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French Paintings and Pastels, 1600-1945

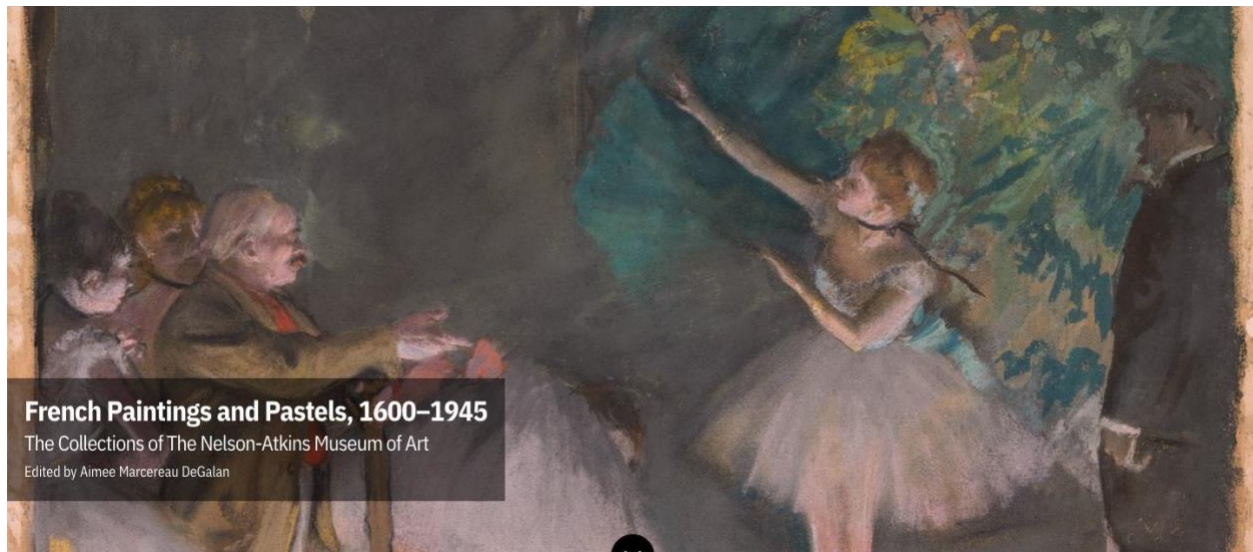
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The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art's [*French Paintings and Pastels, 1600-1945*](#) is an online catalog that brings the museum's collection of 110 French paintings and pastels to visitors and scholars worldwide. Launched in 2021, it is the seventh volume in a series of catalogs that systematically documents the NAMA's encyclopedic collection and the first to be published digitally. It offers viewers much to learn from a digital distance and has infinite potential for addition and modification.



Edgar Degas' *Rehearsal of the Ballet* (1876) serves as the cover image for French Paintings and Pastels, 1600-1945

The catalog is edited by Aimee Marcereau DeGalan, Louis L. and Adelaide C. Ward Senior Curator of European Arts. With twenty-six contributors, the NAMA aims for a vision of collective authorship. Most contributors are affiliated with the NAMA, but others are curators at the J. Paul Getty Museum; faculty at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology; and vice presidents at Wildenstein & Co.

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Mobile friendly, *French Paintings and Pastels, 1600-1945* is best viewed in either Mozilla Firefox or Google Chrome. It can also be downloaded as a PDF and printed in hard copy to store and preserve for future use. There are no accompanying video or audio clips.

Compared to the multimedia, web-based publications funded by the Getty Foundation as part of its [Online Scholarly Catalogue Initiative](#), *French Paintings and Pastels, 1600-1945* more closely resembles a traditional print publication. Entries are arranged chronologically by artistic movement. Within each movement, the paintings and pastels are arranged alphabetically by artist name. Each fully published object includes a high-quality curatorial entry by new or established scholars interpreting the subject and contextualizing the art within the artist's career, with zoomable high-resolution photographs, comparative figures, and fully searchable text. Technical entries from conservation staff document how each artwork was made and its state of preservation. Detailed provenance, related works, exhibition history, and bibliographic references appear at the bottom of each entry page.

Those entries with new scholarly research and commentary are indicated by a page icon. At the time of writing, such new information is provided for nineteen artworks, most of them Impressionist and post-Impressionist masterpieces by artists including Monet, Morisot, Renoir, and van Gogh. The new technical examination of van Gogh's *Olive Trees* (1889) is especially compelling. For object pages without the expanded object entries, there is a note indicating when enhancements are expected.

More than twelve years in production, this digital scholarly effort benefited from external funding at several key moments. The National Endowment for the Humanities made a startup grant in 2009 to support the research and preparation of the original manuscript. The Kress Foundation awarded a Digital Interpretative Grant in 2018 to make possible the hiring of a digital developer and digital assistant. Finally, the Marion and Henry Bloch Family Foundation supported this project as part of a grant to increase awareness, scholarship, and understanding of the Marion and Henry Bloch Collection of Impressionist and Post-Impressionist Art.

The NAMA seeks to ensure that *French Paintings and Pastels, 1600-1945* will be maintained and updated for the long term. Any revisions or corrections made to the publication after the first edition date are listed on the [“About” page and in the project repository](#), where a more detailed version history is available.

As with any online catalog, the danger lies in its limitless possibility for expansion. High-resolution images and historical background information are important, but arguments must eventually result from this abundance of raw material. When adding new scholarly research and commentary, the challenge for the NAMA will be to ensure that its contributors continue to offer a clear point of view.