

# EDGAR DEGAS (1834-1917)

Edgar Degas markerede sig som en af de betydeligste kunstnere for den tidlige modernisme. Han indtog en særstilling i gruppen af impressionister på grund af sin iøjnefaldende og radikale malemåde. Især er hans særegne beskæringer af motiverne og de nærmest voyeuristiske iagttagelser af livet omkring ham bemærkelsesværdige. Centralt i hans værk står også den grænsesøgende udforskning af mulighederne indenfor pastelteknik, monotypi, skulptur og fotografi.

Motivverden: Portrætter, historiemalerier, "det moderne liv", balletdanserinder, vaskekoner, kvinder ved deres toilette og væddeløbsheste.

## What Is A Monotype? Degas And The New Technique

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DC8L2O7I0wk&list=PLfYVzk0sNiGEYF87Bj0us98NVd-h6aOvK>



Edgar Degas: "The River" (c1877-79).

To create a [monotype](#), the artist draws in ink on a metal plate, which is then sandwiched with a damp sheet of paper and run through a press. The method typically produces a single impression, which reverses the composition from what the artist has rendered on the plate. Most printmaking processes fix the image on the matrix. The difference of the monotype is that it remains unfixed until the very instant of printing.

The [monotype process](#) had been known since the 17th century and received renewed interest during Degas' time when etching underwent a revival. In response to new technologies such as photography, artist etchers emphasized the singularity of their expression by printing on different plates to create unique impressions or produce their work in small editions.



*Heads of a man and a woman*, dark-field monotype, by Edgar Degas, 1877-80, via the British Museum

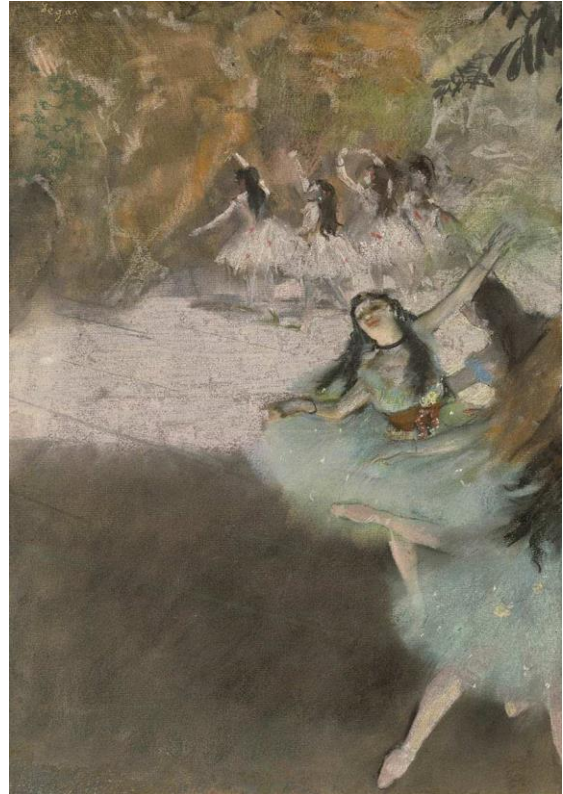
For a man as meticulous as Degas, monotype opened a door to spontaneity. You can see the quick passage of his thumb and the dots of his fingerprints on "The River" (c1877-79). The small, mostly white print is almost Whistler-esque in its minimalist evocation of landscape obscured by atmosphere. In each smudge of shrub, you feel Degas' hand pressing down, mashing the ink around. "Heads of a Man and Woman" (c1877-80) is joyously bleary. Degas wiped away the faces of two

passers-by, obliterating features he had already daubed in. To convey the sense of motion on a Paris street, he sacrificed line, legibility and individuality. All that's left is the ghost of a cigarette, the edge of a nose and the big black blobs of her bonnet and his top hat.

*On the Stage*, pastel and essence over monotype on cream laid paper, laid down on board, by Edgar Degas, 1876-77, via The Art Institute of Chicago

The monotype expanded Degas' capacity for representing a diversity of subject matter: ballerinas in motion or the radiance of electric light. The ink on the plate allowed him to twist and contort bodies into unusual poses and create dramatic relationships between dark and light. The ability to move pigment freely on the slick plate right up to the last minute encouraged him to abandon the precise youth rendering ... and led him to invent completely new drawing modes.

[Arsène Alexandre](#), a French art critic, believed that "*his monotypes represent the area of his work in which he was most free, most alive, and most reckless...not hampered by any rule.*" Indeed, in the monotypes, Degas has the most modern spirit, engaging with the possibilities of abstraction.



Watch [this video](#) to explore Degas' monotype process, with MOMA curator Jodi Hauptman and conservator Karl Buchberg.

## Periods Of Monotypes

Degas learned the process in the mid-1870s by his artist friend [Ludovic-Napoleon Lepic](#). He immersed himself in it with enormous enthusiasm, making over 450 works during two discrete periods. The first lasted from the mid-1870s to the mid-1880s, a decade in which he worked with black printer's ink and composed contemporary urban subjects; the second was a shorter campaign in the early 1890s when he used pigmented oil paint to depict real and imaginary landscapes in images that verge on abstraction.

## Monotype Pairs

Degas' most significant challenge to the monotype was aimed at its singularity. Instead of accepting its [production of unique works](#), he used it to make variations: after printing an impression, he would often put the plate through the press a second time, pulling another print. Because much of the ink would have been transferred to the first sheet during the

plate's initial run through the press, the second impression, called a "cognate," would be a much lighter version of the first print ("light field"). Degas often applied a layer of pastel (sometimes with gouache) on top of this lighter image, using it as a tonal map of the original composition to create a new work that was both a repetition and a transformation of it.



*Three Ballet Dancers*, dark-field monotype on cream laid paper, by Edgar Degas, 1878-80 via The Clark Art Institute



*Ballet Scene*, by Edgar Degas, 1879, William I.Koch Collection, via the New Yorker

**The First Monotype: Edgar Degas And Vicomte Ludovic Lepic, *The Ballet Master* (1874)**



*The Ballet Master*, monotype (black ink) heightened and corrected with white chalk or wash on laid paper, by Edgar Degas and Vicomte Ludovic Lepic, 1874, via National Gallery of Art, Washington DC

One of Degas's first monotypes was *The Ballet Master*, signed by Edgar Degas and Ludovic Lepic. The monotype was heightened and corrected with white chalk or opaque watercolor.

Lepic and Degas' joint signature in the upper left hand corner indicates that this work was the artist's first attempt at a monotype, carried out with Ludovic Lepic. In conception, the design is adapted from *The Rehearsal of the Ballet on the Stage* (1874), where the dancer appears as part of the group to the right. The ballet master, precariously positioned in the

monotype between the stage and the void below it, was derived from the charcoal study of Jules Perrot.

Degas' first monotype print shows the master [Jules Perrot](#) on the stage, directing a ballet's rehearsal. The pose was derived from the two drawings of Perrot, but because Degas drew the figure onto the printing plate precisely as it appeared in the drawings, facing to the left, the image was reversed when the plate was printed.

### **The Second Impression Of *The Ballet Master: The Ballet Rehearsal* (1875-76)**



[The Ballet Rehearsal, gouache and pastel over monotype on laid paper, by Edgar](#)

Links til videre fordybelse:

[8 Underappreciated Monotypes By Edgar Degas \(thecollector.com\)](#)

[Edgar Degas' monotypes at the MoMA | Financial Times \(ft.com\)](#)

De to links er endvidere kilder til ovenstående tekst

