

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man

Edgar Degas Inspired by Rembrandt

• JENNY REYNAERTS AND STELLA VERSLUIS-VAN DONGEN¹ •

*'I assure you no art was ever less spontaneous than mine. What I do is the result of reflection and study of the great masters; of inspiration, spontaneity, temperament – temperament is the word – I know nothing.'*²

Edgar Degas set out for Italy in July 1856. This study trip, prompted solely by his own desires, was to last for three years, an intense period in which he threw himself with a passion into the study of classical sculpture and the Italian paintings of the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. He copied some of the art he saw into six notebooks: mostly rough sketches as an *aide memoire*.³ He also practised by making detailed drawings of certain Italian paintings and sculptures he admired. Here Degas was following academic teaching methods, imitating the classics in order to emulate them, creating his own inventions based on the knowledge he had acquired. In his choice of works of art, too, he initially followed the academic canon by focusing primarily on fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Italian art.⁴

But there in Italy, surprisingly, he also made a portrait and a series of etched and painted self-portraits inspired by those of the young Rembrandt (figs. 1 and 2). Like Rembrandt, Degas was about twenty-three years old and at the start of an illustrious career. Degas's interest in Rembrandt at this point in his life is intriguing, for

Detail of fig. 1

Rembrandt was not part of the academic canon and certainly not an easy subject to study in Italy. Now, for the first time, Degas's study of Rembrandt is the focus of an exhibition. In this article we shall trace examples of this influence and situate his inspiration in the broader framework of the reception of Rembrandt in France around 1850. We shall also establish a relationship between Rembrandt's self-portraits and those of Degas that goes beyond anything previously proposed.

Rome as Training Ground

Hilaire Germain Edgar De Gas, the oldest son of a banker, was born in Paris on 19 July 1834.⁵ He obtained his *baccalauréat* in literature in 1853 and then, at his father's insistence, enrolled in the faculty of law at the University of Paris.⁶ Within the year, however, the urge to become a painter had grown too strong and he abandoned his course.⁷ In 1855 he registered at the *École des Beaux-Arts*, where he studied under Louis Lamothe (1822-1869).⁸ Lamothe himself had been taught by Hippolyte Flandrin (1809-1864) and Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780-1869), both painters in the classical academic



Fig. 1
EDGAR DEGAS,
Self-Portrait,
1857-58.
Oil on paper on
canvas, 26 x 19 cm.

Williamstown,
The Sterling and
Francine Clark Art
Institute, 1955.544.
Photo Michael Agee.

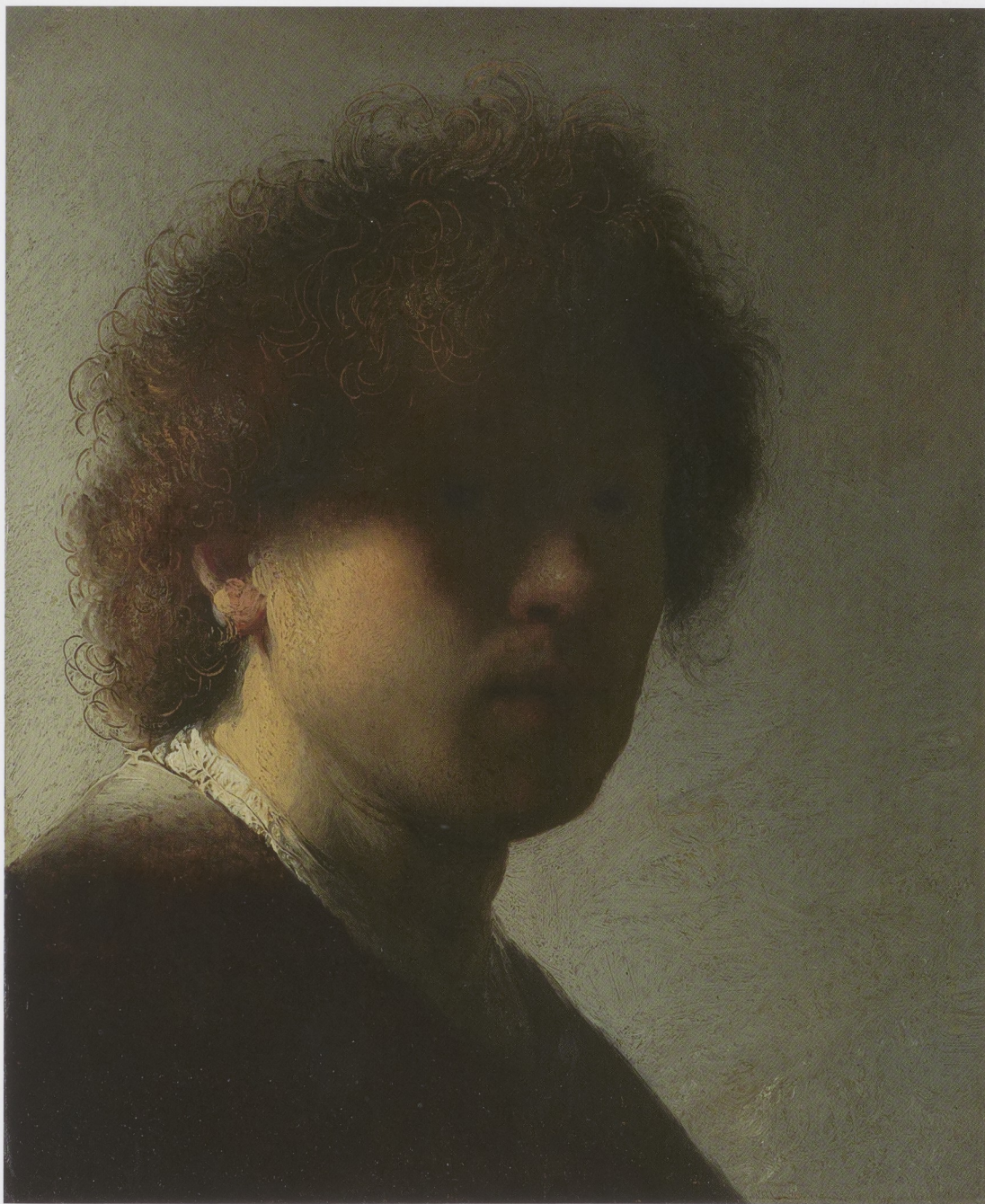


Fig. 2
REMBRANDT
VAN RIJN,
*Self-Portrait as
a Young Man*,
c. 1628-29.

Oil on panel,
22.6 x 18.7 cm.
Amsterdam,
Rijksmuseum,
SK-A-4691.



Fig. 3
EDGAR DEGAS,
*Self-Portrait with
Charcoal*, c. 1854-55.
Oil on canvas,
81 x 64 cm.
Paris, Musée d'Orsay,
RF 2649. © RMN
(Musée d'Orsay)/
Hervé Lewandosky.

tradition.⁹ Lamothe encouraged his students to pay particular attention to the work of Ingres, the greatest portrait painter of the age.¹⁰ In his earliest self-portrait Degas's indebtedness to Ingres is evident in style, expression and composition (figs. 3 and 4). Just as Ingres portrayed himself as a well-to-do citizen, who also happened to be a painter, so the impression Degas created was that of the banker's son from the Parisian upper middle classes.¹¹ It is only on closer inspection that one notices the stick of charcoal in his hand.

Lamothe's urging to study the old masters was echoed by Degas's father Auguste, who had a small collection of eighteenth century paintings of his own.¹² Degas went regularly to the Louvre from an early age, and two years before he enrolled at the *École des Beaux-Arts* was granted permission to study and copy in the print room, the

Cabinet des Estampes.¹³ His lifelong interest in the old masters began here.

The prints he could see in the Cabinet des Estampes were not the only ones Degas was able to study; he also had access to the private collection of etchings that belonged to a friend of his father's, the Romanian prince, landscape painter and engraver Grégoire Soutzo (1818-1869).¹⁴ Away from the print room, a private collection like this was one of the few ways that critics and artists could get to see original impressions.¹⁵ Soutzo's collection contained work by all the artists then regarded as great engravers, among them Jacques Callot, Albrecht Dürer, Claude Lorrain and Marcantonio Raimondi, and a complete set of Adriaan van Ostade prints, 142 in all.¹⁶ The catalogue of the sale of his estate in 1870 reveals that he owned 28 prints by Rembrandt, including *Abraham and Isaac* (B.43), *Christ Disputing with the Doctors* (B.64), *Portrait of Jan Lutma* (B.276), some landscapes, among them *The Three Trees* (B.212), and three self-portraits: *Self-Portrait with Long Bushy Hair: Head Only* (B.8), *Self-Portrait in a Cap and Scarf with the Face Dark: Bust* (B.17) and *Self-Portrait Leaning on a Stone Sill* (B.21).¹⁷ Degas was at liberty to study Soutzo's collection, and he also learnt the basic principles of etching from him, as some copies of landscapes by Soutzo reveal.¹⁸

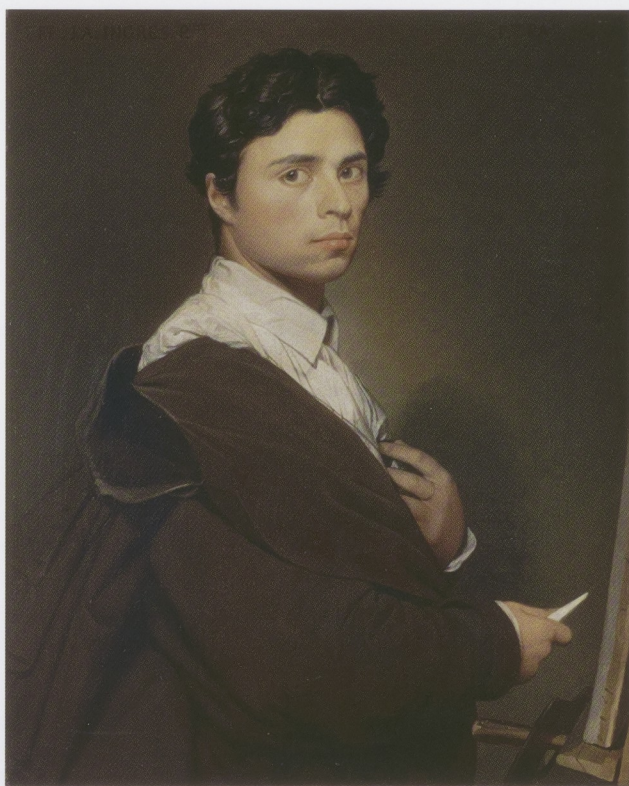
Degas's father Auguste de Gas was born in Naples and had relatives living in that city and in Florence.¹⁹ In the summer of 1856 Degas decided to visit them and stay in Italy for a prolonged period. This meant that he quit the *École des Beaux Arts* fairly soon after he had enrolled and decided to shape his own training. Earlier in the year, he had a 'grande conversation' with Soutzo about the difference in approach between large-scale sketches from life and the academic manner of building a composition up from the details. In his notebook he wrote: 'What courage there is in his [Soutzo's] studies. It is

essential – one must never make bargains with nature. One certainly needs courage if one is to approach nature head-on in its grand planes and lines and it is cowardly to do it by means of facets and details. It is a struggle...'.²⁰ This note and his premature departure from the *École des Beaux Arts* suggest that Degas was questioning the academic style at an early stage.

Degas arrived in Naples by way of Marseille in July 1856.²¹ In October 1856, he left Naples for Rome, staying until late July 1857, when he returned to his relatives in Naples. He settled in Rome again in late October 1857, leaving for Florence in July of the following year, this time for a longer stay, and visiting Viterbo, Assisi, Perugia and Arezzo on the way. In March 1859 he returned to Paris via Genoa.²²

While he was in Rome he moved in the circle of artists who worked at the French Academy in the Villa Medici. Entirely in keeping with the tenor of his training so far, Degas studied life drawing there. At the same time, however, he also learnt to look beyond the confines of academic method. His encounters with the engraver Joseph-Gabriel Tourny (1817-1880) and the painter Gustave Moreau (1826-1898) were particularly important in this respect. He already knew Tourny from the *École* in Paris and probably met Moreau in January 1858, having heard about him from other artists studying at the academy. As Léon Bonnat, a fellow student at the Villa Medici, later declared: 'we were all mad about Moreau'.²³ This group also met to discuss art outside the academy, in the *Caffè Greco*.²⁴

Tourny was a watercolour specialist and engraver who had won the 1847 *Prix de Rome* for engraving.²⁵ In the autumn of 1857, commissioned by the historian and politician Adolphe Louis Thiers (1797-1877), he copied frescoes in the Sistine Chapel for the *Musée des Études* that Thiers had set up in the *École des Beaux Arts*. At the same time he worked on original engravings



to submit to the Salon in 1857.²⁶ It is perhaps relevant to note in this respect that Thiers was also a great collector of prints and owned twenty-nine Rembrandt etchings that Tourny may well have seen. Tourny rekindled Degas's interest in etching first fostered by Soutzo.²⁷ Unfortunately nothing is known about any etchings that Tourny himself may have owned.

Amidst the many sketches and painstaking drawings of works of art in Italian museums and churches, Degas's notebooks of this period contain two drawings after Rembrandt, a reversed sketch of the etching *The Death of the Virgin* (B.99) and a small drawing of *Young Man in a Velvet Cap* (B.268).²⁸ He also made two separate drawings: one of the etching *Three Oriental Figures (Jacob and Laban?)* (B.118) and the other of the four illustrations Rembrandt made for Samuel Manassah Ben Israel's book *Piedra*

Fig. 4
J.-D.-A. INGRES,
*Self-Portrait at the
Age of 24, 1804.*
Oil on canvas,
78 x 61 cm.
Chantilly, Musée
Condé, PE 430.
© RMN (Domaine
de Chantilly)/
Harry Bréjat.

Fig. 5
REMBRANDT
VAN RIJN,
*Young Man in a Velvet
Cap*, 1637 (B.268).
Etching, 97 x 83 mm,
2nd state. Amsterdam,
Rijksmuseum,
RP-P-1961-1144.

Gloriosa de la estatua de Nebuchadnesar (B.36), which was printed in Amsterdam in 1655. Both of Degas's drawings are now in private hands.²⁹ It is also clear from a composition sketch for a group portrait that he drew inspiration from Rembrandt's *Night Watch*; he noted on it 'in the spirit and all the

boldness of the night watch'. This idea might, though, have been jotted down soon after he returned to Paris.³⁰ As well as the little drawing in the notebook he also made an etched copy, the same size but reversed and on a larger plate, of the etching *Young Man in a Velvet Cap* (figs. 5 and 6).



Rembrandt's *Young Man in a Velvet Cap* was neither in Soutzo's collection nor in the first fully-illustrated overview of Rembrandt's etchings published by the art critic Charles Blanc in separate volumes between 1853 and 1858.³¹ The other etchings were not in the Soutzo Collection either, but all three were

Fig. 6
EDGAR DEGAS,
Copy of Rembrandt,
*Young Man in a
Velvet Cap*, 1857.
Etching, plate:
119 x 95 mm; sheet:
361 x 262 mm, only state.
New York, The Metro-

politan Museum
of Art, The Elisha
Whittelsey Collection,
The Elisha Whittelsey
Fund, 1977.500 © The
Metropolitan Museum
of Art/Art Resource/
Scala Florence.



illustrated in Blanc 1853-58. This raises the question as to where Degas could have copied the *Young Man in a Velvet Cap* in Rome. One possibility is Prince Corsini's print collection in the palazzo of the same name, which held all these Rembrandt etchings save for the *Piedra Gloriosa* illustrations.³²

Degas went there on 13 November 1857 to study some prints by Claude Lorrain and would consequently have had the opportunity to copy the *Young Man in a Velvet Cap* then.³³ The copy and the works based on it are indeed dated to the winter of 1857 in the literature.³⁴

Fig. 7
EDGAR DEGAS,
*Portrait of Joseph
Gabriel Tourny, 1857.*
Etching,
810 x 645 mm,
1st state. Paris,
Musée Gustave
Moreau, RF 2649.
© RMN.



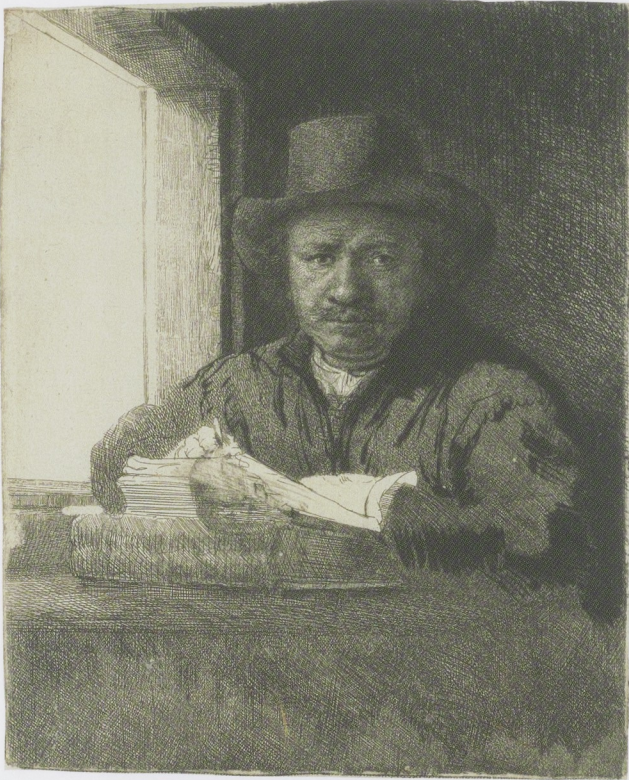


Fig. 8

REMBRANDT
VAN RIJN,
*Self-Portrait
Drawing at a Window*,
1648 (B.22).
Etching, 160 x 130 mm,
1st state. Amsterdam,
Rijksmuseum,
RP-P-OB-39.

One of the works related to *Young Man in a Velvet Cap* is the etched portrait of Tourny (fig. 7). At the same time this portrait clearly refers to Rembrandt's *Self-Portrait Drawing at a Window* (B.22), although the artist is actually pictured etching, not drawing (fig. 8).³⁵ The portrait of the engraver Tourny can almost be interpreted as a *portrait historié*: Degas incorporated Tourny's admiration for Rembrandt in his likeness. The velvet beret was Rembrandt's permanent attribute and he wears it in the *Self-Portrait Leaning on a Stone Sill* (B.21), which is in the Corsini Collection and was already familiar to Degas from Soutzo's collection, where it is catalogued as *Rembrandt appuyée*.³⁶

At right angles to the portrait Degas etched two heads of cardinals. These could have been made after a work by Tourny, for example *Deux moines se signant* (Musée du Louvre, inv. no. RF 3985, recto). It is unlikely that Degas really intended this plate as a study sheet; here again this is a deliberately Rembrandtesque trope. A sheet of sketches with a self-portrait (B.363) was also in the Corsini Collection (fig. 9).

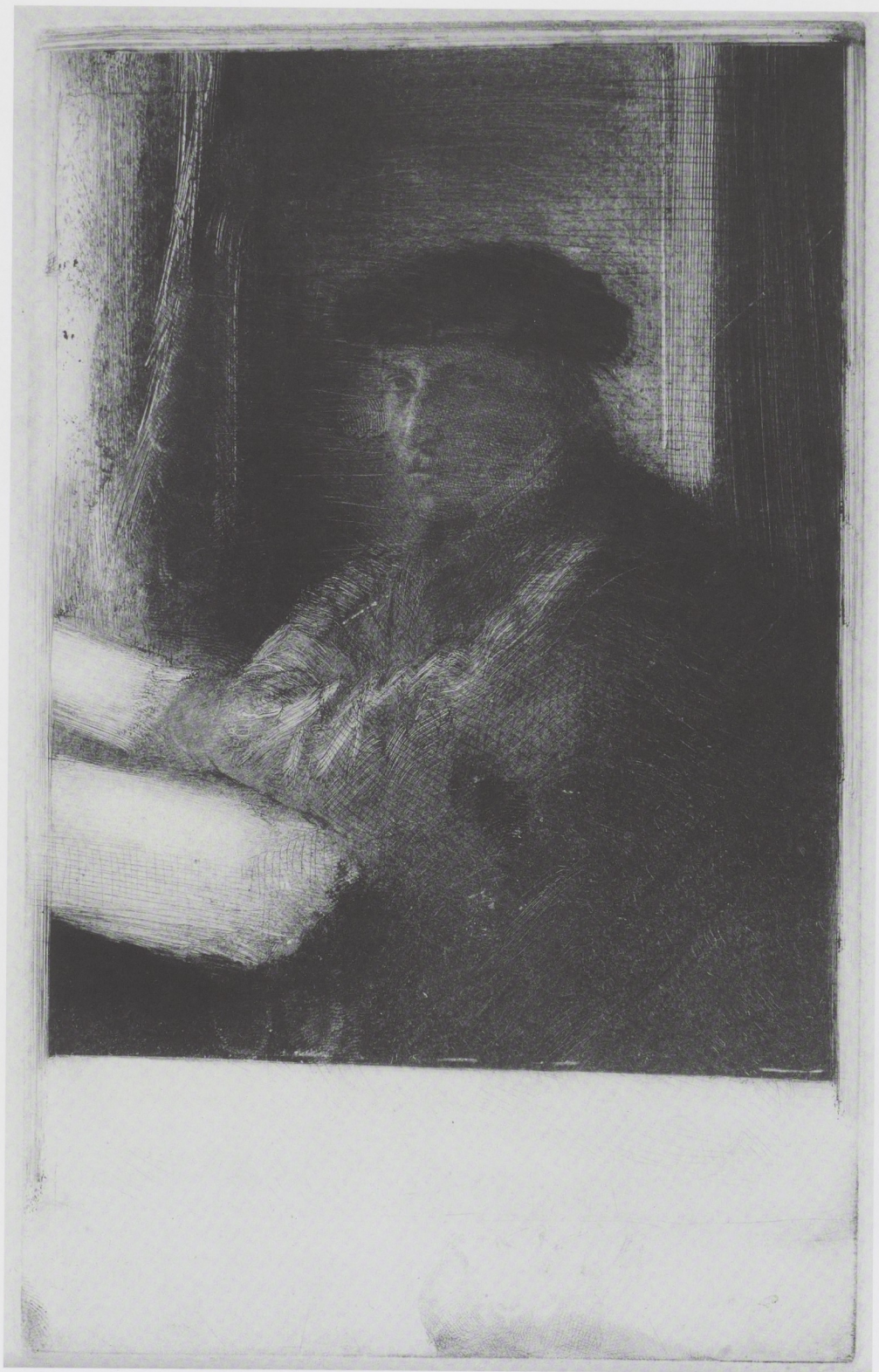
There are several known states of the *Portrait of Tourny*. The first was almost certainly made in Rome in 1857, since the scratches that can be seen on later impressions are absent here.³⁷ The cropping differs from that of the two Rembrandt prints; it is a three-quarter portrait and more akin to Ingres's style of portraiture.³⁸ In later states the bottom half was blurred so that it



Fig. 9

REMBRANDT
VAN RIJN, *Sheet of
Studies with Self-
Portrait*, c. 1632 (B.363).

Etching, 101 x 113 mm,
1st state. Amsterdam,
Rijksmuseum,
RP-P-OB-764.



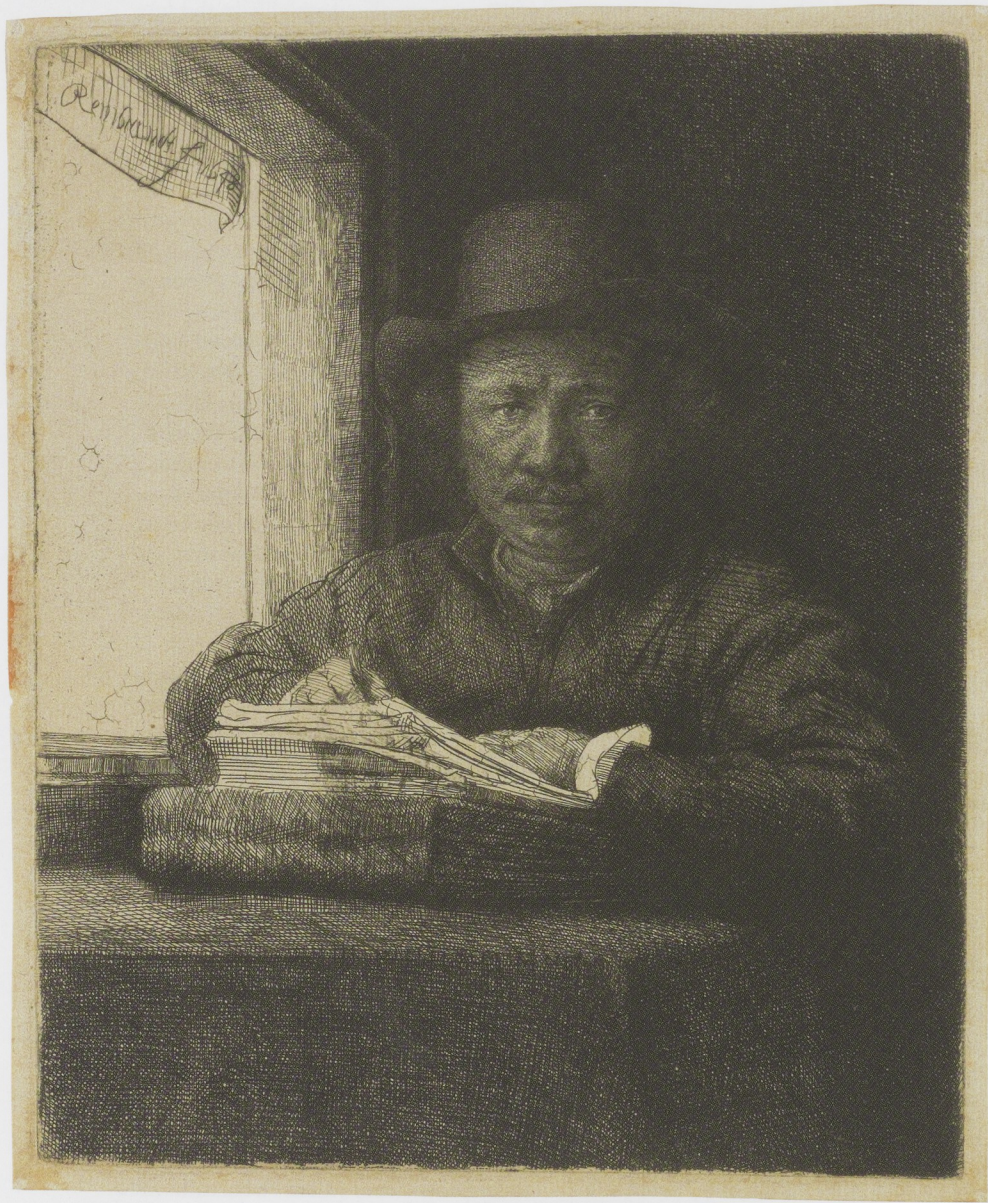


Fig. 10

EDGAR DEGAS,
*Portrait of Joseph
Gabriel Tourny*,
c. 1860.

Etching, plate:
230 x 144 mm;
sheet: 534 x 363 mm,
3rd printing,
with surface tone,
on laid paper.

New York, The
Metropolitan
Museum of Art,
Harris Brisbane
Dick Fund, 27.5.5.
© The Metropolitan
Museum of Art/
Art Resource/Scala
Florence.

Fig. 11

REMBRANDT
VAN RIJN,
*Self-Portrait
Drawing at a
Window*, 1648 (B.22).

Etching,
160 x 130 mm,
3rd state. Amsterdam,
Rijksmuseum,
RP-P-OB-40.

became a half-length portrait in line with the original Rembrandt examples (fig. 10).³⁹ In the 1860s Degas reworked the plate with ink that he only partially wiped off so as to create the suggestion of drypoint and obtain stronger chiaroscuro, just as Rembrandt had emphasized the contrast of light and shade in the later states of *Self-Portrait Drawing at a Window* (fig. 11).⁴⁰

Knowledge of Rembrandt

Rembrandt was certainly not unknown to Degas when he went to Italy. As well as the etchings in Soutzo's collection, he had had a chance to see Rembrandt's paintings in the Louvre. Sixteen works were hanging there at that time, including four self-portraits and some biblical paintings, among them *The Holy Family (The Household of the Carpenter)*, *The Angel Raphael Leaving Tobit and his Family*, *The Good Samaritan* and *Matthew the Evangelist*.⁴¹ In 1857, while Degas was in Italy, the museum acquired *The Slaughtered Ox*.⁴² The Louvre also had a large collection of Rembrandt drawings, but only a few were on display at any one time. In the 1850s they were *Kneeling Man*, *Seated Woman* and four studies of lions.⁴³

The students at the *École des Beaux Arts* were invariably sent to the print room, the *Cabinet des Estampes*. Degas started to go there as early as 1853. The *Cabinet des Estampes* had a huge collection of reproductive prints. Original prints could be seen in small exhibitions or upon request. Around 1850 the print room had some 1,400 impressions of Rembrandt prints.⁴⁴ A small number were on permanent display: in 1853 there were eighteen of them. Most were biblical scenes (*Christ Healing the Sick* [*'The Hundred Guilder Print'*] (B.74), *Christ Preaching* (B.67), *The Raising of Lazarus: the Larger Plate* (B.73), *The Good Samaritan* (B.90), *Christ Presented to the People* (B.76), *The Descent from the Cross by Torchlight* (B.83), a number of portraits (Lutma, Coppenol, Tolling, Jan Asselijn and Jan Six), and *Self-Portrait with Plumed Cap and Sabre* (B.23). There were also a few landscapes,⁴⁵ which were of particular interest since artists belonging to the Barbizon School had focused attention on them.⁴⁶ Nudes, pictures of common human types and genre heads were not exhibited; visitors to the print room were presented with an expurgated Rembrandt. Rembrandt

etchings were also decidedly in the minority: reproductive prints after the French and Italian masters, above all Raphael, dominated the galleries.⁴⁷

Although it is clear that Degas had plenty of access to Rembrandt's paintings and etchings alike in the years between 1853 and 1856, there is nothing to suggest that he felt particularly attracted to this work at this early stage of his career as an artist. We know of no copies dating from this period, and the academy would certainly not have encouraged its students to take an interest in Rembrandt, whose sketchy drawing ran entirely counter to the established style – Raphael's ideal line.

There are likewise no indications that Degas went to any other print rooms during his Italian trip, apart from the one in the Palazzo Corsini in Rome. He did not, for example, visit those in the Biblioteca Vaticana or the Uffizi and the Biblioteca Marucelliana in Florence, which held almost two hundred sheets by Rembrandt, including impressions of some prints copied by Degas.⁴⁸ De Académie de France in Rome did not have a copy of Blanc's *L'Oeuvre de Rembrandt* of 1853–58, but of course we cannot rule out the possibility that one of his friends there owned the work, even though it was very expensive.⁴⁹ At that time there were no other photographic reproductions of Rembrandt's work apart from Blanc's publication.⁵⁰ There is also a final possibility that must not be overlooked; impressions of all these prints were still in circulation in this period, so it is quite conceivable that one of Degas's friends – Tourny or Bonnat, for instance – owned the prints. The copper plates of some of the etchings under discussion were collected; the plate of *Young Man with Velvet Beret*, for example, was owned by the English publisher J.M. Creery and still used for prints.⁵¹

Degas's sudden interest in Rembrandt in 1857 seems to have been sparked by debates in the circle around Tourny

and Gustave Moreau. They opened his eyes to heroes who were quite different from those he was used to. Tourny loved the Venetians and Velázquez, and had copied their work for the Thiers Collection.⁵² Degas's copies of reproductions of Velázquez's *Las Meninas* are a sign of the new direction he was taking.⁵³

He probably met Moreau in January 1858 in the Villa Medici.⁵⁴ After receiving some bruising reviews of his work at the 1855 World's Fair, Moreau had decided to escape the cultural milieu of Paris. He idolized the French Romantic painters Théodore Chassériau (1819-1856) and Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863) and was drawn to Italy by the genius of Michelangelo and Leonardo.⁵⁵

Degas had obviously seen Delacroix's work in Paris, but in the period before his Italian trip, as we have seen, it was Ingres whom he most admired. There was no work by Delacroix in Italy, any more than by Velázquez, but almost immediately after his return to Paris in April 1859, Degas embarked on a number of copies of Delacroix's paintings in that year's Salon, in Versailles and in the Louvre.⁵⁶ In the collection he built up later, mostly between 1890 and 1904, Delacroix's work features prominently.⁵⁷

It was almost inevitable that a group of artists who admired Delacroix would also appreciate Rembrandt, given Delacroix's lifelong interest in the seventeenth-century master. Both Chassériau and Delacroix made sketches after Rembrandt's *Death of the Virgin*.⁵⁸ The work that inspired Léon Bonnat to amass his large collecting of drawings, now shared between the Musée Bonnat, Bayonne, and the Louvre, was a drawing by Rembrandt that he got from the collector Aimé-Charles-Horace His de la Salle (1795-1878). Bonnat became a major authority on the artist and went to the Netherlands in 1872 and 1883.⁵⁹ Moreau also knew and admired Rembrandt's work, although this did

not really emerge until he wrote a scorching but unpublished defence in response to Eugène Fromentin's rather grudging opinion of Rembrandt's *Night Watch* in *Les Maîtres d'Autrefois* (1876).⁶⁰ In 1888 Moreau, too, visited Holland.⁶¹

Rembrandt as Role Model

French artists' interest in Rembrandt had grown since the start of the nineteenth century, reaching its peak in the 1850 to 1880 period. This was due in no small measure to the greater access to the oeuvre through catalogues, biographies and reproductions of prints.⁶² Blanc's 1853 publication was the first illustrated catalogue of Rembrandt's etchings; he used prints from glass negatives.⁶³ Prior to this he had devoted a volume of his major series *Histoire des peintres des toutes les écoles* (1849) to the Dutch school. He described Dutch painting as independent, domestic, religious and truthful – qualities he considered were possessed by the Dutch nation as a whole. Rembrandt's oeuvre embraced all this, but the artist was outstanding above all in the ideal expression conveyed by his characteristic chiaroscuro. Rembrandt thus became an idealist. Blanc, who was Director of the Department of Fine Arts at the Ministry of the Interior from 1848 until 1852, was compelled to employ this somewhat contrived interpretation so that Rembrandt did not fall outside the official standards for French painting.⁶⁴

Despite this attempt to absorb him into the academic world, the picture of Rembrandt that existed in French art literature of around 1850 was that of a non-conformist, self-taught artist whose chief subject was human nature, expressed in a realistic style. It was, moreover, generally assumed that Rembrandt's work was a mirror of the Dutch society of his day, just like the rest of Dutch seventeenth-century painting.⁶⁵ People were convinced that

Rembrandt came from the same social class as the types he drew, even though Dutch authors like the archivist Pieter Scheltema and later the critic Carel Vosmaer demonstrated that this was not the case.⁶⁶ Creating this image served a specific purpose. It made Rembrandt the figurehead for artists who rejected the establishment and the prevailing doctrine of the *École* and the *Académie*. They projected their own resistance on to Rembrandt – for although he appeared in Delaroche's famous *Hémicycle* in the art room at the *École des Beaux Arts* (1841), students were certainly not encouraged to imitate him.⁶⁷

The admiration of Rembrandt led to attempts both to fit him into the academic norm and to place him above it. Charles Baudelaire's review of the Salon in 1846, in which he tried to place Rembrandt on a par with Raphael by making him a 'sturdy idealist', is symptomatic of this rather equivocal attitude. 'Raphael, for all his purity, is but an early spirit ceaselessly investigating the solid; but that scoundrel Rembrandt is a sturdy idealist who makes us dream and guess at what lies beyond. The first composes creatures in a pristine and virgin state – Adam and Eve; but the second shakes his rags before our eyes and tells us of human sufferings.'⁶⁸ Baudelaire gave Rembrandt a unique position amongst all the great masters: 'Each one of the old masters has his kingdom, his prerogative, which he is often constrained to share with illustrious rivals. Thus Raphael has form, Rubens and Veronese colour, Rubens and Michelangelo the "graphic imagination"'. There remained one province of the empire in which Rembrandt alone had carried out a few raids; I mean drama, natural and living drama, the drama of terror and melancholy, expressed often through colour, but always through gesture.'⁶⁹

Eugène Delacroix dared to go even further, and placed Rembrandt above

Raphael, although he shocked himself by saying so. 'Perhaps they will discover that Rembrandt is a far greater painter than Raphael. This piece of blasphemy will make every good academician's hair stand on end, and I set it down without having come to any final decision on the subject. The older I grow, the more certain I become in my own mind that truth is the rarest and most beautiful of all qualities. It is possible, however, that Rembrandt may not quite have had Raphael's nobility of mind.'⁷⁰ For Baudelaire and Delacroix, and for Thoré-Bürger in his *Musées de la Hollande* (1860) Rembrandt offered the only way towards a modern art – 'l'art de l'homme', as Thoré called it, the art of man(kind).⁷¹

States and Series

Artists and critics at the time esteemed Rembrandt for his paintings, of course, but perhaps even more for his prints. For one thing, they were more accessible. People also felt that the etchings showed Rembrandt's true original genius. Critics and artists were convinced that the artist had taught himself to etch and that he had elevated the use of various techniques, states and types of paper to a fine art.⁷² Charles Blanc also regarded Rembrandt as the greatest printmaker of all time and placed him above Albrecht Dürer and Marcantonio Raimondi, who owed his fame chiefly to his engravings after Raphael. Because of his paintings Rembrandt was extolled in the publications of Blanc and others as a *peintre-graveur*, an all-rounder.⁷³

Rembrandt's sketchy line and the chiaroscuro and *contre-jour* effects were much admired from the middle of the century onwards, initially by the artists of the Barbizon School. This reappraisal extended to other seventeenth-century Dutch artists, too – Adriaan van Ostade's etchings were published at this time.⁷⁴ As we have seen, Soutzo had a complete set of

Van Ostade etchings in his collection, which positions it squarely in its day.

At first the fact that Rembrandt sold the separate states of his etchings was attributed to his penny-pinching merchant's mentality, but around the middle of the nineteenth century people started to believe that Rembrandt regarded each state as a work in its own right. This practice must have come as a surprising revelation to artists trained at the academy, where a work of art was not finished until it had reached the highest state of perfection. For a long time most collections showed only one state, usually the first.⁷⁵

Degas's fascination with Rembrandt's prints echoed that of his contemporaries. As well as the *Portrait of Tourny* he also etched a self-portrait in similar vein. It was probably made in Tourny's studio in the winter of 1857.⁷⁶ In terms of composition, the portrait is still very reminiscent of the *Self-Portrait with Charcoal* in the Musée d'Orsay (fig. 3): Degas pictured himself in dark city dress, hatted, and with the same rather timid look as in the early portrait. The cropping, too, is still conservative; this is another three-quarter length work.

Despite these similarities, the effect is quite different from the *Self-Portrait with Charcoal*. By keeping his face partially in the shadow of the hat, Degas gave the portrait an expressive force that the rather ingenuous portrait in the Musée D'Orsay lacks. As with the *Portrait of Tourny*, Degas made several states of this etching, experimenting with the shadow in the background and the contrasts of light and dark in the clothes. The first state is very light, with delicate, open hatching (fig. 12). In the second state he used denser cross-hatching to capture the texture of the dark jacket and hat. In later impressions made in the 1860s the hat is even darker, so that the contrast with the white collar and the highlights on the face is strengthened.



To achieve this he rubbed ink into the etching ground and then wiped some of it off, as he had in the *Portrait of Tourny*.⁷⁷ His fingerprints are still visible. Because the plate had corroded slightly in the meantime, a Rembrandt-esque effect occurred almost of its own accord (fig. 13). In the first state Degas holds a piece of charcoal; a stack of paper lies before him. This again references the self-portrait in the Musée d'Orsay but it also acknowledges Rembrandt's *Self-Portrait Drawing at a Window* (fig. 8). In the second state the hands have been darkened and the charcoal and paper have been blurred almost to the point of invisibility. In the later states they cannot be seen at

Fig. 12
EDGAR DEGAS,
Self-Portrait, 1857.
Etching, 230 x 144 mm,
1st state.
New York, The
Metropolitan
Museum of Art,
purchased from the
Mr and Mrs Richard J.
Bernard Gift, 1972.625.
© The Metropolitan
Museum of Art/
Art Resource/Scala
Florence.



Fig. 13
EDGAR DEGAS,
Self-Portrait, c. 1860.
Etching,
230 x 144 mm,
3rd printing,
with surface tone.
Williamstown,
The Sterling and
Francine Clark
Art Institute,
1955.1402. Photo
Michael Agee.

all. Degas probably felt that the hands were not a success; he did not show them in the other self-portraits he made during this period.

Degas was happy with this etching and gave various states of the print to members of his family and to friends, unlike all the other drawn and painted self-portraits, which only came to light at the sale of the contents of his studio after his death.⁷⁸ A great many of these self-portraits were done in Italy. They are Degas's first *series*, an approach typical of the whole of his oeuvre, be it jockeys, milliners, dancers or nudes – he explored a subject to the utmost before letting it go. 'Art does

not expand, it repeats itself,' he wrote in 1872.⁷⁹ In Italy he drew and painted himself because he was his own most readily available model. Like the different states of the etched self-portrait, the painted portraits can be seen as a series, and the inspiration – again – seems to have been Rembrandt.

Light and shade

In two self-portraits, one with a hat, and a handkerchief knotted around his neck, and one just with a hat (figs. 1 and 14), there is an unmistakable resemblance to Rembrandt's self-portraits as a young man (figs. 2, 15 and 19). Pose, expression and lighting effects are the same. In the self-portrait with a hat, he has played with the shadow on the face just as Rembrandt did. One striking difference is that whereas Rembrandt conceals his eyes and invites the viewer to find them, Degas commands the viewer's attention with his piercing gaze.

In 1855 or 1856, probably not long before he set off for Italy, Degas painted a self-portrait wearing a painter's smock (fig. 16). Here the young man of the self-portrait in the Musée d'Orsay is clearly recognizable, particularly in his rather distant look. But while the face in the *Self-Portrait with Charcoal* is fully lit and consequently rather flat, the dramatic lighting in the Metropolitan portrait creates tension and depth. The background is conventionally dark, but with the strong contrast of light and shade on the face the portrait is far removed from the aesthetic of Ingres. The shadow focuses attention on a single eye, whereas Degas usually emphasized both his 'Neapolitan' eyes.

Degas knew Rembrandt's self-portraits in the Louvre, two of which show Rembrandt as a young man (fig. 17).⁸⁰ The sources do not reveal whether he saw Rembrandt's painted self-portrait which is now in the Uffizi, but was at that time in the collection of Ferdinand III de Medici in Florence.⁸¹ In any event he was



Fig. 14
EDGAR DEGAS,
Self-Portrait, 1857.
Oil on paper on

canvas, 20.6 x 15.8 cm.
Los Angeles, The Getty
Museum, 95.GG.43.



Fig. 15

REMBRANDT VAN
RIJN, *Self-Portrait as
a Young Man*, 1629.
Oil on panel,
15.6 x 12.7 cm.
Munich, Bayrische

Staatsgemälde-
sammlungen, Alte
Pinakothek, 11427.
© BPK/Bayrische
Staatsgemälde
Sammlungen.



Fig. 16
EDGAR DEGAS,
Self-Portrait,
c. 1855-early 1856.
Oil on paper on canvas,
40.6 x 34.3 cm.
New York, The Metro-

politan Museum of
Art, Stephen C. Clark
Bequest, 1960,
61.101.6. © The
Metropolitan Museum
of Art/Art Resource/
Scala Florence.



Fig. 17
REMBRANDT
VAN RIJN,
*Self-Portrait,
Bareheaded*, c. 1633.
Oil on panel,
60 x 47 cm.
Paris, Musée du
Louvre, 1744. © RMN/
Hervé Lewandowki.

Fig. 20
EDGAR DEGAS,
*Self-Portrait with
White Collar*, c. 1857.
Oil on paper on
canvas, 20.5 x 15 cm.
Washington,
National Gallery of
Art, Mr and Mrs Paul
Mellon Collection,
1995.47.

Fig. 21
EDGAR DEGAS,
Self-Portrait en face,
c. 1857.
Oil on canvas,
26 x 16.7 cm.
Private collection.
© Christie's Images/
The Bridgeman Art
Library.





Fig. 18
REMBRANDT
VAN RIJN,
*Self-Portrait with
Long Bushy Hair*,
1629-32 (B.8).
Etching, 64 x 60 mm,
2nd state.
Amsterdam,
Rijksmuseum,
RP-P-1961-976.



Fig. 19
REMBRANDT
VAN RIJN,
*Self-Portrait in a
Cap and Scarf*,
1633 (B.17).
Etching, 139 x 119 mm,
2nd state.
Amsterdam,
Rijksmuseum,
RP-P-0B-32.

familiar with the etched self-portraits, for instance the three in Soutzo's collection: *Self-Portrait with Long Bushy Hair*, 1629-32 (fig. 18), *Self-Portrait in a Cap and Scarf*, 1633 (fig. 19) and *Self-Portrait Leaning on a Stone Sill*, 1639. Four self-portraits and the sheet of sketches with a self-portrait (B.363) (fig. 9) were reproduced in Charles Blanc's *L'Oeuvre de Rembrandt* (1853).⁸² The Corsini Collection held eight etched self-portraits.⁸³ These prints, in which Rembrandt experimented with expressions and costumes, seem to have inspired Degas to make his series of portraits with the primary aim of studying the effect of light and shade on the face. He also varied his pose, as the self-portraits in Washington and in a private collection demonstrate (figs. 20 and 21).⁸⁴

Degas made around forty self-portraits altogether between 1854 and 1862 – in oils, drawn in pencil, in red or black chalk or etched. Unlike

Rembrandt, he did not go on doing this all his life. Save for three self-portraits in the 1860s, it was not until around 1895 that he again portrayed himself – but now in photographs.⁸⁵ The series of early portraits reveals an uncertain, questing artist. There is no bravura – nor even self-confidence. Remarks in his notebooks and correspondence in these years confirm this image. He wrote to Moreau about his loneliness and self-doubt: 'Still about me. But what else could a man say, as lonely and abandoned as I am? He has but himself before him, he only sees himself, only thinks about himself. He is a great egoist.'⁸⁶

Colour and *Infini*

Degas's exploration of 'anti-academic' artists caused Auguste de Gas some concern. He saw in it the malign influence of Tourny and Moreau.⁸⁷ All the same, he saw improvement too: after receiving the painting of *Dante*



Fig. 22
EDGAR DEGAS,
Self-Portrait, c. 1856.
Red chalk,
260 x 205 mm.
Present whereabouts
unknown.

and *Virgil* he noted: '... your drawing is strong, the tone of the colour is correct. You have rid yourself of that flabby, humdrum Flandrinesque, Lamothesque drawing, and that drab grey colour.'⁸⁸ Degas's interest in Rembrandt was also grudgingly approved: 'I can understand that you should consult Rembrandt; he is a painter who astounds one by the depth he is able to achieve, and his palette is not without beauty ...'⁸⁹

The move away from the academic linear style towards a freer brushstroke

with greater emphasis on colour that Auguste observed can also be seen in the series of self-portraits. The *Self-Portrait* of late 1855-early 1856 (fig. 16) in a painter's smock is painted smoothly and in immense detail, in line with the academic doctrine of the *fini*, in which the brushstroke should not be seen.⁹⁰ A red chalk drawing (fig. 22), which may have served as a preliminary study, is minutely drawn, unfinished and with the focus on the eyes. The later self-portraits have a very different feel and their incom-

pletteness is of a different kind. Degas had ceased to pursue the finish of the painting to the extreme, and dared to stop at the suggestion.

In the *Self-Portrait en face* (fig. 21) the painter's smock is indicated with just a few brushstrokes. The white of the ground and of the illuminated part of the face are in strong contrast to the shadow and the dark background. In all the self-portraits Degas experimented with shadow and thus with the legibility of the image. The academic requirement of clarity in line and colour made way for the visible brushstroke and powerful chiaroscuro.

Delacroix contrasted the drawn, detailed style of French painting to the 'heureuses négligences' – 'happy carelessness' – in the work of Rembrandt, 'for whom this choice is almost as much a matter of calculation as of instinct, and the tip of whose mercurial brush does not force itself to produce more than a superficial rendering, even in essential passages'.⁹¹ In his Italian self-portraits Degas abandoned the smooth, detailed French style. The *infinito* gave him new freedom and

was characteristic of his career as a mature artist.

Onward with Rembrandt

Degas was not the only one to be fascinated by Rembrandt; in the 1850s and 1860s other artists in his circle, among them Félix Braquemond, Alphonse Legros and James McNeill Whistler, also produced etchings inspired by Rembrandt (fig. 23).⁹² Etching, moreover, was a mild form of anti-academic resistance. At the *École des Beaux Arts* the technique was regarded as inferior to engraving, which was seen as a more suitable reproductive medium. Etching was not taught there.⁹³ It was, however, fairly easy to teach oneself: Degas learnt it from Soutzo and later from Tourny. Braquemond taught himself and was consulted by Degas and Manet.⁹⁴ In turn, Degas helped Pissarro when he caught the etching bug in the 1870s, both of them encouraged by Rembrandt's example.⁹⁵

Likewise emulating Rembrandt, these artists preferred to make works that stood up in their own right.

Fig. 23
FELIX
BRACQUEMOND,
Essai de procédé, 1855.
Etching, mezzotint
and drypoint,
135 x 216 mm.
Paris, Bibliothèque
nationale de France,
72.12.118.





Fig. 24
EDGAR DEGAS,
*Portrait of Thérèse
and Edmondo
Morbilli*, c. 1865.
Oil on canvas,
116.5 x 88.3 cm.
Boston, Museum
of Fine Arts, gift of
Robert Treat Paine
2nd, 31.33.

Etching lent itself to this; the soft etching ground allowed far more licence for the artist's own handwriting than the laborious technique of engraving. In 1862 Degas, Braquemond and Legros were all involved in setting up the Société des Aquafortistes, where original etchings were shown. Degas's trials in the 1860s with the *Self-Portrait* and the *Portrait of Tourny* – rubbing ink into the plate and partially wiping it off – are typical of the experiments

being conducted by members of the Société.⁹⁶ Here again Rembrandt was constantly used as an example.⁹⁷ In fact, a painted self portrait of Henri Fantin-Latour (1836-1904) made around 1858 was executed in almost graphic chiaroscuro.⁹⁸ This shared interest in Rembrandt was presumably one of the factors that later led Degas to remark: 'When we started, Fantin, Whistler and I, we were on the same path, the Road to Holland.'⁹⁹

The brief encounter between Degas and Rembrandt must, however, be seen in perspective. Degas copied frequently in this period and compiled a huge eclectic visual memory in his notebooks. Every artist he copied fulfilled a role of his own and it is difficult to identify a persistent preference: 'Van Dyck is a great artist, Giorgione also, Botticelli also, Mantegna also, Rembrandt also, Carpaccio also,' he wrote to Moreau in 1858.¹⁰⁰ After he returned from Italy the art of the old masters remained a *leitmotif* in his oeuvre, but the effect of anti-academic art gradually took over as he got to know Manet and other modern painters.

Degas's fascination with Rembrandt sprung initially from an act of rebellion and the young artist's search for maturity. But there was more to it than that: his interest in printmaking remained with him throughout his life. Etching was followed by experiments with monotype, lithography and photography. Rembrandt was always in his thoughts, witness his comment, 'If Rembrandt had encountered lithography, God knows what he would have done with it.'¹⁰¹ In the art collection he compiled later, Rembrandt was represented by an almost complete edition of Charles Blanc's *L'œuvre de Rembrandt* of 1880, which contained 353 facsimiles of the etched oeuvre.¹⁰²

Degas's penchant for series may have been sparked off by Rembrandt's many self-portraits and his use of etched states. Degas's self-portraits are the first example of a series in his oeuvre, followed by later series that include his painted and sculpted dancers and nudes. Exploring a single subject in depth became a constant feature of his work. In his self-portraits he investigated the handling of light and shade, the aspect of Rembrandt's work regarded at the time as most typical of him. Another change in his painting style that appeared for the first time in his self-portraits was the



use of the *infinito*. In deciding to leave something more or less unfinished, he moved away from the painting style he had learned at the academy and opened up to the suggestion of the unseen that is so characteristic of his later work.

More than a youthful infatuation, the influence Rembrandt had on Degas seems to have been more lasting and profound. Glimpses of his abiding admiration for the Dutch master may be caught in the reference he makes to Rembrandt's etching *Self-Portrait with Saskia* (1636; B.19) in the double-portrait of Degas's sister and brother-in-law Thérèse and Edmondo Morbilli (figs. 24 and 25) and in his quotation from Rembrandt's *Negress Lying Down* in his monotype of a reclining nude.¹⁰³ And it is tempting to speculate on the even larger impact Rembrandt may have had on Degas when we consider, for example, the Louvre's 1869 acquisition of Rembrandt's *Bathsheba at her Bath* (1654) and the man who created such magnificent suites of nudes.¹⁰⁴

Fig. 25
REMBRANDT
VAN RIJN,
*Self-Portrait with
Saskia*, 1638 (B.19).
Etching, drypoint and
burin, 160 x 130 mm.
Amsterdam,
Rijksmuseum,
RP-P-1961-988.

NOTES

- 1 With many thanks to Richard Kendall, Theodore Reff, Jaco Rutgers, Susan Alyson Stein and Gary Tinterow for their help and constructive comments. The initial idea for the accompanying exhibition was Richard Rand's.
- 2 From George Moore, 'Memories of Degas', *The Burlington Magazine*, January and February 1918 as quoted in Richard Kendall (ed.), *Degas by Himself. Drawings, Prints, Paintings, Writings*, Boston/New York/London 1987, p. 311.
- 3 Theodore Reff, *The Notebooks of Edgar Degas*, Oxford 1976, vols. 1 and II. We follow Theodore Reff's authoritative classification of the notebooks in this article. Degas's Italian jottings between 1856 and 1859 are scattered among notebooks 7, 8, 10, 11, 12 and 13.
- 4 The first pioneering research on Degas's copies was done in the 1960s by Theodore Reff: 'Degas's Copies of Older Art', *The Burlington Magazine*, 105 (1963), no. 723, pp. 238, 241-51; 'New Light on Degas's Copies', *ibid.*, 106 (1964), no. 735, pp. 248, 250-59; 'Addenda on Degas's Copies', *ibid.*, 107 (1965), no. 747, pp. 320, 323; 'Further Thoughts on Degas's Copies', *ibid.*, 113 (1971), no. 822, pp. 534-41, 543; 'Degas: A Master among Masters', *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin, New Series*, 34 (1977), no. 4, pp. 2-48. See also F. Baumann and M. Karabelnik (eds.), *Degas. Portraits*, Zürich/Tübingen 1995, 'Degas's Copies', pp. 150-57.
- 5 In adulthood the artist changed the spelling of his surname to 'Degas'.
- 6 Baumann and Karabelnik, *op. cit.* (note 4), p. 86.
- 7 Jean Sutherland Boggs, *Portraits by Degas*, Berkeley/Los Angeles 1962, p. 7.
- 8 Baumann and Karabelnik, *op. cit.* (note 4), pp. 86-87.
- 9 Boggs, *op. cit.* (note 7), p. 6.
- 10 *Ibid.*, p. 5.
- 11 *Ibid.*, p. 5.
- 12 The collection that Edgar inherited from Auguste De Gas included paintings by Perroneau and pastels by La Tour. T. Reff, 'The Pictures within Degas's Pictures', *The Metropolitan Museum Journal*, 1 (1968), p. 142. Also published as chapter 3 in T. Reff, *Degas: The Artist's Mind*, New York 1976.
- 13 Baumann and Karabelnik, *op. cit.* (note 4), p. 86. Degas was introduced to the Cabinet des Estampes by Félix Joseph Barrias (1822-1907), his teacher for a few months in 1853. See P.A. Lemoisne, *Degas et son oeuvre*, Paris 1946, vol. 1, pp. 9-10.
- 14 Sue Welsh Reed and Barbara Stern Shapiro, *Edgar Degas: The Painter as Printmaker*, Boston/Philadelphia 1984, p. xiv.
- 15 Alison McQueen, *The Rise of the Cult of Rembrandt: Reinventing an Old Master in Nineteenth-Century France*, Amsterdam 2003, p. 211, lists a number of collectors of Rembrandt etchings: Charles Blanc; Eugene Dutuit (critic); Firmin-Didot (publisher); the dealers Danlos and Delisle and Charles Clement; the collectors Delessert and His de la Salle; the artists Leon Bonnat, Desperet, Jean Gigoux, Théodore Rousseau and Antoine Vollon; the politicians Adolphe Thiers, Baron Edmond de Rothschild, Count Adolphe Thibaudeau; Emile and Louis Galichon. She does not mention Soutzo.
- 16 *Catalogue d'estampes anciennes ... formant la collection de feu M. le prince Grégoire Soutzo*, Paris, Drouot, 17-18 March 1870, nos. 303-25. Bibliothèque Nationale de France.
- 17 To avoid confusion the Bartsch numbers of the Rembrandt prints are cited.
- 18 Jean Sutherland Boggs, Douglas Druick, Henri Loyrette, Michael Pantazzi and Gary Tinterow, *Degas*, Paris/Ottawa/New York 1888-89, p. 71.
- 19 Jean Sutherland Boggs, 'Degas and Naples', *The Burlington Magazine*, 105 (1963), no. 723, pp. 271-77.
- 20 Reff, *op. cit.* (note 3), notebook 5, p. 33: 'J'ai eu aujourd'hui, 18 Janvier [18]56 une grande conversation Mr Soutzo. Quel courage il y a dans ses études. Il en faut - ne jamais marchander avec la nature. Il y a du courage en effet à aborder de front la nature dans ses grands plans et ses grandes lignes et de la lâcheté à le faire par des facettes et des détails. C'est une guerre.' Boggs et al., *op. cit.* (note 18), p. 49. Translation Kendall, *op. cit.* (note 2), p. 13.
- 21 Boggs et al., *op. cit.* (note 18), pp. 49 and 52.
- 22 Henri Loyrette et al., *Degas e l'Italia*, Rome/Paris 1984-85, pp. 15 and 26. Boggs et al., *op. cit.* (note 18), pp. 49-50.
- 23 'Nous étions tous fous de Moreau.' Phoebe Pool, 'Degas and Moreau', *The Burlington Magazine*, 105 (1963), no. 723, p. 251.
- 24 Lemoisne, *op. cit.* (note 13), pp. 18-19 names the other members of the group as the painters Jules-Élie Delaunay, Emile Lévy, Théodore-Pierre-Nicolas Maillot and Felix-

- Henri Giacomotti, the writer Edmond About, the sculptor Auguste Clésinger and the antique dealer Abbé Aulamer. They were also sometimes referred to as the artists of the Cald'arrosti (roast chestnuts). Reed and Shapiro, op. cit. (note 14), p. 8.
- 25 E. Benezit, J. Busse (eds.), *Dictionnaire critique et documentaire des peintres, sculpteurs, dessinateurs et graveurs de tous les temps et de tous les pays*, Gründ 1999, Tourny entry.
- 26 Reed and Shapiro, op. cit. (note 14), p. xvii.
- 27 Lemoisne, op. cit. (note 13), p. 18. A. Rochoux, *Catalogue d'une précieuse collection d'estampes anciennes, composant le Cabinet de M. *** [Thiers]*, Vente Hotel Drouot, Paris, 7-10 March 1864, nos. 325-53.
- 28 Reff, op. cit. (note 3), notebook 8, p. 86 (*The Death of the Virgin*), and notebook 10, p. 13 (*Young Man in a Velvet Cap*). *Young Man in a Velvet Cap* is also known in French as *Jeune homme assis et réfléchissant* (Seated Young Man, Reflective), from the first edition of Adam von Bartsch, *Catalogue raisonné de toutes les estampes qui forment l'oeuvre de Rembrandt et ceux de ses principaux imitateurs*, Vienna 1797.
- 29 Reff, op. cit. (note 4, New Light), p. 258.
- 30 'Dans l'esprit et toutes les audaces de la ronde de nuit.' Reff, op. cit. (note 3), notebook 13, p. 50. The notebook ranges in date from around Florence 1858 to Paris 1860.
- 31 Charles Blanc, *L'oeuvre de Rembrandt décrit et commenté*, [Paris] 1853-58, 3 vols. Reed and Shapiro 1984, op. cit. (note 14), p. xvii; Boggs et al., op. cit. (note 18), p. 71. These etchings were not in the Thiers Collection.
- 32 The etchings had been in the Corsini Collection since 1837. G. Pezzini Bernini, 'La collezione di disegni e stampe Corsini nell'ambito del collezionismo di grafica del XVIII secolo', in Ginevra Mariani (ed.), *Il Gabinetto Nazionale delle Stampe. Storia e collezioni 1895-1975*, Rome 2001, p. 220. *The Death of the Virgin* (B.99) inv. no. ING 00397086; *Three Oriental Figures (Jacob and Laban?)* (B.118), ING 00397157 and *Young Man in a Velvet Cap* (B.268), ING 00397094. All in Collezione Corsini 58N17, Istituto Nazionale per la Grafica, Rome. With many thanks to Danila Rizza, Sala di Consultazione Gabinetto disegni e stampe.
- 33 Reff, op. cit. (note 3), notebook 10, pp. 50 and 52, visit to Galleria Corsini, 13 November 1857. See also Reed and Shapiro, op. cit. (note 14), p. xvii.
- 34 Jean Adhémar and Françoise Cachin, *Degas. The Complete Etchings, Lithographs and Monotypes*, London 1974, p. 266, cat. nos. 7, 8, 11 and 13; Reed and Shapiro, op. cit. (note 14), pp. 8 and 20-22, 23-24.
- 35 With thanks to Marijn Schapelhouman for this observation. There were other states of the *Self-Portrait Drawing at a Window* (B.22) in the Cabinet des Estampes. C. White and K.G. Boon, *Rembrandt van Rijn, in Hollstein's Dutch and Flemish Etchings, Engravings and Woodcuts c. 1450-1700*, Amsterdam 1969, vol. 18, 22-1. B. 22 is not in Blanc, op. cit. (note 31), nor in the Corsini Collection.
- 36 Soutzo, op. cit. (note 16), no. 305.
- 37 Reed and Shapiro, op. cit. (note 14), p. 8.
- 38 Paul Moses, *An Exhibiton of Etchings by Edgar Degas*, [Chicago] 1964, cat. no. 8. Reed and Shapiro, op. cit. (note 14), p. 8.
- 39 Reed and Shapiro, op. cit. (note 14), p. 8.
- 40 *Ibid.*, pp. 8 and 10. Degas's friend, Le Comte Lepic, introduced the 'eau-forte mobile' as an alternative to the drypoint technique. Later 'states' were imitated by completely inking the plate and then partially wiping it. Moses, op. cit. (note 38), cat. no. 8.
- 41 Frederic Villot, *Notice des Tableaux exposés dans les galeries du Musée Impérial du Louvre, 2de partie. Ecoles Allemande, Flamande et Hollandaise*, 1st edition, Paris 1853 and 6th edition, Paris 1855. The full list with catalogue numbers: 404 *The Angel Raphael leaving Tobit and his Family*, 1637; 405 *The Good Samaritan*, 1648; 406 *Matthew the Evangelist*, 1661; 407 *The Supper at Emmaus*, 1648; 408 *Meditating Philosopher*, 1633; 409 *Philosopher in Meditation*, 1632; 410 *The Household of the Carpenter* (now *The Holy Family*), 1640; 411 *Venus and Love*, 1662 (now as *Hendrikje Stoffels and Love*, school of Rembrandt); 412 *Self-Portrait*, 1633; 413 *Self-Portrait*, 1634; 414 *Self-Portrait*, 1637; 415 *Self-Portrait as an Old Man*, 1660; 416 *Portrait of an Old Man*, (now school of Rembrandt); 417 *Portrait of a Young Man*, 1658, (now school of Rembrandt); 418 *Portrait of a Man*; 419 *Portrait of a Woman* (now *Hendrikje Stoffels*), c. 1652.
- 42 http://www.culture.gouv.fr/public/mistral/joconde_fr, consulted 2 February 2011.
- 43 McQueen, op. cit. (note 15), pp. 89 and 313, note 202.
- 44 *Ibid.*, p. 191.
- 45 *Ibid.*, pp. 193-94.
- 46 *Ibid.*, p. 160.
- 47 *Ibid.*, p. 195.
- 48 N. Ferri, *Catalogo delle stampe e disegni esposti al pubblico nella R. Galleria degli Uffizi*, Florence 1881, lists nine self-portraits and *Three Oriental Figures (Jacob and Laban?)*. Jaco Rutgers, *Rembrandt in Italië. Receptie en verzamelingeschiedenis, s.l.* 2008,

- pp. 105-06 and 114-26. Rutger's book only goes up to 1800, but does reveal the genesis and growth of the important collections in Italy.
- 49 The Villa Medici library did have the 1873 edition. http://www.farnese.efrome.it/search-Si*frf consulted 8 March 2011.
- 50 E.A. McCauley, *Industrial Madness. Commercial Photography in Paris, 1848-1871*, New Haven and London 1994, pp. 269-73, 278 and 296; A.J. Hamber, 'A Higher Branch for the Art'. *Photographing the Fine Arts in England, 1839-1880*, London 1996, pp. 43-44, 93 note 27 and 30; Saskia Asser, 'Rembrandt in fotografische staat: Charles Blanc, Bisson frères en L'Oeuvre de Rembrandt reproduit par la photographie', *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum*, 48 (2000), pp. 170-99. With a summary in English.
- 51 Information kindly supplied by Jaco Rutgers, author of the forthcoming new volumes on Rembrandt in Hollstein's *Dutch and Flemish Etchings, Engravings and Woodcuts c. 1450-1700*, which incorporates the Italian collections. See also note 48.
- 52 See among others Musée du Louvre, Département des arts graphiques: drawings by Tourny after Titian (RF 28675, recto and RF 28670, recto), Tiepolo (RF 28705, recto and RF 28702, recto) and equestrian portraits by Velázquez (RF 28686, recto and RF 28677, recto).
- 53 Reff, op. cit. (note 4, New Light), pp. 250-52; Reff, op. cit. (note 3), notebook 13, pp. 84 and 112. These drawings could also have been made as soon as he got back to Paris; the notebook ranges in date from around Florence 1858 to Paris 1860.
- 54 Boggs et al., op. cit. (note 18), p. 50.
- 55 Barbara Wright and Pierre Moisy, *Gustave Moreau et Eugène Fromentin. Documents inédits*, La Rochelle, 1972, p. 24. They support Maxime du Camp's reading of Moreau's reason for going to Italy.
- 56 Reff, op. cit. (note 4, New Light), pp. 250-52 and Reff, op. cit. (note 3), I, pp. 15-16.
- 57 A. Dumas et al., *The Private Collection of Edgar Degas*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, pp. 111, 115-22, 151-62. Colta Ives, Susan Alyson Stein, et al., *The Private Collection of Degas: A Summary Catalogue*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1997, pp. 27-50.
- 58 Musée du Louvre, Département des arts graphiques: Chassériau (RF 25247, recto); Delacroix, sheet of studies containing drawings after the etching (RF 10511, recto). These are sketchbook pages that the Louvre acquired in 1935 and 1927 respectively.
- Cabinet des Estampes: Rembrandt, *The Death of the Virgin*, BNE, Invent / 29167.
- 59 McQueen, op. cit. (note 15), pp. 211, 291, and p. 344, note 555.
- 60 Wright and Moisy, op. cit. (note 55), pp. 141-47. Eugène Fromentin, *Rubens et Rembrandt. Les maîtres d'autrefois*, Paris 1991, with a foreword by Albert Thibaudet (originally 1876), pp. 271-76. See also McQueen, op. cit. (note 15), pp. 39-40.
- 61 Moreau visited the Frans Hals Museum in July 1888. P. ten-Doesschate Chu, 'Nineteenth Century visitors to the Frans Hals Museum', in G.P. Weisberg and L.S. Dixon (eds.), *The Documented Image. Vision in Art History*, Syracuse/New York 1987, p. 139. See also G. Lacambre. D.W. Druick, L.J. Feinberg and S. A. Stein, *Gustave Moreau. 1826-1898*, Paris 1999, p. 271.
- 62 The first *catalogue raisonné* of prints, compiled by Edmé François Gersaint, appeared in 1751; Ignace-Joseph Claussin published a revised edition in 1824. All the prints were described at length, but not illustrated. Petra ten Doesschate Chu, *French Realism and the Dutch Masters*, Utrecht 1974, pp. 65-66.
- 63 Blanc, op. cit. (note 31), pp. 10-11; Asser op. cit. (note 50), pp. 174-75.
- 64 McQueen, op. cit. (note 15), pp. 34-36 and 100.
- 65 *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16, 41, 47-49.
- 66 *Ibid.*, p. 54. See Pieter Scheltema, 'Rembrand, discours sur sa vie et son génie, avec un grand nombre des documents historiques', *Revue universelle des arts*, 8 (1858), pp. 73-299; 360-90 and 485-516, also published as Pieter Scheltema, *Rembrand, discours sur sa vie et son génie, avec un grand nombre des documents historiques* (Thoré-Bürger, ed.), Brussels 1859, and Carel Vosmaer, *Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn. Ses précurseurs et ses années d'apprentissage*, The Hague 1863 and *ibid.*, *Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn. Sa vie et ses œuvres*, The Hague 1868.
- 67 Rembrandt's likeness here is based on the *Self-Portrait Leaning on a Stone Sill*, 1639, B 21.
- 68 'Raphael, quelque pur qu'il soit, n'est qu'un esprit matériel sans cesse à la recherche du solide; mais cette canaille de Rembrandt est un puissant idéaliste qui fait rêver et deviner au delà. L'un compose des créatures à l'état neuf et virginal, – Adam et Eve; – mais l'autre secoue des haillons devant nos yeux et nous raconte les souffrances humaines.' Charles Baudelaire, 'Salon de 1846', in *Curiosités esthétiques. L'Art romantique et autres Œuvres*

- critiques de Baudelaire*, (H. Lemaître ed.), Paris, 1990, p. 104; English translation Elizabeth Gilmore Holt (ed.), *From the Classicists to the Impressionists: Art and Architecture in the Nineteenth Century* (A Documentary History of Art vol. 111) New York 1966, p. 176.
- 69 'Chacun des anciens maîtres a son royaume, son apanage, – se qu'il est souvent contraint de partager avec des rivaux illustres. Raphaël a la forme, Rubens et Véronèse la couleur, Rubens et Michel-Ange l'imagination du dessin. Une portion de l'empire restait, où Rembrandt seul avait fait quelques excursions, – le drame, – le drame naturel et vivant, de drame terrible et mélancolique, exprimé souvent par le couleur, mais toujours par le geste.' Baudelaire, op. cit. (note 68), p. 129. English translation Gilmore Holt, op. cit. (note 68), p. 182.
- 70 'Peut-être découvrira-on que Rembrandt est un beaucoup plus grand peintre que Raphaël. J'écris ce blasphème propre à faire dresser les cheveux de tous les hommes d'école, sans prendre décidément parti; seulement je trouve en moi, à mesure que j'avance de la vie, que la vérité est ce qu'il y a plus de beau et de plus de rare. Rembrandt n'a pas, si vous voulez, absolument l'élévation de Raphaël.' 6 June 1851, on the occasion of the reopening of the painting galleries in the Louvre. Eugène Delacroix, *Journal 1822-1863*, (H. Damisch and André Joubin, eds.), Paris 1996, p. 280. English translation Hubert Wellington ed., *The Journal of Eugene Delacroix*, London 1951, p. 142. Delacroix published these ideas in 'Question sur le beau', *Revue des deux mondes*, 15 July 1854, pp. 306-15.
- 71 McQueen, op. cit. (note 15), p. 103-04. Thoré-Bürger, *Musées de la Hollande* vol. 2: *Musée van der Hoop à Amsterdam et musée de Rotterdam*, Paris 1858-1860.
- 72 McQueen, op. cit. (note 15), pp. 226; Doesschate Chu, op. cit. (note 62), pp. 65 and 79.
- 73 Blanc, op. cit. (note 31), 1, Introduction, p. 5.
- 74 McQueen, op. cit. (note 15), pp. 160-61.
- 75 Ibid., pp. 44-45, 203, 223-27. The idea that he sold 'half-finished' etchings originated with Arnold Houbraken, *De groote schouburgh der Neder-lantsche konstschilders en schilderessen* (1718-1721).
- 76 Adhémar and Cachin, op. cit. (note 35), p. XI. Reed and Shapiro, op. cit. (note 14), 1 cat. no. 8, p. 23. The Metropolitan Museum of Art holds a drawing probably used by Degas for this etching, accession number 1972.118.207.
- 77 Reed and Shapiro, op. cit. (note 14), p. 23.
- 78 Baumann and Karabelnik, op. cit. (note 4), p. 135.
- 79 'Que de choses nouvelles j'ai vues, que de projets cela m'a mis en tête, mon cher Fröhlich! j'y renonce déjà, je ne veux plus voir que mon coin et le creuser pieusement. L'art ne s'élargit pas, il se résume.' Edgar Degas to the Danish artist Lorentz Fröhlich, New Orleans, 27 November 1872, in M. Guérin, *Lettres de Degas*, Paris [1945], p. 4, English translation: Richard Thomson, *The Private Degas*, London 1987, p. 103.
- 80 Rembrandt, *Self-Portrait in a Cap and Golden Chain*, 1633 (inv. no. 1745) and *Self-Portrait Bareheaded*, 1633 (inv. no. 1744).
- 81 Rutgers, op. cit. (note 48), pp. 16 and 21 note 90. See also www.polomuseale-firenze.it, inv. no. 3890, consulted 1 March 2011.
- 82 Blanc, op. cit. (note 31), no. 209, *Rembrandt au visage rond* (B.5) and no. 210 *Rembrandt riant* (B.316), no. 212, *Rembrandt au sabre et à l'aigrette* (B.23), no. 223, *Rembrandt appuyé* (B.21), no. 308, *Griffonnement avec la tête nue de Rembrandt* (B.73).
- 83 E. Antetomaso and G. Mariani, *La Collezione del Principe. Da Leonardo a Goya*, Rome 2004, pp. 251-53: *Self-Portrait with Cap Pulled Forward*, B.319; *Sheet of Studies with Self-Portrait*, B.363; *Self-Portrait in a Cap And Scarf*, B.17; *Self-Portrait with Raised Sabre*, B.18; *Self-Portrait with Saskia*, B.19; *Self-Portrait in a Velvet Cap with a Plume*, B.20; *Self-Portrait Leaning on a Stone Sill*, B.21, and *Self-Portrait in a Flat Cap and Embroidered Dress*, B.26.
- 84 Boggs, op. cit. (note 7), p. 8, describes fig. 20 as one of the earliest portraits. However, the related *Self-Portrait with a White Collar* is dated to around 1857 in view of an inscription on the stretcher: 'Edgar Degas par lui même / né en 1834. . . vers 1857.' http://www.nga.gov/fcgi-bin/tinfo_f?object=92994&detail=prov consulted 22 February 2011.
- 85 *Self-Portrait* (with beard and moustache), c. 1863, formerly Mrs John Hay Whitney Collection, New York, sold Sotheby's New York, 10 May 1999, lot no. 13; *Self-Portrait Removing his Hat*, c. 1863, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian-Museu, Lisbon (2307); *Self-Portrait with Évariste de Valernes*, c. 1865 (Musée d'Orsay, RF 3586) for which there are two preliminary drawings (Cabinet des dessins, Musée du Louvre, RF 24232, and private collection).
- 86 'Toujours du moi. Mais que voulez[-vous] qu'un homme seul aussi abandonné à soi-même que je le suis dise? Il n'a que lui devant lui, ne voit que lui, et ne pense qu'à

- lui. C'est un grand égoïste.' Edgar Degas to Gustave Moreau, Florence, 21 September 1858. Theodore Reff, 'More unpublished letters by Degas', *The Art Bulletin*, 51 (1969), no. 3, p. 282. English translation by Kendall, op. cit. (note 2), p. 23.
- 87 Auguste De Gas to Edgar Degas, Paris, 13 August 1858. Private collection, as cited in Boggs et al., op. cit. (note 18), p. 71.
- 88 '... ton dessin est fort, le ton de la couleur est juste. Tu es débarrassé de ce flasque et trivial dessin Flandrinien Lamothien, et de cette couleur terne grise.' Auguste De Gas to Edgar Degas, Paris, 11 November 1858. Private collection, part cited in Boggs et al., op. cit. (note 18), p. 52. See also Lemoisne op. cit. (note 13), 1, p. 30.
- 89 'Que tu consultes Rembrandt, je le comprends, c'est un peintre qui vous étonne par le relief qu'il sait donner, et son coloris n'est pas sans beauté ...' Auguste De Gas to Edgar Degas, Paris 25 February 1859, as cited in Reff, op. cit. (note 4, *New Light*), pp. 251-52.
- 90 Charles Rosen and Henri Zerner, 'The Ideology of the Licked Surface: Official Art', in *Romanticism and Realism: The Mythology of Nineteenth Century Art*, London/Boston 1984, pp. 203-32.
- 91 '... chez lequel ce parti est presque autant un calcul qu'un effet de son instinct et dont la pointe capricieuse ne s'astreint même dans des parties essentielles qu'à un rendu superficiel.' 29 October 1857. Delacroix, op. cit. (note 70), p. 687.
- 92 Charlotte van Rappard-Boon, *Félix Braquemond 1833-1914*, Amsterdam/Zwolle 1993, pp. 5-6, 10 and cat. no. 16. McQueen op. cit. (note 15), pp. 227-29. Doesschate Chu, op. cit. (note 62), pp. 76-77.
- 93 McQueen, op. cit. (note 15), pp. 175. Reed and Shapiro, op. cit. (note 14), p. xvi. The situation was no different in the Netherlands, Rembrandt's country. See Jeroen Giltay, 'De Nederlandsche Etsclub (1885-1896)', *Nederlands Kunst-historisch Jaarboek* 27 (1976), pp. 91-125.
- 94 Van Rappard, op. cit. (note 92), p. 6.
- 95 Barbara Stern Shapiro, 'Camille Pissarro, Rembrandt and the use of tone', in C. Lloyd, *Studies on Camille Pissarro*, London 1986, p. 127.
- 96 Reed and Shapiro, op. cit. (note 14), p. xx.
- 97 Van Rappard, op. cit. (note 92), p. 18. McQueen, op. cit. (note 15), pp. 233-47.
- 98 Henri Fantin-Latour, *Self Portrait*, ca. 1858, oil on canvas, 25.4 x 20 cm original size, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, accession number 1995.91. See Gary Tinterow, 'Recent Acquisitions, a Selection: 1994-1995', *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 53 (1995), p. 44.
- 99 'A nos débuts, Fantin, Whistler et moi, nous étions sur la même voie, la Route de la Hollande'. Quoted by Paul Poujaud to Marcel Guérin, [De Guèret] 11 July 1936, in Guérin, op. cit. (note 79), pp. 255-56.
- 100 'Van Dyck est un fameux artiste, Giorgion aussi, Botticelli aussi, Mantegna aussi, Rembrandt aussi, Carpaccio aussi.' Degas to Gustave Moreau, Florence 27 November 1858. Reff, op. cit. (note 86), p. 283. English translation Kendall, op. cit. (note 2), p. 25.
- 101 'Si Rembrandt avait connu la lithographie, Dieu sait ce qu'il en aurait fait.' As cited in Theodore Reff, *Degas: The Artist's Mind*, New York 1976, p. 176. The quote is a recollection of Ernest Rouart as noted in Paul Valéry, *Degas Danse Dessin*, 1983 (originally 1938), p. 144.
- 102 See Ives, Stein et al., op. cit. (note 57), p. 110: 'Sold as *L'Oeuvre de Rembrandt*, 353 reproductions (with 25 missing from Degas's portfolio)'. This is the 1880 edition by Charles Blanc. The number of reproductions does not correlate with any other publication at the time.
- 103 Doesschate Chu, op. cit. (note 62), pp. 117-18. Reff, op. cit. (note 4, *Degas: A Master*), pp. 43-44, shows the relation between Degas's *Reader*, a series of monotypes from the 1880s and Rembrandt's etching *Negress Lying Down*, 1658 (B. 205).
- 104 Gary Tinterow in Boggs et al., op. cit. (note 18), p. 451, cat. no. 274, expands on Ian Dunlop's earlier observation of the association between the pastel *Femme nue se faisant coiffer* (1886-88) and Rembrandt's *Bathsheba at her Bath*.

