



BOCA RATON  
MUSEUM OF ART

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Boca Raton Museum of Art Presents its Exceptional Exhibition  
*Degas in Bronze: The Complete Sculptures***

**Boca Raton, FL --** The **Boca Raton Museum of Art** is delighted to announce the opening of the world-class exhibition ***Degas in Bronze: The Complete Sculptures***. This ground-breaking exhibition will be on display January 25 through April 27, 2008.

*Degas in Bronze: The Complete Sculptures* presents an extraordinary opportunity to experience Degas' complete work in sculpture. A pioneering artist in so many respects, Degas set the stage for later developments in modern art through his innovations in depicting lifelike form and movement.

One of the most important artists of the 19th century, the French painter and sculptor Edgar Degas (1834-1917) spent his entire life investigating the figure in motion through countless studies of ballerinas, racehorses, and bathers. Though he worked relentlessly on small composite sculptures privately, he only exhibited one completed sculpture during his lifetime. *Degas in Bronze* offers an extremely rare opportunity to view 73 sculptures, posthumously cast in bronze from Degas' original composite and wax models. This collection is one of only four comprehensive sets of bronzes cast by Hébrard in the 1920's and after from Degas' original fragile statuettes. Despite the difficulties attending the casting of such fragile originals, Hébrard's work was widely acclaimed when the pieces were first exhibited in Paris in 1921, due to the skill of the caster, Albino Palazzolo, and to the supervision of Degas' friend Albert Bartholomé. The 73 bronzes in this exhibition are on loan from the collections of MASP, *Museu de Arte de São Paulo, Assis Chateaubriand, São Paulo, Brasil*. *Degas in Bronze: The Complete Sculptures* is organized by Joseph S. Czestochowski, *International Arts*.

This magnificent exhibition explores one of the most fascinating aspects of the work of Degas, whose innovative compositions, skillful drawing, and perceptive analysis of movement made him one of the late 19th-century masters of modern art. During the Boca Raton Museum of Art's exhibition, the bronzes will be augmented by a selection of Degas prints and drawings to provide visitors with a fuller view of the artist's creative genius for representing the figure in motion.

**more**

*The Boca Raton Museum of Art's presentation of Degas in Bronze is supported in part by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and Humanities, The Estate of Simone Stakolt Tolksdorf, an anonymous Patron of the Arts, The City of Boca Raton, and The Bernard and Mary Jane Pollack Foundation.*

### **Catalogue**

The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated 288-page catalogue, compiled by art historian and former museum director, Joseph S. Czestochowski, and Anne Pinget, conservateur général at the Musée d'Orsay.

During the Degas Exhibition the Boca Raton Museum of Art will be open Sunday and Monday 12pm – 5pm; Tuesday, Thursday and Saturdays 10am – 5pm; Wednesday and Friday 10am – 9pm. Admission for Degas and Tiffany Exhibitions is \$20 for adults, \$17 for senior citizens (65 and older), \$15 per person for group tours and \$6 for students. For more information call 561.392.2500 or visit [www.bocamuseum.org](http://www.bocamuseum.org).

The Boca Raton Museum of Art was founded in 1950 as the Art Guild of Boca Raton, and has evolved into one of the leading cultural institutions in South Florida achieving international recognition as a world-class visual arts institution, presenting dynamic traveling exhibitions from acclaimed and emerging artists, and an outstanding permanent collection. Some of the Museum's programs include the Art Films Series, artist lectures, family programs, Music at the Museum, the International Film Series, and more than 98 classes per week at its studio Art School.

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## BOCA RATON MUSEUM OF ART

### Featured Degas Sculptures in the Exhibition



#### ***Horse at Trough***

EDGAR DEGAS (French, 1834-1917), *Horse at Trough*, conceived around 1865-1868, bronze cast in 1920's and after from a wax sculpture. Collections of MASP, Museu de Arte de São Paulo, Assis Chateaubriand, São Paulo, Brasil. © 2007 Courtesy of International Arts. Photo by Pierre-Alain Ferrazzini

The original wax version of the *Horse at Trough* is probably one of the earliest surviving sculptures by Degas. It has long been recognized as the same horse that stands drinking on the bank of the spring in the painting *Mlle Fiocre in the Ballet "La Source"* that is now in the Brooklyn Museum in New York. The ballet, choreographed by Arthur Saint-Léon to music by Ludwig Minkus and Léo Delibes, opened at the Paris Opéra on November 12, 1866. Degas's painting was exhibited in the Paris Salon of 1868. The celebrated Eugénie Fiocre (1845–1908) was the subject of several drawings by Degas, as well as an enchanting portrait bust by Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux.



#### ***Horse Trotting, the Feet Not Touching the Ground***

EDGAR DEGAS (French, 1834-1917), *Horse Trotting, the Feet Not Touching the Ground*, conceived around 1879-1881, bronze cast in 1920's and after from a wax sculpture. Collections of MASP, Museu de Arte de São Paulo, Assis Chateaubriand, São Paulo, Brasil. © 2007 Courtesy of International Arts. Photo by Pierre-Alain Ferrazzini

Eadweard Muybridge's photograph, part of a sequence titled "*Abe Edgington*" ... *Trotting at a 2:24 Gain over the Palo Alto Track, 15th June, 1878*, revealed for the first time that there is a moment when all four hooves of a trotting horse leave the ground at once. Although the sequential photograph was not widely published until much later, the discovery of this previously unobserved phenomenon caused an immediate sensation. During the 1880s, Muybridge toured Europe with a projecting device and lantern slides of his sequential photographs demonstrating that artists had throughout the ages misrepresented the true movement of a trotting horse. Degas's bronze horse is supported by a post; all four hooves are in the air, and the position of each leg faithfully reproduces the attitude of the horses in the top right photograph of Muybridge's 1878 sequence.



***Horse with Head Lowered***

EDGAR DEGAS (French, 1834-1917), *Horse with Head Lowered*, conceived around 1865-1881, bronze cast in 1920's and after from a wax sculpture. Collections of MASP, Museu de Arte de São Paulo, Assis Chateaubriand, São Paulo, Brasil. © 2007 Courtesy of International Arts. Photo by Pierre-Alain Ferrazzini

Most of the models for Degas's horses were Thoroughbreds, raised for the speed and competition of racing. Degas's aim was to capture their spirited movements with ever-increasing accuracy. This bronze also records the damage to the right front leg of the original sculpture, damage that exposed the wire armature used to support the fragile wax medium.



***Little Dancer, Aged Fourteen***

EDGAR DEGAS (French, 1834-1917), *Little Dancer, Aged Fourteen*, conceived around 1878-1881, bronze cast in 1920's and after from a wax sculpture. Collections of MASP, Museu de Arte de São Paulo, Assis Chateaubriand, São Paulo, Brasil. © 2007 Courtesy of International Arts. Photo by Pierre-Alain Ferrazzini

The model for this essentially realistic work is known to have been Marie Van Goethem. Born on June 7, 1865, she was a student at the École de Danse in Paris, and by 1880 she had been engaged as a dancer at the Opéra. The care with which Degas observed his model is reflected not only in the sculpture itself, but also in the unusual number of surviving sketches of the model in charcoal and pastel, as well as in a preparatory sculptural study of the figure in the nude. The title, *Little Dancer, Aged Fourteen* [*Petite danseuse de quatorze ans*], given to the original mixed-media sculpture when it was exhibited by Degas in the sixth Impressionist exhibition held in Paris in 1881, provides the most solid evidence for the sculpture's date.



***Woman Getting Out of the Bath***

EDGAR DEGAS (French, 1834-1917), *Woman Getting Out of the Bath*, conceived around 1896-1911, bronze cast in 1920's and after from a wax sculpture. Collections of MASP, Museu de Arte de São Paulo, Assis Chateaubriand, São Paulo, Brasil. © 2007 Courtesy of International Arts. Photo by Pierre-Alain Ferrazzini

One of the many sculptured bathers that can be related to similar subjects found among the artist's works on paper, this one is surely the bather seen from the left side, sponging her left knee, in a series of charcoal and pastel drawings that have been dated on stylistic grounds to about 1883 or 1884.



### ***Spanish Dance***

EDGAR DEGAS (French, 1834-1917), *Spanish Dance*, conceived around 1882 -1895 bronze cast in 1920's and after from a wax sculpture. Collections of MASP, Museu de Arte de São Paulo, Assis Chateaubriand, São Paulo, Brasil. © 2007 Courtesy of International Arts. Photo by Pierre-Alain Ferrazzini

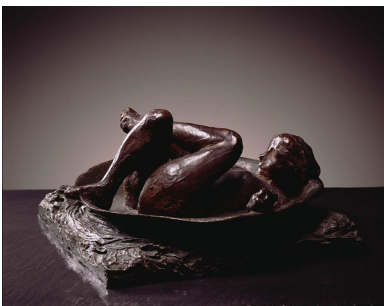
This is one of three sculptures by Degas—the second also called *Spanish Dance*, and the third, *Dancer with Tambourine*—that are part of a group which includes several drawings and pastels illuminating a dancer in nearly the same pose. Two of the drawings, now in the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston, are studies for the cover of a program for an event presented in 1884 by the pupils of the Lycée de Nantes at the Galerie Poursin in Paris. *Spanish Dance* was first cast in plaster by the founder of the bronzes, Adrien Hébrard, about 1900 to 1903. It is one of the few pieces of sculpture that Degas allowed to be cast in a medium that is more durable than wax or clay.



### ***Dancer Rubbing Her Knee* or *Study for a Dancer as Harlequin* or *Dancer in the Role of Harlequin***

EDGAR DEGAS (French, 1834-1917), *Dancer Rubbing Her Knee*, conceived around 1882 -1895, bronze cast in 1920's and after from a wax sculpture. Collections of MASP, Museu de Arte de São Paulo, Assis Chateaubriand, São Paulo, Brasil. © 2007 Courtesy of International Arts. Photo by Pierre-Alain Ferrazzini

*Dancer Rubbing Her Knee* has been identified with Harlequin in a pastel dated 1885 now in the Art Institute of Chicago. The pastel is part of a series of seven depicting scenes from the ballet *Les Jumeaux de Bergame*, probably the production that had its first performance at the Paris Opéra on January 26, 1886. Degas is known to have attended rehearsals for it in July of 1885. The figure in the pastel wears Harlequin's domino costume and carries a baton or slapstick in her right hand with which she has presumably just felled another character in the ballet. In the sculpture, Degas has presented Harlequin nude, abandoning any attempt at narrative context and concentrating on the figure in motion.



### ***The Tub***

EDGAR DEGAS (French, 1834-1917), *The Tub*, conceived around 1881 -1889, bronze cast in 1920's and after from a wax sculpture. Collections of MASP, Museu de Arte de São Paulo, Assis Chateaubriand, São Paulo, Brasil. © 2007 Courtesy of International Arts. Photo by Pierre-Alain Ferrazzini



Like *Little Dancer, Aged Fourteen*, the original version of *The Tub* depends for its effect in large part on its polychromy and on the inclusion of materials usually foreign to sculpture. The original version of *Le tub* consists of a reddish-brown wax figure reclining in an actual lead basin; and plaster had been poured into the bottom of the basin to simulated water. The base, as described in Degas's letter to Paul-Albert Bartholomé, is of plaster-soaked rags arranged over wood, and it represents one of Degas's attempts to eliminate the need for a pedestal. Unlike the bronze version of *The Little Dancer, Aged*, the bronze version of *The Tub* preserves no suggestion of the materials and colors of the original.

*The Tub* is widely regarded as the most innovative and important work of Degas' entire sculpted oeuvre. Arguably the most radical element of Degas's original *The Tub* sculpture is its incorporation of real materials or *objets trouvés* - an overt challenge to the accepted criteria of sculpture in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, unprecedented except in Degas's *Little Dancer, Aged Fourteen* of 1881. The sculpture, then, is at once illusory and real - a precursor to a long line of 20th-century assemblages, from Cubist collages and Duchamp readymades to surrealist objects and Rauschenberg combine-paintings. The second pioneering feature of *The Tub* is the unusual vantage point that it forces the spectator to adopt. Since the bather is partially submerged in the shallow basin, a full view of the figure can be obtained only by looking down at her."



### ***Woman Stretching***

EDGAR DEGAS (French, 1834-1917), *Woman Stretching*, conceived around 1896 -1911, bronze cast in 1920's and after from a wax sculpture.

Collections of MASP, Museu de Arte de São Paulo, Assis Chateaubriand, São Paulo, Brasil. © 2007 Courtesy of International Arts. Photo by Pierre-Alain Ferrazzini

This bronze probably depicts a working woman snatching a moment of respite from her daily labor. Nineteenth-century Paris was full of working women employed as milliner's assistants and laundresses. Degas recorded some of them at their labor in pastels such as *The Milliners*, dated 1882, now in the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City, and in paintings, notably the series titled *Women Ironing*, one of which is now in the Musée d'Orsay in Paris. While the *Women Ironing* series does not include a figure that corresponds exactly to the sculpture, the woman yawning and stretching is surely related. The painting in the Musée d'Orsay is thought to date about 1884–86.

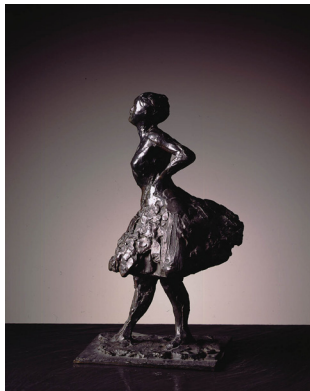
The sculpture is one of Degas's lesser known but illuminating works. He was obviously preoccupied with recording the sketch. The woman's head, with its nightmarish features, is twisted into a difficult position, perhaps as a result of an accident to the wax model, but it is surely no accident that the hands, too, are misshapen and rudimentary and that the feet sink into the base of the sculpture, merging with it.



***First Arabesque Penchée***

EDGAR DEGAS (French, 1834-1917), *First Arabesque Penchée*, conceived around 1882 -1885, bronze cast in 1920's and after from a wax sculpture. Collections of MASP, Museu de Arte de São Paulo, Assis Chateaubriand, São Paulo, Brasil. © 2007 Courtesy of International Arts. Photo by Pierre-Alain Ferrazzini

Degas, whose sculpture subjects are few, deliberately limited himself to ones within which he could explore the problems that particularly interested him. The human figures are often repetitious of the same model, each displaying subtle variations in composition or in the dynamics of movement or tension within the figure. The dancers of the Paris Opéra, disciplined to achieve and to maintain the difficult and often entirely unnatural movements of ballet, were ideal for Degas's purpose, one that required just such holding of complicated poses, allowing him to work from a living model.



***Dressed Dancer at Rest, Hands Behind Her Back, Right Leg Forward***

EDGAR DEGAS (French, 1834-1917), *Dressed Dancer at Rest, Hands Behind Her Back, Right Leg Forward*, conceived around 1896 -1911, bronze cast in 1920's and after from a wax sculpture. Collections of MASP, Museu de Arte de São Paulo, Assis Chateaubriand, São Paulo, Brasil. © 2007 Courtesy of International Arts. Photo by Pierre-Alain Ferrazzini

The skirt of the original sculpture is constructed of light-reflecting wax and bits of cork, evidently an attempt to create the sculptural equivalent of dancers in similar poses that are the subject of some of Degas's most colorful pastels. One of these, *Two Dancers in Green Skirts*, has been dated to about 1894–99 on the basis of stylistic considerations. This figure belongs to a series of sculptures of which two others and a related fourth are preserved in bronze. Two are similar to this one except that they are nude and display much more detailed modeling of the faces and feet. Their existence strengthens the supposition that in this figure Degas's interest was not in the anatomical details, but in the skirt.



***Dancer Looking at the Sole of Her Right Foot***

EDGAR DEGAS (French, 1834-1917), *Dancer Looking at the Sole of Her Right Foot*, conceived around 1882 -1895, bronze cast in 1920's and after from a wax sculpture. Collections of MASP, Museu de Arte de São Paulo, Assis Chateaubriand, São Paulo, Brasil. © 2007 Courtesy of International Arts. Photo by Pierre-Alain Ferrazzini

The model for this bronze was a plaster cast of an earlier sculpture probably modeled in wax. The plaster cast is known to have been made by the founder Adrien Hébrard about 1900. The figure is one of four in a series of surviving figures - each in a slightly different position but all doing the same thing - that exemplify Degas's fascination with subtle changes in the dynamics of movement. This one was long thought to

be the final one in the series owing to its relatively finished surface, but one of Degas's models asserted that in 1910 she was asked by the artist to assume the difficult pose of the plaster cast while he modeled another small figure. So it seems that, in fact, the less finished versions are likely to be the later ones.



***Woman Seated in an Armchair Wiping Her Left Armpit***

EDGAR DEGAS (French, 1834-1917), *Woman Seated in an Armchair Wiping Her Left Armpit*, conceived around 1896 -1911, bronze cast in 1920's and after from a wax sculpture. Collections of MASP, Museu de Arte de São Paulo, Assis Chateaubriand, São Paulo, Brasil. © 2007 Courtesy of International Arts. Photo by Pierre-Alain Ferrazzini

Degas made many drawings and pastels of similar figures of women unselfconsciously combing their hair or washing and drying themselves. A charcoal drawing in the Von der Heydt-Museum in Wuppertal, Germany, depicts a woman in an identical position, seated next to a bathtub. The drawing is thought to date from about 1895. Working on a small scale, which prompted visitors to the artist's studio to compare his figures to dolls, Degas modeled the original sculpture from which this bronze was cast in wax. The cork incorporations in the wax are still visible on the back of the original wax which is now in the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.