

Répétitions: Memory and Making in Degas's Ballet Classroom Series

by

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For my parents,
Mike, and Henry

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation proposes a significant reevaluation of Edgar Degas's ballet classroom pictures, with a particular focus on two series: the foyer paintings (1873-75) and the frieze compositions (c. 1879-1907). Its principal objective is to examine the transformative role of *repetition*—both as a working method and as a register of meaning—in the evolution of the artist's work from an essentially realist enterprise to a process of endless iteration. Repetition for Degas involved the constant recycling and reorganization of pictorial motifs—dancers, architectural elements, props—as a means of exploring countless formal possibilities. It was also a means by which process, readable in the interrelations between multiple paintings, drawings, and prints, came to eclipse the importance of individual, “finished” artworks, thereby deferring the completion of commercially viable “products” and sustaining the possibility of future works in the series.

The study begins with a rehearsal of related examples of repetition and seriality in modernist painting, along with the prevailing art-historical interpretations of the phenomena. It subsequently focuses on Degas's establishment of “place” (the term is drawn from Edmond Duranty's *le langage de l'appartement*) in the foyer series as a means of signaling a suitable quotient of realist “authenticity.” By drawing on Henri Lefebvre's theorizations of social space, however, it is demonstrated that Degas's desire for illusionist manifestations of “place” was challenged by his increasing devotion to the processes of art-making.

Hence the uneven development of the frieze format and the “dancer-motif”—the two defining forms of Degas's repetition. The increased horizontality of the format prompted the artist to forgo “place” in the interest of generating pictorial spaces in which a familiar repertoire of dancer-motifs could be arranged and rearranged, ad infinitum. This new preoccupation with process appeared in diverse media (drawing, monotype, and even casual doodling), and it involved an approach to composition that extended far beyond the limits of a single work. Degas's incessant experimentations accordingly spawned a self-referential and mnemonically driven working method exercised in multiple images over extended periods of time. There are parallels here both to Henri Bergson's notion of duration, and to Paul Valéry's understanding of the primacy of “craft” in Degas's art, such that time, labor, and memory are (re)integrated into the art object as intuited knowledge. There are also consequences for the spectator, who witness the comings and goings of dancer-motifs in multiple pictorial spaces, and for whom the act of looking evokes past, present, and future interpretive encounters.

Chapter One

Degas's Repetition

In January 1905, while the aging Degas was producing pastels in his studio on rue Victor-Massé or strolling the streets of the *quartier de l'Opéra*, his longtime dealer, Paul Durand-Ruel, was in London installing an exhibition of 315 Impressionist paintings at the Grafton Galleries. The West End locale was reminiscent of the Crystal Palace, and the magnificence of the galleries matched the exhibition's magnitude.¹ An album of photographs reveals the immensity of the show, hung in the style derived from *ancien-régime* Salons but moderated by a modern taste for individual temperament (Figs. 1.1 & 1.2).² Taken during closed hours, the photographs effectively stage the exhibition as a cluster of luminous jewels in a delicate glass enclosure with sanitized and autonomous *objets d'art* lying in wait. The absence of viewers, as well as the angle of the photographs, grants us a rare chance to understand the contemporary exhibition practices of Edgar Degas's works and the viewing context enjoyed by their subjects/consumers (lest we forget these paintings are for sale).³

¹ Durand-Ruel brought 315 paintings from his own collection: 59 by Renoir, 55 by Monet, 49 by Pissarro, 38 by Boudin, 37 by Sisley, 35 by Degas, 19 by Manet, 13 by Morisot, and 10 by Cézanne. The exhibition in 1905 has been overshadowed in art historical scholarship by Roger Fry's show in 1910 at the same gallery, "Manet and the Post-Impressionists." See Bruce Altshuler et al., "Manet and the Post-Impressionists," in *Salon to Biennial—Exhibitions That Made Art History, Volume I: 1863-1959* (London and New York: Phaidon Press, 2008). For a short synopsis of the exhibition in 1905, see John Rewald, "Depressionist Days of the Impressionists," *Art News* 43 (February 1–14, 1945); repr. in Rewald, *Studies in Impressionism* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1985).

² The figures in this dissertation are arranged such that the two central series of works are enumerated as Figures 0.1 – 0.30. The figures then follow sequentially with the progression of the chapters: 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, . . . ; 2.1, 2.2, 2.3,

³ The exhibition catalogue's title page states "A Selection from the Pictures by Boudin, Cézanne, Degas, . . ." and lists the artists in alphabetical order. It then reads "Exhibited by Mssrs. Durand-Ruel & Sons of Paris at the Grafton

A single photograph shows an entire wall outfitted with ten paintings by Degas bordered by two chairs at either end (Fig. 1.2). Without too much effort, one can glean the curator's organizing principle: laundresses painted on vertically-oriented canvases flank either end, while smaller, horizontally-formatted scenes of the racetrack rest immediately below; at the center, in the upper tier of objects, a medium-sized pastel of two dancers positioned at the edge of the picture plane is encased by two more pastels, but this time the pictures are on the vertical axis and feature late-career dance subjects.⁴ Durand-Ruel's orderliness draws attention to the patent themes of Degas's long career and the formal similarities across and between these particular compositions. The works are arranged to not only highlight common themes, but also to emphasize the artist's consistent formal choices, such as format, medium, perspectival space, and dimensions.⁵

The lone disruption in the pattern occurs in the bottom register. The work at the center is a small classroom interior, *The Dance Rehearsal* (1873, The Phillips Collection, Fig. 0.1). It is one of eight paintings from the artist's "foyer" classroom series (1873-75) and it features all of the series' stock architectural motifs: columns, staircase, and three tall, arched windows. To the

Galleries, 8, Grafton Street, London." The catalogue lists no other names or affiliates of the Grafton Galleries, but it is practical to assume that Durand-Ruel was assisted by a representative of the gallery during the installation and design process. I will refer to Durand-Ruel as the curator, though I do not uphold him as the sole player in the installation of the galleries. The original photographs are located at Harvard University's Fogg Museum, but there is no authorship attributed.

⁴ Richard Kendall has undertaken a rigorous study of the varying "visual languages" of Degas's late career (c. 1890-1915) and describes his dance pastels from this period as groups of two or three dancers in "an ill-defined space of the wings or recovering in some bleak and anonymous practice room." Drawn in pastel on tracing paper for the most part, they are large, concentrated views removed from narrative context. See Richard Kendall, *Degas: Beyond Impressionism* (London: National Gallery Publications Limited, 1996), 126-31.

⁵ One can deduce that Durand-Ruel was careful to harmonize the installation of each room, but not to the extent seen in the installation of Degas's works. For instance, in the central gallery a wall of paintings by Renoir and Monet is made to rise and fall as the viewer's body and eye travel out and away from the substantial genre scene, *Luncheon of the Boating Party* (1881), and are then pulled back into three sets of intimate, smaller scale landscapes by Monet (Fig. 1.1). This rhythmic effect is repeated twice more before the monumental doorway interrupts the rhythm: single vertical genre scene/portrait, grouped horizontal landscapes/still lifes, single vertical genre scene/portrait. And yet it resumes again, on the right side of the door, as a set of stacked, small scale landscapes answer back to the vertical, monumental doorway and rush forward into the large, vertical portrait at the edge of the photograph.

right of *The Dance Rehearsal* is an example from a second series of paintings, the “frieze” classroom series (c. 1879-1907). The frieze series is easily identifiable by the works’ dramatic horizontal orientation—approximately a 1:2, height to length, ratio—emphasized in the photograph by the verticality of the painting sitting above. Looking to the left of center, the rhythmic pattern of thematic flow is suddenly disrupted. Instead of dancers in a frieze-format ballet classroom, the viewer stumbles upon horses restlessly waiting in the landscape. It comes as no surprise that Durand-Ruel chose this particular work to complement its partner to the right. The painting, *The Races, Before the Start* (c. 1885-92, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts), almost exactly replicates the format and size of the frieze classroom painting, *Before the Ballet* (1890-92, National Gallery of Art, WASHINGTON, D.C., Fig. 0.14). In this case, Durand-Ruel’s desire for the visual harmony of the wall’s composition trumped the need for the continuous thematic configuration of the paintings: let the dancers become horses. The boldness of Degas’s support and its odd pictorial space required some sort of logic, even to the detriment of thematic equilibrium (classroom to landscape).

Looking again, it is the order of the gallery wall that conducts our gaze. The gilded chairs anchor a classical triangular composition; its apex is the upholstered dome light hanging from the sky. The thin, elegant gold frames beat consistently from painting to painting as they echo the carved detail of the chairs, the baseboards, the chair rail, and the frieze of acanthus leaves at top.⁶ Refined temperament, harmonized décor, customized luxury—the photograph tells us—this is the abode of Impressionist painting. But then there is a second, even third disruption to the

⁶ Degas’s aversion to gilded frames was well-known; his preference was for thin frames painted either white or with a bright color. Ambroise Vollard describes Degas’s “irritation” (“colère”) when a collector substituted a gold frame for the original, which the artist almost always selected: “There was a row inevitably; Degas would refund the money and win back the picture.” “C’était alors la brouille. Degas rendait l’argent et remportait le tableau.” Ambroise Vollard, *Degas (1834-1917)* (Paris: G. Crés, 1924), 73. (Unless otherwise noted, all translations in this dissertation are my own.) Martha Ward situates Degas’s enthusiasm for experimental frames in the context of the Impressionist Exhibitions and a new “intimate mode of viewing.” Martha Ward, “Impressionist Installations and Private Exhibitions,” *The Art Bulletin*, vol. 73, no. 4 (December 1991): 599-622.

curator's restrained congruence, this time by way of repetition more than difference amongst the core cluster of works. The seated dancer at the far right of *Before the Ballet* reappears in the pastel in the center, or vice versa (Fig. 1.3). Flagrantly breaking the boundaries of the frame, she sits in two places at once. And then there is her partner, the dancer pulling up her tights. Isn't she terribly alike as well? Durand-Ruel could not have overlooked the similar pair; instead he aligned them across the virtual diagonal axis of a dancer's leg. Perhaps the larger, central painting is the original, or perhaps one is the final version. One might supersede or suppress the other. Repetition and difference are on display here, but their rationale remains elusive.

In 1905 Durand-Ruel made decisions that attempted to control and organize practices of iteration in Degas's oeuvre.⁷ He could not suppress the repetitions across Degas's works. Nor could he organize a persuasive purpose for them. Degas's paintings compelled a re-membering; they referred to one another in ways that were too legible, too recognizable to ignore. That is, at the center of Degas's wall of works is his intertextuality.⁸ And against all odds, the installation photograph only highlights the seepage of Degas's seriality. *Before the Ballet*'s long, horizontal format is peculiar; but nonetheless repeated in the equestrian landscape. The painting stands apart from its neighbors, and yet the picture's "place" is intimately related to the classroom in *The Rehearsal Room*. Then there are those dancers, so blatantly transposed and aligned for the viewer's gaze. Durand-Ruel attempted to bring order to the visitor's experience of Degas's paintings, to glean coherence from what is, after all, only repetition.

⁷ Durand-Ruel also emphasized the homogeneity of Degas's oeuvre. Three other photographs of the exhibition evidence single walls of paintings with works by Monet and Renoir interspersed and categorized by genre only. Another photograph shows a wall with works by Manet and Cézanne. In some respects, Durand-Ruel must have conceived of Degas's paintings as constituting an organic whole that should not be dispersed.

⁸ I employ the literary term "intertextual" to describe the inter-relations between the works of art that are readily available to Degas's viewer via real-time visual encounters and mnemonic experience. As I argue below, these relations shape the meaning of any individual work and evoke the artist's processes of making.

This dissertation takes as its premise the fact of Degas's *répétitions*; it then seeks to locate and analyze the meanings of iteration in the artist's oeuvre from the early 1870s to the first years of the twentieth century. The bookends of my study are the two series of paintings represented in the Grafton Galleries photograph: the foyer series (1873-75, Figs. 0.1-0.8) and the frieze series (c. 1879-1907, Figs. 0.9-0.28). The foyer group evidences Degas's earliest experiments in repetition and the frieze series his most incessant; both take the ballet classroom as their subject. The paintings in the former have long been championed as "charming little pictures" evocative of Degas's "scientific realism;" however, they have never been examined as a sustained set of paintings revealing artistic lessons reliant on repetition.⁹ Conversely, the latter group has been the subject of numerous formal examinations and yet remains, as of 2011, "the most original and least understood inventions of Degas's career."¹⁰ Indeed, the importance of the frieze series has become *a priori* truth in Degas scholarship:

More than any other group in the artist's oeuvre the frieze format rehearsals constitute a genuine series. For over twenty years, Degas elaborated . . . a fixed set of dancers placed in an oblong rehearsal room, who appear, disappear, or are reproduced in reverse images of themselves in an unending stream of contrapuntal variation. Nowhere is Degas's system of additive invention more evident than in this group.¹¹

⁹ For "charming" citations see: Anonymous, "Art Exhibitions," *London Times*, February 27, 1905: 12 (full quote on page 10 of this Introduction); or Eugène Véron, "Cinquième exposition des indépendants," *L'Art*, t. 2 (1880): 94. "M. Degas has made some charming pictures with his dancers. Why not stop when the subject is exhausted?" "M. Degas a fait avec ses danseuses des tableaux charmants. Pourquoi ne pas s'arrêter quand le sujet est épuisé?" Degas's "scientific realism" is common parlance in contemporary scholarship, largely popularized by the exhibition *Degas* in 1988. See Michael Pantazzi, "Scientific Realism" in *Degas*, ed. Jean Sutherland Boggs (New York and Ottawa: Metropolitan Museum of Art and National Gallery of Canada, 1988); see also Anthea Callen, *The Spectacular Body: Science, Method, and Meaning in the Work of Degas* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995).

¹⁰ Richard Kendall and Jill DeVonyar, *Degas and the Ballet: Picturing Movement* (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2011), 95.

¹¹ Gary Tinterow, "III: 1881-1890," in *Degas*, ed. Boggs, 405.

But if the frieze series is so identifiable and the “invention” so “evident,” then why the misunderstanding? Why do the paintings remain opaque when the repetition is so transparent? Or, to be blunt, what is so “original” about Degas’s repetition?

Difference in repetition

Some working definitions of “repetition” and “seriality” are necessary from the start. I postulate repetition, as it relates to the production of paintings in the Western tradition, to function in three discrete, yet intersecting, modes: 1) the quotation or variation of earlier works either by the same artist (self-referential) or by another; 2) the execution of a group/cycle of paintings united by a particular narrative and/or motif and often executed on the same type and/or size of support; and 3) the multiplication of a modular unit (a motif or form) within a single work of art. Seriality is a threshold of any one of these repetitions; it occurs when the intertextuality of repetition is legible to the degree or intensity that iteration becomes a leitmotif of the works’ meanings. Along the lines of the self-reflective model of repetition, Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres recussitated his historical, biblical, and mythological subjects in varied compositions and made provisionality and transfromation significant themes in his oeuvre.¹² In Degas’s own period, Édouard Manet was the reigning master of the first mode, littering his paintings with references to the history of art: Raphael, Titian, Hals, Velázquez, Poussin, Watteau, Goya, and Ingres, to name but a few.¹³ The second type of repetition, traditionally associated with commissions destined for a specific locale, is probably best figured as a modernist modality by Claude Monet’s well-known series of haystacks and cathedrals of the

¹² For an early analysis of Ingres’s self-referential repetition, see Marjorie B. Cohn, “Introduction: In Pursuit of Perfection,” in *Ingres In Pursuit of Perfection: The Art of J.-A.-D. Ingres*, ed. Debra Edelstein (Louisville, KY: The J.B. Speed Art Museum. Bloomington; IN: Indiana University Press, 1983), esp. 23-30.

¹³ For a discussion of Manet’s pastiche of art history, see Jean Clay, “Ointments, Makeup, Pollen,” trans. John Shelpley, *October 27* (Winter 1983): 3-44.

1890s, or by Andy Warhol's *Campbell's Soup Cans* (1962). The final mode of repetition is often associated with "the serial attitude" of Mel Bochner and other minimalists of the late 1960s (although the logic of their labor is glaringly similar to the principles of the Russian Constructivists some forty years prior).¹⁴ Aside from Degas, Auguste Rodin was its most ardent practitioner at the end of the nineteenth century; his *Three Shades* (c. 1881-86) is the modernist rejoinder to the classical female body in variation, the *Three Graces*.¹⁵ To describe the work of any one of these artists as "serial" is dependent upon the legibility and consistency of their repetitions—a contestable claim for Manet, but irrefutable in the case of Monet or Bochner.

I also mean repetition to function in more particular ways. As Patricia Mainardi has noted, by 1884, "*répétition*" had supplanted the academic term *copie* to refer to an artist's later version of his own subject/theme.¹⁶ Thus the traditional definition of copying, or the attempt at the exact reproduction of a master work, shifted in the late nineteenth century to mean "copies executed or signed by the authors themselves of original works." The *Dictionnaire de l'académie des beaux arts* qualifies this primary definition, adding: "Properly speaking these are simple repetitions, recognizable often through some variation that the master himself has intentionally put there."¹⁷ I would maintain that Degas's repetitions represent yet another manifestation of this

¹⁴ Mel Bochner, "The Serial Attitude," *Artforum* 6:4 (December 1967): 28-33; 28. Three assumptions delimit this type of serial production: "[t]he derivation of the terms or interior division of the work is by means of a . . . systematically predetermined process (permutation, progression, rotation, reversal); the order takes precedence over the execution; and the completed work is fundamentally . . . self-exhausting." For an analysis of the Russian Constructivists' deductive repetition, see Maria Gough, *The Artist as Producer: Russian Constructivism in Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 46-50.

¹⁵ Leo Steinberg first made this argument in his chapter on Rodin in his *Other Criteria* (New York: Oxford Press, 1972). See also Rosalind Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture* (Cambridge and London: The MIT Press, 1977), 19-20.

¹⁶ Patricia Mainardi, "The 19th-Century Art Trade: Copies, Variations, Replicas," in "Theo Van Gogh and the 19th-Century Art Trade," special issue, *Van Gogh Museum Journal* (2000): 62-73; 63-4.

¹⁷ The *Dictionnaire* lists two other minor orders of *copie*: 1) "copies made in the atelier or under the very eyes of the author by his students, recognizable through a much greater similarity to the original;" 2) "copies, most numerous, made outside the influence of or after the death of the author of the original." Either can be an attempt at exact reproduction, but they are not "authograph" repetitions (works by the same artist). Degas's repetitions are self-referential and extremely insular. It is worth noting, however, that his inter-media experiments, which never exactly

transition between the academic copy, which valued the replica function, and the modern copy, which emphasized the authorship function.¹⁸ Yet, the differences between Degas's individual works are more than mere variations for the sake of novelty in the marketplace; they are trials in composition, media, and meaning that span three decades. Mainardi is also quick to point out that *répétition* is the same word used to describe a rehearsal of a (dance) performance.¹⁹ In her estimation, the modern copy (or *répétition*), by "focusing on innovation," evades this reference and, instead, valorizes chronological priority and originality in order to thwart anxieties about industrial (re)production. To my mind, Degas's repetitions have more in common with the performance-based arts and the everyday routine of studio-life, rather than the originality or novelty of the finished product. In this way, Degas's practice and the actual work themselves highlight experiment, process, and the on-going duration of art-making, rather than the staging of an event for a gallery of spectators.

It could also be asserted that the foyer and frieze series both register somewhere on the continuum of what has been called the "central contradiction" of Degas's work: realism and repetition.²⁰ However, I will argue that, for Degas, repetition was not a fixed strategy for making paintings—a hermetic system imposed on his subject and easily perused by his audience or ordered by his collectors. (There is a reason Degas's dealer, Ambroise Vollard, encouraged

reproduce any single work, could be considered "translations" of earlier paintings. Yet, to categorize the prints as "translations" would be to participate in constructing a hierarchy of media in his oeuvre and an impossible chronology. "1) *Les copies* exécutées ou signées par les auteurs eux-mêmes des oeuvres originales. A proprement parler, ce sont là de simples répétitions, reconnaissables souvent à quelque variante qu'y a introduite à dessin le maître lui-même. 2) *Les copies* faites dans l'atelier ou sous les yeux mêmes de l'auteur par ses élèves, reconnaissable à une plus grande similitude de procédés avec ceux de l'original. 3) *Les copies*, plus nombreuses, faites en dehors de l'influence ou après la mort de l'auteur de l'original." Institut de France, *Dictionnaire de l'académie des beaux-arts*, vol. 4 (Paris, 1884), 262.

¹⁸ Roger Benjamin defines the modern copy as a work with minimal replica-function and maximal authorship function. In contrast, the traditional copy (in academic criteria) was a sincere attempt to reproduce the original. See Roger Benjamin, "Recovering Authors: The Modern Copy, Copy Exhibitions and Matisse," *Art History* vol. 12, no. 2 (June 1989): 176-201; 176-80 and 194-5.

¹⁹ Mainardi, "The 19th-Century Art Trade: Copies, Variations, Replicas," 64.

²⁰ Carol Armstrong, *Odd Man Out: Readings of the Work and Reputation of Edgar Degas* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 16.

Pissarro and André Derain to follow Monet's serial inclinations and not Degas's.)²¹ For Degas, repetition was a working process of transformation without definitive end, an everyday rehearsal of transmogrifications that sought the experiential and eluded an endpoint. It was also a technique woven into the texture of his everyday behavior, which challenged his "realist" proclivities and postponed the completion of a product. My contention is that Degas's moments or methods of reprisals are not equivalent; rather, the respective modes of production in the foyer and the frieze series are correlated to specific trials with narrative, realism, and the creative potential of pictorial space itself. Yet the two series are not unlike; at times the works relay a familiar syntax and tell of analogous solutions: binary oppositions, mirrored equivalencies, explicit repetition. The viewer is reminded of one series while viewing an example from another, making for a work-intensive looking process. (One might add "writing" and "reading" to that last sentence; in the pages that follow, the reader is asked to track Degas's circuitous alterations of pictorial space and dancer-motifs.) Finally, Degas's series of bathers (c. 1885-86) and late-career dance pastels on tracing paper represent related, but distinct practices of repetition, two moments which have been treated with great attention by Carol Armstrong and Richard Kendall respectively.²² I would argue that these later series are shaped by the lessons learned from the earlier series and operate as concentrated adaptations of processes that originated in the 1870s and early 1880s.

In the foyer series, Degas enacts the first method of repetition, specifically self-referential quotation. From painting to painting—eight in all—he recycled, inverted, and re-invented the "place" of the foyer classroom. The paintings' setting morphs across the series via peripatetic

²¹ Suzanne Pagé, *André Derain, Le peintre du 'trouble moderne'* (Paris: Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, 1994), 140, 144 n.2.

²² Armstrong, *Odd Man Out*, esp. 159-209; Richard Kendall examines Degas's practice of tracing as repetition in *Degas: Beyond Impressionism*, 77-87.

architectural elements that move from one part of the room to another, disappear, and then return. For example, the Phillips' *The Dance Rehearsal* is structured by its three long windows, four Ionic columns, and a descending staircase; but when some of the rhythmic architectural features are stripped away, the foyer "place" is still recognizable in The Fogg's *The Rehearsal* (Fig. 0.2). Likewise, stairs can mutate into serpentine repoussoirs (Fig. 0.4) and columns can reappear in Doric form (Fig. 0.7). But the compositional consistencies—specifically related to "place"—endure. While most of the paintings are approximately 17 x 24 inches, there are significant exceptions to the rule that prevent the foyer series from corresponding to my second type of repetition, that of the conventional cycle.

The frieze series is a much more sophisticated game, wherein *all* the modalities of repetition are in play. Degas self-cites his compositions' pictorial space and what remains of its architectural "place" across the series; he chooses the peculiar and memorable horizontal format, thereby announcing the series' unity; and he employs the modular dancer-motifs in individual paintings, as well as throughout the series.²³ There are ten extant frieze classroom compositions in oil, thirteen more in charcoal, pastel, and various print media, and hundreds of related

²³ I use the term "dancer-motif" to describe the dancers as pictorial motifs that are implanted into the classroom paintings, rather than being integral elements of any particular painting. The varieties of dancer-motifs are determined by specific balletic positions or more casual postures, all of which Degas may or may not have drawn from life. The notion of the dancer-motif in Degas's classroom paintings was parleyed by the 1890s, as evidenced by the criticism of his good friend, George Moore, in 1892. (See note 31.) To my knowledge Ronald Pickvance was the first scholar to discuss Degas's utilization of the dancer-motif. He does not name the practice; rather he refers to the dancers' "poses" as a type of early modern "pattern-book" for the artist and locates specific instances between paintings where Degas reversed figures or used "multiple derivations" of a dancer. See Ronald Pickvance, "Degas's Dancers: 1872-6," *The Burlington Magazine*, no.723 (June 1963): 256-66. Four years later, Eugenia Parry Janis did employ the term "motif" to discuss Degas's practice. Moreover, she noted that "[m]otifs are the natural outgrowth of artistic work that is based on a systematically developed use of memory." She does not elaborate on the argument, but she does claim that the motif "always has a self-sufficiency which enables the viewer to lift it out of context." Eugenia Parry Janis, "The Role of the Monotype in the Working Method of Degas, I," *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. 109, no. 766 (January 1967): 20-7 and 29; 22. It should also be noted that while Degas's particular deployment of the motif is unique to his oeuvre, the recurring motif is essential to the practice of J.-A.-D. Ingres, an artist Degas esteemed and collected. See chapter one of Susan Siegfried's *Ingres: Painting Re-Imagined* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009).

drawings, pastels, and oil paintings.²⁴ With the exception of three late pastels, all of the frieze classroom compositions, regardless of medium, measure approximately 15 x 35 inches. The standard summary of the series divides the works into two types (or conceptions) of pictorial space: one group is defined by a shallow foreground on the left that is contiguous to the deeply recessed background on the right, as in The National Gallery's *The Dance Lesson* (Fig. 0.9); the other exchanges the two spaces, as in *Before the Ballet* (Fig. 0.14).

Degas's iterations of dancer-motifs in the frieze series are more unruly. However, I identify six specific dancer-motifs in consistent poses that dominate the foreground of all the compositions. In the best known example, *The Dance Lesson*, the artist deployed only two of them, which I term the "standing dancer" and the "seated dancer." The two motifs repeat and rotate four and five times respectively, for a total of nine figures. In addition, there are at least a dozen pastels, charcoals, monotypes, and/or lithographs directly related to the two motifs in the painting.²⁵ While Degas's frieze series may not meet the requirements of Bochner's "predetermined process" and "self-exhausting" system, it is an extremely economic, yet expansive scheme of exchange and replication, without contemporary comparison in painting.

Scholars agree that Degas performs a complicated regimen of repetition across the frieze classroom compositions, but investigations to date have overlooked the precedent of the foyer series and have centered on deciphering the chronology and sequence of the frieze series. Instead, I approach the frieze works by scrutinizing their disparate modes of iteration and asking questions about the functions of repetition in Degas's working method. The first mode has to do

²⁴ Often one reads that there are "forty odd" frieze compositions; however this number refers to any and all works executed on a frieze format support, regardless of dimensions and subject. The equestrian compositions number approximately twelve and there are several works that picture café scenes or other dance subjects, all of which I treat in Chapter Three.

²⁵ George Shackelford identifies four sketches related to this painting. In my Chapter Four I will argue that there are actually several more specific compositions that share the two motifs and date to the same period. See George Shackelford, *Degas: The Dancers* (Washington, WASHINGTON, D.C.: The National Gallery of Art, 1985), 86-8.

with the format itself and the binary structures of pictorial space that appear throughout the series. Quite simply, Degas transparently inverts the foreground and background (the series' two types of contiguous space) and re-arranges the iconic signs of "place" across the paintings. But already in the earlier foyer series, we can follow Degas's systematic investigations of architectural place and pictorial space; his inversions of space in the frieze series re-stage and adapt these structural alterations. I will suggest that these experiments simultaneously contest the diachronicity of realism—they upset the works' linear spatio-temporal narrative—and intensify the creative potential of pictorial space. Thus, repetition is not the extension of a single work or one idea (there is no climax or ultimate conclusion), but an ongoing process of modification and manipulation.

The second legible mode of repetition in the frieze series is the iteration and transformation of the modular dancer-motifs. As described above, the dancer-motifs are not exclusive to the frieze series; in fact, their re-creation stimulates a large portion of Degas's production after 1878. The frieze paintings notwithstanding, the two motifs from *The Dance Lesson* appear in at least forty extant pastels, drawings, and prints between 1878 and 1882, and numerous other pastels with questionable dates. Some of these works seem directly linked to Degas's preparation of a particular frieze painting, but the variation between the motifs is minimal and often undetectable. There is little doubt that a sketch like *Dancer Tying Her Scarf* (Fig. 1.4) is a study for the "standing dancer" in *The Dance Lesson*. But what are we to make of the same figure in the experimental print, *Two Dancers in a Rehearsal Room* or in the crayon lithograph, *In the Wings* (Figs. 1.5 & 1.6)? The first print includes the "seated dancer" as well as the "standing dancer." The lithograph doubles the upright motif with the smallest adjustment to the figure. And in the frieze series proper it is nearly impossible to avoid the same motif; it

appears at least once in fourteen of the compositions. As a result, Degas's viewer is consistently immersed in the artist's practices of repetition and alteration, evoking the duration of the artist's craft and his dilatory processes-of-making. In other words, Degas's deployment of the dancer-motifs across the frieze series (and outside of its borders in other media as well) effectively collapses the viewer's encounter with any single work into his or her broader memory of the motifs.

My distinction between the two types of repetition in the frieze series is not arbitrary; Degas's two iterative modalities have discrete origins. The artist employed the frieze format at least one year prior to beginning the first frieze classroom painting, initially adopting it for café subjects around 1876 or 1877. In addition (as already described above), the iterative maneuvers in the frieze composition parallel structural modifications made to the foyer paintings from the mid-1870s. On the other hand, the artist's earliest rehearsals of the dancer-motif can be traced to 1878-79 and the drawings sessions for *Little Dancer Aged Fourteen* and the abandoned *Portraits in a Frieze, Project for Decoration in an Apartment*. By shifting our interpretive lens away from the frieze series' point of origin (late 1878 or early '79) and towards the series' two distinct modalities of making, it becomes clear that the frieze classroom works are intimately entwined with a wide array of artistic experiments at the end of the 1870s: monotypes, a sketchbook kept at Ludovic Halévy's house, plans for sculpture, *japonisme* appropriations, experiments in print-making, and exercises in haptic draftsmanship. My research shows that the frieze series is an adaptation of these fluid processes of production, a fertile ground wherein artistic experiment gelled into a prolific working routine. It also becomes clear that Degas embraced repetition as an everyday activity that provided restricted possibility, a kind of sheltered freedom at once insular and radically plural in practice.

Tracking Degas's production process is no easy task. Not one of the foyer or frieze paintings is dated and there are hundreds of related sketches, some of which are undoubtedly still sequestered in private collections. Reviews and records of the Impressionist Exhibitions from 1874 to 1880 are instructive, as are the artist's somewhat datable sketchbooks and the related works with secure dates. This project could not exist without the numerous scholars before me who have scoured the archives gathering morsels of evidence in order to calibrate timelines and date specific works. Paul André Lemoisne's catalogue raisonné is an invaluable resource, but the more recent reassessments of specific foyer and frieze paintings by George Shackelford, Mari Kalman Meller, and Jill DeVonyar and Richard Kendall laid the groundwork necessary for my own research.²⁶ Yet, I would maintain that the disorder and confusion with which these scholars struggle is, in fact, central to Degas's working methods. Iteration was a routine activity for Degas: a studio practice at once nostalgic for lost academic traditions, infused with modern technologies, and distilled during evenings of doodling with friends. As much as possible I have attempted to recover the element of contingency that his artistic process actualized and to validate its heterogeneous "thrusts in every direction."²⁷

Repetition and the desire for meaning

²⁶ Paul André Lemoisne, *Degas et son œuvre*, 4 vols. (Paris: Paul Brame and C.M. de Hauke, Arts et Métier graphiques, 1946-49); Shackelford, *Degas: The Dancers*, esp. Chapters Three and Four; Mari Kalman Meller, "Exercises in and Around Degas's Classrooms," pts. 1, 2, and 3, *The Burlington Magazine*, no. 1020 (March 1988): 198-215; no. 1045 (April 1990): 253-65; no. 1084 (July 1993): 452-62; Jill DeVonyar and Richard Kendall, *Degas and the Dance* (New York: Harry N. Abrams and the American Federation of Arts, 2002), 110-17; DeVonyar and Kendall, *Degas and the Ballet: Picturing Movement*, 95-126.

²⁷ "Hier, j'ai passé ma journée dans l'atelier d'un peintre bizarre du nom de Degas. Après beaucoup de tentatives, d'essais, de pointes poussées dans tous les sens, il s'est énamouré du moderne ; et dans le moderne, il a jeté son dévolu sur les blanchisseuses et les danseuses. Au fond, le choix n'est pas si mauvais. . . . Un original garçon que ce Degas, un maladif, un névrosé, un ophtalmique [...]. C'est, jusqu'à présent, l'homme que j'ai vu le mieux attraper, dans la copie de la vie moderne, l'âme de cette vie. Maintenant, réalisera-t-il jamais quelque chose de complet ? J'en doute. C'est un esprit trop inquiet." E. and J. de Goncourt, *Journal, mémoires de la vie littéraire*, vol. 2, ed. Robert Ricatte (Paris: Fasquelle, Flammarion, 1956), 967-8. My translation of the passage is included in the conclusion to Chapter Two.

Edmond de Goncourt's infamous quip about Degas's artistic practice in 1874 has become the stuff of legend. After describing the various "neurotic" thrusts he encountered in the artist's studio, he queries: "Now, will he ever realize something really complete? I doubt it. He seems to have a restless mind."²⁸ In a review of the exhibition at the Grafton Galleries in 1905, the *Times*'s critic reached a similar conclusion. He dubbed Degas nothing more than a *virtuoso*, a skilled performer of his instrument, even a collector of sorts, but an artist who lacked the solidity of history:

We for our part, and to our regret, fail to find even the elements of that greatness which [Degas's] admirers says is his and his almost alone of the painters today. Never was there a painter who took the road to immortality with so little baggage. What has he done, except paint (in his young days) a few charming little pictures, perfectly drawn and highly finished, and, in mature life, a number of pastel studies of dancing girls in momentary attitudes? Even were we to admit that he is a good draughtsman—and it is hard to admit—as Jan Steen—and that he is a master of all the subtleties of artificial light, does that prove him to be more than a *virtuoso*? . . . No. The American collector who has been paying his thousands for the little *Danseuses* of Degas will one day wake up to the fact that an artist, to count permanently, must have something to say.²⁹

"With so little baggage" and without "something to say"—these are the not-so-subtle critiques of Degas's modest retrospective. Sixty years later, Theodore Reff would give the sentiment a clinical note: "self-defeat."³⁰ But the broad strokes of the verdict are relatively unchanged from 1880: "M. Degas has made some charming pictures with his dancers. Why not stop when the subject is exhausted?"³¹ Critics consistently found a more complete artistic realization latent in the early realist paintings (like the diminutive *The Dance Rehearsal*), and the *Times*'s critic sensed renewed promise in the late-career pastels of large dancers "in momentary attitudes."

²⁸ See note 26 above.

²⁹ Anonymous, "Art Exhibitions," *London Times*, February 27, 1905: 12.

³⁰ Theodore Reff, "New Light on Degas's Copies," *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. 106, no. 735 (June 1964): 248 and 250-9; 256. The full sentence reads, "[Degas] was doomed to that kind of artistic failure in which there is more than a hint of self-defeat, as Freud suggested in the case of Leonardo."

³¹ See note 9.

Nevertheless, time and again the artist's lag time is branded a deficiency, and Degas is rendered nothing more than an artist with a practiced party trick: "little *Danseuses*."

In my genealogy of Degas's early modes of repetition I spend ample time looking closely at the artist's paintings, drawings, and prints from 1876 to 1882. I examine how they intersect and inflect one another, how different styles of drawing or types of printmaking deplete form while other experiments, such as life drawing, constitute and foster form (though not necessarily in this order). This intertextuality between works and figures can seem exhausting to track, and even pointless to some critics. But it is my contention that, exhausting or not, the same intertextuality is key to the artist's circuitous progression. The results tell us about Degas's everyday draftsmanship, his cultivation of form over time, and what I describe as the production of lived memory. This positions repetition, especially where the re-creation of dancer-motifs is concerned, as an experiential craft involving movement, routine, nurtured intuition, and physical performance. It also emphasizes how Degas's working methods resisted the creation of a "masterpiece" or a "limited edition" series ready for a one-man show. Instead he assimilated both his methods and subjects over time. Unlike the seriality of Monet's paintings of the Gare Saint-Lazare (1877) or his haystacks (c. 1890), there is no ultimate finality to the frieze classroom series; it morphs in perpetuity until the final decade of Degas's career. To my mind this endless reinvention is not so much about the suspension of time—such that Degas is stuck—but the enfolding of past, present, and future moments of making.

Routine and performance are not concrete entities easily located in paintings. Rather these are ephemeral qualities of time and space: the quotidian quality of rehearsal. That said, scholarship to date has mostly pathologized Degas's repetition, linking it to unfreedom,

masochism, and death, as Freud would have it.³² My project attempts to nuance our understanding of Degas's practice and his seriality, to think about the multiplicity of variation as a generative method rather than an obsessive, destructive impulse. Along the same lines, we must resist the desire to fix (or to spatialize) the temporality of his craft: to locate his practice in any one painting or even in one series misses the point. When possible I draw upon the critical assessment of individual paintings or exhibitions to reveal how Degas's methods were regarded in his own period. Not surprisingly, when he exhibits *The Dance Rehearsal* in 1879 (Fig. 0.1) certain critics already detect and dislike a formulaic quality in his paintings. By 1892 George Moore can refer to the "stock figures"—the dancer-motifs—in the frieze painting *Dancers in the Rehearsal Room with a Double Bass* (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fig. 0.10).³³ Still, these are not insightful or sustained interpretations of Degas's working methods. For that I have mostly relied upon Degas's dealer, friends, and acquaintances to describe his routines and their meanings. My ambition is not to re-create a chronology, but to understand the commitment to, and purposes of, iteration.

To that end, there is no shortage of memoirs dedicated to Degas. Yet anecdotal recollections about the artist receive short shrift in the critical scholarship on his art. For the most part, primary accounts by George Moore (1890; 1918), Walter Sickert (1917), Ambroise Vollard (1924; 1938), Georges Jeannot (1933), Paul Valéry (1938), and Daniel Halévy (1964) are

³² In Chapter Three of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), Freud introduces the concept of "repetition compulsion" as an example of the "death drive," arguing that acts of repetition are self-destructive impulses in opposition to the creative drive. My own analyses of repetition are infused with a variety of theoretical and art historical sources, but are motivated first and foremost by Degas's paintings, drawings, and prints. See Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), ed. and trans. James Strachey (New York and London: W.W. Norton and Co., 1989).

³³ "The foreshortened figure of the girl in the foreground bent forward . . . is not so well known to us as the other girls; the girl next to her a little higher up in the picture . . . occurs in nearly every *Leçon de Danse* that Degas has painted; she is one of his stock figures, we find her everywhere, by herself and forming a part of almost every group." George Moore, "Degas in Bond Street," *Speaker*, January 2, 1892.

indiscriminately excised as anecdotal evidence about Degas's stodgy character.³⁴ In this project I revisit Paul Valéry's interpretations of Degas's methods (although Vollard and Moore make for corroborating witnesses) and situate the author as an informed viewer of Degas's rigorous and repetitive processes.³⁵ Unlike other memoirs of the artist, most of which collect anecdotes that mythologize Degas's persona, Valéry's *Degas Danse Dessin* (1938) is a palimpsest of short essays on the three topics—artist, dance, drawing—and their reciprocities as lived activities. In the essays, Valéry describes Degas's drawing methods and studio life, emphasizing the artist's cultivation and performance of memory as an everyday practice. The author also evaluates Degas's draftsmanship in relation to experience and memory, borrowing the vocabularies of contemporary philosopher Henri Bergson, with whom Valéry sympathized and often engaged in his own writing.³⁶ Mnemonic draftsmanship becomes a point of departure for Valéry's Degas, a process in which the artist translates the multiplicities and inequalities of experience into interminable form. Thus, in Valéry's conception, transformative repetition becomes a function of the artist's will to freedom, a modality of endless re-creation. In my own analysis, Degas's

³⁴ Notable exceptions to this rule include Richard Kendall's *Degas: Beyond Impressionism* and Denis Rouart's *Degas, à la recherche de sa technique* (Paris: Floury, 1945).

³⁵ Paul Valéry, *Degas, Danse, Dessin* (1938; repr., Paris: Gallimard, 1965); Vollard, *Degas*; Vollard, *En écoutant Cézanne, Degas, Renoir* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1938); George Moore, "Degas: The Painter of Modern Life," *Magazine of Art* 13 (October 1890): 421-2; Moore, "Memories of Degas," pts. 1 and 2, *Burlington Magazine*: vol. 32, no. 178 (January 1918): 22-3 and 26-9; vol. 32, no. 179 (February 1918): 63-5. This is by no means an exhaustive list; rather it cites the most consequential texts for my arguments. Valéry's daily writing routine is briefly compared to Degas's in Chapter Four, but he emerges as an insightful and critical viewer of Degas's artistic practice in my Chapter Three.

³⁶ My interpretation of Valéry's text is predominately read through the lens of two of Bergson's texts: *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness* (1888), trans. F.L. Pogson (Kila, MT: Kessinger Publishing Company, 1910); and *Matter and Memory* (1896), trans. N.M. Paul and W. Scott Palmer (New York: Zone Books, 1991). Valéry and Bergson shared a brief correspondence and Valéry responded publicly to specific comparisons made between his own writing and Bergson's *Creative Evolution*. Indeed, Valéry delivered a funeral oration for Bergson; however, the influence of Bergson on Valéry has as much to do with their habitus and shared intellectual pursuits as any direct communication between the younger writer and the esteemed philosopher. For instance, Valéry praised Bergson "for having 'renewed' the problems . . . of time and memory." For a thorough account of their correspondence and intellectual intersections, see James C. O'Neill, "An Intellectual Affinity: Bergson and Valéry," *PMLA* 66, no. 2 (March 1951): 49-64; A. E. Pilkington, *Bergson and His Influence: A Reassessment* (Cambridge and London: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 99-145; 104; and Suzanne Guerlac, *Literary Polemics: Bataille, Sartre, Valéry, Breton* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), 165-93.

interminable practice of recycling and adaptation amounts to a tactical resistance to the reification of the artist's process in the marketplace, a kind of anachronistic craft that revels in laggardly time. As the Grafton Galleries photographs confirm, Degas's intertextuality resists efforts at its own ordering; Valéry's insights into the artist's practice help us give meaning to that resistance.

My discussion of Degas's draftsmanship focuses on the variations of the dancer-motifs. But the inventiveness and "originality" of the frieze series has everything to do with the frieze format as much as its dancer-motifs. The origins of the format are as elusive as any of Degas's experiments at the end of the 1870s—the memoirs make no mention of it—and most scholars have presumed an analogy with "ancient" movement.³⁷ However, my research suggests that Degas appropriated the format from several sources before assimilating it to the purposes of oil painting. Japanese prints, sketchbook cells of the *demi-monde*, greasy oil drawings, and panoramic caricatures—all of these media stimulated Degas's move to the horizontal format in canvas. In addition, the early incarnations of the frieze format consistently picture tawdry subjects, such as the café life in *Café-Concert (The Spectators)* (Fig. 3.8) or the ungainly *ballet rats* in *The Ballet Rehearsal* (Fig. 3.30). Yet the paintings in the later frieze series resolve the crudeness and chaos of these early examples. In lieu of the degraded, ape-like creatures that make up the frieze pastels, Degas employs the depleted dancer-motifs in the classroom series as signs of static mobility: bodies that linger between movement and rest and that structure the compositions' own cautious rhythms. Furthermore, the frieze classroom paintings are well-defined, if rudimentary, expressions of figure/ground relations with relatively little evidence of caricatured detail or what I describe as the *jouissance* of the formless frieze drawings. The frieze classroom series communicates a confident, if contingent, knowledge about form and its

³⁷ See, for example, Shackelford, *Degas: The Dancers*, 106; DeVonyar and Kendall, *Degas and the Dance*, 112.

potentialities; pictorial space is unresolved only because it is impermanent. Ultimately, the horizontal format becomes a heuristic device for the artist, a space of transformation and memory—a space of *répétition*.

Repetition, Modernism, and the Marketplace

Practices of iteration in modern painting have, until recently, been situated as the dialectical antipode to modernism's mandate for originality. In Rosalind Krauss's seminal essay "The Originality of the Avant-Garde," she argues that the "grid-scored surface is the image of an absolute beginning," the "logically fraudulent original" that long goaded the modern artist's claims of authenticity while compelling the repetition it sought to repress.³⁸ In her analysis, Degas's compositional rhythms are simply indices of the support's horizontal and vertical axes. (Degas did, in fact, refer to his compositions in a derogatory manner as "a process of perpendiculars and horizontals").³⁹ Richard Schiff examines comparable semantic tensions in the early and mid-nineteenth century, claiming that it was the Romantic painters who altered the cultural and artistic definitions of imitation, "from a relationship of synonymy with 'invention' to a relationship of synonymy with 'copy.'"⁴⁰ Still, Degas's artistic practices—to say nothing of his surly dictates—are imbued with a longing for "tried and true methods of the [classical]

³⁸ Rosalind Krauss, "The Originality of the Avant-Garde: A Postmodernist Repetition," in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985), 161-2.

³⁹ Degas, *Lettres* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1945), 194. The full quote reads: "I thought I knew a bit about perspective, I knew nothing about it, and [I] thought I could replace it through a process of perpendiculars and horizontals, by trying hard to calculate the angles in space by little more than good will. I worked hard at it." "Je croyais que je savais un peu de perspective, je n'en savais rien, et cru qu'on pouvait la remplacer par des procédées de perpendiculaires et d'horizontales, mesurer des angles dans l'espace au moyen de la bonne volonté. Je me suis acharné."

⁴⁰ Richard Schiff, "The Original, the Imitation, the Copy, and the Spontaneous Classic: Theory and Painting in Nineteenth-Century France," in "The Anxiety of Anticipation," special issue, *Yale French Studies*, no. 66 (1984): 27-54; 28.

past.”⁴¹ Krauss locates a metaphysical imperative toward the pairing, “originality/repetition,” while Schiff maintains the historical contingency of its configuration.⁴² However, both scholars privilege modern painting’s discourses about and desire for “originality.”⁴³ The terms of their dialectic are accordingly underwritten by (what they take to be) the specific conditions of modernity: “the private citizen’s free movement and personal growth” amongst “an emerging industrial economy,” for Schiff, or the “material ground of the pictorial object,” for Krauss.⁴⁴

Indeed, when art historical scholarship in the 1980s and early 1990s reassessed the meaning of “the modern copy” and repetition in the long nineteenth century more generally, polemics organized around the fluctuating connotations of “originality.” Scholars contrasted the varied repetitious practices of Eugène Delacroix and Ingres—those canonical Romanticists—to the later uses and meanings of repetition in the work of Claude Monet and Henri Matisse.⁴⁵ As described above, terms like “replica-function” and “author-function” were coined to schematize

⁴¹ Georges Jeannot quoting Degas in his “Souvenirs sur Degas,” *Revue Universelle* vol. 55, no. 13 (October 1933): 152-304; 167. The full quote reads: “One must admit, we live in a funny time. This oil painting we do, this difficult craft that we practice without having a real command of it! A similar inconsistency has doubtless never existed. There were tried and true methods that the artists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries practiced; methods still known to David, a student of Vien, who was the dean of the Academy of Fine Arts, but the painters of the early nineteenth century were no longer acquainted with them.” “Nous vivons à une drôle d’époque, il faut l’avouer. Cette peinture à l’huile que nous faisons, ce métier très difficile que nous pratiquons sans le connaître ! [P]areille incohérence ne s’est sans doute jamais vue. Il y a des méthodes très sûres que pratiquaient les artistes des dix-septième et dix-huitième siècles ; ces méthodes que connaissait encore David, élève de Vien, qui fut doyen de l’Académie des Beaux-Arts, mais que ne connaissaient plus les peintres du commencement du dix-neuvième siècle.”

⁴² For Schiff’s treatment of “originality” and “repetition” as terms with historical breadth in modernism, see his “Originality,” in *Critical Terms for Art History*, eds. Robert S. Nelson and Richard Schiff (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), esp. 114-5.

⁴³ It could be argued that repetition is a central tenet of Krauss’s anti-ocularcentrist modernism; however, she most often invokes repetition as a dominant quality of an artwork when discussing modernist sculpture. For example, see her chapter on Rodin in *Passages of Modern Sculpture*. The great exception to this is the grid paintings of various modernist artists, who ultimately seek, as she argues, originality.

⁴⁴ Schiff, “Originality,” in *Critical Terms for Art History*, 104; Krauss, “The Originality of the Avant-Garde: A Postmodernist Repetition,” 158.

⁴⁵ For a schematic outline of this debate, see Rosalind Krauss, “Retaining the Original? The State of the Question,” in *Retaining the Original: Multiple Originals, Copies, and Reproductions*, Studies in the History of Art 20 (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art; Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1989), esp. 8-9. See also Patricia Mainardi, “The 19th-Century Art Trade: Copies, Variations, Replicas,” 69-73; Benjamin, “Recovering Authors: The Modern Copy, Copy Exhibitions and Matisse,” 176-7; and Marjorie B. Cohn, “Introduction: In Pursuit of Perfection,” esp. 23-30.

the shift and to highlight the role of the emerging gallery system and its emphasis on artistic temperament and uniqueness. Among these contributions, Adrian Rifkin's post-structuralist approach to the "uncertainty" and open-endedness of Ingres's compositions is probably closest to my reading of Degas's seriality.⁴⁶ In lieu of periodic ruptures or symptoms of transition, I mean to locate the uncertain mélange of past and present in Degas's art-making, such that endless reworkings might fuel innovation, which in turn, may or may not drive the burgeoning marketplace, but which often effect contradictory relations between the viewer and the work of art. The ambition is to articulate how an artist engages iteration (consciously or not) in contingent and ill-defined ways. As Rifkin describes Ingres's repetitions, the artist desired to constantly shift his relationship to his works, "unfolding the endless proposition that is 'and if . . . and if.'"⁴⁷

Thus, as alternative models to the "originality of the avant-garde" are formulated, and as the boundaries between modernism and its post- and/or pre- moments begin to seem less severe, repetition has begun to function as yet another modernist myth. In particular, three recent studies have shifted the foundation of our analysis of iteration and modernist painting in provocative ways. In *The Infinite Line: Remaking Art after Modernism*, Briony Fer scrutinizes modes of seriality in post-war abstraction and argues that repetition acted as a generative form invoking memory and the "already-made," but that it also engendered the freedom of possibility. She examines seriality "in the wake of the exhaustion of a modernist aesthetic," suggesting that the modality allowed artists from the late 1950s to 1970 an avenue "into different temporalities" and

⁴⁶ Adrian Rifkin, *Ingres Then, and Now* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), esp. 10-15 and 43-5. Rifkin proposes that Ingres's oeuvre is always/already unsettled and that the artist and his works resist the fixity of historical interpretation. My analysis of Degas's repetitions similarly posits that uncertainty, experiment, and process are productive modalities available as legible indicators of meaning for the viewer. In her forthcoming essay dedicated to Rifkin, Susan Siegfried makes a more traditional art historical argument in support of Rifkin's reading of Ingres. See Susan Siegfried, "Fragment and Repetition in Ingres: The Never-Ending Work of Art," in *The Visual Arts and Interdisciplinarity: Responses to Adrian Rifkin*, ed. D. Arnold (London: IB Tauris, forthcoming).

⁴⁷ Rifkin, *Ingres Then, and Now*, 43.

“multiple registers” of subjectivity, which were provisional, temporary, and incomplete.⁴⁸

Jennifer Dyer’s research in *Serial Images: The Modern Art of Iteration* situates the structure of serial iteration in the historical context of modernism proper.⁴⁹ Dyer posits several different moments of seriality—specifically those of Degas, Mondrian, Bacon, Schiele, and Warhol—which are all defined by their “activity of actualization:” the constructive, active, and free nature of becoming in iteration.⁵⁰ What is striking in these two accounts, which claim c. 1960 as a starting and end point respectively, is the Deleuzian emphasis on the relationship between the praxis of iteration, its actualization, and its ultimate life-affirmative qualities. Or, as Fer summarizes, “[w]e are lost without repetition.”⁵¹

Eik Kahng, in her introduction for *The Repeating Image: Multiples in French Painting from David to Matisse*, finds an “aesthetics of repetition” already evident in the art of the long nineteenth century.⁵² In less certain ways, Kahng’s overarching arguments parallel those of Fer and Dyer, extending their Deleuzian frameworks into an earlier moment. Her goal is to differentiate between the “old aesthetic framework of the original (and by implication its copy)”

⁴⁸ Briony Fer, *The Infinite Line: Remaking Art after Modernism* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004), 2-4. Fer defines series (and, by extension, its proper descriptor, seriality) in the post-war period as “a number of connected elements with a common strand linking them together, often repetitively, often in succession. But . . . usually mutually interwoven.”

⁴⁹ Jennifer Dyer, *Serial Images: The Modern Art of Iteration, International Studies in Hermeneutics and Phenomenology* 4, ed. Andrzej Wierciński (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2011).

⁵⁰ Dyer does not offer a general definition for this essential term of her argument (“activity of actualization”). My own definition is constructed based on usages in her “Introduction.” Dyer’s arguments about Degas’s serial iterations are taken up in my Chapters Two and Three. Briefly, she argues that Degas’s dancers are represented in states of duration (after Bergson), resulting in a continual, interactive process of actualization between the figures and the viewer. My own argument focuses on Degas’s artistic process and how iterations of making become legible indices of memory and craft for the viewer over extended encounters with the artist’s objects.

⁵¹ Fer, *The Infinite Line: Remaking Art after Modernism*, 2. See Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* (1968), trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), esp. 1-5. Deleuze’s philosophical work on repetition is essential to Dyer’s and Fer’s arguments in the way that he positions repetition as a certain manner of working or behavior in relation to something unique or singular and that has no equal or equivalent.

⁵² Eik Kahng, “Repetition as Symbolic Form,” in *The Repeating Image: Multiples in French Painting from David to Matisse*, ed. Eik Kahng (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008). Kahng’s catalogue essay makes critical links between the practices of pop and minimalist artists in the 1960s and circulating discourses about the longer history of repetition and seriality in modern art. Especially relevant is the traveling exhibition *Serial Imagery* (Pasadena Art Museum, 1968), which featured Monet, Mondrian, Josef Albers, Marcel Duchamp, Morris Louis, Ellsworth Kelly, Kenneth Noland, Warhol, and Frank Stella.

and the heterogeneity of repetition as a cultural mode, ultimately identifying repetition as an ontological “symbolic form” of modernity.⁵³ This is a bold claim, staked out in post-1789 terrain conventionally associated with an “anxiety of influence.”⁵⁴ However, Kahng’s argument is timely and suggestive of a larger trend in nineteenth-century studies. For example, Stephen Bann writes extensively on Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres’s and Paul Delaroche’s investment in burin engraving technology as both a commercially viable medium and as a source of originality.⁵⁵ And Marc Gottlieb’s reassessment of emulation bills it as a dominant concern for Jean-Louis Ernest Meissonier—a poignant reminder of the classical past’s tenacious hold on Salon painters and on an artist like Manet.⁵⁶

Two interventions should be made here, both of which will bring us back to Degas. We must be cautious of too easily subsuming iteration into historical definitions of modernity that emphasize the proliferation of reproductive technologies and the challenge to the auratic art object. Such arguments are seductive. In an age of standardized regulation and mechanical reproducibility, why wouldn’t repetition have symbolic resonance? In this scenario Degas’s paintings and drawings are hastily likened to Eadweard Muybridge’s stop-motion photographs.⁵⁷ But what of the *processes* of repetition? What of the ways, the temporalities, and the means, in

⁵³ The term is meant to invoke Erwin Panofsky’s rhetoric regarding perspective as the symbolic form of the Italian Renaissance. Kahng, “Repetition as Symbolic Form,” 14 and 19.

⁵⁴ I refer to Harold Bloom’s well-rehearsed argument in *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973). He argues that post-Enlightenment poets experienced a heightened anxiety about their creative potential in the shadow of their precursors.

⁵⁵ Stephen Bann, *Parallel Lines: Printmakers, Painters and Photographers in Nineteenth-Century France* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), esp. 25-48; Idem., “Ingres in Reproduction,” in *Fingering Ingres*, eds. Susan Siegfried and Adrian Rifkin (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001); Idem., “Reassessing Repetition in Nineteenth-Century Academic Painting: Delaroche, Gêrome, Ingres,” in *Multiples in French Painting from David to Matisse*.

⁵⁶ Marc Gottlieb, *The Plight of Emulation: Ernest Meissonier and French Salon Painting* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).

⁵⁷ The comparison has become common. See DeVonyar and Kendall, *Degas and the Ballet: Picturing Movement*, 98 and 107; Kirk Varnedoe, *A Fine Disregard: What Makes Modern Art Modern* (New York: Abrams, 1990), 112-26; Anne Hollander, *Moving Pictures* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1991), 399-407; and Charles Stuckey, “The Predications and Implications of Monet’s Series,” in *Multiples in French Painting from David to Matisse*, 116-7. I challenge this reading of Degas’s iterations in my final chapter.

which iteration occurs? Studies like Rifkin's and Bann's confirm that reproducibility and repetition are desires that can be put to disparate, even antithetical ends, in any particular historical moment. But in the specific case of Degas, the dawdling mode of production can hardly be explained as "symbolic" of mechanized technologies.

This leads to my second point, which has to do with taste, the market, and collecting. Recent scholarship in the early modern period has gone to great lengths to reveal repetition as a formative condition of the production and reception of Western European painting. Studies by Elizabeth Cropper and Maria Loh draw attention to the ever-shifting interpretive matrices for artistic values such as imitation, innovation, and originality.⁵⁸ What they also reveal is the historical specificity of the artistic marketplace, the fluctuating ways in which objects accrue various qualitative and quantitative values at disparate historical moments. In the current market for modern art, Degas's dancer-motifs and the frieze format are no longer evidence of the artist's deficiencies; they have become trademarks of the irascible, obsessed artist and his "pretty"—if sexually suspicious—dancers. In contrast, I want to suggest that Degas's seriality remains obstinately *uncollectable*. Even as the foyer and the frieze classroom paintings insist on their innumerable associations, they refute tidy quantifications and neat, collectible editions. (This is especially true given the unfortunate number of unpublished drawings traded on the private market.) Hence the constant looking back-and-forth required in my own study; there are so many examples, enumerations, and exceptions to consider. The following chapters will argue that Degas's processes are often rendered legible across and between his works. Indeed, his seriality encourages viewers to recollect their varied experiences before his compositions. However, this recollection is never complete because there is no totality of repetitions to collect. In the face of

⁵⁸ Elizabeth Cropper, *The Domenichino Affair: Novelty, Imitation, and Theft in Seventeenth-Century Rome* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005); Maria H. Loh, *Titian Remade: Repetition and the Transformation of Early Modern Italian Art* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2007).

Monet's novel marketing in the 1890s or Damien Hirst's global "multi-show" strategy today, what is most radical about Degas's seriality is that consciousness is not constituted as hermetic, or collectible. I hope to shed light on the radical circulation of Degas's repetition, its resistance to fixity or rationale, and its dilatory, mnemonic methods still available to viewers today.

Synopsis

This project began in front of a handful of frieze paintings and the desire for them to mean something. But Degas's paintings seem to desire one another; one painting evokes another, telling of the artist's decisions, his repetitions and transformations over time. Not surprisingly this dissertation commences with Degas's earliest explorations of the ballet classroom. In Chapter Two I analyze the first classroom pictures (1871-74) and the foyer series proper in light of Edmond Duranty's influential essay *La Nouvelle Peinture* (1876) and his overlooked theorization of "place" in realist painting: *le langage de l'appartement*. My conclusions are wrought from the paintings themselves and from criticism of the Impressionist Exhibitions. Both divulge a transition in the paintings from the early 1870s: from persuasive *physiologies* of "place," which Duranty advocated, to syntactical structures of pictorial space. I examine Degas's various artistic experiments, employing semiotic classifications borrowed from Charles Peirce and Roland Barthes to name specific pictorial procedures. Along the way I argue against conventional readings of the paintings' temporal instantaneity and realist proclivities. In place of such conclusions, I locate architectural indices of repetitious movement within individual works and, more radically, indices of the artist's creative temporality across the series as a whole. Drawing upon the spatial dialectics of Henri Lefebvre, I describe Degas's simultaneous deployment and interrogation of conceived space—ocularcentric conceptions mapped onto the

canvas—and his tenuous experiments with “lived” or “approximate” spaces that embrace the contingency of their repetition. This chapter is not a strictly formal interrogation of the classroom pictures. Rather, it is an investigation into the structuring of painting’s narrative possibilities and the diminution thereof, an analysis of the pictorial organization of architecture, dancers, and props that allowed for widely popular, *physiologie*-type interpretations in the first place and eventually rendered them insufficient in the face of Degas’s classroom paintings.

The central questions in the third chapter are about how the frieze format entered Degas’s oeuvre. What are the critical contexts for its initial production? What are the underlying principles of its sustainability as a “space” for artistic creation? To address these questions I examine Degas’s endeavors immediately prior to the advent of the frieze classroom series, delving into his most prolific and experimental period of production. My argument is that Degas’s affinity for the frieze format evolved through time and material methods. He neither sketched the peculiar shaped support before composing *The Dance Lesson*, nor did he erratically begin an oil painting on such a large and oddly-shaped canvas. In lieu of some inaugural rupture, I maintain that the frieze classroom series began at the prosaic intersection of Degas’s everyday social practices and innovative, casual experimentation with drawing and print media. Specifically I analyze the drawings in Notebook twenty-eight kept at Ludovic Halévy’s home, Degas’s early frieze monotypes—often produced after dinner with friends,—and his *japoniste* fans and prints. To my mind these compositions suggest Degas’s initial ambivalence about the possibilities for the horizontal format; they are crass caricatures that tell of disordered, perhaps even subversive pleasure. Degas’s earliest encounters with the frieze format were defined by a vacillation between artistic operations that “lowered” or debased his studio processes and prudent revivals of assimilable artistic practices.

The second innovation examined in Chapter Three is the modular dancer-motif, which, in my analyses, was first conceived during Degas's drawing sessions for *Little Dancer Aged Fourteen*. I re-contextualize several of these multi-figure sketches (c. 1878) in light of Valéry's description of Degas's draftsmanship, Bergson's concept of duration, and longstanding inquiries about the relationship between haptic and visual memory modalities. In doing so, I shift our interpretive focus on the series of sketches—from preparation for sculpture to routines of draftsmanship—which helps us to understand the serial nature of the frieze classroom paintings and their varied transformations over three decades. The final section of the chapter is a study of the pastels and charcoals related to Degas's abandoned plans for *Portraits in a Frieze, Project for Decoration in an Apartment* (c. 1879) and of his most prolific series of prints, *Mary Cassatt at the Louvre* (c. 1879). I argue that both series of works were produced through the elaboration of autonomous, but allied motifs and were sustained by transformative acts of combination and re-combination across the page. The qualitative differences between the repeated motifs are therefore located between the works; the repetitions are not spread over a single inclusive composition, but across the entire corpus of Degas's work.

Chapter Four is a reevaluation of the frieze series in light of my conclusions about Degas's mnemonic draftsmanship in the preceding chapter and Paul Valéry's *Degas Danse Dessin*. Accompanied by an examination of the drawings and paintings related to the frieze works, my analysis of Valéry's text ultimately suggests that Degas embraced seriality as a mode of resistance to the reification of artistic process at the end of the nineteenth century. I draw upon Degas's letters and his contemporaries' memoirs from the early twentieth century to support my claims about his allegiance to the craft of art. For Valéry—and later for Walter Benjamin, who borrows from Valéry's writing on Degas—"craft" is an anachronistic practice trained by time,

repetition, physical knowledge, and everyday routine. I will suggest that such methods are at once nostalgic, reactionary, and resistant. Degas's working methods (and his maxims, as well) functioned as a desiring practice, one that presumed the loss of artistic knowledge and its hierarchies and was radically opposed to the public circulation of an artist's commercial "temperament."

In the latter half of the chapter I return to the format of the frieze paintings and examine its longevity in Degas's career. Lefebvre's concepts of spatial practice come into play again as I position the artist's deployment of the frieze format as a "symbolic space." By this I mean a space wherein lived experiences of the everyday collaborate with, even colonize, conceptions of abstract space (Cartesian linear perspective) to produce a freedom of movement and thought. In my analyses of the frieze classroom paintings the fundamental principles of spatial organization are the exchange and manipulation of abstract space and the flux of relations between motifs. Thus, the frieze format allowed Degas to negotiate, re-tool, and re-live the relations of pictorial space and the evolving forms of the motifs, over and over again.

While it has become common scholarly practice to discuss the frieze series as expressive of the "movement" of modernity, this project ultimately characterizes movement in Degas's seriality as radically inefficient and invested in the *longue durée* of transformative repetition.⁵⁹ The project of art, in Degas's case, was conceived of as dilatory rehearsals of craft—performances over time and in space that are still available to viewers willing to remember. At the close of the dissertation I borrow from the cultural geographer David Seamon, who describes

⁵⁹ See DeVonyar and Kendall, *Degas and the Ballet: Picturing Movement*, 98; Charles Stuckey, "The Predications and Implications of Monet's Series," in *Multiples in French Painting from David to Matisse*, 116-7; Anne Hollander, *Moving Pictures*, 399-407; Kirk Varnedoe, *A Fine Disregard: What Makes Modern Art Modern*, 112-26; and Christoph Asendorf, *Batteries of Life: On the History of Things and Their Perception in Modernity* (1984), trans. Don Reneau (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 82.

the processes by which subjects negotiate daily socio-spatial practices as “body-ballets.”⁶⁰ These are bodily habits adopted in daily existence: very basic movements that fuse together like an artistic sensibility, create patterns for a specific task, and that often form an organic rhythm or flow. His conclusions about the relationship between the routines of daily life and dance are glaringly similar to Valéry’s assessment of Degas’s drawing practice and what he calls the “*condition of dancing*.”⁶¹ I would venture that Degas intuited the affinities between his artistic practice and that of the dancers’ craft; to do otherwise would be to ignore his subject. More to the point, the ballet classroom is the physical space where dancers become dancers, where, day after day, they train their muscles, experiment with new choreographies, and loiter between performances. The argument in the following pages is that the seriality of the classroom pictures was an empathetic response to the dancers’ own rehearsals. Given close attention, Degas’s repetitions tell us about the formation of bodily memory, the duration of artistic knowledge, and the endless performances that might follow.

⁶⁰ David Seamon, “Body-Subject, Time-Space Routines, and Place-Ballets,” in *The Human Experience of Space and Place*, eds. Anne Buttimer and David Seamon (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1980).

⁶¹ Valéry, *Degas Danse Dessin*, 31. The longer quote reads: “This time is organic time, such as is found in the ordering of all the alternating and fundamental life functions. Each of these is effected by a series of muscular acts which reproduces itself, as if the end or fulfillment of each series brought about the impulsion of the next. On this model, our limbs can carry out a set of *figures* that are all interlinked, and whose repetition brings about a kind of exhilaration, ranging from languor to delirium, from a kind of hypnotic abandonment to a sort of frenzy. Hence, the *condition of dancing* is created.” “Ce Temps-là est le temps organique tel qu’il se retrouve dans le régime de toutes les fonctions alternatives fondamentales de la vie. Chacune d’elles s’effectue par un cycle d’actes musculaires qui se reproduit, comme si la conclusion ou l’achèvement de chacun d’eux engendrait l’impulsion du suivant. Sur ce modèle, nos membres peuvent exécuter une suite de *figures* qui s’enchaînent les unes aux autres, et dont la fréquence produit une sorte d’ivresse qui va de la langueur au délire, d’une sorte d’abandon hypnotique à une sorte de fureur. L’état de *danse* est créé.”

Chapter Two:
The Foyer Classroom Series

*Art, for him, was simply a series of problems in a
more subtle kind of mathematics than the real one*
- Paul Valéry, *Degas Danse Dessin*¹

In his review of the Impressionist Exhibition of 1877,² a critic calling himself “Jacques” eagerly described the delights available to the viewer in Degas’s painting of the ballet classroom, *The Rehearsal* (c. 1874, Glasgow Museums, Fig. 0.4):

For those fond of the mysteries of the theater, who would willingly worm their way into the sidelights for the enjoyment of a spectacle denied to the layman, I recommend the watercolors [sic] of M. Degas. Nobody examines more thoroughly [than Degas] the interiors behind doors inscribed with the words, ‘Closed to the public.’ For example, his *Dance School* [Fig. 0.4], where, under the eye of the ballet master, four or five students execute their steps with such conviction, there is a disturbing sincerity. The prima ballerina, who, all out of breath, takes a bow after a dance, throws herself at the ramp with such passion that if I were in the position I would catch her. The dancers, poised to rush onstage, legs in the air, watching for their cue, are picturesque. . . . [T]hey are all

¹ “Il ne voyait dans l’art que problèmes d’une certaine mathématique plus subtile que l’autre” Valéry, *Degas Danse Dessin* 11.

² For pragmatic purposes, I refer to the group shows that Degas helped organize in Paris as “Impressionist Exhibitions” (1874-86), but the exhibition titles on posted advertisements and the catalogue titles changed from show to show. In 1877, the catalogue title does not include any description of the artists; rather the artists’ names are simply listed on the cover—and even this infuriated Degas because it smacked of cheap publicity. However, the sign above the entrance to the exhibition read: “Exposition des impressionnistes.” G. Rivière, “Explications,” *L’Impressionniste* (April 21, 1877). See Stephen F. Eisenman, “The Intransigent Artist or How the Impressionists Got Their Name,” in *The New Painting: Impressionism 1874-1886*, ed. Charles S. Moffett (San Francisco: The Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco, 1986).

unconsciously but very conscientiously lined up, and the foreshortening is strangely exact[;] they are taken from real life.³

Carol Armstrong positions Jacques's synopsis as prototypical of Degas criticism from the 1870s: the allure of the ballet classroom, the spectacle of the prima ballerina, the masculine gaze of the ballet master, the unrefined corporeality of the *corps de ballet*—and then the draftsmanship, the “exact” foreshortening, and the “real” quality of it all.⁴ In fact, Jacques's reads as a short *physiologie* of the *petits rats de l'Opéra*, a kind of reportorial introduction for the uninitiated.⁵ Charged with his own promise of “authority” and “truth,” the critic wants to fascinate and scandalize, while also revealing something of the interior that is normally closed to the general public. By the end, however, Jacques's description succumbs to his own desire and he virtually throws himself onto the stage to catch *The Star* or the girl at *The End of an Arabesque* (Figs. 2.1 & 2.2).

³ “A ceux qui sont friands des mystères du théâtre, qui se faufleraient volontiers derrière les portants, pour y jouer du spectacle défendu aux profanes, je recommande les aquarelles de M. Degas. Nul ne scrute, à ce point, les intérieurs sur la porte desquels il est écrit: ‘Le public n’entre pas ici!’ Son *Ecole de danse*, où quatre ou cinq élèves, sous l’œil du maître, se livrent à des jetés battus pleins de conviction, est d’une sincérité inquiétante. La prima ballerina, qui salue après un pas, qui l’a tout essoufflée, se précipite avec une telle fougue vers la rampe que, si j’étais au pupitre, je songerais à la soutenir. Les danseuses, au moment de s’élancer en scène, attentives à leur entrée, une jambe en l’air, guettant le motif qui les convient, on un aspect pittoresquement réel. Le bataillon de choristes, la bouche ouverte, brandissant, qui son épée en fer blanc, qui sa toque à plumes, tous alignés en un raccourci étrangement exact, allongeant leur profil inconscient, mais consciencieux, sont pris sur le vif.” Jacques, “Menus propos: Exposition impressionniste,” *L’Homme Libre*, April 12, 1877. My thanks to Howard G. Lay for help with this translation.

⁴ Carol Armstrong, *Odd Man Out*, 2-3. I would argue that there is a shift in the criticism from the Third and Fourth Impressionist Exhibition and that lengthy extrapolations about the dancer-types or their milieus are rare after 1879, probably because the subject was more commonplace in the artist's oeuvre.

⁵ *Physiologies* were small pamphlets or pocket-sized books, which included positivistic descriptions and illustrations of Parisian “types” (street characters, artisans, etc.) that informed the reader about the details of character, environment, physiognomy, and even physiological tendencies. While the cheap *physiologies* were most popular in the 1840s, the genre begat the more expensive brand of panoramic literature, which covered topics such as monuments, neighborhoods, and the suburbs, and which flourished throughout the latter part of the century. Similar to Jacques's supplementary comments and Degas's paintings, “both *physiologies* and the larger panoramic texts . . . functioned to reduce and classify the city, to make it knowable, through a juxtaposition of pictures and episodic stories . . .” Alexander Zevin, “Panoramic Literature in 19th-Century Paris: Robert Macaire as a Type of Everyday,” in *Paris: Capital of the 19th Century*, ed. French Studies and Comparative Literature Departments, Brown University (<http://library.brown.edu/cds/paris/Zevin.html>). On the relationship between *physiologies*, media of classification, and knowledge about everyday life, see also Richard Sieburth, “Same Difference: The French *Physiologies*, 1840-42,” in *Notebooks in Cultural Analysis*, ed. Richard Sieburth (Durham: Duke University Press, 1984) and Margaret Cohen, “Panoramic Literature and the Invention of Everyday Genres,” in *Cinema and the Invention of Everyday Life*, eds. Leo Charney and Vanessa Schwartz (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

Two years later, for the Fourth Impressionist Exhibition, Degas submitted two self-referential paintings of the ballet classroom, *The Rehearsal* (c. 1873-79, The Frick Collection, Fig. 0.5) and *The Dance School* (c. 1874-78, Shelburne Museum, Fig. 0.6).⁶ In 1879, critics still applauded Degas's skills as a draftsman, but in lieu of breathless narratives about prohibited places, the critics noted "a rash of poses"⁷ and offer exasperated conclusions: ". . . it's the subject that is lost!"⁸ His detractors assumed the artist to be stumped, thwarted, or just plain stuck.

Consider this from Albert Wolfe:

. . . M. Degas; he also had some talent As young man of twenty years, one could predict for him a certain future. But here is the decline of his career, without having taken a step forward, always offering promises and nothing more.⁹

Or this, from Georges Lafenestre:

M. Degas, more mature and cleverer [than Cassatt], also possesses a certain experience with drawing which he uses on occasion and is not always able to disguise. . . . but it is difficult to see how he would take to new processes.¹⁰

Degas's unrealized potential and his tendencies toward repetition had been noticed before.¹¹ But in 1879 the critics did more than lament an apparent impasse in his art. Armand Silvestre,

⁶ There was no exhibition in 1878, mostly due to Degas's novel condition that no member of the group simultaneously exhibit at the Salon and with the "Independents." While no copy of the poster for the Fourth Exhibition exists, Degas's final draft of the advertisement read: *4^e Exposition / faite par un / Groupe d'artistes Indépendants / 28 Av. Opéra / du [date to be entered]*. It is noteworthy that in prior drafts of the exhibition poster for 1879 Degas included the labels *indépendan[ts] / realistes / et / Impressionnistes*, attesting to the diverse artistic commitments of the so-called group. See Theodore Reff, *The Notebooks of Edgar Degas*, vol. 2 (London: Clarendon Press, 1976), Notebook 31: 56, 59, 58, 39. Accounts of the artists' discussions about Degas's new condition in 1878 and the organization of the Fourth Exhibition are detailed by Ronald Pickvance in "Contemporary Popularity and Posthumous Neglect," in *The New Painting: Impressionism 1874-1886*, 243-50.

⁷ "Une hardiesse de ligne, une provocation de dessin, une témérité de poses . . ." Montjoyeux, "Chroniques parisiennes: Les Indépendants," *Le Gaulois*, April 18, 1879.

⁸ "Ensuite, une loge—touours de danseuse. . . . Seulement, au lieu du *chat*, c'est le sujet qu'il faut chercher." Anonymous. "Choses et autres" *La Vie parisienne*, May 10, 1879. I treat the full quote later in the chapter; see note 128.

⁹ ". . . M. Degas; celui-là aussi avait du talent Un jeune homme de vingt ans les signerait qu'on pourrait lui prédire un avenir certain. Mais voici au déclin de sa carrière, sans avoir fait un pas en avant, donnant toujours des promesses et rien que cela." Albert Wolff, "Les Indépendants," *Le Figaro*, April 11, 1879.

¹⁰ "M. Degas, plus mûr et plus habile, possède en plus une certain expérience de dessinateur dont il se sert à l'occasion et qu'il ne parvient pas toujours à déguiser. . . . mais il est difficile de voir comment il le prendrait par des procedes nouveaux." Georges Lafenestre, "Les Expositions d'art: Les Indépendants et les aquarellistes," *Revue des deux mondes* vol. 33, no. 15 (May 1879).

Degas's most enthusiastic critic, took to making analogies between his repetitive processes of making and the syntax of writing:¹²

We will find the highlight [of the exhibition] in the all-too-rare paintings by M. Degas. It is always the same process of synthesis in a truly admirable sense of exactness.

. . . It is a simple alphabet, correct and clear, then thrown into the calligraphic workshop, rendering arabesques that make for unbearable reading.¹³

All of these critics ascertain possibility in Degas's compositions. But whereas Wolfe and Lafenestre saw empty promises and dead ends, Silvestre intuited a syntactical, writerly process of making art, imagining a workshop where the actual product—calligraphic arabesques—makes for grueling readings of paintings. For some, Degas's process seemed to exhaust itself; for others, the same process could be delightfully exhausting.

Process, syntax, and reading are far afield from Jacques' pursuit of the dancer in her private "places" just two years prior. But a thorough analysis of Degas's classroom pictures requires both an examination of their "realist" potentialities (what takes place behind closed doors) and the traces they bear of the artist's working methods—that "simple, correct, and clear alphabet" brusquely thrust into a writer's workshop. Most importantly, I want to deal with the

¹¹ A sampling of criticism that acknowledges Degas's seriality and his reputation for painting dancers is listed here. "If M. Renoir has painted only one dancer, M. Degas has introduced a whole harem of them to the exhibition." "Si M. Renoir n'a peut qu'une danseuse, M. Degas en a introduit tout un sérail à l'Exposition." Marc de Montifaud, "Exposition du boulevard des Capucines," *L'Artiste*, May 1, 1874. "M. Degas, who has exhibited a series of 25 paintings . . ." "M. Degas, qui a exposé une série de 25 peintures . . ." Bertall, "Exposition des impressionists, rue Lepeletier," *Paris-Journal*, April 15, 1876. "His groups of ballet dancers . . ." "Ses groupes du corps de ballet . . ." Bariolette, "Notes parisiennes," *Le Sportsman*, April 7, 1877. "[T]he remarkable series of dancers by M. Degas . . ." "[L]a remarquable série de danseuses de M. Degas . . ." Anonymous, *Le Moniteur universel*, April 1877. "[T]he dancers of M. Degas etc. . . ." "[L]es danseuses de M. Degas etc. . . ." Bertall, "Les Expositions particulières: Revue artistique: Prologue de Salon de 1879," *Paris-Journal*, May 10, 1879. "Degas has sent a suite of interesting studies of dancers and café-concert singers . . ." "Degas a envoyé une suite d'études intéressantes sur les danseuses et les chanteuses des café-concerts . . ." Schop, *Le National*, May 1877.

¹² Armand Silvestre was a Parnassian poet and bawdy writer of *gauloiserie*. His celebration of Degas's syntactic processes is consistent with values espoused by the Parnassians in the late 1870s, such as restraint, simplicity, and technical precision.

¹³ "Nous le trouverons au plus haut point dans les trop rares toiles de M. Degas. C'est toujours le même procédé de synthèse dans un sentiment de justesse vraiment admirable. . . . C'est un alphabet simple, correct et clair, jeté dans l'atelier de calligraphes dont les arabesques rendaient la lecture insupportable." Armand Silvestre, "Le Monde des arts: Les Indépendants," *La Vie Moderne*, April 24, 1879.

inseparability of these two interests. This chapter aims to track and investigate the “authenticity” of Degas’s dancers and their simulated spaces of work: how are convincing fictions like *The Rehearsal* constructed and how do they invite close readings of the “real?” But more significant are the ways in which perspectival renderings, architectural motifs, and dancers’ bodies—the stuff of Degas’s “disturbing sincerity” according to Jacques—become subject to formal manipulations and reconfigurations, which, in turn, are readily legible to the likes of Silvestre as the alphabet of Degas’s writing workshop. Or, to put it differently, this chapter examines how a realist interest in the “authenticity” of dancers and their private places is actually part and parcel of artistic experimentation in the repetition and transmutation of form.

In the pages below I often refer to the comingling in Degas’s classroom pictures of documentary evidence with mutable pictorial spaces. My analyses are inflected by two important critical frameworks about the relationship between “place” and “space,” one from Yi-Fu Tuan, the other from Henri Lefebvre. Yi-Fu Tuan’s seminal research in human geography established that “place” and “space” are not mutually exclusive terms, but actually require each other for definition;¹⁴ in that way the terms’ interrelationality reinforces the intersections of “realist” narrative *and* spatial abstraction in Degas’s classroom paintings. The second approach at work in my project is Henri Lefebvre’s triple spatial dialectic, outlined in his ambitious exposition, *The Production of Space* (1974). Lefebvre’s interdisciplinary model posits three moments of *equal* value in the production of space. My definition of “place” is primarily understood through the lens of Lefebvre’s first dimension of the production of space, *perçu* or perceived space. This

¹⁴ Yi-Fu Tuan defines place as a particular part of space that can be occupied, unoccupied, real, or perceived. His groundbreaking contribution was to argue that “place” is not a quantifiable object; rather, “places are centers of felt value” and determined by 1) biological facts of human utility, 2) relations between place and space, and 3) subjects’ range of experience or knowledge. Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 3-7.

dimension refers to the everyday or “commonsensical” use and understanding of a locale¹⁵—in this case, the ballet classrooms located inside the Le Pelletier Opéra house (1821-1873) and the Garnier Opéra house (1875-present).¹⁶ In other words, I take place to consist of both architectural and topographical specificity. I also take it to refer to the production of distinct ideological practices; place is the site where power is exchanged between historical subjects of gender, class, sexuality, and race.¹⁷ This is what Lefebvre means when he says that space is more than space, a maxim that also applies to Degas’s paintings as he re-produces the social place on the canvas and invites his viewers to collaborate.

¹⁵ Perceived space must have a material component that can be grasped by the senses (not just vision), and it is embodied by spatial practices of social activity that occur in the production processes of the everyday. In spatial terms Lefebvre refers to *perçu* as spatial practice. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (1974), trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell Press, 1991), 38-41. See also Christian Schmid, “Henri Lefebvre’s Theory of The Production of Space,” in *Space, Difference, Everyday Life*, eds. Kanishka Goonewardena et al., (New York and London: Routledge, 2008), 36-9. Tim Cresswell also suggests that Lefebvre’s *perçu* “plays the same role as place.” Tim Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction* (Malden, MA and Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 10.

¹⁶ The Le Pelletier was Paris’s eighth opera house and was located in the burgeoning right bank, in the area now known as the ninth arrondissement. It was hastily commissioned after the Duc de Berry was assassinated at the Théâtre des Arts, which was immediately demolished and then reconstructed with minor changes at the new site on rue Le Peletier. The Le Pelletier Opéra house, though an impermanent solution, was the Opéra’s home until it burned to the ground on the evening of October 18, 1873. However, plans were already under way for a new opera house after an assassination attempt on Napoleon III occurred at the entrance to the Le Pelletier Opéra on January 14, 1858. In 1860 Baron Georges-Eugène Haussmann officially announced the erection of a new opera house on the boulevard des Capucines—just west of the former locale—and two competitions were held in 1861 to determine the architect for the new project. Construction began on Charles Garnier’s Opéra in 1861 and was not completed until well after the abdication of Napoleon III in 1870. When the Garnier Opéra finally opened in January 1875, it was celebrated as a monument to the new Republic, rather than as an Imperial gift to the people. For a detailed analysis of the history of the two opera houses, see Christopher Curtis Mead, *Charles Garnier’s Paris Opera: Architectural Empathy and the Renaissance of French Classicism* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 1991), esp. Chapters Two and Four. DeVonyar and Kendall have gathered convincing evidence about the locale of Degas’s foyer classroom series, which definitively cites specific architectural details from the Le Pelletier Opéra, even though Degas continued to work on the series well after fire destroyed the building in 1873. As a regular attendee he would have had a strong familiarity, a sense of “place,” from past experiences. There is no evidence that the frieze series documents any particular architectural qualities of the Le Pelletier or the Garnier Opéra. DeVonyar and Kendall, *Degas and the Dance*, 80-7 and 105-17.

¹⁷ In addition to Lefebvre, my use and understanding of “place” and “space” are informed by Michel Foucault’s “Questions on Geography,” in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-77*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Press, 1980). I am also beholden to recent scholarship in cultural and Marxist geography. See Edward W. Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (London: Verso Press, 1989) and Gillian Rose, *Feminism and Geography: The Limits of Geographical Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993.) For a detailed summary of various methodological approaches to the concept of “place,” see Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction*, especially his synopsis of the debates between social constructivists (such as David Harvey) and structural phenomenologists (such as J.E. Malpas), 26-33.

“Space,” in my analysis, is an amalgam of Lefebvre’s second and third dimensions of the production of space: *conçu* (conceived space) and its inverse, *vécu* (lived space).¹⁸ Conceived space is a consciously formulated, strategic abstraction/representation of place; it is the space of abstract labor, “technology, applied sciences, [and] knowledge bound to power.”¹⁹ Lived spaces are *symbolic* practices—“limited to works, images, and memories”²⁰—derived from the everyday (*perçu*), but displaced as residues. Because space is not an absolute entity but a field of social struggle, any one place/space is defined by its movement between Lefebvre’s three moments of production. But *conçu* and *vécu* are always/already removed from the everyday social place (*perçu*); they are second tier signs that imbue meaning. In a straightforward manner, place has an experiential, material referent (though its meaning is not singular, nor static); space is a mental conception of place that is always/already an object of analysis, conscious or not.

In this chapter, I borrow Lefebvre’s vocabulary to describe Degas’s artistic processes throughout the foyer series as highly schematic, contrived, and “conceived” procedures, suggesting that the artist methodically “mapped” the place of the ballet classroom. In Degas’s

¹⁸ Lefebvre maintains that the “lived” “cannot be understood historically without the conceived.” He argues that the separation of the two occurred first in Western philosophy with Descartes’ separation of subject and object. Schmid, “Henri Lefebvre’s Theory of The Production of Space, in *Space, Difference, Everyday Life*,” 38. Furthermore, Lefebvre argues that reconstructions of “spatial codes” that might have practical resistance must employ the knowledge systems of conceived space and reunite dissociated elements via experiential social practices. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 64.

¹⁹ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 50. Conceived space, or, in spatial terms, “representations of space,” occurs as a mental exercise that produces an image, which defines the space. It is significant that “one spatial representation can be substituted by another that shows similarities in some respects but differences in others.” Schmid, “Henri Lefebvre’s Theory of The Production of Space,” in *Space, Difference, Everyday Life*, 36-7. I would relate this to the exchangeability of the foyer classroom paintings’ architectural motifs. Additionally, Schmid argues that conceived space emerges at the level of expert, or scientific, discourse. For Degas, this discourse is the academic conventions of composition and perspective, Cartesian systems of illusion, which motivate his experiments in contrived manipulations of linear perspective and foreshortening. Lefebvre states this clearly: “Representations of space [*conçu*] have at times combined ideology and knowledge within a (social-spatial) practice. Classical perspective is the perfect illustration of this.” Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 45. For a longer description of the properties of *conçu*, see Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 50-3.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 50. Lived space, or, in spatial terms, “spaces of representation,” is defined by Lefebvre as the inverse of conceived space; it the everyday experience in symbolic practice. It denotes the experiential quality of “place,” but it utilizes the inexpressible elements (the surplus of the everyday) to create a symbolic dimension of space, such that the lived spaces of representation do not refer to actual “places,” but to something else. Schmid, “Henri Lefebvre’s Theory of The Production of Space,” in *Space, Difference, Everyday Life*, 37 and 40.

pictorial production, the artist disjoined the place of the ballet classroom from its referent and conceived of it as space for artistic operations and syntactic procedures. In doing so he manipulated “a piece of space” that was distanced from its social differentiations and conflicts. Or, to borrow from Lefebvre borrowing from Marx, he conceived of an “abstraction which became true in [artistic] practice.”²¹ I employ the term “mapping” to refer specifically to Degas’s processes of disassociation and exchange in the paintings: how architectural motifs and dancer-motifs become a set of signs disassociated from the specificity of place and reorganized as a set of formal pictorial relations that can be planned again and again, from canvas to canvas.²² Taken as a paradigm, there is a simultaneous homogeneity and fragmentation in the series; particular pictures look exceptionally alike, and yet, their attributes or motifs have been “separated, assigned in isolated fashion to unconnected sites.”²³

Conversely, I also argue that the foyer paintings are spaces of research and symbolic expression. They divulge legible indices, or residues, of Degas’s generative practices²⁴—explicitly derived from everyday experiment—that stimulate analytic, mnemonic looking and supersede the significance of any one painting. Degas’s processes of production were deftly rehearsed and are infamously nebulous; however, I attempt to show that the artist’s formal schematics also reveal “approximateness,” self-consciousness, uncertainty, and non-knowledge,

²¹ Lefebvre describes the production of space under the conditions of capital as a “concrete abstraction,” which he defines as an abstraction that “concretizes and realizes itself socially, in the social practice.” Lefebvre borrows this definition from Marx’s description of labor under capital in the *Gundrisse*: an “abstraction which became true in practice.” Lukasz Stanek, “Space as Concrete Abstraction: Hegel, Marx, and Modern Urbanism in Henri Lefebvre,” in *Space, Difference, Everyday Life*, 67-8.

²² Particular motifs carry various spatio-temporal possibilities dependent on their forms (vertical axis or diagonal axis), but, in effect, they constitute a hermetic language for the foyer series. Lefebvre states that conceived space “functions ‘objectally,’ as a set of things/signs and their formal relationships.” Each foyer painting thus becomes a “mapping” of motifs that construct a formal abstraction of the foyer “place.” Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 49. Lefebvre often cites maps, plans, signs, and information in pictures as types of “representations of space” (or conceived spaces).

²³ *Ibid.*, 98.

²⁴ I use the term generative throughout my text to describe an active and creative state of consciousness that is always/already a process intensified over time, though open-ended and apt to alter. My definition is taken from *ibid.*, 34.

or what Lefebvre calls “misunderstandings” as productive imperatives.²⁵ These tactical “misunderstandings” are made available in the foyer series and help to retrieve Degas’s artistic production for spectators’ own processes of reading/looking. The symbolic potentials of Degas’s classroom paintings are treated in Chapter Four. But the artist’s generative practices and their effective structures of self-conscious spectatorship are first introduced and explored here.

My study begins with an analysis of Degas’s first ballet classroom paintings (1871-74), and the ways in which their architectural motifs and pictorial structure “authenticate” the compositions’ sense of place and its persuasive possibilities. In these paintings Degas becomes the objective artist/reporter, simulating the illicit place of the Opéra classroom for the likes of Jacques. I then compare the early classroom works with Degas’s paintings that picture the orchestra and the stage of the Le Pelletier Opéra. I argue that the orchestra/stage compositions, most of which predate even the early classroom paintings, elicit a phenomenological, theatrical mode of spectatorship that challenges the conventional illusionism at work in the early classroom pictures. Moreover, while these first classroom paintings are prominent examples of Edmond Duranty’s *le langage de l’appartement*, as outlined in his influential essay *La Nouvelle Peinture* (1876), the foyer classroom paintings (1873-75) mark a shift in Degas’s production process toward repetition and seriality. I carefully analyze all eight paintings in the foyer series, subdividing the paintings into three discontinuous phases: prototype (*The Dance Rehearsal* and *Dancers Practicing in the Foyer*; Figs. 0.1 & 0.7), alteration (*The Rehearsal*, *The Rehearsal* and *The Dance School*; Figs. 0.2, 0.5, & 0.6), and variation (*The Dance Class*, *The Rehearsal*, and

²⁵ Ibid., 65. Lefebvre argues that systems of knowledge can be purposefully “misunderstood” in “regressive-progressive” approaches that take as their “starting-point the realities of the present.” In this respect, his method influenced Michel de Certeau’s theory of “making do.” Certeau speaks of “making” as a production that subverts from within a dominant economic order via “ways of using” its established ideological apparatuses. He terms these clandestine forms “tactics,” and includes the reappropriation of space as a fundamental goal. Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), xii-xx.

Dancers at a Rehearsal; Figs. 0.3, 0.4, & 0.8). I track Degas's artistic experiments across and between the canvases, employing semiotic classifications borrowed from Charles Peirce and Roland Barthes to name specific pictorial procedures and to ultimately dispute dominant readings of the paintings' temporal instantaneity. In place of such conclusions, I locate architectural indices of repetitious movement within individual works and, more radically, indices of the artist's generative temporality across the series as a whole.

The broader questions that arise in the chapter follow two lines of inquiry. The first concerns artistic investigations of social place in the latter half of the nineteenth century and the expressive possibilities of space as a pictorial abstraction. How does an artist begin to disjoin everyday place—and its accumulation of descriptive figures, objects, décor—from its representation as pictorial space? And when the figure/ground relationship is slowly disrupted and the ground begins to compel more and more consideration, what are the altered possibilities for interpretation? The second area of query is about the temporality of artistic production and prospects of verisimilitude. When processes of making become recognizable, repetitive exercises and the artists' legible indices vie for interpretive consequence, what happens to normative modes of reading and looking at pictures? And when looking becomes an effort of sustained memory across paintings and viewing contexts, what is the status of any one painting? Such questions are the stuff of lengthy arguments and ultimate conclusions. I begin with the First Impressionist Exhibition, the earliest classroom paintings, and persuasive fictions of place.

The early ballet classroom paintings: Realist place and iconic architecture

In the months leading up to the First Impressionist exhibition in 1874 Degas was instrumental in organizing, administering, and even advertising the exhibition. The artist chose to

exhibit a total of five paintings, two of which were ballet classroom subjects, though he subsequently withdrew one of the works.²⁶ Writing to James Tissot in London, Degas was feeling less confident in the group's success than in their ambition: "The general feeling is that it is a good, fair thing, done simply, almost boldly. It is quite possible that we wipe the floor with it as they say. But the beauty of it will be ours."²⁷ Degas's two submissions, *Dance Class* (1871, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fig. 2.3) and *The Dance Class* (1873-76, Musée d'Orsay, Fig. 2.4), are representative of two distinct formats and compositional arrangements that define the artist's first efforts at capturing the hidden spaces of the Paris Opéra.²⁸ While the format of the earlier work, the Metropolitan's *Dance Class*, is horizontal and that of the latter is vertical, both include a central dancer with her arms in the preparatory *en bas* position, a male figure (either the violinist or the ballet master, Jules Perrot), groups of dancers scattered across the canvas, and an area of expanse in the bottom right foreground for the viewer's own graceful entrance into the scene. Aside from the difference between the accompanying musician and the directing ballet master, the major distinctions between the works are their spatial composition and their architectural motifs. (Degas even retained the watering can in the bottom left corner as a kind of

²⁶ For an exhibition history and excerpts of the critical response to Degas's oeuvre, see *Degas Inédit*, ed. École du Louvre (Paris: La Documentation Française and École du Louvre, Musée d'Orsay, 1989). Prior to the exhibition's opening, Degas chose to remove *The Dance Class* (1873-76, Musée d'Orsay, Fig. 2.4) for unknown reasons. The painting was originally commissioned for Jean-Baptiste Faure; however, Degas was unhappy with both the ballet master's pose (later altered) and the group of dancers in the foreground (subsequently omitting one dancer). The artist sent Faure a different version of the scene, *The Dance Class* (1874, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fig. 0.2.7). For x-radiograph information, see *Degas*, ed. Boggs, 234-5. For a comprehensive socio-historical account of the exhibition and the artistic and politic climate surrounding its four-week run, refer to Paul Tucker's essay "The First Impressionist Exhibition in Context," in *The New Painting: Impressionism 1874-1886*.

²⁷ *Degas Letters*, ed. Marcel Guerin, trans. Marguerite Kay (Oxford: Bruno Cassirer, 1947), 39-40. Letters from Degas to Tissot are only reproduced in the English edition; all other citations from Degas's *Lettres* are taken from the French edition.

²⁸ The titles of Degas's paintings are generically descriptive and are not unique. For instance, the two works discussed here appear as *Classe de danse* (1871) and *Examen de danse au théâtre* (1873-76) in the catalogue for the First Impressionist Exhibition. Durand-Ruel was responsible for changing many of the titles, a fact that did not seem to upset the notoriously irritable Degas. Throughout this dissertation I have chosen to refer to the works' present-day titles as recorded by their home institutions.

iconographic attribute for his novel, modern subject.)²⁹ I will examine the paintings initially submitted to the First Impressionist Exhibition and two comparable works from the same period in order to investigate Degas's sustained interest in the physical place of the ballet classroom and the artist's decisive modifications between the four works: perspectival systems of re-presenting "place" and signs of "authentic" architecture.

The Metropolitan's *Dance Class* (1871, Fig. 2.3), Degas's first foray into the tedious, daily events of the Opéra, presents the viewer with a plain, rather drab interior in light of the subject matter.³⁰ The yellow-brown walls in the right back corner of the room speak to the viewer of labor, exhaustion, and sweat. The floors are painted with the same dirty yellow, suggesting that the stained boards have been scrubbed until their polish faded to dullness. Significantly, the edges of the canvas impede our view of any crown molding, and the gilded frame of the two(?) massive mirrors is acidic and tarnished; even the grand piano sinks under the pressure of the dancers' flesh and tulle. The one object of display and extravagance is the Empire-style cheval glass that sits conspicuously in the presence of the immense mirrors behind it.³¹ In fact, the painting is carefully composed of vertical and horizontal planes that position and

²⁹ The watering can was used to wet the wood floor, creating friction between the rosin on the dancers' shoes and the sealed wood. It is a recognizable motif in several of Degas's paintings and he often utilizes it as a formal device that echoes the architecture of the classroom or the structure of the dancers' bodies. In this way he employs the banal object of work as a formal element in pictorial space. This is most apparent in *Dancers Practicing at the Barre* (1876-77, The Metropolitan Museum of Art).

³⁰ Degas did not have access to the dance foyer of the Opéra on the rue Le Peletier; he was, however, a regular subscriber and was close friends with several musicians from the Opéra, including, significantly, the composer Ludovic Halévy and balletomane Count Ludovic Lepic. Little is known about the specific circumstances leading to Degas's embrace of the subject; however, new evidence published by DeVonyar and Kendall suggests that Degas's first sketches of musicians at the Le Peletier Opéra house date back to 1860, a decade before his attempts at formally rendering the subject. I will discuss the earlier paintings of the orchestra and dancers on stage below. DeVonyar and Kendall are right to suggest that "Degas was making dance pictures for a select, informed clientele who recognized his subjects and understood their specific nuances and allusions." DeVonyar and Kendall, *Degas and the Dance*, 14-9.

³¹ The mirrors could also be read as doorways. My conjecture here is based upon the light source sweeping across the canvas from the right, supporting my conclusion that the mirror on the left reflects a large window.

fix the viewing process along a series of rigid perpendiculars and rejoining orthogonals.³² Along with the layers of compressed mirror frames, the artist draws the viewer's eye around the corner into a corridor where a bulletin board hangs with two notices attached. Its black frame is assertive with pronounced orthogonals that make legible the corridor's structural orientation in relation to the larger area of the classroom. The bills' vertical format, framed in black, is juxtaposed with the black surface of the piano that holds the musician's sheet music—which is, in turn, met with the upright watering can and top-hat-turned-satchel that holds the musician's daily newspaper. Across the canvas, the double doors at the top of the composition and the single vertical trace of paint that acts as “corner” to the left of the doors secure the viewer's sense of the three-dimensional. Degas has gone to great lengths to exploit the conventions of interior genre painting by emphasizing the viewer's verticality in relation to the actual painting/object *and* to the illusionistic space within the painting. This is a not just a room to view, but a three-dimensional reality to inhabit and explore. In the tradition of seventeenth-century Dutch genre painting and its later eighteenth- and nineteenth-century French enthusiasts,³³ one is invited into

³² Degas's draftsmanship did not go unnoticed. The criticism from the First Impressionist Exhibition is littered with exclamations on the topic: “He is the master of highly accomplished science of design . . .” Philippe Burty, “The Paris Exhibitions: *Les Impressionnistes*,” *The Academy*, London, May 30, 1874. “. . . [H]e wages war against drawing with the weapons of a draftsman.” “. . . [I]l guerroye contre le dessin avec les armes d'un dessinateur.” Artiste, “Salon de 1874 à Paris,” *L'Indépendance belge*, June 13, 1874.

³³ The use of multiple interior and exterior areas in compositions is common in the works of Pieter de Hooch, Gabriel Metsu, Gerard ter Borch, and Jan Vermeer, to name only a few. In these artists' paintings, views are revealed through “archways, open doors, pulled-back curtains, or the hairlined grids of latticed windows, or appear within the frames of mirrors or pictures on walls.” Martha Hollander, *An Entrance for the Eyes: Space and Meaning in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 2. Such concise, but suggestive, compositional devices were much admired by artists and critics in mid-nineteenth century France, as demonstrated by Eugène Fromentin's description of painting in the Dutch Golden Age from his *The Masters of Past Time* (1876). He summarizes the qualities of seventeenth-century Dutch painting most admired by the French bourgeois public, but it is also an apt description of Degas's early classroom paintings: “It is of small format, of powerful and sober color, of concentrated effect, etc. . . . No painting . . . is more condensed, for none encloses in so small a space so many things, nor is forced to say so much in such a small setting . . . No painting leads with greater certainty from the foreground to the background, from the border to the horizon.” Eugène Fromentin, *The Masters of Past Time* (1876; repr. London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1913), 137-8. To a lesser extent, similar pictorial devices are found in the French bourgeois genre scenes of Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin, Louis-Léopold Boilly, and Meissonier. In these paintings there are fewer examples of thresholds in a single work compared with their seventeenth-century precedents, but the effects of spaciousness, quotidian domesticity, and episodic ambiguity remain, as does the lack

the room, around corners, through corridors, into passages beyond doorways, and even out into the city (the reflection of the window). The structure of perspectival space, its essential architectural elements, and the vertical orientation of both are exhibited amply for the viewer. This is not fantasy or fiction; this is an illusion of reality, a kind of simulated objective reportage.

I like to think that Degas got curious after his first try at the ballet classroom so he went hunting for signs of the “real” *foyer de la danse* at the Opéra. As noted earlier, the painting, *The Dance Class*, from 1871 is followed by a similar composition, *Dance Class at the Opéra* (Musée d’Orsay, Fig. 2.5), in 1872.³⁴ Aside from the variation in the dancers’ poses, the differences between the two consist mostly of architectural details and the reversal in viewpoint. The same dancer stands in the center of the room, this time facing both a musician and a teacher; however the bulletin board is now being read and the viewer is likewise invited to sit and observe.³⁵ We have only extant contemporary prints of Eugène Lami’s watercolor picturing the Le Pelletier’s *foyer de la danse* (1841, Fig. 2.6). But it is more than tempting to suggest that in the months between the earlier and later painting Degas went looking for some type of visual record that documented the specifics of the Le Pelletier’s ballet classroom, and that he found it.³⁶ Indeed, Degas’s second version of the ballet classroom draws heavily on Lami’s watercolor, which was

of fixed narrative. See, for example, Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin, *The Return from the Market* (1738, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa); Louis-Léopold Boilly, *Grateful Hearts* (c. 1790, Private Collection, England); Jean-Louis Ernest Meissonier, *The Chess Players* (1856, Kunsthalle, Hamburg). It is also significant that the eighteenth and nineteenth-century artists generally kept to the relatively diminutive size and vertical format of their Dutch predecessors. For further reading on the interpretive significance of spatial devices in Dutch genre painting, see Hollander, *An Entrance for the Eyes*, 48-101.

³⁴ It is sold by Durand-Ruel to the Englishmen Louis Huth in late 1872 and, therefore, it was not exhibited in 1874. *Degas*, ed. Boggs, 177.

³⁵ Incidentally the dancers in the two paintings have been identified as Joséphine Gozelin and Mlle. Hughes respectively. Both came to Degas’s studio to pose. The ballet master in the later work is Louis Mérante, an amiable master of ballet at the Opéra from 1870 to 1887. *Degas*, ed. Boggs, 175-6.

³⁶ Even if Degas did not engage with Lami’s watercolor or its printed versions, he would be familiar with the salient architectural qualities of the Le Pelletier Opéra house: the barrel vault arches above the entrance, the frieze decoration below the cornice roof, and the engaged columns framing the windows. These elements are all found in *Dance Class at the Opéra* (Fig. 2.5).

“reproduced in several popular prints around mid-century.”³⁷ The detailed additions to the architecture of the room include the slice of ceiling seen in the top left side of the canvas, the ornate crown molding, the arch, and the engaged columns framing it—all missing from the more somber first work. Not that the artist copied the watercolor; the simplifications speak to his desire for signs of labor and exhaustion to overcome those of glamour and flirtation. For example, the one massive arch replaces the busy bunch of niches in Lami’s version and the Corinthian capitals become subtler Ionic models in the distillation process. Regardless, the desire for signifiers of the actual classroom is unmistakable in the artist’s adaptation of the iconic architecture of the “real” place.³⁸

What ultimately distinguishes the two earliest ballet classroom paintings, the Metropolitan’s *Dance Class* and the Orsay’s *Dance Class at the Opéra*, is the greater articulation of a specific “place” in the latter. The manifestation of an actual, physical place—the *foyer de la danse*—is visually imparted by the architectural motifs and the expanded viewpoint. The insistent, almost diagrammatic system of transversals and orthogonals found in the earlier *Dance Class* persists in *Dance Class at the Opéra* and again acts as visual testament to the structure of place. Moreover, the inclusion of the room’s ceiling in *Dance Class at the Opéra* encourages the viewer to mentally complete the illusion of reality and to name it as secure. It thus bestows an objective sense of physiological, spatial, and social reality onto the scene. It is interesting to note

³⁷ DeVonyar and Kendall, *Degas and the Dance*, 74. Eugène Lami was a costume designer for the Paris Opéra during the height of its golden age of Romantic opera and ballet. His lasting achievement is the introduction of the bell-shaped tulle skirt, now known as the Romantic tutu, though this historical fact is based on oral tradition more than documentary evidence. Ivor Guest, *The Romantic Ballet in Paris* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1966), 15 and 117.

³⁸ I am employing the term “iconic” in reference to Charles Sanders Peirce’s definition of icon: a type of sign system in which the sign conjures its object through topological similarity. In Peirce’s semiotic system there are three types of relations between signs, objects, and interpretants: index, icon, and symbol. An index has an actual, physical relation to the object signified and a symbol signifies via multiple social conventions. For an overview of the definition, see Charles Peirce, “Letters to Lady Welby” (1908), in *Charles S. Peirce: Selected Writings*, ed. Philip Wiener (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1996), 390-1 and 407-8. Also see Peirce, “A Sketch of Logical Critics” (1909), repr. in *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings*, vol. 2, eds. Peirce Edition Project (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998), 460.

that Degas rarely included the presence of a ceiling in his interior paintings. To my knowledge, the earliest example is the notorious *Interior* (c.1868-69, Philadelphia Museum of Art), probably Degas's most psychologically intense genre picture.³⁹ Whether Degas was copying the viewpoint of Lami's watercolor or taking a cue from his relatively limited oeuvre is not important. Rather, it is significant that when he revisited the subject in *Dance Class at the Opéra* he made particular perspectival and architectural modifications to his composition. These architectural adjustments and additions prompt the viewer, in E.H. Gombrich's words, to "join in the game and to supplement with our imagination what the real motif undoubtedly possessed:" four walls, an exterior world, real space, and real time.⁴⁰

But for Gombrich, there is an inherent paradox in the conceptual collapse of picture and three-dimensional space as compelled by Degas's early classroom compositions. On the one hand, the Orsay's *Dance Class at the Opéra* (Fig. 2.5) allows the viewer "to infer not only the external form of every object represented but also its relative size and position" to the point that "we cannot conceive of any spot on the panel which is not 'significant,' which does not represent something."⁴¹ Gombrich terms this process the "rationalization of space," and to which an addendum might be added in the particular case of the realists: the "rationalization of space" into "place." As a consequence, the viewer must "collaborate" and "read contexts" to call up the conceptual image of the place represented.⁴² It is not a matter of imitation or actual knowledge of the *foyer de l'Opéra*; Degas did not need to experience the foyer in order to complete the illusion

³⁹ The work, also called *The Rape*, is thought to have been produced after a passage from Zola's *Thérèse Raquin*, which was published in full at the end of 1867. Degas kept the painting in his studio from 1868 to 1905, at which time he deposited it with Durand-Ruel. *Degas*, ed. Boggs, 145.

⁴⁰ E.H. Gombrich, *Meditations on a Hobby Horse and Other Essays on the Theory of Art* (Greenwich, CT: Phaidon Publishers, 1963), 9.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁴² *Ibid.* The full quotation reads: "It means that the painter relies on our readiness to take hints, to read contexts, and to call up our conceptual image under his guidance. The blob in the painting by Manet which stands for horse is not more an imitation of its external form than is our hobby horse. But he has so cleverly contrived it that it evokes the images in us—provided, of course, we collaborate."

and neither does the viewer. S/he accepts the illusion of reality due to the artist's calculated compositional decisions that signify a clear, ordered arrangement of credible architectural and narrative components—an “authentic” place in real time. As Gombrich notes, the viewer will actually bargain with the artist in order to sustain the illusion of reality and will overlook or traverse inconsistencies such as the implausible presence in *Dance Class at the Opéra* of the central dancer's doppelganger hiding behind the door. Degas has heightened the viewer's sense of objectivity and three-dimensionality by enclosing the fiction in the documented architectural details of the actual place, thereby mitigating the fantasies of painting, Degas's authorial voice, or the viewer's subjective experience.

I said above that the two paintings listed in the catalogue for the First Impressionist Exhibition were indicative of two distinctive formats and compositional arrangements. The first is defined by the two works just discussed. The second is characterized by *The Dance Class* (1873-76, Musée d'Orsay, Fig. 2.4), included in the catalogue but not the actual exhibition in 1874, and *The Dance Class* (1874, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fig. 2.7), which Degas exhibited at the next Impressionist Exhibition at the Durand-Ruel Gallery, rue Le Peletier, in April 1876.⁴³ To complicate matters further, Degas replicates the two architectural types of the former works (the earlier blasé classroom and the second, more ornate classroom discussed above) in the new works' format and composition. Looking at the four works together, it is clear that the earliest version of the vertically formatted works includes crown molding, Corinthian capitals, and marble engaged columns strikingly similar to Lami's watercolor and reminiscent of the Orsay's *Dance Class at the Opéra* (1872, Fig. 2.5). Likewise, the architectural details in *The Dance Class* (1874, Fig. 2.7) are suggestive of the simple, austere qualities found in the first

⁴³ The Metropolitan's version of this format (Fig. 2.7) is the painting given to Faure in lieu of the earlier version (Fig. 2.4), now housed at the Orsay. See note 26.

ballet classroom painting from 1871. All of this is to say that from the beginning Degas was invested in the productive processes of *exchange and substitution* in his paintings, even in the most “realist” phase of his career. Across and between these four earliest ballet classroom paintings is subtle cohesion and serial character resulting in provocative interpretive possibilities: recurrent pictorial spaces and iterated architectural elements that stake a claim on reality yet morph from work to work. Nevertheless, these early works are emphatically based upon the depiction of an actual place, a social locale that physically existed in the rue Le Peletier, and where, even as the viewer inspects the painting in 1874, s/he will accept the simulation as steeped in the documented details of the Le Pelletier Opéra and reported by an intimate insider.⁴⁴

Modes of Spectatorship: Embodied theatricality and absorptive illusionism

I want to intervene in my examination of Degas’s construction of “place” in the first ballet classroom paintings and to invoke the works that preceded, and, some argue, instigated Degas’s fascination with the physical and social site of the ballet classroom. In doing so, I want to underscore the purposefulness with which Degas constructed a particular kind of pictorial illusion and crafted the Opéra’s classroom as a place existing within the viewer’s contemporary social and physical world, but outside of the viewer’s immediate spatial and temporal circumstances of spectatorship.⁴⁵ Scholars agree that *The Orchestra of the Opéra* (c.1870, Musée

⁴⁴ Criticism from the First Impressionist Exhibition is scant and the journalistic style of art criticism most popular in mid-to-late nineteenth-century France rarely allowed for more than brief descriptions. Critical judgments about Degas’s formal means of representation were couched in terms of perception, real-ness, and draftsmanship. Writing about the *Dance Class at the Opéra* (Fig. 2.5) in 1872, London critic Sydney Colvin claimed, “[i]t is impossible to exaggerate the subtlety of exact perception, and the felicitous touch in expressing it, which reveal themselves in his little picture of ballet-girls training” Sydney Colvin, *Pall Mall Gazette*, November 28, 1872.

⁴⁵ In the following pages I suggest that the early ballet classroom paintings facilitate an absorptive viewing process wherein spectators are drawn into the temporalities of the paintings. However, it must be maintained that while viewers’ concentrations are absorbed, they remain cognizant of their physical separation from the work. In this way, the act of looking at the early classroom paintings engenders dual temporalities, that of the painting and the act of looking.

d'Orsay, Fig. 2.8), which began as a portrait of Désiré Dihau, is the artist's first painting that depicts the Le Pelletier Opéra.⁴⁶ Completed before the Franco-Prussian war (July 1870 - May 1871), it was quickly followed by a similar composition, *Orchestra Musicians* (1870-71, Städtische Galerie im Städelschen Kunstinstitut, Fig. 2.9). Pertinent to my argument is the implicit position of the viewer in each work. He—and make no mistake, the viewer here is a man—takes his seat in the exclusive *orchestre* near the musicians (as in *The Orchestra of the Opéra*) or as a member of the orchestra (as in the later painting). Even while the subjects of the painting ignore our physical presence, Degas encourages the viewer to identify and name certain members as close friends or professional colleagues (scholars have spent much time and effort following the artist's ploy).⁴⁷ The spectacle on stage is violently cropped, in effect decapitating the dancers in the first painting and severing the dancers' legs in the second. The dancers and the stage are not the primary subject of the two compositions; rather, the subjective experience of the embodied viewer is accentuated, even exaggerated.⁴⁸ When structuring the novel viewpoint,

⁴⁶ *Mlle Fiocre in the Ballet "La Source"* (1867-68, The Brooklyn Museum) was exhibited at the Salon in 1868; however, scholars consider it a "costume piece" or a portrait, rather than a genre painting. In 1871 Degas created an amalgamation of the costume genre and the first Opéra works: *The Ballet from "Robert le Diable"* (1871, The Metropolitan Museum of Art) positions the viewer in the audience watching the costumed dancers move before lights and scenery. My arguments about embodied spectatorship and the artist/narrator viewpoint in *The Orchestra of the Opéra* and *Orchestra Musicians* could also be applied to *The Ballet from "Robert le Diable."*

⁴⁷ For an exhaustive list of identifiable portraits in *The Orchestra of the Opéra* and a shorter list in *Orchestra Musicians*, see Degas, ed. Boggs, 161-2.

⁴⁸ My use of the term "embodied spectator" is purposeful in that I want to: 1) highlight the ways in which the paintings simulate the presence of the viewer's body immediately outside of the two paintings' picture planes and 2) draw attention to the viewer's complicity with the temporal and spatial experience of the theatre in the paintings, rather than with the experience of the totality of the each painting. However, I would contend that *The Orchestra of the Opéra* (Fig. 2.8) and *Orchestra Musicians* (Fig. 2.9) irrevocably disrupt the rigid boundaries between absorption and theatricality as defined and articulated by Michael Fried in *Absorption and Theatricality: Painter and Beholder in the Age of Diderot* (Berkeley: University of California, 1980), 2-5 and Chapter One. The musicians in both works ignore the viewer and are absorbed in their own contemplations; yet the paintings also make undeniable claims about the physical and temporal presence of the painter/holder. In this way the works can be characterized, if it is at all necessary, as exhibiting a "certain double structure, at once ostensibly denying and implicitly acknowledging the beholder's presence." Michael Fried, *Manet's Modernism or, The Face of Painting in the 1860s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 405. My Chapter Four will discuss the frieze works in relation to specific types of viewing or looking practices contingent upon viewers' experiences with Degas's oeuvre over multiple encounters in diverse moments of time and space. For a discussion on double structure and Degas's contemporaries, see Fried, 208-12, 222-4, and 243-51. Fried does not assimilate Degas into what he terms "the generation of 1863," but he does

Degas probably borrowed from the unusual angle of Honoré Daumier's *At the Theater (The Melodrama)* (1856-1860, Fig. 2.10), which analogously positions the viewer as a member of the audience.⁴⁹ In *The Orchestra of the Opéra* the viewer is just outside of the *stalles de l'orchestre* in the main *salle*. The *stalle*—to which only men were admitted, Degas among them—contained some of the most expensive seats in the house.⁵⁰ In *Orchestra Musicians*, Degas has pushed the musicians so close to the front of the picture plane it is quickly understood that the viewer is either a fellow musician or an intimate spectator. In both works, the viewer becomes wrapped in the locale of the painting, a unique situation of spectatorship in Degas's early oeuvre.⁵¹ That is, in *The Orchestra of the Opéra* and *Orchestra Musicians* Degas intervenes in the processes of spectatorship by stimulating phenomenological sensations such as simultaneity and bodily presence. The spatial illusions and temporalities of the paintings' fictions infiltrate the viewers' spatio-temporal processes of looking: a mode of embodied theatricality wherein the viewer is invited to take part in the scene as a musician/spectator and is literally enmeshed in the spectacle of music and dance. Present-day scholars, myself included, could rightly draw comparisons with Michael Fried's arguments about minimalist sculpture from the 1960s,⁵² but, in addition, Degas's compositions simulate a first-person narrator documenting events in real time and space, staging

argue that "his art makes historical sense only when it is seen in relation to the concerns of the generation of 1863." Fried, 11 and 557 n.169.

⁴⁹ Degas included Daumier as one of the "three great draftsmen" of the nineteenth century, alongside Ingres and Delacroix. It is also known that Degas copied many of Daumier's caricatures into his notebooks and owned several Daumier prints. For a discussion of Degas's indebtedness to Daumier, see Theodore Reff, "'Three Great Draftsmen': Ingres, Delacroix, and Daumier," in Ann Dumas et al., *The Private Collection of Edgar Degas*, (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art and Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1997), 158-70.

⁵⁰ Anselm Gerhard, *The Urbanization of Opera: Music Theater in Paris in the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Mary Whittall (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 25. Degas's notebooks include quick sketches of musicians and spectators that would suggest the artist sat in the *stalles de l'orchestre* or in the first rows of the main *salle*. Theodore Reff, *The Notebooks of Edgar Degas*, vol. 1 (London: Clarendon Press, 1976), 7.

⁵¹ The closest equivalent is the much more conventional portrait *Woman Leaning near a Vase of Flowers (Mme Paul Valpinçon?)* (1865, The Metropolitan Museum of Art) wherein the viewer is invited to sit at the table and contemplate the *nature morte* before him/her, paying little heed to the women's actual presence.

⁵² See Fried, "Art and Objecthood" (1967), repr. in *Art and Objecthood* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

the artist as both participant *and* reporter. Thus, one could argue that the paintings endorse Degas's authorial voice and/or the viewer's subjective, embodied experience before the paintings.⁵³

This is all to say that, in distinction to the first examples of the Opéra subject, the earliest ballet classroom paintings are examples of a more conventional academic illusionism: namely a unified, hermetic linear perspective system that engenders a conventional mid-century form of spectatorship. The Metropolitan's *Dance Class* (Fig. 2.3) and *The Dance Class* (Fig. 2.7), the Orsay's *Dance Class at the Opéra* (Fig. 2.5) and *The Dance Class* (Fig. 2.4)—all of these works ask the viewer to distance him/herself from the picture plane, look through the picture surface to the illusion behind, and become absorbed into the place of the fiction. And while the viewer is often required to traverse steeply raked floorboards in these early ballet classroom paintings, Degas exploits his skills of composition to aid the viewer's eye into and around the pictorial spaces, fastidiously absorbing the viewer into otherwise serene genre pictures.⁵⁴ Likewise, the viewer may be tempted to look down corridors or peek through cracked open doors; but all of the paintings adamantly oblige the viewer to “see with a single and immobile eye.”⁵⁵ Ultimately the paintings bespeak a rationalization of space as described by Gombrich and an absorptive, meditative quality exploited in academic realism and, I would argue, improbably championed by Degas's friend Edmond Duranty, the voice box of the “new painting.”⁵⁶

⁵³ Fried might consider this representative of the “double structure” of some mid-century painting. See note 48.

⁵⁴ Degas employed similar steep perspective systems and relatively high vanishing points in *Portraits in an Office* (*New Orleans*) (1873, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Pau) and *Interior* (c.1868-69, Philadelphia Museum of Art).

⁵⁵ I mean to invoke Erwin Panofsky's assessment of Western illusionistic devices, which most often posit a fixed viewpoint with mathematical certainty. Erwin Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form* (1927; repr., New York: Zone Books, 1991), 29.

⁵⁶ The term “academic realism” is meant to describe the type of realist genre paintings exhibited at the Salon in the 1850s, 60s, and 70s, epitomized by the popular, but controversial, work of Jean-François Millet. Millet's paintings of peasants occupied in repetitive, pre-industrial, and often religious tasks position the viewer as looking into the otherwise hermetic world of simple peasant culture. Michael Fried has identified Millet's oeuvre as “hyperabsorptive” and has located numerous critical responses to support his estimation. See Fried, *Manet's*

Le langage de l'appartement: Duranty theorizes “place” at the Second Impressionist

Exhibition

With *La Nouvelle Peinture* (1876) Duranty's primary objective is to outline a theory of realism for a second generation of artists following that of 1848⁵⁷—what Carol Armstrong describes as a neutralized “Third Republic theory of realism.”⁵⁸ While Degas is never explicitly named in Duranty's essay, it has been assumed that Duranty's program described and advocated Degas's work from the 1870s.⁵⁹ This is an odd fact given that the thirty-eight page pamphlet, the first complete publication dedicated solely to Impressionism, was a review of the Second Impressionist Exhibition at Durand-Ruel's Gallery on rue Le Peletier.⁶⁰ Nonetheless, Duranty's emphasis on asymmetrical compositions and draftsmanship, not to mention the recurrent description of Degas's subject matter, suggests that his focus was on a particular brand of realism rather than the whole of the exhibition. The text is instrumental to understanding the early ballet classroom paintings for several reasons. The Second Impressionist Exhibition included both *The Dance Rehearsal* (c. 1873, The Phillips Collection, Fig. 0.1)—the first instantiation of what

Modernism, 190-5 and 531 n.9. Laura Meixner has analyzed the laudatory criticism of Millet in postbellum United States and extrapolates a similar absorptive quality that allowed American critics to evoke overtly nostalgic meanings. Laura Meixner, “Popular Criticism of Jean-François Millet in Nineteenth-Century America,” *The Art Bulletin*, vol. 65, no. 1 (March 1983): 94-105.

⁵⁷ Louis Emile Edmond Duranty, *La Nouvelle Peinture: A propos du groupe d'artistes qui exposent dans les galeries Durand-Ruel* (1876), repr. in *The New Painting: Impressionism, 1874-1886*, 477-84.

⁵⁸ Armstrong, *Odd Man Out*, 77. Armstrong makes a credible argument that the artists and critics of the 1870s acted to “neutralize” the class antagonism central to the projects of Gustave Courbet, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, Charles Baudelaire, and Champfleury in the early Second Empire. She argues that Duranty's essay quells Realism's politics by aligning the new generation with Diderotian liberalism, anti-academicism, and bourgeois positivism. She also links the essay's depoliticization of Realism to its underlying nationalism and racialism, latent in its discussion of the “new painting” as a link in the teleology of a nationalist art history. See Armstrong, 77-83.

⁵⁹ For corroboration on Degas's primacy in Duranty's text, see *ibid.*, 73-6; Hollis Clayson, “A Failed Attempt,” in *The New Painting: Impressionism 1874-1886*, 145-59; Richard Kendall, *Degas and the Little Dancer* (New Haven: Yale University Press and Joslyn Art Museum, 1998), 54-5; Linda Nochlin, *Impressionism and Post-Impressionism, 1874-1904 (Sources and Documents in the History of Art Series)* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1966), 3. It has been suggested that Degas coauthored Duranty's essay, but the rebuttal is convincing; see Rewald, *Studies in Impressionism*, 376-8.

⁶⁰ It should be noted that Duranty never employs the term “Impressionism,” perhaps at the insistence of Degas. Clayson, “A Failed Attempt,” in *The New Painting: Impressionism 1874-1886*, 148.

would become the foyer series of ballet classroom paintings—and the Metropolitan’s *The Dance Class* (1874, Fig. 2.7), an example of the early ballet classroom paintings.⁶¹ Accordingly, Duranty’s comments bridge the two groups of works which now seem marked by narrower affiliations. Second, the essay foregrounds and champions Degas’s penetrating observation of modern life and its “types.” Most often Duranty’s lengthy appraisal of Degas’s observations is interpreted as a positivist, even “proto-anthropological” model for the “new painting.”⁶² But there is strong textual evidence that Duranty espoused Degas’s paintings just as much for their profoundly legible sense of interiority, or “place,” as for their physiognomic exteriority of bodies.⁶³ Finally, in *La Nouvelle Peinture* Duranty positions Denis Diderot’s “*Essai sur la peinture*” (Salon of 1865) as the progenitor of the “new painting” (read: Degas’s painting) and the precursor of “all that art of the nineteenth century will have wanted to realize.”⁶⁴ This act of genealogical foreshadowing posits an integral link between the genre paintings of eighteenth-century Salon artists, such as Jean-Baptiste Greuze and Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin, the realism of the Second Empire, and Degas’s classroom pictures. In doing so, Duranty conjures up

⁶¹ Degas exhibited three other ballet subjects in the Second Impressionist Exhibition: *Yellow Dancers (In the Wings)* (1874-76, The Art Institute of Chicago); *Standing dancer, from behind* (c. 1873, Musée d’Orsay); *Dancer adjusting her slipper* (c. 1873, location unknown, Lemoisne 388). *Degas Inédit*, ed. École du Louvre, 296-303. All other references to works of art in Lemoisne’s catalogue raisonné are abbreviated with “L” and the work’s catalogue number.

⁶² Armstrong, *Odd Man Out*, 83.

⁶³ Second to Degas’s, Duranty often alludes to Gustave Caillebotte’s paintings in *La Nouvelle Peinture* by recommending appropriate subject matter after particular works by the artist. Caillebotte exhibited eight works at the Second Impressionist Exhibition, including *Young Man at His Window* (1876, private collection, NY), *The Floor-scrapers* (1875, Musée d’Orsay), and *Déjeuner* (1876, private collection, Paris). I would venture an argument that much of what I say here about Degas’s classroom paintings and their penetrating observation of place as a legible, absorptive illusion could be brought to bear on Caillebotte’s works as well. But whereas Degas took the ballet classroom as the place to rehearse radical experiments in formal, pictorial space, Caillebotte’s experimentation plays out in the liminal spaces between the bourgeois interior and the grand boulevards.

⁶⁴ Duranty, *La Nouvelle Peinture*, repr. in *The New Painting: Impressionism 1874-1886*, 481. The sentence in full reads, “[c]et homme extraordinaire est au seuil de tout ce que l’art du dix-neuvième siècle aura voulu réaliser.” Several scholars have written on Duranty’s (mis)appropriations of Diderot. See Armstrong, *Odd Man Out*, Chapter Two; Fried, *Manet’s Modernism*, Chapter Three; David Kenneth Holt, *The Search for Aesthetic Meaning in the Visual Arts* (Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey, 2001), 7-9.

a system of artistic vocabularies and assessments steeped in the tradition of Diderotian absorptive milieus and equally meditative spectators.⁶⁵

The fact that Duranty's text has been interpreted as an appeal to physiognomic observation in modern painting is not surprising. Scholars often quote from passages concerned with drawing the modern human body, its postures, gestures, and sartorial exterior:

Farewell to the human body treated as if it were a vase, from the point of view of the decorative outline; farewell to the uniform monotony of the skeleton, to the anatomy figure visible beneath the nude; what we need is the special detail of the modern individual, in his clothes, in the midst of his social habits, at home or in the street. What is done becomes singularly acute . . . it is the study of moral reflections on faces and dress, the observation of the intimacy of the man in his apartment, of the special feature that his profession inscribes on him, of the gestures that it leads him to make, the partial aspects under which he is best developed and put in relief.

With one back we desire that a temperament should be expressed, the age, the social class; with a pair of hands, we must express a magistrate or a merchant; with one gesture, a whole series of sentiments.⁶⁶

The attention to the body as an indicator of social and psychological character deserves the type of reflection afforded it by scholars. The discursivity of Duranty's profiling is suggestive of a dubious desire for a social legibility and fixity that is at the center of numerous late nineteenth-century pseudo-scientific discourses on race, gender, sex, and class—first made visually accessible by the affordable *physiologie* pamphlets in the 1840s.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Armstrong disagrees with Fried about the impact Diderot had on Duranty. She maintains that Duranty's invocation of Diderot does not reach to the earlier critic's specific systems of criteria and vocabularies of absorption. Armstrong, *Odd Man Out*, 266, n.43. For Fried's response to Armstrong, see Fried, *Manet's Modernism*, 556-7 n.169.

⁶⁶ Duranty, *La Nouvelle Peinture*, repr. in *The New Painting: Impressionism 1874-1886*, 481-2. "Adieu le corps humain, traité comme un vase, au point de vue de galbe décorative; adieu l'uniforme monotonie de la charpente, de l'écorché saillant sous le nu; ce qu'il nous faut, c'est la note spécial de l'individu modern, dans son vêtement, au milieu de ses habitudes sociales, chez lui ou dans la rue. La donnée dévient singulièrement aiguë . . . c'est l'étude des reflets moraux sur les physiognomies et sur l'habit, l'observation de l'intimité de l'homme avec son appartement, du trait spécial que lui imprime sa profession, des gestes qu'elle l'entraîne à faire, des coupes d'aspect lesquelles il se développe et s'accroît le mieux. Avec un dos, nous voulons que se révèle un tempérament, un âge, un état social; par une paire de mains, nous devons exprimer un magistrat ou un commerçant; par un geste, toute une suite de sentiments."

⁶⁷ Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson argues that the desire for an authoritative account of Paris's types is linked to the larger urban crisis that followed the decapitation of Louis XVI in 1793. The city became symbolic nonsense,

However, Duranty simultaneously expands and hones his audience's desires for legibility and fixity by projecting onto the individual's *interior* life, cataloging the appropriate and telling place one inhabits:

[O]ur existence happens in rooms or in the street and . . . the rooms, the street have their special laws of light and of expression. . . . In our homes tonal values of the interiors change with an infinite variety, depending whether one is on the first floor or the fourth, whether the lodging is well furnished, papered, and carpeted, or meagerly embellished; thus an atmosphere is created in each interior, just as a family resemblance between all the furnishings and objects that fill them. The frequency, the number, and the placement of the mirrors which adorn the apartment, the number of objects that hang on the walls, all of these things have brought into our residences, either a sort of mystery or a type of clarity

[W]e will no longer separate the individual from the background of his apartment or the street. Never in real life does he appear to us against a neutral, empty, vague background. Instead there are furnishings, chimneys, wall hangings all around him, an interior which expresses his fortune, his class, his trade

*The language of the empty apartment will be precise enough so that one may deduce from it the character and the habits of him who inhabits it*⁶⁸ [My italics]

Duranty's preoccupation with commodities—furniture, carpet, ornament, and mirror—might suggest that his realist subject is a measure of his expressive, private capital and that the places of realist painting are, in fact, “phantasmagorias of the interior.”⁶⁹ But closer attention to the text

constructed of contested physical places and contingent meanings. She argues that “the city, in a very real sense, had to be re-written before it could once again be read;” hence the development of guidebooks that could make sense of shifting urban identities, places, and languages. Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson, *Paris as Revolution: Writing the Nineteenth-Century City* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 37.

⁶⁸ Duranty, *La Nouvelle Peinture*, repr. in *The New Painting: Impressionism 1874-1886*, 482. “[N]otre existence se passe dans des chambres ou dans la rue, et . . . les chambres, la rue, ont leurs lois spéciales de lumière et d’expression. . . . Chez nous, les valeurs des tons dans les intérieurs jouent avec d’infinies variétés, selon qu’on est au premier étage ou au quatrième, que le logis est très meublé et très tapissé, ou qu’il est maigrement garni; une atmosphère se crée ainsi dans chaque intérieur, de même qu’un air de famille entre tous les meubles et les objets qui le remplissent. La fréquence, la multiplicité et la disposition des glaces dont on orne les appartements, le nombre des objets qu’on accroche aux murs, toutes ces choses ont amené dans nos demeures, soit un genre de mystère soit une espèce de clarté [N]ous ne séparerons plus le personnage du fond d’appartement ni du fond de rue. Il ne nous apparaît jamais, dans l’existence, sur des fonds neutres, vides et vagues. Mais autour de lui et derrière lui sont des meubles, des cheminées, des tentures de murailles, une paroi que exprime sa fortune, sa classe, son métier Le langage de l’appartement vide devra être assez net pour qu’on en puisse déduire le caractère et les habitudes de celui qui l’habite”

⁶⁹ Walter Benjamin, “Exposé of 1935” (1935), repr. in *The Arcades Project*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 9. Benjamin contends that from the reign of Louis-Philippe the French bourgeois individual is dissociated from public social life, which is now relegated to the separate and alienating environment of the office. Simultaneously the individual creates a social

also reveals an emphasis on the *structure* of the apartment (or, in Degas's case, the classroom) and the structural relations between things. Furnishings relate as a family unit, and the objects' number and placement produce meaning; the "rooms . . . have their special laws of . . . expression" such that *le langage de l'appartement* can be tacitly understood without any furnishings. Moreover, Duranty dwells on the peripheral, yet fundamental *décor* of *la chambre*: the walls, the floors, the chimney, the picture hangings, the mirrors. These are the borders of the room, the architecture of place. Duranty is staking a claim about legibility and meaning of place by way of its architectural *décor* and the structure of its composition.⁷⁰ He then advances a semiotics for the expressive quality of place: a deductive (*déduire*) relationship between the inhabited place and the ensuing "type" logically defined by the former.

It is beneficial to revisit the Metropolitan's *The Dance Class* (Fig. 2.7)—one of at least two ballet classroom paintings from the Second Impressionist Exhibition in 1876—in light of Duranty's assertions about the legibility and meaning of place.⁷¹ Similar to its more ornate precedent *The Dance Class* (Fig. 2.4), the compositional structure of the later painting is anchored and defined by the architectural details of the room. The cornice sitting between ceiling and walls, the framed bulletin board, the large enclosed mirror, the chair rail at far left, the door at center-right, and the base of the music stand—all of these generate a tight system of orthogonals that draw the viewer into the picture's recessive spaces. The raking floorboards act as diagrammatic transversals; the dancers' bodies iterate and extend the verticality of the

world or universe of things in his private interior; thus, the social relation of commodities sustains his illusions of social life. This interpretation of the text is more provocative juxtaposed to Caillebotte's paintings of bourgeois interiors shown in the Second Impressionist Exhibition. See note 63.

⁷⁰ Duranty was a writer and frequently published novels in serial form and newspaper stories. He clearly states his affinity for realist literature in *La Nouvelle Peinture* and cites Honoré de Balzac as a realist forefather to the new realism (i.e. Impressionism). For a discussion of Duranty's emphasis on narrative and visual legibility, see Armstrong, "Duranty on Degas: A Theory of Modern Painting," in *Critical Readings of Impressionism and Post-Impressionism: An Anthology*, ed. Mary Tompkins Lewis (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 172-4.

⁷¹ The other work on view was the Phillips' *The Rehearsal* (Fig. 0.1), which I treat in the next section of this chapter. For the debate surrounding the possibility of other ballet pictures included in the exhibition, see note 79.

illusionistic space; and the perspectival structure of the painting is highly articulate and legible. To mitigate the intensity of the composition's structural elements, the principal axis is fashioned of bodies coerced into alignment with the architectural details. A central compositional intersection occurs where a strong vertical line, extending from the discrete picture chord above the bulletin board and down through the foregrounded dancer's left shoulder and leg, meets with the less obvious horizontal line, which runs from Jules Perrot's clasped hands through the central dancer's extended leg to the highlighted nose on the dancer standing just behind the dancer in foreground. To take Duranty's deductive argument to its endpoint, the viewer will intuit and know the truth of character, habits, and type by means of the legibility of a place's architectural décor and the structure of its composition. Hence, the subject of the work—the urban, modern dancer in her milieu—is given meaning by the decidedly controlled, rationally ordered, unified, and hermetic place of the ballet classroom and its own physiognomy: dirty walls, posted notices, upright music stands, large mirrors, and windows through which Paris passes. Though the dancers flout the viewers' gaze for their own preoccupations, the structured habitude of their place absorbs you and offers ample descriptive knowledge.

Michael Fried has traced the recurring themes of Duranty's criticism from the 1860s and 70s and he terms the relations between subject and place in *La Nouvelle Peinture* as a "theory of the apartment," a nuanced calibration of the critic's previous investment in a "theory of the cloister."⁷² Though Fried is mostly concerned with Salon paintings by artists from the circle of Manet, he is diligent about historically situating Duranty's theories of modern painting and

⁷² Fried, *Manet's Modernism*, 260. In fact, Duranty commends the Impressionists for their daring exit-taking from the cloister: "The idea, the first idea, was to take away the partition separating the studio from everyday life It was necessary to make the painter leave his sky-lighted cell, his cloister where he was in contact with the sky alone, and to bring him out among men, into the world." "L'idée, la première idée a été d'enlever la cloison qui sépare l'atelier de la vie commune Il fallait faire sortir le peintre de sa tabatière, de son cloître où il n'est en relations qu'avec le ciel, et le ramener parmi les hommes, dans le monde." Duranty, *La Nouvelle Peinture*, repr. in *The New Painting: Impressionism 1874-1886*, 482.

therefore his insights are useful in this context. Many of Fried's conclusions about Duranty's rhetoric of penetrating observation and hyperlegibility of place are evident in my own analysis, but he also explores the enduring thread of Diderotian interpretation in the essay. Aside from the outright proclamation of Diderot's centrality in *La Nouvelle Peinture*, Duranty curiously included revised passages from his description of Alphonse Legros's *The Ex-Voto* (1860, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dijon, Fig. 2.11), first published in a short essay from 1867, "Those Who Will Be the Painters."⁷³ In both the original text and in *La Nouvelle Peinture*, Duranty praises Legros and the painting for directly communicating the violent, automatist devotion of the peasants as they are quietly absorbed in prayer.⁷⁴ He finds their devoutness before the ex-voto "rigid and machinelike," yet intensely profound because of peasant women's "painful and difficult existence," which was "completely expressed" via the act itself, but also through their faces, clothing, and locale. In this way, Duranty claims that Legros's peasants exhibit a *physiologie* that he calls "very modern" and that is extraordinarily similar to the excessive legibility of Degas's dancers.⁷⁵ He then goes on to commend a related, but distinct type of deductive expression in the painting: the automatic relation between the structural composition and the resultant "single," "gripping" impression for the viewer.⁷⁶ The summation of his appraisal is worth quoting: "And

⁷³ Duranty, "Ceux qui seront les peintres (À propos des derniers salons)," in *Almanach Parisien*, ed. Fernand Desnoyers (Paris, 1864); repr. in Fried, *Manet's Modernism*, appendix 2, 438-41.

⁷⁴ Alphonse Legros exhibited some twenty-four prints at the Impressionist Exhibition in 1876, seven of which had explicitly religious themes. Duranty may have assumed that his description of Legros's painting, *The Ex-Voto* would act as commentary on some of the prints, such as *La Communion dans l'église Sant-Médard* (c. 1876, *Le Bibliothèque nationale de France*, Paris) or *Paysanne des environs de Boulogne (Femmes de Boulogne)* (c. 1876, The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco). For a catalogue of Legros's graphic work in the exhibition, see *The New Painting: Impressionism, 1874-1886: Documentation*, vol. II, 37-9.

⁷⁵ Duranty, *La Nouvelle Peinture*, repr. in *The New Painting: Impressionism 1874-1886*, 480.

⁷⁶ The full quotation reads: "C'étaient de vieilles femmes communes, habillées de vêtements communs, que l'artiste avait prises pour personnages, mais la stupidité rigide et machinale que l'existence pénible et étroite des pauvres donnait à ces faces crevasses apparaissait avec une profonde intensité. L'accent d'un monde particulier était complètement exprimé. Tout ce qui peut frapper, arrêter, retenir devant des êtres; tout ce qui est significatif, concentré, violent en eux rayonnait autour de ce groupe de vieilles femmes, autour de leur visages, de leurs habits, dans la campagne, et le long de la colonne votive." Duranty, "Ceux qui seront les peintres (À propos des derniers salons)," repr. in Fried, *Manet's Modernism*, appendix 2, 438-41, 438.

by a forced accord, *the very means of painting was identified so well with the nature of the personages thus rendered*, that one was gripped by one single impression, vivid and clear; one cried out, it's well painted, here is a true work, a strong work."⁷⁷

While I am not so much concerned with the “truth” in Legros’s painting of pious meditation, the continuity and differences between Duranty’s Diderotian valuations concerning spectatorship and absorption are significant. For Duranty, truth in painting, in 1867 and again in 1876, occurs in the deductive relationship between compositional structure and type.⁷⁸ That is, the indices of type available in the formal composition arrest the viewer, hold his/her attention, and generate the effect of the work. One could argue that the only distinguishing quality between Duranty’s two essays is that, in 1867, the peasants’ meditative or absorptive act is foregrounded; the concentrated votive stance of the peasant women prompts the subsequent profundity in the viewer. In 1876 the interior and its architectural décor is all but sufficient to absorb the viewer—literally to lure him/her into pictorial space—and to communicate the truth of the subject. Though place remains intricately linked to the semiotics of *physiologie, le langage de l'appartement*, the structure of place, is now afforded critical effect.

Scholars often group the early ballet classroom paintings with the foyer series, the subject of my next analysis. This is not especially surprising considering there is little criticism of the earliest paintings, and thereafter contemporary critics most often wrote of Degas’s subject (ballet) in generic terms rather than engaging with particular foyer works. Moreover, what I term the “early ballet classroom paintings” were completed—and sometimes begun—concurrent with

⁷⁷ Ibid. Quoted in Fried, *Manet’s Modernism*, 187-8 and 194. This is Fried’s translation. “Et par un accord force, le moyen même de peinture s’identifiait si bien avec la nature des personnages ainsi rendus, que l’on était saisi par une seule impression, vive et nette; on s’écriait[,] c’est bien peint, voilà une œuvre vraie, une œuvre forte.”

⁷⁸ In Fried’s account the thematics of absorption in the subject matter (women kneeling in prayer before an ex-voto) and the composition’s “flat, silhouetted forms in an extremely shallow space” bring about the “truth” that Duranty finds in the work. Fried, *Manet’s Modernism*, 194.

the advent of the foyer classroom series. Nonetheless, it is still necessary to acknowledge and understand the conventional qualities of the early classroom paintings in order to investigate and interpret Degas's formal divergences and experiments in the foyer, and in the later frieze, classroom paintings.

Duranty's "theory of the apartment" suggests that there was a distinctly modern character about Degas's representation of architectural structure in late nineteenth-century French painting. But for all the emphasis on architectural structure, pictorial composition, and place, the consequent mode of spectatorship is similar to Salon realism from the 1860s. This is in distinction to Degas's paintings of the Opéra's orchestra, the predecessors of the ballet classroom paintings, wherein the viewer is phenomenologically implicated in the painting's fictive time and illusion of space. Instead, the formal structure of the early classroom paintings absorbs the viewer into a successful illusion of an actual place, temporally and spatially distant from the actual circumstances of exhibition and spectatorship. This is to say, in the early classroom paintings like *Dance Class* (Fig. 2.3) and *The Dance Class* (Fig.2.7) Degas was able to formulate and manipulate pictorial space into a convincing, active agent of simulated reportage in the form of architectural and pictorial structure (according to Duranty's reading). However, in these early examples pictorial space ultimately functions as a quiet agent of illusionism, a guarantor of the real, observed world.

The foyer series I (*The Dance Rehearsal*): Conceived space, indexical architecture, and the structure of repetition

Accompanying *The Dance Class* (Fig. 2.7) in the Second Impressionist Exhibition was at least one representative of the foyer classroom series. Of the two possible foyer paintings *The*

Dance Rehearsal (c. 1873, The Phillips Collection, Fig. 0.1) has been convincingly identified as one of the works on view.⁷⁹ It is also the work that obstinately separates the two frieze paintings in the Grafton Galleries installation photograph from 1905 (Fig. 1.2). While the presence of *The Dance Rehearsal* in Durand Ruel's exhibition some thirty years later is a happy coincidence for my purposes, the curatorial arrangement is once again telling (and not only because of the contrived schema inferred from the size and format of the canvases). In a more subtle and abstruse manner, the placement of *The Dance Rehearsal* is indicative of a larger pattern of historicism in Degas scholarship that this project aims to disrupt. At the very center of the Grafton arrangement and yet belittled by its neighbors, *The Dance Rehearsal* stands as a synecdochical marker of a specific period in Degas's production: the *physiologie* of the dancer-type in the mid-1870s. The work acts as a pivotal painting, foreshadowing the formal expressiveness of the frieze paintings and mature pastels that radiate out from the epicenter of the artist's wall. Consistent with Degas scholarship up to the present, the curatorial narrative positions the foyer paintings as a seminal moment of realist observation from which Degas's emotive (sometimes termed symbolist) meditations on movement and color sprung forth.⁸⁰ I

⁷⁹ The critic writing for *Le Pays* describes a grisaille painting of the *foyer de la danse*, securing the identification of *The Dance Rehearsal*. The second painting in question was listed in the catalogue as "Salle de danse," but it is not mentioned in the press. The combined efforts of Degas scholars, among them Boggs, Henri Loyrette, Reff, Denys Sutton, and Tinterow, suggest that there was only one "Salle de danse" exhibited in the Second Impressionist Exhibition. See *Degas Inédit*, ed. École du Louvre, 299. However, in *Degas and the Dance*, DeVonyar and Kendall argue that, in addition to *The Dance Rehearsal* (Fig. 0.1), another work was on view: either *Dancers Practicing in the Foyer* (c. 1875-1900, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen, Fig. 0.7) or *The Rehearsal* (c. 1873-78, Fogg Art Museum, Harvard, Fig. 0.2). The two authors note as evidence the reproduction of the Second Impressionist Exhibition catalogue and the scholarly notations in *The New Painting: Impressionism, 1874-1886: Documentation*, vol. 1, 48; vol. 2, 35. To my mind the evidence is scant and incomplete for such an assured position. See DeVonyar, and Kendall, *Degas and the Dance*, 86 and 283 n.75.

⁸⁰ Given the immense amount of scholarship on Degas's paintings of the ballet, it is a surprising fact that there has been little to no attention paid to the foyer paintings as a particular sustained series. To generalize, the foyer paintings are often treated as part of Degas's larger, scientific realism of the 1870s that then gave way to his obsessive meditations in pastel on the ballet subject after 1886, the year in which he exhibited the famed series of pastels of bathing nudes. Kendall has offered the most succinct synopsis of this historiographic discourse: "a . . . progression from the documentary to the broadly expressive." Kendall, *Degas: Beyond Impressionism*, 174. For recent examples of this construction, see Armstrong, *Odd Man Out*, 128-9; Douglas Druick and Peter Zegers, "Scientific Realism, 1873-1881," in *Degas*, ed. Boggs, 201-7; Kendall, *Degas: Beyond Impressionism*, 10-11; and

would argue that although the conventions in the literature and the Grafton Galleries photograph stage *The Dance Rehearsal* as a germ of a painting—the last gasps of 1848 realism and the *sine qua non* for what was to come—Degas’s unremitting deliberations on the foyer series suggest that more was at stake in *The Dance Rehearsal* and in the series in general than positivist character study, stymied repetition, or imminent inspiration. Close formal comparisons between the classroom paintings on view in 1876 (and across the foyer series as a whole) disclose radical shifts in Degas’s conceptions of compositional space and the temporality of making and looking at paintings, revealing spatio-temporal pictorial experiments that lie beyond musings about subject matter, shifts in style, or some combination thereof. My examination of the foyer series begins with the exhibition in 1876 and with what is regarded as the first work in the series, the Phillips’ *The Dance Rehearsal*, which was actually completed sometime in 1873. After close analysis of *The Dance Rehearsal*, I turn to Degas’s alteration and variation on the foyer classroom, and, finally, to an examination of the earliest instantiations of the modular dancer-motif.

One wonders if Degas recognized the radical qualities of the foyer series, and *The Dance Rehearsal* specifically, at the outset of the Second Impressionist Exhibition in 1876. By then the foyer series had expanded to become an even more complex game of spatial mapping, repetition,

Kendall, “Signs and Non-Signs: Degas’ Changing Strategies of Representation,” in *Dealing with Degas*, eds. Kendall and Griselda Pollock (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1992). For a typical mid-century examination of the “development” of the foyer paintings within Degas’s collective ballet works from the 1870s, see Pickvance, “Degas’s Dancers: 1872-6.” An exception to this convention is the attention given to the two foyer paintings with spiral staircases at the far left; these paintings are often examined as a set, but rarely studied in the larger context of the series. DeVonyar and Kendall’s exhibition and catalogue for *Degas and the Dance* were sea-changing in this respect; their analyses of both the foyer and frieze series of paintings are essential to this study. In contrast to my own, their research efforts were not dedicated to analyzing and interpreting Degas’s shifting conceptualizations of “place” between the two series, nor in light of earlier classroom paintings. See Kendall and DeVonyar, *Degas and the Dance*, 80-7. An earlier notable exception to the scholarship is Mari Kálmán Meller’s “Exercises in and Around Degas’s Classrooms,” pts. 1, 2, and 3. Meller assiduously studies two foyer paintings that include a circular staircase and a third classroom painting in light of the early ballet classroom paintings. She discusses how Degas “thematizes his geometry” via “floorboards, windows, mirrors, staircases, and railings,” affecting “the viewer’s sense of movement and time” in the later works. Meller, “Exercises in and Around Degas’s Classrooms,” pt. 1, 201. Nevertheless, Meller does not examine the foyer paintings as a sustained series.

and substitution. Indeed, the inclusion of an early ballet classroom painting, the Metropolitan's *The Dance Class* (Fig. 2.7), in the same room as the Phillips' *The Dance Rehearsal* in 1876 must have given Degas food for thought—perhaps even smug satisfaction.⁸¹ Setting aside speculation, *The Dance Rehearsal* makes for a stark contrast to the early ballet classroom painting, and, for that matter, to all his other works on view.⁸² *The Dance Class* is awash in sunlight reflected in the mirror and highlighted by sensuous smudges of red and pink facture in the foreground. *The Dance Rehearsal*, on the other hand, is a dark, ominous painting. One might easily presume that Degas was striving to evoke the ethereal white sylphs and the foggy, shadowed haunts synonymous with the lost grandeur of French Romantic ballet—luminous and seductive, cautionary and tragic—if this were not a rehearsal in a bland classroom.⁸³

Nonetheless, an analysis of the mysterious ambiance of *The Dance Rehearsal* will only pinpoint the more poignant formal distinctions between the two works. To my mind, three particular shifts in Degas's engagement with or utilization of architectural place/space can be located in *The Dance Rehearsal*: 1) architectural structures become dominant organizing elements of interpretive possibility, thereby compromising viewers' "rationalization of space" into place and annexing potential meanings; 2) architectural elements become *legible* devices of conceived or mapped pictorial space; and 3) the iconic architecture of the early classroom

⁸¹ Degas chose to exhibit at least one foyer classroom painting in the Impressionist Exhibitions in 1876, 1877, and 1879. In 1880 he submitted a frieze classroom painting.

⁸² The other ballet paintings and sketches are listed in note 61. Other paintings exhibited include four portraits, two laundress scenes, and two rural genre scenes. *The Dance Rehearsal* is the only work with dominant architectural structures in the foreground and the only painting done in such monochromatic color. *Portraits in an Office (New Orleans)* (1873, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Pau) is similar to *The Dance Rehearsal* in that it is a highly conceived pictorial space defined by its architectural structures and it is peopled by grouped or scattered figures. However, *Portraits in an Office* is symptomatic of Duranty's prescriptive realism and its type of iconic architecture rather than the more radical deployments of architecture I scrutinize in *The Dance Rehearsal*.

⁸³ It is significant that Degas invoked the clichés of French Romantic ballet in 1873 with the completion of the *Dance Rehearsal*. The Le Pelletier Opéra burned down in October 1873 and Degas makes references to the event in his letters; see Degas, *Lettres*, 30.

paintings slowly gives way to an indexical architecture that signifies the constructed dynamism of pictorial space.⁸⁴

Without doubt *The Dance Rehearsal* is a painting structured by its architectural elements and, more than likely, it figured in Duranty's "physiognomies of the interior" in 1876. Four Ionic columns neatly march across the middle ground of the painting and announce their centrality to the fiction of place in the painting. Plainly dividing the room into foreground and background for the viewer, the columns also act as the quiet vertical equilibrium to the raked orthogonal lines of the floorboards, which themselves form a cascading series of thin orthogonals up and across the canvas. Degas has meticulously aligned the right edges of the columns' bases with a single orthogonal emanating from the bottom left edge of the canvas, accentuating and underscoring the intangible endpoint on the high horizon to the right of the frame. In doing so, the artist constructs a clear, rigid sense of architectural place within the confines of unmodeled, monochromatic color. Degas's decision to omit the capitals of the columns likewise creates an air of elevation for the viewer in an otherwise cavernous space. The arched windows allow sunlight to wash over the dancers while simultaneously echoing the verticality of the lofty rehearsal room and leading the viewer into the recessive space of the composition. In this manner each architectural element

⁸⁴ Once again I employ Peirce's triad of signs in my discussion of architectural space as a semiotic device in Degas's paintings. See note 38. "Indexical" architecture describes the representation of architecture (sign) that "refers to the Object that it denotes by virtue of being really affected by the Object." Peirce, "A Syllabus of Certain Topics of Logic" (1903), repr. in *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings*, vol. 2, 291-2. In the case of *The Dance Rehearsal*, the reiterated architectural elements are indices of movement because they have been transferred from one place on the canvas to another. They are indices of the act of movement, rather than an object per se. The indices "represent their objects independently of any resemblance to them, only by virtue of real connections to them." Peirce, "A Sketch of Logical Critics" (1909), 460-1. To this end, the architectural elements do not look like movement; they are not illusions of temporality. Conscious interpretation or what might be termed "conventional understanding" is unnecessary for the function of an indexical sign: "[an index] is a real thing or fact which is a sign of its object by virtue of being connected with it as a matter of fact and by also forcibly intruding upon the mind, quite regardless of its being interpreted as a sign." Peirce, "Logical Tracts, No. 2" (c. 1903), repr. in *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, vol. 4, eds. Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 447. The viewers of *The Dance Rehearsal* need not thoroughly understand the precise pictorial mechanisms that communicate the sense of movement; yet they are still able to interpolate the idea of movement.

lends itself to the “rationalization of space” and to the illusion of an authentic, definitive place, ripe with telling details. Validating Duranty’s theory of *le langage de l’appartement*, the architectural structure of *The Dance Rehearsal* acts as a critical vehicle of meaning in the viewers’ desire for positivistic “truth.”

But there is much more amiss in *The Dance Rehearsal*. The most conspicuous architectural element in the composition, the descending staircase, is the least intelligible and the most obvious clue that *le langage de l’appartement* is at pains to justify Degas’s bold architectural devices. One might argue that there are several conventional compositional strategies at work in Degas’s handling of the staircase: the shadowy narrow divide between the descending walls stabilizes the large black column at the far left edge of the painting; and the two parallel banisters and the descending walls beneath them work to extend the orthogonal thrust rushing upward to the horizon and to the left endpoint. Still, the staircase’s principle job—and Degas’s most clever ploy in the painting—is to balance the upward right thrust of the four Ionic columns with a complementary counterweight that creates a slightly off-center Baroque cross or “X.” The diagonal axis reaches from the darkness of the descending stairs into the center of the composition and moves through four bodies: the second Ionic column/mid-ground dancer, the rehearsing dancer, the ballet master, and the faceless dancer at the furthest reaches of the canvas. In the most subtle and ingenious manner, Degas has choreographed the human bodies to form a retort to the fixed architectural elements. Accordingly, the dancers’ bodies move in an ideal space and time so as to align themselves into a chance axis and to balance the persistent signs of place. In other words the subjects of the painting—the dancers—are now subservient, auxiliary motifs within the dominating, complex architectural staging of the composition. Rather than “place” facilitating the subject matter, as in Duranty’s theory of *le langage de l’appartement*

(“*déduire le caractère*”), the architectural structures motivate, perhaps even dominate, the fictive purposes of the dancers-motifs.⁸⁵

The sheer impossibility of the balustrade’s transparent, weightless balusters is less evident at first, but even harder to reconcile with Duranty’s *le langage de l’appartement*. Mere *pentimenti*, summarized delineated volumes without any semblance of substance, the balusters mysteriously hover above the descending stairs and implausibly support the weight of the wood banisters. The lack of illusionistic device here is sufficient evidence for the viewer to doubt the authenticity of the artist’s realist objectives. Degas is more concerned with maintaining the crucial, if paltry, openness surrounding the staircase—a bay of solid ground and light contrasted to the submerged darkness—and the clear diagonal thrust of the steps’ ascent/descent than with the painting’s verisimilitude. If, in fact, Degas had chosen to sustain the illusion and had painted twelve balusters with substantive weight and mass, the busy repetition of the vertical lines would have clogged the right portion of the canvas and mitigated the dominance of the two strong diagonals at the crux on the composition. Instead the viewer is asked to linger over and through this audacious foregrounded architectural contrivance, relegating the realist content of the painting—actual place and “real” dancers—to an ancillary position while broodingly negotiating impossible architecture.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ DeVonyar and Kendall make the point that “with the exception of the dancer leaning on the balustrade . . . each of [the dancers] was first pondered in a known drawing, often in relation to a pose he had used elsewhere.” *Degas and the Dance*, 82. I will undertake an analysis of Degas’s repetition of dancer-motifs below. I withhold my investigation until the analysis of the remaining foyer paintings because *The Dance Rehearsal*, as the sole foyer painting on exhibition in 1876, does not provide sufficient interpretive potential for the viewer to make conclusions about Degas’s reprocessing of dancer-motifs.

⁸⁶ Meller makes a similar claim about *The Dance Class* (c. 1873, The Corcoran Gallery of Art) and *The Rehearsal* (c. 1874, Glasgow Museums), the two foyer paintings with circular staircases: “this apparatus [of intersecting grids] creates a substructure, a scaffolding that holds in place the elements traditionally highest in the hierarchy of subject-matter: the human figures.” Meller, “Exercises in and Around Degas’s Classrooms,” pt. 1, 201. She compares the mapping of space found in Degas’s foyer classroom paintings to the diagrammatic gridded order and elusive releases of freedom located in Andrea Mantegna’s panel *Calvary* (1457-59, Musée du Louvre) and his fresco in the so-called Camera degli Sposi, *The Gonzaga Family* (c. 1469-72). Her argument rests on Degas’s self-acknowledged

In contradistinction to the early ballet classroom painting on view in 1876, *The Dance Rehearsal* compels the viewer to suspend the facticity of place and the charge of illusionism, deferring instead to the legible designs of a highly conceived pictorial space, one which slowly comes to dominate the viewer's processes of comprehending the painting. I would argue that Duranty's *le langage de l'appartement* was an apt investigation of Degas's convincing construction of "place" in *The Dance Class* (Fig. 2.7); however, the critic's deductive theories of "type" were belated responses to the architectural manipulations and spatial plotting that activate the interpretive possibilities for a painting like *The Dance Rehearsal*.

Aside from the staircase, the sheer repetition of architectural elements in *The Dance Rehearsal* foregrounds Degas's operations on conceived pictorial space for the viewer. The row of large arched windows contends with the mobile strength of the columns and completes the rushing, foreshortened rhythm of the composition. The axis of columns meets the axis of windows at yet another "X" in the far right corner of the canvas, emphasizing the predominance of the architectural elements. Nevertheless, I would maintain that while Degas's mapping of contrived pictorial space in *The Dance Rehearsal* motivates the work's meanings, the artist's sly composition subverts the rigidity or permanence that dominant architecture might otherwise imply. The transparent balusters, the largess of the arched windows, the ascent/descent of the staircase, and the rhythm of iterated columns and fenestration—each of these features offers release and expanse from the rigorously articulated space. The oddest release (and one I cannot fully explain) is the placement of the fourth column at the top of the picture plane. Degas has conspicuously moved the column back and away from the dancer at far right, breaking the harsh alignment of the columns and demolishing the architectural integrity of place. Consequently, the

debt to Mantegna and Erica Tietze-Conrat's insightful essay "What Degas Learned from Mantegna," *Gazette des Beaux Arts* XXVI (July-December 1944): 413-20.

various instances of release within Degas's conceived pictorial space engender a provocative tension in *The Dance Rehearsal*: stability and dynamism; control and proliferation; formulation and improvisation; "realist" place and dynamic pictorial space. In a similar vein, and one which clarifies my argument, the dancers' restrained actions, their casual conversation and attention to one another, invoke the temporality of convincing fiction, or *duration*. Yet, the architecture, with its recurring rhythms and intervals of release, signifies moments in a structure of *repetitious movement*. Thus *The Dance Rehearsal* splinters the foundational tenets of *le langage de l'appartement*. Degas has manipulated the possibilities of architecture and pictorial space in order to construct a painting that communicates two different modes of temporality: duration and repetition. While looking at *The Dance Rehearsal*, the viewer is asked to suspend the fiction—the illusions of place and continuous time—and to revel in the analytical efforts of reading/looking at artistic exercises in pictorial space.

In 1876 G. D'Olby, one of only three critics to mention *The Dance Rehearsal* in the criticism of the Second Impressionist Exhibition,⁸⁷ took to task Degas's painting by making a similar claim:

The sketch done in grisaille that represents the *foyer de la danse* of a theater . . . is notable for the indications of movement and the arrangements of well-observed groups. But these are only indications: is this sufficient to make an easel painting [*un tableau*]?⁸⁸

D'Olby's astute characterization reduces the composition to two distinctive categories: "des indications de mouvements" and "des dispositions de groupes bien observées." The "well-observed groups" are no doubt the clusters of dancers strewn purposefully around the classroom.

⁸⁷ I discuss a second critic below. The third writer to single out the painting was Zola: "*La Salle de danse, avec les élèves en jupes courtes exécutant leurs pas, se distingue aussi par une grande originalité.*" Émile Zola, *Le Messager de l'Europe*, (June 1876), 185.

⁸⁸ The full quote reads: "L'ébauche en grisaille qui représente le foyer de la danse d'un théâtre, du même peintre, se fait remarquer par des indications de mouvements et des dispositions de groupes bien observées. Mais ce ne sont que des indications: est-ce suffisant pour faire un tableau?" G. D'Olby, *Le Pays*, April 10, 1876.

The dancer-motifs are arranged or placed like gestalt objects in a formulated pictorial space that is consistent with the duration and continuity of fictive time and place. But if the dancers are iconic pawns that suggest placement or location to D’Olby, “movement” is communicated by indices of dynamism rather than iconic representations of movement (i.e. the illusion of a dancer descending from *en pointe* or the turns of a pirouette). I take these indices of movement to be the signs of that other temporal mode, repetition, which is actually located in the spatial composition of *The Dance Rehearsal*. The intervals of release—the ascent/descent of the strange staircase, the suspended balusters, the subtle intersection of columns and windows, and, most importantly, the dynamic reiterations of these architectural elements—provide legible signs of transference and movement for Degas’s viewers. To be more schematic about it, the replication of architectural elements generates a structure of repetition within the composition such that the architectural elements (column, baluster, window frame, ascending/descending stair) are indices of repetition in conceived pictorial space, and indices of movement constructed within the canvas. In comparison, Degas utilized architectural structures in the early ballet classroom paintings as iconic markers of ‘real’ architecture and place; in *The Dance Rehearsal* architectural motifs become indices of iterated time, spatial markers of temporal repetition distanced from the realist realms of “authentic” place and continuous time. Degas’s careful choreography of pictorial space and its temporal reverberations is undoubtedly covert, but his coercions are implicit in the viewers’ processes of reading/looking at the ballet classroom, invoking a level of self-conscious interpretation not evident in the early classroom works.

I do not presume that D’Olby scrutinized *The Dance Rehearsal* to the extent that I have here. But his shrewd descriptive classifications (“des indications de mouvements” and “des dispositions de groupes bien observées”) suggest that he understood the dancers were not the

sole instigators of temporality in Degas's painting. A second critic also intuited multiple temporalities at work in the painting, mistakenly referring to *The Dance Rehearsal* as a photograph of a painting and thus suggesting that *The Dance Rehearsal* was a mechanical imprint or an index of a primary representation of time and space.⁸⁹ It is more probable that D'Olby, writing for the Bonapartist journal *Le Pays*, was primarily offended by the incomplete character of *The Dance Rehearsal*. Degas's brash collision of well-placed and well-studied postures with the methodically conceived rhythmic and dominant architecture; the disjunction seemed ill-wrought and insufficient to the critic. Furthermore, his use of the term *tableau* is telling because it signals a central point of discernment in his analysis: the distinction between what he took to be Degas's *ébauche* and the completed, artistic notion of the *tableau*.⁹⁰ The charge of 'insufficient' *ébauche* was a common attack on independent (or un-Academic) painters. For D'Olby, the commendable "indications"—the indices of movement and the groups of well-arranged dancer-motifs—are still undeveloped and incomplete fragments of a missing compositional unity that might absorb and arrest the viewer as a successful *tableau*. To my mind, *The Dance Rehearsal's* unity is only and finally made available (and then solely to Degas's most

⁸⁹ "Les Danseuses (parmi lesquelles la photographie d'un tableau)." Pierre Dax, "Chronique," *L'Artiste*, May 1, 1876, 348. DeVonyar and Kendall interpret this critic's presumption as evidence of the painting's realist plausibility and its status as a document. DeVonyar and Kendall, *Degas and the Dance*, 82. I believe that the critic understood the darkness and blurriness of the photograph to be a trace of the mechanical process. Furthermore, Dax's assumption implies that he intuited contrasting temporalities in the painting/photograph, perhaps because the dancers seem inertly posed and yet movement is communicated.

⁹⁰ The term *ébauche* is translated as "sketch," however it is but one part of the generative process in the French Academic model of serious painting. The *ébauche* generally followed the initial study and the sketch in original conceptions with live models, or as a copy from an old master original (or copy) in the *École* setting. The artist or student would outline the contours of the model/copy and then shadow the subject using the same thin oils of earth tone colors suited for underpainting. (This is the characteristic D'Olby likely found in Degas's *The Dance Rehearsal*, with its palette of black, cinnabar, ivory, and yellow ochre.) Lively debates amongst critics, artists, and the public surrounded the artistic value of the *ébauche* at least since the 1830s and the rise of Romanticism in France, and it was also scrutinized in the reforms made to the *École* curriculum in 1863. For a detailed account of the debates surrounding the *ébauche*, the term "originality," and the *tableau*, see Albert Boime, *The Academy and French Painting in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Phaidon Press, 1971), 31-7 and 166-84 and Fried, *Manet's Modernism*, 267-80. While the term *ébauche* was most commonly used in criticism of Manet's work (because of the diluted colors and lack of overpainting) it was developed into a positive Impressionist value as well. In the latter case it connoted colorful underpainting and spontaneous finish. See Anthea Callen, *The Art of Impressionism: Painting Technique and the Making of Modernity* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), 163-9.

diligent audience) in the larger context of Degas's foyer series, wherein architecture becomes intelligibly itinerant and dancer-motifs become recognizable, modular pawns.

The foyer series II (*The Rehearsal*): Exercises in conceived space and residues of peripatetic architecture

It is not my claim that viewers' comprehension of place is extinguished by Degas's astute mapping of conceived space in *The Dance Rehearsal*. In 1876 D'Olby recognized *The Dance Rehearsal* as a "foyer de la danse of a theater." And in the Grafton Galleries installation of 1905 the same painting functioned as a comforting refuge where *le langage de l'appartement* was still available for the more cautious visitor. Nonetheless, a palpable formal break from the early classroom paintings occurs in *The Dance Rehearsal*: Degas's intelligibly fraudulent architectural injections splinter the essential interpretive integrity of *le langage de l'appartement* and the painting discloses the indistinct interconnections of "place" and "space." For both artist and viewers it is the shadowy distinction between "the security and stability of place" (locale, understanding, the everyday) and the "openness . . . threat . . . and movement" of space, which demand viewers' conscious attention.⁹¹

I consider the foyer paintings to be Degas's interrogation of this very liminality: the series is an exploratory meditation on the murky boundaries of illusionary place and conceptions of an abstracted pictorial space. The questions Degas's series invokes are deceptively simple: How does "place" make meaning? What are the limits of its significations? And where does meaning reside when those limits are tested? My analysis of *The Dance Rehearsal* proffered alternative meanings for Degas's ballet classroom—coercions of space, repetitious time, and self-conscious looking. In the paintings that followed it, Degas raises the stakes. He thematizes

⁹¹ Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, 6.

his manipulations of place, crafting exercises in repetition, depreciation, exchange, and transformation that still make allowances for fictive possibilities, but that also construct intricate relations between the paintings and compel highly analytical, mnemonic processes of looking at space.

While the exact succession of the series is unknown, scholars mostly agree that after the beginning of *The Dance Rehearsal* in the late summer of 1873, five other derivations with roughly the same dimensions and format quickly followed—with two additional works completed in 1875.⁹² *The Rehearsal* (c. 1873-78, The Fogg Art Museum, Fig. 0.2) and *The Dance Class* (c. 1873, The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Fig. 0.3) are both thought to date to late 1873. The timeline is significant here because beginning with *The Dance Rehearsal*, the first three paintings from the series represent Degas's prototype, alteration, and central variation of the foyer "place."⁹³ In *The Rehearsal* (Fig. 0.2), Degas wrought a self-conscious alteration of the prototype *The Dance Rehearsal* (Fig. 0.1); and in *The Dance Class* (Fig. 0.3) the artist marginally shifts the viewer's line of sight from the left to the right antechambers of the foyer classroom while brazenly fabricating a swirling variant on the staircase. Moreover, with these three paintings Degas established two disparate pictorial spaces which will define the foyer as "place" throughout the 1870s and act as a model for the two kinds of pictorial spaces that make up the later frieze series. To clarify, the foyer works can be classified into two types: the first is

⁹² There is little hard evidence available to date Degas's oeuvre from the mid-1870s. There are no dated oil paintings from the years 1872 to 1876 and only a handful of dated pastels and drawings. In addition none of the artist's surviving notebooks date from 1873 to 1875. Various sources have aided scholars in the process: Degas's letters to friends in which he references specific works; the *Memoirs* of Paul Durand-Ruel; and the reviews of Impressionist exhibitions and various exhibitions in London. See Pickvance, "Degas's Dancers: 1872-76," 256; Theodore Reff, *The Notebooks of Edgar Degas*, vol. 1, 149; "Chronology II: 1873-1881," in *Degas*, ed. Boggs; and DeVonyar and Kendall, *Degas and the Dance*, 80.

⁹³ Even if the Phillips' *The Dance Rehearsal* followed the Fogg's *The Rehearsal* my conclusions are not affected. I surmise that there was substantial overlap between the foyer paintings completed in 1873 and 1874. What is important to realize and analyze is that, within the series, Degas's investigations and trial solutions interrelate and affect the series' production as a whole.

defined by three arched windows, the presence/absence of the staircase, the presence/absence of the colonnade, and a high vanishing point at the left of the canvas; the second group is composed of truncated arched windows, a conspicuous spiral staircase, and a high vanishing point at the right. Across the foyer series the trajectory of Degas's process is a circuitous one, full of evocative returns and revisions that rebuff rationale. But it is an obligatory expedition if we are to understand the greater formal significance of the foyer series and Degas's insistent, prolific return to these two pictorial spaces in the mid-1870s. The paintings' convergences and divergences encourage our reflections and stimulate the looking process; they also frustrate, confuse, and confound.

The Rehearsal (c. 1873-78, The Fogg Art Museum, Fig. 0.2) looks to be more than a mere alteration of *The Dance Rehearsal*. After all, the awkward staircase and the columns have been completely omitted, a seated musician has replaced the ballet master, and delicate washes of white and pink have expelled the shadows of Degas's grisaille. Most dramatically, in lieu of the complex plotting of architectural intersections at either end of the canvas, the viewer's gaze is allowed to dawdle in the airy facture of the unencumbered windows and the vast hollow of filtered light radiating down upon the undifferentiated floorboards. The rhythm of the marching columns, the reiterative linearity of the orthogonals on the floor and rising from the stairs, the interruption of the ascending/descending staircase: all these architectural structures and releases have been summarily exchanged for hazy emptiness in *The Rehearsal*. Tellingly, Degas made further, more concise alterations to the three arched windows, which are now the dominant architectural structures in the renovated classroom. He chose to narrow the window bays, to add an additional clerestory level of windows, and almost to eradicate the rhythmic fenestration on

the three window panes. In doing so he heightened the interior and vertically spread the composition to balance the sweeping lateral expanse of the foreground.

Two consequences follow Degas's calculated revisions of the foyer classroom in *The Rehearsal*. First, Degas's erasures of, and alterations to, architecture mitigate the breadth of verisimilitude in the painting. Compared to *The Dance Rehearsal*, and especially in light of the early classroom paintings finished the same year, the painting acts as an exercise in the depreciation of Duranty's *le langage de l'appartement*. The second effect involves exchangeability, transformation, and resulting interpretive allowances, all of which will become endemic characteristics of the series as a whole. The markers of movement—the dynamic, architectural contrivances that dominate *The Dance Rehearsal*—are economically substituted with a concentrated diagonal spread of iterated dancer-motifs posed in *grande seconde* just to the left of the violinist. Conversely, on the right side of the canvas, a space that amounts to a third of the painting, Degas chose not to replenish architectural structures or exchange dancer-motifs. Instead there remains a vacuity of spatial signifiers but for the faint touches of chiaroscuro. With *The Dance Rehearsal* Degas consciously constructed an ominous, geometrically dense foyer classroom; *The Rehearsal*, on the other hand, is alluringly spacious in its sparseness, even diaphanous in passages. In effect, the artist unraveled the spatial complexity of *The Dance Rehearsal*, reformulated the dancer-motifs, and altered (almost inverted?) the interpretive significations of the foyer place.

Despite the distinct and incongruous effects of these two compositions in their present states, infrared evaluation and x-ray examination of *The Rehearsal* at the Fogg Art Museum led scholars to conclude that the painting actually began as a near replica of The Phillips' *The Dance Rehearsal*. The analytical diagram of *The Rehearsal* (Fig. 2.12) is revelatory; it reinstates the

rectangular opening of the staircase, six thin stair rails, two Ionic columns, and two of the foregrounded dancers from the earlier composition.⁹⁴ To begin with, a complex convergence of repetitive spatial signifiers; then to erase and maneuver motifs so to finish with a dramatically sparse, vacant painting—this is a radical exercise in binary opposition.⁹⁵ In the distinction between the two works is Degas’s exploratory experiment in the adversative transformation of “place” by way of operations on architectural structures and pictorial space. Setting aside Degas’s intent from the outset, his processes of transforming the spatial structure of *The Rehearsal* effectively upturned the possible fictive content of “place,” and, in the process, exposed the deductive rationale of *le langage de l’appartement* as excessive, subjective, and even fraudulent.⁹⁶ I would maintain that between these two paintings—*The Dance Rehearsal* and

⁹⁴ Degas’s severe alterations to *The Rehearsal* (Figs. 0.2 & 0.3) most definitely occurred in late 1873 or early ‘74. *The Rehearsal* (c. 1873-79, The Frick Collection, Fig. 0.5) and *The Dance School* (c. 1874-78, Shelburne Museum, Fig. 0.6) are direct permutations or descendants of the Fogg painting’s composition in its later stages. In my opinion, changes made to the Fogg canvas post-1874 are limited to the seated violinist.

⁹⁵ The concept of “binary opposition” is a fundamental differential relationship in the synchronic, structural analysis of Ferdinand de Saussure and Levi Strauss, amongst others. Binary opposition establishes that a unit of language is given cultural meaning in the structure of “what it is not” in any given cultural context. Pertinent to my argument about Degas’s artistic processes of production is Roland Barthes’s introspective *revision* of his own early structuralist analysis, originally based upon the structure of binary oppositions (such as denotation/connotation, writing/speech). Barthes retrospectively terms these binaries “figures of production” that enabled him to continue the writing process: “The opposition is *struck* (like a coinage), but one does not seek to *honour* it. Then what good is it? Quite simply, it serves *to say something*: it is necessary to posit a paradigm in order to produce a meaning and then to be able to divert, to alter it.” Or further in the same text: “Like a magician’s wand, the concept, especially if it is coupled, *raises* the possibility of writing. Hence the work proceeds by conceptual infatuations, successive enthusiasms, perishable manias.” I would contend that Degas utilizes the binary opposition of *The Dance Rehearsal* and *The Rehearsal* as a similar impetus toward further art making; it engenders the process and synthesizes the possibilities. Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes*, trans. Richard Howard (London: Macmillan, 1977), 92 and 110.

⁹⁶ As I have shown, from the beginning of the foyer series Degas’s artistic processes emphasized the constructive, conceived qualities of “place” rather than the rationalization of pictorial space apparent in the early classroom paintings. In light of such profound exercises between “realist” place and pictorial space—conducted three years prior to Duranty’s *La Nouvelle Peinture*—the reciprocity of Degas’s artistic investments in the foyer series and Duranty’s influential essay deserve to be re-evaluated. Armstrong analyzes the relationship between Duranty’s essays and Degas’s paintings at great length and concludes: “Though Degas’s works were supposed to exemplify Duranty’s theory of the “trait saillant” and the “image textuelle,” Duranty did not attempt to test his theory against Degas’s images . . .” She then argues that both the critic and the artist shared an interest in “the partial, fragmentary look” of images, in innuendo, and “in the process, rather than the products, of physiognomic readability.” Armstrong, *Odd Man Out*, 88 and 93. While I would agree with her inferences about their shared interest in processes of reading paintings, Armstrong’s conclusions are mostly founded on Duranty’s celebration of physiognomy in his texts, rather than on close scrutiny of Degas’s paintings from the same period. Most emphatically I would argue that while Degas’s paintings might suggest “the partial, fragmentary look,” they do not invite or invoke that *mode* of looking/reading. Instead I argue that Degas’s foyer series produces an analytic,

The Rehearsal—Degas begins to fashion his complex game of differential relations: repetition, exchange, transformation, and interpretive possibility.

Without the aid of technology, however, the viewer is left seemingly unaware of Degas's artistic game of binary opposition. What remains are the *pentimenti* Degas chose to retain from the first mapping of *The Rehearsal* and which are plainly visible to the keen viewer. The residual shaft of a column is perceptible just to the right of the middle window, and a second column is noticeable at the far left of the composition, jutting out of the auburn-haired dancer. These abrasions or renunciations are traces of Degas's operations, indices of the artist's processes of transference and re-structuring. But whereas the indices of movement apparent in *The Dance Rehearsal* act to structure the painting's internal conceived space and lend it a rhythmic temporality, the movement accessible in *The Rehearsal* bespeaks transference *across* foyer paintings: movement from *The Dance Rehearsal* to *The Rehearsal*. To be clear, architecture that signified temporality in the first painting was literally transported and distressed to residue in *The Rehearsal*. Thus, in *The Rehearsal* continuity and duration dominate because temporality is not structured by mapped repetitive architecture—now nearly effaced—but by its dancers and their musical accompanist.

Nonetheless, repetition makes a surreptitious return in the painting. The peripatetic architecture that travels from the Phillips' *The Dance Rehearsal* to the Fogg's *The Rehearsal*, and which Degas leaves behind as legible evidence, is not necessarily integral to the place of the

temporal investment from the viewer. Robert Jensen describes Duranty's essay as grounded in art politics rather than pictorial evidence. In his summation, with which I would agree, Duranty attempts to claim the legitimacy of the "new painting" based upon its rightful inheritance of the old, though now lost, legitimacy of the École. In Jensen's estimation Duranty systematically dismisses competing veins of contemporary art and forcefully argues for the modern history painting advocated by (some of) the Impressionists. In this way the critic's lengthy political rants against members of the Institut and elders at the École, as well as his calls for a contemporary realism founded on tradition, are symptomatic of Degas's well-known and onerous opinions—rather than specific Degas paintings. See Robert Jensen, *Marketing Modernism in Fin-de-Siècle Europe* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 101-2.

foyer classroom itself; rather, it is integral to Degas's artistic processes within the foyer series. That is to say, the structure of repetition and transference in *The Rehearsal* is a generative temporality of artistic production and a process of association and comparison for the viewer. In effect, Degas imparted the spatiality and temporality of artistic processes and production to the place of the foyer classroom and the practices of looking. More comparative and analytic than the embodied theatricality manifest in *The Orchestra of the Opéra* (Fig. 2.8) or *Orchestra Musicians* (Fig. 2.9), the viewer of *The Rehearsal* is invited to recall and re-member, to follow clues and traces in and across foyer paintings, and to trace the mappings of Degas's sometimes exhausting artistic processes.

The foyer series III (the spiral staircase paintings): Exercises in audacious architecture and the modular dancer-motif

By the inception of *The Dance Class* (c. 1873, The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Fig. 0.3), the painting I have termed his "variation" on the foyer classroom, Degas was intensely engaged with the formal opportunities born from his spatial experiments with indexical, peripatetic architecture. In all likelihood, the artist began working on the painting in the midst or soon after his experiments with *The Rehearsal* in late 1873; but *The Dance Class* suggests a much bolder composer, an artist confident in his inventive methods within the foyer place/space. To construct the composition Degas brazenly transposed the ascending/descending staircase from the Phillips' *The Dance Rehearsal* and morphed it into a winding series of transversals deftly spinning up and out the left side of the canvas in deep shadow.⁹⁷ Two columns from *The Dance Rehearsal* are transferred, as is one truncated arched window; however, the viewer's line of sight is now turned

⁹⁷ When the painting was exhibited at Charles Deschamps's gallery in London in April, 1875, one critic dubbed the work, "*Preliminary Steps*"—a pun that certainly attests to the boldness of the artist's architectural motif. Ronald Pickvance, "Degas's Dancers, 1872-6," 259.

to the right and s/he is given access to a novel antechamber decorated with suspiciously recognizable architecture: an ornate frieze, a large doorway framed with engaged columns, a posted bill in a rectangular frame, and a small slice of the ceiling above. These peripheral elements in the rear room are the architectural remnants of the early ballet classroom paintings (Figs. 2.3-2.5), transplanted and repurposed to expand the fictive possibilities of the classroom and the spatial capacities of pictorial space. *The Dance Class* is then an artistic act of augmentation via reversion, at once an audacious departure and a tentative return, a variation of Degas's foyer with the brash addition of early classroom remnants: repetition, exchange, transformation, and interpretive possibility.

Once *The Dance Class* was completed, Degas promptly restructured the pictorial space into *The Rehearsal* (c. 1874, Glasgow Museums, Fig. 0.4), which was in a state of near completion by mid-February, 1874.⁹⁸ In his modifications to the foyer place/space for the Glasgow *The Rehearsal*, the artist sealed off the rear antechamber with the removal of the supporting colonnade and the reinstallation of all three windows on the back wall;⁹⁹ though again the windows are curtailed by the shift in viewpoint to the right. Perhaps undetectable at first, the most audacious transformation in the Glasgow *The Rehearsal* is not the erasure of an entire room, but instead the subtle mutation of the spiral staircase. In yet another exercise in differential spatial signification, Degas converted the "angular and staccato" staircase found in *The Dance*

⁹⁸ Edmond de Goncourt describes the painting in his *Journal*, dated Friday, the 13th of February, 1873; see note 134. For a lengthy analysis of the painting's date, see William Wells, "Degas's Staircase," *The Scottish Art Review*, vol. 9, no. 3 (1964): 14-17 and 29-30. His date has been confirmed and accepted by Degas scholars.

⁹⁹ An x-ray photograph of *The Rehearsal* clearly shows that a column behind the ballet master, Jules Perrot, was painted out during Degas's reworking of the canvas. This only supports my following arguments, in which I suggest that *The Rehearsal* is an artistic exercise in differentiation from its precursor, the Corcoran's *The Dance Class*. Richard Thomson publishes the X-ray photograph in his *The Private Degas* (London: The Herbert Press Ltd, 1987), 52.

Class into a “large billowing rhythm” of compositional movement.¹⁰⁰ In the first instance the winding staircase juts, interrupts, and fragments pictorial space (Fig. 0.3), and in the latter it undulates, encapsulates, and extends the composition (Fig. 0.4).

Various scholars have speculated about the veracity of Degas’s outlandish, yet impressive spiraling staircases: Was the staircase an actual architectural addition to the aging Le Pelletier Opéra?¹⁰¹ Did Degas study seventeenth-century Dutch manuals on the theory of perspective?¹⁰² Did he, in fact, own a miniature model of a spiral staircase, which was kept as a drawing aid in his studio?¹⁰³ While these are all prudent questions to ask of Degas’s empirical sources, they say little of his investment in and articulation of the daring pictorial device. Instead of conjecturing about the relationship between “verisimilitude and invention,”¹⁰⁴ I would suggest that Degas utilized the winding staircase much as he did the many other itinerant architectural structures that fabricate his foyer spaces. The spiral staircase is an exercise of artistic confidence, almost impudent in its immodesty. But both paintings, anomalous as they may seem, are exercises in the transmogrification of “place” via alterations to architectural and pictorial space. Repetitions, exchanges, and transformations in and across pictorial spaces once again allow Degas to

¹⁰⁰ Wells, “Degas’s Staircase,” 17. Wells’s characterization of the two staircases and their opposing interpretive meanings is exceptionally insightful. In the earlier version, *The Dance Class*, Degas paints a rotund axis with angular steps built around a bulky newel post. In the later version, Glasgow’s *The Rehearsal*, Degas mutates the stairs and creates an enclosed, more elegant variation with a slender newel and a serpentine coil that enwraps the cascading stairs. For Wells’ description, see “Degas’s Staircase,” 29.

¹⁰¹ DeVonyar and Kendall hastily suggest that the staircase from *The Dance Rehearsal* (Fig. 0.1) or the variation in *The Dance Class* (Fig. 0.3) may have been part of the architectural renovations to the Le Pelletier Opéra completed in the 1860s. However, the plans for the building’s rehearsal rooms do not specify any such staircases. See DeVonyar and Kendall, *Degas and the Dance*, 33 and 83-4.

¹⁰² Wells, “Degas’s Staircase,” 29. Wells’s speculation is based on the fact that Hans Vredeman de Vries’s treatise on the theory and practice of perspective from 1633 illustrates the two different types of spiral staircases Degas adopted in *The Dance Class* (Fig. 0.3) and *The Rehearsal* (Fig. 0.4). Degas is not thought to have owned the book; however, it is known that he consulted seventeenth-century treatises in the 1850s.

¹⁰³ Paul Lafond, *Degas*, vol. 1 (Paris: H. Floury, 1918-19), 114. See also Lillian Browse, *Degas Dancers* (London: Faber and Faber, 1949), 60.

¹⁰⁴ DeVonyar and Kendall, *Degas and the Dance*, 83.

manipulate, posit, extend, and broaden his own artistic investigations—all the while unfolding the potential of the foyer place and beguiling the viewer with his artistic process.

To turn to the temporality of the spiral staircase paintings is, one on hand, to return to the the initial painting in the foyer series, the *The Dance Rehearsal* (Fig. 0.1) and its alteration, *The Rehearsal* (Fig. 0.2). The task will also direct our attention back to Degas's generative processes and his convoluted patterns of creation within the series. In the first spiral staircase painting, *The Dance Class*, Degas maps copious amounts of architectural structures onto the composition in a highly contrived manner similar to that in *The Dance Rehearsal*, constructing a strategic and legible grid of verticals, transversals, and acute diagonals, all of which intersect in preconceived spatial tensions. Comparably, *The Rehearsal* (Fig. 0.4), the second spiral staircase painting, not only replicates the diaphanous light of *The Rehearsal* (what I term the “alteration” in the series), Degas also dramatizes the former's spatial vacuity by expunging many of the architectural elements of its precursor (just as he literally erased the architectural structure of *The Dance Rehearsal* to produce the Fogg's *The Rehearsal*). Realizing the productive paradigm of *The Dance Rehearsal* and its differential binary, *The Rehearsal*, Degas reenacted the creative process of the earlier foyer paintings with the two spiral staircase works. The pattern is thus: he compounds architectural structures in the first work and alleviates their effects in the second so as to investigate the spatial structures of duration versus repetitious movement. This is especially evident in the spiral staircase paintings. In both works, the staircase is an index of repetitive movement and dynamic release; it works to create a tension between the continuity of the iconic dancers (note the “movement” of their feet on the stairs) and the architectural indices of movement.¹⁰⁵ Finally, in the two spiral staircase paintings the conspicuous staircase and its

¹⁰⁵ Other scholars have noted the effects of movement and time rooted in the spiral staircase of both paintings. However, the rhythmic temporality of the architectural contrivance is not cross-analyzed against the series and is

diagrammatical character read as highly articulated and legible mappings of pictorial space, accessible to the viewer as exercises in perspectival mapping rather than descriptive realism. Thus, Degas's flagrant repetition and transformation of the spiral staircase—across the two paintings—is, to this point, his most deliberate index of peripatetic architecture and of artistic temporality.¹⁰⁶

What is thus far exceptional to the making of the spiral staircase paintings does not pertain to the actual staircases that have drawn so much attention from scholars. Rather, it is the repetition and (slight) transformation of a distinct dancer-motif in the right foreground of each painting that demands additional explanation. Degas first posed the seated dancer-motif in a red shawl in *The Dance Class* (Fig. 0.3): the light from the window highlights her rouge wrap; her legs are aggressively “turned out” in second position; and her left arm dangles at her side as she obscenely jams her right thumb into her mouth. She is equipped with all the makings of a spectacularly vulgar (and exceedingly memorable) character.¹⁰⁷ In the initial restructuring of the

often described as a bold anomaly in Degas's oeuvre, or as an effect similar to Degas's rhythmic raking floorboards. See Wells, “Degas's Staircase,” 15; Meller, “Exercises in and Around Degas's Classrooms,” pt. 1, 201-2; DeVonyar and Kendall, *Degas and the Dance*, 85.

¹⁰⁶ I remind the reader of the three spatio-temporal achievements in the foyer series: 1) architectural structures become dominant organizing elements of narrative, thereby compromising viewers' “rationalization of space” into place and annexing interpretive potential; 2) architectural elements become legible devices of conceived or mapped pictorial space; and 3) the iconic architecture of the early classroom paintings slowly gives way to an indexical architecture that signifies the constructed dynamism of conceived pictorial space. The second and third items were discussed above. The first quality is apparent in several locations across the two spiral staircase paintings: the descending dancer's leg bends to the stair's handrail in the Corcoran painting; the dancers bodies in the left background of the Glasgow work bend in order to mimic the vertical rails of the staircase; and in the same painting the two dancers arms' extend their arabesque while mapping an orthogonal line to the right vanishing point. However, in both paintings the modular dancer-motif is also a dominant organizing element, which I discuss below.

¹⁰⁷ Degas resurrected this dancer-motif's obscene oral gesture for *Women on the Terrace of a Café in the Evening*, a monotype and pastel drawing of prostitutes at a boulevard café (1877, Musée d'Orsay, Fig. 3.9). The pastel garnered a sensational reaction from the public and critics when it appeared in the Third Impressionist Exhibition in 1877. George Rivière insinuated that the woman discusses a stingy client and “clicks her fingernail against her teeth, saying, ‘not even that’” “Il y en a une qui fait claquer son ongle contre sa dent, en disant: ‘pas seulement ça’” George Rivière, “L'Exposition des impressionnistes,” *L'Impressioniste: Journal d'Art* (April 6, 1877): 2-6; 6. It is more than curious that Degas included *Women on the Terrace* and *The Rehearsal* in the Impressionist Exhibition of 1877. The dancer-motif in *The Rehearsal* is not recognizably related to the prostitute with her thumb in her mouth (not without the x-ray of *The Rehearsal*); however, they are integrally linked in Degas's production practices via the *The Dance Class*.

composition—for what would become *The Rehearsal* (Fig. 0.4)—Degas inserted a mirror copy of the dancer-motif so that she is seated in the same foreground position but instead her left thumb is lifted to her mouth. Only the x-ray photograph of *The Rehearsal* makes this known (Fig. 2.13). Without the x-ray, however, the seated dancer-motif is still nearly identical. Over his original mapping, Degas merely reworked her arms to fold demurely in her lap and painted the shawl a warm green. The dancer in question remains in the same compositional place in both works; she fulfills the same structural purpose in each painting—to anchor a classical triad in the foreground; and she retains a glaringly similar morphology across the two canvases. Around her, architecture and props disappear, and personages are amended and appended. Even through his tempering transformation between *The Dance Class* and *The Rehearsal*, Degas chose to retain the spiral staircase and the seated dancer-motif, leaving each as a distinct residue of his transferences between the two paintings.

When *The Rehearsal* was exhibited in 1877 at the Third Impressionist Exhibition, most viewers could not have been aware of its intricate relations with *The Dance Class*. The painting had actually been exhibited the year before at Charles Deschamp's galleries in London and was purchased by an Englishman, Captain Henry Hill. Moreover, it was one of four classroom paintings Hill bought in 1876 and brought to his lavish Marine Parade residence in Brighton; hence fashioning the first known permanent installation of classroom paintings: *Dance Class* (Fig. 2.3), *The Dance Class* (Fig. 2.4), *The Dance Rehearsal* (Fig. 0.1), *The Dance Class* (Fig. 0.3).¹⁰⁸ A series of comparisons between these paintings would be an exercise unto itself; the

¹⁰⁸ Captain Hill's collection is significant because it represents a private, permanent exhibition of the classroom paintings as a group. Hill created "a cluster of moderately-sized, well-lighted rooms, devoted entirely to the purposes of a gallery" in his Brighton estate. Alice Meynell, "A Crighton Treasure House," *Magazine of Art*, vol. 5 (1882): 2-5; 2. It is unclear whether the paintings were indeed hung next to one another; however Meynell's description of Hill's gallery in 1882—the year Hill died and the works were inventoried—suggests that the rooms and the works themselves were within several steps of one another, rather than dispersed throughout the residence. Furthermore, all four paintings remained in the collection from 1876 until 1889, thus allowing for some thirteen

results would, however, be idealizations at best. Nonetheless, *The Rehearsal* made its way back to Paris in 1877,¹⁰⁹ whence Jacques and the wider public were invited to linger in its mysterious spaces.

Jacques's sensationalism (which opened this chapter) was not the only rejoinder to Degas's submissions that year. A certain "L.G." offered a less bawdy account, in which he consciously located his frustration in his own—and more generally, in the bourgeoisie's—desire for some kind of departing mollification:

There is everything in his pictures this year, but mainly dancers. M. Degas's specialty is dancers at work, that is to say, standing on one foot and striking the public in the face with the other. There are bold foreshortenings—the least rare quality of these artists is definitely audacity—there is movement, life, a certain kind of observation, a careful search for the exact; but the defects outweigh the most memorable qualities, and, while looking at most of these paintings, one is forced to ask, in front of some, if their author didn't want to have a little fun at the stupefaction of the bourgeois viewers.¹¹⁰

In this careful, almost hesitant analysis, the critic makes little mention of the actual subject matter. Rather, the engaging, "memorable qualities" are the works' audacious perspectives and life-like movement, the interesting observations, and careful research. Nonetheless, the enduring, searching aspects of *The Rehearsal* are, in turn, deficient and derisory. In the process of looking

years' worth of visitors to study the paintings and over a decade for the family to engage with the works. Hill, a wealthy retired quartermaster and an avid collector of French painting, bought three of the four classroom paintings after an exhibition at Charles Deschamps's gallery in 1876; he also purchased *The Rehearsal of the Ballet On Stage* (c.1873-4, The Metropolitan Museum of Art). The Phillips' *The Dance Rehearsal* was probably purchased a short time before the April exhibition because Degas writes to Deschamps in August of 1875 to inform the dealer of its imminent arrival. The collection was sold at Christie's, London on May 25, 1889. See also Richard Thomson, "Modernity, Figure, Metropolis: Importing the New Painting to Britain in the 1870s," in *Degas, Sickert and Toulouse-Lautrec: London and Paris, 1870-1910*, eds. Anna Gruetznier Robins and Richard Thomson (London: Tate Publishing, 2005), esp. 25-30.

¹⁰⁹ Hill also loaned another painting he purchased in 1876 from Deschamps: *In a Café (The Absinthe Drinker)* (1875-76, Musée d'Orsay). *Degas*, ed. Boggs, 286.

¹¹⁰ "Il y a de tout dans ses envois, mais principalement des danseuses. M. Degas a cette spécialité de faire des danseuses en travail, c'est-à-dire dressées sur un pied et jetant l'autre au nez du public. Il y a des raccourcis audacieux--la qualité la moins rare, chez tous ces peintres, est à coup sûr l'audace,--il y a du mouvement, de la vie, une certaine observation, une recherche consciencieuse de l'exact; mais les défauts l'emportent le plus souvenir sur les qualités, et, tout en s'arrêtant devant la plupart de ces toiles, on est bien obligé de se demander, en face de quelques-unes, si leur auteur n'a pas voulu s'amuser un peu de la stupéfaction des bourgeois." L.G., "Le Salon des 'impressionnistes,'" *La Presse*, April 6, 1877.

at all these exactitudes, observations, and bold perspectives, L.G. feels uncertain of the artist's intentions, his own judgment, and, most assuredly, the bourgeois viewer's tolerance for complex viewing practices.

Jacques's and L.G.'s mix of fascination, discomfiture, and rebuff is littered throughout the generally complimentary criticism from the Third Exhibition. "Paradox" found its way into more than one quip.¹¹¹ Or as one journalist succinctly stated: ". . . his mind is heavy handed."¹¹² But L.G.'s self-conscious, stupefied looking is not that far removed from Armand Silvestre's "unbearable" reading two years later. In 1877—unaware of the artist's generative exercises between the spiral staircase paintings—critics still faltered over contrived alignments, "audacious" perspectives, and divergent temporalities. For the Fourth Impressionist Exhibition, Degas exhibited a pair of foyer paintings—*The Rehearsal* (Fig. 0.5) and *The Dance School* (Fig. 0.6)—in which the artist's transference of the dancer-motif makes apparent his repetitions and exchanges. I turn now to the final group of paintings in the foyer series, the last two foyer works to be included in the Impressionist Exhibitions, and the artistic device that helped sustain Degas's production for nearly four decades, the dancer-motif.

The foyer series IV (the final paintings): Modular motifs and the temporality of artistic production

Hitherto in my analysis, the seated dancer in the two spiral staircase paintings is Degas's riskiest and most blatant utilization of the modular dancer-motif. This is not to say that the seated

¹¹¹ ". . . [S]on talent a des négligences qui sont peut-être des artifices, M. Degas abonde en paradoxes irritants. L'idée de déconcerter le bourgeois est une de ses préoccupations les plus constants." Paul Mantz, "L'Exposition des peintres impressionnistes," *Le Temps*, April 22, 1877. "Les aquarelles de M. Degas sont de spirituels à peu près, qui déconcertent par leurs paradoxes et leurs brutalités voulues, alors même qu'ils séduisent par leur esprit d'observation." Victor Fournel, "Les Oeuvres et les hommes: Courrier du théâtre, de la littérature & des arts: Exposition des *impressionnistes*," *Le Correspondant*, April 25, 1877.

¹¹² ". . . [S]on esprit a la main lourde." Bernadille, "Chronique parisienne: L'Exposition des impressionnistes," *Le Français*, April 13, 1877.

dancer-motif is a novelty in the two works, or that this is the first instance of the device.¹¹³ The timeline of the series is murky and Degas would complete two more foyer paintings in late 1873 or early '74: *The Rehearsal* (c. 1873-79, The Frick Collection, Fig. 0.5) and *The Dance School* (c. 1874-78, Shelburne Museum, Fig. 0.6). Both are permutations of the “alteration” to the classroom place/space—*The Rehearsal* (Fig. 0.2)—and in both Degas concentrates his formal experiments on the allowances and potentials of the modular dancer-motif. From the beginning of the foyer series, the artist’s exercises of repetition and exchange; accumulation and depletion; and substitution and transformation always relied on architectural tokens. The peripateticity of architecture fueled his formal experiments in pictorial space and allowed conventional, descriptive frames of illusionism (“place”) to spawn dynamic movement. But between the two spiral staircase paintings and the Frick and Shelburne paintings, Degas embraces the modular motif as a formal mechanism with which to 1) intelligibly map conceived pictorial space and 2) index the temporalities of artistic experiment. The two works discussed below, *The Rehearsal* (Fig. 0.5) and *The Dance School* (Fig. 0.6), are the artist’s investigations of the modular dancer-motif as another mechanism—much like that of peripatetic architecture—with which to construct and analyze dynamic conceptions of pictorial space.

¹¹³ Degas does not blatantly utilize the modular dancer-motif mechanism in the early ballet classroom paintings. Curiously, he “borrows” and replicates dancer-motifs from the very beginning of the foyer series. While the most recognizable dancer-motifs circulated throughout the foyer series are not pilfered from outside the series, there are examples: In *The Dance Rehearsal* (Fig. 0.1) there appears a) in the middle foreground a dancer before a column who is adapted from the left foreground dancer in *Dance Class at the Opéra* (Fig. 2.5); and b) at the far right a dancer leaning on the stair rail who is adapted from the dancer leaning on the piano in *Dance Class* (Fig. 2.3). Throughout other paintings there appears a particular dancer-motif from *The Dance Class* (Fig. 2.7). The foreground dancer looking down with her hands to her hips is retrieved a) in *The Dance Class* (Fig. 0.3) at the far right edge of the canvas; b) in *The Rehearsal* (Fig. 0.2) at the far left behind the violinist; and c) in *The Dance School* (Fig. 0.6) at the far left, again behind the violinist.

In *The Rehearsal* and *The Dance School*, Degas arrogates the group of dancer-motifs posed in *grande seconde* from *The Rehearsal*.¹¹⁴ He supplants the group to the far right forefront of the picture plane in *The Rehearsal*, and to just off-of-center in the middle ground of *The Dance School*. When Degas restructured the foyer place/space for *The Rehearsal* (Fig. 0.5), he focused in on the modular group, increased the incline of the floorboards, grew the three windows to echo the modular trio, and essentially collapsed the room in the process (which will also occur in the final two foyer paintings begun in 1875). Given the shift in scale and deficiency of architectural structures, he also carefully demarcated the outline of each floorboard, again emphasizing the parallel relationship between the dancers' bodies and the architecture itself. Much like the purpose of the group in the "alteration" (the Fogg's *The Rehearsal*), here the modular dancer unit is transposed as an instrument of mapping: the dancers' bodies are made to align with the pictorial space they inhabit. But in the Frick painting the dancers' spatial and structural deployment is further emphasized and isolated. Degas subdues the peripatetic architecture by homing in on the dancer-motifs so that the architecture is no longer permitted to repeat or move about. Instead, Degas stages the inverse and rehearses abjection in the Frick's example: dancers' bodies do not flow, evolve, or develop; they demarcate, outline, and define the perspectival space they inhabit.¹¹⁵ In this sense they are more traditional, cohered with perspectival space.

¹¹⁴ It does occur to me that the repetitious group of dancer-motifs in *grande seconde* is already a self-referential index of Degas's generative processes: one body multiplied across a single canvas. Yet there is a certain amount of veracity to the group because dancers' daily exercises consist of repeating the same movements in small groups. The kinetic knowledge brought about by repetitious exercise is discussed in Chapter Four.

¹¹⁵ To be specific, the left dancer's elbow marks the central vertical axis of the painting; her elbow meets the calf of the dancer behind her; in turn, that dancer's elbow (the dancer in the center background) meets the calf of the next dancer. Degas schematically links the dancers' bodies across the pictorial space, articulating and demarcating perspectival space. In a similar way he joins their arms and legs to divide the canvas lengthwise.

When Degas transferred the group of dancer-motifs in *grande seconde* to the Shelburne's *The Dance School* in 1874, he used both tempera and oil on the canvas and eliminated the fourth dancer on the far right. Adding or subtracting at will, utilizing a fast-drying medium: these are confident moves borne of careful preparation and repetitious exercises.¹¹⁶ An oversized charcoal drawing from the same year (Fig. 2.14) documents Degas's stringent commitment to this particular dancer-motif as a generative tool. The study, which structures the dancer's center across a central vertical and horizontal axis and maps her body on a segmented grid, is actually lifted from the "completed" painting, the Fogg's *The Rehearsal* (Fig. 0.2). Degas consciously salvaged the dancer-motif in *grande seconde* by way of an intelligible artistic operation, a recovery process that remains unmistakably evident in the Fogg painting. Degas plotted the foreground dancer's body on a grid and he left his pencil tracings for viewers' scrutiny. More than indices of Degas's generative processes, these mappings and repetitions impart persistence and resolve outside the completion of a single painting, as if the artist's procedures seem to compel and sometime override the individual product.¹¹⁷

The group of dancer-motifs in *à la seconde* is undeniably recognizable across all three works. And although the Fogg's *The Rehearsal* was never publicly exhibited in Paris (Degas's close friend, Michel Manzi, came to own the work until 1911), Degas did include both the Frick's *The Rehearsal* and the Shelburne's *The Dance School* in the Fourth Impressionist Exhibition in 1879. Before submitting the works, Degas altered each of them and he made

¹¹⁶ I would also infer that Degas's use of egg tempera (or distemper-like medium) explains the Shelburne's *The Dance School*'s less adventurous spatio-temporal composition. Degas made no rigorous experiments to the pictorial space of the foyer place/space in the painting, or to its temporality. When he revisits the painting in 1878 he morphs the seated violinist, a maneuver I discuss below.

¹¹⁷ The large charcoal drawing (Fig. 2.14) was significant to Degas. He chose it for a special collection of his drawings published by Michel Manzi in 1898: Degas, *Vingt Dessins 1861-1896*. One hundred color copies were made and Degas signed each one. Manzi also held an exhibition of the prints in 1898. André Mellario, "Expositions, Un Album de 20 reproductions d'après des dessins de M. Degas," *L'Estampe et l'affiche*, vol. 2 (April 15, 1898): 81-2. I discuss Degas's process and his infamous disdain for the painting as an "article" in Chapter Four.

changes to the Fogg's *The Rehearsal* around the same time. (The fact that an alteration to one of the paintings affected the compositions of all three is suggestive.) At this later stage the violinist was the subject of Degas's operations and several drawings from this period testify to his interest in the subject's posture and position.¹¹⁸ In his process of re-examination Degas pilfered the violinist from the Fogg's *The Rehearsal*, mirrored the subject in several sketches (Fig. 2.15), and then repositioned him in a completely new painting, which he also chose to exhibit in 1879: *Portrait of a Dancer at her Lesson* (c. 1879, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fig. 2.16). A similar mirror technique was used for the sketch of a more rotund, bearded violinist, then deployed for both the Frick's *The Rehearsal* and the Shelburne's *The Dance School* (Figs. 2.17, 0.5 & 0.6 respectively). A note pasted into Degas's notebook from this time offers insight into the type of instructive, almost academic, experiments the artist was making on the modular motif:

Make simple operations like drawing a profile that keeps still, then shift up or down, do the same for a whole figure, a piece of furniture, an entire room. Make a suite of movements of dancing arms or legs that are still, shift around them, etc. Finally [make] studies of figures, objects, anything, from all perspectives. A mirror can be used for this purpose—you would stay in your place. The place itself would lower or lean; you would move around it.¹¹⁹

It is tempting to wonder if this note already littered Degas's studio in 1873 or 1874 when he was relentlessly working on the foyer series, and that it was only pasted into the notebook when he returned to the three works in 1878 or 1879. In 1874, five years before the alterations at

¹¹⁸ For a detailed account of the violinist studies, see *Degas*, ed. Boggs, 331-2.

¹¹⁹ The Notebook dates from 1877-83 and contains a sketch of the violinist in the Fogg's *The Rehearsal*, which reappears in *Portrait of a Dancer* in reflection. "Faire des opérations simples / comme dessiner un profile qui ne / bougerait pas, bougeant soi, montant / ou descendant, / de même pour une figure entier / un meuble, un salon tout entier. // Faire une suite de mouvements de / bras dans la danse, ou de jambes qui / ne bougeraient [written over "bougent"] pas, tournant soi / autour—etc. / Enfin étudier à toute perspective / une figure ou un objet, n'importe quoi. // On peut se server pour cela d'une / glace—on ne bougerait [pas] de sa place. / La place seule s'abaisserait ou se pencherait, / on tournerait autour." For a description of the notebook and the quote, see Reff, *The Notebooks of Edgar Degas*, vol. 1, 7 and 133-4.

the end of the decade, Degas applied the mirror technique to a dancer-motif across two of the paintings: the dancer at the far left, with her back to the violinist, in the Fogg's *The Rehearsal* is mirrored in the Shelburne's *The Dance School*, where she now faces the musician. Moreover, the vulgar dancer biting her thumb in *The Dance Class* (Fig. 0.3) was mirrored in the first rendition of *The Rehearsal* (Fig. 2.13). Taken together, all of these inversions (or reversals?) do not foster the illusion of persuasive fictions, but attest to Degas's agile maneuvering of docile pawns.¹²⁰ That is, the modular motifs are not simply iconic representations bespeaking various contextual episodes; they are also indices of Degas's transplantative exercises—his choreography of pictorial space—and the generative temporalities of his processes. The dancer-motifs disclose intelligible clues about Degas's production; they bond the paintings to the time and space of their making, and link them to the time and space of viewers' receptions.

What is strikingly unique about Armand Silvestre's lyrical analysis in 1879 is that he deciphers systematic structure and fundamental elements in Degas's paintings, but he also recognizes the experimental ("the calligraphic workshop"). Both—the "alphabet" of architecture and dancer-motifs *and* their alterity, movement, transformation—are essential to Degas's rigorous mode of making. Stranger still, Silvestre seems consciously to revel in the resounding legibility of Degas's processes, and in the ensuing frustrations. But there is also evidence that less insightful or less admiring critics either intuited or consciously grasped Degas's syntactic experiments in 1879. A Belgian critic swiftly summarized Degas's twenty odd paintings as

¹²⁰ Degas's keen interest in puppets and dolls is interesting given his nimble handling of the dancer-motifs in the foyer series and across his ballet pictures. While there are obvious conclusions to be drawn about control and the female body, there is also a noteworthy slippage between "high" art making, popular culture, and child's play. Paul Lafond recalls how Degas displayed several Neapolitan puppets or dolls beside conventional bronze and marble sculptures in a vitrine in his dining room. Duranty actually directed a very popular Théâtre des Marionnettes in the Tuileries gardens in the 1860s. (It closed after a scandalous meeting between his mother and his mistress at a show.) And critics employed various euphemisms about puppets and dolls in their commentaries on Degas's *Little Dancer Aged Fourteen*, exhibited at the Impressionist Exhibition in 1881. See Richard Kendall, "Can Art Descend Lower?," in *Degas and the Little Dancer* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), esp. 55-64.

“corners and Parisian characters.”¹²¹ Henry Havard, a specialist in the Dutch school, was not as convinced of Degas’s actual attainments and was suspicious of his probing investigations:

M. Degas is a man of infinite wit, and most importantly a talented artist, but I reproach him, especially, with a critique of his chemistry.

His brain seems to be a furnace where a whole new type of painting just coming into being is coming to a boil. He is neither Japanese nor impressionist, but impressionism moves him and he feels *japonisme* in his gut. He seems to be in pursuit of an ill-defined ideal, for which he hopes to find the formula by way of unexpected combinations of frames, pastels, tempera and thinned oils. All this can lead to an expression of thought, but it is not thoughtful, and M. Degas will not begrudge us considering his exhibition simply as a curious meeting of trials and tests.¹²²

Havard’s critique of Degas’s “chemistry” is more than odd. Likenesses to chemists were usually reserved for landscape artists such as Monet or Pissarro, and were aimed at their experiments in color and diffuse light.¹²³ “Trials” and “tests” may well refer to the plethora of media on display—such as the *détrempe* in *The Dance School* (Fig. 0.6)—but Havard also derides the raking perspectives, impudent foreshortenings, and compound temporalities of Degas’s guttural “japonisme.”¹²⁴ Claims about the influence of *japonisme* were more prevalent in 1879, as were broader critiques about the group’s “contempt” for perspective.¹²⁵ This might be

¹²¹ “M. Degas, avec ses *coins* et ses personnages si parisiens . . .” Jules Clarétie, “Le Mouvement parisien: Les *Impressionnistes* et les *aquarellistes*,” *L’Indépendance belge*, April 20, 1879.

¹²² “M. Degas, c’est un homme d’infiniment d’esprit, et qui plus est un artiste de talent, mais c’est à lui surtout que le reproche de chimie s’adresse. Son cerveau semble être une fournaise où bouillonne toute une nouvelle peinture encore en parturition. Il n’est ni impressionniste ni japonais, mais l’impressionnisme l’émeut et le japonisme le prend aux entrailles. Il semble être à la poursuite d’un idéal mal défini, dont il espère trouver la formule dans des combinaisons inattendues de cadres, de pastels, de *détrempe* et d’essence. Tout cela peut conduire à l’expression de la pensée, mais ce n’est pas encore la pensée; et M. Degas ne nous en voudra pas de considérer son exposition simplement comme une réunion curieuse de tâtonnements et d’essais.” Henry Havard, “L’Exposition des artistes indépendants,” *Le Siècle*, April 27, 1879.

¹²³ For example, Duranty, in his article from 1879, claims “this school of *plein soleil*” is pursuing “arduous experiments which resemble the experiences of a chemist or physicist.” “. . . [C]ette école du plein soleil . . . essais laborieux qui ressemblent aux expériences du chimiste ou de physicien.” Edmond Duranty, “La Quatrième Exposition faite par un groupe d’artistes indépendants,” *La Chronique des arts et de la curiosité*, April 19, 1879.

¹²⁴ Moreover, the two foyer works were by far the most serial of the works exhibited and their subject matter was more closely related to popular *ukiyo-e* prints.

¹²⁵ “Il faut voir avec quel mépris les Indépendants traitent les premiers éléments du dessin et de la perspective. Nous nous souvenons d’une certaine dame assise sur un canapé *perpendiculaire*; nouvelle manière de s’asseoir qui ne doit pas être la plus commode de toutes.” Daniel Bernard, “Chronique parisienne,” *Revue du monde catholique*, May 15, 1879. The critic is speaking generally and then references what seems to be Mary Cassatt’s *Little Girl in a Blue*

due to the influx of Japanese exhibitions in Paris the year before: a garden and teahouse at the World's Fair, a wooden pavilion of the latest *bibelot* on the rue des Nations, and a fine art display in the Trocadéro.¹²⁶ Perhaps the critics were weary and suspicious of the foreign “fad.” But more to the point, Havard attacks the tangibility of Degas's generative processes (“en parturition”). He insults the unformed ideal, but also the transparency of his pursuit. The critics' crucial complaint is that Degas has allowed the structural elements to dominate and obfuscate the subject, to become a murky stratagem that requires scrutiny and, for Havard, clarification. Simply put, Havard finds the palpability of Degas's processes vulgar.

The type of violence Havard ascribed to Degas's paintings—bubbling, ripping, and guttural—is a subtle thread throughout the criticism from 1879. Scholars often assign the critics' protestations to the fragmentation of the dancers' physiognomies.¹²⁷ However, the journalists' dismay is rarely directed toward any injuries to the human body; rather, their consternations stem from the artist's discordant use of the repetitious dancer-motif. Here is the critic for *La Vie parisienne* in 1879:

To the right, half a dancer: an ear, shoulder, arm and left leg. To the left, another half of another dancer: ear, shoulder, arm and right leg. In the middle, a man whose beard serves as the hair for one of the dancers. . . . Then, a loge—still a dancer. . . . Next, some fans!! . . . It's the subject that one fails to find.¹²⁸

Armchair (1878, National Gallery of Art, WASHINGTON, D.C.), a painting widely known to have been completed under Degas's tutelage.

¹²⁶ For a general introduction to Degas's relationship to *japonisme* and the major cultural events that marked the style's rise in French artistic circles, see Jill DeVonyar and Richard Kendall, *Degas and the Art of Japan* (Reading, PA: Reading Public Museum and New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007), esp.10-23; and Colta Ives, “Degas, Japanese Prints, and *Japonisme*,” in *The Private Collection of Edgar Degas*. I treat Degas's appropriations of *japonisme* with reference to the frieze format in the following chapter.

¹²⁷ Armstrong traces the theme across the criticism from 1879, paying special attention to Louis Leroy's comments about dislocation. See Armstrong, *Odd Man Out*, 45-7.

¹²⁸ “A droite, une moitié de danseuse: oreille, épaule, bras et jambe gauche. A gauche, autre moitié d'autre danseuse: oreille, épaule, bras et jambe droite. Au milieu, un monsieur dont la barbe sert de cheveux à une des danseuses. . . . Ensuite, une loge—toujours de danseuse. . . . Puis, des éventails!! . . . c'est le sujet qu'il faut chercher!” Anonymous, “Choses et autres,” *La Vie parisienne*, May 10, 1879.

Not for the first time, the critic jumps from one painting to another. But he begins with the Frick's *The Rehearsal* (Fig. 0.5) and the Shelburne's *The Dance School* (Fig. 0.6), trailing the dancer-motifs from one painting to the next, performing their repetitious temporality and their differential relations. So he implicitly concedes the paintings' disjunctive unity (“[a] gauche, autre moitié d'autre danseuse”) and their rhythmic structures of repetition across the canvases, but he does not comprehend the larger syntactic game. Alas, the critic/viewer is perplexed and thwarted—*c'est le sujet qu'il faut chercher!* I would suggest that, in 1879, *le langage de l'appartement* was rendered illegible. Not because of any single painting's total inability to communicate “place,” but because, between *The Rehearsal* and *The Dance School*, Degas's artistic processes of structuring pictorial space became irritatingly legible. Dancer-motifs order space instead of elucidating place, their generative temporalities overrun the illusions of fictive duration, and Degas's own production procedures activate viewing practices that are decidedly self-conscious, challenging, and/or infuriating.

In 1875 Degas initiated two final foyer paintings that revisit the experiments with the modular dancer-motif as both a structural apparatus and an index of making. He carried out one final work on each of the two types of foyer places/spaces: *Dancers Practicing in the Foyer* (c. 1875-1900, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Fig. 0.7) is representative of the first type of foyer classroom and *Dancers at a Rehearsal* (c. 1875-77, Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Fig. 0.8) includes the spiral staircase. The former was dramatically retouched with large swaths of chiaroscuro c. 1900. However, a lithograph from around 1888 gives us some indication about its former state (Fig. 2.18), and either way the place/space is unmistakably procured from the Phillips' *The Dance Rehearsal* (Fig. 0.1). In both paintings Degas deemphasizes the architectural structures found in the source painting and homes in on the dancer-motifs, exploiting their

abilities to structure the spatial system of the composition in lieu of the discarded architecture. The strategy is akin to his maneuver between the Fogg's *The Rehearsal* (Fig. 0.2) and the Frick's *The Rehearsal* (Fig. 0.5): foreground and background collapse into one another and the dancer-motifs work to support or anchor the pictorial space between them.

In the case of *Dancers Practicing in the Foyer* (Fig. 0.7), Degas transformed the Ionic columns into square piers and angled the arched windows, constructing a fictitious colonial architectural style that underscores the conceptual grid on which the dancer-motifs are aligned.¹²⁹ He also eradicated the implausible staircase, the instructor, and the extraneous, scattered dancer-motifs, leaving only the three principal units of dancers which parallel the mapped architecture. The dancer-motif in *grande seconde* makes a surreptitious return at the center left of the canvas, as do two interconnected dancer-motifs from the Fogg's *The Rehearsal* that were lifted from the center background of the Fogg painting and then dropped into the center background of *Dancers Practicing in the Foyer*. Furthermore, when Degas modified the painting around 1900 (Fig. 0.7), he transposed yet another modular dancer-motif: one that appears in half of the series' works and always at the same position in the compositions. In these foyer paintings the dancer-motif in question stands at the *barre* with her right leg stretched along it, and in each one her right foot is the endpoint of a dynamic, diagonal axis.¹³⁰ Thus, across the four paintings the dancer-motif's foot on the *barre* is consistently a plotted orthogonal within Degas's contrived pictorial spaces;

¹²⁹ The stylistic transformation of the architecture, from the Phillips' *The Dance Rehearsal* to *Dancers Practicing in the Foyer*, is not outside of Degas's normative generative processes, but it is a strange choice of architecture because of its colonial roots. I suggest that he transposed the vertical square frames from his *Portraits in an Office (New Orleans)* (1873, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Pau). The various heights of the opened windows and the odd paneled door at the far left edge are also reminiscent of the earlier painting. The painting was not sold to the museum in Pau until 1878 and would have been in Degas's possession in 1875 while he worked on *Dancers Practicing in the Foyer*.

¹³⁰ The dancer-motif with her right leg stretched across the *barre* appears in *The Dance Rehearsal* (The Phillips Collection, Fig. 0.1), *The Rehearsal* (The Fogg Art Museum, Fig. 0.2), *The Dance School* (Shelburne Museum, Fig. 0.6), and *Dancers Practicing in the Foyer* (Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Fig. 0.7). However, her first utilization was in *Dance Class at the Opéra* (Musée d'Orsay, Fig. 2.5).

she is also a recurring index of the artist's conceptual mappings and a trace for viewers to recollect.

Dancers at a Rehearsal (c. 1875-77, Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Fig. 0.8) is the only pastel among the foyer series, and it is an ambitious, unnerving leave-taking.¹³¹ The peripatetic architecture (the spiral stairs) and the modular dancer-motifs in arabesque are sourced from *The Rehearsal* (Fig. 0.4), but the frontal vantage point references the first spiral staircase painting, *The Dance Class* (Fig. 0.3). Similar to the spatial operations in the contemporaneous *Dancers Practicing in the Foyer*, Degas dissolves the middle ground thereby collapsing “place” by means of pictorial space. However, without the corkscrew linearity of the staircase or the dramatic recession into the antechamber in *The Dance Class*, the flat horizon—parallel to the picture's edges—renders the room strangely static. The movement and temporality of the spiral stairs are condensed to a segmented curve so that the *repoussoir* now seems pastiched, almost stuck to the picture plane. (In fact, the viewer must be acquainted with the series to comprehend the delineated curve as a spiral staircase; it would otherwise be difficult to explain.)¹³² Alas, the dancer-motifs march across the canvas; they activate the dynamism of the composition and structure its repetitious movement. Degas's processes and his artistic temporality are still indexed in the transfigured spiral stairs and the modular dancer-motifs—this is the temporality inherent to the foyer series. But the temporality of the painting itself is almost wholly dependent upon the dancer-motifs and their repetitious movement across the canvas. The architectural scaffoldings of pictorial space, which propelled Degas's calculated procedures and technical investigations throughout the series, have yielded to the dancer-motifs' conceived corporeality.

¹³¹ A second version of the pastel was completed soon after (L654). The dimensions are the same and the composition is remarkably similar, though the color is much less saturated.

¹³² A final work, completed much later in Degas's career, includes a trio of dancer-motifs in arabesque against the windows of the foyer and a close-up view of a spiral staircase on the left. There are also several related drawings for the oil, *Three Dancers in the Foyer*, c. 1892-95 (L1131).

I include these final two foyer paintings because Degas self-consciously included peripatetic architectural elements from the foyer series: the colonnade and the spiral staircase. Yet, they also portend the focus of Degas's attentions in the last half of the 1870s. From 1875 until 1879, when the first frieze painting is begun, Degas's paintings focus on the front of the house: performers at the café-concert, dancers on stage, or dancers accompanied by *abonnés* in the wings of the new Garnier Opéra (inaugurated in January, 1875). The ballet classroom is no longer the site of persistent investigations into the liminality of place and pictorial space. Instead Degas sustains the game by assimilating the lessons learned from the foyer series. *Dancers at a Rehearsal* (Fig. 0.8) incorporates the principle mechanisms of Degas's few classroom paintings from 1875 to 1878: modular dancer-motifs (from various ballet paintings, not only the foyer series) structure and align pictorial space; minimal, but conspicuous, architectural contrivances map pictorial space (floorboards, chair, watering can, heater, small bench); and a high horizon line hovers above raking floor boards.¹³³ All of these genre paintings are meticulous calculations of pictorial space—*The Ballet Class* (c. 1880, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Fig. 2.19) for instance—but they do not constitute the type of concentrated, inter-relational artistic effort perpetuated in the early classroom paintings and the foyer series. They extend and amalgamate the lessons learned, but experimental exercises and rigorous *répétitions* are meant for the inventive breadth of the classroom.

Conclusion: Degas's Deferred Endings

I want to end my discussion of the foyer classroom paintings at the beginning, in the midst of Degas's most concentrated investigations into place and pictorial space. Prefiguring

¹³³ Examples include L396, L408, L447, L449, L460, L479, L573, and L576.

many of the critics' dualistic estimations, Edmond de Goncourt wrote about visiting Degas's studio at 77 Rue Blanche on February 13, 1874:

Yesterday I spent my afternoon in the atelier of a strange painter named Degas. After many attempts, experiments, and thrusts in every direction, he has fallen in love with modern subjects and has set his heart on laundry girls and dancers. I cannot find his choice bad. . . .

This Degas is an original fellow, sickly, neurotic, and afflicted with eye trouble Of all the men I have seen engaged in depicting modern life, he is the one who has most successfully rendered the inner nature of that life.

Now, will he ever realize something really complete? I doubt it. He seems to have a restless mind."¹³⁴

We know that Degas showed Goncourt the Corcoran's *The Dance Class* (Fig. 0.3).¹³⁵ And it is probable that the writer viewed other works from the foyer series the same afternoon. What is significant is how Goncourt described the temporality of Degas's studio environ at this moment: "experiments," "thrusts in every direction," "restless." Goncourt rightly correlated these momentums with Baudelairean modern life and an insider's prized reportage.¹³⁶ Nevertheless, he was uncertain about Degas's impetuosity and the likelihood of his success. To Goncourt's mind, the artist's "neurotic" enthusiasms for experiment threatened the promise of healthful completion. Among most critics (there are exceptions to be discussed) Goncourt's desire for secure absorption and pictorial stability would win out. Diagnoses of repetition, stuck-ism, frustration, obsession: these will become the quintessential ingredients for the criticism of Degas's classroom paintings. I would argue that realization and fulfillment were imbued in the

¹³⁴ For the French, see note 20, Chapter One.

¹³⁵ Goncourt mentions the red muslin shawl on the seated dancer-motif in the journal entry.

¹³⁶ I nuance my analysis of the discourse on modernist "genius" in Chapter Four when I problematize the concept of "originality" as it is constructed in relation to Degas's output. My thanks to Howard Lay for his subtle reading of Baudelaire's essay, "Painter of Modern Life" (1863). Baudelaire describes "Mr. G" involved in rapid, momentary sketches of popular life and its unseemly underside. But the printed page filters the impressions of the particular, the mad, and the masses, and makes them available to the respectable reader. Degas would court a reputation as an intimate of the Opéra and its underbelly: the *abonné*, the *danseuses*, *les coulisses*. His authorial disguise—one of many—was that of an insider at the Opéra, charged with the public's desire to "see" and to "know" his subjects. Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, ed. and trans. Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon, 1964).

artist's "restless" processes. It was Degas's successive fervors of making that engendered and synthesized his modes of composition. Completion was not the goal; process was the success.

I have tried to make clear that Degas's artistic processes are not haphazardly strewn or compulsively repetitive. Degas was not a *bricoleur*. There are patterns of pensive experiment from canvas to canvas and evidences of sustained engagement with painting "place," realist or not. Methodically following the artist's formal operations, I have attempted to posit my own "exacting" conclusions. The foyer series generated specific artistic mechanisms and formal lessons that Degas would exploit throughout the rest of his career: highly conceived perspectival spaces; repetitious architectural and dancer motifs; residues of artistic production; and experiments in differential relations, binary oppositions, and mirroring motifs. These are the essential qualities of Degas's serial production. I doubt Degas would approve of such a diagnostic conclusion; he "was not apt to be indulgent of . . . theories."¹³⁷ And, in truth, the paintings do not easily prompt dry summations. They belong too much to the realm of contingency. And though the paintings are physically distant—spread across the Atlantic as it were—they remain implicated in the heterogeneous continuity of Degas's investigations into "place." Brooding viewers become cognizant of the residual spaces and repetitive motifs, all the while challenged by the density of artistic process. With the foyer series, Degas's reader becomes conscious of the artist's spatial experiments—"thrusts" that flow into and penetrate each other—and wherein memory becomes an implicit function of looking.

¹³⁷ Valéry recalls that "Degas, with little tenderness for anything, was not apt to be indulgent of criticism, or of theories. He was always ready to assert—and later in life he would harp on it—that there is no arguing with the muses. They work all day, very much on their own. In the evening, work finished, they get together and dance; *they do not talk.*" "Degas, tendre pour peu de choses, ne s'adouçissait guère à l'égard de la critique et des *théories*. Il disait, volontiers,—et sur le tard le rabâchait,—que les Muses jamais ne discutent entre elles. Elles travaillent tout le jour, bien séparées. Le soir venu et la tâche accomplie, s'étant retrouvées, elles dansant: *elles ne parlent pas.* Valéry, *Degas Danse Dessin*, 14.

Chapter Three:

“Thrusts in Every Direction”

*I shall say that a little formalism turns one away
from History, but that a lot brings one back to it.*

- Roland Barthes, *Myth Today*¹

Notebook thirty-one is a seemingly lackluster sample from the collected sketchbooks of Edgar Degas.² Amongst the many drawings of paintings in progress—the *Portrait of Diego Martelli* and *Miss La La at the Cirque Fernando*—there are inventories of artists and pictures for the Fourth Impressionist Exhibition in 1879 and quick studies of unidentified sitters.³ In addition, there are a remarkable number of mundane entries concerning recent architectural designs and decor. Plans of modern, *Haussmannien* buildings are interspersed throughout the middle and end of the book: three separate diagrams of the interior of 28 Avenue de l’Opéra (the site of the upcoming exhibition, (Fig. 3.1); a map of the building’s locale and intersecting streets; and a three-page text and image spread expounding on water closets, with illustrated elevations of WCs in apartments and two more plans of apartments furnished with the new luxury.⁴ There is

¹ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (1957), trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1999), 112.

² Bibliothèque Nationale, Dc 327d réserve, Carnet 23. For a description of the notebook see Reff, *The Notebooks of Edgar Degas*, vol. 1, 135-38. An abridged copy of the notebook is reproduced in Reff, *The Notebooks of Edgar Degas*, vol. 2. For purposes of clarity, the page numbers below refer to Reff’s publication, for which the author paginated Degas’s notebooks; Nb refers to the Notebooks as listed in Reff’s catalogue.

³ Both paintings were exhibited at the exhibition in 1879: *Diego Martelli* (1879, National Gallery of Scotland) and *Miss La La at the Cirque Fernando* (1879, The National Gallery of Art, WASHINGTON, D.C.). Lists of participating artists and potential works for the exhibition are located on pages 66, 67, and 93 in Nb 31. There are numerous unidentified portrait studies, including pages 71, 73, and 75.

⁴ Plans of the exhibition space are located on pages 33, 54, 64, and 65. The text and plans about water closets are found on pages 95-7.

also an unprecedented amount of attention afforded to the shape and style of picture frames: six pages at the beginning of the book, each with several cross-sectional drawings of frames comparatively arranged (Fig. 3.2).⁵ But there are no scenes of sadism like those in Notebook twenty-nine (Figs. 3.3 & 3.4), or unpublished illustrations of murderous novels like the five sketches for *La Fille Elisa* in Notebook twenty-eight (Fig. 3.5). Notebook thirty-one is also short on Degas's more titillating doodles, such as criminals, prostitutes, and mobile phalluses (Fig. 3.6).⁶ Instead, the 1879 notebook appears prosaic, even civil: architecture, street maps, water closets, and picture frames.

Nevertheless, Notebook thirty-one has come to have a fabled, though thoroughly sanitized, place in the scholarly narrative of the frieze classroom series. About three-quarters of the way into the book there is a horizontally-oriented page with a small, rough sketch of a frieze-shaped painting (Fig. 3.7). It is the only extant drawing Degas made of the frieze format and it has come to mark the momentous beginning of the series.⁷ It is actually the penultimate sketch in the book (again, awarding it some import), followed only by preparatory lists and diagrams for the Fourth Exhibition and a prophetic drawing of a lone man outside a partly opened door. While scholars agree that the pivotal sketch represents *The Dance Lesson* (c. 1879, National Gallery of Art, WASHINGTON, D.C., Fig. 0.9), the artist's witty arrangement of a flawlessly illusionistic ornament directly underneath the flattened frieze painting has gone unmentioned.

⁵ Sketches and text about frames and picture moldings are found on pages 8-13.

⁶ Nb 29 (sadism): 31, 33 and 35; Nb 28 (*La Fille Elisa* by Edmond de Goncourt [1877]): 26, 27, 29, 31, 33, and 35; Nb 33 (criminals): 5, 6, 10, and 11; Nb 28 and 29 respectively (prostitutes): 65 and 7; Nb 26 (phalluses): 63, 75, and 76.

⁷ Nb 31: 70. While the sketch is upheld as the only drawing of the frieze format itself, it is significant that in notebook thirty-one several sketches are oriented on the horizontal. The notebook's dimensions are approximately 4 ¼" x 6 ½"; the frieze format paintings are generally 16" x 34". Of interest is the fact that the horizontally-oriented scenes include a still-life on a long table-top, an urban crowd with landscape, a lone man standing in a narrow room, and two sketches for text-only posters. All of the portraits are done on vertically-oriented pages. In other words, Degas chose to rotate his sketchbook to the horizontal axis when his subject was *not* an individual but a composition of separate entities to be relationally arranged on the page.

The dispute—as in so much of the Degas literature—is one of dating: whether the sketch was made before, during, or after the completion of the painting.⁸ And yet, the fact that *The Dance Lesson* was actually *not* the first composition in the frieze format has yielded little to no investigation.⁹ Regardless of the date of the “frieze sketch” in Notebook thirty-one, if we are to understand Degas’s sustained investment in the frieze classroom series and its significance for spectators, the circumstances surrounding the artist’s earliest engagement with the format must be unraveled.

⁸ Lemoisne and Lillian Browse situated Degas’s frieze classroom paintings in the mid-1880s, following the artist’s production of frieze paintings with the equestrian subject (L446, L502, L503). Boggs re-dated this group of equestrian pictures to 1885-86 in his *Degas at the Races* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998). Shackelford first named the frieze sketch as proof of an earlier date for the frieze classroom series. He argues that the sketch “has all the characteristics of a thumbnail copy of the composition, made perhaps to give a colleague, a collector, or a dealer a brief idea of a work in progress.” Shackelford also suggests that elements of the sketch “have been suppressed in the final version of the painting” (i.e. the open violin case). Contrary to Shackelford, Reff infers that the sketch is a preparatory study and concludes that as many as four of the frieze classroom paintings were painted or begun in 1878-79. Shackelford, *Degas, The Dancers*, 86. Reff, *The Notebooks of Edgar Degas*, vol. 1, 137. See also *Degas*, ed. Boggs, 339, and DeVonyar and Kendall, *Degas and the Dance*, 111 and 283 n.61.

⁹ DeVonyar and Kendall argue that the frieze format was “fixed in Degas’s well-educated memory by the carved entablatures . . . of the European tradition” They also claim that the odd support was “linked to the wide format of certain early monotypes, such as *Ballet at the Paris Opéra* (c. 1877, The Art Institute of Chicago, Fig. 3.30) and *Three Ballet Dancers* (c. 1878-80, The Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Fig. 3.59), as well as to some of Daumier’s innovative designs and to examples of contemporary illustration” DeVonyar and Kendall, *Degas and the Dance*, 111-2. However, in the authors’ more recent *Degas and the Ballet: Picturing Movement*, they suggest that Degas’s utilization of the format was influenced by various panoramic devices and images, although they offer no conclusive arguments about the exact relationship between Degas’s knowledge and/or practice and the historical images/practices they describe. The authors describe the frieze format as a “panorama-like design” that invites the viewer “to survey each painted room from side to side,” effectively encouraging a “scanning response,” or what they term “the mobile viewer.” The effect is compared to the modes of looking prompted by painted panoramas, panoramic photographs, and panoramic cameras: “visual forms . . . involving the scanning of horizontal scenes.” DeVonyar and Kendall, *Degas and the Ballet*, 98-9. I would agree that Degas’s paintings share some of the dramatic perspectival effects of panoramic photographs, and I concur that the artist was probably familiar with the style of urban, panoramic photography. However, their argument relies on visual and morphological affinities between Degas’s frieze classroom series and panoramic photographs that result from distinct mediums (pastel, oil, charcoal, gouache, and monotype versus albumen photography). For example, the authors equate “the blurred pedestrians in Baldus’s *Paris, Panorama from the Carousel* with Degas’s figures’ “imperfect finish,” claiming that both create a sense of energy for the viewer. DeVonyar and Kendall, *Degas and the Ballet*, 111. I would insist that Degas’s dancer-motifs in the frieze paintings—save those in the very latest works—do *not* create a sense of energy for the viewer (quite the opposite actually) and are, in fact, not even blurred. Also, the size and scale of the panoramas were much larger than panoramic photographs or Degas’s paintings, eliciting a simulated, monumental visual experience not readily available in the smaller formats. Moreover, the authors do not consider how the panoramic photographers appropriated or manipulated conventions of landscape painting, conventions that also might be at work in Degas’s frieze series. And finally, DeVonyar and Kendall do not treat the frieze paintings as a *series* that provokes particular types of viewing practices beyond the format of an individual work.

In the plainest way, my questions are about how the frieze format entered Degas's oeuvre. What are the critical contexts for its initial production? What are the underlying principles of its sustainability as a "space" for artistic creation? Analyses of the first frieze compositions will offer insight into why the ballet classroom—and not the café-concert, the Opéra's stage, or even the races—became integrally linked to the format for three decades of the artist's practice. Implicit in this inquiry is the argument that Degas did not arbitrarily choose the frieze format for the subject of the ballet classroom; he did not randomly sketch the peculiarly shaped support before composing *The Dance Lesson*, nor did he erratically begin an oil painting on such a large and oddly-formatted canvas. In the place of inaugural ruptures that help to sublimate and fix the series, I argue that the frieze classroom paintings began at the prosaic intersections of Degas's everyday social practices and innovative, "low" production methods. In the following sections I engage with several moments of the artist's more informal and sociable practices of production—all intrinsically connected and interdependent—as I attempt to congregate the foundational contexts of the frieze classroom series.

In the period from 1877 to 1880, the tendencies of Degas's artistic processes actually follow similar themes: debased subject matter, *japoniste* appropriations, investigations into the decorative, and experiments that utilize repetition as a research tool. While the frieze classroom series may not immediately conjure up all of these concepts for the reader, my ambition is to reveal the fluid quality and everyday character of Degas's methods, to locate the fundamentals of the artist's practice during the stretch of time before the frieze classroom series. The organic, quotidian quality of Degas's artistic practices is a muddled field to excavate, full of the artist's aphorisms about making art (related by nostalgic colleagues), pages of undated sketches, more undated paintings and pastels, and a few morsels of historic detail. My ambition is to understand

the marginal practices that inflected Degas's larger studio projects at this moment, such that a series of some two dozen oil and pastel paintings could begin with everyday occurrences.

To warrant the digressions that guide this chapter it is necessary to preview particular facts about the frieze classroom paintings—which are, finally, the subject of Chapter Four. The entire series (some two dozen works) is almost completely composed of six dancer-motifs posed in multifarious, yet comparable, sets of spatial relations. There are a handful of anomalous or augmented motifs: a figure climbing the stairs appears only once in the 1880s (Fig. 0.16); a dancer in the *en bas* position returns from the earliest foyer classroom paintings in the middle of the decade (Figs. 0.17 & 0.18); and Degas modifies some motifs sometime around the turn of the century. Nonetheless, the cache of dancer-motifs set in the foreground sustains only subtle modifications between 1879 and 1907. The frieze compositions are also defined by two basic conceptions of disjunctive pictorial space: the first is formed by a shallow foreground on the left of the canvas, which is contiguous to a deep recessive expanse on the right; the second reverses this design, with the foreground space on the right of the canvas adjoining the recessive on the left. Set between the two spaces (or on the margins of both), at the center of the canvas, are one or more dancer-motifs that act like a hinge connecting the two regions. *The Dance Lesson* (Fig. 0.9) is an example of the first type of composition; and the Clark's *The Dancing Lesson* (c. 1880, Fig. 0.13) is representative of the second.

Respectful of this principal division of asymmetrical foreground and background space, Degas reserved the blatant repetition of a dancer-motif—iterations of the exact same pose—for the recessive space of the painting. More often than not these dancer-motifs are vaguer and less defined than those occupying the shallow foreground of the picture, and their poses are only recognizable by their outstretched arabesques or *battements à la seconde*. In contrast, the dancers

in the foreground are distinct, varied motifs arranged in taut, highly conceived compositional relations. Similar to this apposition, the dancer-motifs set in the background are performing the disciplined structure of dance; they are *in* ordered movement, executing specific barre exercises. The dancers in the foreground rest, stretch, fix, and bend in a general state of slack, or even collapse. These dancer-motifs are the constant, dominant subject of the frieze classroom series: bodies involved in indeterminate, in-between actions, held in un-formed and insignificant states of boredom, exhaustion, and resolve.

There are few architectural contrivances across the series, with the exception of one composition that features the last step of a much larger staircase (Fig. 0.16).¹⁰ Signs of “place” are few and far between. There are no instructors, musicians, pianos, watering cans, corridors, arches, or columns. A mirror takes the place of the windows in two works from the mid-1880s (Figs. 0.17 & 0.18) and a single door makes an appearance in three compositions dated to around 1889 (Figs. 0.19-0.21). Otherwise, the place of the ballet classroom is extraordinarily simplified, and the most basic features of the classroom persist relatively unchanged from work to work: rectangular windows of light are located in the furthest reaches of the background; a bench, instrument, and/or chair is normally found in the foreground; a barre might run along one or more walls; and a metal post divides pictorial space in a handful of compositions (Figs. 0.15 & 0.22-0.25).

From this brief summary of the frieze series, the conceptual imbalance between place and space might seem quantifiable to the reader. But the distinctions between the foyer and the frieze

¹⁰ Another work included a glimpse of a spiral staircase through an open door along the foreground wall, but Degas re-worked the canvas at some point and painted over it (Fig. 0.19). A lithograph of the work, which was submitted to the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris in 1889, clearly shows the curvature of the stair’s handrail through the open door (Fig. 4.58). Degas also added a figure, outlined the dancers’ contours with a loose silhouette, and significantly reworked the texture of the canvas. Shackelford argues that the painting was probably begun before 1889. Shackelford, *Degas: The Dancers*, 98.

series extend beyond inventories of furniture and fixtures and into the subtleties of, and shifts within, Degas's artistic practice in the intervening years. In this chapter I have relied on two general facts to organize my investigations into the series: the format of the frieze composition itself and the proliferation of dancer-motifs. I begin with Degas's leisurely experiments in draftsmanship on and across the horizontal in Notebook twenty-eight and several early frieze monotype compositions. The horizontal sheet—especially when utilized for a monotype—was a socialized “space” of extended experiment for the artist; but it simultaneously intensified the strictures of pictorial space and limited Degas's manipulations of foreground and background. The following section analyzes the artist's literal and structural appropriations of *japonisme*, which informed his assimilation of the frieze format and introduced radical models of pictorial space and time. The first half of the chapter concludes with an examination of Degas's early experiments with the frieze format and the subject of the Paris Opéra. I consider two frieze-shaped pastels in light of the artist's novel—and thoroughly distinct—brand of calligraphic, almost scribbly draftsmanship and his timely interest in “low” subject matter. I argue that although Degas was, at first, ambivalent about the possibilities for the frieze format, he innately associated the format with rigorous experiments in degraded or undisciplined form.

An interlude in the chapter effectively shifts focus to the dancer-motif as a creative device. I challenge the scholarly discourse on Degas's sketches of Marie Goethem, the model for *Little Dancer of Fourteen Years* (1878-81, Fig. 3.44), as I seek to re-interpret the artist's commitment to draftsmanship as a repetitive exercise in haptic and visual memory. Henri Bergson's contemporary theories of duration, “pure memory,” and intuition bolster my endeavor to reevaluate Degas's repetition as productive of *aides mémoire* for artist and viewer alike. This detour away from the actual frieze series underscores Degas's intense investment in the

generation of the dancer-motif just before or concurrent with commencing the first frieze classroom paintings. In the final section of the chapter Degas's exercises in drawing are linked to his subsequent attempts to assimilate his sketches of dancer-motifs into a larger composition. I argue that after initial experiments with iterations of a single motif in one composition, Degas begins a group of figure studies consciously prepared as a collection of novel motifs for serial, decorative compositions—the *Portraits in a Frieze* series, and a group of prints with Mary Cassatt at the Louvre. Rather than an investigative study of women's curious physiognomies or "ways of looking," I suggest that Degas's commitment to these motifs has everything to do with his empathy for modern women's *processes* of looking: observing, comparing, and remembering the fleeting stuff of the everyday modern world.

Degas's first frieze compositions I: Sociable sketches and "greasy ink" drawings

Café-Concert (The Spectators) (c. 1876-77, The Art Institute of Chicago, Fig. 3.8), is one of several pastel drawings on monotype that Degas made on the theme of the café around 1877.¹¹ More well-known examples include *Women on the Terrace of a Café in the Evening* (1877, Musée d'Orsay, Fig. 3.9)—in which Degas reused the lewd oral gesture from the Corcoran's *The Dance Class* (Fig. 0.3)—and *The Song of the Dog* (c. 1876-77, Private collection, Fig. 3.34). Perhaps because its subject (spectators) is an anomaly amongst the group, *Café-Concert (The Spectators)* has not received the same scholarly attention as the others.¹² And, yet, I would

¹¹ For purposes of clarity I refer to the painting as simply *The Spectators* throughout the chapter. The subject of the café-concert appears suddenly in Degas's work beginning in 1875, the height of popularity of such establishments, which had emerged in Paris in the 1830s. Degas's interest in the subject petered out before 1879, but the theme makes up much of his earliest work in monotype, which I treat here. See Françoise Cachin, "The Monotypes," in *Degas: The Complete Etchings, Lithographs and Monotypes*, eds. Jean Adhèmar and Françoise Cachin (New York: The Viking Press, 1973).

¹² As the stage and the singer are not the subject in *The Spectators*, sources for the bulk of the composition are not as immediately apparent as, say Degas's numerous sketches of singers from notebooks twenty-seven, twenty-eight, and twenty-nine, which testify to an ongoing fascination with *la chanteuse* and to Degas's prolific output on the subject.

suggest that the composition is one of the first in which Degas adopted the frieze format. It is also likely that it was preceded or quickly followed by a second pastel on monotype with similar dimensions, *Cabaret* (c. 1877, The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Fig. 3.10).¹³ The dimensions for the two monotype compositions are significantly smaller in size than the frieze classroom paintings; however, the shapes are roughly equivalent and they all have a ratio of approximately 1:2 (height to length). Why Degas chose the odd format for these crude “drawings done with greasy ink” is not immediately obvious;¹⁴ however, it is clear that the artist’s experiments with monotype are intricately interwoven with the first frieze compositions. I will treat Degas’s monotype process as a particular mode of production below;¹⁵ first I examine the suggestive sources for the two early

I reference many of the sketchbook compositions in arguments below. Moreover, the “star” is not a recognizable singer in *The Spectators*, nor is the particular place made clear. This is in distinction to works like *The Song of the Dog* (Fig. 3.34), which pictures the famous Thérèse or the various lithographs and etchings of the Café des Ambassadeurs. See Degas, ed. Boggs, 290-6. For the social history of the *café-concert* as it relates to Degas’s works, see Robert Herbert, *Impressionism: Art, Leisure, and Parisian Society* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988), 82-91. On café culture and prostitution in Degas’s works, see Hollis Clayton, *Painted Love: Prostitution in French Art of the Impressionist Era* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991), 103-8. ¹³ *Cabaret* has dimensions of 9 ½” x 17 ½”; however, in the monotype stage it was slightly shallower with a shorter height. Degas enlarged the picture at the top by working pastel over the platemark, which is still visible as it passes through the coiffures of the performers. The original format survives in the first print of the monotype. (See Eugenia Parry Janis, *Degas Monotypes: Essay, Catalogue & Checklist* [Cambridge, MA: Fogg Art Museum, 1968], cat. 7.) Further reference to this catalogue is listed as “J.”) This might suggest that Degas’s “completion” of the monotypes with pastel necessitated a repression of the odd sketchbook-like format; although *The Spectators* proves otherwise. In addition to *The Spectators* and *Cabaret*, Degas produced at least two other monotypes of a café-concert singer in the frieze format (See Adhémar and Cachin, “Monotypes,” in *Degas: The Complete Etchings, Lithographs and Monotypes*, cat. 9 and 43. Further reference to this catalogue is listed as “AC.”) *Mlle Bécat* (c. 1877-78, Private collection, AC43) was first produced as one of three monotypes on a single plate and then transferred to lithograph with crayon and pencil. The original monotype is a strong example of Degas’s construction of negative and positive pictorial space in dark field monotype. However, I have omitted the work from my analysis because of its distinctive printing process and the fact that Degas never added pastel to the monotype or lithograph. There is one impression of the lithograph with additional pastel, but it was actually finished by Zacharie Zachariain, a still-life painter and friend of Degas. It is reproduced in Sue Welsch Reed and Barbara Stern Shapiro, *Edgar Degas: The Painter as Printmaker* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1984), 30c. The left half of the finished work is almost completely effaced by scratching from the printing process and crayon work.

¹⁴ “Dessins faits avec l’encre grasse et imprimés.” Quoted and trans. in Cachin, “The Monotypes,” in *Degas: The Complete Etchings, Lithographs and Monotypes*, 77.

¹⁵ It is generally agreed that Degas learned the monotype process from his friend Vicomte Ludovic Napoléon Lepic, an amateur anthropologist and member of the *Société des Aquafortistes*. *The Ballet Master* (c. 1875, National Gallery of Art, WASHINGTON, D.C.), considered Degas’s first monotype, bears Degas’s and Lepic’s signature. Degas’s early monotypes were done in the dark field manner (plate is first inked and then wiped to reveal the negative image); in 1879 he began to use the light field manner (ink is added to a clean plate) and combinations of both methods. Janis located 321 monotypes by Degas, including lost prints and those with pastel and/or gouache. In the Third Impressionist Exhibition Degas included at least five monotypes with pastel and gouache. Approximately

frieze works, *The Spectators* and *Cabaret*, and the social contexts that provoked such a peculiar format.

The Spectators hinges on a moment of anecdotal drama between male and female customers uncommon in the *café-concert* pictures: an interaction ripe with the kind of heightened heterosexual difference acted out in Degas's infamous brothel monotypes begun soon after.¹⁶ The central man and woman lean toward one another in animated conversation, a private moment intensified by the proximity of their extended bodies, each one reaching out over the furniture so as to hear the other. A similar couple is located on a two-page horizontal spread in Degas's Notebook twenty-eight (Fig. 3.11), although the male patron does not appear quite as engaged. The scene is titled as an illustration of Edmond de Goncourt's *La Fille Elisa* (1877), the first of six episodes from the novel in the sketchbook, but the actors' features offer few details beyond the military adornments on the men's costumes and the women's suggestive décolletage.¹⁷ Six pages prior in the notebook, there is a sketch of a hunched, balding man

fifty extant monotypes represent the brothel (most done in the light field manner with dimensions varying from around 4"x 6" to 8" x 11"), done in 1879 and soon after. Vollard claimed that Degas's brother destroyed seventy or more brothel monotypes upon the artist's death. See Janis, *Degas Monotypes: Essay, Catalogue & Checklist*, xvii-xix, and Charles Bernheimer, *Figures of Ill Repute: Representing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century France* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1997), 167.

¹⁶ Reff repeatedly describes this period as Degas's "worldly phase." Reff, *The Notebooks of Edgar Degas*, vol. 1, 11, 17, and 31.) Indeed, Manet's paintings of waitresses and customers at café-concerts make for stimulating comparisons: *The Waitress* (1878-79, National Gallery, London) or *Café-Concert* (1878, Walters Art Gallery). Exact dating of the brothel monotypes is difficult. Janis, as well as Adhémar and Cachin, date the works to 1879 and 1880, in the wake of several novels about the life of the prostitute, (see note 17 below). Michael Pantazzi has argued for the earlier date of 1876-77 based on a review by Jules Claretie for the Impressionist Exhibition in 1877. Claretie writes: "[t]he horrors of war by the Spanish master [Goya] are not stranger than the love scenes that Degas has undertaken to paint and to engrave. His etchings would provide an eloquent translation of certain pages from *la Fille Elisa*." "Les horreurs de la guerre de maître espagnol ne sont pas plus étranges que les amours que M. Degas a entrepris de peindre et de graver. Ses eaux-fortes seraient une traduction éloquente des pages de *la Fille Elisa*." Jules Claretie, "Le Mouvement parisien: l'Exposition des impressionnistes," *L'Indépendance belge*, April 15, 1877. Pantazzi believes that Claretie was discussing the brothel monotypes. I would adamantly disagree given that the subjects in Degas's works were often considered sexually available. Moreover, if Degas had exhibited a brothel monotype in 1877, certainly more than a single reviewer would have taken notice. Michael Pantazzi, "II: 1873-1881," in *Degas*, ed. Boggs, 296-309. See also Bernheimer, *Figures of Ill Repute*, 167.

¹⁷ Goncourt's novel was one of several published in the mid-1870s and early 1880s on the subject of the prostitute's degenerate decline. The story follows Elisa, a provincial girl in Paris who eventually finds work at a brothel, murders her soldier-lover during an attempted rape, and is sentenced to the maddening conditions of a provincial

surrounded by variations of Degas's *chanteuse* (Fig. 3.12). The physiognomy of the man and the position of the women are decidedly reminiscent of the waiter at the center of *The Spectators*, as he is caught between the singer on stage, the female shadow behind him, and lunging woman at his right. There are also several sketches in Notebook twenty-eight that resonate with the particular singer in *The Spectators*: the women at either edge of page thirteen; the singer to the far right of page thirty-seven; and the gesticulating character on page sixty-three (Figs. 3.13-3.15).

The first sketches for *La Fille Elisa* and *The Spectators* have analogous settings, atmospheres, and social exchanges. Indeed, Carol Armstrong has argued that while Degas's illustrations of *La Fille Elisa* offer few specific narrative clues from the novel, "they seem to depict what Goncourt describes as the upper reaches of the social ladder of registered brothels, with their 'affectation of a vulgar style,' rather than the 'bon ton' of the lower ranks of prostitute."¹⁸ A final sketch in the notebook partakes of the same relaxed, slightly bawdy flirtation with aristocratic pretense. In this instance, the subject is Degas's friend, the composer Ernest Reyer, with a group of four laundresses—all identified by Degas's dry editorial: "Reyer incessantly offering a third loge to a laundress" (Fig. 3.16).¹⁹ While Armstrong notes the generic resemblance between Reyer and the mustachioed man leaning into the table in the sketch for *La*

prison. Unlike Zola's *L'Assommoir* (1877) or *Nana* (1880), Goncourt sought to criticize the judicial and penal systems; however, later adaptations minimize the aspects of the narrative that deal with Elisa's legal troubles and sensationalize her physiological impulses. Other examples of "prostitute literature" include Joris-Karl Huysman's *Marthe, Histoire d'une fille* (1876) and Guy de Maupassant's *La Maison Tellier* (1881). For critical analysis of Goncourt's novel and its reception, see Katherine Ashley, "Policing Prostitutes: Adaptations and Reactions to Edmond De Goncourt's *La Fille Elisa*," *Nineteenth-Century French Studies*, vol. 33, nos. 1-2 (September 2004): 135-46.

¹⁸ Carol Armstrong with David Hockney, *A Degas Sketchbook* (Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2000), 50.

¹⁹ "Reyer proposant pendant longtemps une troisième loge à une blanchisseuse."

Fille Elisa,²⁰ she does not mention that the likeness also extends to the seated man in *The Spectators*—another slumming character offering up his assets.

Since we have no reason to distrust Ludovic Halévy's date for Notebook twenty-eight (1877-78), it might be reasonable to date *The Spectators* to 1877 (rather than 1876) concurrent with the artist's production of the other frieze monotype and pastel, *Cabaret* (c. 1877). The latter work does, in fact, have discernible ties with Notebook twenty-eight and its frieze sketches. The café-concert singers on pages fifty-seven, thirty-seven, and thirteen are all akin to the *chanteuse* in *Cabaret* (Figs. 3.17, 3.15 & 3.14); and the woman seated at the center of the double-page spread on pages forty-six and forty-seven resonates with the imperious women holding fans on either side of the main attraction in the monotype (Fig. 3.18).²¹ In fact, many of the sketches from Notebook twenty-eight appear connected to the early monotypes dating from 1877 to 1878. Comparisons between the two—sketchbook and early monotypes—make that interdependency unequivocal.²² Aside from the particulars of the frieze format examples above, the quick renditions of gesticulating café-concert singers from the notebook find their way into numerous

²⁰ Ibid., 46. She also notes a similarity between Degas's annotation on the Reyer sketch—concerning his sexual offenses—and the “little phallic cannon” that is cartoonishly framed above the head of the seated soldier in the *La Fille Elisa* sketch.

²¹ The double-page spread is a sketch of Barbey d'Aureville, the Beau Brummel of the Second Empire, dressed in tails at the salon of the hostess and sculptress Mme. Hayem. Kneeling in front of her is Adolphe Franck, the Collège de France philosopher. To the far left is a profile of Barbey, suggesting that the sketch is a continuous narrative wherein Barbey enters the room and then walks across to the seated Mme. Hayem. Armstrong connects Degas's fascination with the social ritual to his and Ludovic Halévy's nostalgia for courtly transactions. However, the more aristocratic pretensions share commonalities with “courting” rituals pictured in *Cabaret*. The women seated behind the singer, “all extremely bare about the neck and shoulders . . . are the performers of the evening. The object . . . is to keep as many of them as possible constantly before the gaze of the [seated] audience. . . . If [a woman] appears with [a man's bouquet] on stage she thereby signifies her willingness to accept Monsieur's attentions.” James D. McCabe, Jr., *Paris by Sunlight and Gaslight* (Boston: National Publishing Co., 1870), 692-3. Quoted in Janis, *Degas Monotypes: Essay, Catalogue & Checklist s*, cat. 7.

²² Michel Melot has argued that Degas's (and Pissarro's) experiments in print making, and especially monotype, were discursive efforts to realize the various print mediums as private, intimate, or precious encounters, akin to the status of a drawing. Melot positions Degas's type of production (very small number of pulls per prints; only three published prints) in contradistinction to the medium's serial potential as a vehicle for the “popularization” of an artist. It is a convincing stance given Degas's disgust of publicity; however, Degas's plans to publish the collective print journal, *Le Jour et la nuit* reveal the public side of the artist's experiments. Michel Melot, “L'Estampe impressioniste et la réduction au dessin,” *Nouvelles de l'estampe* no. 19 (January-February, 1975): 11-15, 56.

other monotypes from the period (Figs. 3.19-3.21, for instance).²³ Then there are interrelated sketches and monotypes of illicit women at café tables (labeled “*Fille Elisa*” in Notebook twenty-eight, Figs. 3.22 & 3.23),²⁴ as well as comparable compositions of couples in a loge (Figs. 3.24 & 3.25). While a handful of sketches of café-concert singers appear in Notebook twenty-seven (datable to 1875-78), there are no sketches of theater loges or scenes of lone women at cafés in contemporaneous sketchbooks.²⁵ On one hand seemingly straightforward—two type of media with similar subject matter—the specific exchanges between the two suggests that Degas’s monotype production in 1877 and 1878 was conspicuously entwined with the production of Notebook twenty-eight.

All of the sketches in Notebook twenty-eight were completed in the company of Degas’s close friends and urban acquaintances at the rue de Douai home of Ludovic Halévy, the librettist and novelist. The Halévy apartments, which were like a second home to Degas, were the site of weekly salon-type evenings attended by the likes of Edouard Manet, Puvis de Chavannes, Guy de Maupassant, Alexandre Dumas *fils*, George Moore, Comte Robert de Montesquiou-Fézensac (infamous fin-de-siècle dandy), and, on occasion, Henry James.²⁶ The notebook is signed by

²³ Related works include: J9, J10, AC3, AC5, AC7, AC9-13, and AC15. One specific monotype, *Café-Concert* (c. 1877; AC9) is particularly interesting as an example of how the frieze style monotypes relate to sketchbook twenty-eight. The work’s dimensions are 3” x 6 2/3” and the composition is split into two nearly equal halves—similar to the two pages of an open sketchbook. Degas divided the picture into negative and positive space, making the separation between the two side/pages even more apparent.

²⁴ Another associated work is AC31.

²⁵ There is a contemporary lithograph (single state) of a woman with fan in a loge (AC34).

²⁶ Carol Armstrong has carefully analyzed the contents of the Notebook in light of its production context at the Halévy house. She treats the drawings as “adjunct[s] to social speech,” such that “Degas the draftsman” performed as “Degas the parlor *parleur*.” Armstrong, *A Degas Sketchbook*, 10. Her insights into Notebook twenty-eight and its relationship to the café-concert pictures are central to my arguments here. Degas was childhood friends with Ludovic Halévy’s wife, Louise née Bréguet, and the artist attended the same lycée as Ludovic. Degas dined with the family weekly and, in 1895, he documented these intimate evenings in a series of photographs. As Armstrong notes, Degas and Halévy had in common their strange blend of conservative politics, liberal cultivations, suspicions of the Third Republic, and strong feelings for the *retardaire*. Degas completed a series of monotypes for Halévy’s serial novel, *La Famille Cardinal* (1872), in 1877, though they were not published. The friendship broke down during the Dreyfus Affair because the Halévys, of Jewish descent on Ludovic’s paternal side, sided with the imprisoned officer. Degas finally made amends in 1908 to pay his last respects to Ludovic. Daniel Halévy, Ludovic’s son, wrote the preface to a facsimile edition of Notebook twenty-eight, published in a limited edition of 550: *Album de dessins*

Halèvy, with the promise that “all the drawings in this album are by Degas,” followed by the proviso, “two or three by Ernest Reyer the Composer.” Thus, the unique sketchbook was a stock prop in an informal, mostly homosocial ritual, what Armstrong calls a “conversational context,” in which “artists, literati, and luminaries of the Parisian intelligentsia” gathered to showcase their skills of music, song, storytelling, and draftsmanship.²⁷ Degas’s contribution was his quick and droll sketches—*barbouillages* “done in a light vein, passed around . . . with notes jotted [down] after.”²⁸ *The Spectators*, I would argue, was fashioned under similar social pretenses, informed by the casual, jovial anecdotalism borne of everyday rituals in masculine, bourgeois banter. That is, the subject *and* the production of *The Spectators* are linked to Degas’s informal doodlings of affable jibes and his brash caricatures of equally crass characters.²⁹

Of perhaps greater significance is the relationship between the format of the three panoramic drawings from notebook twenty-eight—the first episode from *La Fille Elisa*, Reyer with the laundresses, and the seated woman with fan—and the elongated length of *The Spectators* and *Cabaret*. In the sketches Degas construed a single frame from the double-page format, utilizing two cells for anecdotal breadth so as to prolong the scene and amuse his friends.

(Paris: Quatre Chemins-Editart, 1949). He also wrote his memoirs of the artist: *Degas Parle* (Paris: La Pallatine, 1960).

²⁷ Armstrong, *A Degas Sketchbook*, 11.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 11; 59. Homosocial” is a term coined by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. I use it here to describe the strength, exclusivity, and intimacy of male same-sex bonds in Degas’s circle. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

²⁹ Scholars agree that Degas’s interest in female professional types, such as laundresses, café-concert singers, and milliners, distinguishes his work in the mid to late 1870s and is contingent upon his study of Daumier’s caricatures. While Degas visited the retrospective of Daumier’s work at Durand-Ruel’s in April or May of 1878, his investment in Daumier’s urban typologies and physiognomies pre-dates the late 1870s and is apparent in his early paintings of the Opéra’s orchestra, for instance. For a comparison of Degas’s café-concert paintings and Daumier’s caricatures of the subject from the 1850s, see Armstrong, *Odd Man Out*, 140-6. There is no evidence of crucial connections between Daumier’s caricatures and the format of Degas’s early monotype frieze compositions. Several of Daumier’s ink and watercolor drawings from the 1850s and 60s have a wider length than the lithographs for *Le Charivari*. For example, *Soup* (1853-57, Musée du Louvre) or *The Drinking Song* (1860-63, The Sterling and Francine Clark Institute) are variations on stock themes that have been extended lengthwise in their format. However, Daumier’s history paintings might serve as a more convincing precedent, especially the various versions of *The Fugitives (The Emigrants)* (1848-50, Montreal, Van Horne Collection; 1849-50, Musée du Petit Palais; and 1852-55, Winterthur Museum). Daumier made at least two bas-relief sketches in plaster of the subject that are based upon a classical frieze format (second version, first cast from original plaster, 12 2/3” x 28 3/4”, Musée d’Orsay).

It is an unprecedented pictorial tactic in Degas's collected notebooks, a seemingly chance effort on the artist's part to extend his powers of pleasurable diversion in the midst of genial conversation.³⁰ The anomaly emphasizes the uniqueness of Notebook twenty-eight and its status as an object of broader social practice beyond the immediate objectives of Degas's more serious studio production. The sketches are the products of a communal, everyday activity that lacks the purposefulness of gridded drawings or careful studies executed in the studio. These sketches rambled like the conversation around them and followed the contingencies of an evening with friends. I understand them as the first frieze drawings; and I take their production context—the temporality of lived, material experience—to be essential to the interpretation of Degas's frieze classroom series.

The circumstances surrounding the making of *The Spectators* or *Cabaret* are much less clear. According to Vollard, however, Degas commonly called his monotype prints “*plats du jour*” (“today’s specials”), which “[a]s a rule Degas executed . . . after dinner at Cadart’s, the printer’s.”³¹ It would seem that the artist also associated the monotypes with social intimacy and practices of everyday ritual, in effect sanctioning the informal, “low” subjects that found their

³⁰ Degas did invert his notebook and utilize two cells in a third sketch related to *The Spectators*, but on the vertical axis. In Notebook 26 (pages 33-4) there is a study for *Women on the Terrace of a Café in the Evening* (Fig. 3.9), depicting the architectural structure of the café’s interior without the seated prostitutes. The café chairs in the foreground of *The Spectators* are akin to those in *Women on the Terrace of a Café in the Evening*; and the seated woman leaning over to listen at the right of *The Spectators* is related to the second prostitute from the left in the later pastel. There are two other sketches for the chairs in *Women on the Terrace of a Café in the Evening* in Notebook 27 (pages 10 and 12). See Theodore Reff, *The Notebooks of Edgar Degas*, vol. 1, 124 and 127. There are two other occasions in which Degas sketched a scene across both pages of an open notebook, but, again, the book itself was oriented on the vertical—and both are scenes in a landscape: Nb 14: 61-60; Nb 20: 20-21.

³¹ Ambroise Vollard, *Recollections of a Picture Dealer* (1937), trans. Violet M. MacDonald (New York: Dover Publications, 1978), 258. Alfred Cadart was a pioneer of the print revival in Paris in the 1860s; he founded the Société des Aquafortistes in 1862. He died in 1875, but his widow maintained the publishing business. It is accepted that Degas’s first experiments in drypoint were also completed in the company of friends at Cadart’s establishment. Marcellin Desboutin and Giuseppe de Nittis were regulars at Cadart’s, and it is likely that Desboutin introduced Degas to the group. It is assumed that Degas made his two portraits of Alphonse Hirsch (his first drypoints; AC 24) “in the atmosphere of camaraderie reflected in [the] portrait.” Douglas Druick and Peter Zegers, “Part II: The Peintre-Graveur as Peintre-Entrepreneur, 1875-80” in *Edgar Degas: The Painter as Printmaker*, xxviii.

way into his monotype practice—and into his sketchbooks.³² Both media were set apart from the rigors of studio life; the sketches were bound to the status of the notebook and the monotypes were produced in situ and sometimes finished in pastel later.³³ Moreover, Degas could perform both his sketches and monotypes at a leisurely pace with an economy of means.³⁴ With few necessary accessories—pencil and paper, or ink, rag, and plate—he could easily erase, smudge, or wipe away blunders, engaging his companions while dawdling in a creative, kinetic routine. The casualness of the activities allowed for spontaneous improvisation. In the case of monotype, Degas could make impermanent cursory markings with whatever tools he found at hand—the dull end of a paintbrush, a matchstick, or the blunt force of his own thumb.³⁵ The social ease of recurrent performance, the relaxed tempo of an after-dinner sketch, the routine releases from the strictures of picture plane and paint brush—all of these intangible factors (which actually involved a great deal of tactile maneuverings) allowed Degas to exploit the inherent allocation of contingency across the surfaces of both the sketchbooks and the monotype plates. The effective

³² As early as 1870 Duranty was aware of Degas's propensity to draw (in black and white) as a social pleasantry: "une petite plaisanterie que font au peintre ses amis, à cause de ses idées d'art." The monotype process seems to have been an extension of this habit. Edmond Duranty, "Où est donc la vérité?" *Paris Journal*, May 8, 1870.

³³ In comparison, see Figs. 2.14, 2.15, and 2.17. Some of Degas's sketches made for specific paintings were made in a serial manner and he did repeat drawing exercises of the same figure to gain a haptic memory of the particular figure. (I analyze a group of these drawings below.) However, the sketches completed in the artist's studio were very rarely given narrative detail or anecdotal breadth (background or "place"). The sketches normally consisted of a single figure or an interrelated group against the naked page. While certain monotypes were most likely finished in pastel in Degas's studio, it is assumed that many were, in fact, completed in the company of friends and colleagues. Bernheimer claims that the brothel monotypes "are actually remembered images composed *après coup*," but he offers no evidence of the assertion. Bernheimer, *Figures of Ill Repute*, 173.

³⁴ Janis corrects the assumption that the monotype process necessitates speed. She describes the temporality of Degas's process as such: "[m]aking a monotype requires speed only in the printing, because, once the paper has been dampened, the artist must go about transferring the ink to the paper with pressure quickly before the paper dries. The ink on the plate, consisting mostly of oil, does not dry quickly and can be worked over and over again and changed on the plate several times, at the artist's whim, before he prints. Only the artist's eagerness to see the printed impression speeds up the inking-wiping process. Degas . . . solved this problem by sometime using transparent celluloid plates. When he wanted to see what the eventual impression . . . was going to look like before it was actually transferred to paper, he had only to lift up his celluloid plate and look at it from underneath to see the design in reverse." Janis, "The Role of the Monotype in the Working Process of Degas – I," 26.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

mode of production was an experiential drawing with an aimless generation and a lateral, spatial expansion across the page/plate.

It is helpful to compare a particular notebook sketch and a similar monotype in order to understand Degas's nimble translations between the two media better. Both the first *La Fille Elisa* sketch and *The Spectator* position the artist/viewer at a slight bird's-eye distance from the principal subjects, but still well within the confines of the establishment's interior. And each is highly structured by numerous rhythmic architectural structures, which emanate out from (and surround) the central couple. The edifices in both compositions are comprised of loosely articulated forms, imprecise in their handling and often formless along their edges, but rigid nonetheless. In the *La Fille Elisa* scene Degas fashioned "place" by way of familiar, controlling orthogonals (chair rails, benches, tables, floorboards, frames), which he scrawled back and forth, making multiple, indeterminate pencil scratches to suggest a single edge or a continuous silhouette. It is clear that many of the contours of locale were laid out before the addition of characters; hence the pale graphite orthogonals that run through the body of the sleeping officer on the left. Still, given the tight organization of lines that make up Elisa, the table, and her officer/client, it would seem that the architecture of place was constructed around the general outlines of the anecdotal couple.

For *The Spectator*, Degas similarly built a structure of "place" around the centered subjects. Here, pencil hatchings are translated into broad, greasy sweeps of light (negative) and dark (positive) ink on the monotype plate, what scholars have often called a "chiaroscuro-like" foundation for the pastel.³⁶ Carefully correlating and rebalancing the composition with each new

³⁶ Janis argues that Degas realized a "chiaroscuro abstractness comparable to Rembrandt's" in the dark field monotypes. She takes his ability to wipe away the dark ink as "the means to portray the form-constructing power of light." Eugenia Parry Janis, "Degas and 'The Master of Chiaroscuro,'" *Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies*, vol. 7 (1972): 52-71; 54. In her earlier arguments about the monotypes, Janis also suggests that the monotype process

smear of the ink, the artist must have roughly fashioned the setting of the composition and then blurred or smudged the ink to suggest the contours of a few select bodies.³⁷ He then, at a later date, worked over the print in swaths of pastel color—concentrated or diffuse, depending on the desired effects of light—and added details to the persons’ dress or facial features. Evidence for his process can be found in the passages of monotype that are still visible in the upper left and center, and in the black costumes of the spectators. The characters in both works are thus coarsely defined by the general bent of their bodies, rather than explicit expressions or narrative detail. Indeed, the monotype process allowed Degas to treat the plate much like a sketchbook, making broad, but definitive patterns of place, which were then supplemented by more indefinite persons and retroactively outfitted from the insinuated forms.

Eugenia Parry Janis, the foremost scholar on the monotypes, describes Degas’s sketch-like method in a similar way, giving close attention to the paradoxical structure of monotype construction:

Having to compose a format by wiping away ink forced the artist to think in terms of negative and positive areas and their interrelationship, to consider structure and design exclusive of line at the most formative stage of the work of art – the sketch.

With the monotype, Degas began to compose shapes. Smearing ink around on a metal plate and wiping it away was not simply a game (although we cannot deny that it may have had a certain recreational flavor for the artist). It became an

helped Degas construct light from form rather than color because the “original patterns of light established in the plate (to which the first untouched impressions testify) remain unaltered and are only expatiated upon and heightened with color in the second pastel-worked impressions.” Janis, “The Role of the Monotype in the Working Method of Degas – I,” 26. Armstrong makes similar insights; however she also contends that the monotype “shows through the pastel . . . [t]hus it undermines pictorial surface, rather than cooperating with it. . . . [I]t denies substance and volume to the descriptive details of the image—fundamentally negating the traditional role of chiaroscuro.” For Armstrong, the monotype process partly obliterates the promise of legible physiognomies or typologies put forth by caricature. Armstrong, *Odd Man Out*, 148-9.

³⁷ Degas’s early monotypes in the dark field manner contain a minimal number of persons, three at most. This is no doubt due to the novelty of the medium and his learning curve, as well as the difficulty of precision and detail in the dark field manner in general. If and when Degas chose to add pastel to a dark field print he would build up the number of characters in the original print and add episodic details about dress, posture, architectural specifics, etc. For a comparison of black field monotypes (first print) and the prints with added pastel (second print) see the “Checklist” in Janis, *Degas Monotypes*, nos. 25 and 26; nos. 29 and 30; and nos. 33 and 34.

essential, liberating, initial procedure which retained the suggestiveness of sketches that Degas's own preparatory drawings lacked.³⁸

Janis argues that the positive/negative structure of the monotype process allowed Degas to reimagine the picture surface as an area of recreation, wherein initial markings created generalized shapes interconnected by their inherent contiguity.³⁹ Degas, who had up to an hour to manipulate the ink before it began to dry, would wipe away areas of black ink, each time effectively re-forming the structure of the composition while simultaneously necessitating *and* limiting further reorganization of the picture's forms. Relatively few erasures/wipes of ink would result in immediate and strict restraints on the spatial division of the picture, or on what Janis terms the "the structure and design." In other words, compared to the additive process of oil painting—or even sketching—the dark field monotype manner constrained Degas's compositional possibilities within the persistent boundaries of positive *or* negative pictorial space.⁴⁰

I contend that the process of monotype, especially with the first frieze prints, enacted an important tension for Degas. In arguing this I am amending Janis, who claims that Degas relished the impermanence of the leisurely process, the lack of finish that permitted material play during the act of composing. There is little doubt that monotype offered a certain liberation from the conceptual stages of a studio drawing destined for a painting; it allowed for "suggestiveness" rather than conceptual deliberation, and it posed possibilities for future operations.⁴¹ (When the

³⁸ Janis, "The Role of the Monotype in the Working Method of Degas – I," 26.

³⁹ Denis Rouart made a similar observation about Degas's printing processes: "It is clear that printmaking was attractive to Degas because it was a way of indefinitely working, retouching and transforming a plate while keeping impressions of successive states than a means of obtaining numerous identical examples of a single state" Denis Rouart, *Degas à la recherche de sa technique*, 66. "Il est certain que pour Degas la gravure fut plutôt un moyen de travailler, retoucher et transformer indéfiniment une planche tout en conservant des tirages des états successifs, que celui d'obtenir de nombreux exemplaires identiques d'un même état."

⁴⁰ See note 15 for a description of the two types of monotype: dark field and light field.

⁴¹ In the middle of her article on Degas's monotypes, Janis claims that Degas embraced the process because it eliminated the composition of line in the initial stages of a sketch, and thus the picture. I readily agree with her

performance was complete, possibilities lay in wait: to pull one print or two, to enhance the second print, to file the composition away, or to further manipulate it with pastel color.⁴²) But it also distanced Degas from the particulars of mapping “place”—the complexities of aligning architecture, décor, and motifs in pictorial space—and involved him in the malleability of contiguous constructions in negative and positive pictorial space. The peculiar tactility, generative temporality, and constructive nature of the monotypes brought about a discrete combination of spontaneity and constraint, a liberation that engendered patterns of interrelated forms and allowed for quick renditions of familiar motifs made in a similar way to those from the sketchbooks.

The correlations and exchanges that occur between Notebook twenty-eight and the early monotypes are subtle but significant alterities in Degas’s working processes in 1877. It seems unlikely that we will ever discern the specific social circumstances of the early frieze monotypes with the clarity afforded the context of Notebook twenty-eight.⁴³ Nor do we presently understand the full significance of the technical translations between the notebook sketches and the early monotype production.⁴⁴ But I hope I have made it clear that several determinable characteristics

assessment that “[t]he monotype enabled . . . Degas not to abandon line, but to place it second to compositional structure in the production of a work of art.” However, her argument takes a turn toward the end of the essay, and it comes to rest on the art historical binary of line and color. She ultimately assumes that Degas embraced the monotype medium because the negative/positive structure of the dark field mode acted as a “tonal map” for Degas, allowing him to form light and color in the earliest stages of the work and to adapt “to his own artistic needs what was newest and most interesting in the technique of his contemporaries.” To my mind this is a weak argument prefaced on the historiographical “triumph” of Degas’s pastels and the integration of Degas’s work with that of the canonical Impressionists, such as Monet and Renoir. “The Role of the Monotype in the Working Method of Degas – I,” 26.

⁴² Ibid., 27.

⁴³ In addition to Vollard’s comments about the sociability of Degas’s monotypes, it is worth noting that Lepic, the friend and amateur printmaker who introduced the technique to Degas, is also represented in Notebook twenty-eight. (See note 15.) On page fifty-one of the book, adjacent to a couple in a loge, Lepic is seated in the *salle* of a theater with his legs casually propped up on a railing before him.

⁴⁴ To my knowledge no other scholar has showed the interrelations between Notebook twenty-eight and the early monotypes (1877-79). Further inquiry is necessary to say more about the transformations in Degas’s draftsmanship and subject matter as a result of his artistic performances in the homosocial environment of the Halévy home and the material experiments made in monotype.

dominate both modes of production: the context of an informal, masculine bourgeois sociability, the performance of lascivious and homosocial anecdotes, the extension of the longitudinal frame (or an emphasis on the horizontal axis of page and plate), and the haptic quality of the leisurely artistic process. Add to this the particular type of contiguous (positive and negative) structure of the frieze monotypes—the constricted recreation of pictorial composition—and these qualities represent what I understand as the primary social and artistic contexts for the creation of the frieze classroom series.

Degas's first frieze compositions II: Literal and structural appropriations of *japonisme*

The most literal, yet rarely cited, source material for the frieze format is a conventional form of Japanese print-making.⁴⁵ The Ukiyo-e format known as the *harimaze* consists of a single printed sheet composed of two or three independent pictures that often features two adjacent vertical images below, or on top of, a long horizontally-oriented image (Fig. 3.26).⁴⁶ To our knowledge, Degas printed only one sheet of impressions in this format, *Mademoiselle Bécat at the Café des Ambassadeurs* (1877-78, The Baltimore Museum of Art, Fig. 3.27); however, the

⁴⁵ None of the major texts on Degas's frieze series postulate a connection between the *harimaze* format and the frieze compositions. However, I am indebted to DeVonyar and Kendall for linking the print of *Mlle Bécat at the Café des Ambassadeurs* to *harimaze*. The relationship between Degas's vertical "frieze" compositions and the elongated, vertical orientation of many Japanese woodblock prints is more commonplace. See Jill DeVonyar and Richard Kendall, *Degas and the Art of Japan*, 42.

⁴⁶ Degas's encounter with Japanese art was part of a larger cultural exchange between France and Japan, widely referred to at the time, and still today, as *japonisme*. Its origins can be traced to Commodore Matthew Perry's American expeditions in 1853 and 1854, at which time the Japanese self-imposed blockade was finally lifted. Shortly thereafter, Japan participated in the International Exposition in London in 1862 and in Paris in 1867, 1873, and 1878. Within Degas's own circle of literati the mythic birth of *japonisme* is said to have occurred when Felix Bracquemond opened a crate of imported ceramics, only to find that they were wrapped in prints by Katsushika Hokusai. Also pertinent to Degas's colleagues was Madame Desoye's "La Jonque Chinoise," which opened its doors sometime around 1862 on the rue de Rivoli. The gallery acted as a space of encounter and education, as well as a competitive market for the collection of older Japanese prints and new works created especially for the Western market. For an overview of the cultural history and historiography of *japonisme*, see Jan Walsch Hokenson, *Japan, France, and East-West Aesthetics* (Madison, WI: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2004), 13-33. The foundational text on nineteenth and early twentieth-century French art and *japonisme* is Klaus Berger's *Japonisme in Western Painting from Whistler to Matisse* (1980), trans. David Britt (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

artist may have cut up other sheets into multiple prints.⁴⁷ Similarly, it is unknown if Degas actually saw a *harimaze* print in person. Nonetheless, the reference is fairly straightforward, and the fact that there exists one extant *harimaze*-style print attests to the breadth of Degas's research and exploration in the late 1870s.⁴⁸

Aside from the frieze-like format of the top image in *Mademoiselle Bécât at the Café des Ambassadeurs*, Degas's choice to repeat the same subject in each print is noteworthy. *Harimaze* produced in the nineteenth century usually included prints of multiple types, heroes or actors, for instance, but did not picture the *same* subject multiple times. Thus, while Degas appropriated the structure of the *harimaze* print, he did not imitate the typological approach associated with the format. Instead, Mademoiselle Bécât is depicted from various angles throughout her performance: looking out over the audience to stage left, homing in to frame her body, and then zooming back into the trees along the perimeter of the stage. To this end, it might be argued that Degas's act of appropriation was influenced by the character of *carte de visite* proofs, in which a sitter would be pictured in various poses with varying effects. But the variety on offer in Degas's sheet of prints is not about kinds of singers or staged effects; it is about the multiple points of view made available to the viewer via Degas's own performance of print-making. In other words, the viewer is invited to compare and contrast the collected scenes, to enter into a duration of performed events—by Mlle. Bécât and by Degas—as they occur across the prints.

⁴⁷ *Mademoiselle Bécât at the Café des Ambassadeurs* is composed of three monotypes transferred to a lithographic stone. The full sheet exists in seven known impressions. The top print also exists as an impression touched with pastel; Degas gave this work to his friend Zacharie Zacharian (Private collection, New York). A monotype at the National Gallery of Art, WASHINGTON, D.C. is a second impression of the image at the bottom left of the sheet. No print related to the image at bottom right has been located. Welsh Reed and Stern Shapiro, *Edgar Degas: The Painter as Printmaker*, 91.

⁴⁸ A *harimaze* print by Hiroshige was published in *L'Art* in 1875; see *Le Japonisme*, ed. Musée National d'Art Occidental (Paris: Ministère de la culture et de la communication, Editions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 1988), 87.

The representation of connected or nearly successive moments of movement and performance is provocative. It means that in the course of Degas's borrowing, he linked the spatial proximity of the scenes with the temporal proximity of their subject, and with his own successive acts of making. In other words, if the prints were going to sit close to one another on the page then the subject's actions would hang together in the fictive time pictured, and that Degas's own process of drawing in greasy ink would be interrelated and comparable across the single sheet of paper. I would venture that the repetition of the subject was also about artistic variety and difference during the process of experimentation. The three monotypes, while still wet, were placed on a lithographic stone and transferred to the hard surface. Degas then added to the stone with crayon and tusche, and scraped away some of the surface to create the negative "light" space of the gas lamps.⁴⁹ But even before the crude transfer process was enacted three times over, the monotypes themselves were made by deploying similar compositional devices: the shallow separation of stage and audience made by brisk orthogonals; the abrupt vertical lines that read as "edge of stage" or "structural support;" and the tonal contrast between shadow and light that is exploited by the gas globes in each print. Degas enacted a sort of regimen in the three prints, modifying the architectural structures, the viewpoint, and the singer's gestures to evoke variation, or difference, across the otherwise rather comparable sketches/prints.

The dramatic diagonals and in-your-face flattened planes that define these monotypes—as with so many of Degas's compositions—are indicative of a less literal *japonisme* at work in the artist's methods. Degas's indebtedness to the proliferation of Japanese prints, fans, and screens, is well documented, as is the extent of his own personal collection of Japanese works

⁴⁹ Welsh Reed and Stern Shapiro, *Edgar Degas: The Painter as Printmaker*, 91.

that were sold at auction upon his death.⁵⁰ Still, it should be emphasized that Degas's personal affinity for Japanese art and aesthetics was restricted to a purely formal engagement. He never included kimonos, prints, or screens in his portraits; there are no vague allusions of exotic flora made to contrast with *objets japonais* in his genre scenes; and he didn't chose to paint French subjects assuming the allegorical languor of an alien culture.⁵¹ Instead Degas integrated Japanese pictorial devices as a reflexive, or autocritical, tool with which to subordinate the cohesiveness of his compositions. Cartesian spatio-temporal conventions are undermined again and again in Degas's frieze compositions.⁵² Typical maneuvers include the boldly disjunctive orthogonals that stretch across *The Spectators* (Fig. 3.8), or the seemingly random scattering of vertical "poles," which brusquely segment a composition's temporal and spatial totality. Likewise, I would argue that the frieze format itself is an artistic appropriation that figures the relativity of Western representations of space and time, accentuating the irregular and the asymmetrical over the harmonious and balanced.

Nowhere are Degas's proclivities for *japoniste* experimentation more evident than in the series of prints, *Mary Cassatt at the Louvre: The Paintings Gallery* (c. 1879-80, Fig. 3.28). The

⁵⁰ The most thorough account of Degas's borrowings from Japanese art is DeVonyar and Kendall, *Degas and the Art of Japan*, esp. Chapter Two. Upon the sale of Degas's estate in 1918, more than one hundred works by Japanese artists were dispersed. Unfortunately, no official inventory was made of the objects and there is scant information about the particular works owned by the artist. Some artists' names were identified and recorded in 1918, and various friends and colleagues remember specific works hanging in Degas's studios. For a list of artists names and identified works, see Colta Ives, "Degas, Japanese Prints, and *Japonisme*, in *The Private Collection of Edgar Degas*, 247-59.

⁵¹ Tissot and James McNeill Whistler are the most prolific practitioners of this type of *japonisme* in late nineteenth-century painting; both artists regularly included Japanese objects in their compositions as potent signs of their own taste and judgment, but also as allegories of an exotic, otherworldliness meant to contrast with Western European bourgeois social, sexual, and aesthetic conventions. For instance, see Tissot's *The Japanese Vase* (c. 1870, Leicester Galleries, London) or Whistler's *Caprice in Purple and Gold: The Golden Screen* (1864, Freer Gallery of Art); both works encourage the viewer to correlate the female body—dressed in kimono and draped in Japanese fabrics—with the highly collectible Japanese *objets d'art* that surround her. Moreover, the aesthetic appreciation of all of these objects (woman, exotic collectibles) imbues the artist's reputation as a collector of rare and beautiful things, a talented and tasteful aesthete, who is able to assemble and reproduce them in a new work of art.

⁵² This is not a new argument. As early as 1921 Henri Focillon, the first historian of *japonisme*, discusses the appropriation of Japanese aesthetics in the late nineteenth-century an overt challenge to the aesthetic values of the Italian Renaissance. For a review of the historiography of *japonisme*, see Hokenson, *Japan, France, and East-West Aesthetics*, 31-33.

two female subjects in the prints are significant to arguments in the final section of this chapter; but the vertically-oriented, “frieze” format is noteworthy in a discussion about the compositional audacity of the frieze format itself and its relation to Degas’s other *japoniste* borrowings. In this single composition Degas exceeds the spatial restrictions of linear perspective, deploying at least three spatial systems: the wall of paintings, the gap between the wall and Cassatt, and the area before and including the seated woman. The flat, “marbled” plane overlies each system and acts as a recalcitrant reminder of the odd format. There is little doubt that Degas’s goal throughout his printing process was to disrupt an easy reading of the prints. The vertical plane gets wider in the final states of the print, and the artist altered the plate’s texture by adding three thin lines just to the right of middle on the plane. There is no mimetic justification for the latter addition—could it be a molding of some sort?—other than the fact that they draw attention to the ungainly length of the print and its resolute flatness. Spatial and temporal unity is disavowed in these prints, making for a radical disharmony between the female subjects, their architectural surroundings, and the “moment” represented.

On the more normative horizontal axis, the frieze format tends toward expansiveness rather than compression; shifts in time and space spread out before the viewer in a work like *The Spectators*. The incidental is accumulated into a collective character, defining the represented “place” via differential moments and spaces. A similar compositional and narrative quality is found in the type of Japanese prints owned by Degas—Torii Kiyonnaga’s *Interior of a Bathhouse* (c. 1787, Fig. 3.29), for example. But these are works that Degas collected later in his life, and I do not mean to make proleptic claims about influence here. Rather, it is sufficient to understand that the frieze format was endemic to Degas’s various structural appropriations of *japoniste* aesthetics—part and parcel of a larger lesson about possible alternative modes of

ordering space and time in representation. The format itself signified a departure from the rules and regulations of Western art, while making hazy reference to both the Far East (the exotic) and Greek classicism (Academic tradition). But most significantly, the adaptation of the strange format necessitated novel conceptions of narrative and compositional structure. The early, literal appropriation of the *harimaze* format was just an initial move, a suggestive encounter that fused with other borrowings. Or, to rephrase, the act of imitating the foreign format did not determine the direction of Degas's implementation of the format; instead, it revealed the potential for insurgent forms of organizing art and propelled experiment in the name of creative dissention.

Degas's first frieze compositions III: The formless in the foyer classroom

No matter how one might try to suppress them, extrapolations concerning the *informe* inevitably begin to surface in my analysis of the early frieze compositions. There are too many hints of crass sexuality, horizontality, repetition, scratchings, greasy thumbprints, and experiential temporalities to ignore.⁵³ Are Notebook twenty-eight and the early monotypes then

⁵³ I invoke the operational concept of the "formless" parlayed first by Georges Bataille in 1929 and throughout the 1930s and 1940s, and then by several art historians of modernism in the 1980s, and up to the present. In his dictionary of the *informe*, Bataille describes the formless as "a term that serves to bring things down in the world, generally requiring that each thing have its form In fact, for academic men to be happy, the universe would have to take shape. All of philosophy has no other goal: it is a matter of giving a frock coat to what is On the other hand, affirming that the universe resembles nothing and is only formless amounts to saying that the universe is something like a spider or spit." Georges Bataille, *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927-1939*, ed. and trans. Allan Stoekl (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 31. Bataille locates early operations of the *informe* in Manet's paintings, which he situates as "slippages" that displace expectations about *both form and content*. In this respect, Manet's paintings enact the central tenet of the *informe*: dismemberment or declassification of hierarchies of knowledge (i.e. form and content in art). Georges Bataille, *Manet* (1955), trans. Austryn Wainhouse and James Emmons (New York: Rizzoli, 1983). In the context of contemporary art historical debates about the discipline's methodologies and historiography, the *informe* is conceived as a repressed, but defining operation of modernist art practices, sublimated by dominant teleologies constructed and canonized by the likes of Roger Fry, Clement Greenberg, and Michael Fried. In opposition to the authorization of art as a cultured form that addresses man's instincts toward creation (versus destruction) and ontological projections, Bataille and his latter-day espousers position certain types of art making and art objects as symptomatic of man's primitive functions and drives. In their reference guide to the *informe*, Yve-Alain Bois and Rosalind Krauss address the specific "postulates and exclusions" of mainstream modernism that work to sublimate the formless operations of modernist art practices: "visual art, especially painting, addresses itself uniquely to the sense of sight," therefore "matter does not exist for it except as in-formed, made over into form;" "pictures reveal themselves in an instant and are addressed only to the

the destabilizing “spittle” of the artist’s studio production cum high art?⁵⁴ Is there a base materialism at the disintegrative core of Degas’s experiments in materiality and horizontality? My suspicion is that this would be a somewhat shallow, ahistorical, and premature conclusion; Degas is not executing *déclassé* maneuvers on the horizontal—at least, not yet.⁵⁵

Nevertheless, I suspect that sometime soon after (or concurrent with) the completion of *The Spectators* and *Cabaret*, Degas extended the novel, stimulating contexts of his “low” production to the place of the ballet classroom—the site of his most persistent pictorial investigations in oil painting to date. *The Ballet Rehearsal* (c. 1876-78, Private collection; Fig. 3.30) is a little-known pastel on board, rarely mentioned in the literature,⁵⁶ and was never publicly exhibited until the recent show at the Royal Academy of Arts, *Degas and the Ballet*,

eye of the viewer” [and not the body]; “art is addressed to the subject as an erect being, far from the horizontal axis that governs the life of animals. . . . [I]t gathers the perceiver together around the core of its ideal unity;” “an artwork [has] to have a beginning and an end, and . . . all apparent disorder is necessarily reabsorbed in the very fact of being bounded.” In response, Bois and Krauss outline four types of operations consistent in modernist art practice: base materialism, horizontality, pulse, and entropy. Yve-Alain Bois and Rosalind Krauss, *Formless: A User’s Guide* (New York: Zone Books, 1997), 24-6.

⁵⁴ In the *Documents*’ critical dictionary of concepts, Michel Leiris claims that “spittle” is innate in every disciplined speech: “Given the identical source of language and spittle, any philosophical discourse can legitimately be figured by the incongruous image of a spluttering orator.” Michel Leiris, “Crachat: l’Eau à la bouche,” *Documents* 1 (1929); quoted in Bois, “The Use Value of ‘Formless,’” in *Formless: A User’s Guide*, 18.

⁵⁵ Monotypes in the frieze format are mostly completed in the early years of Degas’s monotype production, 1876-79; hence a prolonged study of the monotypes is not a necessary part of my investigations into the frieze classroom series. (The late landscape monotypes in color, datable between 1890-93, are approximately 11 4/5” x 15 3/4” and are therefore not applicable.) Bernheimer’s readings of Degas’s brothel monotypes take on the relationship between subject, form, and materiality more than any other scholarly source. He pays close attention to the play of positive and negative space in the prints and claims that Degas sets up analogies “between the common usage values of the living [the prostitutes] and the fabricated [the ink], the sexual and the material.” He argues that “[t]he would-be voyeur at the brothel threshold contemplates women who have been denaturalized and marked in an economy of exchange that offers little stimulus for his narcissistic fantasy.” In conclusion, Bernheimer offers several simultaneous “perspectives” on the pictures, one of which suggests that the women are, ultimately, reified as Degas’s facture: “woman’s threat is neutralized by her absorption into ink.” Further inquiry into the relations between the homosociability of the sketchbook and the monotypes would be worthwhile—especially in relation to operations of the *informe*. Bernheimer, *Figures of Ill Repute*, 186; 194.

⁵⁶ The work is L403 and Lemoisne lists the provenance from Durand-Ruel, to Bruno-Cassirer, and to T. Sardnal. Lemoisne, *Degas et son œuvre*, vol. 2, 220. Pierre Cabanne lists the work in his inventory of “Le Foyer de la Danse,” and he acknowledges the “almost caricatured ballet master.” Pierre Cabanne, *Edgar Degas* (Paris: Editions Pierre Tisné, 1958), 108. I can locate no other published accounts of the painting until DeVonyar and Kendall, *Degas and the Ballet: Picturing Movement*, 27. Their catalogue includes a rare color reproduction of *The Ballet Rehearsal*, but the authors do not discuss its relationship to the later, more well-known frieze classroom pictures or the earlier monotypes, *Café-Concert (The Spectators)* and *Cabaret*. In fact, DeVonyar and Kendall’s lack of interpretation, insight, or contextualization about the pastel is glaring. It could very well be the case that the authors did not see the work in person at the time of writing, or that the work was a late addition to the exhibition.

Picturing Movement (September – December, 2011). While it may be the first of the ballet classroom frieze compositions, its debt to the *earliest* classroom pictures and the foyer series is unmistakable. The grand piano returns from Degas's first classroom painting, *Dance Class* (Fig. 2.3); the elongated mirror is seen in the Metropolitan's *The Dance Class* (Fig. 2.7); there is the motif of the ballet master, which Degas had recently recycled from *The Dance Class* for his first experiment in monotype (*The Ballet Master*, Fig. 3.31);⁵⁷ and, lastly, the artist annexed the viewpoint and perspective of the foyer "place" in its phase of alteration (Figs. 0.2, 0.5, & 0.6). Degas thus set the stage for pictorial experiment in *The Ballet Rehearsal*—dawdling in the past in order to realize the present.

Aside from the blatant consolidations just described, *The Ballet Rehearsal* is an exceptional painting because it palpably attempts to assimilate the conversational proclivities of Notebook twenty-eight into the past labors of the foyer series. Degas brought to bear all of the essential formal operations and contexts of his latest endeavors onto the "place" of his most radical transmogrifications of pictorial space. The frieze format of the composition, with its associations of rambling homosocial banter, is brought beyond metaphor with the unusually prominent position of the gesturing ballet master, Jules Perrot. Not surprisingly, Perrot actually appears twice on page forty-one of Notebook twenty-eight, enmeshed in a thoughtful conversation with his mirrored self while a dense-looking dancer waits in the background (Fig. 3.32). In *The Ballet Rehearsal* he stands alone and to the side of the chaotic swarm of legs, arms,

⁵⁷ Degas's "first" monotype was of a ballet subject (the work signed by Lépic and Degas; see my note 15). Degas simply reused the ballet-master from recent paintings (Figs. 2.4 & 2.7). He had already made a large, gridded drawing for the ballet master-motif in 1874, *The Dancer Jules Perrot* (Fitzwilliam Museum), and then at least one other in *essence* in 1875 (Philadelphia Museum of Art). The same is true of the dancer *en pointe* with her arms in fourth position; she is a figure most rigorously utilized in the three pictures of a ballet rehearsal on stage (L340, L400, L498). The artist's hesitations with the new medium are easily visible in the print, especially at the edges of the composition where he attempted to render scenery. Cachin has suggested that the theater stage was a logical choice of subject for Degas's first monotype prints because of the highly artificial nature of the light/dark contrast on a theater stage. Cachin, "The Monotypes," in *Degas: The Complete Etchings, Lithographs and Monotypes*, 77.

torsos, and tulle; he is a heightened note of heterosexual difference in the picture, a steadfastly erect and embodied challenge to the defiant disorder of the caricatured dancers.

The woman performing an *attitude* to the left of center is recognizable as a recurring motif (Figs. 2.1 & 2.2),⁵⁸ but the figures in the foreground are actually *chanteuses* maladroitly masquerading as *danseuses*. The woman perched at the center of the piano's closed lid is the most conspicuous; her *geste canaille* is registered on page eleven of Notebook twenty-eight (Fig. 3.33) and was given dubious attention by the artist in *The Song of the Dog* (c. 1876-77, Private collection, Fig. 3.34). The figure at center right is dressed in white tulle, but her gestures are more comparable to the café-concert performers like those on pages thirteen, thirty-seven, and fifty-seven of the sketchbook (Figs. 3.13, 3.14, & 3.17). The only "authentic" dancer-motif, holding her *attitude* before the mirror, is wryly repeated at the right edge of the composition with the tails of her black hair ribbon dangling ludicrously from her absent head. And yet, even she has direct links to the *barbouillages* of Notebook twenty-eight: once again decapitated in *attitude* at the right edge of page twenty-five (Fig. 3.35).

Pages twenty-three and twenty-five comprise the only sketches of dancers in Notebook twenty-eight (save for page forty-one with the mirrored Perrot plus one) and they are arguably the strangest drawings of dancers in Degas's entire oeuvre (Figs. 3.35 & 3.36). Degas was not routinely given to sketching dancers in his notebooks; rather, in the 1870s and 1880s, he most often rendered the dancer in heightened studies completed in his studio (Figs. 3.37 & 3.38, for example).⁵⁹ In contrast to these large, frequently gridded, *études* of voluminous, balanced, and

⁵⁸ Degas completed a large, gridded charcoal and chalk drawing of the dancer around 1876: *Dancer* (The Art Institute of Chicago).

⁵⁹ There are rare examples of sketches of dancers in Notebooks twenty-nine and thirty, which date from around 1877: Nb 29: 25; Nb 30:1). The two drawings are remarkably alike, save that the example from Notebook twenty-nine is rendered in the type of angular, comical style discussed below in reference to *The Ballet Rehearsal*, and the drawing from Notebook thirty has a solidity and volume absent in the former. Reff claims that the sketches are studies for L599, which is actually a study for *Little Dancer Aged Fourteen* (1878-81). I would disagree and I would

poised dancers, the two sketch pages are done with a scribbly, haphazard hand that often abbreviates the precision of position and accentuates the irregular, discomfited linearity of the dancers' limbs. The girl at the bottom of a *grand plié* in the center of page twenty-three is an ungainly, primitive variant compared to her mature counterpart in finely chiaroscuro-ed charcoal (Fig. 3.37).⁶⁰ Valéry, at the beginning of his discussion of “The Ground and the Formless” in *Degas, Danse, Dessin*—an essay to which I will return—describes looking at one of Degas's dancers “just as we see a crab on a beach”; this girl might be that crab.⁶¹ In much the same manner, the dancers in *The Ballet Rehearsal* impart an immature vehemence, at once comical and menacing, sharp and ill-formed.

This distinct graphic style has not gone unnoticed in the Degas literature. Eugenia Parry Janis first identified and described it in relation to two fans from the same period: [it is] “a kind of comic cartooning, a witty calligraphy similar to that which . . . had been reserved for the . . . monotypes.”⁶² Some years later, Marc Gerstein located the “low comedy” of the “angular drawing” in several other fans (Fig. 3.39), particular brothel monotypes (Fig. 3.40), early lithographs (Fig. 3.41), a brush and ink sketch (Fig. 3.42), and designs for dinner plates⁶³—what

also suggest that the sketch from Notebook twenty-nine is related to *Sketches of Dancers* (c. 1876-7, Fogg Art Museum, Fig. 3.42) and Degas's designs for plates or ceramics. Richard Thomson makes a similar claim concerning the inter-relations of the Fogg sketch, Degas's tile painting, and his plate designs, but does not allude to the two notebook sketches. Richard Thomson, “Degas's Only Known Painting on Tile,” *The Burlington Magazine* vol. 130, no. 1020 (March 1988): 222-5; 223 and 223 n.16.

⁶⁰ I employ “girl” here to draw attention to the youth of the dancers across the two pages. Degas seems to have a marked interest in the younger students at the Opéra beginning around 1877-78. This is probably related to Halévy's serial publication of *La Famille Cardinal* in the 1870s. The stories, originally published as *M. Cardinal*, *Mme Cardinal*, and *Les Petites Cardinal*, were a series of informal, reportage-style anecdotes about the young Cardinal girls as related to the author/narrator by Mme Cardinal. I would argue that the sketch at the bottom right of page twenty-five in Notebook twenty-eight is associated with the fragmented, reportage narration in Halévy's novel, which Degas would eventually illustrate. (See note 78.) Degas's fascination with the younger *rats* peaked between 1878 and 1881 when he dedicated much of his efforts to *Little Dancer Aged Fourteen* (1878-81, Mellon Collection). It might also be suggested that the artist's fascination with the young dancers has everything to do with their undisciplined form.

⁶¹ “Parfois, il prend une danseuse d'assez haut . . . comme on voit un crabe sur la plage.” Valéry, *Degas Danse Dessin*, 99.

⁶² Eugenia Parry Janis, “Degas Drawings,” *Burlington Magazine*, vol. 109, no. 772 (July 1967): 413-5 and 417; 413.

⁶³ See note 59 on the relationship between the Fogg ink drawing (Fig. 3.42) and the plate designs.

Gerstein calls “marginal media and formats.”⁶⁴ The dancers in the sketchbook and in *The Ballet Rehearsal* belong to this conglomeration of “angular” and comical characters. The *rats*, like string puppets, seem to mimic the figures in Degas’s more conventional *études* and ballet paintings. It is as if the artist was aping his own familiar gestures, performing sly pantomimes of his own motifs, wherein the derision and slackness of his own hand begat the denigration and jagged amorphousness of dancers’ bodies.⁶⁵

With these common graphic eccentricities in mind, there is an important distinction to realize between the two pages of dancers in Notebook twenty-eight and *The Ballet Rehearsal*. Though the literal presence of the gesticulating ballet master in the latter synecdochically invokes the lived homosocial experience of the sketchbook pages under Degas’s direction, the pastel’s conventional composition ultimately homogenizes the euphoria of artistic spatio-temporal digressions found in the two sketchbook pages. With minimal signs of “place” to locate and unify the dancers’ various poses, there is a kind of anarchic anecdotalism to the relationships across and between the dancers in Notebook twenty-eight. Certain areas of the pages may appear to be part of a sustained effort at episodic development, such as the right half of page twenty-three, wherein the “crab” dancer’s hands are linked to both the foot of the dancer below her and the leg of the dancer above her. But the development is not actually narrative or

⁶⁴ Marc Gerstein, “Degas’s Fans,” *The Art Bulletin* vol. 64, no. 1 (March 1982): 105-18; 112.

⁶⁵ Valéry expounds on Degas’s knack for mimicry in a section entitled “Mimique” in *Degas Danse Dessin*. In lieu of a description of the artist’s talent for imitating what he observed (the sort of typical anecdote about Degas the draftsman/copyist), Valéry recalls an elderly Degas entertaining company by miming the grooming gestures of a woman he witnessed on the tram the prior evening. Valéry is quick to defend Degas against charges of misogyny; rather he concludes that Degas reproaches “nobody but himself when affairs of this nature [‘the female animal’] leave him only with disgust, bitterness, or worse feelings still. . . . His dark eye saw nothing in a rosy light.” The full quote reads: “Il faut être une sorte de sage pour ne s’en prendre qu’à soi-même quand les affaires de ce genre ne nous laissent que des dégoûts, de l’amertume, et quelquefois bien pis encore. Mais le caractère de Degas me donne à penser que sa vie passée était pour peu de chose dans sa manière de réduire la femme à ce qu’il en faisait dans ses ouvrages. Son noir regard ne voyait rien en rose.” Valéry, *Degas Danse Dessin*, 134-6.

even episodic (like that of Reyer's or Elisa's scenes) but is instead pure deviation across the page.

There are also several examples of repetitious temporality in the Notebook pages. The two dancers rehearsing at the top right corner of twenty-three and the two in *attitude derrière* at the right of twenty-four reproduce the *répétitions* of the dancer's daily practice, while the dancers in *tendu derrière* on page twenty-four and the dancer-motif in *attitude derrière* in the bottom right corner of twenty-three are indices of Degas's own repetitious generation. Even so, repetition is not a structural device in the two Notebook pages;⁶⁶ iteration is not an organizing intent, like Degas's compositional maneuvers in the foyer works where internal repetition constructs pictorial dynamism. Rather, the sketches perform the permeability and digression of their production context, casually linked by shifting desires that are scattered around the decentered pages. The frivolity of the artistic salon entertainment ("its entertaining façade"⁶⁷) and the effective dissolution of the architecture of place in the drawings (the hierarchies of composition) generate a slackening of spatio-temporal constraints, figuring the "mobility and freedom of the libido, attacking all possible objects of attention without attaching itself to any."⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Armstrong argues that these pages "are precisely about repetition:" "Theirs, in short, is the circling, serial time of *repetition*, in which gestures recur, movements come in sets and bunches, bodies are de-individuated and reduced to the drill in which they repeatedly engage, and drawing goes over itself within the arena of the page, as we witness round after round of drawing-room practice." Armstrong, *A Degas Sketchbook*, 39-40. Armstrong's actual description of the pages' temporality is, in fact, quite close to my own analysis; however, I would quarrel with her ultimate word choice, which suggests a regimented or ordered quality that does not accurately account for the liberating and distracted quality of the doodles and the contingencies of the living moment.

⁶⁷ Ross Chambers, *Loiterature* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 9.

⁶⁸ Ibid. Chambers' describes "loiterly" texts as those which blur the categories between "innocent pleasure taking and harmless relaxation and not-so-innocent 'intent'—a certain recalcitrance to the laws that maintain 'good order.' . . . It casts serious doubt on the values good citizens hold dear—values like discipline, method, organization, rationality, productivity, and, above all, work—but it does so in the guise of innocent and, more particularly, insignificant or frivolous entertainment." Ibid., 8-9. The texts he analyzes as "loiterly" thus resist contextualization and thrive at the intersections of dominant categorizations. I argue that Notebook twenty-eight is a loiterly text scripted by Degas with the collaboration of the persons at the Halévy salon. Unlike the artist's rigorous and somewhat autonomous studio environ, Degas was able to embrace distractedness, digression, and the shifting desires of the conversational context.

I am suggesting that Degas's anomalous doodles of dancers on pages twenty-three and twenty-five are effects of the experiential transgression of his more methodical artistic practices and contexts. The discipline of Degas's vigilant studio *études* was relaxed to the point of abandonment in the Halévy salon (and doubtless Cadart's, as well), yielding a mode of distracted attention that allowed for the enactment of liberating, disordered spatio-temporal possibilities and the graphic regression of the dancers' formed, disciplined bodies. These two pages, more than any other in the notebook, jeopardize Degas's technical control of place, the coherence of his draftsmanship, and the certainty of his form. They suggest a subversive pleasure on behalf of Degas and his participants/viewers: to roam from doodle to doodle across and around the page, to "incorporate and enact—in a way that *may* be quite unintended—a criticism of the disciplined and the orderly, the hierarchical and the stable, the methodical and the systematic, showing them to be unpleasurable, . . . alienating."⁶⁹ The various moments of production around the pages coalesce into what Ross Chambers might term a "loiterly" text, linked by an experiential spatio-temporal slippage from one context to another—simultaneously continuous and disjunctive in their associations—that is implicitly critical of fixed temporalities, disciplined attention, and sublimated desires.

Nonetheless, these biting parlor sketches were, for Degas, a peripheral performance for the benefit of his intimate literati accomplices; in the finished pastel, *The Ballet Rehearsal* (Fig. 3.30), Degas attempts purposefully to order and re-constitute these lived transgressions and distracted contexts into the form of proper composition. The work in question, *The Ballet Rehearsal*, is an extremely large pastel composition (16 7/8" x 31"), outsizing all of the pastel works Degas exhibited at the Third Impressionist show in 1877. If the artist did not expressly mean the work for exhibition or sale, it is certain that his aspirations were not trivial. Yet the

⁶⁹ Ibid., 9-10.

scale of *The Ballet Rehearsal* is actually closest to *Cabaret* since Degas enlarged both compositions along the top edge by incorporating the margin into the picture sometime after the monotype print was made.⁷⁰ But whereas the *chanteuse* in *Cabaret* was bequeathed her coiffure and rendered intact (though not exactly upright) by the additional height, Degas accentuated the innate violence of the frieze format's longitudinal lack in *The Ballet Rehearsal*. The “song of the dog” is thus performed by a dancer/singer with no voice; her body is cut short at precisely the base of her neck as she grovels above the ballet master—*geste canaille*, indeed. The dancers' raucous undoings of rehearsal are amassed into an ambitious, persuasive fiction complete with all the strictures of place and pictorial space in the pastel. In the process of translation from sketchbook to pastel, however, diversion, disorder, and formlessness become tangible threats to the discipline of conceiving legible, narrative “place” and to the “master's” controlling hand. Degas's normative authorial agents of pictorial control—here, in the form of past classroom

⁷⁰ See note 13.

paintings—are not sufficient to contain the *jouissance* of the sketchbook pages.⁷¹ And, one might argue, *jouissance* only returns in *The Ballet Rehearsal* in the overt sadism of the frieze format.⁷²

To bring my reading of *The Ballet Rehearsal* to a temporary close, I want to propose that the work is a dark field monotype print overworked with pastel.⁷³ The tell-tale signs are the greasy swipes of black ink “reflected” in the mirror, the faint smears across the piano’s board, and the dark shadows that sit underneath the pastel at the feet of the ballet master and the piano. Deprived of the spatio-temporal disorder of the sketchbook pages, the pastel resounds with particular operations of the *informe*—the graphic frenzy of “aped” dancers, the residues of unctuous ink revealed through the mesh of pastel, the horizontal extension of the picture’s support (an index of its origins as loiterly *barbouillages*), and the desublimated death drives of

⁷¹ In *The Pleasure of the Text*, Barthes employs Jacques Lacan’s concept of *jouissance* to theorize the textual experience of *jouissance* in opposition to *plaisir* (pleasure). The translation of the former term is notoriously elusive—bliss or orgasm—and, in fact, Barthes and Lacan both argue that *jouissance* is ultimately irreducible to discourse. However, the distinction between the two closely follows Barthes’ analyses of writerly and readerly texts, such that pleasure of a text is immediate, easily managed, and undemanding of the reader’s position as subject. *Jouissance*, as I use it here, is the result of libidinal investment that challenges the reader’s control of the text and disrupts the ease of identification; it is the bliss of unpredictability. For Degas the *jouissance* of the sketchbook is its experiential, haptic contingency—the lived sociability of a marginal artistic practice—which alters and challenges his normative artistic processes and graphic control. Also significant for my purposes is the fact that Lacan locates two types of *jouissance*: phallic *jouissance*, which prevails in the speaking being and is related to Freud’s pleasure principle; and the *jouissance* of the body or life, which lies beyond the pleasure principle. I want to suggest that Degas is not simply articulating lewd sketches of the dancers’ bodies as phallic utterances, but that he is desiring of artistic operations outside of “phallic” or dominant orders of making, and that might, ultimately, impart his haptic and lived involvement in the construction of a work. Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text* (1973), trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975), esp. 4, 13-4 and 19-22. Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XX: Encore: On Feminine Sexuality, the Limits of Love and Knowledge* (1972-73; repr. New York: Norton, 1998). For a synthesis and analysis of Lacan’s “Seminar XX,” or *Encore*, see Suzanne Barnard, “Introduction,” in *Reading Seminar XX: Lacan’s Major Work on Love, Knowledge, and Feminine Sexuality*, eds. Suzanne Barnard and Bruce Fink (Albany, NY: State University Press of New York, 2002).

⁷² Chambers also links the seemingly “innocent” pleasure of loiterly texts to Barthes’s *jouissance*. Chambers, *Loiterature*, 13.

⁷³ This is a forthright claim on my part. But given that the work has not been in the public domain for decades and has never been considered—let alone analyzed—in scholarship, it is not unreasonable to assume that the published information about the picture’s materials is incomplete. Lemoisne described several monotypes with pastel as simply “pastel” in his catalogue raisonné, including the work most related to *The Ballet Rehearsal*, *Ballet at the Paris Opéra* (c. 1877, The Chicago Art Institute, Fig. 3.43). Furthermore, Degas did not complete any pictures in pastel mixed with turpentine (which he did use with oil) in 1876 or 1877. My suspicions can only be confirmed by seeing the work in person (which I have yet to succeed in) and/or a proper conservation report. At present I see no other explanation for the blatant wipes on the mirror and piano, and given that Degas did exhibit some five monotypes with pastel in the Third Impressionist Exhibition, his inception of a large work in monotype in 1877 would be consistent with his material and methods of the time.

bourgeois masculinity.⁷⁴ But despite—or, more likely, because of—these congruities of debasement, Degas set aside *The Ballet Rehearsal*. As stated above, he never exhibited or sold the work, and, most remarkably, he did not revisit the subject of the ballet classroom in even a second or third monotype or pastel in the 1870s. Instead, we encounter a fourth (and perhaps penultimate?) frieze monotype, one which both returns us to the flimsy spectacle of the stage, the artist’s earliest ballet subject, and acts to control the aggressive chaos of the *Ballet Rehearsal*.

Ballet at the Paris Opéra (1877, The Art Institute of Chicago, Fig. 3.43) is a resolutely “finished” pastel over monotype, a veritable showcase of the artist’s talents in asymmetrical equilibrium and *contre-jour* silhouettes. It is also a picture of channeled heterosexual desires organized into two disparate scopic regimes (spectator and performer), of which the viewer’s identification is plain. The episode—dancers on stage with the cropped heads of spectators and musicians below—is a familiar one, drawn from the annals of Degas’s oeuvre of early ballet subjects.⁷⁵ The artist had recently resurrected the subject for a set of etchings with experimental drypoint, one of which was included in an exhibition catalogue of original prints sponsored by Les Amis des Arts de Pau in January, 1877 (Fig. 3.41).⁷⁶ Perhaps the latest success with the

⁷⁴ In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), Freud first outlined a theory of the “death drive” (*Todestrieb*), an entropic force that aims to dissolve ordering systems, in opposition to eros or life-producing/affirming activities. His discussion of the concept in *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930) is what I refer to here. Freud describes Western aesthetics as a substitutive satisfaction, a sublimated (“displacement of the libido”) product of the cultural or “civilized” superego, which attempts to overcome the individual’s libidinal drive toward destruction with the psychological salve of pleasure. As such, art is addressed to the subject as a visual experience for (cerebral/psychological) contemplation removed from the horizontal axis of bodily instincts and animal existence. The satisfaction of art is derived from its unifying principle: the individual idealizes the object as a bounded, unified, and inherently whole conception without disparate extremities that might disturb the pleasure-seeking superego. In the case of *The Ballet Rehearsal*, Degas attempts to transfer the marginal, contingent, and experiential contexts of the production of the notebooks pages to more conventional contexts of disciplined picture making. I argue that the pictorial transgressions of the sketchbook are translated into desublimated death drives in *The Ballet Rehearsal*, wherein the dancer on the piano must lose her head—even as Degas extends the latitudinal length of the composition. See Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, ed. and trans. by James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton, 1989), esp. Chapter Two. See also my Chapter One, note 25.

⁷⁵ See my Chapter Two for a discussion on Degas’s paintings of the stage and orchestra from 1870-71.

⁷⁶ There is no known extant exhibition catalogue that contains Degas’s etching; the work has been removed from all existing copies. The section in the catalogue listing watercolors, drawings, and prints lists two works by Degas. One is titled *Un Ballet à l’Opéra* and is described as a pastel. No other identifying information is provided. However,

recycled theme in Pau provided a clear alternative to the deviancy operative in *The Ballet Rehearsal*. Regardless, *Ballet at the Paris Opéra* is a staunch renunciation of the disorganized libertinism characteristic of the frieze classroom composition. The lavish theatricality of the scene is centered, balanced, and spotlighted, immediately alerting us to the fixed contextual circumstances of “looking” at the dancers at the Garnier Opéra. The spectacle on the stage focuses desire and sublimates the violence of the longitudinal lack (the spectators’ necks), while the necks of the upright basses act as a redoubled psychological and formal repoussoir for the pictured spectators and the viewers of the work alike.

In fact, the phallic protuberances are the controlling site of identification in the work; they fix and guide the gaze of the male spectators in, and outside of, the composition. In contrast to the upended world of *The Ballet Rehearsal*, the musicians’ instruments frame *Ballet at the Paris Opéra*, establishing a secure hierarchy between the musicians/spectators/ viewers and the dancers. The fecundity of the scenery behind the dancers again acts to frame their sensuality. The

Sue Welsch Reed and Barbara Stern Shapiro contend that the pastel in question may have been *Ballet at the Paris Opéra* (1877, The Art Institute of Chicago, Fig. 3.43). Their argument is that: “there is a decided relationship between the [pastel] and the print, even though the print is in reverse, of a different format, and a simpler version with few figures. . . . It is likely that Degas produced a print for distribution to reflect a work that was part of the exhibition. Although the practice of making etched reproductions of paintings and pastels was common at the time, Degas’s print was not a slavish copy but a creative variant.” Reed and Schapiro, *Edgar Degas: The Painter as Printmaker*, 68. I would adamantly disagree with this proposal. The exhibition opened in January, 1877, meaning that, in their estimated timeline, *Ballet at the Paris Opéra* would have a date of mid- to late 1876 and would stand as either a) the first frieze monotype and pastel, or b) a second frieze work that followed *The Spectators*. To my mind, *Ballet at the Paris Opéra* is distinctly different from the other three monotype frieze compositions which all have links to Notebook twenty-eight and a specific type of “low” or debased subject matter and production. Furthermore, *Ballet at the Paris Opéra* shares a similar subject matter with later monotype and pastels from 1877-78, such as *Two Dancers Entering the Stage* (The Fogg Art Museum). Just as likely is that the pastel in Pau was *Aria after the Ballet* (c. 1879, Dallas Museum of Art), which has a similar scale and format to the print’s. The pastel would then act as a “finished” version of the print, clearly revealing the artist’s addition of a central performer after the print. *Aria after the Ballet* is dated to 1879 because it was exhibited in the Impressionist Exhibition of that year. However, it seems quite likely that the large picture was in Pau during the 1877 show in Paris, and that Degas decided to include it in the next Impressionist show in 1879. In addition, the singer in *Aria after the Ballet* is symptomatic of Degas’s interest in the café-concert singer/subject at the time and shares its subject with another picture from early 1877, *The Chorus* (Musée du Louvre). The fact that Durand-Ruel bought the picture soon after the 1879 exhibition suggests that the work had substantial provenance. *Ballet at the Paris Opéra* was purchased by Albert Hecht, a banker who also owned *Robert le Diable* (1872, The Metropolitan Museum of Art) and who would have appreciated a work with a parallel theme.

simulated backdrop offers the context of the exotic spectacle—as does the unusual disarray of hair and dabs of red-orange pastel floating around the dancers’ bodies—sanctioning and facilitating the cultured displacement of desire. It is as if all the chaos, violence, and uncertainty of *The Ballet Rehearsal* have been repressed and redressed in the theatrical stage production that is *Ballet at the Paris Opéra*.

In a similar way *Ballet at the Paris Opéra* is also a stabilizing agent to *The Spectators* and *Cabaret* (Figs. 3.8 & 3.10). It is the architectural and authoritative containment to the street improprieties of the two café pictures.⁷⁷ It need not matter which of the early frieze monotype and pastels came first; it holds that *Ballet at the Paris Opéra* is set apart from the other three, and especially from *The Ballet Rehearsal*. Still, there are remains of Degas’s more vulgar production in the disciplined picture. The third spectator from the left is too much like the drunk officer passed out in the military brothel on page twenty-six of Notebook twenty-eight (Fig. 3.11); and the dancer posed in a relaxed *croisé derrière* in the foreground feigns a restrained version of the carnivalesque “dog’s” gesture from *The Ballet Rehearsal*. But these are only traces of the compendium of formal and contextual deviances at work in the topsy-turvy revelry of *The Ballet Rehearsal* or the carnal anecdotalism of *The Spectators*. Discipline not only reigns in *Ballet at the Paris Opéra*, it is acclimatized to the very structures and processes of looking, prescribing

⁷⁷ The first entry in Bataille’s dictionary of the *informe* is on architecture, which he describes as a metaphor for the authority within man, and as an imaginary projection of man’s authority. George Bataille, “Architecture,” *Documents* 1 (1929). See also Denis Hollier, *Against Architecture: The Writings of George Bataille* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 1992), 45-56. Some fifteen years after the publication of his dictionary, Bataille criticized the “eternal” ambitions of architecture: “its principle is the repetition through which ‘all that is possible’ is made eternal. The ideal is architecture, or sculpture, immobilizing harmony, guaranteeing the duration of motifs whose essence is the annulment of time.” Georges Bataille, *L’Expérience intérieure*, trans. Anne Boldt (1943; repr. Stony Brook, NY: State University of New York Press, 1988), 56. I would argue that a picture like *Ballet at the Paris Opéra* immobilizes, or makes permanent, the social harmony of patriarchal, heteronormative desire at the Garnier Opéra, itself a monument to the infallibility of the French nation-state and militarized power, with direct links to both Napoleonic imperialism (its original benefactor) and monarchist republicanism (its reticent guarantor in the 1870s). Bataille’s curt analysis also describes the composition’s temporal unfolding in an ideal duration and its naturalization of patriarchal scopie regimes.

and reproducing scopic modes of possession and control via simulations of the most official kind of bourgeois spectacle.

Suffice to say that Degas did not long sustain his joint investigation of the monotype process and the frieze format following the four examples just discussed. I would argue that the artist's provisional impulses toward "low" forms of production and subject matter and his concurrent desires for cultured ordering have everything to do with his ambivalent ambitions for the peculiar format. Degas earliest encounters with the frieze format were defined by a vacillation between artistic operations that debased the integrity of his production processes, compositions, and subjects—"greasy ink drawings" of repugnant men and women stretched across the page. The uncertainty dithers between the sequestered happenings of after-dinner camaraderie turned artistic exploit and the re-focused reportage of a realist painter.

This is not to say that Degas's draftsmanly explorations of form ended, but rather that his efforts became divided into medium-specific investigations and disparate exhibition contexts. From 1878 and into the early 1880s, Degas's monotype production was given to the correspondingly unseemly production and exchange of sex: the brothel and the Opéra's *coulisses* as mythologized by Halévy in his *La Famille Cardinal* (published serially in 1870-71). It is well established that Degas never meant the brothel monotypes for reproduction or exhibition, while his *La Famille Cardinal* series was commissioned by the author, but ultimately judged unfit for publication.⁷⁸ By contrast, around 1878 Degas began a series of studies for an ambitious

⁷⁸ Degas monotypes for Halévy's text were not made public until 1938 when the three serial publications (*Mme Cardinal*, *M. Cardinal*, and *Les Petites Cardinals*) were integrated into *La Famille Cardinal* by the publisher Marcel Guérin with Auguste Blaizot et fils. Thirty-one of Degas's monotypes "illustrated" the texts, which had originally been published with social satire illustrations made by Edmond Morin (1871) and Henri Maigrot (1880) that were typical of the *galant*, mid-century *coulisses* literature. Armstrong argues that Halévy disapproved of Degas's blatant associations between the dancer's work and the exchange of sexual favors behind the wings. She suggests that Degas's monotypes reveal the links between professionalism (the dancer and the *abonné*), commercialism (the glamour of sex at the Opéra), and prostitution—which must contrive to be illicit under the terms of capitalism's separation of social spheres. See Armstrong, *Odd Man Out*, 62-72. Armstrong also claims that Halévy did not

sculpture consciously wrought for exhibition, the infamous *petit rat*, *Little Dancer Aged Fourteen* (c. 1878-81, National Gallery of Art, WASHINGTON, D.C., Fig. 3.44).⁷⁹ All of these works are evidence of Degas's labors with form in flux. However, whereas the brothel monotypes revel in their copious materiality and licentious subject (though they often elicit a reckoning upon closer inspection), the sculpture—and, more poignantly, the affiliated drawings—are ardent explorations of form in transition.

An Interlude: A “way of being” form, or the recovery of *durée*

I do not mean to imply that the fissures in Degas's artistic practices in the advent of the frieze series neatly split themselves into “low” and “high” investigations. And I am acutely conscious of a hierarchy of media—monotype versus sculpture—surfacing in my conclusions that might support such assumptions. On the contrary, Richard Kendall's account of the criticism and social history of *Little Dancer Aged Fourteen* (for which he borrowed a critic's charge “Can Art Descend Lower?” as title)⁸⁰ did much to unravel our construal of the sculpture's

publish Degas's monotypes in his own lifetime because he probably wished “to maintain a distinction between what was appropriate for a private salon album and what was proper in the public domain—or perhaps he questioned the illustrational efficacy of Degas's blunt, brutal scribbings.” Armstrong, *A Degas Sketchbook*, 49.

⁷⁹ I refer to the plaster version of *Little Dancer Aged Fourteen* in the Mellon Collection at the National Gallery in WASHINGTON, D.C. because it has been convincingly argued that it was cast from the original plaster, which was lost during the process. Degas probably cast this work around 1900 with the aid of colleagues trained in replication techniques such as mold making. For a detailed discussion of the replication history from original wax to first casts and posthumous casts, see Arthur Beale, “*Little Dancer Aged Fourteen*: The Search for the Lost Modèle,” in *Degas and the Little Dancer*, esp. 100-4. See also Alice Michel, “Degas et son modèle,” *Mercure de France* (February 16, 1919): 457-78 and 623-39.

⁸⁰ Kendall's chapter title references the English journal *Artist* and its reviewer, known as “Our Lady Correspondent.” The reviewer compares the “semi-idiot” dancer to an Aztec, one of many charges of primitivism, naiveté, or simplicity among the critical responses in 1881. Kendall's chapter is a remarkable summation and social elucidation of the criticism in its historical moment. He traces various “low” themes in the literature surrounding the sculpture: the puppet, the doll, the commodity, Egyptomania, and racial ambiguities. While he does not extend his analysis to account for the symptomatic nature of the “modern” sculpture's dilemma (art object or commodity thing), the chapter goes a long way toward elaborating such an argument. I would also add that Kendall's rigorous undoings of Impressionist mythologies are mitigated by his tendencies toward metanarrative; hence subtitles such as “The First Impressionist Sculpture.” Kendall, *Degas and the Little Dancer*, 34. For a discussion of modern sculpture's problematic relationship to the commodity “thing,” see Alex Potts, “Dolls and Things: The Reification

paradigmatic status as Impressionist object/Idea. Still, it is the enduring ideation of the nine drawings affiliated with the statuette that is the source of my present concern in light of the frieze classroom series (Figs. 3.45-3.53).⁸¹ The charcoal drawings, completed sometime between 1878 and 1880, make up one more thread—or “thrust” as Edmond de Goncourt would have it—of sustained artistic investigation that motivates Degas’s praxis at the conceptual moments of the frieze series. The fact that the artist was involved in yet another ambitious undertaking in draftsmanship at the end of the 1870s should come as no surprise; graphic experiments dominated Degas’s oeuvre at this time. Rather, it is the scholarly terms of interpretation that have so far prevented real reflection on the sketches and misconstrued the artist’s shifting modes of production at the end of the decade.

Scholarly consensus positions the drawings as a collective group, excavated from an idiosyncratic period in Degas’s career, which culminated in the exhibition of *Little Dancer Aged Fourteen* in 1881, and thus the emergence of a modern species of sculpture. Charles Millard articulates the “modernism” of *Little Dancer* in his foundational study, *The Sculpture of Edgar Degas*: “Degas’s sculpture [*Little Dancer Aged Fourteen*] is a very paradigm of the development of sculpture in nineteenth-century France, a resume of its statements and problems, its exploratory and modern strains.”⁸² George Shackelford describes the drawings themselves as “the genesis of the sculptural idea . . . the most exemplary realization in his oeuvre of Degas’s naturalist aesthetic.”⁸³ Kendall’s attention to the sketches is more nuanced, but his allegorical

and Disintegration of Sculpture in Rodin and Rilke,” in *Sight and Insight: Essays on Art and Culture in Honour of E.H. Gombrich at 85*, ed. John Onians (London: Phaidon, 1994).

⁸¹ There are three additional sketches that are possibly related to the sculpture: Nb 29: 25 (c. 1878-79); Nb 30: 1 (c. 1877-78); and a sketch in essence, *Two Dancers* (c. 1873-80, The Metropolitan Museum of Art). All of these examples incorporate the motif of the dancer posed in a relaxed fourth position; however, none demonstrate repetition of motif or duration of generative time as located in the group of nine.

⁸² Charles Millard, *The Sculpture of Edgar Degas* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 119.

⁸³ Shackelford, *Degas: The Dancers*, 65.

language extends a metaphysical consequence and solemnity that elevates the material pages to a priori Idea as well:

More than in any other of his works of art, Degas has attempted to comprehend, even to achieve complete mastery over, a single three-dimensional form in all its palpability and space-occupying complexity, using only the conventional means of line and tone on a succession of sheets of paper. Slowly circling around his stationary model, not just once but several times, Degas became the moon to his subject's earth, moving through the surrounding space and implicitly and provocatively through time.⁸⁴

At the start of the passage it seems that Kendall is purposefully striving to afford Degas an “unstable physiology and temporality of the human body”⁸⁵—to locate the artist's generative practice in an embodied and cognitive subject that “circles” around the “palpable form.” And yet, by the end of the paragraph, Degas's creative space and time are made over into an incorporeal, transcendental model of apperception and knowledge of materiality: earth, moon, and heavens.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Kendall, *Degas and the Little Dancer*, 38.

⁸⁵ Jonathan Crary has argued that there is a paradigm shift in nineteenth-century Western European science away from ideal geometries of optics (i.e. perspectival space) and the mechanical transmission of light (i.e. the camera obscura) to the physical properties of human vision and the technological separation of the senses. Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 1990), esp. 70. Kendall seems acutely aware of the physicality of Degas's visual perception in the serial sketches. In *Degas and the Ballet*, he and DeVonyar connect Degas's “seeing in the round”—as they describe his process of sketching Marie van Goethem—to François Willème's technological process of photosculpture (c. 1863), which created semi-automatic sculptures from three-dimensional subjects. DeVonyar and Kendall, *Degas and the Ballet*, 86-90. (Shackelford briefly mentions Willème in *Degas: The Dancers*, 76.) Willème's procedure involved twenty-four photographs of the subject, which were projected onto frosted glass for a technician to “copy” while the rotating stand with clay moved to twenty-four points parallel to the perspective of the photographs. The apparatus did indeed split the senses into separate temporal and spatial modes of generation by way of an arbitrary, yet “scientific” division of space. Degas's sketches are far less schematic and often alter the body position, hairstyle, and facial expression of the young dancer. In other words, automatism or mechanical reproduction was not his goal, nor his motivation. In more specific terms, Willème's system attempts to unify sequences of time and spatial movement to create a mechanical “ideal” of space; whereas I argue that Degas's sketches allude to the irreducibility of experienced time to perception, vision, and representation.

⁸⁶ I reference Immanuel Kant's theory of space and time as transcendental, as that which the mind innately intuits without recourse to the mind-independent world. Kendall grants Degas a unifying power over the object (the metaphoric gravity of Degas's moon to the object's earth) in accordance to a transcendental space and time exercised by the artist's consciousness and removed from the contexts of subject-object engagement. In fact, Kendall's metaphor is reminiscent of the concluding lines of Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788): “Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe, the more often and steadily we reflect upon them: *the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me*. I do not seek or conjecture either of them as if they were veiled obscurities or extravagances beyond the horizon of my vision; I see them before me and connect them immediately with the consciousness of my existence.” Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason* (1781/88), trans. Thomas Kingsmill Abott (New York: Forgotten Books, 2008), 138.

The metaphor becomes literal in Kendall's most recent publication with DeVonyar on the subject. It includes a diagram that methodically plots out all viewpoints of the nine drawings whence Degas ostensibly rotated around Marie van Goethem. The sculpture itself is pictured as the projected "finished" form at the center of the artist's axis (Fig. 3.54).

While it is generally accepted that Degas began sketching Goethem sometime around February 1878, scholars and conservators actually agree on little else about the chronology of the drawings and the two nude studies for the "final" wax sculpture.⁸⁷ Given the ongoing uncertainty about the artist's intentions for the sketches and the unknowable timeline of Degas's fluctuating plans for a "finished" sculpture, Shackelford's and Kendall's assessments grant an inexorable historical weight to the nine sketches of the young dancer.⁸⁸ Furthermore, the latent historicism

⁸⁷ *Little Dancer Aged Fourteen* is the only sculpture Degas exhibited publicly and it remained in his private residence for the length of his life, as noted by several colleagues including Albert Bartholomé, Jeannot, Sickert, Marice Denis, Georges Rouault, and Suzanne Valadon. Kendall, *Degas and the Little Dancer*, 11-12. It is important for purposes of dating that the work was listed in the catalogue for the Impressionist Exhibition in 1880, but Degas never submitted the work. *The New Painting: Impressionism, 1874-1886: Documentation*, vol. II 147-8. There are two related sculptures, both of which were long-thought to be studies made for the exhibited sculpture: *Dancer at Rest, Hands on Her Hips, Left Leg Forward* (c. 1877-79, Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College) and *Nude Study for Little Dancer Aged Fourteen* (c. 1878-79; later bronze cast at The Toledo Museum of Art). There is now evidence that *Nude Study for Little Dancer Aged Fourteen* may actually post-date the exhibited work. Daphne Barbour claims that *Nude Study* was most likely cast from a third work in wax that existed in the late 1870s and was destroyed. Daphne Barbour, "Degas's Little Dancer: Not Just a Study in the Nude," *Art Journal* (Summer 1995): 28-32. As for the drawings, if pressed I would agree with Kendall's timeline wherein the sketches of the clothed figures predate the sketches of the nude, although he nor I make any claim about the exact chronology of the other works. Shackelford seems to agree with this generic sequencing, as well. See Kendall, *Degas and the Little Dancer*, 36-40 and Shackelford, *Degas: The Dancers*, 74-5. Ronald Pickvance claims that the nude drawings were made in preparation for the nude sculpture, after which Degas commenced the drawings and wax version of the clothed figure. Ronald Pickvance, *Degas 1879* (Edinburgh: National Gallery of Scotland, 1979), 64. John Rewald argues that the figures with altered arm positions (Fig. 3.53) were done prior to the drawings of the "final" pose; Theodore Reff situates only six specific drawings that relate to the "final" work and places them all prior to the sculpture; whereas Lillian Browse suggests that the nude studies preceded the clothed figure studies. John Rewald, *Degas, Works in Sculpture, A Complete Catalogue* (New York: Kegan Press, 1944), 6; Theodore Reff, *Degas: The Artist's Mind* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1976), 245; Browse, *Degas Dancers*, 369. Millard does not discuss the drawings at any length.

⁸⁸ Shackelford repeatedly points to the gaps in our knowledge about the sketches, but he continues to insist upon their status as predictions for the sculpture. For example, he maintains that "there is no firm evidence of the drawings' sequence or of their role in the creation of the statuette." He also insists that the "suite of drawings is, in fact, not merely a preparation for the *Little Fourteen-Year-Old Dancer*, nor even principally that. On the contrary, the drawings began with an essentially pictorial end in view: that of rendering on a flat surface a series of multiple points of view of the same model, expressive of three-dimensional form." However, he ultimately concludes that "the sculpture, then, is dependent on the drawings, both in terms of its form and *because the drawings predicted the idea of the sculpture itself.*" (My italics.) Shackelford, *Degas: The Dancers*, 73; 75; and 76. As for Kendall, he too

of their interpretations assigns the drawings an artistic consciousness that eschews the material circumstances of Degas's production and overlooks implicit knowledge that exercises of habitual drawing might provoke. Put another way, what is at stake here is the slippage between epistemology and experience. How might one responsibly reconstruct the opacity of historical experience or unravel the phenomenology of making without projecting the climax of the finished thing? In the following section I re-contextualize several of the sketches in light of Henri Bergson's concept of duration and longstanding inquiries about the relationship between haptic and visual memory modalities.⁸⁹ My own digression, while seemingly tangential to the subject of the frieze series, seeks to re-evaluate and redress the ideological parameters of the scholarly criticism on Degas's repetitive methods by analyzing the artist's—and his posthumous critic, Ludovic Halévy's—investment in mnemonic drawing practices. My guiding ambition is to alter the foundational premises of Degas's artistic practices at the level of draftsmanship so as to better understand the serial construction of the frieze classroom paintings, the motivation behind

acknowledges the limits of scholarly knowledge about the sketches—dates, sequence, purpose, etc.; yet in his most recent publication with DeVonyar on the subject they too assume a definitively preconceived intention—a sculpture—for the sketches. For instance: “The originality of Degas's sculpture was not merely rooted in his choice of model or the unconventional materials used, but also in his fresh approach to analyzing the subject and translating it into three-dimensional form. Most conspicuous was the artist's decision to draw Marie van Goethem repeatedly and from multiple angles, a strategy that arguably had roots in practicality yet is rarely encountered in the history of sculpture.” DeVonyar and Kendall, *Degas and the Ballet*, 73. This is also the foundational assumption of recent scholarship on the sculpture from curators at the Musée d'Orsay: Martine Kahane et al., “Enquête sur la *Petite Danseuse de quatorze ans* de Degas,” *La Revue de Musée d'Orsay*, 7 (Autumn 1998): 48-68; esp. 53-60.

⁸⁹ The questions I raise about the relationship between Degas's haptic and visual perception of form are not at all new; they are founded on the same type of query put forth by William Molyneux's problem posed to John Locke at the end of the seventeenth century and by Denis Diderot's letter on the blind (1749). In the most recent experiments on the relationship between haptic memory and visual memory there is evidence that haptic representations are not coded as visual coordinates and that the two mnemonic modalities have some independent functions. Studies seem to suggest that tactile memory alone—without the aid of visual—becomes vulnerable with a time lapse of fifteen seconds. See Miriam Ittyerah and Lawrence E. Marks, “Memory for curvature of objects: Haptic touch vs. vision” *British Journal of Clinical Psychology* 98, pt 4 (Nov 2007): 589-610. Even though the fleeting quality of haptic memory has been documented, there is also evidence that a combination of haptic and visual memory is beneficial over vision alone. Results show a “crossmodal transfer” or perceptual equivalency; however, the sensory transfer is actually limited by the object's material complexity in that the more complex an object becomes (number of curves, indentations, materials, etc.) the more reliance is placed on visual memory. See F. Phillips, E.J. Egan, and B.N. Perry, “Perceptual equivalence between vision and touch is complexity dependent,” *Acta Psychologica* 132:3 (November 2009): 259-66.

their repetitions, and the possibilities for readings attentive to their organic formation. In the process, I aim to reassess the initial significance of the drawings related to *Dancer of Fourteen Years* for Degas's studio practice from 1878 to 1881, and, finally, to de-emphasize what scholars see as their singular purpose. While the greater part of my analysis is given over to four of the largest sketches, I begin with a discussion of the more conventional studies and end with a broader evaluation of the artist's discursive drawing practices from the late 1870s and early 1880s.

Of the nine sketches related to *Little Dancer Aged Fourteen* only two are not full figure studies of Marie van Goethem or a similar young dancer (Figs. 3.45 & 3.46). Segmented, systematic studies grouped on a single page, as Shackelford notes, are common enough in Degas's oeuvre (Figs. 3.55 & 3.56, for example),⁹⁰ and the composition follows precedents (Figs. 3.57 & 3.58, for example). The premise of such drawings is that a unified subject will be construed from the various perspectives of the draftsman's or the sitter's changing physical position; the spatially and temporally discordant "views" are thus always/already rectified into an ideal space and time wherein the whole will be realized—whether by the artist or the viewer. Nothing makes this plainer than the compositional integration of the discrete sketches. For instance, Watteau's line that begins in the upper right corner as the curve of a shoulder becomes a long fold of fabric in the drawing to the left, and then becomes the profile of the nose, the line of the neck, and the fold of fabric again at the bottom of the page. Even more ingenious is Degas's tight economy of line in the study of the *Little Dancer's* legs (Fig. 3.46): the contour of toes in a ballet slipper from the lower right study simultaneously represents the concave slope where calf meets thigh in the lowermost sketch. Flesh enmeshing into flesh, sketch entwining

⁹⁰ See also Nb 22: 52, 62, 72, 109, and 117; Nb 25: 169-73.

into sketch—the physiological whole may be fragmented, but the artist’s composition renders it unified.⁹¹

The three sketches of Marie van Goethem dressed in a bodice and tutu with her hands clasped behind her and below her waist make up a second sub-group of sketches. Sequencing aside, it is more than probable that the three drawings were completed within hours, days, or weeks of one another (Figs.3.48-3.50). To these I would add a fourth sketch where the viewpoint has slightly altered (ladder or stairs?) and that includes two renditions of Goethem adjusting her bodice while still in the relaxed fourth position (Fig 3.47).⁹² In each of the works, the figure is represented two or three times on the page and the exact disposition of her weight over her feet is minutely altered, as is the relationship between the front and back feet in fourth position, the style of her hair, and the structure of her facial features. Even within the same sheet, there is alteration from sketch to sketch, and some individual figure studies include pentimenti around the calves and feet. Moreover, there is almost no compositional unity among the figure sketches—save their similar scale and some slight overlap of skirt—so that each one is rendered as an object/figure whole unto itself.⁹³

⁹¹ Degas came to own a study by Eugène Delacroix that demonstrates similar characteristics: *Studies of the Head of an Oriental Man in a Burnoose* (c. 1823-4, Musée du Louvre). Ann Dumas et al., *The Private Collection of Edgar Degas*, 117.

⁹² While I would hesitate to draw specific conclusions, it is worth noting that all four of these sheets of paper share comparable dimensions, though some of their institutions list varying information about the color (gray or pink) of the wove paper. Each drawing sheet measures approximately 18 7/8” x 23 2/3”, which is also the size of the sheet with the three nudes (Fig. 3.51). Reff cites three drawings related to *Two Dancers* (Fig. 3.47), all of which can be dated to early 1878: Nb 29: 25 (signed “Degas” in Halévy’s hand); Nb 30: C (with two studies); Nb 30: 1.

⁹³ Shackelford suggests that Degas constructs an “ornamental unity” of composition in this group of drawings, one similar to the type of unity I attribute to the earlier fragmented studies. He argues that there is a “rapport between the individual figures, the interval filled in between one thing and another. It is not necessary . . . to fill the supposed interval with a physical object or design: the mind bridges the gap between the figures, thus understanding the ornamental unity of the composition.” Shackelford, *Degas: The Dancers*, 106. In my reading of this group of drawings there is little formal relation between the figures; in fact, the relations between them are blatantly borne of process and draftsmanship rather than contrived schema. See my discussion of “ornament” in Degas’s sketches below.

Related to these three drawings are two other sheets in which Degas sketched the “final” pose: one is a series of three nudes from different viewpoints (Fig. 3.51); the other is a single study of the figure in full three-quarter profile (Fig. 3.52). The quality of chiaroscuro in these two drawings—almost absent in the former and highly schematic in the latter—and the boldness of the thick contours in each suggest that the figures were articulated as a series of schematic planes, tactile ridges, and sudden indentations. Furthermore, it appears that Degas imagined some type of metal armature or wire support at the top right corner of the sheet with three nudes (Fig. 3.51). All of which is to say that two of the nine sketches are most likely meditations on a sculptural form that may or may not have existed at the time of their production.

It is safe to propose that for the four most comparable sheets of drawings (Figs. 3.47-3.50), Degas sat down or stood up in front of his model, paper and charcoal at hand, with the explicit intent to create more than one figure study across the breadth of the paper. Either he and/or van Goethem then moved positions to complete a second and, in some cases, a third sketch. Shackelford off-handedly suggests that the works “served Degas as *aides-mémoire* in the process of finishing the statuette.”⁹⁴ But taken as individual studies—not as projections for an envisaged figure in the round—the sketches are a conglomerate of visual and haptic exercises about how Degas might draw, or represent the form of the young dancer in fourth position.⁹⁵ The physical act of repeating the task involved separate occasions of grasping and turning the charcoal, maneuvering around the paper, and glancing up and down, while van Goethem shifted

⁹⁴ Shackelford, *Degas: The Dancers*, 76.

⁹⁵ The latent claim here is that Degas is voluntarily constructing “memory-images” from visual, and, I would stress, haptic, lessons about the form of his subject. Bergson asserts that “this memory [image] is made possible by the intelligent, or rather intellectual, recognition of perception already experienced; in it we take refuge every time that, in the search from a particular image, we remount the slope of our past. But every perception is prolonged into nascent action; and while the images are taking their place and order in this memory, the movements which continue them modify the organism and create in the body new dispositions toward action.” Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 81. At the end of my discussion of Bergson’s theories I discuss the problem of representing memory in the material world.

her head and hands, altered her legs slightly, or varied the weight on her feet. Hence, it might be more accurate to describe the sketches as particular and irreducible exercises, none of which were identical experiences, and none of which Degas could exactly replicate. In distinction to the individual lessons acted out in time, is then the aggregate endeavor of visual and haptic modalities that might produce the generic dancer-motif at any time: the bodily memory of drawing the pose. Degas's bodily memory would have all the features of consolidated knowledge acquired by repetition of effort—or what Shackelford might justly describe as an *aide-mémoire*, one that is not a representation or a model, but a kind of experiential knowledge about the thing represented.⁹⁶

Given Degas's propensity toward declarations concerning drawing, repetition, and memory—dicta that will be attended to shortly—and given their anecdotal import in every major monograph or exhibition on the artist, the precise function of memory in Degas's artistic practice has rarely been the subject of prolonged analysis. Henri Bergson's conception of two types of memory in *Matter and Memory* (1896) is helpful in that he distinguishes between, and later correlates, bodily memory and experiential memory. The first, habit-memory (or bodily memory) is automatic movement built from the heterogeneous, repetitious energies that accumulate in the body: trained motor mechanisms that can complete specific tasks. In contrast to habit memory, which is an adaptation of the nervous system, is what Bergson describes as “pure memory.” This second type of memory is not typically the product of a rehearsed exercise; it is instead the continuing preservation of the totality of heterogeneous experiences: memory as consciousness.⁹⁷ “Pure memory” does not simply juxtapose separate memories—a spatialization of memory—or compare one moment of life to another as quantifiable entities; rather, pure memory involves

⁹⁶ The description of Degas's “lessons” and the two types of memory produced from the lessons is based upon Bergson's oft-cited description of a person learning in his *Matter and Memory*, 79-90.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 82-3 and 133-4.

moving to a different plane of consciousness, which retains an evolving tableau of one's past life in all its multiplicities. There is a quotidian quality of spontaneity to Bergson's evocation of pure memory. Everyday perceptions require constant acts of recognition (*reconnaissance*) "by which we grasp the past in the present," whereas directed efforts may prove ineffectual.⁹⁸ The brain may act as intermediary between sensations and movements that conjoin memory and action to structure experience of the present.⁹⁹ But pure memory is "what communicates to perception above all its subjective character": it defines the subjective quality of lived experience (*vécu*).¹⁰⁰

But if pure memory, or *la mémoire par excellence*, is irreducible to bodily memory, it is also dependent on the body, without which consciousness could not exist:

The bodily memory, made up of the sum of the sensori-motor systems organized by habit, is then a quasi-instantaneous memory to which the true memory of the past serves as base. Since they are not two separate things, since the first is only the . . . pointed end, ever moving, inserted by the second in the shifting plane of experience, it is natural that the two functions should lend each other mutual support. . . . It is from the present that the appeal to which memory responds comes, and it is from the sensori-motor elements of present action that a memory borrows the warmth which gives it life."¹⁰¹

Ultimately, Bergson argues that most instances of remembering combine habit memory and pure memory. Moreover, he proposes that the senses are equiprimordial in present action, such that the tactile sensation of drawing a figure is coextensive with visual, auditory, olfactory, and gustatory qualities/memories. And, in fact, it is vision and its tendency toward spatialization that

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 90.

⁹⁹ My reading of Bergson's theory of memory is indebted to Ian Alexander's analysis. Ian Alexander, *Bergson: Philosopher of Reflection* (London: Bowes and Bowes, 1957).

¹⁰⁰ Of obvious relation to this discussion is Marcel Proust's distinction between "voluntary memory" and "involuntary memory," which also emphasizes the personal or individual quality of memory. Maurice Halbwachs's theories of collective memory absorb and critique such accounts, arguing that the individual is inseparable from collective remembrance. It is of note that Bergson was a cousin by marriage of Proust and Halbwachs was Bergson's pupil at the Lycée Henry IV in Paris. In Chapter Four I reference the phenomena of what Richard Terdiman has termed "the memory crisis" in nineteenth-century France. For a general synopsis and comparison of the primary texts on memory at the turn of the century, see *Theories of Memory*, eds. Michael Rossington and Anne Whitehead (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), esp. 92-6 and 134-8.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 152-3.

most often betray lived experience and grant a false sense of homogenous and synchronous time to everyday life.¹⁰²

In light of Bergson's account of pure memory and its reliance on a variety of multi-sensory experiences, I want to suggest that Degas strived to "see" differently in the nine sketches of Marie van Goethem. That is, he sought—consciously or not—to execute the "study" as a physical and material process and to train or concentrate his senses on the phenomenological practices of making. In perhaps his most infamous decree, Degas claimed that constructing form has everything to do with a particular "way of seeing:" "Drawing is not the same as form, it is a way of seeing form." In *Degas Danse Dessin*, Paul Valéry—who admits to finding great pleasure while goading the artist into a "rage" over this particular recurrent maxim—correlates Degas's "seeing" with his "working." He then scrutinizes the artist's slogan-of-sorts by comparing "*mise en place*," which is best apprehended by the camera lucida as a technological instrument of vision, to the "*chose vécue*" ("thing *experienced*"). The passage is worth quoting at length:

Since I was not writing at all, and since he repeated the aphorism too often, I was not intimidated. . . . I would say: 'But look here, just what do you mean by *Drawing*?'

He would reply with his celebrated axiom: 'Drawing is not the same as form, it is a way of seeing form.' . . .

'Can't follow,' I would mumble, in a tone rather suggesting that the pronouncement seemed to me empty or meaningless.

At once he would start shouting. . . .

I had quite a good idea of what he meant. He meant to distinguish what he called *mise en place*, or the conventional representation of objects, from what he

¹⁰² Martin Jay emphasizes the importance of Bergson's theory of consciousness and its dependence on the body that can evoke memory in his examination of modern Western philosophy's critique of ocularcentrism, *Downcast Eyes*. He proposes that "[r]ather than construing the body as an object of contemplation, Bergson claimed we should understand it instead as the ground of our acting in the world." Jay argues that Bergson aimed to overthrow both Idealism and Materialism because "the former believed in the ontological priority of images in the mind, the latter in one central image . . . the body as material thing." Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 192-4. He draws connections between Bergson's critique of the spatialization of time and Georg Lukács's analysis of capitalist reification and the commodification of labor time. He also briefly discusses Bergson's links to the Surrealists (André Breton and Bataille), later phenomenologists such as Husserl and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and poststructuralists. Jay, *Downcast Eyes*, 191-208.

called the ‘drawing,’ or the alteration which this exact representation—for example, that of a camera lucida—undergoes from a particular artist’s way of seeing and working. . . .

The camera lucida, which I take as the best means of defining *mise en place*, would enable us to begin work at any point, dispensing us from so much as taking a view of the whole, from any effort to find the relationships between lines or surfaces, and so from transforming the thing *seen* into the thing *experienced*—that is, into a *personal act*.

Certainly there are draftsmen . . . whose work has the precision, the evenness, and the veracity of the camera lucida. . . . Quite the contrary is the case with the real artist. His value resides in certain *inequalities*, all with the same tendency or meaning, which to reveal—with regard to a figure, scene, or landscape—at once *an aptitude, will, and necessity* that are entirely *personal*: a personal power to transpose and recreate. Things in themselves reveal nothing of all this: and it is never of the same kind in two different individuals.

What Degas called a ‘way of seeing’ must consequently bear a wide enough interpretation to include *way of being, power, knowledge, and will*. . . .¹⁰³ [Italics in the original.]

In Valéry’s elucidation of Degas’s terms and practices, drawing is an “alteration” of form, a process that transforms the “thing” *seen* by way of the artist’s lived experience (*vécu*) in the physical world. The “inequalities” of the artist’s encounters with the figure congeal into an internal experience of individually endured “being” in the world, what Bergson would describe as the private reality of *durée* that infuses the form in the conflict between spirit and matter. Duration, or the indivisible, irreversible flow of one’s “being,” is determined by memory and its

¹⁰³ Valéry, *Degas Danse Dessin*, 205-7. “Comme je n’écrivais point, et qu’il répétait trop souvent l’aphorisme, je n’étais point choqué. . . . Je lui disais: ‘Mais enfin, qu’est-ce donc que vous entendez par *le Dessin*?’ Il répondait par son célèbre axiome: ‘Le Dessin n’est pas la forme, il est la manière de voir la forme.’ Je murmurais: ‘Comprends pas,’ avec un ton qui suggérait assez que la formule me paraissait vaine et insignifiante. Aussitôt il criait. . . . Je soupçonnais bien ce qu’il voulait dire. Il opposait ce qu’il appelait la ‘mise en place,’ c’est-à-dire la représentation conforme des objets, à ce qu’il appelait le ‘dessin,’ c’est-à-dire l’altération particulière que la manière de voir et d’exécuter d’un artiste fait subir à cette représentation exacte, celle que donnerait, par exemple, l’usage de la chambre claire. . . . La chambre claire, que je prends pour *définir la mise en place*, permettrait de commencer le travail par un point quelconque, de ne pas même regarder l’ensemble, de ne pas chercher des relations entre les lignes ou les surfaces; de ne pas agir sur la chose *vue* pour la transformer en chose *vécue*, en action de *quelqu’un*. Or, il est des dessinateurs . . . qui ont la précision, l’égalité et la vérité de la chambre claire. . . . Il en est tout au contraire des *artistes*. La valeur de l’artiste tient à certaines *inégalités* de même sens ou de même tendance, qui révèlent à fois, à l’occasion d’une figure, d’une scène ou d’un paysage, la *facilité*, les *volontés*, les *exigences*, la puissance de transposition et de reconstitution de *quelqu’un*. Rien de tout ceci ne se trouve dans les *choses*; et ne se trouve jamais le même dans deux individus différents. La ‘manière de voir’ dont parlait Degas doit donc s’entendre largement et inclure: *manière d’être, pouvoir, savoir, vouloir*. . . .

evolving multiplicities of physical experience.¹⁰⁴ Even so, the artist's differentiated sensations are elusive—they cannot be fixed in the “thing” or described by language. With regard to the production of the four sketches, Degas's dancer-motifs in charcoal became receptacles of the fluid, heterogeneous temporalities of their making, such that Degas “seeing” form was the same as Degas “working” form. It meant reiterating visual and haptic mnemonic lessons and transforming or transitioning the form by way of the artist's experience of, or work in, duration.¹⁰⁵

To put it another way, Degas attempted to recover duration in the four sketches, to locate the temporalities, materialities, and sensations of draftsmanship. However, attempting to recover the experiential, haptic sensation of drawing form is an irrational, futile task, one which will inevitably become only a series of traces or indices—marks on paper. In spite of this, I want to locate the type of accrued difference in repetition in the four drawings of van Goethem. Rather than searching for a conceptualized unity between the four works,¹⁰⁶ it is more convincing that Degas embraced the action of open investigation into the duration of form. His method would

¹⁰⁴ To augment my definition of duration, I would add that in *Time and Free Will*, Bergson defines duration as a series of intensities that differ in their quality (experience) rather than their quantity (enumeration). Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, 2-6. In the same text he defines pure duration as “the form which the succession of our conscious states assumes when our ego lets itself *live*, when it refrains from separating its present state from its former states. . . . [I]n recalling these states, it does not set them alongside its actual state as one point alongside another, but forms both the past and the present states into an organic whole, as happens when we recall the notes of a tune, melting, so to speak, into one another.” Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, 100. Bergson's analogy of music is not coincidental; it draws upon the Enlightenment's division of the arts into temporal and spatial modalities, demonstrated most famously by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's *Laocoon* (1766). Bergson's theory of duration as consciousness is explicitly antagonistic toward Kant's division of time from space and the concept of pure intuition outside of time.

¹⁰⁵ Bergson's writings on the visual arts are scant. In *The Creative Mind* he briefly discusses “great artists” and their translation of form: “If we accept [great artists] and admire them, it is because we had already perceived something of what they show us. But we had perceived without seeing. . . . The painter has isolated it; he has fixed it so well on the canvas that henceforth we shall not be able to help seeing in reality what he himself saw.” He also claims that “true art . . . will seek behind the lines ones sees to the movement the eye does not see.” Henri Bergson, *The Creative Mind* (1934), trans. Mabelle L. Andison (Totowa, N.J.: Littlefield, Adams & Co., 1975), 136; 230. Both of these rather pithy quotations point to the tension in the visual arts between the dominance of visual modalities and the effort of the artist's will to make other sensory modalities available in the fixed image.

¹⁰⁶ DeVonyar and Kendall make their ideation of the subject especially clear in this regard: “The collective significance of this suite of drawings for the *Little Dancer* becomes dramatically evident when they are considered not as separate sheets but as a continuous statement about a single entity.” *Degas and the Ballet: Picturing Movement*, 83.

then involve staging multiple corporeal and cognitive encounters with a subject, which would ultimately enable him to distance himself from nature (the model) and to generate future forms from past experiences. The unruly ambition of such a project is to build a “pure memory” of the motif, to conserve the past in the present and assure that one never practices or expresses the motif in precisely the same manner. The “present” draftsman’s exercise is thus folded into an ever evolving past, which changes not by degree or quantity, but by the quality of the artist’s efforts to render the motifs’ evolving difference again and again. Memory then becomes the source of possibility for Degas’s practice. As Bergson explains, memory enables “independence . . . the inner energy which allows the being to free itself from the rhythm of the flow of things and to retain an even higher degree of the past in order to influence ever more deeply the future.”¹⁰⁷

Nevertheless—and I keep harkening back to this point—the sketches cannot act as ventriloquists to the lived actions of the artist, and they cannot speak about the accumulation of his haptic and visual memory. Indeed, throughout *Matter and Memory* Bergson argues that images can only represent memory; they can never express it because “the image does not reveal the qualitative difference between matter and mind, which consists of the mind’s capacity to preserve images, in its capacity for memory.”¹⁰⁸ The series of drawings is material evidence of a collaboration between Degas’s bodily memory (collection of past exercises) and his ongoing voluntary investigations of memory. The sketches should not be conceived as a tidy document, proof of Degas’s positivistic processes towards the rational visualization of form. First and foremost because the artist’s processes are notoriously impervious to rationale, a fact Degas

¹⁰⁷ Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 222.

¹⁰⁸ Temenuga Trifonova, “Matter-Image or Image-Consciousness: Bergson contra Sartre,” *Janus Head* 6.1 (Spring 2003): 80-114; 81.

himself emphasized when he claimed that reason had no part in “good drawing.”¹⁰⁹ But just as important is that the ideation of the sketches implicitly ignores the artist’s experiential operations which occurred within the dynamics of contingency, rather than within the teleology of art (to say nothing of the tacit reproduction of academic hierarchies of media). Efforts to unify Degas’s exercises of looking and making into a “rational encapsulation of . . . sculpture in advance of its fabrication” disregard his conscious, highly wrought concentration on the act of drawing in a serial mode.¹¹⁰ An act, which—if we are to trust Valéry on the subject—is about transposition, re-creation, and “inequalities,” a personal experience comprised of a “*way of being, power, knowledge, and will* (“*manière d’être, pouvoir, savoir, vouloir*”).”

To summarize, if we accept that the sketches are futile experiments to represent form as evolving memory, we then ignore the act of willing experience into form as an affecting desire. The function of “will” is particularly provocative in Valéry’s adaptation of Degas’s maxim, especially as “will” relates in a transitive mode (“to will something”) to the “thing” drawn. In

¹⁰⁹ The anecdote is related by Daniel Halévy in Degas, *Lettres*, 276. At a dinner with the Halévy family in the fall of 1892 Degas became enraged by the other guests’ laughter at the miracles recorded at Lourdes. Degas describes his travels there, becoming more and more excited and exclaiming that reason should be used “at the most only as an instrument for getting on to an omnibus.” A guest asks if he would like to be without reason, to which he quickly responds, “[t]hat would not stop me from doing a good drawing.” The full excerpt from Halévy reads: “La raison! Vous allez parler la raison! Qu’est-ce que ça veut dire? Rien n’a fait dire plus de bêtises que la raison ; il ne faut pas s’en servir ou tout au plus comme d’un instrument pour monter en omnibus.’ ‘Mais,’ dit ma grand’mère, ‘si demain on disait de vous avez perdu la raison, seriez-vous content ?’ ‘Ce n’est pas ça qui m’empêcherait de faire un bon dessin.’”

¹¹⁰ Kendall and DeVonyar, *Degas and the Ballet*, 84. The authors are referring to their composite diagram of all nine sketches that maps Degas’s various viewpoints of van Goethem: “Nothing in Degas’s previous career prepares us for such comprehensiveness, which seems to point to an unusually clear, rational encapsulation of his sculpture in advance of its fabrication. Beyond the convenience of such a suite of drawings, the artist arrived at a sophisticated procedure for unifying many hours of patient scrutiny in a simple visual form. Comparable, perhaps, to the three-dimensional scanning process or laser analysis of our day.” Their description of Degas’s “rational” enterprise is especially illuminating in light of my own arguments, which rely on Bergson’s theory of duration and intuition. Bergson specifically argued against efforts to attain absolute knowledge by unifying partial viewpoints: “Though all the photographs of a city taken from all possible points of view indefinitely complete one another, they will never equal in value that dimensional object along whose streets one walks. . . . A representation taken from a certain point of view, a translation made with certain symbols still remain imperfect in comparison with the object whose picture has been taken or which the symbols seek to express. But the absolute is perfect in that it is perfectly what it is.” For Bergson, multiplicities of sympathy, or intuition—which I discuss below—were the only way to enter the interiority of the object. Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, 160-1.

Bergson's writings, will (*volonté*) and human action are similarly positioned as the source of freedom: "Freedom is the relation of the concrete self to the act which it performs. *This relation is indefinable* For we can analyze a thing, but not a process; we can break up extensity, but not duration" [my italics].¹¹¹ For Bergson, mental activity is an experiential process of becoming that occurs in duration, a *travail de l'esprit* "[which] continually travels between the two extreme limits, the plane of action and the plane of dream."¹¹² But rather than a metaphysical dualism between the two terms—action and dream—Bergson characterizes both as an extraction from the conventional world. Freedom is conditional on voluntary (or vital) will, which is differentiated from the habit memory of automatic action of the body; yet, freedom is also identified with useless action (the state of the dream) and spontaneity.¹¹³ To clarify, freedom is always/already attuned to duration whether it is a) concentrated memory as voluntary action (consciousness) or b) ineffectual action as dream-state (unconsciousness). Perhaps most important for purposes here, both states of consciousness are disinterested in analysis as a path toward synthesis or in experience as utility, and both states require an intuition of duration.

While Bergson's first definition of human freedom—memory at the service of voluntary action—is quite obviously endemic to Degas's generative schemes, the quality of uselessness, or ineffectual action, also seems to apply to Degas's *Little Dancer* sketches and to his larger oeuvre in general. There is the sense that several of the drawings in question—like so many of the hundreds of dancer-motifs in charcoal and pastel—are without resolve or destination. Bergson's concept of intuition, as an experience first of self-sympathy and then of heterogeneous openness toward the "thing," is useful in this regard because the state of intuition reverses the normative

¹¹¹ Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, 219.

¹¹² Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 172.

¹¹³ For a broader discussion on the dialectic of voluntary will and "the automatic" in early twentieth-century French philosophy see Guerlac, *Literary Polemics: Bataille, Sartre, Valéry, Breton*, 166-73.

patterns of intelligence. Instead of seeking utility and unification in human experience, (or, in psychoanalytic terms, narcissistic identification), the intuition of duration involves the “strong recoil of the personality upon itself”¹¹⁴ in order to penetrate the duration of the object or living thing.¹¹⁵

Considering Degas’s reputation for stubbornness, repetition, obsession, or even “stuckness,” Bergson’s theory of an intuition of duration releases Degas’s practice from the framing ideologies of utility, immediacy, unification, and closure. In *Creative Evolution* (1907) Bergson defines intuition as “instinct that has become disinterested, self-conscious, capable of reflecting on its object and enlarging it indefinitely.”¹¹⁶ He then emphasizes the potential of sympathies in duration:

[Intuition,] by the sympathetic communication which it establishes between us and the rest of the living, by the expansion of our consciousness which it brings about . . . introduces us into life’s domain, which is reciprocal interpenetration, endlessly continued creation.”¹¹⁷

In other words, the voluntary effort of memory—the consciousness of one’s own multiplicity—brought to bear upon a subject generates a variety of perceptions and understandings of the subject and allows for endless creation. As an alternative, Bergson’s theory of an intuition of

¹¹⁴ Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution* (1907), trans. Arthur Mitchell (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1911; Palo Alto, CA: ebrary, 2009), 193.

¹¹⁵ In a long letter to Albert Bartholomé written from Naples in January 1886, Degas digresses into the confessional and describes how the subject of the dancers has affected his life and his body. He begins by decrying the process of aging. He then links this feeling directly to his work with dancers and follows the thought with a charge about drawing and repetition: “. . . for with the exception of the heart it seems to me that everything within me is growing old in proportion. And even this heart of mine has something artificial. The dancers have sewn it into a bag of pink satin, pink satin slightly faded, like their dancing shoes.” Degas then breaks and the next paragraph begins: “I am anxious to see your picture. How pretty the photographed drawing is that you gave me! But it is essential to do the same subject over again, ten times, a hundred times . . .” I would draw attention to the *empathy* Degas feels for the dancers’ work (faded dancing shoes) and, by extension, their bodies. However, he also seems to suggest that his body and heart are worn by the activity of making the dancing pictures. The intensity of the production process has fostered a melancholy, and, perhaps, a drive toward repetition. “. . . [C]ar à part le cœur il me semble que tout vieillit en moi proportionnellement. Et même ce cœur a de l’artificiel. Les danseuses l’ont cousu dans un sac de satin rose, du satin rose un peu fané, comme leurs chaussons de danse. Je suis curieux de voir votre tableau . . . [M]ais il faut refaire dix fois, cent fois le même sujet. . .” Degas, *Lettres*, 118-9.

¹¹⁶ Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, 176.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 187.

duration provides a model for re-examining the conditions of the artist's practice, now re-imagined as a process desiring the experiential transformation of form and continuous multiplicity. Moreover, it affords new interpretive grounds, such as interpenetration, for understanding the relations between compositions and new possibilities of reception for an audience desiring "endlessly continued creation."

The intuition of form in duration—that is, form that varies over time and that shifts in its own morphologies, intensities, and desires—is what I take to be the crucial motivation and practice of Degas's artistic generation from 1878 onward. The action of intuition, which is part voluntary and part spontaneous for Bergson, requires a continuous consciousness of one's own duration. In the repetition of drawing, the re-remembering of form, Degas was able to enter duration and sustain its pluralities. His more infamous aphorisms about art as a willed, mnemonic practice are more than provocative in this respect: "But it is essential to do the same subject over again, ten times, a hundred times."¹¹⁸ "A man is an artist only at certain moments, by an effort of will. Objects have the same appearance for everybody."¹¹⁹ Here again is Degas on memory and its detachment from the "real" of nature:

It is very well to copy what one sees . . . it's better to draw what one has retained in one's memory. It is a transformation in which imagination collaborates with memory. One reproduces only that which is striking; that is to say, the necessary. Thus, one's recollections and invention are liberated from the tyranny which nature exerts.¹²⁰

Such quotes are the stuff of the Degas myth. But for the artist to speak of retaining memories and liberating recollections implies that the experience of his artistic process occupied a certain

¹¹⁸ See note 115.

¹¹⁹ The exclamation is paraphrased by Berthe Morisot in Valéry, *Degas Danse Dessin*, 209. The full citation reads: "L'Art c'est le faux! et il explique comment un artiste ne l'est qu'à ses heures, par un effort de volonté. Les objets ont le même aspect pour tous . . ."

¹²⁰ Jeannot, "Souvenirs sur Degas," 158. "C'est très bien de copier ce que l'on voit ; c'est beaucoup mieux de dessiner ce que l'on ne voit plus que dans sa mémoire. C'est une transformation pendant laquelle l'imagination collabore [avec] la mémoire. Vous ne reproduisez que ce qui vous a frappé, c'est-à-dire le nécessaire. Là, vos souvenirs et votre fantaisie sont libérés de la tyrannie qu'exerce la nature."

duration, that it required “an effort of memory which extends a plurality of moments into one another.”¹²¹ Moreover, Degas’s charge in the quotes—and in the seriality of the drawings themselves—is to will the quality of memory, to “induce this memory to shrink, or rather to become thinned and sharpened, so that it presents nothing thicker than the edge of a blade to actual experience, into which it will thus be able to penetrate.”¹²² Or, to paraphrase, to liberate one’s recollections from “the tyranny” of nature.

By way of conclusion to this interlude, I want to consider a final drawing from the *Little Dancer* group that is somewhat at odds with the other eight and is strangely symptomatic of Degas’s large drawings from the early 1880s. In the *Study of Three Dancers* (c. 1878-80, Private collection, Rochester, NY, Fig. 3.53), all the figures are in a relaxed fourth position, which is highlighted in white and is fairly consistent across the sheet. Akin to the four sketches just discussed, the dancer-motif is slightly altered from sketch to sketch, with noticeable variance to body posture, facial features, and coiffure. In fact, the figures’ upper bodies are so significantly modified that the composition—if such a description even holds—actually shares more in common with several sketches of *chanteuses* in Notebook twenty-eight (Figs. 3.13-3.15). Taken from foreground to background, the dancer lifts her head, rolls back her shoulders, slouches to the left, spreads her arms wide, and then folds her arms into her body to support her lifted head. Though Degas’s notation in the upper right corner, *vue de dessus* (“seen from above”) suggests that he morphed the subject’s upper body from sketch to sketch in a single sitting, the transitions are hardly as seamless as just expressed.

¹²¹ Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 219.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 106. Guerlac’s translation of the well-known passage is actually more eloquent: to “get the memory to contract itself or rather to sharpen itself more and more, until it presents only the cutting edge of its blade to the experience into which it penetrates.” Guerlac, *Literary Polemics: Bataille, Sartre, Valéry, Breton*, 168.

The drawing is certainly not an integrated study of a figure. There are no interlacing contours that resolve the three bodies or unify them as an Idea. On the other hand, the normative attributes of “place” are obviously left out of the composition and the subject’s saccadic jumps across the paper— which might otherwise be understood as “skips” in a continuous narrative— suggest something of repetition and of alteration. Each figure is independent, complete unto herself, and yet each is also intimately connected to the others by way of articulated form. Each figure is a self-sustained cycle of artistic attention that works to interrupt the singularity of subject; and each figure draws upon the other in the memory of its form. Or, to further emphasize the vitality of action rather than its negation, Degas crafted approximately analogous dancer-motifs in disparate cycles of generation across the paper, accentuating the temporal heterogeneity of his physical processes and re-inscribing the discrete experiences of looking and drawing in lived time. “*Vue de dessus*” is, therefore, neither a single “view,” nor a series of moments re-sequenced in spatialized time; rather, it is a temporal stretch of physical and mental concentration on the multiplicity of form, an accrual of form in artistic duration.¹²³

¹²³ I have two reservations about these conclusions that deserve comment. The first has to do with the problem of precedent and the risk of positioning the drawings as a rupture in conventional modes of draftsmanship, and in Degas’s own drawing practices. Delacroix’s *Studies of a Young Greek Soldier* (c. 1826, Baltimore Museum of Art) makes for a provocative comparison in the first respect. Aside from the much smaller scale of the earlier work, the crucial difference between the works is Degas’s prolonged attention and efforts given to the analysis of a particular—though deeply mundane—position of the body in some twenty-six individual studies without immediate recourse to any one conceived composition. Degas’s innovation rests in the monotony of the everyday, the routine process of perpetual investigation that implicitly spurns the specific, informative, or useful drawing and embraces the dynamics of contingent production. Moreover, rather than a breach in the artist’s studio practices, I would suggest that the sketches of van Goethem are an intensification of Degas’s repetition and transformation of the dancer-motif from painting to painting, as discussed in my Chapter Two. The minute shifts of the upper body suggest a difference from one context to the next, and yet the continuity of the motif is palpable, if only by way of Degas’s graphic reiterations of skirts, calves, and feet. The second reservation again has to do with the representation of duration and the inevitable spatialization of time. In the sketches Degas homogenizes the dancer by way of size, scale, stance (as opposed to the *chanteuses* in notebook twenty-eight) and proximity on the page. The artist thereby juxtaposes successive generative moments in what Bergson might call an “extension” across the page and illustrates a “chain” of quantifiable time. But Degas’s three sketches do not actually succeed one another in a diachronic manner. Rather, in spatial terms, they overlap in inadvertent or artless ways.

Degas's first frieze compositions IV: Assimilations of the motif in artistic duration

The earliest frieze monotypes were not composed from multiple dancer-motifs or repetitive *chanteuses* strewn across the page. Rather, all of the early frieze works discussed to this point are convincing fictions highly reliant on the structure of “place,” its architectural signs, and narrative details. However, in the months immediately following Degas's drawing sessions with Marie van Goethem in the first part of 1878, the artist completed the most well-known example of the frieze monotype: *Three Ballet Dancers* (c. 1878-80, The Clark Art Institute, Fig. 3.59).¹²⁴ The work's size and scale are comparable to *Cabaret* and *The Spectators*, but the composition is dramatically simplified and stripped of almost all denotations of place. Even the pastel version of the monotype is sparse, composed of just three dancers distributed across the paper and then asymmetrically fissured into foreground and background against the subtle dislocations of the backdrop. From nominal content and minimal markings, Degas has actually wrought an intense dynamism in the monotype and pastel, the type of elusive turmoil usually associated with his late pastels.

The composition's few descriptive details were actually crafted during the initial layout of pictorial space—with an economy of means inherent to the medium—to which Degas added little narrative information in pastel (Fig. 3.60). The physical and material smears of black ink, dragged from one corner to another, simultaneously act as iconic signs of floorboards and as a lone, rudimentary perspectival device. Similarly, the wisps of white in the background signify some sort of floral backdrop, whereas intensified actions with the same tool (probably cotton

¹²⁴ The hypothetical end date (1880) of the monotype is determined by Degas's drop off in monotype production around 1880. I would venture that the production date was sometime in the spring of 1878 because the work is inscribed “*Degas à Cherfils*.” Alphonse Cherfils was a friend of Paul Lafond; he lived in Pau and was responsible for completing the sale of *Portraits in an Office (New Orleans)* to the Musée de Pau in March, 1878. The much needed income from the successful sale of a large work was welcome news to the artist, who wrote fondly of Cherfils on more than one occasion. It is highly likely that Degas offered the work as a gesture of his gratitude in the months following the sale. See *Degas*, ed. Boggs, 217 and *Degas, Lettres*, 60 and 65.

gauze of some sort) represent the tulle of tutus in the foreground. The dancers' facial features, assorted decorative trinkets, and wooden, doll-like legs were all articulated by a sharper endpoint capable of clarity, which is absent in the backdrop. Furthermore, the dramatic contrast between light (negative space) and shadow (positive space) sustains the illusion of recessive space while making for a haunting, ethereal atmosphere. In the most fundamental ways, the necessities of the monotype medium provided Degas with an implicit compositional space for the iterated dancer-motifs, one that finally exempted him from conceiving "place" from architectural attributes, and which simultaneously provided the most rudimentary spatial restrictions on the free-floating forms of the dancer-motifs.

Spatial constrictions aside, the two upright figures in the first impression are relatively ungainly, and are highly reminiscent of the "comic cartooning" or "witty calligraphy" evident in *The Ballet Rehearsal* (Fig. 3.30). Degas used his thumb to dull the black ink to gray around their calves and feet; but the effect of shadow just emphasizes how the two figures hover like string puppets in their own weightless atmosphere. This formlessness contrasts to a slightly earlier monotype and pastel, which features a similar dancer-motif in the middle ground. With the addition of pastel to *Two Dancers Entering the Stage* (c. 1877-78, Fogg Art Museum, Fig. 3.61), Degas chose to accentuate the orthogonal floorboards and the watchful presence of an *abonné*. The dancer *en pointe* in a *coupé* position is fixed between the two aligned diagonals and the gaze of the gentleman. Degas affected a credible sense of mass to the dancer by articulating the smudge of shadow under her foot, which is straight and grounded to support her upright leg and the precision of her *coupé*. The two central women in *Three Ballet Dancers* are amorphous and flimsy by comparison. Knees collapsing, feet unhinged, torsos suspended in the air, they make for debauched dancer-motifs, abandoned in their own form and flailing around the foreground.

If *Three Ballet Dancers* reveals a similar production process as its frieze monotype predecessors, and if it too showcases the ill-formed, unruly dancers recovered from Notebook twenty-eight, its difference ultimately rests with Degas's naked concentration on the dancer-motif. Gone are the iconic signs of place and quotidian incident—the clusters of customers gapping at one another, the bobbing heads in the orchestra pit, or the carnival of daily class. The familiar pillars, pianos, tables, fans, bows, mustaches, and musical shafts have all been exchanged for the sly disjunction between foreground and background and the multiplicity of dancer-motifs. With respect to the latter, *Three Ballet Dancers* relates to several other pastel compositions (Figs. 3.62-3.65),¹²⁵ all of which date to 1879, and all of which focus on a single dancer-motif repeated across the paper/on the stage. While none of the works utilize the specific dancer-motif at the center of *Three Ballet Dancers*, two portray a dancer-motif conspicuously close to van Goethem in her relaxed fourth position. Indeed, there can be little doubt of the relationship between *Three Ballet Dancers* (Fig. 3.62) or *Three Dancers Before Class* (Fig. 3.63) and the *Little Dancer of Fourteen Years* sequence of studies, particularly *Study of Three Dancers* (Fig. 3.53).

In most of these pastels, Degas individually tailored dancer-motifs' hand and arm gestures, and he sometimes sought to heighten narrative potential by adding hints of caricature in particular faces.¹²⁶ (Note the pug-nose and upturned lip given to the dancer-motif at the center of *Three Ballet Dancers* (Fig. 3.62) or the angular brow and nose on the girl with her arms crossed in *Three Dancers* (Fig. 3.64).) These minor adjustments to the dancer-motif have more to do

¹²⁵ To the group of works reproduced here, I would add two more pastels: L544 (*Danseuses entrant en scène*, c. 1879), for which Degas employed van Goethem's position in loose fourth, and L570 (*Danseuses sur la scène*, c. 1879), which is closely related to *Three Dancers* (Fig. 3.64). Both are in private collections and have not been reproduced in publication other than the catalogue raisonné.

¹²⁶ Other examples include L486, L494, L505, L572, L575, and L645. Several fans also demonstrate the internal compositional repetition of motifs, which serves little structural purpose and is almost always situated on the Opéra stage: L557, L562, L565, and L594.

with indication than evocation, as if they are meant to denote difference rather than real significance. They are of little consequence to the the structure of the composition. In *Dancers Bowing* (Fig. 3.65),¹²⁷ the artist made no attempt to distinguish between the motifs' actual form, relying on the place and time of performance to explain the synchronism. In this case, Degas too easily emphasized the peculiarity between the dancers with the blaze of red hair on the girl to the left. Contrasted with all that fiery pastel are the mechanics of the dancers' bodies, which invoke a severe automaton-quality and a sense of the "standardized."

Despite Degas's attempts at differentiating dancer-motifs with varied coiffures and compartments, there is little that might actually disguise his exercises of reprise and reiteration in these works. Spreading the motif across the support and slightly modifying the pose suggests either a) successions in the internal temporality of the painting (its fictive time) or b) the spatialization of generative time passing, a kind of visualization of repetitive, mnemonic drawing. In both situations, temporality—whether fictive or artistic—is ultimately rendered static in fixed illusions. Accordingly, the dancer-motifs are ineffective in the works. They don't do much of anything for the composition, and they lack the integral structural relationships that make paintings like the Frick's *The Rehearsal* so dynamic (0.5). These compositions are maladroit stagings of dancer-motifs—even when the dancers assume leisurely poses—because Degas's artistic processes are lingering on the surface, as if he aligned the dancer-motifs and surrounded them with signs of "place." Set beside the contemporaneous monotype *Three Ballet Dancers*, the pastels lack the organic structure and stricture of making; they read as applications of a process rather than the organic scaffolding of a picture. In each of these works—and there are several more datable to the period—Degas's operations are flatly repetitive: drills of draftsmanship dressed in pastel.

¹²⁷ Sketches for the dancer-motif in *Dancers Bowing* include L616 and L616bis.

There is strong evidence that almost immediately after his drawing sessions with van Goethem, and for the next three to four years, Degas was searching for an application for his mnemonic exercises in drawing form—beyond any single “idea” for a sculpture. His early endeavors included maneuvers like the ones just discussed: selecting, manipulating, and re-articulating the same dancer-motif within a single composition made over into place. Another suite of sketches and prints, completed from 1879 to 1880 (Figs. 3.66-3.74 & 3.28), suggests a second, more complex network of research, production, and reformulation of motifs into composition. Significant to my larger argument, the works were executed concurrent with the first frieze classroom paintings. Moreover, they too grapple with the temporalities of creating forms, scrutinizing their possible manifestations, and re-actualizing the motifs across the page.

The subject of the series is women dressed in street clothes looking at and/or reading about objects. *Essai de decoration, détrempe* is listed in the catalogue for the Fourth Impressionist Exhibition in 1879, but is now assumed lost or destroyed; another is titled in Degas’s hand, “*Portraits en frieze pour decoration dans un appartement*,” and was exhibited *hors catalogue* in the Fifth Impressionist Exhibition in 1880 (Private collection, Fig. 3.66);¹²⁸ a third work, a charcoal and pastel sketch also missing, included two seated women with a standing figure between them, all spread horizontally across the page.¹²⁹ Of the remaining six, one sketch portrays two women (Fig. 3.67) and the others are single figure studies, including a drypoint print in three states (Figs. 3.68-3.72).¹³⁰ Finally, the series is intricately entwined with

¹²⁸ Listed in the reprinted catalogues in *Degas Inédit*, ed. École du Louvre, 317 and 321.

¹²⁹ The work is described in a sale catalogue of Drouot’s from December 20, 1954, lot 70: “Two studies of a seated woman; in the center, the same figure standing (Mary Cassatt?). Charcoal and pastel. H 61 cm; L 94 cm.” See *Degas*, ed. Boggs, 319-20. If the dimensions were listed correctly, it is the only work in the series that was not on paper with a width of roughly nineteen inches.

¹³⁰ A sketch at Harvard’s Fogg Art Museum might also be part of Degas’s investigations of “women looking.” *Young Woman in Street Clothes* (c. 1879) is a single study in black ink, gray wash, gouache, and black chalk. The size of the sheet is smaller than the larger sketches in the series, but the muted palette and subject are similar. To my

the most rigorous experiments in reproduction in Degas's oeuvre: the *Mary Cassatt at the Louvre* series, consisting of one pastel and some thirty prints in etching, aquatint, and drypoint (Figs. 3.73, 3.74, & 3.28).

While scholars have exerted great effort to secure the identities of the sitters for the various "women looking," there is little solid evidence and much conjecture. It is generally accepted that Mary Cassatt is the middle figure in *Portraits in a Frieze*, but the identification is mostly premised on the presence of the umbrella, which is associated with the *Louvre* series of prints, and a generic likeness.¹³¹ An even less convincing proposition is that Cassatt was the model for both women in the pastel titled after the later series of prints (Fig. 3.67).¹³² Based upon an early review of the drypoint print, Ronald Pickvance has suggested that the *Woman in Street Clothes* (Fig. 3.70), and the woman to the right in *Portraits in a Frieze*, is the actress and model Ellen Andrée.¹³³ Cassatt's sister, Lydia, is purported to have been the model for the sketch of a

knowledge, no other scholar has made an assertion about the drawing; however the suggestion seems logical and deserves further investigation.

¹³¹ It was Lemoisne who first claimed that Cassatt was the woman "leaning on her umbrella" in several etchings Degas made for *Le Jour et la nuit*. Indeed, Cassatt verified that she was the model for the woman in the prints at *At the Louvre*. Paul-André Lemoisne, *Degas: L'Art de notre temps* (Paris, 1912), 90. However, it is pure scholarly assumption that the seated woman in *Portraits in a Frieze* is also Cassatt. The identification for *Portraits in a Frieze* seems to be based on the fact that the seated woman also grasps an umbrella and wears a black coat, though the women's cuffs, hat, and hair style are obviously different. This assumption, and the presumptuous titles of works like *Two Studies of Mary Cassatt at the Louvre*, has not been thoroughly questioned in the literature. Reference catalogues like *Degas*, ed. Boggs, continue to claim secure identities for *Portraits in a Frieze*, when there is only strong evidence for the identities of the women in the *Louvre* prints and the pastel, *At the Louvre*.

¹³² I am suspicious of this title and identification because it is also premised on Lemoisne's description of the later "finished" pastel and prints, *At the Louvre*, *The Etruscan Gallery*, and *The Painting Gallery*. The scholarly consensus presumes that the woman with the umbrella is Mary Cassatt in a similar posture as the figure in the *Louvre* series and, therefore, that the women are both Cassatt. However, the standing woman shares more than a resemblance to the Ellen Andrée figure in *Portraits in a Frieze*, and the dimensions and palette are reminiscent of the *Portraits in a Frieze* composition. I would suggest that *Two Studies of Mary Cassatt at the Louvre* is actually a composite picture constructed in much the same manner as *Portraits in a Frieze*. For a different opinion—based on no further evidence—see *Degas*, ed. Boggs, 320.

¹³³ Pickvance bases his assumption on a description of the drypoint print by Arsène Alexandre from 1918. Alexandre names Andrée and describes her as a close friend of Halévy, Manet, and Degas. Arsène Alexandre, "Degas: graveur et lithographe," *Les Arts* 132 (December 1912): 11-19; 14. Pickvance gives no formal evidence for his claims that Andrée is the also the figure in both *Portraits in a Frieze* and *Woman in Street Clothes*. Pickvance, *Degas, 1879*, 60-1.

seated woman Degas later deployed for the *Louvre* series (Fig. 3.69).¹³⁴ However, it should be noted that the missing sketch of three figures reportedly includes two manifestations of a seated figure, both of which were last assumed to be portraits of Mary Cassatt (perhaps because they carry umbrellas?).

Even with the shaky identifications at hand, the gap in our knowledge owing to the two missing compositions—*Essai de decoration, détrempe* and the pastel sketch of three women—makes it impossible to know if or how Degas might have altered these figures from work to work.¹³⁵ I would venture that other related sketches were discarded by Degas or have been lost. Cassatt recalls a modeling session for the “woman at the Louvre leaning on an umbrella,” yet there is only one surviving pastel directly related to the later prints (Fig. 3.72) and her single figure in both *Portraits in a Frieze* and *Two Studies of Mary Cassatt at the Louvre*.¹³⁶ Similarly, the drypoint of *Andrée* is surely an iteration of a figure from a more prolific sketching session, during which *Woman in Street Clothes* and *Woman in Mauve Dress and Straw Hat* may or may not have been produced, though the two women appear quite dissimilar. So it is quite possible

¹³⁴ This identification seems to be based on convention. See Degas, ed. Boggs, 321; Stern and Schapiro, *Edgar Degas: The Painter as Printmaker*, 170; Callen, *The Spectacular Body*, 165-8.

¹³⁵ In her chapter on this series of works, Callen makes the latent argument—similar to Kendall’s in relation to the sketches that predate the sculpture *Little Dancer Fourteen Years*—that *Portraits in a Frieze* and the related sketches of “women looking” were “early ideas” for the *Mary Cassatt at the Louvre* prints and pastel. Callen, *The Spectacular Body*, 193. This leads to a sequence of deductions about Degas’s production processes, all of which are dependent on the fact that Degas always/already intended Cassatt (and the others) to be looking at paintings in the “final” pastel, *At the Louvre* (Fig. 3.74). Callen argues that Degas “disrupted the logic of Cassatt’s gaze” and “rendered the figure of Cassatt aimless” in his transposition of the motif from *The Etruscan Gallery* to the “final” pastel. She also argues that the transposition of the figures in differing “perspectival logics” creates “a discordant spatial logic . . . a pictorial dynamic which imbues the work with volatile uncertainty, stimulating the speculative fantasies of the viewer.” Callen, *The Spectacular Body*, 197. Three problems are apparent in this interpretation of *At the Louvre*: 1) the privileging of *At the Louvre* as the “final” version or “completed” work that finally allows speculative fantasy; 2) the characterization of the works as conventional portraits, when Cassatt’s performance is as much model as sitter—an ambiguity that deserves more analysis and research; and 3) the acceptance of Degas’s construction of pictorial space as a real place with organic or innate connections to the motifs. See Callen, *The Spectacular Body*, 193-8.

¹³⁶ Mary Cassatt, Grasse, December 7, 1918, to Louise Havemeyer (Archives, The Metropolitan Museum of Art). It is plausible that the missing sketch of two seated and one standing women was produced during Degas’s session with Cassatt, or as a result of sketches made during the session. I am wary of the assumption, however, because *Portraits in a Frieze* does not include three portraits of the same woman. See notes 131 and 132.

that more than one sketch of Andrée, Cassatt, or another model made its way into *Essai de decoration, détrempe, Portraits in a Frieze*, and/or *Two Studies of Mary Cassatt at the Louvre*. Degas need only to have slightly modified the sitter's physiognomy and/or the details of their dress—relatively simple operations with recent precedent in works like *Three Ballet Dancers* (Fig. 3.62).

Except for the missing composition with three figures, the pastel sketches are of comparable size and scale, with dimensions nearly identical to the van Goethem series of sketches.¹³⁷ The “women looking” also share a tawny palette made up of ochre, sienna, mauve, with highlighting in white—again, somewhat akin to the recent studies of the young dancer. Not only are the single-figure sketches of “women looking” completely void of signifying “place,” but so too are *Two Studies of Mary Cassatt at the Louvre* and *Portraits in a Frieze*. Indeed, the latter was exhibited as a “project for an apartment,” a title redolent with the kind of spatial equivocation apparent in the actual composition. (One can't help but wonder if the ailing Duranty was witness to the lapse *langage de l'appartement* in the pastel, or, for that matter, if the earlier *Essai de decoration, détrempe* shared the later work's vacant background.) The individual women in *Portraits of a Frieze* and *Two Studies of Mary Cassatt at the Louvre* are each intrinsically distinct: their stances are dissimilar, their props discernible, and their forms autonomous, gestalt-like. The sketches are no doubt interrelated, but they are not portraits that cohere into a unified psychology or persona; the women's subjectivity is not under scrutiny here. In fact, they are hardly legible as portraits at all.¹³⁸ Instead, it seems certain that the “women

¹³⁷ Pickvance suggests that the common height of the drawings (approximately nineteen inches) might indicate that Degas prepared the sketches in 1:2 proportions for one meter figures. This is an especially compelling argument given Degas's proposal in Notebook eighteen for figures “at least one meter tall.” See note 142. Pickvance, *Degas 1879*, 61.

¹³⁸ This remains the dominant reading of the series of “women looking.” They are accepted as part of what Boggs has termed Degas's “psychological portraits” of the late 1870s “representing friends in settings typical of their calling.” *Degas*, ed. Boggs, 321. Callen's chapter on the series expands this argument in order to differentiate *At the*

looking” in *Portraits in a Frieze*, *Two Studies of Mary Cassatt*, and the single figure studies were purposefully fashioned in distinct creative cycles, not unlike the individual figure studies in the sketches for *Little Dancer of Fourteen Years*. The results are works nearly as stark and methodical as the earlier studies of van Goethem; multiple autonomous figures spread lengthwise across the sheet, their heights determined by the width of the page, their gazes turned outward, and their interrelatedness entirely independent of episodic place.¹³⁹

It seems likely that Degas was attempting to replicate the circumstances under which the van Goethem series was generated: the paper size, the medium, the scale, the individual sitters, the horizontal spread across the page, the generation of motifs. Moreover, I would argue that he executed the “women looking” sketches as an intimately linked network of novel motifs that could be combined and worked into one or more extended frieze composition.¹⁴⁰ Rather than lifting a single motif from a previous sketch or composition and then slightly transforming it in iterations, Degas purposefully sought to research the subtleties of novel forms, the intricacies of a particular bodily practice: “women looking.” His ultimate ambition was to aggregate these distinct efforts and set them into a horizontal formal relation. *Portraits in a Frieze* (Fig. 3.66) is an attempt at such a relation, an amalgamation of disparate generative moments in Degas’s production practice brought together and transformed in a new context of making.

Louvre from Degas’s portraits of professional men (i.e. Diego Martelli and the nameless men in *Portraits at the Stock Exchange* [c. 1879, Musée d’Orsay]). On her argument, see note 135. In constructing the broader argument about *At the Louvre* and the two related prints as psychological studies of friends, Duranty’s *La Nouvelle Peinture* is almost always quoted with reference to “the significant interpretations to be derived from the simple view of a person’s back.” Degas, ed. Boggs, 321. See also Callen, *The Spectacular Body*, 184-5. My own assessment of the works seeks to challenge the characterization of the series as a set of conventional portraits. I argue that Degas deployed the figures (which perhaps were originally sketched as portraits?) as motifs in a much larger experimental project concerning the act of looking. *At the Louvre* is, therefore, intrinsically connected to a larger network of compositions, such that it is not an entity or a completed work onto itself.

¹³⁹ Shackelford and Callen both link *Portraits in a Frieze* to the sculpture *Little Dancer of Fourteen Years*, but both scholars base their assessments on aspects of portraiture and physiognomy evident in the two works. See Shackelford, *Degas: The Dancers*, 80-1; Callen, *The Spectacular Body*, 18-29 and 184-8.

¹⁴⁰ A similar suggestion is made by Boggs, et al. in the catalogue entry for *Two Studies of Mary Cassatt at the Louvre*. Degas, ed. Boggs, 318.

Degas's immediate plans for the series of sketches were apparently undefined. But the artist's chosen subject for the project is more than curious. Within the extant thirty-seven collected notebooks of Degas, only three entries discuss plans for decorative schemes. In all likelihood, the first was written sometime in 1859 and proposes "to decorate a small library with semi-natural figures—young and strong Melancholy facing Boredom, Patience facing Fickleness."¹⁴¹ The second entry was recorded later in the same notebook, takes a more "realist" subject, "a portrait of a family in a frieze," and hints at plausible formal relations to the physical setting.¹⁴² The last proposal is found in Notebook twenty-three (1868-72), and is neither allegorical, nor modeled after conventional portraiture. Degas envisaged a treatise on ornament, a program that might express the correlations between women's manner of "observing" their everyday world and "the source of ornament."¹⁴³ Some ten years later, Degas's suite of women performing the act of looking could well fulfill his directive:

¹⁴¹ In light of the dancer-motifs' posture and mood in the frieze classroom series, the fact that Degas was once enthusiastic about a "decorative scheme" on the subject of boredom is noteworthy. On the same page as the text there are two sketches: a nude man in a landscape seen from behind, stretching or yawning with his hands clasped and bent over his head; the other is a contemporary young man in profile, slouched over to his left and staring into the distance. Reff claims that the nude figure is the proposed allegory of Boredom because Degas scribbled "*L'Ennui*" within the frame that encloses the nude. However, the length of the frame encompasses the contemporary youth's figure as well, and it seems more than likely that he could represent Melancholy or even a modern version of Boredom. The full entry reads: "décorer une petite bibliothèque / figures demi nature—une mélancholie jeune et forte en face *l'ennui*. *La patience* en face *l'inconstance*." Reff, Nb 18:123.

¹⁴² The entry reads: "A portrait of a family in a frieze. . . . The proportions of the figures not quite one meter. There could be two compositions, one of the family in town, the other in the country / on either side of a door / subjects in the spirit of the house like attributes." "Portrait d'une famille dans une frise. . . . Proportion des figures à peine 1 mètre. Il pourrait y avoir 2 compositions. l'une de la famille à la ville, l'autre la campagne / des deux côtés de la porte / sujets dans l'esprit de la maison, en manière d'attributs." Reff, Nb 18: 204. As Shackelford rightly points out, Degas's plans for the decorative subject are reminiscent of the artist's portraits of families from the late 1850s. Shackelford, *Degas: The Dancers*, 104.

¹⁴³ Although described as "decorative," "a frieze," and "ornament," I refer to Degas's notations as decorative schemes because the latter two are each concerned with portraiture and the relational, formal quality between parts that inform the whole, whether apartment or person. The *Dictionnaire de la langue française par Émile Littré* (1883) defines *décoration* as first, an "action de décorer" and, second, as "ornements d'architecture, de peinture, de sculpture, ou autres ornements au 'on emploie dans les appartements et les jardins. Décoration extérieure, intérieure. La décoration d'un salon, d'un édifice." The third definition of the term deals with its uses in the theater; the fourth definition is concerned with official recognition. *Ornement* is first defined as "ce qui orne, ce qui sert à orner." For this primary definition, several examples are offered as to whom might perform the ornamenting: a prince as in Jean Mairet's tragedy, *Le Grand et Dernier Soliman, ou la Mort de Mustapha* (1637); "an ambitious and vein woman" with reference to Louise de la Vallière, mistress of Louis XIV; or the obelisks in Rome with reference to

More drawing. Ah, beautiful drawing. . . . Ornament is the interval between one thing and another. One packs this interval with a relationship between the two things, and there it is, the source of ornament. Think of a treatise of ornament for women or by women, after their way of observing, of combining, of feeling their toilette and everything else. Every day, more than men, they compare, one with another, a thousand visible things.¹⁴⁴

It might be construed that Degas was concocting reactionary associations between women, commodities, desire, and ornament in his scheme, hinting at the dream world of *Le Bon Marché* and the feverish female *habitués* that swayed under its influence.¹⁴⁵ But the text and tone of the notation don't impart spectacle, caricature, or callous judgment, nor do the pastels and prints to my mind. (And, in fact, only the later prints include any sort of "place" that might demarcate the women's deliberations.) Instead, Degas equates women's manner of observing—an essentialist

architectural history. The second definition for *ornement* reads: "Il se dit des figures de caprice, fleurons, rosaces, festons, etc., qu'on emploie pour orner. La peinture, la sculpture d'ornements." The third definition is similar to the second in that it emphasizes the additive quality of *ornement* and its various parts on a building, but it also implies that the parts are relational: "Particulièrement, en architecture et en menuiserie, il se dit des sculptures, moulures, etc. qui servant à orner les différentes parties d'un bâtiment ou d'une boiserie." The example given for this definition is from Voltaire's *Temple of Taste* (1732): "Chaque ornement, à sa place aéré, y semblait mis par la nécessité." The fourth definition deals explicitly with painting: "Peinture qui, dans une galerie où est représenté un sujet principal sert d'accompagnement à ce sujet. Une peinture d'ornements." I take Degas's use of "ornament" to refer to each of these definitions as they converge on essential points. He is employing ornament first as a noun (an interval or a relationship), which would allude to the second and third definitions concerning the additive elements that are in "necessary" relation to one another. In the second sentence of his notation he refers to a "treatise of ornament," which is more than likely to be a pictorial treatise given the notations about painting that come before and after his description on ornament. This association would suggest that Degas was imagining a painting of some sort to act as a treatise; however, his slippage between "pour les femmes ou par les femmes" also suggests that women might take an active role in the production of a treatise. Indeed, the next clause situates ornament as an action by women, touching upon the first definition in Littré. Degas infers that the act of ornament is inherently gendered (and sexed via "toilette"), but he effortlessly associates what might be described as "preparing a toilette," "window shopping," or simply "women observing" to the effective construction of relationships between forms over time and space. *Dictionnaire de la langue française . . . par Emile Littré*, s.v. "décoration," (Paris: Hachette, 1883), openlibrary.org, accessed October 26, 2011: <http://archive.org/stream/1883dictionnaire01littuoft#page/n5/mode/2up>.

¹⁴⁴ Reff, Nb 23:45-6, (c. 1870). "Dessiner beaucoup. Ah! le beau dessin! L'ornement est l'intervalle entre une chose et une autre. On comble cet intervalle par un rapport entre les deux choses et c'est là. la source de l'ornement. Penser à un traité d'ornement pour les femmes ou par les femmes, d'après leur manière d'observer, de combiner, de sentir leur toilette et toutes choses. Elles comparent journellement plus que les hommes mille choses visibles les unes aux autres."

¹⁴⁵ For discussions of the relationship between emerging public spheres of consumption, women shoppers, and female desire in late nineteenth-century French society, see Hilary Radner, *Shopping Around: Feminine Culture and the Pursuit of Pleasure* (New York: Routledge, 1995) and Lisa Tierstein, *Marianne in the Market: Envisioning Consumer Society in Fin-de-Siècle France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001). For a discussion of women shopping as the subject of French literature, see Rachel Bowlby, *Just Looking: Consumer Culture in Dreiser, Gissing, and Zola* (New York: Taylor and Francis, 1985).

estimation rather than a misogynist dictate—to the “interval” that is the source of ornament: the qualitative relationship between things encountered in everyday existence. To be schematic about it, Degas invokes (or, rather, projects) how women observe “thousands” of objects throughout a day; recall, compare, and contrast those objects; remember again, combine them, and sort out the similarities, the differences, and the potentials between the varied things. He then correlates this act to the formal dynamic of ornament, defined as the spatio-temporal “interval” that relates two or more things across time and space and allows them to be juxtaposed in the present.¹⁴⁶

Portraits in a Frieze, and the series as a whole, attempts to re-create women’s process of looking over time, to reproduce the experience of close looking with mnemonic motifs iterated across several compositions. Thus, Degas’s proposal is not simply about describing women’s performances as an immediately accessible subject perceptible via costumes, postures, and physiognomies. The project sets out to investigate the variances, disparities, and multiplicities of action: how women observe, combine, feel, and “compare” over the folds of time and space—or, what Bergson might describe as the intuition of duration. Degas’s composite sketches are themselves generated from combinations and comparisons; they prompt the viewer’s memory and intertwine one’s experiences with the series, past and present. The artist’s particular brand of

¹⁴⁶ Degas’s definition of ornament (“the source of ornament”) emphasizes the modality of vision; in this way, his description is rather conventional by the contemporary standards. For example, in *Grammaire des arts du dessin* (1867), Charles Blanc defined the decorative component of a painting as “optical beauty, that which responds to the pleasure of the eyes,” versus “moral or poetical beauty, that which touches the feelings.” In Blanc’s program, “if the picture appeals to the mind or the heart, if it aims to excite the passions, the moral character of arrangement should take precedence” over the decorative. Charles Blanc, *The Grammar of Painting and Engraving*, trans. Kate Newell Doggett (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1874), 34-8. However, Degas finds value in the intermediate or intervening act of comparison, which distances the subject/looker from the individual thing or whole work of art at hand and embraces the incidental or the interval. Moreover, he esteems the ability—what he actually terms a “feeling”—to process or remember the incidental, that which is not constantly fixed before one. Blanc’s theories are founded on Kantian conceptions of aesthetics that divorce the experience of art from the everyday. Not to press the point too far, but Degas’s proposal for a treatise on ornament seems to challenge the normative valuation of ornament and the everyday. For a schematic history of the decorative in nineteenth-century France and its rejection by canonical modernism, see David Brett’s *Rethinking Decoration: Pleasure and Ideology in the Visual Arts* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2005), esp. 209-14.

seriality—the creation and repetition of multiple and diverse mnemonic motifs—stitches together the intricate interrelationality of the works. From this cultivated memory comes the possibility for future moments of comparative looking, now made up of the viewer’s own encounters with the “women looking.”

For reasons unknown the frieze decorations were never realized in full scale, and there are no further documents detailing such projects.¹⁴⁷ By the summer and fall of 1879, much of Degas’s attention was consumed by the plans for a journal of original prints, *La Jour et la nuit*, in which members of the Société Anonyme des Artistes would publish, promote, and, hopefully, sell their graphic works.¹⁴⁸ Degas borrowed two of the “women looking” motifs to generate a new cycle of works intended for the journal. The journal was never published, but Degas did produce nine states of *The Etruscan Gallery*, twenty states of the *The Paintings Gallery*, a pastel assembled from seven sheets piecemealed together, and at least four preparatory sketches (Figs. 3.73, 3.74 & 3.28). All of the works are taut operations constructed from two “women looking” motifs—one standing and one sitting—set into mutable compositional relations and then made over into various “places” in the Louvre.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷ It is worth noting that Degas’s series of woman shopping at millineries begins soon after his investigations on “woman-looking” motifs. *The Millinery Shop* is the only oil painting of the subject (c. 1879/84, Chicago Art Institute), but there are at least fifteen more pastels and drawings of the subject. For a brief description of the group, see *Degas*, ed. Boggs, 395-401.

¹⁴⁸ In January, 1880, *Le Gaulois* carried an advertisement for the first issue of *Le Jour et la nuit*, which was to appear on February 1. Tout-Paris (Anonymous), “La journée parisienne : impressions d’un impressionniste,” *Le Gaulois*, January, 24 1880. Degas, Cassatt, Caillebotte, Pissarro, Jean-Louis Forain, Bracquemond, Raffaëlli, and Rouart all planned to publish original prints. It seems that Degas’s personal aspirations for the journal were both experimental and commercial. In Notebook thirty there is evidence of ambitions for numerous series on abstract concepts, such as mourning, as well as the material of everyday life: smoke, lamps, bread. He also emboldens himself to “[c]rop a great deal” for the journal. Reff, Nb 30:208-202. But, as Druick and Zegers suggest, Degas meant to establish a monthly review—much like an illustrated periodical that would reach a wide audience—while also selling original prints to a limited number of subscribers. Degas, *Lettres*, 55. For further details regarding the demise of the publication and the various artists’ entries, see Druick and Zegers, “Degas and the Printed Image, 1856-1914,” in *Edgar Degas: The Painter as Printmaker*, xxix-li.

¹⁴⁹ Degas’s sequence of production for the pastel and the two prints has been the subject of much ink. There are two reigning lines of reasoning. Reed and Schapiro argue that the pastel, *At the Louvre*, was photographed and numerous prints in different sizes were made. Using two difference size prints for the two different figures, Degas traced and filled out a pencil drawing, which he then folded over the plate coated with softground and traced the silhouette of

While the *japoniste* elements of *The Painting Gallery* have garnered much critical attention, the “combined” pastel is the most complex composition in the group. *At the Louvre* (c. 1879, Private collection, Fig. 3.74) was assembled from two large strips of paper—one with “Cassatt” leaning on her cane and the other with “Lydia” sitting—which were originally a single sheet portraying the two women on level ground. When (re)aligned, the dimensions of the two large strips roughly match the sheets Degas used for the “women looking” series (nineteen inches high), suggesting that the pastel was, in fact, part of the larger group of decorative sketches. Degas divided the motifs along the vertical axis, shifted the two pieces in an asymmetrical askew, and abutted the motifs at the precise intersection just beyond the tip of Cassatt’s umbrella. In effect, the tip of the umbrella became the hinge between the two pieces of paper, the two women, and the disjunction in scale of foreground and background. With this keystone intersection, the interval between the two motifs was set anew; the spatio-temporal relation between divergent, multiple moments of generative time was re-formed and the

the seated motif. He then repeated the process using the same pencil drawing to trace the standing motif, but he placed it lower on the plate to situate the two figures next to one another. In support of their sequence of production, Reed and Schapiro site the evidence on the verso of a pencil drawing (*Study for Mary Cassatt at the Louvre*, Private collection) where there are traced lines in soft ground etching that adhered to the paper in the transfer process. However, photographs of the pastel were never found. Reed and Schapiro, *Edgar Degas: The Painter as Printmaker*, 170. Callen, on the other hand, contends that the pastel was the final work completed in the sequence. She maintains that *The Etruscan Gallery* was first in the chronology of production, followed by *The Paintings Gallery*, and then by *At the Louvre*. Her evidence is mostly argumentative. She claims that the “spatial structure” of *The Etruscan Gallery* is derived from *Portraits in a Frieze*, but the comparison does not support such a conclusion. Her most forceful argument is that *The Etruscan Gallery*’s “pictorial and narrative meaning is more logical—and less controversial—than that in the finished *At the Louvre*.” It is unclear what Callen means by “the finished” *At the Louvre*; she is most likely referring to its state as a single sheet before its division? If so, the two women would be placed side by side in much the same position as in *The Etruscan Gallery*, which she deems “less controversial.” Regardless, Callen seems eager to position *At the Louvre* as the “final” version of the series because her overarching proposition is dependent on the pastel’s compositional structure. She acknowledges that the prints’ have a “more sympathetic view of Mary Cassatt,” while her thesis throughout the chapter is to make manifest Degas’s “anxiety” about women in the public sphere. Ultimately, she finds “a simpler solution . . . stemming from the differences of meaning in the images, and the ways they are embedded in Degas’s pictorial language.” Callen, *The Spectacular Body*, 190-1. To my mind she is constructing a tautological argument about Degas’s intent for the series. I find both proposals lacking, but I have not examined the pencil drawing as Reed and Schapiro certainly did. Most surprising is that no one has suggested Degas might have produced more sketches in which he altered the scale of the two figures. If pressed, I might propose that the pastel was produced in close collaboration with *The Etruscan Gallery*; it may well have been in a state of flux when Degas was making the various states of the print. However, the extreme spatial compression of *The Paintings Gallery* leads to me to believe that it was composed after *At the Louvre*.

juxtaposition of Degas's past productions was brought into the artist's duration of "now"—combined and compared, to create yet another possibility.

In the final stages of its making, Degas expanded the pastel's composition into a "place" with the addition of five cuts of paper (to counterbalance the asymmetry of the skewed sheets) and with the décor of the Louvre's picture frames and parquet floor. The prints' compositions were also primarily constructed from the crucial re-negotiation of the two motifs' spatial configuration. It has even been proposed that during this process Degas had the pastel photographed and prints made in various sizes to maneuver around and compare on the plate.¹⁵⁰ He could have then chosen motifs with different scales and fixed them together, wryly manipulating the malleability of pictorial space by way of the placement of the two sketches. Whether or not he used photographic reproduction, his own visual and haptic modalities, or some combination thereof in order to trace the figures is a judicious question. But the fact remains that the prints' compositions are defined by the latent possibilities of the motifs' spatio-temporal disjunctions, enjoinments, and overlaps rather than the artist's preconceived perimeters of place or the women's fictive relations therein. With or without the photographs, Degas's deployment of the motifs in the prints is still an action of "pure memory." The iterations (or reproductions) allow him to conserve past generations in the present act of making, provoking him to produce future moments of qualitative transformation and further potential for new compositions.¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰ See note 149 for the full description. Reed and Schapiro lean on the conclusions of Druick and Zegers from the same catalogue. However, Druick and Zegers offer no substantiation for their claims about the role of photography in the sequencing of the series. Druick and Zegers, "Degas and the Printed Image, 1856-1914," *Edgar Degas: The Painter as Printmaker*, xxxvi. While Degas did photograph paintings in the latter half of the 1880s and in the first half of the 1890s, there is no evidence that the artist produced photographs of his works before then. For a discussion of Degas's photographs of his paintings, see Malcolm Daniel, "L'atmosphère des lampes ou lunaire," in Malcolm Daniel, Eugenia Parry, Theodore Reff, *Edgar Degas: Photographe* (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France, 1999), 38-40.

¹⁵¹ Degas would complete two more paintings utilizing the "women looking" motifs. The works' dates are murky, but their correlation to the other compositions is relatively clear. The woman at the left of *Visit to a Museum* (c. 1879-90, Boston Museum of Fine Arts) is a fusion of the two figures in *Two Studies of Mary Cassatt at the Louvre*,

To judge by actual output, Degas's engagement with the "women looking" motifs and his "project for decoration" was over by the end of 1880. However, the series' processes of generation would inform the frieze classroom compositions for the next three decades. It was a process founded on the development and elaboration of autonomous, but allied motifs and sustained by artistic acts of comparison, combination, and re-formation across the page. The particular motifs were not created anew with each novel composition; rather, the "woman looking" and dancer motifs were reformed under different circumstances of making—adjusted, reversed, rescaled, skewed, cropped, overlapped, etc.—to create new compositional possibilities from past artistic inventions. The qualitative differences between the motifs are therefore located between the works; the repetitions are not spread across a single inclusive composition, but across the temporal and physical experiences of Degas's artistic generation. As a consequence, the "women looking" series—as well as the frieze classroom series—is not comprised of absolute quantities. Its significance accrues across the temporal and physical experiences of

while her companion is derived from the study of "Lydia" reading and its many manifestations in the print series. In the second oil painting, *Woman Viewed From Behind*, (unknown date, National Gallery of Art, WASHINGTON, D.C.), Degas morphed the motif of Ellen Andrée, which had been reversed in the drypoint. Still, the oil paintings stand apart from the series of sketches and prints; they exist as independent entities rather than interrelated facets of investigation. In both paintings the women's dress and posture are more lax, and greater attention is paid to their profiles and facial expressions than in the other compositions. The two oil paintings' compositions are also more loosely conceived than the *Mary Cassatt at the Louvre* pastel and prints; the contours of bodies are sketchier and the relationship between the motifs in *Visit to a Museum* is less taught. I would speculate that they were completed concurrent with one another. It is unclear whether or not they were executed during Degas's investigation of the motifs in 1879 or perhaps some two to three years later (c. 1882) when he revisited the subject of "women looking" and conversing in several pastels (L710-713). Walter Sickert, writing in 1917, quoted Degas with regard to a painting of "a lady drifting in a picture-gallery:" "[h]e said that he wanted to give the idea of that bored, and respectfully crushed and impressed absence of all sensation that women experience in front of paintings." Sickert remembers Degas putting the last touches on the canvas in 1885, which suggests a more decisive date for the two canvases. Walter Sickert, "Degas," *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, vol. 31, no. 176 (November 1917): 183-7 and 190-1; 186. In any case, the date of 1890 proposed for *Visit to a Museum* seems mistaken, unless the artist made late additions in pastel. Callen employs the quote from Sickert to support her claim that the entire series of "women looking" compositions are evidence of Degas's ongoing ideological investment in "the discourse of woman as constituted by her physiological femaleness." In comparison to these passive female spectators, Callen argues, Degas's male portraits "carry the underlying assumption these men have a professional reason for their presence, a reason which gives their presence authority." Callen, *The Spectacular Body*, 186; 174. I would agree with Callen's conclusions concerning the passivity of the women in the two later oil paintings. In general, however, Callen is too eager to classify the earlier prints and pastels of "woman looking" into binary categories based upon public (male) and private (female) bodies.

looking/viewing, such that any single work's meaning is always mediated by the memory of another, and by the intervals in between.

Conclusion: Threads of experiment

Degas made approximately nineteen fans between 1878 and 1880. *The Foyer of the Dance* is the only one executed in monotype (c. 1880, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Fig. 3.75), and it is the only fan that takes the classroom, rather than the stage, as its subject. In the left foreground three dancer-motifs—nearly identical—are positioned at three different angles. This dancer-motif might be called “hunched over seated dancer” or simply “seated dancer.” It appears in dozens of sketches and in almost every frieze classroom painting from the 1880s. The fan's composition respects the asymmetrical division of the early frieze classroom works, with the exception that a corpus of dismembered dancers huddles at the center, bridging the vast differences in scale between the seated girls and the dancers at the barre. The work is at once a lady's ornament, a greasy ink drawing, a *japoniste* encounter, a decorative scheme across the horizontal, a sketch of a motif in the making, and a scribbly *barbouillage* of ballet rats in the *foyer de l'Opéra*.

Rather than a moment of genesis or revelation, I think the fan makes evident the threads of experiment woven into the frieze classroom series. It debunks seductive mythologies of progression or evolution in art making—such that a single sketch begets a series—and helps us remember Degas's work as a kind of provocation: a mode of experimentation that was all about the flux of experience and the contingencies available in process, material, media, and format. But if the fluidity and trials of Degas's repetitious practices resist tidy stories about origins and purpose, they also tell us about how the artist understood his vocation. To some degree Degas's

pursuits are unavailable to us, lost in the process of everyday life and its innumerable and ordinary chance happenings. The challenge is to embrace the intractability of the open-endedness and to make sense of the lessons accrued in the duration, without resolving their potential. This chapter was an attempt to locate, without affixing, some of the material contingencies of Degas's process; the next seeks to characterize his pursuit.

Chapter Four:

The Frieze Classroom Series

*For Degas seems without desire of present or future notoriety.
If he could create his future as he has created his present, his future
would be found to be no more than a continuation of his present.*
- George Moore, "Degas: The Painter of Modern Life"¹

In December of 1878 Degas completed a studio sketch of a young dancer of fifteen years by the name of Melina Darde (Fig. 4.1). Aside from naming the dancer, Degas scribbled notes at the top of the sheet about how to "play" with color and light on her back and head; he also dated it.² A second sketch survives, less resolved and muddled with pentimenti, but the model is drawn from an identical viewpoint, leading more than one scholar to suggest they were produced during a single drawing session with Darde (Fig. 4.2).³ In both works the dancer sits forward on the seat so the tulle of her skirt becomes folds of weightless volume behind her. In the annotated sketch, the chair's legs are barely discernible under the artist's hatch marks; the chair's top rail doubles as an echo of the fabric's creases, making it appear as if the dancer is suspended on her toes and hovering over the floor. The pose is somewhat idiosyncratic in Degas's oeuvre prior to 1878,

¹ George Moore, "Degas: The Painter of Modern Life," 421-22. It should be noted that Degas was shocked and offended by Moore's candid reportage on his person and practice and he refused to see Moore again.

² The text at the bottom of the page reads, "Melina Darde / 15 ans / danseuse à la Gaïte / Dec. 78." The rest of the text is difficult to decipher in reproduction and the drawing is in private hands. What notes are legible are about the color and light: ". . . corsage reflété en rosé gauche. Joue très reflétée."

³ The two sketches are related in Ronald Pickvance and Jaromír Pečírka, *Degas Drawings* (New York: Exeter Books, 1987), xvi n.37, and in Richard Thomson, *Edgar Degas: Waiting* (Malibu, CA: Getty Museum Studies on Art, 1995), 6.

although the seated dancer-motif is a key relation between the two earlier foyer paintings with circular staircases. But here Darde bends her body toward the ground, grips her lower calves as if massaging her muscles, and pushes her arches up and over her pointe shoes. It might seem that her body is collapsing onto itself, yet her shoulders, neck, arms, and head are held in a loose alignment, poised between exhausted abandonment and the expectation of ensuing work. It's a "dancer's dancer" pose, familiar to those acquainted with the tiresome routine of daily practice and the incongruities of a trained body at rest. She is a dancer lingering on the cusp of action, fixed in a reclusive, intermediate state where mobility meets respite.

At the bottom left of the drawing Degas noted that Darde worked at the Théâtre de la Gaîté, a Haussmann-era Italianate theater known colloquially as the Théâtre Lyrique. In the early 1920s the theater would become the Parisian home of Sergei Diaghilev's famed travelling troupe, *Ballets Russes*. In 1878 its most recent balletic sensation was *Le timbre d'argent* (The Silver Bell), an *opéra fantastique* in which a painter is tragically undone by his entwining obsessions: his artistic masterpiece (an allegory of the goddess Circe) the ballerina who posed for the painting, and gold.⁴ A lithograph after Félicien Rops's drawing for the production schematizes the plot into seven scenes, encapsulated by the two most emblematic: the artistic masterpiece at the top, and the avaricious ballerina at the bottom (Fig. 4.3). The print is provocative in that it so blatantly orders the prevailing myth of the dancer in the latter half of the nineteenth century: the enchanting representation is always more satiating than the vulgar reality—and the tragedy in between is the stuff of bourgeois spectacle. Throughout the 1880s and 1890s the myth would come to infuse the representation of dancers from all types of venues,

⁴ The opera's composer Camille Saint-Saëns began the score in 1864, but it was not produced until 1877. The libretto was written by Jules Barbier and Michel Carré. It is considered a comic morality opera, but with elements of the surreal that may have influenced Jacques Offenbach's *Les contes d'Hoffmann* (1881), to which Barbier and Carré also contributed the libretto. Gerald Abraham, *The New Oxford History of Music: Volume IX: Romanticism (1830-1890)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 386.

culminating in the ubiquitous fin-de-siècle *cherettes* and their indiscriminate flights of fancy for everything from bicycles and rice powder to horse racing and opera.⁵

On May 8, 1879, five months after Degas sketched Darde in his studio, a reproduction of the drawing (without the artist's annotations) appeared in the illustrated magazine *La Vie moderne* (Fig. 4.4). Degas's study of Darde and the poster for *Le timbre d'argent* make for a revealing contrast from a similar plot: both strive to market a famed artist consumed by his (unattainable) desire. In the poster the dancer's seductive prowess is staged as an active agent in the artist's undoing; she is the manipulative force that compels him to "ring the bell" [a sexual motif] and surrender to his insatiable desires for sex and money. Her wantonness is fixed as allegory at the top of the mandorla and enacted as "reality" at the bottom. Just as surely, Degas's sketch of a young dancer (Darde) simulates an overbearing, unsolicited inspection of the dancer's isolated and vulnerable body. However, the dancer could just as well be described as sequestered in private thought and physical readiness—remote and reserved on the one hand, and poised for action on the other. Not unlike the tensions in the dancer's body, are the commonplace frustrations of "dealing with Degas" that often arise from his works' insistent resistance to tidy classifications like "spectacular," "voyeuristic," or "objectifying."⁶ Contrary to the prompt

⁵ For a discussion of the relationship between "high" and "low" forms of dance in the 1870s and their various representations in visual culture, the most concise yet critical source is Alex Potts's "Dance, Politics and Sculpture," *Art History* vol. 10, no. 1 (March 1997): 91-109; esp. 97-105. Potts concludes that much of the controversy surrounding the representation of dance as a respectable art form stemmed from the Opéra's own bankrupt ideology and its associations with conspicuous consumption in the wake of Napoleon III's illustrious new Garnier Opéra house. He makes connections between the type of illicit financial wealth attendant at the Opéra and the illicit sex that was part of its own mythology—as well as part of the spectacle of the can-can and other popular dance forms. Potts also draws attention to more literal connections between popular forms of dance and the ballet at the Paris Opéra: the absence of men on stage, the rising hemline of tutus, the circle of male bourgeois insiders with liberal access to the performers, and the vulnerable position of poorly paid dancers.

⁶ I refer directly to *Dealing with Degas*, an anthology edited by Kendall and Pollock and Callen's *The Spectacular Body*. For specific references aside from the book's title, see Callen, *The Spectacular Body*, xiv, 59, 74, 88, 91, 109-10, and 138. In my estimation Callen's book represents a binary polemic in Degas scholarship wherein viewership is constituted as strictly male, heterosexual, and psychically proscribed. I would also position her work as symptomatic of a type of literature on Degas that positions the artist's oeuvre as a slightly mediated reflection of the man as an "anxious" bourgeois misogynist. On the other hand (not to the antithetical binary, however), many of the

decipherability of the poster's mythic connotations, the practiced tension between the revealed and the reserved belongs just as often to Degas's drawings as to the dancer they picture.

I make the comparison here—between Degas's sketch and the poster after Rops—because both were published for a cultured bourgeois clientele: ladies and gentlemen who might visit the Fourth Impressionist Exhibition on a pleasant May afternoon and attend an Offenbach opera at the Théâtre Lyrique that evening. And yet, Degas's sketch is a spectacularly weak advertisement for the allure of the dancer “type:” that mysterious ballerina coveted by his conservative and liberal critics alike in 1877 (think of “Jacques” at the Third Impressionist Exhibition). Nor is it a portrait of a star ballerina, the likes of which regularly appeared on full page spreads in *La Vie moderne* and which Degas featured in the paintings submitted to the show in 1877.⁷ And while Degas's sketch has more in common with Manet's “thumbnail” exhibition promotions published in *La Vie moderne* one year later (Figs. 4.5 & 4.6), the lone dancer seems distant and morose next to Manet's stylish urban types out for a public jaunt, perhaps on their way to an exhibition. If Degas's sketch is meant to promote the readers' curiosity about the latest showing at 28 avenue de l'Opéra, their anticipation is hardly invigorated by the circumspect dancer.

essays collected in *Dealing with Degas* grapple with ambiguities, multiple strategies of representation, sexual politics of illegibility, and the scholarly management of Degas. From this anthology, see especially Deborah Bershad, “Looking, Power and Sexuality;” Griselda Pollock, “The Gaze and The Look;” Heather Dawkins, “Managing Degas;” and Kendall, “Signs and Non-Signs.” For further literature which struggles with Degas's sexual politics and his works' shifting interpretive possibilities, see Eunice Lipton, *Looking into Degas: Uneasy Images of Women and Modern Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); Norma Broude, “Degas's ‘Misogyny,’” in *Feminism and Art History: Questioning the Litany*, eds. Norma Broude and Mary Garrard (New York: Harper and Row, 1982); and Norma Broude, “Edgar Degas and French Feminism, ca. 1880,” in *The Expanding Discourse: Feminism and Art History*, eds. Norma Broude and Mary Garrard (New York: Harper Collins, 1992).

⁷ For example, in the edition of April 24, 1880, Léontine Beaugrand, famous for her role of Swanilda in ETA Hoffmann's *Coppélia* (1870), was featured on the cover. Georges Jeannot's portrait of Rosita-Isabel-Lunada Mauri was featured on the cover of the journal on February 4, 1882. In each instance the image of the dancer acts as a celebratory representation of a popular artistic icon. Both Beaugrand and Mauri are featured in full costume with special attention paid to idiosyncratic facial features. Moreover, in both cases, the portrait is followed by a laudatory article describing the dancer's physical capabilities and her unique personality. For a synopsis of the critical response to Degas's paintings of dancers in 1877 see my Chapter Two, especially the introduction, in which I discuss “Jacques's” response to Degas's paintings.

The artist's peculiar selection for publication raises straightforward questions. Why not a sketch akin to *The Star* (Fig. 2.1) or the more recent *Dancer in Her Dressing Room* (1879, Cincinnati Art Museum)? Why submit such a blasé, melancholic scene of repose when the critics are most fond of your spotlighted dancers and bourgeois portraits? Assuming that Degas's decision was not born of ignorance, the selection begets more complex questions: Why did the artist embrace the dancer's tired, depleted body after 1878? Why did he make this his particular purview? Or, if we consider the dancer as a motif and the sketch one of many, then what about this sketch did Degas deem significant in 1879? What made it worthy or qualified to represent his practice to the public at that moment? Might not the little drawing speak quite well of the interim stages of work and the long hours of practice? These final questions concern Degas's consciousness about his own exercises in production and the subjects he chose for pictures. To my mind, the sketch in *La Vie moderne* is testament to the artist's mounting awareness of the piecemeal, transitional nature of his studio practices, wherein the iteration of a "pose" is no longer about the resolution of a single work, but about the interminable, long transformation of form through time and in illusionistic space.

The thesis of this chapter begins where the last left off. Over the course of 1879 and into the early 1880s, I want to argue, Degas laid out the terms and conditions of a new working process. The central tenets of the process had to do with the transformation of similar motifs: making studies of the models, creating repetitions of the motifs, setting them into particular relations with one another, and, in the case of the frieze series, locating them within the set perimeters of the horizontal format. This was not a devised scheme for producing paintings; rather, Degas's cycles of revision and adaptation slowly took on the guise of a daily work regime. His rules for transformation became the theory behind his infamous aphorisms, surly

quips, and serious judgments about making art. In turn, those apothegms became the stuff of *memoir*-style art histories by members of France's cultural elite. This chapter tries to unravel the relationship between them—between practice, discourse, and theories of art. As such, my basic resources are, yet again, the works themselves and the memories of Degas's circle of friends. At the crux of this dialectic (practice and theory) is what I take to be Degas's attempt to possess something of the past and to reintegrate consciousness and memory. Or, to put it another way, at the end of the 1870s, Degas wrought a working mode of drawing, morphing, rearranging, etc. that allowed him to resist the inclination of the present toward both dissipation and fixity. He found a way to “make” the present without making it permanent; his innumerable rehearsals of dancer-motifs and frieze classrooms—his own brand of *répétition*—would sustain the contingencies of art and retain his process for future viewers.

My starting point is a brief description and examination of the six main dancer-motifs in the frieze series as they appear in dozens of sketches in the late 1870s and early 1880s. I then consider the various accounts of Degas's ritualistic drawing process, attempting to reveal how the artist approached and transformed his subject over the course of years, and how his friends and friendly critics understood these repetitions (“stock motifs” and the frieze series). I engage Valéry's lament on the loss of artisanal craft in *Degas Danse Dessin* as an empathetic interpretation of Degas's practice that justly describes the artist's nostalgic, perhaps reactionary, approach to marking art. Walter Benjamin's re-reading of Valéry just over a decade later offers another layer of exegesis. My ambition here is to present a description of Degas's working process which involves specific conceptions of time, labor, production, and consumption; practices that are at once resistant to modernity's tendencies toward mechanization and reification, and yet symptomatic of a desire for historical continuity and mindful of loss itself.

En route to my analysis of the frieze series paintings and pastels, I examine Degas's relationship to the emerging marketplace for modern art at the end of the nineteenth century—how he conceived of his works' relations to it, and how he negotiated an oppositional practice within it. I take the frieze series and the innumerable sketches of dancer-motifs to be essential to this negotiation, as well a model for making art that served him until his last days. In order to distinguish Degas's mode of seriality, I contrast the frieze series to Monet's serial paintings from the late 1870s and 1890s. Degas's practice is actually more akin to Rodin's, or even Paul Cézanne's a few years later, but the comparison—between Degas and Monet—elicits a discussion of how repetition can serve distinct, even contradictory ends in the market, and for viewers as well. Finally, the chapter concludes with an examination of Degas's production of the frieze series and an analysis of how the format functioned for the artist. This brings us back to dates and timelines, but my analysis is meant as an application of the arguments made in Chapter Three about the frieze format as a space for experiment and digression. Degas's repetitive, heterogeneous drawings of the dancer motifs, the debased quality of the motifs' stances, and the exploitation and horizontal extension of a highly wrought, conceived pictorial space—these are Degas's integral and variable devices in the series. Their combination elicits a tension between the intellectualization (or spatialization) of movement and the duration of making from lived experience.

On the motifs: The “seated dancer” and the “standing dancer”

A year after Degas published the sketch of the seated dancer in *La Vie moderne*, the artist exhibited *The Dance Lesson* (c. 1879, National Gallery of Art, WASHINGTON, D.C., Fig. 0.9) at the Fifth Impressionist Exhibition. Considered to be the first frieze classroom oil painting, it is

an exceedingly economic composition. The entire episode is made up of *two* dancer-motifs—with slightly altered torsos and gestures—rotated, reversed, rescaled, and spread across a diagonal extending from the bottom left corner to the top right of the elongated canvas. The “seated dancer” appears four times; and a “standing dancer” appears five times. The classroom setting is adorned with a barre at the far right wall, a single billboard in the foreground, and a massive double bass misappropriated as a bench by a “seated dancer.” The pictorial space of *The Dance Lesson* is a template for Degas’s subsequent compositional disjunctions in the pictures from the late 1870s. The abutting foreground and background are both articulated by strong, acute orthogonals; however, the series of diagonals never coherently align into a single perspectival system. The baseboard in the background space skews (rather than extends) the axis made where the brown and green paint meet on the foreground wall. The floorboards are also made of sharp, decidedly legible orthogonals, which extend from a shifting point of origin high above the picture plane. But these lines are ever-so-slightly at odds with the out-turned feet of the dancer at the fulcrum of the composition. Notwithstanding these contrived slippages in pictorial space, the dancer-motifs are the dominant structural agents of *The Dance Lesson*’s composition. The diagonal axis that begins with the divide between brown and green on the wall is held aloft by the ostensibly haphazard organization of the dancers’ bodies: from left to right, the head, neck, and waist of the dancers in the foreground and the alignment of knees and necks in the background.

In his singular essay dedicated to the frieze classroom series and its motifs, George Shackelford identifies four specific sketches related to the particular figures in *The Dance Lesson*. A sketch from the Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe relates to the dancer fluffing her skirt at the far right (Fig. 4.7). A second study in a private collection is a reversed motif of the “seated

dancer” with the burst of yellow pigment fanned over her head (Fig. 4.8).⁸ The “seated dancer” at the far left of the painting is akin to the figure in a pastel sketch (Fig. 4.9), from which Degas probably sourced the upper body of the “seated dancer” at the center of *The Dance Lesson*. And finally, Shackelford suggests that the head of the “standing dancer” at the crux of the painting and the body of the “seated dancer” to her left are appropriated from a brilliant study of two dancers, now in Rotterdam (Fig. 4.10).⁹

I have no objections to the individual studies Shackelford links to *The Dance Lesson*. The difficulty is to delimit the artist’s assimilations and to decide which specific drawings Degas gleaned to fabricate the “finished” painting. The head of the “seated dancer” on the double bass is akin to that of a dancer in a sketch from the Norton Simon Foundation (Fig. 4.11), while the viewpoint of the chair and dancer in the same sketch bares a strikingly resemblance to the “seated dancer” at the center of the National Gallery’s canvas. Another work from the Hermitage in Amsterdam could arguably be a drawing for the “seated dancer” at the far right of the canvas (Fig. 4.12), and three extant sketches relate to the “standing dancer with fan” (Figs. 4.13-4.15). As for the other “standing dancers” in the painting, there is a crayon lithograph that could be the

⁸ Shackelford suggests that these two drawings “were probably made from the same model, an English dancer named Nelly Franklin, whose name is inscribed on a sheet, known from the estate sales catalogues, which established the pose of the central seated figure; another drawing of Nelly Franklin shows that she posed for the central standing figure as well.” Shackelford, *Degas: The Dancers*, 88. The first sketch he describes (*Vente* 1:354), which includes the inscription may indeed be a sketch of Nelly Franklin. But beyond the dancer’s address listed on the first page of Notebook 30, there is no evidence that Franklin is the model for the other drawings.

⁹ Shackelford describes the drawing in Rotterdam as “a masterful study . . . surely among Degas’ most remarkable works . . .” I would concur with his judgment about the strength of color and shading in the work and about “the strange tension which results from having the smaller figure placed illogically “in front of” the larger head.” Shackelford, *Degas: The Dancers*, 87-8. However, the economy and the elasticity of form in the drawing has gone unnoticed or, at least, has not been commented upon in the literature. The tulle of the seated dancer’s skirt can also be read as the tulle of the “standing dancer’s” shoulder strap. The “seated dancer’s” waist line then becomes the costume’s shoulder strap; the chalk line on her back that peculiarly curves upward becomes the larger girl’s scapula bone; and the loose chalk marks on her head becomes the “standing dancer’s” right shoulder. The artist’s marks therefore signify in two disparate modes to form two unique signifieds: “standing dancer” and “seated dancer.” The cunning sketch foreshadows Pablo Picasso’s exploitation of the mark as double signifier in works like his study for the crouching woman from *Les Femmes d’Alger* (O. J. No. 114) (c. 1907 Musée Picasso, Paris): a drawing of a woman’s head resting in her palm that can also be read as a seated woman’s body without a head.

source for the central “standing dancer”-motif in the painting (Fig. 1.6); but a charcoal and pastel drawing in a private collection includes a figure that is also the mirrored equivalent of that specific motif (Fig. 4.16). A gridded sketch from the Hyde Collection pictures the same pose but with the dancer wearing a wrap of some sort (Fig. 1.4). Furthermore, as if to emphasize the interconnection and mutability of the standing and seated dancers, Degas reversed the exact poses of the two central figures in an aquatint and drypoint print of the two motifs, ever-so-slightly varying the head of the “seated dancer” (Fig. 1.5).

It would seem that a dozen or so studies of the “seated dancer” and the “standing dancer” motifs relate to *The Dance Lesson*. My ambition is not to track down every possible sketch or print associated with the oil painting—at least not here. (Nor do I intend to treat the reader to further sleuthing campaigns on behalf of the remainder of the frieze classroom oils.) My larger contention is that Degas’s working processes were founded on the iteration and circulation of similar, but heterogeneous dancer-motifs. Analogous to the reciprocity of the sketches related to *Portraits in a Frieze*, the various drawings, prints, and pastels just described—as well as the “finished” painting itself—belong to Degas’s long process of generating dancer-motifs, not to the progress of a single work. The persistent duration of making, adapting, adjusting, refining, remaking—this is Degas’s process of assimilation, wherein the artist would come to know fungible and interrelated motifs. The knowledge thus accrued is haptic, visual, temporal, and incomplete because it springs from everyday encounters in the studio. Moreover, the artist’s repetitions permitted his memory to propel or manage much of the artistic process, thereby affording both control and freedom, limitation and possibility. In the end, it is a remarkably decipherable process for the viewer, with copious iterations to trace (even in an individual painting). It is also relentlessly confusing.

In light of Degas's concentration on the "seated dancer" motif at the end of the 1870s, I want to suggest that the sketch chosen for publication in 1879 was an iconic marker of sorts. Degas was not so much concerned with the typology of the dancer, and probably even less with Darde's celebrity. Rather, the sketch was a formative sign of his process as an emerging "style" of working, a kind of clue about his ever-expanding project regarding the body of the dancer. The dancer-motif proliferated in his oeuvre in the late 1870s and the 1880s; the figure was recalled and re-membered to suit dozens of different compositions. While most likely not the first sketch of a seated dancer bent toward her feet, the drawing reproduced in *La Vie moderne* is but one example of the twenty plus extant charcoal and/or pastel drawings of the motif that Degas completed between 1878 and 1882 (Figs. 4.8-4.12 & 4.18-4.31).¹⁰ In addition to these single study sketches, the artist executed two monotypes and the experimental aquatint and drypoint discussed above (Figs. 1.5 & 4.17). He also utilized the motif, slightly altered from work to work and sometimes reiterated in the same composition, in five large pastel drawings, all of which feature only two or three central figures deftly arranged in a tight compositional nexus (Figs. 4.32-4.37). Several more charcoals and pastels of the dancer-motif adjusting her slipper have uncertain dates ranging into 1887—not a surprising circumstance considering that Degas dated just twenty-five of the 700 works catalogued by Lemoisne as 1884 or later (Figs. 4.38-4.42).¹¹ The figure appears, with slight modifications as always, in the foreground of five of the seven earliest frieze classroom oils. And, in an addendum from the mid-1890s, Degas deployed

¹⁰ There is a great likelihood that there are more surviving sketches of this particular dancer-motif. The majority of sketches reproduced in this chapter are in public collections; the works from private collections are reproduced from either the Lemoisne catalogue raisonné or from other published sources. I would venture that many unpublished sketches have been sold via auction houses. Further research of auction catalogues is necessary to locate and analyze sketches of this and the other dancer-motifs in the frieze series.

¹¹ Jean Sutherland Boggs, "Danseuses à la barre by Degas," *The National Gallery of Canada Bulletin*, II: 1 (1964): 1-9; 2.

the motif yet again—four times, extended across the canvas—for the best known of the frieze classroom series, *Frieze of Dancers* (Cleveland Museum of Art, Fig. 0.26).

Certainly a source of assiduous production for Degas in 1879, the “seated dancer’s” reverberations galvanized his draftsmanship and was integral to some of the artist’s best works from the period. As such, the dancer-motif in *La Vie moderne* is not so much an iconic marker of the “place” of the Paris Opéra, as it is a distillation of the dancer-motifs that appear in the artist’s oils, pastels, prints, and sketches produced in the late 1870s and 1880s: a signifier of Degas’s practice and his paintings, more than the fictive place portrayed therein. The motif’s repetitions, transformations, and exchanges are most legible in the pictorial space(s) of the frieze classroom series, wherein “place” becomes fodder for Degas’s mnemonic draftsmanship within a confined, but malleable space. Moreover, the tenacity of the “seated dancer” in the frieze series is matched by the endurance of the “standing dancer”-motif and the small cache of interchangeable figures from which Degas created the paintings. But beyond the visual recognizability of the sign—the resemblance of the specific “seated dancer” in *La Vie moderne* to similar dancer-motifs in other works—all of the various sketches of the motif are indices of Degas’s generative working methods in the 1880s.

The other motifs in the frieze classroom series require some schematic description. Aside from the anomalous central figure in *Dancers Climbing a Staircase* (Fig. 0.16) and the demure figure standing *en bas* in the pastels from around 1884 (Figs. 0.17 & 0.18) (both of which are addressed below), there are only *two* additional dancer-motifs found in the foreground of the frieze classroom paintings from the 1880s. For purposes of clarity, the main motifs are as follows: 1) the ubiquitous “seated dancer” with an upright or folded torso; 2) her mate, the standing dancer, with or without fan; 3) the “dancer pulling up her tights” (Figs. 4.43-4.47),

which is represented by the figure to right of center in the Clark's *The Dancing Lesson*; and 4) the "dancer with foot on bench/double bass" (Figs. 4.48-4.53), featured as a seated figure in *The Dancing Lesson* and morphed into a standing figure in *Dancer in the Green Room* and Yale's *Ballet Rehearsal*. (It could be argued that this final motif is, in fact, a variation of the "seated dancer." The similarity is unmistakable in works like *Two Dancers*, (c. 1879, Fig. 4.32).) Finally, in the works after 1889 there are several instances of a dancer-motif, not seated, but bent over fixing her shoe; she is, by my account, a mere variant of the "seated dancer," transformed and altered beyond recognition. To summarize: if we are to include, with the six motifs from the foreground listed above, the three motifs from the recessed pictorial spaces of the compositions, there are a total of nine motifs.¹² By the end of 1880, Degas had executed multiple sketches and/or oils of all the motifs, save one.¹³

¹² The two most common dancer-motifs found in the background spaces of the paintings from the 1880s are actually not novel dancer-motifs, but are appropriated from earlier works; they are also the only dancers in the paintings involved in actual dance steps or physical preparation. The "dancer at the barre in *à la seconde*" is the subject of a large pastel in a private collection (c. 1877-79, L460); three related sketches are probably from the same period (L435; L460bis; and Fig. 4.54). The second type is a "dancer *en face* with leg on barre." This motif is found in the celebrated oil at the Metropolitan Museum, *Dancers Practicing at the Barre* (c.1876-77), as well as in the earlier related sketch in *essence* (Fig. 4.55). In the Orsay's *Dancers Climbing Stairs* and the Met's *Dancers in the Rehearsal Room with Double Bass*, there also appears a "dancer leaning over her pointe shoe" (Figs. 4.56 & 4.57). The motif only appears in the background of these two paintings and can be dated to sometime around *The Dance Examination* (c. 1879, Denver Art Museum, Fig. 4.47), exhibited in 1879.

¹³ The exception is the "dancer climbing the stairs in the Orsay's frieze painting (Fig. 0.16). The dates of the sketches are, as always with Degas, somewhat dubious. However, the artist's submissions to the Impressionist Exhibition in 1879 help to secure most of the drawings' dates, or, at the very least, to substantiate the dancer-motifs' presence in the artist's oeuvre and to corroborate Degas's engagement with the motifs before or during 1880. The "dancer pulling up her tights" stands behind the "dancer leaning over her pointe shoe" in *The Dance Examination* (Fig. 4.47), which was exhibited in 1879. The "dancer with foot on bench/double bass" appears next to the iconic "seated dancer" in *Two Dancers* (c. 1879, The Shelburne Museum, Fig. 4.32), also on view in 1879. A second pastel contains a near replica of the seated "dancer with foot on bench/double bass" from *Two Dancers*; it is in a private collection and dated to c. 1879 (Fig. 4.33). More than any other dancer-motif, the "dancer seated with foot on bench/double bass" has great variance in her pose; however the cohesion of the motif can be traced from *Two Dancers* (Fig. 4.32) to *Dancers in the Green Room* (Fig. 0.12): the "dancer with foot on double bass" is actually just a mirrored variant of the seated "dancer with foot on bench." Likewise, in Yale's *Ballet Rehearsal* (Fig. 0.15) Degas morphed the motif so that her hands support her chin; yet the awkwardness of the dancer's *bent* right leg reveals her to be a variant of the seated "dancer with foot on bench/double bass" motif.

Anachronistic craft and the resistance to forgetting

Between 1879 and 1889 Degas executed at least eleven frieze compositions from four vital motifs and a handful of trimmings (Figs. 0.9-0.20). This is an extremely insular system of artistic production, grounded in draftsmanship, which bucks conventional notions of continuity, efficiency, progression, or even an endgame. Prior to the dozens of drawings on tracing paper executed at the end his working career,¹⁴ the production of the dancer-motifs at the end of the 1870s marks a major shift in Degas's conception of artistic process and final product(s). The frieze classroom paintings and their innumerable preparatory works are already infused with a sense of re-membrance and a loiterly resistance to the resolve of a finished product. There is a certain sameness to the motifs that reverberate in the frieze series and in the numerous sketches and pastels dating to the period. But there is also a deliberation or reckoning in the works that resists the reification of form and flouts the fixity of representation. Painting, for Degas, became about advancing a memoir of form, accruing moments of deformation and reconstitution in the search for an intuitive Nature built from the scraps of his own machine.

In conversations Degas often formulated a contrast between the reproduction of Nature and the project of making paintings.¹⁵ In one such instance, Vollard was astounded at Degas's

¹⁴ Vollard has a keen insight into Degas's use of tracing paper and the dancer-motif. He recognizes that "[b]ecause of the many tracings that Degas did of his drawings, the public made the accusation: 'Degas repeats himself.'" But Vollard then describes the tracing paper as a tool and the process as research: "Tracing-paper proved to be one of the best means of 'correcting' himself. He would usually make the correction by beginning the new figure outside of the original outlines, the drawing growing larger and larger until a nude no bigger than a hand became life-size—only to be abandoned in the end." "C'est cette perpétuelle recherche qui explique tous les calques que Degas faisait de ses dessins, ce qui faisait dire au public: 'Degas se répète.' Le papier calque servait seulement au peintre de moyen pour se corriger; ces corrections, Degas les faisait en recommençant son nouveau dessin en dehors du premier trait. Ainsi, de corrections en corrections, il arrivait qu'un nu, pas plus grand que la main, était conduit jusqu'à la grandeur nature pour être en fin de compte abandonné." Vollard, *Degas (1834-1917)*, 68. See also Kendall, *Degas: Beyond Impressionism*, 77-87.

¹⁵ Berthe Morisot remembers a quip similar to that recounted above: "Degas said that the study of nature is unimportant because painting is a conventional art and it would be infinitely better to learn drawing from Holbein" "Degas a dit que l'étude de la nature était insignifiante, la peinture étant un art de convention, et qu'il valait infiniment mieux apprendre à dessiner d'après Holbein . . ." Valéry, *Degas Danse Dessin*, 209. Similarly, Vollard recollects another of Degas's mantras: "He [an aspiring painter] should copy the masters and re-copy them, and after

“method of doing a landscape indoors.” The dealer questioned Degas’s inattention to nature, to which the artist responded:

. . . [W]ith a bowl of herb soup and three old brushes, couldn’t one make the finest landscape ever painted? Now take old [Zacharie] Zakarian,¹⁶ for example. With a nut or two, a grape and a knife, he had material enough to work with for twenty years, just so long as he changed the knife around from time to time.¹⁷

Degas might as well have been describing his own restricted arsenal of metamorphosed dancer-motifs: derived from a handful of models’ visits and slowly transformed through years of rearrangements into abject entities.¹⁸ This is not to say that Degas renounced close observation or disregarded the more transitory qualities of experience. Indeed, when Vollard commented to Degas that he once saw a horse hoisted into a studio on the Boulevard Clichy, Degas picked up a little horse from his worktable and said, “When I come back from the races, I use these as models. I could not get along without them. You can’t turn live horses around to get the proper effects of light.”¹⁹ The “proper” study of a model—and of its lived effects—thus entails an

he has given every evidence of being a good copyist, he might then reasonably be allowed to do a radish, perhaps, from Nature.” “Il faut copier et recopier les maîtres, et ce n’est qu’après avoir donné toutes les preuves d’un bon copiste qu’il pourra raisonnablement vous être permis de faire un radis d’après nature.” Vollard, *Degas (1834-1917)*, 64. This is to say that, for Degas, draftsmanship is a craft, which only other artists (or their works) can teach, and which is best learned via repetitious practice. The artist also argues that Nature is not involved in the craft of representation; it is a process of making that must be enacted.

¹⁶ Zakarian (1850-1922) was an Armenian artist from Constantinople who moved in Degas’s circle. He was a well-regarded still-life painter.

¹⁷ “. . . [A]vec une soupe aux herbes et trois vieux pinceaux piqués dedans, est-ce qu’on n’aurait pas de quoi faire tout les paysages du monde ? C’est comme mon ami Zakarian, avec une noix, un grain de raisin et un couteau, il en a pour travailler pendant vingt ans en changeant seulement son couteau de place. . . .” Vollard, *Degas (1834-1917)*, 57.

¹⁸ In the section “The Ground and the Formless,” Valéry tells the reader a similar story about Degas. He relays how the artist “drew studies of rocks *indoors*, heaping bits of coke borrowed from his stove, as models; and that having overturned a bucketful on the table, he set about making a studious drawing of the random landscape thus precipitated by his own act. There was no object of reference in the drawing to allow you to think that the piled-up boulders were only pieces of coke no bigger than a fist.” “. . . [Il a] fait des études de rochers *en chambre*, en prenant pour modèles des tas de fragments de coke empruntés à son poêle. Il aurait renversé le seau sur une table et se serait appliqué à dessiner soigneusement le site ainsi créé par le hasard qu’avait provoqué son acte. Nul objet de référence sur le dessin ne permettait de penser que ces blocs entassés n’étaient que des morceaux de charbon gros comme le poing.” Valéry, *Degas Danse Dessin*, 100.

¹⁹ The conversation in full reads: “MOI.—‘Monsieur Degas, en passant boulevard de Clichy, j’ai vu dans l’air, au bout d’un crochet, un cheval qu’une corde tirait dans un atelier de peintre.’ Degas avait pris sur une tablette un petit cheval de bois: ‘—Lorsque je reviens du champ de courses, voilà mes modelés ; comment pourrait-on faire tourner comme on veut dans la lumière des chevaux vrais ?’” Vollard, *Degas (1834-1917)*, 58.

artificial context. Art is not wrought from the imitation of Nature or an equivocation before one's subject; one requires an objective encounter with a fundamental form, and, of course, transformation.

A nut, a grape, a knife, and time ("twenty years," if we are to believe Vollard's story): such is Degas's rudimentary recipe for making paintings for a lifetime. I would argue that the last item is the vital quality at work in the artist's drawing and in the evolving motifs of the last thirty years of his career. (After all, Degas's studies of horses and bathers will come to generate stocks of motifs as well.) But time, or the duration of Degas's labor, is not readily accessible in an encounter with a single oil painting; it only becomes intelligible in the accretion of experiences with the works, when repetition surfaces as a generative mode and seriality emerges as the elusive, interminable product. In his insightful criticism on the artist in the early 1890s, George Moore is the first to explicitly comment on Degas's iterations of dancer-motifs. He positions repetition as an artistic practice that engenders novel relations between Degas's fungible motifs. However, Moore's interpretation of the artist's "stock figures" is curbed by his enthusiasm for the diversity of subjects at hand; he leaps from dancers to washerwomen to bathers to horses seeking the particulars of a subject rather than engaging with the particulars of artistic process.

Reviewing the Metropolitan's *Dancers in the Rehearsal Room with a Double Bass* in 1892, Moore admires the individual painting and immediately recognizes both its compositional scheme and its motifs:

[It] is clear proof of the irreducible genius of the hand that drew it, for we have seen it all before, a hundred times before. There is nothing in the picture that is not familiar to us. The side wall, very low in tone, leading up to a recess, brightly lighted by two windows in which several girls are posturing, practicing their art. We do not complain that ingenious and original perspective has not lost its charm for us, and only the fiddle lying in the foreground seems really stereotype. The

foreshortened figure of the girl in the foreground bent forward, tying up her shoe, is not so well known to us as the other girls; the girl next to her a little higher up in the picture, with the light falling on her shoes—she is examining them—occurs in nearly every *Leçon de Danse* that Degas has painted: she is one of his stock figures, we find her everywhere, by herself and forming a part of almost every group. Like all great masters, Degas has lived a great deal on himself, and the very slightest re-arrangement in the composition or the distribution of light suffices.²⁰

It is noteworthy that the English critic did not recognize the “seated dancer,” but instead pinpointed the “standing dancer.” Yet after the initial recollection, Moore quickly abandons the motif’s repetition across works.

Two years earlier, in his article, “Degas: The Painter of Modern Life” (1890), Moore did expound upon the artist’s relationship to the “nature” of the dancers. He argued that “Degas is possessed of such intuitive knowledge of the qualities inherent in the various elements that nature presents that he is enabled, after having disintegrated, to re-integrate them, and with a surety of ever finding a new and more elegant synthesis.”²¹ The critic was able to identify the disintegration, re-integration, and “synthesis” of Degas’s dancers, but he also expressed reservations about the significance of the motifs’ repetition:

Artists will understand the almost superhuman genius it requires to take subject-matter that has never received artistic treatment before, and bring it at once within the sacred pale. Baudelaire was the only poet who ever did this; Degas is the only painter. Of all impossible things in the world to treat artistically the ballet-girl seemed the most impossible, but Degas accomplished this feat. He has done so many dancers and so often repeated himself that it is difficult to specify any particular one.²²

In the end, Moore struggled to explain Degas’s incessant repetitions. Like every other critic, he acknowledged both the importance of drawing and its role “epitomizing” the characteristic gestures of the dancers. However, the problem was to make sense of the

²⁰ Moore, “Degas in Bond Street,” 19.

²¹ Moore, “Degas: The Painter of Modern Life,” 423.

²² *Ibid.*

“inherent” relationship between drawing, dancers, and “intuitive knowledge.” Toward the conclusion of the essay Moore cites one of Degas’s maxims about making art, but it reads like Moore’s closing arguments on Degas’s repetition: “Artists are always in such a hurry, and we find all that we want in what they have left behind.”²³ Moore saw the residue, but he wasn’t sure what to make of it. Paul Valéry is Degas’s only contemporary that undertakes the venture, finally affecting an interpretation out of process, subject, and knowledge in Degas’s paintings.

Not unlike Moore’s critical response to Degas in the 1890s or Vollard’s posthumous collection of Degas memories, one should be wary of concocting a thesis out of Valéry’s *Degas Danse Dessin* (1938). In the first paragraphs Valéry is already describing his thoughts as “scribbles” that can be read “discontinuously,” because they are “a sort of monologue, incorporating my memories as they occur to me.”²⁴ And yet, given Valéry’s writing habits and the intensity/enormity of his own literary practice, I am equally wary of his protestations.²⁵ The author organized the text under headings, which themselves divulge specific themes: “Seeing and Copying” (*Voir et tracer*), “The Ground and the Formless” (*Du sol et de l’informe*), “On the

²³ “Les artistes sont tellement pressés! et que nous faisons bien notre affaire avec les choses qu’ils ont oubliées.” Ibid., 424.

²⁴ The first sentences of the book read: “[c]omme il arrive qu’un lecteur à demi abstrait crayonne aux marges d’un ouvrage et produise, au gré de l’absence et de la pointe, de petits êtres ou de vagues ramures, en regard des masses lisibles, ainsi ferai-je, selon le caprice de l’esprit, aux environs de ces quelques études d’Edgar Degas. J’accompagnerai ces images d’un peu de texte que l’on puisse ne pas lire, ou ne pas lire d’un trait, et qui n’ait avec ces dessins que les plus lâches liaisons et les rapports les moins étroits. Ceci ne sera donc qu’une manière de monologue . . .” Valéry, *Degas Danse Dessin*, 11.

²⁵ Valéry was a celebrated and prolific poet, essayist, dramatist, and critic in his own lifetime (1871-1945) and a member of the Académie française. He spent over fifty years writing daily in his notebooks (some 28,000 pages combined), which were posthumously collected and published as his *Cahiers* in twenty-nine volumes (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1957-61). The *Cahiers* were composed as a daily regimen of writing. Every morning at dawn Valéry made notes, sketches, illustrations, aphorisms, models, poems, dreams, etc., which filled around one page of a notebook; they are often compared to the notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci. Brian Stimpson, in his “Introduction” to the English translation of the abridged *Cahiers*, describes the whole of the project as such: “[t]he characteristic rhythm of thought and writing is one of absolute provisionality: fragmentary, open, rebounding, superficially repetitious, but profoundly progressive (like much ‘scientific’ research). The same problems, regularly resurgent, are forever reformulated and reviewed, giving wider associations, sharper definition, renewed perspectives and contexts of significance.” Brian Stimpson, “Introduction,” in Paul Valéry, *Cahiers/Notebooks*, vol. 1, trans. Paul Gifford, et al., ed. Brian Stimpson, et al. (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2000), 15.

Nude” (*Du nu*), “Politics and Degas” (*Politique et Degas*), “Modern Art and Great Art” (*Art moderne et grand art*), “Drawing Is Not the Same as Form” (*Le dessin n’est pas la forme*)—to name some of the more candid examples. More to the point, there are thematic threads in the book, often treated in sections unto themselves (i.e. drawing and form), but which are also woven in and out of seemingly unrelated chapters. Finally, what sets Valéry’s text apart from other memoirs of Degas is his authoritative, yet empathetic, reading of Degas’s artistic process.

In “Work and Beware” (*Travail et méfiance*) an early section of *Degas Danse Dessin*, Valéry’s literal description of Degas’s methods blends with an analogy to the author’s own ceaseless project, writing:

Every work by Degas was done in earnest. . . .

He is like a writer striving to attain the utmost precision of form, drafting and redrafting, canceling, advancing by endless recapitulation, never conceding that his work has reached its *final stage*: he continually revises his drawing, deepening, tightening, closing it up, from sheet to sheet, copy to copy.²⁶

Valéry’s characterization of Degas’s methods is relayed by his own repetitions; his claims are delicately argued before and after anecdotes and observations, becoming more and more defined as the reader progresses. It’s worth noting that throughout his text—as he does here—Valéry often slips into the present tense when he describes Degas’s actual studio processes. Vollard’s *Degas (1834-1917)* was written in the past tense; the same is true of Jeanne Fevre’s *My Uncle Degas (Mon oncle Degas, 1949)* and Daniel Halévy’s *My Friend Degas (Degas parle, 1960)*.²⁷ Valéry, on the other hand, reactivates the artist’s processes; he actualizes Degas’s production for the reader as experiences in the present, invoking the modalities—both temporal and spatial—of

²⁶ “Comme un écrivain qui veut atteindre la dernière précision de sa forme multiplie les brouillons, rature, avance par reprises, et ne se concède jamais qu’il ait rejoint l’état *posthume* de son morceau, tel Degas: il reprend indéfiniment son dessin, l’approfondit, le serre, l’enveloppe, de feuille en feuille, de calque en calque.” Valéry, *Degas Danse Dessin*, 83.

²⁷ The exceptions to this rule are when the authors include memories of specific dialogues between people or when they quote from journals or letters. Jeanne Fevre, *Mon oncle Degas* (Geneva: P. Calliver, 1949) ; Daniel Halévy, *Degas parle* (Paris: La Palatine, 1960).

the artist's actions (and, perhaps, his own?). The effect renders Degas's practice in perpetuity, as if only the artist's death brought his craft to an end. Valéry's text thus exemplifies the artist's working processes to some extent; and his admiration for Degas's studio practices is surely inflected by his own work routines. Nonetheless, Valéry's textual repetitions and invocations of interminable creation evoke the viewer's own experiences before Degas's serial paintings: practice in perpetuity, or a story retold, again and again.

In the section titled "Degas, Mad About Drawing" (*Degas, fou de dessin*)—a title that already hints at the clinical and the mythic—Valéry expounds on the artist's obsession with "tactical images" and the "game" of draftsmanship. In typical fashion (recall the passage treated at length in my Chapter Three), Valéry moves from the past tense to the present by way of anecdote, from a remembrance to an action, for which he offers further analogy and interpretation:

The sheer labor of drawing had become a passion and a discipline to him, the object of a *mystique* and an ethic all-sufficient in themselves, a supreme preoccupation which abolished all other matters, a source of endless problems in precision which delivered him from any other form of inquiry. He was and wished to be a specialist, of a kind that can rise to a sort of universality.

At the age of *seventy*, he told Ernest Rouart: 'You have to have a high conception, not of what you are doing, *but of what you may do one day*: without that, there's no point in working.'

. . . There speaks real pride, an antidote to all vanity. The artist who is essentially an artist is like a player forever harried by new combinations of the game, haunted nightly by the specter of the chessboard or the cards alighting on the baize, obsessed with tactical images and solutions more living than real ones.

. . . The idea of completely possessing the technique of an art, of achieving the freedom to employ its means as confidently and as easily as we do our limbs and our senses in their ordinary functions, is one which inspires a few men to infinite determination, struggle, practice, and agony.²⁸

²⁸ "Le travail, le Dessin étaient devenus chez lui une passion, une discipline, l'objet d'une mystique et d'une éthique qui se suffisaient à elles seules, une préoccupation souveraine qui abolissait toutes autres affaires, une occasion de problèmes perpétuels et précis qui le délivrait de toutes autres curiosités. Il était et voulait être un spécialiste, dans un genre qui peut s'élever à une sorte d'universalité. Âgé de *soixante-dix ans*, il dit à Ernest Rouart: 'Il faut avoir une haute idée, non pas de ce qu'on fait, *mais de ce qu'on pourra faire un jour*; sans quoi, ce n'est pas la peine de travailler. . . . Voilà le véritable orgueil, antidote de toute vanité. Comme le joueur est poursuivi par des combinaisons de parties, hanté la nuit par le spectre de l'échiquier ou du tapis sur quoi les cartes s'abattent, obsédé

Heroic rhetoric intact, Valéry describes Degas's enterprise as first a specialized craft and then a serial game: both experiential processes comprised of trained maneuvers and expert knowledge. Degas's craftsmanship (*le travail*) is realized in duration, or what Valéry expresses as states of preoccupation with, obsession with, or endlessness in drawing. This type of immersion, he claims, allowed Degas to become the player of his own game, to move his pawns from one space to another, and to create "new combinations of the game" as if it was second nature ("as confidently and as easily as we do our limbs and our senses"). The writer also surmises Degas's own awareness of the indeterminate state of this pursuit. He confers this consciousness various descriptors: pride, determination, struggle, agony—and, implicitly, *répétition*.

In the section entitled "Rue Victor-Massé," Valéry describes entering the pell-mell conditions of Degas's studio and the penetrating sense of belatedness that infused the artist's workspace.²⁹ He gives an inventory of the random bric-a-brac (the props, the wax models, the old materials), and then he reflects on the anachronism of Degas's studio life:

[T]he labor of the artist [Degas] is of a very old-fashioned kind; the artist himself a survival, a craftsman or an artisan of a disappearing species, working in his own room, following his own homemade empirical methods, living in an untidy intimacy with his tools, his eyes intent on what is in his mind, blind to his surroundings; using broken pots, kitchenware, any old castoffs that come to hand...³⁰

d'images tactiques et de solutions plus vivantes que réelles L'idée de posséder entièrement la pratique d'un art, de conquérir la liberté d'user de ses moyens aussi sûrement et légèrement que de nos sens et de nos membres dans leurs usages ordinaires, est de celles qui tirent de certains hommes une constance, une dépense, des exercices et des tourments infinis." Valéry, *Degas Danse Dessin*, 151-4.

²⁹ Vollard also recalls the disarray of Degas's studio, remembering its "state of confusion" and the "clutter of all sorts of objects." This is an addition to the English edition. Ambroise Vollard, *Degas: An Intimate Portrait*, trans. Randolph T. Weaver (1927; repr. New York: Dover, 1986), 22-3. His account of the artist's work space includes an anecdote about how the dealer came to Degas's studio one day, whilst carrying a package under his arm. Then, when "[a] tiny piece of paper worked loose from the package," the artist "pounced on it, dug it out of the crack where it had lodged, and threw it into the stove. 'I don't like disorder,' he said." "Un tout petit morceau de papier s'étant détaché du paquet que je dépliais, Degas se s'élança pour le saisir. Il retrouva le 'confetti' dans la rainure du plancher et le jetant dans son poêle. 'Je n'aime pas le désordre.'" Vollard, *Degas (1834-1917)*, 22-3.

³⁰ "[L]e travail de l'artiste est un travail de type très ancien; l'artiste lui-même, une survivance, un ouvrier ou un artisan d'une espèce en voie de disparition, qui fabrique en chambre, use de procédés tout personnels et tout

Valéry then becomes nostalgic about the loss of such craftsmen:

Perhaps conditions are changing, and instead of this spectacle of an eccentric individual using whatever comes his way, there will instead be a picture-making laboratory, with its specialist officially clad in white, rubber-gloved, keeping to a precise schedule, armed with strictly appropriate apparatus and instruments[,] each with its appointed place and exact function. . . . So far, chance has not been eliminated from practice[,] or mystery from method[,] or inspiration from regular hours; but I do not vouch for the future.³¹

Just over ten years later, Valéry's "picture of the craftsmanly atmosphere" would be appropriated by Walter Benjamin to decry the loss of the storyteller as a symptom of the degradation of experience, memory, and the *durée* of history. In "The Storyteller" (1936), Benjamin draws out the elder author's emphases on daily life, intimate surroundings, and homemade methods to compare the long processes of Nature to the craftsman's artifice:

[The storyteller] speaks of the perfect things in nature—flawless pearls, full-bodied mature wines, truly developed creatures—and calls them the precious product of a long chain of causes that are all similar to one another. . . . The patient process of Nature was once imitated by men. Miniatures, ivory carvings elaborated to the point of greatest perfection, stones that are perfect in polish and engraving, lacquer work or paintings in which a series of thin, transparent layers are placed one on top of the other—all these products of sustained, sacrificing effort are vanishing, and the time is past in which time did not matter. Modern man no longer works at what cannot be abbreviated."³²

Both Nature and the storyteller/craftsman are involved in their own patient process of accumulation and change over (what is now called) time. In contrast, for Benjamin and Valéry,

empiriques, vit dans le désordre et l'intimité de ses outils, voit ce qu'il veut et non ce qui l'entoure, utilise des pots cassés, des ferrailles domestiques, des objets condamnés..." Valéry, *Degas Danse Dessin*, 39-44.

³¹ "Peut-être cet état change-t-il, et verrons-nous s'opposer à l'aspect de cet outillage de fortune et de l'être singulier qui s'en accommode, le tableau du laboratoire pictural d'un homme rigoureusement vêtu de blanc, ganté de gomme, obéissant à une horaire tout précis, pourvu d'appareils et d'instruments strictement spécialisés: chacun ayant sa place et son occasion exact d'emploi? . . . Jusqu'ici, le hasard n'est pas encore éliminé des actes; le mystère, des procédés; l'ivresse, des horaires; mais je ne répons de rien." *Ibid.*, 44.

³² Walter Benjamin, "The Storyteller: Observations on the Works of Nikolai Leskov," in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, 1935-1938*, trans. Edmund Jephcott, Howard Eiland, and Others, eds. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2002), 150.

modernity has an “increasing aversion to sustained labor.”³³ It “no longer permits that slow piling one on top of the other of thin, transparent layers which constitutes the most appropriate picture of the way in which perfect narrative is revealed through the layers of a variety of retellings.”³⁴

Perfection aside, what is at stake for Benjamin is the loss of the storyteller and his methods: a symptom of the broader cultural degradation of experience and comprehensive memory. For Valéry it is the similar loss of the craftsman as a character (“an eccentric individual”) living within an unconscious tradition of his own making. The loss has everything to do with the audience’s demands, whether listener or viewer. In Benjamin’s text, the craft of storytelling is threatened by the deficiency of boredom, a state of consciousness which provides a means for assimilation and memory. Assimilation “requires a state of relaxation which is becoming rarer and rarer. If sleep is the apogee of physical relaxation, boredom is the apogee of mental relaxation. Boredom is the dream bird that hatches the egg of experience.”³⁵ Storytelling is an “art of repeating stories” and requires a brooding consciousness of its audience. Valéry’s language is more severe and class conscious. At the end of the penultimate chapter in *Degas Danse Dessin*, he returns to the loss of the “character,” of “originals, those self-made men who lived by their own will.” Now there are only men who achieve “effect—for the newspapers, the museums, and the public good . . . *Not for pleasure.*” And then he summarizes: “That is the whole point; pleasure is dying out. Enjoyment is a lost art. Now the thing is intensity, enormity, speed, direct action on the nerve centers, by the shortest route.”³⁶

³³ Benjamin quoting Valéry, *ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 149.

³⁶ “. . . [C]ar il n’y a plus d’originaux, de volontaires qui ne relèvent que de soi-même. . . . Ils agissaient, d’ailleurs, en vue de l’effet, des journaux, des musées, du bien public . . . *Pas pour le plaisir.* C’est là le point: la volupté se meurt. On ne sait plus jouir. Nous en sommes à l’intensité, à l’énormité, à la vitesse, aux actions directes sur les centres nerveux, par le plus court chemin.” Valéry, *Degas Danse Dessin*, 224.

Loss is a subject well-rehearsed by the French bourgeois literati, most often encountered in the case of an educated white male of vast to substantial means mourning an authenticity never possessed and at least partially imagined. Nonetheless, Benjamin's essay grieves traditions imagined to be endangered (storytelling and craft) and gives expression to the states of consciousness integral to their actualization and reception. In doing so, he organizes and analyzes craft as mode of consciousness that is simultaneously defined by and split from modern modes of production. Valéry's account of Degas's belated craft similarly laments a certain experience of time and labor that is no longer desirable, or even fathomable, under the conditions of modernity. As Benjamin so succinctly states, "the time is past in which time did not matter." Degas's draftsmanship might invoke the mass reproducibility of photography for some contemporary scholars, but his processes were never of "the shortest route." The dancer-motifs in the frieze series are assimilations and retellings of form—the dialectical rejoinder to abbreviations.

The argument, thus far, can be summarized as such: the dancer-motifs that make up the frieze classroom series carry a palimpsest memory of their long production in Degas's practice. And as viewers of Degas's oeuvre, we become oriented in the memory of that production. Every time we encounter the "seated dancer"—not just in a frieze classroom painting, but especially then due to the distinct format—we are enmeshed in a conglomerate memory of the motif, in all its variations. It is at these moments that consciousness is integrated with recollection, when processes of labor emerge as continuous with the *longue durée* of time rather than as temporal fragments, quantifiable in their exchangeability.

At the same time, we should be careful to position Degas's mnemonic exercises as nostalgic in more reactionary ways as well. His repetitions speak to a certain kind of knowledge

under pressure: drawing, craftsmanship, and memory itself. More than once Degas rallied against the loss of continuity in the practice of painting. In his projections about the “old superior methods of fabrication,”³⁷ or the “craft which the old masters knew,”³⁸ or the “tried and true methods that the artists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries practiced,”³⁹ the loss is registered on the level of expertise, but also felt as an interruption of what Friedrich Nietzsche called monumental history: “the belief in the affinity and continuity of the great of all ages.”⁴⁰ The monumental past thus offers “the knowledge that the great which once existed was at least *possible*,” but it also threatens to rule over the present, to become codified as criteria for the present.⁴¹ Richard Terdiman aptly describes Degas’s own historical moment of transition in *Discourse/Counter-Discourse*:

[T]here is no process of institution in social life without a preceding, and determining destitution. As the transparency characterizing areas of social existence not previously experienced as problematical is progressively lost, the

³⁷ The full sentence reads: “[i]l fut ensuite parlé des vieilles choses et du vieux temps, des procédés supérieurs de fabrication qu’assuraient les vieilles corporations fermées, de la lutte entre la corporation des peintres et l’Académie; et, à ce propos, de l’admission à la corporation des peintres et particulièrement de l’admission de Watteau.” Degas, *Lettres*, “Appendice II: Quelques conversations de Degas notes par Daniel Halévy en 1891-1893,” 268-9.

³⁸ Jeannot, “Souvenirs sur Degas,” 167.

³⁹ The longer passage, from Jeannot’s “Souvenirs sur Degas,” is worth quoting: “Often we would speak of craft, Degas, Chialiva and I, this craft which the old masters knew, thanks to which they could leave splendid works that stayed unchanged despite the passage of centuries. Degas appeared to think and all of a sudden said to us: ‘One must admit, we live in a funny time. This oil painting we do, this difficult craft that we practice without having a real command of it! A similar inconsistency has doubtless never existed. There were tried and true methods that the artists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries practiced; methods still known to David, a student of Vien, who was the dean of the Academy of Fine Arts, but the painters of the early nineteenth century were no longer acquainted with them.’” “Souvent nous parlions métier, Degas, Chialiva et moi ; ce métier que savaient les peintres anciens, grâce auquel ils ont pu laisser des œuvres splendides qui restent immuables malgré les siècles. Degas parut réfléchir et nous dit, tout à coup: ‘Nous vivons à une drôle d’époque, il faut l’avouer. Cette peinture à l’huile que nous faisons, ce métier très difficile que nous pratiquons sans le connaître! pareille incohérence ne s’est sans doute jamais vue. Il y a des méthodes très sûres que pratiquaient les artistes des dix-septième et dix-huitième siècles ; ces méthodes que connaissait encore David, élève de Vien, qui fut doyen de l’Académie des Beaux-Arts, mais que ne connaissaient plus les peintres du commencement du dix-neuvième siècle.’” Ibid.

⁴⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History*, trans. Peter Preuss (1874; repr. Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing, 1980), 16. In his critique of history as a scientific practice, Nietzsche outlines three types of history: monumental, antiquarian, and critical. All three are necessary to the practice of a history for life, which is experiential and productive of new forms of culture; however, he warns against the domination of one form over any other.

⁴¹ Ibid.

effort to master such areas in the their transformed state attempts [. . .] to reproduce a dying innocence through the concerted mobilization of knowledge.⁴²

I take Degas's process to be a lament on the loss of an organic or un-formed memory about craft, a quiet act of resistance *and* reassertion—an “effort to master” art-making in the present. (Take, for instance, his anxiety later in life about the dissemination of his own collection. He foresaw re-collection not dispersion for his private corpus of works.)⁴³ This second take foreshadows the reactionary, *fin-de-siècle* Neoclassicism of Maurice Denis and Emile Bernard. Such a reading does not, however, supersede the frieze classroom series as a conceptual project that might reintegrate our relation to the past, however fleetingly. Rather, we must allow that Degas's project, with its constant rehearsals and repetitions of form, aims at a radical lucidity between time, labor, production, and consumption, while also acknowledging its nostalgic impulses toward a stable, more hermetic field of cultural production.

“Les articles” suspended in seriality

“No art was ever less spontaneous than mine. What I do is the result of reflection and of the study of the great masters; of inspiration, spontaneity, temperament, I know nothing. Nothing in art should appear an accident, even movement.”⁴⁴ This, again, is George Moore citing Degas. And Degas is concocting his procreative mythology by infusing his practice with the erudition of

⁴² Richard Terdiman, *Discourse/Counter-Discourse: The Theory and Practice of Symbolic Resistance in Nineteenth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 97.

⁴³ Beginning around 1895 Degas sought to preserve his collection as an independent museum. Paul Lafond, Lemoisne, and Etienne Moreau-Nélaton all mention this in their respective publications. Paul Lafond, *Degas, 182*; Lemoisne, *Degas et son œuvre*, vol. 1, 154; Etienne Moreau-Nélaton, “Deux heures avec Degas: Interview posthume,” *L'Amour de l'art 12* (July 1931): 267-70; 268.

⁴⁴ Moore, “Degas: The Painter of Modern Life,” 423. A similar sentiment is found in a letter from Degas to Bartholomé dated to 1886: “Rien en art ne doit ressembler à un accident, même le mouvement.” Carol Armstrong attributes the longer quote to a different letter from Degas to Bartholomé. She claims that the original reads: “Aucun art n'est aussi peu spontané que le mien. Ce que je fais est le résultat de la réflexion et de l'étude des grands maîtres; de l'inspiration, la spontanéité, le tempérament, je ne sais rien . . . Rien en art ne doit ressembler à un accident, même le mouvement.” She lists the citation as from a letter to Bartholomé (1886), quoted in Paul-Andre Lemoisne, *Degas et son œuvre*, vol. 1, 104. However, the quote is not verifiable.

classicism, preemptively draping his legacy with the cloak of tradition and instilling his oeuvre with history. (The declaration rings with a vestige of Ingres' own pronouncement: "You don't get anything from nothing.")⁴⁵ In fact, the declaration ensued as a specific rebuttal to the modern ideologies of creativity and originality. Degas was mocking the spontaneous, novel gestures of artists such as Monet in favor of "reflection" and "study," which were, for him, the unequivocal materials of even the most modern of qualities: "movement"—which is to say, form becoming in space *and* time.⁴⁶ And I do think that the tension in Degas's statement is purposeful: "even movement" takes reflection and study.

To describe the actuality of Degas's study and reflection is to invoke *connaissance*, an embodied form of cognitive and sensual knowing.⁴⁷ Valéry describes it as an "approach" in which the artist "withdraws, leans over, screws his eyes up, his whole body behaving like an instrument of the eye."⁴⁸ But whereas "the hand is very indirectly governed by the eye," the artist's past mediates them both:

Many 'relays' come in between [the hand and the eye]; notably that of memory. Every glance at the model, every line traced by the eye, at once becomes a recorded memory, and it is from this record that the hand will have to derive its

⁴⁵ Boyer d'Agen, *Ingres, d'après une correspondance inédite* (Paris: H. Daragon, 1909), 91. Quoted and translated in Richard Schiff, "Originality," in *Critical Terms for Art History*, 103.

⁴⁶ It was in the early 1880s that Monet and Renoir began to professionally distance themselves from Degas, Pissarro, and the other artists exhibiting in the Impressionist Exhibitions. According to Robert Jensen, "Monet and Renoir had virtually become members of the *juste milieu* in their pursuit of society connections and wealthy clients." Jensen, *Marketing Modernism in Fin-de-Siècle Europe*, 129. The two artists defected from Durand-Ruel to the gallery of Georges Petit and sought to align their practice with a generic form of Impressionism. This seems the correct context in which to understand Degas's reproach. It has to do with the artist's suspicions of painters who "arrive" and the means by which they do so. Moore must have drawn similar conclusions about Degas's statement. The paragraph ends with a refrain to the first anecdote, a continuation of Degas's spoken thoughts: "When people talk about temperament it always seems to me like the strong man at the fair, who straddles his legs and asks someone to step on the palm of his hand. . . . It is very difficult to be great as the old masters were great. In the great ages you were great or you did not exist at all, but in these days everything conspires to support the feeble." Moore, "Degas: The Painter of Modern Life," 423. On Monet's financial success and first one-man shows with Durand-Ruel, see also Harrison C. White and Cynthia A. White, *Canvases and Careers: Institutional Change in the French Painting World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), 124-40.

⁴⁷ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 10.

⁴⁸ "L'artiste avance, recule, se penche, cligne des yeux, se comporte de tout son corps comme un accessoire de son œil . . ." Valéry, *Degas Danse Dessin*, 82.

law of movement on the paper. This amounts to a transformation of visual into manual copying.⁴⁹

Knowledge of Degas's subject is constructed from physical and intellectual engagement with and absorption of materials and bodies (his and his models'). Perception and cognition of the model are infused with the artist's Bergsonian lessons of copying after old masters and himself, a practice which in turn gives way to pervasive transformations. Artistic processes are meticulous and open-ended, crafted over long periods of time from manual experience and mnemonic knowledge, not the sort of *plein-air* perceptions he identified with his colleagues' works. Nor did Degas imagine his production as an elevated activity that occurred in fleeting moments of inspiration before Nature. Creativity was born of a workaday praxis: routine, repetition, and minute alterations.⁵⁰

This is not to construct an antipodal myth about the humility of the great artist, nor to disregard Degas's contentious struggle for artistic and economic legitimacy as a sometimes-financially-troubled artist in the Third Republic. Still, his artistic praxis was bound more to the menial quality of the everyday—and less to the transitory nature of modernity. Art-making, for Degas, was anything but a felicitous impression that might be captured in any one *pochade*—a working method that dominated a large segment of the avant-garde market from the 1880s to the

⁴⁹ “Mais le commandement de la main par le regard est fort indirect. Bien des *relais* interviennent: parmi eux, la mémoire. Chaque coup d'œil sur le modèle, chaque ligne tracée par l'œil devient élément instantané d'un souvenir, et c'est d'un souvenir que la main sur le papier va emprunter sa loi de mouvement. Il y a transformation d'un tracé visuel en tracé manuel.” Valéry, *Degas Danse Dessin*, 81.

⁵⁰ The concept of repetition and transformation as a type of originality is detailed in Schiff's account of imitation: a “degree of difference between the model (the ‘original’) and its copy, whereas copying is an attempt at mechanistic replication.” Schiff, “Originality,” in *Critical Terms for Art History*, 106. Schiff locates a shift in the Romantics' discourse on originality and imitation, such that “imitation” was severed from transformation and interpretation and made into a sign of artistic immaturity. See also, Idem., “The Original, the Imitation, the Copy, and the Spontaneous Classic: Theory and Painting in Nineteenth-Century France,” and Idem., “Representation, Copying, and the Technique of Originality,” in “Interrelation of Interpretation and Creation,” special issue, *New Literary History*, vol. 15, no. 2 (Winter 1984): 333-63.

turn of the century. Octave Mirbeau, a novelist-critic friendly with Monet often described it as “instantaneity.”⁵¹ Monet himself called it “effect.”⁵²

Writing from New Orleans in November, 1872, Degas describes his methods in the poetic language of the peasant-practitioner:

. . . I want nothing but my own little corner where I shall dig assiduously. Art does not expand, it repeats itself. And, if you want comparisons at all costs, I may tell you that in order to produce good fruit one must line up an *espalier*. One remains thus all one’s life, arms extended, mouth open, so as to assimilate what is happening, what is around one, and live through it.⁵³

Degas’s somewhat reluctant (“at all costs”) introduction of the horticulturalist’s *espalier* as metaphor for his artistic practice conveys the young artist’s independence (“my own little corner”) and resilience, while also revealing his appetite for the modern world. In the construct of his narrative, however, Degas gives the most emphasis to the cycle of art/horticulture, and specifically to the lateral spread of the *espalier* and his own long-term projects. Fertility is carefully restricted and artfully trained in the *espalier* method; few seeds are planted because growth covers a low, horizontal structure rather than a vertically-inclined trellis. Thus, Degas’s characteristically anachronistic—even biblical—metaphor likens artistic processes to tending soil in a controlled, contrived mode that brings forth circuitous, lateral limbs.

The fact that an urban, bourgeois artist would allegorize himself and his practice in this manner is no surprise. Late-nineteenth century European modernism is rife with autobiographical

⁵¹ Mirbeau repeatedly uses the word “*instantanéité*” to describe the characteristic moment that Monet chose to paint. Octave Mirbeau, “Claude Monet,” *Exposition Claude Monet—Auguste Rodin* (Paris, Galerie Georges Petit, 1889), esp. 14. For an analysis of the critical response to Monet’s “instantaneity,” see Steven Z. Levine, “The ‘Instant’ of Criticism and Monet’s Critical Instant,” *Arts Magazine* vol. 55 (March 1981): 114-121, esp. 119-20.

⁵² See note 64 below.

⁵³ “. . . [j]e ne veux plus voir que mon coin et le creuser pieusement. L’art ne s’élargit pas, il se résume. Et, si vous aimez les comparaisons à tout prix, je vous dirai que pour produire de bons fruits, il faut se mettre en *espalier*. On reste là toute sa vie, les bras étendus, la bouche ouverte pour s’assimiler ce qui passe, ce qui est autour de vous et en vivre.” Degas, *Lettres*, 22.

myths of marginalized, yet empowered, artists/creators.⁵⁴ Yet, Degas's little allegory is curious because of its metaphorical peculiarity: the horizontal sprawl of the *espalier*, equating his tedious exercises and even his own body ("arms extended, mouth open") with the discipline and organic growth of a low-lying plant. Even early on in his career, his poetic resolve was to seek out the local and thoroughly assimilate his subjects, to restrict his focus and to cultivate nascent possibilities over time.

Degas's letters from New Orleans are revealing in this respect, especially as testimonials from the artist's only lengthy excursion beyond a Channel crossing.⁵⁵ In more than one he speaks of feeling like Rousseau on the île de St. Pierre on the Lac de Brienne (from the final pages of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Confessions*): "I see many things here, I admire them. I make a mental note of their appropriation and expression and I shall leave it all without regret. Life is too short and the strength one has only just suffices."⁵⁶ Or, to the Danish painter Lorenz Frølich: "It is not good to do Parisian art and Louisiana art indiscriminately; it is liable to turn into the *Monde Illustré*. . . . Instantaneousness is photography, nothing more."⁵⁷ He offers these opinions as truisms, telling Rouart that "Manet would see lovely things here, even more than I do. He would not make more of them. One loves and gives art only to the things to which one is accustomed."⁵⁸ But he returns to resolution more than mere sentiment: "[I am] at last free to dream in peace, observing impartially, beginning work that would take ten years to finish and

⁵⁴ Gustave Courbet stands as the standard of all autobiographical mythologies in nineteenth-century France (the *autre* amongst the bourgeoisie). See Marsha Maskimmon, *The Art of Reflection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 18-27.

⁵⁵ Degas does travel to Spain in the fall of 1889 and then, in his own words, "set[s] foot in Morocco" ("au pied au Maroc"). Degas, *Lettres*, 144-5.

⁵⁶ "Je vois ici, j'admire bien des choses, j'en classe l'appropriation et l'expression dans mon esprit et je laisserai tout cela sans regret. La vie est trop courte et on n'a que ce qu'il faut de force." Ibid., 25.

⁵⁷ "On ne doit pas faire indifféremment de l'art de Paris et de la Louisiane, ça tournerait au *Monde Illustré*. . . . L'instantané, c'est la photographie et rien de plus." Ibid., 23.

⁵⁸ "Manet, plus que moi, verrait ici de belles choses. Il n'en ferait pas davantage. On n'aime et on ne donne de l'art qu'à ce dont on a l'habitude." Ibid., 26.

abandoning it after ten minutes without regret.”⁵⁹ In the letter to Frölich, ten years turns into “ten lifetimes” and he vows “never again to leave *my home*.”⁶⁰ Twelve years later, as Degas is travelling through Normandy, he again writes to Rouart about his empathy for Rousseau and the writer’s predicament: “I am attempting work which would take ten years to finish and I leave it after ten minutes without regrets, said Rousseau in the île de St. Pierre.”⁶¹

Degas’s repetitions here are again about memory and loss; but they also speak to the relationship between painting and knowledge: what it means to “know” a place, a people, an object. Ten years is apparently the minimum amount of time necessary—all other engagements are superfluous, or at least peripheral. His attitude is quite different from the conception of expansion and repetition we find in Monet’s serial production from the late 1870s and 90s—what Pissarro once referred to as “*cette répétition*.”⁶² Conceived as an entity from the start and executed on pre-stretched canvases of a standard size, Monet’s train stations, haystacks, and the rest were conscious attempts by the artist to give order to his production, to synthesize what critics found insubstantial and subjective in his individual paintings.⁶³ In an interview nearly thirty years after the fact, Monet candidly describes his moment of inspiration in front of a haystack:

⁵⁹ “. . . [M]usant enfin tout à son aise, observant tout indifféremment, entreprenant des travaux de dix ans et les laissant au bout de dix minutes sans regrets.” Ibid., 26-7.

⁶⁰ The full quote reads: “[j]’entasse donc des projets qui me demanderaient dix vies à exécuter. Je les abandonnerai dans six semaines, sans regret, pour regagner et ne plus quitter *my home*.” Ibid., 23.

⁶¹ “J’entreprends des ouvrages de dix ans que je laisse au bout de dix minutes, sans regrets, disait Rousseau dans l’île de St. Pierre.” Ibid., 83.

⁶² Writing in April 1891, Pissarro expressed his shock at hearing about Monet’s intention to include only paintings of haystacks at his upcoming one-man show at Durand Ruel’s: “comment cela ne gêne pas Monet de s’astreindre à cette répétition—voilà les effets terribles du succès!” Camille Pissarro, *Lettres à son fils, Lucien* (Paris: Michael, 1950), 231.

⁶³ At the Impressionist Exhibition in 1877, Monet exhibited at least seven paintings of the Gare Saint-Lazare; he completed twelve that year. In January he sought official permission to paint the train station, and Caillebotte paid the rent for a studio nearby. For a thorough discussion of the series, see Juliet Wilson-Bareau, *Manet, Monet and the Gare Saint-Lazare* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), 103-30. The compelling forces behind Monet’s move to serial production are well researched and argued. See Grace Seiberling, *Monet’s Series* (New York and London: Garland, 1981) and Paul Hayes Tucker, *Monet in the 90s: The Series Paintings* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989).

When I started out, I was like everyone else; I believed that two canvases sufficed, one for 'gray weather,' one for 'sun.' Then I was painting some stacks that had impressed me and that made a magnificent group, just nearby here; one day, I see that my lighting has changed: I tell my step-daughter: 'Go to the house, if you would, and bring me another canvas.' She brings it to me, but a little later, it [the light] is different again: another! and yet another [canvas]! And I worked on each only when I had my effect, that's all there is to it. It's not very difficult to understand.⁶⁴

That last sentence was never uttered by any student of Degas's repetitions. But the comparison is more than trite. Degas and Monet are the only two artists of the Impressionist or Post-Impressionist circles wrestling with the potential of serial production in the 1870s. And while Monet's serial mode would soon be easily assimilated by others, Degas's was not.⁶⁵ Several distinctions should be addressed. First, note the relative arbitrariness of Monet's subject matter at the moment of his discovery. The train stations or the haystacks were not an integral form with latent possibilities for extension and expansion; they "impressed" him. In 1909 Louis Gillet could already characterize Monet's relations to his subjects as "perhaps the *limitation* of this great artist: the life of his model is insufficiently felt behind the eternal smile of his work. He lacks empathy. I would not swear that he is truly convinced that nature exists."⁶⁶ Essentially, Monet is able to move from haystacks to poplars to cathedrals to London to lilies without restructuring the object in the painting. Second, Monet's individual canvases are not a composite of experiences before their object (i.e. haystacks); instead, they function as discrete moments of

⁶⁴ "Quand j'ai commencé, j'étais comme les autres; je croyais qu'il suffisait de deux toiles, une pour 'temps gris,' une pour 'soleil.' Je peignais alors des meules qui m'avaient frappé et qui faisaient un groupe magnifique, à deux pas d'ici; un jour, je vois que mon éclairage a changé: je dis à ma belle-fille: 'Allez donc à la maison, si vous voulez bien, et apportez-moi une autre toile.' Elle me l'apporte, mais peu après, c'est encore différent: une autre! encore une autre! Et je ne travaillais à chacune qu quand j'avais mon effet, voilà tout. Ce n'est pas très difficile à comprendre." Duc de Trévisé, "Le pèlerinage de Giverny," *Revue de l'art ancien et moderne* vol. 51, nos. 282 and 283 (January and February 1927): 41-50 and 111-34; p. 126.

⁶⁵ On Monet's repetition as a narcissistic impulse that excluded other painters associated with Impressionism, see Steven Z. Levine, "Monet's Series: Repetition, Obsession," *October* vol. 37 (Summer 1986): 65-75.

⁶⁶ "Là est peut-être, si j'ose l'avouer, la 'limite' de ce grand artiste: derrière l'éternel sourire de son œuvre, on ne sent pas assez la vie de son modèle. Il manque de sympathie. Je ne répondrais pas qu'il soit bien convaincu que la nature existe." Louis Gillet, "Les 'Nymphéas' de M. Claude Monet," *La Revue Hebdomadaire* no. 8 (August 21, 1909): 397-415; 406.

time with specific external circumstances prescribed to the individual canvases.⁶⁷ Hence the artist's desire for "another" and "another" succeeding the quick alteration of exterior effects; the vacillating realities of time necessitate an entirely new illusion. Finally, Monet's transformations from canvas to canvas are motivated by the effects of nature as a visual experience before a relatively fixed entity.

There are overlaps between the two projects. Both Degas's and Monet's seriality involves variations on a unifying theme with no narrative beginning or end. The artists' repetitive practices have potential for seemingly infinite extension, though Monet chose to limit his editions. But aside from these commonalities—all modern variances from the classical production of a cycle—there are real differences that deserve our attention. Degas's subject is by no means arbitrary; there are integral connections between "the dancer" and his disciplined study of forms shifting through time and in space (more on this below). Moreover, while his frieze classroom series is defined by its oddly-shaped, homemade supports, it is not a coherent product; its boundaries bleed into other paintings, pastels, and sketches. Degas did not conceive of a synthetic, limited "brand" in the way Monet did. (Monet ultimately insisted the haystacks be installed as a one-man show at Durand-Ruel's, rather than at a group show.)⁶⁸ Unlike the

⁶⁷ Monet recalled the context for his process of seriality in much the same way numerous times, effectively endorsing a reading of the works as records of particularized moments in Nature. In an interview to the American painter Lilla Cabot Perry, Monet described the circumstances of making one of the poplar pictures of the 1890s: "the effect lasted only seven minutes, or until the sunlight left a certain leaf." Perry then summarizes Monet's lesson as a directive: "He always insisted on the great importance of a painter noticing when the effect changed, so as to get a true impression of a certain aspect of nature and not a composite picture." Lilla Cabot Perry, "Reminiscences of Claude Monet from 1889-1909," *American Magazine of Art* 18 (March 1927): 119-125; repr. in Meredith Martindale, *Lilla Cabot Perry: An American Impressionist* (Washington, WASHINGTON, D.C.: The National Museum of Women in the Arts, 1990), 117.

⁶⁸ John Klein convincingly argues that Monet's demand for a one-man show "indicates the artist's desire to find a market niche as much as to assert his individuality. At the same time, there can be no question that Monet thought of his paintings and their installation in terms of the aesthetic harmony of the parts." John Klein, "The Dispersal of the Modernist Series," *Oxford Art Journal*, vol. 21, no. 1 (1998): 123-35; 124. In a similar manner, Durand-Ruel was eager to deal in the temperament and individuality of Monet, a practice that was becoming essential to the commercial world of art galleries. Degas had only two one-man exhibitions in his lifetime: a group of color

seriality of Monet's paintings, there is no ultimate finality to the frieze classroom series; it morphs in perpetuity until the final decade of Degas's career. This endless reinvention is not so much about the suspension of time—such that Degas is stuck—but the enfolding of past, present, and future. This holds for Degas's production and for viewers' reception of the works. Just as important, Degas's transformations are not mediated by fluctuating factors in/of Nature, but by the artificial bounds of durations of drawing and the re-formation of motifs in pictorial space. It is the difference of willed transformation over time and in a symbolic space versus the individual's perception of nature recorded as instantaneous effect.

There is more at stake in my comparison than de-mythification of artistic processes. I mean to differentiate between modes of temporality involved in the practices of art-making: how the everyday can be experienced and expressed in dialectical ways.⁶⁹ Degas's serial mode involved continuity and transformation, memory, routine, and the absorption of experiments; Monet implicitly sought out the novel and the ephemeral, insisted on a large sum of forgetting as he moved from moment to moment, and wrote an ending into the beginning of his project/product when he limited each series. I take the opposition to be of critical significance, not just where definitions, or mythologies, of creativity are concerned, but also because it affects how we consume painting as a product (painting as a commodity). Lefebvre's analogy of the everyday is insightful here:

There is a cliché which with a certain degree of justification compares creative moments to the mountain tops and everyday time to the plain, or to the marshes. The image the reader will find in this book differs from this generally accepted metaphor. Here everyday life is compared to fertile soil. A landscape without

monotype landscapes was shown at Durand-Ruel's in late 1892, and the Fogg Art Museum exhibited twelve works for ten days in 1911, its first modern art affair.

⁶⁹ Lefebvre stresses the dialectical nature of everyday life, which is colonized by the commodity but is apt to produce social practices of resistance. Henri Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life I* (1947), trans. John Moore (London, New York: Verso, 1991), 35.

flowers or magnificent woods may be depressing for the passer-by; but flowers and trees should not make us forget the earth beneath.⁷⁰

Lefebvre's point is that the soil is "something dirty" and diffuse, whereas the flowers are specialized activities to be appreciated as whole manifestations. Monet's series are whole manifestations, "conveniently coherent product line[s] freshly served up to the market-place."⁷¹ Degas's seriality is layered and diffuse. His series of works spreads over time, with little more for the viewer to go on than memories of peculiar frieze-shaped canvases and tired, hunched-over dancers. Nor do his canvases bloom. Instead, they appear as labored manipulations of transmogrified forms and disjunctive spaces—a rather deficient product line of unfinished forms, but a vast field of twisted productivity given acute attention.

It's strange then, that Degas's well-worn vernacular for a picture was "*l'article*."⁷² In 1879 he writes to Bracquemond, "I shall go and see you one of these days when I have finished two *articles* which are in the process and on the fire."⁷³ In 1880, with an air of irony, he instructs Jean Charles Cazin that he "must also begin a campaign to have your *articles* pushed by amateurs, admirers of yours."⁷⁴ Or, shrouded in disappointment, he writes to Bartholomé sometime in 1889: "I had some tedious articles to do, I still have some to do, and they must have, alas, bad as they are, the best that is in me."⁷⁵ There is little confusion about how he used the term. Whether discussing successful moments of production, commercial enterprises, or unhappy products for the market, Degas positions *l'article* as an object of commerce, a thing invariably

⁷⁰ Ibid., 87.

⁷¹ Klein, "The Dispersal of the Modernist Series," 126.

⁷² Degas employs the terms in several letters and Vollard makes a general statement claiming that this was the artist's term for his works. Degas, *Lettres*, 43, 59, 62, 136, 202 ("À Durand-Ruel"), and 202 ("À Alexis Rouart"). Vollard, *Degas (1834-1917)*, 73.

⁷³ "J'irai vous voir ces jours-ci quand j'aurai fini deux *articles* qui sont en train et sur le feu." Degas, *Lettres*, 43.

⁷⁴ "Il faudrait aussi que vous vous missiez en campagne pour faire pousser vos *articles* par des amateurs, des gens à vous." Ibid., 59.

⁷⁵ "J'ai eu des articles embêtants à faire, j'en ai à faire et il leur faut, hélas, tout mauvais qu'ils soient, le meilleur de moi." Ibid., 135-6.

destined to depart the studio and enter the market.⁷⁶ But *l'article* sits uncomfortably between several meanings at the end of the century, a fact no doubt relished by Degas. Littré lists the primary meaning as: “A term of anatomy. Joint of two bones. Amputation of the article.”⁷⁷ A subdivision of this first definition relates to painting and sculpture, wherein the word refers to a very small contour of a human joint. The second use of the term has to do with a specific “moment of conjuncture” when one is “at death’s door,” a final moment of contingency as it may be. There are additional meanings for *l'article* that might pertain: part of a contract, a subject or matter at hand, or an article of commerce, merchandise on the market.

None of these definitions seem exactly right; yet they are all mildly feasible. In the anatomical definition there is a quality of synecdoche that adheres to Degas’s collective project of making art, even with its indefinitely alterable features. If the “part” is a representative of the whole, to amputate the part is to destroy the oeuvre. Indeed, one often gets the impression that for Degas, the completion of a painting was a death knell. As early as 1873 he bemoaned the task of finalizing a painting and the inevitable passing of time: “I have never done with the finishing off of my pictures and pastels etc. . . . How long it is and how my last good years are passing in mediocrity! I often weep over my poor life. Yesterday I went to the funeral of Tillot’s father.”⁷⁸

There are more even infamous instances of loss, retrieval, and destruction. He told the German

⁷⁶ Patricia Mainardi claims that Degas reserved the term, *l'article*, for “commercial items created specifically for the market.” She insinuates that “works such as these” stand in opposition to another type or category of art works; however, she makes no argument about what might characterize said distinction, nor does she offer examples. Moreover, she claims—without further discussion or evidence—that “Degas was . . . meeting demand with supply by using repetitions of his sought after works to generate income.” I maintain that Degas’s letters provide no evidence for such a clear distinction between types of pictures. I would also add that her conclusions are unfounded and problematic. Patricia Mainardi, “Review of *Déjà Vu? Revealing Repetition in French Masterpieces*,” *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide*, vol. 7 (Spring 2008): 10-11, <http://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/index.php/component/content/article/40-spring08review/102-deja-vu-revealing-repetition-in-french-masterpieces>.

⁷⁷ “Terme d'anatomie. Jointure de deux os. Amputation dans l'article.” *Le dictionnaire de la langue française Littré*, <http://littre.reverso.net/dictionnaire-francais>.

⁷⁸ “Je n’en finis pas de mes achevements de tableaux, pastels, etc. . . . Que c’est long, et que mes dernières bonnes années s’en vont dans le médiocre! Je pleure bien souvent sur ma pauvre vie. Hier j’ai été à l’enterrement du père de Tillot.” Degas, *Lettres*, 30.

painter Max Liebermann that he “would like to be rich enough to buy back all my pictures and destroy them by pushing my foot through the canvas.”⁷⁹ And when Vollard suggested he have a wax statue cast in bronze, he destroyed it, explaining, “You are thinking of its money value only! But even a hat full of diamonds would not make me as happy as I was to destroy it—for all the pleasure I shall have in remodeling it.”⁸⁰ Vollard maintains that Degas made a habit of refunding buyers’ money and reclaiming his paintings; he was never satisfied in letting any of his work go out of the studio. Accordingly, Rouart chained his favorite *Danseuses* to the wall.⁸¹

Degas’s notorious “horror of commerce” and his disdain for “brothels that picture shows are”⁸² may bespeak a late-career anxiety about the commodification of his works, but Degas’s long-standing ardor for *les articles* evinces more than just a suspicion of art’s increasing exchangeability. Underlying Degas’s violent measures of retrieval, and his evocation of the art market as the final moment of conjecture, is a desire for deferment of “an end.” The assimilation of the dancer-motif to the frieze canvases (and beyond) suspended the irrevocable moment of release and allowed him to reorganize the players on the board. Psycho-sexual interpretations might readily follow such conclusions: the desire for control and restraint displaced as motivation toward repetition; seriality as substitute for semen. But perhaps more poignant is the artist’s underlying lament for the circulation of the thing: *l’article* as a social surrogate for himself or, more to the point, his practice. After all, if one enacts artistic labor as an

⁷⁹ In Karl Scheffler’s memoirs he remembers: “[d]as einzige Mal, als ich mit Degas zusammen war, sagte er: er wüsche reich zu sein, um alle Bilder zurück-zukaufen und mit dem Fuß durchzustoßen!” Karl Scheffler, *Die fetten und die mageren Jahre: ein Arbeits- und Lebensbericht* (Munich: Paul List, 1946), 77.

⁸⁰ “Vous pensez surtout, Vollard, à ce que ça valait, mais m’auriez-vous donné un chapeau plein de diamants que je n’aurais pas eu un bonheur égal à celui que j’ai pris à démolir ça pour le plaisir de recommencer.” Vollard, *Degas (1834-1917)*, 112-3.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 75.

⁸² William Rothenstein, *Men and Memories: Recollections of William Rothenstein, 1872-1900*, vol. 2 (New York: Coward-McCann, 1931), 336.

anachronistic—perhaps even nostalgic—practice, entrenched cynicism toward reified public life makes sense.

In his own unwieldy manner, Vollard articulates the equivalences between Degas's postures on public life and his artistic processes. At the start of the chapter dedicated to Degas's "Methods of Work," the author begins: "Degas never cared very much for money. One of his sayings was: 'In my day no one ever really "arrived."' Vollard then projects how "a trace of regret that those days were gone would creep into his voice." Having thus effectively entwined money and public life, the dealer's narrative shifts to relate an anecdote about the marketplace on his way toward his actual subject, Degas's repetitious drawing methods:

Upon leaving an auction at which one of his pictures had fetched a sensational price, someone said to him:

'Quite a change from the days when you sold a masterpiece for a hundred francs, Monsieur Degas.'

'Why do you say masterpiece?' asked Degas sharply. 'If you only knew how sorry I am those days are over. I may have been a good horse to bet on, but it is just as well I didn't know it. If my "articles" have begun to fetch such prices now, there is no telling what Delacroix and Ingres sell for. I won't be able to buy them for myself any more . . . !'

'But,' I ventured, 'you could have all the money you want, Monsieur Degas, if you would only dig into your portfolios.'

'You know how much I hate to sell my work, and I always hope eventually to do better.'

Because of the many tracings that Degas did of his drawings, the public made the accusation: 'Degas repeats himself.' But his passion for perfection was responsible for his continual research. . . . He would usually make the correction by beginning the new figure outside of the original outlines, the drawing growing larger and larger until a nude no bigger than a hand became life-size—only to be abandoned in the end.⁸³

⁸³ "Degas n'a jamais attaché aucun prix à l'argent. On connaît ce mot de lui: 'De mon temps on n'arrivait pas.' Et dans la voix perçait comme un regret que ce temps fût passé. Au sortir d'une vente où une enchère sensationnelle avait été portée sur une de ses toiles: 'Cela vous change, monsieur Degas, du temps où vous vendiez un chef-d'œuvre cent francs,' disait quelqu'un. Degas (*brusquement*)—Pourquoi chef-d'œuvre? . . . Si vous saviez comme je regrette ce temps-là! J'étais peut-être déjà le cheval de course sur lequel on misait, mais du moins, je ne le savais pas Et si mes 'articles' se mettent à se vendre des prix pareils, qu'est-ce que ça va être pour les Delacroix et les Ingres? Je ne vais plus pouvoir m'en payer! Moi—Monsieur Degas, cela vous serait si facile d'avoir tout l'argent que vous voudriez! Vous n'auriez qu'à entrouvrir vos cartons. Degas—Vous savez combien cela m'embête de vendre, et que j'espère toujours arriver à faire mieux." For the remainder of the original French, see note 14. Vollard, *Degas (1834-1917)*, 66-8.

There is a lot happening this passage: an artist and his dealer speculating on art while the artist's work is up for auction; Degas's tactical self-effacement, which coercively links his oeuvre with Delacroix's and Ingres's; and the formative construction of Degas as a passionate, even obsessive ascetic. But Vollard's traverse—from Degas's distaste for “arriving” to the artist's resistance to sell his *articles*, and then to the abandonment of his sketches—is illuminating in its own way. Not only does it divulge Degas's skepticisms about the finality and fixity of both public life and artistic production, but it bridges the two by way of the marketplace.

Daniel Halévy recounts a separate incident that similarly links Degas's renouncement of public life and his deferment of “an end” to his practice. Degas is at the Halévy home in February 1892, enraged that Mallarmé, acting on behalf of Henry Roujon of the Beaux-Arts, requested a picture for the Luxembourg:

‘I told him, most certainly not, of course. These people want to make me think that I have arrived. Arrived, what does that mean? One is always there; one is never there—what is this *arrived*? It means hanging on a wall next to a lady by Bouguereau and *The Slave Market* by Toto Girod? I want none of it. When everyone pulls his own way and attracts his own little public, what do the committees want to stick their noses into it for? . . . They have the chess board of the *beaux-arts* on their table and we, the artists, we are the pawns. . . . They move this pawn here, that pawn there. . . . I am not a pawn, I do not want to be moved!’⁸⁴

Ludovic Halévy, the author's father, reportedly grows angry and calls Degas “embittered,” to which the artist responds:

‘Embittered? But I am very pleased.’ [. . .]

⁸⁴ ‘Je lui ai dit non, bien sûr. Ces gens voudraient me faire croire que je suis arrivé. Arrivé, qu'est-ce que cela veut dire? On l'est toujours, on ne l'est jamais—quoi *arrivé*? C'est être sur un mur à côté d'une dame de Bouguereau et du marché d'esclaves de Toto Girod? Je n'en veux pas. Quand chacun tire de son côté et se fait son petit public, qu'est-ce que les bureaux viennent fiche là-dedans? Je leur paye mes contributions, est-ce que mes tableaux les regardent? . . . Ils ont l'échiquier des beaux-arts sur leur table et nous, les artistes, nous sommes les pièces. . . . ils poussent ce pion-là, puis ce pion-là. . . . Je ne suis pas un pion, je ne veux pas qu'on me pousse!’ Degas, *Lettres*, “Appendice II: Quelques conversations de Degas notes par Daniel Halévy en 1891-1893,” 273-4.

‘You do not see that in a higher sense. The fact is that if I were to become a member of the Luxembourg I should imagine I were being led to the guard-room! *Arrived!* One remains stationary! *Arrived!* What does that mean? Does one ever *arrive*? I do not wish to be seized by the policemen of the Beaux Arts, or by that officer of the peace known as Roujon’⁸⁵

Halévy’s anecdote concludes without comment, but the fact that Degas did not want to become a “pawn” in the game of official taste is more than ironic given his abject treatment of the dancer-motifs. Nonetheless, his outrage ultimately stems from the threat of stasis. He objects to the accolades that indubitably fix one as either prostitute or slave (Bouguereau or Girod) to the public and preclude the promise of future prospects. His immediate endeavors may be destined for abandonment, as Vollard alleges, but the process of execution is what matters most and public circulation suppresses transformation.

In the the early Third Republic, when free market principles and speculative investment swelled into the dealings of modern art, Degas’s cynicism was not unfounded. As Nicholas Green has smartly argued, the emerging dealer-critic system was premised on “particular discourses of individualism grounded in the dominant ideology of the Third Republic.”⁸⁶ Novel modes of biographical “branding” were underpinned by the burgeoning discipline of art history, which concocted tales of nationalistic genius from the lives of the state’s citizens. Degas himself would undergo such hagiographic treatment immediately following his death in 1917, but the artist was no doubt aware of the rash of biographies of contemporary painters already proliferating the market in the 1870s and 80s: Philippe Burty on Paul Huet (1870), Frédéric Henriet on Chintreuil (1873), Henri Dumesnil on Corot (1875), Louis Gonse on Fromentin

⁸⁵ “‘Aigri?’ Mais je suis très content. . . . Tu ne vois pas ça de haut. Le fait est que si j’entrais au Luxembourg, je croirais qu’on me mène au poste! *Arrivé!* On ne bouge plus! *Arrivé!* Qu’est-ce que ça veut dire? Est-ce qu’on *arrive*? Je ne veux pas être empoigné par les sergents de ville des beaux-arts, ou par cet officier de paix nommé Roujon.” Ibid., 274.

⁸⁶ Nicholas Green, “Dealing in Temperaments: Economic Transformation of the Artistic Field in France during the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century,” *Art History* vol. 10, no. 1 (March 1987): 59-78; 61.

(1881), Edmond Bazire on Manet (1884), Louis de Fourcand on Bastien-Lepage (1885), and collections of biographies by Burty, Charles Blanc, Ernest Chesneau, and Jules Clarétie, to name only a few.⁸⁷ In some cases, art dealer and art historian were in cohorts (Alfred Sensier and Durand-Ruel are the notorious example), but in each instance the text was an exposé of a painter's life meant to advertise his uniqueness—a modern substitution for the “old master” selling point so central to business at the Hôtel Drouot.⁸⁸ As Green points out, these positivistic, pseudo-scientific accounts mostly disregarded the formal qualities of the works and discursively argued for an unmediated relationship between the creative individual and his paint, actively producing a cult of personality and an art market that traded in “modern” artistic temperments.⁸⁹

As much as Degas was complicit in the free market of modern art dealing, there is evidence—in his biographers' recollections, ironically—that he was critical of its strategies, or that he found its compulsory publicness to be crude, even vulgar. (Hence, Degas's outrage at Moore when he published “The Painter of Modern Life” in 1890 and divulged intimacies about the artist's private life.)⁹⁰ Biographies, journalistic vignettes, membership to the Luxembourg, one-man retrospectives—these are the essential parts in the machine of public “arrival.” The “creative individual” and his labor are collapsed into a unique, desirable product for public circulation, such that the “qualitative, variable, flowing nature” of art-making is made static,

⁸⁷ Philippe Burty, *Paul Huet, Notice biographique et critique* (Paris: J. Claye, 1870); Frédéric Henriet, *Vie et l'œuvre de Chintreuil* (Paris: Cadart, 1873); Henri Dumesnil, *Corot, souvenirs intimes* (Paris, 1875); Louis Gonse, *Fromentin* (Paris, 1881); Edmond Bazire, *Manet* (Paris: A. Quantin, 1884); Louis de Fourcaud, *Bastien-Lepage : Sa vie et ses œuvres* (Paris, 1885); Philippe Burty, *Maîtres et petits maîtres* (Paris, 1877); Charles Blanc, *Les Artistes de mon temps* (Paris, 1876); Jules Clarétie, *Peintres et sculpteurs contemporains* (Paris, 1873, 1880, 1882). For a more complete list, see *ibid.*, 77n.37.

⁸⁸ Jensen, *Marketing Modernism in Fin-de-Siècle Europe*, 53-4.

⁸⁹ Green, “Dealing in Temperaments: Economic Transformation of the Artistic Field in France during the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century,” 71.

⁹⁰ See note 1.

transformed in the public sphere into a delimited and quantifiable thing (the commodity).⁹¹ In Georg Lukács words, the commodity's "principle of rationalization . . . declares war on the organic manufacture of whole products based on the *traditional amalgam of empirical experiences at work*. The finished article ceases to be the object of the work-process."⁹² Artistic process, the experiences of knowledge and intuition developed over time, becomes an objective, quantified thing that must stand in relation to all other commodities. Degas detested the spectacle: the parade of bourgeois "individuality" and its clamoring public, the fixity of the picture and of the person. Not because he was anti-capitalist, or republican. Rather, because he longed for continuity with the past. He desired stability in the face of radical social contingency. And if France's grand artistic traditions were nearly lost, then he would invent his own modern traditions wrought from his own vital knowledge about modern life. In other words, he would practice and rehearse his craft interminably, infusing it with the time, labor, and knowledge that are constantly reified in the subjective forms of bourgeois life.

By way of conclusion I want to return to the quotation from the beginning of this section. It was George Moore's recollection of Degas railing against inspiration and temperament in modern painting, claiming that "even movement" is borne of reflection and study. In assimilating the dancer-motif to the serial production of the frieze paintings, Degas imbued their reception with the alteration of form over time: the "movement" of his everyday labor that depleted and revived the frieze canvases of the 1880s and 90s. In distinction to contemporaneous modes of coherent seriality, Degas's method of production was an attempt to resist the reification of the artist's interminable process (and the artist himself) into product. But the seriality of the frieze classroom series also generates knowledge about the viewer's own movements in and across

⁹¹ Georg Lukács, "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat," in *History and Class Consciousness* (1923), trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 90.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 88.

time. “Movement” occurs when the intensity of past and present are compounded; change is relayed via the memory of prior encounters nascent in the present exchange between a viewer like Valéry and a painting. To put it bluntly, looking at a particular painting from the frieze series becomes an event melded to past experiences. This may very well be symptomatic of seriality in general. However, the seriality of the frieze paintings and their dancer-motifs is fluid and indefinite. The viewer’s future encounters are undetermined and there is no limited edition of experiences/paintings for her to collect. Alas, the viewer’s “movement” is not fixed in the series, so much as actualized by contexts. In the face of Monet’s novel marketing in the 1890s or Damien Hirst’s global “multi-show” strategy today, what is most radical about Degas’s seriality is that consciousness is not constituted as hermetic, or collectible.⁹³

On the frieze format: Performances in symbolic space

To speak of how encounter and experience perpetually unfold in Degas’s craft is impossible without examining the creative expanse of the frieze format. It is the quintessential pictorial arena for the iterations of the dancer-motifs, intricately entwined with their generation, recognizability, and qualitative differences. But after the careful attention awarded to the temporality of crafting the dancer-motifs, the frieze format reverts us to analyses of a specific *spatial* practice. Assuming the reader has already been privy to the methodical formal attention given to Degas’s inversions and manipulations of pictorial space in the foyer series (i.e. Chapter Two), the more succinct account of the frieze compositions that follows may come as a relief, but it should also ring familiar.

⁹³ On the marketing of Monet, see Klein, “The Dispersal of the Modernist Series;” on Hirst’s recent “multi-show” strategy, see Roberta Smith, “Hirst: Globally Dotting His ‘I,’” *The New York Times*, January 12, 2012.

The standard summary of the series divides the works into two types (or conceptions) of disjunctive pictorial space: the first is defined by a shallow foreground on the left that is contiguous to the deeply recessed background on the right; the second reverses the two spaces.⁹⁴ To borrow the structural terms from my discussion of the foyer series, these two models of “place” as pictorial space might be deemed Degas’s prototype and alteration.⁹⁵ Of the earliest frieze oil paintings (c. 1879-1885), three deploy the first type of pictorial space (with the foreground on the left of the canvas), and three the second.⁹⁶ I would secure their dates from 1878-79 to around 1885, with significant changes made to several at a future date. However, the compositions were not necessarily worked on chronologically or in synchronicity.⁹⁷ The first group consists of the National Gallery’s *The Dance Lesson*, the Metropolitan’s *Dancers in the Rehearsal Room with a Double Bass*, and *Dancers in the Green Room* from the Detroit Institute of Arts (Figs. 0.9-0.12). The alterations are *The Dancing Lesson* at The Clark, the National Gallery’s *Before the Ballet*, and Yale’s *Ballet Rehearsal* (Figs. 0.13-0.15). I examine the series with the premise that its repetitions and anomalies reveal something of Degas’s investment in the horizontal format as a space for controlled experiment. There is much made of dates and order, a

⁹⁴ The reader will remember that the foyer series can also be divided into two types of pictorial space: the first is defined by three arched windows, the presence/absence of the staircase, the presence/absence of the colonnade, and a high vanishing point at the left of the canvas; the second group is composed of truncated arched windows, a conspicuous spiral staircase, and a high vanishing point at the right. For a longer summary of the frieze series’ pictorial space and its limited number of dancer-motifs, see the introduction of my Chapter Three. For other scholars’ synopsis of the series, see Shackelford, *Degas: The Dancers*, 85; *Degas*, ed. Boggs, 405; DeVonyar and Kendall, *Degas and the Dance*, 111.

⁹⁵ To remind the reader, in Chapter Two I discuss the Phillips’ *The Dance Rehearsal* as the foyer series’ prototypical pictorial space, which the artist then depleted (removed architectural structures) to generate its alteration, the Fogg’s *The Rehearsal*, an airy and luminous alternative that is void of the cumbersome weight of “place.” In the Corcoran’s *The Dance Class*, Degas created a particular variation on this pictorial space by augmenting it with the spiral staircase and shifting the viewer’s line of sight from the left to the right antechambers.

⁹⁶ There is also a sketch in *l’essence* that closely follows the Metropolitan’s *Dancers in the Rehearsal Room with a Double Bass*. I do not discuss the work in specifics, but it should be included in the count of prototype frieze compositions (Fig. 0.11).

⁹⁷ I discuss the debate surrounding the dating of the series below. Briefly, Gary Tinterow and Jean Sutherland Boggs construct one timeline, which is at odds with that of George Shackelford. Richard Kendall does not give much attention to the dates of the frieze paintings, but he does concede the archival evidence offered by Shackelford.

somewhat unfortunate effect of the artist's unwieldy process. But the principle point is that Degas cultivated the restricted, oddly-shaped canvases in order to exploit the potential of his memory drawing routines. The results are plural performances on the horizontal—a dozen or more paintings reworked over time—of well-rehearsed turns and pairings of motifs, complemented by recognizable architectural contrivances and a few tentative tactics late in the game. Degas again deploys architecture as structural variances in the frieze compositions, but the iconicity of architectural “place” is largely dispersed, replaced by an everyday craft of art-making in a familiar, well-worn space.

Scholarly consensus argues that *The Dance Lesson* (Fig. 0.9) came first. The painting was either underway or completed in 1879, depending on whether the sketch from notebook thirty-one (c. 1878-79, Fig. 3.7) is regarded as a preliminary sketch, a drawing from memory, or a work-in-progress. The dates of the remaining five paintings that comprise the early frieze works are contested. Shackelford contends that *Dancers in the Rehearsal Room with a Double Bass* (Fig. 0.10) was also begun or even completed around the same time as *The Dance Lesson*.⁹⁸ Gary Tinterow refutes this date.

[*Dancers in the Rehearsal Room with a Double Bass*'s] palette . . . reveals affinities with other works of the mid-1880s. The tawny tonality . . . is closer to that of Chicago's *Millinery Shop* and significantly removed from the cool palettes of the Mellon picture [*The Dance Lesson*, Fig. 0.9] and the *The Dancing Lesson* in the Clark Art Institute [Fig. 0.13], both of which do seem to date from 1879-80. The Metropolitan's picture is equally removed from both the variant in Detroit [*Dancers in the Green Room*, Fig. 0.12], which is later, and the frieze-format painting of a rehearsal in the National Gallery of Art [*Before the Ballet*, Fig. 0.14] that Degas sold in 1892. The drawings for the Metropolitan's painting seem to have been made between 1882 and 1885; they are similar in handling to the milliners in pastel and their related drawings of 1882.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ Shackelford, *Degas: The Dancers*, 86-90

⁹⁹ *Degas*, ed. Boggs, 406

The first painting to which Tinterow refers, *The Millinery Shop*, is dated from 1882-86—not exactly a definitive date from which to measure. More importantly, the palette of both works, *Dancers in the Rehearsal Room with a Double Bass* and *The Millinery Shop*, are comparable to the “tawny” palette that dominates in the *Portraits of a Frieze* and *Mary Cassatt at the Louvre* series of pastels sketches and prints (c. 1879-81, Figs. 3.66-3.72). As for the sketches that Tinterow associates with the Metropolitan’s painting, *Study of a Bow* is related to several other sketches of the seated dancer-motif dated to 1879-80 and to two multi-figure compositions that actually feature the hunched dancer in a blue bow, also dated 1879-80 (Figs. 4.27-4.31 & 4.33-4.36). The other sketch, *Dancer Stretching*, is one of the few anomalous motifs in the series, and its date is completely dependent upon the secure date of the Metropolitan painting. Finally, Tinterow’s reference to the Detroit painting as a useful measure must be reviewed, as that painting has been re-dated to circa 1879.

There are two basic compositional details in the sketch from Notebook thirty-one that have led scholars to assume that it relates specifically to *The Dance Lesson*: the position of the seated dancer motif, which faces toward the rear right corner of the composition; and the presence of the open violin case, over which Degas visibly painted. However, the sketch differs in more than one way from *The Dance Lesson*, and it shares just as much with the Metropolitan’s *Dancers in the Rehearsal Room with a Double Bass* (Fig. 0.10). In the notebook sketch, the double bass sits along the foregrounded wall, but there is no dancer resting on its lower bout as in *The Dance Lesson*. Similarly, the bulletin on the wall in *The Dance Lesson* is missing in the sketch and, whereas there are two windows with streaming light in *The Dance Lesson*, there are three squared blocks of white light in the sketch. On the other hand, like in the sketch, in *Dancers in the Rehearsal Room with a Double Bass* the bout of the instrument is vacant, there is

no bulletin posted on the wall, and three windows interrupt the wall of shadow in the background. This is not to say that the notebook sketch duplicates *Dancers in the Rehearsal Room with a Double Bass*: its seated dancer-motif faces the viewer and there are no traces of a violin case near the double bass. Nor am I suggesting that the sketch is less bound to the production of *The Dance Lesson*. Rather, there are definite traces of both oil paintings in the mythical sketch from Notebook thirty-one, such that, even if the Metropolitan's work was not in progress or completed at the time of the sketch, it is more than likely that its conception was not far off. Furthermore, given the fervor of Degas's artistic experiments around 1879, I doubt the artist waited three years—as Tinterow would have it—to reprise his new found ballet classroom.

This persnickety pursuit of dates is necessary, even if it highlights the tenuousness of our knowledge about the artist's generative practices.¹⁰⁰ No scholar has questioned the dates of the Orsay painting, the two pastels with the “dancer in preparatory *en bas*,” or the pastels done after 1900 (Figs. 0.22-0.25 & 0.27-0.30). But there are three prime bones of contention: 1) the origin of the series; 2) the production dates of two “alteration” works (the National Gallery's *Before the Ballet* and Yale's *Ballet Rehearsal*); and 3) the dates of the later pastels featuring the architectural addendum of the open door. Tinterow and Bogg's approximations correspond closely to Lemoisne's timeline of the series;¹⁰¹ Shackelford's and mine are a revision of sorts. Tinterow argues that the National Gallery's *The Dance Lesson* (Fig. 0.9) was completed first. He and Bogg's estimations also spread Degas's engagement with the prototype and alteration

¹⁰⁰ The dates for the majority of the frieze classroom paintings are in question, but George Shackelford has convincingly argued for a reconsideration of the series' timeline in his chapter on the series, *Theme and Variations*. Shackelford argues that several of the works, originally dated to the first decade of the twentieth century on stylistic grounds, were actually conceived closer to the period in which Degas produced the earliest work in the series. Shackelford, *Degas: The Dancers*, 85-107.

¹⁰¹ Tinterow wrote the catalogue entries in *Degas* for works dating from 1881-1890; Boggs was responsible for the portion of the *Degas* catalogue, 1890-1912. I am not assuming that the two men agree on the totality of dates recorded in the *Degas* catalogue, but that their opinion forms a published document, which post-dates Shackelford's publication and is obviously meant to challenge his assessment.

paintings just over ten years, from 1879 to 1890: from The National Gallery's *The Dance Lesson* to the same institution's *Before the Ballet* (Fig. 0.14) and Yale's *Ballet Rehearsal* (Fig. 0.15).¹⁰² Boggs dates the later pastels in the series to 1898 (i.e. the Bührlé Collection's *Dancers in the Foyer*). On the other hand, Shackelford contends that the six paintings that make up the prototype and alteration groups were in some state of finish by 1885, and that the lithograph from 1889 (Fig. 4.58) is irrevocable evidence to date the later pastels—again, in some state of finish—to the late 1880s as well.¹⁰³

What remains uncertain then is the number of canvases Degas completed during any one period of engagement with the frieze series. But given that it is resolutely impossible to detail exactly when Degas re-worked many of the paintings, what are we demanding when we fetishize dates of origination and completion?¹⁰⁴ It is clear that the series sustained Degas's attention in multiple media, discrete styles of draftsmanship, and various levels of finish over the course of nearly three decades. If nothing else, the duration of the project attests to Degas's deferral of "the end," while implicitly acknowledging the provisionality that led the artist *not* to date his works.

Suffice it to say that Degas seems to have invented the two types of pictorial space at an early moment. The National Gallery's *The Dance Lesson* was exhibited at the Fifth Impressionist Exhibition in 1880 and scholars agree, on stylistic grounds, that the Clark's *The Dancing Lesson*

¹⁰² Boggs claims that the Yale version of the alteration group was probably finished before the National Gallery painting because the former has "fussier genre details." Again, I would disagree and invoke Degas's many re-workings of canvases. We know the National Gallery work was overpainted at some point but it is unclear when. It is more likely that the painting was completed at an early date (c. 1885) and Degas obfuscated the "dancer with leg on bench" and the bulletin board relatively near to the time he sold it to Durand-Ruel, in 1892.

¹⁰³ Kendall reconciles these two arguments by dating the Bührlé Collection's *Dancers in the Foyer* to c. 1889-1905; although he does concede the date of the Yale painting to Tinterow and Boggs, c. 1890-92.

¹⁰⁴ I would also invoke Richard Schiff's argument about nineteenth-century discourse on the concept of the "original." He queries that the early modernist critics and artists "sought the original—but could it ever be certain of having found it?" Schiff resolves that "[i]n general, nineteenth-century discourse recognizes the wildness of the original; and in the wavering motion of its consequent insecurity, it anticipates and evades the incisions with which critics today would undercut any rigid or seamless history of origins." Schiff, "The Original, the Imitation, the Copy, and the Spontaneous Classic: Theory and Painting in Nineteenth-Century France," 27-8.

(Fig. 0.13) was started around the same time. As in the foyer series, Degas morphed one pictorial space into another via architectural means, in this case by moving the long foreground wall from the left to the right of the picture plane. Degas thus inverted the positive and negative spaces of the fictive classroom by relocating the “physical” wall—a procedure that effectively collapses the distinction between “place” (wall) and pictorial space (positive space). It is a subtle, ingenious manipulation of the pictures’ most rudimentary figure/ground relationship, prior to the addition of the architectonic figures themselves. It is also a remake of the artist’s monotype frieze compositions and their positive/negative spatial limitations. A third group of paintings, which date from 1884 to around 1889, comprise the variation phase of the series. Little attention has been given to these works, most likely because they do not adhere to scholars’ simplified scheme of the series’ two types of pictorial space, and because more than one was reworked at a later date. But in fact, the Orsay’s *Dancers Climbing a Staircase*, the two pastels called *The Dance Foyer* (Figs. 0.17 & 0.18), and the Bührle Collection’s *The Dance Foyer* (Fig. 0.19), along with later variants (Figs. 0.20 & 0.21), do not dramatically amend the fundamental pictorial structure of the frieze classroom.

The Dance Lesson, *Dancers in the Rehearsal Room with a Double Bass*, and Detroit’s *Dancers in the Green Room* employ the prototypical pictorial space of the frieze classroom. Whatever their exact sequence, it is evident that Degas blatantly replicated the basic structuring motifs of the space: the double bass that echoes the length of the foreground wall; the “seated dancer” that bends just below the painted horizontal divide on the long wall; the group of loosely configured dancers in the background; and the “standing dancer” motif, which is the crucial intermediary point between the contiguous spaces. While the paintings were executed with various degrees of finish, the three works picture nearly identical compositions. And still, there is

an underlying dynamic of differentiation (as much as repetition) among the three. The “seated dancer” on the double bass in *The Dance Lesson* migrates to the right and morphs into the “dancer with foot on double bass” in the Detroit canvas; the “seated dancer” in the chair rises, falls, and rotates 180 degrees across the three canvases; and all of the foregrounded dancer-motifs undergo noticeable costume changes.

There is a comparable tension between consistency and difference in the alteration trio. The “seated dancer” at the far right of *Before the Ballet* and *Ballet Rehearsal* (Figs. 0.14 & 60.15) was once a “dancer with foot on bench” in *The Dancing Lesson* (Fig. 0.13). The “standing dancer” with fan is absent only in *Before the Ballet*. A crude pillar and a novel “dancer with foot on bench” appear to the center of *Ballet Rehearsal*; the same motif was actually present in *Before the Ballet* as well, but Degas painted over the dancer at an unknown date.¹⁰⁵ Aside from these substitutions and alterations, the works are exceedingly similar. In both cases—the prototype group and the alteration group—Degas’s generative mode was to re-create the fundamental structure of the composition as a space for ongoing reconfigurations. In other words, the frieze support and its two spatial typologies afforded the artist a pictorial expanse for experiment, a space in which to arrange dancer-motifs in distinct, but always interrelated, variations or performances.

Given the homogeneity of the compositions, it is easy to conceive of the individual works as replicas—with minute peculiarities—of an original composition. And in the context of textual enumeration, it’s an easy mistake. But looking from work to work, the dissimilarities manifest as *qualitative* rather than quantitative differences. Some of this has to do with palette and with the distinct finishes Degas brought to certain works’ surfaces. Their heterogeneity also stems from

¹⁰⁵ National Gallery of Art, WASHINGTON, D.C., Archives for acquisition no. 1942.9.19. The x-radiograph is published in Shackelford, *Degas: The Dancers*, 97.

the fact that there is no tangible rationale behind the discrepancies between the paintings. Degas's decisions to add, alter, or remove motifs produce no variation in the viewer's access to space; nor, for that matter, do they effect narrative interest in a painting. More than any other factor, it is the dancer-motifs' interrelatedness—from picture to picture—that prompts the spectator to identify qualitative differences (and similarities) between the individual paintings. For example, the “seated dancer” in the foreground of each prototype painting maintains a distinctive formal relationship to the dancer-motifs on either side (and to the contrabass), thereby establishing a discrete compositional rhythm across the foreground of the canvases. By slightly altering the dancer-motifs in the foreground (upright or bent torso, angle of body, etc.), Degas was able to structure the surface of the paintings in nuanced ways. Simply put, the paintings seem like repetitions of an exercise: each one is marginally different in its actual manifestation, but they are all made up of the same skillful movements and performed in the same “imaginary space.”¹⁰⁶

Moore refers to this effect as “the picturesqueness of the arabesque.”¹⁰⁷ In the same essay in which he identifies “stock figures,” he explains that Degas's “figures live on the canvas, they do not live in the canvas,” and goes on to make a telling analogy between looking at Degas's paintings and the act of reading:

Degas is small, confined, scattered; there is no view; it is never like looking out of a window, it is more like poring over the text of a book. . . . [T]he figures are, in a sense, more written than drawn.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ This is Shackelford's term for the conceptions of pictorial space in the frieze series. He never defines exactly what he means to infer by such language; however, he employs the term with some thought as it appears in the first sentence of his chapter on the series: “Extending his practice of using and re-using a single figure (discussed in chapter 2), Degas began in the very late 1870s to use and reuse an imaginary space, painting a series of pictures of dance rehearsals, all of which employ a distinctive horizontal format that has often been likened to a frieze.” Shackelford, *Degas: The Dancers*, 85.

¹⁰⁷ Moore, “Degas in Bond Street,” 19.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 19-20.

For Moore, Degas's paintings are like stories told and re-told with recurring plots, characters, and a familiar, if nuanced, rhythm—except that the stories never end. The later variations in the frieze series were fashioned in just this way, from a memorable array of dancer-motifs, props, and architectural structures. The Orsay's *Dancers Climbing a Staircase* (Fig. 0.16)—one of the oddest in the series—recycles the classroom staircase in order to alleviate the pressure of the foreground and the weight of the large wall. But it does little to complicate the pictorial space because so little of the staircase is actually pictured. A second variation reaches further back into Degas's oeuvre. In the two pastels titled *The Dance Foyer* (Figs. 0.17 & 0.18), Degas borrowed both the mirror and the “dancer in preparatory *en bas*” from his earliest classroom painting, *Dance Class* (1871, Fig. 2.3). In both, the deep recess of space to the right is barricaded by a shallow wall; hence the need for the mirror and its reflection of the “outside” world beyond. For the final three variations of the series, Degas transplanted a slightly ajar door to the foregrounded left wall. In the lithograph and in The Toledo Museum of Art's pastel, a familiar circular staircase is barely discernible through the open door (Fig. 0.21). In another, Degas modified the elliptical rail into two vertical lines, perhaps signifying a more conventional stair rail (Fig. 0.20), only to eventually obliterate any trace of it in later re-workings of the Bührlé Collection's *The Dance Foyer* (Fig. 0.19).

If the earlier foyer series signals a diachronistic breakdown in Degas's realism, the variances of “place” in the frieze paintings only strengthen the cohesiveness of symbolic space from picture to picture. In the foyer series, the signifiers of place are constantly transplanted and shifted in the foyer paintings, which in turn creates a paradoxical inaccessibility to their pictorial spaces as definitive “place.” To my mind, there is little doubt that the foyer paintings' disparities were wrought with great care and that the resulting contradictions effectively distanced legible

“place” in painting from the processes of art-making. Accordingly, Degas’s alterations figure a disruption across the series; we lose our imagined location and we are asked to suspend our belief in the permanence of architecture, in the realities of place, and in what realism might deliver.

Architecture does not threaten imagined space in the frieze series. Given the rudimentary reversal of foreground and background (between prototype and alteration), it barely secures pictorial space as a “place” at all. In the frieze paintings the fundamental principle of spatial organization is the flux of relations between motifs, across the horizontal: the particular structuring of the dancer-motifs and the relations between them. The frieze format was Degas’s heuristic device to negotiate, re-tool, and re-live the relations of the motifs and their evolving forms. I would characterize it as an illusion of life processes—an attempt to perform the fluidity of creative life—but certainly not as an illusion of the real. The specific space of a painting is activated by the arranged motifs, and the series thrives in the multiplicity of shifting relations. Similarly, the format is at once restrictive and liberating: the literal height to length ratio of the painting limits the reach of illusionistic depth, but it also foregrounds the artist’s routines and experiments with dancer-motifs. It is a space that is always/already incomplete, in which all potential pictorial relations are always/already contingent, such that no single performance will resolve relations. To borrow Lefebvre’s terms, the frieze support was a “space of representation,” a space of human imagination wherein one might refigure or rebalance the rigid conceptions of abstract space and the lived experiences of everyday life.¹⁰⁹ Degas, in other words, had transformed Cartesian-infused illusionism—the representation of “place” to its inhabitants—into a symbolic arena that is elusive and ever-changing. This is not to say that the frieze series negates the conceived spaces of Western painting, but it does real damage to the cohesiveness of

¹⁰⁹ For detailed definitions of these terms, see my Chapter 2, n.19 and n.20.

illusionistic space and to the naturalized representation of lived space. In the ways that the series thrives on its heterogeneity and difference, how it invites viewers to dawdle in past moments of making/looking—if we consider these real effects—then the series cultivates the impartial over the conceived, the process (or dirt) over the product (the bloom).

To invoke Lefebvre’s triple dialectic one last time, Degas’s achievement, however intangible, was to blur the categories of Western, philosophical space: *physical* or perceived space (the “place” of the Paris Opéra), *mental* or conceived space (pictorial illusionism), and *social* or lived space (his artistic process).¹¹⁰ The “space” of painting is always a social space of knowledge production where ideologies are engaged, reproduced, and/or challenged. In the frieze series, however, the challenge to conventional forms of knowledge is sustained from work to work by way of repetition and then made available as a mode of resistance to the speed and finality of painting as a product. Rather than a surface for reproductive illusions, the production of painting and its illusions of space and time are available as a working process—with limitations, restrictions, rituals, and freedoms. When I say that the frieze classroom is a “space of representation,” I mean that it is a space that can still *activate* its audience via revelations and instigations about/over time and about/in space. We are asked to revel in the dilatory and the incomplete, to question methods of production and consumption, and to re-member past moments of making and viewing. We may try to rationalize the artist’s meanderings, but in the end, the space of the frieze series must be *lived* or experienced by the viewer, precisely because “it is essentially qualitative, fluid, and dynamic.”¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ See my summary of Lefebvre’s triple spatial dialectic in Chapter Two, 5-8.

¹¹¹ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 42.

Conclusion: Body ballets and time-space routines

Through the formation and re-formation of dancer-motifs and contingent spaces, Degas created a mode of production that both stabilized his artistic practices and offered him the freedom to sustain and extend his craft. The dancer-motifs he wrought in the 1880s bear a certain likeness to the women in his brothel monotypes; they are the most depleted, abject dancer-bodies of his entire oeuvre. I think of them as the icons of Degas's own practice: the disintegrated result of incessant rehearsal, a resistance to performance-as-product. The frieze format is the dancer-motifs' theater, the space where they rest and rehearse, fashioning their always contingent relations across the surface.

Over the past two decades, it has become standard scholarly fare to describe the frieze classroom paintings—with their spread of dancer-motifs—as an exercise in “picturing movement.”¹¹² What typically follows are accounts of how the works capture a moment of dancers' actions or how the paintings affect viewers' “scanning response” across the “modest dynamism” of the dancers' bodies.¹¹³ This literature is quick to associate Degas's technologies of making with Eadweard Muybridge's photographic studies of motion, with E.J. Marey's apparatus to study vision and movement, and with the phenomenological experience of viewing sweeping panoramas. The foundation of such arguments has to do with morphological similarity: the frieze pictures are said to look like small panoramic photographs, and Degas's more conventional

¹¹² Aside from the literature cited below, see Kirk Varnedoe, “Fragmentation and Repetition” in his *A Fine Disregard: What Makes Modern Art Modern* (New York: Abrams, 1990), esp.112-26; Anne Hollander, *Moving Pictures* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1991), 399-407; and Charles Stuckey, “The Predications and Implications of Monet's Series” in *Multiples in French Painting from David to Matisse*, 116-7. The critique I elucidate below is also my chief concern with Dyer's argument about Degas's repetition and how it communicates duration. Dyer focuses only on the figures' morphologies in the paintings and how they might morph within one work or across works, whereas I am acutely interested in the artistic processes that are re-activated by the viewer. See Dyer, *Serial Images*, esp. 25-38.

¹¹³ DeVonyar and Kendall, *Degas and the Ballet: Picturing Movement*, 98; 107.

paintings like “snapshots.”¹¹⁴ After all, Degas himself maintained the dancers were just a “pretext” for “rendering movement and painting pretty clothes.”¹¹⁵

Implicit in these assertions is a comparison between Degas’s working methods and the mechanization of picture-making. Dancer-motifs are rendered “frozen in acts,” while the frieze canvases “bustle with activity and purposefulness.”¹¹⁶ Christoph Asendorf articulates this argument quite succinctly, and his conclusions are my final concern in this chapter:

[I]n Degas, the language of movement [the representation of bodies in motion] becomes the carrier of pictorial content. In his work, communication is reduced to the language of gestures; his interest in the objects is mimetic. In this there lies a reflection of the communicational forms of the big city, in which countless meetings with unknown people demand a purely gestural, speechless way of reacting. There remains only the language of movements, which make people speechless mobile bodies and therefore the equivalent of things.

[. . .] Degas is not interested in the human figure but in the figure of movement in space. The body can be visualized only in movement. The eye registers the movements of persons, not the latter themselves; the objects are exchangeable like commodities in circulation. The dancers are doubly anonymous, as elements of the entertainment industry and as mobile bodies. Degas paints them in endless series.¹¹⁷

Asendorf contends that Degas created disembodied figures, both anonymous and interchangeable, that accumulate exchange value in serial relations over time. Degas’s fetish is movement; his obsession the sexualized body of the dancer. Not surprisingly, I find this claim difficult to reconcile with the sketch of Darde that appeared in *La Vie moderne* in 1879 (Fig. 4.4). There is no doubt that by publishing the drawing (without annotation) he displaces the dancer’s subjecthood—perhaps to the point that she becomes the object of a scientific voyeurism. Likewise, she is “an element” of commercialism, although of an unarticulated, less-than-thrilling type. I would maintain that she is worn and labored, but not penetrable. Moreover,

¹¹⁴ Christoph Asendorf, *Batteries of Life*, 82.

¹¹⁵ The full quote reads, “On m’appelle le peintre des danseuses, on ne comprend pas que la danseuse a été pour moi un prétexte à peindre de jolies étoffes et à rendre des mouvements. . . .” Vollard, *Degas (1834-1917)*, 109-10.

¹¹⁶ DeVonyar and Kendall, *Degas and the Ballet: Picturing Movement*, 107; 110.

¹¹⁷ Asendorf, *Batteries of Life*, 86-7.

in the theatricalized space of the frieze series, it is difficult to locate and define desire. Our desire follows the arabesques of the compositions and the modalities of labor; it lingers over prior moments of looking and strives to remember objects from the past. Similarly, I am uncertain as to how “movement” is suggested in the sketch, except by the intact pentimenti around her legs and feet. Conventionally, these traces would recall the dancer’s movement. To my mind they are just as much the marks of Degas’s movement.

In the end, it is Degas’s interminable drawing that exerts control over the dancers’ bodies and that actualizes them in repetition and duration. David Seamon calls these complex practices *body-ballets*: “a set of integrated behaviors which sustain a particular task or aim” and that “are frequently an integral part of a manual skill or artistic sensibility; their sum may constitute a particular person’s livelihood.”¹¹⁸ Body-ballets are bodily habits adopted through daily training and practice, very basic movements that fuse together to create patterns for a specific task and that often form an organic rhythm or flow. Seamon evidences the movements of a metalsmith; Degas’s draftmanship could also serve as an example. Whenever a subject organizes “a set of habitual bodily behaviors” that extend through a considerable portion of time and space, s/he performs a *time-space routine*. As Seamon describes it, “[t]he time-space routine has a certain holistic pattern, which, like movement itself, is well described by the word ‘unfolding.’” Such routines integrate the present moment into the past and allow the individual to enact multiple tasks at once—a kind of choreography of daily life. Ultimately, the frieze support became Degas’s space in which to enact his mnemonic exercises and unite them as a routine. In the symbolic space of the frieze support, the act of drawing was staged and set into relations: a “place” and a space to reintegrate memory with consciousness.

¹¹⁸ Seamon, “Body-Subject, Time-Space Routines, and Place-Ballets,” in *The Human Experience of Space and Place*, 157.

In *Degas Danse Dessin* Valéry's second chapter is simply titled "On Dance" (*De la Danse*). The author makes no attempt to link his digression to Degas or to his paintings; rather his meditations on the relationship between movement, space, and time are ostensibly sufficient for the reader to piece things together. They are also astoundingly similar to Seamon's description of *body-ballets* and everyday *time-space* routines.

Space, as we have said, is only the background to movements of this kind; *it does not contain their object*. In this case it is Time which plays the dominating role. . . .

By Time I mean organic time, such as exists in the ordering of all the alternating and fundamental functions of life. Each of these is effected by a series of muscular acts which reproduces itself, as if the end or fulfillment of each series brought about the beginning of the next. On this pattern, our limbs can carry out a set of *figures* that are all interlinked, and whose repetition brings about a kind of exhilaration, ranging from languor to delirium, from a sort of hypnotic abandonment to a sort of frenzy. In this way the *condition of dancing* is created.¹¹⁹

In odd ways, I agree with Asendorf: "in Degas, the language of movement becomes the carrier of pictorial content."¹²⁰ And he is correct; the body-subject of the dancer is not an agent of her own meaning—though this is true of almost all of modernism's "others." But I have argued that the "movement" pictured in the frieze series is the legible, dilatory practices of Degas's craft and viewers' reception of it. The serial production of the frieze paintings was not necessarily an attempt to reify the dancer, but to resist the purposefulness or the product-ion of art-making, perhaps even its commercialism. The content of the series is about the processes of labor and the everyday lessons that one might glean from *répétitions*: how we might come to know and intuit a subject that is itself about the necessity of and the knowledge in repetition.

¹¹⁹ "Nous avons dit que, dans ce genre de mouvements, l'Espace n'était que le lieu des actes: *il ne contient pas leur objet*. C'est le Temps, à présent, qui joue le grand rôle. . . . Ce Temps-là est le temps organique tel qu'il se retrouve dans le régime de toutes les fonctions alternatives fondamentales de la vie. Chacune d'elles s'effectue par un cycle d'actes musculaires qui se reproduit, comme si la conclusion ou l'achèvement de chacun d'eux engendrait l'impulsion du suivant. Sur ce modèle, nos membres peuvent exécuter une suite de *figures* qui s'enchaînent les unes aux autres, et dont la fréquence produit une sorte d'ivresse qui va de la langueur au délire, d'une sorte d'abandon hypnotique à une sorte de fureur. L'état de *danse* est créé." Valéry, *Degas Danse Dessin*, 31.

¹²⁰ See note 117.

Conclusion:

“Rambling” and “Drifting”

Ambulare, here is a new motto, *postea laborare*.

- Degas, in a letter to Bartholomé (1883)¹

In the final paragraph of Ambroise Vollard’s memoir of Degas, the dealer laments the artist’s demise by making analogies between the aging artist and the changing topography of Paris:

He spent his last days wandering aimlessly around Paris; but usually his ramblings ended up at his former home, now rapidly disappearing under the hands of the wreckers. The last load of plaster and rubbish was carted away, there was a plank fence along the sidewalk, and all that was left was a solitary old man standing for long hours peering pathetically through the cracks at what he could not see: the dreary and barren ground.²

Vollard’s fading Degas is a familiar modern urban type: a bourgeois Parisian lost to nostalgia and uncertainty in the face of perpetual alterity. Here is a Degas adrift in his own city, standing on barren ground, and reeling from the *longue dureé* of his urban existence. Vollard’s last accounts of the artist are no doubt inflected by the only film ever made about Degas, shot by Sacha Guitry in 1915 and discussed by Vollard just before his concluding paragraph. Guitry’s film, however, shows an ambulating man with his wits about him, strolling with cane in hand

¹ The Latin reads “walk, after that, work.” “*Ambulare*, voilà une nouvelle devise, *postea laborare*.” Degas, *Lettres*, 71.

² “Les journées de Degas se passaient maintenant à errer dans Paris, sans but; toujours ses pas le ramenaient devant sa maison en démolition. Les derniers plâtres enlevés, des planches dressées en bordure le long du trottoir, on pouvait voir un vieillard regardant, à travers les fentes de la palissade, un terrain nu.” Vollard, *Degas 1834-1917*, 118.

and companion at his side, maneuvering around the lamppost in front of him and sidestepping the oncoming pedestrian traffic (Fig. 5.1). Vollard's picture of the artist is considerably bleaker, and its sentimental undertone barely disguises the aura of "pathetic" futility that pervades the dealer's adieu. And though he repeatedly challenges accounts of Degas as a solitary ogre, the farewell ultimately leaves the reader with an impression of isolation and loss. Rather than an activity that negotiated the contingencies of modernity (as Edmund Husserl describes the practice of walking³), walking for Vollard's Degas involved fractured space and passing time.⁴

Vollard's homage, I want to suggest, speaks to both the ravages of old age and to the essential qualities of Degas's working methods. His description pictures Degas walking the streets of Paris without destination or precise purpose. The artist finds himself in a familiar place, where he peers, for hours and hours, at a "barren" landscape from his reconstituted past. Implicit in this description are the key characteristics of the artist's mature practice: recurrent, "aimless" maneuvers, perpetual "ramblings," excavated places, and symbolic spaces. Walking is just another kind of kinetic memory habit that allows for exploratory digressions and intersections between old and new knowledge; it is a physical process wherein one can lose direction and still end up somewhere—again and again. There is a corporeal rhythm to walking in a familiar place, a synchronized rootedness and mobility where one integrates past, present, and future experiences.

³ Edmund Husserl, "The World of the Living Present and the Constitution of the Surrounding World External to the Organism" (1931), in *Husserl: Shorter Works*, ed. Peter McCormick and Frederick A. Elliston (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 238-50.

⁴ Nancy Forgione claims that "walking [for Parisians] provided a manageable way to come to know the new environment [of Haussmann's Paris]—a necessary process for making an unfamiliar, or in this case, defamiliarized, place start to feel like home." (669). Her argument is founded on Husserl's assessment of walking as an integrating, conciliatory practice. Forgione singles out Degas's *Place de la Concorde (Viscount Lepic and His Daughters Crossing the Place de la Concorde)* (1875) as one particular example where "walking's powers of integration are not in evidence . . ." Nancy Forgione, "Everyday Life in Motion: The Art of Walking in Late-Nineteenth-Century Paris," *The Art Bulletin*, vol. 87, no. 4 (December 2005): 664-87; 669 and 671.

The fact that Degas correlated walking and working, and then made it into a maxim is no surprise. He liked to make self-righteous dictums from his personal habits. Nonetheless, Degas's dogged faith in repetition and drawing is all too often taken for reactionary orthodoxy. There is some truth to this claim; his oeuvre is evidence enough of a desire to resuscitate France's waning High Classicism via any experiment necessary. But I also think the artist's credos had everything to do with defending art-making as a "craft" rather than a "product"—as a labored pursuit rather than a commercial prospect. In the context of the early Third Republic, when private enterprise was discovering how to reconfigure artistic temperament as spectacle, and the processes of art were being "branded" into limited editions, Degas began to rehearse a mode of picture-making that resisted "packaging" altogether. The artist's experiments from the late 1870s through the 1880s were the very negation of efficiency, expediency, and quantification. Progress, in Degas's method, was always entwined with past labors, which ensured that each new project was connected to a vast network of nebulous relations that refused to resolve themselves into cogent, stable meaning.

The great irony here is that Degas's pictures have become so recognizable, to the point that he is heralded around the world as "the painter of dancers." It's the kind of ubiquitous trademark Hirst or Takashi Murakami can only covet. Monet diversified his repetition by packaging his method in recognizable motifs (haystacks, poplars, cathedrals, water lilies, etc.). And while anyone familiar with Degas's dancer-motifs would notice similar generative tendencies at work in the artist's café-concert singers or his bathers, it is the dancers that have become synonymous with Degas. They are his brand—on notecards, calendars, handbags, umbrellas, shirts, shoes, ad infinitum.

To my mind this phenomenon has as much to do with twentieth-century museum marketing campaigns of Degas's oeuvre—a story that deserves to be told—as it does with his dancers. (On a side note, Degas was a bad ad man; he was responsible for the constant name-changing of the Impressionist group and of their exhibitions.)⁵ That said, when Degas's critics and curators, past and present, attempt to make sense of the artist's innumerable compositions on the dance, the organizing principles are always realism, fragmentation, movement, and obsession. These are each provocative, thoroughly modernist, readings of the dance pictures; but they are mostly about the dancers' bodies, the "place" they occupy, and the artist's psychology. In the preceding pages, I have tried to make sense of Degas's repetition as a process critically entwined with the labor of dance, but also to figure it as ambivalent in its modernist impulses—at once concerned with radical research about the nature of art-making, while also symptomatic of loss and nostalgia. In some ways the fad for Degas's dancers and their "movement" has, unfortunately, brought a kind of stasis to the artist's experimental "thrusts" and his own peculiar mode of drawing/being.

There is no doubt that the concepts of repetition and movement are thoroughly enmeshed in discourses devoted to visual and material culture in turn-of-the-century France. However, it should be apparent that as far as Degas is concerned, repetition and movement were much more than the conventional terms of industrial, specular modernism. Mechanization, standardization, reproducibility, ephemerality, instantaneity: these are the calling cards of Capital's relentless phantasmagoria. The "movement" Degas rehearsed across the frieze classroom series imparts the long duration of an intuited knowledge, rather than the purported instantaneity of photography or the reproducibility of action fixed in time and space on film. Similarly, the viewer's rambling encounters with Degas's oeuvre are more akin to the wonderings of a drifter in a familiar city

⁵ See Chapter 2, note 2.

than to the anonymous glance or “snapshot” sensations of the passer-by. This is partially due to the fact that “place” is released from its strictly diachronic duties in Degas’s seriality; the symbolic space of the horizontal format entices the viewer to recall past experiences and to fold previous moments of looking into present desires for meaning. But the viewer is also entreated to remember and follow the dancer-motifs, in and outside of the series proper. Given the time to make a habit of it, the viewer like Valéry can follow Degas’s peripathetic relocations. Dancer-motifs and their “spaces” begin to look more than familiar; they come to serve as enticements or provocations of memory. It’s a process that breeds its own intimacy, where the viewer is found roaming through non-events and non-places, led back to a real, but illusory place. Thinking back to Durand-Ruel and the Grafton Galleries show in 1905, we are reminded of how difficult it is to control Degas’s repetitions and the relationships they induce. Degas’s dancer-motifs break out of their frames, resist the order of the gallery wall, and refuse to be static. But they also perform what Bergson might call a “reciprocal interpenetration,” wherein “endlessly continued creation” becomes an alternative to the product of painting or to the ordering of experience.⁶

In the most straightforward way—and I’m not the first to notice—Degas’s repetitions give so much, but they withhold even more. Writing about the “links” between several jockey paintings in 1962, the musicologist Christopher Small concluded:

Everything, after all, flows It is not . . . ‘instantaneousness,’ but transformation: the moment, ambiguous, trembling on the edge of new possibility, is caught in all its instability, its eternal becoming, and made into something that we can keep.⁷

What we keep are the artist’s transformations, rehearsals, and repetitions—souvenirs of artistic “becoming” that might re-member Degas’s craft, if we take the time.

⁶ Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, 187.

⁷ Christopher Small, “Degas’ Lenses,” *The Scottish Art Review* vol. 8, no. 4 (1962):1-4; 4.

FIGURES



0.1
Edgar Degas, *The Dance Rehearsal*, c. 1873
Oil on canvas, 16 x 21 ½"
The Phillips Collection, D.C.



0.2
Edgar Degas, *The Rehearsal*, c. 1873-78
Oil on canvas, 18 x 23 5/8"
The Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University



0.3
Edgar Degas, *The Dance Class*, c. 1873
Oil on canvas, 18 ³/₄ x 24 ¹/₂"
The Corcoran Gallery of Art, D.C.



0.4
Edgar Degas, *The Rehearsal*, c. 1874
Oil on canvas, 23 x 32 4/5"
Glasgow Museums, Burrell Collection



0.5
Edgar Degas, *The Rehearsal*, c. 1873-79
Oil on canvas, 18 ³/₄ x 24"
The Frick Collection



0.6
Edgar Degas, *The Dance School*, c. 1874-78
Oil and tempera on canvas, 17 x 22 ½"
Shelburne Museum, Shelburne, VT



0.7
Edgar Degas, *Dancers Practicing in the Foyer*, c. 1875-1900
Oil on canvas, 30 x 34 2/3"
Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen



0.8
Edgar Degas, *Dancers at a Rehearsal*, c. 1875-77
Pastel on board, 19 1/3 x 24 4/5"
Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts



0.9
Edgar Degas, *The Dance Lesson*, c. 1879
Oil on canvas, 14 15/16 x 34 5/8"
National Gallery of Art, D.C.

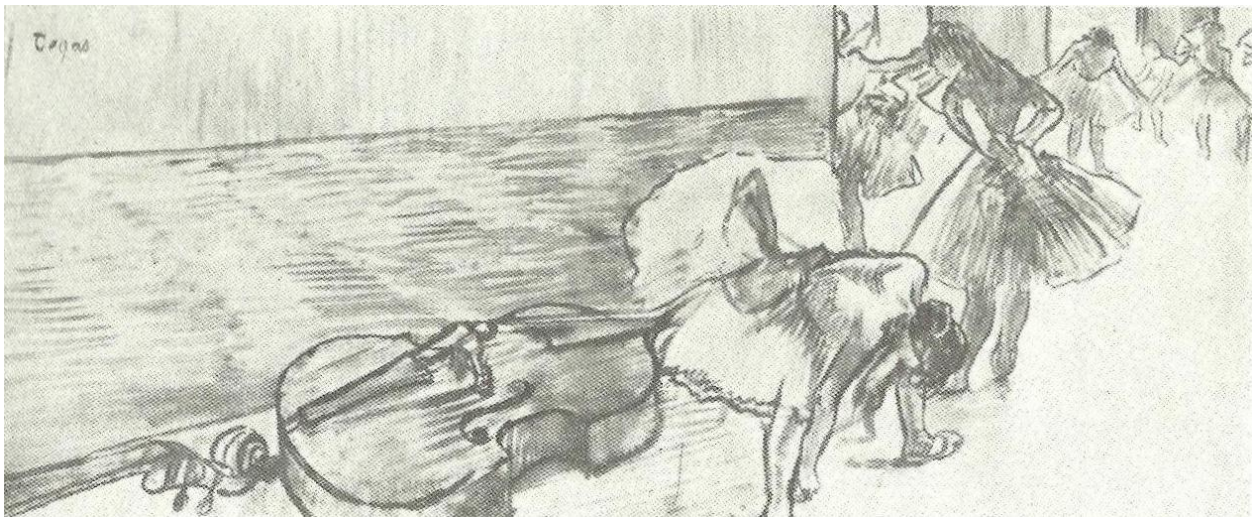


0.10

Edgar Degas, *Dancers in the Rehearsal Room with a Double Bass*, c. 1880-85

Oil on canvas, 15 3/8 x 35 1/4"

The Metropolitan Museum of Art



0.11

Edgar Degas, *Preparations for the Ballet (with contrabass)*, c. 1882-87

L'essence on canvas, 14 1/2 x 34 1/4"

Private collection, Paris



0.12
Edgar Degas, *Dancers in the Green Room*, c. 1879
Oil on canvas, 16 ¼ x 34 ½”
Detroit Institute of Arts



0.13
Edgar Degas, *The Dancing Lesson*, c. 1880
Oil on canvas, 15 ½ x 34 4/5”
Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute



0.14
Edgar Degas, *Before the Ballet*, c. 1885-92
Oil on canvas, 15 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 35"
National Gallery of Art, D.C.



0.15
Edgar Degas, *Ballet Rehearsal*, c. 1885-91
Oil on canvas, 18 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 34 $\frac{5}{8}$ "
Yale University Art Gallery



0.16
Edgar Degas, *Dancers Climbing a Staircase*, c. 1886
Oil on canvas, 15 1/3 x 35"
Musée d'Orsay



0.17
Edgar Degas, *The Dance Foyer*, c. 1884
Pastel on paper, 15 x 28 1/3"
Private collection



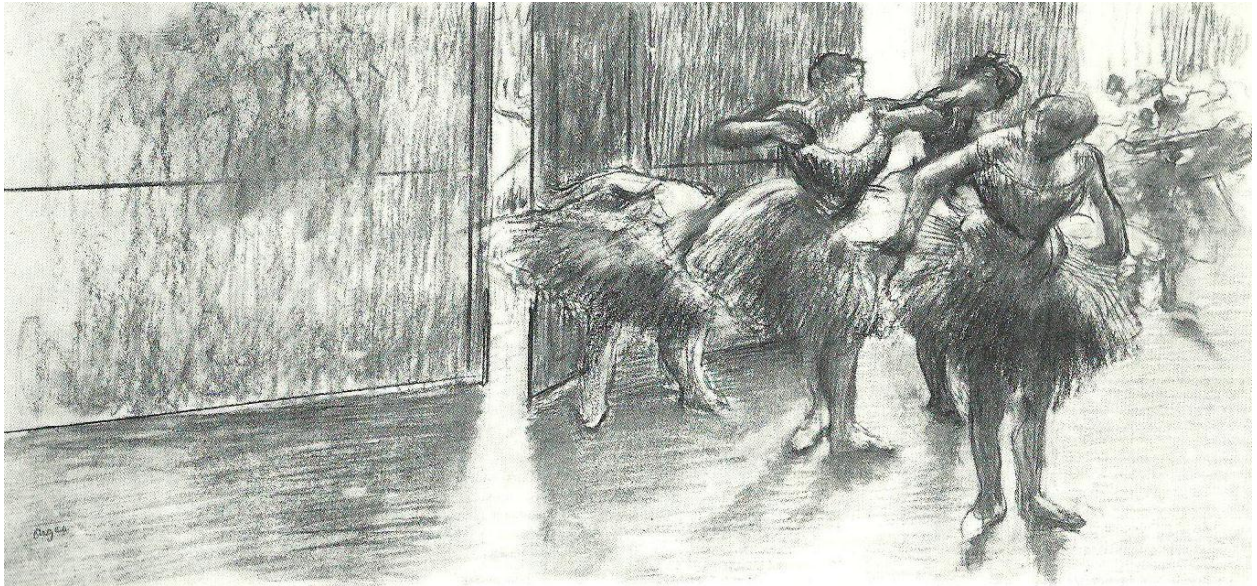
0.18
Edgar Degas, *The Dance Foyer*, c. 1884
Pastel on paper, 15 1/3" x 29"
Private collection



0.19
Edgar Degas, *Dancers in the Foyer*, c. 1889
Oil on canvas, 16 1/3 x 36 1/5
E. G. Bührle Collection, Zurich



0.20
Edgar Degas, *Dancers*, c. 1889-1910
Pastel and charcoal on paper, 17 1/4 x 36 5/8"
Wallraf-Richartz Museum, Cologne



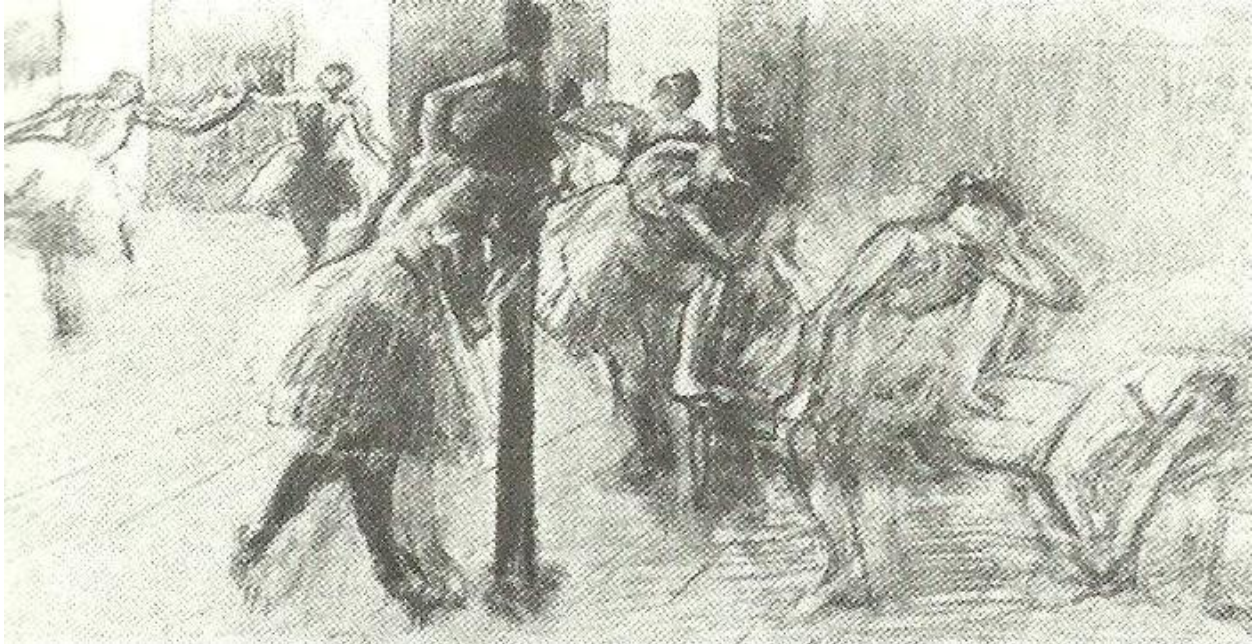
0.21
Edgar Degas, *Dancers at the Bar*, c. 1905
Charcoal and pastel on paper, 18 ¼ x 40”
Toledo Museum of Art



0.22
Edgar Degas, *Dancers in the Foyer*, c. 1880-1905
Oil on canvas, 16 1/8 x 34 1/3"
Private collection, Switzerland



0.23
Edgar Degas, *Dancers in the Foyer*, c. 1880-1905
Pastel on paper, 18 x 33 3/8"
Private collection



0.24
Edgar Degas, *The Dance Foyer*, c. 1895-98
Pastel on paper, 18 x 35 3/8"
Private collection



0.25
Edgar Degas, *Dancers in the Foyer*, c. 1895-98
Pastel on paper, 21 2/3 x 37"
Private collection



0.26
Edgar Degas, *Frieze of Dancers*, c. 1895
Oil on canvas, 27 ½ x 78 7/8”
The Cleveland Museum of Art



0.27
Edgar Degas, *Dancers in the Foyer*, c. 1900-05
Pastel on paper, 27 ½ x 43 1/3”
Private collection



0.28
Edgar Degas, *Ballet Scene*, c. 1907
Pastel on tracing paper, 30 ¼ x 43 ¾”
National Gallery of Art, D.C.



0.29
Edgar Degas, *Dancers Practicing*, c. 1906-08
Charcoal and pastel, 32 $\frac{2}{3}$ x 44"
Private collection



0.30
Edgar Degas, *Dancers (Before the Ballet)*, c. 1906-08
Pastel on paper, 29 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 42 $\frac{1}{8}$ "
Private collection



1.1
Grafton Galleries, London, exhibition of Impressionist paintings, 1905



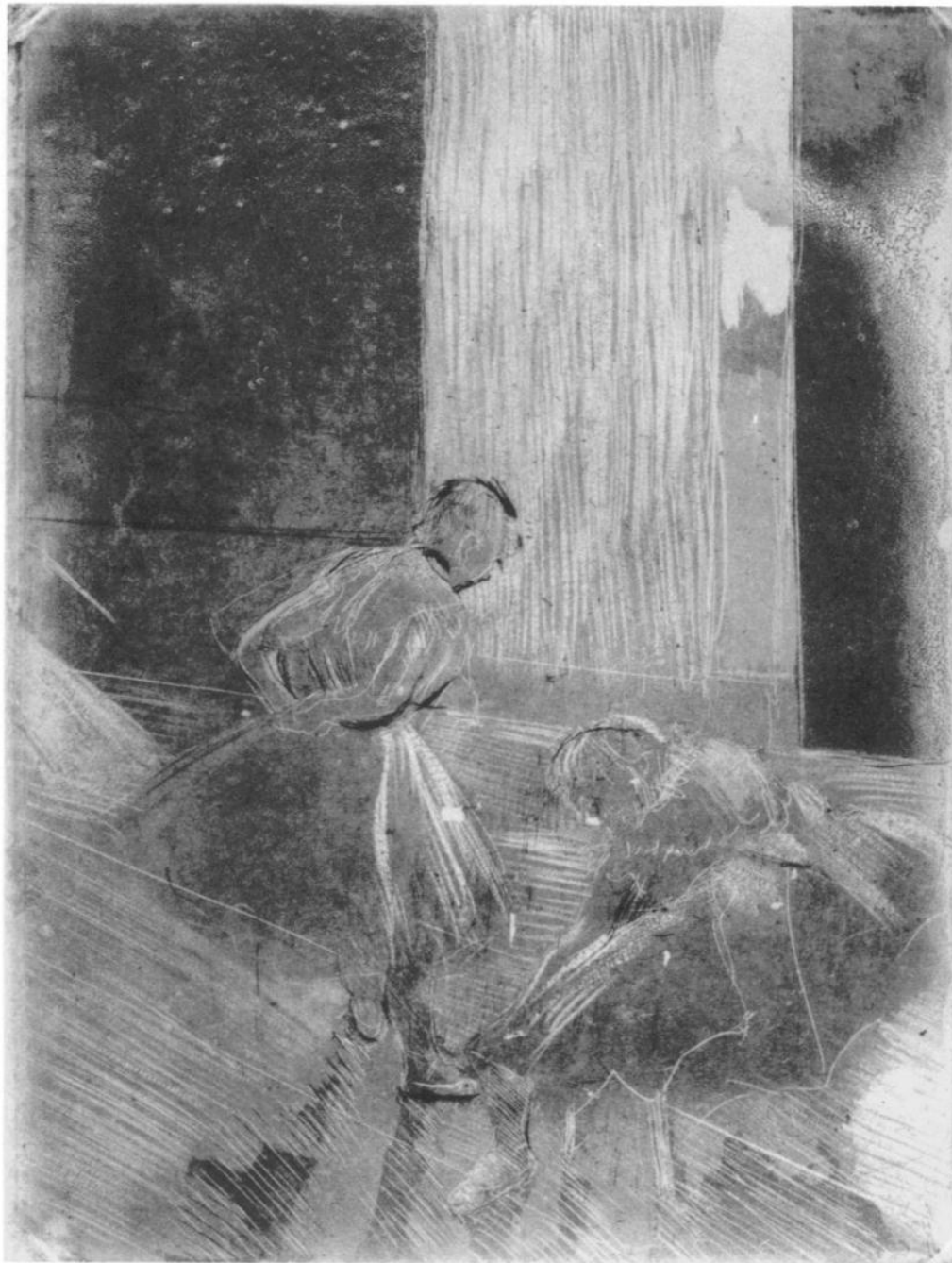
1.2
Wall of works by Degas at exhibition of Impressionist paintings Grafton Galleries, London, 1905



1.3
Edgar Degas, *Dancers in the Foyer (Before the Dance)*, c. 1879
Pastel, 19 2/3 x 25 1/2"
Private collection



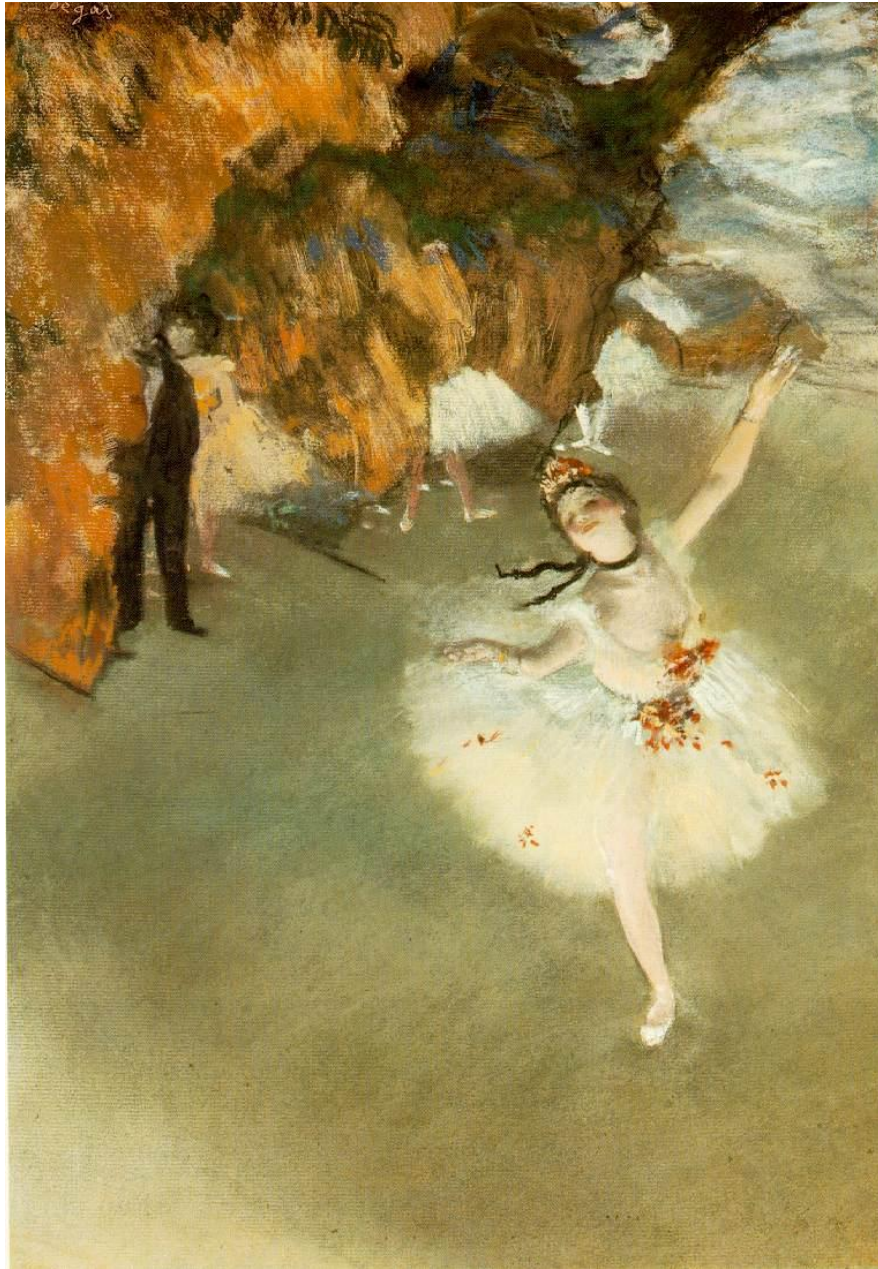
1.4
Edgar Degas, *Dancer Tying Her Scarf*, c. 1878-79
Charcoal with white on paper, 18 5/8 x 11 5/8"
The Hyde Collection, Glen Falls, NY



1.5
Edgar Degas, *Two Dancers in a Rehearsal Room*, c. 1877-78
Aquatint, drypoint, and scraping on paper, 6 ¼ x 4 5/8”
Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute



1.6
Edgar Degas, *In the Wings*, c. 1878-80
Crayon lithograph, 10 x 7 ¼"
Private collection



2.1
Edgar Degas, *The Star*, c. 1876-77
Pastel on paper, 30 x 16 ½"
Musée d'Orsay



2.2

Edgar Degas, *The End of an Arabesque*, c. 1877
Oil, *l'essence*, and pastel on canvas, 25 ½ x 14 1/5”
Musée d’Orsay



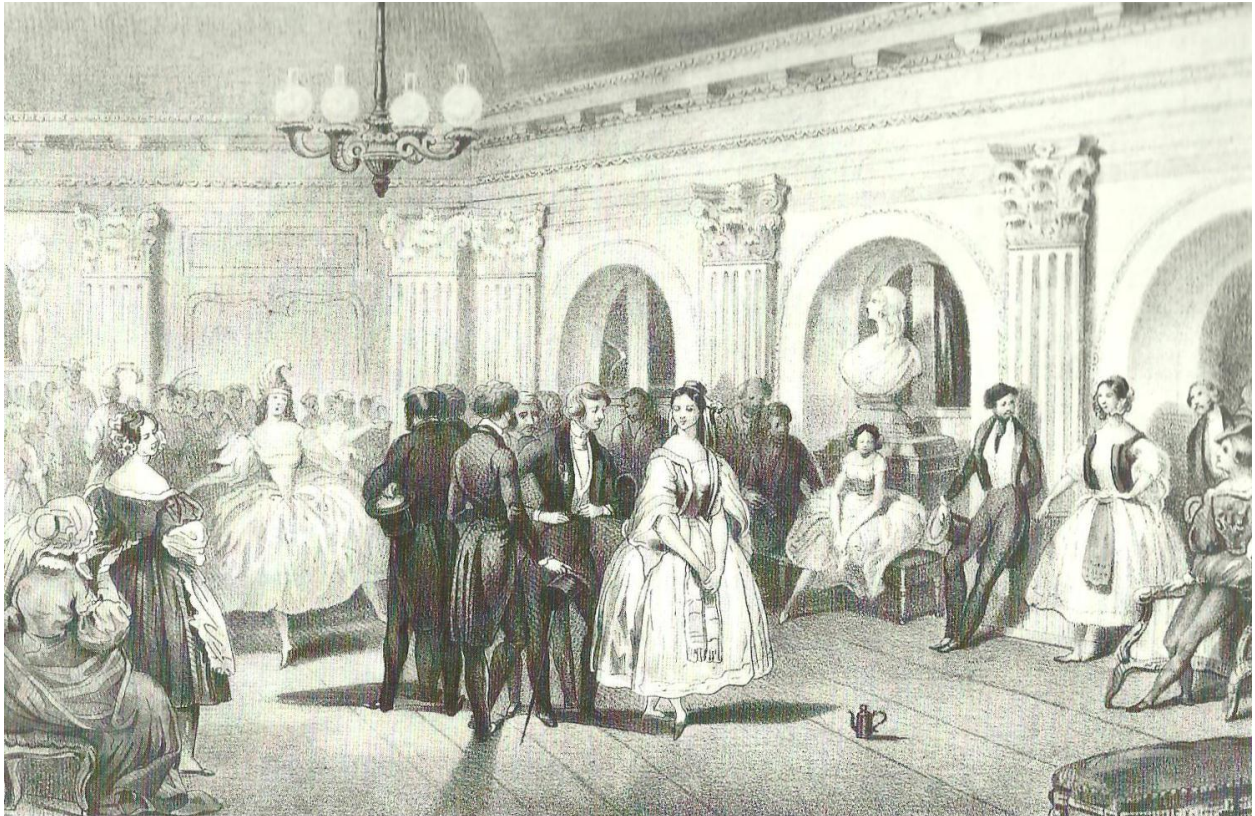
2.3
Edgar Degas, *Dance Class*, 1871
Oil on wood, 7 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 10 $\frac{5}{8}$ "
The Metropolitan Museum of Art



2.4
Edgar Degas, *The Dance Class*, 1873-76
Oil on canvas, 33 $\frac{2}{3}$ x 29 $\frac{1}{2}$ "
Musée d'Orsay



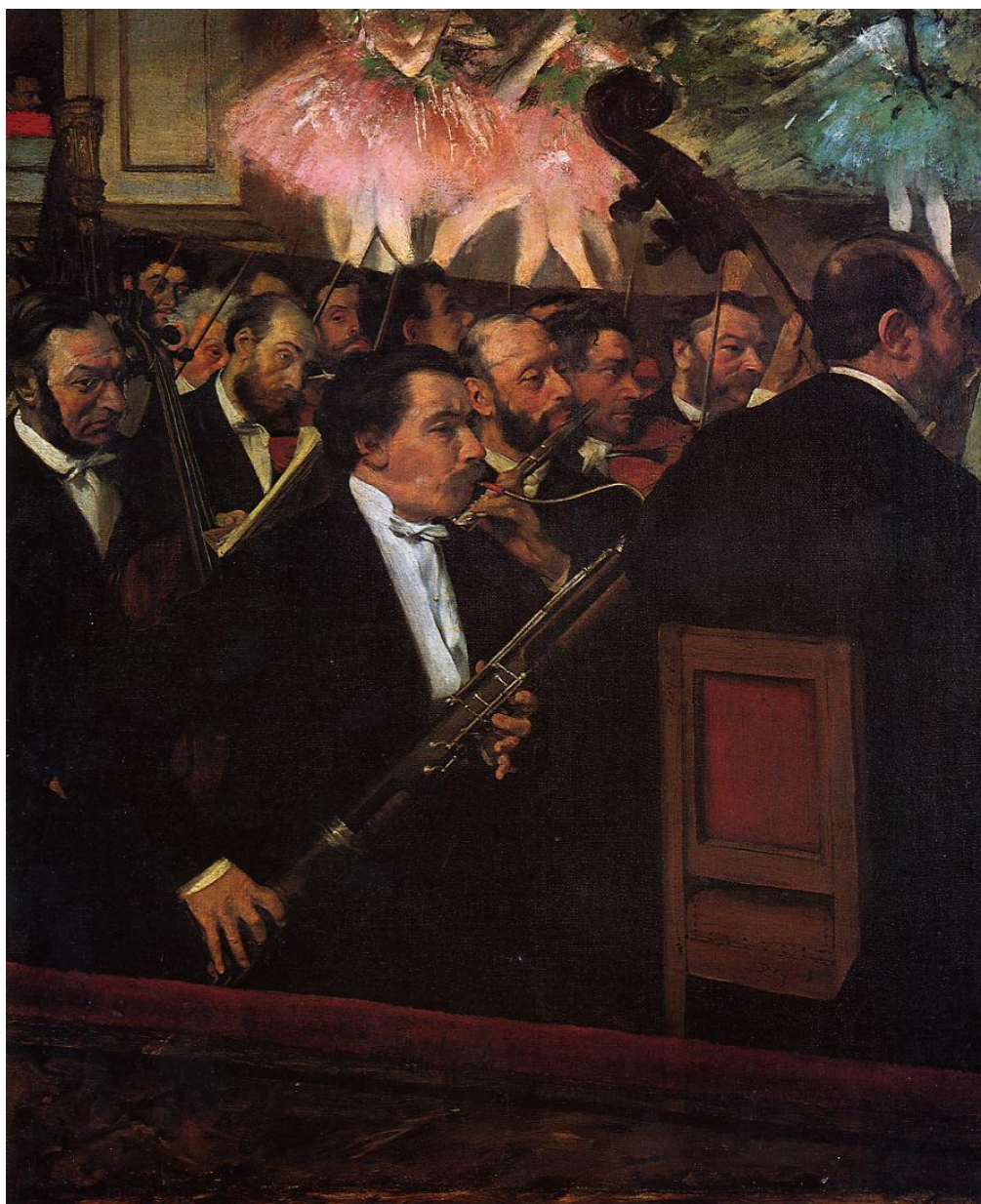
2.5
Edgar Degas, *Dance Class at the Opéra*, 1872
Oil on canvas, 12 4/5 x 18 1/5"
Musée d'Orsay



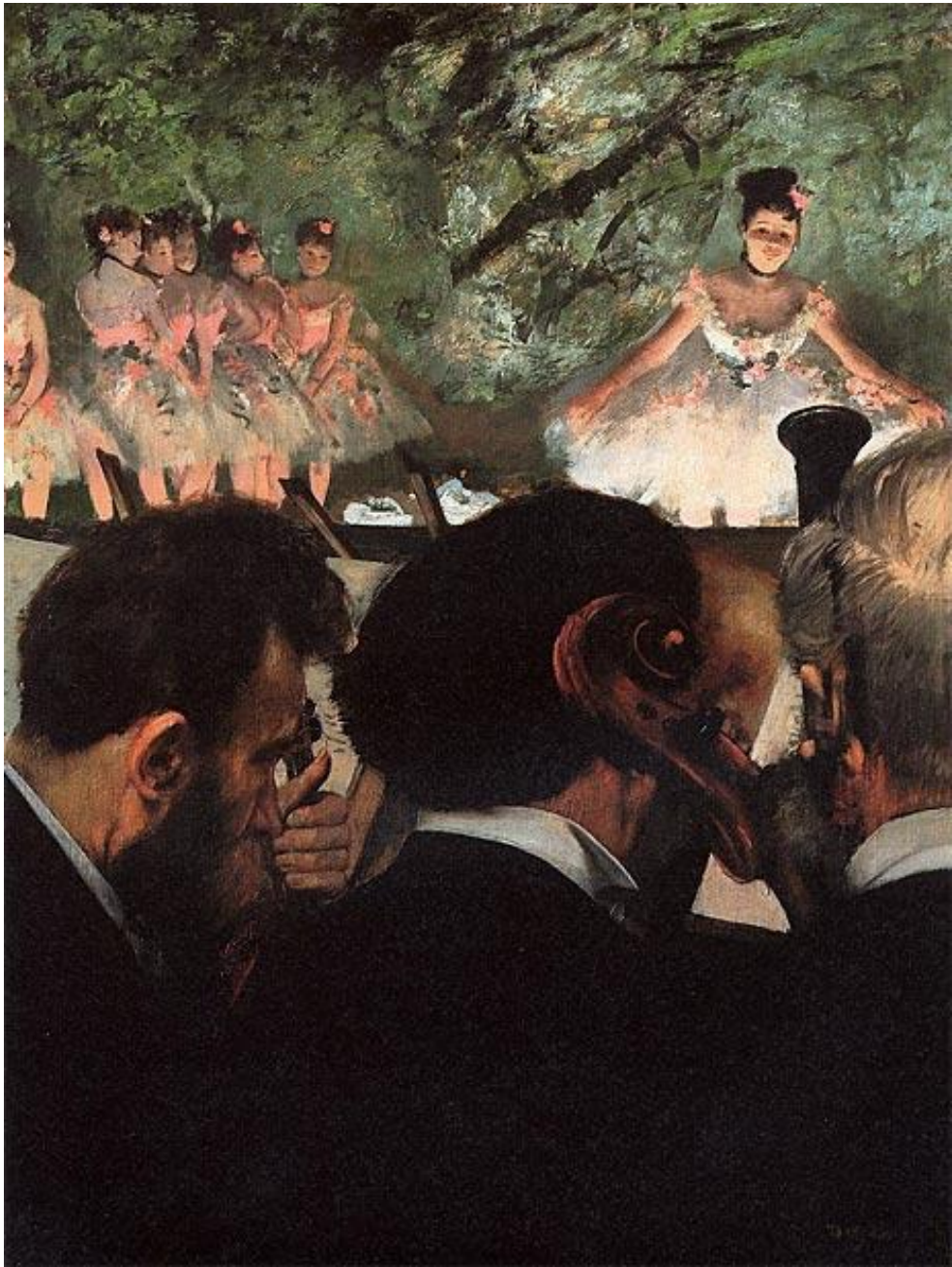
2.6
After Eugène Lami, *The Foyer at the Opéra*, 1841
Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris



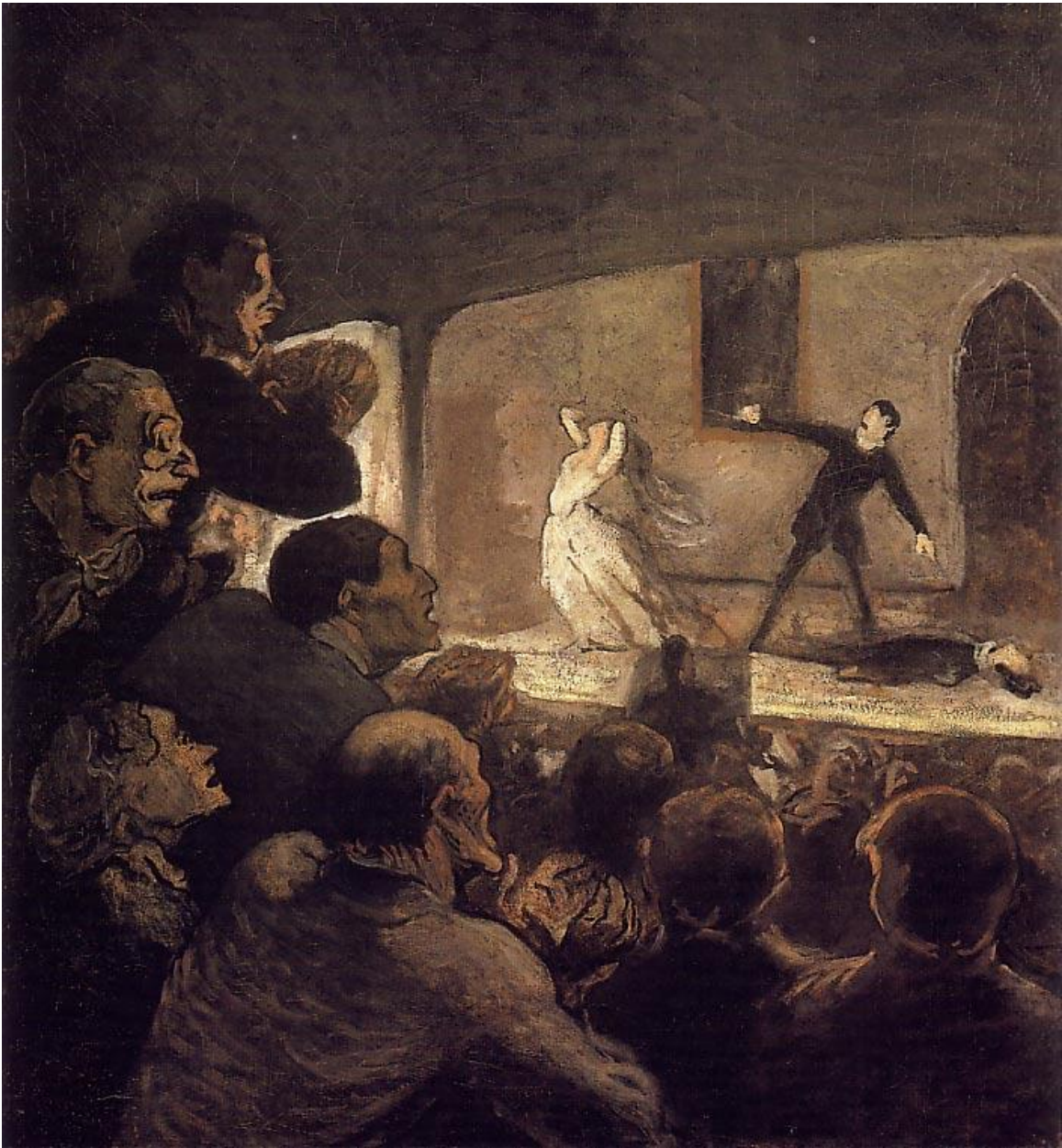
2.7
Edgar Degas, *The Dance Class*, 1874
Oil on canvas, 32 7/8 x 30 3/8"
The Metropolitan Museum of Art



2.8
Edgar Degas, *The Orchestra of the Opéra*, c. 1870
Oil on canvas, 22 ¼ x 18 ¼"
Musée d'Orsay



2.9
Edgar Degas, *Orchestra Musicians*, 1870-71
Oil on canvas, 27 1/8 x 19 1/4"
Städtische Galerie im Städelschen Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt



2.10

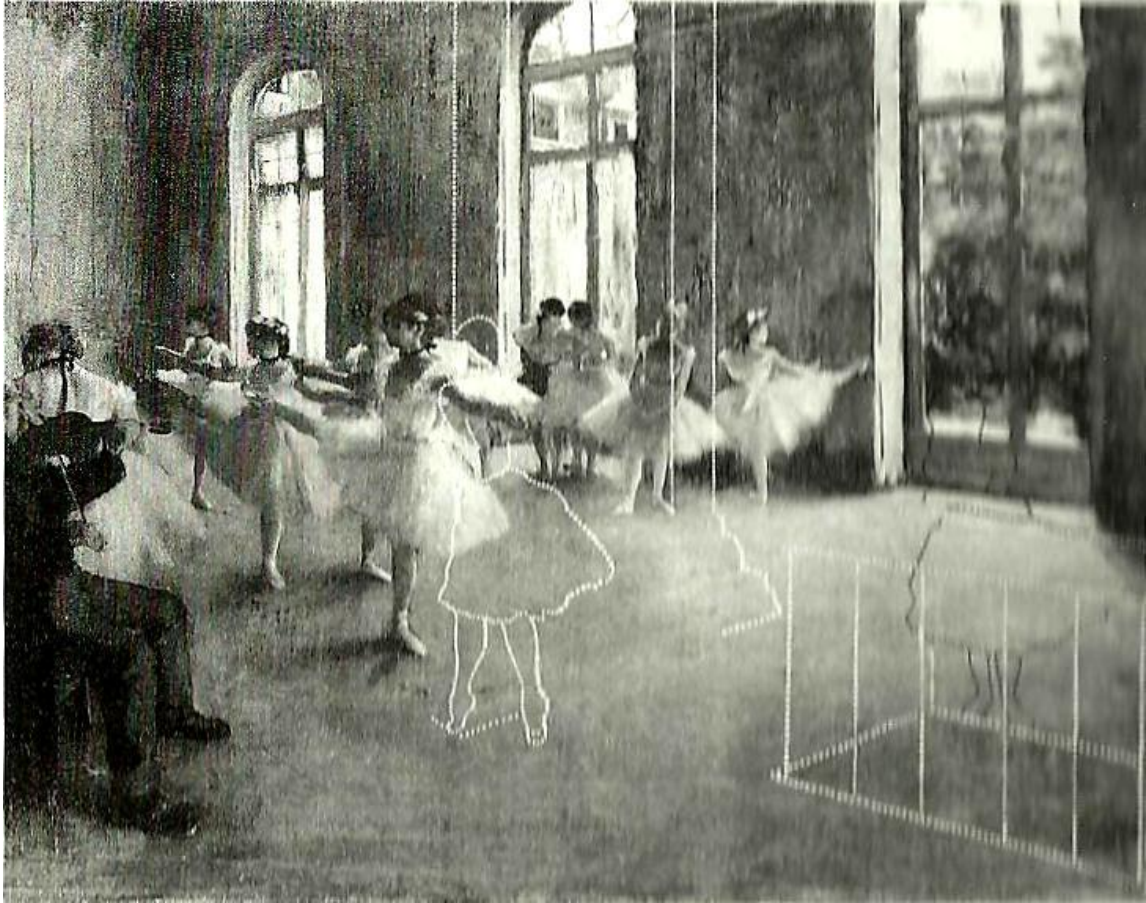
Honoré Daumier, *At the Theater (The Melodrama)*, c. 1856-1860

Oil on canvas, 38 2/5 x 35 1/2"

Bayerische Staatsgemädesammlungen, Neue Pinakothek, Munich



2.11
Alphonse Legros, *The Ex-Voto*, 1860
Oil on canvas, 68 ½ x 77 ½”
Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dijon



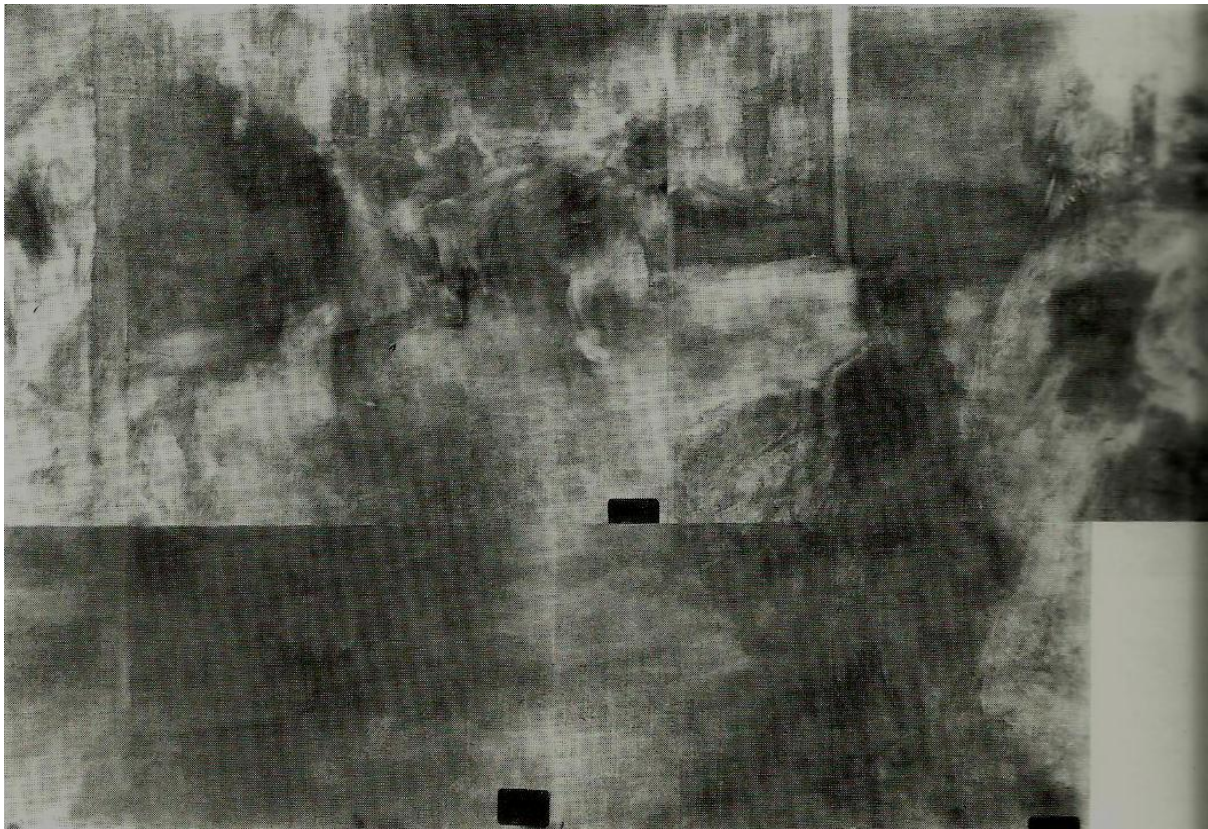
2.12

Analytic diagram of under-painting seen in infrared examination (white lines) and x-ray examination (black lines); courtesy of The Phillips Collection, D.C.

Edgar Degas, *The Dance Rehearsal*, c. 1873

Oil on canvas, 16 x 21 1/2"

The Phillips Collection, D.C.



2.13

X-ray photograph, reproduced by Jill DeVonyar and Richard Kendall in *Degas and the Dance*

Edgar Degas, *The Rehearsal*, c. 1874

Oil on canvas, 23 x 32 4/5"

Glasgow Museums, Burrell Collection



2.14
Edgar Degas, *Dancer Rehearsing: Study for The Rehearsal*, c. 1874
Charcoal with white on paper, 17 ³/₄ x 11 ⁷/₈"
Norton Simon Art Foundation



2.15
Edgar Degas, *The Violinist*, c. 1879
Charcoal on paper, 12 5/8 x 9 1/2"
Minneapolis Institute of Art



2.16
Edgar Degas, *Portrait of a Dancer at Her Lesson*, c. 1878-79
Pastel and charcoal on paper, 15 3/8 x 11 3/4"
The Metropolitan Museum of Art



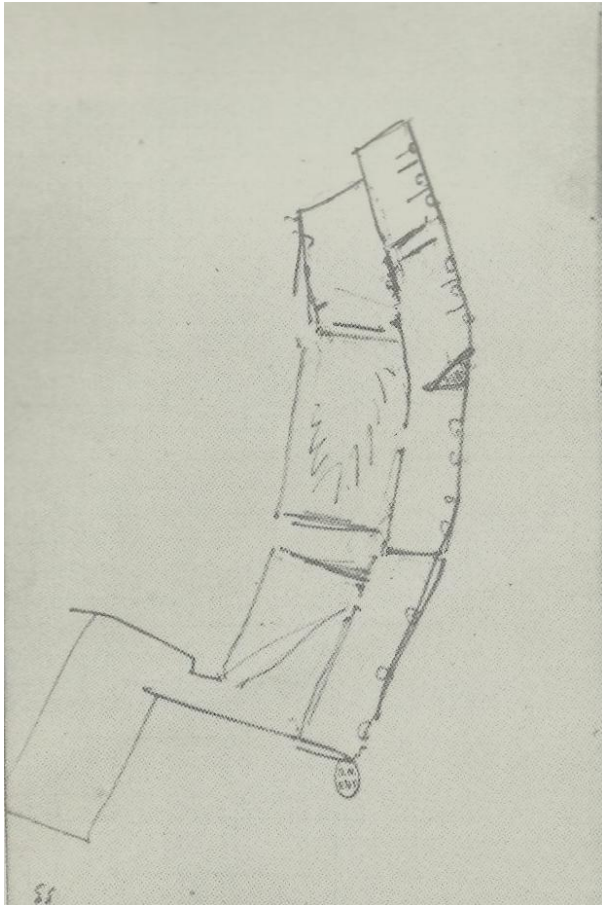
2.17
Edgar Degas, *The Violinist*, c. 1877-78
Chalk, charcoal, white and wash on paper, 18 7/8 x 12"
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston



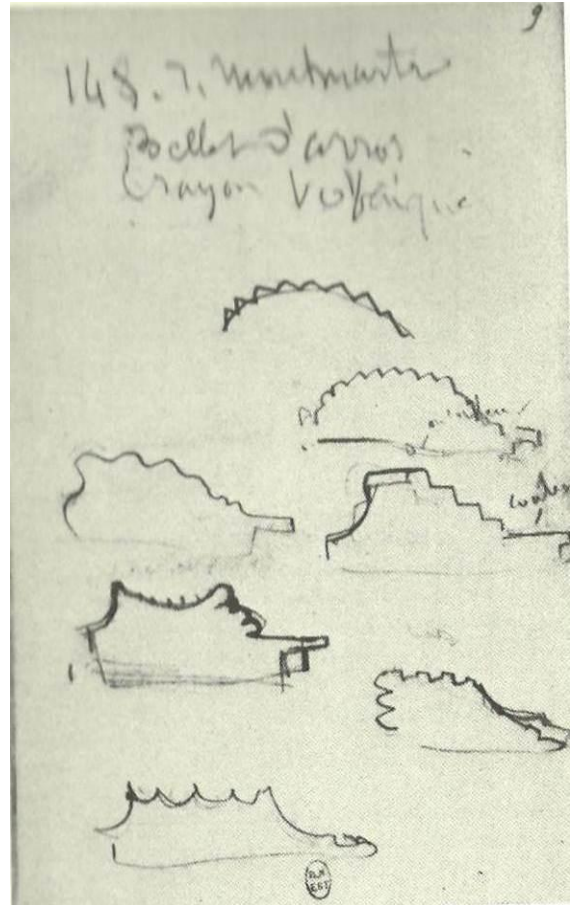
2.18
George William Thornley, *The Dance Class*, c. 1888
Lithograph, 9 3/8 x 12 1/8"
Private collection



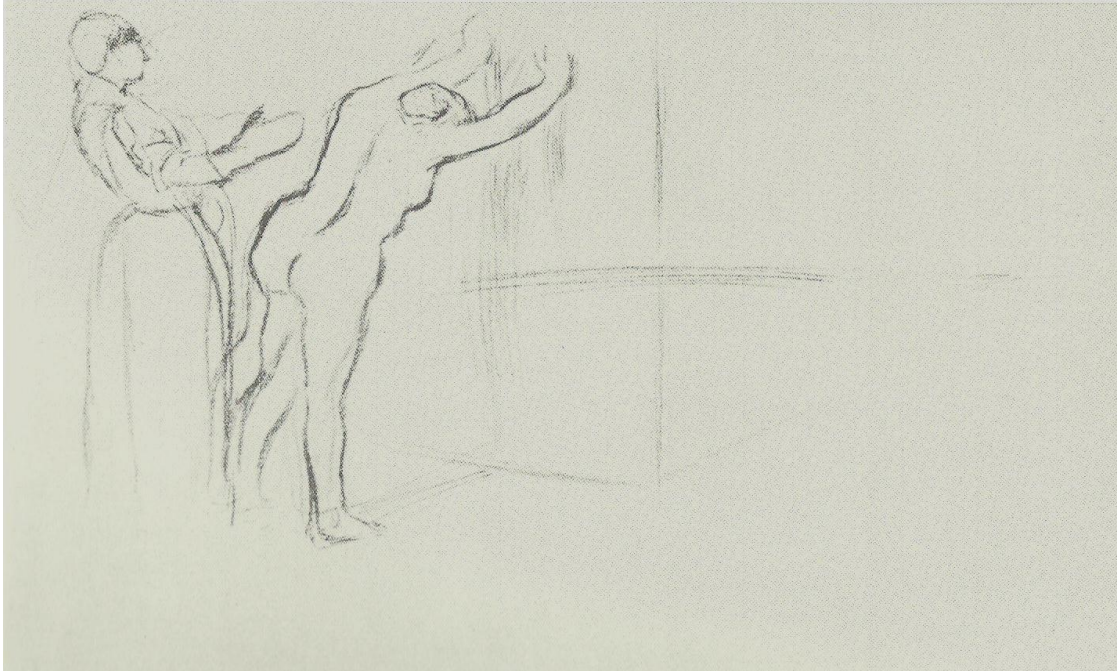
2.19
Edgar Degas, *The Ballet Class*, c. 1880
Oil on canvas, 32 3/8 x 30 1/4"
Philadelphia Museum of Art



3.1
Edgar Degas, Plan of 28 Avenue de l'Opéra
c. 1878-79
Notebook 31, page 33
Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris



3.2
Edgar Degas, Cross-sections of picture frames
c. 1878-79
Notebook 31, page 9
Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris



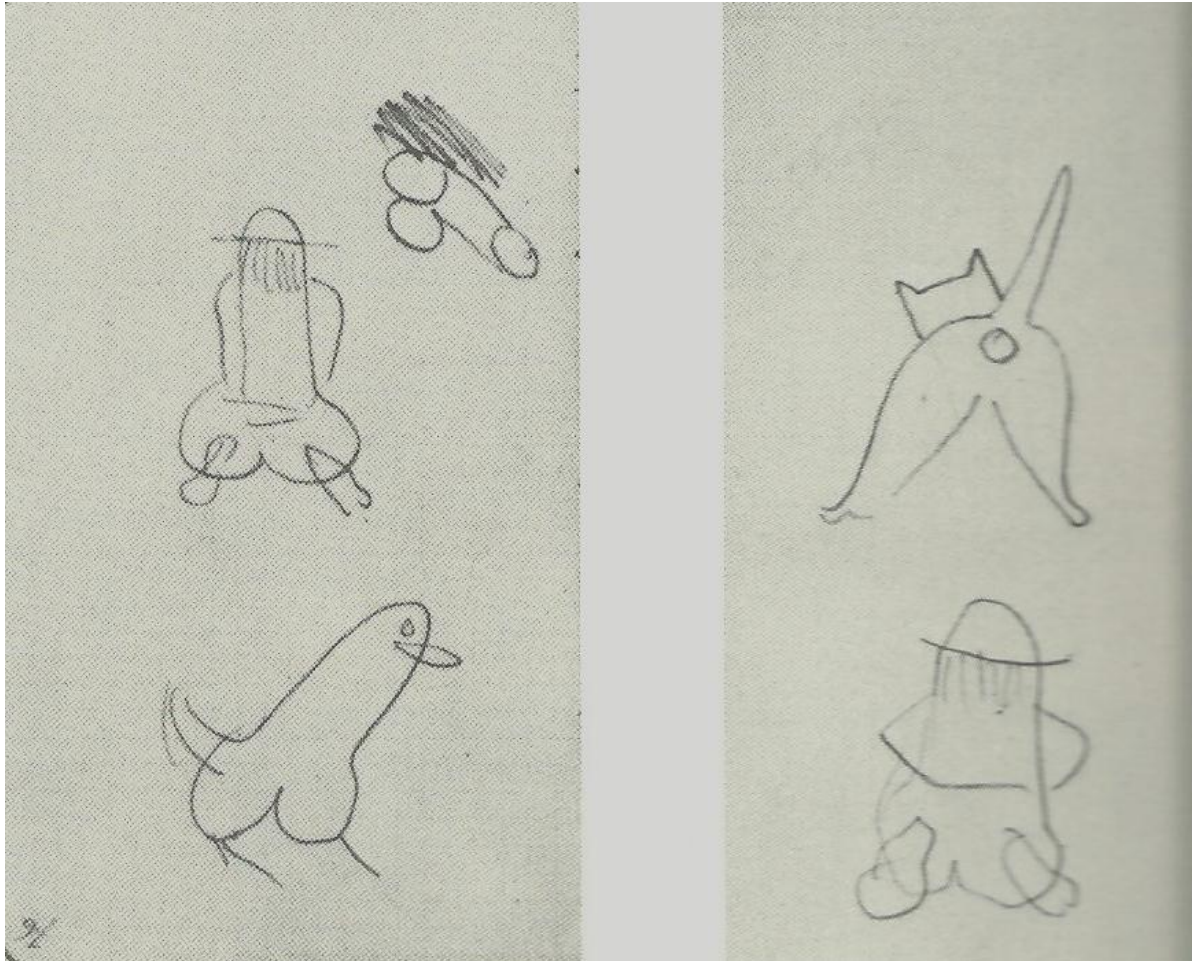
3.3
Edgar Degas, Nude with servant, c. 1877-80
Notebook 29, page 31
Private collection



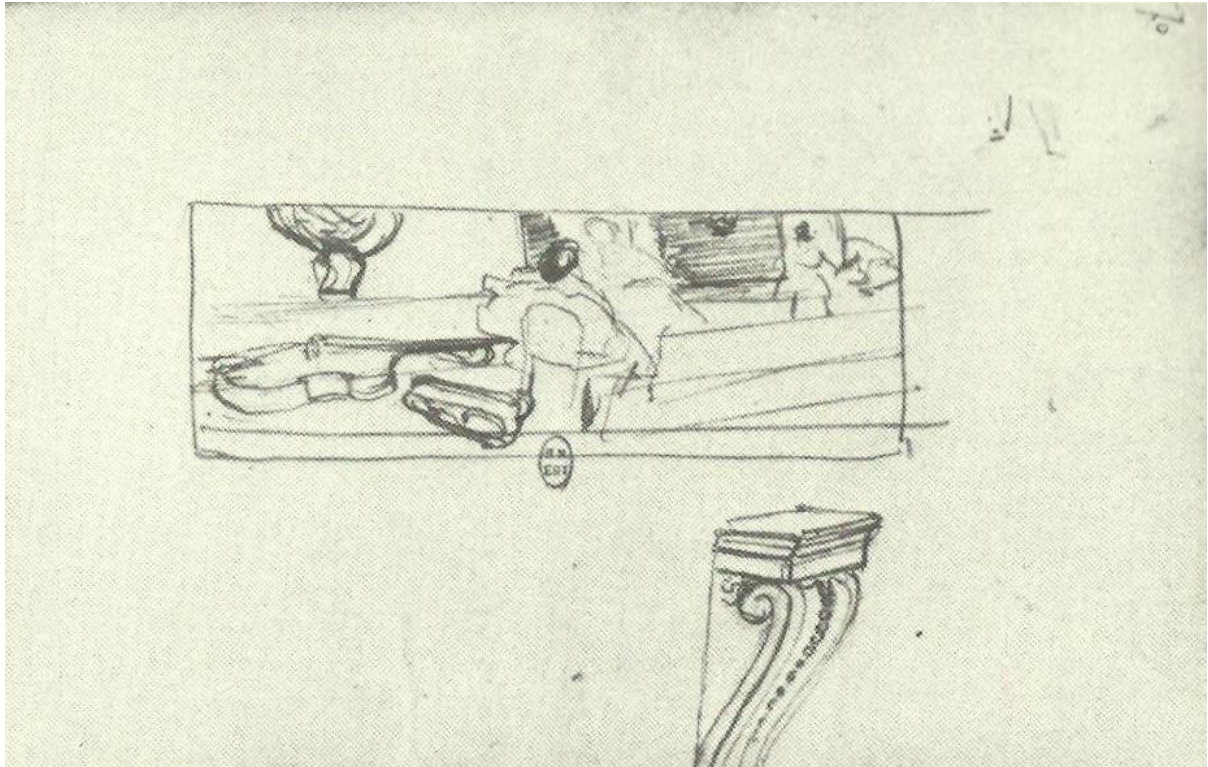
3.4
Edgar Degas, Nude with servant, c. 1877-80
Notebook 29, page 35
Private collection



3.5
Edgar Degas, Brothel scene from *La Fille Elise*, c. 1877-79
Notebook 28, page 31
J. Paul Getty Museum



3.6
Edgar Degas, Penis and walking phalluses, c. 1875-77
Notebook 26, pages 76 & 75
Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris



3.7

Edgar Degas, Sketch of a frieze painting, most likely *The Dance Lesson*, c. 1879 (National Gallery of Art, D.C.) with scroll-shaped console underneath

Notebook 31, page 70

Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris



3.8
Edgar Degas, *Café-Concert (The Spectators)*, c. 1876-77
Pastel over monotype, 7 7/8 x 16 1/3"
The Art Institute of Chicago



3.9

Edgar Degas, *Women on the Terrace of a Café in the Evening*, 1877

Pastel over monotype, 16 1/5 x 23 2/3"

Musée d'Orsay



3.10

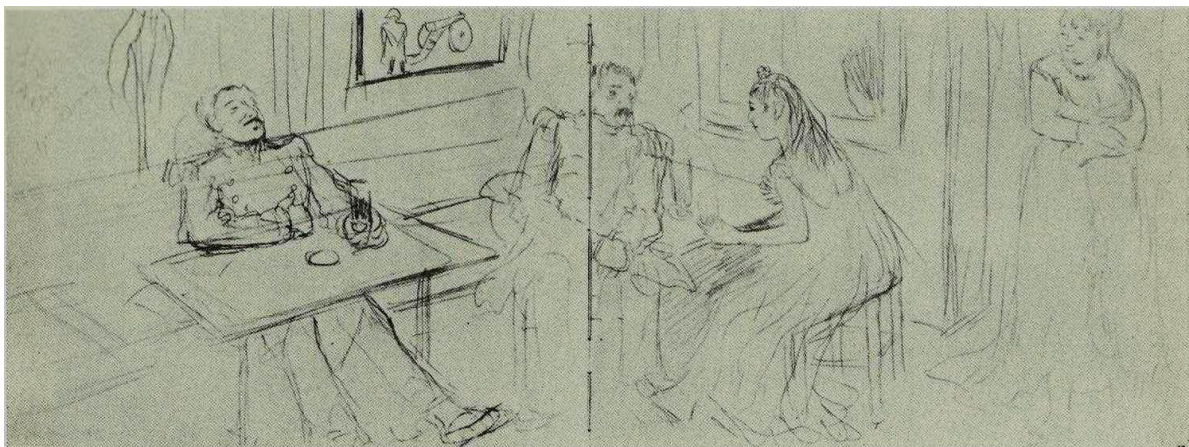
Edgar Degas, *Cabaret*, c. 1877

Pastel over monotype (second impression with pastel work over platemark at top), 9 ½ x 17 ¾"

The Corcoran Gallery of Art, D.C.



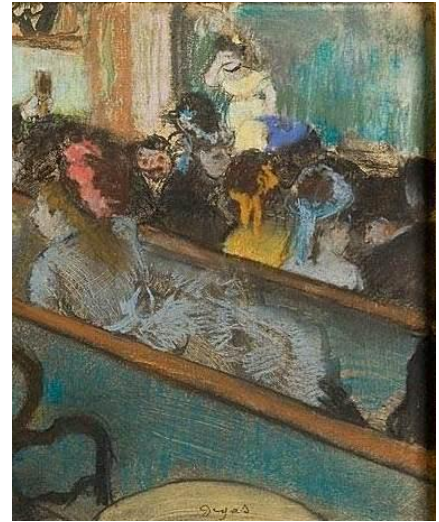
Detail of Fig. 3.8



3.11
Edgar Degas, Brothel scene from *La Fille Elise*, c. 1877-79
Notebook 28, pages 26-27
J. Paul Getty Museum



3.12
Edgar Degas, Man with café-concert singers, c. 1877-79
Notebook 28, page 15
J. Paul Getty Museum



Detail of Fig. 3.8



3.13
Edgar Degas, Café-concert singers, c. 1877-79
Notebook 28, page 13
J. Paul Getty Museum



3.14
Edgar Degas, *Café-concert singers*, c. 1877-79
Notebook 28, page 37
J. Paul Getty Museum



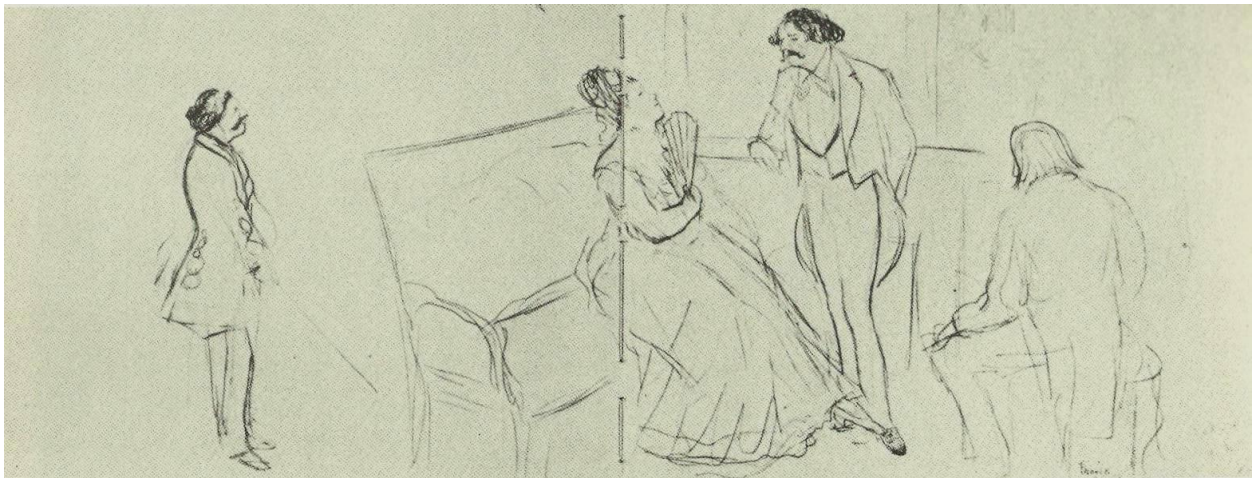
3.15
Edgar Degas, *Café-concert singers*, c. 1877-79
Notebook 28, page 63
J. Paul Getty Museum



3.16
Edgar Degas, "[Ernest] Reyer incessantly offering a third loge to a laundress," c. 1877-79
(Note in Degas's hand; signature at lower right in Halévy's hand)
Notebook 28, pages 4-5
J. Paul Getty Museum



3.17
Edgar Degas, Café-concert singers, c. 1877-79
Notebook 28, page 57
J. Paul Getty Museum



3.18

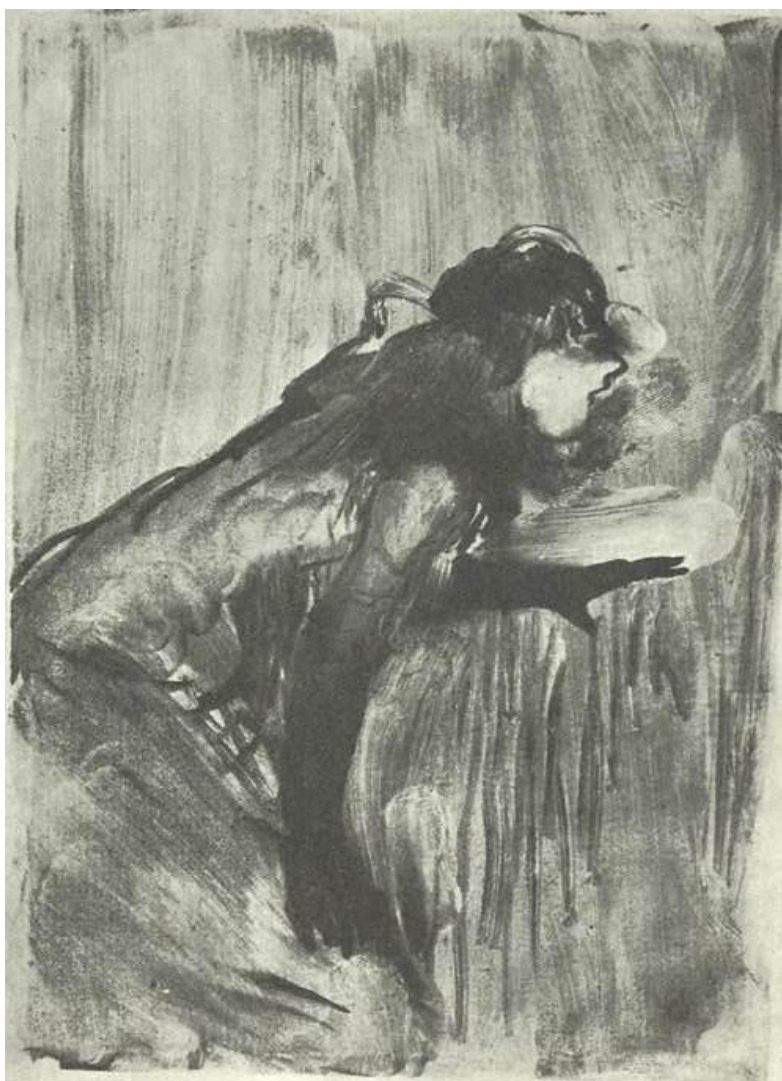
Edgar Degas, Mme Charles Hayem with Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly (seen twice) and Adolphe Franck (seated),
c. 1877-79

Notebook 28, pages 46-47

J. Paul Getty Museum



3.19
Edgar Degas, *Café singer*, c. 1877-78
Monotype in black ink on paper, 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 6 $\frac{3}{8}$ "
Kornfield and Klipstein Collection, Bern



3.20
Edgar Degas, *Café-concert singer*, c. 1877-78
Monotype in black ink on paper, 7 ¼ x 5 ¼"
Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University



3.21
Edgar Degas, *Mlle. Bécot aux Ambassadeurs*, c. 1877
Monotype in black ink, 5 5/6 x 8 5/6"
National Gallery of Denmark, Copenhagen



3.22
Edgar Degas, Brothel scene from *La Fille Elise*, c. 1877-79
Notebook 28, page 33
J. Paul Getty Museum



3.23
Edgar Degas, *Young Woman at a Café*, c. 1877
Monotype in black ink with pastel, 5 1/8 x 6 3/4"



3.24
Edgar Degas, Loges at the Opéra, c. 1877-79
Notebook 28, page 49
J. Paul Getty Museum



3.25
Edgar Degas, *At the Theater (Spectators in a Loge)*, c. 1877
Monotype in black ink with pastel
Private collection



3.26
 Utagawa Kunisada (Toyokuni III) and others, *Flowers of Edo, Famous Views: Number Ten, Shitaya*, 1863
 Publisher: Kato Kyo, Carver: Matsushima Daijiro
 Woodblock print, harimaze, ōvan tate-e, 14 5/8 x 10”
 Reading Public Museum, Pennsylvania



3.27

Edgar Degas, *Mlle Bécot at the Café des Ambassadeurs: Three Motifs*, c. 1875

Lithograph, transferred from monotypes, on ivory wove paper, 11 1/2 x 9 2/3"

Art Institute of Chicago



3.28

Edgar Degas, *Mary Cassatt at the Louvre: The Paintings Gallery*, c. 1879-80

State xviii/xx

Etching, aquatint, drypoint, and electric crayon, 11 7/8 x 4 15/16"

National Gallery of Art, D.C.



3.29

Torii Kiyonaga, *Interior of a Bathhouse*, c. 1787

Publisher: Iseya Jisuke

Woodblock print, ink and color on paper, vertical ōban diptych, each sheet 15 ¼ x 10 3/8"

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston



3.30
Edgar Degas, *The Ballet Rehearsal*, c. 1876-78
Pastel (over monotype?), 17 x 31 1/8"
Private collection



3.31
Edgar Degas, *The Ballet Master*, c. 1875
Monotype in black ink; signed by Lépic and Degas
National Gallery of Art, D.C.



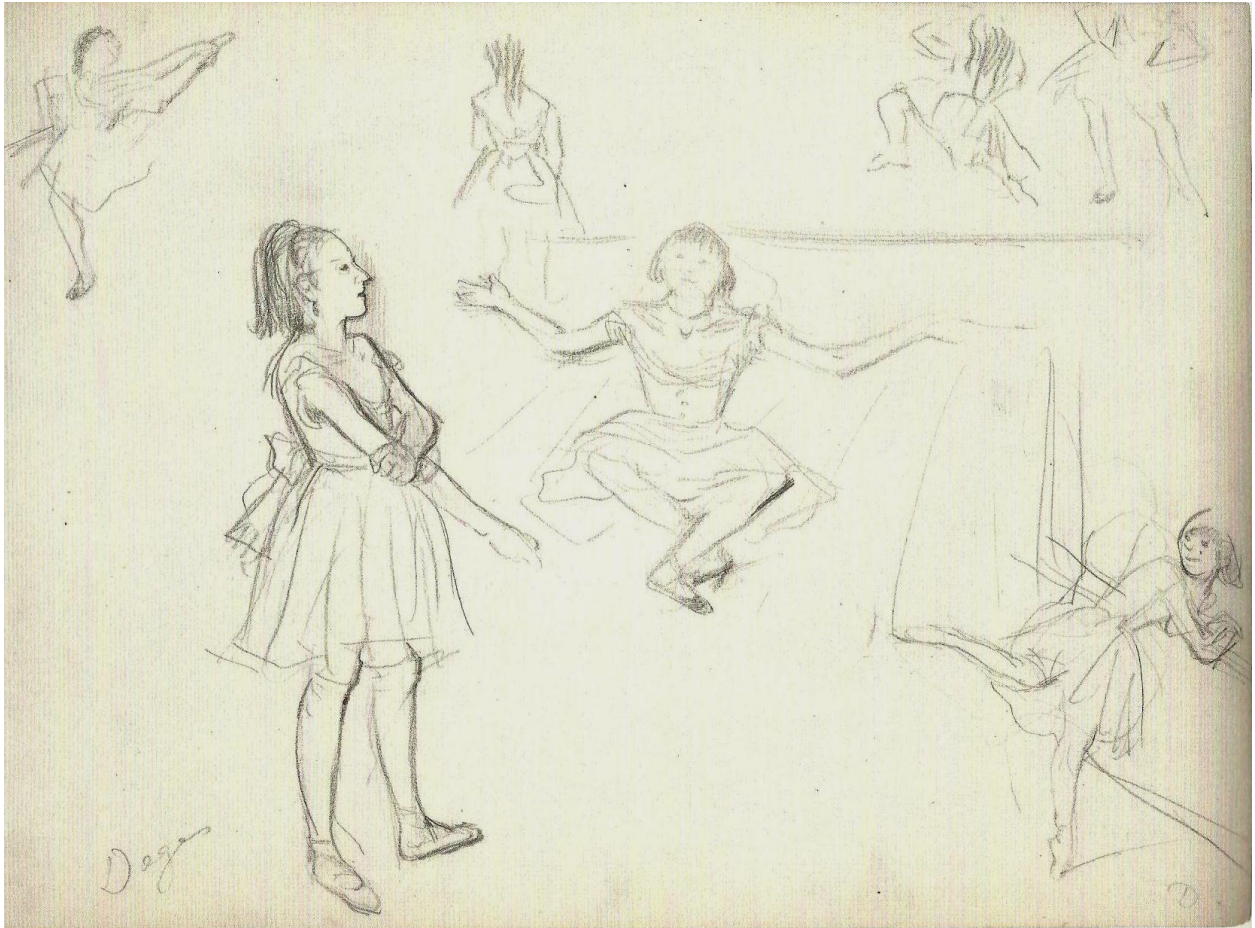
3.32
Edgar Degas, *Two ballet masters and a dancer*, c. 1877-79
Notebook 28, page 41
J. Paul Getty Museum



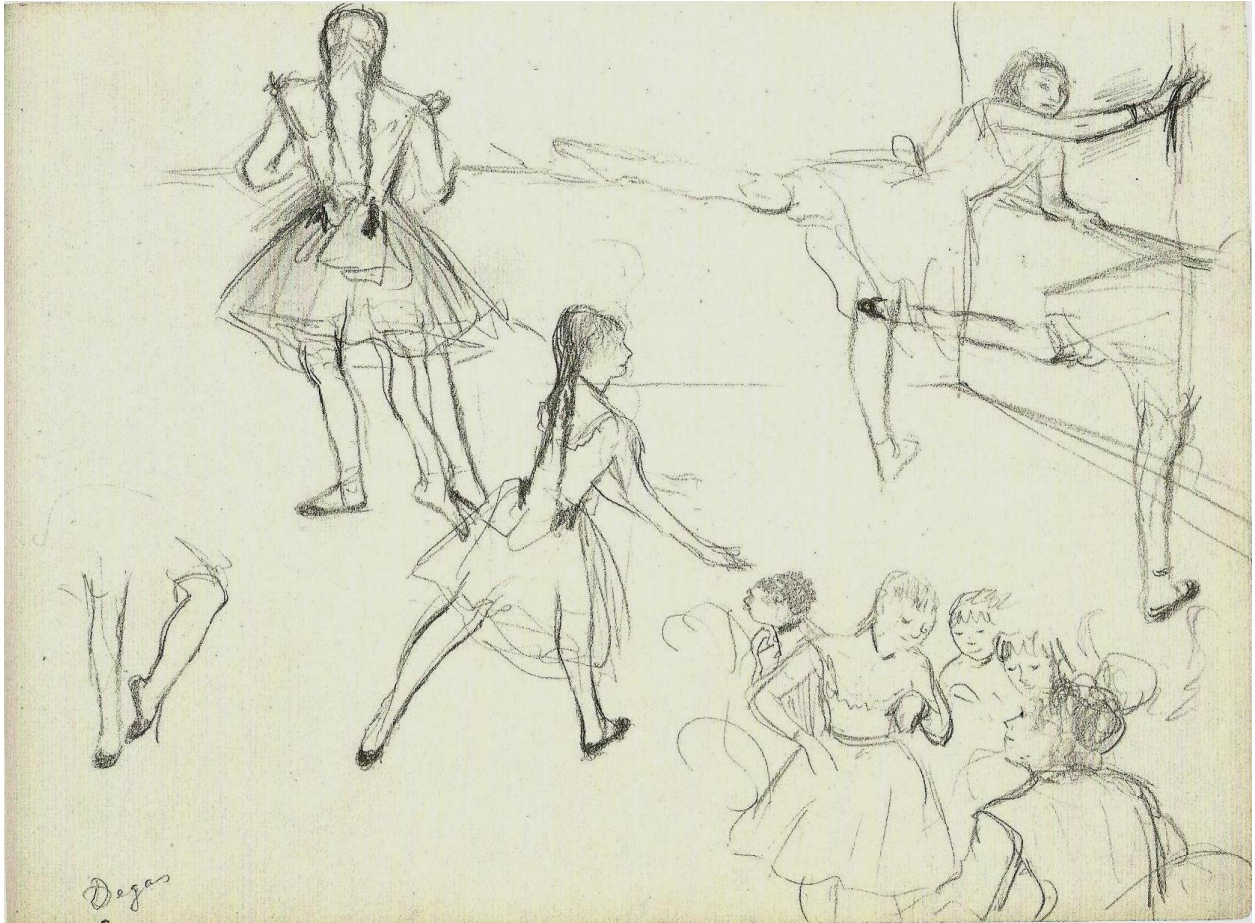
3.33
Edgar Degas, *Café-concert singers*, c. 1877-79
Notebook 28, page 11
J. Paul Getty Museum



3.34
Edgar Degas, *The Song of the Dog*, c. 1876-77
Monotype in black ink with pastel and gouache, 24 ³/₄ x 20 ¹/₈"
Private collection



3.35
Edgar Degas, Dancers in a classroom, c. 1877-79
Notebook 28, page 23
J. Paul Getty Museum



3.36
Edgar Degas, Dancers in a classroom, c. 1877-79
Notebook 28, page 25
J. Paul Getty Museum



3.37
Edgar Degas, *Seated Dancer*, c. 1873-74
Graphite & charcoal with white on paper
16 9/16 x 12 5/8"
The Metropolitan Museum of Art



3.38
Edgar Degas, *Dancer Turning*, c. 1876
Charcoal with white chalk on paper
23 7/8 x 17 2/3"
Art Institute of Chicago



3.39
Edgar Degas, *Ballet Girls*, 1879
Watercolor, silver, and gold on silk, 7 ½ x 22 ¾”
Metropolitan Museum of Art



3.40
Edgar Degas, *The Private Room*, c. 1877-9
Monotype in black ink, 6 2/3 x 8 2/5"
Private collection



3.41

Edgar Degas, *On Stage III*, 1876-77

5th and final state, one of approximately 150 prints made members of *Les Amis des Arts de Pau* print catalog, January 1877

Lithograph, 5 x 7"

Private collection



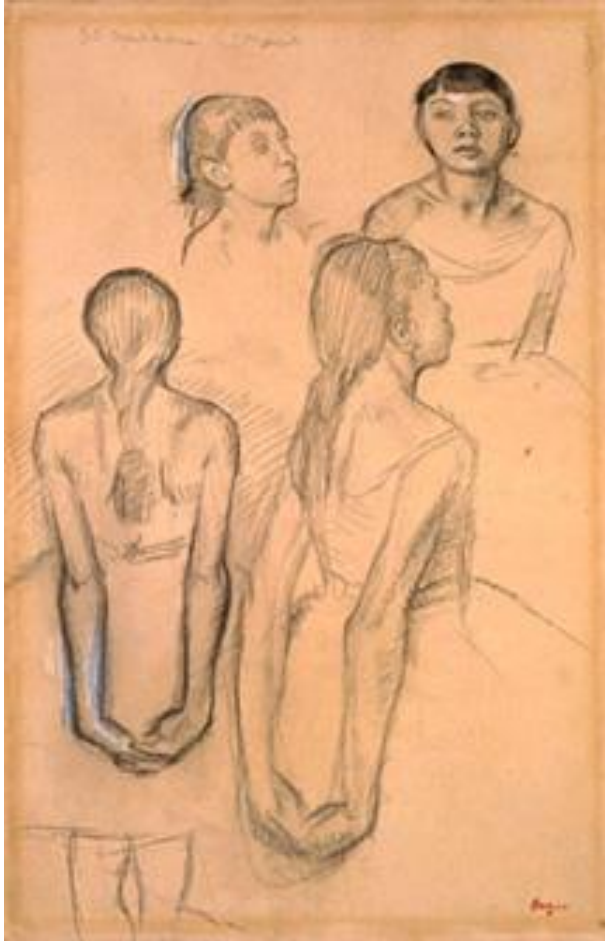
3.42
Edgar Degas, *Sketches of Dancers* (detail), c. 1876-7
Brown ink with blue watercolor on paper, 7 5/6 x 9 7/8"
The Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University



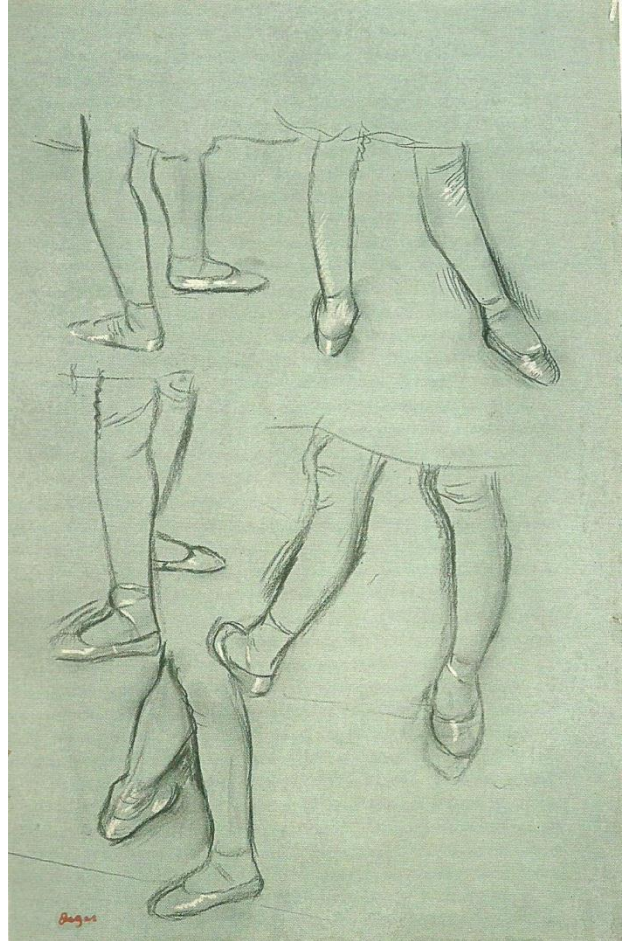
3.43
Edgar Degas, *Ballet at the Paris Opéra*, c. 1877-78
Pastel over monotype, 13 7/8 x 27 5/6"
Art Institute of Chicago



3.44
Edgar Degas, *Little Dancer Aged Fourteen*, modeled c. 1878-81, cast, 1922
Bronze, partially tinted, with cotton skirt and satin hair ribbon, wood base
38 ½ x 17 ¼ x 14 3/8”
National Gallery of Art, D.C.



3.45
Edgar Degas, *Four Studies of a Dancer*
c. 1878-79
Charcoal and white on paper, 19 1/3 x 12 1/2"
Musée du Louvre



3.46
Edgar Degas, *Studies for Little Dancer Aged Fourteen*
c. 1878-79
Charcoal and white on paper, 19 x 12"
Private collection



3.47
Edgar Degas, *Two Dancers*, c. 1878-79
Charcoal and white on paper, 25 1/8 x 19 1/4"
The Metropolitan Museum of Art



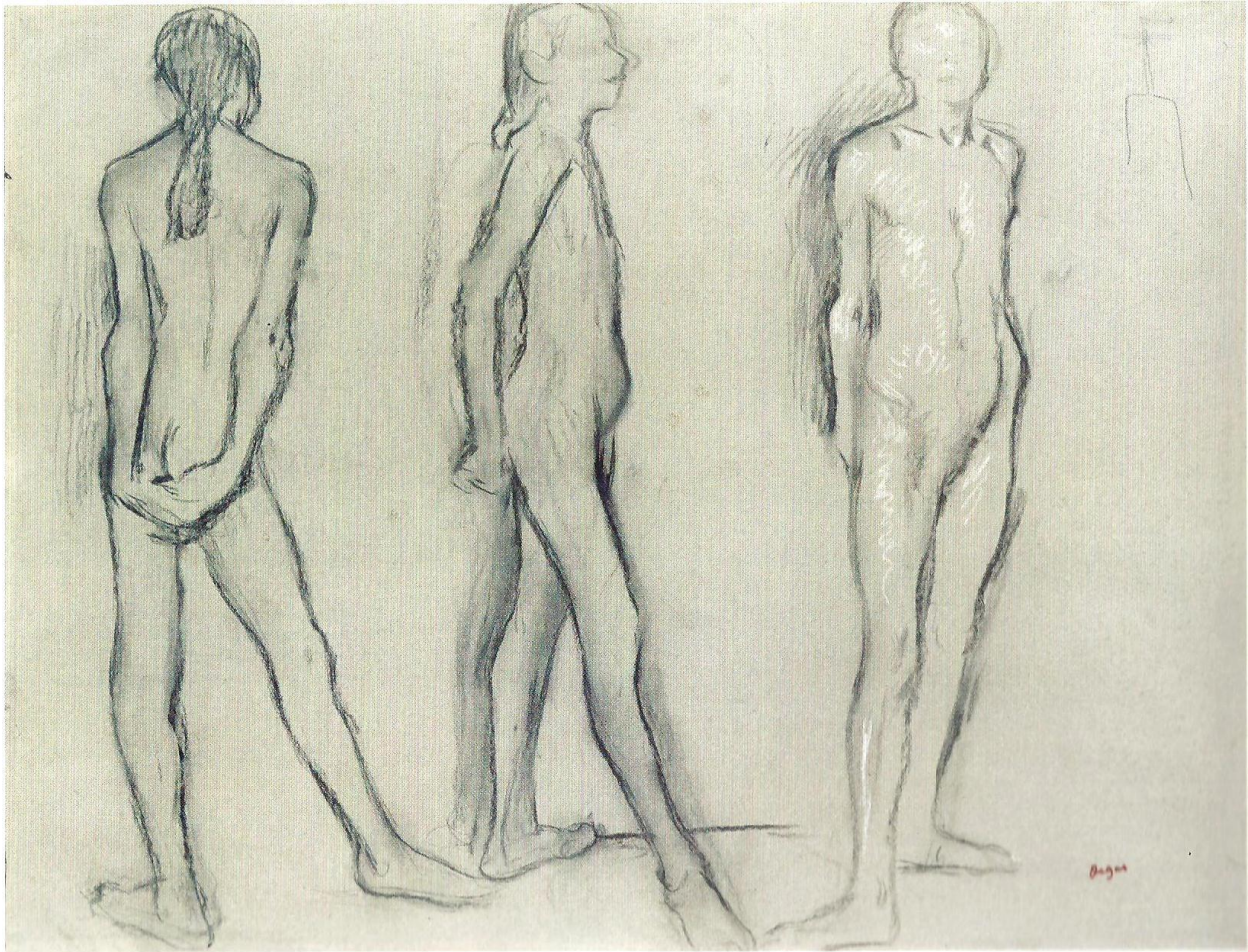
3.48
Edgar Degas, *Three Studies of a Dancer in Fourth Position*, c. 1878-81
Charcoal and white on paper, 18 15/16 x 24 1/5"
Art Institute of Chicago



3.49
Edgar Degas, *Three Studies of a Dancer*, c. 1878-81
Charcoal and white on paper, 18 ½ x 24 ½"
The Pierpont Morgan Library, NY



3.50
Edgar Degas, *Two Studies of a Dancer*, c. 1878-79
Charcoal and white on paper, 18 9/16 x 23"
Private Collection



3.51
Edgar Degas, *Three Studies of a Nude Dancer*, c. 1878-79
Charcoal on paper, 17 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 24 $\frac{1}{2}$ "
Private collection

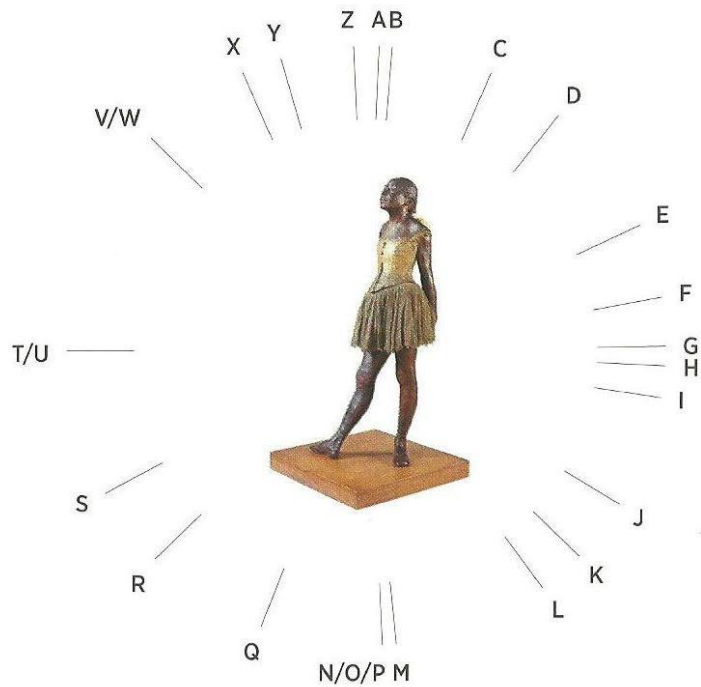


3.52
Edgar Degas, *Study of a Nude Dancer*, c. 1878-81
Charcoal on paper, 18 15/16 x 12"
Nasjonalgalleriet, Oslo



3.53
Edgar Degas, *Study of Three Dancers*, c. 1878-80
Charcoal and white on paper, 18 3/8 x 20 1/5"
Private collection, Rochester, NY

- A Fig. 27, lower left
- B Cat. 21, upper left
- C Cat. 22, left
- D Cat. 24, left
- E Fig. 27, lower right
- F Cat. 24, centre
- G Cat. 21, upper right
- H Cat. 22, centre
- I Cat. 23, left
- J Fig. 27, upper left
- K Fig. 29
- L Private collection (Vente III: 369), right
- M Cat. 22, right
- N Cat. 24, right
- O Cat. 21, centre left
- P Fig. 27, upper right
- Q Cat. 23, centre
- R Private collection (Vente III: 369), centre
- S Private collection (Vente III: 369), left
- T Cat. 23, right
- U Cat. 21, centre
- V Cat. 21, lower left
- W The Metropolitan Museum of Art (L.599), right
- X Cat. 25, left
- Y The Metropolitan Museum of Art (L.599), left
- Z Cat. 25, right

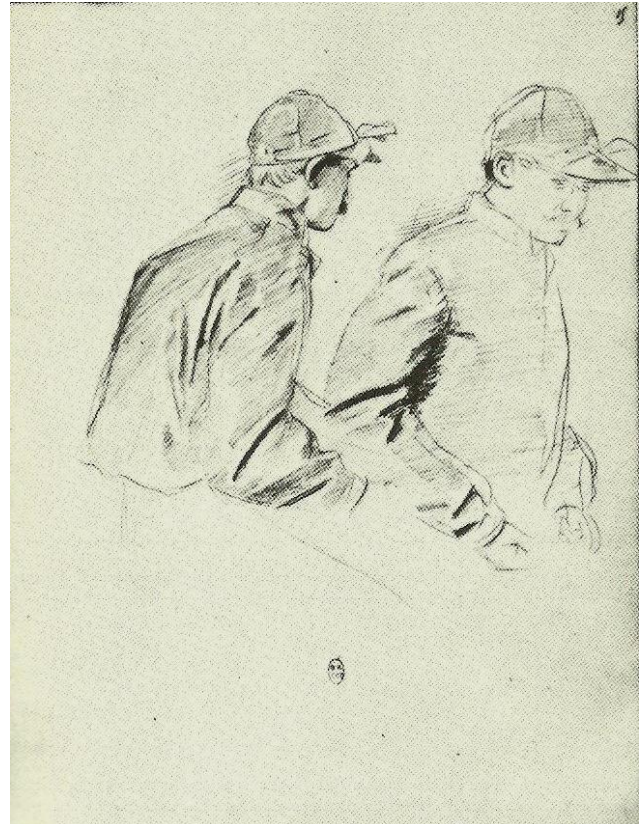


3.54

Schematic diagram “showing the positions of the preparatory drawings carried out by Degas for the *Little Dancer Aged Fourteen*,” from Richard Kendall and Jill DeVonyar, *Degas and the Ballet: Picturing Movement* (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2011), 84, Fig. 32. [Catalogue and figure numbers refer to *Degas and the Ballet*.]



3.55
Edgar Degas, *Four Studies of a Jockey*, 1866
Ink, oil, and gouache on paper, 17 7/8 x 12 3/8"
Art Institute of Chicago



3.56
Edgar Degas, *Jockeys*, c. 1867-69
Notebook 22, page 15
Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris



3.57

Anthony van Dyck, *Charles I, King of England, from Three Angles*, 1636

Oil on canvas, 34 5/6 x 39 7/8"

Windsor Castle, Royal Collection



3.58
Antoine Watteau, *Five studies of a Woman's Head, one Lightly Sketched*, c. 1716-17
Chalk on paper, 13 x 9 1/3"
British Museum



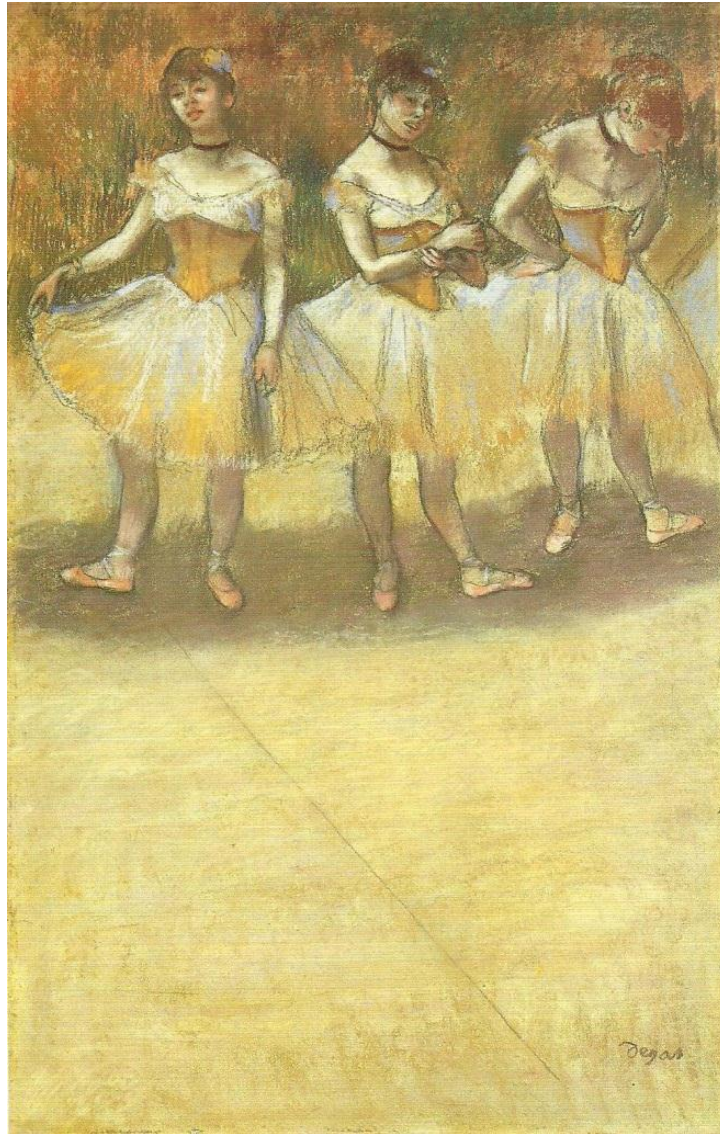
3.59
Edgar Degas, *Three Ballet Dancers*, c. 1878-80
Monotype in black ink (first impression), 7 7/8 x 16 2/5"
Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute



3.60
Edgar Degas, *Three Ballet Dancers*, c. 1878-79
Pastel over monotype, 7 7/8 x 16 15/16"
Private collection, New York



3.61
Edgar Degas, *Two Dancers Entering the Stage*, c. 1877-78
Pastel over monotype, 15 x 13 ³/₄"
The Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University



3.62
Edgar Degas, *Three Ballet Dancers*, c. 1878-80
Pastel, 31 x 19 ½"
Private collection



3.63

Edgar Degas, *Three Dancers Before Class*, c. 1879-80

Pastel, 24 x 18"

Private collection

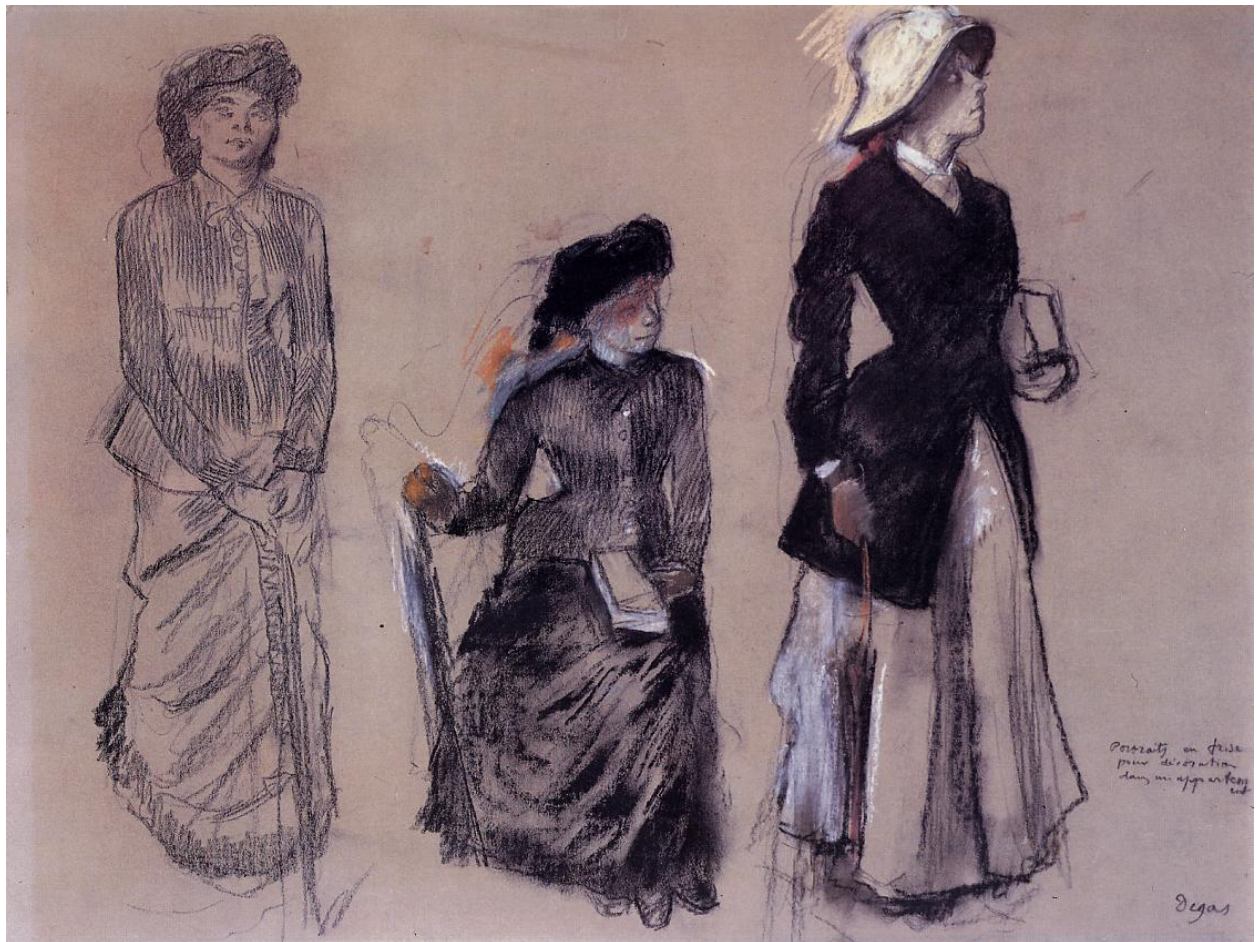
Abraded and damaged with severe restoration to original composition and surface



3.64
Edgar Degas, *Three Dancers*, c. 1879
Pastel on panel, 7 7/8 x 6 1/3"
Private collection



3.65
Edgar Degas, *Dancers Bowing*, c. 1879-80
Pastel, 14 1/5 x 19 1/3"
Private collection, Paris



3.66

Edgar Degas, *Portraits in a Frieze, Project for Decoration in an Apartment*, c. 1879-80

Charcoal, pastel, and white on paper, 19 3/4 x 25 5/8"

Private collection



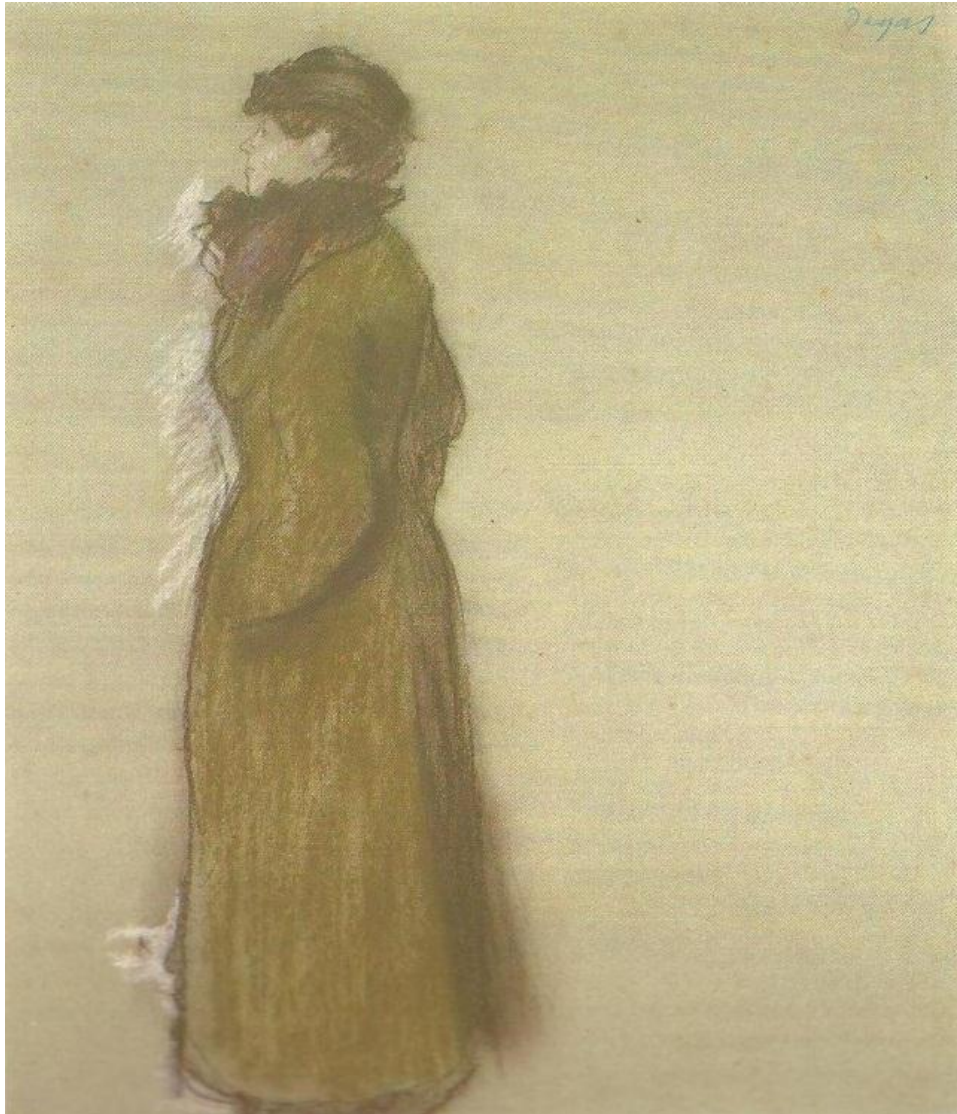
3.67
Edgar Degas, *Two Studies of Mary Cassatt at the Louvre*, c. 1879
Charcoal, pastel, and white on paper, 18 7/8 x 17"
Private collection



3.68
Edgar Degas, *Woman in Mauve Dress and Straw Hat*
c. 1879
Pastel on paper, 19 1/3 x 12 1/2"
Private collection



3.69
Edgar Degas, *Woman Reading*
c. 1879
Charcoal and pastel, 19 1/4 x 12 1/2"
National Gallery of Art, D.C.



3.70
Edgar Degas, *Woman in Street Clothes*, c. 1879
Pastel on paper, 18 7/8 x 17"
Private collection, Zurich



3.71
Edgar Degas, *The Actress Ellen Andrée*, 1879
Drypoint, 8 5/8 x 6 1/4"
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston



3.72
Edgar Degas, *Mary Cassatt at the Louvre*, 1880
Pastel on paper, 25 x 19 1/4"
Philadelphia Museum of Art



3.73

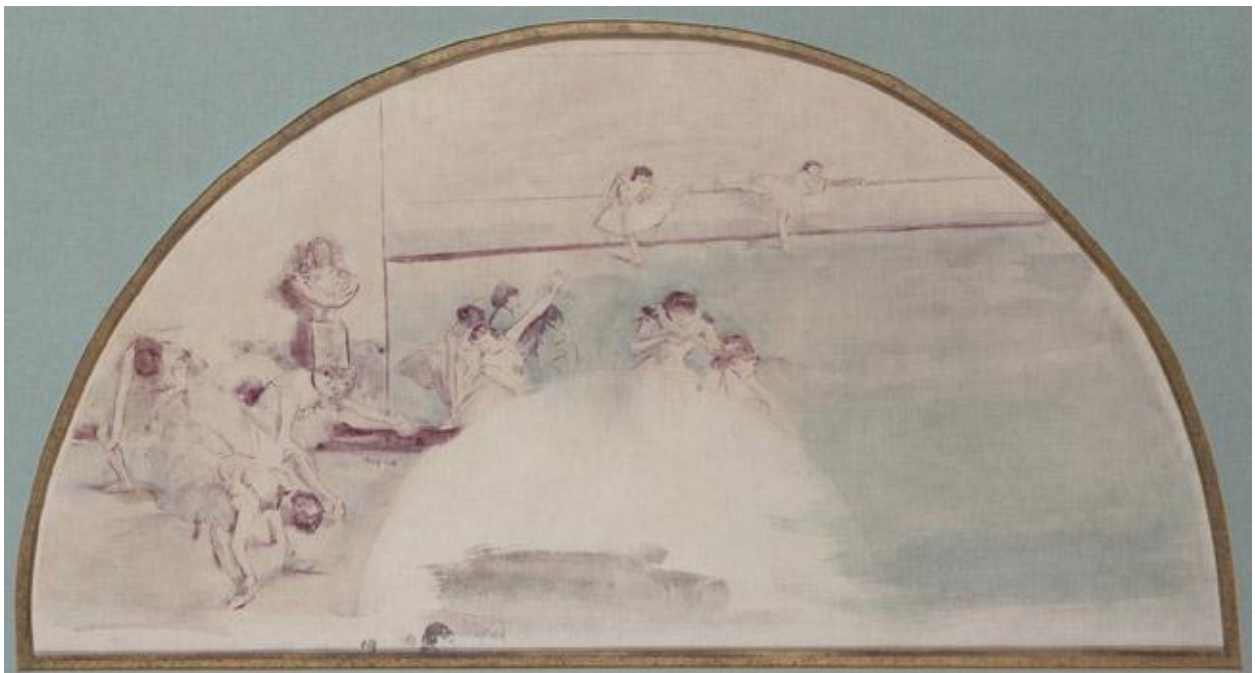
Edgar Degas, *Mary Cassatt at the Louvre: The Etruscan Gallery* c. 1879-80
Softground etching, drypoint, aquatint, and etching, 17 x 12"

Third state of nine

The Metropolitan Museum of Art



3.74
Edgar Degas, *At the Louvre*, c. 1879
Pastel on seven sheets of joined paper, 28 x 21 ¼"
Private collection



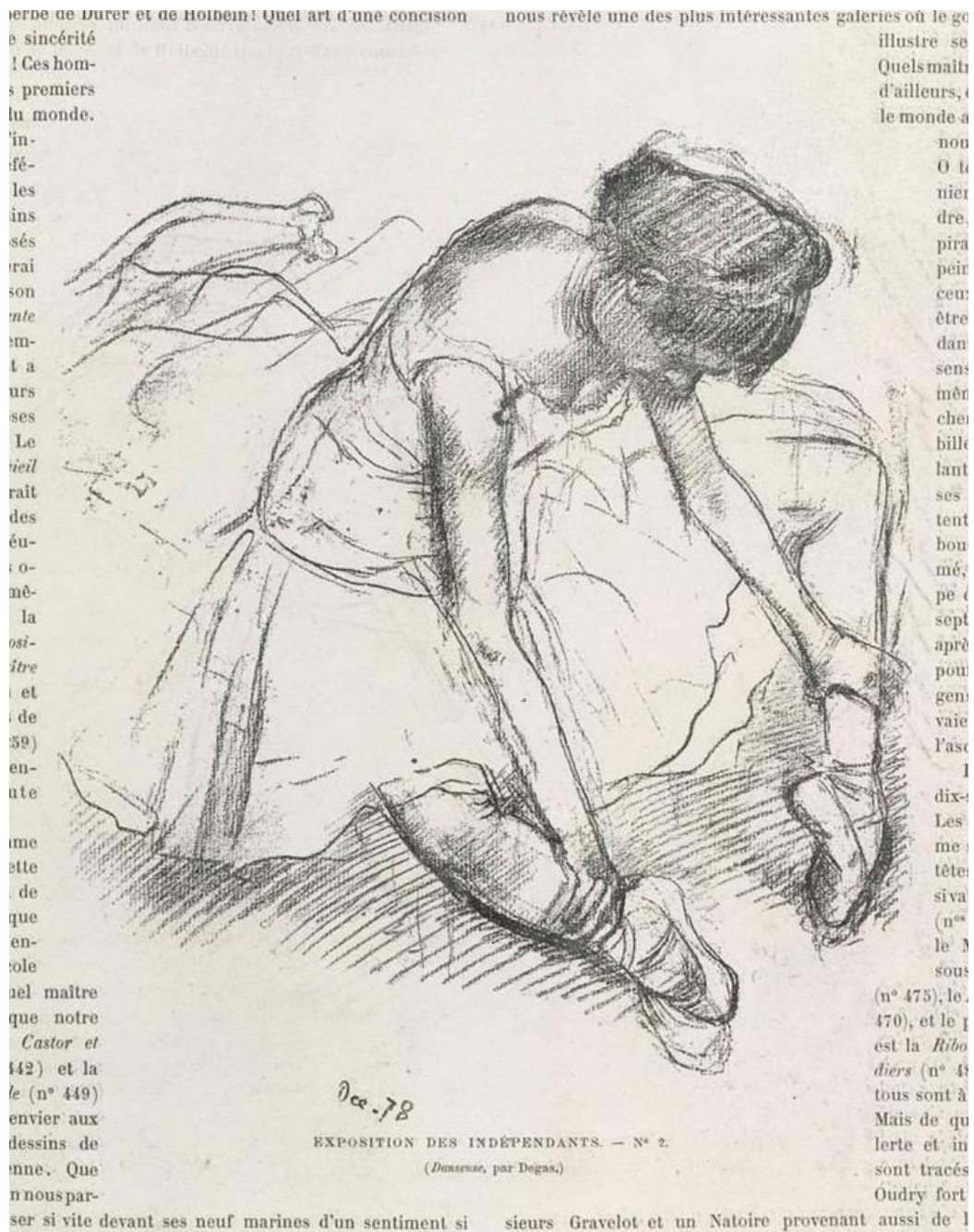
3.75
Edgar Degas, *The Foyer of the Dance*, c. 1880
Watercolor and monotype on paper, 18 x 20"
Philadelphia Museum of Art



4.1
Edgar Degas, *Melinda Darde*, c. 1878
Pencil on paper, 12 ¼ x 9"
Baroness Alain de Gunzberg, Paris



4.2
Edgar Degas, *Seated Dancer*, c. 1878
Graphite pencil on paper, 19 2/3 x 8 1/4"
Musée d'Orsay



4.4
 Edgar Degas, "Exposition des Indépendants, *Danseuses*, par Degas"
La Vie Moderne, May 8, 1879
 Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris

six œuvres nouvelles d'Édouard Manet, organiser dans sa galerie du boulevard des querelles. Cette exposition est, à coup t de han- e de l'arie èlère rient

tout près du palais de l'Industrie, à côté e malin aussi, paraît-il, — avait installé ses eûtâ vingt-cinq mille francs et ne lui ra

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Croquis par Édouard Manet.

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sur-
ntre. Ils composent cet étrange assem-
d'appeler le « tout Paris ». Les provinciaux

formé à son école et qui journallement,
parti de son enseignement, appliquent

4.5

Édouard Manet, "Croquis par Edouard Manet"

La Vie Moderne, April 17, 1880, no. 17

Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris



Dessin d'Édouard Manet.

NOTRE EXPOSITION

4.6

Édouard Manet, "Dessin d'Edouard Manet"

La Vie Moderne, April 17, 1880, no. 17

Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris



4.7
Edgar Degas, *Standing Dancer*, c. 1878
Black and white chalk on paper, 19 ¼ x 12 1/16”
Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe



4.8
Edgar Degas, *A Seated Dancer*, c. 1878
Black chalk with white on blue paper, 18 7/8 x 11 1/2"
Private collection, New York



4.9
Edgar Degas, *Two Seated Women*, c. 1878
Pastel on paper, 12 ½ x 18 ½”
The Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design



4.10
Edgar Degas, *A Seated Dancer and a Head of a Girl*, c. 1878
Black chalk and pastel on paper, 18 1/8 x 11 3/4"
Private collection



4.11
Edgar Degas, *Seated Dancer Rubbing Her Leg*, c. 1878
Charcoal and pastel w/ white on paper, 17 ½" x 12 ¼"
Norton Simon Art Foundation



4.12
Edgar Degas, *Seated Dancer Adjusting her Pumps*, c. 1880
Charcoal and pastel on paper, 18 5/8 x 12"
Hermitage Amsterdam



4.13
Edgar Degas, *Dancer with a Fan*, c. 1876-78
Chalk with white on paper, 18 7/8 x 12 3/8"
Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam



4.14
Edgar Degas, *Dancer with a Fan*, c. 1879
Pastel on paper, 17 3/4 x 11 3/8"
Private collection



4.15
Edgar Degas, *Dancer with a Fan*, c. 1880
Pastel on paper, 24 x 16 ½"
The Metropolitan Museum of Art



4.16
Edgar Degas, *Study of Dancers*, c. 1880
Charcoal and pastel (dimensions not recorded)
Private collection



4.17

Edgar Degas, *Dancer Seated Massaging Her Ankles*, c. 1878-80

Monotype, 7 ¼ x 12 ¾"

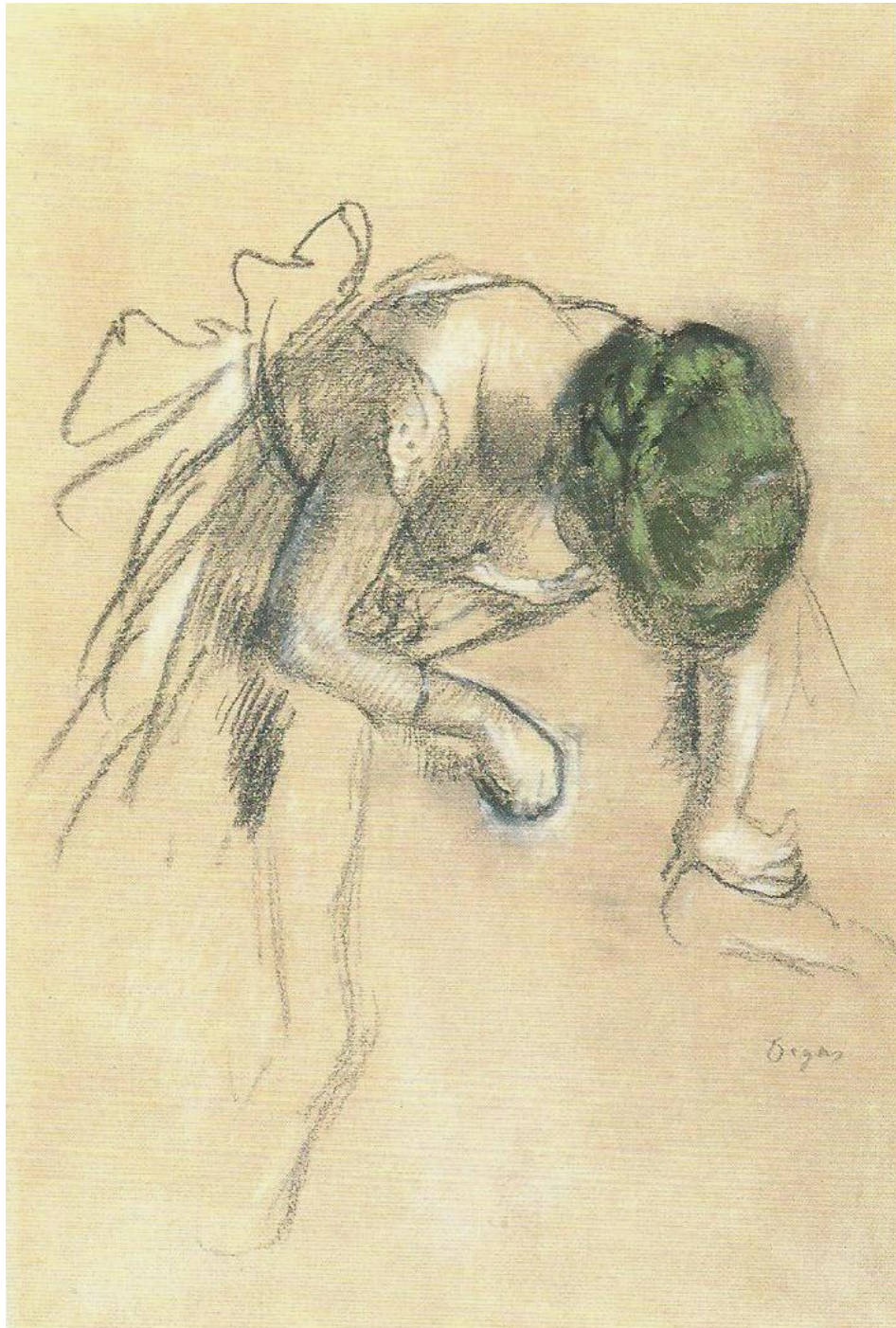
Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen



4.18
Edgar Degas, *Dancer at Rest*, c. 1879
Charcoal and pastel on paper, 11 4/5 x 17 1/3"
Private collection



4.19
Edgar Degas, *Dancer Rubbing Her Foot*, c. 1882-85
Charcoal with white on paper, 11 3/4 x 12 1/2"
Private collection



4.20
Edgar Degas, *Dancer*, c. 1882
Charcoal and pastel on paper, 18 x 12 1/4"
Private collection, New York



4.21
Edgar Degas, *Dancer Adjusting Her Slipper*, c. 1880-82
Pastel on paper, 18 ½ x 14 1/5
Private collection, Paris



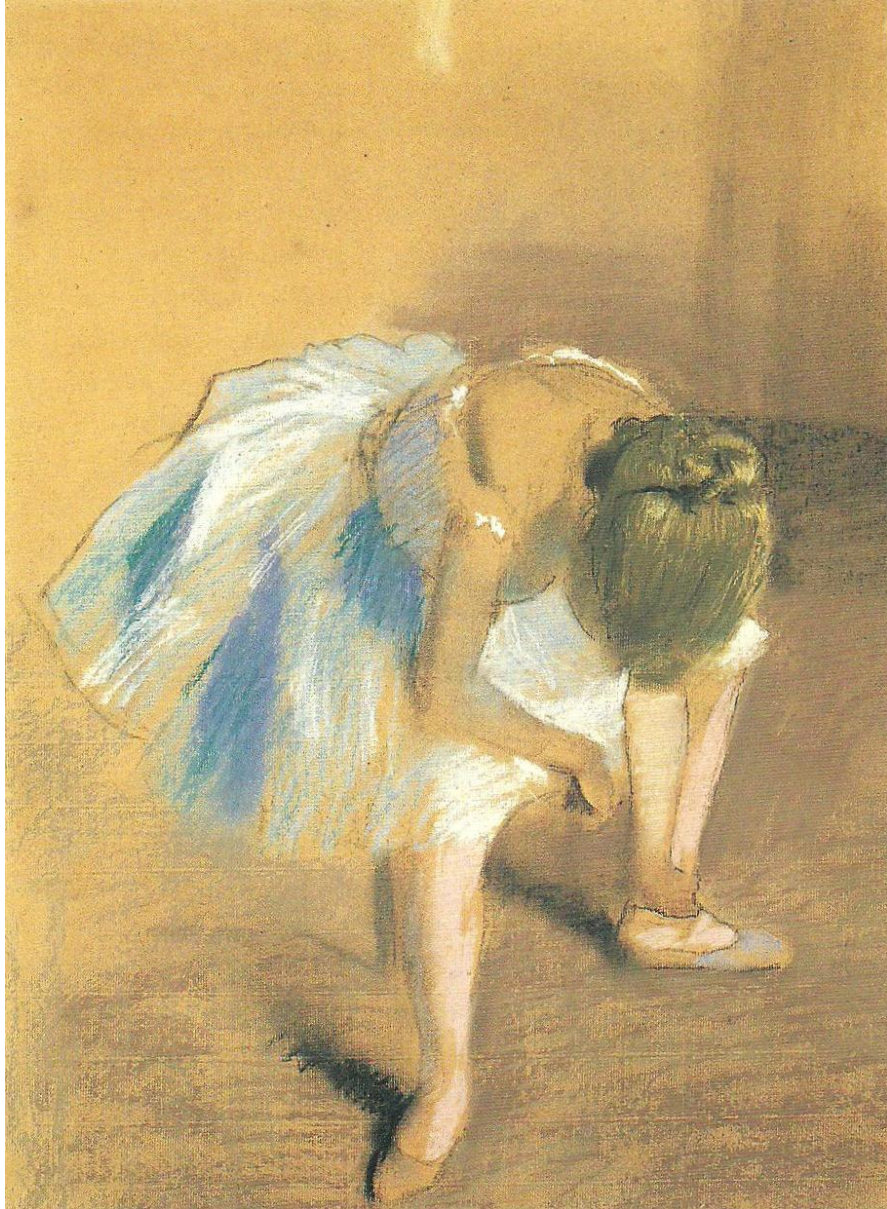
4.22
Edgar Degas, *Dancer Fixing her Slipper*, c. 1880-85
Charcoal and pastel on paper, 12 ½ x 9 ¼
Musée Bonnat, Bayonne



4.23
Edgar Degas, *Dancer in Green Tutu*, c. 1878-79
Pastel, 18 ½ x 13”
Private collection



4.24
Edgar Degas, *Seated Dancer*, c. 1879-81
Pastel on paper, 24 x 19"
Musée d'Orsay



4.25
Edgar Degas, *Seated Dancer*, c. 1879-81
Charcoal and pastel on paper, 23 x 18"
Ordrupgaardsamlingen 33, Copenhagen



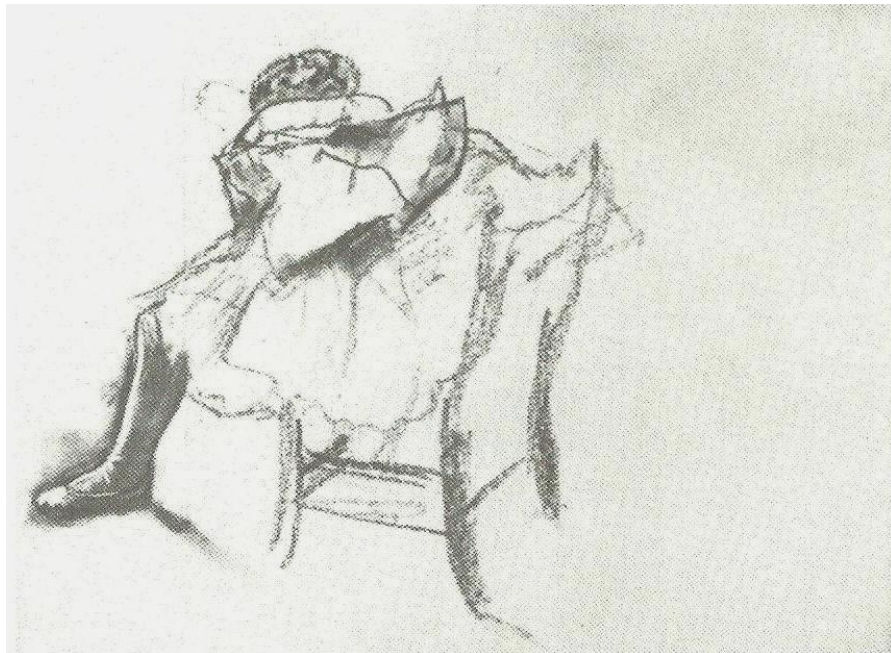
4.26
Edgar Degas, *Dancer Adjusting her Slipper*, c. 1880-85
Pastel on paper, 18 5/8 x 24 1/2"
Private collection



4.27
Edgar Degas, *Dancer Adjusting her Slipper*, 1881
Pastel on paper, 12 1/2 x 16"
Document Archives Durand-Ruel, Paris



4.28
Edgar Degas, *Dancer Adjusting her Shoe*, c. 1880
Pastel on paper, 18 x 22 4/5"
Private collection



4.29
Edgar Degas, *Seated Dancer*, c. 1880
Color pencil and pastel on paper, 19 1/3 x 21 3/5"
Private collection



4.30
Edgar Degas, *Dancer Adjusting Her Slipper*, c. 1880-85
Pastel on paper, (dimensions not recorded)
Private collection, Paris



4.31
Edgar Degas, *Dancer Adjusting her Shoe*, c. 1880-82
Pastel on paper, 19 x 24"
The Dixon Gallery and Gardens, Memphis



4.32
Edgar Degas, *Two Dancers*, c. 1879
Pastel and gouache on paper, 18 1/8" x 26 1/4"
Shelburne Museum, Shelburne, VT



4.33
Edgar Degas, *Dancers at Rest*, c. 1879
Pastel and gouache on paper, 23 1/5 x 25 1/5"
Private collection



4.34
Edgar Degas, *Three Dancers Resting*, c. 1879-80
Black chalk and pastel on paper, 18 ½ x 24 3/8"
National Gallery of Art, D.C.



4.35
Edgar Degas, *Dancers in the Foyer (Before the Dance)*, c. 1879
Pastel on paper, 19 2/3 x 25 1/2"
Private collection



4.36
Edgar Degas, *Waiting*, c. 1880-82
Pastel (and charcoal?) on paper, 19 x 24"
J. Paul Getty Museum and Norton Simon Art Foundation



4.37
Edgar Degas, *Dancers Resting*, c. 1881–85
Pastel on paper, mounted on cardboard, 19 5/8 x 23”
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston



4.38

Edgar Degas, *Dancer Adjusting Her Slipper*, c. 1887
Pastel on paper, 19 1/3 x 24 4/5"
Private collection, Paris



4.39

Edgar Degas, *Dancer Fixing Her Shoe*, c. 1887
Charcoal and pastel on paper, 17 x 11 4/5"
Private collection



4.40
Edgar Degas, *Dancer Adjusting Her Slipper, Nude*, c. 1887
Pastel on paper, 11 $\frac{4}{5}$ x 11 $\frac{4}{5}$
Private collection



4.41
Edgar Degas, *Dancer Adjusting Her Slipper*, c. 1887
Pastel on paper, 19 $\frac{2}{3}$ x 24 $\frac{4}{5}$
Private collection



4.42
Edgar Degas, *Dancer Adjusting Her Slipper*, c. 1887
Pastel and pencil on paper, 16 ½ x 15 ¾”
Private collection



4.43
Edgar Degas, *Dancer Adjusting Her Stocking*, c. 1880
Chalk on paper, 9 ½ x 12 5/16"
Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, MA



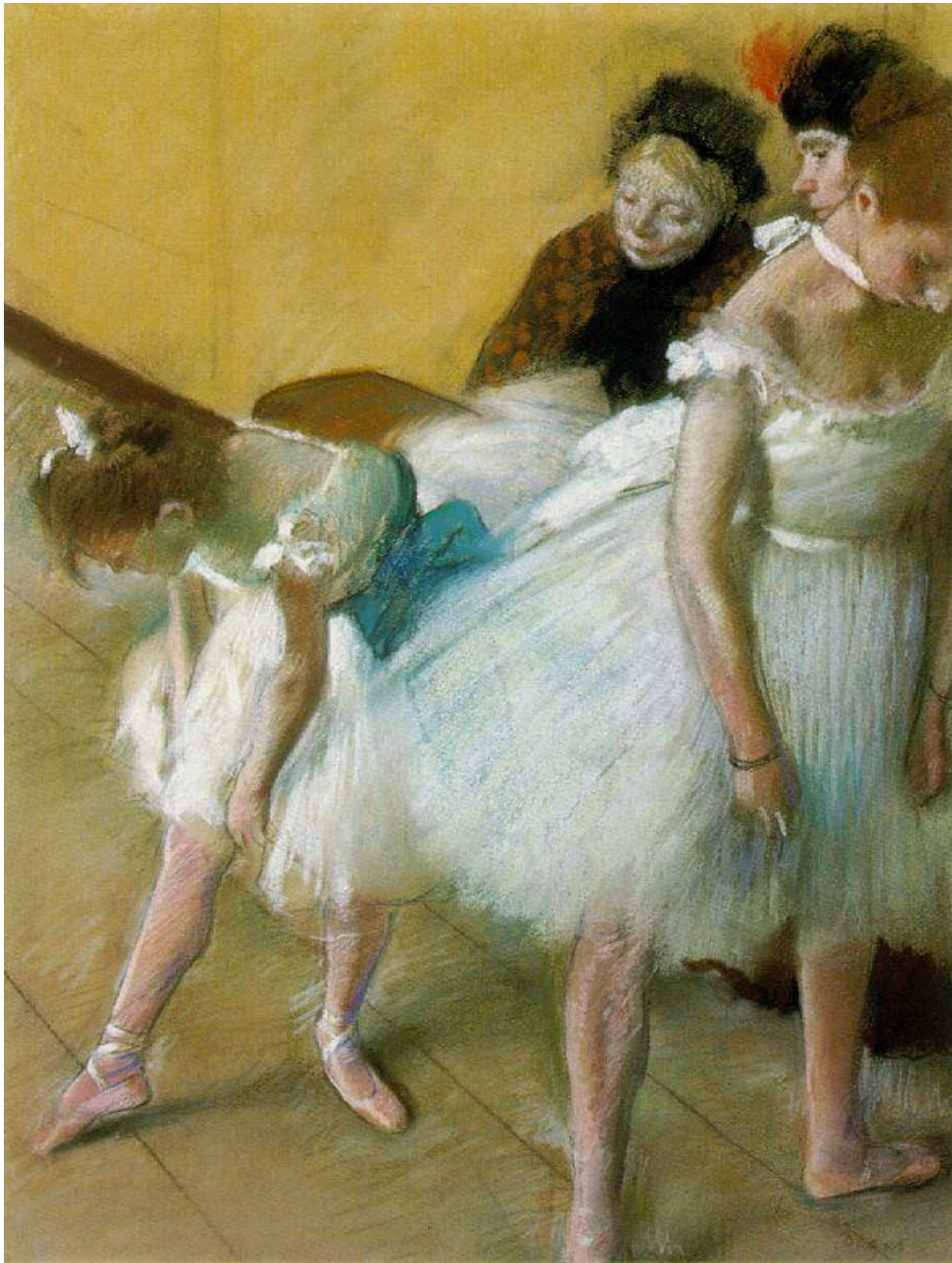
4.44
Edgar Degas, *Dancer Adjusting Her Stocking*, c. 1880
Black chalk and pastel on paper (dimensions not recorded)
Private collection, Munich



4.45
Edgar Degas, *Dancer with Red Stockings*, c. 1884
Pastel on paper, 29 7/8 x 23 1/8"
The Hyde Collection, Glen Falls, NY



4.46
Edgar Degas, *Dancer Pulling on Her Stocking*, 1880-1885
Pastel on paper,
24 2/5 x 18"
Ordrupgaard, Denmark



4.47
Edgar Degas, *The Dance Examination*, c. 1879
Pastel and charcoal on paper, 25 x 19"
Denver Art Museum



4.48
Edgar Degas, *Bust-Length Study of a Dancer*, c. 1880
Chalk and pastel on paper, 8 ½ x 9 1/16"
Narodni Muzej, Belgrade



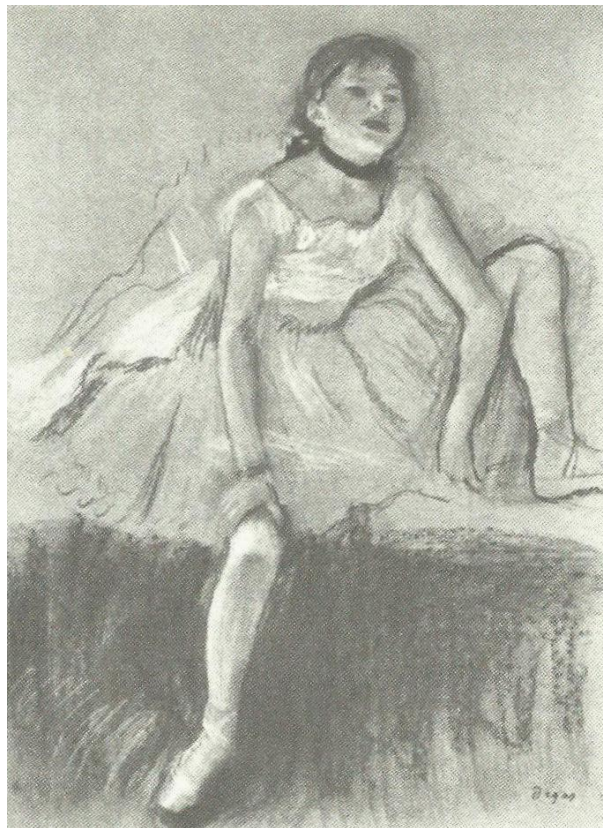
4.49
Edgar Degas, *Study of a Dancer Leaning on Elbows*, c. 1880
Chalk and pastel on paper, 12 5/8 x 9 1/4"
Narodni Muzej, Belgrade



4.50
Edgar Degas, *Standing Nude*, c. 1880-83
Charcoal and pastel on paper, 19 ½ x 12”
Musée d’Orsay



4.51
Edgar Degas, *Two Dancers*, c. 1880
Charcoal and chalk with white on paper, 17 ½ x 22 ½”
The High Museum of Art, Atlanta



4.52
Edgar Degas, *Dancer Resting*, c. 1880-85
Pastel on paper, 25 ½ x 19 1/3”
Private collection



4.53
Edgar Degas, *A Corypheé Resting*, c. 1880-82
Pastel on paper, 18 ¼ x 24 1/8”
Philadelphia Museum of Art



4.54
Edgar Degas, *Dancer at the Barre*, c. 1880
Charcoal with white on paper, 18 ³/₄ x 23 ⁷/₈"
Private collection



4.55
Dancers at the Barre, c. 1873
L'essence on paper, 18 ⁷/₈ x 24 ⁵/₈"
The British Museum



4.56
Edgar Degas, *Dancer Seen from Behind and Three Studies of Feet*, c. 1878
Chalk and pastel, 17 15/16 x 23 9/16"
National Gallery of Art, D.C.



4.57
Edgar Degas, *Two Dancers* c. 1880-81
Pastel on paper, 18 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 12 $\frac{3}{4}$ "
Private collection



4.58

Unknown artist, Lithograph, 1889, after Edgar Degas, *Dancers in the Foyer*, c. 1889 (E. G. Bührle Collection, Zurich, Fig. 0.19)
Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris



5.1
Edgar Degas walking in Paris, from Sacha Guitry's *Ceux de Chez Nous*, c. 1914

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