

#62 June 2021 Cameraderie
Charles Marville (1813-1879)



My French is poor, but here is the best I can do for the pronunciation of Charles Marville's name: shahrl mahr-vheel'.

Marville's bio in Wikipedia is surprisingly brief, so here is most of it:

Charles Marville, the pseudonym of Charles François Bossu (Paris 17 July 1813 – 1 June 1879 Paris), was a French photographer, who mainly photographed architecture, landscapes and the urban environment. He used both paper and glass negatives. He is most well known for taking pictures of ancient Parisian quarters before they were destroyed and rebuilt under "Haussmannization", Baron Haussmann's new plan for modernization of Paris. In 1862, he was named official photographer of Paris.

Bossu was born in 1813 in Paris. Coming from an "established" Paris family, he trained as a painter, illustrator and engraver. He assumed the pseudonym Charles Marville around 1832, and began working in his field. After 17 years, as an illustrator, he took up photography around 1850.

There is a bit more in the Wikipedia article, so here is the link.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Marville

The Metropolitan Museum of New York City presented an exhibit in 2014 of Marville's work, and in its introduction gave an excellent discussion of how Marville documented the rapid rebuilding of nearly all of Paris under the direction of Emperor Napoleon III and his chief urban planner, Baron Georges-Eugène Haussmann (ref. "Haussmannization" of Paris). Please read the

introduction and look at the images (with individual photographic and historical explanations) at this link:

<https://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/listings/2014/charles-marville>

I would normally recommend you to Google “Marville” and select “Images” to see more—please do if you wish—but the Met exhibit link makes this largely unnecessary. Below, I will show and discuss several themes of Marville’s work, all from the Met exhibit.

Marville mastered using oblique natural lighting to bring out three-dimensional surfaces. Here are a couple of examples.

Left:

[South Portal, Chartres Cathedral]

Date: 1854

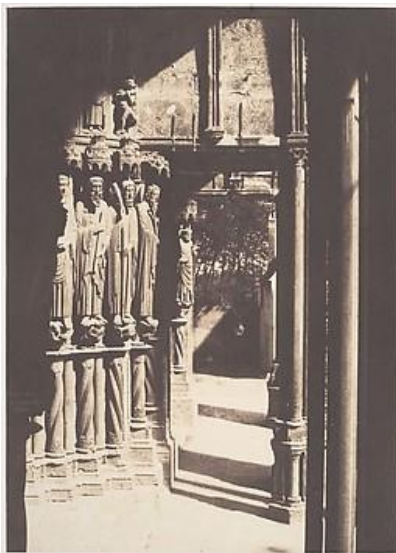
Medium: Salted paper print from paper negative

Right:

Bas-reliefs de l’Hôtel Colbert (fifth arrondissement)

Date: 1862–1866

Medium: Albumen silver print from glass negative



Here are a couple of shots of the earlier Paris.

Left:

Longchamps Windmill, Bois de Boulogne

Date: 1858–1860

Medium: Albumen silver print from glass negative

Right:

Bords de la Bièvre (au bas de la rue des Gobelins) (Banks of the Bièvre River at the Bottom of the rue des Gobelins) (fifth arrondissement)

Date: ca. 1862

Medium: Albumen silver print from glass negative



Here are four shots, all taken in the same month, of the same construction project for the rebuilding of Paris.

Top Left:

Percement de l'avenue de l'Opéra: Butte des Moulins (Construction of the avenue de l'Opéra: Butte des Moulins)

Date: December 1876

Medium: Albumen silver print from glass negative

Top Right:

Percement de l'avenue de l'Opéra (Construction of the avenue de l'Opéra)

Date: December 1876

Medium: Albumen silver print from glass negative

Bottom Left:

Percement de l'avenue de l'Opéra: Butte des Moulins (de la rue Saint-Roch) (Construction of the avenue de l'Opéra: the Butte des Moulins from the rue Saint-Roch)

Date: December 1876

Medium: Albumen silver print from glass negative

Bottom Right:

Percement de l'avenue de l'Opéra: chantier de la rue d'Argenteuil (Construction of the avenue de l'Opéra: Costruction Site of the rue d'Argenteuil)

Date: December 1876

Medium: Albumen silver print from glass negative



Here are several perspective views of Paris. I particularly like that they are always offset to one side.

Left:

Rue Laffitte (de Notre-Dame-de-Lorette)

Date: ca. 1868

Medium: Albumen silver print from glass negative

Center:

Passage de l'Opéra (Galerie de l'Horloge) (ninth arrondissement)

Date: ca. 1868

Medium: Albumen silver print from glass negative

Right:

Interior of Les Halles Centrales

Date: 1874

Medium: Albumen silver print from glass negative



I am very fond of Parisian lampposts, so here are three from the Met exhibit.

Left:

Arts et Métiers (Ancien Modèle)

Date: 1864

Medium: Albumen silver print from glass negative

Center:

Candelabre console avec inscription des noms des rues (Candelabra with Street Signs) (Avenue de l'Opéra)

Date: 1877–1878

Medium: Albumen silver print from glass negative

Right:

Hôtel de la Marine

Date: 1864–1870

Medium: Albumen silver print from glass negative



Now let's relate photography to art. One of my favorite paintings is Gustave Caillebotte's Paris Street, Rainy Day, 1877, a few years after some of Marville's Paris street photography of lamppost images. Can we agree that Marville's images may have had an influence on Caillebotte? I frequently cite this painting as a precedent for later photography that divides images in half, but in this case the lamppost subject may have been established by Marville. One can at least play with the idea of the connection—Caillebotte must surely have seen Marville's photographs, cotemporary to his time.



Note Caillebotte's extreme perspective views on the left side of his painting. Perspective study by artists have been around for a long time, so we can't credit Marville with teaching Caillebotte anything about perspective, but Marville's many Paris street perspectives may have

still been source material for Caillebotte. Caillebotte painted this just after the rebuilding of Paris that Marville documented in his photos—so this painting is of the “new” Paris.