Cosmic over or Athanor from Annibal Barlet, *Le Vray Cours de Physique*, Paris, 1653.

Cover: Crucified Christ, ca. 1300, walrus ivory with traces of paint and gilding, 7 9/16 x 2 1/16 x 1 3/8 in., Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY, USA. Photo Credit: Metropolitan Museum of Art.
ATHANOR XXXVIII

MIA HAFER
◊ Indice in Ivory: Inspiring Affective Piety with a Walrus Ivory Christ

SONIA DIXON
◊ Reexamining Syncretism in Late Antique Iconography of a Vault Mosaic

ANGELICA VERDUCI
◊ Sight, Sound, and Silence at the Oratorio of San Bernardino in Clusone

HOYON MEPHOKEE
◊ At the Center of the Globe: Empiricism and Empire in Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux’s Fontaine des Quatres-Parties-du-monde

JORDAN HILLMAN
◊ Embodying Violence, Manipulating Space: The Irony of Valloton’s Police States

Günther Stamm Prize for Excellence

Mia Hafer was awarded the Günther Stamm Prize for Excellence for “Indices in Ivory: Aspiring Affective Piety with a Walrus Ivory Christ” presented at the 2021 Art History Graduate Student Symposium.

ATHANOR XXXVIII

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“Turbulent antitheses, contrasts, —clashes”: this is how Michel Zévaco of Le Courrier français characterized the graphic work of Félix Vallotton, a new contributor to the illustrated Parisian weekly in 1894.1 The militant journalist and anarchist activist was not alone in recognizing the violent pictorial tendencies of the Swiss-born artist, who had relocated to the French capital in 1882 at age seventeen.2 A month earlier in his literary column “Lettre de Genève” in the Gazette de Lausanne—a daily journal published in Vallotton’s hometown for which the artist had worked as the Parisian correspondent since 1890—Gaspard Vallette remarked, “M. Vallotton’s art does not insinuate with delicate or scholarly nuances. It forcibly implants itself and takes possession […with] a healthy strength and an invigorating bitterness.” 3 Vallotton’s creative spirit indeed culled an acerbic, morbid pleasure from observing the harsh realities of urban experience and translating them into striking and incisive graphic form.4 Nowhere was this vitriol more apparent than in the many depictions of police officers that Vallotton produced around 1900. By appropriating and upending authoritative visual and compositional devices, the artist pictured the Parisian police in ways that actively and violently challenged their potency as a force of law and order.

In the last decades of the nineteenth century, the visual and experiential character of the French capital was being reshaped as the urban street took on renewed social significance. Though considered a politically charged site of demonstration and insurrection since the Revolution, widespread social protests in the 1890s exacerbated the perceived danger of proletarian crowds.5 Propelled by heightened tensions between the bourgeois establishment and increasingly radical social reformers, the anarchist movement also reached a fever pitch around 1895. Attacks and bombings in service of the cause—notably, the assassination of Sadi Carnot, President of the Republic, a year earlier—shook the political foundations of France and precipitated a need for more efficient and ubiquitous law enforcement.6

The arch of anarchism’s rise in France coincided with Vallotton’s arrival there and the height of his illustrious graphic career working for popular and fine art ventures alike. Playing out publicly—and violently—in the street, and privately within the circles of avant-garde artists and writers with whom Vallotton was closely associated, its anti-authoritarian ideals clearly informed the artist’s attitude towards his adopted country.7 His illustrations for leftist organs like L’Assiette au beurre, Le Rire, and Le Cri de Paris, as well as his contributions to books and limited-edition albums, expressed stark, often caustic, views on the state of life in modern Paris. Moreover, though Vallotton was not as active as some of his close friends and collaborators, such as Théophile Steinlen, Félix Fénéon, and Lucien Pissarro, he was a known supporter of anarchist hostility toward the uneven power structures in France.8 Vallotton’s work for Jean Grave, a driving force in the international anarchist movement and editor of the journal Les Temps nouveaux, attests to his sympathies.9 Moreover, a woodcut he produced in 1892 entitled L’Anarchiste (Figure 1) clearly channels the artist’s own revulsion of authority through its titular figure, who turns his back and recoils from the long-fingered hands of the law as four policemen haul him into their clutches. In the rear of the scene storefronts are partially visible, and Patrick McGuinness has suggested that the cropped sign of the “Librairie-Papeterie” at far left hints at the significant relationship between anarchist action and intellectual, literary, and artistic coteries.10 Vallotton further includes two bourgeois spectators who watch as the arrest unfolds, wary of whatever the anarchiste seems to be extracting from his pocket, an act that reveals the contingency of vision and order in the urban spaces of Paris.

Like his fellow Nabi artists, with whom he began exhibiting in 1893, Vallotton was undeniably drawn to the chaotic, crowd-filled streets in the French capital.11 Deliberately diverse in style and execution, the members of the Nabi were


2 Zévaco founded the anarchist weekly Gueux in 1892 and wrote for others, including Sébastien Faure’s Libertaire and the anarchist newspaper La Renaissance.

3 “L’art de M. Vallotton ne s’insinue pas par des nuances délicates ou savantes. Il s’implante de force et prend possession…Il a une robustesse qui est saine et une amertume qui est tonique.” V (Gaspard Vallette), “Lettre de Genève,” Gazette de Lausanne, 22 February 1894, 3.


6 Sadi Carnot died on 25 June 1894 from stab wounds inflicted by Geronimo Casserio, an Italian anarchist, after delivering a speech in Lyon, France the day before.

7 Vallotton became a naturalized French citizen in 1900.

8 In 1894, Vallotton painted a portrait of Fénéon, an art critic and known anarchist who was jailed on suspicion of participating in the bombing by militant anarchists of the Restaurant Foyet, a popular haunt of politicians.

9 Vallotton contributed a design, La Débâcle, to supplement Les Temps nouveaux on 17 November 1900. It was reproduced as a lithograph in an album published by the journal in 1903.


11 Vallotton first exhibited with the Nabis in Paris in 1893 at Le Barc de Boutteville where he showed four of the five woodcuts that he would submit to the exhibition organized in Toulouse the following year.
unanimously committed to experimentation: they disavowed illusions of depth, stressed the continuities between art and design, and favored subjective expression over objective representation. The streets of Paris provided an ideal atmosphere for exploring such notions of individual experience within the ever-changing, visually stimulating, and politically uncertain world of modernity.12

On the one hand, then, Vallotton clearly shared more with the Nabis than a mere fascination with the urban spaces of Paris; he also shared their ambivalent relationship to illusionism. Influenced by artist and journalist Maurice Denis’s credo that “a picture…was essentially a flat surface covered with colors assembled in a certain order,” as well as by the profusion of Japanese prints in France, members of the Nabis grappled with the two-dimensionality of the picture plane.13 The resulting compositions often played with the notion of surface depth through uplifted horizons, the cutting of silhouette shapes devoid of modelling, and the decorative arrangement of forms. In Vallotton’s prints, such anomalies were accompanied by a visual language of flat planes of color and abbreviated forms that was largely revered by critics: Vallette’s “Lettre de Genève” celebrated Vallotton’s “almost supernaturally powerful of simplification which acutely strikes the mind.”14 Vallotton’s poet friend and fellow Swiss expat, Mathias Morhardt, described it as “a breadth, a nobility, a simplicity of conception which does not seem [to him] to have been equaled.”15 Pointing to two of Vallotton’s earliest woodcuts, the editor of the revue L’art et l’idée, Octave Uzanne, further exclaimed that in these “brutal xylographs we find a reduction to one-tenth: they are only silhouettes that appear cut almost in Chinese shadows, but do you not see what intensity of life and of reality is enlivened by the unique spirit of the engraving?”16 The “intense, impenetrable, uncompromising blacks” of Vallotton’s designs pointed to the artist’s skillful manipulation of the relief-printmaking process that produced precise, high contrast, visually arresting images of Parisian street-life.17 Indeed, he developed this innovative, often politically charged pictorial shorthand through his close contact with vanguard caricaturists, avant-garde artists, and leftist supporters in Montmartre, including Steinlen, another transplant from Lausanne who settled in Paris the year before Vallotton.18

Unlike his Nabi counterparts, however, Vallotton’s anarchist sympathies often made him a more skeptical, ambivalent, and critical observer.19 It was on those terms that Octave Mirbeau singled Vallotton out from the group, writing in the preface to the catalogue for an exhibition of the artist’s work at the Galerie Druet that, “like those who have seen a lot, read a lot, think a lot, he is pessimistic. But there is nothing aggressive about this pessimism, nothing arbitrarily negative. This righteous man does not want to deceive himself […] and he seeks in all things, in good faith, the truth.”20 Like Morhardt and others, Mirbeau identified Vallotton’s concern for authenticity as integral to his artistic identity. As Zévaco poetically described, “there is a frankness in his compositions that sometimes touches brutality, yet it remains seductive like the cry of a mind eager to see and know everything.”21 Despite his penchant for bitterness and wit, his realist impulse prevented him from resorting to “the too-easy grotesque, [or]…exaggerating to the point of caricature”; instead, “[the] irony [of his art] is expressed exclusively through the composition of the forms.”22

The candor and irony of Vallotton’s art has not been lost on art historians, though much of the scholarship has tended to focus on his uneasy relationship to the Nabis and his later painting career, which became the artist’s primary focus after 1899.23 When studies have addressed his graphic work, it has typically been in the context of his virtuosic handling of the woodcut medium or his prolific illustrations for the popular


19 Vallotton was known within the group as the “Nabi Étranger” or “Foreign Nabi” both for his Swiss nationality and for his discordant artistic politics.


21 “Il y a dans ses compositions une franchise d’allure que touche parfois la brutalité, mais demeure séduisante comme le cri d’un esprit avide de tout voir et savoir.” Zévaco, “Nos Collaborateurs.”

22 “ne recourt jamais au trop facile grotesque, ne s’égare nulle part jusqu’à la caricature…son ironie ne s’exprime exclusivement que par la composition des formes…” Thadée Natanson, La Revue blanche, 15 April 1893.

press. 24 Recently, however, scholars like Richard Thomson and Bridget Alsdorf have undertaken more sustained examinations of Vallotton’s graphic interest in violence and the law. In a chapter titled, “Picturing and Policing the Crowd,” Thomson considered Vallotton among a slew of other artists whose pictures registered the nineteenth-century crowd and attempts to control it. Thomson mobilizes psychological theory to read Vallotton’s masses as fragmented, yet unanimously repressed by the threat of the state. 25 Alsdorf takes up a similar thread in her examination of Vallotton’s expression of violence as violent through his semi-autobiographical novel, La Vie meurtrière. She focuses on the ethical dilemma of vision as related to witnessing accidents and random violence in modern Paris and postulates that such witnessing engenders a level of responsibility that implicates bystanders in the act. 26 Building on and diverging from these studies, I argue that the seeming violence of Vallotton’s spatial interventions in his police prints—the transposition of space into form and back again—works not as hyperbole but rather as an astute expression of the unpredictable and shifting experiences with police in the streets of Paris. As Morhardt wrote in a review of the 1893 Salon des indépendants, Vallotton was “an indefatigable walker, who in the streets of Paris has encountered a thousand burlesque or painful, tragic or ridiculous episodes, which he interpreted with the same sincerity, the same cult of truth, and with a very keen sense of the picturesque crowds.” 27 His graphic submissions to an exhibition in Toulouse the following year generated a similar response. Organized by the newspaper La Dépêche de Toulouse, the exhibition aimed to promote “independent artists” whose “curious works” were then relatively unfamiliar beyond the urban environs of Paris. 28 A notice, published in La Dépêche five days before, further explained its impetus: “We thought it would be interesting to make [these young painters] known to the public of our region […] Undoubtedly, the efforts of the new school have not yet resulted in a definitive formula, but these efforts nonetheless mark an interesting stage in the story of French art.” 29 Vallotton’s works proved especially compelling on this front. A critic for the provincial newspaper praised the artist’s “frank originality” and perceived in Vallotton’s woodcuts the “process of the old masters […] rediscovered by an artist very much enamored with modernism and applied by him to the spectacles of the present-day street.” 30 Indeed, it was in the street that Vallotton’s avant-garde modes of expression and uncanny perception met, which meant, within the shifting political milieu, a continued pictorial confrontation with the growing number of police officers who occupied it. When commissioned to produce an original lithograph for the limited-edition catalogue that would accompany the exposition in Toulouse, Vallotton’s choice of subject—a closely cropped encounter between a citizen and a police officer on a cobbled street—only affirmed his preoccupation with the everyday realities and urban experiences of modern Paris and the role of police within them (Figure 2). Moreover, the man’s status as a laborer, signified by his smock and doffed cap, coupled with his precarious footing on the uptilted street, point to Vallotton’s keen awareness of the volatile relationship between socioeconomic status and policing in the period.

Forty years earlier, steps were already being taken to mitigate political instability and working-class rebellion through a confluence of infrastructural and legislative action in Paris. Driven by Emperor Napoléon III’s desire to secure his new and precarious imperial power in the wake of his 1851 coup-d’état, reforms were introduced to restructure, bureaucratize, and nationalize the French police force. Notably, the existing system of legal and administrative jurisdictions, or préfectures, was overlain with a superstructure of political police granted sovereign authority to localize and manifest governmental control. This secondary force became the eyes and ears of the state, allowing it to “foresee and direct, to take the initiative in all matters, and properly to govern France.” 31 Coupled with Baron Haussmann’s complete overhaul of the city’s medieval plan which called for the demolition of neighborhoods housed in all matters, and properly to govern France. 31


29 “Nous avons pensé qu’il serait intéressant de les faire connaître au public de notre région, dont l’esprit si affirmé est si largement ouvert aux choses délicates et précieuses de l’art. Sans doute, les efforts de la nouvelle école n’ont pas encore abouti à une définitive formule, mais ses efforts marqueront à coup sûr une étape intéressante dans l’histoire de l’art français.” “Nos Expositions,” La Dépêche de Toulouse, 17 May 1894. The use of “new school” implicitly refers to the Nabis, whose members made up the majority of the fourteen artists invited to exhibit.


ing the “dangerous classes” and the widening of boulevards to prevent the construction of barricades and to allow the easy deployment of troops, modern Paris became a city structured on the principle of public order.32

Despite such measures, urban space was not so easily defined nor controlled. In the devastating aftermath of the Paris Commune in 1871 and amid concerns of increasing industrialization and urbanization, the discontentment of citizens frequently played out publicly in the streets. Their active and visible resistance to the government of the Third Republic and the bourgeois establishment it engendered ultimately resulted in the state’s 1892 authorization of more than a thousand additional policemen in Paris.33 Not only were they highly visible in the city thanks to the implementation of a standard uniform—which consisted of a dark buttoned coat, flat-brimmed cap, knee-high black boots, and a bâton blanc—clandestine police surveillance and undercover work were also well-known to Parisian citizens.

Confronted with more officers than ever in the street, but also in official bulletins, police memoirs, journals, and photographic albums published by the state, Vallotton sought to challenge the pervasive reality and image of social control by the forces of order. In Paris, Toulouse, and several other venues and publications, Vallotton presented graphic works that represented more than a visual analog for the police encounters he witnessed in the capital; rather, he provided an impression of the experience. He did this by exploiting the very same visual strategies of domination adopted by the police themselves. Vallotton’s use of unusual points-of-view and high horizon lines, for example, co-opted the specular authority over urban space presumed to belong to the police, who patrolled the city on horseback or surveilled from elevated vantage points. Moreover, that power was seemingly consecrated from above within the hierarchy of the French government, making the police the most visible and visualized representation of state authority. Yet in contrast to the official portrayal of the police as orderly and regimented (Figure 3), Vallotton’s prints were destabilizing and turbulent, flattened and cropped. Whether officers appeared as participants in the scene or only as forces beyond the frame, Vallotton’s violently distorted and truncated pictorial spaces thus translated the actual urban spaces he represented into powerful commentaries on police and social life in Paris. He also developed compositional devices, such as pronounced graphic voids and the transposition of horizontal and vertical planes, that gave form to the instabilities of police authority and the dynamics of its visibility and invisibility in city streets. By embodying such modes of spatial control in his compositions, Vallotton’s police prints forcefully expose the contradictions of policing in this period and demonstrate how, rather than maintaining order, police intervention often had the opposite effect.

Beyond the visual jolt of the images themselves, Vallotton’s modality of engagement with the street constituted a secondary layer of dissension and irony, as it was in these pictures that the artist took his experiments with compositional flattening and perspectival disruption to extremes. In these works—which frequently thwart, tear up, and collapse completely the structuring elements of the street—Vallotton depicts chaotic demonstrations, state efforts to construct and maintain public order, and varied encounters with officers that challenge the nature and efficacy of the police force and amplify the problematic incidents with authority witnessed in this period.

Of the works Vallotton submitted to the exhibition in Toulouse, three envisioned the street, but it is La Charge (Figure 4) that most brutally wields the graphic potential of the medium.34 The incendiary charge of the print’s title is palpably felt in his depiction of policemen engaged in a violent encounter with the crowd rendered as an amorphous mass of black, differentiated only by buttons, batons, and cropped visages formed from the paper’s reserves. In the print, an elevated viewpoint flattens the image, and the arrangement of bodies on the sheet produces a patterned effect. Simplified figures with caricatural features are crammed into the picture’s lower register; above, others are forcibly scattered across the printed surface. The gridded lines of the cobblestone street have been obliterated, creating a space devoid of any architectural elements. Despite this, Vallotton partially renders the implied three-dimensional space of the composition. He uses diminution to suggest that the much larger figures at the bottom of the frame are closer to the viewer than those smaller figures at the top. Moreover, he articulates the plane of the street by positioning a man at far left lying completely flat on his back and another crawling away just right of center, the white soles of his shoes indicating the foreshortened nature of his body in space. This hint at spatial recession is ultimately contradicted, however, by the rising ground plane, which allows for the figures in the supposed distance to be visible at all; should Vallotton have composed the scene head-on, the already injured and fallen men would be entirely obscured by the attacking officers. A dark border printed around the plate’s

32 In nineteenth-century France, the “dangerous classes” referred to the poor, members of some racial and ethnic minorities, sex workers, and criminals. Large-scale riots and insurrections in the 1830s as a result of industrial development, a changing economic situation, and growing class consciousness led the working classes to be deliberately subsumed into the “dangerous classes.” See Louis Chevalier, Laboring Classes and Dangerous Classes in Paris in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century (New York: Howard Fertig, 1973); Haussmannization has also been the subject of numerous studies. See David P. Jordan, Transforming Paris: The Life and Labors of Baron Haussmann (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); David Harvey, Paris, Capital of Modernity (New York: Routledge, 2003); Peter Soppelsa, “How Haussmann’s Hegemony Haunted the Early Third Republic,” in Is Paris Still the Capital of the Nineteenth Century? (New York: Routledge, 2016): 35-52; and Rupert Christiansen, City of Light: The Making of Modern Paris (New York: Basic Books, 2018).

33 The Third Republic was installed in France in 1870 following the Siege of Paris, which culminated in Napoléon III’s disastrous defeat in the Franco-Prussian War and led to the establishment of the Paris Commune.
EMBDYING VIOLENCE, MANIPULATING SPACE: THE IRONY OF VALLOTTON’S POLICE STATES

edge emphasizes the limits and control imposed by the artist over the imagined street, activated and violently cropped by the policemen forcefully swinging their bâtons blancs.

Two prints that bookended Vallotton’s decade-long engagement with the image of the policeman further illustrate how physical, legislative, and visual conceptions of space became for the artist a means through which urban order could be facilitated, maintained, and ultimately disrupted. La Foule à Paris (Figure 5), produced in 1892, depicts a policeman at the lower left corner, his outstretched arms forming an obtuse angle around a compressed mass of citizens. His left arm is aligned with the diagonal recession of the street while his right extends parallel to the paper’s surface, holding in the obviously proletarian throng. That Vallotton inscribed his monogram on the policeman’s dark uniform announces the artist’s authoritative role in visually ordering the street. His precipitously rising ground plane works against this by upending the street itself, which threatens to spill the crowd out of the frame and the control of the officer. A pair of disembodied feet dangling from the upper left corner serve as a further reminder of the street’s potential instability. Through this interplay, Vallotton reveals the ways in which urban space is multiply—if ineffectually—constructed in relation to the police.

The policeman in Vallotton’s L’Affaire Crainquebille (Figure 6) signifies a similar paradox. Published in the Parisian literary and satiric journal Le Canard sauvage in April 1903, Vallotton positions a policeman on a Paris street at the far-right edge of the composition, his back aligned with the picture’s frame. The officer’s dark uniform is accentuated by the wide expanse of open space that surrounds him. Vallotton fills the void with sketchy, crayon-like scratches that heighten the sense of motion created as the working-class crowd flees quickly in the opposite direction of a man whom the caption claims “spreads terror.” The scattering crowd is seen from different points of view simultaneously: from behind, in profile, and head-on, heightening the sense of confusion and manipulating the viewer’s response to this chaotic urban scene. Empty space radiates outward from the policeman, further widening the physical and judicial distance between the officer and these citizens as they escape the frame of both the picture and the law. There are no signs of outward brutality, yet the crowd disperses; here, the policeman’s presence alone is capable of altering the street from a site teeming with life to an emerging void overseen only by authority.

In Le Canard sauvage this two-page illustration accompanied Jules Renard’s parodic column “Au Théâtre” in the April 4th issue. The title refers to a three-act play by Anatole France, adapted from his short novel of the same name, that was staged at the Théâtre de la Renaissance that March. L’Affaire Crainquebille tells the tale of a street merchant who is arrested after a verbal misunderstanding with a police officer, and who, upon his release from jail, finds that his record has left a permanent stain on his reputation. He decides he must return to prison in order to survive. After soliciting a second arrest to no avail by actually insulting an officer in the same manner in which he was previously accused, Crainquebille ultimately resigns to his fate and drowns himself in the Seine. France’s story mocks the law through its narrative of justice gone awry: Crainquebille’s comically sad experience underscores the inherent biases and prejudices of the French judicial system. At the same time, the title points to the story’s central irony: that France aligns the trivial incident of the lowly Crainquebille with the serious drama of l’affaire Dreyfus, a contemporary scandal that divided the nation over the fate of the Jewish army captain Alfred Dreyfus who had been falsely accused of treason.

Vallotton’s lithograph, like France’s story, operates in a critical space between reality and representation. A nameless, nearly faceless, police officer stands his post, yet the recognizable silhouette of his uniform operates as an obvious sign of his authority. The velocity with which the figures disperse, and the anxiety that Vallotton’s caption instills, suggest an exaggerated sense of fear; perhaps it is the proletarian status of this crowd that renders the officer all the more frightening. Here, however, the potential threat has reversed: no longer is the disorderly crowd the source of anxiety. Instead, it is the figure of order who poses the threat. This was, to some extent, the officer’s role in the last decades of the nineteenth century: the modern force was largely centered around the maintenance of social order, often through modes of surveillance, intimidation, and intervention. Vallotton thus not only acutely registers these ironies in the new police system, but also the nature of its contradictory and condemning public criticism.

Attitudes toward the police during this period were indeed complex. An essay entitled “The Parisian Police” published in The English Illustrated Magazine by A. Shadwell in 1892 explained: “It seems impossible for [the police] to please the public. When we want them, they are our best friends, to whom we turn with the utmost confidence, when we do not, we join in treating them as a common enemy.” Competing categorizations of the police as absent or overly present, too lenient or unnecessarily harsh thus occupied the Parisian cultural imagination. Read in this context, the graphic punch of Vallotton’s policed Paris takes on a more critical tone. The growing space that fans outward from the officer in L’Affaire Crainquebille visualizes the distance between the moral and

35 Thomson states that, in nineteenth-century Paris, “the city served as a metaphor for order, the moral authority of which was embodied by the police.” However, as the work of Vallotton and others attests to, that order was by no means guaranteed, morally or otherwise. Thomson, Troubled Republic, 108.

36 La Foule is one of the prints that Uzanne referred to in his article. He reproduced it in the prologue to his 1896 anthology, Badauderies parisiennes: Les rassemblements; Physiologies de la Rue, a collection of stories illustrated by varied artists that celebrates both the typologies of the street and the revival of the woodcut, of which Uzanne saw Vallotton as the leader.


ethical expectations of police behavior and their actual conduct in the urban sphere, a space that is likewise indicated by the contrast between this officer's detached surveillance and the hands-on exertion of force in La Foule à Paris and La Charge.

Indeed, in other images, this detachment is made complete by Vallotton’s erasure of the policeman from the image entirely while still acknowledging the ways in which his palpable presence continues to activate those around him. Such is the case for La Manifestation (Figure 7), which depicts the characteristically frantic aftermath of one of late nineteenth-century Paris’s many demonstrations. Writing in the Gazette de Lausanne shortly after its publication, Morhardt described the print:

Imagine a very wide boulevard. The crowd flees in a fan shape, into the distance, exhibiting diverse attitudes which evoke...memories of scenes that we’ve often witnessed over the last five years. However, nobody pursues the crowd. Yet it scatters in frantic flight. Near the front just one bloke...turns around, and his expressive silhouette indicates that he expects the regulation kicking from the police, which is the very ethos of these demonstrations.40

Published in 1893 in the first edition of André Marty’s L’Estampe originale, and exhibited the same year at the Salon des indépendants, La Manifestation likewise appeared during the height of both the labor strikes and the anarchist bombings in Paris. Yet, as Morhardt describes, La Manifestation includes no police presence whatsoever, only an implication of their likely proximity to the scene. This was further acknowledged by Julius Meier-Graefe in his 1898 illustrated biography of the artist, in which his entry for the print points out that Vallotton audaciously chose a point of view that “left out of the picture... the principal thing, the police, who do not show themselves but whose effect is nonetheless felt.”41 This absence is made present through Vallotton’s elevated angle of view, which seems to embody the vantage point of mounted police at the charge. In so doing, Vallotton forces the viewer to identify with the officers who loom above the crowd even as members thumb their noses or fling insults in their direction. The seeming ambivalence of the menacing perspective coupled with the frenzied nature of the crowd’s dispersal echoes the terror inspired by Vallotton’s policeman in L’Affaire Crainquebille. Richard Thomson has suggested that, in light of the splintering crowd bound together only by “the ungiving structural logic, both physical and legislative. I posit that through these violent interventions, Vallotton gives visual

40 “La Manifestation ne plaiss guiè qu’aux Parisiens. Je crois qu’elle leur plaira beaucoup. Imaginez un boulevard très large. La foule s’entasse en éventail, très loin, dans les attitudes les plus diverses et qui évoquent d’une façon surprenante le souvenir des scènes que nous avons vues depuis cinq ans si souvent devant les yeux. Personne ne poursuit, d’ailleurs, cette foule. Elle s’écrase cependant en une fuite éperdue. Seul, au premier plan, un bonhomme, à moitié accroupi, tourne le dos, et son expressive silhouette atteste qu’il attend le coup de pied réglementaire des gardiens de la paix, ce qui est la philosophie même des manifestations.” Mathias Morhardt, “Les artistes vaudois à Paris. M. Félix Vallotton.”


42 Thomson, Troubled Republic, 110.
form to the inherent disconnects that occurred between law and its enforcement in the unpredictable streets of late-nineteenth century Paris. Although rendered as blank or disjointed spaces by the artist, these visual voids in the urban fabric are not devoid of meaning; rather, they function for Vallotton as charged synaptic junctures where exchanges between the police and the policed—in reality and in artistic reimaginings—were continuously negotiated, complicated, and misunderstood. Exploiting such confusion, Vallotton’s prints of police called attention to the instabilities of urban space and of its control at the turn of the century.

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Figure 1. Félix Vallotton, L’Anarchiste, 1892, woodcut, 6.7 x 9.8 in (17.1 x 25 cm). Bibliothèque nationale de France.
Figure 2. Félix Vallotton, *Le Renseignement (The Inquiry)*, published in “Exhibition of La Dépêche of Toulouse. Catalogue illustrated with 17 original lithographs. Price 1 Franc. (Printed by Edw, Ancourt, 83 Faubourg Saint-Denis, Paris),"1894, lithograph, 7.3 x 5.4 in (18.5 x 13.8 cm). MAH Musée d’art et d’histoire, Ville de Genève.

Figure 3. *Boutiques parisiennes, Commissariat de police, 7e arr.* (Parisian Boutiques : Police Station, 7th arr.),1905-1915, silver gelatin print on barite paper, 3.5 x 5.4 in (8.9 x 13.8 cm). Ville de Paris/ Bibliothèque historique.
Figure 4. Félix Vallotton, *La Charge* (The Charge), 1893, woodcut, 7.9 x 10.2 in (20 x 26 cm). Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Figure 5. Félix Vallotton, *La Foule à Paris* (Paris Crowd), 1892, woodcut, 5.5 x 7.7 in (13.9 x 19.5 cm). Bibliothèque nationale de France.
Figure 6. Félix Vallotton, “L’Affaire Crainquebille: Un mâle qui répand la terreur” (“The Crainquebille Affair: A man who spreads terror”), in Le Canard Sauvage (Paris) 3 (4-10 April 1903), lithograph, 12.4 x 9.5 in (31.5 x 24 cm). Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Figure 7. Félix Vallotton, La Manifestation, 1893, woodcut on cream wove paper, 8 x 12.6 in (20.3 x 32 cm). Bibliothèque nationale de France.
Figure 8. Félix Vallotton, “Au Voleur!” (Thief!) with text by Jules Renard, in Le Rire, 16 March 1895, chromotypograph, 12.1 x 18.7 in (30.8 x 47.6 cm). Bibliothèque nationale de France.