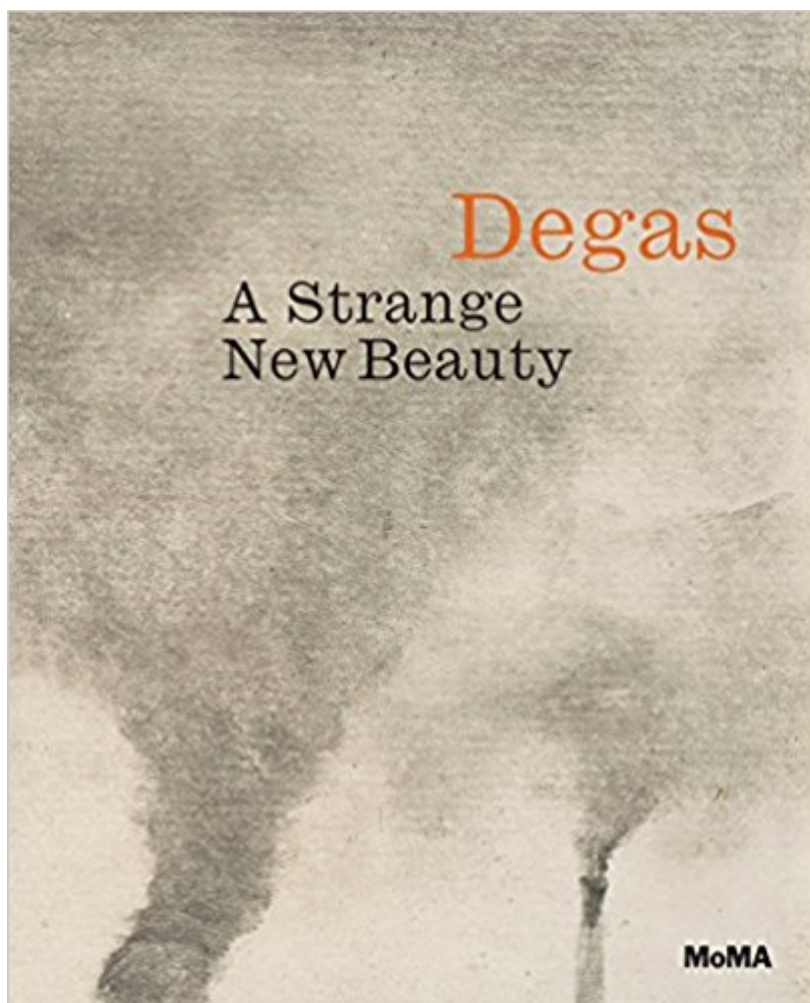


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Edgar Degas: A Strange New Beauty



Synopsis

A towering figure in 19th-century art, Degas is best known as a painter and chronicler of the ballet. Yet his work in monotype reveals the true extent of his restless experimentation. In the mid-1870s, Degas was introduced to the monotype process, a technique in which the artist draws in ink on a metal plate that is then run through a press, typically resulting in a single print. Degas embraced the medium with enormous enthusiasm, inventing a new repertoire of mark-making that included wiping, scraping, scratching, fingerprinting and rendering via removal. The resulting works are characterized by enigmatic and mutable forms, luminous passages emerging from darkness and a heightened tactility. Taking the monotype process to radical ends, Degas explored a variety of subjects, including city dwellers in motion; harshly illuminated cafe singers, ballet dancers on and offstage, women in intimate settings; and evanescent landscapes. With this medium, Degas is at his most modern, liberating drawing from tradition, depicting the body in new and daring ways, and boldly engaging the possibilities of abstraction. Published to accompany an exhibition at The Museum of Modern Art, this richly illustrated catalogue presents approximately 120 monotypes along with some 60 related works, including paintings, drawings, pastels, sketchbooks and prints. Essays and detailed studies by curators, scholars and conservators explore the creative potency of Degas's rarely seen monotypes, and highlight their impact on his wider practice.

Hilaire-Germain-Edgar Degas (1834–1917) was a French painter, draftsman, printmaker and sculptor celebrated for his scenes of modern life, from the cabaret concert to the racetrack to the ballet, the subject for which he is best known. Academically trained, Degas emulated old master and 19th-century predecessors; at the same time, he embraced radically new subjects, compositions and techniques.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

More than 120 illustrations alternate with concise essays, offering an ideal way to view these precursors of works by today's most interesting figurative artists. (Christopher Lyon Bookforum) An exceptionally complex and intriguing exhibition, which makes the best possible use of an array of works seldom seen in one place. Together they constitute a genuine portrait of the artist. (Anka Muhlstein The New York Review of Books) It was his work in monotype that reveals the true extent of his restless experimentation... With this medium, Degas is at his most modern, liberating drawing from tradition, depicting the body in new and daring ways, and boldly engaging the possibilities of abstraction. (James A. Cox Midwest Book Review) Breathtaking... There are visual pleasures here that you will never see anywhere else. (Deborah Solomon WNYC) "A Strange New Beauty" brings a new logic and coherence to Degas's experimentation... It makes the past feel alive and useful. (Roberta Smith The New York Times) That sense of expanded possibility pervades Degas's work in monotype, and carries over into other aspects of his art. (Susan Delson The Wall Street Journal)...reveals the inveterate experimentalist behind the tutus. (Andrea K. Scott The New Yorker) In monotype, even his ballet dancers leap into new territory. (The Wall Street Journal) Degas at his most blissfully experimental. (Adam Lehrer Forbes)

The landscapes alone are worth the price. They will blow your mind. It's too bad when the illustrations aren't as generous as they could be. Design and negative space are great things, but I too will complain about the capacious margins. But you know what? You'll be dead before another book is published on the subject. I will note a certain displeasure. In recent years, art books seem to be more about those assembling the pages. As with numerous monographs of late you have to wonder what's more important, the art on display or the essayists involved. About a dozen academics get publishing credits with this book. Which would be okay if there was a central editing post. Instead you get, say, a bunch of words wasted on numerous cursory explanations of Degas' otherwise revolutionary dark-field/light-field monotypes. You hear echos of the same phrasings. But trust me. If you couldn't go to the exhibition, you'll want to study the pages of this book.

The show itself is as wondrous a show as you'll ever see. Please make every effort to see it in NYC

or as it travels. Literally every piece is brilliant, radiant, at times unimaginably envisioned. However the book is in insult to the art. As another reviewer stated, the paper is all wrong for works where highlights set everything aglow. Here it's dull and duller. The pieces could have been printed 1 to a page with the doubles across from one another, creating an experience close to the real thing. Instead they wasted 85 pages with ho hum redundant prose that takes up nearly half the book. A beautiful catalogue might have included simply the historical information displayed in the show and loving attention to the reproductions of Degas' art. This book is an insult to his work and the reader. Buy if you must.

Essays good but reproductions of the art very poor

Informative writing about Degas' printmaking techniques and experimentations. Images of his work that are rarely seen.

The Degas mono print show at MoMA was fantastic and this book is a great catalog/overview. There's nothing like seeing the real thing but the book is well printed and it's a lot easier to read the history in a book than on the walls of a museum.

This book is marvelous. The ample illustrations might have looked better on a glossy instead of matte stock.

Well exhibition catalog. I would recommend it to anyone interested in Degas and his monoprints.

Wonderful prints from a genius. JS ROUSE

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