



**NINETEENTH-CENTURY EUROPEAN PAINTINGS
AT THE STERLING AND FRANCINE CLARK ART INSTITUTE**

VOLUME ONE

Edited by Sarah Lees

With an essay by Richard Rand
and technical reports by Sandra L. Webber

With contributions by Katharine J. Albert, Philippe Bordes, Dan Cohen,
Kathryn Calley Galitz, Alexis Goodin, Marc Gotlieb, John House,
Simon Kelly, Richard Kendall, Kathleen M. Morris, Leslie Hill Paisley,
Kelly Pask, Elizabeth A. Pergam, Kathryn A. Price, Mark A. Roglán,
James Rosenow, Zoë Samels, and Fronia E. Wissman

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Degas chose to reverse his sitter's position in the two large canvases, while retaining the subdued demeanor and slightly lowered head of the Clark study. RK

PROVENANCE [The Matthiesen Gallery, London]; Sir Edward and Lady Hulton, London (by 1957—until at least 1968); private collection, London; [Alex Reid & Lefevre, London, sold to Cook, 15 Aug. 1984, as *Portrait d'homme*]; John S. Cook, Oak Ridge, Tenn. (1984–2006, given to the Clark, as *Portrait of a Man*); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2006.

EXHIBITIONS London 1957, no. 10; Wuppertal and others 1964–68, no. 9, as *Bildnis eines mannes [angeblich Degas' Freund Valpinçon]* (Rotterdam ed., no. 9, as *Mansportret*; Zurich ed., no. 11, as *Bildnis eines mannes [angeblich Degas' Freund Valpinçon]*).

REFERENCES Brame and Reff 1984, pp. 116–17, no. 106, ill.

TECHNICAL REPORT The support is an unprimed mahogany panel 0.3 cm thick. The panel may have been thinned prior to the installation of the cradle, as only the top and bottom edges of the wood show a narrow strip of chamfering. The cradle has four molded-edge mahogany bars and four sliding slats, as well as extra glued mahogany sections alongside one of the center fixed bars, presumably to support a crack in the panel. There is no coating on the reverse of the panel. The panel has some wavy warping across the grain, seen especially at the top and bottom, possibly induced by the placement of the fixed cradle bars. A small chunk of wood is missing in the lower left corner. The surface of the panel shows extensive sanding or pumicing abrasion across the grain, as well as black paint remaining in the wood grain below the sanding marks. This suggests that the panel was previously used, perhaps having had another sketch on its surface. Old, possibly original, brown oil paint has been applied along some cracks, possibly with a palette knife. While this paint likely matched the mahogany in color when applied, it has now darkened.

There is no ground layer. Much of the white chalk used as the preliminary sketch layer, which would usually be absorbed into the oil medium as the image progressed, has survived due to the unfinished state of the image. Brown oil sketch lines can be seen on the shoulders and lapels, with a more complete oil sketch of the sitter's head. There are two drips of this brown paint near the proper left hand. There is no varnish.

1. L 519, 520.

2. For a summary of these drawings and their role in the painted portraits, see Paris–Ottawa–New York 1988–89, pp. 312–16.

3. Brame and Reff 1984, p. 116. In Wuppertal and others 1964–68, the picture had previously been identified as a portrait of Degas's lifelong friend, Paul Valpinçon.

114 | **Dancers in the Classroom** c. 1880

Oil on canvas, 39.4 x 88.4 cm

Upper right: Degas

1955-562

Exceptionally lucid as a composition and bold as a pictorial invention, *Dancers in the Classroom* has often been cited among Degas's key achievements during the years of Impressionism. In a group of such works made around 1880, Degas asserted his claims as a painter of modern Paris, spelling out a familiarity with the commonplace characters and institutions of the city, and stressing the informal sensory encounters of a new age. The ballerinas in *Dancers in the Classroom*—like the laundresses, prostitutes, and cabaret singers of this same period—are finely observed and carefully particularized, celebrating Degas's technical mastery over the urban themes that now defined his reputation. Yet for all the painting's bravura qualities, examination shows that it was completed with difficulty, after substantial revisions to several of its figures and—most remarkably—the extension and restretching of the canvas itself. The picture's origins are also surprisingly uncertain: its date is unrecorded, the depicted site is insecurely located, and its first buyer has remained little known to the art world.

Dancers in the Classroom was painted when Degas's name had been publicly linked with the ballet classroom for almost a decade. From the early 1870s onward, he exhibited a succession of backstage pictures in diverse formats and on contrasting scales, followed by a more consistent sequence of canvases, among them two now titled *The Rehearsal* (The Frick Collection, New York; and Harvard Art Museums / Fogg Museum, Cambridge, Mass.).¹ Showing members of the Opéra corps de ballet at their daily exercise, this sequence was also united by its setting, a distinctively high, deep room with a row of tall windows along the principal wall.² Several of these works appeared at the Impressionist exhibitions of 1876, 1878, and 1879, where they rapidly found buyers and attracted largely favorable comment.³ Begun in the immediate aftermath of this success, the Clark *Dancers in the Classroom* and the closely related *Dance Lesson* in the National Gallery of Art, Washington,⁴ constituted a major new initiative at Degas's mid-career. Now choosing a pronounced horizontal rectangle, he launched a group of frieze-like pictures that can be seen as his first



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true “series,” eventually encompassing at least ten canvases of nearly identical size and as many ambitious pastels.⁵ All of them feature between seven and a dozen dancers in another, equally recognizable space, now wide and low where the earlier room was cavernous. More than half conform to the model of the Washington picture, which seems to have been painted first, with windows at right and a blank wall at left, while a second group evolved from the mirrored design of the Clark painting, completed soon after the Washington version. The series evolved over two decades and was evidently important to the artist beyond its public role or the market value of the works in question; each was prepared in meticulous drawings, and many were partially or fully repainted over time, some in the early twentieth century, with only a few released from Degas’s studio during his lifetime.⁶

The subjects of *Dancers in the Classroom* and the other frieze pictures have often been misrepresented, a confusion that lingers in certain of their titles to this day.⁷ In contrast to the classroom scenes of the earlier 1870s, where a cohort of ballerinas engages in routine activity under the eye of a male teacher and often a musician, none in the new series shows a formal lesson.⁸ No figures of authority are present and the dancers are dispersed in a haphazard fashion, offering few clues as to whether teaching has begun or whether we are watching a pause in the day’s exertions. For his frieze project, it seems, Degas turned from relative order to randomness, emphasizing the scattered pattern of individuals and their contrasted personalities. In *Dancers in the Classroom*, part of our attention is

seized by the preening, erect figure at center, who is sharply distinguished from the seated dancer adjusting her tights, while the professional absorption of both is set against their immodest colleague at right. Though similar in age and physique, these ballerinas and their industrious companions at the barre might almost be a spectrum of stereotypes, attitude, and commitment, from the “serious dancers” who strove for excellence to those who were believed to rely on glamour for their advancement.⁹

Degas’s critics had already established a vocabulary of response to his classroom compositions by the time *Dancers in the Classroom* was painted, returning to such topics as the rigors of ballet training, the veracity of his imagery, and the novelty of his designs, and to the audacious depiction of “semi-naked” models, as Stéphane Mallarmé described them.¹⁰ Since it remained unexhibited until late in Degas’s life, the Clark canvas was not publicly evaluated by his immediate contemporaries, though the closely linked Washington picture was both shown and discussed at length. Included in the 1881 Impressionist exhibition *hors catalogue*, this latter work was noted by Paul Mantz, who observed that its theme was now familiar and that “the artist excelled in silhouettes of little dancers with angular elbows.”¹¹ Mantz also detected a tendency “to descend to the caricatural,” though Joris-Karl Huysmans insisted that Degas’s “observation is so precise that a physiologist could make a curious study of the organism of each of this series of girls.”¹² In his astute account of the Washington painting Huysmans remarked on the cropping of the dancers “as in certain



Fig. 114.1 Hilaire-Germain-Edgar Degas, *View over Roofs, Paris*, c. 1877–83. Pencil on paper. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris

Japanese images,” their “boredom and fatigue,” and the perceived undernourishment of their slender bodies, all qualities he would have discovered in *Dancers in the Classroom*. Alluding to the ballerinas’ often humble origins and precocious behavior, he also conceded that many were “charming, with a special beauty, mixing common impropriety with grace.”¹³

Even more than in the exhibited picture, when painting *Dancers in the Classroom* Degas used the resources of his craft to emphasize the banality and tedium of the corps de ballet’s existence. Focus is unusually sharp from foreground to background, encouraging us to linger on the classroom’s Spartan accommodation and the kind of topical detail and physiological nuance relished by Huysmans. Equally dominant is the grayish umber tone that pervades floor and walls, which both unifies the scene and defines its muted atmosphere. A bluish cast to the dancers’ white tutus extends this sobriety, while providing a suitable foil for the few warm highlights on ribbons and flesh.¹⁴ The shadowy character of the interior is further accentuated by the lighted windows, where glimpses of blue sky and white clouds almost mock the ballerinas sequestered life. In his essay on the “rats” or young Opéra students, Théophile Gautier wrote: “They know only the theater and the dance class: the spectacle of nature is closed to them; they

barely know if there is a sun, and see it only rarely.”¹⁵ Equally poignant is the sight of the city far below, another emblem of their remoteness and their precarious professional status. Degas took unusual pains with this small but critical detail, making a miniature study in one of his current notebooks (fig. 114.1) that corresponds closely to part of the view in *Dancers in the Classroom*.¹⁶

With its gently rising diagonal, the “long, wide gallery” of the frieze pictures—in the words of Paul Mantz—varies only slightly from one canvas to another.¹⁷ Study of Degas’s earlier dance class scenes indicates that they were set in documented backstage spaces at the Opéra le Peletier, often following its architectural detail with some precision. Though this “gallery” has a similar specificity, attempts to locate it in both the old and new Opéra buildings have been inconclusive and may point to the use of a site outside the main complex.¹⁸ Because we see the ground plane of the room from above, our view in *Dancers in the Classroom* is that of a standing figure in the right-hand foreground, perhaps situated on a step or elevated platform. In the same notebook that contains his rooftop study, Degas famously reminded himself “to get used to drawing things from above and below” and contemplated treating “an entire salon” in this way.¹⁹ When Edmond Duranty’s essay *The New Painting* had appeared in 1876, it was widely understood to reflect the current thinking of Degas, who shared the author’s fascination with the radical depiction of modern spaces. “Our vantage point is not always located in the center of a room whose two side walls converge toward the back wall,” Duranty wrote, “nor does our point of view always exclude the large expanse of ground or floor in the immediate foreground. Sometimes our viewpoint is very high, sometimes very low; as a result we lose sight of the ceiling, and everything crowds into our immediate field of vision.”²⁰

Offering a virtual blueprint for the classroom in *Dancers in the Classroom*, this passage defined the truncated, asymmetrical encounters with his urban milieu that characterized Degas’s art at the turn of the decade. The frieze canvases are perhaps the extreme case, eliminating everything above head-height, shrinking figures furthest from us and compressing those nearby, to the point where their limbs are cut by the frame. More than twice as wide as they are high, these paintings also reconstruct the view of an observer scanning the scene from side to side, a possibility already available to contemporary photogra-

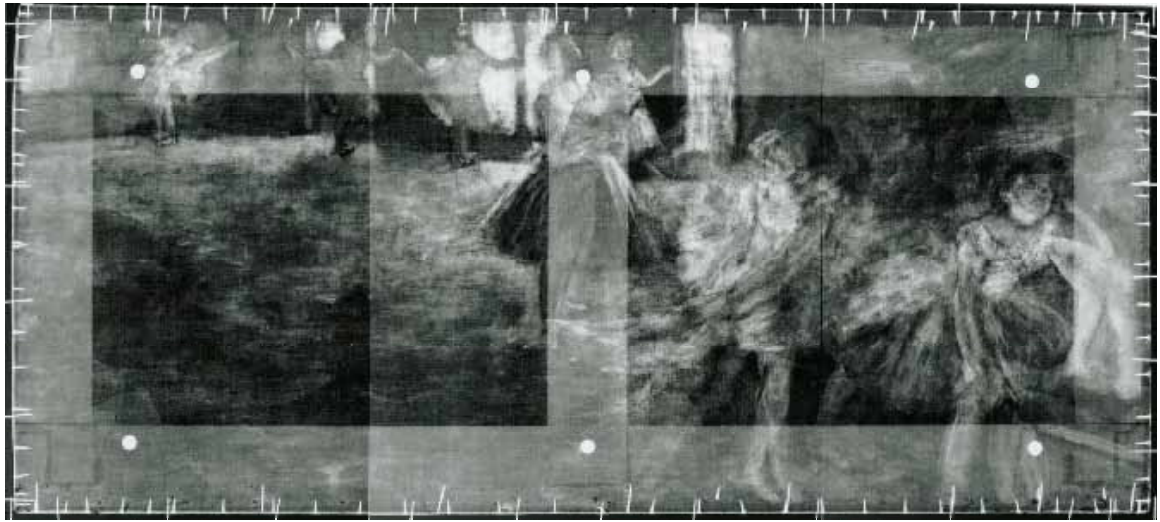


Fig. 114.2 X-radiograph of *Dancers in the Classroom*

phy.²¹ Degas's choice of such a canvas format, which was not among the many standard sizes offered by Parisian art suppliers, was clearly deliberate and has suggested a number of precedents.²² These include the carved classical entablature, the Renaissance fresco, and the painted chest or *cassone*; the horizontal narratives of Degas's own history paintings of the 1860s; a current interest among his Impressionist peers in decorative panels for domestic interiors; and the work of certain contemporary illustrators.²³ An overlooked model can be found in Huysmans's reference to Japanese art, where certain *surimono* prints offer similarly orchestrated figures and spaces in an elongated field. An example such as *Viewing the Moon at Gomeirô* by Katsushika Hokusai, an artist Degas is known to have admired, shows an array of young women in a wide, receding interior, their rhythmic grouping underscored by partly screened windows and a vertical, off-center figure wielding a fan, all features shared with *Dancers in the Classroom*.²⁴

The still novel format and complex ambitions of *Dancers in the Classroom*, rather than any limits to Degas's practical skills, may have accounted for its protracted genesis. On the canvas surface the naked eye can detect minor modifications to areas of the floorboards, distant walls, and picture edges, but Degas clearly went to some lengths to mask the evidence of his more profound revisions.²⁵ In conjunction with an extensive set of preparatory drawings, many of exceptional quality, examination of the picture through X-ray and infrared analysis reveals something

of the complex story beneath (fig. 114.2).²⁶ The structure of the classroom was apparently established early and left largely unchanged, and the number and placement of dancers was similarly fixed at this time. Subsequently, adjustments were made to all three left-hand figures at the barre, ranging from a turned profile to an entirely reworked body.²⁷ The central ballerina was surprisingly little modified, her function as the fulcrum around which the rest of the group balances remaining in place from the beginning. Her colleagues on the bench, however, were radically transformed; the tired coryphée at extreme right formerly pulled the raised knee closer to her body, supporting her right arm as it bent sharply back to touch her face, while the legs of the second seated girl were painted no less than nine times before reaching their present positions.²⁸ This extraordinary reformulation of a major character can be traced in approximately ten drawings and pastels, including one in the same notebook cited in two previous contexts.²⁹ Gradually raising the more prominent leg toward the horizontal, Degas increased the provocative implications of this pink, semi-naked limb, while using it to link left and right groups of dancers in a continuous, if staccato rhythm, a solution he later adopted in other frieze paintings.³⁰ His concern for such compositional refinements was carried further in the extraordinary decision to extend the canvas at top and bottom, and to amend the wooden stretchers by the necessary several millimeters, allowing a little more headroom for the dancers and subtly modifying the play of cropped and intact feet at lower right.³¹

The picture's first owner was Jacques Drake del Castillo, a country landowner who became Deputy for Indre et Loire in 1889 and acquired a small collection of otherwise modest Impressionist pictures by such artists as Claude Monet, Camille Pissarro, and Jean-François Raffaëlli.³² His connection with Degas may have been through their mutual friend Paul Lafond, director of the museum at Pau, who is known to have promoted Degas's art and later wrote the first biography of the artist.³³ Degas recorded Castillo's Paris address at the beginning of a notebook used from 1880 to 1884, two pages before a reference to Marie van Goethem, the model for Degas's *Little Dancer Aged Fourteen*.³⁴ The sculpture was underway between 1879 and 1880, and the fact that Marie's features have also been identified in the pivotal standing figure in *Dancers in the Classroom* adds support to the suggestion that the Clark picture was made around this date.³⁵ Perhaps bought from Degas at the time of their recorded contact, it presumably remained with Drake del Castillo for more than two decades, passing in 1906 to the wealthy decorator and collector Georges Hoentschel, who showed the painting in three important prewar exhibitions in Europe.³⁶ Sterling Clark bought *Dancers in the Classroom* in 1926 and considered it to be among the best of the frieze series.³⁷ RK

PROVENANCE Jacques Drake del Castillo, Paris (until 1903, sold to Boussod, Valadon, 10 Jan. 1903, as *Le foyer de la danse*); [Boussod, Valadon, Paris, sold to Glaenzer, 10 Jan. 1903];³⁸ [Eugene Glaenzer and Co., New York, 1903–6, sold to Boussod, Valadon, 30 June 1906]; [Boussod, Valadon, Paris, sold to Hoentschel, 30 June 1906];³⁹ Georges Hoentschel, Paris (from 1906; d. 1915);⁴⁰ [Galerie Barbazanges, Paris, in 1924, sold to Knoedler, Paris, Feb. 1924]; [Knoedler, Paris, in 1924, sold to Clark, Aug. 1924];⁴¹ Robert Sterling Clark (1924–55); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.

EXHIBITIONS Paris 1912b, no. 115, as *Au Foyer de la Danse*; Ghent 1913, Group II, Beaux-Arts, no. 121, as *La répétition de danse*, lent by Hoentschel; London 1914, no. 24, as *Leçon de danse*, lent by Hoentschel; Williamstown 1956a, no. 101, pl. 18; Williamstown 1959c, no. 3, pl. 18; Williamstown 1970, no. 7; Northampton 1979, pp. 17, 21, no. 3, ill.; Washington 1984–85, pp. 91, 93, 139, no. 32, ill.; Williamstown 1987, p. 61, no. 44, ill.; Paris–Ottawa–New York 1988–89, pp. 339–41, no. 221, ill.; Omaha–Williamstown–Baltimore 1998–99, pp. 10, 13, no. 29, ill.; Graz 2000, pp. 316–17, no. 84, ill.; Detroit–Philadelphia 2002–3, pp. 1–3, 110–11, 113–14, 116, 139, 152–53, 231, 235, 262, pl. 168; Montgomery and others 2005–7, no cat.; Williamstown–New York 2006–7, pp. 67–69, fig. 68; Williamstown–Barcelona 2010–11, pp. 140, 142, fig. 157.

REFERENCES Alexandre 1912a, pp. i, xii, ill., as *Au foyer de la danse*; Lemoisne 1946–49, vol. 3, pp. 470–71, no. 820, ill.; Browse 1949, p. 377, pl. 116, as *Sept danseuses dans une salle de classe. Frise*; Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute 1963, no. 36, ill.; Minervino 1970, p. 123, no. 819, ill., as *Ballerine in esercizio e in riposo*; Varnedoe 1980, p. 105, fig. 12; Boggs 1985, p. 13, fig. 6; Boggs 1988, p. 40, ill.; *Connais-sance des Arts* 1988, pp. 32–34, figs. 28–29; Gordon and Forge 1988, pp. 187, 203, ill.; Shenker 1988, p. 63, ill.; Philadelphia and others 1989–91, p. 14, fig. 24; Varnedoe 1989, pp. 118, 122, fig. 117; Meller 1990, pp. 259–60, fig. 25, and ill. on cover; Milner 1990, pp. 138–39, ill.; Ash and Higton 1992, pp. 50–51, ill.; De Vries-Evans 1992, p. 175; Koch-Hillebrecht 1992, p. 59, ill.; Kostenevich 1995, pp. 80–81, fig. 3; Adams 1996, p. 424, fig. 24.5 (3rd ed., p. 424, fig. 24.4); Kendall 1996, pp. 17–18, 58–59, 78, ill.; Kern et al. 1996, pp. 70–71, ill.; Shackelford 1996, p. 194, ill.; *Antiques* 1997, p. 523, pl. 3; Christie's 1998a, p. 86, fig. 1; Phillips 2001b, pp. 237, 239, fig. 5; Cahill 2005, pp. 56–57, ill.; Christie's 2005a, p. 38, fig. 1; Hoffmann 2007, pp. 135, 177, ill.

TECHNICAL REPORT The support is an unlined, finely woven linen, which has been extended by 1.9 cm on the bottom and 1.3 cm on the top. These extensions, which bring the tacking margins up to the image surface, appear to have been done by the artist, although the gauze strip-lining suggests the assistance of a restorer. The stretcher was modified with wood strips at the top and bottom edges to take up the expanded canvas. The original fold-over creases can still be seen, especially along the bottom edge. A slight fluorescence of the varnish coating is visible in ultraviolet light, as is a stronger fluorescence on the edges, suggesting excess media in the thinly painted additions. This is confirmed in the X-radiograph, where the extension paint does not register. There is some deformation of the canvas in the corners, probably from shrinkage of the wood stretcher bars or weakness in the joinery. The picture was probably cleaned by Madame Coince in Paris in 1935. Minor consolidation of lifted paint was done along the lower extended edge in 2005.

The off-white ground layer appears to be commercially applied, despite the faint cusping visible along the original bottom edge of the fabric. Comparison of the X-radiograph with the infrared examination reveals the presence of dark underdrawing or painting lines for some, and possibly all, of the figures. This is particularly true for several leg changes on the seated girl on the left, which may never have been fully painted or were scraped out. They show up faintly in the X-radiograph, but are clearer and stronger as drawing lines in infrared. Additional alternate leg positions of this figure, as well as changes in the arm position of the seated girl on the right and the left-most dancer in the background, appear to be alterations only in the paint layer, as no line work is detected in infrared. While most of the artist's changes are visible in the X-radiograph, some are visible to the naked eye, such as the reduction of the skirt of the seated dancer on the right. The original head position of this same girl appears

tilted further back in the X-radiograph. Some discarded lines for the floor are also visible with the unaided eye. The floor areas are painted in a thin, sketchy manner, allowing the ground to show through occasionally. The paint in the figures is applied in dry, often unblended strokes, similar to the technique employed for pastel work.

1. L 537 and BR 60.
2. See Detroit–Philadelphia 2002–3, pp. 80–87.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 85–87.
4. L 625.
5. For a list of the paintings, see Detroit–Philadelphia 2002–3, p. 283n60. The pastels include L 1201–2, 1294, 1307–8, 1368–69, 1395–96; BR 145–46.
6. Among the conspicuously repainted works are L 900, 941, and 996.
7. Though all the following frieze pictures, for example, share a similar space and closely related activities, their titles indicate otherwise: L 625 is known as *The Dance Lesson*; L 905 as *Dancers in the Rehearsal Room*; L 1107 as *Ballet Rehearsal*; and L 900 as *Dancers in the Green Room*.
8. While three of the distant ballerinas in the Clark composition appear to practice their *battements* at the barre in tandem, this small, undirected group and their imperfectly coordinated action hardly constitute a ballet class. Two curiosities of the picture are the double barre against the far wall, a design allowing both young and mature dancers to exercise, and the fact that the third ballerina from left—somewhat improbably—appears to hold on to the window, not to a barre.
9. See Detroit–Philadelphia 2002–3, p. 122.
10. Mallarmé 1876; reprinted in Berson 1996, vol. 1, p. 96.
11. Mantz 1880, p. 3; reprinted in Berson 1996, vol. 1, p. 298: “l’artiste excelle dans les silhouettes des petites danseuses aux coudes anguleux.”
12. Huysmans 1880, p. 115: “L’observation est tellement précise que, dans ces séries de filles, un physiologiste pourrait faire une curieuse étude de l’organisme de chacune d’elles.”
13. *Ibid.*, pp. 114, 116: “comme dans certaines images japonaises”; “l’ennui . . . et de la fatigue”; “charmantes d’une beauté spéciale, faite de salauderie populacière et de grâce!”
14. Dancers wore plain, white practice tutus in class and were largely unadorned. Some accessories might be added by individuals, but Degas appears to have taken liberties in introducing so many colored sashes and ribbons. The stripes of the fan may refer to the French tricolor, but the circumstances for such an inclusion are unknown.
15. Gautier, in *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes* 1840–42, vol. 3, p. 250; translation from Detroit–Philadelphia 2002–3, p. 133.
16. The drawing was executed on a separate sheet of paper and stuck into the notebook. Some resemblance to the architecture surrounding the courtyard of the Hôtel de Choiseul, where dance classrooms at the Opéra le Peletier were situated, should be noted. Though this building burned down in 1873, it continued to appear in a number of Degas’s subsequent ballet scenes; see Detroit–Philadelphia 2002–3, pp. 28–87.
17. Mantz 1880, p. 3; reprinted in Berson 1996, vol. 1, p. 298: “La vue d’une longue galerie profonde.”
18. See the discussion of these issues in Detroit–Philadelphia 2002–3, pp. 113–16. Additional classrooms and private premises on the nearby Rue Richer were also in use through much of this period.
19. Reff 1976b, Notebook 30, pp. 210, 65: “pour habituer à dessiner de bas et de haut les choses”; “un salon tout entier.”
20. Duranty 1876; translation from Washington–San Francisco 1986, p. 45. For Degas’s relationship with Duranty during these years, see Omaha–Williamstown–Baltimore 1998–99, pp. 45–75.
21. See, for example, Arles 1989 and London 2011b, pp. 95–111.
22. For standard canvas sizes, see London 1990–91b, pp. 44–45.
23. See Detroit–Philadelphia 2002–3, p. 112.
24. For Degas’s collection of Hokusai prints, see Ives et al. 1997, pp. 82–83. Though he appears to have owned many, the titles of individual prints by Hokusai in Degas’s collection are not known. An off-center pillar such as that in *Viewing the Moon at Gomeirô* is also featured in later variants of the frieze paintings, such as L 1109, 1200, and 1394.
25. In the 1870s, Degas would often scrape down passages of painted canvas before reworking them. Later revisions in certain frieze paintings were typically more improvised, with both early and later areas of paint visibly co-existing on the surface.
26. Drawings and pastels related to this work include the following: Georges Petit 1918b, nos. 220 (ii), 325, 352; Georges Petit 1919a, nos. 145 (ii), 148, 336 (ii), 343 (i), 371, 372; L 530–31, 659, 716, 821–23, 884 bis. In most cases, the figures in these studies are significantly larger than their equivalents in the painting. Several were given independent status when they were signed and sold by the artist; see for example Detroit–Philadelphia 2002–3, pp. 110–17.
27. Though the changes are almost invisible to the naked eye, the dancer at extreme left was radically repainted and her limbs redefined.
28. The earliest position of the right-hand figure corresponds closely to the pastel L 659. The suggested presence in this same area of an “unidentified object,” mentioned in Paris–Ottawa–New York 1988–89, p. 340, may result from a misreading of the X-ray.
29. Studies related to the figure with the raised leg are listed in note 26. The notebook drawing is Reff 1976b, Notebook 30, pp. 2–3.

30. See, for example, L 941 and 1107.
31. See Technical Report. Degas went to considerable lengths to arrange these small-scale adjustments, adding narrow fillets of wood to the stretcher and painting the newly visible edges to match the existing surface. At least one other frieze picture (L 900) was subtly extended in this way.
32. It is not known whether the picture was bought through a dealer or directly from the artist; the tradition that the work was commissioned from Degas seems to have no documentary basis and would be contrary to his established practice. For Drake del Castillo, see http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/sycomore/fiche.asp?num_dept=2581#biographie. His acquisition of Monet's *The Beginning of the Grand Rue at Argenteuil, Winter* (W 355), on 14 April 1890, is recorded in Rewald 1986a, p. 94. In the sixth Impressionist exhibition, Raffaelli's *Argenteuil Road* was listed as belonging to Castillo; see Berson 1996, vol. 2, p. 287. His purchase of Pissarro's *Morning in June, Saint-Ouen-l'Aumône* (PDR 312) is noted in Brown 1994, p. 97n60.
33. Mme Lafond stayed at Drake del Castillo's Paris apartment in 1894; see *Paris–Ottawa–New York 1988–89*, p. 340n8. Another link between Castillo and the Pau Museum is referred to in Brown 1994, p. 97n60.
34. Reff 1976b, Notebook 34, pp. 2 and 4.
35. See *Omaha–Williamstown–Baltimore 1998–99*, p. 10.
36. Hoentschel was a major collector of European sculpture and decorative objects from earlier centuries, most of which were given to the Metropolitan Museum of Art by J. Pierpont Morgan. He acquired two other dance pictures by Degas (L 868 and 1247).
37. RSC Diary, 31 Dec. 1926.
38. See Goupil Stock Books, book 15, p. 98, no. 27863.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 164, no. 28847.
40. Lemoisne 1946–49 lists Samuel Courtauld, London, as an owner after Hoentschel (see vol. 1, p. 116, and vol. 3, p. 470, no. 820), but correspondence with the Courtauld Institute confirms that this painting was not in Courtauld's collection. See letter dated 3 Nov. 1969, from Fiona Morgan to P. O. Troutman, in the Clark's curatorial file.
41. There is no invoice to Clark from Knoedler. A letter of 19 Dec. 1969 from Knoedler, London, in the Clark's curatorial file states that the branch in Paris bought this painting from the Galerie Barbazanges in Feb. 1924 and sold it to Clark the following August.

115 | Before the Race c. 1882

Oil on panel, 26.7 x 34.9 cm
 Lower right: Degas
 1955-557

The early history of *Before the Race* is preserved in several vivid and precise forms: in the stock books of Degas's principal dealer, Paul Durand-Ruel, where an entry for December 1882 records its purchase from the artist for the considerable sum of 2,500 francs;¹ in a canvas by Pierre-Auguste Renoir, which shows the painting on the wall of its first owner's home (fig. 115.1); and in a letter written by Degas in January 1883 to his friend Mme Bartholomé. In the letter, he excused himself from a previous engagement and announced that "something surprising has happened," explaining that the painting in question had been acquired by the wealthy artist Henry Lerolle: "He has just, at a moment like this, bought a little picture of mine of horses, belonging to Durand-Ruel. . . . [he] wishes to entertain me with his friends and although most of the legs of the horses in his fine picture (mine) are rather badly placed, yet, in my modesty, I should very much enjoy a little esteem at dinner. Just this once, dear



Fig. 115.1 Pierre-Auguste Renoir (French, 1841–1919), *Yvonne and Christine Lerolle at the Piano*. Oil on canvas, 73 x 92 cm. Musée de l'Orangerie, Paris (inv. 1960-19)