

Edgar Degas



What Did Edgar Degas Create?

Edgar Degas was a French artist known for painting dancers, racehorses, and everyday people. He loved to show movement in his art and used painting, drawing, pastels, and sculpture.

Childhood

- He was born in **Paris, France**, on **19 July 1834**.
- His full name was **Hilaire-Germain-Edgar Degas**.
- His **father was a banker** and loved music, which helped Degas learn to appreciate the arts from an early age.
- His **mother was from New Orleans**, which gave Degas a connection to America and different cultures.
- He was the **oldest of five children** and often took a leading role in family matters.
- As a boy, he **loved visiting museums** and copying famous artworks in his sketchbooks.
- Degas enjoyed drawing from a very young age and **turned his bedroom into an art studio**.
- He **preferred being alone** and was often shy, which helped him observe people quietly—something that later helped his art.

Education: More About His Art Studies

- He went to a famous school called **Lycée Louis-le-Grand** in Paris.
- Degas studied **law at his father's request**, but he didn't enjoy it and didn't finish.

- He enrolled in the **École des Beaux-Arts**, one of the most important art schools in France.
 - At school, he **studied drawing, painting, and sculpture**, learning the traditional ways of making art.
 - Degas **copied Old Master paintings** at the **Louvre Museum**, including works by Raphael and Ingres.
 - He travelled to **Italy** to study the work of artists from the Renaissance period.
 - He admired artists like **Delacroix and Ingres**, blending romantic colour and classical line in his style.
 - Degas believed in **learning by observation**, and many of his best lessons came from watching life around him.
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Career: More About His Art Life

- He was known for painting **ballet dancers, racehorses, and scenes of everyday Parisian life**.
- Degas created **more than 1,500 pictures of dancers**, making him the artist most closely linked to ballet.
- He didn't like being called an Impressionist—he preferred to be called a **Realist** or **Independent**.
- Degas **often used pastels**, which allowed him to quickly capture movement and detail.
- He experimented with **photography** and sculpture when his eyesight worsened.
- His famous sculpture “**Little Dancer of Fourteen Years**” was made using wax, real fabric, and human hair.
- Degas worked alone most of the time and didn't enjoy public attention or interviews.
- He became **nearly blind** later in life, but still continued to draw and sculpt by touch.

Artworks

The Ballet Class



Dancers Practicing at the Barre



Little Dancer of Fourteen Years



Dancers Backstage



Racing horses (a series)



Quotes from Degas:

- “Art is not what you see, but what you make others see.”
- “Painting is easy when you don’t know how, but very difficult when you do.”