

Edgar Degas, the private impressionist

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Before the Race, circa 1895, by Edgar Degas and Auguste Clot, is on display now in an exhibition including 24 of Degas' drawings and 20 prints at the Newcomb Art Gallery. Although Degas' lithographs were monochromatic, his dealer asked him to contribute to an album of color prints. Unconvinced, Degas suggested instead that master printer Clot interpret one of his pastels in color. Clot's work met with Degas' approval, but the album never materialized; individual impressions were sold only many years later. (Image from the Newcomb Art Gallery)

Edgar Degas' realist approach to art emphasizes the importance of seeing things the way they truly are.

That's why his work is effective, said Robert Flynn Johnson, the co-curator of the new exhibit of the French artist's work at the Newcomb Art Gallery on the Tulane

University uptown campus.

Johnson, curator emeritus at the Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco, gave a talk at Tulane on Feb. 19 to commemorate the opening of the new exhibition of Degas' lesser-known sketches and prints. Degas is an impressionist from the late-19th century who is famous for paintings of ballerinas and horses.

During his presentation, "A Journey Not a Destination: Chasing the Art of Edgar Degas for 40 Years," Johnson discussed how the power of Degas' style was his ability to portray an image in a specific point in time.

Johnson encouraged students to remember the importance of appreciating art for what it can tell us about the reality of the world. In his time, critics of Degas' art thought it was too real and too ugly but Johnson said he sees the realism in his work as its greatest asset.

"He didn't try to capture stories, but moments," he said.

Johnson explained that when compiling the pieces for exhibition he attempted to collect images that captured Degas' development as an artist at different points in time.

The [exhibition](#), "Edgar Degas: The Private Impressionist, Works on Paper by the Artist and his Circle," consists of 24 of Degas' drawings along with 20 prints, three monotypes, one sculpture and a letter. It is on display through May 24. Admission is free and open to the public. The exhibition is organized by Landau Traveling Exhibitions of Los Angeles in association with Denenberg Fine Arts of West Hollywood, California.

Claire Davenport is a first-year student majoring in English and political science at Tulane University.

"I love Degas because his work expresses the human condition...Many artists paint pretty things; Degas painted real and contemporary things." — exhibit co-curator Robert Flynn Johnson