EDGAR DEGAS
A Teaching Packet
Written by Sally Ruth May

Classroom Suggestions by Maura Rogan
Edited by Jane Clarke, Robert Eskridge, and Maura Rogan

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PREFACE

This teaching packet has been written to complement the exhibition *Degas: Beyond Impressionism*, co-organized by The National Gallery, London and The Art Institute of Chicago and held at the Art Institute from September 30, 1996 through January 5, 1997. This is the first exhibition devoted exclusively to Degas’s work of the 1890s and 1900s. One hundred paintings, pastels, drawings, and sculptures from the artist’s mature years document the serial nature of his imagery, the transformed significance of color, and his obsessive, endlessly reinvented depictions of the female form.

These late works are revelatory to many of us who are more familiar with Degas’s art of the 1870s and 1880s, when he was one of the leading representatives of the Impressionist movement. His innovative pictures of the ballet, the laundry, the race course, and the brothel are celebrated for their sharp observation and their engagement with contemporary urban life.

This teaching packet brings together these two distinct stages of Degas’s career, providing an overview of the artist’s life and creative output and six slides of works spanning thirty years and representing a range of subjects and media. For each work, information is given about its subject and production. Glossary words are underlined the first time they appear in the text. Each entry concludes with three classroom suggestions, ranging from questions about the work of art to writing, research, and art activities. Teachers are encouraged to adapt all of the written material to meet the grade level, abilities, and interests of their students.

It is my hope that *Edgar Degas* will serve as a valuable resource in the classroom and as an incentive to visit these works firsthand, along with others in the Impressionist collection, at The Art Institute of Chicago.

Maura Rogan
Assistant Director, Teacher Programs
Department of Museum Education
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DEGAS: HIS ART AND HIS LIFE

“We were made to look at one another,” declared French artist Hilaire Germaine Edgar Degas (1834-1917) toward the end of his career. The statement confirms the artist’s lifelong theme -- the human figure, in myriad states of action or repose. Degas was the oldest of two brothers and two sisters from the wealthy De Gas banking family. His training was thoroughly traditional. He studied briefly at the official Ecole des Beaux Arts (School of Fine Arts), as well as with a disciple of his beloved Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780-1867), master painter of the neoclassical line. From 1856 to 1859, Degas immersed himself in Renaissance painting in Italy, where his Italian-born father’s family lived. Upon his return to Paris, he copied and studied the Old Masters in the Louvre. His earliest endeavors, large historical paintings, reflected this academic background. He also began the first of his probing and subtle portraits, mainly of his Italian relatives.

Upon Degas’s return to Paris in 1859, his career as a modern artist began to take shape. It was, in fact, while copying at the Louvre in 1862 that Degas met the maestro of avant-garde artists, Edouard Manet (1832-1883). Manet introduced Degas to other like-minded artists and writers who gathered around Parisian café tables during the 1860s, discussing modern art. With his cultivated manners and fierceness of opinions, Degas soon became one of their leaders, both respected and feared. One of the café habitués remembered him later as “that round-shouldered man in a suit of pepper-and-salt.... [H]is eyes are hard, and his words are sharp, ironical, cynical.”
Critic Théodore Duret often joined these gatherings, which had momentous repercussions for the history of art. "The meetings at Café Guerbois," Duret later recalled, "with discussion of painting in light tones and bright colors by Manet, and the technique and procedure of *en plein air* painting by Claude Monet (1840-1926), [Camille] Pissarro (1830-1903), and [Pierre Auguste] Renoir (1841-1919) were to have fruitful results. From those meetings sprang the powerful development of art that was to go by the name Impressionism."

Degas participated in all but one of the eight revolutionary, independent exhibitions mounted from 1874 through 1886 by the diverse group of Impressionist artists. Like his avant-garde colleagues, Degas's subject matter was new and modern. He focused upon his fellow Parisians in their contemporary city with its recently restructured streets and growing suburbs. Jockeys and ballerinas, middle-class women at hat shops, singers, and prostitutes at sidewalk cafés replaced the historical stagemset of his earliest works.

Degas's technique, however, was entirely his own. His Impressionist colleagues used bright colors, short sketchy brushstrokes, and open-air painting to capture, as if seen in the blink of an eye, the constantly changing world around them. Degas, on the other hand, has been called "an old masterly painter of modern life." He preferred to paint indoors, his attention drawn to composition and line rather than fluctuations of weather and light. Although his work conveyed an impressionistic spontaneity, that sense of an instant rendering of a private and unguarded
moment, his approach was rigorous and probing. He made numerous preparatory drawings of his figures in order to devise his spatially complex pictures, with their unusual viewpoints and cropped compositions. “I assure you that no art was ever less spontaneous than mine.” he once declared. “What I do is the result of reflection and the study of great masters.”

Just as Degas “sought for new subject matter, he [also] sought for new means by which he might reproduce his subject in an original and novel manner,” a critic once remarked. His technical inventiveness seemed to know no bounds. He was fascinated with Japanese prints and the relatively recent art of photography. Not only did he work in all orthodox media, such as painting, sculpture, prints, and pastels, but he also developed his own hybrids, such as monotypes or various combinations of prints and, for instance, pastels.

As the Impressionistic era waned in the late 1880s, Degas’s work changed slowly, but radically. Jettisoning the majority of his trademark themes, those figural documentations of the new Paris -- the laundresses and milliners, the café-concerts and racetracks -- he began to concentrate solely on two or three key subjects, specifically decontextualized ballet dancers and rudimentary female nudes. And as he pared down his subject matter, his focus became even more obsessive. Aided by the use of drawings on tracing paper, which enabled him to copy and alter his compositions, Degas developed these key themes in scores of series, or sequences. The figure remained paramount, but his compositions were simpler, his style broader, more expressive. He still relied on his classical
training, yet the simplification of his forms and his bold use of color looked forward to the new century. About these powerful late works, Renoir proclaimed: “If Degas had died at fifty, he would have been remembered as an excellent painter, no more; it is after his fiftieth year that his work broadened out and that he really becomes Degas.”

A confirmed bachelor, Degas lived and worked in various studios in Montmartre throughout his career. The artist’s austere, almost ascetic, focus during his later years may have reinforced rumors of an ogre-like reclusivity, which persist to this day. Despite failing eyesight, however, Degas indeed continued to play an opinionated and a vital role in Parisian life, keeping up to date with cultural activities, the latest art, and his friends -- but always on his own terms. “The soul of the evening,” an old friend recalled, “a constant, brilliant, unbearable guest.” Even two years before his death in 1917, a photograph captures the eighty-year old Degas -- “the last great artist of the nineteenth century,” according to his friend and colleague Mary Cassatt (1844-1926) -- frail, silver-bearded, nearly blind, but still wearing his bowler hat, still strolling the streets of Paris.
**Four Studies of a Jockey**, 1866

Essence heightened with white gouache on brown paper
17 3/4 x 12 3/8 in. (45 x 35.5 cm)
Mr. And Mrs. Lewis Larned Coburn Memorial Collection, 1933.469

Although horses had long played an important role in French social life, from military hunts to royal parades, organized racing only arrived in Paris from England around the 1830s. Originally held on private estates, racing was an upper-class diversion attended primarily by males. In 1857, the new public race course Longchamps was completed in the most famous of the Second Empire's new parks, the Bois de Boulogne. The races, attended by Degas, were a highlight of the social season. But Degas's interest was not social. Rather, his passion was depicting jockeys and horses in motion, for what could better encapsulate the rapidly changing modern world than these "animated urban machines", as art historian Robert Herbert called them.

Degas manipulated his jockeys -- like his ballerinas -- as if they were puppets, moving the figures around this way and that, to show their sense of movement and control. In this drawing, he divides his sheet into four parts, placing the rear view of a faceless jockey into each section. He merely suggests the figure of a horse, searching instead for the most natural balancing of the rider on his mount. We see here Degas's masterful line, his emphasis on contour as he conveys the figure of the shifting
jockey with single, long strokes of **gouache** or ink. He also deftly renders the sheen of the jockey's racing silks, whose brilliant colors were one of the racetrack's brightest spectacles.

Already reflected in this early work is Degas's technical inventiveness, with his use of brown essence, or thinned oil paint, to prime, or coat, the dark oil paper. He then draws his figures with black ink and white gouache. Degas made a number of these brilliant essence-and-gouache studies during 1866-1868, forming what has been called a virtual "visual grammar of the horse race." Degas's works documenting his devotion to the racetrack reached their peak during the mid-1880s, then, following the narrowing of his visual vocabulary, dropped toward the end of the decade until the subject disappeared altogether.

**Classroom Suggestions**

1. Have students examine *Four Studies of a Jockey*. How does each of the four studies differ? How did the artist use line and color to create the illusion of form -- the massive hindquarters of the horses? the compact and poised bodies of the jockeys? the fullness of their racing shirts? What did Degas depict in detail and what did he only suggest?

2. Degas made this work to study the "visual grammar of the horse race." Discuss with students the concept of "visual grammar" -- the form and structure of the way something looks. Have students examine the visual
grammar of the human figure, creating four studies of a fellow classmate in various poses. Pencil, charcoal, and pastel are excellent media for this exercise.

3. At the time of these studies, horseracing was an established leisure activity. Have students research other recreational pastimes in mid- to late-nineteenth-century Paris. What historic and social conditions allowed for their emergence and popularity? Have students find paintings of these leisure activities by other Impressionist artists.
Ballet at the Paris Opéra, 1877

Pastel over monotype on cream laid paper
13 7/8 x 27 13/16 in. (352 x 706 mm)
Gift of Mary and Leigh Block, 1981.12

Ballet was Degas's trademark, his signature theme, from the very beginning of his career. Dubbed "the painter of dancers," he devoted almost one-half of his total output to the subject, with his production steadily increasing so that, by the 1890s, it dominated all others, three to one. Although ballet was not a recent import -- the first state-supported ballet, the Académie Royal de Danse, was founded in France in 1661 -- Degas depicts here a scene from the company's official ballet school, the Paris Opéra, in an utterly modern way. Using his characteristically cropped forms and odd vantage points, he effectively captures the immediacy of the scene. The view is from the orchestra pit, with the necks of the bass viols intruding into the dancers' zone. While the central dancer, en pointe, appears to be performing, the random positioning of the corps de ballet, with the dancers' free-flowing hair, suggests that they are only rehearsing. This combination of formal, choreographed poses with informal, offstage gestures is characteristic of many of Degas's works of the ballet.

In this work, Degas creatively combines the monotype printmaking technique with the fragile medium of pastel. The monotype was rarely
made at this time, and Degas was considered one of its finest practitioners, mastering the challenge of a very wide plate for this work. Described as "the powder of butterfly wings," pastel was the perfect medium to illustrate the onstage metamorphosis of spindly young dancers into illusions of beauty as perfect and short-lived as butterflies.

This evolution was, in reality, less graceful. Nearly always from the lower classes, apprentice dancers -- nicknamed "les rats de Paris" -- often began to dance at age seven or eight, studying long hours without pay. A contemporary review bluntly describes the "breaking in" of these young girls -- "giraffes who could not bend, elephants whose hinges refused to fold" -- who through grueling practice have their brief moments of glory before the stage lights until, too old to dance, they turned into "dressing room attendants, palm readers, or walkers on." As another writer declared: "Dancers are often compared with race horses; the advantage is entirely to the horses."

**Classroom Suggestions**

1. Unlike *Four Studies of a Jockey* in which the artist focused on four isolated subjects, *Ballet at the Paris Opéra* combines several different subjects and activities simultaneously. Have students study the composition carefully and describe what they see. Is there a center, or focus, of attention? How has the artist differentiated the foreground from
the middle- and backgrounds? What strategies did Degas employ to assist the viewer's eye in moving around and through the composition?

2. In many of his works, Degas crops forms and approaches his subjects from unusual vantage points. Have students determine the vantage point of *Ballet at the Paris Opéra*. Where is the viewer? What can the viewer observe and what is obscured from his or her vision? Imagine the viewer sitting with the orchestra, behind the bass viols; how would the vantage point change? Have students draw a scene (in the classroom or outside of school) from two different vantage points. Encourage them to select unusual angles that invite them to see the scene in new ways. Look at other works by Degas for inspiration.

3. Have students research the history of the ballet. What is the relationship between the premier dancer and the corps de ballet? What are the principal positions of classical ballet? When did male roles become significant? Has ballet training and performance changed since Degas’s time? What impact has ballet had on modern sports?
Mary Cassatt at the Louvre: The Paintings Gallery, 1879-1880

Etching, soft-ground etching, aquatint, and drypoint on ivory wove
Japanese tissue, 15th state, Plate: 12 x 5 in. (30.5 x 12.6 cm.); Sheet: 13 3/8 x 6 7/8 in. (34 x 17.5 cm)
Gift of Walter S. Brewster, 1951.323

In 1877, thanks to an invitation from Degas, Mary Cassatt exhibited with the Impressionists, becoming the only American artist to be an established member of the group. Degas soon became Cassatt’s mentor when they closely collaborated in 1879 for a journal of Impressionist prints entitled Jour et la Nuit, or Day and Night. Although the magazine never materialized, Cassatt posed for a number of Degas’s works during this period, including this print.

An excellent example of Degas’s mastery of portraiture, the print features Cassatt in France’s foremost museum, the Louvre. She is set off by a seated companion, probably her sister Lydia. She, like we, views Cassatt from behind. Yet despite this provocative daring rear pose -- we never see Cassatt’s face -- we sense who she is by where, and how, Degas places her: in a museum, absorbed by the artwork, with her older sister as companion. Additionally, as Degas wrote in his notebooks: “Her slender erect figure, neatly tailored, and her crisply furled umbrella all convey to us something of Mary Cassatt’s tense, energetic character.”
The work is also a tour de force of printmaking, combining etching, aquatint, and drypoint. Its flattened shapes and long, narrow format derive from the Japanese prints that Degas collected. To arrive at this striking portrayal of his friend, Degas made twenty known versions, or states, of the work, which is the second largest number ever recorded by the artist for a print. He continually refined it, making changes in tone and texture, and once, even altered the composition, making the left pillar larger. This sumptuous, delicate version is from the fifteenth state.

Classroom Suggestions

1. Have students compare Mary Cassatt in the Painting Gallery of the Louvre with Ballet at the Paris Opéra. What similarities and differences exist in their compositions? vantage points? use of cropped forms? their recording of specific moments in time?

2. Have students study Mary Cassatt, the only American artist to become a member of the Impressionists, and her relationship with Degas. What influence of Degas can be seen in her subjects, media, and compositions?

3. Degas combined several different printing techniques in the making of Mary Cassatt in the Painting Gallery of the Louvre. Using the glossary to assist, summarize for students the different processes. Have students examine the work and discuss the artist's ability to evoke color, texture, and depth with the black-and-white printing media.
The Millinery Shop, 1879-1884
Oil on canvas, 39 1/4 x 43 3/8 in. (100 x 110.7 cm)
Mr. And Mrs. Lewis Larned Coburn Memorial Collection, 1933.428

In documenting what poet Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867) called "the heroism of modern life," Degas preferred the working classes. Almost two-thirds of his vast oeuvre consists of jockeys, singers, ballet dancers, laundresses -- and milliners as we see here. In this painting, Degas has indeed rendered the Impressionist's quickly changing modern world. As if we were a modish stroller out window shopping, the work -- with its unusual cropping and tilted perspective -- seems to capture an unedited glimpse of the interior of a small nineteenth-century hat shop.

With her mouth pursed around a pin and her hands gloved to protect the delicate fabric, a young shop girl leans back to examine her creation. She is totally absorbed in her work and, like most of the women in Degas's art, seems unaware of being watched. Degas has scraped and repainted the milliner's hands and her hat-in-progress so that both appear to be in movement, drawing an analogy between her creative efforts and those of the artist.

This analogy extends to the bonnets, which are displayed on the table like a still life: where they are unfinished, so too is the painting. X-rays and preparatory drawings show that Degas originally intended what is now a
plain shop girl to be an elaborately hatted customer. Thus, what began as a painting about vanity and fashion become instead a metaphor on artistic creation and consumption. The hat, for Degas, was the supreme emblem of the modern bourgeois woman.

The reworking of this painting, with its bold pattern of colors, coincided with the slow but relentless transformation in Degas’s work during the 1880s and 1890s toward simpler compositions and more expressive use of color. Of at least fifteen pastels, drawings, and paintings Degas created on this subject during the 1880s, The Millinery Shop is the largest and most ambitious. Like his racetrack motif, works on these topical Impressionist themes dwindled by the 1890s.

Classroom Suggestions

1. X-rays and preparatory drawings reveal that the shop girl was originally an elaborately hatted customer. For a creative writing exercise, divide students into two groups. Have one group write the inner thoughts of the shop girl as she makes hats for others to buy. Have the other group write in the voice of the bourgeois woman, recording her thoughts as she selects a hat to purchase and enjoy.

2. At the time of this painting, hundreds of small Parisian shops were closing due to the popularity of the burgeoning department stores. A similar phenomenon is occurring today in towns and cities across America,
with chain stores and malls forcing privately owned small businesses to close. Have students research this economic and social shift in both Paris (1860s - 1890s) and in their community today. What local shops are no longer in existence? What is in their place? How have the larger stores changed the nature of the community?

3. The Millinery Shop can be divided in half vertically, with the right half revealing a portrait of a working woman and the left half revealing a still life of fashionable hats. With color and brushstroke, Degas captured the hats' fabrics, ribbons, and flowers. Design a still life of like objects for students to draw, selecting items with a range of colors and textures and arranging them at various angles and levels. Have students pay special attention to the still life's composition and the relationship of the objects to one another in space.
Slide 5

*Arabesque penchée*, c. 1895/90
Bronze; foundry no. 16, 39.4 x 70 cm; base 20.3 x 12.7 cm
George F. Porter Collection; 1925.1641

Although Degas has been called “the most important painter-sculptor of the nineteenth century,” he only exhibited one piece of sculpture during his entire career. With its real hair, cotton tutu, and natural features, the inclusion of his wax *Little Fourteen-Year-Old Dancer* (1878-1881) at the 1881 Impressionist exhibition scandalized the public as being too lifelike, too unglamorous. Thereafter, only visitors to Degas’s Montmartre studio had the privilege of viewing his statuettes, which were mostly modeled in wax and cast in bronze only after the artist’s death in 1917.

Degas once called sculpture “a blind man’s trade,” which gave rise to the long-standing assumption that his increased interest in sculpture as he aged was to compensate for his failing eyesight. Degas himself corrected this rumor in 1897, after having already practiced sculpting for some thirty years: “The only reason I made wax figures of animals and humans was for my own satisfaction ... in order to give my paintings and drawings greater expression, greater ardour and more life. They are exercises to get me going; documentary, preparatory notions, nothing more. None of this is intended for sale.”
Clustered on tabletops and sculpture stands, these statuettes served then as points of reference for his drawings, pastels, and paintings, with Degas moving back and forth from object to image, borrowing a pose here, repositioning a stance there. The three-dimensional figures helped him understand form and even became stand-ins for living models. *Arabesque penchée* shows a dancer at the lowest point of an *arabesque*, a complex ballet position in which all body parts extend from the central body mass, balancing on one foot. Upon completion, the dancer is upright, head in line with her spine, balancing on one leg with arms extended.

Degas studied this complex position -- one which would have been extremely difficult for a model to maintain for any length of time -- throughout his career, particularly in wax and pastel. These studies of the *arabesque*'s sequential positions were not unlike the high-speed exposures that froze sequential motions of figures and horses by the British photographer Eadward Muybridge (1830-1904), whose work Degas admired. *Arabesque penchée* was not only the first bronze by Degas to enter the holdings of The Art Institute of Chicago but it may have been the first to become part of any American public collection.

**Classroom Suggestions**

1. Of his wax figures, Degas said “none of this is intended for sale.” Have students discuss why Degas’s statuettes (bronze casts of the wax figures), considered “exercises” by the artist, are today so valued in museum and
private collections. What can they reveal about Degas? his interests? his working methods?

2. The changing movements of humans and animals are “frozen” in Degas’s wax (and later bronze) figures, much as they are in British photographer Eadward Muybridge’s high-speed exposures. If cameras are available, have students record the changing movements of a classmate in motion. Upon development, line up the photographs in chronological order to recreate the movements as they were executed. Have students examine the individual body positions and their relationship to one another. (If cameras are not available, have students make quick sketches of a classmate who poses briefly in a number of different poses.)

3. While *Arabesque penchée* was cast in bronze after the artist’s death, Degas is recognized as the artist. Discuss with students this issue of originality and artistic credit. Can students think of other artistic fields in which recognition goes to the individual with the original design or idea rather than to the individual(s) who physically made the finished product?
"Women can never forgive me," confessed Degas toward the end of his career. "They hate me, they feel that I am disarming them. I show them without their coquetry." Here, Degas shows us a solitary female figure who is totally absorbed in the simple, everyday act of drying her neck after a bath. Her surroundings are plain, anonymous. A yellow-orange curtain drapes down across her hip, concealing the lower part of her body, while the red-orange fabric in the rear reinforces the richness of her long, auburn hair.

This brilliant pastel is a prime example of Degas's later work, when he had honed down his subject matter largely to dancers and nudes using a simplified format, bold colors, and often made in series. Although certain of his colleagues, such as Monet, practiced seriality, none could match Degas's pictorial obsessiveness. *Woman at Her Toilette*, for instance, has at least ten drawings closely related to it, forming a "family" of near-identical compositions that reveal the complexities, as well as the cumulative powers, of a single theme.

With roots from his early training, when he copied the Old Masters, the key ritual to later works like this pastel was drawing, tracing, and finally
coloring. Visitors to Degas's studio recalled how the master draftsman pinned sheets of tracing paper to cardboard, adding strips of paper as needed to complete his compositions. Here, the female figure, which he may have traced from another picture, occupies the largest sheet of tracing paper, with three separate sheets -- to the left, right, and on top -- extending the format.

When he was satisfied with the picture, he would glue the tracing paper down -- and then add layers of expressive color. *Woman at Her Toilette* is the most brilliantly worked pastel in the museum's collection. Sponged with solvents and fixatives, the layers of colors range from red-oranges to pale greens and lilacs. At different distances, the intermingled hues produce varying effects. The woman seems suspended in color, enveloped in the vortex of a whirling rainbow.

Degas's studio was filled with scores of variations on themes like this, all propped up on easels, which he would work on in succession, tracing and extending, saving color until the end. As the poet Baudelaire contended -- and as Degas shows us in this late work -- "a harmoniously conducted picture consists of a series of pictures superimposed on one another, each new layer conferring greater reality on the dream."
Classroom Suggestions

1. In this work of art, “Degas effectively suspended the woman in color, denying the wholeness of her form. Indeed, the figure barely survives the riot of pastel in which she exists.” Have students look carefully at the color in Woman at Her Toilette. What riot of pastels did Degas create? What colors can be identified and how did the artist combine and apply them to the paper? In what setting is the woman and what color relationships exist between her and her surroundings?

2. Degas often traced figures from other pictures and then added strips of paper and color to create new compositions. Have students trace figures from magazine pictures and produce their own works of art by altering the figures’ poses, surroundings, and colors.

3. Have students compare Woman at her Toilette with any two other works of art in this Degas teacher packet. Make a list of similarities and differences, paying particular attention to subject matter, composition, cropping, vantage point, and color.
Glossary

**Aquatint:** A method of printmaking in which tonal areas rather than lines are created. A metal plate is covered in places with resin, a natural adhesive substance; it is then immersed in an acid bath. The acid eats around the particles and into the metal plate, leaving a pitted grainy surface. When inked, the plate produces shadowy effects.

**Ascetic:** Exceedingly strict and severe.

**Avant-garde:** Seeming advanced or ahead of its time.

**Bois:** A wooded park.

**Bourgeois:** Middle class.

**Café-concerts:** Places of entertainment in the late nineteenth century, with music, dance, and refreshments; similar to today’s nightclubs.

**Café Guerbois:** Favorite meeting place in the mid-1860s where Manet, Degas, Renoir, and Monet had early discussions about the movement which would be called Impressionism.

**Cast:** in sculpture, duplicated by pouring molten bronze into a mold.

**Coquetry:** Flirtation.

**Cropped:** Cut or fragmented, resulting in an altered image.

**Drypoint:** A method of printmaking in which the image is scratched directly into the surface of a zinc or copper plate with an etching needle or other sharp instrument. The jagged metal that is raised along the scratch is called the “burr.” When the plate is inked, most of the ink clings to the burr. This prints as a somewhat softer, fuzzier line than an etched line. Drypoint prints are printed in a manner similar to an etching. The pressure of the press, however, causes the burr to gradually flatten out. Fewer impressions can therefore be made before the plate wears out.
En plein air: Painting “in the open air,” removed from the constraints of the studio.

Etching: A printing process in which a metal place is covered with wax and a design is drawn into the wax with a pointed tool, exposing the metal surface underneath. The plate is immersed in an acid bath which eats into the metal, creating grooves. The wax is removed and ink is spread on the plate. Any ink not in the incised lines is removed. Damp paper is placed on the plate and both are passed between the two rollers of a press. The pressure of the rollers forces the damp paper into the incised lines where it picks up the ink.

Fixatives: A gummy liquid applied to chalk, charcoal, and pastel drawings to prevent the pigments from blurring.

Gouache: Opaque watercolor; it differs from transparent watercolor in that the pigments are bound with glue and the lighter tones are obtained by the addition of white pigment.

Louvre: Foremost French museum, in Paris. Originally a royal palace and fortress in the thirteenth century, then rebuilt in the sixteenth century, and opened to the public as a museum following the French Revolution of 1789-93. Expanded during the 1980s; a glass pyramid in the courtyard by American architect I.M. Pei sits atop the entrance to the new space.

Milliner: A person who designs, makes, or sells hats for women.

Monotypes: A printing process in which a painting (in oil paint or printing ink) is done on a metal plat. Dampened paper is placed on the plate and it is put through an etching press. Only approximate results are expected in the making of duplicates.

Montmartre: One of the hills surrounding Paris in the nineteenth century, made accessible by the replanning of the city under Baron Haussman; an entertainment center and an ideal milieu for the Impressionists, with their passion for recording contemporary life. Today, Montmartre is incorporated into the city of Paris.
Neoclassical: A revival in the mid eighteenth- mid nineteenth centuries of architecture and art characterized by the order, symmetry, and simplicity of style of ancient Greek and Roman art.

Oeuvre: The total body of work of an artist, from the French word meaning work.

Old Masters: Paintings of high quality produced before 1800.

Pastel: A drawing material consisting of a stick of color made from powdered pigments with just enough gum to bind them.

Perspective: Mathematical method used by artists since the Renaissance to represent three-dimensional objects on two-dimensional surfaces, so that they seem to appear as in nature.

Renaissance: Revival of learning, literature, art, and architecture that initially emphasized the classical models of Greek and Roman antiquity. Began in Italy in the late thirteenth century, then spread to other parts of Europe; lasted throughout the sixteenth century.

Second Empire: Reign in France of Napoleon III (1852-1870).

Solvents: Substances, usually liquids, capable of dissolving another substance (in Degas’s case, pastel).

States: Alterations of a print, in the nature of working notes to study desired changes. Most artists don’t save, sell, or sign any but the finished state.

Vantage point: The position or place from which an artist views a particular scene.
Educational Resources

Bibliography


Bibliography for Younger Students


Audio-Visual Resources

*Edgar Degas: The Unquiet Spirit*, RM Arts presents Portrait of an Artist Series, Home Vision A Films, Inc. 1-800-262-8600

*With Open Eyes: Images from The Art Institute of Chicago*. Voyager CD-Rom. Art Institute Museum Shops.