



American Federation of Arts

For Immediate Release

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MAJOR EXHIBITION TO SHOWCASE DEGAS' VISION OF THE BALLET ON TWO-CITY TOUR
Degas and the Dance

The Detroit Institute of Arts
October 20, 2002–January 12, 2003

Philadelphia Museum of Art
February 12–May 11, 2003

New York City (April 24, 2002)—A comprehensive exhibition of 144 paintings, works on paper, and sculptures by Edgar Degas (1834–1917), focused exclusively on the French artist's fascination with ballet, premieres at the Detroit Institute of Arts (October 20, 2002–January 12, 2003) and travels to the Philadelphia Museum of Art (February 12–May 11, 2003), the only two exhibition venues.

Degas and the Dance explores the artist's extraordinary achievement as an acute observer of the on- and off-stage activities of the dancers of the Paris Opéra. It is the first exhibition to examine fully his work in the vivid context of 19th-century ballet, with costume designs, stage sets, and photographs of dancers also included to provide added immediacy and context.

The exhibition is organized by the American Federation of Arts, the Detroit Institute of Arts, and the Philadelphia Museum of Art. In Detroit, the exhibition is made possible by the DaimlerChrysler Corporation Fund. In Philadelphia, the exhibition is made possible by ATOFINA and PNC Financial Services Group. Additional support is provided by The Pew Charitable Trusts. The media sponsor is NBC 10 (WCAU). According to Julia Brown, director of the American Federation of Arts, "As much as we thought we knew about Degas' interest in the ballet, this exhibition reveals the degree to which dance was a continual source of inspiration to the artist throughout his career. Far from creating compositions from his imagination, Degas actually immersed himself in the environment of the Paris Opéra and painted a world that he had come to know firsthand."

"While authors and artists have responded to the world of dance for centuries," said Graham W. J. Beal, director of the Detroit Institute of Arts, "Degas was among the few to have a 'backstage pass' to explore it freely, allowing today's audiences an opportunity to visit 19th-century Paris through his intimate and expressive images. The superb scholarship of guest curators Richard Kendall and Jill DeVonyar brings new understanding to one of the leading Impressionists."

Anne d'Harnoncourt, director and CEO of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, added, "Thanks to the generosity of lenders from around the world, this exhibition assembles many of the most extraordinary works that capture Degas' fascination with the ballet. We are delighted to collaborate with our colleagues at the American Federation of Arts and the Detroit Institute of Arts on *Degas and the Dance*. It finds brilliant correspondences with the Impressionist and Post-Impressionist collections of our two museums and offers visitors a new appreciation for one of the greatest artists of the 19th century."

The exhibition is drawn from public and private collections in nearly a dozen countries. It features such important paintings as *Dancers at the Barre* (ca. 1900; The Phillips Collection); *Orchestra Musicians* (ca. 1880; Städtische Galerie im Städelschen Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt am Main); and *Yellow Dancers* (ca. 1874–76; The Art Institute of Chicago). Also in the exhibition are major pastels, including *Two Dancers* (ca. 1895–97; The National Museum of Fine Arts, Stockholm) and *Dancer Stretching* (ca. 1882–85; Kimbell Art Museum). Among the drawings is a rarely seen suite from the National Museum, Belgrade, and sculptures include the much-revered *Little Dancer, Aged Fourteen* (1878–81; Philadelphia Museum of Art) and *Spanish Dancer* (ca. 1890; The Detroit Institute of Arts).

In *Degas and the Dance*, guest curators Kendall and DeVonyar reveal for the first time the artist's intimate knowledge of the dance and his familiarity with ballet technique; his previously unexplored access to rehearsal rooms and backstage areas; his acquaintances with both stars and students; and the links between Degas' works of art and actual stage productions. After years of research, the curators have been able to identify many of the theaters and rehearsal rooms Degas depicted, helping viewers understand the combination of memory and invention in Degas' dance images. In several works, the individual identities of figures depicted by the artist have come to light.

In other works, the actual performances he portrayed are now identified for the first time. Organized thematically, the exhibition includes sections devoted to Degas' images of the private world of dancers; portraits of famous ballerinas; lessons in the classroom; performances on stage; and encounters between dancers and their admirers. The exhibition also highlights a group of spectacular late oil paintings and pastels that illustrate the boldness of Degas' composition in his final years, mirroring the artist's own description of some of his late works as "orgies of color."

PUBLICATIONS

A fully illustrated catalogue published by the American Federation of Arts and Harry N. Abrams, Inc., accompanies the exhibition. *Degas and the Dance* features a comprehensive text by Richard Kendall and Jill DeVonyar on Degas' relationship with dance and the dance world, and the historical circumstances of the ballet in mid-to late 19th-century Paris. (304 pages; approximately 190 colorplates and 125 black-and-white illustrations; 9 1/2 x 11 inches; hardcover \$49.95; paperback \$35.00) *Degas and the Dance: The Painter and the Petits Rats—Practicing Their Art*, written by children's book author Susan Goldman Rubin and published by Harry N. Abrams in association with the AFA and the School of American Ballet, tells the story of the artist's attraction to dance and study of the dance world. (32 pages; 30 full color illustrations; 9 x 12 inches; hardcover \$17.95)

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF ARTS

Founded by an act of Congress in 1909, the American Federation of Arts (AFA) initiates and organizes art exhibitions that travel internationally and develops educational programs in collaboration with the museum community. Through these programs, the AFA seeks to strengthen the ability of museums to enrich the public's experience and understanding of art. Please visit our website at www.afaweb.org.

THE DETROIT INSTITUTE OF ARTS

Located in the heart of Detroit's Cultural Center, the Detroit Institute of Arts (DIA) is recognized as one of the country's premier art museums. From the first van Gogh to enter a public collection in the United States (*Self Portrait*, 1887), to Diego Rivera's world-renowned *Detroit Industry* murals, the DIA's collection reveals the scope and depth of human experience, imagination, and emotion. Visit online at www.dia.org.

PHILADELPHIA MUSEUM OF ART

The Philadelphia Museum of Art is among the largest art museums in the United States, showcasing more than 2,000 years of exceptional human creativity in over 200 galleries installed with masterpieces of painting, sculpture, works on paper, decorative arts, and architectural settings from Europe, Asia and the Americas. The striking neoclassical building stands on a nine-acre site above the Benjamin Franklin Parkway in the city of Philadelphia and offers many enriching activities—including programs for children and families, lectures, concerts, and films. Please visit the Museum's website at www.philamuseum.org.