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Press Release

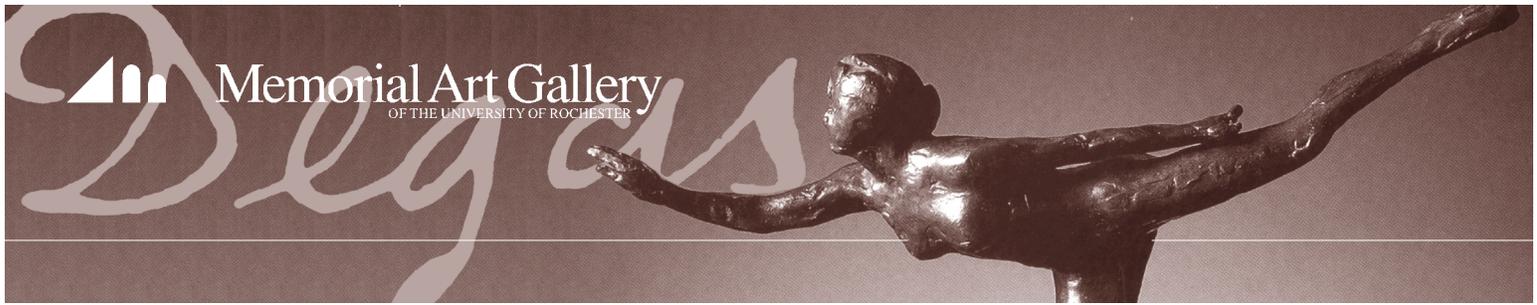
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October 3, 2001

EXHIBITION FACT SHEET

- Title:** Edgar Degas: Figures in Motion
- When:** October 12, 2002–January 5, 2003
- Significance:** This major exhibition of works by French Impressionist master Edgar Degas showcases the artist's celebrated bathers, horses and dancers, among them the beloved sculpture *The Little Dancer, Aged Fourteen*. Rochester is the only East Coast venue for the nationally touring show, which is the first major Degas exhibition ever in western New York.
- Contents:** The show is in two parts. *Degas in Bronze*, organized by International Arts, Memphis, TN, comprises 73 sculptures—one of only four complete sets in existence. The second part, organized by the Memorial Art Gallery, includes a dozen works on loan from private and public collections including the Metropolitan Museum, the Detroit Institute of Arts and the Denver Art Museum, as well as pastels and prints from the Gallery's collection.
- Presenting sponsor:** M&T Bank
- Supporting sponsor:** Verizon Wireless
- Tour schedule:** The exhibition's national tour includes the Denver Art Museum, the San Diego Museum of Art and another major museum to be announced.
- Catalogue:** A full-color catalogue of the exhibition will include images of all 73 bronzes, essays by noted authorities and an introduction by J. Carter Brown, director emeritus of the National Gallery of Art.
- Organizer:** Joseph Czestochowski, International Arts, Memphis, TN
- Information:** Public relations office (716) 473-7720
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- Images:** Images for publication are available for download at
<http://mag.rochester.edu/MAG/PR/download.htm> (username: MAG; password: NEWS)

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MAJOR DEGAS EXHIBITION TO OPEN IN ROCHESTER IN 2002 M&T Bank Will Sponsor Show at Memorial Art Gallery

ROCHESTER, NY — A major exhibition of works by French Impressionist master Edgar Degas will open at the Memorial Art Gallery on October 12, 2002, director Grant Holcomb announced today. *Edgar Degas: Figures in Motion* will showcase the artist's celebrated bathers, horses and dancers, among them the beloved sculpture *The Little Dancer, Aged Fourteen*. The show comprises 73 bronzes, as well as a dozen of the artist's paintings, pastels and prints. Rochester is the only East Coast venue for the nationally touring show, which is the first major Degas exhibition ever in western New York.

The exhibition is in two parts. *Degas in Bronze*, organized by International Arts, Memphis, TN, showcases one of only four complete sets of the artist's bronzes in existence. The second part, organized by the Memorial Art Gallery, includes paintings, pastels, prints and photographs from the Gallery's collection and the collections of such lenders as the Metropolitan Museum, the Detroit Institute, the Denver Art Museum and the George Eastman House.

"Emboldened by the success of last year's Maxfield Parrish exhibition, the Memorial Art Gallery is delighted to offer Rochester the work of one of the true masters of modern art," says Holcomb. "The selection of the Gallery as one of the show's venues is particularly noteworthy in view of the fierce competition for high-profile exhibitions."

Like Parrish, the Degas exhibition presents an opportunity for MAG to collaborate with other area cultural institutions. A community-wide celebration, already in the planning stages, will include collaborative events with the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra, the Rochester City Ballet, George Eastman House and Writers & Books.

The exhibition will remain on view through January 5, 2003.

Sponsors

Major funding is being provided by presenting sponsor M&T Bank. This grant is the largest corporate gift in Gallery history in support of an exhibition. "*Edgar Degas: Figures in Motion* is a major cultural attraction that will draw tens of thousands of visitors to Rochester from across western New York and beyond, many of whom will be first-time patrons of the Memorial Art Gallery. At M&T Bank, we see this as a rare opportunity to showcase world-renowned works of art—and to showcase Rochester's rich quality of life," says Brian E. Hickey, president of M&T's Rochester division.

Additional major support is being provided by Verizon Wireless. "Involvement in the community is more than just a corporate responsibility to Verizon Wireless—it's part of our company's core culture," says regional president Tracy Nolan. "We're excited to help make the Degas exhibition possible."

more...

Hours and admission

The Gallery will announce ticket prices, ticketing procedures and extended exhibition hours in spring 2002.

Tour schedule

The exhibition will have a national tour that includes the Denver Art Museum, the San Diego Museum of Art and another major museum to be announced.

Catalogue

A full-color catalogue of the exhibition will include images of all 73 bronzes, essays by noted authorities and an introduction by J. Carter Brown, director emeritus of the National Gallery of Art.

Organizer

Degas in Bronze is organized and circulated by Joseph Czestochowski, International Arts, Memphis, TN.

About the artist

One of the greatest of French artists, Hilaire Germain Edgar Degas was born in Paris in 1834, son of a wealthy family of bankers. His early work reflected the academic tradition in which he had been trained, but by the 1870s he had emerged as a prominent member of the Impressionists, participating in all but one of this group's groundbreaking exhibitions.

Degas was a keen observer of the life around him and an acknowledged master at portraying the human figure in motion. Nowhere is this more apparent than in such favorite subjects as ballerinas and racehorses. Influenced by photography and Japanese prints, he also experimented with unusual angles and unconventional, off-balance compositions.

In his later years Degas became more and more preoccupied with color, texture and form, and his technique became broader and freer. As his eyesight began to fail, he stopped painting but continued to produce masterworks in other media, from vividly colored pastels to increasingly abstract sculpture.

Since his death in 1917, Degas's reputation has continued to grow. Today, the work of this well-loved artist is showcased in major museums around the world.

Presenting sponsor:



Supporting sponsor:



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GIFT FROM M&T BANK IS LARGEST IN MAG HISTORY IN SUPPORT OF AN EXHIBITION

Thanks to a major grant from M&T Bank, the Memorial Art Gallery will host western New York's first major exhibition of works by French Impressionist master Edgar Degas.



Degas: Figures in Motion, which opens in October 2002, showcases one of only four complete sets of the artist's late bronzes—73 in all—as well as a dozen paintings, pastels and prints. Included will be the artist's celebrated bathers, horses and dancers, among them the beloved sculpture *The Little Dancer*.

M&T's grant is the largest corporate gift in Gallery history in support of an exhibition. "Over the past few years, M&T has supported some of the most important cultural events in western New York," says MAG director Grant Holcomb. "Their immediate interest in this exhibition was critical to our decision to bring it to Rochester."



"*Degas: Figures in Motion* is a major cultural attraction that will draw tens of thousands of visitors from across Western New York and beyond, many of whom will be first-time patrons of the Memorial Art Gallery," says Brian E. Hickey, president of M&T's Rochester division. "We welcome this rare opportunity to showcase world-renowned works of art—and to showcase Rochester's rich quality of life."

It's not the first time that M&T has shown strong support for the arts in western New York. In 1999, the bank provided major funding for *Monet at Giverny*, which shattered attendance records at Buffalo's Albright-Knox Art Gallery.

At MAG, M&T has a long history of partnership. In 1994 the bank sponsored one of the most popular shows in Gallery history—*Child's Play: Contemporary Children's Book Illustration*.

1994 was also the year that M&T came on board as sponsor of the annual Clothesline Festival. This year, MAG and the bank celebrated an unprecedented eighth year as Clothesline partners. And that's good news for the Gallery, considering that Clothesline—MAG's biggest fund-raiser—accounts for some eight percent of the year's operating budget.

At Clothesline, M&T's presence is felt in more ways than one. "We always have volunteers working in the food tents," says Sara Cardillo, assistant vice president and community relations manager for the Rochester region. "We want to be part of the event, as participants as well as sponsors."



Memorial Art Gallery
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER



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VERIZON WIRELESS COMES ON BOARD

How does a growing telecommunications company demonstrate its commitment to the communities it serves—while underscoring its commitment to its own employees?



“Involvement in the community is more than a corporate responsibility to us—it’s part of our company’s core culture,” says Tracy Nolan, regional president of Verizon Wireless. “By supporting the Memorial Art Gallery, we can help bring major events like the Degas exhibition to Rochester and make an important contribution to our community’s quality of life.”



Quality of life is important to the community and also plays a major role in employee recruitment and retention, Nolan notes. “Our company is growing rapidly in Rochester. Promoting our community’s vibrant cultural atmosphere is as important to attracting good employees as promoting our schools, our economy and our other entertainment options. Verizon Wireless has actively supported our local sports teams and charitable organizations like the United Way. I wanted to lend our support to the arts as well.”

When the opportunity arose for Verizon Wireless to become a major sponsor of *Edgar Degas: Figures in Motion*, Nolan was eager to become involved. “The Memorial Art Gallery is such a valuable cultural institution and this exhibition is so unique, we couldn’t pass up the chance to get involved,” she says. “Rochesterians shouldn’t think they have to travel to Toronto or New York City to experience an exhibition as culturally significant as the Degas exhibition. We can bring it to them right here in Rochester. We’re excited to help make it possible.”

Verizon Wireless’s willingness to take a leadership role in the year’s most exciting exhibition is good news for the Gallery. “We are thrilled to have a New Economy business in this major sponsorship position,” says Peggy Hubbard, the Gallery’s director of development. “When we met with Tracy Nolan, we were energized by her personal commitment to supporting the arts in the Rochester area. She and Verizon Wireless understand that support of the arts is a key employee retention strategy that contributes to our area’s quality of life.”

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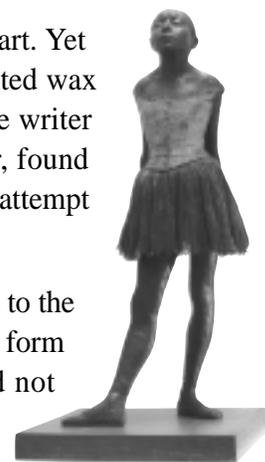
October 3, 2001

DEGAS IN BRONZE

“Who said anything about Rodin? Why, Degas is the greatest living sculptor.”

Pierre-Auguste Renoir, quoted by Ambroise Vollard, 1925

Edgar Degas’s *Little Dancer, Aged Fourteen* is today one of the icons of 19th-century art. Yet when first exhibited, at the 1881 Impressionist Exhibition, she created an uproar. A tinted wax figure clad in a real tulle tutu, satin ribbon and wig, she struck many as grotesque. One writer felt that she belonged in a museum of zoology, not a museum of art. Others, however, found much to admire. Art critic Joris-Karl Huysmans considered her “the only truly modern attempt that I know of in sculpture.”



Although Degas would live another 36 years, he would never again exhibit his sculptures to the public. But as the testimony of his contemporaries makes clear, his fascination with the form continued. Exploiting his reputation as a misogynist, Degas kept away those he did not wish to see, while inviting a considerable number of friends and fellow artists into his studio to see his latest experiments.

Degas as sculptor

Degas first began sculpting in the late 1860s, and as his eyesight began to weaken in the 1870s he turned to the medium more and more. His subjects were the same as those of his two-dimensional works—dancers, horses and women washing.



Molded in soft wax and supported by cork, wood or metal armatures, the sculptures were extremely fragile. Many crumbled during the artist’s lifetime, and he often reworked them. Although they were largely intended as studies, some works, such as *The Tub* (shown at left), are quite elaborate.

Though he never commissioned bronze casts of any of his sculptures, Degas did have plaster models made of three of them, a possible preliminary step. It was not until after his death, however, that casts were made, and then by authorization of his heirs: In 1919, the caster Adrien A. Hébrard received permission to produce 22 sets of bronzes from 73 wax sculptures. Of these, scholars can today account for about 1,300 individual sculptures, including only four complete sets.

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The mark of the artist

Rare is the artist who casts his own works in bronze. In the case of Degas, the works could not have been created without the involvement of A. A. Hébrard's master artisan, Albino Palazzolo.

Palazzolo relied on the time-honored method known as *cire-perdue* (lost wax). This complex process requires as a first step a wax mold, or "waster," which will be melted out, or lost.

Following Hébrard's usual practice, Palazzolo did not use Degas's original sculptures as "wasters." Instead, he coated each original with flexible, cold-set gelatin, which was then removed and used as the mold for a wax duplicate. It was this duplicate that melted away in the casting process and was eventually replaced by molten bronze.

Degas's original waxes have survived, and careful comparison with the bronzes does show some inevitable differences. There has been some shrinkage, and traces of clay and gelatin occasionally built up on the originals as successive molds were made.

Yet the bronzes clearly bear the mark of the artist, and Degas's contemporaries were lavish in their praise of Palazzolo's efforts. "I must tell you how much I enjoyed the exhibition of Degas's sculpture," wrote artist Mary Cassatt to Hébrard. "It is very rare in the history of art that an artist has equal talent for painting and sculpture.... All artists and collectors are indebted to you for the admirable work you have done in reproducing so perfectly these fragile works in bronze."

Thanks in large part to this legacy in bronze, Degas's reputation as a sculptor is today secure. In his definitive *History of Modern Art*, H. H. Arnason writes: "Degas was unquestionably the greatest of the late 19th-century painter sculptors.... The posthumous bronze casts retain the feeling of the original wax material, built up, layer by layer, to a surface in which every fragment of wax is articulated."

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EDGAR DEGAS: AN INTRODUCTION

by Virginia Spate



Edgar Degas was born in Paris in 1834. His was a rich and cultivated upper-middle-class family that shared the attitudes of its class: a secure sense of position, belief in controlled, well-bred behavior and an unquestioning acceptance of the good life of the Parisian social élite. Early in his career, however, Degas came to accept the fundamental principles of Realism: truth to the visible world, combined with an understanding that such truth was shaped by personal experience. This meant that he would see the world with his own eyes, not the eyes of others. It also meant that he would paint the world he knew: modern life in

Paris, as experienced by someone of his class. He painted portraits of his well-to-do family and friends, as well as scenes of their work and recreation, but his privileged status also gave him access to lower-class life: to the backstage world of ballet dancers, to the hidden, claustrophobic spaces of the brothel, and to the vulgar attractions of café-concerts. He depicted such subjects with a curious detachment, refusing any moral judgment, but using his art to reveal the “modern beauty” that they contained.

Realism required the artist to look at human beings as if they were objects, and, in this sense, it was an ideal form of art for Degas. Perhaps because of the death of his mother when he was just 13 years old, Degas found relations with others difficult. He expressed this best in a 1890 letter to an old friend, Evariste de Valernes, in which he apologized for having often been brutal in their discussions on art:

I was or I seemed hard with everyone by a sort of impulse towards brutality which came to me from my doubts and my ill-temper. I felt myself so badly formed, so badly equipped, so soft, while it seemed to me that my ideas on art were so true. I sulked against everyone and against myself.

Degas had a malicious wit; he was touchy, obstinate and often prejudiced. But he also inspired lifelong friendships. He never married, and has been accused of being a misogynist, although, again, he had long friendships with women. Relatively few of his paintings contain both men and women, and they tend to be isolated from one another, or even antagonistic. Except in paintings of parents and children, few of his figures touch or even look at one another in any intimate way. Most of his works represent women— usually working-class women. He would obsessively repeat the same pose as if somehow trying to possess it. But perhaps it was his detachment from others that gave his depiction of women a certain dignity, however degraded their existence, and however ungainly the poses that he depicted. He did not, like Renoir, mold

them into the desirable shapes of erotic fantasy, but showed them as plain, even ugly, active beings. His paintings thus invite the spectator to see these women as individuals.

The 1850s and 1860s: From the Classical to the Contemporary

Degas first studied drawing when he attended a prestigious school in Paris. When he left, he continued to draw and to copy works in the Louvre. In 1855, he visited the revered classicist painter Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780–1867), who advised him to, “Make copies, young man, many copies, and you will become a good artist.” Ingres would have meant copies of classical sculpture, and of works by artists who followed the classical tradition. Degas did indeed “make copies,” but his art was to be far from classical.

It was unusual for someone of Degas’s class to consider becoming an artist, but he was nonetheless encouraged by his father, who supported him financially. He could have developed a respectable career by following the traditional route of academic art; years of study in the *École des Beaux-Arts* (School of Fine Arts), where teaching was based on intensive study of the human figure—which students had to learn to idealize according to the example of the approved masters of the past. Such a training was directed to the creation of works of “high art,” the most important of which were paintings of religious and historical subjects intended to elevate the mind and the emotions through their beauty and subject matter. Academic theory did not value paintings of contemporary life, although there was a considerable market for them if they were sentimentalized or moralized. Portraiture was well regarded if the sitter were idealized. Success in the great annual exhibition—the Paris Salon—was crucial in such a career.

But Degas did not follow this course. After only a few months in the School of Fine Arts, he went to Italy, where he spent three years studying the Old Masters through sketches and copies. When he returned to France in 1859, he began painting formal portraits and history paintings as if planning a conventional career. Nevertheless, in the early 1860s he met with Édouard Manet (1832–83) and other young artists who were interested in painting modern subjects, and, by the second half of the decade, he seems to have decided to become a Realist painter of contemporary life. It is not known what made him take this decision, but his history paintings (for example, *The Spartan Girls Challenging the Boys*) reveal an almost unconscious attraction to visual truth that made it impossible for him to give them the idealization, harmony and “finish” that academic art required.

Painters had been painting contemporary life since the 1840s, but, fearing and despising the changes brought by modern capitalism, they usually depicted the timeless world of the peasant. However, from the late 1850s onwards, there was intense debate about a new kind of Realism that would express the characteristics of modern city life. It was believed that the city’s dynamism, its scale and its crowds had created a new form of consciousness: alienation and a detached but ceaseless fascination in all that the city offered. Novelists characterized the “modern body” as casual, informal, shaped by work. Degas began to depict such a body quite early. He almost certainly read Charles Baudelaire’s essay “The Painter of Modern Life” (1862), in which the writer called for a new style of painting to represent modern dynamism—a rapid, shorthand style whereby a broken line or patch of color could evoke the wholeness of the body. Degas was to paint many of the subjects that Baudelaire described as characteristically modern: horse-races; theater’s world of illusion; the world of fashionable women; and the demimonde of courtesans and prostitutes. Baudelaire valued the artificial, ultra-civilized life of modern Paris, however corrupt, over what he saw as the meaninglessness of

nature. Degas shared this obsession, once saying to any other artist, “for you natural life is essential, for me artificial life.”

After 1865, Degas devoted himself entirely to paintings of contemporary life. However, although these paintings look completely different from the Old Masters he had studied, his mode of working remained traditional: he always worked in the studio, relying on his prodigious memory and on sketches of his motif. His paintings might appear like the immediate reaction to something seen, but they were, in fact, meticulously prepared by means of drawings and studies or by the multiple repetition of a theme. “No art,” he wrote, “was ever less spontaneous than mine. What I do is the result of thought and of the study of the Old Masters.”

The 1870s to the Mid-1880s: The Ethnographer of Paris

FRANCINE AND STERLING CLARK ART INSTITUTE



Degas remained in Paris during the terrible events of 1870–71, when the Prussians besieged the city, and the Paris Commune was suppressed amid terrible massacres and the destruction of many fine buildings. Perhaps the threat to Paris—the “city of light” and of shadowy, hidden depths—made Degas more conscious of it than he had been previously, for he now devoted himself to representing its multiple life more intensively than ever. By 1872 he had begun his first paintings of ballet dancers rehearsing their meticulous and arduous art, and had returned to his paintings of the racetrack. After visiting relatives in New Orleans in 1872–3, he painted a family portrait in the context of a rarely depicted aspect of modern life: the business world.

Separation from Paris may also have intensified Degas’s awareness of the city’s unique qualities, for on his return, he enlarged his modern-life subject matter: his rare depictions of middle-class women now included family portraits and images of the American painter Mary Cassatt at the Louvre; he also painted gentlemen backstage and at the races, a financier at the Stock Exchange and a writer in his study. But the vast majority of his Parisian subjects were working-class women—laundresses, singers in the café-concerts, prostitutes, and, above all, ballet dancers.

Degas saw his world through the assumptions of his class. He depicted ladies with strong but refined features, but he painted—and probably saw—working-class women with coarse, ill-formed faces. He was consciously influenced by the theories that held that the shape of heads revealed inherited personality traits. Many now believed that these theories were scientifically validated by the theory of evolution, according to which humans evolved from animals, and more civilized humans from primitive ones. The Parisian upper classes therefore felt justified in considering themselves a higher level of being than the more animal-like working class. But, at the same time, they feared that such animality was a sign of the inevitable degeneration of civilization. In 1874, the writer Edmond de Goncourt described Degas as:

A sickly hypochondriac with such delicate eyes that he fears losing his sight and for this reason is sensitive and aware of the reverse character of things. He is the man I have seen up to now who has best caught the atmosphere of modern life and the soul of the past.

The “reverse character of things” probably meant those hidden aspects of modern social life that could be revealed only by the intense observation of surface appearances. Other writers described Degas’s depictions

of different Parisian types as a form of “scientific realism” or as “ethnographic,” while the critic and novelist J. K. Huysmans wrote that his study of modern life was characterized by an “analytical insight at once subtle and cruel.”

Degas displayed extraordinary inventiveness in this period: he was influenced by the graphic shorthand of the caricaturist Honoré Daumier (1808–79), and by Japanese prints, which suggested entirely new ways of seeing the world. To intensify the vibrancy of color and the impression of spontaneity, he experimented with new techniques, notably with dazzling combinations of monotype and pastel. Such works were unlikely to have been accepted by the Salon: they lacked “finish” and depicted “vulgar” subjects unredeemed by any moralizing. Moreover, his works tended to be small and so required intimate viewing. It was for such reasons that Degas joined with a group of artists—including Claude Monet, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Berthe Marisot, Camille Pissarro, Paul Cézanne and Alfred Sisley—to found an exhibition that was independent of the official Salon. At the first exhibition in 1874, the press named the group “Impressionist,” but Degas never accepted the label, for he scorned both the practice of open-air painting and the immediate reaction to the motif to which his colleagues attached so much importance. But he did share with them the ideal of truth to personal vision, as well as that of capturing a “moment” in time (such as the moment when light catches a dancer as she turns in space), and they exhibited together, or squabbled about exhibiting together, until 1886.

After his father’s death in 1874, Degas became burdened with family debts, so he needed to sell, and sell fast, despite his own desire to keep his works and to continue working on them for years. Like Monet and Cézanne, he saw painting as continuous research into the world of sight—and into the processes that transformed the raw material of sight into the intense concentrated world of art.

The Mid–1880s to the Early 1900s: A More Abstract Art of Observation



DAYTON ART INSTITUTE

Degas’s Realism had always had a tendency towards abstraction; it was never illusionistic—materials, for example, are always emphatically paint; this paint may suggest the visual effect of silk or of muslin, but it does not imitate them. But from the mid-1880s, this tendency became more pronounced: there are larger, more expressive masses of color, and the textures of paint or pastel are more emphatic. Instead of wide spaces full of visual incident, Degas now depicted enclosed, even claustrophobic spaces filled with larger bodies seen close up. This sense of enclosure was echoed in Degas’s own life when he retreated into his studio; he did not exhibit in any group exhibitions after 1886 and, since he had paid off his debts and his work was in demand at good prices, he could afford to work primarily for himself. Symptomatic of this retreat into an interior space is his fascination with a new theme: nude women in corners of rooms; women tending to their bodies, grooming themselves; women crouching to sponge themselves or to comb their long hair; women stretching to get out of a bath or to dry themselves. They are observed with an obsessive intensity in all their actions.

Degas also continued his equally obsessive exploration of the multiple, disciplined poses of the ballet dancers. Here, too, he tended to bring the figures closer to the foreground plane; the dancers are no longer individual, and there are only the most summary indications of the room. He concentrated on the infinite malleability of these bodies, their insistent self-presentation, the maintenance of pose even in intense weariness.

Later in life, Degas worked increasingly in pastel, achieving an extraordinary variety of effects. Since the early 1870s, he suffered from poor eyesight, particularly in bright light. By the early 1890s, he could scarcely see to read or write. But in 1890 he went on a joyful expedition through the countryside, and could see the landscape sufficiently clearly to re-create wonderful images in monotype and pastel. It is impossible to know how much was observation, and how much the internalized memory of what the hands could create. Pastel, charcoal and monotypes were media whose movements he could feel in his hands, those hands that were so accustomed to their own disciplined movements that he could perhaps rely on their “memory” of the relationship between sight and form on paper—just as the dancers could rely on the deeply internalized shaping of their bodies: the necessary stretch, tension, leap across space. Degas had also been modeling in wax from the late 1860s onwards, and this, too, was a means by which the hands could shape movement. Perhaps such modes of creation explain why Renoir could say: “Degas painted his best things when he could no longer see.”



Degas now concentrated on what had always fascinated him: the process of creating form from inert matter. One needs to consider why this process should have been so closely associated with the bodies of women—of women preparing their bodies to be seen, washing, combing their hair, examining themselves in mirrors, rehearsing, adjusting their clothes, trying on hats. In “The Painter of Modern Life,” Baudelaire had written that the essence of modernity lay in its artificiality; art was significant not because it imitated nature, but because it created something more intense, more concentrated, more human. In this sense, a courtesan who transformed her body through clothes and cosmetics made her body into a work of art. The entire effort of the ballet dancers was to make their bodies into art. Degas’s lifelong, concentrated attention to the movements of the human body, his disciplined rehearsal of the effect of each element of form, and his constant repetition of themes were directed to the same end.

Degas was the most acute observer of the mysterious otherness of the human body. But his art was not a matter of recording what he saw, but of searching out the forms with which he could express how he perceived his world. Through his consistent struggle to create such form, he created an intense, personal world, a world that can absorb the spectator into its being as if it were alive.



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EDGAR DEGAS CHRONOLOGY

- 1834 Born 19 July, in Paris, the eldest son of Auguste and Marie Célestine De Gas.
- 1855 Enrolls in the *École des Beaux-Arts*, as a pupil of Louis Lamothe, a follower of Ingres.
- 1856–9 Studies independently in Italy.
- 1862 Meets Manet while copying in the Louvre.
- 1866–8 First exhibit at the Salon: *War-Scene from the Middle Ages*, his last history painting.
- 1870–1 During the Siege of Paris enrolls in the National Guard, but leaves Paris during the Commune.
- 1872 First paintings of dancers rehearsing; visits his mother's family in New Orleans; his eyes are already too weak to paint outdoors in brilliant light.
- 1873 First transactions in Paris with Paul Durand-Ruel.
- 1874 Left in financial difficulties by father's death; shows ten pictures at the first Impressionist exhibition.
- 1876–81 Exhibits at the next five Impressionist exhibitions; exhibits *The Little Dancer of Fourteen Years* at the 1881 Impressionist exhibition.
- 1882 Disputes with other Impressionists lead to decision not to exhibit at the seventh Impressionist exhibition.
- 1883 Exhibits in London.
- 1886 Exhibits 15 works at the eighth, and last, Impressionist exhibition.
- 1891 Solo exhibition of landscape monotypes at the Galerie Durand-Ruel.
- 1891–6 Broadens his style due to worsening eyesight.
- 1912 Now blind, he probably ceases all work.
- 1917 27 September: death of Degas.



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October 3, 2001

EXHIBITIONS AT THE MEMORIAL ART GALLERY: 2002

GRAND GALLERY



Thomas Eakins, *Edith Mahon*
(1904). Courtesy Smith
College Museum of Art.

October 28, 2001–January 13, 2002
**American Spectrum: Paintings and Sculpture
from the Smith College Museum of Art**

The Smith College Museum of Art may be closed for renovation and expansion, but highlights from its vast collection are on their way to Rochester. Spanning 250 years of American art, *American Spectrum* includes 61 paintings and 14 sculptures by Alexander Calder, John Singleton Copley, Winslow Homer, Edward Hopper, and Georgia O’Keeffe, to name but a few. John Russell, art critic for *The New York Times*, gives the exhibition high marks, noting that Smith’s is “a rhapsodic and quirky collection” assembled by generations of far-sighted directors and discerning alumni. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to see masterworks that are rarely permitted to travel.

This exhibition was organized by the Smith College Museum of Art, Northampton, MA. In Rochester, it is sponsored by JP.Morgan Private Bank and members of the Smith College Club of Rochester, with additional support from the Herbert W. Vanden Brul Exhibition Fund.



Manipulated detail from
John James Audubon,
*Colonel Nathaniel
Rochester* (1824). Gift
of Thomas J. Watson.

February 17–April 21, 2002
Ken Aptekar: Eye Contact

What do people see when they look at paintings? Is there a way to heat up the chemistry between a person and a painting, to make the dialogue more intense, more consequential? New York artist Ken Aptekar makes new paintings inspired by those in museum collections. He then etches words inspired by the paintings onto glass panels and bolts those over the surface. The superimposed texts—in a variety of voices—encourage viewers to make a real connection between their lives and what they see on the wall.

This exhibition is sponsored by Bausch & Lomb and an anonymous donor. Additional support is provided by the New York State Council on the Arts. The exhibition catalogue is sponsored by Mr. and Mrs. Robert Hursh and Mr. and Mrs. Robert Gianniny.

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Sandy Skoglund, *Breathing Glass*. Collection of the artist.

February 17–April 21, 2002
Sandy Skoglund: Breathing Glass

Originally known for her photographs of beautiful but bizarre built environments, Sandy Skoglund has emerged as one of America's most influential installation artists. *Breathing Glass*, commissioned by the American Craft Museum in Manhattan, features mosaic-encrusted mannequins floating upside down above a blue floor covered with tiny white plastic figures. The backdrop is composed of 50 deep blue panels, each studded with dozens of handmade glass dragonflies and miniature marshmallows strung on wire filaments, vibrating and softly buzzing. The effect is a cloud of glittering insects beating their way through a blizzard.

This exhibition is sponsored in part by Corning Incorporation Foundation, with additional support from an anonymous donor.



Fernand Leger, *Smoke* (1912).
Albright-Knox Art Gallery.

June 16–August 25, 2002
Circa 1900: From the Genteel Tradition to the Jazz Age

The latest in a series of collaborations among six upstate New York museums celebrates art and culture when the last century was new. During the tumultuous period 1880–1920, many artists rejected the visual traditions established by the Academy and began experimenting in bold new modes of expression. This exhibition features an eclectic mix of painting, sculpture, photography and decorative arts by artists such as Pablo Picasso, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec and John Singer Sargent.

LONG-TERM INSTALLATION

New Acquisitions for a New Millennium



Inner coffin of Pa-debehu-Aset
(4th century B.C.E.) Marion
Stratton Gould Fund.

A 19th-century painting by British artist Walter Goodman, a gold wreath from ancient Greece and a contemporary glass sculpture by Dale Chihuly—these are but three of the masterworks acquired by MAG during the last four years. The majority of the 18 works are on view for the first time. Of special note is one of the most significant acquisitions in Gallery history—the Inner Coffin of Pa-debehu-(en)-Aset, an Egyptian official of the 4th century B.C.E.

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MEMORIAL ART GALLERY FACT SHEET

Press Release

The Memorial Art Gallery is a major cultural center with an outstanding collection of world art, a year-round schedule of exhibitions and educational programs, an art school and a reference library. The Gallery is supported primarily by its membership, the University of Rochester, and public funds from Monroe County and the New York State Council on the Arts.

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- Founding:** The Memorial Art Gallery was founded in 1913 by Emily Sibley Watson as a memorial to her son, architect James Averell. Given in trust to the University of Rochester, the Memorial Art Gallery is one of the few university-affiliated art museums in the country that also serves as a public art museum.
- Collections:** The Gallery is considered one of the finest regional art museums in the country. Its permanent collection of 11,000 works spans 50 centuries of world art and includes important works by Monet, Cézanne, Matisse, Homer and Cassatt. Contemporary masters in the collection include Wendell Castle, Albert Paley and Helen Frankenthaler.
- Exhibitions:** In 2000–01, the Gallery offered nine temporary exhibitions, including three major shows.
- Programs:** The Gallery’s encyclopedic collection makes it an invaluable educational resource. Throughout the year, the Gallery offers a full schedule of lectures, concerts, guided tours, family activities, educational programs and art classes. Exhibition preview parties attract more than 2,000 visitors per event.
- Facilities:** To accommodate the growing collections and increased level of activity, the Gallery was expanded in 1926, 1968 and 1987. The most recent expansion project added nearly 46,000 square feet of new and remodeled space, increasing exhibition areas by nearly 60 percent.
- Attendance:** Since the opening of the new facility in May 1987, attendance has more than doubled, as has the number of children and adults participating in docent-led tours. During fiscal year 2000–01, the Gallery welcomed 257,156 visitors. This figure included more than 15,000 area schoolchildren.
- Membership:** The Gallery’s 9,700 individual and corporate supporters constitute one of the highest per capita memberships in the country.
- Volunteers:** In 2000, the Gallery ranked first among art museums in the Northeast and 11th nationwide for number of volunteers (1,364).

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- Hours: Tuesday, noon–9 pm; Wednesday–Friday, 10 am–4 pm; Saturday, 10 am–5 pm; Sunday, noon–5 pm. Closed Mondays, Independence Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas and New Year’s Day. Extended hours for *Edgar Degas: Figures in Motion* will be announced in spring 2002.
- Admission: Adults, \$7; college students with ID and senior citizens, \$5; children 6–18, \$2; children 5 and under, free. Free to members, UR students and children five and under. Reduced general admission, \$2, Tuesday evenings from 5–9, made possible by the Democrat and Chronicle/Gannett Foundation and FleetBoston Financial Foundation, with additional support from Monroe County. Ticket information for *Edgar Degas: Figures in Motion* will be announced in spring 2002.
- Gift shop: The Gallery Store is open during all regular Gallery hours and until 5 pm Wednesday–Saturday.
- Restaurant: Cutler’s Restaurant is open for lunch Tuesday–Sunday and for dinner Tuesday and Saturday. Reservations suggested (473-6380).
- Family center: With interactive displays similar to those found in children’s museums, the Dorothy McBride Gill Family Center explores ways of looking at art. The current installation is *About Face: Copley’s Portrait of a Colonial Silversmith*.
- Art library: The Charlotte Whitney Allen Library is open to the public for browsing; Gallery members and University of Rochester students and staff may borrow books. The library also includes a state-of-the-art teacher resource center. For hours, call 473-7720, ext. 3022. Online catalog available at www.rochester.edu/MAG/
- Art school: The Creative Workshop offers year-round art and art history classes for adults, teens and children as young as 2½. For a free course catalog, call 473-7720, ext. 3056.
- Handicapped access: Through the University Avenue entrance.
- Special needs: To arrange to have any program interpreted for the deaf, or to reserve an induction loop system for spaces other than the auditorium, call the education department, 716-473-7720, ext. 3027 (TDD 716-473-6152).
- Website: <http://mag.rochester.edu>
- Contact: Public relations office (716) 473-7720
Deborah Rothman, ext. 3032, or Shirley Wersinger, ext. 3020
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