

Release Date: December 16, 2013

Degas/Cassatt Exhibition Reveals New Information About Relationship of Two Renowned Impressionists at National Gallery of Art, Washington, Sole Venue Worldwide,
May 11–October 5, 2014



Mary Cassatt, *Little Girl in a Blue Armchair*, 1878

oil on canvas

National Gallery of Art, Washington, Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon

Washington, DC—Edgar Degas's (1834–1917) influence on fellow impressionist Mary Cassatt (1844–1926) is widely known, but her role in shaping his work and introducing him to American audiences is fully examined for the first time in *Degas/Cassatt*. On view at the National Gallery of Art, Washington—the sole venue worldwide—from May 11 through October 5, 2014, the exhibition includes some 70 works in a variety of media. Groundbreaking technical analysis is presented by conservators and scientists who examined key works by both artists.

"Despite differences of gender and nationality, Degas and Cassatt forged a deep friendship founded on respect and admiration, and we are delighted to share the results of this relationship with our visitors. The Gallery is particularly well suited to the exploration of this subject because of the exceptional works donated by discerning collectors, such as Paul Mellon, Chester Dale, and Lessing J. Rosenwald," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art, Washington. "A profound debt of gratitude is owed to our many lenders, both public and private, in the United States and France."

The Gallery is exceptionally rich in holdings by both artists, with one of the finest collections of works by Cassatt in existence, totaling 119, and the third largest collection of works by Degas in the world, totaling 158.

Exhibition Organization and Support

Degas/Cassatt was organized by the National Gallery of Art, Washington.

The exhibition is made possible by a generous grant from Booz Allen Hamilton Inc. in celebration of its 100th anniversary.

"Booz Allen is honored to sponsor this major exhibition at the National Gallery of Art, which

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BIOGRAPHIES

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presents the exceptional artistry and collaboration of Edgar Degas and Mary Cassatt. The works themselves, and the research conducted by the National Gallery of Art, reveal the way these impressionist masters inspired and learned from each other. Booz Allen is proud to help make possible this exhibition in the nation's capital on the occasion of our firm's 100th anniversary," said Ralph W. Shrader, chairman and chief executive officer of Booz Allen Hamilton.

The Robert and Mercedes Eichholz Foundation is the foundation sponsor.

The exhibition is supported by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities.

Exhibition Highlights

Degas/Cassatt is organized thematically over four galleries with a focus on the height of Degas and Cassatt's artistic alliance—the late 1870s through the mid-1880s. Included are oil paintings, pastels, and works on paper (etchings, lithographs, monotypes, and drawings), with several that were once in the artists' personal collections. Cassatt stated that her first encounter with Degas's art "changed my life," while Degas, upon seeing Cassatt's art for the first time, reputedly remarked, "there is someone who feels as I do."

A focal point of the exhibition is Cassatt's *Little Girl in a Blue Armchair* (1878). Degas's participation in this painting is known through a letter (also in the exhibition) that Cassatt wrote to her dealer Ambroise Vollard, but the details have remained a mystery. Recent cleaning and careful analysis of the brushwork, as well as x-radiographs and infrared images have revealed changes beneath the paint surface, providing clear evidence of Degas's intervention in Cassatt's picture.

Both artists explored alternate and mixed media, including distemper, tempera, and metallic paint, during a brief but intensive period of experimentation from 1878 to 1879. A group of these daring and unconventional works are on view, including Cassatt's *Woman Standing Holding a Fan* (1878/1879) and Degas's *Portrait after a Costume Ball (Portrait of Mme Dietz-Monnin)* (1879), which is being loaned for the first time in 60 years.

The show presents some of the most audacious and technically innovative etchings of the artists' careers done in anticipation of a new impressionist print publication that was never realized, *Le Jour et la nuit*.

The exhibition includes the most comprehensive group of works depicting Cassatt at the Louvre, including prints, preparatory drawings, pastels, paintings, and an original copperplate.

Several important artistic juxtapositions are revealed throughout the exhibition, including Cassatt's *Young Woman in Black (Portrait of Madame J)* (1883), on view for the first time beside Degas's *Fan Mount: Ballet Girls* (1879), which appears in the background of her painting.

Degas owned some 100 works by Cassatt—more than any other contemporary artist of his generation. Among the works in his collection at the time of his death was a unique set of 13 impressions of Cassatt's print *The Visitor* (c. 1881). Four of these impressions as well as the original softground preparatory drawing (also from Degas's personal collection) are included.

Although their friendship endured until Degas's death in 1917, their interactions decreased after the eighth and final impressionist exhibition in 1886. A small group of works dating to the 1890s is included in the exhibition to illustrate how their paths diverged.

Curator, Catalogue, and Related Activities

The exhibition curator is Kimberly A. Jones, associate curator of French paintings, National Gallery of Art.

Published by the National Gallery of Art and DelMonico Books, an imprint of Prestel Publishing, the 176-page fully illustrated exhibition catalogue is available in softcover and hardcover for purchase in the Gallery Shops. To order, please visit <http://shop.nga.gov/>; call (800) 697-9350 or (202) 842-6002; fax (202) 789-3047; or e-mail mailorder@nga.gov. The catalogue includes

essays by Jones, with contributions by Elliot Bostwick Davis, John Moors Cabot Chair, Art of the Americas, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Erica E. Hirshler, Croll Senior Curator of Paintings, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Ann Hoenigswald, senior conservator of paintings, National Gallery of Art; Marc Rosen and Susan Pinsky, private dealers in impressionist and modern art; and Amanda T. Zehnder, associate curator of fine arts, Carnegie Museum of Art.

On Sunday, May 11, 2014, at noon, Jones presents the opening day lecture. The exhibition closes with a public symposium on October 5, 2014.

Background

Little Girl in a Blue Armchair came to the Gallery from Paul Mellon, who also donated his extraordinary collection of works by Degas. Formerly part of Degas's personal collection, Cassatt's *Girl Arranging Her Hair* (1886) was among the more than two dozen paintings and works on paper bequeathed to the Gallery by Chester Dale. Several exhibited etchings—produced during their collaboration for *Le Jour et la nuit*—came from the extensive collection of prints donated by Lessing J. Rosenwald.

The Gallery has hosted several past exhibitions on both artists, including ***Prints by Mary Cassatt*** (1950); ***Prints and Drawings by Mary Cassatt*** (1963); ***Mary Cassatt (1844-1925)*** (1970); ***Wax Sculptures by Degas*** (1973); ***Degas: The Dancers*** (1984); ***Mary Cassatt: The Color Prints*** (1989); ***Degas at the Races*** (1998); and ***Mary Cassatt*** (1999).

General Information

The National Gallery of Art and its Sculpture Garden are at all times free to the public. They are located on the National Mall between 3rd and 9th Streets at Constitution Avenue NW, and are open Monday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The Gallery is closed on December 25 and January 1. With the exception of the atrium and library, the galleries in the East Building will remain closed for approximately three years for Master Facilities Plan and renovations. For specific updates on gallery closings, visit <http://www.nga.gov/content/ngaweb/Collection/modern-art-during-renovation.html>.

For information call (202) 737-4215 or the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) at (202) 842-6176, or visit the Gallery's Web site at www.nga.gov. Follow the Gallery on Facebook at www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt and on Twitter at www.twitter.com/ngadc.

Visitors will be asked to present all carried items for inspection upon entering. Checkrooms are free of charge and located at each entrance. Luggage and other oversized bags must be presented at the 4th Street entrances to the East or West Building to permit x-ray screening and must be deposited in the checkrooms at those entrances. For the safety of visitors and the works of art, nothing may be carried into the Gallery on a visitor's back. Any bag or other items that cannot be carried reasonably and safely in some other manner must be left in the checkrooms. Items larger than 17 by 26 inches cannot be accepted by the Gallery or its checkrooms.

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