

THE WORK OF
ATGET
OLD FRANCE

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, NEW YORK
OCTOBER 3, 1981—JANUARY 3, 1982

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FACT SHEET

- EXHIBITION: THE WORK OF ATGET: OLD FRANCE
- DATES: The Museum of Modern Art, New York
October 3, 1981 - January 3, 1982
- SPONSOR: This exhibition is part of the Springs Mills Series on the Art of Photography, and is supported by grants from Springs Mills, Inc., and the National Endowment for the Arts.
- DIRECTOR: John Szarkowski, Director of the Department of Photography
- CONTENTS: THE WORK OF ATGET: OLD FRANCE will consist of some 125 prints by the French photographer Eugène Atget and will be the first in a series of four exhibitions which will explore his work.

Eugène Atget (1857-1927) was a commercial photographer who worked in and around Paris for more than thirty years. When he died, his work was known only to a few archivists and artists. Little is known about his life, and less about his intentions, except as can be inferred from his photographs. In his lifetime Atget made perhaps 10,000 photographs. Almost all of these describe the historic character of French life, as indicated by its architecture, its landscape, and its traditional labors and vernacular gestures. To many photographers today his work stands not only as a heroic and original achievement, but as an exemplary pedagogical lesson, the full implications of which are even now only beginning to be perceived.

In 1968 The Museum of Modern Art purchased Berenice Abbott's collection of more than 5,000 original prints and negatives by Atget. Since then three successive curators at the Museum have catalogued and studied the collection and have greatly advanced our understanding of the man and his work. These efforts culminate in a series of four exhibitions, each of which will be accompanied by a volume of The Work of Atget. Besides OLD FRANCE (I), the series includes THE ART OF OLD PARIS (II), THE ANCIEN REGIME (III) and MODERN TIMES (IV). The four exhibitions will be presented at yearly intervals. Together with their accompanying books they will provide a complete and sensitive analysis of Atget's work.

continued

THE WORK OF ATGET: OLD FRANCE concerns the French countryside, a subject that previously has not been recognized as one of Atget's major interests. Taken largely in the Ile-de-France, the country's ancient core, the photographs depict the region's natural landscapes and the structures of its civilization, and describe the traditional values and lifestyles of the rural people. The picture selection ranges over Atget's long career and elucidates both the beginnings of his artistry and its flowering.

TRAVEL: After closing at the Museum, THE WORK OF ATGET: OLD FRANCE will travel to:

The Corcoran Gallery of Art
Washington, D.C. January 23 - March 7, 1982

The Saint Louis Art Museum
St. Louis, Missouri April 1 - May 16, 1982

The Art Institute of Chicago
Chicago, Illinois June 15 - August 15, 1982

The Minneapolis Institute of
Arts
Minneapolis, Minnesota September 13 - November 7, 1982

The Detroit Institute of Arts
Detroit, Michigan December 6, 1982 - February 6, 1983

The San Francisco Museum of
Modern Art
San Francisco, California March 12 - April 18, 1983

PUBLICATION: The Work of Atget: Old France, co-authored by John Szarkowski and Maria Morris Hambourg, will be published by The Museum of Modern Art in conjunction with the exhibition. The 180-page book will contain an introductory essay by John Szarkowski, 121 plates, and 83 reference illustrations with notes by Maria Morris Hambourg. Springs Mills, Inc. will support the publication of all four volumes of The Work of Atget. The books will be distributed by the New York Graphic Society, Boston. Clothbound only, \$40.00.

PUBLIC OPENING: Saturday, October 3, 1981

PRESS PREVIEW: Wednesday, September 30, 1981, 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

May 1981

For further information, please contact Luisa Kreisberg, Director, (212) 956-2648, or Sharon Zane, Associate Director, 956-7295, The Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, NY 10019.