

French Drawings in the Time of Degas, August 19, 2005-January 22, 2006

This selection of 19th-century French drawings complements the exhibition *Edgar Degas: Six Friends at Dieppe*. Although that show focuses on one exceptional pastel portrait, it also highlights the Museum's rich holding of other of Degas's works and points to the strong 19th-century French drawing collection as a whole.

Degas (1834-1917) was an outspoken advocate for the independent presentation of contemporary art based on modern life. He helped to organize what became known as the first Impressionist exhibition in 1874 and planned many of the seven shows that followed (the last of the series occurred in 1886). The artists involved did not wish to define themselves as a specific school or style, but Degas's suggestion of "independents, realists, and impressionists" probably came closest to describing the many new directions in French art beyond the academic tradition of the official Salons. Degas considered himself a realist.

In his role as a major participant in the Impressionist exhibitions, as an artist who was highly regarded by those who understood advanced art, and as an engaged collector, Degas had many opportunities to study the creations of his contemporaries. His interest in the artists whose work is on view here reflected his lifelong passion for drawing and his constant desire to reexamine and refine his own methods and results.

This exhibition is dedicated to Eliza G. [Metcalf] Radeke and her niece, Helen Metcalf Danforth, the donors of the majority of works on display here and of most of the Degas drawings on view in the Granoff Galleries. These remarkable women were not only benefactors, but also the presidents of RISD's Board of Trustees (1913-31 and 1931-47, respectively). Both contributed to many areas of the institution and to the Museum's collection, but French drawings were their passion.

The Museum is grateful for the assistance of Mario Pereira (graduate student in the Department of History of Art and Architecture, Brown University) in organizing this exhibition.

CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, French, 1864-1901

Skating Professional Beauty (Edouard Dujardin and Liane de Lancy at the Palais de Glace), 1896

Blue and black crayon, ink, and opaque watercolor on light brown paper

Gift of Mrs. Murray S. Danforth 35.541

Toulouse-Lautrec was greatly inspired by the work of Degas; however, while Degas admired Lautrec's drawing abilities, he felt that Lautrec's work was too dependent upon his own. Today, one appreciates Lautrec's unique perspective on contemporary Parisian entertainment and how distinctly different his spontaneous approach to drawing was from Degas's studied process.



Paul Cézanne, French, 1839-1906

The Card Player, ca. 1890-1892

Graphite and watercolor on wove paper

Gift of Mrs. Murray S. Danforth 42.211

Cézanne and Degas had met by the late 1860s in Paris at the Café Guerbois, where they engaged in lively, if sometimes antagonistic, discussions. They both worked outside mainstream Impressionism, and they were among the most knowledgeable about art history and the most well read of their artists' group. More so than most of their colleagues, they gave prominence to drawing: life drawing, copying, and studies for paintings. This drawing, after a figure in Cézanne's painting *The Card Players*, ca. 1890-92 (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York), was made in preparation for another version of the subject. As a modern portrait, it would have had particular appeal for Degas.



Their mutual regard was long-standing. Degas acquired one of the first collections of Cézanne's work, most of it just after the first Cézanne retrospective exhibition, organized by Ambroise Vollard in 1895. At this very time, Cézanne was copying a work by Degas.

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Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot, French, 1796-1875

Landscape with Nymph, ca. 1856

Charcoal on wove paper

Gift of Mrs. Murray S. Danforth 41.003

Degas profoundly admired Corot's figure studies and landscapes, although he primarily collected the latter. He loved Corot's early paintings, which had a hard-edge clarity quite different from the softer, more atmospheric style of this drawing, typical of Corot's work of the 1850s.



Thomas Couture, French, 1815-1879

Head of a Bishop, ca. 1856

Chalk on paper

Gift in memory of Helen Metcalf Danforth by her niece and goddaughter Esther Elise Metcalf Mauran 85.088



Henri Fantin-Latour, French, 1836-1904

Rinaldo, ca. 1877-78

Black lithographic crayon with scraping

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 29.284

Fantin-Latour met Degas shortly after Degas's return to Paris from Italy in 1859, and they became lifelong friends and colleagues. Fantin-Latour was among the artists and writers who congregated for lively debates at the Café Guerbois.



Fantin-Latour was drawn to the idea of capturing musical themes in visual terms. *Rinaldo* was inspired by an 1868 Brahms cantata for male chorus and orchestra whose text was derived from Goethe's translation of Tasso's epic poem of 1581 about the First Crusade,

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Gerusalemme liberata (Jerusalem Liberated). In RISD's drawing, the fictional Christian knight Rinaldo renounces the Saracen sorceress Armida and leaves her enchanted island to rejoin his troops.

Jean-Léon Gérôme, French, 1824-1904

Study for Moorish Bath, ca. 1874

Black chalk on wove paper

Museum purchase: Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Barnet Fain, Mrs. Frank Mauran, Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Morris, Jr., Mrs. Alfred Morris, Sr., and the Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 1987.007

Gérôme, one of the most prominent academic painters of the late 19th century, drew and painted from the nude model throughout his career. This highly refined work is a study for the exquisitely rendered figure in RISD's painting by Gérôme: *Moorish Bath*, ca. 1874-77, installed in the gallery above this one on the 5th floor.



Léon-Augustin Lhermitte, French, 1844-1925

Path in the Grain Field, ca. 1890

Pastel on paper

Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 1996.3

In 1879, Degas suggested that Lhermitte be invited to exhibit at the fourth Impressionist exhibition, by which time Lhermitte had established himself as a painter of contemporary rural life. If Lhermitte did in fact receive an invitation, he declined to participate.

Lhermitte's use of pastel was more conventional than that of Degas. As seen in this work, his drawing was tighter and more detailed and his use of color less complex.



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Jean-François Millet, French, 1814-1875
Returning from Market, early 1850s
Charcoal and black chalk on laid paper
Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 22.097

Millet was a member of the group of painters who worked from nature in and around the village of Barbizon, some 25 miles southwest of Paris on the edge of the forest of Fontainebleau. They developed a new, naturalistic style of landscape painting in the 1830s and 1840s. These works were admired by collectors of the time, but Degas did not share this enthusiasm and collected only Millet's figure studies.



Camille Pissarro, French, 1830-1903
Woman with a Wheelbarrow, ca. 1882
Pastel over drypoint on paper
Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 23.037

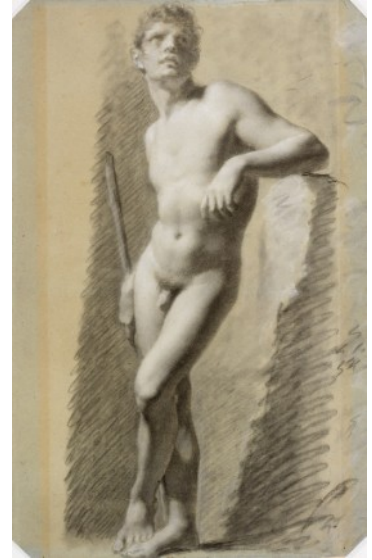
Among the most complex prints in Degas's collection were those by Pissarro and Mary Cassatt, whose accomplishments owed much to their association with Degas. Both were Degas's main collaborators in a failed 1879 venture to produce a journal of prints to be called *Le Jour et la nuit (Day and Night)*. If you look carefully, you will see that the color on this work was applied over a print. When the printing plate became flawed, the artist used a print from it as a starting point for a new work. Likely this idea came from Degas, who had regularly created new compositions using prints in this way. For example, see Degas's *Dancer with a Bouquet* in the exhibition *Six Friends at Dieppe* (Granoff Galleries, 5th floor). Even Pissarro's use of pastel was inspired by his close working relationship with Degas.



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Pierre-Paul Prud'hon, French, 1758-1823
Study of a Nude Youth, ca. 1800-1817
Black and white chalks on blue laid paper
Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 29.083

Throughout his life, Prud'hon made studies from a live model as private exercises unrelated to other work. He kept these in his studio and occasionally gave them to friends



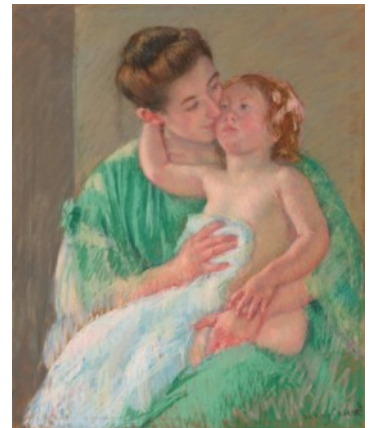
Odilon Redon, French, 1840-1916
Head of the Virgin, after 1900
Oil paint and metallic paint with scraping on wove paper
Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 28.112

Although Redon's dreamlike imagery was far removed from Degas's subjects drawn from contemporary life, Redon held a profound regard for Degas's work. "Degas would have the right to have his name inscribed high on the temple. Respect here, absolute respect," wrote Redon in his journal in 1889 (Odilon Redon, *A Soi-meme: journal (1867-1915)*. Paris: 1992, p. 93).



Mary Cassatt, American, 1844-1926
Antoinette's Caress, ca. 1906
Pastel on wove paper mounted to fabric
Gift of Mrs. Houghton P. Metcalf, Sr. 82.115

Degas and Cassatt had met by 1877 (if not sooner), when he invited her to exhibit in the fourth Impressionist exhibition, held in 1879. In 1879-80, they worked together in Degas's studio, where he introduced her to a variety of innovative print techniques. Many of these were employed in works she showed at the fifth Impressionist exhibition in 1880. At the same time, Degas made prints of Cassatt at the Louvre and a major pastel of her. Cassatt's luminous use of pastel,



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particularly the diagonal strokes of contrasting warm and cool colors seen here, also owed a debt to Degas. The two held great admiration for each other's work throughout their lives. Cassatt was instrumental in making Degas's work known among American collectors, and Degas acquired nearly 100 of her prints, a painting, and several pastels.

Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, French, 1864-1901

At the Circus: Bareback, 1899

Crayon, ink and pastel on wove paper

Gift of Mrs. Murray S. Danforth 34.003



Jean-Louis-André-Théodore Géricault, French, 1791-1824

The Organ Grinder, ca. 1820

Pen and ink over graphite on laid paper

Gift of the Estate of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 31.239

Géricault's representations of contemporary experience, drawn largely from direct observation, emphasized the human element. This drawing probably dates from Géricault's trip to London, where he spent his days sketching his impressions of street life with incisive realism. He was interested, paradoxically, both in street derelicts and in the modern and fashionable aspects of an industrialized London.



Degas owned a small group of equestrian lithographs by Géricault that influenced his early study of racehorses and racing scenes. Degas drew repeatedly after Géricault's equestrian images in preparation for his own pictures of racetracks. Several of Degas's racing subjects are on view in the exhibition *Six Friends at Dieppe* on the 5th floor, Granoff Galleries.

Théodore Chassériau, French, 1819-1856
Portrait of Léopold Burthe, 1846
Graphite on wove paper
Gift of Mrs. Murray S. Danforth 38.145

Degas became familiar with Chassériau's work through Gustave Moreau (1826-98), who had been Chassériau's student. Moreau became a mentor to Degas in 1858 while they were in Italy and introduced him to many artists, both contemporary French and historical figures.

Chassériau had been a pupil of Degas's idol Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780-1867), but Chassériau's study with Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863) led to the looser, more expressive style of drawing seen here. Excellent examples of the drawings of Delacroix, Ingres, and Moreau from RISD's collection are on view upstairs in the Six Friends at Dieppe exhibition.



Hippolyte-Jean Flandrin, French, 1809-1864
Religieuse, 1837
Graphite and opaque watercolor on wove paper mounted to board
Museum Membership Fund 67.023

Around 1855, Degas's teacher was Louis Lamothe (1822-69), a student of Flandrin, who himself had been Ingres's prized student. Degas became an Ingres devotee through this heritage, and he copied Flandrin's work.



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Édouard Manet, French, 1832-1883

Mlle. Victorine in the Costume of an Espada (Victorine Meurent), 1862

Graphite, pen and ink, watercolor on tracing paper; incised for transfer

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 21.483

Manet and Degas purportedly met in the Louvre Museum, Paris, while both were copying the same painting by Diego Velázquez. Although Manet and Degas shared an interest in studying the Old Masters and in the portrayal of contemporary life, Manet was the artist with whom Degas developed the most overtly competitive relationship. In a conversation with the English painter Walter Sickert (one of the figures in Degas's group portrait *Six Friends at Dieppe*), Degas lamented, "Everything [Manet] does he always hits off straight away, while I take endless pains and never get it right" (Walter Sickert, "Degas," *Burlington Magazine*, vol. 31, no.176 [November 1917], pp. 97-98). Degas owned 8 paintings, 14 drawings, and 69 prints by Manet, while Manet's inventory at his death did not include a single work by Degas.

This watercolor is an intermediary work in preparation for an etching Manet made after his own painting *Mlle. V. in the Costume of an Espada*. Lines incised into the sheet indicate how he transferred its image to the etching plate.



Berthe Morisot, French, 1841-1895

Study of Mother and a Child, 1800s

Graphite on wove paper

Gift of the Bayard and Harriet K. Ewing Collection 76.156

Although her gender and elevated social class excluded her from attending art school and from participating in the café culture of Paris, Morisot became an informal pupil of Camille Corot and a member of the Impressionist group, exhibiting in seven of their eight exhibitions. In the late 1860s, Henri Fantin-Latour introduced her to Édouard Manet, with whom she established a close personal and professional relationship (see Manet's remarkable portrait of her in the Museum's 19th-century galleries on the 5th floor). At this time, she also became friendly with Degas. Artists such as he, Renoir, and Mary Cassatt would often gather at her home.

Morisot is best known for the play of light across her scenes of bourgeois domesticity. The RISD drawing features her typical theme of a stylish mother with her daughter, adeptly captured during a fleeting moment.



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Eugène Carrière, French, 1849-1906
Landscape in the Orne, ca. 1901
Oil on prepared paper mounted on canvas
Museum Membership Fund 67.025

Although Degas seems to have been unmoved by Symbolist art, he respected the work of Carrière. An important figure in the Symbolist movement, Carrière's ethereal images are pervaded by a poetic naturalism and dreamlike stillness.

This sheet belongs to a small group of landscapes that Carrière made towards the end of his career. With a soft and almost misty focus, Carrière transformed reality into a quasi-abstract two-dimensional system of broad planes differentiated by changes in the density of the striated brushstrokes. Perhaps it was this painterly application of medium, reminiscent of Degas's monotypes, that attracted Degas to Carrière's work in general.



Mary Cassatt, American, 1844-1926
Mother Pulling on Baby's Stocking, ca. 1890
Graphite on wove paper
Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 21.132



Maurice Chabas, French, 1867-1947
Illustration to Baudelaire, ca. 1900
Red conté crayon on paper
Anonymous gift 82.032



Gustave Doré, French, 1832-1883

Tavern in Whitechapel, 1870

Watercolor and opaque watercolor on wove paper

Gift of Mrs. Herbert N. Straus 51.082

Although Doré's dark-toned art had only minor significance for Degas, Doré's representations of familiar urban subjects resembled and even anticipated Degas's own versions. Doré depicted contemporary life with biting realism, and his greatest achievement was his collaboration with the English journalist Blanchard Jerrold on *London: A Pilgrimage* (1872), to which *Tavern in Whitechapel* is related. In these vignettes, Doré recorded the details of London's broad social panorama, emphasizing the contrast between rich and poor. With his deft use of gouache and ink, he registered an agonizing vision of a dense crowd in a claustrophobic space. Images like *Tavern in Whitechapel* epitomize some of the horrors of 19th-century urban life with a piercing intensity foreign to many Impressionist artists.



Théophile Alexandre Steinlen, French, b. Switzerland, 1859-1923

Géomay, 1889

Watercolor, gouache, crayon, and graphite with pen and ink inscriptions

Museum Membership Fund 70.104

This sheet illustrates lyrics written by Steinlen's friend, the singer and songwriter Aristide Bruant (1851-1925). The topic is the execution of Fulges-Benjamin Géomay, a young French army corporal, at the Place de la Roquette on May 23, 1889, for the murder of a widowed wine seller. In his confession, Géomay claimed that he committed the murder because he needed money to support his mistress, a Montmartre prostitute and washerwoman. His case became a public sensation, and many Parisians attended the execution. Steinlen's drawing indicates his well-known sympathy for the poor and his practice of chronicling humanitarian concerns. The artwork is thought to have been reproduced as sheet music to be sold in Bruant's cafe, although no printed examples have been found.



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Honoré Daumier, French, 1808-1879

Collectors at the Salle Drouot, ca. early 1860s

Pen and ink, brush and wash, with touches of black chalk on laid paper

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 22.268A

Degas ranked Daumier as one of the three great draftsmen of the 19th century. Daumier's depictions of modern subjects were an important influence on Degas's own choice of scenes of urban entertainment, such as art exhibitions. More than most artists of the period, Degas shared and appreciated Daumier's deep interest in physiognomic expression.

Degas owned about 750 lithographs by Daumier, but only 5 drawings, including this sheet, which was first shown at the retrospective exhibition of Daumier's works in 1878. Perhaps Degas saw something of himself among the group of collectors depicted here.



Paul Gauguin, French, 1848-1903

Studies of Heads and Hands, ca. 1884-1885

Black chalk and ink on gray-pink paper

Gift of Mr. Robert G. Berry 72.170

Gauguin and Degas met through their mutual friend Camille Pissarro around 1879. Fifteen years his junior, Gauguin had a strong admiration for Degas's abilities. Gauguin collected as much of Degas' work as he could afford, valuing its presence so much as to take it to Tahiti when he traveled there. Conversely, Degas took a fatherly interest in the struggling Gauguin and purchased many of his woodcuts and paintings at sales held to finance his trips. Degas also used his professional influence to arrange for exhibitions of Gauguin's work upon his return.



This tentative sketchbook sheet, created around the time of Degas's *Six Friends at Dieppe* (Gauguin, in fact, saw Degas in Dieppe in September of 1885), likely portrays Gauguin's children and comes from the collection of his son, Pola.

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James Tissot, French, 1836-1902

Croquet, ca. 1878

Watercolor and opaque watercolor over touches of graphite on wove paper

Anonymous gift 61.077

Tissot and Degas became acquainted in the early 1860s and maintained a close friendship for about fifteen years. These well-educated gentlemen also shared a passion for Japanese prints (they were among the earliest collectors in France) and the depiction of modern life. The large areas of relatively flat color against which the figures are silhouetted placed is a device Tissot likely borrowed from Japanese prints. (See the related exhibition on the 6th floor, Japonisme: Japanese Prints and Their Influence in 19th-Century France.)

