

Muscatine Art Center welcomes Carol Ehlers

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The public is invited to join the Muscatine Art Center in welcoming Carol Ehlers, art history speaker, as she presents a 45 minute lecture on the art of the French Impressionist Edgar Degas. The lecture will take place Thursday, September 20 at 5:30 pm in the Muscatine Art Center's Music Room. Admission is free.

Edgar Degas was born on July 19, 1834 in Paris, France, the oldest of five children. Degas began to paint early in life and in 1853 he registered as a copyist in the Louvre. He exhibited at the Salon for the first time in 1865 but his painting gathered little attention.

At the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War in 1870, Degas enlisted in the National Guard. During rifle training his eyesight was found to be defective and for the rest of his life his eye problems were a constant worry to him. From 1870 on Degas increasingly painted ballet subjects, partly because they sold well and provided him with needed income after his brother's debts had left the family bankrupt. He produced much of his greatest work during the decade beginning in 1874.

During his life, public reception of Degas' work ranged from admiration to contempt. He is considered one of the founders of Impressionism, though he preferred to be called a realist. His paintings, pastels, drawings, and sculptures are included in the collection of numerous museums around the world. Although Degas had no formal pupil he greatly influenced several important painters. His greatest admirer may have been Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec.

In 1992 the Muscatine Art Center's collections were significantly enriched by a gift of twenty-seven works of art by Toulouse-Lautrec, Matisse, Degas, Boudin, Chagall, Renoir, and other European artists. The collection was a gift from the estate of Mary Musser Gilmore in honor of her parents, Richard Drew Musser and Sarah Walker Musser. The paintings are on permanent display in the Laura Musser Mansion.