

2005

## Edgar Degas: Six Friends at Dieppe

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The background of the entire page is a reproduction of Edgar Degas's painting 'Six Friends at Dieppe'. The painting depicts a group of six people in a crowded, outdoor setting, likely a beach or promenade. On the left, a man in a long, light-colored coat and a dark hat stands in profile, looking towards the right. In the center, a woman wearing a wide-brimmed hat and a dark dress is partially visible. To her right, a man with a beard and a dark coat is looking towards the viewer. In the foreground, a man with a beard and a brown top hat is looking down. To his right, another man with a beard and a dark cap is looking towards the left. The overall color palette is dominated by warm, earthy tones like ochre, brown, and beige, with some darker accents. The brushwork is visible and expressive, characteristic of Degas's style.

# Edgar Degas

SIX FRIENDS AT DIEPPE

qui ont aujourd'hui quel  
d'âge. Ses souvenirs sont  
de les écrire est comme en  
est à Dieppe que ce tableau  
les modèles étaient ~~vases~~  
tree du beau "Chalet" qui ét  
a estival de Jacques-Emile  
e Ludovic Halévy avait  
proche de celui des Blanch  
fils, avec lesquels nous ét

Edgar Degas SIX FRIENDS AT DIEPPE



Maureen C. O'Brien

Edgar Degas SIX FRIENDS AT DIEPPE

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Museum of Art  
Rhode Island School of Design  
Providence  
2005

Edgar Degas: *Six Friends at Dieppe*  
September 17, 2005–January 15, 2006

Cover and frontispiece

EDGAR DEGAS

French, 1834–1917

*Six Friends at Dieppe*, 1885

Pastel on wove paper laid down on canvas

45¼ x 28 in.

Museum of Art

Rhode Island School of Design

Museum Appropriation Fund 31.320

Cat. 1

Endpapers

DANIEL HALÉVY

French, 1872–1962

*Letter to John Maxon*, 1953

(details of handwritten sheets)

Museum of Art

Rhode Island School of Design

Department of Prints, Drawings,

and Photographs

Cat. 4



NATIONAL  
ENDOWMENT  
FOR THE ARTS

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**Rhode Island**  
MONTHLY

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## *Contents*

- vii *Introduction*  
ix *Acknowledgments*
- I PERFORMING FRIENDSHIP  
*Edgar Degas: Six Friends at Dieppe*  
Maureen C. O'Brien
- 31 JACQUES-ÉMILE BLANCHE  
*A young man at home in Dieppe*  
Jane Roberts
- 49 SUDDENLY LAST SUMMER  
*Walter Sickert and Degas's Six Friends at Dieppe*  
Anna Gruetzner Robins
- 65 POWDER ON PAPER  
*Degas, Pastel, and Six Friends at Dieppe*  
Linda Catano
- 80 *Checklist of the Exhibition*  
102 *List of Images*  
106 *Selected Bibliography*  
108 *Six Friends at Dieppe: Schema of the Characters*  
110 *Letter from Daniel Halévy to John Maxon, 1953*





### *Introduction*

This exhibition offers us the opportunity to celebrate an important but rarely seen work in The RISD Museum collection. No studies or sketches are known for Edgar Degas's *Six Friends at Dieppe*, but this portrait of six men is well-documented in the memoirs, correspondence, and autobiographies of the sitters. Thanks to their reflections, we are able to enjoy a glimpse into the social and professional life of an artist who fiercely guarded his privacy.

I am particularly pleased that the inauguration of this exhibition coincides with my own arrival as Director of RISD's Museum. My distant predecessor, Eliza Radeke, was the first to bring the art of Degas to the Museum, giving works that she bought in New York only a few years after the artist's death. Thanks to her foresight and generosity, and to that of the Metcalf, Danforth, and Fazzano families, RISD can provide a context for the exhibition through its enviable collection of Degas's paintings, drawings, prints, and sculpture.

We owe a great debt to RISD's Curator of Painting and Sculpture, Maureen O'Brien, whose interest in French art has brought *Six Friends at Dieppe* to life. Maureen is an old friend, and I have long admired her fine eye. Her insight into Degas and his world are evident in this engaging show. I look forward to many exciting projects with Maureen in the coming years.

On behalf of the RISD community and all the viewers who see this exhibition, I would like to express our sincere appreciation to the museums and private collectors whose generosity has helped us transform a great story into a notable performance. Our gratitude is extended to an anonymous lender; The Baltimore Museum of Art; Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris; The Cleveland Museum of Art; Dahesh Museum of Art, New York; Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco; Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University Art Museums, Cambridge; The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles; John Hay Library, Brown University Libraries, Providence; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Musée des Beaux-Arts, Rouen; Musée Carnavalet – Histoire de Paris, France, Paris;

Facing page: Cat. 71 (detail)

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg; Museum of Modern Art, New York; National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; National Portrait Gallery, London; North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh; Palais des Beaux-Arts, Lille; Yale Center for British Art, New Haven.

Finally, our deepest thanks go to those who provided the resources that have made this project possible: The National Endowment for the Arts, whose enlightened support of the arts enhances the quality of all American lives; The Providence Tourism Council – in particular, Cliff Wood – for their commitment to sharing our state’s resources with visitors from all countries; Providence’s Mayor David Cicilline; *Rhode Island Monthly* for helping to focus statewide attention on the Museum and this show; and to the private donors whose passionate and selfless contributions assure the continuity and preservation of the arts in Rhode Island.

### *Acknowledgments*

Rhode Island School of Design is the home of an astonishingly talented and close-knit community. RISD staff and faculty play significant roles in every exhibition at the Museum, partnering with curators to give physical dimension to ideas about art. We would like to thank them for their contributions to this exhibition, which, after all, is about one great work of art that focuses on creative people and their friendships.

Inspiration is a key ingredient of creative ideas, and for that I wish to personally acknowledge the importance of the late Kermit S. Champa, Andrea V. Rosenthal Professor of History of Art and Architecture at Brown University, who did not flinch from the concept of “masterpiece” and whose passion, intelligence, and life are celebrated by the countless students he encouraged. Collaboration is a second crucial element, and the scholarly insights of Linda Catano, Anna Gruetzner Robins, and Jane Roberts have greatly enhanced this exhibition catalogue and expanded its parameters. Leadership is vital to the success of group efforts, and this project has flourished due to the commitment of RISD President Roger Mandle and Museum Director Hope Alswang, along with former Directors Doreen Bolger and Phillip Johnston and former Interim Director Lora Urbanelli.

The encouragement of many colleagues sustained the effort to bring *Six Friends at Dieppe* to life. I am particularly indebted to Judith Singsen, Matthew Monk, Stephen Wing, Jan Howard, and Frederica McLaughlin for their constant intellectual, creative, and moral support. To their names we add our gratitude to a RISD-wide network of generous professionals, including Colleen Bartlett, Denise Bastien, Scott Benson, Erica Boyd, Deborah Clemons, Carole-Lynn De Groat, Tara Emsley, Melody Ennis, Christin Fitzgerald, Julie Fry, Claire Gadrow, Gail Geisser, Erik Gould, Joy Hallinan, Ed Hammond, Guinevere Harrison, Ann Hudner, Kate Irvin, Tracy Jenkins, Naomi Kaly, Shawn Kenney, Marny Kindness, Angela Kondon, Elizabeth Leuthner, Jennifer Liese,

Sarah Lowery, Catherine McGuinness, Patricia McLaughlin, Brian McNamara, Eric Meier, Will Melton, Matthew Montgomery, Elinor Nacheman, Louise Olson, Elizabeth O’Neil, Steven Orlando, Laura Ostrander, Michael Owen, Robin Ragle, Marianne Ruggiero, Michael Schrader, Page Sciotto, Bill Seaman, Candace Seel, Deana Setzke, Madelyn Shaw, Glenn Stinson, Carol Terry, Patricia Thornton, Carole Villucci, and Deborah Wilde.

We would also like to thank our many friends and colleagues for opening their institutional and private collections to research and for sharing their ideas, their resources, and their encouragement. We offer our most sincere appreciation to Clifford Ackley, Brian Allen, Sylvie Aubenas, Bart Balog, Fred Bancroft, Martin Banham, Juliette Wilson Bareau, Michael Barker, Marie-Hélène Belin-Capon, Sylvain Bellenger, Virginie de Bermond-Gettle, Mireille Bialek, Joëlle Bolloch, Suzanne Boorsch, Craigen Bowen, Richard Breazeale, Jay Clarke, Marjorie B. Cohn, Sixtine Colson, Marie-Cecile Commerre, Cynthia Cormier, Rosemary L. Cullen, Malcolm Daniel, Aaron de Groft, Andrew Dempsey, Roger Diederer, Ann Dumas, Stephen Edidin, Mia Fineman, Jay Fisher, Marilyn and Michael P. Fitzgerald, Marie-Odile Fontaine, Jeanette Gerritsma, Jane Glaubinger, Adrian Glew, Jennifer Gross, Françoise Hack, Arnaud de Hauterives, Françoise Heilbrun, Paul Herring, Alanna Hildt, Rena Hoisington, Richard Hurley, Adrienne Jeske, Robert Johnson, Catherine Johnston, Cathleen Joyce, Natasha Kandekar, Christian Kempf, Catherine Lampert, Jean-Marc Léri, Christophe Leribault, Daniella Linardatos, Eva Lisikewycz, Michèle Longino, Henri Loyrette, Man Xiao-li, Laure de Margerie, Denise McColgan, Catherine and Bill McGurn, Julia Marciari-Alexander, Mitchell Merling, Olivier Meslay, Odile Michel, John Monahan, Sylvain Morand, Patrick Murphy, Claude Nabokoff, Weston Naef, Sandy Nairne, Diana Nemiroff, David Nisinson, Carlotta Owens, Leslie Paisley, Michael Pantazzi, Sylvie Patry, Mireille Pastoureau, Roy Perkinson, Dominic Persad, Jean-Christophe Pralong-Gourvenec, Sue Welsh Reed, Catherine Regnault, Françoise Reynaud, William Robinson, Andrew Robison, Clare Rogan, Anne Roquebert, Laurent Salomé, Kris Samuelson, John E. Schloder, Annie Scottez de Wambrechies, George Shackelford, Lisa Small, David Steele, Nathaniel Stein, Miriam Stewart, Robert Stoppenbach, Harriet K. Stratis, Alain Tapié, Pierre Théberge, Nancy DiMauro Tomasetti, Angus Trumble, Sandra Verri, Sandra L. Webber, and Deborah Wye.

Facing page: Fig. 3 (detail)

Pp. xii-xiii: Cat. 6 (detail)



. — Chalet du Bas Fort Blanc

*G. Marchand*









Fig. 1

JACQUES-ÉMILE BLANCHE

*Portrait of Edgar Degas, ca. 1903*

North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh

Cat. 2

PERFORMING FRIENDSHIP

Edgar Degas's *Six Friends at Dieppe*

IN A DRAMATIC TWIST of plot, Edgar Degas's *Six Friends at Dieppe* found its way to Rhode Island School of Design as the result of a falling-out between the artist and one of his sitters. The remarkable pastel drawing of six men was made by Degas in 1885 in Jacques-Émile Blanche's seaside studio in Dieppe. Before he returned to Paris, Degas magnanimously offered it to Blanche's mother, the sympathetic hostess of her son's many artistic friends. Degas listed it among works he intended to exhibit at the final Impressionist exhibition in 1886, but the absence of any critical mention suggests that he never delivered it to the show. In all likelihood, it did not leave the Blanche collection until nearly twenty years later, when Degas demanded it back.<sup>1</sup>

The provocation was the appearance of Blanche's portrait of an aged and pensive Degas [fig. 1, cat. 2] as a full-page illustration in the December 1903 issue of *The Studio* magazine.<sup>2</sup> Degas had accepted the original portrait as a gift and had permitted it to be photographed for Blanche's records, but he had expressly forbidden that the image be shown or reproduced.<sup>3</sup> Angered by its publication, he sent a porter to Blanche's home with a dual mission. He was instructed to return the offending portrait, along with several drawings by Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres that Degas had been lent by Blanche, and to retrieve the large pastel, *Six Friends at Dieppe*.<sup>4</sup> Although the younger artist had become accustomed to Degas's barbs and outbursts, he was unprepared for this outcome. Degas perceived the exposure of his likeness as the betrayal of a promise and abruptly ended their long friendship.<sup>5</sup>

By the date of this event, Degas was already estranged from two older friends whom he depicted in *Six Friends at Dieppe*. In 1897, intolerant of the pro-Dreyfus stand of Ludovic Halévy's family, Degas left their home and did not return until after Halévy's death in 1908. Contact with Albert Boulanger-Cavé, another figure in the drawing, ceased at the same time. Degas's friendships were not the only casualties of the famous case. Parisian society was

polarized by pro- and anti-Dreyfus sentiment during the course of *l'affaire Dreyfus*, in which a Jewish army officer was falsely convicted of passing information to the German government. The Halévy sons, Daniel and Élie, rallied their friends to sign a letter in Dreyfus's defense, adopting a position that was shared by many French intellectuals and that eventually led to Dreyfus's vindication. Their father supported their efforts, as did his cousin Geneviève Straus and other members of their circle. Both Blanche and Boulanger-Cavé professed no real convictions and so managed to maintain their social connections with both camps. Degas, on the other hand, steadfastly held an anti-Dreyfus position. Informed by anti-Semitic newspapers, he refused to accept Dreyfus's innocence or to blame the army for its role in defaming him.<sup>6</sup> Ironically, it was Daniel Halévy, a passionate and articulate historian of the Dreyfus affair both then and in later writings, who continued to maintain a friendship with Degas.<sup>7</sup> His willingness to look beyond the artist's difficult shell to find the grandeur of his life transforms his small presence in *Six Friends at Dieppe* into a large role in the interpretation of the drawing.

Although Degas was highly protective of his own work, selling only when he needed money or wanted to acquire something for his private collection, he eventually placed the pastel in the hands of dealers. In 1914, it was reproduced in an Italian (Florence) publication entitled *Edgar Degas. Sedici opere di Degas. Maestri Moderni*. It came to light again in 1917, when Paul Rosenberg summoned Blanche to his Paris gallery on the rue de la Boétie to see "a group of portraits of artists, ca. 1880, wherein we believe you can be identified."<sup>8</sup> There, in Rosenberg's "Ritz-Palace of avant-garde art," Blanche beheld the drawing in "a sanctuary at the back of the gallery, enthroned on an easel, in a noble Florentine Renaissance frame that enlarged it, dressed it up, and finished it." Claiming to have only lent the drawing back to Degas, Blanche was outraged when his "scrap of pastel" (*mon bout de pastel*) was offered by Rosenberg as a masterpiece valued at 100,000 francs.<sup>9</sup> By that date, the sale of the collection of Degas's friend Henri Rouart had already caused the value of Degas's paintings to skyrocket well beyond that point.

The portrait of six men remained on the market for a number of years and began to appear in monographs published after the artist's death.<sup>10</sup> Durand-Ruel's gallery included it in a Degas exhibition at their New York branch in 1928 and then lent it to an exhibition at Harvard University's Fogg Art Museum the following year. In the spring of 1931, it was shown again in New York at a benefit exhibition.<sup>11</sup> Later that year, the pastel, mounted in the same "Florentine Renaissance" frame described by Blanche, was sold to Rhode Island School of Design, where it came to be known as *Six Friends at Dieppe*.<sup>12</sup> This descriptive

title is an invitation to read it today as a performance of friendship: a play in which six characters convene on a bare stage in a biographical drama whose first act has ended and whose complicated denouement awaits. It was Blanche who later described Degas as *un extraordinaire metteur en scène* – a director who seemed to have controlled public perception of his own life and work.<sup>13</sup> The essays in this catalogue set out to tell that story from the perspective of the characters and from the point of view of the artist who skillfully directed them to take their positions on stage.<sup>14</sup>

MALE FRIENDSHIP was a constant in Degas's life and often found representation in his portraiture. In addition to various family members, Degas depicted the likenesses of dozens of men whose company and interests he shared, frequently staging them in familiar surroundings. In studies for a single-figure portrait, such as that of Diego Martelli, 1879 (Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge), he foreshortened his sitter by looking down on him from a high point of view within the writer's study. In a group portrait, such as *Orchestre de l'Opéra* (*The Orchestra at the Opera*), 1872 [fig. 2], he established the primary figures in the orchestra pit, tightly overlapping their faces in an arrangement that both clarified and heightened the activity of the principal sitter, bassoonist Désiré Dihau, while separating the realm of the orchestra from that of the dancers. *Six Friends at Dieppe* includes aspects of both these viewpoint strategies, but it abandons the element of setting, leaving the six actors on an empty stage.

Degas did not intend to suggest an underlying narrative with his staging of the portrait, but he was instinctively aware of its theatrical potential. Like the many posed photographs of these friends that were taken in Dieppe that summer, his drawing embodied the performance of a contemporary tableau in which one member or another served as director. This particular cast was hand-picked by Degas from the society of two families with whom he shared a holiday on the Normandy coast in September 1885. The connections between the subjects and the artist offer all the elements of a poignant script as relationships unfold, flourish, and fade; and although women were full participants in the holiday's activities, the drama of the image is heightened by the simple fact that Degas chose to feature only men in his comedy of manners.

Degas's biographer Henri Loyrette describes the artist's deepest male friendships, including several that sustained him through much of his adult life and substituted in many ways for his distant or estranged family.<sup>15</sup> He visited these men often in Paris and corresponded with them when apart. Most noteworthy were the circles of school friend Paul Valpinçon, whose family estate in

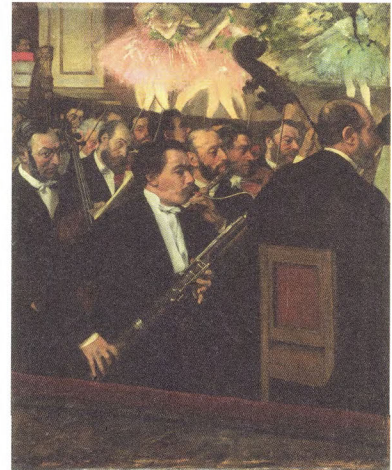


Fig. 2  
EDGAR DEGAS  
*L'Orchestre de l'Opéra*  
(*The Orchestra at the Opera*), ca. 1870  
Musée d'Orsay, Paris



Fig. 3  
 Photographer unknown  
 Dieppe. — *Châlet du Bas Fort Blanc*, ca. 1890  
 Courtesy of Musée Jacques-Émile Blanche,  
 Offranville

Normandy offered access to racecourses; those of artists such as Paul Bartholomé and Henri Rouart, who grasped the importance of his art; and from Paris's sophisticated arts-and-letters *haute bourgeoisie*, the family of writer Ludovic Halévy (1833–1908). It was Halévy who brought Degas to Dieppe in September 1885, and if one were to measure the friendships Degas sustained with each of the figures in the portrait,

Halévy's was the most meaningful. At table in Dieppe, as in Paris, Degas was received as an intimate family friend by Ludovic, his wife Louise, his mother, his sister, and his two young sons.

The setting for the portrait was actually located next door to the Halévy villa. It was in the courtyard of *Châlet Bas-Fort Blanc* [fig. 3], the home of Doctor and Mrs. Émile Blanche, a family with whom the Halévys had been closely connected for many years. The two households communicated freely that summer, especially out-of-doors and on walks. The Halévy residence was very family-centered, while the Blanche home served as a guesthouse and meeting place for the many friends of their son Jacques-Émile, whose studio faced the sea in front of the family's large Norman-style house. It was not surprising to find the easels of visitors set up on the terrace or young painters such as Paul Helleu or Raphaël de Ochoa showing up and staying for a week or more to work and relax in the tonic atmosphere of the Blanche seaside villa. When Degas arrived at the end of the summer, the Blanche courtyard, already a hub of activity, quite naturally served as a stage for an impromptu performance of friendship and art.

Degas's unusually public execution of the composition reflected a sense of personal confidence and energy at that particular moment. Fortunately, his subjects were both available and willing to submit to his instructions. Two were old friends who enjoyed his delight in this exercise, three were young artists who reveled in his attention and observed every gesture of his activity, and one was a boy who had instinctively taken to Degas's company and direction. Degas went straight to work with this cast, creating some new poses, appropriating others from his memory, and intuitively setting the figures in space so that they might be perceived at once from a variety of angles. He gave prominence of place to the young English artist Walter Sickert (1860–1942), who dominates the scene in a stance that recalls earlier Degas studies of single male figures.<sup>16</sup> He is properly planted in his pose, as is each of the five male actors who form an emblematic curtain down the right edge of the sheet. In descending order, the figures in this increasingly sculptural column are Ludovic Halévy (1834–1908), Jacques-Émile Blanche (1861–1942), Daniel Halévy (1872–1962), Henri

Gervex (1852–1929), and Albert Boulanger-Cavé (1830–1910). The characters intersected not only in the drawing, but also in professional and social life in Paris and Dieppe. In their lifetimes, all five of the Frenchmen would be decorated with the Légion d'honneur, and both Halévys, Blanche, and Gervex would take seats in various branches of the Institut de France. Like Degas, Ludovic Halévy and Albert Boulanger-Cavé were in their early fifties; Gervex was thirty-three; and Sickert and Blanche were in their early twenties. The youngest, Daniel Halévy, was not quite thirteen.

The image that evolved would be the antithesis of the genre of male portraits in which protagonists come together to pay homage to their like-mindedness or professional associations. Here the stage is bare, and the only action implied is the assembly of the characters before the performance. In contrast to Degas's theatre and racecourse subjects and most of his portraits, there is not a single prop or indicator of setting. On the other hand, elements of costume reveal much about the individual sitters and suggest the time and place. They wear comfortable summer attire appropriate to their bourgeois status and warm enough to buffer the cool breezes of the Normandy coast. Blanche's tweeds and cashmere exude "English country house." Sickert's long jacket and walking stick suggest that he is on the move. Ludovic Halévy, Boulanger-Cavé, and Gervex are dressed as if prepared to greet Parisian friends whom they might encounter in town. Daniel Halévy, who in later life rejected the badge of bourgeois costume and favored a simple corduroy suit, wears the jaunty straw boater (*canotier*) that was sported by young men at boating events and picnics and on seaside strolls.

The dramatic effect of the image is not dependent on costume, however, but emerges from the blocking, and – as always with Degas – from the point of view. Following his own long-standing directives, he examines his models from above and below, as if "on benches placed in tiers around the studio," or "from the first floor looking down on the ground floor."<sup>17</sup> Reproductions of this image convey Degas's alternation of linear and modeled moves, but viewers are inevitably startled by the size of the drawing – 45¼ by 28 inches – and the impact that scale makes on one's perception of the figures. Photographs of the drawing suggest that they are tucked behind one another like pieces of a two-dimensional puzzle, but this flatness is transformed to sculptural relief when the actual pastel is viewed head on.

For Degas, who was accustomed to working in private, the execution of this drawing was uncharacteristically performative. He required the active involvement of each of his sitters and was subjected to (although did not necessarily heed) their comments and suggestions. Although Daniel Halévy recalled that the drawing was staged on the porch outdoors, it was probably made inside Blanche's

studio building. In order to create an image with various points of view, Degas would have posed the figures separately and in groups, interweaving their outlines in a complicated ensemble on the large sheet of paper. Like Édouard Manet, Degas was not a *plein-air* artist, preferring to construct and finish his work in the studio. Although long responsive to the effects of artificial illumination in theatres, Degas's failing eyes were troubled by the brilliance of seaside light, making it unlikely that he could have sustained its discomfort even in the early stages of the drawing's composition. He nevertheless used light for subtle dramatic effect, perhaps capturing it from the studio's windows or door. Daylight appears to strike the faces of the figures at right, while a hazier quality of light veils the figure of Sickert. No related sketches have been discovered, nor have any photographs that specifically serve as sources or memory aids, but photography had definitely captured the imagination of Degas and the Blanche and Halévy set. Family albums preserve countless playful images, particularly of the Halévy sons and the daughters of John Lemoine, the "chères petites camarades" whose gay promenades with Degas were among the highlights of his visit.<sup>18</sup>

Degas's willing engagement in two well-known group photographs taken on the steps of Blanche's studio may have conditioned him for the public performance that would be the pastel drawing. Like *Six Friends at Dieppe*, these were formally arranged productions, but commissioned by the participants and taken by Walter Barnes, a Jersey photographer working in Dieppe.<sup>19</sup> Degas appears in both of these photographs, assuming the roles of director and actor in the carefully posed take-off [fig. 4, cat. 5] on Ingres's *Apotheosis of Homer*, 1827 (Musée du Louvre, Paris). Typically, Degas wanted to rework details of the composition after the fact. Given the opportunity, he would have grouped his "three muses and two choir boys" more closely together and shown them against a lighter background in order to bring out the forms of the women.<sup>20</sup> The second Barnes photograph was a full-company shot lacking only Henri Gervex among the men who posed for *Six Friends at Dieppe*. Degas appears on the far right, behind Daniel Halévy, where he could have easily repositioned himself after viewing the tableau from Barnes's vantage point.

Sickert was apparently responsible for discovering Barnes, but Blanche, the Halévys, and Degas all had ideas about ways to keep the photographer employed that summer. There was talk of another "apotheosis" composed of Sir Rivers Wilson, the controversial Duchesse Caracciolo, and various Poles; and of a group shot of the eleven servants of Madame Blanche's friend, Madame Blerzy [cat. 36].<sup>21</sup> Based on the level of participation, both young and old were amused by the novelty of creating and preserving their own group performances. This is particularly evident in a recently discovered outtake of



Fig. 4

WALTER BARNES

*The Apotheosis of Degas,*

*After Ingres's Apotheosis of Homer, 1885*

The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles

Cat. 5

[Top row (l. to r.): Rose Lemoinne, Catherine Lemoinne, Marie ("Yoyo") Lemoinne

Bottom row: Élie Halévy, Edgar Degas, Daniel Halévy]



the group photograph in which Degas, Sickert, Blanche, Boulanger-Cavé, and Louise Halévy are still playfully engaged in the creation of their poses [see fig. 31, cat. 6]. Degas, who had long ceased painting self-portraits, apparently was satisfied with his appearance in photographs. His presence in informal shots in the Halévy family's albums and his self-representation in photographs in the 1890s show a willingness to expose his very private self to his good friends.

In contrast to the group photographs, in which the exuberance of the gathering is contained by scale and by Barnes's technical limitations, the figures exude far greater visual drama in the exponentially larger and more selective hand-drawn record of Degas's pastel. Familiarity with his sitters combined with acute observation and editing of visual evidence also reveal psychological truths about his subjects. Our knowledge of their personalities and their thoughts about the drawing is far from speculative, as the narrative of *Six Friends at Dieppe* is corroborated by letters, diary entries, articles, books, and memoirs written by the characters themselves. Ludovic Halévy noted it in his diary;<sup>22</sup> Sickert published a full account in *Burlington Magazine* at the time of Degas's death;<sup>23</sup> and if Albert Boulanger-Cavé's letters to his friend Madame Hortense Howland (herself an amateur photographer) had survived, an account would most likely have been found there. Jacques-Émile Blanche, who doubles as actor and house manager in the production of *Six Friends at Dieppe*, mentioned it in several publications, precisely describing the way in which Degas directed them to assume their poses.<sup>24</sup> In a 1927 essay on Dieppe, Blanche even recalled Count Robert de Montesquiou-Fezensac sulking at not having been invited to participate.<sup>25</sup> It comes as no surprise that these adult men – who recognized Degas's importance at the time the drawing was made – recorded the event; but the account that brings the story to life was a letter written many years later by the youngest character.

In 1953, Daniel Halévy, Chevalier of the Légion d'honneur, member of the Académie des sciences morales et politiques of the Institut de France, distinguished writer and historian, described *Six Friends at Dieppe* in a handwritten letter to John Maxon, Director of the Museum of Art, "R.I.S.D." [cat. 4, for full text, see pp. 110–13].<sup>26</sup> His use of the acronym for Rhode Island School of Design reveals a glimmer of the curiosity and still-vibrant wit of a writer then entering his ninth decade.<sup>27</sup> His handwriting deserves special note. Although like Degas he was nearly blind in later life, he had a strong, open penmanship for which Degas expressed gratitude when he could no longer read Ludovic Halévy's fine script. For Degas, Daniel became the pen (*la plume*) of his family, and in later years he would become Degas's compassionate biographer.<sup>28</sup> Not long after writing to Maxon, Daniel Halévy began assembling notes for his final

book, *Degas parle*, a memoir of Degas that reveals his profound understanding of a man he had known from his childhood.<sup>29</sup>

Like Jacques-Émile Blanche, Daniel Halévy studied English under the tutelage of the Symbolist poet Stéphane Mallarmé. When Halévy advanced to the upper grades at the Lycée Condorcet, Paris, where he was befriended by Marcel Proust, he dedicated himself to mastering the clarity and style of French prose.<sup>30</sup> Daniel began recording his impressions of Degas in 1887, but his first descriptions of Dieppe were penned in 1884, when his family rented Les Rochers, a commodious villa at Bas-Fort Blanc.<sup>31</sup> The recently developed site was a stretch of land at the western edge of the beach below the medieval château perched upon the cliffs. A suite of large houses had sprung up at their base, each one designed with important rooms facing the sea and a generous proportion of terraces and porches. By the time the Halévys arrived, the residents of the houses along the rue de la Grève comprised a microcosm of *haut bourgeois* and international society, ranging from the supremely elegant Countess de Greffuhle on the cliff above to the glamorous but not quite *comme il faut* household of the Duchesse Caracciolo and her pretty young daughter, Olga. These social distinctions, which were probably pointed out by his grandmother and aunt, did not escape eleven-and-a-half-year-old Daniel's descriptive text.

From this location, Daniel and his older brother Élie had their daily choice of promenades. Nearby, bordering the beach, were the wide grassy lawns of the rue Aguado, animated by tents and by the activities of croquet and cricket players. Further afield, on long walks toward Puy and Varengeville, they could visit hospitable farms and examine the façades of interesting châteaux. Their next-door neighbor, Madame Émile Blanche, marveled at these “truly incredible children” whose love of the seaside was like nothing she had seen before.<sup>32</sup> Her twenty-two-year-old son Jacques, who created a double portrait of Daniel in the summer of 1885 [fig. 5], was similarly impressed by the “two passionate little companions” who joined him on excursions into the countryside. When he wrote to his father in Paris, he described the Halévys' presence next door as a special aspect of that season. It provided “friends with whom one may come and go and pass as much time as one wishes, but with whom one is not obliged to lead a communal existence.”<sup>33</sup>

The Blanche family, whom Jane Roberts describes later in this catalogue, had encouraged the Halévys to join them in this new location. The Blanches had long frequented Dieppe, which Jacques, a true anglophile, declared his second birthplace. Dieppe's welcome of English visitors commenced in the nineteenth century with a ferry service that linked it to Brighton and later to Newhaven. The connection provided convenient access for artists and writers whose visits

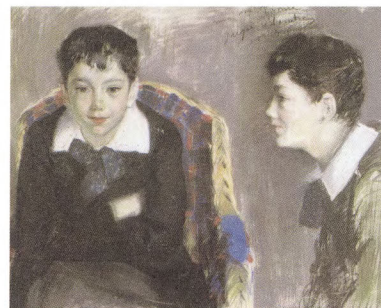


Fig. 5

JACQUES-ÉMILE BLANCHE  
*Daniel Halévy, de front et de profil*  
(*Daniel Halévy from front and profile*), 1885  
Private collection

began in the years following Napoléon's defeat at Waterloo (1815) and the refurbishment of the Brighton Pavilion (1815–22).<sup>34</sup> Viewed as a French counterpart to Brighton, Dieppe was elevated to the status of chic watering place by Caroline, Duchesse de Berry, whose patronage led to the construction of the fashionable bathing huts (*les bains Caroline*) and public spa (*les bains chauds*) that preceded the erection of its first casino. The historically inward-turning town soon had hotels with northern exposures facing the beach and the wide sweep of green lawns designed by the Empress Eugénie to accommodate strollers. Amenities were added throughout the nineteenth century, and by 1885 the third version of the casino, a Moorish fantasy, was already under construction. The town buzzed with visitors, including the stylish casino developer Bloch, whose grey felt hat became the rage among fashionable men at Dieppe that summer.<sup>35</sup>

When the Blanchés finally built a home at Bas-Fort Blanc, it was partially on the advice of painter and architect Constant Armand Mélicourt-Lefebvre, a provincial artist whose own romantic studio faced the theatre and the fifteenth-century towers of the once-fortified town.<sup>36</sup> Mélicourt, who had taught painting to Jacques, proposed that his pupil have a beach-front studio nearby. The Blanchés agreed, and the construction of a “*démontable*” structure was completed in 1879. This first version of Jacques's studio was made of steel and wood and was intended to be easily assembled and moved. Madame Blanche then engaged Mélicourt to design a Norman-style manor house for the site, a solid, expansive counterpart to the simpler studio pavilion. The house, known as Châlet Bas-Fort Blanc, was completed in 1881. It was a place that gave the sensation of being out “at sea, where one went to sleep as if in the cabin of a yacht, was awakened by ships bells, and where the waves of the equinox seemed to roll pebbles right up to one's slippers.”<sup>37</sup> These wonderful sensations were shared with Jacques's many friends and were enjoyed by their neighbors. It is no wonder that Daniel Halévy “cried out with joy” when he reminisced about that happy moment in all their lives.<sup>38</sup>

Degas joined the Halévys on at least two occasions in Dieppe, in 1884 and in 1885. By then, he had become an intimate friend of the family, to whom he had had various connections since his youth and whose Montmartre neighborhood was his own. Their relationship is warmly described by Daniel Halévy both in his memoir of that neighborhood, *Pays parisiens*, and in *Degas parle*, and is documented in letters, photographs, and numerous books and catalogues. More thoroughly analyzed in other sources, the basic facts bear recounting here.<sup>39</sup> Ludovic Halévy, the son of Léon Halévy and Alexandrine Le Bas and the nephew of composer Fromental Halévy, entered the Lycée Louis-le-Grand

in Paris as a boarding student in the fall of 1844. Degas arrived there a year later, but it was not until they were both launched in their careers that their friendship flourished. Among Degas's closest friends at the *lycée* was Alfred Niaudet, a young man whose extended family visited him at school on Sundays. The Niaudet girls and their Breguet cousins, with whom they lived in Paris, became acquainted with Degas and his sisters during those visits, and their childhood bonds endured. As a young man, Degas often visited the Breguet home at the quai de l'Horloge on the Île de la Cité, where the family of renowned inventors and watchmakers also kept their workshop. After 1868, when Ludovic Halévy married Louise Breguet, who was almost fourteen years his junior, Degas was drawn into the new family of his sisters' girlhood friend. He was devoted to Louise, whose kindness and intelligence characterized one of the great friendships of his life.

Like Degas, who reluctantly studied law after passing his baccalaureate exams, Ludovic Halévy was urged by his family to pursue a professional career. In 1852, he entered the ministry of state, where he served as an aide to Albert Blanche, a cousin of Jacques-Émile Blanche's father. While Degas rebelled by making copies in the Musée du Louvre, Halévy began a double life as a writer for musical theatre. By 1855, he had attracted the attention of composer/entrepreneur Jacques Offenbach, who asked him to write an overture prologue for his Bouffes-Parisiens theatre on the Champs-Élysées. Books for the "*bouffonnerie*" *Madame Papillon* and for the "*chinoiserie musicale*" *Ba-Ta-Clan* soon followed, and Ludovic Halévy had his first great success collaborating with Hector Crémieux on the libretto for Offenbach's operetta *Orphée aux enfers* in 1858. An unexpected theatrical collaboration with the Duc de Morny on a piece for the Bouffes led to his appointment as de Morny's assistant at the legislature, where he served as the powerful president's *secrétaire des débats* from 1861 to 1867. All the while, he flourished in his second career, perfecting the genre of satirical operetta in partnership with Henri Meilhac. Together they wrote librettos for such Offenbach successes as *La Belle Hélène* (1864), *La Vie parisienne* (1866), and *La Grande Duchesse de Gérolstein* (1867), and their farce *Le Reveillon* became a source of the libretto for Johann Strauss's *Die Fledermaus* (1874). At one point in 1874, Halévy and Meilhac had four shows in rehearsal, including the debut of *Carmen*, whose book they had written for Georges Bizet, then married to Halévy's cousin Geneviève.

In 1867, Ludovic Halévy resigned his position in the *corps législatif* to dedicate himself to writing. He was able to draw his entire income from this work and to live comfortably in future years from the royalties of the more than eighty productions whose lyrics or scripts he had written.<sup>40</sup> His passion for



Fig. 6

EDGAR DEGAS

*Virginie Being Admired while the*

*Marquis Cavalcanti Looks On*, ca. 1880/1883

National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Cat. 10

work rivaled Degas's, and it was backstage at the theatre during the 1870s that their three-decade-long friendship began to flourish. On two important occasions, Degas offered Halévy the opportunity to use his own observations of the ballet to enhance the writer's work. The first was an exchange of ideas that they had over the staging of Halévy and Meilhac's 1877 comedy *La Cigale*, which featured an "Intentionist" painter named Marignan whose interests parodied the Impressionists. Degas delighted in the spoof and offered to cover the beautiful arms of singer Mlle Baumaine in soapsuds, as he had drawn her as a laundress.<sup>41</sup> He also assured Halévy of his willingness to advise on the setting for the third act, which takes place in the painter's studio.<sup>42</sup>

The next proposal, which was Degas's idea, helped confirm his belief that Halévy was a perfect judge of all things except art.<sup>43</sup> Sometime during the years 1876 and 1877, impassioned by the possibilities of a new technique, Degas produced a suite of monotypes related to Halévy's stories about two dancers at the Paris Opera and their ambitious parents.<sup>44</sup> The fictional tales of Monsieur and Madame Cardinal and their daughters Pauline and Virginie (*les petites Cardinal*) had been hugely successful since the publication of the first one in 1870. By 1877, the Cardinal stories, which had initially appeared in the journal *La Vie parisienne*, had been collected and republished in illustrated volumes. Degas proposed an edition using his distinctive images, which would be printed as heliogravures, a process in which the monotype print [fig. 6, cat. 10] could be transferred to photographically etched plates.

In his depictions of *La Famille Cardinal*, Degas communicated the author's gentle cynicism in backstage encounters between the elegant narrator and the scheming parents and between the girls and their preying suitors. His portraits of the impeccable Halévy in formal attire contrast brilliantly with the fleeting edges of tutus and distinguish him from the vaguely sinister *abonnés* (season-ticket holders) who frequented the dancers' foyer in search of ballerinas. The monotypes were printed in black ink on white paper and several were heightened with black, white, and red pastel. In some, Degas approached the same scene from different angles, testing the medium as well as the content. Jules Clarétie, who saw a selection of them at the 1877 Salon, compared Degas's characterizations to those of Francisco de Goya and Paul Gavarni.<sup>45</sup> To our eyes as well, Degas's images add a visual excitement and density to the story line; but for Ludovic Halévy, who either failed to comment or else demurred tactfully, they somehow missed the mark. It may have been discomfort with his close physical resemblance to the narrator, disaffection for the heliogravure process, or simply a conviction that these were not the type of illustrations he had in mind for his stories. When Degas grasped Halévy's inability to appreci-

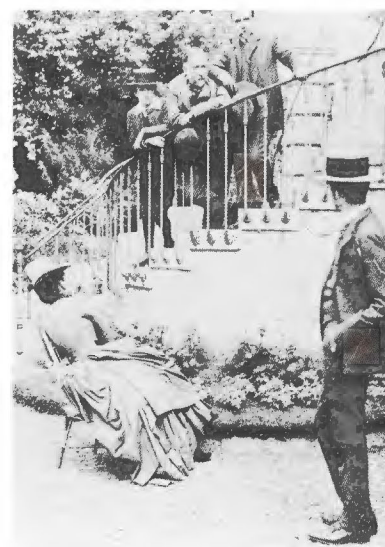


Fig. 7  
 Photographer unknown  
 Louise Breguet Halévy [seated, left],  
 Daniel Halévy, Edgar Degas,  
 Ludovic Halévy [on stairs, left to right],  
 and Elie Halévy [standing, right]  
 ca. 1885  
 Private collection



Fig. 8  
Photographer unknown  
Albert Boulanger-Cavé, ca. 1885  
Private collection

ate them, he abandoned the idea of collaboration and tucked the project away in his studio. It was not until 1938 that Halévy's stories and thirty-four of Degas's images were combined in a deluxe, limited-edition version of *La Famille Cardinal*, published by the collector who had acquired the monotypes after Degas's death.<sup>46</sup>

The incident neither destroyed nor diminished their friendship, which for Degas's part did not require that Halévy understand his work. The continuing relationship with the Halévy family filled a more important need in his life, and his affection for them, which extended to their two young sons, continued to deepen. By the early 1880s, he was a frequent guest in their Paris home at 22 rue de Douai and had begun to join them on occasional holidays [fig. 7]. Although a week with the family in Étretat in 1882 had challenged his skills as a country houseguest,<sup>47</sup> his experiences at Dieppe were very different. He had a wonderful time there, admitting to Halévy that if he had stayed any longer he would have had a hard time readjusting to the rigors of the studio.<sup>48</sup>

A second houseguest of the Halévys, Albert Boulanger-Cavé, was also a key to Degas's amusement in Dieppe [fig. 8]. A close member of their circle, Cavé, as he was known to all his friends, had already been depicted by Degas in a double portrait with Ludovic Halévy [fig. 9] in 1878–79.<sup>49</sup> Poised and composed, the two men appeared in top hats and elegant street attire, as comfortable in their theatrical setting as two courtiers in a Renaissance fresco. Halévy and Cavé had met around 1862, when both were employed by state ministries. Boulanger-Cavé's position, reluctantly accepted and briefly performed, was held only long enough to assure him honorable retirement and receipt of the red ribbon of the Légion d'honneur. As censor of public spectacles in the fine-arts ministry, his primary responsibility was to attend theatrical performances and to make sure that actors and theatre managers heeded the warnings they received about inappropriate lines or lyrics. More interested in art than censorship, Cavé became the favorite of writers and directors, who sought him out at rehearsals and considered his opinion the final word. "What does Cavé think?" became the question on which a scene might turn and whose answer won him the friendship of Offenbach, Meilhac, Alexandre Dumas *fils*, and Halévy. Attentive, sophisticated, witty, and accessible, he was described by Daniel Halévy as "the public one dreams of, the one for whom artists create."<sup>50</sup>

Albert Boulanger-Cavé was the son of two artists. His father, Clément Boulanger, a history painter who had studied with Jacques-Louis David, died when he was a child. When his mother married Edmond-François Cavé, head of the Ministry of Fine Arts of the Department of the Interior from 1831 to 1848, Albert appended his stepfather's name to his own. Marie-Elisabeth Blavot

Boulangier-Cavé was an intelligent and beautiful woman whose admirers included Delacroix and Ingres.<sup>51</sup> Her treatises on color and drawing, known as “The Cavé Method,” were published with an introduction by Delacroix and were widely circulated and translated [see cat. 30, 31, 32].<sup>52</sup> Her son grew up in a household that was filled with fine drawings and furniture, which he inherited when his mother died in 1885. At home he was invariably found with a blanket on his knees and a book in his lap, caressing an object with his hands while he talked with friends.<sup>53</sup> His collections included European and Asian ceramics, works by François Boucher and Jean-Honoré Fragonard, portraits by Ingres of his mother and stepfather, and drawings and watercolors by Delacroix.<sup>54</sup>

Daniel Halévy appropriated a passage from Friedrich Nietzsche when he described Cavé as one of those rare individuals who was so harmoniously talented, so balanced and comfortable in his own skin that any activity directed toward an end was odious to him.<sup>55</sup> He thought that Cavé would have been a brilliant prototype for Proust’s Charles Swann, a protagonist of *À La Recherche du temps perdu* (*Remembrance of Things Past*), except that unlike the actual model, his exquisite life had no complicated angles.<sup>56</sup> Cavé’s days were passed solely within the society of his friends, and although Daniel feared that Cavé’s name would be lost to future generations, his value to that same society, which included the salon of Geneviève Bizet Straus, perpetuated his existence in letters, memoirs, and photographs. Daniel also pointed out that Degas’s relationship with Cavé often seemed like the attraction of opposites: Degas, labor incarnate; Cavé, the enemy of labor.<sup>57</sup> Of the seven men who participated in the creation of *Six Friends at Dieppe*, Cavé, who anchors the picture, is the single one whose life was not driven by a passion for work.

Degas always enjoyed the company of this “man of taste” (*l’homme de goût*) and in 1884 begged Halévy to keep Cavé at the house in Dieppe until he could join them there.<sup>58</sup> Degas was frustrated, however, by Cavé’s ability to coolly disengage from plans: “And you, for God’s sake, are you coming?” he wrote when Cavé appeared to cancel an excursion to Mont Saint Michel in the summer of 1885.<sup>59</sup> Degas afterwards insisted that although Cavé was in a position to write his memoirs, he would never think of doing so: he was a “do-nothing” (*un feignant*).<sup>60</sup> On the other hand, Degas appreciated his graciousness, his admiration for artists such

Fig. 9  
EDGAR DEGAS  
*Portraits d’amis dans les ailes de la scène*  
(*Portrait of Friends in the Stage Wings*)  
1878–79  
Musée d’Orsay, Paris







Fig. 10  
 HENRI GERVEX  
*Le Quai de la Villette à Paris*  
 (*The Quay at la Villette, Paris*), 1882  
 Palais des Beaux-Arts, Lille  
 Cat. 35

as Ingres and Delacroix, and his complete lack of need to strive for recognition. He teasingly described the thin, elegant Cavé as a dancer who waved his arms like a ballerina on stage, but in his portraits of the man he resisted caricature. As if heedful of Cavé's displeasure at Jules Dalou's unflattering bust of Delacroix in the Luxembourg gardens ("but he took such pride in his elegant appearance; he would have been horrified by this manner of representing him"),<sup>61</sup> Degas focused on Cavé's fine profile and characteristic sense of repose when he portrayed Cavé in *Six Friends at Dieppe*. There may have been an element of sadness in Cavé's demeanor as well, since he had just bid temporary farewell to his *amie de coeur*, Madame Hortense Howland, who had departed for America to visit her son.<sup>62</sup>

In *Six Friends at Dieppe*, Henri Gervex's vaguely saturnine face and short, neckless torso force comparison with the composed seated figure of Cavé. In spite of his carefully groomed appearance, Gervex fails to mirror Cavé's refinement, as if Degas wished to distinguish an arriviste from a man of great culture. His portrayal of Gervex subverts the young artist's role at Châlet Bas-Fort Blanc, where as Jacques-Émile's teacher and friend he was

a frequent and privileged houseguest. The son of a Montmartre piano-maker and salesman, Gervex had trained in the atelier of Alexandre Cabanel, a leading academic painter. He absorbed the traditional skills taught at the Cabanel studio, but quickly learned to apply them to the imagery of modern life. Gervex socialized with the Impressionists in the 1870s, even appearing in the background of Renoir's *Bal du Moulin de la Galette*, 1876 (Musée d'Orsay, Paris), but he strategically declined Degas's invitation to exhibit with them, preferring to court official recognition. His name appeared occasionally in Degas's notes and letters, once in a satirical bit of doggerel about academic painters who have taken up the banner of realism.<sup>63</sup>

Gervex was an attractive young man whose career had benefited from a *succès de scandale* in 1878.<sup>64</sup> Numerous Salon awards had elevated him in official circles, and he had even secured a certain status among "advanced artists" by helping Manet acquire his long-sought decoration from the Légion d'honneur. By 1885, the future of the thirty-three-year-old Gervex seemed secure. His first important decorative commission, which included scenes of a civil marriage, a public-assistance office, and dockworkers at the Quai de la Villette [see fig. 10 for



Fig. II

HENRI GERVEX

*Une Séance du jury de peinture – étude*

*(A Session of the Painting Jury – Study)*, 1885

Private collection

Cat. 37



Fig. 12  
 PIERRE PETIT  
 For *Album Félix Potin*,  
*500 Célébrités contemporaines*  
 Henri Gervex, ca. 1900  
 Museum of Art  
 Rhode Island School of Design

a related subject], had been installed in the marriage chamber (*salle des mariages*) of the Hôtel de Ville in Paris's nineteenth *arrondissement*. He also drew consistent critical attention for his submissions to the Salon, including the monumental *Une Séance du jury de peinture (A Session of the Painting Jury)*, 1885, in the Musée d'Orsay, Paris [see the oil study, fig. 11, cat. 37].<sup>65</sup> That same year, with the support of investors and in partnership with Ferdinand Humbert, he opened La Palette, a school for aspiring realist painters.

Gervex openly crafted the trajectory of his career and made no apologies for his success. Unlike Degas, who preferred to be “illustrious and unknown” (*illustre et inconnu*), he courted attention, conceiving ambitious projects, competing for important commissions, and socializing wherever there were connections to be made. Émile Zola used Gervex as a model for the character Fagerolles in the novel *L'Oeuvre*, in which the successful artist who is willing to compromise is contrasted with the unyielding protagonist, Claude Lantier. Even so, both Zola and J.-K. Huysmans acknowledged Gervex as a leader among young realists, one who would put academic training to good use in the naturalist revolution.<sup>66</sup> Many years later, his position within the establishment was assured by his election to the Académie des Beaux-Arts of the Institut de France, but his celebrity had already been confirmed by a more popular indicator. He was a “collectible” presence in the roster of notables who were immortalized in the celebrity trading cards produced by the Potin department store and included in packages of chocolate [fig. 12].

In his early career Gervex often promoted the agenda of more advanced art in his adaptations of style and subject matter. His reference to aristocratic morals in *Rolla*,<sup>67</sup> his inclusion of his mistress among the devout witnesses in *First Communion at Trinity Church*,<sup>68</sup> and his grafting of a photographic perspective onto his view of the Salon jury all were efforts to introduce elements of modern life into his art. Gervex's memoirs elevate Manet above all other contemporary models, but it is evident that he carefully studied the works of Degas and incorporated their constructions into his own paintings. As unlikely an image as his allegory of *Music through the Ages*, 1891 (ceiling of the Hôtel de Ville of the City of Paris) zooms to its Baroque apotheosis over orchestra musicians and an Ophelia lit from below, both of which he derived from Degas's theatre and *café-concert* pictures.

Like Degas, Gervex was a relentless worker, but he was also a showman. A year or two after posing for *Six Friends at Dieppe*, Gervex partnered with Belgian painter Alfred Stevens to begin work on the *Panorama of the Century*, a vast group portrait featuring 641 identifiable men and women who made the greatest contributions to French life and culture between 1789 and 1889. The finished production, which was installed for the 1889 Universal Exposition in a

rotunda in the Tuileries Gardens, was about 394 feet long and 65 feet high.<sup>69</sup> The contrasts between Degas's intimate portrait and Gervex's truly operatic 1889 site installation clearly place them in separate corners of the ring. Not surprisingly, Degas fell outside Gervex's canon of greatness, and although Ludovic Halévy was depicted in the panorama, Degas was not among the artists portrayed by Gervex and Stevens in their *magnum opus* [fig. 13].

Aside from professional differences and the subtle class issues that were never far from the surface in bourgeois French society, there was another possible point of irritation that could have colored Degas's rendering of

Gervex. The younger artist was at the time a favorite of Madame Félicie Blanche, the "austere, but smiling and indulgent" hostess of Châlet Bas-Fort Blanc. Speared by the ruthless Goncourt brothers as "the insupportable wife of the man that everyone loves" (Dr. Émile Blanche, the eminent Paris alienist),<sup>70</sup> she was transformed in Dieppe into the beloved confidante of overnight guests such as Gervex, Paul Helleu, and Paul Robert, whom she permitted to come and go without curfew. Madame Blanche's affection for the Halévys and their children was extended toward their guests, and both she and Jacques enjoyed the company of Degas and Cavé.<sup>71</sup> Unfortunately, her relationship with Madame Léon Halévy, Ludovic's mother, was less warm, and they clashed at dinner that summer over the salubrious quality of open windows versus the classic French phobia of drafts.<sup>72</sup> This was an understandable point of difference between a prominent doctor's wife and a member of the *grande bourgeoisie*, but correspondence between Madame Léon Halévy and her niece Geneviève Bizet (the widow of composer Georges Bizet, and later the wife of financier Émile Straus) suggests that Madame Blanche's neighbor aligned with the Goncourt camp.

In a letter to her "Aunt Nanine" from Switzerland, where she vacationed in the summer of 1884, Geneviève Bizet remarked at the news that Gervex had thrown over his mistress to become Madame Blanche's lover. The witty Madame Bizet seized this bit of gossip and declared that their affair would surely make an impact on the history of art: "You know that Gervex has the habit of using his mistresses for models. We'll soon see this cheating little Félicie transformed into Marion or Namouna. Won't she be lovely with her disheveled hair on the pillow, and what an idea she will leave of nineteenth-century woman!"<sup>73</sup>



Fig. 13  
ALFRED STEVENS  
*A Portrait Group of Parisian Celebrities*  
(segment of the "Panorama of  
the Nineteenth Century"  
featuring Ludovic Halévy, center), 1889  
The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art,  
The State Art Museum of Florida, Sarasota



Fig. 14  
 JACQUES-ÉMILE BLANCHE  
*Self-Portrait with Raphaël de Ochoa*, 1890  
 The Cleveland Museum of Art  
 Cat. 41

Her amusement continued the following summer when Madame Bizet learned that Degas had been cast in the role of leading man, this time as a replacement for the writer William Busnach: “I am so sorry,” she wrote her cousin Ludovic from Italy, “first to not have seen Degas, who is marvelous, but above all to not have seen him in his role as Madame Blanche’s lover of record. So, she definitely prefers the greatest painter of the century to the most well-bred man of Europe? Poor Busnach!”<sup>74</sup>

Whether or not he considered Gervex a rival in love, it is clear that Degas had developed an appreciation for Madame Blanche, whom he had nicknamed “Madame Ingres.”<sup>75</sup> He was unusually cordial to Jacques when he wrote to thank him for sending an image of Madame Blanche’s maid, Dinah, and he hastened to acknowledge the welcome he had been shown by Blanche’s “*terrible et aimable mère*.”<sup>76</sup> Although she was not known to admire advanced art, having rejected Manet’s *Déjeuner sur l’herbe* (which her husband proposed buying) and criticized Renoir’s manners and the Tannhäuser-inspired decorations he conceived for the dining room in Dieppe, Degas’s

essentially refined demeanor must have pleased her, even if their purported love affair can be attributed to a neighbor’s joke at her expense. Although Degas did not intentionally set out to flatter his sitters, his caricature-like rendering of Gervex is exceptional for this drawing. Gervex’s good looks and his success with professional beauties such as Lucie Valtesse de la Bigne, a real-life model for Émile Zola’s *Nana*, contradict the image Degas created for him here and suggest an element of distrust. In later years, the Blanchés and Halévys were eventually alienated from the socially and professionally ambitious Gervex as well. In 1891, Gervex informed Doctor Blanche that he wished to distance himself from his former pupil. Gervex presumably felt threatened by Jacques’s association with homosexual friends.<sup>77</sup> Daniel Halévy, in his 1953 letter to John Maxon (see pp. 110–13), commented on the promise of Gervex’s early work, but added that he was vulgar by nature and that this could be sensed in his art.<sup>78</sup>

In subtle ways, Degas’s placement of the six men and his compositional moves suggest hierarchies of friendship. The cropped figures of Gervex and Cavé firmly anchor the group, forming a triangular shape on the edge of the proscenium in the lower right corner. Degas looks at both men from above, as if his easel is on a higher step, but he simultaneously raises Cavé up and pushes Gervex down. Although Cavé is decidedly seated at the bottom of the compo-

sition, Gervex appears to be standing on lower ground, bringing his head closer in juxtaposition with Cavé's but severely truncating his torso and thus his status. Blanche and Sickert form their own pair, viewed from below and distinctly separated from the foreground and from each other. The middle ground is located between the Gervex-Cavé group and the looming figure of Blanche, whom Degas renders in a not unflattering three-quarter profile, taking care to depict the details of his groomed and tailored appearance. Hatless here and looking at ease with his hands in his pockets, Blanche appeared in photographs that summer wearing a classic straw boater that complemented his country-house attire and protected his pale skin. Both his height, which skims the upper limit of the sheet, and his broad back obscure the torsos of Ludovic and Daniel Halévy and limit the space they occupy.

The sense of crowding on the right is intensified in comparison to the left side of the drawing, which is completely given over to the figure of Sickert. Degas gave the former professional actor a singular role, as a solitary English counterpart to the tightly interlocked society of Frenchmen. A secure stance anchors him on the raked stage, but a barely perceptible downshift in scale and the blurring of his likeness emphasize his elusiveness and cast him as an outsider. His self-awareness and swagger enliven the scene without fully disrupting its momentary stasis.

Ludovic and Daniel Halévy are the most recessive figures in this composition, slipped in behind Jacques-Émile Blanche, where they exist without projection of mass. Blanche referenced this proximity to the older Halévy in his self-portrait with Raphaël de Ochoa of 1890, in which he shadowed himself with de Ochoa's lithe figure and drew their two faces closely together [fig. 14, cat. 41]. In contrast to Blanche's self-portrait, and despite the physical congestion of the figures, there are no obvious homoerotic adjacencies in *Six Friends at Dieppe*, and no actor addresses either the viewer or the artist through a direct gaze. This live performance remained fully under the control of Degas, who acutely represented his perceptions of character and determined which roles to valorize. He provided his viewer with visual evidence of his subjects, but then deftly denied psychological access.



Fig. 15

EDGAR DEGAS

*Ludovic Halévy*, 1895

The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles

Cat. 13



Fig. 16  
 EDGAR DEGAS  
*Madame Ludovic Halévy*  
 (*Louise Breguet Halévy*), ca. 1895  
 Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco  
 Cat. 14

Degas exerted a particular restraint in his depictions of the Halévys, whose physical presence in the drawing is inversely proportionate to the intimacy of their friendship. Ludovic's clear, expressionless eyes are familiar from photographs taken both before and after the portrait was made [fig. 15, cat. 13]. In typical fashion, he appears not so much as a performer but as one witnessing a show from the wings. This representation suited the writer, whose complex nature was both amiable and detached, ambitious for recognition but most comfortable when away from society. Gracious and impeccably mannered, he avoided discussion of religion and politics, refused to interrupt speakers whose stories he had already heard, and indulged Degas's strong opinions. The long-established codes of their friendship included discretion, privacy, and respect for family [figs. 16, 17, cat. 14, 15]. Although Degas spoke freely in Halévy's company, he also maintained certain boundaries, stopping short of revealing worries and self-doubts.<sup>79</sup>

Halévy himself was not immune to Degas's judgment, although he outwardly maintained an even demeanor in his presence. Devoted to his family and concerned about the future that his sons would inherit, he also suffered throughout his adult life from bouts of anxiety and melancholy. After 1880, he withdrew from musical theatre and comedy to focus on writing a series of novels that would position him as a serious man of letters. His extraordinary success with *L'Abbé Constantin*, a story of virtue and simplicity, led to his nomination to the Académie française of the Institut de France in 1884.<sup>80</sup> During the summer of 1885, he worried about his *discours*, the formal acceptance speech in which the newly elected member pronounces on the life and work of the "immortal" whose seat he will assume. Degas wrote encouragingly to him about this task, but he hadn't failed to criticize Halévy for abandoning the topical cynicism of his theatrical works.<sup>81</sup>

Halévy's election to the Académie française, which depended significantly on his recent dedication to "literature," as opposed to theatre, represented further entrenchment in an arena of public recognition that Degas eschewed. His acceptance of Degas never wavered, however, and their friendship deepened. In 1888, writing from Les Cauterets in the French Pyrénées, Degas abandoned the formality that characterized his social interactions and for the first time addressed Halévy by the familiar *tu*: "My dear Halévy, I write to you out of boredom and to tell you nothing at all. And I 'tutoyer' you out of familiarity, to diminish the distance that separates us, and perhaps also out of a feeling of friendship."<sup>82</sup> This

friendship served Degas generously and well, providing a constant foyer, a welcoming table, and a theatre in which Degas could perform as himself.

Degas's place within the family and his opinions on art and life entered the diaries of Daniel Halévy beginning in 1888. Degas's presence at dinner, wrote Daniel, was the purest gift he could imagine: "Degas, in my eyes, is the incarnation of all intelligence."<sup>83</sup> Earlier, around the age of twelve, Daniel had asked Degas for a sketch that he could use on the cover of one of his first self-published texts, and Degas indulged him by carefully drawing the figure of a dancer, hand on her hip, about to leap onto the stage.<sup>84</sup> As he grew older, Daniel recognized his family's reciprocal importance, noting in 1891: "At dinner: Degas. Degas has entered definitively into our family. His own is scattered around the world. We bring him out through our intimacy and we gather him into our family. This brings me great pleasure."<sup>85</sup> Journal entries – from 1888 through the moment when Degas abandoned the Halévy home because of disagreement over the Dreyfus affair – became the basis of Daniel's biography of Degas, *Degas parle*, published an astonishing seventy-five years after the holiday in Dieppe, when the author was eighty-eight years old. The passion, insight, and acuity of his writings is as remarkable as his visual presence in the hierarchy of *Six Friends at Dieppe* is slight.<sup>86</sup> Few friends invested themselves in understanding the artist and his work as thoroughly as Daniel Halévy: not Blanche, who once said that nothing could be more precious than the friendship of a man as wonderful as Degas; nor Sickert, whose essay at the time of Degas's death consisted of stories about their personal encounters; nor Gervex, whose recollections rambled on about meetings at the Café Rochefoucauld without ever addressing Degas's brilliance.<sup>87</sup> Only Daniel reflected on the meaning of Degas's life, and after viewing the late works that came to auction from Degas's studio at his death, attempted to comprehend Degas's sadness in terms of the deep love of art that had propelled him into art's inferno.<sup>88</sup>

When Degas left the Halévy home definitively on the evening of December 1897, he did so out of an ultimately self-destructive sense of honor that was threatened by changes in the social order and offended by the passionate convictions of young men who supported Alfred Dreyfus. An artist who fiercely rejected performing for society, even to resisting the sale or exhibition of his works, Degas nevertheless mistrusted attacks on the integrity of the army to the extent that he sacrificed sustaining friendships rather than entertain the



Fig. 17  
EDGAR DEGAS  
*Daniel Halévy*, 1895  
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York  
Cat. 15



innocence of an officer of Jewish descent. There is no evidence that his relationship with the Halévys had been eroded by any other issue. In his theatrical works, Ludovic Halévy willingly poked fun at social foibles, but in private he did not court controversy. Raised as a Roman Catholic, the faith of his mother (his father was Jewish), he was not a Zionist and was never a practicing Jew. His support of Dreyfus depended on his belief in his innocence and his outrage over injustice at any level. His sons were both raised in the Protestant faith of their mother, a tradition that Daniel valued for its commitment to reason. Daniel, too, was intolerant only of injustice and led his family and friends in the cause of Dreyfus's acquittal. Remarkably, he did not allow this turning point to separate him from Degas. Three months after the breakup, Daniel called on Degas and resumed a friendship that endured beyond the artist's death and was celebrated in the writer's final book.

Like all great works of art, *Six Friends at Dieppe*, which has attracted the attention of Degas scholars since it reappeared in Paris in the early twentieth century, will continue to appeal to new audiences. It is an image that compels attention, and no other artist of his time but Degas could have created it. Its visual overlaps and complications alone project a unique energy that sends sparks flying in the direction of theatre, literature, music, and history. It is a touchstone for studies of decentralized staging, for formal and psychological tension among male figures, for idiosyncratic group portraiture, for figural compression, for experimental use of pastel, and for draftsmanship. *Six Friends at Dieppe* also represents a rare view of seven privileged men whose unapologetic passion for the arts and pleasure in each other's company provided the raw material for a staged collaboration, a performance of male friendship in late nineteenth-century French society. This exhibition launches the drawing's twenty-first-century run.

- 1 See Gary Tinterow and Anne M. P. Norton, "Degas aux expositions 'impressionnistes,'" in Musée d'Orsay and École du Louvre, *Degas inédit: actes du colloque Degas, Musée d'Orsay, 18–21 avril 1988*. Paris: 1989, p. 345. The RISD pastel is identified by Tinterow and Norton as "no. 17. *Ébauche de portraits (pastel)*." The catalogue of the Eighth Impressionist Exhibition (1886) is reproduced in Charles S. Moffett, et al., *The New Painting: Impressionism, 1874–1886*. San Francisco: 1986, pp. 443–47. There was apparently no mention of it in the press, and it seems unlikely that Gustave Geoffroy, who described Degas's stature among a tight circle of writers and painters, would have failed to single out the new "immortel" Ludovic Halévy or the popular painter Henri Gervex. See Geoffroy's "Salon de 1886: VIII. Hors du Salon: Les Impressionnistes," *La Justice* (May 26, 1886), pp. 1–2, cited in Ruth Berson, ed., *The New Painting: Impressionism, 1874–1886: Documentation, Volume 1: Reviews*. San Francisco and Seattle: 1996, pp. 449–52. Henri Fèvre, who noted Jean-Louis Forain's unlisted portrait of Blanche, might also have been expected to comment on Jacques-Émile Blanche's presence in the Degas pastel. See Fèvre, "L'Exposition des impressionnistes," *La Revue de demain* (May–June 1886), pp. 148–56, cited in Berson, ed., *op. cit.*, pp. 445–47.
- 2 Henri Frantz, "Jacques-Émile Blanche: Portrait Painter," *The Studio*, vol. xxx, no. 129 (December 1903), pp. 191–99; *Portrait of Degas*, ill. p. 193.
- 3 Jacques-Émile Blanche, *La Pêche aux souvenirs*. Paris: 1949, p. 433. Accepting the portrait as a gift, Degas said to Blanche, "Je le garderai, mais je défends qu'il soit exposé, ni photographié, sauf pour votre album."
- 4 Blanche mentions the Ingres drawings in *ibid.*: "Degas, furieux, me l'avait renvoyé par un commissionnaire, avec d'autres choses de moi et les dessins d'Ingres que je lui avais donnés jadis." He seems also to refer to them in a letter to Daniel Halévy, June 5, 1926, Collection Institut Néerlandais, Paris, 2004–A.421: "et il me renvoyait en échange des oeuvres de moi qu'il avait désiré de posséder." Citation courtesy Anna Gruetzner Robins.
- 5 Blanche protested that he was not responsible for the publication of the photograph. In 1917, he stated that the portrait was reproduced in the magazine without his knowledge: "à mon insu." See Jacques-Émile Blanche, *Cahiers d'un artiste*, vol. VI, Paris: 1919, p. 89. In 1919, he again claimed to have had no knowledge of how it happened: "sans que j'ai su comment s'était commise l'erreur." See Jacques-Émile Blanche, *Propos de peintre; de David à Degas, Première série...*. Paris: 1927, p. 308. Later, he insisted that the photograph of Degas's portrait was illicitly taken from the stock of the photographers. See Jacques-Émile Blanche, "Ma Brouille avec Degas," in *op. cit.*, 1949, pp. 432–34.
- 6 See Linda Nochlin, "Degas and the Dreyfus Affair: A Portrait of the Artist as an Anti-Semite," in Norman L. Kleeblatt, ed., *The Dreyfus Affair: Art, Truth & Justice*. Berkeley: 1987, pp. 96–116.
- 7 Daniel Halévy's *Regards sur l'affaire Dreyfus*. Paris: 1994, chronicles his intellectual involvement in the Dreyfus case and its impact on French society over the course of forty-one years.
- 8 Blanche, *op. cit.*, 1919, p. 88. Blanche quotes Paul Rosenberg as saying: "Je possède dans mes galeries un groupe de portraits d'artistes, vers 1880, où l'on croit vous reconnaître."
- 9 *Ibid.*, pp. 90–91. "Mon ex-pastel de Degas – car c'était lui – trône, seul, sur un chevalet, dans un sanctuaire, à l'extrémité du Rosenberg-Palatz. Un noble cadre florentin Renaissance l'agrandit, l'habille, l'achève."
- 10 Prior to its sale to RISD by Durand-Ruel, New York, the pastel was published in Henri Hertz, *Degas*. Paris: 1920, pl. III, as *Portraits (Période du salon des Indépendants: Welter [sic] Sickert, Daniel Halévy, Ludovic Halévy, J.-E. Blanche, Gervex, Boulanger-Cavé)*; in Julius Meier-Graefe, *Degas, Ein Beitrag zur Entwicklungsgeschichte der Moderner Malerei*. Munich: 1920, pl. 27, as *Bildnisse*; and in Paul Jamot, *Degas*. Paris: 1924, pl. 54, incorrectly identified as *Portraits d'amis sur la scène*, the title of Degas's pastel of Ludovic Halévy and Albert Boulanger-Cavé (Musée d'Orsay, Paris), ill. in the present catalogue as fig. 9 (p. 14).
- 11 Durand-Ruel, New York, *Exhibition of Paintings and Pastels by Edgar Degas, 1834–1917*, January 31–February 18, 1928, no. 10, as *Portraits de Sickert, Daniel et Ludovic Halévy, J. Blanche, Gervex, Boulanger Cavé, 1886*, ill.; Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge, *Exhibition of French Painting of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, March 6–April 6, 1929, no. 27, pl. XIX, as Edgar Degas, *Group of Artists*; M. Knoedler & Co., New York, *Pictures of People 1870–1930. A Loan Exhibition for the Benefit of the Hope Farm*, April 6–18, 1931, no. 8, as Edgar Degas, *Portraits of Walter Sickert, English Painter and Critic; the French Music Composers and Editors, Daniel and Ludovic Halévy; and the French painters, J. E. Blanche, Henri Gervex, and Gustave Boulanger*, ill.
- 12 The drawing, which Degas may have described as *Ébauche de portraits* (see n. 1), has been known by various titles over the years. Daniel Halévy used the title *Six Amis à Dieppe* when he described it in a letter to John Maxon, Director of the Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, in 1953 (see cat. 4 and pp. 110–13). Jean Sutherland Boggs, in Harvard University Art Museums, *Degas at Harvard*. Cambridge: 2005, p. 86, recounts first studying the portrait when she was a Harvard graduate student in the 1940s. Boggs, whose visit to Halévy is recalled in his letter mentioned above, published the portrait as *Six Friends at Dieppe* in her *Portraits by Degas*. Berkeley: 1962. RISD now uses this version of the title.
- 13 Blanche, *op. cit.*, 1927, p. 296: "Pendant qu'il exécutait ce grand groupe... il se levait et, par le même geste nous indiquait comment 'affirmer' nos attitudes..."
- 14 For this approach to *Six Friends at Dieppe*, the author acknowledges the inspiration of Michèle Longino Farrell's masterful construction of correspondence as performance in her *Performing Motherhood: The Sévigné Correspondence*. Hanover: 1991.
- 15 Henri Loyrette, *Degas*. Paris: 1991, p. 496, describes Degas's circles of friends.

- 16 See, for example, Degas's sketch of *Boussard the Photographer*, ca. 1872–74, watercolor and gouache on paper, 11½ x 7¼ in., Detroit Institute of Arts (Lemoine 677).
- 17 As described by Degas in Notebook CIX (1878–84), Bibliothèque Nationale de France, cited in “From Edgar Degas’s Notebooks,” in Linda Nochlin, *Impressionism and Post-Impressionism, 1874–1900; sources and documents*. Englewood Cliffs: 1966, pp. 62–3.
- 18 Edgar Degas to Ludovic Halévy [September 1885], letter LXXXIII, in Marcel Guérin, ed., *Lettres de Degas; recueillies et annotées par Marcel Guérin, préface de Daniel Halévy*. Paris: 1945 (exact reprint 1997), p. 107: “Que Daniel dise à nos chères petites camarades que je regrette bien les belles promenades si gaies.”
- 19 For a discussion of Barnes and his encounter with Degas in Dieppe, see Françoise Heilbrun, “Sur la photographie de Degas,” in Musée d’Orsay and École du Louvre, *op. cit.*, pp. 159–80.
- 20 Edgar Degas to Ludovic Halévy, Wednesday [September 1885], letter LXXXVI, in Guérin, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 112: “Il aurait fallu grouper mes trois muses et mes deux enfants de cœur sur un fond blanc ou clair. Les tournures des femmes, surtout, sont perdues. Il fallait aussi serrer davantage les gens.”
- 21 *Ibid.*, p. 111.
- 22 Daniel Halévy, with texts presented by Jean-Pierre Halévy, *Degas parle*. Paris: 1995, p. 22. In his “Avant-propos,” Jean-Pierre Halévy cites a passage from the unpublished notebooks of Ludovic Halévy of September 8, 1885: “Degas et Cavé ici depuis trois jours... Degas a commencé un pastel représentant Cavé, Jacques, Gervex, Sickert, Daniel et moi.”
- 23 Walter Sickert, “Degas,” *Burlington Magazine* (November 1917), reprinted in Anna Gruetner Robins, ed., *Walter Sickert, the Complete Writings on Art*. Oxford and New York: 2000, pp. 413–17.
- 24 Blanche, *op. cit.*, 1927, p. 296.
- 25 Blanche, *Dieppe* (Collection *Portrait de la France*). Paris: 1927, p. 72: “Degas, dans mon atelier, m’avait emprunté des pastels; en un groupe qu’il esquissa, je figurais avec Sickert, nos voisins Ludovic Halévy et Gervex. Montesquiou boudait, Degas ne l’ayant point prié.”
- 26 Maxon was Director of the Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, from November 1, 1952, until October 1, 1959. In his letter, Halévy thanked Maxon for sending a photograph of the portrait, which he refers to as *Six Amis à Dieppe*. Maxon’s own correspondence with Halévy has not been located.
- 27 I am deeply grateful to Daniel Halévy’s granddaughter, Madame Claude Nabokoff, for many thoughtful and generous insights, which include this observation on his delight in contemporary life.
- 28 Edgar Degas to Daniel Halévy [August 1892], letter CLXIX in Guérin, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 191, writes: “Bonjour à ta famille, dont tu deviens la plume, lisible à me faire plaisir.” Henri Loyrette, ed., *Entre Le Théâtre et l’histoire: la famille Halévy, 1760–1960*. Paris: 1996, p. 351, n. 15, cites an unpublished letter of June 14, 1894, in the collection of the Bibliothèque de l’Institut de France (henceforth cited as BIF) in which Degas refers to Ludovic Halévy as “mon cher illisible.”
- 29 Daniel Halévy’s major writings on Degas, including the text of “À Edgar Degas,” originally published in *Le Divan*, no. 61 (September–October 1919), pp. 209–19, are collected in his *Degas parle*, previously cited.
- 30 Daniel’s education and the formation of his literary career are fully discussed in Sébastien Laurent’s biography, *Daniel Halévy, du libéralisme au traditionnalisme*. Paris: 2001. Daniel began school at the *collège* (lower school) of the Lycée Fontanes at 8 rue Havre in Paris’s ninth *arrondissement*. The school was renamed Lycée Condorcet in 1883. For Daniel Halévy’s relationship with Marcel Proust, see Marcel Proust, *Correspondance avec Daniel Halévy, texte établi, présenté et annoté par Anne Borel et Jean-Pierre Halévy*. Paris: 1992.
- 31 Daniel’s exuberant first impressions of Dieppe, from unpublished notes dated July 11, 1884, private collection, are quoted in Loyrette, *op. cit.*, 1991, pp. 530–31.
- 32 Letter from Félicie Blanche to Dr. Émile Blanche of July 22, 1884, BIF, fonds Blanche, MS 7031, sheet 280.
- 33 Letter from Jacques-Émile Blanche to Dr. Émile Blanche, undated [July 1884], BIF, fonds Blanche, MS 7035, sheet 150. “J’ai trouvé en Daniel et Élie deux petits compagnons passionnés de ces visites lentes, avec de longs arrêts devant chaque château.” In a subsequent letter to his father of July 15, 1884, BIF, fonds Blanche, MS 7035, sheet 152, he broke off abruptly because Daniel and Élie were waiting for him to accompany them on a walk to the jetty.
- 34 For an overview of artists in Dieppe, see Caroline Collier, ed., *The Dieppe Connection: the town and its artists from Turner to Braque*. Brighton: 1992.
- 35 Letter from Jacques-Émile Blanche to Louise Halévy of July 27, 1885, BIF, fonds Halévy, MS 4480, Halévy letters from various correspondents, letter 143. “Dieppe est très habitée, très fréquentée, par la compagnie Bloch... élégante et couverte de rubans... Les messieurs portent beaucoup le chapeau Bloch, une création nouvelle de Léon.”
- 36 Blanche, *op. cit.*, 1927, pp. 51–52. Discussing the construction of the new casino (Bloch’s Moorish version), which was completed in 1886, he notes the disappearance of other buildings in Dieppe, including “le studio de mon premier maître, Mélicourt, ‘peintre d’histoire,’ émule de Delaroché, un artiste qui, ailleurs qu’en province, aurait développé un talent peu commun pour la composition décorative. Contre les Tourelles et le Théâtre, là où la statue de Saint-Saëns – Dieppois – assied aujourd’hui son bronze sur un socle ambitieux, Mélicourt s’était construit une demeure romantique. Les fenêtres étaient à meneaux; des mâchicoulis en bois, des créneaux en stuc, des moulages de bas-reliefs sous un lierre jauni disaient au passant: ‘Sonnez à la porte. Ici l’on peint le portrait et le genre.’”

- 37 *Ibid.*, p. 59: “On pouvait s’y croire hors de la ville, autant dire en pleine mer. On s’y endormait comme dans une cabine de yacht. Les sirènes, les cloches des navires nous réveillaient; les lames d’équinoxe semblaient rouler des cailloux jusqu’à nos pantouffes.”
- 38 Daniel Halévy, *op. cit.*, 1995, p. 83. In his journal on July 11, 1890, Daniel wrote that he, his brother Élie, and Yoyo Lemoine had reminisced at length about that summer: “Je hurle de joie à ces souvenirs.”
- 39 The relationship between Degas and Ludovic Halévy is the subject of Henri Loyrette’s essay “Portrait d’amis, sur la scène: Degas et Ludovic Halévy,” pp. 178–93, in Loyrette, ed., *op. cit.*, 1996.
- 40 See Jean-Claude Yon, “Le Théâtre de Meilhac et Halévy: satire et indulgence,” in *ibid.*, pp. 173–77.
- 41 Edgar Degas to Ludovic Halévy, September 1877, letter XIII bis, in Guérin, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 41. Degas made two drawings showing Mlle Baumaine in *La Cigale* in an 1877 album that had belonged to Ludovic Halévy (Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Thaw, New York; illustrated in Loyrette, ed., *op. cit.*, 1996, p. 184).
- 42 Edgar Degas to Ludovic Halévy, September 1877, letter XIII bis, in Guérin, ed., *op. cit.*, pp. 41–42.
- 43 Edgar Degas to Ludovic Halévy, January 7, 1886, letter LXXXIX, in *ibid.*, pp. 114–15. Degas calls Halévy “si bon juge en tout ce qui n’est pas des arts....”
- 44 See Michael Pantazzi, “Degas, Halévy, and the Cardinals,” in Jean Sutherland Boggs, *et al.*, *Degas*. New York and Ottawa: 1988, pp. 280–84. Pantazzi provides a full assessment of the circumstances surrounding Degas’s monotypes for *La Famille Cardinal*. To briefly sum up the chronology determined by Pantazzi, under the pseudonym “A. B. C.,” Ludovic Halévy’s tales of a fictional Madame and Monsieur Cardinal, the parents of two young dancers at the Opera, appeared in the periodical *La Vie parisienne* in 1870 and 1871. They were published again in 1872 as *Monsieur et Madame Cardinal*, but this time under Halévy’s name and bound with other stories in a volume illustrated by Edmond Morin. In 1875, when *Monsieur et Madame Cardinal* had already appeared in eighteen editions, Halévy wrote “Les Petites Cardinal,” a third story for *La Vie parisienne*. In 1880, he decided to finish off the series and published this last story in a book entitled *Les Petites Cardinal*, along with five new Cardinal chapters and several unrelated stories. He chose Henry Maigrot to illustrate this volume. In 1883, the eight Cardinal stories were united in a single edition with illustrations by Émile Mas after Jules Massard. Numerous editions followed, including other illustrated versions and translations [cat. 17, 18, 19, 20, 21].
- 45 Jules Clarétie, “Le Mouvement parisien: L’Exposition des impressionnistes,” *L’Indépendance belge* (April 15, 1877), cited in Berson, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 141.
- 46 Ludovic Halévy, *La Famille Cardinal, illustré d’un portrait de l’auteur et de trente-trois monotypes en noir et en couleur par Edgar Degas, avant-propos de Marcel Guérin*. Paris: 1938.
- 47 Edgar Degas to Paul Bartholomé, August 5, 1882, letter XL, cited in Guérin, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 68: “...je ne sais pas le piquet, ni le billard, ni faire la cour aux personnes, ni travailler devant la nature, ni être agréable en société. Je crois que je leur ai un peu pesé.”
- 48 Edgar Degas to Ludovic Halévy [September 1885], letter LXXXIII, cited in *ibid.*, p. 107: “Bien de la peine de reprendre les habitudes honorable de l’atelier; si j’étais encore resté, la chose devenait difficile, vraiment.”
- 49 Cavé also appears in a study for this portrait, *Ludovic Halévy et Albert Boulanger-Cavé*, private collection, reproduced in Loyrette, ed., *op. cit.*, 1996, p. 180.
- 50 Daniel Halévy, *Pays parisiens*. Paris: 2000, p. 91: “le public tel qu’on le rêve, qu’on en conçoit l’idée, qu’on en forme le vœu.”
- 51 See Pierre Angrand, *Marie-Elisabeth Cavé, disciple de Delacroix*. Lausanne and Paris: 1966; and André Joubin, “Deux Amies de Delacroix: Madame Elisabeth Boulanger-Cavé et Madame Rang-Babut,” *La Revue de l’art*, vol. lviii (1930), pp. 58–59.
- 52 Madame Marie-Elisabeth Blavot Boulanger-Cavé’s *Le Dessin sans maître. Méthode pour apprendre à dessiner de mémoire*. Paris: 1850, was published in English as *Drawing without a master. The Cavé Method for Learning to Draw from Memory*. New York: 1868. Her sequel, *L’Aquarelle sans maître, méthode pour apprendre l’harmonie des couleurs*. Paris: 1851, was expanded as *La Couleur, ouvrage approuvé par Eugène Delacroix pour apprendre la peinture à l’huile et à l’aquarelle*. Paris: 1863. It was published as *Color, approved by Eugène Delacroix, for teaching painting in oils and water-colors*. New York: 1869, 1878.
- 53 Daniel Halévy, *op. cit.*, 2000, p. 85: “Il me suffit de fermer les yeux et je le revois exactement tel que je l’ai connu... sur ces genoux, une couverture, un livre, à portée de sa main quelque bibelot qu’il maniait en causant.”
- 54 Cavé’s extensive collection passed to his cousin, Gaston Le Roy, and was sold at auction in 1928. See Hôtel Drouot, *Collection de Monsieur Gaston Le Roy. Meubles et objets d’art des XVIIIe et XIXe siècles. Tableaux et dessins anciens et modernes, gravures anciennes, tapisseries appartenant à M. Gaston Le Roy et provenant de la succession de M. Cavé* (May 19–20). Paris: 1926. Among the most important objects in this sale were the portraits of Madame and Monsieur Cavé, painted by Ingres. They entered the collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art as bequests of Grace Rainey Rogers in 1943. See Gary Tinterow and Philip Conisbee, eds., *Portraits by Ingres: image of an epoch*. New York: 1999, pp. 394–98, no. 123, and pp. 398–401, no. 124.
- 55 Daniel Halévy, *op. cit.*, 2000, Appendix I, p. 280, cites Friedrich Nietzsche, *Humain, trop humain*, vol. II, §626: “Il y a des hommes si harmonieusement doués, si justement établis en eux-mêmes, que toute activité orientée vers une fin extérieure leur répugne.”
- 56 Daniel Halévy, *op. cit.*, 2000, p. 82. Charles Haas, the actual model to whom Daniel refers, was also a member of the Halévys’ social circle.

- 57 *Ibid.*, p. 93: “Degas, le labeur incarné, et Cavé, l’ennemi du labeur.”
- 58 Edgar Degas to Ludovic Halévy [from Ménéil Hubert, Normandy, undated, 1884], letter LIX, in Guérin, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 85: “Sera-t-il encore temps à mon retour d’aller voir la maison fort agréable au bord de la mer? Retenez Cavé qui est fort agréable aussi.”
- 59 Daniel Halévy contrasts the attitudes of Degas and Cavé in *op. cit.*, 2000, pp. 93–95. See also Edgar Degas to Ludovic Halévy [August 1885], letter LXXX, in Guérin, ed., *op. cit.*, pp. 104–05; and Edgar Degas to Albert Boulanger-Cavé, undated, letter LXXXI, in *ibid.*, p. 105.
- 60 Daniel Halévy, *op. cit.*, 2000, p. 95.
- 61 *Ibid.*, p. 91. Cavé complained that the bust of Delacroix was positioned so that the viewer looked up into two large nostrils.
- 62 Halévy and Degas were both involved in the preparations for Madame Howland’s farewell from Le Havre that summer. See Edgar Degas to Ludovic Halévy, Wednesday [August 1885], letters LXXX and undated, LXXXI, in Guérin, ed., *op. cit.*, pp. 104–05.
- 63 Theodore Reff, *The Notebooks of Edgar Degas: a catalogue of thirty-eight notebooks in the Bibliothèque Nationale and other collections*, vol. 1. Oxford: 1976, p. 124: Nb 26, 99, shows a list of names “probably made in preparation for the second Impressionist show, April 1876, the first list consisting of artists who would show, and the second of those who had declined to show.” *Ibid.*, p. 126: Nb 26, 37, is the draft of a poem that begins “Vous avez déjà vu Gervex/se mettre sous la main d’Etex....”
- 64 See Hollis Clayton’s interpretation of Gervex’s painting *Rolla* and the scandal it provoked in *Painted Love: Prostitution in French Art of the Impressionist Era*. New Haven and London: 1991, pp. 79–93.
- 65 Henri Gervex, *Une Séance du Jury de Peinture*, 1885, oil on canvas, 9 ft. 7¼ in. x 12 ft. 3¼ in., Musée d’Orsay, Paris; exhibited at the Salon of 1886.
- 66 J. K. Huysmans, *L’Art moderne/Certains, préface de Hubert Juin, “Le Salon de 1879, V.”* Paris: 1975, p. 53: “Parmi les jeunes, M. Gervex est à coup sur celui qui donnait le plus d’espoir. Ses tableaux révélaient un incontestable talent.” Émile Zola, “Salon de 1879, Nouvelles artistiques et littéraires,” in his *Salons*. Genève: 1959, pp. 227–28: “les peintres dont la critique s’occupe et qui attirent la publique; ce sont... Gervex... ces artistes doués doivent leur succès à l’application de la méthode naturaliste dans leur peinture.”
- 67 Henri Gervex, *Rolla*, 1878, oil on canvas, 68⅞ x 86⅞ in., Musée des Beaux-Arts, Bordeaux.
- 68 Henri Gervex, *La Communion à l’église de la Trinité*, 1877, oil on canvas, 158¼ x 114⅞ in., Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dijon.
- 69 Mitchell Merling, *Ringling, The Art Museum*. Sarasota: 2002, p. 163, gives the number of portraits and the dimensions of the *Panorama of the Century*. The original segment in which Ludovic Halévy is represented is in the collection of the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Sarasota. See also Roselyne Hurel, “Le Panorama de l’Histoire du siècle par Henri Gervex et Alfred Stevens,” in Jean-François de Canchy and Jean-Christophe Gourvennec, eds., *Henri Gervex 1852–1929*. Paris: 1992, pp. 190–205; and Theodore Stanton, Henri Gervex, and Alfred Stevens, “The Paris Panorama of the Nineteenth Century,” *The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine*, vol. XXXIX, no. 2 (December 1889), pp. 256–69.
- 70 Françoise Balard, *Geneviève Straus: biographie et correspondance avec Ludovic Halévy, 1855–1908*. Paris: 2002. Balard’s note “a,” p. 153, cites *Journal des Goncourt*, vol. 3. Paris: 1989, p. 648, which describes Félicie Blanche as “la femme insupportable de l’homme que tout le monde aime.”
- 71 Blanche first met Cavé in Dieppe in the summer of 1884, when he described him to his father as “le plus charmant le plus gai et le plus aimable” guest of the Halévys. Jacques-Émile Blanche to Dr. Émile Blanche, September 3, 1884, BIF, fonds Blanche, MS 7035, letter 154.
- 72 Félicie Blanche to Dr. Émile Blanche, July 22, 1884, BIF, fonds Blanche, MS 7031, letter 280: “Le dîner s’est...parfaitement passé hier, la mère [Madame Léon Halévy] et la fille étaient très aimables et très parlantes, seulement pour elles il fallait avoir toutes les fenêtres fermées ce qui était un supplice pour Jacques, aujourd’hui il fait une chaleur comme celle de Paris, sauf un peu plus d’air.”
- 73 Balard, *op. cit.*, p. 152, Geneviève to Madame Léon Halévy, September 17, 1884, letter 119, p. 152: “Je suis très intéressée par les amours de Madame Blanche et du peintre Gervex, car je pense qu’elles joueront un rôle dans l’histoire de l’art. Tu sais que Gervex a l’habitude de prendre ses maîtresses pour modèles. Nous verrons donc bientôt cette petite friponne de Félicie transformée en Marion ou en Namouna. Qu’elle sera belle les cheveux épars sur l’oreiller, et quelle idée elle laissera de la femme du XIXe siècle!”
- 74 *Ibid.*, Geneviève to Ludovic Halévy from Bellagio, Italy, September 12, 1885, letter 124, p. 157: “Je regrette bien, d’abord de ne pas voir Degas qui est délicieux, mais surtout de ne pas le voir dans son nouveau rôle d’amant en titre de Madame Blanche. Alors, elle préfère décidément le plus grand peintre du siècle à l’homme le mieux élevé d’Europe? Pauvre Busnach!” Balard, *op. cit.*, p. 99, n. “c,” describes William Busnach as a cousin of Geneviève.
- 75 Edgar Degas to Ludovic Halévy, Tuesday [September 1885], letter LXXXV, in Guérin, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 110: “Bonjour à tout le monde aussi, ainsi qu’à Madame Ingres.”

- 76 Edgar Degas to Jacques-Émile Blanche, October 10, 1885, BIF, fonds Blanche, MS 6281, cited in Musée d'Orsay and École du Louvre, *op. cit.*, p. 371: "Remerciez votre terrible et aimable mère de l'accueil qu'elle m'a fait... J'ai eu, je vous l'avoue aussi, un grand plaisir à faire un *peu la paix* avec vous... On se verra cet hiver, n'est-ce pas?"
- 77 In reference to an article on Blanche written by Téodor de Wyzewa – "M. Jacques-Émile Blanche," *L'Art dans les deux mondes*, no. 33, (July 4, 1891), pp. 75–77 – Gervex wrote to Dr. Émile Blanche to demand that his name no longer be associated with that of his former student. Henri Gervex to Dr. Blanche, BIF, fonds Blanche, MS 7045, July 10, 1891, letter 169: "Mon cher Dr. Blanche, Je vous prierai de bien vouloir dire à votre fils que lorsqu'il fera paraître un article sur son compte il est de bon goût de ne pas citer mon nom." Jacques Blanche, whose parents suspected his real or latent homosexuality, wrote an anguished response to his father discussing his inability to fully function as himself. See Jacques-Émile Blanche to Dr. Émile-Blanche, BIF, fonds Blanche, MS 7045, undated [July 1891], letter 171. Laure Murat, *La Maison du docteur Blanche: histoire d'un asile et des ses pensionnaires, de Nerval à Maupassant*. Paris: 2001, p. 306, refers to the Blancches' concerns about their son's sexuality.
- 78 "Derrière Cavé, le peintre Gervex, qui était hôte des Blanche. Je crois qu'il avait été un peu professeur pour J. E. Blanche. Ses tableaux de jeunesse manifestaient un vrai talent, mais il était de nature vulgaire, et son art s'en est ressenti."
- 79 Loyrette, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 181.
- 80 Since its publication in 1882, *L'Abbé Constantin* has been printed in over two hundred and forty editions and translated into many languages. In Halévy's lifetime, it became a text for the teaching of French in American schools. It is currently "in print" in English in *The Project Gutenberg EBook of the World's Greatest Books*, vol. V., Etext-No. 3957.
- 81 Jean-Pierre Halévy, "Avant-propos," in Daniel Halévy, *op. cit.*, 1995, p. 21, cites Ludovic Halévy's notebook of December 4, 1884, which mentions that Degas was present at the Halévy home the day Ludovic received official word of his election to the Académie française. Degas refers to his friend's new status in his letters to Ludovic Halévy, Wednesday [August 1885], letter LXXX, and January 7, 1886, letter LXXXIX, in Guérin, ed., *op. cit.*, pp. 104, 114. In "Les Carnets de Ludovic Halévy, III, 1880–1882," *La Revue des deux mondes* (January 15, 1938), p. 399, Halévy writes: "Mon ami Degas est indigné de l'Abbé Constantin, écoeuré serait mieux. Il m'a dit ce matin des injures. Je dois faire toujours des *Madame Cardinal*, des petites choses sèches, satiriques, sceptiques, ironiques, sans coeur, sans émotion. Il m'appelle Père Halévy."
- 82 Edgar Degas to Ludovic Halévy, September 6, 1888, letter CV, in Guérin, ed., *op. cit.*, pp. 130–31: "Je t'écris par ennui et pour ne rien te dire du tout. Et je te tutoie par familiarité, pour diminuer la distance qui nous sépare, peut-être aussi par un sentiment d'amitié."
- 83 Daniel Halévy, *op. cit.*, 1995, p. 87, entry for October 26, 1888.
- 84 *Ibid.*, p. 84. "Précoce dans la carrière des lettres, j'avais décidé de publier dans ma classe une feuille polycopiée et de montrer sur sa couverture un dessin d'Edgar Degas." Daniel describes the difficulty Degas had drawing by lamplight and the lasting impression this effort made on him.
- 85 *Ibid.*, p. 23: "À dîner: Degas. Degas entre définitivement dans notre famille. La sienne s'est éparpillée sur le monde. Nous le faisons sortir de notre intimité, et nous le faisons entrer dans notre famille. Cela m'a fait un bien grand plaisir."
- 86 Daniel Halévy's *Degas parle*, first published in 1960, and also published in an English version, translated and edited by Mina Curtiss, *My Friend Degas*. Middletown (Connecticut): 1964, and his *Pays parisiens*, first published in 1929, are essential memoirs about Degas and his neighborhood.
- 87 Henri Gervex, *Souvenirs, recueillis par Jules Bertaut*. Paris: 1924.
- 88 See n. 29. "À Edgar Degas," originally published in *Le Divan*, p. 217: "C'est vous qui d'étude en étude avez achevé la descente aux enfers de l'art." The entire text of this article is reprinted in Halévy, *op. cit.*, 1995, pp. 217–30.



Fig. 18

JACQUES-ÉMILE BLANCHE

*Portrait de la mère de l'artiste*

*(Portrait of the Artist's Mother)*, 1890

Musée des Beaux-Arts, Rouen

## JACQUES - ÉMILE BLANCHE

### A young man at home in Dieppe

IN LATE SUMMER of 1885, Edgar Degas, a guest at Ludovic Halévy's holiday villa in Dieppe, chose Jacques-Émile Blanche's studio next door at the Châlet Bas-Fort Blanc in which to execute his astonishing pastel portraying six of his friends. Toward the end of Degas's sojourn in Dieppe, he rather unexpectedly gave this work as a gift to Jacques's mother, the "terrible and amiable"<sup>1</sup> Madame Blanche [fig. 18]. In the pastel's composition, which even by Degas's standards is elaborate, his young friend (only twenty-four years old but looking middle-aged, rather plump, and somewhat dowdy in his favorite tweeds and cashmere) stares vacantly to the right, while Walter Sickert, his exact contemporary and lifelong friend, in his elegant frock coat and newly trimmed beard (he is, after all, on his honeymoon) cuts a dashing figure to the left.

It was, of course, not a surprising choice of venue for Degas, because Jacques's family was the reason they were all present anyway. The Blancches were at the center of artistic and social circles in Dieppe in the 1880s and had been linked to the Halévy family for three generations. Doctor Émile Blanche [fig. 19] persuaded the Halévys, who had previously summered at Étretat, to move to Dieppe and rent Les Rochers, one of the large villas that had recently been built next to the Blanche chalet. Indeed, if Daniel Halévy, Albert Boulanger-Cavé, Henri Gervex, or Walter Sickert appeared in the pastel, and if Degas had been persuaded by the Halévys to spend several weeks of his summer in Normandy with them all, it was in part because of the Blancches.

Wisely investing in Jacques's future artistic career, Doctor Blanche had decided in 1879 to build for his eighteen-year-old son a studio overlooking the sea. By 1885, the studio was located in the garden of Doctor Blanche's very large, rather ostentatious Norman-style "chalet" [fig. 20]: "At the other end of the beach on an old battery of Napoleonic artillery known as the Bas Fort Blanc a new row of houses had recently been built. From his studio, Jacques-Émile Blanche could see the fishing boats go by as if from the cabin of a yacht."<sup>2</sup>





Fig. 19  
HENRI GERVEX  
*Portrait du docteur Blanche*  
(*Portrait of Doctor Blanche*), ca. 1880  
Château-musée de Dieppe

Fig. 20  
Photographer unknown  
*Le Bas-Fort Blanc, côté sud*  
(*Villa Bas-Fort Blanc, South Side*)  
Fonds ancien de la Bibliothèque de Dieppe



In the summer of 1885, Jacques was still a budding artist, not yet a sophisticated and worldly personage. On the contrary, Jacques was extremely troubled by his appearance. He was seriously overweight because of an accident six years before. This had not only immobilized him for many months, but had left him with a slight limp that would embarrass him throughout his life.<sup>3</sup> In 1884, he was mortified when Jean-Louis Forain, who was never noted for his kindness towards models, painted an extremely unflattering portrait of “poor Jacques,” overblown and penguin-like [fig. 21] in a top hat and grey frock coat. No, the Jacques-Émile Blanche in Degas’s pastel of 1885 is not at all the self-assured man-about-town he was to become, but still very much his very famous father’s son.

La Maison du Docteur Blanche, as it became known,<sup>4</sup> was a celebrated institution by the end of the nineteenth century. Jacques’s grandfather, Doctor Silvestre-Espirit Blanche (1796–1852), who was known as an “alienist” (a precursor of the modern psychiatrist), left Rouen in Normandy to set up a Paris clinic at Montmartre in 1823.<sup>5</sup> Here the air was reputedly purer for his patients, who soon included many artists and celebrities suffering from depression, a passing breakdown, or incurable dementia. His techniques, which would be refined by Jacques’s father, Émile (1820–93), consisted of firmly “persuading” his patients to voluntarily enter the clinic and, once he had interned them, using methods of treatment that were both humane and modern compared to any others before them. The Blanche clinic successfully attempted to superimpose the structure of a classic insane asylum onto that of a residential hotel (*pension de famille*); thus, Doctor Silvestre-Espirit Blanche and his wife lived with their inmates day and night and charged them 3000 francs a year for this privilege.

During the next twenty-five years, Silvestre-Espirit carefully built up his practice, becoming not only affluent but also well known among influential circles in Paris. Of course, for the sake of business, he entertained upper-class society, but he always preferred the company of artists such as Eugène Delacroix, Alfred de Vigny, and Hector Berlioz. He set himself quite apart from *le monde*. “A psychiatrist more than an ordinary doctor or even a priest is never part of high society,”<sup>6</sup> he would repeat over and over again to his son Émile, and Silvestre-Espirit’s lifelong aim seems to have been to try quasi-religiously to somehow soften the boundaries between his fragile patients and the outside “sane” world.

In 1841, Silvestre-Espirit decided to transfer his clinic to the beautiful and grand eighteenth-century Hôtel de

Lamballe in Passy on the western outskirts of Paris (it was in 1860 that Passy and Auteuil became part of the sixteenth *arrondissement* of Paris). Not only was the property several times larger than the one in Montmartre, but Silvestre-Espirit, who was a passionate believer in hydrotherapy, found several natural springs on the grounds of his new domain. When his son Émile took over the concern in 1852, he continued his father's sound precepts, and the clinic's clientele came from more and more celebrated circles: for instance, the great Romantic poet Gérard de Nerval, who spent many months at the clinic before being found hanged by his shoelaces near the Châtelet in January 1855; composer Charles Gounod, but only intermittently; and writer Guy de Maupassant, who died at the clinic in 1893. Émile's reputation for outward kindness but utmost rigor endeared him to the grandest persons, who knew that they could count on his absolute discretion in a late-nineteenth-century Paris riddled with scandals and the widespread curses of syphilis, drugs, and absinthe.

Émile, apparently a shy and obedient character in private life, had been persuaded by his ill father to take his distant cousin Félicie ("*douce cousine Félicité*" [sic])<sup>7</sup> as his bride, and although he was not in love, he married her on July 28, 1854. The forceful Félicie always resented her husband's passion for his profession because it meant that he spent little or no time with his family: Marie Antoinette (1855–60), Joseph (1856–68), Louis (1858, but who survived a mere ten months), and Jacques-Émile (1861–1942), born premature and very weak, who would always be known simply as Jacques by his family and friends. Félicie was by then an exhausted forty-one years old. She had already lost two children and was obviously extremely protective towards little Jacques and obsessed with his health.

Joseph and Jacques grew up within the boundaries of the Hôtel de Lamballe among the patients (*pensionnaires*). They were inseparable companions, although Jacques, always a weakling, had problems keeping up with his very robust and sporty elder brother, whom he idolized. Because all the records of the clinic were destroyed, it is essentially thanks to Jacques's writings that we have an idea of how such a place ran like clockwork. Timed walks and recreation periods, compulsory hydrotherapy sessions and gymnastics in the park,



Fig. 21  
 JEAN-LOUIS FORAIN  
*Portrait de Jacques-Émile Blanche*  
 (*Portrait of Jacques-Émile Blanche*), 1884  
 Musée des Beaux-Arts, Rouen



Fig. 22  
Photographer unknown  
Jacques-Émile Blanche  
at age ten in London, 1871  
Bibliothèque de l'Institut de France, Paris

and meals taken as a family and served by inmates were all part of the innovative treatment. Jacques and Joseph, in between lessons at home given by tutors, were allowed to play together in the extensive gardens of the Hôtel de Lamballe. In Jacques's memoir, *La Pêche aux souvenirs*, published posthumously in 1949, he described how the two little boys were very occasionally let into the sanctuary of their father's office and were allowed to contemplate his collection of Delacroix watercolors and sit on the chair that once belonged to the great actor François-Joseph Talma (1763–1826).<sup>8</sup>

Unexpectedly, in this extremely unusual but happy childhood, two events completely changed the course of Jacques's life. In 1868, his adored elder brother died of peritonitis. Jacques suddenly became the only child and had to depend upon his nannies and governesses for company. His mother was utterly distraught and never again wore anything else but full mourning. She was now absolutely sure that she was about to lose her last sickly son, spent her days fussing about, wrapping him up in warm clothes, and insisting on healthy and filling meals. Whenever she felt he was “under the weather,” he was sent to his cousins Lallemand in Dieppe. They lived at 29 rue de l'Écosse (“I said that Dieppe nearly was my birthplace. At the slightest sign of illness, I was sent there for a change of air”<sup>9</sup>), where at least life was a little more convivial than at the clinic. In Passy he was now, of course, constantly in the company of mainly elderly adults and even presided precociously over the Sunday night parties his parents always gave there. The guest list over the years is truly impressive. Artists Edgar Degas, Eugène Delacroix, Henri Fantin-Latour, Pierre Puvis de Chavannes; composers Hector Berlioz, Charles Gounod, Franz Liszt, Giacomo Meyerbeer, Gioacchino Rossini; writers Charles Baudelaire, Marie de Flavigny (Comtesse d'Agoult), Théophile Gautier, Jules Michelet, Ernest Renan, Georges Sand; scientists Michel-Eugène Chevreul and Louis Pasteur; all attended many times.

Then, on July 15, 1870, the Prussians declared war on France, and Blanche's parents decided to evacuate their only child to London for safety. At nearly nine years old, he traveled from Dieppe (naturally!) on September 4 with a full and devoted staff (“*ma smala*”),<sup>10</sup> presided over by his beloved nanny “Noud'Jac” (Marie Barbier) and his governess Miss Ellen Maclaren. The latter had already tried to teach Jacques the basics of English by singing him nursery rhymes (“Little Bo-peep” was his favorite) and reading to him from the *Illustrated London News*, which she and her sister Winnie (a child of the same age as Jacques) obtained from their mother, Mrs. Randall, owner of a British bookshop on the rue Saint-Honoré in Paris.

Instead of being homesick, as was expected, Blanche literally *adored* London. He lived in some comfort in a pretty house with a garden at 15 Walton

Place, Chelsea, a “hop and a skip” away from the French Embassy at Albert Gate, Hyde Park. The fact that many of the Blanches’ eminent guests had also fled Paris for London (Charles Gounod was one, for instance; he oversaw Jacques’s piano studies in Chelsea) and were living, like Jacques, the lives of exiles meant that Jacques had a full social life before he was ten [fig. 22].

In his autobiographical novel *Aymeris* and in his previously mentioned memoir, he describes over and over again the delights of the English countryside (“too green,” he felt), the food (shortbread and marmalade were favorites), the “pea-souper” fogs, boating on the Serpentine, the Lord Mayor’s Show and Banquet, the Chamber of Horrors at Madame Tussaud’s wax museum, and so on. “Exile for me had been like the discoveries of Alice in Wonderland,”<sup>11</sup> he wrote many years later.

Jacques had become an “honorary” Englishman and never looked back. He was truly “hooked” and spent half his adult life in London. “Europeans went to London to experience an example without equal of perfection. It is by living in London, day after day, that one feels the fullness of its glamour and of its seduction.”<sup>12</sup> He certainly took to the English way of life like a duck to water. As soon as he could, he never again used a French tailor and dressed in “tidy London suits,”<sup>13</sup> preferably tweeds; had his shoes made at Lobb’s in St. James’s; and his cashmere cardigans sent from Scotland [fig. 23]. He also insisted on speaking English whenever he could and spoke very quickly in a curious, imagined upper-class accent that most of his English friends found rather comical, but of which he himself was very proud.

Of course, it was probably in England that Jacques first understood at all about snobbery and the class system, of which he remained particularly conscious all of his life. Curiously, Doctor Blanche’s clinic was inhabited in the 1860s by numerous members of the European aristocracy, probably because it was cheap and exceptionally discreet in comparison with asylums elsewhere.<sup>14</sup> Many of his pensioners were English. These eminent patients were able to continue employing their maids and menservants while receiving treatment! Little Jacques, who must have been extremely lonely, used to visit these eccentrics on a regular basis and described one such inmate, the Reverend Henry Marsh of Bidford Hall,

Fig. 23

JACQUES-ÉMILE BLANCHE  
*Autoportrait de l'artiste à la casquette*  
(*Self-Portrait Wearing a Cap*), ca. 1890  
Musée du Petit Palais, Paris



second son of a baronet, who lived at the Hôtel de Lamballe in great splendour with his gentleman's valet John Fox and his furniture from Bidford Hall. Thanks to regular visits to the Reverend Marsh, Blanche was already much taken by such delicacies as toast and crumpets on a toasting fork, still exotic equipment to the French; Atkinson's lavender water; porridge; kippers; and the finest China tea; all before he even set off for London.<sup>15</sup> It was no doubt the Reverend Marsh who made an introduction to the Dowager Marchioness of Huntly at Orton Hall, who generously supplied the household in exile with plum puddings, turkeys, venison, and a complete set of sporting prints for young Jacques during Christmas 1870 and then invited him with his nanny and governess to spend a week at Orton Hall.

In his memoir, Blanche likens to Cinderella's coach the berline carriage and the coachman and footmen in full livery that the Marchioness sent to London to collect them.<sup>16</sup> He was greeted on arrival by Lady Huntly and her three much older daughters, Grace (later to become Lady Landsdowne), Ethelreda, and Margaret, on the steps of Orton Hall. With gushing wonderment he describes life in this grandest of houses: one of many belonging to the family, of course, including Inverness Castle, their Scottish seat (they had their very own tartan). Lady Margaret, however, soon reproached him for being too familiar with his governess's sister Winnie: "You treat her as if she were your own sister! But she can't be a Lady!" When Jacques bravely but somewhat naïvely declared that the Maclarens, like the Gordons, descended from the Scottish kings, Margaret reprimanded him sharply: "I suppose English nurses, when abroad, pretend they are of high breeding! You should not talk such impertinent nonsense, Jacques!"<sup>17</sup> Although truly scandalized by this silly snootiness, Jacques obviously did not recoil from the British aristocracy in years to come. On the contrary, he was to use his connections to accept invitations from every grand house in the land, where he no doubt hoped he would be asked to paint the family members.

This was, after all, Edwardian England, where successful portrait artists such as Philip Alexius de Laszlo (1869–1937) and Jacques himself were far removed from the bohemian artistic life in turn-of-the-century Paris. They were able to live extremely comfortably on commissions not only from members of the British aristocracy, but also from the up-and-coming very wealthy industrialists of the era, who longed to resemble their social betters. "Portraits are high up on the inventory of permanence, they have their place among the silver, the carpets, the tapestries, the furniture, the jewels, the plate and the books which were collected as the legacy to the future... acquisition lost the gentleness of habit and became a profession."<sup>18</sup> Blanche exploited this opportunity and would live several months a year

in London. So integrated was Jacques into the London art scene of the early twentieth century that until recently, Sotheby's and Christie's auction houses always included his work in British painting sales!

One may guess that after such an exciting sojourn in London, Jacques's return to Paris in March 1871, during the Prussian occupation, must have been a bit shocking to the child. During his absence, his father had already begun to build a large house on a piece of land that he had purchased some years before in rue des Fontis in Auteuil [fig. 24]. After the 1873 move away from the oppressive atmosphere of his father's clinic and its unusual inhabitants, Jacques was allowed the semblance of a normal adolescence, spending happy summers in Dieppe, although mostly alone with his mother, with whom he still had a very intimate relationship,<sup>19</sup> and always in rented accommodation at 2, rue Saint-Pierre. He also experienced the novelty of going to school for the first time in Paris, entering the *collège* of the Lycée Condorcet in 1873, where his English teacher was symbolist poet Stéphane Mallarmé. Later Condorcet alumni such as philosopher Henri Bergson and novelist Marcel Proust would become his close friends. As a student, he was found to be quiet and hardworking but mediocre at mathematics, and it was assumed that young Jacques would never study medicine and certainly never take over the family business. His father would have liked him to become a civil servant or a diplomat, but reluctantly agreed that his son would be a professional artist of some sort.

His parents thought he was destined to be a musician, for he was by all accounts a truly talented pianist. "The little Mozart," Gounod called him in 1870, and with teachers such as his father's composer friends Emmanuel Chabrier and Gabriel Fauré giving him advice and lessons, he certainly had a head start in that direction. In 1874, however, Jacques became acquainted with another habitué of his family's Sunday get-togethers, one who was to be his mentor. Edmond Maître (1840–98), a wealthy and cultured connoisseur of the arts, became a welcome paternal figure nineteen years younger than Jacques's own father and much more available to take Jacques under his wing. While introducing him properly to the passion of collecting other artists' paintings and to the mysteries of art history, Maître also encouraged Jacques to become a painter himself.

Although constantly surrounded by artists and collectors, Doctor Blanche



Fig. 24

HENRI MANUEL

*Blanche dans son atelier à Auteuil*

(*Blanche in His Studio at Auteuil*), ca. 1895–1900

Musée des Beaux-Arts, Rouen

was definitely never touched by the collecting bug and could hardly have been called a connoisseur. Any pictures he owned had been given as gifts or payment in kind for services rendered. Even his favorite Delacroix watercolors came from his friends the Duponchels; his Camille Corot *Une Rivière vue de haut entre les arbres*, 1865–70 (Robaut 1546), came with a dedication “*don de Corot reconnaissant au docteur Blanche*”; the *Pivoines roses dans un cornet de crystal* by Édouard Manet came from Dinah Félix, sister of the actress Rachel. Doctor Blanche had always admired conventional work – carefully painted pictures – and would certainly rather commission Gervex to paint his portrait [see fig. 19] than Manet or Fantin-Latour, although all three were friends of the family. According to Jacques, however, his father quite surprisingly almost purchased Manet’s *Le Déjeuner sur l’herbe*, 1863 (Musée d’Orsay, Paris), but ultimately declined due to his wife’s objection.<sup>20</sup>

His son, on the other hand, threw himself into collecting with gusto, encouraged by the slightly mischievous Maître, and methodically attended auctions and gallery openings. He acquired, with his father’s money, large numbers of works by Bonvin, Cézanne, Corot, Courbet, Monet, Renoir, and Théodore Rousseau (whom he had met in person in Dieppe in 1882), but nevertheless always concentrated on his favorite, Manet. At the time of his death, Jacques owned twenty-one of Manet’s works. He pursued the “hobby” of collecting assiduously throughout his life.

A high-ranking civil servant from a rich Bordelais family, Maître was already a familiar figure on the Parisian art circuit. He had his reserved table at the café Guerbois, he attended every Salon opening, he scoured Paris for the most refined and exciting things happening in the art and music worlds. His great friend Fantin-Latour included him in the painter’s *Autour Du Piano*, 1885 (Musée d’Orsay, Paris), sitting next to Chabrier, as had Frédéric Bazille in his *L’Atelier de la rue la Condamine*, 1870 (Musée d’Orsay, Paris). One may easily imagine that Maître was amused by Jacques’s precociousness and enjoyed taking him from studio to studio in his search for masterpieces. Jacques was by this time painting as seriously as a teenager could and was in awe of Fantin-Latour, whom Maître would bring to the Blanchés’ Sunday soirées. Unfortunately, Fantin-Latour was not at all impressed by Blanche’s first efforts as an artist and, as Doctor Blanche had done before him, suggested a career in diplomacy.

Jacques Blanche was luckier with Édouard Manet, who was Jacques’s idol throughout his entire life. After an initial introduction from Edmond Maître, Jacques had the courage to visit Manet alone at his Paris studio on rue de Saint Pétersbourg in 1879 and later on the rue d’Amsterdam. The great master didn’t dismiss Jacques as Fantin-Latour had done, but, on the contrary, encouraged

him to try new things. In 1882, Manet even dared him to paint a simple brioche, declaring that “still-life painting was the touchstone of any painter.”<sup>21</sup> Blanche always considered that this little painting exercise was his first as a proper painter. When Manet died on April 30, 1883, Blanche was inconsolable.

When he had passed the second part of his baccalaureate in 1880, Jacques officially settled on a career as a painter. With his father’s contacts, one might have thought that he would have an embarrassment of choices as far as teachers went. He was, of course, primarily attracted to Manet and would have loved to study with him, but Manet didn’t take pupils, and Jacques’s mother thought him too utterly scandalous anyway. Edgar Degas was already an “elderly” man of around fifty, renowned for his constant bad temper and caustic wit, but he would gladly dispense avuncular albeit didactic advice to young hopefuls. He didn’t hesitate to deflate the less talented in his circle with honest comments often bordering on the downright cruel, but was too much of an irritable loner to take on a pupil. He had known Jacques since Jacques was a small child and did not really take him seriously as a painter, contrary to Degas’s regard for Sickert, whose work interested Degas greatly; but Degas did share Jacques’s passion for collecting. Degas also early pointed out to Jacques his great talent as a critic, although this may just have been to avoid having to speak about Jacques’s painting.

Auguste Renoir was another possibility. Blanche had consulted him around 1879, when he visited Wargemont (near Dieppe), where Renoir was diligently painting flowers for his patron Paul Bérard. Madame Blanche, against her better judgement, had permitted her son to commission Renoir to paint large decorative panels on the theme of Tannhäuser and Venus in the style of Fragonard to decorate the new chalet at Bas-Fort Blanc. Even so, she felt that Renoir, although already thirty-eight years old and well known thanks to dealer Durand-Ruel, was vulgar, badly behaved, and too much of a ruffian to be the right teacher for her Jacques. Far from being shocked by Renoir’s working-class exterior so worrisome to Madame Blanche, Jacques was charmed with him from the outset and described him affectionately: “Renoir’s face was already very worn, hollow, lined, his beard was sparse, and his two little eyes blinked and glittered with tears under bushy eyebrows that couldn’t harden a look so tender and good. He spoke with the vulgar drawl of a Parisian workman.”<sup>22</sup>

A safe option was hit upon. It was decided that Jacques, having been ignominiously refused at the Salon des artistes français of that year, should be sent in October 1881 to take lessons from his father’s great friend Henri Gervex (1852–1929). The fashionable portrait artist who had painted Doctor Émile Blanche so carefully in 1880 [see fig. 19] would not have been Jacques’s personal





Fig. 25  
 JACQUES-ÉMILE BLANCHE  
*Henriette Chabot au piano*  
 (*Henriette Chabot at the Piano*), 1884  
 Private collection

choice, but he accepted his parents' decision. He continued to study with Gervex through the mid-1880s, assisting him with drawings for the mural commission for the Mairie (City Hall) of the 19th *arrondissement* and serving as his head student (*massier*) in 1885, when Gervex and the painter Ferdinand Humbert received financial backing to open La Palette, a commercial venture that recruited students who might not have gained acceptance to the more serious Académie Julian.

Jacques was himself no great admirer of Gervex's official work,<sup>23</sup> but curiously, quite soon his own early work – unintentionally, perhaps – was very much tinged with Gervex's delicate touch and atmosphere. Blanche's first efforts were timid and derivative affairs, but in short order he managed to paint large and quite elaborate compositions, as can be seen in *Henriette Chabot au piano*, 1884 (Private collection), one of his most successful early works [fig. 25]. Here are glimpses of Whistler in the charming model in white and the musical theme (with Blanche's favorite Wagner sheet music on the piano); and also the

influence of Degas, no doubt responsible for Blanche's curious method of composition. In his *Contemplation*, 1883 (Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg, Florida), both Manet and James Jacques Joseph Tissot also played decisive roles [fig. 26, cat. 39]. On the whole, Jacques at this time stuck to fashionable genre scenes involving pretty women or children, usually surrounded by too many flowers [fig. 27]. Later he was to exploit what would make him on occasion a portraitist bordering on genius: his rare and real talent for psychological observation and insight. Blanche would always have a problem being taken seriously as an artist, and this was probably due to his amazing energy. He not only painted for several hours every single day, but managed to write and publish over forty full-scale books, including novels, memoirs, and critical essays, as well as countless articles.

Was he more a writer or was he truly a painter? Most of his critics and even his many friends couldn't work it out: "The versatility of his gifts, the caustic nature of his wit, the opulent fortune which he enjoyed, without excess by the way, meant that Jacques-Émile Blanche was treated badly, and he suffered from this until his dying day," wrote his young friend Daniel Halévy, who continued, "Jacques, with that admirable artist's temperament, a gifted painter, a gifted writer, a gifted musician, but never wholly successful at anything, realized it and



Fig. 26

JACQUES-ÉMILE BLANCHE

*Contemplation*, 1883

Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg (Florida)

Cat. 39



Fig. 27  
 JACQUES-ÉMILE BLANCHE  
*La Petite Fille aux hortensias*  
 (Young Girl in the Hydrangeas), 1887  
 Private collection

became embittered.”<sup>24</sup> To compound these feelings of confusion, poor Jacques was well aware that his father, whom he wanted so much to please, had little regard for his talents. Jacques summed up his inferiority complex in chilling terms through the main character (Georges Collet) in *Aymeris*, his first novel: “My father judges me badly because he has guessed I am a bad painter, a bad lover, bad at everything I want to be.”<sup>25</sup> It is probable that Jacques very early realized he was far more gifted at observing (and criticizing) other people’s pictures than at painting his own, but by then he had already made his decision to be a painter and to abide by it. In 1891, his image as the fashionable Parisian portraitist and man-about-town was cast in stone: “All of Paris knows Mr. Blanche, the very Parisian artist, with his greased hair and slender face, dressed in the swellest of swell London style, who roams about looking for the curious, special, and new events around town.”<sup>26</sup>

In 1885, however, Jacques was still the pupil of Gervex; although they had also become close friends. Jacques organized trips to London for his teacher on several occasions (as, for instance, in May 1883 with Edmond Maître and Paul Robert), and Gervex was diplomatically invited

to join his pupil’s family in Dieppe at Bas-Fort Blanc every summer. Dieppe remained a real anchor throughout Jacques-Émile Blanche’s life. It was certainly an exciting place in the last half of the nineteenth century; but then it had been so since 1820, when Caroline, Duchesse de Berry, copying the British Prince Regent and the success of his Brighton Pavilion, had launched Dieppe as a popular spa by building its hot baths and bathing huts. Soon, Madame de Récamier was summering there with her salon, and the Marquis d’Aguado, a Spanish banker, brought fashionable musicians and actors to amuse the crowds. “To visit once is to be enticed to return,” wrote Jacques – and all sorts of artists agreed – “because of the clear moonlit nights, the spirits of Delacroix, Chateaubriand, Isabey, Bonington, Liszt, Rossini, who converse with Alexandre Dumas, Whistler, Degas, Renoir, Debussy, Gounod! What a lot of ghosts! Artists, princes, political figures, their names alone add a special poetry to the name of Dieppe.”<sup>27</sup>

Jacques was sentimentally and unconditionally attached to Dieppe: “I didn’t choose this place to stay. One led me there; I am there still. A bit of all the people with whom I passed my time is in the air that I breathe there: in its turn, each

street, each stone speaks of someone and of those who were there,” he wrote in his charming little book *Dieppe*, dedicated to his longtime friend Sickert.<sup>28</sup> There was no doubt in Blanche’s mind that Dieppe would never lose its attraction and that his time there would be very important to his development as an artist. Doctor Blanche, once he had been convinced by the combined efforts of his son and wife that young Jacques would become a painter, had set about building his son a professional



studio in Dieppe. It was even the precocious Jacques who found a site for the Bas-Fort Blanc house himself and wrote excitedly to his father: “As for the view, it is not only extensive but extremely beautiful. And this was what I was really after. If you don’t want to build a house, we could at least build a very nice studio until some neighbours come and join us. It is obvious that I am to be a painter. Nothing could be more useful!”<sup>29</sup>

The summer of 1885 was no different from any other: the usual crowds on the beach, in the fish market, and in the port. The large chalets at Bas-Fort Blanc bustled with guests during July and August, as did most hotels and also the modest guesthouses in town, where the more bohemian visitors could afford lodgings. As usual, the *café des Tribunaux* was the required meeting place for artists and writers after a day at the races or an afternoon on the beach [fig. 28; and see figs. 38, 41, and cat. 47].

Unusually for the time, the row of houses at Bas-Fort Blanc were brilliantly lit by gaslight at night. They were also within walking distance of the Moorish-style third version of the casino, under construction in 1885, and the busy center of town. A few doors down from the Blanche chalet, discreet policemen could be seen patrolling outside the villa of Jacques’s friend, the beautiful young Olga Caracciolo [fig. 29], who was probably being visited by her godfather, the Prince of Wales, traveling incognito as usual. (Olga’s mother was the Duchesse Caracciolo). Doctor and Madame Blanche had entertained some of Jacques’s painter friends earlier that summer. Apart from Henri Gervex, both Paul Helleu (1859–1927) and Raphaël de Ochoa (1858–1940) had spent a fortnight. The Lemoine family was in residence: Doctor Blanche’s best friend, John Lemoine, the half-English and very eminent editor of the *Journal des débats*, whose daughter

Fig. 28

JACQUES-ÉMILE BLANCHE  
*Dieppe, le Puits salé, café des Tribunaux*  
 (Dieppe, the Saltwater Well,  
*café des Tribunaux*), 1920  
 Musée Jacques-Émile Blanche, Offranville



Fig. 29  
 JACQUES-ÉMILE BLANCHE  
*The Pink Rose* or  
*Portrait of Olga Caracciolo*, 1888  
 Private collection

Rose [fig. 30] would belatedly marry Jacques in 1895, five days before Madame Blanche's death. The two had met first as mere children in 1871 at the home of Vincent Lanel, Mayor of Dieppe and Rose's uncle. Also, of course, the Halévys were installed at Les Rochers: "There was a summer that no one could remember without nostalgia. There were all our families in Dieppe: Halévy, Lemoine, and Blanche; there were the Sickerts, the young English painter; Whistler and Degas and Cavé came to stay for a fortnight with us. Helleu stayed two weeks with the Blanchés. I cry out with delight at these memories."<sup>30</sup> Daniel Halévy may well be recalling Walter Barnes's hilarious photograph *The Apotheosis of Degas* (The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles), taken on young Jacques's studio steps [see fig. 4, cat. 5]; but that whole summer seems to have been infused with whimsy and fun.

Of course, Dieppe was the ideal place to be based if one spent a lot of time in England, as Jacques did. It seems unlikely that he would have been able to keep up his constant links with London if he had been based in Provence, for instance. If he spent a lot of time on the ferry to-ing and fro-ing to his beloved London, his English friends didn't ever seem to refuse an invitation to visit Jacques in Dieppe. Sickert, of course, was no stranger to Dieppe when he arrived on August 19 to spend a working honeymoon (he had married Ellen Cobden in London on June 10 at the Marylebone Registry Office), taking a "dear little house" with his family on the rue Sygogne behind the Casino. He had first met Jacques in summer 1882 at the house of Mrs. Edwin Edwards, who lived in

London's Soho. She was the agent of German artist Otto Scholderer, whom Sickert wished to meet in an attempt to gain an interview with Scholderer's greatest friend, Fantin-Latour. Whistler, who was then Sickert's teacher, had sent him to Mrs. Edwards. Jacques and Sickert immediately became firm friends, and Jacques, who was keen to meet Whistler, attended the Master's next Sunday breakfast. Jacques was so taken with Sickert that he delayed his return to Dieppe so that they could travel together.

Whistler also made an appearance in Dieppe that summer a few days after Degas finished his pastel. Degas respected Whistler as an artist, but there was no love lost between the two great men, and Degas could see through Whistler's histrionics: "The role of the butterfly must be quite tiring. I prefer to be the old ox, what!"<sup>31</sup> Degas nevertheless wrote to Jacques to ask if he could provide a translation of the controversial "Ten O'Clock Lecture," which Whistler had

delivered to friends in the Cobdens' sitting room after Degas's departure for Paris. The idyllic summers in Dieppe went on well into the 1890s for Jacques-Émile Blanche. Oscar Wilde, Aubrey Beardsley, Arthur Symons, Charles Ricketts and Charles Shannon, George Moore, Max Beerbohm, and many others would replace the guests entertained at the house party of 1885. On August 15, 1893, Doctor Blanche died of cancer in Auteuil. By then, his son had become an established portrait painter in Paris and London with a clientele of rich and famous sitters and also was well known as a writer and critic. In 1895, after his wedding and his mother's death, Jacques decided to build an apartment above his studio in Dieppe. He would soon move away from the crowds to a quieter location in the Calvados region of Lower Normandy, but it was not long before he returned to the Dieppe area to establish a home in the nearby village of Offranville, where he died in 1942.

In 1897, the year Jacques was made a Chevalier of the Légion d'honneur, the Dreyfus affair created a dramatic and sadly definitive rift between Degas and the Halévy family. Jacques, a notorious gossip and scandalmonger, was never really a political animal, and he managed somehow to navigate diplomatically between the two sides, but was far from convinced by either. Six years later, however, the friendship of Jacques and Degas came to an end with the publication of Blanche's 1903 portrait of Degas against the expressed desire of Degas himself. Jacques had promised that he would only have the work recorded by Creveaux, his trusted photographer, so that it could be entered into Jacques's personal album, which documented all of his work with an image next to each entry. According to Jacques, the photographer mistakenly sold a print to an English publisher, and the portrait mysteriously appeared a few weeks later as a full-page illustration in a flattering article about the younger artist. One will never know whether or not Jacques, a very good self-publicist, had himself orchestrated this indiscretion, but he and Degas never spoke to each other again.



Fig. 30  
 JACQUES-ÉMILE BLANCHE  
*Madame Jacques-Émile Blanche*  
*sur fond de paysage*  
 (*Madame Jacques-Émile Blanche*  
*with Landscape in Background*), 1896  
 Private collection

N O T E S

- 1 Degas's own words, "*terrible et aimable*," in a letter to Jacques-Émile Blanche dated October 10, 1885, Bibliothèque de l'Institut de France, Paris, fonds Blanche, MS 6281.
- 2 Simona Pakenham, *Quand Dieppe était anglais*. Dieppe: 1971, p. 33: "À l'autre bout de la plage avait été récemment construite une rangée de maisons, sur l'emplacement de la vieille batterie à canons de Napoléon, le bas fort blanc. De son atelier, Jacques-Émile Blanche pouvait voir passer les bateaux de pêche comme dans une cabine de bateau."
- 3 While coming home from the Lycée Condorcet in 1879, Blanche attempted to jump off the Madeleine-Ranelagh tramway before the stop and badly injured his right knee, resulting in water on the knee and leaving him with a permanent limp.
- 4 See the excellent book by Laure Murat, *La Maison du docteur Blanche: histoire d'un asile et de ses pensionnaires, de Nerval à Maupassant*. Paris: 2001.
- 5 Sylvestre-Esprit Blanche bought the Folie Sandrin (or Cendrin) from a Doctor Prost on March 24, 1821. The large house was situated at 113 rue Trainée (22 bis, rue Norvins today) in Montmartre; sale contract photocopy supplied to the author by the Musée Jacques-Émile Blanche, Offranville.
- 6 Jacques-Émile Blanche, *La Pêche aux souvenirs*. Paris: 1949, p. 36: "Un aliéniste plus qu'un médecin quelconque ou qu'un prêtre, ne fait pas partie du monde."
- 7 Esprit recommended Émile's cousin Félicie (whom he incorrectly named Félicité in one letter) as a bride in a letter to Émile dated "Passy 1849," as quoted by Blanche, *op. cit.*, p. 27.
- 8 Blanche, *op. cit.*, p. 40.
- 9 *Ibid.*, p. 50: "J'ai dit que Dieppe avait failli être mon lieu de naissance. Au moindre bobo on m'y envoyait changer d'air..."
- 10 *Ibid.*, p. 66.
- 11 Jacques-Émile Blanche; trans. and ed. Walter Clement, *Portraits of a Lifetime*. London: 1937, p. 6.
- 12 Blanche, *op. cit.*, 1949, pp. 343–44: "...les Européens allaient à Londres pour y prendre un exemple sans pareil de perfection. C'est en vivant à Londres, jour après jour, que l'on éprouve la plénitude de sa *glamour*, de sa séduction."
- 13 Harold Nicholson, obituary of Jacques-Émile Blanche, *The London Times* (November 27, 1942), front page.
- 14 See Murat, *op. cit.*, ch. 2, pp. 40–47.
- 15 Blanche, *op. cit.*, 1949, pp. 44–45.
- 16 *Ibid.*, p. 75.
- 17 *Ibid.*, pp. 77–78.
- 18 Stanley Olsen and Christopher Newall, *Society Portraits, 1850–1939*. London: 1985, p. 10.
- 19 Jacques-Émile Blanche, "Picpus et le Docteur Goujon," *La Revue hebdomadaire* (December 3, 1938), pp. 13–14.
- 20 Jacques-Émile Blanche, *Propos de peintre: de David à Degas. Première série...* Paris: 1927, p. 134: "My father told me on one occasion: —Yes, it's queer, that painting! *It's really got something*. I was discussing its purchase with Édouard. We had a place to hang it in the dining room, but your mother was afraid of the bather's nudity. I suppose she was right; but we could have put it aside for you, and you could have had it later since you like that painting. I think you may be right."; "Mon père me dit une fois: —Oui, c'est drôle, cette peinture! *Il y a quelque chose là-dedans*. J'ai été en pourparlers pour acheter à Édouard son déjeuner sur l'herbe. Il y avait un panneau à mesure dans notre salle à manger. Ta maman a craint la nudité de la baigneuse. Après tout, elle avait peut-être raison; mais on aurait pu mettre ce tableau de côté, et tu l'aurais eu pour toi plus tard puisque tu aimes cette peinture. Je crois que tu n'as pas tort."

- 21 Eric Darragon, *Manet*. Paris: 1991, p. 327.
- 22 Blanche, *op. cit.*, 1919, p. 237: “Le visage de Renoir était déjà ravagé, creux, plissé, les poils de sa barbe clairsemés, et deux petits yeux clignotants brillaient, humides, sous des sourcils que cette broussaille ne parvenait pas à rendre moins doux et moins bons. Son parler était d’un ouvrier parisien qui grass-eye et traîne ....”
- 23 Henri Gervex’s painting *Rolla* caused a scandal in 1878, but the artist soon became known for his official commissions, which included decorative panels for the Hôtel de Ville (City Hall) of Paris; the Mairies (Town Halls) of the 19th *arrondissement* (ward) of Paris and the village of Neuilly; the Sorbonne, University of Paris; and the Train Bleu restaurant of the Gare de Lyon, Paris.
- 24 Daniel Halévy and Jean-Pierre Halévy, *Degas parle*. Paris: 1995, p. 108: “La versatilité de ses dons, la causticité de son esprit, la fortune opulente dont il jouissait d’ailleurs sans excès valaient à Jacques-Émile Blanche une malveillance dont il souffrit jusqu’à son dernier jour”; “Jacques, cet admirable tempérament d’artiste, doué pour les lettres, doué pour la musique, doué pour la peinture – et ne pouvant réussir, et le sachant et s’aigrissant.”
- 25 Quoted in Claude Pétry-Pariset, *Jacques-Émile Blanche, peintre (1861–1942)*. Rouen and Paris: 1997, pp. 51–52; referred to by Georges Collet in *Aymeris* as “journal de 1890”: “Mon père me juge mal par ce qu’il a deviné ce que je suis: mauvais peintre, mauvais amant, mauvais tout ce que je veux être.”
- 26 *Le Figaro*, December 1891, Bibliothèque de l’Institut de France, Paris, fonds Blanche, MS 4797: “Tout Paris connaît Mr Blanche, ce peintre très parisien, aux cheveux collés sur la tête, la face amaigrie, habillé avec la recherche la plus swell des swells de Londres, qui promène sa curiosité partout où il y a à voir quelque chose de curieux, de spécial, de recherché, de nouveau.”
- 27 Jacques-Émile Blanche, *Dieppe* (Collection *Portrait de la France*). Paris: 1927, p. 4: “Y venir, c’est s’engager à y revenir, par les claires nuits de lune, les fantômes de Delacroix, de Chateaubriand, d’Isabey, de Bonington, de Liszt, de Rossini, doivent converser avec Alexandre Dumas, Whistler, Degas, Renoir, Debussy, Gounod. Que de revenants! Artistes, princes, personnages politiques, leurs noms ajoutent une poésie singulière à celui de Dieppe.”
- 28 *Ibid.*, p. 105: “Je n’avais pas choisi ce séjour. On m’y amena; j’y suis encore. Un peu de tous les individus que j’y ai fréquentés est dans l’air que j’y respire: chaque rue, chaque pierre parlent de quelqu’un et de ceux que fus tour à tour.”
- 29 Bibliothèque de l’Institut de France, Paris, fonds Blanche, MS 7035: “Quant à la vue, elle est d’une étendue et d’une beauté rare. Or c’est surtout cela que je recherchais. Si vous ne voulez pas bâtir une maison, l’on pourrait du moins élever un atelier fort agréable en attendant que des voisins vinsent se grouper autour de nous. Il est évident que je serai peintre. Rien ne pourra m’être plus utile!”
- 30 Daniel Halévy, *op. cit.*, 1995, p. 83: “Il y eut un été, surtout, dont nous ne pouvons chacun nous parler sans attendrissement. Il y avait à Dieppe nos familles, John Lemoine et Halévy et Blanche complètes. Il y avait les Sickert, jeune peintre anglais; Whistler et Degas et Cavé vinrent quinze jours chez nous. Helleu vint aussi quinze jours chez les Blanche. Je hurle de joie à ces souvenirs.”
- 31 Walter Sickert, “Degas,” in *Burlington Magazine*; quoted in Anna Gruetzner Robins, ed., *Walter Sickert: the Complete Writings on Art*. Oxford and New York: 2000, p. 415: “Le rôle de papillon doit être bien fatigant, allez! J’aime mieux, moi, être le vieux bœuf, quoi?”





Fig. 31

WALTER BARNES

*The Halévy Family and Their Friends at Dieppe*

1885 (printed ca. 1900)

Museum of Art

Rhode Island School of Design

Cat. 6

[Top row (l. to r.): Ludovic Halévy, Walter Sickert, Jacques-Émile Blanche, Ellen Cobden Sickert

Middle row: Marie ("Yoyo") Lemoinne, Rose Lemoinne, Albert Boulanger-Cavé

Bottom row: Louise Halévy (standing), Élie Halévy, Mme Léon Halévy, Valentine Halévy, Mme Émile Blanche, Catherine Lemoinne (standing) with arm around Daniel Halévy, Edgar Degas (standing)]

## SUDDENLY LAST SUMMER

Walter Sickert and Edgar Degas's *Six Friends at Dieppe*

“THE YOUNG AND BEAUTIFUL SICKERT,” as Edgar Degas called him, stands to the left in Degas’s haunting portrait group, *Six Friends at Dieppe*.<sup>1</sup> It is a striking profile of the young Walter Richard Sickert as a rather vulnerable “buck.” In 1885, Sickert – virtually unknown in France and only beginning to make his mark in the London art world as the pupil of James Abbott McNeill Whistler – was just starting out on a long career that would make him a venerated British modernist. He wears a rumpled, light-colored checked coat with a touch of white collar protruding over the lapels. A black fedora is in his gloved hand; his slightly too long trousers are bagging at the knee. Walking stick in hand, legs astride, left foot turning outwards, Sickert, never able to stay in one place for any length of time, looks ready to bolt. The upturned collar of Sickert’s overcoat is a telltale sign of his smart scruffiness. Watching Degas draw the black outline of the coat collar, Ludovic Halévy walked over to Sickert and started to turn it down when Degas called out: “Leave it. It’s fine.” Halévy shrugged his shoulders and said, “Degas always looks for the accidental.”<sup>2</sup> Nothing else was accidental about the making of the pastel.

What was Sickert doing in the company of this close-knit group of Degas’s friends? “It was said, it represents an Englishman who turns his back anti-French because he despises them,” Sickert informed painter Ethel Sands,<sup>3</sup> but this was not true. No British artist was more pro-French than Sickert. The immaculate Jacques-Émile Blanche, his back towards Sickert, looks equally resolute, but Degas was amusing himself. The foundations of Blanche and Sickert’s lifelong friendship were laid that summer, and no one would prove more loyal to the irascible Sickert than Blanche. They had met for the first time in London during 1882 and agreed to meet again in 1885 at Dieppe, the summer haunt of the Blancches and a favored resort of Sickert’s family, who had long-standing associations with the area. Sickert, who had met Degas two years previously, “learned with delight...” that Degas “was staying with the Ludovic Halévys, next door to Doctor Blanche’s Châlet on the sea-front by the Casino.”<sup>4</sup> In his highly entertaining and richly detailed ongoing homage to a friendship that lasted until Degas’s death, Sickert also related to Ethel Sands the

humorous account that Degas gave to Oscar Wilde of Sickert's 1883 visit.<sup>5</sup> According to Degas, Sickert attentively examined every Degas work in sight at the 21, rue Pigalle apartment and later the next day at the 19 bis, rue Fontaine St. Georges studio. It was not until the summer of 1885 that Sickert really began to understand the greatness of Degas's art.

Alongside the twenty-five-year-old Sickert (1860–1942), Degas arranged three generations of his French friends. Albert Boulanger-Cavé (1830–1910) at fifty-five was the oldest. Degas's host in Dieppe, Ludovic Halévy (1834–1908), was next at fifty-one. Henri Gervex (1852–1929) would turn thirty-three on September 10, 1885. Jacques Émile Blanche (1861–1942), his usual self in a tweed coat that was probably made by one of his favorite British tailors, was a year younger than Sickert; and Daniel Halévy (1872–1962), Ludovic's second son, peeking out from behind the portly Blanche, was not quite thirteen. Just when Degas worked on the portrait may be deduced more precisely by piecing together the comings and goings of the various parties who holidayed in Dieppe that summer. The newly married Sickert and his wife Ellen Cobden Sickert, daughter of the political reformer Richard Cobden, took a house on August 19 near the seafront at 21, rue Sygogne. One of Ellen's three sisters, Jane Cobden, and Dorothy Richmond, former student at the Slade School of Art and a friend of Sickert and the Cobden sisters, came to stay for a while. Sickert's parents and his four brothers were nearby. When Jane left in September, Whistler took her place in the house, writing: "I am staying with Sickert of whom, for the moment, I greatly approve."<sup>6</sup>

Degas arrived on August 22, a few days after the Sickerts, to stay with his old friends Ludovic and Louise Halévy. The Halévys had taken a villa, Les Rochers, on the sea front next door to the "châlet" of Doctor Blanche, Jacques's father, at Bas-Fort Blanc.<sup>7</sup> Gervex and artists Paul-César Helleu (1859–1927) and Raphaël de Ochoa (1858–1940) were staying with Jacques and his family. At some point at the end of August, Degas made an excursion to Mont St. Michel with Boulanger-Cavé in tow and arrived back in Dieppe on September 5. On September 8, Ludovic Halévy recorded in his journal that "Degas has started a pastel representing Cavé, Jacques, Gervex, Sickert, Daniel and me,"<sup>8</sup> suggesting that Degas did not start work on *Six Friends at Dieppe* until his return from Mont St. Michel. Sickert tells us that Degas presented *Six Friends* "with a profound bow to Madame Blanche when it was finished."<sup>9</sup> He must have worked on the portrait with lightning speed, because by September 12, Degas was back in Paris, where he attended a production of *Guillaume Tell* at the Paris Opéra.<sup>10</sup>

With its arresting rhythmical arrangement of six distinct individuals, *Six Friends at Dieppe* is one of Degas's most complex portraits. Sickert provided a detailed account of his memories of Degas making the pastel in a letter written

about 1913 to painter Ethel Sands. Sickert explained that Degas had started by drawing him first. “He began with me and gradually added one and another.”<sup>11</sup> Three years later, Sickert explained that Degas had conceived the other five figures as a cohesive group, drawing one figure after the next, so that one figure had grown “on to the next in a series of eclipses, and serving, in its turn, as a *point de repère* [reference point] for each further accretion.”<sup>12</sup> Although Sickert used the word “eclipses,” surely he meant “ellipses,” defined as “a plane closed curve in which the sum of the distances of any point from the two foci is a constant quantity.”<sup>13</sup> Possibly Degas may have used an improvised compass for the overlapping curved forms of his five French friends.

Another account by Sickert suggests that Degas may have used a plumb-line to determine the arrangement of the figures. Sickert remembered that “during a rest,” Degas called on Gervex to take a look, and he saw “Gervex, in the most natural manner in the world, advance to the sacred easel, and, after a moment or two of plumbing and consideration, point out a suggestion.” As Sickert recalled: “The greatest living draughtsman resumed his position at the easel, plumbed for himself, and, in the most natural manner in the world, accepted the correction.”<sup>14</sup> As Degas was fond of explaining to Sickert, he wanted to give the “effect of the real by false means,”<sup>15</sup> and the calculating precision behind Degas’s method of drawing each overlapping, asymmetrically arranged figure in this seemingly relaxed casual group of male friends comes as no surprise.

According to Sickert, Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres’s portraits of *Madame Clément Boulanger, née Marie Élisabeth Blavot, later Madame Edmond Cavé*, early 1830s, and *Hygin-Edmond-Ludovic-Auguste Cavé*, 1844 (both The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York) were points of departure for the portrait. By 1885, Albert Boulanger-Cavé had inherited these portraits [figs. 32, 33] of his mother and stepfather (the Director of Fine Arts under Louis-Philippe), the latter of whom Sickert mistakenly identified as Degas’s friend. Degas, who jumped at any chance to see an Ingres picture, must have been delighted when his old friend inherited these portraits.<sup>16</sup> Sickert pointed out the connection between *Six Friends at Dieppe* and the Cavé portrait in a letter written to Blanche in 1935, but he must have been prompted to do so because he remembered a conversation with Degas about Boulanger-Cavé’s newly acquired works by Ingres: “By the way, I have compared the Ingres of Cavé, with our group by Degas made in your studio... It’s the same vision, the same light,” Sickert announced to Blanche.<sup>17</sup> Degas took a high viewpoint, looking down at the seated Boulanger-Cavé. He is shown more in profile than the three-quarter view of his stepfather, calling attention to his long, aristocratic nose, but he shares the wistful expression given by Ingres to Boulanger-Cavé’s stepfather, whose name the stepson added to his own.



Figs. 32, 33

JEAN-AUGUSTE-DOMINIQUE  
INGRES

*Madame Clément Boulanger,*  
*née Marie Élisabeth Blavot,*  
*later Madame Edmond Cavé, early 1830s (?)*

*Hygin-Edmond-Ludovic-Auguste Cavé*  
(1794-1852), 1844

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York



Fig. 34  
 EDGAR DEGAS  
*The Rehearsal of the Ballet on Stage,*  
 probably 1874  
 The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Ingres (French, 1780–1867) was on Degas’s mind more than usual that summer in Dieppe. Sickert arranged to have the impoverished Dieppe photographer Walter Barnes take pictures of the jolly group, and Barnes shot several images. Degas with sisters Rose, Marie (“Yoyo”), and Catherine Lemoinne and brothers Élie and Daniel Halévy appear on the steps leading into Blanche’s studio in one. Sensing the awe in which the others held him, Degas here cast himself in a humorous conceit after Ingres’s *The Apotheosis of Homer*, 1827 (Musée du Louvre, Paris). The painter – sur-

rounded by his young friends in this photo [see fig. 4, cat. no. 5] and in the other by a bigger crowd of several generations of old and new friends, each group gathering on Blanche’s studio steps – has had a bit of fun with Ingres’s picture of Homer’s admirers gathering on the temple steps. In the other by Barnes [see fig. 31, cat. 6] – presumably taken on the same day because Degas, the Lemoinne sisters, and the Halévy brothers are wearing clothes identical to those in first-mentioned photograph – they are joined by Boulanger-Cavé; Ludovic and Louise Halévy; a jaunty Sickert and his new wife, Ellen; Blanche and his mother; and Nanine and Valentine Halévy.

The women in the photographs adored and admired Degas. His dear friend Louise Breguet Halévy, Ludovic’s wife, who had known Degas since childhood, “had a brain eminently fitted for philosophic speculation,” and one can imagine the conversations they must have had as she accompanied Degas on their many excursions.<sup>18</sup> The three young daughters of Degas’s close friend John Lemoinne – whom Degas nicknamed “the little friends” (“*les petites amies*”) – went with Degas all around Dieppe that summer.<sup>19</sup> “Ask Daniel to tell our dear little companions that I miss our happy walks very much,” Degas instructed Ludovic Halévy upon Degas’s return to Paris.<sup>20</sup> All of the women in the Sickert party made an impression on Degas, including Dorothy Richmond, a friend of Sickert and his wife.<sup>21</sup> The following January in Naples, Degas again saw the young New Zealander Dorothy Richmond, a promising artist and noted beauty. When her family compared Degas’s appearance in the flesh to the photograph of himself and Sickert, they decided that “I was better than on the paper.”<sup>22</sup> Sickert had “begged” him “with his well known charm” to go and see this “delightful person to whom he [Sickert] had taught the art of respecting me.”<sup>23</sup>

Sickert's wife Ellen and his sister-in-law Jane Cobden, who also was holidaying with them in Dieppe, but who probably left for England before the photographs were taken, were independent women. They upheld the political beliefs of their late father, Richard Cobden, the great proponent of Free Trade, and both sisters campaigned in Ireland for Irish Home Rule. The two mixed in the socialist circle of British reformer and artist William Morris (1834–96). Ellen decided that Degas's pictures "are simply magnificent. I almost think them the finest in the world."<sup>24</sup> Ellen would provide the money to buy the four magnificent works by Degas in the Sickert collection, including *The Green Dancer* (*Dancers on the Stage*), ca. 1880 (Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid), and *Mlle Bécot at the café des Ambassadeurs*, 1885 (The Morgan Library, New York), both purchased in 1886; *The Rehearsal of the Ballet on Stage*, 1873–74 (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York), purchased in 1889 [fig. 34], and *Woman at a Window*, ca. 1871–72 (Courtauld Institute of Art, London), purchased 1902.

Of the Cobden sisters, Jane was the most strong-minded and political. She encouraged Ellen to follow her lead and campaign in Ireland on a speaking tour in the autumns of 1887 and 1888. The next year, Jane was one of two women members elected to the London County Council, the newly established governing body for London. Given what we know about Degas's seeming lack of interest in forming romantic attachments with women, it is rather surprising to discover that he developed a crush on "Janie" Cobden. After seeing her off on the ferry back to England, Degas declared himself jealous of everyone else's affection for her and sent messages of his disappointment when she did not join the Sickerts on a visit to him in Paris later in autumn 1885. "You could do worse, Janie, dear," Ellen wrote by way of admonishment.<sup>25</sup> The fourth woman in the Sickert party was the outrageous Lady Archibald Campbell. She probably did not stay with them, but she joined Sickert and the others at the house they took at 21, rue Sygogne to hear Whistler give a version of his "Ten O'Clock" lecture. In *Arrangement in Black: The Lady in the Yellow Buskin* (Portrait of Lady Archibald Campbell), ca. 1883 (Philadelphia Museum of Art), Whistler celebrated her independent spirit by depicting her wearing a walking costume [fig. 35], a "uniform" favoured by the "New Woman." On seeing the portrait in Sickert's company at the 1889 Paris Universal Exposition, Degas commented: "She is returning to Watteau's cellar."<sup>26</sup>

Fig. 35  
 JAMES ABBOTT  
 MCNEILL WHISTLER  
*Arrangement in Black:*  
*The Lady in the Yellow Buskin*  
 (Portrait of Lady Archibald Campbell), ca. 1883  
 Philadelphia Museum of Art





Fig. 36  
EDGAR DEGAS  
*Study of a Jockey (M de Broutelles)*, ca. 1884  
National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Not even a twinkle of the presence of Janie, or any of the other women in the party, is evident in *Six Friends at Dieppe*. It is as if Degas took a slice of the photograph of the group seated on the steps and airbrushed the women away before setting out to draw his casual but studied portrait of his male friends. This deliberate lapse in what could have been an opportunity for gender studies makes what seems to be a spontaneous gathering of male friends appear on reflection to be artificial and contrived. We have Sickert's word for it that Degas worked on *Six Friends* in Blanche's Dieppe studio, which was apparently large enough to allow all his artist friends to labor in it together.<sup>27</sup> There is no hint of the physical structure of the steps in *Six Friends*, but the men are sitting and standing on imaginary risers, just as they sat and stood on the real steps leading to the studio. This accounts for the odd spatial incongruities in *Six Friends* that allow us to look down at Boulanger-Cavé and Gervex and across and up at the others.

The undelineated steps still do not fully explain all of the intricacies of the extraordinary arrangement of figures in *Six Friends*. There is the unusual placement of Sickert, who stands apart but holds his corner so well against Blanche. Undoubtedly, Degas's lack of familiarity with this young British interloper made him think about ways in which he could show him being part of the party but not belonging with Degas's own longtime French friends.

The racing pictures that Degas had made in the early part of the 1880s provided the solution to this problem. There has never been any suggestion that Degas worked on these pictures at Dieppe, but a drawing of one "gentleman" jockey, inscribed "de Broutelles," must have been made that summer [fig. 36]. It has been identified as a pencil sketch of the Marquis Théodore Albert de Broutelles (1840–after 1920),<sup>28</sup> marine painter and friend of the Duchesse Caracciolo. De Broutelles summered at Dieppe in the house next door to the Blanche chalet, not far from the villa of the Duchesse.<sup>29</sup> Sickert remembered that de Broutelles joined Degas and "Helleu, Ochoa, Jacques Blanche, and me" when they "went out in a party one day with the vague intention of sketching, into a field behind the Castle,"<sup>30</sup> a structure that had overlooked Dieppe since medieval times. Taken together, this evidence suggests that the Degas drawing of de Broutelles as a gentleman jockey can either be dated to summer 1885 or possibly to October 1884, when Degas also visited Dieppe.

As Sickert recalled, one day when out sketching with de Broutelles behind the castle, Degas preached his ideas to de Broutelles about the imaginative possibilities of drawing: "I always tried...to urge my colleagues to seek for new combinations along the path of draughtsmanship."<sup>31</sup> Degas may have been thinking of a different composition for *The Gentleman's Race, Before the Start*, 1862 (Musée d'Orsay, Paris), which he reconfigured, as Jean Sutherland Boggs points out, to create a more synthetic pastel version of a frieze of horses and jockeys [fig. 37, cat. 59] in *Before the Race*, ca. 1885 (Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design).<sup>32</sup> As Boggs suggests, the de Broutelles sketch closely



Fig. 37  
EDGAR DEGAS  
*Before the Race*, ca. 1885  
Museum of Art  
Rhode Island School of Design  
Cat. 59





Fig. 38  
 WALTER SICKERT  
*Dieppe Races*, 1885  
 Yale Center for British Art, New Haven  
 Cat. 46

relates to the jockey on the far right in *Before the Race*, as well as to the central rider in pose, if not appearance; so, in a sense, it is a drawing of a seventh Dieppe friend. The low wooden railing that slices across the legs of the compact group of horses in *Before the Race* also appears in Sickert's *Dieppe Races*, 1885 [fig. 38, cat. 46], which Degas must have seen that summer in Dieppe. Sickert's picture explains why Degas would have drawn de Broutelles, who

must have participated in a racing event at Dieppe wearing his "silks." A single detail from Sickert's picture, which was painted from direct observation, has an artful emphatic effect in Degas's carefully composed *Before the Race*, which should be dated no earlier than summer 1885.

Degas was never shy about taking apart his own compositions and reordering his figure groupings to produce new and different versions of an older image. Knowing that his racing pictures were on his mind that summer in Dieppe, it may be suggested that Degas was looking "for new combinations along the path of draughtsmanship" in the compactly organised group of standing horses and riders, set off by a solitary cantering horse and jockey [fig. 39] in *Before the Race*, 1882. This pastel is a springboard for the settled group and the coltish Sickert in *Six Friends*.

*Six Friends at Dieppe* is an heroic commemorative portrait to the ages of man. No generals or other heroes are here, but nineteenth-century men who fight indifference and melancholy and bear the weight of other "modern" psychological states. Degas's own broodings about his approaching old age haunt the fabric of this portrait. During the previous two years, Degas had lost three close male friends. Édouard Manet's death in 1883 at fifty-one years of age had

Fig. 39  
 EDGAR DEGAS  
*Before the Race*, 1882  
 Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute,  
 Williamstown (Massachusetts)



hit Degas hard. Also in 1883, the death of 48-year-old Alfred Niaudet, an old school friend and cousin of Louise Halévy, was another reminder of his own mortality. Degas's "singular intelligent friend," the Italian painter Guiseppe de Nittis, died in 1884 at thirty-eight. We know that Degas had a morbid fear of growing old from Degas's later quarrel with Blanche. Part of the problem with Blanche's portrait of Degas was that Degas thought it made him look too old. Old men, especially bachelors such as Degas and Boulanger-Cavé, were pitied in nineteenth-century France, and Boulanger-Cavé – in his fifty-fifth year and only a year younger than his stepfather (who died in his fifty-sixth year) – was already old. The age ladder of Hippocrates, which was "endlessly repeated" at that time in France, put the beginning of old age for men at fifty-five.<sup>33</sup>

Old age was believed to be a sickness, and once men reached the age of fifty-five, it was assumed that there would be a sudden onset of physical decline with a loss of hair and teeth and other kinds of physical deterioration. In old age, abstinence from all manner of things, including travel, was advised. "Old people are like old furniture; they last only so long as they stay put," advised J. H. Reveillé-Parise, author of *Traité de la Vieillesse hygiénique, médicale et philosophique*.<sup>34</sup> No wonder Boulanger-Cavé is melancholic in Degas's portrait. Boulanger-Cavé does not appear as a revered old man, but rather sits at the bottom of the heap, crushed by the younger people who stand above him. No wonder Sickert looks so young and attractive. No one could have been "as young as Sickert was that summer in Dieppe," said the Irish novelist and critic George Moore, who visited at the Blanche chalet sometime that summer.<sup>35</sup> *Six Friends* points up Sickert's exuberant youthfulness. Degas, standing so close to the younger painter in the photograph that Barnes took of them together [fig. 40], must have wanted to be in Sickert's shoes and even went to the extent of flirting with Sickert's sister-in-law.

That summer in Dieppe when Sickert met Degas for the second time has acquired a mythic significance in Sickert's historiography as the moment when Sickert abandoned his Whistlerian ways and became a figure painter. In 1885, Sickert was essentially a landscape painter. In the Barnes photograph of Degas and Sickert, Sickert poses in the same natty light suit that he wears in the group photograph, walking stick in hand, a pochade box slung over his shoulder, suggesting that he had been out painting landscapes that day. Perhaps this was the day that Degas accompanied him, together with Blanche, de Broutelles, Helleu, and Ochoa, when they set off with "the vague intention of painting landscape behind the Castle."

One day, Degas paid a visit to see Sickert's most recent Whistlerian "sunlight pochades" (cf. *Dieppe Races*, fig. 38). Rather cuttingly, Degas told him that the smooth application of oil to panel looked to be "painted like a door," probably meaning that Sickert was relying too closely on Whistler's own landscape sketches. For these, Whistler had developed a method of applying oil



Fig. 40

WALTER BARNES  
*Sickert and Degas at Dieppe, 1885*  
 Tate Museum Archives, London

color in broad horizontal strokes of thin paint, so that the pictorial effect of the brushwork dominates the representative function of the picture as a landscape.<sup>36</sup>

There is more than a suggestion here that Degas must have seen the favorite pupil of his old rival Whistler as prize bait. Some of his rudest remarks about Whistler apparently were made to Sickert that summer. Exasperated by Whistler's dandified, capricious manner, Degas quipped: "Playing the butterfly must be very exhausting. I prefer the part of the old ox, what?" This may also have been a suggestion that he was a better, more stable father figure and role model for Sickert to follow.<sup>37</sup> Sickert's memories of Degas working on *Six Friends* suggest that he was watching Degas with an eagle eye as Degas set about making his pastel. Although his apprenticeship as Whistler's pupil lasted several more years, that summer in Dieppe Sickert started making figure drawings and taking an interest in a more constructed kind of art.

The group in *Six Friends* is bathed in the intense light of the setting sun in late summer, denoted in strokes of orange-red color, and Sickert's left eye is closed tight against the glow. The orange-red strokes, worked over with a layer of white, bind these figures together in the timeless light-filled space that took on an increasingly golden glow both figuratively and physically as the years progressed.

Sickert would return to Dieppe many times after the summer of 1885, and like every artist and writer who passed through the town, would stop by the café des Tribunaux. There, the poet and critic Arthur Symons wrote his first editorial for the *Savoy*, the short-lived magazine of high British decadence for which Aubrey Beardsley was the art editor. There, after his release from Reading Gaol, Oscar Wilde was entertained by a group of raucous young French poets from Montmartre. As if Sickert were sensing the nostalgic associations that the café des Tribunaux would acquire, he painted it in the fading summer light in 1890 [fig. 41, cat. 48]. The painting relates closely to an earlier etching of this famous café that may, in fact, have served as a starting point for the flat gabled façade of the canvas. In the etching *Dieppe, café des Tribunaux* of summer 1885 [cat. 47], the view appears in reverse because of the printing process. Reducing details of the façades of buildings to an arrangement of flat shapes, a way of seeing that Sickert learned from Whistler, became a distinctive hallmark of many of Sickert's Dieppe pictures.

The Hôtel Royal, which Sickert claimed had "left its mark on his talent," was another beloved Dieppe motif of the 1890s. The violet sky of twilight and the grey-green shadows on the white façade of the hotel were a favorite combination of Whistler for his own twilight landscapes of Dieppe. In Symons's poem "At Dieppe" (dated September 16, 1893), which was dedicated to Sickert, these colors evoke a mood of nostalgic longing: "the long hotel, acutely white,/ Against the after-sunset light/Withers grey-green, and takes the grass's tone."<sup>38</sup> In Blanche's long essay on Dieppe, which was also dedicated to Sickert, he remembers coming upon Sickert, probably in summer 1893 at the end of a

scorching summer's day, and finding him lingering in front of the "greenish-grey" hotel "under a sky where a rose ring in the violet mist marked the moon." Sickert was making color notations of the twilight effects in a sketchbook.

Blanche eventually would buy *L'Hôtel Royal, Dieppe* (now lost), the painting that Sickert made from this sketch.<sup>39</sup> In later life, Blanche's encounters with Sickert in Dieppe took on mythic significance for Blanche. Blanche's essay dedicated to Sickert was written when they met by chance in front of the Church of Saint-Jacques and were reconciled after many years of not seeing each other. It was Blanche's view that Sickert was "the Canaletto of Dieppe," and, significant in Blanche's mind, these meetings with Sickert always took place in front of one of Dieppe's many landmarks. A number of figures people the Grande Rue in the afore-mentioned etching of *Dieppe, café des Tribunaux* (two nuns in the first state were erased in the second state), but very few figures appear in the later Dieppe pictures.

Sickert began painting Dieppe and its sights in earnest after moving to Dieppe following his separation and divorce from Ellen in 1898. He lived there until 1905, making occasional trips back to London and spending periods of time in Paris. Symons had praised Dieppe's picturesque aspects in a travel essay. The impermeable Gothic Church of Saint Jacques, the Place Nationale with its statue of Duquesne, the fishing quarter of Le Pollet, the modern street Aguado and the narrow, dark streets behind, all caught Symons's eye. It is tempting to think that Sickert accompanied Symons around Dieppe, because Sickert approached the town with a similar tourist's imagination. Many of his Dieppe paintings depict motifs described by Symons.

After that summer of 1885 in Dieppe, Sickert's visits to Degas's studio, the "lighthouse of his existence," became so numerous that it would be impossible to list the number of times they met. Sickert's letters and art criticism are filled with references to Degas, to the pictures that they discussed, and to the exhibitions and picture sales that they attended. Sickert loved Degas's "rollicking



Fig. 41

WALTER SICKERT  
*Café des Tribunaux, Dieppe, 1890*  
 National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa  
 Cat. 48

sense of fun” and never forgot a particularly memorable conversation that took place in 1900 about Monet’s paintings of water lilies, when Degas told him that he had never wanted to lose consciousness in front of a pool. After Sickert moved to Dieppe, he made regular trips to Paris, and there were periods when he saw Degas on a weekly basis. Sickert had an attentive interest in each and every aspect of Degas’s methods of making art. Often, Sickert’s is the most informed voice about a particular picture. The exquisite craftsmanship of Degas’s pictorial methods set a standard for Sickert, whether he was making a drawing, an oil painting, or a print. “Degas was the greatest artist the world has ever known,” Sickert announced in 1889, and he never changed his mind.

As a man with a theatrical past (he worked briefly as an actor before becoming an artist), Sickert was fascinated by Degas’s sparkling images of urban entertainment; but he was well aware that only by observing the urban spectacle surrounding him in London would he find a way to make his mark as an artist. Taking the English music hall as a subject for his paintings, drawings, and prints

was a daring choice. Sickert’s own collection of a *café-concert* and two ballet pictures by Degas was the inspiration for endless images of female performers on the London music-hall stage. Like Degas, Sickert was fascinated by the gesticulating forms of these female entertainers, and like Degas, he was drawn to the spectacle of the performer and the audience seen from unusual viewpoints under artificial light. Between 1887 and 1892, in a large series of such pictures, he explored different ways of representing the British music hall. Taking a seat in the fourth row back, he followed Degas’s practice of making small pencil sketches of the performers, musicians, and audience, which were the starting points and aids to memory for complexly composed oil paintings achieved in his Hampstead studio. In 1889, Sickert organized his own London Impressionist exhibition and paid homage to Degas’s importance for himself and the other participating artists in his preface to the catalogue. Sickert’s contribution to the show included *P. S. Wings in the O. P. Mirror* (Musée des Beaux-Arts, Rouen) and *Little Dot Hetherington. The Boy I Love is up in the Gallery* (private collection), two sparkling London music-hall pictures that combine real and reflected images of the audience and a young female performer, seen from an unusual viewpoint and illuminated by artificial light.

Sickert had seen Degas’s *The Box at the Opéra*, 1880 (private collection), at an 1882 Impressionist show in London and typically had stored a memory of it for future

Fig. 42

WALTER SICKERT

*The Old Bedford: Cupid in the Gallery*, ca. 1890  
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

Cat. 49





Fig. 43

WALTER SICKERT

*The Trapeze*, ca. 1920

Yale Center for British Art, New Haven

Cat. 53

use. In the 1890s, Sickert turned his attention solely to the audience in a series looking up at the “boys in the gallery,” among which is *The Old Bedford, Cupid in the Gallery*, ca. 1890 [fig. 42, cat. 49]. The boys staring down at the performer on stage from the cheapest seats in the house, surrounded by the ornate decoration of the stage, is a haunting image of the music hall’s magic for London’s poor working class. The elaborate and studied means that Sickert took with the architectural detail, the carefully planned perspective, and the seemingly casual group of figures reflect Degas’s own working practice; but the image is Sickert’s own. *The Trapeze*, ca. 1920 [fig. 43, cat. 53], a late picture, is a rare example that pays specific homage to a Degas composition: in this instance, *Miss LaLa at the Cirque Fernando*, 1879 (National Gallery, London), which Sickert saw initially in Paris when he visited Degas in autumn 1885.

Sickert was in his fifties when he first referred to *Six Friends at Dieppe* in his art criticism. After his return from France in 1905, Sickert had been a driving force behind some of the most important British artists of the younger generation, who acknowledged him as the lion of British modernism. Although Sickert never painted a group portrait of Harold Gilman, Charles Ginner, Spencer Gore, and the other artists in his Camden Town group, the role that Degas had fulfilled for Sickert as a young artist was a model for his generous conduct towards the younger generation in Britain.

In 1886, Sickert, wanting to remember the pastel and the image of him depicted in it, wrote to Blanche to ask for a photograph of it. Forty years later he would include a photograph of *Six Friends at Dieppe* in one of his own retrospective exhibitions. Sickert at age seventy-three wrote about *Six Friends* again. By then he was living in the seaside town of Margate, where he could see the steamboats crossing to Dieppe in summer. Pulling out a treasured reproduction of *Six Friends*, which must have been the photograph that Blanche had sent him nearly fifty years before, or else the one in his copy of *...Sedici opere di Degas...*, where the pastel is reproduced as *Ritratti*,<sup>40</sup> he compared it to the Cavé portrait by Ingres. It was then that he noticed that “it’s the same vision, the same light.” That golden summer in Dieppe stayed in Sickert’s mind forever.

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NOTES

- 1 Marcel Guérin, ed., trans. Marguerite Kay, *Degas' Letters*. Oxford: 1947, p. 108.
- 2 Walter Sickert, "Degas," *Burlington Magazine* (1917), cited in Anna Gruetzner Robins, ed., *Walter Sickert, the Complete Writings on Art*. Oxford and New York: 2000, p. 414: "Laissez. C'est bien." "Degas cherche toujours l'accident."
- 3 Unpublished letter from Walter Sickert to Ethel Sands, undated (it may be assigned to 1913 on the basis of external evidence), TG 9125/64, Hyman Kreitzman Research Centre, Tate Museum, London: "La [sic] représentent un Anglais qui tourne le dos anti Français parce qu'il les méprise."
- 4 Sickert, "Degas," in Gruetzner Robins, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 414.
- 5 Walter Sickert letter to Ethel Sands, *op. cit.*
- 6 Whistler letter to C. W. Dowdeswell, September 18, 1885; M. F. MacDonald, P. De Montfort, N. Thorpe, eds., "On-line edition of the Whistler Correspondence (1855–1903), 2004," Centre for Whistler Studies, [http://www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/correspondence/datetest.asp?year=1885&month=.09&\(GUW 08606\)](http://www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/correspondence/datetest.asp?year=1885&month=.09&(GUW 08606)).
- 7 Sickert, "Degas," in Gruetzner Robins, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 414.
- 8 Unpublished notebooks of Ludovic Halévy, September 8, 1885, cited in Daniel Halévy, with texts presented by Pierre Halévy, *Degas parle*. Paris: 1995, p. 22.
- 9 Sickert, "Degas," in Gruetzner Robins, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 414.
- 10 See the chronology in Jean Sutherland Boggs, *et al.*, *Degas*. New York and Ottawa: 1988, pp. 382–83.
- 11 Walter Sickert letter to Ethel Sands, *op. cit.*
- 12 Sickert, "Degas," in Gruetzner Robins, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 414.
- 13 This definition comes from the *Oxford English Dictionary*. In Gruetzner Robins, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 414, I accepted "eclipses," but I now suspect it was either Sickert's error or, more likely, it was a typesetting error in the *Burlington Magazine*.
- 14 Walter Sickert, "O Matre Pulchrà," *Burlington Magazine* (April 1916), in Gruetzner Robins, *op. cit.*, p. 407.
- 15 Sickert, "Degas," in Gruetzner Robins, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 415.
- 16 For a full discussion of the portraits and their provenance, see Gary Tinterow, Phillip Conisbee, and Hans Naef, *Portraits by Ingres: image of an epoch*. New York: 1999, pp. 394–401.
- 17 Walter Sickert in a letter to Jacques-Émile Blanche from Margate, which appeared in Jacques-Émile Blanche, *Souvenirs sur Walter Sickert, précédés de souvenirs sur Jacques-Émile Blanche, par Daniel Halévy*. Alençon: 1943; published by Daniel Halévy after the deaths of Blanche and Sickert: "Apropos, j'ai compare [sic] les Ingres de M. Cavé, avec notre groupe par Degas fait [sic] dans ton atelier... C'est la même vision, la [sic] même éclairage." The manuscript letter in the Institut Néerlandais, like the book, is dedicated to Daniel Halévy.
- 18 Jacques-Émile Blanche, trans. and ed. Walter Clement, *Portraits of a Lifetime*. London: 1937, p. 50.
- 19 Daniel Halévy and Jean-Pierre Halévy, *op. cit.*, 1995, p. 79.
- 20 Degas letter to Ludovic Halévy, September 1885, in Guérin, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 106.
- 21 Degas confirmed Dorothy Richmond's identity in a letter to Ludovic Halévy, written from Naples on January 7, 1886: "But I must not forget to tell you that Sickert signalled my arrival in Naples to family Richmond from Australia [in fact New Zealand], one of whose daughters appeared in profile in the watch of the unfortunate Barnes at Dieppe"; in Guérin, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 115.
- 22 Degas letter to Ludovic Halévy, January 7, 1886, in Guérin, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 115.
- 23 *Ibid.*
- 24 Ellen Cobden Sickert letter to Jane Cobden, undated (internal evidence suggests that it was written in December 1885), Cobden Archives, 47D, West Sussex County Council, Record Office.
- 25 Ellen Cobden Sickert letter to Jane Cobden, September 1885, Cobden Archives, 47D, West Sussex County Council, Record Office.
- 26 Sickert, "Degas," in Gruetzner Robins, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 421.
- 27 Blanche, 1937, *op. cit.*, p. 31.
- 28 This biographical information comes from Jean Sutherland Boggs, *et al.*, *Degas at the Races*. Washington, D.C.: 1998, p. 130.
- 29 Daniel Halévy provides this information in his unpublished notes from 1884, private collection; cited in Henri Loyrette, *Degas*. Paris: 1991, p. 530.
- 30 Sickert, "Degas," in Gruetzner Robins, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 415.
- 31 *Ibid.*
- 32 Boggs, *op. cit.*, 1998, pp. 129–30.
- 33 Peter N. Stearns, *Old Age in European Society: the case of France*. London: 1977, p. 24.
- 34 J. H. Reveillé-Parise, *Traité de la Vieillesse hygiénique, medical et philosophique*. Paris: 1853; cited in Stearns, *op. cit.*, p. 26.
- 35 George Moore, *Conversations in Ebury Street*. London: 1924, p. 138.
- 36 *Ibid.*
- 37 *Ibid.*
- 38 Arthur Symons, *The Collected Works of Arthur Symons*, vol. 1. London: 1927, p. 187.
- 39 Jacques-Émile Blanche, *Dieppe* (Collection *Portrait de la France*). Paris: 1927, p. 60.
- 40 Sickert's copy of *Edgar Degas. Sedici opere di Degas. Maestri Moderni*, IV. Florence: Libreria della Voce, 1914, is in the library of the Courtauld Institute of Art, London.





Fig. 44

EDGAR DEGAS

*Six Friends at Dieppe* (detail), 1885

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## POWDER ON PAPER

### Degas, Pastel, and *Six Friends at Dieppe*

WHEN EDGAR DEGAS created *Six Friends at Dieppe* in 1885, he was fifty-one years old, at the height of his career, and had turned almost entirely from oil paint to the use of pastel in a progression that had begun by the mid-1870s. By 1890, Degas had created over six hundred works in the latter medium.<sup>1</sup> During this period of prodigious creative activity, Degas pushed the bounds of pastel much beyond its traditional handling and thoroughly exploited it to fulfill his particular expressive purposes. Several factors contributed to this evolution. Degas's vision was failing, and the process of working in oil paint – a smooth, reflective medium that requires precise color mixing and refined brushwork – was too painstaking a burden for his eyesight. What is more, at a time when he was also experiencing personal financial difficulty, with a consequent dramatic shift in his lifestyle, pastel allowed him to create work with greater speed and less expense (as compared to oil paint), providing for expanded sales and a necessary increase in income.<sup>2</sup>

The medium of pastel unquestionably had a natural appeal for Degas, always an impassioned experimenter with respect to materials and technique and a lifelong perfectionist in his investigation of form and composition. As others have observed, pastel is ready to use, needs little or no preparation of its receiving surface (support), and requires no drying time. It allows for spontaneous and direct expression, and with it an artist may produce a variety of lines and broad passages. Of most importance, the medium yields to the immediate readjustment and reworking of subject matter. In a sense, pastel is both drawing (line) and painting (color) combined, a perfect vehicle for Degas, who was above all a consummate draftsman and fervent in his devotion from youth until life's end to the graphic tradition of Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (French, 1780–1867).<sup>3</sup>

With regard to oil paint, Degas was aware of his lack of technical knowledge of the medium, complaining on occasion of its difficulties to one of his dealers in Paris, Ambroise Vollard: "What a cursed medium oil is anyway! How is one to know the best canvas to use – rough, medium or fine? As for the preparation, is white lead better, or glue? Should there be one layer, two, or three?" ;



Fig. 45  
EDGAR DEGAS  
*Jockey, Red Cap*, ca. 1866–68  
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Rhode Island School of Design  
Cat. 56

and finally declaring in frustration (albeit untruthfully), “I will never touch a brush again.”<sup>4</sup> After youthful years spent copying paintings by artists such as Andrea Mantegna (Italian, 1431–1506), Titian (Italian, 1485–1576), and Nicolas Poussin (French, 1594–1665), Degas regretted that the traditional method of slowly building paintings – layering color over tone to create light, shadow, and form, with the accompanying complications of underpainting and glazing – eluded him. His sometimes impetuous technical investigations of the oil medium would occasionally produce unfortunate results with regard to the physical stability of his paintings.

Throughout the nineteenth century, developments in chemistry made new vibrant pigments available to artists in the various commercially prepared and widely available materials purchased from their suppliers. For the Impressionists, the expansion of their palette was a momentous advance. Important as that may have been, some of the new oil colors (as were some of the earlier materials) proved to be sensitive to the effects of light, moisture, and time. Although convenient to use and easy to obtain, the commercial oil paints also presented some well-recognized problems and limitations: the pigment and oily medium could separate unpredictably while being used, the uniformly rich consistency from one color to the next was considered monotonous by some, and yellowing of the oil film on the canvas while drying was responsible for undesirable tonal changes in paintings.<sup>5</sup> Aware of such consequences of working in oils, Degas wrote from the United States in February 1878 to artist James Jacques Joseph Tissot (French, 1836–1902) in anticipation of the transatlantic shipping of his painting *Portraits in an Office: The Cotton Exchange, New Orleans* (Musée des Beaux-Arts, Pau): “In the fortnight I intend to finish the said picture. But it will not be possible for it to leave with me. A canvas scarcely dry, shut up for a long time, away from light and air, you know that would change it to chrome yellow no. 3. So I shall not be able to bring it to London myself or to have it sent there before about April.”<sup>6</sup>

Despite the obstacles, throughout his life Degas pursued mastery of oil painting, using the medium both in the traditional manner and also in ways that were less orthodox, but suited to his own unique requirements. Examples of these are the freely painted works that he made using oil paint thinned with turpentine, paintings executed on oiled paper rather than on canvas, and those done in *peinture à l'essence*. In the latter technique, the oily component of the paint is first extracted as much as possible through blotting to create a pastier mixture. This is then thinned with turpentine and applied with a brush, as in *Jockey, Red Cap*, ca. 1866–68 [fig. 45, cat. 56]. The qualities of thinned oil paint were not unlike those of the water-based paints Degas also used frequently, such as distemper and gouache. Each of these dries quickly, allowing for the nearly immediate application of successive paint layers, and produces a matte surface finish when dry. Degas’s preference was to use the thinned oil paint on a

paper support (most often mounted onto a board), whose absorbency contributed to the speed with which he preferred to work. Pastel, which shares some important characteristics with the media previously mentioned, remained his favorite material and the one with which he produced the largest body of work. It was also the medium chosen by Degas to execute *Six Friends at Dieppe*.

Pastel (fabricated chalk) has been available to artists since the sixteenth century. It is made with ground pigments, fillers (calcium carbonate, talc, and clays), and binders (glues and gums) mixed into a paste, rolled into individual sticks by hand, and then slowly air-dried. Because any particular pigment contains properties that affect the texture and durability of the finished pastel product, manufacturers customize the proportions and types of additives used with the ground colors in order to maximize the handling qualities and the chromatic brilliance of the sticks.<sup>7</sup> When Degas began using them, pastel sticks had not changed greatly in general formula for centuries, but the range of available colors had increased significantly. In 1887, five hundred different colors could be purchased, where only one hundred were available in 1865. Three levels of density – hard, semihard, and soft (*dur*, *demi-dur*, and *tendre*) – were available to Degas and could be had from at least one firm in Paris.<sup>8</sup> The new softer varieties made possible the bolder, more lively repertoire of strokes so desired by artists of the time.

Of the pastel-makers in Paris, S. Macle (founded 1720), operated by Henri Roché on rue de Grenier St-Lazare; Maison Sennelier (founded 1887) on Quai Voltaire; and Pastels Girault (founded 1780), whose product was sold through artists' materials shops throughout the city, were among the best known; and all three still make pastels today. Degas is reported to have purchased his pastels from at least two of them [fig. 46].<sup>9</sup> The vivid, intense color derived from a fine-quality pastel is realized only when a particular color stands alone, not when it is blended with another to create a third different hue on the support. For that reason, a large range of tints of any given hue, made by the manufacturer into individual sticks by combining pure pigment with a compatible white-pigmented filler, were standard in any pastel box.

Degas's early works in pastel, such as *Portrait of Mme Edmondo Morbilli*, 1869 (Private collection), were executed in the classic eighteenth-century manner of carefully laying down strokes of colors side by side on the support and blending their edges together with a tool such as a small pointed paper or leather stump, a cloth, or the fingers to "sweeten" the medium.

Fig. 46

Pastel box belonging to Degas, found in his studio after his death; 8¼ x 7¾ x 1½ in. (closed), containing sticks in varying hues of violet and green, cotton batting, and a stump or eraser of some organic material such as gum. Musée d'Orsay, Paris





Fig. 47

Using wet and dry pastel and also gouache, Degas worked over a monotype whose image served as the foundation for *Dancer with a Bouquet*. The superimposed white lines indicate where the monotype's image falls on the sheet bearing the pastel drawing (rectangle) and where Degas added a strip of paper to expand the lower part of the composition (horizontal line).

Rubbing the powders deeply into the crevices of the paper's texture in this way produces a smooth, continuous surface and reinforces the illusionistic impact of the work. In his series of stark seascapes from 1869 in the collection of the Musée d'Orsay, Paris, Degas used the technique to a different end, shrouding his subjects in luminosity and atmosphere.

A decade later, when Degas made pastel his primary focus, his handling became significantly looser and exploratory. He frequently employed the medium both in unadulterated form and in combination with distemper and gouache brushwork. In addition, his ventures into printmaking led Degas to use monotypes extensively as foundation images over which he would draw with pastel [fig. 47]. RISD's *Dancer with a Bouquet*, ca. 1877–80 [fig. 48, cat. 25], is an example of the type of amalgamation of media and intermingling of techniques he frequently employed. Here he combined pastel and gouache over a monotype ground and added strips of paper to extend its dimensions as he felt necessary to the developing composition. Degas also experimented with permutations of the pastel itself by moistening the sticks before using them, by mixing pastel shavings with liquid to create a type of paint, and by selectively steaming the pastel in place on the support to create a paste that could be worked directly.<sup>10</sup> In one of Degas's notebooks, he recorded the recipe for a particular *pastel-savon* (pastel soap). Although this product has not yet been identified as having been used in any of his work, it seems as if the medium would have resembled the crayon or the present-day oil pastel, whose waxy character eliminates the necessity of using fixative to help bind the material to its support.<sup>11</sup> Obviously aware that some of the new pastel colors faded when exposed to light, Degas would leach certain sticks of some of their fugitive color by placing them on his window sill, which allowed the daylight to fade them before he actually drew with them.<sup>12</sup>

By the early 1880s, Degas's use of aqueous media in his pastels had declined, with the exception of those he continued to experiment with for use as fixatives, and he chose instead to work in a more straightforward manner generally, drawing with pastel on paper in its pure, dry stick form, sometimes with stumping, and then leaving it undisturbed. Fixative, applied between layers of pastel as they were built up, became an essential component of this method; and Degas, in his search for a formula that would keep the powdered marks in place without saturating or glossing the medium, turned to his friend, the painter Luigi Chialiva (Swiss, 1842–1914) for a “secret” recipe that the former effectively utilized.

The basic system for structuring form in Degas's technique at this time depended on overlaid linear strokes of pastel placed either parallel or perpendicular to each other. Within these networks of markings, colors organized in alternating layers activate the ground and bring life to shadow, light, and depth. This approach to building the overall surface effect – comparable to that of an intricately woven textile – became the means through which Degas would



Fig. 48

EDGAR DEGAS

*Dancer with a Bouquet*, ca. 1877–80

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Cat. 25



Fig. 49  
Reverse of *Six Friends at Dieppe*,  
showing canvas backing to which paper  
is adhered and the whole tacked and  
taped to the wood strainer.

eventually produce figural works wherein human subjects became enlarged, centralized, and more abstract, and objects, if used at all, became devices for reforming pictorial space, rather than clues to a narrative. *Six Friends at Dieppe* may be placed within this technical realm, although a variety of other handling methods are visible in the pastel as well. The circumstances surrounding the portrait were that Degas, while on holiday in the town of Dieppe on the Normandy coast in the late summer of 1885, assembled a group of his friends in the studio of the young painter Jacques-Émile Blanche and executed the pastel. Depicted at left is Walter Sickert, and on the right in descending order are Ludovic Halevy and his son Daniel, Blanche, Henri Gervex, and Albert Boulanger-Cavé.

The large size of the portrait (45¼ x 28 in.), while common for pastel portraits since the eighteenth century, was a highly unusual choice for Degas at this time in his career, and it was not until the 1890s that he executed works on paper approaching this scale. Equally atypical is his use of a pre-made pastel support consisting of paper glued onto canvas and the whole fastened to a wood strainer, in fashion like the canvas and stretcher of an oil painting [fig. 49].<sup>13</sup> Édouard Manet (French, 1832–83) evidently used this support format for his pastels, and artist

Walter Sickert (British, 1860–1942), writing a word of technical advice to artists in 1924, warned that it should be avoided:

Manet was in the habit of doing pastels on canvasses prepared with a ground of white distemper. Now a canvas is a drum, and a drum vibrates, and vibration tends to detach powder. I have seen the famous and beautiful pastel head by Manet of Mademoiselle Suzette Lemaire, in which the brown velvet of the hat has fallen down across the exquisite colour of the face like soot on the marble of a Venetian palace – an irrevocable catastrophe.<sup>14</sup>

Degas's preferred supports for pastel were usually sheets of moderately textured laid papers (at times in such colors as pink, blue, and green) and varieties of medium-weight wove paper. Also, he worked to a great extent on tracing paper, less for its surface than to be able to transpose, reuse, and combine his large stock of images. Later, he composed monumental bathers and Russian dancers on sheets larger than that of *Six Friends*. For his many pastels made up of two or more abutted pieces of paper, a method that Degas relied upon as a compositional device both before and after 1885, he or his mounter, Père Lezin, would perform the delicate operation of aligning the sheets on a rigid paper



Fig. 50

A magnified view of the surface of *Six Friends at Dieppe* shows the way in which the extremely rough texture of the paper assists in holding the particles of pastel in place.

board and gluing them down. It therefore seems likely that in the case of *Six Friends at Dieppe*, Degas used the materials that were available to him in Dieppe at Blanche's studio, where this portrait was undertaken in September 1885, or in the art-materials shops there.

The paper itself for *Six Friends at Dieppe* is also quite different in its rather heavy weight and extremely rough and fibrous texture from that which Degas normally used. In fact, it is seen infrequently in his work, but occurs in such examples as *Étude de Ciel*, 1869 (Musée d'Orsay, Paris); *At the Milliner's*, 1882 (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York); and *Femme tenant son cou*, ca. 1884 (Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge, Massachusetts).<sup>15</sup> It is fortunate that such a paper, so receptive to pastel, was available to Degas in Dieppe. Its dramatic peaks and valleys (its "tooth"), visible microscopically, aid greatly in holding the powdery medium on the support [fig. 50]. Through examination of the unframed *Six Friends* at RISD, it was observed that the drawing bears no traces of fixative, and that consequently some transfer of pastel powder to the original glass had occurred.

Degas may also have borrowed Blanche's pastel box to execute *Six Friends*. Blanche's writings indicate that artists visiting him in Dieppe often worked in his studio with his materials.<sup>16</sup> At first glance, the palette Degas chose for the portrait seems minimal and subdued, but upon closer inspection about twenty separate colors are identifiable. Most appear as sets of complementary hues consisting of greens (most likely chrome green, viridian, and emerald green), red-oranges (Venetian red or vermilion) and their tints, and blues (Prussian blue, cerulean or cobalt blue, and ultramarine) and their tints. In addition, there is an earthy yellow (yellow ochre or Naples yellow), at least two different whites (a bluish white and a yellowish white), medium browns (raw





Fig. 51

Detail of the short strokes of layered pastel used by Degas to the face of Henri Grevex.

and/or burnt sienna) and their tints, and a warm medium gray. Small touches of a bright cool pink (possibly rose madder) appear in some of the faces, and black occurs as outlining. On the whole, this choice of colors (particularly in his use of earth tones) is decidedly similar to the palette of other Degas pastel works from around this time: namely, his exquisite suite of nudes included in the Eighth Impressionist Exhibition of 1886, where parallels in the handling of the medium are also easily seen.<sup>17</sup> The bare paper of *Six Friends* – noticeable in large areas but particularly in the background that surrounds the figure of Sickert, alone at left – has discolored somewhat over time and has darkened from its original lighter color (visible along the edges of the strainer) to a mid-range brown, a fate common to many works on paper. Due primarily to acid content inherent in the paper and to exposure to light, this darkening of the support constituting the background affects perception of the relative intensities of the drawn colors, which therefore may have appeared more lively earlier in the drawing's history. Conversely, the colors in the faces of Blanche and young Daniel Halévy may seem overly heightened because they present a greater level of contrast with the now-darkened paper.

Degas utilizes finely layered, short, sharp strokes of color to describe the faces of Boulanger-Cavé, Gervex, and Blanche in particular, building up the surface with pastel to the point where the paper fibers, viewed under magnification, are permanently reordered in the direction of his marks and are embedded in the pastel medium [fig. 51]. These are the most strikingly rendered areas of the work, where the artist uses highly pitched whites to illuminate and accentuate these forms alone and to define the direction of the sunlight, which falls from the front right onto the scene. With its longer and broader strokes and play of greens, light oranges, and brown, Gervex's wool coat is patterned to a high degree and set against the smoky-textured, cool-dark-blue hues of Boulanger-Cavé's overcoat. Degas describes Blanche's jacket quite literally as a tweed through a controlled crisscross hatching technique; while in Sickert's clothes, the lines are eccentrically scribbled horizontals and verticals that no longer identify a type of fabric, but rather extend far beyond the bounds of the figure into the empty background of the composition. A field of markings, layered over the contours of Sickert's torso and legs in particular, diffuses his figure and presses it deeper into the picture plane – an apparent attempt by Degas to create a type of shallow atmospheric perspective – whereas in the group of figures to the right of the composition, he relies rather on the relative proportion in scale from one figure to the next to convey spacial recession.

Degas reestablishes the figures' forms using brown and gray pastel throughout his process of working and reworking, wherein balance between contour and the greater areas of texture is constantly negotiated. In some areas, contour lines are overtaken by the edges of tactile shapes, and in others they reemerge at the surface level. Finally, blacks and browns are used alternately in



Figs. 52, 53

*Six Friends at Dieppe* [cat. 1] and an infrared photograph of it in which *pentimenti* suggest that the figure of Cavé at bottom right was previously positioned at bottom center of the composition. A diagonal axis bisects the design from the lower left of the bottom edge to the upper right of the composition, supporting the idea that a pyramidal structure was originally considered for the organization of the group of figures at the right.



Fig. 54

EDGAR DEGAS

*Ballet Girl*, ca. 1886–88

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Cat. 62

line work to accent the figures' gestures and to enliven the strong diagonals of the composition. A very recent infrared photograph of the pastel provides some information regarding development of the composition [figs. 52, 53]. Clearly evident in the *pentimenti* (layers of underdrawing) are Degas's experiments with the precise placement of the figures, particularly in the lower two-thirds of the sheet, where much reworking of the composition is apparent. Here, Degas attempts to affirm the shape of the negative space between the backs of Sickert's legs and the figures of Gervex and Boulanger-Cavé.

Degas also seems unwilling to define Sickert's walking stick strongly, preferring rather to delineate the right-pointing bracket-shape space surrounding it and to deliberately repeat and emphasize similar shapes in several places throughout the composition: near Sickert and Blanche's profiles, near Daniel Halévy's face and shoulder; and where Gervex's right shoulder and the hem of Blanche's jacket meet.<sup>18</sup> Also, there is enough evidence to speculate that the unit comprising the figures of Gervex and Boulanger-Cavé might have once been positioned about three inches higher in the composition, where a scumbling of light-colored pastel has an arch shape reminiscent of the curve of Gervex's right shoulder and where the diagonal brown line through the chest of Gervex (emphasized by Degas) forms an exact parallel to the line defined by the upper edge of Boulanger-Cavé's right shoulder. The burst of white pastel in the lower left corner appears to be a way for Degas to resurrect the ground in order to correct the layout.

In RISD's *Ballet Girl*, 1887 [fig. 54, cat. 62], Degas used a similar technique to redefine the composition. As was determined at RISD by examining the edges of the sheet, the original color of the paper supporting this drawing was blue, and Degas used matching blue pastel to sharpen the brown contour lines around the dancer's legs and torso. Around this time, Degas was immersed in creating sculptures in clay and in wax, including a bas-relief. It is not surprising to find him building *Six Friends* as he would one of his plastic three-dimensional works: by both additive and subtractive means. Forms continually evolve and emerge during the working process and are then modified, retained or excised, so that the method of developing imagery is comparable in both two and three dimensions: in either pastel or wax or clay.<sup>19</sup> In Dieppe, Degas was deprived of his usual means of arriving at a final composition because of his situation as an artist/visitor far from his own studio: the possibilities allowed by using tracings or adding or cropping off strips of paper. That he had limited time and a type of support whose size and proportions were difficult to alter may in part account for the changes indicated by the *pentimenti*.

One method of using pastel occurs beyond the predominant technique in *Six Friends*. Boulanger-Cavé's coat and the area below Daniel Halévy's shoulder have a painterly appearance, and it is possible that Degas, in an effort to quickly cover areas of the paper when forming his composition, may have

brushed some water onto the pastel ground as a type of underpainting. In these places, the paper fibers do not seem to be disturbed, in contrast to areas where the pastel has been rubbed into the surface; and there is no appreciable thickness of medium, despite which these areas are saturated with color. Some of the black lines laid over the whitish pastel of Daniel's face seem also to have been applied with a brush, while the crusty, coagulated pastel in Daniel's straw boater and in the brim of the Gervex's top hat appears to be a type of pastel paste. Another notable technique used most possibly as a final touch was that of sgraffito (from the Italian "to scratch," a term traditionally reserved for fresco painting, another medium often referred to in Degas's notebooks and letters). Degas used a type of pointed tool to incise the pastel in order to vary its texture and add emphasis to the edges of particular forms. In *Six Friends*, this effect is very subtle, but it is visible in Boulanger-Cavé's coat and hat. Sgraffito is also quite evident in the blades of the black fan in the foreground of RISD's *Dancer with a Bouquet* [see fig. 48] and is a technique that Degas used often in his work.

Taken as a whole, the mountainous group of compressed and overlapping figures at right, the isolation of Sickert at left, the ambiguous background space out of which the subjects advance, and the vacuous stares of the sitters, who refuse to look toward the viewer or to engage with each other at all, make for a work that is compelling both formally and psychologically.<sup>20</sup> The snapshot cropping of the composition and the existence of the figures in a shallow depth of field, not unlike that of a photograph, add to their seeming competition for the picture's space. Degas had a well-known interest in photography and used it to inform other of his artistic works. During his stay in Dieppe, he was involved in posing his friends and acquaintances for portrait shots taken by Walter Barnes, a professional photographer who had been hired by the group to record their holiday together (see the discussions in other essays in this catalogue).

Degas was working in Dieppe that summer within a rather restricted time frame and in an unfettered state of mind. By all accounts he enjoyed himself hugely. That he never seems to have taken the pastel to a higher level of finish may have been due simply to the circumstances of being away from his own Paris studio, to the limited duration of his stay in Dieppe, and to his desire to present the portrait as a gift to Madame Blanche before departing for Paris. *Six Friends* was executed quickly, apparently without the use of studies or sketches beforehand, and seems to have never been reworked, as was Degas's notorious but usual habit. It is unknown whether Degas signed the portrait at the time he finished it or later. The pastel was in the possession of the Blanche family from 1885 until Degas's falling out with Jacques-Émile Blanche in 1903, when it was returned to Degas in Paris by way of a "messenger who had on his back a porter's harness": a method of transport that would strike fear in the hearts of anyone concerned about protection of the delicate, oversized object.<sup>21</sup> Later, *Six Friends* came into the hands of Parisian dealer Paul Rosenberg, where,

according to Blanche, the drawing was placed in a frame of Florentine Renaissance style, consistent with the taste of that particular establishment (although not likely to have been what Degas would have chosen). This surrounds the pastel today.<sup>22</sup> Following an overseas voyage for *Six Friends*, it was purchased in 1931 by RISD from Durand-Ruel's New York gallery and given a permanent home in Providence.

During preparation for the current exhibition at RISD, the ancient, thin, and brittle plate glass was replaced with a protective laminated and shatter-resistant variety, and spacers of a greater thickness than the originals have been installed to keep the glass a safe distance from the delicate pastel medium. To reduce the drum effect of canvas stretched over a strainer (inherent in the support format of the work), a slight bed of a cushioning material has been added between the back of the canvas and the strainer.<sup>23</sup> The frame has been modified to accept the increased depth of the newly sealed package inside which the pastel now exists, protected from dust and changes in humidity. These measures will undoubtedly assist in the pastel's long-term preservation at the Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, whose great good fortune it is to have the work in its permanent collection.

- 1 Paul André Lemoisne, *Degas et son oeuvre*, 4 vols. Paris: 1946.
- 2 See Daniel Halévy, *Degas parle*. Paris: 1960 (translated and edited by Mina Curtiss as *My Friend Degas*. Middletown: 1964, pp. 22–23), for Halévy’s recollections about Degas’s health, his rue Pigalle studio, and the circumstances concerning the loss of the Degas family business; and Walter Richard Sickert, *A Free House!* London: 1947, pp. 154–55, for Sickert’s explanation of Degas’s transition to pastel. See also Denis Rouart, *Degas à la recherche de sa technique*. Paris: 1945, translated by P. DeSantis, S. Fisher, and S. Fletcher as *Degas in Search of His Technique*. New York: 1988, p. 69; also Anne F. Maheux, *Degas Pastels*. Ottawa: 1988, pp. 21–24. Both Rouart and Maheux provide comprehensive analysis and interpretation of Degas’s working methods and were indispensable references for this essay.
- In 1985, Maheux, then Conservator of Graphic Art at the National Gallery of Art, Ottawa, conducted an examination at RISD of its Degas pastels, which has been instrumental to our understanding of these works.
- 3 Extensive and outstanding technical research has been published on the subject of Degas’s use of pastel. The references listed in the Selected Bibliography of this catalogue (pp. 106–07) form the foundation of this author’s understanding of the topic.
- 4 Ambroise Vollard and Randolph T. Weaver, *Degas, An Intimate Portrait*. New York: 1937, p. 69.
- 5 Fortunately, a large segment of independent painters relied on a small group of color merchants in Paris who made their paints by hand according to dependable formulas, assuring a reasonable quality for their products; Anthea Callen, *The Art of Impressionism: Painting Techniques & the Making of Modernity*. New Haven and London: 2000, pp. 98–100, 103–05. This is an extremely thorough source of information regarding all aspects of Impressionist painting techniques and media.
- 6 Letter from Degas to Tissot in Marcel Guérin, ed.; trans. Marguerite Kay; *Degas Letters*. Oxford: 1947, p. 30.
- 7 See James Watrous, *The Craft of Old-Master Drawings*. Madison (Wisconsin): 1957, pp. 112–17.
- 8 Information concerning the manufacturing of pastel was offered by Isabelle Roché, descendant of Henri Roché and the current proprietor of the family’s *maison du pastel*, in an interview with the author in Paris, November 2004, and subsequent correspondence; Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Department of Prints, Drawings, and Photographs.
- 9 Literature from both the Sennelier and Roché firms claim Degas as their client. The top of the closed pastel box [fig. 46] bears a design composed of a winged dragon with the letters “S” and “M,” and “Paris,” an early version of the Roché label. Degas also reportedly obtained brilliantly colored pastels from his friend, the artist Luigi Chialiva, who had provided Degas with a fixative recipe for pastel and was his advisor on methods for using and retouching his works in oil paint. See Vollard, *op. cit.*, p. 68; and also Rouart, *op. cit.*, pp. 18–19.
- 10 See Rouart, *op. cit.*, pp. 43–53, and Maheux, *op. cit.*, pp. 28–29, for expanded information about Degas’s pastel technique.
- 11 In Theodore Reff, *The Notebooks of Edgar Degas: a catalogue of the thirty-eight notebooks in the Bibliothèque Nationale and other collections*, 2 vols. Oxford: 1976, NB 33, p. 3v; “*mélanges des couleurs / à l’eau / avec de la glycérine / et de la soude // on pourrait faire / du pastel-savon // potasse au lieu / de soude.*”
- 12 See Vollard, *op. cit.*, pp. 62–63.
- 13 The rarity of this type of support was discussed with Roy Perkinson, Head of Paper Conservation, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and George Shackelford, Chair, Art of Europe, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, who also generously provided me with access to Degas pastels in the collections and shared information about Degas’s materials and techniques. Harriet K. Stratis, Conservator of Prints and Drawings, The Art Institute of Chicago, conducted a major conservation survey of Degas’s pastels in RISD’s permanent collection in May 2003 and specifically noted the uncommon support format of *Six Friends*. Her examination provided RISD with valuable information regarding the condition of the pastels in RISD’s care, and she most generously shared her knowledge of the working methods of Degas, providing another important resource for the preparation of this essay.
- 14 Walter Sickert, “Mr. Burrell’s Collection at the Tate,” in Anna Gruetzner Robbins, ed., *Walter Sickert, the Complete Writings on Art*, Oxford: 2000, p. 480.
- 15 I would like to thank Ann Roquebert, Conservateur, Musée d’Orsay, Paris, for her suggestions concerning my research and for information she most generously provided concerning Degas’s pastel box in that museum’s collection. Odile Michel, Chef du service de la régie des oeuvres, Musée d’Orsay, kindly allowed me to visit storage rooms at the museum. I am especially grateful to Craigen Bowen, Philip and Lynn Straus Conservator of Works on Paper and Deputy Director of the Straus Center for Conservation at the Harvard University Art Museums, for permitting me to examine unframed pastels by Degas in the permanent collection of the Fogg Art Museum and for providing technical information about the works there.
- Also, in 1980, Bowen conducted a conservation survey of RISD’s works on paper by Degas, which has provided useful documentation as well.

In her 1985 analysis “A Study of Five Degas Pastels in the Fogg Art Museum,” in the conservation files at the Straus Center for Conservation at the Harvard University Art Museums (courtesy of Craigen Bowen), Pia DeSantis, an intern at the Center at that date, observed that the coarse paper of *Femme tenant son cou* seems to be a paper that incorporates pumice, prepared specifically for pastel. The character of the paper Degas used for the execution *Six Friends* is very similar to that of the Fogg’s pastel.

16 See Rouen, Musée des Beaux-Arts (exhibition catalogue), *Jacques-Émile Blanche, peintre (1861–1942)*. Paris: 1997, for an overview of Blanche’s work in painting and pastel; I am grateful to Catherine Reguault at the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Rouen, for permitting me to view pastels by Blanche in storage at that museum and for providing access to archives there. Another portrait by Blanche, *Élie and Daniel Halévy at Dieppe*, exists in a private collection in Paris. This work, executed in oil with touches of pastel on canvas, 29¼ x 24 in., dated 1884, was graciously made available to me by its owner for examination in November 2004. See also Callen, *op. cit.*, for information concerning standard canvas formats.

That same summer, Jacques-Émile Blanche executed a pastel portrait, *Daniel Halévy, de face et de profil* [see fig. 5], which quite possibly has a similar support structure, although it is not as large in size as *Six Friends at Dieppe*. This portrait exists in a private collection, and little technical information other than its dimensions and a general description of its media is available. Certainty of the type of support Blanche used for its execution awaits verification. During the 1880s, Blanche, whose primary subject was portraiture, chose mainly “salon”-size canvases for his oil paintings and paper mounted to canvas for his pastels. The proportions of Blanche’s vertical rectangles are very similar to those of *Six Friends* and again suggest Degas’s use of locally available materials.

17 See for example, *Le Tub*, 1886 (Musée d’Orsay, Paris), and *Woman Bathing in a Shallow Tub*, 1885 (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York), which were both included among the group of nudes in the Eighth Impressionist Exhibition. See also *Portrait de Zacharian*, 1886 (Private collection, Paris), shown in the same exhibition, and another work entitled *Le Tub*, 1886 (Hill-Stead Museum, Farmington, Connecticut), for technical similarities with *Six Friends*.

18 This form is also used repeatedly in the charcoal-and-pastel drawing *Three Dancers*, ca. 1889 (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston). Walter Sickert, in Sickert, *op. cit.*, 1947, p. 196, recounts an interesting episode regarding the development of the composition of *Six Friends*: “. . . During a rest [for the sitters], I was somewhat surprised to see Degas, by a gesture, invite Gervex to look at the pastel upon which he was working, and Gervex, in the most natural manner in the world, advancing to the sacred easel, and, after a moment or two of plumbing and consideration, point out a suggestion. The greatest living draftsman resumed his position at the easel, plumbed for himself, and, in the most natural manner in the world, accepted the correction. . . .”

19 See the essay, “To Make Sculpture Modern,” in Theodore Reff, *Degas: the artist’s mind*. Cambridge (Massachusetts): 1987, pp. 239–69, for an investigation of Degas’s sculpture in the 1880s.

20 See Jean Sutherland Boggs, *Portraits by Degas*. Berkeley: 1962, pp. 69–72. Boggs provides a comparison of RISD’s *Six Friends at Dieppe* with Degas’s other work in portraiture. Particularly relevant is her discussion of *The Mante Family*, ca. 1884 (Philadelphia Museum of Art).

21 Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Department of Prints, Drawings, and Photographs, in a letter regarding *Six Friends* from Daniel Halévy to John Maxon, then Director, Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, dated February 4, 1953 [see pp. 108–111].

22 Jacques-Émile Blanche, *Cahiers d’un artiste*, vol. IV. Paris: 1917, p. 89. For information on the subject of Degas and his frames, see Isabelle Cahn, “Edgar Degas, Gold or Colour,” in Eva Mengden, *et al.*, *In Perfect Harmony: Picture and Frame 1850–1920*. Amsterdam: 1995, pp. 129–38.

23 Harriet K. Stratis made the recommendation of using of a layer of quilt batting in the void between the support and the wooden strainer to minimize movement in the paper/canvas. The RISD Museum is grateful to her for providing this and other information concerning the housing of Degas’s pastels in its permanent collection during her May 2003 visit to RISD’s Museum.



## Checklist of the Exhibition

### INTRODUCTION

The Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, purchased Edgar Degas's *Six Friends at Dieppe* from the Durand-Ruel Gallery, New York, in 1931. Degas had originally given the portrait to the mother of Jacques-Émile Blanche, who passed it on to her artist son. In 1903, Blanche painted a portrait of Degas and presented it to him as a gift. When the portrait was "unintentionally" reproduced in an article about Blanche in *The Studio* magazine, Degas was infuriated. As a result, he sent a porter to retrieve *Six Friends at Dieppe* and to return the offending portrait to Blanche. That version of Blanche's portrait of Degas was destroyed in 1931 by a fire at an exhibition at the Glaspalast, Munich. Another version, exhibited here, is now in the collection of the North Carolina Museum of Art.

1

EDGAR DEGAS

French, 1834–1917

*Six Friends at Dieppe*, 1885

Pastel on wove paper laid down on canvas

45¼ x 28 in.

Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design  
Museum Appropriation Fund 31.320



1

2

JACQUES-ÉMILE BLANCHE

French, 1861–1942

*Portrait of Edgar Degas*, ca. 1903

Oil on canvas, 27½ x 22 in.

North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh

Purchased with funds from  
the Museum Purchase Fund

3

JACQUES-ÉMILE BLANCHE

artist, *Portrait of Edgar Degas*, 1903,

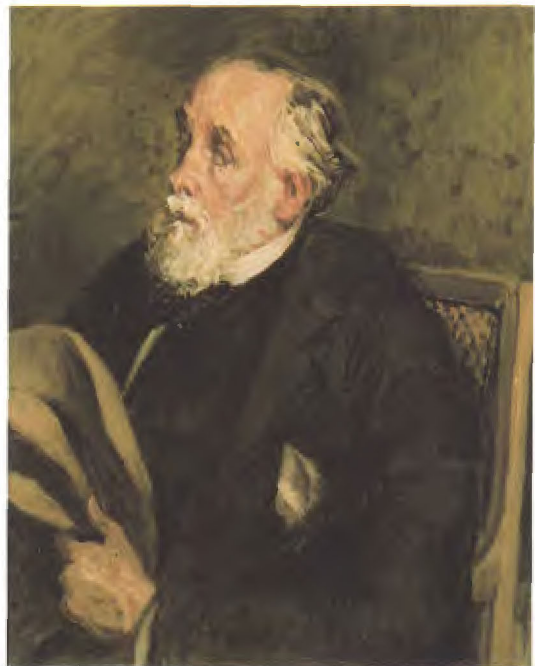
illustrated in Henri Frantz,

"Jacques-Émile Blanche: Portrait Painter,"

vol. XXI, no. 83, *The International Studio*

(January 1904), p. 193. Rhode Island School

of Design Library



2

LUDOVIC HALÉVY (French, 1834–1908)  
and his son

DANIEL HALÉVY (French, 1872–1962)

In 1953, the director of the Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, received a letter from Daniel Halévy, the youngest person portrayed in *Six Friends at Dieppe*. Then eighty years old, Daniel recalled the summer of 1885 when Degas had been the Halévys' guest at Dieppe. Images taken then by hired photographer Walter Barnes show Degas with his friends. In the 1890s, Degas took his own photographs of the Halévy family at their home in Paris. Degas worked closely with Delphine and Guillaume Tasset, who enlarged certain prints.

Degas's long association with Ludovic and his wife Louise Breguet Halévy began when he was a schoolboy in Paris. His friendship with Ludovic deepened in the 1870s, when they were often found backstage at the Paris Opéra. Halévy was a successful librettist and a writer of fiction. His stories about the lives of two ballerinas and their parents were compiled as *La Famille Cardinal* (*The Cardinal Family*) and widely published. Around 1876–77, Degas offered Halévy a series of monotypes that he had created on his own as illustrations for these stories, but Halévy apparently preferred more traditional images. It was not until 1938 that a limited edition of *La Famille Cardinal* was published with Degas's illustrations.



5

4

DANIEL HALÉVY

*Letter to John Maxon*, February 4, 1953, handwritten with pen and ink on paper, 3 sheets and envelope. Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Department of Prints, Drawings, and Photographs

5

WALTER BARNES

British, 1844–1911

*The Apotheosis of Degas, After Ingres's Apotheosis of Homer*, 1885

Albumen print from glass negative, plate: 3¼ x 3¾ in.; sheet: 3<sup>13</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 5½ in.; mount: 4¼ x 6<sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in.

The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles

6

WALTER BARNES

British, 1844–1911

*The Halévy Family and Their Friends at Dieppe*,  
1885 (printed ca. 1900)

Gelatin silver print, image:  $3\frac{1}{8} \times 4$  in.;

sheet:  $3\frac{11}{16} \times 5\frac{1}{8}$  in.

Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design

Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund

Fig. 31



8

7

EDGAR DEGAS

*Pauline and Virginie Conversing with Admirers*  
(illustration for *La Famille Cardinal*),  
ca. 1880–83

Monotype on paper, image:  $8\frac{7}{16} \times 6\frac{1}{16}$  in.;

sheet:  $11\frac{3}{8} \times 7\frac{1}{2}$  in.

Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University Art

Museums, Cambridge (Massachusetts)

Bequest of Meta and Paul J. Sachs

8

EDGAR DEGAS

*Ludovic Halévy Encounters Mme Cardinal*  
*in the Wings* (illustration for  
*La Famille Cardinal*), ca. 1876–77

Monotype on paper, image:  $8\frac{3}{8} \times 6\frac{1}{4}$  in.;

sheet:  $10\frac{3}{8} \times 6\frac{3}{4}$  in.

Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design

Purchased with funds given in memory of

Houghton P. Metcalf, Jr.; Helen M. Danforth

Acquisition Fund 2005.7

9

EDGAR DEGAS

*Conversation: Ludovic Halévy and Madame*  
*Cardinal* (illustration for *La Famille Cardinal*),  
ca. 1880–83

Monotype on paper, image:  $8\frac{3}{8} \times 6\frac{3}{16}$  in.;

sheet:  $9\frac{15}{16} \times 6\frac{15}{16}$  in.

The Cleveland Museum of Art

Gift of The Print Club of Cleveland

in honor of Henry Sayles Francis

10

EDGAR DEGAS

*Virginie being Admired while the Marquis*  
*Cavalcanti Looks On* (illustration for  
*La Famille Cardinal*), ca. 1880–83

Monotype touched with pastel on wove paper,

plate:  $6\frac{3}{16} \times 4\frac{11}{16}$  in.; sheet:  $8\frac{1}{16} \times 5\frac{7}{8}$  in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon

Fig. 6



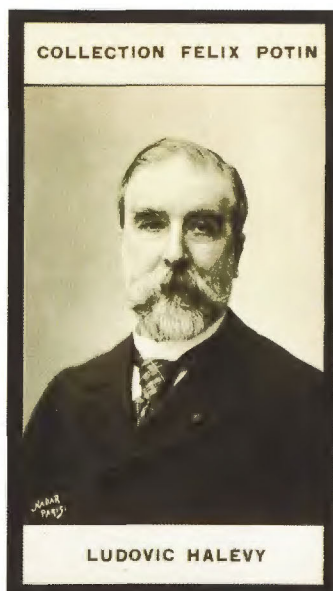
9



7



11



16



12

11

EDGAR DEGAS

*Three Studies of Ludovic Halévy Standing*,  
ca. 1880

Charcoal on paper, 12½ x 19 in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon

12

EDGAR DEGAS

*Ludovic Halévy*, ca. 1880

Charcoal and black chalk on paper,  
12¾ x 10⅞ in.

The Baltimore Museum of Art

The Nelson and Juanita Greif Gutman Collection

13

EDGAR DEGAS

*Ludovic Halévy*, 1895

Gelatin silver print, image: 3⅞ x 3⅞ in.

The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles

Fig. 15

14

EDGAR DEGAS

*Madame Ludovic Halévy*

(*Louise Breguet Halévy*), ca. 1895

Gelatin silver print, image: 4⅞ x 3⅞ in.

Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco

Museum Purchase, Mrs. Milton S. Latham Fund

Fig. 16

15

EDGAR DEGAS

*Daniel Halévy*, 1895

Gelatin silver print from glass negative,  
15¼ x 11⅞ in.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Purchase, The Horace W. Goldsmith

Foundation Gift, 1998

Fig. 17

16

NADAR (Gaspard Félix Tournachon)

French, 1820–1910

For *Album Félix Potin*,

*500 Célébrités contemporaines*, ca. 1900

*Ludovic Halévy*

Gelatin silver print in *carte-de-visite* format,

image: 2⅞ x 1½ in.; mount: 3 x 1⅞ in.;

album: 9¼ x 14⅞ x 1⅞ in. (closed)

Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design

Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2003.33

(album)

17

LU DOVIC HAL ÉVY, *Madame et Monsieur Cardinal...*, with illustrations by Edmond Morin. Paris: 1877 (Calmann-Lévy, Éditeurs, 11th ed.). Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Department of Prints, Drawings, and Photographs

18

LU DOVIC HAL ÉVY, trans. George B. Ives, *The Cardinal Family*, with illustrations by Charles Lucien Léandre, from the series "Chefs d'Oeuvre du Roman Contemporain, Realists." London and Paris: 1901 (Walpole Press). Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Department of Prints, Drawings, and Photographs

19

LU DOVIC HAL ÉVY, *La Famille Cardinal*, with illustrations by Albert Guillaume. Paris: 1914 (Calmann-Lévy, Éditeurs). Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Department of Prints, Drawings, and Photographs

20

LU DOVIC HAL ÉVY, *Les Petites Cardinales*, with illustrations by Henry Maigrot. Paris: 1894 (Calmann-Lévy Editeurs). Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Department of Prints, Drawings, and Photographs

21

LU DOVIC HAL ÉVY, author  
EDGAR DEGAS, artist  
A. Blaizot, Paris, publisher  
*La Famille Cardinal*, 1938  
Book with portrait of the author and thirty-three illustrations after monotypes in black and in color, 13¼ x 10¼ x 1¼ in. (closed)  
Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design  
Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2003.32



23



22



24

ALBERT BOULANGER-CAVÉ  
(1830–1910)

Albert Boulanger-Cavé, whom Degas called “the man of taste” (*l’homme de goût*), was distinguished by his wit, manners, and lack of personal ambition. In his brief career as censor of public spectacles, he was responsible for assuring that the content of theatre, opera, ballet, and café-concert productions did not offend the government or corrupt public morals. After an early retirement, Cavé continued to advise informally at rehearsals and performances, often in the company of his friends Ludovic Halévy and Edgar Degas. In September 1885, he joined them in Dieppe, where he was included in Walter Barnes’s photographs as well as in Degas’s pastel, *Six Friends at Dieppe*. Cavé was the son of two artists, Clément and Marie-Elisabeth Blavot Boulanger. After his father’s death, his mother married Hygin-Edmond-Ludovic-Auguste Cavé, Director of Fine Arts during the reign of Louis-Philippe. His mother wrote several widely circulated books on techniques of drawing and painting. In later life, her son lived contentedly amid works of art inherited from his mother, including watercolors and drawings by Delacroix and Ingres.

22

WALTER BARNES

*Portrait of Degas, Ludovic Halévy et Albert Boulanger-Cavé à Dieppe*, September 10, 1885  
Albumen print from glass negative,  
4<sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 3<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in.

Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris  
Don 5391, M. Mévil-Blanche

23

EDGAR DEGAS

*On the Stage*, 1876–77

Soft-ground etching on laid paper,

image: 3<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 4<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in.; sheet: 5<sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 8<sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in.

Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design

Gift of the Fazzano Brothers 84.198.1083

24

EDGAR DEGAS

*Mademoiselle Bécat at The Ambassadeurs*, ca. 1877

Lithograph on paper, image: 8<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 7<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in.;

sheet: 13<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> x 10<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in.

The Museum of Modern Art, New York

Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, 1940



25

EDGAR DEGAS

*Dancer with a Bouquet*, ca. 1877–80

Pastel and gouache over monotype on laid paper,  
15<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 19<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in.

Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design

Gift of Mrs. Murray S. Danforth 42.213

Fig. 48

26

GEORGES SEURAT

French, 1859–91

*At the Gaité Rochecouart (Café-concert)*,

ca. 1887–88

Conte crayon on laid paper, 12 x 9<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in.

Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design

Gift of Mrs. Murray S. Danforth 42.210

27

JEAN-AUGUSTE-DOMINIQUE

INGRES

French, 1780–1867

*Portrait of Thomas-Charles Naudet*, 1806

Graphite on wove paper, 9<sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 7 in.

Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design

Museum Appropriation Fund 29.087

28

EUGÈNE DELACROIX

French, 1798–1863

*Turk Resting, Watched by His Horse*, 1824

Watercolor, ink, and graphite

on wove paper, 5<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> x 8<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> in.

Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 28.006



26



27



28

29

GUSTAVE MOREAU

French, 1826–98

*Hesiod*, early 1880s

Watercolor and gouache on wove paper,  
14 x 8¼ in.

Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design  
Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 28.005

30

MARIE-ELISABETH

(BLAVOT BOULANGER) CAVÉ,

*La Femme aujourd'hui, La Femme autrefois*,

with frontispiece portrait of the author after

Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, engraved

by M<sup>e</sup>lle LeGrand. Paris: 1863 (Henri Plon,

Imprimeur-Éditeur). Museum of Art, Rhode

Island School of Design, Department of Prints,  
Drawings, and Photographs

31

MARIE-ELISABETH

(BLAVOT BOULANGER) CAVÉ,

trans. J. M. Hart, *Color*, approved by M. Eugène

Delacroix, for teaching painting in oils and water-

colors (from *La Couleur*, second part of *Dessin*

*sans maître*, 3rd French edition). New York:

1869 (G. P. Putnam's Sons). Rhode Island

School of Design Library

32

MARIE-ELISABETH

(BLAVOT BOULANGER) CAVÉ,

*Drawing from Memory: The Cavé Method for*

*learning to draw from memory* (translated from

the fourth Paris ed., revised, corrected,

and enlarged by the author). New York: 1878

(G. P. Putnam's Sons). Rhode Island School

of Design Library

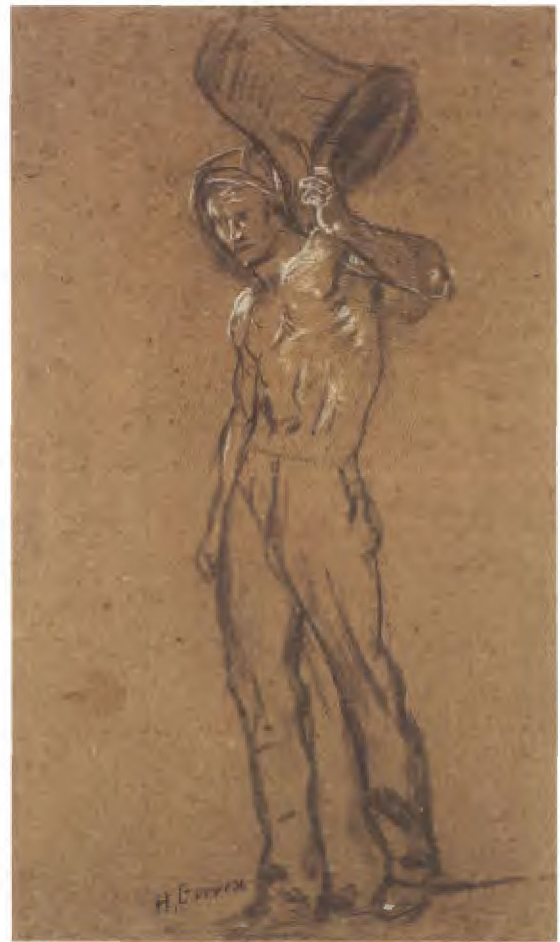


29

HENRI GERVEX (French, 1852–1929)

Henri Gervex first won acclaim with paintings of mythological subjects, but it was his application of academic technique to scenes of modern life that gained him broad public approval. Gervex often mingled with Degas at the Café Rochefoucauld in Montmartre, but like Édouard Manet, whom Gervex greatly admired, he declined to show with the Impressionists. Doctor and Mrs. Émile Blanche chose him as a teacher for their son Jacques-Émile.

In 1882, Gervex's proposal for subjects of neighborhood life, including one of workers on the Canal St. Martin, won him a commission for decorative murals for the marriage chambers of the Mairie of the nineteenth *arrondissement* in Paris. A large Salon submission, *Une Séance du jury de peinture*, 1885, further proved his ability to apply realist skills to contemporary themes pleasing to a wide audience. Even more indicative of his great ambition was the 394-foot-long *Panorama du siècle*, a depiction of the most distinguished French citizens of the past hundred years, painted in collaboration with Belgian artist Alfred Stevens and unveiled at the 1889 Universal Exposition, Paris.



34



33



36



38

33

HENRI GERVEX

*Satyr* (Study for *Satyr and Bacchante*), ca. 1874

Crayon on cream laid paper,

8 $\frac{7}{16}$  x 11 $\frac{1}{16}$  in.

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Gift of Paul J. Sachs and W. G. Russell Allen

34

HENRI GERVEX

*The Coal Porter* (sketch for *Mairie*,

19th *arrondissement*, Paris), 1882

Charcoal and chalk on wove paper, 18 $\frac{3}{8}$  x 11 in.

Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design

Mary B. Jackson Fund 2005.36

35

HENRI GERVEX

*Le Quai de la Villette à Paris*

(*The Quay at la Villette, Paris*)

(study for *Mairie*, 19th *arrondissement*, Paris),

1882

Oil on canvas, 46 $\frac{1}{16}$  x 27 $\frac{1}{16}$  in.

Palais des Beaux-Arts, Lille

Fig. 10

36

HENRI GERVEX

*Portrait de Madame Blery*, 1884

Oil on canvas, 31 $\frac{15}{16}$  x 25 $\frac{3}{8}$  in.

Musée Carnavalet – Histoire de Paris, France

37

HENRI GERVEX

*Une Séance du jury de peinture – étude*

(*A Session of the Painting Jury – Study*), 1885

Oil on canvas, 26 x 32 in.

Private collection

Fig. 11

38

HENRI GERVEX

Study for *Le Blessé de guerre*, ca. 1914

Charcoal and red and white chalk on blue paper,

11 $\frac{1}{4}$  x 18 $\frac{1}{2}$  in.

Daheh Museum of Art, New York

Gift of DeCourcy E. McIntosh

JACQUES-ÉMILE BLANCHE  
(French, 1861–1942)

Jacques-Émile Blanche, the son and grandson of doctors renowned for treating mental illness, was a talented painter, musician, and writer. As a young man he collected paintings by Manet, Cézanne, Renoir, and Degas and had studios in both Paris and Dieppe. The Dieppe studio was among the first structures in a suite of seaside villas built around 1880 along a strip of beach known as Bas-Fort Blanc. It quickly became a gathering spot for Blanche's friends, and in September of 1885 it was the site at which Degas's *Six Friends at Dieppe* was posed and realized. This portrait is mentioned in many of Blanche's writings, including *Propos de peintre* (1919), *Cahiers d'un artiste* (1919), *Dieppe* (1927), and *La Pêche aux souvenirs* (1949). Blanche became a successful portrait painter who exhibited in England and elsewhere in Europe. He also published and illustrated an autobiographical novel, *Aymeris* (1922), and, encouraged by author Virginia Woolf, published an English memoir, *Portraits of a Lifetime* (1937), for which his likeness of Woolf serves as the frontispiece.



45



42



39

JACQUES - ÉMILE BLANCHE

*Contemplation*, 1883

Oil on canvas, 51 $\frac{1}{16}$  x 39 $\frac{3}{8}$  in.

Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg (Florida)

Museum purchase with funds provided by

Mr. and Mrs. Wally Bishop

Fig. 26

40

JACQUES - ÉMILE BLANCHE

*Portrait présumé de Mary Cassatt*, 1885

Oil on canvas, 23 $\frac{1}{4}$  x 13 $\frac{3}{8}$  in.

Musée Carnavalet - Histoire de Paris, France

41

JACQUES - ÉMILE BLANCHE

*Self-Portrait with Raphaël de Ochoa*, 1890

Oil on canvas, 38 $\frac{1}{16}$  x 27 $\frac{7}{16}$  in.

The Cleveland Museum of Art

Bequest of Noah L. Butkin

Fig. 14

42

JACQUES - ÉMILE BLANCHE

*Vue de Dieppe prise du haut des falaises*

(*View of Dieppe from the Cliffs*), ca. 1900-10

Oil on cardboard, 30 $\frac{7}{16}$  x 38 $\frac{3}{8}$  in.

Musée des Beaux-Arts, Rouen

Gift of the artist, 1922

43

JACQUES - ÉMILE BLANCHE,

author and illustrator, *Aymeris*. Paris: 1922

(Éditions de la Sirène). Museum of Art, Rhode

Island School of Design, Department of Prints,

Drawings, and Photographs

44

JACQUES - ÉMILE BLANCHE,

*Dieppe*, with frontispiece illustration by

the author. Paris: 1927 (Éditions Émile-Paul

Frères). Museum of Art, Rhode Island School

of Design, Department of Prints, Drawings,

and Photographs

45

JACQUES - ÉMILE BLANCHE

*Portrait of Virginia Woolf*, 1927

Oil on canvas, 16 $\frac{1}{4}$  x 13 in.

Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design

Museum Works of Art Fund 54.178

WALTER SICKERT (British, 1860–1942)

Walter Sickert arrived at Degas's studio in 1883 with a letter of introduction from his mentor, James Abbott McNeill Whistler. The insistent young painter had been sent to Paris to accompany Whistler's 1871 *Arrangement in Grey and Black No. 1* (*The Artist's Mother*) to the Paris Salon. Sickert developed a deep admiration for Degas, later reflected in his choice of theatrical subjects and compositional devices. In 1885, while on his honeymoon, Sickert met him again at Jacques-Émile Blanche's Dieppe studio and joined Degas on walks around town. Blanche, who became Sickert's lifelong friend, called him the "Canaletto of Dieppe," as many of his paintings documented the town's streets, churches, and squares.



47

46

WALTER SICKERT

*Dieppe Races*, 1885

Oil on panel, 6 x 9½ in.

Yale Center for British Art, New Haven

Paul Mellon Collection

Fig. 38

47

WALTER SICKERT

*Dieppe, The Café des Tribunaux*, 1885

Etching and drypoint (2nd state),

image: 7 15/16 x 8 7/16 in.; sheet: 15 1/16 x 13 15/16 in.

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

George Peabody Gardner Fund

48

WALTER SICKERT

*Café des Tribunaux, Dieppe*, 1890

Oil on canvas, 26 5/16 x 19 11/16 in.

National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

Gift of the Massey Collection of

English Painting, 1946

Fig. 41



51



50

49

WALTER SICKERT

*The Old Bedford: Cupid in the Gallery*, ca. 1890

Oil on canvas, 50 x 30½ in.

National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

Gift of the Massey Collection of

English Painting, 1946

Fig. 42

50

JACQUES-ÉMILE BLANCHE

*Walter Sickert*, 1898

Oil on canvas, 31 13/16 x 25 1/2 in.

National Portrait Gallery, London

51

WALTER SICKERT

*La Rue Pecquet, Dieppe*, ca. 1907

Oil on canvas, 16¼ x 13 in.

Yale Center for British Art, New Haven

Paul Mellon Fund

52

WALTER SICKERT

*At the London*, ca. 1908–12

Crayon on wove paper, 12 x 9 in.

Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design

Gift of the Fazzano Brothers 84.198.951



52

53

WALTER SICKERT

*The Trapeze*, ca. 1920

Oil on canvas, 24½ x 32 in.

Yale Center for British Art, New Haven

Paul Mellon Collection

Fig. 43



EDGAR DEGAS (French, 1834–1917)  
*Other works in the collection of the  
 Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design*

By the early twentieth century, Edgar Degas had begun to attract a sophisticated circle of American admirers. In Providence, one of these enlightened collectors was RISD's president, Mrs. Gustav (Eliza G. Metcalf) Radeke, who purchased the first two Degas drawings for the Museum in 1920 from New York dealers Scott & Fowles. In 1923, the year in which the Museum acquired *La Savoisiennne* from Durand-Ruel Gallery, Mrs. Radeke gave a large drawing of a dancer, while her brothers, Stephen O., George P., and Houghton P. Metcalf gave the sculpture *Grande Arabesque, deuxième fois*.

The family's passion for Degas was shared by Director L. Earle Rowe, who continued the relationship with Durand-Ruel and acquired *Six Friends in Dieppe* and *Jockey, Red Cap* in the 1930s. Further gifts followed in 1942 and 1957, including two important racecourse pastels from Mrs. Radeke's niece and successor as president, Helen M. Danforth, and from the estate of George Pierce Metcalf. Prints by Degas were added later with the 1984 gift of a soft-ground etching, *Sur la scène*, from the five Fazzano brothers, and the recent acquisition of a monotype from the suite of images proposed by Degas to Ludovic Halévy to illustrate *La Famille Cardinal*. This work was acquired in 2005 in memory of the Museum's beloved Fine Arts Committee chairman, Houghton P. Metcalf, Jr.

54  
*La Savoisiennne*, ca. 1858  
 Oil on canvas, 24¾ x 18¼ in.  
 Museum Appropriation Fund 23.072

55  
*Horse*, ca. 1865  
 Graphite on wove paper, 12¾ x 9¾ in.  
 Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 21.127

56  
*Jockey, Red Cap*, ca. 1866–68  
 Oil with *essence* on laid paper, laid down on a cardboard support, adhered to a wood panel, 18 ⅞ x 12 ⅞ in.  
 Gift of Mrs. Murray S. Danforth 35.539  
 Fig. 45

57  
*Two Seated Women*, ca. 1878  
 Pastel on laid paper, 12¼ x 18½ in.  
 Gift of the Museum Committee in honor of John Maxon's Directorship 59.111



55



57

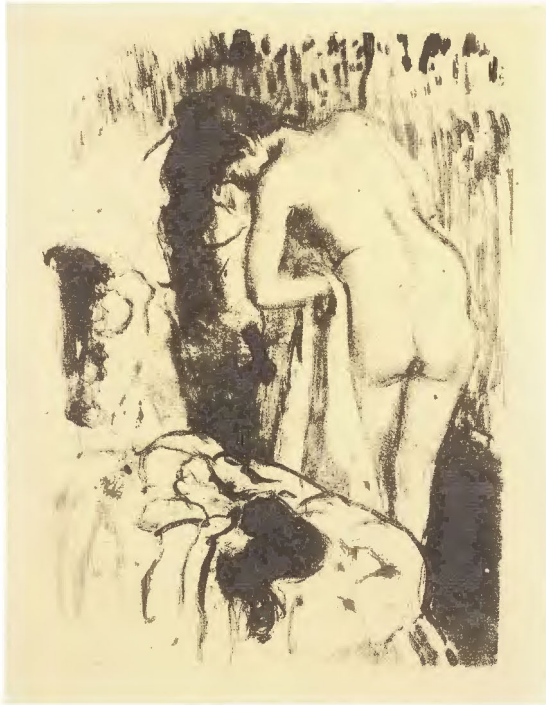




58



60



63

58

*Two Jockeys*, ca. 1880–90

Crayon on laid paper, 9 $\frac{3}{8}$  x 12 $\frac{3}{8}$  in.

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 21.249

59

*Before the Race*, ca. 1885

Pastel, gouache, graphite over charcoal  
on wove tracing paper, 22 $\frac{1}{4}$  x 25 $\frac{3}{4}$  in.

Gift of Mrs. Murray S. Danforth 42.214

Fig. 37

60

*Four Jockeys on Horseback*, ca. 1885–87

Pastel over charcoal on wove tracing paper,  
21 $\frac{1}{4}$  x 25 in.

Bequest of George Pierce Metcalf 57.233

61

*Grand Arabesque, Second Time*, ca. 1885–90

Bronze, 16 $\frac{3}{8}$  x 23 $\frac{7}{8}$  x 10 $\frac{3}{8}$  in.

Gift of Stephen O. Metcalf, George Pierce

Metcalf, and Houghton P. Metcalf 23.315

62

*Baller Girl*, ca. 1886–88

Pastel on laid paper, 18 x 11 $\frac{1}{4}$  in.

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 23.038

Fig. 54

63

*Standing Nude Woman, Dressing*, 1890

Lithograph on wove paper, 19 $\frac{1}{8}$  x 11 $\frac{3}{8}$  in.

Anonymous gift 59.115



61

99

VIEWS OF DIEPPE AND  
THE NORMANDY COAST  
*in the collection of the Museum of Art,  
Rhode Island School of Design*

Dieppe was a popular vacation spot in the nineteenth century, drawing both French visitors and foreign tourists to its hotels, casino, and beach. Poised between Le Havre and Calais, it was one of several towns on the Normandy coast that attracted artists during the summer months. Early in the century, Romantic painters like Eugène Isabey depicted Dieppe's high cliffs and sea vistas. Later, the activities and costumes of its visitors were described in the lithographs of Paul Gavarni. Claude Monet, who spent his youth in Le Havre, was encouraged to paint outdoors by his teacher, Eugène Boudin. From Honfleur, where he painted the estuary of the Seine around 1868, to towns closer to Dieppe, he frequently returned in summer to capture the changing qualities of light on land, sea, and sky. Boudin's passion for seaside views took him from Normandy to Brittany to the Bordeaux coast. Like Gavarni, he often peopled his scenes with vacationers gathered on the beach to enjoy the salt air.



65



72

64

THÉODORE LAMBERT, author and delineator; Héliog Chauvet, photographer; R. Engelmann, printer; *Villa Plage de Dieppe...*, Ernest Bertrand architecte (flat folio, pls. 29–30) in *Maisons de campagne et villas: dessins et relevés*, from the series “Nouveaux Éléments d’architecture.” Paris: 1889 (Charles Schmid Éditeur). Rhode Island School of Design Library

65

EUGÈNE ISABEY  
French, 1803–86  
*Environs of Dieppe*  
from the series “Six Marines,” 1833  
Lithograph on wove paper,  
image: 9<sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 11<sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in.; sheet: 10<sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 12<sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in.  
Mary B. Jackson Fund 76.019

66

EUGÈNE ISABEY  
French, 1803–86  
*Return to Port*  
from the series “Six Marines,” 1833  
Lithograph on wove paper,  
image: 9<sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 11<sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in.; sheet: 10<sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 13<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> in.  
Mary B. Jackson Fund 76.020

67

PAUL GAVARNI  
French, 1804–66  
*Dieppe*, 1835  
Lithograph on wove paper,  
image: 4<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 5<sup>13</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in.; sheet: 8<sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 11<sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in.  
Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 66.188

68

EUGÈNE BOUDIN  
French, 1824–98  
*Figures on a Beach*, ca. 1863  
Oil on panel, 8<sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 13<sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in.  
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Houghton P. Metcalf, Sr.  
1986.070

69

CLAUDE MONET  
French, 1840–1922  
*Honfleur, The Seine near Its Estuary*, ca. 1868  
Oil on canvas, 18<sup>15</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 29 in.  
Bequest of George Pierce Metcalf 57.236

70

EUGÈNE BOUDIN  
French, 1824–98  
*The Port at Trouville*, 1889  
Oil on canvas, 16<sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 22 in.  
Museum Appropriation Fund 29.290

71

JEAN-BAPTISTE-ANTOINE  
GUILLEMET  
French, 1843–1918  
*The Cliffs at Dieppe*, ca. 1889  
Etching on wove paper,  
image: 8<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 11<sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in.; sheet: 9<sup>11</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 12<sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in.  
Bequest of Isaac C. Bates 13.1117

72

CHARLES LAPOSTOLET  
French, 1824–90  
*View of Dieppe*, n.d.  
Oil on canvas, 16<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 30<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in.  
Gift of Walter R. and John A. Callender  
in memory of their father, Walter Callender  
29.102

## List of Images

All works of art, books, and ephemera belonging to RISD have been imaged by Erik Gould, Museum Photographer

### Figures

#### PERFORMING FRIENDSHIP

Edgar Degas: Six Friends at Dieppe

Fig. 1

Jacques-Émile Blanche, *Portrait of Edgar Degas*, ca. 1903 [cat. 2]. North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh. © 2005 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.

Fig. 2

Edgar Degas, *L'Orchestre de l'Opéra (The Orchestra at the Opera)*, ca. 1870, oil on canvas, 20 $\frac{7}{8}$  x 17 $\frac{3}{4}$  in. Musée d'Orsay, Paris. © Réunion des Musées Nationaux de France/Art Resource, New York; image by Hervé Lewandowski.

Fig. 3

Photographer unknown, *Dieppe. – Châlet du Bas Fort Blanc*, ca. 1890, photographic postcard. Musée Jacques-Émile Blanche, Offranville.

Fig. 4

Walter Barnes, *The Apotheosis of Degas, After Ingres's Apotheosis of Homer*, 1885 [cat. 5]. © The J. Paul Getty Museum.

Fig. 5

Jacques-Émile Blanche, *Daniel Halévy, de face et de profil (Daniel Halévy, Front and Profile)*, 1885, pastel, 25 $\frac{3}{8}$  x 31 $\frac{1}{2}$  in. Private collection. © 2005 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.

Fig. 6

Edgar Degas, *Virginie Being Admired while the Marquis Cavalcanti Looks On*, ca. 1880/1883 [cat. 10]. National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., © 2004 Board of Trustees, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; image by Ricardo Blanc.

Fig. 7

Photographer unknown, *Louise Breguet Halévy* [seated, left], *Daniel Halévy, Edgar Degas, Ludovic Halévy* [on stairs, left to right], and *Elie Halévy* [standing, right], ca. 1885, from an album of photographs in a private collection.

Fig. 8

Photographer unknown, *Albert Boulanger-Cavé*, ca. 1885, from an album of photographs in a private collection.

Fig. 9

Edgar Degas, *Portraits d'amis dans les ailes de la scène (Portrait of Friends in the Stage Wings)*, 1878–79, pastel on paper, 31 $\frac{1}{8}$  x 21 $\frac{7}{8}$  in. Musée d'Orsay, Paris. © Réunion des Musées Nationaux de France/Art Resource, New York; Musée du Louvre, Paris; image by C. Jean. D.A.G. (fonds Orsay).

Fig. 10

Henri Gervex, *Le Quai de la Villette à Paris (The Quay at the Villette, Paris)*, 1882 [cat. 35]. Palais des Beaux-Arts, Lille. © Réunion des Musées Nationaux de France/Art Resource, New York; image by R. G. Ojeda.

Fig. 11

Henri Gervex, *Une Séance du jury de peinture – étude (A Session of the Painting Jury – Study)*, 1885 [cat. 37]. Private collection. Image by Prudence Cuming Associates Limited, London, courtesy of David Nisinson Fine Art, New York.

Fig. 12

Pierre Petit, French, 1832–1909, For *Album Félix Potin, 500 Célébrités contemporaines, Henri Gervex*, ca. 1900, gelatin silver print in *carte-de-visite* format, image: 2 $\frac{3}{16}$  x 1 $\frac{1}{2}$  in.; card: 3 x 1 $\frac{5}{8}$  in.; album: 9 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 14 $\frac{3}{8}$  x 1 $\frac{3}{8}$  in. (closed). Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2003.33 (album).

Fig. 13

Alfred Stevens, Belgian, 1823–1906, *A Portrait Group of Parisian Celebrities* (segment of the “Panorama of the Nineteenth Century” featuring Ludovic Halévy, center), 1889, oil canvas, 92 $\frac{3}{4}$  x 96 $\frac{3}{4}$  in. The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, The State Art Museum of Florida, Sarasota, Bequest of John Ringling.

Fig. 14

Jacques-Émile Blanche, *Self-Portrait with Raphaël de Ochoa*, 1890 [cat. 41]. © The Cleveland Museum of Art; © 2005 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.

Fig. 15

Edgar Degas, *Ludovic Halévy*, 1895 [cat. 13].  
© The J. Paul Getty Museum.

Fig. 16

Edgar Degas, *Madame Ludovic Halévy*  
(*Louise Breguet Halévy*), ca. 1895, [cat. 14].  
© Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco.

Fig. 17

Edgar Degas, *Daniel Halévy*, 1895 [cat. 15].  
© 2004 The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

J A C Q U E S - É M I L E B L A N C H E

*A young man at home in Dieppe*

Fig. 18

Jacques-Émile Blanche, *Portrait de la mère  
de l'artiste (Portrait of the Artist's Mother)*, 1890,  
oil on canvas, 77 $\frac{7}{16}$  x 47 $\frac{1}{4}$  in. Musée des Beaux-  
Arts, Rouen, Gift of Jacques-Émile Blanche.  
© Bridgeman-Giraudon/Art Resource,  
New York; Musée des Beaux-Arts, Rouen;  
2005 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New  
York / ADAGP, Paris.

Fig. 19

Henri Gervex, *Portrait du docteur Blanche*  
(*Portrait of Doctor Blanche*), ca. 1880, oil on  
canvas, 22 $\frac{1}{16}$  x 18 $\frac{11}{16}$  in. Château-musée  
de Dieppe.

Fig. 20

Photographer unknown, *Le Bas-Fort Blanc,  
côté sud (Villa Bas-Fort Blanc, South Side)*.  
Fonds ancien de la Bibliothèque de Dieppe,  
courtesy of Musée Jacques-Émile Blanche,  
Offranville; image by Jean Decaux. Image  
provided by Jane Roberts.

Fig. 21

Jean-Louis Forain, French, 1852–1931, *Portrait  
de Jacques-Émile Blanche (Portrait of Jacques-  
Émile Blanche)*, 1884, oil on cardboard, 25 $\frac{1}{4}$  x  
15 $\frac{3}{4}$  inches, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Rouen, Gift  
of Jacques-Émile Blanche, 1923. © Musées de la  
Ville de Rouen; image by Catherine Lancien/  
Carole Loisel.

Fig. 22

Photographer unknown, Jacques-Émile Blanche  
at age ten in London, 1871. Bibliothèque de  
l'Institut de France, Paris. Courtesy of Musée  
Jacques-Émile Blanche, Offranville; image by  
Bulloz. Image provided by Jane Roberts.

Fig. 23

Jacques-Émile Blanche, *Autoportrait de l'artiste  
à la casquette (Self-Portrait Wearing a Cap)*,  
ca. 1890, oil on canvas, 28 $\frac{3}{4}$  x 20 $\frac{5}{16}$  in. Musée  
du Petit Palais, Paris, Gift of Marie Bersier,  
widow of the painter-etcher Jean-Eugène Bersier,  
to the City of Paris for the Petit Palais Museum,  
1980. © Photothèque des musées de la ville  
de Paris, cliché Pierrain; 2005 Artists Rights  
Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.

Fig. 24

Henri Manuel, French, fl. Paris ca. 1880–1947,  
*Blanche dans son atelier à Auteuil (Blanche in  
His Studio at Auteuil)*, photograph. Musée des  
Beaux-Arts, Rouen. © Musées de la Ville de  
Rouen; courtesy of the Musée Jacques-Émile  
Blanche, Offranville. Image provided by  
Jane Roberts.

Fig. 25

Jacques-Émile Blanche, *Henriette Chabot au  
piano (Henriette Chabot at the Piano)*, 1884,  
oil on canvas, 57 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 44 $\frac{1}{8}$  in. Private collection.  
© 2005 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New  
York / ADAGP, Paris.

Fig. 26

Jacques-Émile Blanche, *Contemplation*, 1883  
[cat. 39]. © Museum of Fine Arts, St.  
Petersburg (Florida); 2005 Artists Rights  
Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.

Fig. 27

Jacques-Émile Blanche, *La Petite Fille aux  
hortensias (Young Girl in the Hydrangeas)*, 1887,  
oil on canvas, 36 $\frac{1}{4}$  x 25 $\frac{1}{2}$  in. Private collection.  
© 2005 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York /  
ADAGP, Paris.

Fig. 28

Jacques-Émile Blanche, *Dieppe, le Puits salé,  
café des Tribunaux (Dieppe, the Saltwater Well,  
café des Tribunaux)*, 1920, oil on canvas  
mounted to cardboard, 19 $\frac{3}{4}$  x 24 in. Musée  
Jacques-Émile Blanche, Offranville. © Musée  
Jacques-Émile Blanche, Offranville; 2005  
Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York /  
ADAGP, Paris; image by Jean Decaux. Image  
provided by Jane Roberts.

Fig. 29

Jacques-Émile Blanche, *The Pink Rose or  
Portrait of Olga Caracciolo*, 1888, pastel on  
paper, 62 x 30 in. Private collection. © 2005  
Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York /  
ADAGP, Paris.

Fig. 30

Jacques-Émile Blanche, *Madame Jacques-Émile  
Blanche sur fond de paysage (Madame Jacques-  
Émile Blanche with Landscape in Background)*,  
1896, oil on canvas, 43 $\frac{5}{16}$  x 33 $\frac{7}{8}$  in. Private  
collection. © 2005 Artists Rights Society (ARS),  
New York / ADAGP, Paris.



S U D D E N L Y   L A S T   S U M M E R

Degas's Six Friends at Dieppe

Fig. 31

Walter Barnes, *The Halévy Family and Their Friends at Dieppe*, 1885 (printed ca. 1900) [cat. 6]. Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design.

Fig. 32

Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, French, 1780–1867, *Madame Clément Boulanger, née Marie Élisabeth Blavot, later Madame Edmond Cavé*, early 1830s (?), oil on canvas, 16 x 12 7/8 in. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Bequest of Grace Rainey Rogers, 1943 (43.85.3). © 1998 The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Fig. 33

Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, French, 1780–1867, *Hygin-Edmond-Ludovic-Auguste Cavé* (1794–1852), 1844, oil on canvas, 16 x 12 7/8 in. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Bequest of Grace Rainey Rogers, 1943 (43.85.2). © 1980 The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Fig. 34

Edgar Degas, *The Rehearsal of the Ballet on Stage*, probably 1874, oil and turpentine (*peinture à l'essence*) with traces of watercolor and pastel over pen-and-ink drawing on wove paper, laid down on Bristol board and mounted to canvas, 21 3/8 x 28 3/4 in. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, H. O. Havemeyer Collection, Gift of Horace Havemeyer, 1929 (29.160.26). © 1980 The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Fig. 35

James Abbott McNeill Whistler, *Arrangement in Black: The Lady in the Yellow Buskin* (Portrait of Lady Archibald Campbell), ca. 1883, oil on canvas, 86 x 43 1/2 in. Philadelphia Museum of Art, purchased with the W. P. Wiltach Fund, 1895.

Fig. 36

Edgar Degas, *Study of a Jockey (M de Broutelles)*, ca. 1884, charcoal on cream paper, 13 7/8 x 8 7/8 in. National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon. © 2005 Board of Trustees, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; image by Lee Ewing.

Fig. 37

Edgar Degas, *Before the Race*, ca. 1885 [cat. 59]. Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design.

Fig. 38

Walter Sickert, *Dieppe Races*, 1885 [cat. 46]. Yale Center for British Art, New Haven. © 2005 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / DACS, London; Estate of the Artist; image by Richard Caspole.

Fig. 39

Edgar Degas, *Before the Race*, ca. 1882, oil on panel, 10 7/16 x 13 3/4 in. © Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown (Massachusetts).

Fig. 40

Walter Barnes, *Walter Sickert and Edgar Degas at Dieppe*, 1885, albumen print from glass negative. Tate Museum Archives, London. Courtesy London Borough of Islington, Libraries Department, For Trustees of Sickert Archives.

Fig. 41

Walter Sickert, *Café des Tribunaux, Dieppe*, 1890 [cat. 48]. © National Gallery of Canada; 2005 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / DACS, London.

Fig. 42

Walter Sickert, *The Old Bedford: Cupid in the Gallery*, ca. 1890 [cat. 49]. © National Gallery of Canada; 2005 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / DACS, London.

Fig. 43

Walter Sickert, *The Trapeze*, ca. 1920 [cat. 53]. Yale Center for British Art, New Haven. © 2005 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / DACS, London; Estate of the Artist; image by Richard Caspole.

P O W D E R   O N   P A P E R

Degas, Pastel, and Six Friends at Dieppe

Fig. 44

Detail of Degas's signature, extreme lower left corner of *Six Friends at Dieppe*, 1885 [cat. 1]. Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design.

Fig. 45

Edgar Degas, *Jockey, Red Cap*, ca. 1866–68 [cat. 56]. Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design.

Fig. 46

Pastel box belonging to Degas, found in his studio after his death. Musée d'Orsay, Paris. © Réunion des Musées Nationaux de France/Art Resource, New York; image by Lewandowski.

Figs. 47, 48

Edgar Degas, French, 1834–1917, *Dancer with a Bouquet*, ca. 1877–80 [cat. 25]. Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design.

Fig. 49

Reverse of *Six Friends at Dieppe*, showing canvas backing to which paper is adhered and the whole tacked and taped to the wood strainer.

Fig. 50

Magnified view of the rough texture of the paper, showing how the particles of pastel powder are held in place.

Fig. 51

Detail of the short strokes of layered pastel used by Degas to render the face of Henri Gervex.

Figs. 52, 53

Edgar Degas, *Six Friends at Dieppe*, 1885 [cat. 1]. Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design.

Fig. 54

Edgar Degas, *Ballet Girl*, 1887 [cat. 62]. Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design.

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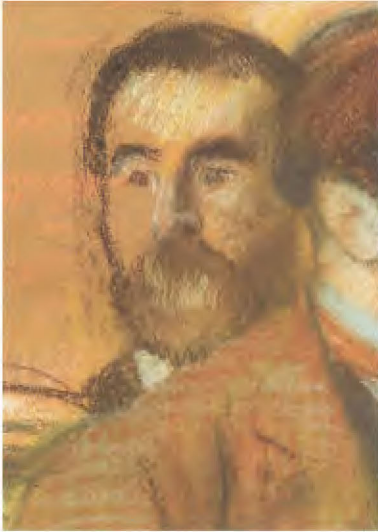
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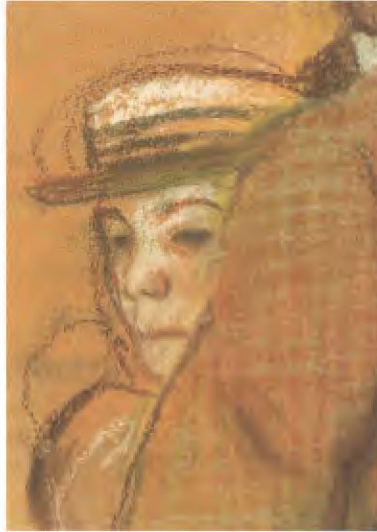
## Six Friends at Dieppe: *Schema of the Characters*



LUDOVIC HALÉVY

(1834–1908)

Renowned librettist and writer of fiction who shared Degas's interest in theater and music and was his host in Dieppe



DANIEL HALÉVY

(1872–1962)

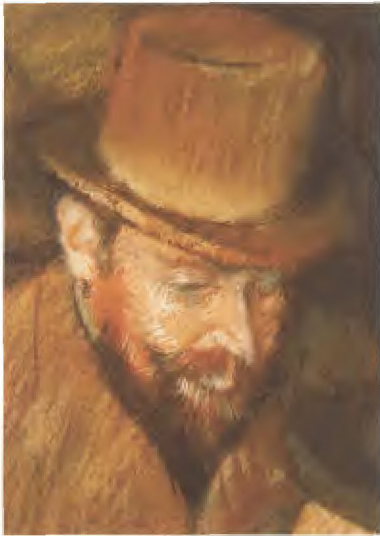
Ludovic and Louise Halévy's younger son, who admired Degas throughout his life and who wrote an insightful biography of the artist (*Degas parle*, 1960)



ALBERT BOULANGER-CAVÉ

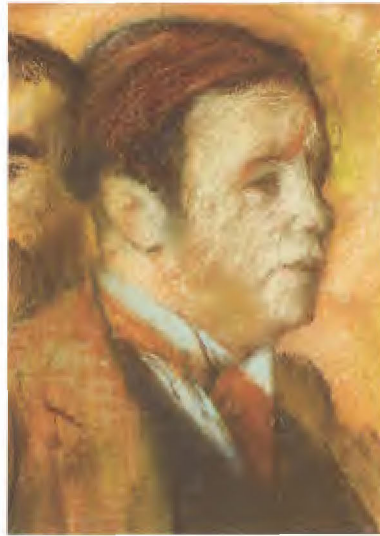
(1830–1910)

Briefly a censor of public spectacles for the Ministry of Fine Arts, he was best known as a "man of taste" whose advice was sought by writers and stage directors



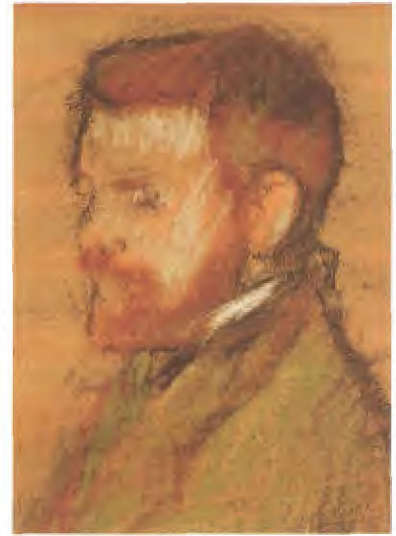
HENRI GERVEX  
(1852–1929)

Realist painter who won numerous public commissions, teacher of Jacques-Émile Blanche, and frequent guest at the Blanchés' home in Dieppe



JACQUES-ÉMILE BLANCHE  
(1861–1942)

Artist, writer, musician, and passionate Anglophile whose studio in Dieppe provided the setting for *Six Friends at Dieppe*



WALTER SICKERT  
(1860–1942)

Young British artist, friend of Jacques-Émile Blanche; an apprentice to James A. M. Whistler when he first met Degas in Paris in 1883

Letter from Daniel Halévy to John Maxon,  
Director, Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design

4 février 1953

Cher monsieur,

Votre photographie est très belle, je vous remercie.

Vous me demandez de rassembler des souvenirs qui ont aujourd'hui quelque soixante-cinq ans d'âge. Ses souvenirs sont agréables, la tâche de les écrire est comme eux agréable.

C'est à Dieppe que ce tableau a été peint, les modèles étaient groupés à l'entrée du beau "Chalet" qui était la résidence estivale de Jacques-Emile Blanche. Mon père Ludovic Halévy avait loué un chalet proche de celui des Blanche, père, mère & fils, avec lesquels nous étions intime. Nous avions chez nous à demeure notre ami Albert Cavé, dont j'ai tracé le portrait (écrit) dans mon livre intitulé Pays parisiens. Albert Cavé était un excellent amateur et oisif comme il n'en existe plus. J'ai raconté dans mon livre les rapports parfois rugueux de Degas et de Cavé. Entre le grand artiste et l'homme de grand goût il y avait des affinités, mais entre le grand homme de labour qu'était Degas et le grand artiste du rien faire qu'était Cavé, il y avait des incompatibilités.

Degas, lui aussi, était installé à demeure chez nous.

Derrière Cavé, le peintre Gervex, qui était hôte des Blanche. Je crois qu'il avait été un peu professeur pour J. E. Blanche. Ses tableaux de jeunesse manifestaient un vrai talent. Mais il était de nature vulgaire, et son art s'en est ressenti.

Derrière Gervex, J. B. [sic] Blanche; derrière lui, mon père; enfin, moi le petit dernier.

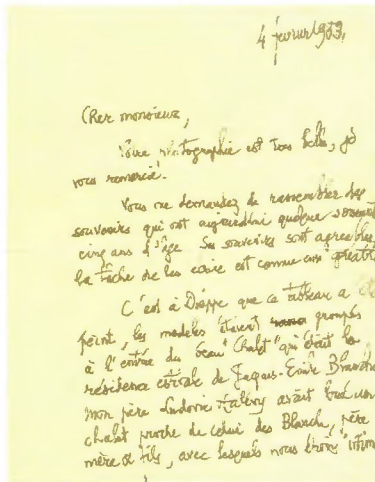
Quand je regarde ces figures groupées à droite, se confirme en moi le souvenir que Cavé & Gervex étaient assis sur les marches de l'entrée, Blanche, mon père et moi, debout sur le perron.

Quant au jeune Sickert, debout, solitaire, Degas ne se sera pas gêné pour le planter là, selon sa fantaisie.

Sickert était très admirateur & disciple de Wistler [sic], qui quelques semaines fut des notres. Vous savez assurément que Sickert a passé de longues années à Dieppe.

Quant au travail de Degas, que vous dirais-je? Il peignait, on causait, il causait. Je ne me souviens pas qu'il se plaignît de ses yeux, pourtant bien éprouvés dès lors.

Je vous ai répondu de mon mieux, souhaitant avoir mérité cette immortalité de seconde zone que vous promettez.



J'autorise la traduction, la publication, tout ce que vous voudrez, avec cette réserve qu'un exemplaire des publications me sera envoyé.

J'ajoute un post scriptum que je crois identifier Miss Jean Boggs. C'était une gracieuse jeune femme, dont je garderais un bon souvenir si elle avait tenu la promesse qu'elle m'avait faite de me renseigner sur ce qu'avaient été les derniers mois de Rachel Bepalof, éminente juive réfugiée à M. O. [Mount Holyoke] College, et sur le souvenir qu'y avait laissé son enseignement du français. Elle a tragiquement mis fin à sa vie, et ses nombreux amis parisiens n'ont jamais été renseignés sur son drame.

Truly yours D Halévy

J'espère que vous m'accuserez réception de mon petit devoir.

x

x x

Encore un post scriptum, relatif à l'histoire du tableau. Ce n'est pas bien intéressant, mais les érudits veulent tout savoir.

Ce tableau avait été laissé par Degas à Dieppe, & J. B. [*sic*] Blanche on a eu la possession pendant une vingtaine d'années – ou vingt-cinq.

Vers 1910, J. B. [*sic*] B. fit un portrait de Degas, qui est d'un beau caractère.

Sans en demander la permission, il montra ce portrait dans une exposition. Mais Degas, qui avait horreur des indiscretions et des expositions, écrivit un mot très bref exprimant son mécontentement et sa demande d'une restitution immédiate du tableau resté en dépôt chez lui. Il donna le mot à un commissionnaire, qui partit ayant sur son dos son crochet de porteur. Il avait ordre d'attendre la réponse. La réponse, c'était le tableau. J. E. Blanche s'exécuta aussitôt, & voilà pourquoi le tableau est maintenant à R.I.S.D.

La bombe atomique menace tout, mais la photographie sauvera bien des choses. Je ferai de mon mieux pour préserver celle que vous avez l'amabilité de m'envoyer.

D. H.

[39, Quai de l'Horloge, Paris, France]



February 4, 1953

Dear Sir,

Your photograph is very beautiful; I thank you for it.

You ask me to gather together memories that are today some sixty-five years old. These are happy memories and the task of writing about them is equally pleasant.

It was in Dieppe that this picture was painted, the models having been grouped at the entrance of the beautiful "Chalet" which was the summer residence of Jacques-Emile Blanche. My father, Ludovic Halévy, had rented a cottage near that of the Blancches, father, mother and son, with whom we were close friends. Staying with us was our friend Albert Cavé, whose portrait (written) I sketched in my book entitled *Pays parisiens*. Albert Cavé was an excellent amateur and idler of the sort that no longer exists. I recounted in my book the sometimes strained relationship between Degas and Cavé. Between the great artist and the man of great taste there were affinities, but between the man of great labor who was Degas and the great artist of idleness who was Cavé, there were always points of incompatibility.

Degas was staying with us in our home, as well.

Behind Cavé, the painter Gervex, who was the guest of the Blanche family. I believe that he was something of a teacher for J. E. Blanche. The paintings of his early career demonstrated a true talent, but he was common by nature, and that was manifested in his art.

Behind Gervex, J. B. [*sic*] Blanche; behind him, my father; finally, myself, the last little one.

When I look at these figures grouped at right, it confirms my memory that Cavé and Gervex were seated on the steps of the entrance, Blanche, my father and myself, standing on the landing.

As for the young Sickert, standing, alone, Degas would have had no trouble sticking him there, according to his fancy.

Sickert was a great admirer and disciple of Wistler [*sic*], who for a few weeks was among our group. You know of course that Sickert spent many years at Dieppe.

As for Degas's working methods, what can I say? He painted, we chatted, he chatted. I do not recall that he complained about his eyes, which were however very much compromised by then.

I've responded to you as best I can, hoping to have merited this second rank immortality that you have promised me.

I authorize the translation, publication, everything you would like, with the sole condition that an example of the publications be sent to me.

I add as a postscript that I believe I can identify Miss Jean Boggs. This was a gracious young woman, of whom I would preserve a fine memory if she had kept the promise that she made to inform me about the last months of Rachel Bepalof, the eminent Jewish refugee at M. O. [Mount Holyoke] College, and about the impressions left by the French courses she taught there. She tragically ended her life, and her many Parisian friends have never been fully informed about the circumstances of her drama.

Truly yours D Halévy

I hope that you will acknowledge receipt of my little assignment.

x  
x x

One more postscript, related to the history of the picture. It is not very interesting, but scholars want to know everything.

This picture was left by Degas in Dieppe, and J. B. [*sic*] Blanche had possession of it for about twenty years – or twenty-five.

Around 1910, J. B. [*sic*] B. made a portrait of Degas, a fine characterization.

Without asking permission, he showed it in an exhibition. But Degas, who had a horror of indiscretions and of exhibitions, wrote a very curt note expressing his discontent and demanding the immediate return of this picture that had been confided to him. He gave a note to a messenger who appeared with a porter's brace on his back. He was instructed to await the response. The response was the picture. J. E. Blanche delivered it immediately, and that is why the picture is now at R.I.S.D.

The atomic bomb threatens everything, but photography will save many things. I will do my best to preserve the one that you have had the kindness to send me.

D. H.

[39, Quai de l'Horloge, Paris, France]

~~le~~ part, ayant su  
rochet de porteur. Il a  
dre la réponse. La rép  
le tableau. J. E. Bla  
uta aessich, & veda p  
ntenant à R. I. S. D.

bombe atomique menace  
graphie sauvera bien des  
de mon mieux pour prés  
à ma tête d