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**HSBC Presents: Beyond the Frame, Episode 3 – *Fruit Displayed on a stand*,
Gustave Caillebotte (c. 1881 – 82)**

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APPLE: Caillebotte was certainly not the standard painter of his time. His 1875 painting, *The Floor Scrapers*, which portrays laborers on their hands and knees scrapings the wooden floor of a new Parisian apartment was deemed too vulgar to enter this alone at the time. So, what did he do? He painted more of them.

HOST: HSBC, proudly presents *Beyond the Frame*. A look behind the bigger picture of some of the world's most important Impressionist art. In this season, we're looking at the rebellion of the Impressionists. It wasn't all dreamy brushwork but rife with bravery, breaking stereotypes and smashing perceptions. Across this series, we go back 150 years to discover some of the surprising stories behind six Impressionist masterpieces. One classic Impressionist painting in every episode. Don't take my word for it. You'll hear from the paintings themselves. If you like what you hear extend the *Beyond the Frame* experience by seeing these renowned artworks for yourself at the National Gallery of Victoria's exhibition, *French Impressionism* from the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Proudly supported by HSBC. It's open now until October three. For tickets visit ngv.melbourne.

HOST: Was it a painting by the rich for the rich, or was this fruit stand filled with commodities for sale given the old Impressionist shakedown? You be the judge of Gustave Caillebotte's *Fruit Displayed on A Stand*, painted by the artist in the early 1880s. Caillebotte's family owned a military textile business and with wars breaking out every other Sunday, you'd assume Caillebotte would have wanted an excuse not to fight. But like the princes of the 21st century, he walked the walk. No foot spurs for him.

HOST: But he was criticized for his not so gritty, gritty reality. So, what does a fruit stand look like through the eyes of a millionaire who wants to comment on technology's grip of the 19th century's food chain? Well, this Impressionist still life of a fruit stand bore fruit and fame. In this painting, we see Caillebotte revel in singular vantages, simultaneously delivering creative art. While also a magnificent example of a still life. Many series about art tend to interview the artists to gain insight into the work, but on *Beyond the Frame*, we're sharing a better impression of the work of these French artists. And today from the back row, past the grapes, near the oranges, just out of reach of those who taste test a grape while perusing the produce, we're joined by one of the red green apples from the painting now. Apple from Gustave Caillebotte's *Fruit Displayed on A Stand*, welcome to *Beyond the Frame*.

APPLE: Merci, thank you. If someone told me that after 130 years posing as a still life, we'd be leaving Boston to visit the National Gallery of Victoria for a tour and considering the many fruits you have to choose from, I'm grateful to be on the podcast.

HOST: Well, you're a wonderful model. A flawless example of fruit on display in amongst many other flawless examples in the Impressionist style.

APPLE: Well, Monsieur Caillebotte captured some of my curves, but flawless, that's not what Impressionism is about at all. You can't tell if I'm green or if someone's taken a bite out of me. It's the entire display Monsieur Caillebotte really wanted to draw your eye to. The composition of the stand and how it links to ideas around consumerism and commercialism. Just look at us all presented on perfect white pieces of paper ripe for the picking.

HOST: So, I'm curious, how did you and Caillebotte meet?

APPLE: Oh, mon chérie, let me paint you a picture.

HOST: Oh, okay.

APPLE: It was a beautiful spring day in Paris in 1881. Freshly plucked I was. Golden and delicious.

HOST: Beautiful.

APPLE: I was placed in a luxurious display of fruit in the fashionable part of town, a tempting market stall offering its wares to the consumers of the day. And there he was. And I, the Caillebotte's muse, the inspiration for a truly Impressionist notion. Why not paint a still life of something you would paint indoors, outdoors? And rather than paint an outdoor scenario it's the inside of the store. The style *plein air* while simultaneously. Doesn't seem rebellious, but it was highly experimental for the time. It went against virtually all artistic conventions and traditions. But the best part, rather than isolating me in a posed arrangement and snubbing the other fruit, he painted us all. A whole picture of repeated shapes, colour and form. An example of marketing through art, while a comment on commercialism still seen today. That said, he could have finished painting me.

HOST: Yeah, I can imagine he could have, but isn't that part of the style?

APPLE: Well, yes, it's a superb example of genre. The brush strokes indicate a lusciousness to the fruit. It would be a treat to eat. But traditional still life would still be arranged in a domestic setting. Here white pieces of paper under the fruit, they indicate they were for sale. As one critic noted, "A still life is about a select fruit. Here, he's painted the whole display." Unlike some of his peers Caillebotte was independently wealthy and free to paint whatever he wanted, how he wanted. He didn't need to sell his paintings the way many artists did. Perhaps that's what drew him to painting a canvas that required no consideration to how much the pallet cost, or what the critics would say. I do imagine that working with so much talent in one painting and its challenges, however, there were many-

HOST: Prima donnas?

APPLE: No, the fruit was French, maybe provincial, but certainly not Italian.

HOST: Okay. So, *Fruit Displayed on A Stand* is as one critic remarked. "Still life freed from its routine." Like many of Caillebotte's works. Do you have any words of advice or wisdom for other still life fruit models?

APPLE: Well, I'm lower hanging. Still, who would have thought that this young naive apple all those years ago would catch the eye of a wealthy French Impressionist painter and end up traveling to Australia to be admired by the masses. Half eaten, half green, half red apple of the French Impressionist eye.

HOST: That's three halves.

APPLE: Oh, I'm a big apple.

HOST: Yes, but still life freed from tradition. You're out of the studio.

APPLE: I think you just got to the core of it. I'm outside, but I'm inside. I'm a commodity, not on a plate in a home. Bound to be bought, but maybe not I'm a still life about luxury consumerism. Ah, the insight.

HOST:

So, did you know that one critic actually joked that the painting was a still life as conceived by millionaires?

APPLE: I'm not surprised, Caillebotte was certainly not the standard painter of his time. His 1875 painting, *The Floor Scrapers*, which portrays laborers on their hands and knees scrapings the wooden floor of a new Parisian apart

ment was deemed too vulgar to enter this alone at the time. So, what did he do? He painted more of them. And then joins the Impressionist Movement. And then gave it up to row boats. If I was painted by a street artist, I would have been washed away with the rain, not be hanging on the wall of the National Gallery of Victoria. Or in the permanent collection of the MFA Boston. Look, the mantra of still life is to be still life, but it doesn't have to be inside. He painted views of roundabouts, a streetlight, and so many chrysanthemums, and plenty of fruit.

HOST: It really is so impressive. Well, apple from Fruit Displayed on A Stand by Gustav Caillebotte thank you so much for going with us Beyond the Frame.

APPLE: Oh, merci beaucoup, thank you very much. It was my pleasure to be here.

HOST: That's all the time we have for Beyond the Frame, brought to you by HSBC, proud partner of the National Gallery of Victoria and French Impressionism from the Museum of Fine Arts Boston. We hope that after hearing this podcast, you've got a greater understanding of these masterpieces. On the next episode, we're going to meet Paul Cézanne's Turn in The Road.

Cézanne was one of the most interesting figures in the Impressionist Movement. He was so rebellious that he broke away from the movement entirely. Technically, he's what we call a post-Impressionist. His works not only inspired the likes of Van Gogh and Picasso but continue to influence artists and art students today.

HOST:

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