Edgar Degas

In 1834, Edgar Degas was born in Paris, France, but he was also born into the life of art. His mother and father loved the arts and encouraged it upon Edgar at a young age. Degas inherited these skills and relayed them into his adult life. He copied at the Louvre in Paris and attended Ecole des Beaux-Arts for a short while until he decided to study and paint in Italy. After 3 years, Degas returned to Paris and set out on his professional journey.

Degas eventually become a member of a group of avant-garde artists who were ambitious about finding ways to engage the modern world. He also volunteered for the French National Guard when the French-Prussian War emerged. Later on, after the conclusion of the war, Degas, along with several other painters became known as Impressionists; they were also known as the Société Anonyme des Artistes. The Société Anonyme des Artistes held art exhibitions, with Degas featuring modern women painted from radical perspectives.

These exhibitions continued for several years. A couple of Degas’s most famous paintings during that time were “The Dance Class” and “Dancers Practicing at the Bar”. Degas’s paintings reflected France’s changing social and economic environment. Edgar Degas found much interest in painting nude women and dancers. He captured the humility of dancers waiting and preparing right before a show compared to the striking poise during their performance.

Three painting that are absolutely breathtaking are “The Dance Class II”, “L Etoile” and “Dancers in Pink”. “The Dance Class” is exactly what one would imagine when picturing a dance class. A room full of students with just one or two dancers currently being judged by the instructor while everyone else is taking a break and waiting amongst peers. Some girls are sitting and relaxing, a couple of girls are helping each other with their uniform and one girl in the center is in full effect, working through the motions of the dance. This piece captured the behind the scene image as opposed to the structured ensemble on stage. As opposed to this, “L Etoile” captures a single moment in action. A dancer is on stage, and you can see she is feeling the piece from the tip of her fingers to the point of her toes. “Dancers in Pink” is just a beautiful piece that captures the pure beauty of the women and the dresses they are in. The bright pink fills the painting, enticing the audience to want to see more and even watch the dance that is about to happen.

Degas primarily used oil paint and pastels for his art which portrayed such a soft and delicate ambiance. Edgar Degas’s use of elegant strokes and his ability to capture the feeling of each scene truly makes the viewers wish they would have been able to catch such a stunning moment for themselves.

Works Cited

“Biography”. *Edgar Degas Biography*. August 6, 2020. <https://www.biography.com/artist/edgar-degas>

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