Subject: Edgar Degas, the painter, 1834-1917 and French Impressionism.

Edgar Degas (1834-1917), was a French impressionist painter. Like the other impressionists, he wanted to portray situations from modern life. However, he did not share his fellow impressionists' concentration on light and color. Degas emphasized composition, drawing, and form more than did the other members of the movement. Degas is best known for his paintings of people in both public and unguarded private moments. He showed his figures in awkward or informal positions to free himself from what he felt were outmoded styles of portraying the human body. But he composed his pictures carefully both for formal balance and to indicate the social interaction of his figures.

Hilaire Germain Edgar Degas was born on July 19, 1834, in Paris of wealthy parents. From 1854 to 1859, he spent much time in Italy studying the great Italian Renaissance painters to perfect his draftsmanship and style. Degas intended to become a painter of historical scenes, but he abandoned this career because he felt a need to paint modern subjects. Probably under the influence of the painters Gustave Courbet and Edouard Manet, Degas began to paint scenes from everyday life. He especially enjoyed painting pictures of race-track and theatrical life.

During the 1870's, Degas began to use daring compositional techniques, partly influenced by Japanese prints. He placed his figures at unusual angles and used odd visual viewpoints. For example, he tilted his perspective to emphasize a sudden or informal movement by a figure. He even cut off parts of the subjects at the edge of the picture. In the 1880's, Degas started to concentrate on intimate scenes, such as women bathing, shopping, or drying or combing their hair.

Degas painted many pictures in oil, but he also excelled in pastel. In addition, Degas was a fine sculptor and made many clay or wax figurines. He died on Sept. 27, 1917.


French Impressionism. Painters and other artists have created Impressionistic works of art in several periods of history. But the term Impressionism is applied chiefly to the work of a group of French artists who revolutionized painting with shimmering, colorful pictures. These artists, included Claude Monet, Pierre Auguste Renoir, Camille Pissarro, and Edgar Degas. They created their most important work from about 1870 to about 1910. They held their first exhibition together in Paris in 1874. The name Impressionism comes from Monet's painting Impression: Sunrise (1870), which was shown at that exhibition.

The French Impressionists were influenced by the Realist movement in painting of the mid-1800's. They were also influenced by the scientific study of light and color, which gained importance at the same time. In addition, Impressionists studied the then new science of photography, along with Japanese prints, newly introduced into Europe. Both
these art forms showed the Impressionists how to frame and use space differently in their compositions.


Museums:
**Museum of Fine Arts** - Degas and the Nude. This exhibit runs October 9, 2011 - February 5, 2012. Numerous lectures are available related to this subject during the run of the exhibition. Go to MFA.org and search under programs.
www.mfa.org

**Harvard Art Museum** - The collection contains a few works of art by Edgar Degas. These may not be on display because the Museum is currently in a smaller location while the original building is under renovation. You can view these works of art online at www.harvardartmuseums.org.

**Isabella Gardner Museum.** The collection has one Degas painting titled, Portrait of Joséphine Gaujelin, located in the Yellow Room. Many other Impressionist Artists are on display at the Gardner Museum.
www.gardnermuseum.org/

**Museum of Art: Rhode Island School of Design**. The RISD collection has excellent examples of the French Impressionist and Post- Impressionist schools by such artists as Edouard Manet, Claude Monet, Edgar Degas, Paul Cézanne, and Pierre-Auguste Renoir.
www.risdmuseum.org

Museums farther a field.

**The Sterling and Francine Clark Art.** Located in the Berkshires, the collection has an excellent representation of well know Impressionist artists. Currently, this collection is on an International Tour. The paintings can be viewed online at www.clarkart.edu/visit/

Websites:
**www.edgar-degas.org** - this website contains a short biography about the artist, over 1,000 reproductions of the artist works, and links to other websites about the artist.

**www.metmuseum.org** search under Collection using keyword Edgar Degas to view painting at the Metropolitain Museum of Art.

**www.musee-orsay.fr/en/collections/works-in-focus/home.html** - The Museum D’Orsay in Paris, France. This collection focuses on artists in the western world between 1848 and 1914. Paintings by Edgar Degas can be viewed online with detailed description of each painting, historical descriptions, a list of exhibition listings and bibliographies.
http://www.nga.gov/cgi-bin/psearch?Request=S&imageset=1&Person=7850 - contains all the pictures by Edgar Degas at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. Each picture contains more information: Artist information, bibliography, exhibition history, inscription and location.


http://www.tate.org.uk search under Tate Modern using keyword Edgar Degas to view painting held at this museum with further information available about the artist and each individual work.

Reference Database:

Articles:
All the Articles listed below unless otherwise noted can be accessed through our Reference Database. The Reference Database can be accessed through our website www.weymouth.ma.us/library/.


“Culturally Significant Objects Imported for Exhibition Determinations:


Meyers, Jeffrey. "Degas and Manet: a study in friendship: Jeffrey Meyers explores the intense, admiring, but often wary relationship between two great artists whose lives, as well as art, had many parallels." Apollo Feb. 2005: 56+. Expanded Academic ASAP.


All *ARTnews* magazines listed below are available at the Weymouth Public Library to checkout. The complete article cannot be accessed through the Reference Database.


Cohan, William D. "Breaking the silence on Degas *ARTnews* May 2010: 98+. Expanded Academic ASAP.


Books:
All the book listed below are available through the OCLN Network.

**Degas : impressions of a great master** / Gruitrooy, Gerhard.
This book has an introduction with biography information about the artist. The books greatest attributes are the reproductions of the artists works.

**Degas : a dialogue of difference** / Hofmann, Werner.
A comprehensive overview and survey of this artist with over 200 illustrations.

**Edgar Degas : dancers and nudes** / Schacherl, Lillian.
The author examines Degas depiction of dancers and nudes with critical insights. The book contains over 125 illustrations of paintings, drawings, sculptures and prints.

**Edgar Degas : Waiting** / Thomson, Richard
This study examines the pastel painting *Waiting* from a aesthetic viewpiont and broader context.

**Edgar Degas** / Copplestone, Trewin
A volume from the *Treasure Art Series* contains a good selection with brief descriptions of the artist’s finest works.

**The Judgment of Paris: The Revolutionary Era That Gave the World**/ King, Ross
The story begins in 1863 when paintings were denied entering in the French Academy’s yearly Salon to 1874 of the first Impressionist exhibit. The story follows two paintings of
different styles. This books gives a great insight into the begins of Impressionism and those opposed to this new type of painting.

**The sculpture of Edgar Degas / Millard, Charles W.**

**DVDs:**

All the DVDs listed below are available through the OCLN Network.

**Ambient art. Impressionism** [videorecording]. Study the work of Impressionistic masters. More than 340 painting and from 11 masters create the finest collection of art ever assembled on DVD.

**Degas and the dance: the man behind the easel** [videorecording]. Features the paintings, drawings, and sculptures of ballet dancers created by Degas.

**Landmarks of western art: a journey of art history across the ages. Impressionism and post-impressionism.** [videorecording]. A 50 minute program on Degas. Learn more about the artist’s life, artistic style and techniques, explore the historical context of his life and work, and begin to understand his creative process.

**The Impressionists. Degas** [videorecording]. Profoundly influenced by the Renaissance painters, Hilaire Degas pioneered precision of line and the use of the human form in space within the Impressionist school. A Paris-born pupil of Ingres, Degas produced such masterpieces as Rehearsal of the Ballet and The Cotton Exchange. This unique study of his life and times includes delightful new footage of the Royal Ballet, Birmingham, England.

**The Impressionists: the other French revolution** [videorecording]. Tells the story of the first truly modern artistic movement, focusing on five of its most important practitioners, Renoir, Monet, Degas, Pissarro, and Morisot. Their determination to remain true to their convictions—and the price they paid as a result—is vividly captured in their own words, taken from letters and diaries, while the world's foremost authorities offer fascinating insights into their lives and work.

**The world's greatest paintings / Kloss, William.** [videorecording]. Course guidebook includes professor biography, statement of course scope, lecture outlines and notes, glossary, biographical notes, and bibliography. The aim of these lectures is to make viewers feel welcome and comfortable in the company of paintings. By focusing on 65 masterpieces of Western painting, Professor William Kloss offers a vivid, visceral encounter with genius, shining light on the unique technical, stylistic, and expressive achievements of each painting. From the 14th century to the 20th, the images are examined for their qualities of uniqueness, impact, and emotional and intellectual resonance. The lectures are arranged chronologically, showing what painters of contrasting traditions and cultures were doing in the same period, thus following the
progressive unfolding of each painter's art. These lectures open rich perspectives on Western civilization through encounters with some of the most significant, daring, and sublime paintings in Western art.


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