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Denver Art Museum to Be Sole U.S. Venue for *Degas: A Passion for Perfection*

Artistic evolution of masterful artist Edgar Degas revealed through more than 100 artworks

DENVER—April 26, 2017—The Denver Art Museum (DAM) is pleased to announce it will be the sole American venue for *Degas: A Passion for Perfection*, an exhibition showcasing prolific French artist Edgar Degas' works from 1855 to 1906. The exhibition is presented and organized in association with the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, England, whose Degas holdings represent the most extensive in the United Kingdom across the various media in which Degas worked. The Denver venue will include more than 100 works consisting of paintings, drawings, pastels, etchings, monotypes and sculptures in bronze. Additional works by J.A.D. Ingres, Eugène Delacroix and Paul Cézanne also will be shown, adding significant depth to the exhibition's narrative. *Degas: A Passion for Perfection* will be on view at the DAM from Feb. 11–May 20, 2018, following its debut at the Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge.

"Degas was the quintessential independent artist, and this exhibition will give visitors a more intimate look into his creative process as well as his public and private life," said Christoph Heinrich, Frederick and Jan Mayer Director of the DAM. "Several moments within the exhibition will encourage close, mindful looking, providing the opportunity for visitors to savor the range of media, subject matter and techniques that defined Degas as an innovator."



Edgar Degas, *Dance Examination (Examen de Danse)*, 1880. Pastel on paper; 24-1/2 x 18 in. Denver Art Museum; anonymous gift. 1941.6

Organized by Jane Munro, Keeper of Paintings, Drawings and Prints at the Fitzwilliam Museum, and curated locally by Timothy J. Standing, Gates Family Foundation Curator of Painting and Sculpture at the DAM, the exhibition will focus on the most prominent and recurring themes throughout Degas' 60-year career. These will include his interest in learning from the art of the past and from that of his contemporaries, a lifelong fascination with the nude, a passion for horses and his strong interest in opera and dance. The DAM's exhibition narrative will explore these themes through a range of media and compelling groupings. Some of

the most well-known masterpieces on view will include the DAM's own *Dance Examination (Examen de Danse)*, *Three Women at the Races (Trois Femmes Aux Courses)* and *Woman Scratching Her Back*.



Edgar Degas, *Four Ballet Dancers on Stage (Quatro Bailarinas em Cena)*, about 1885-1890. Oil paint on canvas; 28-3/4 x 36-1/4 in. (73 x 92 cm). Gift, Walther Moreira Salles, Simone Pilon, Jacques Pilon, Benedito Manhães Barreto, um comissário de café em Santos [a coffee commissioner in Santos], Industriais da Juta de São Paulo e [and] Diários Associados de São Paulo, 1950. Inv. MASP.00082 Collection: Museu de Arte de São Paulo Assis Chateaubriand. Photo by João Musa.

“Degas was determined to succeed on his own terms by blurring the boundaries of traditional media and pushing them to extremes,” said Standing. “He excelled both as a colorist and a draughtsman, and met the challenges of new subject matter with experimental techniques. Degas invented an oil medium known as *l’essence*, in which the oils in oil pigment are leached out and then mixed together with paint thinner, and took his mark-making to new extremes by printing sticky ink drawings, known as monotypes.”

The presentation of *Degas: A Passion for Perfection* also will dive deeper into Degas’ obsession with repetition of subjects throughout his entire artistic journey. Visitors will see his transformation from a portraitist and painter of historical subjects to one interested in the contemporary life of late 19th century Paris. By experimenting constantly throughout his career he developed techniques that allowed him to capture modern subject matter through sharp and precise lighting, such as café

concerts, street scenes with new electric lighting, sporting events and theatrical settings. He considered his work in all media a constant continuum.

Degas: A Passion for Perfection will be a special ticketed exhibition and will include a complimentary audio guide with a ticket purchase. An accompanying book published by Yale University Press, edited by Jane Munro, will be available in the exhibition’s exit shop and in The Shop at the Denver Art Museum. The publication will include essays from leading scholars, including one on Degas’s monotypes by Standing, as well as studies by conservation scientists and specialists in sculpture and printmaking.

Exhibition Sponsors

Degas: A Passion for Perfection is organized by Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge, in association with the Denver Art Museum. It is presented with generous support from Diane Stanbro, Robert and Carolyn Barnett, the donors to the Annual Fund Leadership Campaign and the citizens who support the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District (SCFD). Promotional support is provided by *5280 Magazine*, CBS4, Comcast Spotlight and *The Denver Post*.

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The Denver Art Museum

The Denver Art Museum is an educational, nonprofit resource that sparks creative thinking and expression through transformative experiences with art. Its holdings reflect the city and region—and provide invaluable ways for the community to learn about cultures from around the world. Metro citizens support the [Scientific and Cultural Facilities District](http://www.scfd.org) (SCFD), a unique funding source serving hundreds of metro Denver arts, culture and scientific organizations. For museum information, call 720-865-5000 or visit www.denverartmuseum.org.

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