Sculptures
Degas

CATALOGUE RAISONNEE OF THE BRONZES

Edited by
Joseph S. Czestochowski and Anne Pingeot

C ONTRIBUTED by three of the greatest living sculptors—Edgar Degas, Richard Serra, and Anish Kapoor—Degas: Sculptures, published only six months after Degas’s death in 1917, marked the avant-garde’s and the conservative and conventional taste. Following the artist’s death in 1917, three bronze casts were created from the molds made of Degas’s sculpture and presented to the public. The work on a mixed media, labeled “original” by the conservative and “experimentally creative” by the avant-garde. Following the artist’s death in 1917, three bronze casts were created from the molds made by the foundry to be presented to the public. The work on a mixed media, labeled “original” by the conservative and “experimentally creative” by the avant-garde.

Degas: Sculptures, which work has long been admired by connoisseurs and scholars alike, is considered a masterpiece of the genre. Much of the controversy is the result of the avant-garde’s disdain for the artist’s work, which was disregarded by the public. The catalogue raisonné of the works is a significant contribution to the field of art history and a valuable resource for scholars and enthusiasts alike.

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Degas Sculptures

Catalogue Raisonné of the Bronzes

Joseph S. Czestochowski and Anne Pingeot

Essays by
Daphne Barbour
Arthur Beale
Sara Campbell
Ann Dumas
Martine Kahane
Luiz Marquis
Charles Millard
Theodore Reff
Shelley Sturman

The Torch Press Distributed by International Arts

Paris, Musée d'Orsay Photo Jean Paul Pinon
Foreword

In 1956, five years before I became affiliated with our National Gallery of Art in Washington, my good friend and later museum chairman and principal donor, Paul Mellon, was captivated by an exhibition in Richmond at the state museum of his adopted and much-loved home state of Virginia. The exhibition was organized by the innovative museum educator Muriel B. Christison at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, and consisted of a series of wax and mixed-media sculptures, together with small bronzes, by one of the century’s most important artists—who was also a personal favorite of Paul Mellon’s—Edgar Degas. Then recently discovered in the Paris basement of the Hébrard Foundry, after having been presumed lost for almost forty years, these sculptures had just been exhibited in New York at the M. Knoedler & Co. gallery. In Richmond’s Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, works were displayed for the first time, the original wax and mixed-media sculptures juxtaposed with the same subjects in bronze. This 1956 Virginia exhibition was the first such attempt to explore the intriguing differences.

The only other time this juxtaposition has occurred was in the National Gallery’s Degas at the Races exhibition shortly before Mr. Mellon’s death. That was made possible by his having given his collection of waxes and bronzes to the gallery. But until the very end of his life, he cherished the waxes so much that he insisted on keeping them at his farm at Oak Spring. Many are the times that I tried to borrow some for the museum, but he felt that they were too delicate, and would move again only once more, to their eventual place in the National Gallery of Art.

Perhaps in addition to the aesthetic appeal of these sculptures, Paul Mellon was drawn by their educational value. These waxes were after all the originals, the objects that bore the artist’s immediate touch, and yet the bronzes were also very beautiful, if not more so. Even in the late 1910s, Degas’s heirs could not bear the thought of destroying the wax models by traditional bronze-casting methods, and succeeded in finding a way to preserve these singular works. So taken was he by them that Paul Mellon bought the whole collection en bloc.

The Mellon purchase became the catalyst for greatly expanded scholarship about Degas and his sculpture. Public perception of Degas as a sculptor was heightened and deepened by knowledge of the bronze casts copied from Paul Mellon’s original models. With this renewed critical attention we are also learning more about the very mysterious history of these sculptures. Through Paul Mellon’s intercession, the wax and mixed-media sculptures have been preserved—itself a challenging task—and today are considered among the most innovative works of our century. At the same time, the serialized casts also attracted widening public attention by virtue of their appealing subjects or simply the cachet of the name Degas; but the process was very slow, and limited to a slowly expanding public. Today only four complete sets of the bronzes exist—in museums in Paris, New York, Copenhagen, and São Paulo. The São Paulo set exhibited in the 1930s is the set available to us today.

The current exhibition will further our knowledge by bringing together in this catalogue the work of several distinguished writers. I am delighted that this show, realized through the brilliant entrepreneurship of Joseph S. Czestochowski, will offer many, in several cities, an opportunity to come to know and enjoy these wonderful images, and perhaps to love them as I do.

J. Carter Brown
Director Emeritus, National Gallery of Art

Edgar Degas, Dancer, Fourth Position Front, on Left Leg, brown wax, Weight: 2.16 kg; Musée d’Orsay, Paris, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon, 1956, RF 2770, photograph J. Schormans
Little Dancer, Aged Fourteen
or Ballet Dancer, Dressed

Alternate Title: Petite danseuse de quatorze ans

References: Hébrard 73; Pingeot 73; Rewald 20

Editioned Cast: 98 × 31.2 × 24.5 cm; 27.75 kg

Modèle Cast: 96.5 cm; NS, Pasadena, purchase 1977

Model Original: yellow wax, hair, ribbon, linen bodice, satin shoes, muslin tutu, wood base; 99.2 × 34.7 × 21.1 cm; NGA, Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon, bequest, 1999.80.28

Model Date: Millard 1878–1881; NGA 1879–1881

Inscriptions: Degas: cire/perdue/A. HÉBRARD

Public Census Edition Casts:

A. MMA, bequest of Mrs. H. O. Havemeyer, 1929.100.370 (Mrs. H. O. Havemeyer, New York, 11 Oct. 1921)

B. (Halvorsen) New York, Durand-Ruel 1951; Mr. and Mrs. William Goetz; New York, Christie’s, 14 Nov. 1988:17; New York, Sotheby’s, 11 Nov. 1999.110

C. FOG, bequest of Grenville L. Winthrop, 1943.11.28 (M. Clark, New York, 1924)

Stephen C. Clark; Scott and Fowles; Grenville L. Winthrop 1924

D. CLK, bequest of Robert Sterling Clark 1951.45 (M. Clark, Paris)


Nathan and Marion Smooke; New York, Phillips, 3 Nov. 2001.67

F. DRM (Flechtheim, Dresden Museum, Oct. 1926) Dresden, Galerie Flechtheim, October 1926:73


J. (Mrs. James Watson Webb, New York, 14 Apr. 1931) Mr. and Mrs. James Watson Webb 1952; SMV sold New York, Sotheby’s, 12 Nov. 1996.12; Private Collection

K. Unlocated

L. Unlocated

M. SLAM, gift of Mrs. Mark C. Steinberg, inv. 133.1956 (1956); Paris, Henry Laügique 1956; New York, M. Knoedler & Co.

N. Unlocated

O. Unlocated
P. MO, RF 2137 (1930) OR 1931:73
Q. Unlocated
R. Unlocated
S. NCG (Galerie, 1920) CM 1939:73; Paris, Mme. Nelly Hébrard 1948; Copenhagen, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek 1948:20; Stockholm, Galerie Blanche 1948:20; Oslo, Nasjonalgalleriet 1948:20
T. Unlocated


Plaster NGA, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon, 1981.64.62 (1922?) (99.1 x 38.1 x 31.6 cm) M. Knoedler & Co.; John Rewald 1968; Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon

AP Unlocated

OTHER Unlettered:

(1930) Paul Rosenberg; Paine family; Fairhaven, Elizabeth Paine; New York, Private Collection 2000

(1930) Marie Harriman Gallery; Averill Harriman; Pamela Churchill Harriman 1988; New York, Wildenstein & Co.; Japan, Private Collection

MFAB, purchase (1938) Marie Harriman Gallery

SAIN (1938) London, Robert Sainsbury

BAMA, purchase 1943.1 (1939) Paris, Mlle Jeanne Fevre; Paris, André Weil; M. Knoedler & Co. 1943


Unidentified Casts: Modèle (recorded in Hébrard Archives before Madame Havemeyer 1921); Rome 1923; Paris, Petit 1924:230; Prague 1926:73; London, Abdy 1930:73