

**HARVARD UNIVERSITY ART MUSEUMS TO PRESENT ITS
DISTINGUISHED COLLECTION OF DEGAS MASTERWORKS
AUGUST 1 – NOVEMBER 27, 2005**

Degas at Harvard Brings Together for the First Time Degas Works from Harvard's Fogg Art Museum, Houghton Library, and Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection

CAMBRIDGE, MA (April 19, 2005)—This August, the Harvard University Art Museums will present *Degas at Harvard*, an exhibition examining Harvard University's distinguished holdings by Edgar Degas—one of the most important collections of the artist's work in the United States. The exhibition will draw together more than 60 works by Degas from the collection of the Fogg Art Museum, together with promised gifts to the Fogg, as well as works from The Houghton Library at Harvard and Harvard's Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection in Washington, D.C. Organized by the Fogg Art Museum, the exhibition encompasses drawings, paintings, prints, sculpture, and photographs, and will be on view at Harvard's Arthur M. Sackler Museum from August 1 to November 27, 2005.



Hilaire-Germain-Edgar Degas, *After the Bath, Woman Drying Herself (detail)*, c. 1893-98. Crayon on yellow tracing paper, 79.8 x 90.1 cm. Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University Art Museums, Bequest of Meta and Paul J. Sachs, 1965.258. Photo: Allan Macintyre, HUAM, © President and Fellows of Harvard College.

In 1911, the Fogg was the first museum in the world to mount an exhibition of works by Degas and was the only one to do so during the artist's lifetime. *Degas at Harvard* brings together for the first time Degas works in various Harvard collections, from very early works created in his student days to masterworks made at the height of his career. The exhibition explores the range and depth of Degas's artistic innovation, and Harvard's pivotal role in fostering understanding

and scholarship of his works through the commitment of its curators, collectors, and the generations of scholars who have worked with the collection at the Fogg. A key figure in the remarkable relationship between the work of Degas and the Fogg, its staff, and students at the University was Paul J. Sachs (1878–1965), former professor of fine arts at Harvard and associate director of the Fogg. Not only does the Fogg owe the heart of its collection to Sachs’s eye and generosity (some 22 works by Degas were given or bequeathed by him over the years) but his inspirational teaching had a profound impact on the wider reception of Degas in the United States.

“The Degas collections at Harvard are an exceptional resource that provides a multidimensional examination of Degas’s work and contributes to the Art Museums’ great tradition of teaching, research, and close interaction with works of art,” said Thomas W. Lentz, Elizabeth and John Moors Cabot Director of the Harvard University Art Museums. “The work of Sachs and those he drew to Harvard was central to the recognition and acceptance of Degas as one of the influential artists of his day – and ours. Sachs’s passion, vision, and legacy of scholarship has resulted in outstanding contributions to the field and collections that are used on a daily basis in classrooms and study rooms. By making these works more accessible, we can explore new ideas and take a fresh look at what we think we know well.”

The Harvard University Art Museums initiated new research in preparing the exhibition, including extensive conservation and analytical research that allowed curators and conservators to reexamine in careful detail much of the collection. Building upon recent extensive technical analysis of a number of the Fogg’s paintings, all of Degas’s works on paper in the collection were subjected to a rigorous examination in the museum’s Straus Center for Conservation. A highlight of this substantive study was the unframing, for the first time in many years, of one especially fragile drawing, which revealed a section of the drawing hitherto hidden under the mat, providing new insight into the work. The technical research was complemented by significant archival research in order to examine the history of the prized collection of Degas’s work at the Fogg. Through this new research and ongoing study, the exhibition underscores the Harvard University Art Museums’ commitment to making opportunities available for scholars and visitors to explore and enjoy exceptional works of art.

Degas at Harvard is organized by Edward Saywell, Charles C. Cunningham Sr. Curatorial Associate in Drawings, and Stephan Wolohojian, curator in the Department of Paintings, Sculpture, and Decorative Arts. The 62 works in the exhibition will be organized thematically into sections of portraits, landscapes, ballet scenes, bathers, and horse scenes, highlighting the strength and range of Harvard's collections.

“Edgar Degas was a brilliantly innovative artist and the Harvard collections reveal his constant experimentation with new techniques and bold ideas,” said Saywell. “Despite the broad familiarity of his art, the more we study it, the more we realize just how much there is still to discover about Degas's remarkable creative process. In subjecting the works to detailed analysis in our conservation labs, and then presenting the results through exhibition and lectures, we intend to make a lasting contribution to the scholarly consideration of Degas's art.”

Significant works featured in the exhibition include:

- *The Rehearsal* (1873–78), the only work in the current exhibition to also be shown in the pivotal 1911 exhibition. Lent by a private collector for the first show, *The Rehearsal* came to Harvard in the 1951 bequest of Maurice Wertheim.
- *After the Bath, Woman Drying Herself* (1893–98), which will be shown to the public for the first time in 40 years. Due to its extreme fragility—the work is drawn on very thin and brittle tracing paper—the drawing has remained in the care of the Fogg's paper conservation laboratory since the 1960s because techniques for conserving the work have not yet advanced to a point where the work can be handled or presented on a regular basis.
- *Alice Villette* (1872), an oil painting purchased by the Fogg in 1925, its first Degas acquisition.
- *Untitled (Self-Portrait in Library)* (c. 1895), a gelatin silver print that shows Degas's fascination with portraits and his skill as a photographer.
- *Dancers, Nude Study* (1899), a drawing of ballet dancers bathing, combining two of the artist's most famous subjects. The drawing is a partial and promised gift of Emily Rauh Pulitzer, chair of the Visiting Committee for the Harvard University Art Museums, in honor of former Harvard University Art Museums director James Cuno, who taught a popular course on Degas while he was at Harvard.
- Two rare landscape photographs from the 1890s, *Untitled (Cape Hornu, near Saint-Valèry-sur-Somme)*, and *Untitled (The Hourdel Road, near Saint-Valèry-sur-Somme)*,

both probably taken in early September 1895, when Degas spent five days in Saint-Valéry.

The exhibition will include archival material pertaining to the University's collecting history as well as an autograph letter to Paul Albert Bartolomé and an extremely rare book of sonnets written by Degas, both loaned from Harvard's Houghton Library. The sonnets vividly evoke Degas's life in the ballet world. Due to the size of the Degas collection at the Fogg, a number of prints and drawings will not be able to be presented within the Sackler galleries and these will be available for close study during the public open hours of the Agnes Mongan Center for the Study of Prints, Drawings, and Photographs in the Fogg.

Catalogue

The exhibition will be accompanied by *Degas at Harvard*, a fully illustrated catalogue containing essays by Harvard curator Marjorie Benedict Cohn and one of the world's most prominent Degas scholars, Jean Sutherland Boggs, an independent scholar and former pupil of Paul Sachs, as well as a poem by Richard Wilbur inspired by the Degas works he studied at the Fogg as a Harvard graduate student in the late 1940s. The 128-page catalogue with 90 illustrations, 50 in color, is published by the Harvard University Art Museums and distributed by Yale University Press (\$19.95).

Exhibition Programming

M. Victor Leventritt Lectures:

Arthur M. Sackler Museum, lecture hall

485 Broadway, Cambridge, MA

6:00 p.m.

Free admission.

The M. Victor Leventritt Lecture Fund was established through the generosity of the wife, children, and friends of the late M. Victor Leventritt, Harvard Class of 1935. The purpose of the fund is to present outstanding scholars of the history and theory of art to the Harvard and Greater Boston communities.

Thursday, October 6

Richard Kendall, independent scholar, lecturer, and curator

Friday, October 14

Richard Thomson, Watson Gordon Chair of Fine Art, University of Edinburgh, UK

Thursday, October 20

Anthea Callen, Emeritus Professor of Visual Culture, University of Nottingham, UK

Thursday, November 3

Hollis Clayson, Professor of Art History, Northwestern University, IL

Thursday, November 17

Theodore Reff, Professor Emeritus, Department of Art History and Archaeology, Columbia University, NY

Gallery Talks:

Arthur M. Sackler Museum

Free with the price of admission.

Sunday, September 11, 2:00 p.m.

Sarah Kianovsky, Assistant Curator, Department of European Paintings, Sculpture, and Decorative Arts

Sunday, September 25, 2:00 p.m.

Marjorie B. Cohn, Carl A. Weyerhaeuser Curator of Prints Emerita

Sunday, October 2, 2:00 p.m.

Prudence Peiffer, Ph.D. candidate, History of Art and Architecture

Sunday, October 9, 2:00 p.m.

Michelle Yi-Ann Kuo, Ph.D. candidate, History of Art and Architecture

Saturday, October 22, 11:30 a.m.

Willemijn Lindenhovius, Lynn and Philip A. Straus Curatorial Intern, Department of Drawings

Sunday, November 13, 2:00 p.m.

Edward Wouk, Ph.D. candidate, History of Art and Architecture

Saturday, November 19, 11:30 a.m.

Miriam Stewart, Assistant Curator, Department of Drawings

Concerts:

Fogg Art Museum, Calderwood Courtyard

32 Quincy Street, Cambridge, MA

6:30 p.m.

\$35; \$25 for Friends. Please call 617-495-4544 for more information.

Monday, September 19

Music of Fauré, Franck, and Debussy

Sergey Schepkin, pianist

Monday, October 24

Late-19th-Century Songs by French Composers

The Florestan Recital Project

About the Harvard University Art Museums

The Harvard University Art Museums form one of the world's leading arts institutions, with the Arthur M. Sackler, Busch-Reisinger, and Fogg art museums, the Straus Center for Conservation, and the U.S. headquarters for the Archaeological Exploration of Sardis, an excavation project in western Turkey.

The Harvard University Art Museums are distinguished by the range and depth of their collections, their groundbreaking exhibitions, and the original research of their staff. As an integral part of the Harvard community, the three art museums serve as resources for all students, adding a special dimension to their areas of study. The public is welcome to experience the collections and exhibitions as well as to enjoy lectures, symposia, and other programs.

For more than a century, the Harvard University Art Museums have been the nation's premier training ground for museum professionals and scholars and are renowned for their role in the development of the discipline of art history in this country.

Location and Hours

The Fogg Art Museum and the Busch-Reisinger Museum are located at 32 Quincy Street in Cambridge. The Arthur M. Sackler Museum is located next door at 485 Broadway. Each Museum is a short walk from the Harvard Square MBTA station.

Hours are Monday through Saturday, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m., Sunday 1 – 5 p.m.; the Museums are closed on national holidays. Admission is \$7.50; \$6 for seniors; \$6 for students; and free for those under 18 years of age. The Museums are free to everyone on Saturday mornings, 10 a.m. – noon. The Harvard University Art Museums receive support from the Massachusetts Cultural Council. More detailed information is available at 617-495-9400 or on the Internet at www.artmuseums.harvard.edu.

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For more information on this exhibition or the Harvard University Art Museums, please contact:

Matthew Barone
Harvard University Art Museums
tel 617-495-2397; fax 617-496-9762
matthew_barone@harvard.edu

Elizabeth Chapman / Casey L. Barber
Resnicow Schroeder Associates
tel 212-671-5159 / 5179
echapman / cbarber@resnicowschroeder.com