel's strain. In combining these two elements, the painting must be read as a representation of multiple movements over time.

If this painting is responding to the problem of depicting the male nude in modern times, how does a condensed sense of time relate to the meaning of the work? Had Caillebotte intended to disguise movement, as Sagner suggests, then the painting would be suggestive of a state of mind that is mental rather than physical. In other words, the scholar asserts that Caillebotte tried to detract from bodily sensations, and instead depicted a male nude that would become a statement of mental occupation. In other words, *Man at His Bath* depicts the male nude with the same emphasis on thought and contemplation as a painting like *Young Man at His Window* (Fig. 6). My opposing view of movement in this work comes with a radically different interpretation of meaning. Had Caillebotte wanted to disguise movement, and emphasize ideation, what would be the point of depicting his subject nude, in a bathroom? The content of the painting is just as crucial to the meaning of the work as the way that it is being represented. Caillebotte's efforts in arranging this scene suggest that the sense of movement is key to understanding the body within its space, but also essential to attract and frame the attention of the beholder.

### *Facing-away-ness*

The man's body within the space is an equally important element in understanding Caillebotte's depiction of the bourgeois male nude. The subject, engrossed in drying himself, turns away from the beholder. This pose not only obscures the person's face--making it impossible to see emotion registered by facial expressions--but it also directs the man's attention just as the painting holds the viewer's attention. In facing away from the picture plane, the man is facing the same direction as any potential beholder.

Another of Caillebotte's compositions, *Young Man at His Window* from 1875, depicts a man in a similar pose but within a radically different context.<sup>18</sup> This painting features a smartly dressed man, René Caillebotte, with his hands in his pockets, slightly hunched over, gazing out into the wide streets of Haussmann's Paris. The man's image is partially reflected on the open window that frames a bourgeois interior with respect to the large facades and streets of the urban exterior. On the inside of the room, we glimpse an elaborate rug, a portion of a chair, and curtains. The exterior is divided from this domestic setting by concrete balustrades that go up to the man's waist. While the subject is to be alone in his thoughts, other people are depicted moving around on the street below.

On one level, these two paintings are similar in that both subjects are turned away from the viewer and their attention is consumed by something that the viewer can imagine, but cannot experience directly. In *Man at His Bath*, the man's attentions and actions are dedicated to drying himself. His arms are bent, grasping the towel, and his head is angled down, implying that he is looking at his body, perhaps calculating how to readjust the towel to continue drying off. In *Young Man at His Window*, the subject of the painting is engrossed in his own thoughts. Unlike the man at his bath, the young man looking out of his window is immobile, with his hands in his pockets, and shows no sign of impending movement or action. In both situations, the man's attention is directed away from the picture plane. The men concentrate on something that is out of reach, out of sight, or perhaps unable to be depicted. The most accurate way to surmise the character of the young man's thoughts would be to look at his face. The clearest way to show the viewer what the nude man is looking at would be to show it to him. Because of the man's

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<sup>18</sup> The artist composed several other scenes that mirror this stance. Most notable are *Woman at the Window* (1880), and *Man at His Balcony, Boulevard Haussmann* (1880).

orientation away from the picture plane, these pieces of information are unknowable to the beholder.

The assumption at the root of my argument is that Caillebotte depicted the men's poses and the quality of their attention with the intent of responding to specific representational problems. The issue at the core of *Man at His Bath* is depicting a member of bourgeois society in a state where no trace of that society can be identified. On the other hand, the problem that governs *Young Man at His Window* is depicting a member of bourgeois society isolated in his thoughts. Michael Fried constructs a schema that supports this assumption in monographs on Gustave Courbet and Edouard Manet and in his essay on Gustave Caillebotte.<sup>19</sup> The larger problem that Fried identifies is the concept of theatricality or artificiality. Fried claims that Manet responded to the problem by depicting his subjects with a facingness that addressed the viewer and dissolves any notion of artificiality by confronting it. With regards to Caillebotte, Fried sees a trend towards absorption, meaning that Caillebotte's subjects focus so intently on their prescribed activities, that they negate the beholder. According to the scholar, Caillebotte was reacting against Manet's notion of facingness, instead evoking similar means of representation as Gustave Courbet. While Fried's interests traces larger stylistic and formal developments in art, his essay on Caillebotte asserts that the oeuvre produced in the painter's short career contains original and serious qualities that merit further understanding. The essay's ultimate goal is to narrow down and expand of the characteristics that comprise Caillebotte's artwork, and also to seek an explanation for the artist's voluntary abandonment of art production. The scholar concludes that Caillebotte's works struggle to incorporate ideological elements to

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<sup>19</sup> Michael Fried, *Manet's Modernism or, the Face of Painting in the 1860s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996). Michael Fried, "Caillebotte's Impressionism," *Representations* No. 66 (Spring 1999): 1-51.

means of representation. Specifically, he notes a conflict between realist principles and Impressionist formal techniques that the artist could not successfully synthesize.

My argument aligns itself closely with the foundation of Fried's work, and thus I wish to draw on the scholar's research and assertions on French conventions of beholding. The scholar's schema of modes of beholding acutely relates the content and subject of works of art to the meaning of the work as perceived by the viewer. In the example of *Man at His Bath*, the content of the work encompasses what is represented--a nude male in a bathroom. The meaning, then, is ascertained by examining the artist's specific means of representing the content. Fried argues that an artist's composition is comparable to the manner through which the viewer should come to understand or relate to the scene. Furthermore, this relationship communicates the meaning of the scene and speaks to the artist's historical outlook. In that sense, this is the same claim that I seek to make about *Man at His Bath*. However, my second interest lies in rejecting any judicial comments on Caillebotte's compositions. Fried concludes that the artist failed to find the accurate pictorial means through which he could represent certain social and ideological ideas. This project straightforwardly rejects the idea that the painter was unsuccessful in representing his ideas, and instead argues that the artist designs answers to representational problems in unique ways that depend on the prescribed role of the beholder. As I have previously argued, Caillebotte constructs a condensed sense of time in *Man at His Bath*. The means through which the beholder comes to understand that time comprises a part of the composition's meaning. Furthermore, the position of the man's body also constructs a mode for the beholder to come to experience the composition.

On the subject of the balcony painting, Fried determines that the composition unites the impressionist motif of a city view and the realist form of a subject as seen from behind through the frame of the window. He concludes:

Our [the beholder's] perception of the scene through the open window is in the end associated simply and wholly *neither* with the point of view of the young man, as if we are meant to forget our separateness from him in our involvement with the scene, *nor* with a distinct point of view that includes him and the scene, as if the relative positions of the young man and woman, carriage, and horses were strictly a function of our situatedness further back in the apartment. All this is to say that *Young Man at His Window* at once raises the question of its relation to the beholder in an especially pointed way and leaves the question unresolved, hovering in the air, between two alternatives neither of which exactly fits the case.<sup>20</sup>

In the bath scene, the scholar finds:

The viewer is made aware of the extent to which Caillebotte's phenomenological aspirations, or at least his efforts to represent bodily sensation, were in the end unrealizable. It's as though for *Man at His Bath* to succeed in the terms that the painting proposes, the viewer would have to be able to feel, not merely see, the man's fists clenching the towel ends, the effort and motion of pulling the towel back and forth across his body, and--something that can't be seen at all--the chafing sensation of the towel against his skin. Not only is that impossible; the strain imposed by the painter's desire to accomplish the impossible is apparent in the man's bizarrely small left forearm and hand... Inasmuch as nothing like that attempt can be discerned in Caillebotte's earlier

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<sup>20</sup> Michael Fried, "Caillebotte's Impressionism," *Representations* No. 66 (Spring 1999): 9.

figure paintings, it may be that another factor in his withdrawal from ambitious painting in the early 1880s was the dissonance between an emergent desire to represent sensations.<sup>21</sup>

Fried finds that both men are absorbed within their respective activities. The man in *Young Man at His Window* turns away from the beholder such that the beholder cannot separate herself from the man's point of view, nor can she wholly assume his point of view either. The painting thus employs the pose, and the tantalizing effects of the "outside world" to direct the attention of the beholder, on to the man as an individual and in the context of his social life. On the other hand, Fried comes to understand *Man at His Bath* as having been driven by Caillebotte's intent to realize the corporeal effects of the scene on the beholder. Fried attributes to the painter a desire to create a feeling of phenomenological empathy so that a beholder could imaginatively experience the man's activities. Fried makes a claim about Caillebotte's motive, but then finds the painting to be unsuccessful in accomplishing said motives. This reading undermines the problem of the male nude, like Karin Sagner did, by redirecting the conflict at hand. Caillebotte is responding to a long tradition of classicized male nudes. In other words, Caillebotte's painting is trying to depict the experience of a male nude, not by evoking empathetic reactions from its viewer, but by controlling the sense of the body in time and space. In an earlier part of this chapter, I argued that Caillebotte meticulously arranged the man's body within a longer sense of time. Similarly, I intend to explain how the man's facing-away-ness controls the subject and positions him such that the beholder must acknowledge his physicality, without being asked to assume any sense of corporeality.

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 33.

So, how does the man's pose affect the viewer's experience? Fried's concept of facingness refers to the painted subject's acknowledgment beholder. Facing-away-ness, on the other hand, works by turning the subject's attention away from the beholder. Since the latter term is an opposite description of the former one, one could imagine that the implication of the terms would be opposite also. That, however, is not the case. Facingness negates the role of the beholder by addressing her. Facing-away-ness perpetuates the role of the beholder by foreshadowing it. The beholder is forced to share the same sense of direction as the painted persona, thus encouraging him to imagine what is occupying the persona's attention. But, like absorption, facing-away-ness distances the viewer, encouraging her to understand the subject in relationship to its context. Facing-away-ness, then, gives the viewer a dynamic mode through which he can enter the space. The viewer must attend to both the intellectual, or emotional preoccupations of the subject, as well as the physical and surrounding implications of that subject in its depicted setting.

Fried's comments on *Young Man at His Window* resemble my definition of facing-away-ness. He finds that the beholder is caught in-between seeing the scene as the subject, and seeing the subject as the main component of the scene. Facing-away-ness as I define it implies both kinds of relationship between the beholder and the subject, without the subordination of one over the other. In *Man at His Bath*, facing-away-ness distinguishes the man as the primary focus of attention. His nudity is heightened, by the fact that we see him, taking a wide stance, and revealing his entire backside to the audience. But, his own attention (which incidentally is also himself) becomes another subject of the painting. The man looks down at himself and is preoccupied with drying his own body. This self-reflexive action is a part of what the beholder is forced to be concerned with.

The man's facing-away-ness affects the beholder by giving her two different levels upon which she can enter the painting. The man's self-absorption preoccupies the viewer, in an imaginative attempt to visualize or experience whatever the man himself is beholding. In depicting the man's focus but not the subject of his focus, Caillebotte frames the viewer so that he can be pulled into the space of the painting. The beholder is asked to participate in the painting by being asked to fill in the missing pieces of what is going on.

However, this is not Caillebotte's main goal. The artist's efforts in this painting are first and foremost concerned with representing the male nude within a quotidian setting. This is made evident by the directness of the man's body with respect to the picture plane. He puts the content of the work front and center for the viewer, in order for her to be faced with his corporeality. Caillebotte reveals the man's body, unapologetically, in an almost life-size canvas that definitely shocked its earliest viewers. The man's attention seems secondary to the stark image of the man's body. The meticulously arranged composition, then provides two levels for the beholder to experience. The imaginative experience that comes from following the man's sense of direction and attention, and the separateness that one feels when seeing someone else's body are dependent on the man's facing-away-ness. The beholder comes to understand the man's physical palpability, as the artist's method of introducing the beholder to the scene.

The beholder confronts the facing-away-ness of the man, and relates to the scene due to his shared pose. In facing the same direction as the man, the viewer is asked to imaginatively re-create the focus of his attention. At the same time, the beholder is definitively shown an unapologetic view of the man's body, in an attempt to remind the viewer that he cannot empathize with the man. One can try imagine the man's sensations, but can only come to concretely understand him with respect to the bourgeois bathroom that surrounds him.

## *Conclusion*

In *Man at His Bath*, Gustave Caillebotte depicts the subject of a male nude by calculating and situating the painting's subject facing away from the beholder, in a compounded moment. The man is caught between bathing and getting dressed, and the painting works to show him in motion. His wide stance, and turned attention position him so that the viewer is forced to acknowledge the corporeal elements of his body. However, the man's facing-away-ness allows the viewer to enter the picture plane, as an unnoticed spectator, and not as someone who is meant to assume the same position as the man.

Like in my previous chapter, the conclusions I have drawn from this painting rely on sustained attention. The painting's visual complexity solicits, or call for the viewer's effort to resolve the tension between the man's movement and the room's cohesion, and between the man's attention and the viewer's own attention. The issue between the man's movement and his setting are resolved if one considers the painting as depicting a condensed sense of time. Furthermore, considering the man's pose with respect to my term of facing-away-ness creates two separate subjects for the beholder to consider in relationship to each other. In working through these problems, as this essay has done, the viewer's imaginative experience entering the scene is normalized and made plausible. Caillebotte took on the challenge of depicting the male nude, and resolved it by composing the scene such that its subject was facing away from the beholder.

Gustave Caillebotte's *Pont De l'Europe* of 1876 depicts a sidewalk and street on a bridge over the Gare St. Lazare (Fig. 8). The setting of this painting reflects Baron Georges Haussmann's systematic reconstruction of the city that began in 1852; among other changes, the city's superintendent inserted wide straight streets, created new transportation centers, broke up old neighborhoods, and built new residential edifices.<sup>22</sup> By 1876, the city and its inhabitants had been completely transformed. Within the painting, the artist arranged a series of people, carriages, and even a stray dog moving within the space defined by metal girders, large repetitive buildings, and the street itself. Caillebotte was part of a burgeoning society that navigated, observed, and interacted with the new Paris. *Pont de l'Europe* depicts the city as its residents conformed to the changed structures of modern life. The clarity of these historical facts and observations are complicated by ambiguity in one's presentation of the historical moment, in scholarship, and in the narrative of the painting itself. Caillebotte's intent and the painting's meaning require an understanding not only of the new structures, but of the experience of modernity. I argue that Caillebotte intentionally arranged the space and the people within the space in order to reproduce his own point of view for the beholder.

Constructing the story of modernity is complicated, primarily because it requires the historian to make assumptions or connections based on her own ideologies. The facts of Haussmannization are complicated by the ambiguity that comes with representing the experience of such a historical moment. In the case of this painting, the ambiguity of narrative further complicates how scholars should approach the meaning of the work. Within my discussion, I

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<sup>22</sup> Stephen F. Eisenman, "Manet and the Impressionists," in *Nineteenth Century Art: A Critical History* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2002), 282.

evaluate the accounts of T.J. Clark, Kirk Varnedoe, and Norma Broude to analyze the connections those scholars make between visual analysis, external literary or critical sources, intention, and meaning. Impending the issue from a Marxist perspective, Clark considers the changing social attitudes of Paris from the 1860s and onwards as a direct response to Capitalism's redistribution of urban space. I will reference Clark to maintain that a historian's principles shape the nature of their historical narrative. Then, I will turn to the Varnedoe and Broude, who offer two renown accounts of the meaning of the painting. In each of their arguments, I find that their interpretations of the visual narrative--that unfolds between the woman in the black dress, the top hatted gentleman, and the worker in a grey suit--focus on external sources rather than the painting itself. In contrast to an over reliance on extrinsic sources, I argue for a closer reading of the painting itself to come to terms with how Caillebotte constructs space.

In my own account of the painting, I argue that the artist constructed the point of view prescribed to the viewer so that the beholder could reflect on the same image that the artist had responded to. The form of the street and the point of view provided by the canvas divides the viewer's attention between the built environment and the people within it. The beholder is made to feel present in the scene but his prescribed viewpoint impedes him from coming to a cohesive conclusion. The viewer is compelled to look at the receding street, just as he is tempted to turn his attention to the urban landscape on the other side of the large metal girders. Likewise, one is curious about the relationship of the three people on the bridge but Caillebotte's arrangement of the figures denies a clear narrative. Therefore, not only are the people at ambiguous relationships to each other, but the viewer is divided between observing the street and connecting with other bystanders. Caillebotte reproduces the experience of modernity by imposing a dynamic

viewpoint onto the beholder. The viewer not only sees the dynamic nature of urban life, but he is made to participate within that space as well. A straightforward vision of the city is at a tantalizing distance for the viewer. The suggestions of narrative and the direction of the urban gaze are suggested to the viewer, but Caillebotte's painting enacts the irreconcilability of urban experience.

### *The Past*

How has the city changed, who changed it, and why? What were those effects on social life, and most importantly how do those effects affect the new painting? In describing Parisian modernization, T.J. Clark invokes multiple contemporary texts that were critical of these urban changes to answer these questions.<sup>23</sup> Namely, he quotes a section of Goncourt's journal in its original version, and then in a revised form. He finds that the meaning of the extract understands the city in material terms, and edits the claim by saying that Goncourt's entry is representative of incomplete images. From this assertion, Clark asks if the city was given form, and then answers by stating that the project failed because it transformed the urban space such that capitalism redefined the individual's labor and identity. The city itself became an image, and the citizen consumed the space's spectacle, not as a structure, but as a commodity. From this bold claim, the scholar presents facts and figures about Haussmannization, and then asks why it happened. In summarizing historical citations, Clark gives emperor Napoleon III agency over the project. The scholar claims that the emperor's motives were primarily to skirt off rebellion, and subsequently

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<sup>23</sup> T. J. Clark, "The View from Notre-Dame," in *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and His Followers* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 23-78.

for the public benefit of sanitation and improvement. Clark returns to contemporary comments, describing how the rebuilding of Paris was extremely unpopular. The scholar describes the sentiment that a change in the appearance of the city changed the nature of social interactions such that vice, vulgarity, and display became a theme of the modern experience. These themes are related to the avant-garde agenda in that they accentuate uncertainty and consumption. Through questioning the role of a city, Clark connects the assertion of the avant-garde's interests to Manet's work.

The scholar claims that Manet's art depicts many different types of subjects in situations that are displayed by enumerating the artist's repertoire of themes. Clark reads Manet's art as modern in that it attends to marginal and ambiguous topics and expresses them in terms of the visual. He connects this claim to the overall role of capital in society by claiming that modernism seeks to map one form of control (socio-political) over others in spite of the culture's ideology. To clarify the connection between artistic content and social content, Clark backtracks to discuss capital. He finds that the new organizational form of the city itself re-order collective understanding such that commodities themselves become the images or objects that provide codification. The scholar explains his assertion by describing the numerous jobs and people who used to crowd the Parisian streets. The relationship of the proletariat and bourgeois had been more personal, but the breaking up of quartiers dispersed the location of business, and affected the proletariat by alienating him from his labor, and eventually pushing him out of the city. The caveat to Clark's claim is that this innovation was just that. One form of capitalism replaced another. Clark directly relates this sense of innovation to the sense of change experienced by the contemporary criticism he had previously employed.

Clark's view of modernity (as an image that lost its means of representation) is reflected in his comments on Manet's paintings and subsequent impressionist artists. In describing *Pont De l'Europe*, the scholar notes the anonymity of urban spaces. Clark claimed that Impressionist painting "was likely to be one in which the classes coexisted but did not touch; where each was absorbed in a kind of dream, cryptic, turned in on itself or out to some spectacle, giving off equivocal signals: the worker looking out of the street without sides in Caillebotte's *Pont De l'Europe*, and the bourgeois engaged in mysterious transaction with a woman--his wife, his mistress, a passer-by, a prostitute, who knows?"<sup>24</sup>

Clark, like most scholars who analyze this painting, describes the narrative ambiguity in terms of the figures' relationship to one another. His rhetorical question implies that the "mysterious transaction" is the focus and subject of the painting. In these comments, Clark's historical claims make up the meaning of the work, and Caillebotte's depiction of space is merely symptomatic of urbanization. Clark contends that capitalism is an active agent, but then denies Caillebotte's view in *Pont de l'Europe* equal agency. Kirk Varnedoe and Norma Broude's arguments are constituted by similar employments of evidence.

### *The Arguments*

In the following section, I will present Kirk Varnedoe and Norma Broude's claims about the canvas by first explaining the scope of their aims, and then working through their argument by citing, and simultaneously commenting on the logic behind their argumentative structure. In essence, this investigation is questioning the methods of these art historians, not with the intent

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 73.

to negate, but with the desire to understand how these two scholars used essentially the same set of resources to arrive at their understandings. Before moving into this process, however, I would like comment on the historians' contexts that explain certain differences in their claims. Kirk Varnedoe's first publication on Gustave Caillebotte is twenty-eight years prior Norma Broude's study. Art history as a field grew during those years to encompass remarkably different ideologies and voices. Norma Broude writes from a feminist's perspective, and thus her study on the topic take on extremely different interests. This goes to say that I am less interested in scholar's differences or on their conclusions. What I find most important is the fact that each scholar works under the assumption that Parisian society in 1876 is interchangeable to the contents of Caillebotte's composition. The initial "realism" of the brushwork of the painting, as well as the meticulous planning of the composition, leads each author to make the claim that Caillebotte was trying to represent a certain element of sociability within Haussmann's Paris.

Varnedoe's investigations into Caillebotte's works began in 1974 when he conducted a study of *Pont de l'Europe*'s space. One of his essays begins by describing the bridge as it was in 1876 and sees this specific representation as a dramatization of the perspective of the real street. The point of view offered in the painting unifies the height of the street, creating a cohesive line of recession from the foreground into the deep background. In this "dramatic and visual space," the viewer is manipulated into seeing a uniform, impressive boulevard not as it really was, but as the artist wanted it to be seen.<sup>25</sup> Varnedoe argues that a tension between actuality and artificiality played a dynamic role in Caillebotte's body of work. For the scholar, artificiality is best defined

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<sup>25</sup> Kirk Varnedoe, "Caillebotte's *Pont de l'Europe*: A New Slant," *Art International* Vol. 18 (April 1974): 28.

by what the artist changed from the verifiable reality of the city. But, what is verifiable about the new experience of walking down the streets of Haussmann's Paris?

Varnedoe implies that Caillebotte represents the city against the objective reality of the historical space, and awarding primacy to the Parisian street. In searching for an explanation of the work, this semi-mathematical approach makes sense. The problem, in this case, lies with the degree to which historical reality merits primacy. In the second portion his argument, the scholar focuses on the social and psychological ambiguity of the painting. The painting's mass of girders consumes the painted space, and thus distracts from the human elements of the painting. Similarly, the apparent isolation of the subjects hints at their self-absorption, and thus their states of mind within their urban surroundings. As I foreshadowed in my description of the painting, he identifies the gentleman in the top hat as Gustave Caillebotte himself. Varnedoe relies on his visual analysis, that relies on a comparison to a reconstruction of the real urban space. The sum total of his interpretation claims that the painting focuses on "perceptual ambiguity and social and psychological tension."<sup>26</sup>

In 2002, Norma Broude argued that Caillebotte manipulated the "type" of the flâneur in order to secretly depict the habits of homosexual bourgeois male and his relationship to other bourgeois or proletariat males. By investigating the artist's persona, her argument produces an account that would be consistent in all of the artist's works, due to an awareness of, or curiosity for understanding the artist's sexual and personal interest as acting agents that influenced the topics, and meaning of his works. For the scholar, the most affecting aspect of Caillebotte's oeuvre is its ability to disguise homosexual activities within the increasingly homophobic society. Her claims blur the line between the real historical Paris of 1876 and the vision of Paris

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<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, 58.

depicted in Caillebotte's canvas. The scholar uses critical evidence to define societal norms that existed and applied pressure on the artist in the same way in the painting and in real life. This method of approach equates her reading of historical attitudes to Caillebotte's personal concerns.

In her discussion of *Le Pont de l'Europe*, Broude begins by citing Varnedoe and identifying the central, top-hatted gentleman as the artist himself. She glosses several contemporary and modern critics who interpret the painting in terms of the heterosexual relationship between the man and the woman, but then she turns to the peculiar aspects of the work to develop her points. The scholar connects the man's forward stride with a particular gaze. As the man looks towards the painting's right hand side, he might either be caught looking at the worker's "derriere thrust backward" or the flâneur might be matching the worker's line of sight, sharing the experience of seeing something that is off of the canvas. This observation of the subject's vision is grounded in two different ways. First, she evokes the preparatory drawings of this painting to suggest that the man's offset position is intentionally suggestive of his connection to the worker. On the other, she argues that the scene's architecture becomes a map of gazes. Thus concluding that "Caillebotte's own gaze and its same-sex object--must indeed be what this painting is about. Moreover, the very clarity of the perspective construction forcefully implicates the viewer of the painting in this transgressive act of same-sex looking."<sup>27</sup>

Broude reads each visual detail in the light of a socially determined code. As an alternative example, one of the details of her argument calls upon an iconographical analysis of the stray dog. She mentions that it visually connects the bourgeois male with the worker, and then invokes sources that claim dogs to be symbols of sexual interest. This method of analysis is

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<sup>27</sup> Norma Broude, "Outing Impressionism: Homosexuality and Homosocial Bonding in the Work of Caillebotte and Bazille," in *Gustave Caillebotte and the Fashioning of Identity in Impressionist Paris*, ed. Norma Broude (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 122.

placing an emphasis on the sources, and the sexual codes they describe, rather than the total nature of the artwork. I contend that Broude's argument's fail to address the kind of space that Caillebotte depicted, and that she constructs her claims around iconographic interpretations of the images themselves. The dog, the working-class man, and the street are all given symbolic significance. However, the initial ambiguity and the formal qualities of the bridge that frame the viewer suggest the impossibility of a narrative reading of the painting.

My account of these scholars has been working with an underlying question. What evidence is important to making a claim about the artwork? In both Varnedoe and Broude's arguments, extrinsic evidence frames their view of Caillebotte's intent and of the work's meaning. Scholars like the ones I have pointed out are drawn toward the representations of people, and look for meaning within the relationship of people to each other. To reiterate, In Varnedoe's claims, he views Caillebotte's form of perspective mathematically. If one subtracts the point of view in the painting from the appearance of the bridge and the receding street, the difference becomes the key through which one can understand Caillebotte's attitude, and thus his meaning. In Broude's argument, the pictorial world is policed by the social norms that policed the artist. The portion of their argument that I have scrutinized is the primacy of the external sources over the construction of space that Caillebotte imposes onto the beholder. Another argument has been made by Claude Ghez within an exhibition catalogue on the painter's relationship to photography. The scholar compared old photographs of the canvas the painting to infra-red and x-ray images and found that the man's toes were edited, most likely in a faulty restoration. Coupled with a close reading of the other figures in the space, Ghez claims that the narrative of the painting is that there is no narrative. The painting's ambiguity is intentional, and

is thus meant to represent the chaotic experience of modernity.<sup>28</sup> Ghez's conclusions are closer to my own, but like the other scholars, he fails to explain how the composition's space reinforces the ambiguity of social life, and the feeling of being in a modernized space.

### *The Painting*

The painting, set on a bridge next to a major train station, poses an ineluctable question of the relationship between the city and its inhabitants. As I have pointed out, scholarship has focused on constructing a narrative about the figures in order to qualify Caillebotte's experiences of modernity. Rather than focusing my study on the relationships of the figures to each other, I will investigate Caillebotte's techniques of framing the beholder. The form of the street and the point of view provided by the canvas divides the viewer's attention between the built environment and the people within it. Caillebotte's composition guides the viewer to notice the potential narrative of the street scene. Yet the artist specifically arranged the characters on the street to be purposefully unclear. My account argues that the viewer is struck by a sense of being present in the scene, but he struggles to make sense of the space he is in and the people that are in front of him.

In terms of the built environment, the right edge of the canvas depicts large steel girders. These massive metal beams recede into space in a regular pattern that rigidly directs a viewer's line of sight. At the bottom right edge of the painting, the bottom part of railing meets the paved sidewalk. The top portion of the girders are outside of the picture space at the right side of the

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<sup>28</sup> Claude Ghez, "Reading Gustave Caillebotte's *Pont de l'Europe* (1876)," in *Gustave Caillebotte: An Impressionist and Photography*, ed. Karin Sagner, Max Hollein, and Ulrich Pohlmann (Frankfurt: Hirmer, 2012), 88-105.

painted space. The top only becomes visible about halfway down the canvas. This structure implies that the viewer's point of view equals the scale of the people being represented. Since the beams are significantly larger than the painted space, the beholder shares a sense of scale with the people on the bridge. Just as the man leaning on the railing looks small in comparison to his surroundings, our vision of the *Pont de l'Europe* shows a small portion of a greater whole.

The center of the canvas depicts the cross-shaped girders that recede into the left of the painted space. This "empty" zone is bordered by the man in the green jacket, the woman, and the man in the grey suit. In approaching this painting, the beholder is drawn to look towards the street at the left area of the canvas. But the artist also presents a vision of other houses and avenues at a distance through the gaps between the metal beams of the girders. The central zone is the crux of these diverging lines of sight. The significance of this is twofold. On the one hand, the viewer's point of view resembles the nature of the urban intersection. The artist applies the effects of modernization to the perspective of the painting, giving the viewer a dynamic mode of relating to the space. On the other hand, the central zone of the painting exclusively depicts the urban structure. The narrative, human elements are introduced when the viewer follows the line of sight that the structure insists upon. In other words, the central portion of the canvas focuses on the structures of urbanization, which in turn direct the viewer to see the effects of urbanization on the Parisian population.

Furthermore, the background of the painted space is overrun by yellow, beige buildings with blue roofs and red chimneys. The line of sight created by the recession of the street and girders into the far left part of the painting emphasizes the viewer's awareness of these buildings. Yet, the view provided through the large gaps in between the steel beams enables the viewer to spot large apartment buildings that echo the buildings seen in the deep background of the left-

side of the painting. It is as if the background of the painting is overrun by these buildings. The edifices themselves became some of the most recognizable image of Haussmann's reconstruction of Paris, but also created a social divide. These buildings housed people like the man in the top hat and displaced people like the man in the bowler hat. Modernity in this sense reorganized everyone's sense of relationship to each other. Beyond their historical significance, their presence in both the left and right hand background of the painted space echo the visual chiasmus that the viewer experiences. The strong recession of the street forces the viewer to direct their attention to the far left space of the canvas. Because Haussmann's residential buildings are both in the deep space of the left and right hand side of the picture space, it poses the poses the question of how the viewer's line of sight could move towards the background space of the right hand side.

In terms of the theoretical narrative, the painting's composition foregrounds three people. A man in a gray suit leans on the railing and stares out and down into the train tracks. His left leg appears to be crossed over his right leg, and he balances his weight between the supporting leg and his elbows on the railing. This relatively passive stance seems to indicate that he is lost in his own thoughts, blankly staring at the fleeting occurrences of the space not depicted. A woman dressed in a black, ruffled dress, walks towards the picture plane. She holds a blue, ornate umbrella that shades her from the sun ahead of her. A man in a black suit is a step ahead of the woman. Both of his hands are behind his back, as his torso curves forward and to his left. This man has been identified as the artist himself, and largely understood to be representative what Charles Baudelaire named the flâneur:

For the perfect flâneur, for the passionate spectator, it is an immense joy to set up house in the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow of movement, in the midst of the

fugitive and the infinite. To be away from home and yet to feel oneself everywhere at-home; to see the world, to be at the center of the world, and yet to remain hidden from the world such are a few of the slightest pleasures of those independent, passionate, impartial natures which the tongue can but clumsily define. The spectator is a prince who everywhere rejoices in his incognito. The lover of life makes the whole world his family, just like the lover of the fair sex who builds up his family from all the beautiful women that he has ever found, or that are--or are not--to be found; or the lover of pictures who lives in a magical society of dreams painted on canvas. Thus the lover of universal life enters into the crowd as though it were an immense reservoir of electrical energy. Or we might liken him to a mirror as vast as the crowd itself; or to a kaleidoscope gifted with consciousness, responding to each one of its movements and reproducing the multiplicity of life and the flickering grace of all the elements of life.<sup>29</sup>

Baudelaire's description resonates with the painting most profoundly in the comparison to a mirror. Caillebotte reflects (on) the experience of modernity. The artist observes and considers the effects of Haussmannization by depicting them as he himself perceived them. The key difference is that the former awards agency to the city, while the latter awards agency to the artist. There is a vital difference between the artist as an observer and the artist as a creator. The former allows the artist to preserve a sense of anonymity. He is collecting experiences within the modern world, but he is not affecting change upon the world as it is. The artist as a creator is forced, by the very nature of art-making to transform an element of the represented form, and to transfer his collections to the viewer of the painting.

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<sup>29</sup>Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, trans. Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon Press, 1964), 9.

The poet describes a specific type of artist that confronted the city with a specific mindset. I argue that *Pont de l'Europe* questions the role of the flâneur and by extension the artist and the beholder by purposefully reproducing ambiguity. The beholder has a sense of being within the painted space. The arrangement of the canvas entices the beholder to focus on the street. But the vision beyond the girders divides the beholder's attention. The images of modernization within the canvas are irreconcilable for the viewer as they depict the "multiplicity" of life at that moment. In these ambiguities, narrative is purposefully rendered obsolete, and the painting becomes about an experience. The identification of the flâneur, or a hypothesis of his relationship with the woman to his side, denies the importance of the kind of vision the painting offers. Caillebotte composed this urban space to give the beholder his indecipherable experience within Paris.

What constitutes the evidence for art historical analysis? In looking closely at the compositions of *Young Man Playing the Piano*, *Man at his Bath*, and *Pont de l'Europe*, I have found that the pictorial spaces involved in each address different modes of beholding. Within the bourgeois interior of Caillebotte's home in *Young Man Playing the Piano*, the beholder faces multiple viewpoints that work in conjunction with each other to render an embodied sense of space. The artist divided the composition and composed three different viewpoints that correspond to different values of space. The painting is constructed around the experience of the potential viewer and the beholder's imaginative movement normalizes the distorted space. In *Man at his Bath*, the viewer responds to the man's time and pose in order to resolve the shock of the subject matter. Time, like the man's pose, is arranged in such a way for the artist to present the scene. The man's pose foreshows the beholder's confrontation to the painting emphasizing the work's corporeal subject and its quotidian setting. In *Pont de l'Europe*, the canvas' viewpoint equalizes the role of the painter and beholder. The built environment of the city directs the viewer's attention, just as the arrangement of the figures in the middle ground tantalize one's narrative imagination. The social and public realm of this composition speaks to the dynamisms of urban life. The viewpoint assigned to the beholder projects an irreconcilable vision of modernity. Caillebotte utilizes these elements of representational painting--viewpoints, the illusion of time, the arrangement of people within space, and the built structures that describe space--in order to frame the beholder. In the paintings I have analyzed, Caillebotte incorporated the role of the beholder into each composition.

In these three cases, the empirical locations of the paintings are fundamentally different from one another. The semi-private, semi-public parlor, the extremely intimate bathroom, and

the exceptionally public street scene involve different types of spectatorship. The level of intimacy, and the level of engagement between the potential viewer and the subject differs between these scenarios. *Young Man Playing the Piano* depicts a situation in which friends and family would socialize and interact. *Man at His Bath* depicts a situation in which a viewer should not be present. *Pont de l'Europe* portrays the artist's dynamic vision of the city. The representational constructions of each composition reflect these differing roles. Caillebotte allows the viewer of the domestic interior to imaginatively interact within the space of the painting. The artist arranges the bathroom so that the man's pose and the illusion of time will allow the viewer to gain access to a moment he would otherwise not be able to see. Caillebotte organizes the city and its inhabitants so that the viewer can experience the conflicting multiplicity of urbanism. Caillebotte responds to the scenes of his historic moment by constructing compositions that frame the beholder.

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## Illustrations

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Figure 1\*  
Figure 2

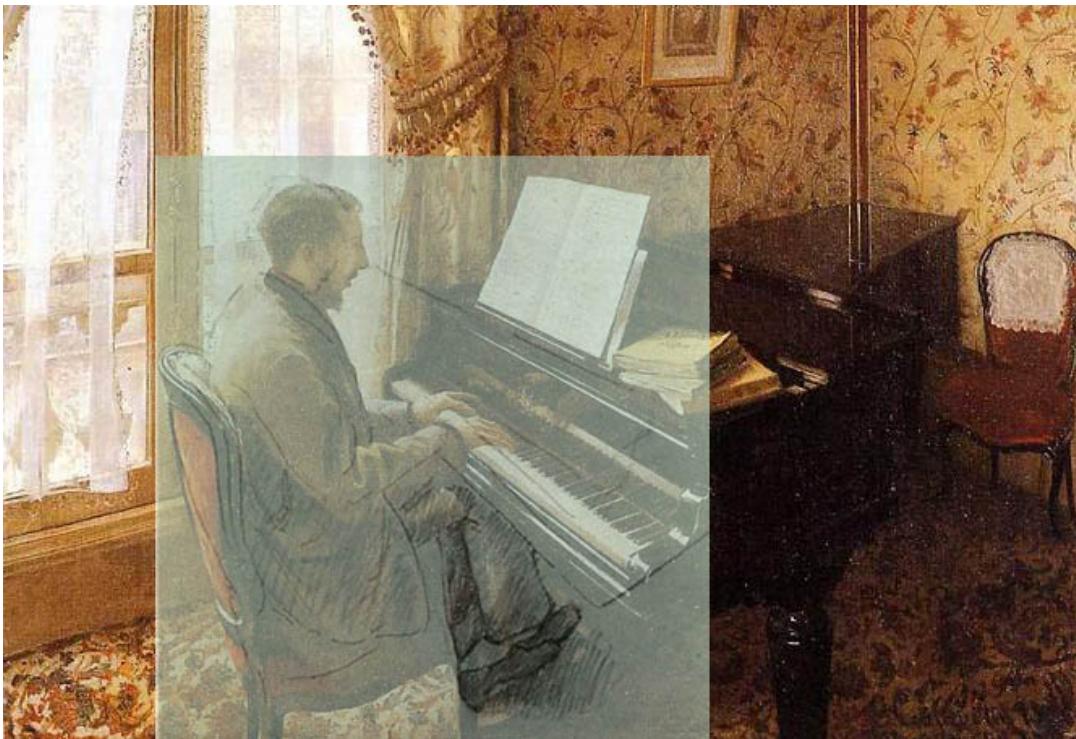


Figure 3



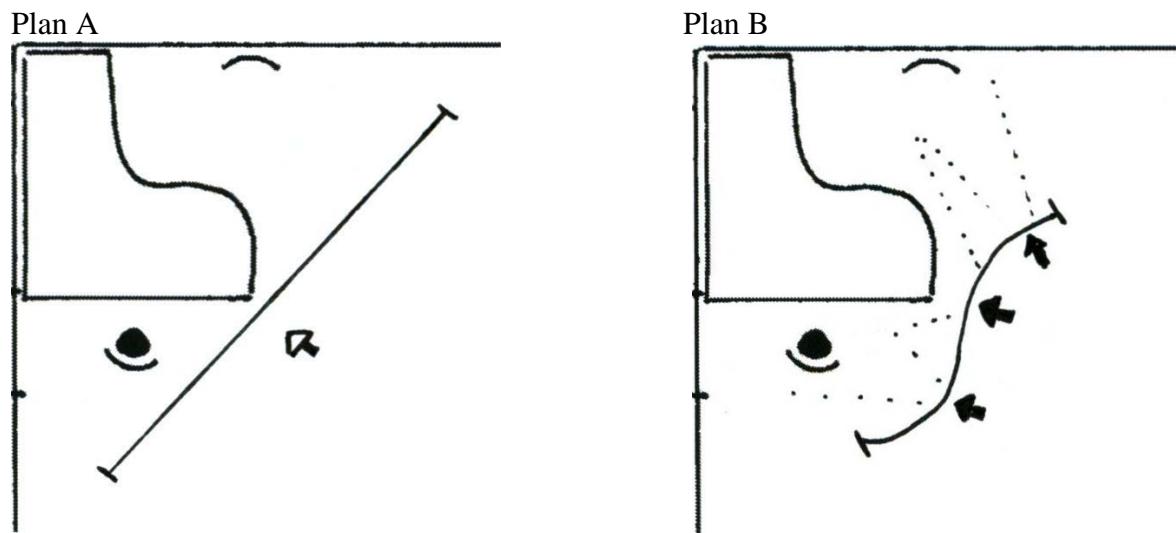


Figure 4



Figure 5\*

Figure 6\*

Figure 7\*

Figure 8\*

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