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Scanning Art

The Dance Class, by Edgar Degas

About the Art

About the Artist

Listen to the Artist

Interesting Facts

About the Artist

Edgar Degas

Born on July 19, 1834, in Paris, France, Edgar Degas, originally Hilaire-Germain-Edgar De Gas, was a renowned French Impressionist artist celebrated for his pastel drawings and oil paintings.

The eldest of five children in a moderately wealthy family, Degas began painting at an early age and transformed a room in his home into an artist's studio by the time he graduated from the Lycée in 1853.

Influenced by Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, whom he met in 1855, Degas enrolled in the École des Beaux-Arts, following Ingres' advice to focus on drawing lines from life and memory. Under the guidance of Louis Lamothe, he thrived at the École des Beaux-Arts, adhering to Ingres' stylistic approach.

About the Art

The Dance Class

This artwork, along with its variant in the Musée d'Orsay, Paris, stands as Edgar Degas' most ambitious exploration of the dance theme.

Depicting a scene in an old rehearsal room at the recently burned-down Paris Opéra, the painting portrays approximately twenty-four women, including ballerinas and their mothers, awaiting as a dancer performs an "attitude" for examination. Jules Perrot, a renowned ballet master, oversees the class. Notably, a poster for Rossini's Guillaume Tell on the wall, beside the mirror, pays homage to the singer Jean-Baptiste Faure, who commissioned the painting and loaned it to the 1876 Impressionist exhibition.

Listen to the Artist

Edgar Degas, Self Portrait, 1857

My iconic paintings of ballerinas from the 1870s Paris ballet world, like The Ballet Class, commissioned by Jean-Baptiste Faure, remain influential. They reflect my dual love for classic beauty and modern techniques. The vibrant, Impressionistic scene captures the gritier aspects of working-class ballerinas' lives. My compositional choices, influenced by photography, evoke a sense of observation, though some perceive it as potentially voyeuristic, mirroring the societal dynamics of the time.

Interesting Facts

At 36, Degas faced worsening visual problems that persisted throughout his life. Enlisting in the National Guard during the Franco-Prussian war, he developed retinal disease, causing color confusion, light sensitivity, and scotoma. Struggling in bright light, he favored indoor work, thriving in the low light of ballet and opera. Losing central vision in his forties and the ability to read by 57, his deteriorating eyesight influenced his art with broader strokes, bolder colors, and diverse experimentation across pastels, photography, printmaking, and sculpture.

Other Paintings

Waiting, pastel on paper, c. 1882

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The Persistence of Memory
Salvador Dalí, 1931

Salvador Dalí's *The Persistence of Memory* plunges the viewer into a dreamlike and definitely strange universe where hard and soft surfaces coexist. The artwork opposes Surrealism to reality and questions the ineluctability of time. It cements the artist's obsession for its symbolism.

Also known as Soft Watches or Melting Clocks, is one of Dali's most famous pieces. Several of his favorite recurring images are present in this work. The setting is one he often used: the seashore of Catalonia at Cape Creus. His melting-clock imagery mocks the rigidity of chronometric time.

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