



Edgar Degas, *Mademoiselle Bécot aux Ambassadeurs*,
1877-1878, lithographie
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Degas en noir et blanc

dessins, estampes, photographies

**(Degas in black and white
drawings, prints, photographs)**

BnF | Richelieu
Mansart Gallery - Pigott Gallery
31 May - 3 September 2023

Curation

Henri Loyrette, Honorary
Director of the Louvre
Museum, General Curator

BnF, Prints and Photography
Department

Sylvie Aubenas, Head of
Department

Valérie Sueur-Hermel, Curator
of 19th-century Prints

Flora Triebel, Curator of 19th-
century Photographs

This exhibition offers a novel approach to the work of Edgar Degas through his ongoing interest in black and white, which he expressed via prints, photographs, drawings and paintings. Driven by an insatiable technical curiosity, the artist built up a body of black and white work that was unparalleled in his time, earning him a unique place among impressionist artists. Bringing together 160 pieces from the BnF's rich collection and prestigious loans, the exhibition follows the evolution of a passion that made him assert: *«If I could have had my own way, I would have confined myself to black and white.»*

A chronological and themed itinerary reveals Degas' experiments, from his early studies in black and white to the years of his all-consuming passion for prints, through the recurring motifs that fed his research.

His first etching attempts date back to the 1850s, but it wasn't until twenty years later that, thanks to uniquely inventive technical research, he produced plates that are considered to be among some of the masterpieces of impressionist printing: snapshots of modern life captured at the Paris Opéra or cafe-concerts, or behind the scenes in bourgeois homes and brothels. His taste for a unique print led Degas to monotypes, which he considered a «printed drawing», and he became an unsurpassed master of them. Women doing their toilette are a recurring theme of his late lithographs, while photographic experiments – his last passion, which he devoted himself to in 1895 – enabled him to rediscover «the atmosphere of lamps» and the chiaroscuro of prints.

The richness of this body of work, with a wide variety of techniques and media, is restored via 160 pieces (prints, drawings, photographs, one painting and one sculpture) from the BnF collections and loans from French museums (Musée d'Orsay, Musée Picasso, Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art, etc.) and international museums (Metropolitan Museum of Art). These exceptional pieces are linked with the work of his friends, Mary Cassatt and Camille Pissarro.



Edgar Degas, *Au Louvre, la peinture, Mary Cassatt*,
1879-1880
Eau-forte, aquatinte, pointe sèche et crayon électrique
©BnF

The BnF Prints and Photography Department has the finest collection of Degas prints in the world : it features a wealth of test prints, rare series of prints and ten monotypes. Two unpublished pieces acquired in December 2022 will be presented to the public for the first time. The collection also features 29 rarely exhibited notebooks of drawings and the most representative set of photographic research by Degas.

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Useful information

31 May - 3 September 2023
BnF | Richelieu
Mansart Gallery - Pigott Gallery
5 rue Vivienne, 75002 Paris

Tuesday – 10 a.m. > 8 p.m.
Wednesday to Sunday – 10 a.m. > 6 p.m.
Closed on Mondays

Full price entry: €10 – concession: €8
2-exhibition price, including the BnF Museum: €13 – concession: €10

The BnF Reading/Culture Pass (€24/concession: €15) and the Research Pass (€55/concession: €35) give unlimited access to the BnF's entire cultural programme

For more information (including concession and free admission conditions), go to :
www.bnf.fr

Publication

Degas en noir et blanc
Henri Loyrette, Sylvie Aubenas, Valérie Sueur-Hermel, Flora Triebel
Price: €42.00
23 x 28 cm, paperback, 224 pages, 170 illustrations
BnF | Editions

In partnership with Télérama, Connaissance des arts, Radio Classique and Arte