

Edgar Degas: Six Friends at Dieppe, September 16, 2005-January 15, 2006

In the late summer of 1885 Edgar Degas (1834-1917) traveled north from Paris to join his friends for a seaside holiday. His destination was Dieppe, a picturesque town on the Normandy coast. While relaxing with the family of writer Ludovic Halévy, he created a large pastel drawing of six male figures. They included Halévy and his young son Daniel; the painters Henri Gervex, Jacques-Émile Blanche, and Walter Sickert; and "a man of taste," Albert Boulanger-Cavé. This exhibition reveals the story of *Six Friends at Dieppe*, a remarkable group portrait that represents a unique performance of art and friendship.

The fishing port of Dieppe on the Normandy coast of France became a popular vacation spot in the early years of the nineteenth century. Within easy access from Paris by train, it could also be reached by the steamers that crossed the English Channel. Dieppe's transformation into a chic watering place began in the 1820s under the patronage of Caroline, Duchesse de Berry, who encouraged the construction of fashionable bathing huts and a public spa. By mid-century the first of Dieppe's casinos buzzed with activity and the wide stretch of land to the west of the port gave way to an avenue of grand hotels and a broad promenade. The beachfront was further enhanced when Dieppe was discovered by the court of Emperor Louis-Napoléon III, which prompted Empress Eugénie to design grassy lawns for leisurely strolls and sporting activities. By 1885, the third version of the casino, a Moorish fantasy, was already under construction, and the town's summer colony boasted a fascinating mix of artists, writers, and international society.

CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

Eugène Louis Boudin, French, 1824-1898
The Port at Trouville, 1889
Oil on canvas
Museum Appropriation Fund 29.290



ARTISTS ON THE NORMANDY COAST

Poised between Le Havre and Calais, Dieppe was one of many sites on the Normandy coast that attracted artists during the summer months. Early in the nineteenth century, the Romantic painter Eugène Isabey depicted Dieppe's high cliffs and sea vistas. Later, the activities and costumes of its visitors were described in the lithographs of Paul Gavarni. Claude Monet, who spent his childhood in Le Havre, was encouraged to paint outdoors by his teacher, Eugène Boudin. From Honfleur, where he depicted the estuary of the Seine around 1868, to towns closer to Dieppe like Pourville and Varengeville,

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Monet captured the changing qualities of light on land, sea, and sky. Boudin's passion for seaside views encompasses all seasons and took him from the Normandy beaches of Trouville and Deauville to Brittany, then south to Bordeaux. Like Gavarni, he often animated his scenes with vacationers gathered on the beach to enjoy the refreshing salt air. Among popular postcard views of Dieppe was one shown here, featuring a row of grand houses below the cliffs at the western edge of the beach. The house third from right was "Châlet Bas-Fort Blanc," owned by the family of Jacques-Émile Blanche; second from right was "Les Rochers," the house in which the Halévy family, Edgar Degas, and Albert Boulanger-Cavé stayed. In the next gallery, the plans and elevation of "Villa, Plage de Dieppe," the house at far right, show the scale and luxury of these homes. Other postcard scenes that suggest the atmosphere of Dieppe when Degas was there include The Casino and Bathing Huts; The Boulevard Maritime; A Donkey Ride; The Terrace of the Casino; and Panorama of the Port taken from the Church of St. Jacques.

Charles Lapostolet, French, 1824-1890

View of Dieppe, 1800s

Oil on canvas

Gift of Walter R. and John A. Callender in memory of their father,
Walter Callender 29.102



Lapostolet's view across the harbor of Dieppe includes a glimpse of the tower of the Église St. Jacques. These two aspects of Dieppe were favorites of both British and French artists. As early as the 1820s, Richard Parkes Bonington and Joseph M. W. Turner had depicted the port, to be followed by a range of French artists that included Eugène Delacroix, Charles Daubigny, and Paul Gauguin.

HOW SIX FRIENDS AT DIEPPE CAME TO PROVIDENCE

In 1885 Degas gave *Six Friends at Dieppe* to the mother of Jacques-Émile Blanche, one of the figures he portrayed in the pastel. It remained with the Blanche family until 1903, when Blanche painted a portrait of Degas and offered it to him as a gift. Intensely private, Degas permitted Blanche to photograph this portrait for his records, but forbade its publication. When he later found it reproduced in an international fine arts magazine, he sent the portrait back to Blanche and demanded the return of *Six Friends at Dieppe*. Blanche did not see Degas's pastel again until 1914 when it appeared in a Paris gallery, "enthroned on an easel in a sanctuary in a noble Florentine Renaissance frame that enlarged it, dressed up, and completed it." It was brought to the United States in the 1920s by the Durand-Ruel Gallery, exhibited in New York and Cambridge, and purchased by The RISD Museum in 1931.

Edgar Degas, French, 1834-1917

Dancer with a Bouquet, ca. 1877-1880

Pastel and gouache over monotype on paper

Gift of Mrs. Murray S. Danforth 42.213

As an artist, the worlds of performer and patron were equally familiar to Degas, as they were to the writer Ludovic Halévy, and to the much sought-after advisor, Albert Boulanger-Cavé. In this remarkable image Degas unites two distinct experiences: the public delight of a principal



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dancer receiving applause, and the private attention of a patron in her box above the stage. Degas used a monotype of the dancers of stage as the under-drawing of this pastel. To that sheet he added a strip of paper along the bottom and took advantage of previously unused margins in order to expand the surface of his image. He then added the female patron and overlapped the dancer's tutu with her fan, connecting their separate realms while maintaining their real and psychological distance.

Georges Seurat, French, 1859-1891
At the Gaité Rochechouart (Café-concert), ca. 1887-1888
Conté crayon with gouache on laid paper
Gift of Mrs. Murray S. Danforth 42.210



LUDOVIC HALÉVY

Ludovic Halévy (1834-1908), a highly celebrated librettist and writer, was a schoolmate of Edgar Degas at the lycée Louis-le-Grand in Paris during the 1840s. Their friendship flourished after Halévy married Louise Breguet, a childhood friend of Degas's sisters. The two men could often be found at the Paris Opera, which Degas frequented both as an artist and as a passionate member of the audience. Degas became an intimate of the Halévy family and in 1885 accepted an invitation to vacation with them in Dieppe. Halévy was a native Parisian, descended from a highly educated Jewish family that had emigrated from Germany to France in the late 18th century. Encouraged to pursue a profession, he served in the Ministry of State before abandoning politics for a memorable career in the theatre. In collaboration with Henri Meilhac, Halévy scripted such well-known operettas as Jacques Offenbach's *La Belle Hélène* (1864) and *La Vie parisienne* (1866) and Georges Bizet's opera *Carmen* (1873-74). In the 1870s he turned to fiction and wrote a popular series of stories about ballet dancers and their parents, *La Famille Cardinal*. The success of his subsequent novels led to his election to the Académie Française of the Institut de France. The close friendship between Halévy and Degas ended abruptly in 1897 over the Dreyfus Affair, an event that polarized public opinion in France. A Jewish army officer, Alfred Dreyfus, had been falsely convicted of treason. Degas supported the army, who had accused Dreyfus of passing information to the Germans, but Halévy and his family believed he had been framed and lobbied for a government investigation. Degas did not speak to Halévy again, and did not return to the family's home until 1908, when he called to pay his respects upon learning of the death of his old friend.

HENRI GERVEX

Henri Gervex (1852-1929) was a realist painter who won early acclaim at the Paris Salon. As a young man he socialized with the Impressionists, but like Édouard Manet, whom he greatly admired, he declined to participate in their group exhibitions. His ability to apply academic techniques to scenes from modern life appealed to the parents of Jacques-Émile Blanche, who chose him as their son's teacher and who welcomed him as a guest at their summer home in Dieppe. Beginning in 1882, Gervex won numerous mural commissions for public buildings in Paris, including ceiling decorations for the Hôtel de Ville and the Train Bleu restaurant in the Gare de Lyon. His ambition matched the scale of his paintings. His *Panorama of the Century*, a 396-foot-long mural depicting over 600 of the most distinguished French citizens of the last 100 years - undertaken with Belgian artist Alfred Stevens - was installed in the Tuileries Garden to celebrate the opening of the 1889 Universal Exposition in Paris. So well-known were Gervex's aspirations for fame that Émile Zola used him as a model for the ambitious painter Fagerolles in his 1886 novel *L'Oeuvre (The Masterpiece)*. His desire for acclaim contrasted dramatically with Degas's expressed wish to be "illustrious and unknown." Theirs was not a close friendship, but Gervex was among the small group of mourners who attended Degas's funeral in 1917.

French

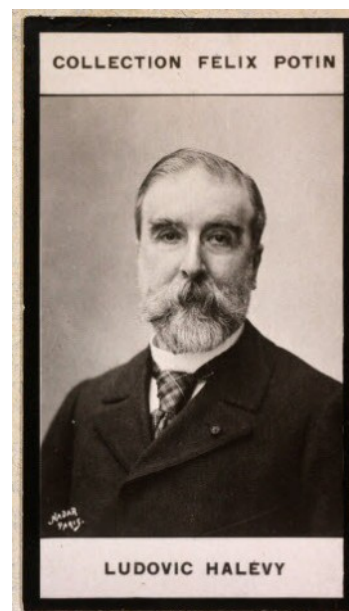
Album Felix Potin, 500 Célébrités contemporaines, ca. 1900

Gelatin silver print in carte-de-visite format

Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2003.33

The craze for collecting photographs of famous people began in the 1850s and continues to this day. The small carte de visite format was the perfect size to be included in packages of chocolate sold by the Félix Potin department store – not unlike baseball cards in packages of bubble gum. This album from around 1900 had places for photographs of five hundred contemporary celebrities. Each one was names in a list included at the back of the album.

The great librettist, Ludovic Halévy was among the celebrities to appear here, along with renowned (and some forgotten) writers, actors, statesmen, and artists. Henri Gervex, another of the figures in *Six Friends at Dieppe*, also appears in this album, but neither Edgar Degas nor any of the great Impressionist painters was considered of equal stature.



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Edgar Degas, French, 1834-1917

Ludovic Halévy Encounters Mme Cardinal in the Wings (illustration for La Famille Cardinal), ca. 1876-1877

Monotype on paper

Purchased with funds given in memory of Houghton P. Metcalf, Jr. and Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2005.7

Degas often took a second, and sometimes even a third, impression from his monotype plates. This delicate image of Ludovic Halévy and Madame Cardinal talking in the corridor shows his effectiveness at capturing the thin coat of pigment remaining on the plate after the first pull. Degas often used the fainter version of an original image as the preliminary drawing for another work. Such is the case with the pastel over monotype, *Dancer with a Bouquet*, ca. 1877-80, which appears in this exhibition in the section on Albert Boulanger-Cavé



Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, French, 1780-1867

Portrait of Thomas-Charles Naudet, 1806

Graphite on wove paper

Museum Appropriation Fund 29.087

Cavé and Degas shared a deep appreciation for the work of Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, an admirer and friend of Cavé's mother. Portraits by Ingres of Cavé's mother and her second husband, Hygin-Auguste-Edmond Cavé (now in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York), were among the works of art that Cavé inherited in 1885.

Degas avidly sought Ingres' works for his own collection and personally owned 88 drawings and 20 paintings by the great draftsman and portraitist.



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Edgar Degas, French, 1834-1917
Six Friends at Dieppe, 1885
Pastel on paper (now yellowed) mounted to fabric
Museum Appropriation Fund 31.320

At left, standing: Walter Sickert. At right, from top to bottom: Ludovic Halévy, Jacques-Émile Blanche, Daniel Halévy, Henri Gervex, Albert Boulanger-Cavé.



Gustave Moreau, French, 1826-1898
Hesiod, early 1880s
Watercolor and gouache with touches of graphite on wove paper
Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 28.005



Eugène Louis Boudin, French, 1824-1898
Figures on a Beach, ca. 1863
Oil on panel
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Houghton P. Metcalf, Sr. 1986.070



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Claude Monet, French, 1840-1926
The Seine Near its Estuary, Honfleur, ca. 1868
Oil on canvas
Bequest of George Pierce Metcalf 57.236



Jean Baptiste Antoine Guillemet, French, 1840-1887
The Cliffs at Dieppe, ca. 1889
Etching on wove paper
Bequest of Isaac C. Bates 13.1117



Eugène Isabey, French, 1803-1886
Charles Etienne Pierre Motte
V. Morlot
McLean
Retour au Port, from the series "Six Marines" 1833
Lithograph on wove paper
Mary B. Jackson Fund 76.020



Paul Gavarni, French, 1804-1866
Benard et Frey
Dieppe, 1835
Lithograph on wove paper
Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 66.188



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Eugène Isabey, French, 1803-1886
Charles Etienne Pierre Motte
V. Morlot
M. Lean
Environs de Dieppe, from the series *Six Marines*, 1833
Lithograph on wove paper
Anonymous gift and Mary B. Jackson Fund 76.019



Ludovic Halévy, French, b. 1834; d. 1908
Maurice Potin, French, b. 1874
Edgar Degas, French, 1834-1917
Auguste Blaizot
Frazier-Soye
La Famille Cardinal, 1938
Book with portrait of the author and thirty-three illustrations in soft-ground etching after monotypes in black and color
Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2003.32



This deluxe edition of *La Famille Cardinal* appeared after the deaths of both Halévy and Degas and is the only volume in which Degas's illustrations for the Cardinal stories appear. Visitors may view each of the illustrations in the book on the monitors in the center of the gallery.

After the 1918 sale of prints from the artist's estate, a portfolio of Degas's original works for the Cardinal project appeared as a single lot that included thirty-five monotypes, thirty second impressions, and eleven drawings. The lot was withdrawn from that sale but was later purchased by Marcel Guérin, the publisher Auguste Blaizot, and the collector David David-Weil. In 1938 Guérin and Blaizot published thirty-four related images in a limited edition of Halévy's stories. Degas original images were transferred to copper plates and etched by a highly skilled "painter-engraver" (peintre-graveur), Maurice Potin. They were individually inked and printed in his atelier and in the atelier of Raymond Haasen, a master printer.

Edgar Degas, French, 1834-1917
Four Jockeys on Horseback, ca. 1885-1887
Pastel over charcoal on tracing paper mounted to cardboard
Bequest of George Pierce Metcalf 57.233



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Frits Thaulow, Norwegian, 1847-1906
The Main Square, Montreuil (La Grande Place, Montreuil), 1894
Oil on canvas
Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund and Museum Acquisition Fund
2004.36



Edgar Degas, French, 1834-1917
Jockey with Red Cap, ca. 1866-1868
Oil paint with solvent (peinture à l'essence) on paper, mounted to
cardboard, mounted to wood panel
Gift of Mrs. Murray S. Danforth 35.539



Edgar Degas, French, 1834-1917
Two Seated Women, ca. 1878
Pastel on blue laid paper (now faded)
Gift of the Museum Committee in Appreciation of John Maxon's
Directorship 59.111



Edgar Degas, French, 1834-1917
Two Jockeys, ca. 1880-1890
black and blue crayon on laid paper watermarked L. Berville
Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 21.249



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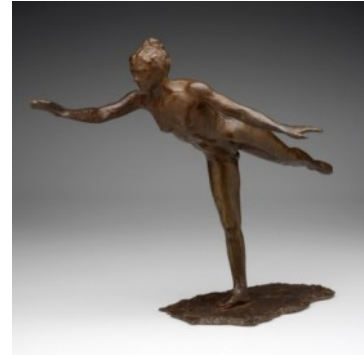
Edgar Degas, French, 1834-1917

A.A. Hebrard

Grand Arabesque, Second Time, ca. 1885-1890 (cast ca. 1919–1922)

Bronze

Gift of Stephen O. Metcalf, George Pierce Metcalf and Houghton P. Metcalf 23.315



Eugène Delacroix, French, 1798-1863

Turk Resting, Watched by his Horse, 1824

Graphite, watercolor, opaque watercolor, and pen and ink, with scraped highlights on wove paper

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 28.006



Albert Boulanger-Cavé's mother was deeply admired by Eugène Delacroix, who was said to have had romantic interest in the beautiful young painter. In 1838 she traveled with him to Belgium to study the paintings of Rubens. Although she married a government official after the death of her first husband, she kept Delacroix as a faithful friend. When she died in 1885, her son inherited her art collection, which included watercolors dedicated to her by Delacroix.

Cavé admired Delacroix's dignified comportment, and when a statue of the artist by Jules Dalou was installed on a pedestal in the Luxembourg Gardens, Cave complained that it forced viewers to look up into two giant nostrils: "he took such pride in his elegant appearance; he would have been horrified by this manner of representing him."

Edgar Degas, French, 1834-1917

Horse, ca. 1865

Graphite on tan colored wove paper

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 21.127



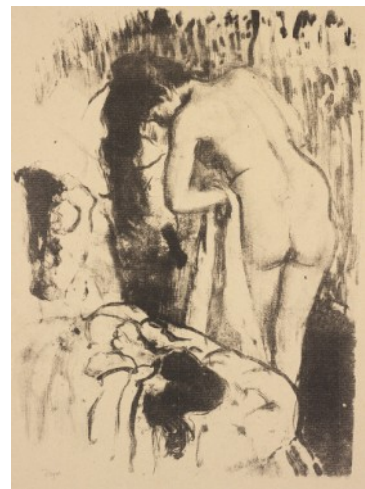
Walter Barnes, British, 1844-1911
The Halévy Family and their Friends, 1885
Gelatin silver print
Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2005.83.1

Degas exploited his interest in photography during the summer of 1885 by directing photographs taken by the British photographer, Barnes. In his humorous take on a painting by Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres that hung in the Louvre, Degas cast himself as the blind Homer, attended by three "muses" – the Lemoinne sisters – and two "choir boys" – Élie and Daniel Halévy. *The Apotheosis* was staged on the steps of Jacques-Émile Blanche's studio, as was a marvelous group photograph taken the same day.

In this animated view of the Halévy and Blanche households Degas, Sickert, Blanche, Cave and Louis Halévy are playfully engaged in the creation of their poses. Less amused are the three older women dressed in mourning. In fact, Mme Léon Halévy and her daughter Valentine had a strained relationship with their neighbor, Madame Émile Blanche, all seated on the bottom step.

Unlike the *Apotheosis* of Degas, which is an albumen print, this gelatin silver print appears to have been made around 1900, presumably from one of Barnes's original glass plate negatives.

Edgar Degas, French, 1834-1917
Standing Nude Woman, Dressing, 1890
Lithograph on wove paper
Anonymous gift 59.115



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Edgar Degas, French, 1834-1917
Before the Race, ca. 1885
Pastel, gouache, and graphite over charcoal on tracing paper
mounted to cardboard
Gift of Mrs. Murray S. Danforth 42.214



Edgar Degas, French, 1834-1917
Ballet Girl, ca. 1886-1888
Pastel on blue laid paper (now faded)
Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 23.038



Edgar Degas, French, 1834-1917
La Savoisienne, ca. 1860
Oil on canvas
Museum Appropriation Fund 23.072



JACQUES-ÉMILE BLANCHE

Jacques-Émile Blanche (1861-1942) was raised and educated in Paris and as a young boy was introduced to a sophisticated circle of musicians, artists, and writers. The precocious son of a prominent psychiatrist, he was sent to England for several months at the age of ten to escape the dangers of the Franco-Prussian War and the Paris Commune. It was in London that he first tasted independence and became a lifelong Anglophile, adopting British style in dress and speaking English with an oddly personal upper-class accent.

Throughout his life, Blanche vacationed with his family in Dieppe. In 1879, he convinced his parents to build him a studio near the beachfront. There, and in Châlet Bas-Fort Blanc, their spacious vacation home, the Blanche family welcomed a constant stream of friends during the summer months. In early September of 1885, Blanche graciously offered the use of his studio to Edgar Degas for the creation of *Six Friends at Dieppe*.

A talented pianist with a passion for Wagner, Blanche also developed a sophisticated appreciation of contemporary music and art. He arranged to have Renoir paint decorative panels for the family dining room in Dieppe, and his own impressive personal collection included numerous works by Manet, Cézanne, and Degas. During the course of his long career, Blanche became a successful portrait painter whose subjects reflected his own wide interests. He portrayed many of the outstanding personalities of his era, including writers Marcel Proust, James Joyce, and Virginia Woolf; sculptor August Rodin; dancer Vaslav Nijinsky; and composer Claude Debussy.

Jacques-Émile Blanche, French, 1861-1942

Portrait of Virginia Woolf, 1927

oil on canvas

Museum Works of Art Fund 54.178

Blanche was already an admirer of Virginia Woolf when he interviewed her at Auppegard, near Dieppe, in 1927. In August of that year he published a thoughtful review of Woolf's writings along with a translation of her story *Kew Gardens* in the French periodical *Les Nouvelles littéraires*. Blanche is credited for introducing Woolf to the French public.

This portrait, which Blanche based on a photograph, was a gift from the artist to Woolf. It appeared as the frontispiece illustration in *More Portraits of a Lifetime*, the second volume of Blanche's memoir about his many English friends and acquaintances. Woolf's Hogarth Press published the volumes in the 1930s.



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Henri Gervex, French, 1852-1929

The Coal Porter (sketch for Mairie, 19th arrondissement, Paris), ca. 1882

Charcoal and white chalk on brown wove paper

Mary B. Jackson Fund 2005.36

Gervex's training under Alexandre Cabanel and Eugène Fromentin provided a strong academic underpinning for all his later work. His ability to draw the human form was skillfully employed throughout his career, as demonstrated by these three drawings. The sketch of a dockworker was a preliminary study for a mural commission and is related to his painting, *Quai de la Villette*, exhibited nearby. Its rough outlines contrast with the refined technique he uses to draw the back of a wounded soldier.

The drawing of a satyr was a study for one of Gervex's first official successes. That painting, *Satyr playing with a Bacchante*, won a second-class medal at the Salon of 1874 – a huge accomplishment for a twenty-two year old artist. Purchased by the French government, it was exhibited at its gallery of contemporary art in Paris and later transferred to the Museum of Montlucon.

Edgar Degas, French, 1834-1917

On Stage III, 1876-1877

Soft-ground etching, drypoint, and roulette on cream-colored, slightly textured laid paper

Gift of the Fazzano Brothers 84.198.1083

