The Pictures within Degas’s Pictures

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I. Three of the paintings in the Metropolitan Museum’s great collection of works by Degas—The Collector of Prints, the Portrait of James Tissot, and Sulking (or The Banker)—are doubly intriguing as images because other images are shown within them.¹ The anonymous collector (Figure 7) is surrounded by a variety of objects, including color prints of flowers in the portfolio and on the table, a statuette of a horse in the cupboard, and what appear to be fragments of wallpaper, photographs, calling cards, etc., on the bulletin board. The artist Tissot (Figure 10) is shown in a studio amid paintings of remarkably diverse subjects and styles: at the top, an imitation of a Japanese garden scene; at the sides, landscapes with figures in modern costume; behind the easel, a dramatic, colorful sketch; and in the center, a small, sober portrait. And the two figures in Sulking (Figure 24) are seen against a large engraving of a steeplechase, whose strenuous action provides a foil for their brooding inertia and also seems to offer a solution to the mystery of their identity and relationship.

In each of these paintings, the presence of works of art that are distinctly different in subject, scale, and visual texture from the larger work complicates and enriches our experience of the latter to an extraordinary degree.² For the smaller picture or object is not only an independent creation with its own content and circumscribed field, but a means of extending or dividing the larger field and of deepening the content of its imagery through formal or iconographic analogies. In doing so, it also calls attention to the artificial aspects of the picture in which it occurs, reminding us that even The Collector of Prints, Sulking, and the portrait of Tissot, all painted between 1866 and 1871, in the most naturalistic period of Degas’s art, are after all products of the artist’s mind and hand, like the more visibly contrived works within them.³

In these respects, the picture within the picture is analogous to the literary devices of the play within the play and the narrative flashback, which likewise reveal the ambiguous relation to reality of the works in which they appear. In the visual arts, it is similar to two other motives that Degas frequently employed, sometimes in conjunction with the motive of the picture; namely, the mirror whose surface reflects in a condensed and essentially pictorial form a sector of the visual field around it, and the window or doorway whose frame intercepts in a fixed and equally pictorial manner a sector of the larger field behind it. At times he even juxtaposed these effects in the same work: in the Portrait of Mme Gobillard-Morisot, by framing her head between a doorway at one side that opens onto a garden, and a mirror at the other that reflects a portion

3. Traditionally, this has been the function of the paintings and prints represented in trompe-l’œil still lifes, a genre that, however, had no appeal for Degas; see M. Farré, *La nature morte en France* (Geneva, 1962) II, pls. 103–113, 151–153, and 448–453; also note 146, below.
of the room; and in The Dancing Class, by representing some of the figures in the background as reflected in a cheval glass and a wall mirror, and others as glimpsed through an opening into an adjacent room. In The Interior (Figure 1), painted in the home of his friend Paul Valpinçon in 1892, he achieved a tour de force in combining all three motives very inventively, playing on the similarities of shape between the framed pictures, the mirror reflections, and the doorway vista, while preserving an effect of informality through the choice of viewpoint.

Surprisingly, this fascination with the artificial and the natural in the making of images, which seems so characteristic of the mature Degas, is already present in his earliest experiment with the picture in the picture. On a page in a notebook used around 1860 (Figure 2), he pasted two sketches of contemporary figures and a copy after Giorgione’s Fête Champêtre, and then drew at the bottom a couple who appear to look at the Giorgione, thus converting the spatially neutral page into an illusion of a wall in the Louvre’s Grande Galerie.

4. Lemoisne, nos. 213 and 297; Sterling and Salinger, French Paintings, pp. 65–66 and 69–71. Mirrors are also employed, sometimes very ingeniously, in Lemoisne, nos. 298, 348, 397, 516, 709, 768, and 1227; window views also occur in nos. 48, 116, 174, 303, 324, 447, and 700.

5. Lemoisne, no. 312; now in the collection of Mr. and Mrs. Saul Horowitz, New York. Incorrectly identified and dated by Lemoisne, it in fact represents Degas’s bedroom in the Valpinçons’ château at Ménil-Hubert, and was probably painted during a visit in August 1892 (see Degas, Lettres, pp. 192–194). I am indebted for this information to M. Paul Brame, who visited Ménil-Hubert after the war and recognized the room.

6. B. N., Carnet 1, fol. 35; the whole notebook was used in 1859–1864, and this portion in 1859–1860; see Reff, “Degas’s Notebooks,” p. 612.
When its functions are conceived in the general terms just discussed, the motive of the picture obviously can occur in any image showing a conventional type of interior; hence in most of those painted by Degas, who was more deeply interested than any artist of his time in recording the appearance of the rehearsal rooms, laundries, offices, cafés, and salons in which his contemporaries worked and lived. Thus, when the novelist and critic Duranty declared in *La nouvelle peinture*: "Nous ne séparerons plus le personnage du fond d'appartement... autour de lui et derrière lui sont des meubles, des cheminées, des tentures de murailles, une paroi qui exprime sa fortune, sa classe, son métier," he illustrated this programme of pictorial naturalism with identifiable paintings by Degas. It is not surprising, then, that several of the ones we shall discuss are, like Sulking, images of an office or a drawing room, among whose carefully depicted furnishings a picture seems naturally to belong. It may even allude to the profession of the person portrayed, like the lithograph behind the musician Pilet (Figure 30), or to his social status or aspirations, like the painting behind Thérèse Morbilli (Figure 19), or finally to his relation to the artist himself, like the drawing behind Degas’s aunt in The Bellegardi Family (Figure 3).

But if these works reflect the naturalism of his own age, they are also inspired by that of the seventeenth century, especially in Holland, where Hals, Rembrandt, and Vermeer had often depicted paintings, mirrors, even maps, in the backgrounds of their portraits and genre scenes in order to heighten their verisimilitude and deepen their visual “resonance.” Indeed, Degas himself later observed that “à nos débuts, Fantin, Whistler et moi” — and the other two also experimented frequently with the picture in the picture — “nous étions sur la même voie, la route de Hollande.”

In most cases, however, the milieu in the paintings we shall discuss is not simply a contemporary interior, but that of an individual who is professionally concerned with the creation or appreciation of art. Like the portrait of Tissot, those of Henri Rouart (Figure 35) and a hitherto unidentified artist (Figure 33) show Degas’s colleagues in their studios, surrounded by what appear to be their own works. And like the portrait of a print collector, those of Hélène Rouart (Figure 41) and the art critic Diego Martelli (Figure 36) show his friends in their apartments, with the paintings and objects in their collections. In a public version of the


latter type, Mary Cassatt is shown with a companion, contemplating an Etruscan sarcophagus in the Louvre (Figure 39) or the pictures in the Grande Galerie (Figure 37). In these images, we recognize the studios, collections, and museums which constituted Degas’s own world, where he was indeed known not only as an artist, but as a distinguished collector and indefatigable museum visitor. As pictures of a world in which pictures themselves are the most conspicuous objects, they are ideal expressions of that cult of art and the artificial which was so characteristic of him.

But like his images of more conventional interiors, they also belong to an historical tradition, that of representing the artist’s studio and the collector’s gallery; for in the self-portraits and “painted galleries” that have been popular since the seventeenth century, the works of art surrounding the artist or collector serve also to identify his profession, characterize his taste, or symbolize the relation of art and nature. As a

11. See also the other versions of the latter (Lemoisne, no. 583; Delteil, no. 29) and the slightly earlier Visit to the Museum (Lemoisne, nos. 464 and 465). On their place in the views of Louvre galleries which were popular at the time, see J. J. Marquet de Vasselot, “Répertoire des vues des salles du Musée du Louvre,” Archives de l’Art Français 20 (1946) pp. 266–279.

student, Degas had copied one example of this type, Bronzino's Portrait of a Sculptor, and had made a variation on another, more important one, Velázquez's Maids of Honor, in which the pictures of mythological subjects in the background, the mirror reflecting the king and queen, and the doorway in which a figure is silhouetted, all are employed both as spatial and as symbolic motives.  

II. The ingenious use of these devices in works such as The Maids of Honor, an image of the artist's studio that is also a portrait of the royal family, is undoubtedly what inspired Degas to employ them in the impressive group portrait in which his early studies culminated, The Belleti Family (Figure 3) of about 1860. Here, too, the picture, the mirror, and the doorway serve both to extend the interior space, which is much more shallow than in the Velázquez, and to deepen its expressive significance by means of analogies. Thus, the somber, upright figure of Degas's aunt is placed against a wall whose expanse is broken only by the narrow doorway and the sharply defined picture frame, while the lighter, more recessive figure of his uncle is seen against a mantelpiece surmounted by small objects and a mirror reflecting the blurred and luminous forms of a window and a chandelier.

Although this contrast corresponds to linear and coloristic tendencies which were already present in Degas's art at the time, it undoubtedly also expresses his insight into tensions within the Belleti family. He had in fact been living with them in Florence for several months before he undertook this ambitious portrait, and must have perceived the great distance between husband and wife, a distance which he has in effect made visible in his composition. For shortly after he returned to Paris, his uncle Achille, apparently replying to Degas's own observations, admitted: "La vie intérieure de la famille de Florence est un sujet de tristesse pour nous. Comme je le prévoyais, il y a beaucoup de la faute de l'un et un peu de notre soeur aussi. Incomptabilité de caractère et d'éducation par suite un manque d'amitié et d'indulgence qui grossit comme une loupe les défauts naturels des individus."

Expressive of this estrangement, and perhaps also of the couple's respective roles, are the dissimilar objects shown behind them in Degas's portrait—the ambiguous, receding images in the mirror and the clear, advancing shape of the drawing.

When its subject and author are recognized, the drawing (Figure 4) acquires additional significance. It is a study, evidently now lost, that Degas himself had made in Naples around 1857 for the etched and painted portraits of his father, which show him wearing the same hat and sitting in the same position (Figure 5). As an image of the Baroness Belleti's brother, it is appropriately placed near her own head, and in this position it discreetly asserts the existence of the De Gas branch of this family at a moment when they were separated from their relatives in Naples and Paris, owing to the political exile of the baron. There was perhaps a deeper bond between Degas's father and aunt, since the former had lost his wife when the painter was still a child, and the latter was estranged from her husband, with the result that both devoted themselves to their children. As she wrote to Degas shortly after he returned to Paris: "Tu vas être bien heureux, de te retrouver en famille, au lieu d'être en face d'un visage triste tel que le mien et une mine désagréable telle que celle de mon mari... Dieu me donnera peut-être la force de trainer mes jours, jusqu'à ce que mes enfants auront besoin de moi."  

Thus the portrait of Degas's father plays essentially the same role in The Belleti Family as the effigies of


16. Letter from Achille de Gas to Degas, May 14, 1859, collection the late Jean Nepveu-Degas, Paris. I am grateful to him for allowing me to consult his unpublished family papers.

17. Lemoisne, no. 33; the etching is Delteil, no. 2. On their relation to the drawing, also see M. Guérin, "Remarques sur des portraits de famille peints par Degas," Gazette des Beaux-Arts 17 (1928) pp. 378–379. According to R. Raimondi, Degas e la sua famiglia in Napoli (Naples, 1958) pp. 261–262, the drawing originally represented the Baron Belleti and was repainted about 1900, but this is extremely unlikely.

18. Letter from Laura Belleti to Degas, April 5, 1859, collection the late Jean Nepveu-Degas, Paris.
ancestors which appear in European portraits since the Renaissance, especially in Netherlandish group portraits such as the Van Berchem Family by Frans Floris, where the prominently displayed image of the deceased member unites him with the living ones shown eating, conversing, and playing music. 19

As one of Degas’s works, the background picture in The Bellelli Family is no less significant, since it subtly identifies him with his aunt and affirms his presence, if only as an artist-observer, in this household whose members he has portrayed. It was probably his gift to them while living there, although its later history is unknown. As an accomplished portrait drawing, however, it also testifies to Degas’s artistic progress, which was at the time most evident in just this type of dignified family portrait, and which he has characteristically identified with skillful draughtsmanship. At the same time, it hints at one of the sources of this early portraiture; for its three-quarter view of the head and bust, its delicate red chalk technique, even its traditional blue mat and gold frame, give it the appearance of a Renaissance portrait drawing, especially one by the Clouets or their school, which it resembles also in its use of costume. 20 Before going to Italy in 1856, Degas had copied a red chalk drawing of this type, which was formerly considered a self-portrait by François Clouet; and on his return, he reproduced a portrait of Elizabeth of Austria attributed to the same artist. 21

19. M. Friedländer, Die Altniederländische Malerei (Leiden, 1936) XIII, p. 69 and pl. xxxvii. I owe the knowledge of this example to Prof. Leo Steinberg.

20. For drawings by them in the Louvre, see E. Moreau-Nélaton, Les Clouet et leurs émules (Paris, 1924) II, figs. 298–313.

21. See Reff, “Degas’s Copies,” pp. 256 and 258. The former is after Moreau-Nélaton, Les Clouet, II, fig. 308, the latter after Louvre 130 (no longer attributed to Clouet). Degas refers to this painting—as “Janet, la Femme de Charles IX”—in planning his own portrait of a woman about 1860; see the notebook passage cited below, note 40.
This ambition to rival the perfection of Renaissance art is undoubtedly what led Degas to lavish so much attention on the background details of The Bellelli Family, including the carefully rendered frame on his own drawing. Among the many preparatory studies, there is even one (Figure 6) in which he envisaged the painting itself as it would appear in a frame, and drew in detail the type of Louis XVI moulding that he would use. Already present here is that characteristic conception of the work of art as an artifice which would lead him to reproduce with equal care the Renaissance frame in the background of his portrait of Tissot (Figure 11) and to copy part of a Baroque frame in the Louvre in preparation for his portrait of Mary Cassatt (Figure 38).

III. In The Collector of Prints (Figure 7), painted about six years later than The Bellelli Family, Degas virtually reversed the roles of the figure and the background picture, giving the latter a prominence and interest which almost outweigh those of the former. Appropriately, the subject, whose identity remains unknown, must be considered as a type rather than an individual, the type of old-fashioned collector who flourished during the Second Empire, and whom Degas had met as a young man in the company of his father. Recalling these visits many years afterward, he dwelled on precisely that dedication to art and indifference to self which seem to characterize the anonymous figure in his painting: "Une chambre où les toiles s'entassaient pêle-mêle... [Marcille] avait un paletot à pelerine et un chapeau usagé. Les gens de ce temps-là avaient tous des chapeaux usagés. Lacaze, ah! Lacaze avait aussi, lui, un chapeau usagé." Indeed, the description would apply equally well to Degas himself in his old age and to such dedicated amateurs among his friends as Paul Lafond and Christian Cherfils, of whom he painted a sympathetic double portrait around 1881 that shows them seated together, gazing intently at a small canvas. Here, as in the roughly contemporary picture of an unidentified collector bending over a print to examine it, Degas was evidently inspired by the example of Daumier, whose paintings of amateurs scrutinizing the works on display in print sellers' stalls or admiring the objects in each

22. B. N., Carnet 16, fol. 10; used in 1859-1860, see Reff, "Degas's Notebooks," p. 612. The frame on the drawing is quite similar to the nineteenth-century one shown in Raimondi, Degas e la sua famiglia, pl. 20, but is not identical with it as is stated there. On Degas's later concern with the framing of his pictures, see L. W. Havemeyer, Sixteen to Sixty, Memoirs of a Collector (New York, 1961) p. 250.
23. Lemoisne, no. 138; signed and dated 1866. For the recent literature, see note 1, above.

FIGURE 6
other's apartments likewise focus on the intensity of their concentration, the consuming character of their passion.\footnote{In contrast to these, the Museum's Collector of Prints shows an introspective and disenchanted man, almost detached from the works of art that he idly handles or appears to place behind him in turning his back. As a result, the latter, in their fascinating diversity of styles, seem more expressive of his real interests than he himself.}

The objects surrounding him are indeed remarkably varied, and include examples of popular as well as sophisticated art, from the Far East as well as Europe; and significantly, they are seen as examples of their types, rather than as unique works. Within the collector's portfolio, and placed on the table behind him, are some of the small color lithographs of roses for which Pierre Redouté, the so-called "Raphaël des fleurs," had become famous earlier in the century.\footnote{In the cupboard is a ceramic statuette of a horse, evidently one of those produced in China during the T'ang Dynasty; the positions of the legs on the small base, the bowed head, and the flaring nostrils are characteristic of this type, which Degas has westernized in rendering the anatomy and hair realistically.\footnote{Oriental and occidental styles are also juxtaposed in the objects placed on the bulletin board and inserted into its frame (Figure 8), for the smaller ones are such typically European products as envelopes, calling cards, notices, and photographs, placed against pieces of wallpaper, while the larger, more vividly colored ones are fragments of Japanese embroidered silk.\footnote{A daring composition, apparently without order yet ultimately balanced, the bulletin board symbolizes both the collector's fascin-}}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics{figure7.jpg}
\caption{The Collector of Prints, by Degas. Oil on canvas. \textit{The Metropolitan Museum of Art, bequest of Mrs. H. O. Havemeyer, the H. O. Havemeyer Collection, 29.100.44}}
\end{figure}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics{figure8.jpg}
\caption{Detail from The Collector of Prints}
\end{figure}

\footnote{26. E. Fuchs, \textit{Der Maler Daumier} (Munich, 1927) pls. 98--109 and 244--249; some of these figured in the great Daumier exhibition of 1878. Degas's painting \textit{The Collector} is Lemoisne, no. 648; dated there about 1881.}

\footnote{27. H. Béraldi, \textit{Les graveurs du XIXe siècle} (Paris, 1891) XI, pp. 177--178; see especially the two publications, \textit{Les roses} (1835) and \textit{Choix de soixante roses} (1836).}

\footnote{28. For similar examples, see E. Fuchs, \textit{Tang-Plastik} (Munich, n.d. [1924]) pls. 46 and 48; and especially Shensi Province, \textit{Selected T'ang Dynasty Figurines} (Peking, 1958; in Chinese) pl. 160. I am indebted to my colleague Prof. Jane Gaston Mahler for this information.}

\footnote{29. See Victoria and Albert Museum, \textit{Guide to the Japanese Textiles, Part I, Textile Fabrics} (London, 1919) pp. 20--21 and the examples reproduced on pl. x, all of which date from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.}
tion with even such small, almost worthless scraps of paper and fabric, and the artist's recognition of aesthetic qualities in their very profusion of overlapping shapes, diagonal stripes, and surprising spots of color.

By far the most important elements in this design are the fragments of Japanese embroidery, which were either cut from larger fabrics or manufactured as such, to be sewn into covers for pocketbooks. Popular among French collectors from the 1860s on, they were admired for their skillful workmanship and their rare color harmonies, what Edmond de Goncourt, a pioneer among these connoisseurs, described as "toutes couleurs rompues et charmeresses pour l'oeil d'un coloriste." Degas and the Goncourts were, of course, not alone at the time in appreciating these novel qualities. Among the other writers, artists, and craftsmen in Paris who also began to collect Japanese art in these years were Degas's friends Manet, Whistler, Tissot, Fantin-Latour, Bracquemond, and Alfred Stevens. However, most of them were attracted primarily to its unusual forms and exotic appearance, hence painted interiors filled with Japanese screens, ceramics, costumes, and figures with vaguely oriental features, of which Whistler's Golden Screen (1864) and Tissot's Young Woman Holding Japanese Objects (1869) are good examples.

Degas was one of the few who attempted instead to assimilate the distinctive stylistic features of Japanese art. In contrast to the color woodcuts at the right side of The Golden Screen, which are cleverly arranged but within a traditional perspective space, the embroidered silks in the background of The Collector of Prints form a pattern of flat, piquantly silhouetted and colored shapes. Moreover, the pattern itself closely resembles one of those employed in Japanese fabrics of the type that Degas has shown (Figure 9). It represents the scattered cards used in a popular poem game, some of which bear poems and others the portraits of well-known poets, the object being to match each poem card with the corresponding portrait card; and the resultant effects of condensation, random distribution, and cutting at the edges were obviously what appealed to him.

IV. An example of Japanese art, or rather an imitation of one, also appears in the background of Degas's Portrait of James Tissot (Figure 10), painted in the same years as The Collector of Prints; and this time in a composition which, although severely classical in its pattern of overlapping and interlocking

30. Goncourt, La maison d'un artiste, I, pp. 182-183. On his own extensive collection of Japanese fabrics, especially the so-called "fukusas," small embroidered squares similar to those in Degas's painting, see I, pp. 11-17.


33. See Victoria and Albert Museum, Guide to the Japanese Textiles, p. 21 and pl. x, no. 98. Degas's interest in exotic patterns at this time is also shown by a list of merchants specializing in "Indiennes de Rouen," "Indiennes de Suisse," "Imitations de Chiné," etc., in Guérin Carnet 3, fols. 30-30 verso. This notebook was used in 1865-1870; see Reff, "Degas's Notebooks," p. 613.

34. Lemoisne, no. 175; dated there 1868. In Boggs, Portraits by Degas, p. 106, it is dated 1866, but the study in Guérin Carnet 3, fol. 6 verso that is cited as evidence can in fact be dated only to 1865-1870; see note 33, above. For the recent literature, see note 1, above.
rectangles, shows an even greater taste for the cutting of forms at its edges. All but one of the six pictures in the background are intercepted by other elements, three of them by the frame. As a result, they seem more animated than Tissot himself, particularly since he assumes an attitude of passivity, a kind of elegant nonchalance. Neither actively at work in his own studio nor clearly a visitor to another artist’s—and the slender walking stick that could also be a mahlstick held idly in his hand, the hat and coat placed casually on the table behind him, only heighten this ambiguity—he turns sideways on the chair and leans on the table, confronting us with an expression that is at once worldly and world-weary.35

That this image of the artist as a dandy was an appropriate one for Tissot, who was already becoming the fashionable painter who would later specialize in scenes of Victorian high life, seems obvious enough. But that Degas also expressed in it his own conception of the artist becomes equally clear when it is compared with his self-portraits of these years, in which he appears as a somewhat haughty gentleman, defensive and slightly ironic.36 Hence what is most characteristic in his portrait of Tissot, what distinguishes it from the more prosaic pictures of the artist in his studio painted by the young Impressionists at this time, derives as much from Degas himself as from his subject. And this identification manifests itself not only in the ambiguities already mentioned, but in the paintings surrounding him, since most of them could have been made by Degas as well as by Tissot at this moment in their careers.

Significantly, none of the five canvases whose faces


36. See especially Lemoisne, nos. 105 and 116, the latter showing another colleague, De Valernes, in a posture almost identical with Tissot’s. In a portrait etching of about 1865, Tissot in turn shows Degas as a melancholy type; illustrated in Lemoisne, I, opposite p. 62.
we see is a known work by either artist, and only one can be identified at all. This is the small, handsomely framed picture hanging near Tissot's head (Figure 11), which is a free copy after a portrait of Frederick the Wise attributed to Cranach in the Louvre (Figure 12);37 and such a copy could easily have existed in either artist's studio. More obviously perhaps in Tissot's, since the meticulously rendered genre scenes in which he had specialized in the early 1860s were clearly dependent on German Renaissance art, or rather on the "neo-Germanic" art of Henrik Leys, a popular Belgian painter with whom he was often compared at the time.38 This would account not only for the presence of a copy after Cranach in Tissot's studio, but for its

37. F. Villot, Notice des tableaux... du Musée Impérial du Louvre (Paris, 1855) II, no. 99. It is one of several workshop replicas of an earlier portrait; see M. Friedländer and J. Rosenberg, Die Gemälde von Lucas Cranach (Berlin, 1932) p. 38, no. 151.

38. On Tissot and Leys, see C. de Sault, Essais de critique d'art (Paris, 1864) pp. 73-74; on Leys and German art, E. Chesneau, Les nations rivales dans l'art (Paris, 1868) pp. 84-93.
evident analogies with the portrait of himself. Although they are subtly contrasted in coloring, both heads are turned toward the right, surmounted by a dark mass, and marked by a drooping moustache, as if to suggest the stylistic affinities of the two artists by a physiognomical one.

However, the manner in which the copyist has eliminated the Gothic features of his model and has made its forms more compact and legible suggests that he was a less pedantic artist than Tissot—in fact, was one with the classical taste of Degas. For it is also conceivable that this copy once hung in his own studio: he, too, admired German Renaissance art, had drawn repeatedly after pictures by Holbein and Dürer, and had collected photographs of others by Cranach and Dürer. In fact, in a notebook of the early 1860s he referred to this very portrait of Frederick the Wise as a model of firm drawing and subtle coloring for a portrait of a woman that he was planning.

Like the copy after Cranach, the horizontal picture of Japanese women in a garden (Figure 13), which extends across the top of Degas’s composition, is not the historical work it appears to be, but rather a modern copy or imitation. For if its format is that of a five-sheet Japanese woodcut or a scroll of the makimono type, and if its figures wear Japanese costumes and are seen against a background partly closed by partitions and latticed windows in the Japanese manner, the style in which it is painted is thoroughly Western. The modeling and cast shadows of the figures, their recession into depth, and the atmospheric landscape all point to that conclusion. Behind this “Japanese” picture is undoubtedly a polychrom color woodcut by one of the followers of Utamaro, such as Evening Under the Murmuring Pines by Yeishi (Figure 14), an artist whose figural style it particularly recalls and who was among the first of the Ukiyo-e school to become known in France.

That Tissot was one of the earliest collectors of this art we have already seen; that he was also one of the most enthusiastic we learn from a letter written by Rossetti in 1864: “I went to the Japanese shop [of Mme de Soye], but found that all the costumes were being snapped up by a French artist, Tissot, who it seems is doing three Japanese pictures, which the mistress of the shop described to me as the three wonders of the world.” One of these was presumably In a Foreign Land, an episode in Tissot’s series on the Prodigal Son that shows him being entertained by Japanese dancers; and if the picture in Degas’s portrait, which represents a similar subject, does not reproduce the latter, it may nevertheless allude to it. However, like the embroidered silks in The Collector of Prints, it also reflects Degas’s own interest in Japanese art, an interest only slightly less keen than that of Tissot, according to Chesneau and other contemporaries. And since it does not represent an actual work, whether Japanese or pseudo-Japanese, but is improvised in the manner of both, it may well be Degas’s unique attempt to produce such a work—not altogether seriously, but in the guise of one that Tissot himself had painted, and in this friendly competition clearly capturing a more authentically Japanese look.

If the framed and relatively complete “Cranach” and “Japanese” pictures may never have existed, the three seen in an unframed, fragmentary state were even more obviously invented to fill the peripheral spaces they occupy. Pictorially, they represent styles which are distinctly different from those just discussed yet are equally indicative of interests shared by Degas and Tis-


40. B. N., Carnet 1, fol. 194; used in 1859–1864, see note 6, above.

41. See L. Binyon, A Catalogue of Japanese and Chinese Woodcuts . . . in the British Museum (London, 1916) p. 165, no. 32; also p. 164, no. 30 for a similar example. I am indebted to Mr. Basil Gray and Mr. Jack Hillier for this suggestion, which they have made independently.

42. Letter from Rossetti to his mother, November 12, 1864, in Dante Gabriel Rossetti, His Family Letters (London, 1895) II, p. 180. See also William Rossetti’s memoir, in I, p. 263.


44. See note 31, above. At his death, Degas owned over 100 prints, drawings, and albums by Japanese masters; see Catalogue des estampes . . . collection Edgar Degas, Hôtel Drouot, Paris, November 5, 1918, nos. 324–331.
Thus, the picture placed on an easel (Figure 15) shows figures in contemporary dress seated outdoors in the manner of early Impressionist picnic scenes. One of these, a Déjeuner sur l’Herbe painted by Tissot himself about 1865 (Figure 16), when he had abandoned his earlier “neo-Germanic” style and was assimilating the more advanced naturalistic style of Monet and his colleagues, may well be the kind of picture that Degas had in mind. But if it seems broadly painted in relation to Tissot’s earlier work, it lacks the vivid outdoor light and boldly simplified forms found in the picnic scene invented by Degas, whereas these are precisely the qualities that characterize some of his own pictures of these years, for example, the brilliant sketch of Three Women Seated Outdoors.

The same is true of the painting placed on the table behind Tissot (Figure 17), which serves as a pendant to the other one and with it encloses the examples of historic and exotic art shown between them. For it, too,


46. Not in Lemoisne; illustrated in Choix d’une collection privée, Klipstein and Kornfeld, Bern, October 22–November 30, 1960, no. 9; dated there about 1865. See also the Children and Poneys in a Park, Lemoisne, no. 171; dated there about 1867.
against the wall behind the easel (Figure 15), which apparently represents the Finding of Moses, its upper half showing the Pharaoh’s daughter and a servant descending toward the Nile, its lower half another servant lifting the infant from his basket.48 As an illustration of a Biblical episode, dramatic in content and painted in resonant red and green tones, it provides a striking contrast to the modern picnic scene adjacent to it. Yet no picture of this subject by Degas or Tissot is known; and no Renaissance picture of it—assuming that what we see is a copy—would arrange the figures so eccentrically on the surface, which has clearly been improvised within the irregular space available. Behind the improvisation, however, there is an historical type, the depiction of the Finding of Moses in late Renaissance and Baroque art, particularly that of the Venetians and their followers. The version in the Louvre by Charles de la Fosse (Figure 18), for example, shows the figures in similarly twisted postures, disposed vertically on an inclined ground plane, and rendered in similarly warm tones.49

47. Illustrated in Rewald, *Impressionism*, p. 77. It is also reminiscent of Monet’s *Déjeuner sur l’Herbe* of 1866, illustrated in *ibid.*, p. 119.
48. Hence the suggestion in Laver, “*Vulgar Society,*” p. 13, that it “may form part of Tissot’s *Faust* and *Marguerite* series,” is unfounded. In view of Degas’s competition with Manet, it is worth noting that he, too, had depicted the Finding of Moses; see R. E. Krauss, “*Manet’s *Nymph Surprised,*” *Burlington Magazine* 109 (1967) pp. 622–623 and fig. 20.
Moreover, in the mid-1860s Venetian art was of particular interest to Degas, who painted several copies of works attributed to Giorgione, Tintoretto, and Veronese, including a Finding of Moses by the latter which was clearly the prototype of de la Fosse's. A few years earlier, Tissot, too, had studied and copied Venetian art; but characteristically, he preferred the more sober art of the quattrocento, and wrote to Degas from Venice: "L'Assomption du Titien m'a laissé froid—le Tintoret de Saint-Marc piquant une tête m'a bien étonné—mais Andrea Mantegna, Bellini m'ont ravi." Like the other pictures in Degas's portrait, then, the "Venetian" one reflects artistic interests which he shared with Tissot, but which were more fundamentally his own.

Indeed, only an artist of Degas's complexity could have invented five pictures so remarkably varied in subject and style, or have juxtaposed them so deliberately. For taken together they constitute a kind of summation, a statement of his artistic affinities in what we now recognize was a critical period of transition for himself and other advanced artists, among whom to some extent was Tissot. In effect, Degas asserts his belief in the relevance for modern art of several distinctly opposed tendencies: the artificiality of Japanese prints and the realism of European paintings, the immediacy of contemporary genre scenes and the formality of older portraits and narratives, the sober, linear style of the Renaissance, and the dramatic, colorful style of the Baroque. And in doing so, he expresses in art-historical terms that ideal of sophistication and self-awareness which he has also expressed in personal terms in his image of the artist as a dandy.

**Figure 19**

Portrait of Thérèse Morbilli, by Degas. Pastel. Collection of Mme David-Weill, Paris (photo: Laniepce)

V. The richly framed portrait and the ambiguously reflecting mirror, which we have already encountered in The Bellelli Family, occur again in the background of Degas's portrait of his sister Thérèse Morbilli (Figure 19), drawn in pastel around 1869. Here, however, the two motives are juxtaposed in depth rather than on the picture surface, and they serve to characterize the personality and social status of an individual rather than the opposed temperaments of a married couple. For there is a correspondence between the portrait, the other pictures in the room, and the ornate candelabra reflected in the mirror, just as there is between these Rococo objects, at once expensive and vaguely aristocratic in tone, and the elegant, rather aloof young woman who stands before them, apparently at home in this richly furnished place. Actually, it is her father's drawing room, since the portrait was made during one of her visits to Paris; yet it is an appropriate

52. Lemoisne, no. 255; dated there about 1869. Degas implies that it has just been completed in a note in B. N., Carnet 21, fol. 43; used in 1868–1872, see note 39, above.
He was undoubtedly encouraged to do so by the very detailed description of the milieu in Naturalist literature, in which a window view or a picture frequently plays an important role; an example relevant to both portraits of his sister is the description of Mlle de Verandeuil's bedroom in the Goncourts' novel *Germaine Lacerteaux*.

Unlike the fine chalk drawing in The Bellelli Family, the picture in the background of the later portrait of Thérèse Morbilli, even when examined in detail (Figure 22), remains a broadly painted sketch, featureless and evidently without further significance for the whole. Yet it is rendered in sufficient detail to be identified as the Bust of a Woman by J.-B. Perronneau which later figured in the sale of Degas's collection (Figure 23). And when this in turn is compared with


54. Lemoisne, no. 109; according to René de Gas, it was painted in Paris early in 1863, during Thérèse's engagement.


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setting, reminding us of her own home in Naples and of her position as the wife of the Duke of Morbilli, a wealthy and aristocratic cousin whom she had married with special papal dispensation. In another portrait, painted in Paris on the eve of her marriage in 1863 (Figure 20), Degas showed Thérèse standing in an equally dignified manner, elegant in dress and impulsive in expression, and in the background he introduced an equally appropriate detail—an open window providing a view of Naples, the city in which she would soon begin her married life. In depicting the city and the Gulf of Naples, Degas relied on a watercolor sketch that he had made in a notebook during a visit in 1860 (Figure 21), and his incorporation of it into the portrait, where it is framed as carefully as a painting, demonstrates again how deliberately he planned such background effects.

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**FIGURE 20**
Portrait of Thérèse de Gas, by Degas. Oil on canvas. Musée du Louvre (photo: Archives Photographiques)

**FIGURE 21**
the head of Thérèse, the appropriateness of its presence behind her, as the only recognizable picture among all those shown, becomes more apparent. Although Perronneau represents a mature woman in a conventional pose and Degas a younger one posed more informally, there is an obvious affinity in the turn of their heads, the composure of their features, and the cool manner in which they confront us. Thus the Rococo portrait, discreetly introduced into the background of the Second Empire one, places its subject in a larger social context and confirms our impression of her personality.

How deliberately drawn the parallel was we cannot say, since we know nothing about Degas’s attitude towards Thérèse at this time. But he may well have sensed in her that haughtiness which later made him observe wryly, during one of her visits to Paris, “que son hôtel doit être bien organisé, autrement les nobles étrangers n’y afflueront pas,” and which she herself expressed in complaining that “la vie est trop pénible près de lui, il gagne de l’argent mais ne sait jamais où il en est.” 57 Certainly the contrast between his portraits of Thérèse and those of his younger sister Marguerite, who was more artistically inclined and who later married an architect, would seem to confirm this. 58

Although the provenance of Perronneau’s Bust of a Woman cannot be traced before its appearance in Degas’s portrait around 1869, it undoubtedly did belong to his father, a cultivated banker of the old bourgeoisie, who was acquainted with such outstanding collectors of eighteenth-century art as Lacaze and Marcille and had in his own collection several pastels by La Tour, which his son also inherited but was later obliged to sell. 59 That Degas, too, admired the psychological penetration and technical accomplishment of La Tour and Perronneau is evident not only from the memoirs of his friend Blanche and his niece Jeanne Fèvre, but from his own pastel portraits. 60 That of Thérèse Morbilli is particularly reminiscent of the older masters’

57. Both statements are in letters from Thérèse Morbilli in Paris to her husband in Naples, the first written between 1879 and 1881, the second on July 4, 1881; both are quoted in Boggs, “Edgar Degas and Naples,” p. 276.
58. See Boggs, Portraits by Degas, pp. 118 and 125 and the portraits listed there.
59. Lemoisne, 1, pp. 8–9 and 173. One of the La Tours was exhibited in 1874 as in the collection of M. de Gas; see A. Besnard, La Tour (Paris, 1928) p. 155, no. 326.
60. J.-E. Blanche, “Portraits de Degas,” Formes 12 (February
palette in the subtle tones of yellow ochre, pearl gray, blue, and white employed.

This admiration is in turn part of a revival of interest in Perronneau which took place precisely in the 1860s and in the circle of critics and collectors to which Degas and his father belonged. In these years, an important pastel by Perronneau was acquired by Émile Lévy, a successful painter and a friend of Degas, and the Goncourts discussed him in *L'Art du XVIIIe siècle* as "un artiste que La Tour a eu raison de redouter et qui, en marchant derrière lui, a souvent dû l'atteindre."61 They themselves had recently bought "un magnifique pastel de Perronneau," before which they would sit "en adoration," and in the same years Eudoxe Marcille, a friend of Degas’s father, and Camille Groult, later a friend of Degas, added still others to their collections.44 Hence no doubt Degas’s own interest at this time in the Rococo artist’s portraiture and his decision to introduce an example of it into a portrait whose setting was, appropriately, his father’s drawing room.

VI. The smallest and also the most puzzling of the pictures containing other pictures is one that Degas painted in the same years as that of Thérèse Morbilli, but with a far more obscure intention. Generally called Sulking, and occasionally The Banker (Figure 24), it seems to waver between the kind of narrative episode implied in the first title and the kind of modern genre

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61. Quoted in Vaillat and Ratouis de Limay, *Perronneau*, pp. 144-146, where the revival of interest in this artist is traced.

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**FIGURE 24**

Sulking, by Degas. Oil on canvas. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, bequest of Mrs. H. O. Havemeyer, the H. O. Havemeyer Collection, 29.100.43
scene implied in the second one. The positions and expressions of the two figures, their relation to each other, even the identity of the setting and its significance for them, are at once highly suggestive and ambiguous. This ambiguity extends to the large picture that hangs behind them, its rectangular shape carefully placed to enclose their heads; for its prominence implies that it contains a clue to the meaning of the whole, yet it cannot be related easily to their personalities or tastes, as in the examples discussed previously.

Although rendered in a broad, simplified style, this picture was obviously copied from an English racing print; more specifically, a color engraving of a painting by J. F. Herring entitled Steeple Chase Cracks (Figure 25). It probably belonged to Degas, since he also used the galloping jockey in the foreground as a model for the one in the foreground of The False Start, a work that is exactly contemporary with Sulking; and as early as 1861 he observed in a notebook that the landscape around the stables at Haras du Pin was “absolument semblable à celles des courses et des chasses anglaises coloriées.” But whether the presence of a sporting print in the background of Sulking signifies that the man shown in it is a bookmaker or an habitué of racetracks, as has been suggested, is another matter. The period when it was painted was indeed one of greatly increased interest in horseracing and betting in France, the first agency of organized betting, based on a system of “paris mutuels” that is still used today, having been founded in 1867, and the first periodical devoted exclusively to racing news, the Journal des Courses edited by Joseph Oller, having begun to appear in 1869. By that date Oller’s Agence des Poules, J. S. Harry’s Betting Office, and the Office Jones were all flourishing in Paris, and any one of them could conceivably have inspired the setting of Degas’s painting.

In all likelihood, however, it represents one of the small, privately owned banks which also flourished at this time, before corporate banking replaced them; perhaps the bank on Rue de la Victoire owned by Degas’s father. For the furnishings and decor which Degas has represented in detail—the window counter fitted with opaque glass at the left, the table piled with papers in the center, and the rack filled with ledgers at the upper right, all of which he studied separately at the site in notebook drawings—are those of a banking rather

63. Lemoisne, no. 335; dated there about 1873–1875. In fact, it must have been painted about 1869–1871, since there are studies for it in B. N., Carnet 24, fol. 36, 37, and 39, which was used in those years; see Reff, “Degas’s Notebooks,” p. 614. For the recent literature, see note 1, above.

64. The engraving is by J. Harris and was published as Fores’s National Sports, pl. 2, on October 25, 1847. At his death, Degas owned another engraving by Harris after a sporting picture by Herring; see Catalogue des estampes . . . collection Edgar Degas, no. 199.

65. B. N., Carnet 1, fol. 163; used in 1859–1864, see note 6, above. The False Start is Lemoisne, no. 238; dated there 1869–1872.

66. P. Lafond, Degas (Paris, 1919) II, p. 5, where it is called Le Bureau; however, in I, p. 37, it is called Bouderie.

than a betting office. Moreover, it is known that Degas, acting through his patron Faure, bought back six paintings from his dealer Durand-Ruel in March 1874, and that one of them was entitled Le Banquier. In that context, too, of course, an English sporting print would have been an appropriate element of the decor. Yet Degas's conception of The Banker as an image of an exceptional moment, charged with anticipation and tension, transcends the purely naturalistic description of a milieu, and still more the frequently discussed influence of photography, and seems instead to have been inspired by another work of art. This is Rembrandt's Syndics of the Drapers' Guild, which also represents a business meeting that we seem to have momentarily interrupted, one figure turning in virtually the same way to challenge us, and which also has in the background a picture that plays an important role—symbolically, if not compositionally.

68. See the description of such a bank in G. Rivière, Mr. Degas, bourgeois de Paris (Paris, 1935) pp. 7–6. Degas's drawings, probably made in his father's bank, are cited in note 63, above, and one is illustrated in Burlington Magazine 100 (1958) p. 242, fig. 39 (it is fol. 37, not fol. 39).

69. See Guérin's note in Degas, Lettres, pp. 31–32; and Lemoine, I, p. 83. The influence of Degas's picture is evident in a contemporary work by his friend De Valernes called The Visit to the Notary; see De Valernes et Degas, Musée de Carpentras, May 19–September 5, 1963, no. 31; and J.-L. Vaudoyer, Beautés de la Provence (Paris, 1926) p. 79.


If the steeplechase print does not allude to the professional relationship of the two figures in The Banker, it does unite them visually, its arch of galloping and leaping horses effectively linking their heads (Figure 26), and in a manner which heightens the apparent tension between them by providing a contrasting image of strenuous action directly behind them. Indeed, so poignant is their mood that some writers have sought a specific narrative content, even a source in contemporary fiction; but none has been found, and none probably existed. For as in the later picture Absinthe, whose title is as inaccurate as Sulking is here, Degas has not illustrated a Naturalist novel, but rather a theory of expression similar to that of the novelists, a theory which he and Duranty, his closest acquaintance among the latter, had worked out at just this time. It is formulated in Duranty's essay "Sur la physiognomie," published in 1867, and in Degas's contempo-

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**Figure 26**

Detail from Sulking
FIGURE 27
Portrait of Edmond Duranty, by Degas. Charcoal drawing. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 19.51.9

FIGURE 28
Portrait of Emma Dobigny, by Degas. Oil on canvas. Collection of Mrs. Walter Feilchenfeldt, Zürich (photo: Bulloz)

FIGURE 29
The Conversation, by Degas. Oil on canvas. Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon, Upperville, Virginia
ranceous statement, “Faire de la tête d’expression (style d’Académie) une étude du sentiment moderne,” in other words, transform the schematized and exaggerated physiognomies which were typical of the academic tradition into portrayals of the more complex emotions characteristic of modern spiritual life, such as the angry withdrawal of the man in The Banker and the sullenness of his companion.78

Hence it is appropriate that, again as in Absinthe, these figures, although essentially models for a genre scene rather than sitters for a group portrait, were friends of Degas with whose personalities and moods he was well acquainted. And it is particularly appropriate that the male figure is Durandy, as is evident when his contracted features and receding blond hair are compared with those in other portraits of him, including the well-known one by Degas himself of about a decade later (Figure 27).79 Although he is shown in a different mood there, we know from other sources that Durandy, a pioneer in the Naturalist movement whose career was later eclipsed by the fame of Flaubert and Zola, was often as bitter and withdrawn as he appears in The Banker, his “physionomie douce, triste, et résignée. . . . Sa vie était comme écrite dans le rictus parfois dououreux de sa bouche.”74 As for the female figure, her full yet rather fine features and chestnut-colored hair are those of Emma Dobigny, a favorite model of Degas and one for whom he felt a special sympathy, to judge from the rather tender, self-ironic letter he wrote to her and the portrait he painted of her at this time (Figure 28), where she appears in a similarly pensive mood.75

That Degas’s use of the racing print as a composition-
al and expressive device in The Banker is typical only of a certain period in his development becomes clear once this picture is compared with a later version called The Conversation (Figure 29), which was begun in 1884 as a portrait of his friends the Bartholomés and finished a decade later.74 Here the emphasis falls entirely on the two figures, who are shown in intimate proximity rather than estranged; and the print behind them, no longer a necessary means of linking them or of characterizing their environment, is reduced to a barren landscape whose horizon alone is indicated by the contrast between two broad areas of color.

VII. It was also around 1870, and also in the form of a popular print apparently employed as a mere decorative element, that Degas devised one of his most ingenious background pictures. It is the lithograph showing a reunion of musicians that hangs behind the violoncellist Pilet in Degas’s portrait of him seated in his study (Figure 30).77 In contrast to the sporting print, this one contains many portrait-like figures, which are more distinctly rendered in black and white; indeed, its very absence of color, especially in relation to the rather vivid tones of color in the composition, calls attention to it. So does the open ‗cello case, whose powerfully silhouetted covers, probably inspired by the bold treatment of foreground elements in Japanese prints, seem to point directly toward it.78 Moreover, one of these covers overlaps the lithograph, its large, block-like form contrasting sharply with the diminutive figures behind it. Through this device, and through the equally striking contrast be-


73. Lemoisne, no. 517, dated there 1879. Reproduced above is a study for it in The Metropolitan Museum of Art. See also Desboutin’s etched portrait of Durandy, illustrated in Rewald, Impressionism, p. 377.

74. A. Silvestre, Au pays des souvenirs (Paris, 1887) pp. 174–175. The same description is given in George Moore’s memoir, quoted in Rewald, Impressionism, p. 435, note 6. Durandy was evidently also the model for the male figure in the Violinist and Young Woman (Lemoisne, no. 274) of about 1872.


76. Lemoisne, no. 864; dated there 1885–1895; now in the collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon, Upperville, Virginia. In a letter to Mme de Fleury, January 8, 1884 (Degas, Lettres, p. 76), he mentions “un portrait intime où Mr. et Mme. Bartholomé sont représentés en tenue de ville.” For photographs of them, see T. Burrollet, “Bartholomé et Degas,” L’Information de l’Histoire de l’Art 12 (1967) pp. 119–126.


FIGURE 30
Portrait of M. Pilet, by Degas. Oil on canvas. Musée du Louvre (photo: Bulloz)

FIGURE 31
Detail from the Portrait of M. Pilet (photo: Agraci)
tween these figures and the imposing one of Pilet himself, we are led almost inevitably to examine their relation to him.

When the picture behind Pilet is studied more closely (Figure 31), it can no longer be described simply as a lithograph showing a group of celebrated musicians, of the type which was popular in the Romantic period. Its unconventional features become obvious once it is compared with an actual example, such as the Celebrated Pianists by Nicolas Maurin (Figure 32), a popular portraitist of the 1840s. Instead of a few clearly depicted figures, Degas’s print shows a gathering of eighteen, some of whom are half obscured; and instead of facing toward the center, the majority seem to look at something outside the composition at the left, the pianist even turning away from his instrument to do so. What they look at, of course, is their colleague Pilet, and the homage that they thus appear to pay him is all the more flattering in that they can be identified as some of the most illustrious musicians and amateurs of music of the immediate past.

In the right-hand group we recognize Chopin seated at the piano in a typically lethargic pose, and surrounding him several members of his circle: behind and slightly to the left, the poet and music critic Heine; behind and slightly to the right, the pianist Liszt; and at the extreme right, Delacroix. Between the latter and Liszt stands the librettist Jacques Halévy; between Liszt and Heine, the composer Berlioz; and leaning on the piano is Balzac. In the left-hand group we recognize Théophile Gautier seated in the center, and around him some of Chopin’s other literary friends: directly above Gautier, the novelist George Sand; to her left, the Polish poet Zalewski; and to her right, Alfred de Musset. At the extreme left are the musicologist Hiller and the actor Bocage; the other figures cannot be identified as surely, but the cellist standing behind the piano is probably Auguste Franchomme, Pilet’s predecessor.

As a whole, then, the scene is conceived as one of the reunions in Chopin’s studio in which he gave impromptu performances, and may well have been inspired by an account of the first such performance—at which Heine, Delacroix, George Sand, Hiller, and Liszt were all present—in the latter’s well-known memoir of Chopin, published in 1852. If Degas were not already familiar with it, he could easily have learned about it from some of the musicians, including Pilet himself, with whom he was friendly around 1870 and whose portraits he painted in The Orchestra.

In the context of these musical friendships, Degas’s conception of the lithograph as a playful homage to Pilet seems entirely appropriate. It recalls Manet’s use of a similar device in his portrait of Zola, exhibited in 1868, where the figures in the three prints framed together in the background—a Japanese color woodcut of a wrestler, Goya’s etching after Velázquez’s Los Borrachos, and a photograph of Manet’s own painting, Olympia—are either modified or so chosen to

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79. It was published in the series “Galerie de la Gazette Musicale,” no. 2, 1842. See also Kriehuber’s lithograph Une Matinée chez Liszt, published in 1846, illustrated in R. Bory, La vie de Frédéric Liszt par l’image (Paris, 1936) p. 124.
80. For portraits, see R. Bory, La vie de Frédéric Chopin par l’image (Paris, 1951) p. 138 (Chopin), p. 89 (Heine), p. 114 (Liszt), and p. 88 (Delacroix).
81. For portraits, see Bory, Frédéric Chopin, p. 91 (Haller), p. 89 (Berlioz), and Bory, Frans Liszt, p. 59 (Balzac).
82. For portraits, see Bory, Frédéric Chopin, p. 141 (Haller), p. 136 (Sand), p. 86 (Zalewski), and Bory, Frans Liszt, p. 56 (Musset).
83. For portraits, see Bory, Frédéric Chopin, p. 90 (Hiller), p. 142 (Bocage), and p. 92 (Franchomme). For help in identifying the figures in Degas’s picture, I am indebted to Mlle Boschot of the Bibliothèque de l’Opéra.
85. Lemoine, no. 186; dated there about 1869. On Degas’s friendship with musicians at this time, see ibid., I, pp. 58-60.
begin with that they seem to look in deference toward Zola. And it anticipates Pissarro’s use of the same device in a portrait of Cézanne painted in 1874, in which popular prints are placed on either side of him in such a way that the figures of Courbet and Thiers shown in them turn toward and appear to salute him. The lithograph in Degas’s portrait is conceived in the same spirit, but even more ambitiously, since it attempts to capture the look of a familiar type of print rather than to reproduce a specific example, and it contains a great many figures, each of which has been adapted from still another source, a portrait of the person represented. That he was successful, despite the small area within which he had to work, testifies to his remarkable ability to summarize the characteristics of a physiognomy in a few strokes, an ability of which his caricatures are also impressive evidence.

If the lithograph behind Pilet reflects a playfulness appropriate to the spirit of friendship in which Degas conceived this portrait, it was also inspired by a respect which makes even more meaningful the deference shown by so many famous figures. For Pilet was more than an accomplished musician; he was also a courageous individual who had risked his position in the orchestra of the Opera a few years earlier by openly challenging its administration. In January 1866, after many months of protesting for higher wages, a few of its members met with one of Louis Napoleon’s ministers, and the results were reported by their conductor, Georges Hainl. “Le plus grand nombre a fort bien accueilli cette communication,” he wrote to the Director of the Opera, “Cependant une voix a prononcé les paroles suivantes: c’est de l’argent qu’il nous faut. Cette voix était celle de Mr Pilet violoncelliste.” Incensed by this challenge to his authority, Hainl insisted that Pilet, who had played in the orchestra for over twenty years, be fired immediately: “Je ne veux pas être victime du mauvais vouloir de quelques uns. Il faut un exemple. Il le faut immédiat.”

Actually, Pilet was not dismissed, since he figures prominently in The Orchestra, painted three years later; but his outspoken attitude was undoubtedly discussed among the musicians and known to Degas, who at this moment was mounting his own attack on the administration and would surely have admired it. That he recognized in Pilet an independent spirit like his own is evident in his portrait, both in the calm, determined expression on the musician’s face and in the respectful attitudes of his illustrious predecessors, whom Degas has ingeniously placed behind him.

VIII. In another portrait of a friend, this one a fellow artist (Figure 33), probably painted around 1878, Degas returned to the theme of the studio which he had employed a decade earlier in portraying James Tissot; and here, too, the dimensions and legibility of the pictures surrounding the figure give them an important role in the composition and invite speculation as to their meaning in relation to him. But their consistency of style and imagery, their unframed and apparently unfinished condition, and the prominently displayed paintbox, palette, and brushes all indicate that they are his own works, recently completed or currently in progress. In fact, the mannequin propped against the wall beside him is obviously the model he has used for the similarly costumed figure in the larger picture. Unlike the portrait of Tissot, then, this one seems simply to represent a fellow artist with two of his paintings—outdoor scenes of informal pleasure and relaxation, Impressionist in spirit, that have little to do with Degas’s own art of the later 1870s. Yet this portrait, too, expresses an attitude of disillusionment which reveals as much of Degas as of his subject, and does so

86. S. L. Faison, Jr., “Manet’s Portrait of Zola,” Magazine of Art 42 (1949) pp. 162-168; however, this observation is not made there.
88. See, among others, the ones in E. Degas, Album de dessins, ed. D. Halévy (Paris, 1949) which date from about 1877. On his interest in caricature, see Boggs, Portraits by Degas, pp. 53-54.
89. He had been a member of the orchestra since 1845, according to a chart in Paris, Archives Nationales, A J xiii. 478: Personnel des choeurs et de l’orchestre de l’Opéra.
90. Letter from Georges Hainl, Premier Chef d’Orchestre, to Émile Perrin, Directeur de l’Opéra, January 11, 1866, in Archives Nationales, A J xiii. 478. On the musicians’ demands for higher wages, see also Le Temps, July 11, 1865, and subsequent issues.
92. Lemoine, no. 326; dated there about 1875; now in the Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisbon. It can be redated by means of the iconographic evidence presented below.
FIGURE 33
Portrait of Henri Michel-Lévy, by Degas. Oil on canvas. Fondação Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisbon
through the choice and relation to him of the pictures and objects as much as through his own appearance.\textsuperscript{93} This becomes evident, however, only when the pictures and the artist himself have been identified.

It has been suggested several times that he is Cézanne, a painter with whom Degas was of course acquainted, and who might well have used such a mannequin for lack of live models.\textsuperscript{94} But the photographs and portraits cited as proof, and particularly the one by Renoir that is not cited, show a quite different head, rounder and more compact, with more open eyes, a fuller beard, and a balder pate; and the picnic scene mentioned in relation to the picture at the right resembles it only superficially.\textsuperscript{95}

A more reliable clue was provided by Degas himself, who listed among his entries in the catalogue of the Impressionist exhibition of 1879 a “Portrait d’un peintre dans son atelier” in the collection of a “Mr. H. M.-L.”\textsuperscript{96} Although no contemporary review or memoir mentions it, very likely because Degas decided not to exhibit it after all, it was undoubtedly the portrait under discussion. For the only others in his oeuvre that could be so described are the portraits of Tissot and of a man in a white blouse, of which the former was too early in date and the latter too unfinished in appearance to be exhibited then.\textsuperscript{97} Now in 1879, before the picture could have changed hands, “Mr. H. M.-L.” could only be the artist portrayed, and he in turn could only be Henri Michel-Lévy (1844–1914), the one recorded artist with these initials.

A somewhat conservative minor Impressionist, Michel-Lévy was known to the major figures in the movement, particularly Manet and Monet, with whom he occasionally painted, and a work he exhibited at the Salon of 1877 was singled out for praise by Durany.\textsuperscript{98} Like Degas at an earlier date, he had been a pupil of Barrias, through whom they may have met; in any event, they were acquainted, for his addresses appear three times in Degas’s notebooks around 1870.\textsuperscript{99} In fact, Michel-Lévy himself later reported that “ils étaient camarades d’atelier, chacun avait fait de l’autre un portrait,” that he had sold Degas’s portrait of him for a high price, and that the latter, learning of this, had remarked mercilessly: “Vous avez commis une lâcheté; vous savez bien que je ne pouvais pas vendre votre portrait.”\textsuperscript{100}

If the main facts of Michel-Lévy’s career are known, his works have virtually disappeared. Hence it is hardly surprising that the picture at the right in Degas’s portrait cannot be identified, although one that Michel-Lévy exhibited at the Salon of 1878 as Promenade in a Park suggests a similar subject.\textsuperscript{101} It is only through the discovery of an old photograph that the one at the left can be identified as The Regattas (Figure 34), which he showed at the Salon of 1879, the very year when Degas planned to show this portrait.\textsuperscript{102} Obviously working from memory, Degas has altered the seated woman’s position and rendered the foliage around her in a more boldly simplified style, but it is clearly the right side of The Regattas that he has reproduced. The

93. Compare the appearance of the male figure in Le Viol (Lemoisne, no. 348), who also leans against the wall with his hands in his pockets. It was probably apropos the latter that Durany wrote, in \textit{La nouvelle peinture}, p. 43: “Des mains qu’on tient dans les poches pourront être éloquentes.” On Le Viol, see also note 150, below.


96. \textit{Catalogue de la 4\textsuperscript{me} exposition de peinture}, 28 Avenue de l’Opéra, Paris, April 10–May 11, 1879, no. 69. See Lemoisne, I, p. 243, note 129.

97. Lemoisne, nos. 175 and 337. According to Lemoisne, it was the latter that Degas exhibited; according to Lafond, \textit{Degas}, II, p. 15, it was the former. Neither statement is supported by the provenance given by Degas himself; and Lemoisne compounds the error by placing Mr. H. M.-L. in Montreal (probably because the Gulbenkian picture was formerly in the collection of Sir George Drummond, Montreal).


99. B. N., Carnet 8, fols. 216 and 221, and Carnet 22, fol. 117; the former was used in 1867–1874, the latter in 1869–1873, see Reff, “Degas’s Notebooks,” pp. 613–614.


other picture, although painted even more summarily, represents a similar occasion—two men and a woman seated or reclining outdoors, and two women with parasols strolling toward them.

In choosing these elegant, idyllic scenes, Degas in effect characterizes his friend’s art as an Impressionist equivalent of the Rococo fête galante, although it was also an art of landscapes and urban genre scenes, to judge from the titles in exhibition and sale catalogues. Thus Degas alludes not only to the general affinities between Impressionism and the Rococo, but to the influence exerted on Michel-Lévy by his own outstanding collection of eighteenth-century masters, especially Watteau, the creator of the fête galante. Indeed, the posthumous sale of his collection contained twelve paintings and thirty-three drawings by Watteau, as well as works by Boucher, Fragonard, and others, some of which might well be compared with the two by Michel-Lévy himself that Degas has reproduced.104

Ironically, however, Michel-Lévy appears in Degas’s portrait as a withdrawn and disillusioned man, altogether removed from the scenes of pleasure and conviviality that surround him, and made to seem even more isolated by their very presence. Moreover, the most conspicuous figure in each picture appears to turn its back on him, as does the mannequin placed on the floor beside him. Compositionally, the mannequin, which in effect the third work of art, closes a series of triangles that surround the artist on all sides. This hermetic effect is reinforced by the shallow space in which he stands, his back literally against the wall, his exits blocked visually by his own creations or instruments of creation. Symbolically, the mannequin plays the role of his “companion,” one that is indeed lifelike in scale and appearance, yet is shown in a particularly lifeless posture. Its poignancy is echoed in the female figure in The Regattas, which appears even more inanimate and remote—an imitation of an imitation of reality. The mood of pessimism which results becomes more apparent when Degas’s image is compared with a typically Impressionist one, such as the portrait by Guillaumin of the painter Martinez, which dates from the same years, and suggests an attitude of confidence and naturalness both in the relaxed position of the figure and in the casual disposition of the works of art around him.105

That there is in Degas’s picture much of Michel-Lévy himself, a man of whom one acquaintance wrote, “Je ne connais pas d’homme plus réticent, plus défiant de soi-même que cet artiste sincère et fin... Il a rêvé, regardé, peint, travaillé, vécu pour soi, loin des vaines et folles agitations,” cannot be doubted.106 But that there is also in it much of Degas’s own conception of


105. For similar observations on the mannequin, the paintings, and his own position, “trapped like an animal in a corner,” see Boggs, Portraits by Degas, pp. 55–56.

106. It is dated 1878, and illustrated in Rewald, Impressionism, p. 427.

the artist as an unsocial being who lives in a world of his own invention, and particularly of Degas's sense of himself as a frustrated, embittered man whose deepest needs have remained unfulfilled, also cannot be doubted. We have only to read his letters, such as the one he wrote to a colleague in 1884, "Si vous étiez célibataire et âgé de 50 ans, vous auriez de ces moments-là, où on se ferme comme une porte, et non pas seulement sur ses amis; on supprime tout autour de soi, et une fois tout seul, on s’annihile, on se tue enfin, par dégoût," to realize how profoundly true an image of himself this painting is.

IX. If, in the portraits discussed thus far, the pictures represented in the background appear either to have existed in reality or to have been invented with a particular thematic purpose in mind, the one that is shown behind Henri Rouart in Degas's portrait of him with his daughter (Figure 35) of about 1877 cannot be explained in either way. It has been called "one of his landscapes," but its boldness of conception and freedom of execution are without parallel in his art. A talented amateur who was better known as an engineer and as a collector of modern art, Rouart had studied with Corot, hence preferred more picturesque sites such as Venice, Avignon, and Marseille, and worked in a more cautious style, of which Valéry later observed: "Il s'était fait un métier des plus serrés, d'une précision et d'une justesse remarquables." Therefore, the landscape in Degas's portrait should probably be understood as an acknowledgment of Rouart's general interest in landscape painting, which Degas himself

108. Letter to Henry Lerolle, August 21, 1884, in Degas, Lettres, pp. 79–81. See also the letter to Bartholomé, December 19, 1884, ibid., p. 99, in which he describes himself as "l'homme qui veut finir et mourir tout seul, sans bonheur aucun."

109. Lemoisne, no. 424; dated there about 1877; now in the collection of Dr. and Mrs. Rudolf J. Heinemann, New York.

110. P. Valéry, preface to the catalogue of Peintures et aquarelles par Henri Rouart, Galerie Paul Rosenberg, Paris, March 20–April 12, 1933. For other examples of his art, see the catalogue of a similar exhibition at Galeries Durand-Ruel, Paris, March 16–30, 1912. M. Louis Rouart has also expressed the opinion that the picture in Degas's portrait cannot be one by his father.

FIGURE 35
Portrait of Henri Rouart and Hélène, by Degas. Oil on canvas. Collection of Dr. and Mrs. Rudolf Heinemann, New York
encouraged by inviting him to exhibit with the Impressionists, rather than as a particular work by him. This becomes clearer when it is compared with the easily identified, symbolically significant works of art that often appear in portraits of artists in the Romantic period, such as that of Michelangelo by Delacroix and those of Tintoretto and Raphael by Ingres; the latter may even have been in Degas’s mind, since he shows Hélène Rouart seated on her father’s lap like the Fornarina on Raphael’s in some of Ingres’s pictures.111

Also without further significance is the large picture in the background of Degas’s portrait of Diego Martelli (Figure 36), a Florentine art critic who visited Paris in 1878–1879, when Degas painted him in his apartment, and who was on his return the first to champion Impressionist painting in Italy.112 The background picture should probably be seen as an allusion to his professional activities, rather than as a work he actually owned. For not only is there no such work in the inventory of his collection, which he willed intact to the Galleria d’Arte Moderna in Florence,113 but its appearance varies from one to another of the preparatory studies for Degas’s portrait, and takes still another form, that of a loosely painted landscape, in a second


113. The only possibilities would be the works by De Nittis and Zandomeneghi, for which see A. Jahn-Rusconi, La galleria d’arte moderna a Firenze (Rome, 1934) pp. 17 and 23. The inventory is in Florence, R. Biblioteca Marucelliana, Raccolta Martelli; I am indebted to Mr. Lamberto Vitali for information on its contents.
version of it. Unlike the latter, however, the picture in the first version is impossible to identify even generically; it has been described as a “framed fan,” but the curvature of a fan would be downward rather than upward, and its size would be much smaller. What we see, then, is not a fragment of a real or imagined picture, but an abstract design whose pale red, yellow, and blue tones echo those found elsewhere in the composition, just as its curved contour repeats that of the sofa below it, effectively reinforcing the apparent rotundity of Martelli’s compact figure.

X. A number of conspicuous and unidentifiable pictures also appear in the background of Degas’s pastel Mary Cassatt at the Louvre (Figure 37)—a work that is contemporary with the portrait of Martelli—and also in order to characterize the setting rather than to comment indirectly on the personality or taste of the individuals shown. For if this apparently simple scene of visitors in the Grande Galerie is in fact a rather sophisticated portrait of Degas’s friend and pupil Mary Cassatt and her sister Lydia, its effectiveness in describing them depends neither on the nature of the pictures behind them nor on their facial expressions, which are likewise hidden or ambiguous, but rather on the expressiveness of their postures and the silhouettes that these produce against the strikingly bare surfaces of the parquet floor and marble dado of the gallery. Although probably inspired by the piquant flattening and simplification of shapes in Japanese prints, the shrewdly contrasted silhouettes of the two women are fundamentally European in their expression of personality. That of the standing woman, which Degas studied repeatedly in a notebook of around 1879, is particularly effective in this respect, for “her slender, erect figure, neatly tailored, and her crisply furled umbrella all convey to us something of Mary Cassatt’s tense, energetic character.”

Degas’s essentially European realism is also evident in the care he took to reproduce accurately the appearance of the Grande Galerie: on another page of contemporary genre pictures by Cassatt, on which see pp. 51 and 64-65.

114. Lemoisne, no. 520; now in the Museo de Bellas Artes, Buenos Aires. For preparatory studies which show the background, see B. N., Carnet 23, fol. 25; Fifty Master Drawings in the National Gallery of Scotland (Edinburgh, 1961) no. 49; and J. S. Boggs, Drawings by Degas (New York, 1967) no. 88.

115. Lemoisne, no. 581; dated there 1880; now in a private collection, New York. It is probably the work that Degas lists among those he plans to show in the Impressionist exhibition of 1879, in B. N., Carnet 23, fols. 66 and 68. For other versions, see note 11, above.

116. F. A. Sweet, Miss Mary Cassatt (Norman, Oklahoma, 1966) p. 50; compare the appearance of Lydia in pls. iv and 10, and the picture, by Cassatt, on pp. 9 and 15.

117. Shinoda, Degas, der Einzug des Japanischen, pp. 81-82 and pls. 73-74. In a preparatory study, illustrated in Boggs, Drawings by Degas, no. 85, Degas emphasizes just this aspect of their silhouettes.

118. Sweet, Miss Mary Cassatt, p. 50; on her friendship with Degas, see pp. 32-33 and 39-40. The studies are in Guérin Carnet 4, fols. 8 verso, 9, and 15; see Reff, “Degas’s Notebooks,” p. 615. Durandy had already declared in La nouvelle peinture, p. 42: “Avec un dos, nous voulons que se révèle un tempérament, un âge, un état social.”
FIGURE 39
Mary Cassatt at the Louvre, by Degas. Etching and aquatint. Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris

FIGURE 38
Study for Mary Cassatt at the Louvre, by Degas. Pencil drawing, Guérin Carnet 4, fol. 1. Private collection, Paris (photo: Agraci)

FIGURE 40
Sarcophagus from Cervetri, Etruscan, vi century B.C. Polychromed terracotta. Musée du Louvre (photo: Agraci)

this notebook he drew a faint outline of Mary Cassatt’s head and shoulders, and above it part of the elaborately carved frame on one of the pictures that hung there (Figure 38), reproducing a corner of the latter so faithfully that it can be identified as Ruben’s composition The Birth of Louis XIII.119

The figures of Mary and Lydia Cassatt, based directly on those in the pastel, but now shown contemplating the Etruscan sarcophagus in the Salle du Tombeau Lydien rather than the pictures in the Grande Galerie

119. Villot, Notice des tableaux... du Musée Impérial du Louvre, II, no. 441; it was hung then in the Grande Galerie. Degas’s drawing is in Guérin Carnet 4, fol. 1, and on its verso he observed with equal concern for accuracy: “Dans la grande galerie les draps et les soieries noirs sont plus clairs que les tableaux sombres.”
(Figure 39), appear once again in an etching that Degas made around 1880.\(^{120}\) His choice of the famous sarcophagus from Cervetri is not surprising, since it was already well known at the time and was appreciated in a manner he would surely have found congenial. Thus, it was described in a popular guidebook as “une œuvre étrange, à la fois raffinée et sauvage,” and in a history of Etruscan art as having “quelque chose de vivant et d’expressif qu’une coloration vive contribue encore à accentuer.”\(^{121}\) Moreover, the representation of its complicated forms, seen through a glass case that both reflects light and frames the luminous window behind it, undoubtedly posed a technical problem for Degas, one which he must have been all the more anxious to solve since this print was to mark his public debut in the field of graphic art. It was to be his contribution to Le Jour et la Nuit, a periodical devoted to original prints, which he was then organizing with Bracquemond, Pissarro, and Mary Cassatt herself. The technique of aquatint, which he has employed so freely and inventively here, was to be an important element in all their prints.\(^{122}\)

That Degas has achieved more than a technical tour de force, however, becomes evident when his print is compared with contemporary pictures of visitors in the Louvre’s sculpture galleries, such as those by his former colleague Tissot. For if the latter’s view of the Rotonde de Mars, probably painted around 1884, is more successful as an illusion—so much so, that all the antiquities shown in it and even the Pavillon de Sully seen through the window can be identified—it is also more pedantic, and lacks the flair and especially the wit that are characteristic of Degas’s image.\(^{123}\) This is evident not only in his original handling of the graphic media, but in a carefully contrived and amusing detail: the husband and wife shown reclining on the Etruscan sarcophagus appear to turn toward, and the husband even to beckon toward, the figure of Lydia Cassatt, who in turn seems to look up from her guidebook in order to meet their glances, while her sister Mary faces them directly. When seen from this angle, the figures on the sarcophagus do appear this way (Figure 40), but the angle was undoubtedly chosen in order to produce such a confrontation between the pairs of living and sculptured figures.\(^{124}\) In effect, then, Degas’s image is a witty, modern equivalent of the older one, especially popular in medieval and Renaissance art, of the Three Living Meeting the Three Dead. Yet it remains nevertheless a scene of contemporary life and a rather shrewd portrait of two of his friends.

**XI.** The latest in date and also the most varied in subject matter of the portraits in which pictures appear is the one that Degas painted of Hélène Rouart in 1886 (Figure 41), almost a decade after he had shown her as a girl with her father.\(^{125}\) Although a poised and independent young woman now—and her unusual relation to the chair, a feature which appears more unconventional in Degas’s preparatory studies, is an indication of this—she is still represented in her father’s studio, surrounded by works of art in which his presence is felt.\(^{126}\) As we have seen, it was largely as a collector, rather than as an artist, that Henri Rouart was best known, and Degas, who was one of his closest friends, has acknowledged this by characterizing the pictures and objects behind her as vividly as Hélène herself. If it is a portrait of her as the daughter of a famous collector, however, it is also an image of the cultivated milieu which his intelligence and taste enabled him to create, and in which she was raised to appreciate the values of many types of art. How much at ease she seems in it becomes clearer when Degas’s portrait is compared with the one he had painted of his sister

\(^{120}\) Delteil, no. 30, sixth state; dated there 1876. But undoubtedly etched in 1875-1886; see P. Moses in *Etchings by Edgar Degas*, University of Chicago, May 4–June 12, 1964, no. 30.


\(^{123}\) H. J. Gourley III, “Tissots in the Museum’s Collection,” *Bulletin of the Rhode Island School of Design* 50 (March 1964) pp. 3–4 and figs. 8–9. Not identified there is the statue of Dionysos (Louvre 222) at the extreme right in fig. 9.

\(^{124}\) Degas studied the sarcophagus alone from this angle; see *Catalogue des tableaux . . . par Edgar Degas et provenant de son atelier*, Galerie Georges Petit, Paris, July 2–4, 1919, no. 250a.

\(^{125}\) Lemoisne, no. 869; dated there 1886; now in the collection of Gimpel Fils, Ltd, London.

\(^{126}\) For the studies, see Lemoisne, nos. 870, 870 bis, and 871, all signed and dated 1886, and B. N., Carnet 6, fols. 204–207.
FIGURE 41

FIGURE 42
Detail from wall hanging, Chinese, Ch’ing Dynasty. Embroidered silk. Collection of M. Edmond Fournier, Paris
Thérèse standing rather stiffly in her father's richly furnished drawing room, with an equally formal Perronneau portrait behind her (Figure 19). 127

As if to emphasize the essentially artistic and intellectual character of Hélène Rouart's home, Degas has placed a table piled with books and papers in the foreground, and has surrounded her with a remarkable variety of works of art. In the glass case are three Egyptian wood sculptures, of which the nearest one alone is rendered clearly enough to be identified; it is an Ushabti, or funerary statuette, of the Middle Kingdom, and was for many years in the collection of Louis Rouart, who inherited it from his father. 128 Above it is part of a large Chinese silk hanging, whose embroidered ornament (more intelligible when seen in color) consists of dragons and "dogs of Fo" on a crimson ground, of a type woven in the Ch'ing Dynasty (Figure 42). 129

Yet these works of ancient and exotic art, although obviously part of Henri Rouart's collection, were hardly typical of it; for its greatest strength was in European art, especially of the nineteenth-century French school, many of whose masters he had known personally. Hence the presence of these works probably reflects Degas's own interests. As a student, he had copied

127. A similar comparison is made in Boggs, Portraits by Degas, p. 68. The appearance and atmosphere of Rouart's home are vividly described in J.-E. Blanche, Propos de peintre, de David à Degas (Paris, 1919) pp. 245-276.
128. See F. Petrie, Shabtis (London, 1935) pls. xliv and xlv; and Gimpel, Journal d'un collectionneur, p. 418, entry of April 30, 1930, recording information given by Louis Rouart. I am indebted to M. Rouart for discussing his collection with me.
129. For the example reproduced here, see H. d'Ardenne de Tizac, The Stuffs of China, Weavings and Embroideries, Eng. trans. (London, 1924) p. 12 and pl. 34. For a color reproduction of the Degas, see Boggs, Portraits by Degas, pl. 124.

**Figure 43**
Detail from the Portrait of Hélène Rouart (photo: Todd-White)

**Figure 44**
Naples and the Castello dell'Ovo, by Camille Corot. Oil on canvas. Formerly in the collection of Henri Rouart, Paris (photo: Paul Rosenberg)
extensively after Egyptian art; and according to his niece, "après avoir lu Le Roman de la Momie, [il] s’intéresse à tout ce qui touche à la vie des Égyptiens au temps des Pharaons." Early in his career, he had also studied Far Eastern art, as we have seen in The Collector of Prints and the Portrait of James Tissot, which actually represent oriental costumes and embroidered fabrics.

More appropriate as expressions of Rouart's own taste are the painting and drawing behind Hélène at the right side of the composition (Figure 43). Although rendered in paler tones and a broader style than the figure and chair adjacent to them, both works can be identified. The painting is Corot's Naples and the Castello dell'Ovo (Figure 44), one of an outstanding group of early landscapes by him which particularly impressed those who visited Rouart's collection. Many years later, a visitor recalled both the vivid coloring of this "magnifique marine" and the many hours he had spent discussing the master's work with his host, who had in fact known Corot and received some lessons from him. The same is true of Millet; and, appropriately, he is represented by the study of a peasant woman (Figure 45) that hangs below the Corot; it is one of an even larger series of pastels and sketches by him, which were among Rouart's most valued possessions. A colleague later described how the latter, even as an old, infirm man, "malade et pouvant à peine se lever d'un fauteuil, ... tint à me reparler de Millet, et s'appuyant sur mon bras, se traina jusqu'à un coin obscur où il alluma une bougie, pour me montrer un tout petit dessin." Thus the early Corot landscape and the Millet drawing, although not the most valuable works in a collection which included pictures by El Greco, Chardin, Goya, and Degas himself, were evidently among the most significant in Rouart's own judgment, and were probably chosen by Degas as such.

Like the Chinese silk hanging and the Egyptian sculptures, however, one of them must also have had a particular attraction for Degas; not the Millet, of course, the rustic in art never having interested him, but the Corot, which would have appealed to him for two reasons. As a view of the Bay of Naples, it recalled a scene he had often admired as a young man, while visiting relatives in that city, and had seen again in 1886, the very year in which he painted this portrait.

Like Corot, he responded particularly to its vivid contrasts of color and light, observing, for example, in a notebook of 1860 that "le Château de l'Oeuf se dé-
tachait sur les pentes roses du Vésuve, étant lui verdâtre et noir comme en hiver." 126 Two of his earliest landscapes are in fact small, broadly executed views of the Bay of Naples and the Castello dell’Ovo, undoubtedly painted under the older artist's influence. 127 Hence the picture in Rouart's collection would also have interested Degas as a brilliant example of Corot's style, and especially of his early style, for he, too, preferred it to the later, more popular style. Indeed, his own collection contained seven Corots by the time of his death, almost all of which were small landscapes of the early Italian period; and appropriately, when he was considering the purchase of two of them in 1898, he asked Rouart to confirm their authenticity. 128

XII. If, in the portrait of Hélène Rouart, and in the earlier ones of Tissot and Michel-Lévy, the works of art around them seem as important as the figures themselves in defining their interests or personalities, they are nevertheless subordinated to the latter compositionally. Only on two occasions, during a sojourn in his friend Paul Valpinçon’s château at Ménil-Hubert in 1892, did Degas eliminate the figure and attempt instead to paint a portrait of his environment. In The Interior (Figure 1), he represented his own room in the château, playing ingeniously with the motives of the picture, the mirror, and the doorway, as we have seen, but also capturing the provincial charm of this simply furnished, yet cheerful and luminous place. 130 And in The Billiard Room (Figure 46), he depicted one of the more elaborately furnished areas used for entertainment and the display of Valpinçon’s extensive collection of paintings. 140 He was in fact the son of a famous collector and friend of Ingres, and it was through him that Degas was able as a young man to meet Ingres—an occasion he never forgot. 141 Hence the prominence he has given to the pictures, which fill both walls of the billiard room, the space above the doorway, and a wall of the room visible beyond it, creating an effect like that in the portrait of Mary Cassatt in the Grande Galerie, but with a greater emphasis on the pictures themselves.

Yet only the largest of them, the one in the center of each wall of the billiard room, is shown in sufficient detail to be identified. At the right is an eighteenth-century tapestry representing Esther Swooning before Ahasuerus, which was still at Ménil-Hubert before the Second World War, but was removed or destroyed at that time. 142 At the left is a painting of a typically rustic scene by the Neapolitan artist Giuseppe Palizzi, the Animals at a Watering Place of about 1866 (Figure 47). 143 Clearly uninterested in its rather dryly rendered genre details, Degas has suppressed the foreground entirely in his copy and has given the earth, and especially the horizon, a rhythmic curvature lacking in the more static original. However, these changes do not necessarily imply a criticism, since there is a similar tendency to simplify and abstract a broad pattern of tones in his late copies after artists he surely did admire, such as Corot (in the Portrait of Hélène Rouart) and Mantegna (in a pastel drawn in 1897). 144 In fact, Degas may have met Palizzi, the leader of the so-called School of Pausilippus, during one of his sojourns in Naples, and may have been interested in the picture for that reason.

XIII. Viewed in retrospect, the pictures within Degas's pictures are not only surprisingly numerous,

136. B. N., Carnet 19, fol. 6; used in 1860, see note 55, above.
138. Letter to Henri Rouart, June 30, 1898, in Degas, Lettres, p. 223. For the Corots he owned at his death, see Catalogue des tableaux . . . collection Edgar Degas, nos. 16–22. For his admiration for that master, see also Baud-Bovy, Corot, pp. 150 and 268.
139. See note 5, above. In the letter to Bartholomé, August 27, 1892, which is cited there, Degas characteristically refers only to the technical problem of representing an interior in correct perspective.
140. Lemoisne, no. 1115; dated there 1892; there is a second, less finished version, Lemoisne, no. 1114. On the circumstances in which they were painted, see S. Barazzetti, "Degas e suoi amici Valpinçon—III," Bollettino d’Arte 40 (1955) pp. 244–258 and 334–345; but see p. 339, fig. 20, a similar work dated 1866.
142. For information on this and the following work, I am indebted to M. Paul Brame, who made an inventory of the collection at Ménil-Hubert after the war.
144. Reff, "Degas’s Copies," p. 256 and p. 253, fig. 5; see also pp. 255–256 on the style of his later copies.
FIGURE 46

FIGURE 47
Animals at a Watering Place, by Giuseppe Palizzi. Oil on canvas. Formerly in the collection of Paul Valpinçon, Ménil-Hubert (photo: Brame)
but so diverse in subject and style as to appear almost unintelligible as a group. Nevertheless, when they are arranged chronologically, as they have been here, they reveal patterns of occurrence, function, and taste that are meaningful in terms of Degas’s artistic development. It is surely no coincidence, for example, that the first and last works in which pictures appear prominently, The Bellelli Family of about 1860 and The Billiard Room of 1892, are also the first and last in which he attempts to characterize a room in relation to the personalities and tastes of the individuals who inhabit it.\textsuperscript{145} Nor is it an accident that, between these terminal dates, all the examples we have discussed are either portraits or, in the case of The Banker and Mary Cassatt at the Louvre, portrait-like genre scenes, whose background pictures or objects serve to identify the characteristic ambience of the person portrayed or to comment on some aspect of his professional life.

Unlike his colleagues Cézanne and Gauguin, whose still lifes sometimes include works of art strikingly juxtaposed with the non-mimetic objects around them, Degas was too deeply attached to the representation of human beings to experiment with this form.\textsuperscript{146} Even those pictures in which figures are not shown, namely, The Interior and The Billiard Room, are conceived so entirely in terms of human associations that they can be called portraits of rooms. Indeed, in their concern with personality and mood, they resemble Impressionist interiors much less than those of the Romantic period, one of which, Delacroix’s well-known study of the Count de Morny’s Bedroom, Degas acquired some years later and, significantly, considered one of the three most important works in his collection.\textsuperscript{147}

Thus the period of Degas’s greatest interest in the motive of the picture coincides roughly with that of his greatest interest in portraiture. Within that, however, there is a smaller interval, from 1866 to 1880, or rather, two still smaller intervals, from 1866 to 1871 and from 1877 to 1880, which comprise most of the examples we have discussed. It is especially in the first of these periods that Degas, encouraged by Duranty, Manet, and other members of the Naturalist movement, who are convinced that in modern portraiture “nous ne séparerons plus le personnage du fond d’appartement,”\textsuperscript{148} explores the expressive possibilities of the background, and particularly of the picture in the background, in such complex and subtle works as The Collector of Prints, The Banker, and the portraits of Tissot and Pilet. Moreover, it is in precisely these years that Degas tends to include small prints of an essentially documentary value in such realistically depicted interiors as those of the Portraits in an Office, The Cotton Merchants, and The Pedicure.\textsuperscript{149} In the most intriguing of these interiors, the so-called Le Viol, his practice actually coincides with that of the Naturalist writers, since it is inspired by an episode in Zola’s novel Madeleine Férat, in which particular importance is attached to the visual effect and symbolic significance of a series of prints decorating the walls of the hotel room in which the episode occurs.\textsuperscript{150}

In most cases, Degas copies the background picture or object from an actual one, often in a broader, more summary style, but with sufficient fidelity for the latter to be identified; here he relies on his phenomenal visual memory and on techniques he has acquired in years of copying as a student.\textsuperscript{151} In the relatively few cases where he obviously invents the work of art, it is for a specific reason: to characterize a style or type of art, in

\textsuperscript{145} In the only later works in which pictures appear—The Toilet (Lemoine, no. 1288) and the Woman Drying Her Hair (no. 1454)—both the figures and the pictures behind them are anonymous. In photographs, however, Degas did continue to use the motive expressively; see L. Hocin, “Degas photographe,” L’Oeil 65 (May 1960) pp. 36–43, especially the photograph of himself and Bartholomé on p. 41.

\textsuperscript{146} L. Venturi, Cézanne, son art, son œuvre (Paris, 1936) nos. 494, 496, 706, and 707, G. Wildenstein, Gauguin (Paris, 1964) especially nos. 183, 375, and 604, but also nos. 174, 287, 377, 380, etc. For examples in earlier art, see note 3, above.

\textsuperscript{147} Catalogue des tableaux . . . collection Edgar Degas, no. 31. According to Paul Poujaud’s letters to Marcel Guérin, in Degas, Lettres, pp. 253 and 255, it was one of Degas’s favorites. For other interiors of the Romantic period, see Eitner, “The Open Window and the Storm-Tossed Boat,” pp. 285–287 and figs. 5–8.

\textsuperscript{148} Duranty, La nouvelle peinture, pp. 44–46. In his “Salon de 1870,” Paris-Journal, May 8, 1870, Duranty had in fact criticized Degas’s Portrait of Mme Camus for its lack of “l’accord, auquel il tient tant d’ordinaire, entre le personnage et l’intérieur.”

\textsuperscript{149} Lemoine, nos. 320, 321, and 323; all dated there 1873.

\textsuperscript{150} E. Zola, Madeleine Férat (Paris, 1928 [first ed. 1868]) pp. 188 and 220–221. Degas’s painting is Lemoine, no. 348; dated there about 1874, but more likely about 1869. For its dependence on this text, see J. Adhémar in Émile Zola, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, 1952, no. 114. However, the three pictures shown in the background of Le Viol do not correspond to the prints described by Zola.

\textsuperscript{151} See Reff, “Degas’s Copies,” pp. 250–256 and the memoir by Thiébault-Sisson cited there, p. 252, note 31. According to Ferre, Mon oncle Degas, pp. 52–53, Degas was able to reproduce a Corot so well that his colleagues took it for the original.
a portrait of an artist (Tissot, Rouart); to introduce a humorous marginal comment, in a portrait of a friend (Pilet); or to reinforce a compositional element, in a portrait whose subject alone is important (Martelli). Whether copied or invented, however, the picture or object in the background always seems appropriate for the person portrayed, and sometimes actually belongs to him (the Bellerus, The Print Collector) or to his family (Thérèse Morbilli, Hélène Rouart). 153 Nevertheless, in most of these examples and in a few others (The Banker, Mary Cassatt), the particular work of art seems also to be chosen because of Degas’s own interest in it, his taste agreeing with or even supersedes that of his subject, although this may appear so partly because much more is known about his artistic affinities in general.

Whatever the reasons for their choice, the mere presence in Degas’s paintings of works as varied as Egyptian and Etruscan sculptures, Chinese and Japanese fabrics, Renaissance and Rococo portraits, Romantic and Impressionist landscapes, Neoclassical and Victorian prints, is evidence of a responsiveness to art of almost every type and style which is in itself characteristic of him. 154 Within this extraordinary diversity, however, certain preferences can be observed; notably for nineteenth-century and for Far Eastern art. To the former group belong not only the landscapes and genre scenes by (or apparently by) his colleagues Michel-Lévy, Tissot, and Rouart, which are perhaps inevitable in portraits that show them in their studios, but also those by Corot, Millet, and Palizzi, which represent less externally conditioned choices, and also the flower prints by Redouté, the steeplechase print after Herring, and the imitation of a musical print designed by Degas himself. To the group of Far Eastern works belong the T’ang figurine and Japanese embroideries in The Collector of Prints, the Ch’ing silk hanging in the portrait of Hélène Rouart, and the imitation of a Yeishi color woodcut in that of Tissot. And as we have seen, the influence of oriental art is also present in the design of the background in The Collector of Prints, the composition of the portrait of Pilet, and the figural type used in that of Mary Cassatt. 155

Iconographically, too, the works of art copied or invented by Degas reveal a preference, and understandably it is for portraiture: in addition to Perronneau’s Bust of a Woman, a copy of Cranach’s Frederick the Wise, and his own portrait drawing of his father, we find among them the realistically rendered heads on the Etruscan sarcophagus and that tour de force of miniature group portraiture, the reunion of musicians and writers shown in the lithograph behind Pilet.

In the period between 1860 and 1890, when Degas painted the pictures within his pictures, many other artists also took up this theme; in fact, the years around 1885 in France have in this respect been compared in importance with those around 1660 in Holland and Spain. 156 The Delacroix sketch in Renoir’s portrait of Victor Chocquet, the Japanese prints in Van Gogh’s portrait of Père Tanguy, and the Cézanne still life in Gauguin’s portrait of Marie Derrien all are familiar examples of this motive. 157 So, too, on a larger scale, are the Delacroix self-portrait in Fantin-Latour’s homage to him, the Impressionist landscapes and figures in Bazille’s picture of his studio, and the fragment of La Grande Jatte in Seurat’s painting, The Models. 158 Less familiar, but particularly relevant here, are the works by Degas himself which appear in other examples: the fan decorated with Spanish dancers in Berthe Morisot’s Two Sisters on a Sofa, the pastel of a dancer adjusting her slipper in Gauguin’s Still Life with Peonies, and the paintings of ballerinas and jockeys in Renoir’s Portrait of Yvonne and Christine Lerolle. 159

As we have seen, however, the device of the picture

152. See also the studies for a portrait of Mme Rouart and Hélène which Degas planned in 1884, where the figures contemplate a Tanagra statuette in their collection; Boggs, Portraits by Degas, pp. 67–68 and pls. 122–123.


154. For additional examples, some more convincing than others, see Shinoda, Degas, der Einzug des Japanischen, passim.


156. Illustrated in Rewald, Impressionism, p. 355 (Renoir); Rewald, Post-Impressionism from van Gogh to Gauguin (New York, 1956) p. 47 (van Gogh); and ibid., p. 309 (Gauguin).

157. Illustrated in Hofmann, The Earthly Paradise, pl. 178 (Fantin-Latour); Rewald, Impressionism, p. 235 (Bazille); and Rewald, Post-Impressionism, p. 107 (Seurat). See also Corot’s Studio, which is contemporary with, and compositionally similar to, Degas’s portrait of Tissot; illustrated in Hofmann, pl. vi.

158. See M.-L. Bataille and G. Wildenstein, Berthe Morisot (Paris, 1961) no. 19 (the fan is Lemoisne, no. 173); Wildenstein, Gauguin, no. 131 (the pastel is Lemoisne, no. 69); and Collection Jean Walter—Paul-Guillaume, Orangerie des Tuileries, Paris, 1966, no. 31 (the paintings are Lemoisne, nos. 486 and 702).
has a unique significance for Degas, who employs it more often and on the whole more ingenioulsy than his colleagues, and not only in subjects whose imagery seems to require them. Quite apart from its iconographic function in portraits of artists, critics, and collectors, the picture is for Degas a motive of purely visual fascination; like the mirror, the doorway, and the window, it is a means of playing on the artificial and the natural in the art of making pictures. Ultimately, it is this endless fascination with the pictorial as such that enables him to create images of such remarkable subtlety and complexity as The Collector of Prints, The Banker, and the Portrait of James Tissot in the Metropolitan Museum.\textsuperscript{159}

\textsuperscript{159} I am indebted to the owners of many of the works illustrated here for sending me photographs of them, and particularly to the following, for arranging to have detail photographs made: Mme Hélène Adhémar of the Musée du Louvre, Mlle M. Minet of the Collection David-Weill, Mr. Peter Gimpel of Gimpel Fils, Ltd, and Mr. Claus Virch of the Metropolitan Museum.

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P.-A. Lemoisne, \textit{Degas et son oeuvre}, 4 vols. (Paris, 1946–1949). Cited as: Lemoisne, with the catalogue number; and Lemoisne, I, for the text. Note: the present location of a work has been given only where it differs from the one recorded by Lemoisne.

