

Degas and the Nude

By Xavier Rey, Anne Roquebert, George Shackelford

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The nude figure was critical to the art of Edgar Degas throughout his life, and yet frequently his expansive body of work on this subject has been overshadowed by his celebrated portraits and dancers. *Degas and the Nude* is the first book in a generation to explore the artist's treatment of the nude from his early years in the 1850s and 1860s, through his triumphs in the 1880s and 1890s, all the way to his last decades when the theme dominated his artistic production in all media. With essays by leading American and French critics, it provides a new interpretation of Degas' evolving conception of the nude, situating it in the subject's broader context among his peers in nineteenth-century France. It explores how Degas exploited all of the body's expressive possibilities, how his vision of the nude informed his notion of modernity, and how he abandoned the classical or historical form in favor of a figure seen in her own time and setting--whether engaged in overtly carnal acts or just stepping out of an ordinary bath. More than 200 lushly rendered full-color images present a re-seeing of Degas' subject in paintings, pastels, drawings, prints and sculpture. Among them are the most important of Degas' early paintings of nudes, *Scene of War in the Middle Ages*, which exerted a lifelong influence on the artist's treatment of the female nude and includes poses repeated throughout his career; monotypes of the late 1870s, almost caricature-like in their imagery, illustrating Degas' most explicitly sexual depictions of women in Parisian brothels; and a number of pictures portraying the daily life of women wherever they may reside. Together these iterations range over more than a half-century of genius achievement and present a groundbreaking look at the evolution of this master artist.

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