Brushing the Surface:
Edgar Degas's *La Coiffure* as Site of Experimentation and Corporal Dissolution

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Abstract

This thesis examines how the repetition of forms and figures in Edgar Degas's artworks presents the representation of the female body as a foundation for Degas's experimentation with different media. Through an analysis of Degas's 1896 painting *La Coiffure* and three negative photographic plates, unique for their colouristic effects caused by developmental error, I explore Degas's interest in media-specific effect, particularly his heightened interest in photography between 1895 and 1896. In the first half of this thesis, I link Degas's chosen subject matter of hair brushing to his artistic production and argue that both are material processes that elicit the tension between touch and sight. I also examine hair as a visual signifier of difference within nineteenth-century French culture. The second section of this thesis outlines the visual similarities between the glass negatives and *La Coiffure* to argue that Degas references the visual qualities of the plates in paint. From this analysis, Degas's use of photography as a modern technology that encouraged his longstanding practice of repetition is explored. To conclude, I connect the process of dry-plate development to Degas's artmaking and nineteenth-century ideals of hair care. I ultimately argue that both the photographic plates and *La Coiffure* exist as sites for Degas's artistic experimentation. This connection reveals how the body of the model, exhibited in the negatives, dissolves through Degas's artistic process. My research aims to provide a critical approach to Degas's *La Coiffure* and to contribute to alternative feminist interpretations of his images of women.

Résumé

Ce mémoire examine comment la répétition des formes et des figures dans les œuvres d'Edgar Degas révèle que la représentation du corps féminin était un élément fondamental dans l'expérimentation de Degas avec différents médias. À travers une analyse de *La Coiffure*, un tableau de Degas datant de 1896, et de trois planches photographiques négatives uniques pour leurs effets de couleur, causés par des erreurs de développement, j'explore l'intérêt qu'avait Degas pour les effets spécifiques aux médias, plus particulièrement son intérêt accru pour la photographie entre 1895 et 1896. Dans la première moitié de ce mémoire, je fais le lien entre le sujet choisi par Degas, le brossage des cheveux, et sa production artistique. Je propose que ces deux processus représentent des processus matériels qui provoquent une tension entre le toucher et la vision. J'examine également les cheveux comme marqueur de différence dans la culture française du XIXe siècle. La deuxième partie de ce mémoire souligne les similitudes visuelles entre les négatifs sur verre et *La Coiffure* pour démontrer que Degas fait référence aux qualités visuelles des plaques dans sa peinture. À partir de cette analyse, j'examine comment l'utilisation que fait Degas de la photographie comme technologie moderne l'encourage dans sa pratique de répétition. En guise de conclusion, je fais le lien entre le processus de développement de la plaque sèche, la pratique artistique de Degas et les idéaux de soin des cheveux du XIXe siècle. Je soutiens qu'à la fois les plaques photographiques et *La Coiffure* sont des sites d'expérimentation artistique pour Degas. Cette connexion révèle comment le corps du modèle, tel qu'il est exposé dans les négatifs, se dissout dans le processus artistique de Degas. Mes recherches ont pour objectif de proposer une approche critique de *La Coiffure* de Degas et de contribuer à des interprétations féministes alternatives de ses images de femmes.

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Introduction

Edgar Degas's painting, *Combing the Hair* (*La Coiffure*), (fig. 1), dated 1896, depicts a female figure, likely a maid, brushing the long, red hair of a seated female figure.[1] The seated figure is depicted in a red-orange dress, which resembles a *peignoir* worn specifically in the *toilette* setting.[2] She raises her right hand to her head instinctively, emphasizing the tension caused from the tugging of her hair.[3] The maid is depicted to the right of the seated figure, holding her long, heavy-looking hair in her left hand while directing the yellow comb through its middle section with her right. The maid's hair, also red, is tied up in a simple *chignon*. She wears a pink blouse and a white apron, which corresponds to the white, roughly rendered table that is depicted in the lower, right corner of the composition. This table creates a divide between the viewer and the figures. On the table, Degas portrayed the outline of various *toilette* objects.[4] These items appear to be unfinished, apart from a yellow-orange hair brush, the handle of which is positioned towards the maid. The background of the work is ambiguous, rendered in loose brush strokes and coloured in the same hues as the hair of both figures. The painting is striking for its limited colour palette, expressed in vibrant shades of red and orange that are contrasted by prominent black outlines and shadows.

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[1] The female figure brushing the hair is identified as a maid by David Bomford. See: David Bomford, *Art in The Making: Degas* (London: National Gallery, 1988), 142.

[2] In her study on hair in nineteenth-century French literature, Carol Rifelj has shown that the word *peignoir* comes from *peigne,* translated as comb. The term originally referred to a cloth that was placed around the shoulders when having one's hair done. This remains the first meaning of the word in French. Carol Rifelj, *Coiffures: Hair in Nineteenth-Century French Literature and Culture* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2010), 185.

[3] The female figure having her hair brushed appears to be pregnant, as observed by Richard Kendall. Richard Kendall, "Degas's Colour," in *Degas 1834-1984* (Manchester: Manchester Polytechnic, 1985), 26.

[4] This detail is similar to a late painting by Matisse, *Woman Reading at a Dressing Table (Interieur, Nice)*, dated 1919, which represents a similar subject matter of a female figure at the toilette. In Matisse's painting, the table in the foreground also appears to be unfinished. David Bomford has recorded that Matisse owned *La Coiffure,* between 1920 and 1936, when it was purchased by the National Gallery in London. Bomford, *Art in The* Making, 142.

La Coiffure remained in Degas's studio until 1918, when the painting was sold at the posthumous sale of Degas's collection in Paris.[5] The painting has been altered twice since its creation; first enlarged by Degas, who expanded the canvas onto a larger stretcher, then returned to its original size sometime during the nineteen years after the painting was sold in the atelier sale and before it was purchased by the National Gallery, London.[6]

Degas's images of women have been the subject of much scholarly work within the field of art history; feminist art historians have taken particular interest in the ways in which his works adhered to – and at times challenged – sexual and social stereotypes. Although Degas did create portraits of women in his social circle in ways that were considered socially respectable at the time, he also made numerous images of working-class women who were often deemed to be sexually available by Parisian men, including dancers, shop girls and prostitutes. The painting, *La Coiffure* has primarily been examined in art historical texts in relation to the pictorial completeness and limited colour palette of the image rather than to the sexual availability of the woman portrayed. The painting has also been linked to an earlier pastel dated 1892 to 1896 (fig. 2) that shares a similar composition. Scholars such as David Bomford, Jean Sutherland Boggs and Christopher Riopelle, have considered the restricted colour palette of the painting in comparison to Degas's painting *After The Bath* (fig. 3) dated the same year as *La Coiffure*; they argue that the painting was left unfinished, although it is possible that Degas intended to continue to working on it.[7] Richard Kendall has offered an alternative interpretation by proposing that the

[5] Bomford*, Art in The Making: Degas*,145.
[6] The enlargement of the canvas by Degas added an extra 7 cm of canvas to the bottom, 3 cm to the top and 2cm to either side. Bomford*, Art in The Making: Degas*, 145.
[7] It has generally been accepted by scholars that the objects depicted on the table in *La Coiffure* signify the unfinished quality of the painting. Vivien Hamilton, et al., *Drawn in Colour: Degas From The Burrell Collection* (New Haven: Distributed by Yale University Press, 2017), 104. See also: Jean Sutherland Boggs, *Degas* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art; Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1988), 553. Also, the argument that Degas had intended to continue working on the painting is supported by Degas's decision to enlarge the canvas. See: Bomford, *Art in The Making,*145.

red palette may act as a preliminary stage for the later addition of contrasting colours.[8] A similar argument has been made by Theodore Reff, who has attributed the color tones exhibited in Degas's *After the Bath* to Degas's study of Venetian masters, stating that, 'he must in fact have studied the Venetian masters closely again in the 1890s…" by following the procedure of underpainting in monochromatic cool tones and glazing in warm ones.[9] With this, Reff argues that *After the Bath* is left in the *grisaille* state.[10] Boggs and Riopelle have also considered the painting thematically through discussion of the discomfort and strain evoked from colour and gesture.[11]

Discussions of the painting's relation to Degas's heightened interest in photography in the years 1895 to 1896, however, is lacking. This thesis will examine the painting in relation to three negative photographic glass dry plates, dated 1895 or 1896 (figs. 4, 5, 6) that contain many visual similarities to *La Coiffure*.[12] These negative plates have not yet been connected to the painting, although they are attributed to the same years.[13] Unique for their colouristic effects, the glass plates present vivid shades of red and orange, expressing similar tones to the colour palette of *La Coiffure*. This colouration is the result of chemical error in their development, unlike Degas's painting in which he purposefully chose similar bright red, orange and pink pigments. Furthermore, the images on the plates are ruptured through combined exposure, with some areas

[8] Kendall, "Degas's Colour," 26.
[9] Theodore Reff, "The Technical Aspects of Degas's Art," *Metropolitan Museum Journal,* vol. 4 (1971), 161.
[10] Reff, "The Technical Aspects of Degas's Art," 161.
[11] Hamilton, et al., *Drawn in Colour,* 104.
[12] Authorship of the plates has been debated and remains undetermined. The glass negatives were given to the Bibliothèque Nationale de France by Degas's brother, René de Gas, in 1920, three years after Degas's death. Malcolm Daniel has argued that the idiosyncratic nature of the images, the technical errors and the fact that the negatives were found in Degas's studio after his death all argue for an attribution to Degas. Daniel, *Edgar Degas, Photographer*, 136.
[13] The plates were initially described as collodion on glass by Janet Buerger, attributing them to an earlier date. Janet F. Buerger, "Degas's Solarized and Negative Photographs: A Look at Unorthodox Classicism." *Image* 21, no. 2 (June 1978): 17-23. Laboratory analysis in the 1990s has since shown that the glass plates are standard, commercially available gelatin dry plates, attributing them to Degas's late interest in photography, 1895-1896. Daniel, *Edgar Degas, Photographer,*137.

presenting as negative and others as positive. They depict a ballet dancer in various poses, who was likely a model in Degas's studio.[14] The blurred hands and ambiguous facial features of the model in the negatives are visually similar to the depiction of female figures in the painting. Additionally, the dark shadows in the plates, which provide a dimensionality yet also obscure parts of the body and costume, are similar to the shadows and outlines of form in the painting.

Malcolm R. Daniel has suggested that the bright colours visible in the gelatin dry plates could have resulted from chemical intensification to compensate for underexposure, or reduction to compensate for overexposure.[15] He has argued that the photographic plates were sources for Degas's work in painting and pastel from 1896 and later, particularly the representation of pose and gesture. For instance, Daniel has shown that for the pastel *Behind the Scenes (Dancers in Blue),* dated 1898, Degas combined the poses from the negative plates into a single composition.[16] He does not, however, analyze the colouristic and visual effects of the plates in relation to Degas's artwork.

This thesis expands beyond these earlier studies to focus on the visual effects and medium-specific error presented in the glass plates as material objects. I thereby connect the negative plates to Degas's *La Coiffure* through comparison of their analogous visual effects to argue that the painting references the visual and tactile qualities presented in the negative glass plates. In addition, this project examines how Degas's repetition of forms and figures presents

[14] Evidence of Degas's study of models in his studio in the year 1896 is presented in the photograph *Nude (Drying Herself)* from late 1895 or 1896, in which a model is depicted in the same pose as the figure in the painting *After the Bath*. Degas's friend Georges Jeanniot described watching Degas pose the model in this position. Additionally, Antoine Terrasse has connected the photograph to Degas's studio by identifying the patterned fabric in the photograph as identical to that represented in a photographic self portrait of Degas in his studio. Malcolm R. Daniel, *Edgar Degas, Photographer*, (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1998), 136. See also: Antoine Terrasse, *Degas et la photographie,* (Paris: Denoël, 1983).
[15] Daniel, *Edgar Degas, Photographer*, 137.
[16] Daniel, *Edgar Degas, Photographer*, 43-44.

the representation of the female body as a site of artistic experimentation.[17] However, medium and formal artistic practices were of equal importance to Degas and the limitations of both were explored through his depictions of the female form. His interest in the visual effects produced in both painting and photography elicits discussion of his multiple sources of inspiration. Attention to Degas's artistic processes reveal how the female body is comprised and compromised through Degas's experimentation with media-specific error and effect. Through analysis of the relationship between subject matter, media and material support, I argue that the negative glass plates and the painting *La Coiffure* exist as sites for Degas's artistic experimentation.

This project draws on primary sources such as Degas's letters and notebooks, which provide useful information and examples of his creative practice, as well nineteenth-century advertisements for beauty products and French beauty manuals. My research relies on the collection of thirty-eight notebooks in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, which date from 1853 to 1886, and the catalogue of notebooks edited by Theodore Reff.[18] This thesis is also informed by feminist scholarship in art history. In particular, it engages with – and builds upon - feminist scholars from the late twentieth century who have examined Degas's depiction of white, French women from different social classes. Many of these scholars have examined how Degas' work can be read as both ambiguous, and as inviting a male, heterosexual gaze. This includes the work of Carol Armstrong, Anthea Callen, Norma Broude and Linda Nochlin.

This thesis is also informed by scholarship on hair and beauty ideals in nineteenth-century France and is particularly indebted to Carol Rifelj's study of hair in nineteenth-century

[17] Tamar Garb has argued that the female body was a vehicle for the male artist to demonstrate skills of observation and recording, yet also was subject to erotically charged looking that exceeded realistic depiction. Tamar Garb, *The Body in Time*, 4.

[18] There are two notebooks that Degas used while dining at the Halévy family home, which were unavailable for my research as they are privately owned. These notebooks may have been censored by Degas's family as well as the Halévy family after his death, as examined by Theodore Reff. Theodore Reff, *The Notebooks of Edgar Degas: A Catalogue of the Thirty-Eight Notebooks in the Bibliothèque Nationale and Other Collections* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 11.

French literature. My research aims to provide a critical approach to Degas's *La Coiffure* in order to contribute to alternative feminist interpretations of nineteenth-century, French art. My argument is, however, based on representations of white women's hair and white hair culture, as well as its depiction in nineteenth-century French art and visual culture.

Chapter One: Degas's Painting *La Coiffure*: Experimenting with Sight and Touch

The alterations Degas made to *La Coiffure*'s canvas accentuate the status of the artwork as a site of artistic, visual and tactile experimentation. For instance, Degas's decision to stretch the canvas on which the image of *La Coiffure* was already painted exemplifies how Degas's media and material support were often revised through his ongoing artistic experimentation. This action, the unfolding and restructuring of the canvas, highlights Degas's tactile relationship with the structure and materials of his artwork and also suggests that he had intended to expand the picture, thereby emphasizing the work's experimental state.[19]

David Bomford has claimed that the composition of the image was painted onto the canvas with dark paint that contained charcoal. This also suggests an experimental method as combining charcoal drawing and paint was unusual. Furthermore, infrared photographs of the canvas from the National Gallery of London reveal that Degas used broad paint strokes to create form. The composition was thus mainly developed through paint and colour rather than detailed preparatory drawings, although there is a *pentimento* in the upraised elbow of the seated woman, likely created to situate her gesture.[20] Additionally, the *peignoir* and curtain were reworked to achieve the variety of red tonalities, which were made by three different red pigments. This

[19] The pastel, *Woman drying her Hair after the Bath,* dated about 1893-9 and currently within the Brooklyn Museum of Art, was extended by Degas at the top as well as on the bottom and left side, after the image was initially created. This is one example of Degas's artistic process in which Degas extended completed pastels with strips of paper, which were then glued together by a *colleur,* a specialist in mounting photographs, maps and other works on paper. The extension of the drawing allowed Degas to add more colour. Bomford*, Art in The Making: Degas*, 127.
[20] Another preparatory mark is visible as a small, vertical line that appears to determine the position of the eye of the seated figure. These marks were likely created to mark the placement of the eye and gesture of the figure. Bomford, *Art in The Making*, 146.

implies that Degas was interested in the visual effect produced by the combination of different shades of the same colour on a single surface.[21]

This chapter explores how Degas's experimental processes accentuate the visual and tactile relationship between paint and support, which links Degas's creation of the painting to the subject matter of hair brushing. I will trace the repetition of form and figures in Degas's artworks that represent women bathing and having their hair brushed in relation to his conception of form in *La Coiffure*. From this, I consider the artistic and social influences that contributed to Degas's ongoing practice of repetition. Additionally, I examine the modern subject matter of the *toilette* and the role of hair in nineteenth-century French culture. I ultimately connect Degas's production of the painting to hair brushing as material processes that rely on touch and sight.

Degas's Artistic Production and Repetition

An analysis of *La Coiffure* in relation to other artworks by Degas that are similar in subject matter and composition, such as a smaller pastel and painting that both share the same title as *La Coiffure*, demonstrates how the repetition of subject matter, form and composition, and the use of different media, such as pastel and paint, were part of his artistic processes. For instance, *La Coiffure* has been connected to a painting in the National Gallery, Oslo (1896-1900) (fig. 7), which contains similar red hues, yet presents a more varied colour palette. In this painting, the figure having her hair brushed leans forward to hold her hair up to counter the force of pulling, emphasizing its weight. Only the back of the female form that carries out the act of combing is depicted; the facial features are omitted completely behind her brown hair, which falls over her left shoulder as she leans forward. Additionally, a smaller pastel dated 1892 to 1895, from a private collection, presents a closer study of a woman having her hair combed, in a

[21] Bomford argues that the three red pigments are a red earth such as venetian red, vermillion red and a more orange-toned red lead. Bomford, *Art in The Making*, 148.

wider variety of colour (fig. 8).[22] The woman is depicted in the same position as the seated figure in the painting *La Coiffure*, however, the expression in the pastel is more detailed than the facial features rendered in the painting. Therefore, Degas's repetition of this form in different media demonstrates how he reproduced the representation of a woman having her hair brushed multiple times.

Furthermore, the unfinished qualities of *La Coiffure,* such as the rough outline of *toilette* objects on the table in the foreground, apart from the hairbrush, mark the experimental state of the artwork through its potentiality for further alterations. These aspects of the painting are also found in Degas's earlier artworks. For instance, the *toilette* objects in *La Coiffure* are similar to those represented in Degas's pastel of the same subject matter and composition, *Woman combing her Hair* (fig. 2). In the painting, the objects are depicted as mere silhouettes, absent of colour apart from the yellow hairbrush and two strokes of red paint that are the same hue as the hair in the image. These strokes of colour are situated in close proximity to the left-hand side of the seated figure. In the pastel, these objects are more clearly rendered; a sense of length and texture is elicited by individual lines of colour. The strokes of colour that correspond to the hair in each image and the position of the objects amongst other *toilette* items suggest that they represent detached strands of hair from a hair piece. In late nineteenth-century France, hair pieces, often produced using human hair, were deemed necessary to achieve desired hair styles and textures.[23] They were used to thicken hair that was considered too thin in order to achieve the abundant length that was idealized at this time.[24] Hair pieces are included in a number of Degas's images of bathers, a subject matter he repeated during the 1880s. In Degas's pastel, *The Tub* (1886) (fig.

[22] Paul André Lemoisne, *Degas Et Son Oeuvre* (Paris: Arts et métiers graphiques, 1948), vol. III, p. 654, no. 1130 (illustrated, p. 655).
[23] Rifelj, *Coiffures*, 210.
[24] Elizabeth Cowling, "The Rebirth of Venus: Women at Their Toilette" in *Picasso looks at Degas*, eds. Elizabeth Cowling and Richard Kendall (Williamstown, Mass: Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2010), 167.

9), for example, a mass of detached auburn hair is visible lying on the washstand on the right side of the composition. The colour of the hair piece corresponds to the hair of the female figure, who is depicted from an elevated perspective, squatting in a shallow tin tub.[25] The thick hair piece is rendered by Degas in a way that emphasizes its materiality through variations in tone and shading that provide a textural quality. Thinning towards the ends, the hair twists around the left side of a hairbrush, which is a similar yellow colour and shape to the one portrayed in *La Coiffure* and is also situated at the end of a table, so the handle lies over the edge.

Additionally, comparisons between *La Coiffure* and Degas's *The Millinery Shop,* dated 1879 to 1886 (fig. 10), reveals the levels of repetition involved in Degas's conception of the female form. For instance, this connection may explain the stiff position of the left hand of the seated figure in *La Coiffure*. The figure's hand appears to be firmly enclosed, possibly around hair pins, which were used to attach hair pieces.[26] In *The Millinery Shop*, which remained in Degas's studio until his death, a female figure is seated at an angle beside a table, similar to the composition of *La Coiffure,* yet reversed.[27] Both scenes are depicted from the same elevated perspective. The social status of the figure and her identity as a working-class woman or an upper-class customer in *The Millinery Shop* has been debated by art historians.[28] This social identity is significant as there was a hierarchy of respectability within millinery shops: milliners, who created the hats, were associated with a higher status of propriety than the salesgirls, who

[25] The detached hair is identified by Elizabeth Cowling. Elizabeth Cowling, "The Rebirth of Venus," 167.
[26] Rifelj, *Coiffures*, 210.
[27] Simon Kelly, Esther Bell, and Susan Hiner, *Degas, Impressionism, and The Paris Millinery Trade* (San Francisco: Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco-Legion of Honor, 2017), 246.
[28] The identity of the woman in *The Millinery Shop* has been debated and much has been written about the ambiguity of the social type of Degas's figures. There are material attributions, such as her dress and yellow gloves, that suggest her middle-class station, yet it has been argued from X-radiography examination of the painting and comparison to two earlier pastels that Degas altered the figure from the status of customer to milliner. Gloria Groom, "Edgar Degas: The Millinery Shop," in *Impressionism, Fashion, & Modernity* (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 2012), 218-222.

tried the fashions on for customers.[29] Gloria Groom argues that the concentrated expression of the figure is exaggerated through Degas's depiction of her pursed lips, which appear to be holding a pin, thereby suggesting her status as an employee rather than a customer in the millinery shop. This expression of concentration, accentuated through the red lips, shares a remarkable resemblance to the expression of the maid in *La Coiffure.* This similarity suggests that the maid holds a pin, removed from the hair to be brushed out, between her lips. Extending from this analysis, the possibility of the seated figure holding a pin, but in her left hand, recalls the account of Geneviève Straus, who on multiple occasions allowed Degas to accompany her to the dressmakers so he could observe women within a feminine space. As Marcel Guérin wrote in the edited volume, *Degas Letters*:

> Mme. Straus reposts that Degas - who had come to enjoy it - often accompanied her to her fittings at the dressmaker's. When she was astonished, one day, at the pleasure he was taking, and asked him what so entertained him about these fittings, Degas replied, "it's the red hands of the little girls holding the pins."[30]

This account exemplifies Degas's interest in studying the female form, yet also exemplifies Degas's fascination with private spaces that were designated for women. This interest was a product of gendered modes of decorum in nineteenth-century Paris, which generally marked the upper-class, white, feminine body as an ideal theme for art. In many ways, artworks, such as Degas' images of bathers, reflect the male fantasy of viewing women undressing in private settings. As an artist living within upper-class social circles, Degas was granted access to some spaces in which intimate moments of women's lives were performed, such as behind the scenes at the ballet. However, other images – such as those of women brushing hair – may show hired models or were objects of artistic imagination. Degas's repetition of form and gesture across

[29] Rifelj, *Coiffures,* 71.
[30] This account is provided by the French art critic Marcel Guérin and is quoted here as translated from the French by Robert Gordon. Robert Gordon and Andrew Forge, *Degas* (New York: H.N. Abrams, 1988), 135.

different subject matter expresses his ongoing fascination with the female figure and exemplifies the use of repetition in the conception of the figures for *La Coiffure*.

Degas's Artistic Influences

Degas's practice of repetition was rooted in his early artistic training and knowledge of Italian artistic conventions.[31] Degas's study of Renaissance artworks and artistic values, which emphasized draftsmanship, studio practice and the study of the human form, was described by his contemporary, the artist Berthe Morisot, who recalled that: "Degas declared that the study of nature is meaningless, since the art of painting is a question of conventions…"[32] This also separated Degas from some of his Impressionist contemporaries, who were more interested in depicting their surroundings by painting *en plein air*; Degas preferred to be called an "independent" or "realist."[33] Degas's meticulous study of the human body, which he repeatedly practiced through drawing, is illustrated in his early notebooks from the 1850s and 1860s, in which Degas copied the human figure from Italian Renaissance artworks.[34]

Denis Rouart has argued that Degas's artistic experimentations were tied to his early study of Renaissance artists.[35] He claims that Degas's artistic practice consisted not only of the

[31] Degas's colouristic abstraction, larger brushstrokes and scale and also the suppression of detail that is characteristic of his late style has been attributed by numerous critics and historians to his failing eyesight. Linda Nochlin has outlined that initially, a blind spot blocked off Degas's vision, which later became more generalized. Nochlin, *Impressionism Documents, 66.*

[32] As translated from the French by Linda Nochlin. Linda Nochlin, ed., *Impressionism and Post-Impressionism, 1874-1904: Sources and Documents*, Sources and Documents in the History of Art Series (Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice-Hall, 1966), 65.

[33] *En plein air* referred to painting outdoors and became a fundamental idea related to the Impressionist art movement. Norma Broude, *Impressionism: A Feminist Reading: The Gendering of Art, Science, and Nature in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Rizzoli, 1991), 4. Also, Degas's, "realism" has been defined by Carol Armstrong as a shared interest with the writer Edmond Duranty. Armstrong defines Duranty's "new realism" as neutralized from the narrative qualities of eighteenth-century, Dutch genre art. Duranty expressed realism as related to physiognomy, which in the nineteenth-century generally referred to a semiotics of costume and setting that marked social distinction and identity as legible. Carol M. Armstrong, "Duranty on Degas: A Theory of Modern Painting," in *Odd Man Out: Readings of the Work and Reputation of Edgar Degas*, 73-100 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

[34] Reff, *The Notebooks of Edgar Degas*, 52.

[35] Denis Rouart, *Degas: in Search of His Technique* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1988), 199.

repetition of form and subject matter, but also of multiple experiments with various media, such as pastel and paint. This is exemplified in Degas's continual retouching or retracing. Rouart states:

> Materials preoccupied him, and he sought the best medium and the best fixative, the best canvas and the best ground, without ever arriving at a definitive solution. All his life was passed in experimentation in both the aesthetics as well as in the technical aspects of art.[36]

Theodore Reff has also acknowledged how artists in the nineteenth century, including Degas, continued to study and employ Italian Renaissance techniques. Reff argues that it was not until the third decade of Degas's career, from around 1875 to 1885, that Degas combined stylistic conventions with radical innovations in material and method, as, "…the experimental method was widely regarded as a model for intellectual achievement…"[37] As Reff suggests, Degas's late technical experimentations can be contextualized within the period of scientific and technological progress, where experimental methods were elevated to a high status of intellect. In a letter written by Degas to the artist Camille Pissarro in 1880, Degas discusses his experimentation with the effects of light and color using different artistic media. He explains a new method of tinting etching using wood blocks and copper stencils: "One could make some nice experiments with original and unusually colored prints… I shall send you some of my own attempts of this kind. It would be economical and novel."[38] However, while Degas's late artworks often invoke a feeling of spontaneity through experimentation, it is reported in conversation with George Moore from 1891 that Degas stated, "No art was ever less spontaneous than mine. What I do is the result of reflection and study of the great masters."[39] Degas can thus be examined as an artist who was experimental with various media yet was interested in the

[36] Rouart, *Degas: in Search of His Technique*, 127 -128.
[37] Reff, "The Technical Aspects of Degas's Art," 142.
[38] As translated by Theodore Reff. Reff, *Degas: The Artist's Mind*, 271.
[39] As translated by Norma Broude. Broude, *Edgar Degas: Images of Women; Images of Men*, 1.

spontaneity that is so often linked to Impressionist art making. *La Coiffure* expresses this spontaneity through the lack of preparatory work, limited colour palette, loose brush strokes and Degas's expansion of the canvas, yet these qualities also mark Degas's ongoing process and suggest the potentiality for further alterations based on study and reflection.

The *Toilette* as Modern Subject Matter

Degas's interest in the subject matter of the *toilette* was connected to his study of Italian Renaissance art.[40] The *toilette* was a popular subject matter in late nineteenth-century French art, yet has art historical origins in depictions of the female nude in classical art and European history painting, in which it was often represented as part of biblical or classical narratives.[41] Degas addressed the connection between his work and artistic tradition by referencing the biblical tale of Susanna and the Elders, through which the female nude has been historically depicted. This narrative focuses on the false accusation of Susanna, who is accused of adultery for refusing to comply to the elderly men in her town when they witness her bathing. The story therefore elicits topics of privacy, voyeurism and gender hierarchies of power. As Degas's written statement, which was published in the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* after his death, notes: "You see how the difference in the times affects us: two centuries ago, I would have painted Susannas Bathing. And now I just paint women in the tub."[42] This statement demonstrates that Degas's conception of the modern subject matter of the *toilette* developed from European art historical convention and the study of the female nude.

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[40] Norma Broude has described Degas as, "…the artist who wanted to paint the contemporary world through the lens of the classics…" Broude, "Edgar Degas and French Feminism, ca. 1880," 642.

[41] Norma Broude, "Edgar Degas and French Feminism, ca. 1880: 'The Young Spartans,' the Brothel Monotypes, and the Bathers Revisited," *Art Bulletin* (December 1988); reprinted in Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard, eds., *The Expanding Discourse: Feminism and Art History* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992), 653.

[42] This is quoted as translated by David Gordon from Raymond Bouyer in the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts,* January 1925: Gordon and Forge, *Degas,* 242. Mina Curtiss has stated that Degas expressed in a letter to a friend that, "he wished he might have lived at the time when his predecessors, unaware of women in bath-tubs, painted Susanna and the Elders." However, Curtiss does not identify whom Degas addressed this to. Daniel Halévy, *My Friend Degas,* trans., ed. Mina Curtiss (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1964), 24.

Nineteenth-century *toilette* images included depictions of women bathing, applying makeup and having their hair combed within a private, domestic space. Tamar Garb has argued that nineteenth-century French depictions of a woman in a private setting at her *toilette* allowed for an otherwise unattainable spectacle for male viewers, with the exception of husbands, lovers or men who paid to watch sex workers prepare themselves.[43] The subject of the *toilette* was made modern through the anonymity of the depicted woman, which distinguished the *toilette* theme from earlier images that were based on religious or classical narratives.[44] Additionally, the subject could be modernized with the depiction of new, domestic technology, such as indoor plumbing and bath tubs, as argued by Georgina Downey.[45] Degas's *La Coiffure* exemplifies a modern depiction of the *toilette* subject matter stylistically through its loose, rapid brushstrokes and limited colour palette, as these components work to accentuate the anonymity of the figures by removing them farther from a realistic representation or clear narrative. Degas's stylistic choices - his bold brushwork, 'unnatural' colour palette and unusual, asymmetrical compositions - exemplify his experimental and artistic liberty with the portrayal of the modern *toilette* subject. These stylistic qualities are thematically bound to the subject matter of hair brushing as the depiction of the red hair visually merges with the surrounding red space, thereby collapsing form, substance and subject matter.

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[43] Garb, *Bodies of Modernity,* 115.

[44] Tamar Garb has argued that the anonymity of the model allowed Georges Seurat to exhibit *Young Woman Powdering Herself* as a genre painting in 1890, rather than as a portrait of an individual, as it was not revealed until after Seurat's death that the figure was modeled by his companion, Madeleine Knobloch. Garb, *Bodies of Modernity*, 136.

[45] Downey has argued that in nineteenth-century scenes of women bathing, modernity is inherently embedded beyond the subject or interpretation of a nude within an interior space. Furthermore, Downey argues that Edgar Degas' *Woman in a Bath Sponging Her Leg"* is successful in presenting modern bathing technology, the bathtub, and expresses Degas's interest in how it relates to the female body. Georgina Downey, "Bathrooms: Plumbing The Canon - The Bath Tub Nudes of Alfred Stevens, Edgar Degas, and Pierre Bonnard Reconsidered" in *Domestic Interiors: Representing Homes From The Victorians to The Moderns*, ed. Georgina Downey (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 124.

The circulation of Japanese prints and photographs in France throughout the nineteenth century inspired many artists, including Degas, and Japanese imagery contributed to the modern style and representation of *toilette* images as a genre subject by presenting the subject matter as a scene of everyday life.[46] Degas was certainly familiar with Japanese images that depicted women bathing or brushing their hair and owned a book of Japanese woodblock printed illustrations by Nishikawa Sukenobu, titled *One Hundred Qualities of Women,* from 1723, which was included in the posthumous sales of his private collection.[47] Eunice Lipton has argued that French artists found a visual language in Japanese images to express modern life in Paris, one that implied the real and also displaced it.[48] However, the interest that French artists and collectors expressed in the themes and stylistic qualities of Japanese images, such as the asymmetrical compositions and foreshortening, were part of a more complex relationship between the two nations. Lipton has described this relationship as one that included overt racism towards Japanese people and also economic reliance, as exemplified in France's importation of Japanese silkworms, used to rebuild the collapsing French silk industry in 1861.[49] This relationship played a significant role in the reproduction of Japanese designs, fabrics and images, which also contributed to Degas's interest in linking different media. For instance, in her analysis of Degas's *The Collector of Prints,* dated 1866, Anne Higonnet argues that Degas combined and compared Japanese papers

[46] Phylis Floyd argues that as early as the 1850s, artists had access to Japanese albums and prints in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. Degas was known to have copied these images in the Cabinet des Estampes, having registered in 1853. Phylis Floyd, "Documentary Evidence for the Availability of Japanese Imagery in Europe in Nineteenth-Century Public Collections," *The Art Bulletin* 68, no. 1 (1986): 118.
[47]Colta Ives, et al., eds., *The Private Collection of Edgar Degas* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1997), 116. It is unknown when Degas acquired the illustrations.
[48] Eunice Lipton argues that disruption of form in Japanese prints relates to the anxiety produced by the isolation in modern, Parisian life. Eunice Lipton, *Looking into Degas: Uneasy Images of Women and Modern Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 6.
[49] Lipton, *Looking into Degas*, 48-49.

and fabric swatches with photographs, rendering the mass-produced pictures in paint.[50] Degas's interest in replicating the properties of photography through his paintings is also demonstrated in *La Coiffure* through Degas's reference of the colouristic effects of the negative plates. This connection shows Degas's experimental interest in the errors of photography, which was a departure from his early replications of the small-scale format and multiplicity of mass-produced photographs.

The influence of Japanese images and Italian Renaissance art on Degas's representations of women within the *toilette* setting presents the experimental relationship between his depiction of the female form and modern artistic style. For instance, Degas often portrayed the body from various perspectives and in unusual poses, suggesting his study of form within the development of innovative compositions. This is exemplified in the painting *Woman at Her Bath* from 1895 (fig. 11), in which a female figure is depicted sitting on the edge of a modern bathtub as her nude frame strains to lean forward while a maid pours water over her body. The elongated back of the body is the primary focus of the work and takes up most of the composition. In this painting, like in *La Coiffure*, Degas corresponds the colours used to render parts of the body to the background of the image, expressed in vibrant pink, orange and purple hues that appear to represent dressing gowns suspended beside a modern bath tub. While this colour palette is more varied than in *La Coiffure,* both paintings present a visual connection between the depiction of the stretching female body and its surroundings through the loose application of brush strokes and shared hues. This presents a direct relationship between Degas's stylistic qualities and the representation of the female form. As part of his interest in unconventional compositions, Degas posed models in positions that were challenging to depict. This is articulated in a passage written by Pierre-

[50] Anne Higonnet, "Manet and the Multiple," *Grey Room*, no. 48 (2012): 110. http://www.jstor.org/stable/23258338.

Georges Jeanniot, who witnessed Degas posing a model in a position similar to the posture depicted in the painting *After The Bath*:

> I saw him with a model, trying to pose her in the movement of drying herself while leaning on the high padded back of a chair covered with a bathrobe. This movement is complicated. The woman being shown from the back, you see her shoulder blades, but the right shoulder, bearing the weight of the body, takes a most unexpected shape, which suggests some kind of acrobatic activity of violent effort.[51]

This pose is also visualized in a photograph, *Nude (Drying Herself)* from late 1895 or 1896, suggesting Degas's use of the photograph as a source for his painting.[52] Degas's construction of poses that were compositionally challenging also induced the idea that the image was a representation of reality by implying that the female subject is being watched without her knowledge or consent, thereby contributing to the voyeuristic gaze of his images. This perpetuated the association between models, working-class women and prostitutes. For instance, as Eunice Lipton has argued, some working-class women, especially models who posed nude in the artist's studio, did resort to prostitution if further income was needed.[53]

In addition to the use of photographs and models, Degas could also depict the *toilette* subject matter from memory due to his longstanding practice with the depiction of hair. In a notebook Degas kept between the years 1863 and 1867, he writes:

> Therefore, it is not merely instinct which makes us say that we must search for a method of coloring everywhere, for the affinities among what is alive, what is dead and what vegetates. I can, for example, easily recall the color of some hair, because I got the idea that it was hair made out of polished walnut wood, or else flax, or horse-chestnut shells. The rendering of the form will make real hair, with its softness and lightness or its roughness or its weight out of this tone which is almost precisely that of walnut, flax or horse-chestnut shell. And then one paints in such different ways on such different supports that the same tone might be one thing in one place, another in another.[54]

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[51] Daniel, *Edgar Degas, Photographer*, 42
[52] Daniel, *Edgar Degas, Photographer*,136.
[53] Lipton, *Looking into Degas*, 160.
[54] As translated by Linda Nochlin. Nochlin, *Impressionism and Post-Impressionism, 1874-1904: Sources and Documents*, 61-62.

This text demonstrates Degas's knowledge of hair and his interest in the pictorial effects it elicits. This is also evident in his depictions of hair in different media. For example, in the pastels, *Woman combing her Hair* and *La Coiffure,* which share the same composition as the painting *La Coiffure*, the hair appears to be more textural than in the painting, in which Degas relies on a single, bold colour tone to suggest the form and weight of the hair. In contrast, the depiction of hair in the pastel is made through individual lines of colour that suggest the wavy shape of strands of hair, resting on the surface of the table. The subject of hair brushing took various forms for Degas: he represented the stretching of a woman's long hair, its texture and colour, the movement of hands working through hair with a comb in addition to the straining and pose of the figure.[55]

Nineteenth-Century Hair and Identity

Hair symbolized many things in the commodity-based culture of late nineteenth-century Paris. Much time and money were spent on hair styling, care and maintenance. Who cared for one's hair was influenced by classfications of class, race and status; wealthy, white, women, both respectable upper-class women and high-class prostitutes, had their hair done in private *cabinet de toilettes* by chambermaids or during visits from a *coiffeur*. *Coiffeurs* who visited the home were often young, white, working-class men, who contributed to the hyper sexualized setting of the *toilette* due to their single status.[56] Working-class, white women arranged their hair themselves, often forming the hair into a simple *chignon*, as depicted in Degas's rendering of the maid's hair.[57] More complicated hairstyles that required a maid or *coiffeur* were only attainable

[55] Degas recorded in a notebook: "Do…the hands – of the hairdresser – the badly cut coiffure…" As translated by Linda Nochlin. Nochlin, *Impressionism and Post-Impressionism, 1874-1904: Sources and Documents*, 63. The notebook is dated 1878-1884.
[56] Data on the marriage status of hairdressers from 1896 divides the profession into patrons and *ouvriers,* the latter of which tended to be younger, single, working-class males who were often underpaid. Steven Zdatny, *Fashion, Work, and Politics in Modern France* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 25-26.
[57] Zdatny, *Fashion, Work, and Politics in Modern France*, 3. See also: Rifelj, *Coiffures*, 166.

for the upper-class bourgeoise.[58] Respectable, proper women fashioned their hair into styles that allowed it to be up and neatly covered with a *chapeau*. Even within the privacy of the home, middle and upper class women would not let their hair down unless undressing as the act of hair brushing was a private routine.[59]

Hairstyles played an important role in the construction and regulation of female sexuality because the intimate routine of hair-brushing had erotic connotations.[60] For instance, the idealized depiction of long, loose hair was usually intended to express a women's sexual availability and corrupt sexuality. Furthermore, unkept hair or uncovered heads were associated with impropriety, immorality and working-class women.[61] Hair style, like clothing, thus signified respectability as well as economic status. From this, Degas's depiction of a woman with her hair down, and thus in a partial or unfinished state of dress and decorum, can be examined as a deliberately provocative choice of subject matter that works to perpetuate the somewhat typical nineteenth-century white, male, heterosexual fantasy of the dishevelled or semi-clothed woman.

While individual taste was increasingly encouraged in manuals and texts that advised women on ideals of personal appearance, general trends regarding hair colour and hairstyle continuously shifted.[62] For example, red hair was often associated with lower classes, yet at times was considered desirable and idealized in artworks. The trends in hair colour were dominated by upper-class white French ideals and exemplified by people of European descent.[63]

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[58] Rifelj, *Coiffures*, 166.
[59] Rifelj, *Coiffures*, 84.
[60] Rifelj, *Coiffures*, 185.
[61] Young, working-class woman were thought to have loose morals as there was a possibility that they could engage in prostitution to support their poor wages. Rifelj, *Coiffures,* 71.
[62] Lisa Tiersten, *Marianne in the Market: Envisioning Consumer Society in Fin-De-Si cle France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 178.
[63] Steven Zdatny states: " At the turn of the century, fashion in France still belonged, as it had traditionally, to the elite." Steven Zdatny, *Fashion, Work, and Politics in Modern France*, 3.

Black hair that was associated with African descent was attributed with negative characteristics, such as inflexibility.[64]

Advice published in manuals and texts that were produced for middle and upper-class literate women connected bodily beauty and hygiene to the domestic interior and to the *toilette,* where the production and maintenance of the body took place. Lisa Tiersten has argued that the devaluation of women to an aesthetic role more closely associated with decorative art than high art was accomplished foremost by situating a feminine intimacy with objects. [65] The ideals of appearance for bourgeoise women were strongly associated with their home décor, as conveyed by decorating guides. Some guides equated the styles and colour of the body with the home. For instance, the journalist Louise de Salles advised in *Paris-mode* in 1892 that women should adorn the home strictly with colours that blended with their hair-colour and skin tone.[66] Similar advice was provided by Henri de Noussance, who stated that the home was a frame for the female body, thus colours must be chosen according to one's hair and complexion.[67]

Degas's *La Coiffure* embodies the tension between bourgeoise ideals of beauty and the negative characteristics associated with red hair, as the varying red tones create a visual tension that is accentuated by the stark shadows and outlines. The colour red encompasses not only the hair of both figures but also the setting of the image and the clothing of the seated woman. In this way, Degas equates the female figure with the domestic setting, combining both into a single decorative surface that lacks substance and interiority. In other words, the visual connection between the figures and their surroundings, created by Degas's rough brushstrokes and limited colour palette, associates the female figures with the ambiguous background, negating any

[64] Rifelj, *Coiffures,* 122.
[65] Tiersten, *Marianne in the Market,* 178-9.
[66] Tiersten, *Marianne in the Market*, 179.
[67] Tiersten, *Marianne in the Market*, 179.

emotional or psychological depth. Degas's provocative choice of colour also reflects the controversial subject matter of private feminine rituals, expressing the otherwise unattainable sight in a way that is stylistically and visually striking. For instance, the repeated red hues reflect the repetitive action of hair grooming. Also, the vibrancy and intensity of the colour red accentuates Degas's depiction of a private setting in which social constructions of decorum, which were enforced on the female body, took shape.

Some nineteenth-century scientific texts claimed hair could denote an individual's character; the pseudoscience of physiognomy contended that a person's character was based on physical appearance and visual classification.[68] Cesare Lombroso, widely considered the founder of the field of criminology, argued that one's social deviance was attributed to their biological disposition, which was visible in a person's cranial shape, facial features and hair colour.[69] Lombroso's book, *La Donna Delinquente* (Criminal Woman), written with Guglielmo Ferrero and originally published in Italian in 1893, almost twenty years after *L'Uomo Delinquente* (Criminal Man), is considered the first text written on women and crime. Lombroso's study of the, "born criminal," suggested that an individual with an inherited criminality could be visually identified through physical traits.[70] This idea dominated criminological discussions in Europe, North and South America and parts of Asia from the 1880s into the early twentieth century.[71] In *La Donna Delinquente,* published in French in 1896, three contradicting studies on hair colour are outlined; the first concludes that criminals have darker hair, the second suggests that more blondes can be found among prostitutes and the third notes the predominance of blonde and red

[68] Rifelj, *Coiffures*, 120.
[69] Anthea Callen, *The Spectacular Body : Science, Method, and Meaning in the Work of Degas* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 20.
[70] Cesare Lombroso and Guglielmo Ferrero, *Criminal Woman, the Prostitute, and the Normal Woman,* trans. Nicole Hahn Rafter and Mary Gibson (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 3.
[71] Rifelj, *Coiffures*, 120.

hair amongst women offenders, which the authors state agrees with their own observations. Furthermore, the authors argue that among criminal women, "we also find an unusual quantity of hair."[72]

Anthea Callen has argued that Degas uncritically embraced Lombroso's work, which was published in 1879 in *La Nature,* a popular science periodical that was read by Degas.[73] Callen has connected Degas's artwork to Lombroso's theory in her analysis of Degas's sculpture *Little Dancer of Fourteen Years,* dated 1880 to 1881. Made of tinted wax, gauze, ribbon and human hair, the sculpture exemplifies Degas's use of real hair as material for his artistic production. Callen argues that Degas demonstrates Lombroso's theory by depicting the figure of the young model as a member of the lower class through her physiognomic features, including her receding forehead and dark hair.[74] This is emphasised by the decision to display the sculpture in the same exhibition as two pastels of male *Criminal Physiognomies*.[75] The hair that Degas used for the statuette was described by Mary Cassatt's collector friend, Mrs. Louisine Havemeyer, who stated: "How woolly the dark hair appeared."[76] Callen connects this statement with Lombroso's theory that thick, black hair was associated with atavism. However, the description from the American collector also recalls the degradation of black hair, particularly hair that was associated with African ancestry, which was referred to as, "wool" during Transatlantic Slavery in order to subjugate it as a different material altogether.[77] Hair was thus a visual signifier that was used to categorize, criminalize and racially subjugate the non-white body.

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[72] Lombroso and Ferrero, *Criminal Woman, the Prostitute, and the Normal Woman*, 123-124.
[73] Callen, *The Spectacular Body,* 1.
[74] Callen, *The Spectacular Body,* 1.
[75] Callen, *The Spectacular Body*, 27.
[76] As quoted by Anthea Callen. Callen, *The Spectacular Body*, 26.
[77] Cheryl Thompson, "Black Women, Beauty, and Hair As a Matter of Being," *Women's Studies* 38, no. 8 (2009), 833.

Degas's depiction of the Parisian, lower-class criminalized body is examined by Hollis Clayson in her analysis of Degas's monotypes from the 1880s that depict prostitutes within brothel interiors. Clayson states:

> The important point about the appearance of stereotyped faces in the brothel monotypes is that they suggest Degas thought of these women not only as sexual deviants but as threatening *social* deviants – like other typed components of the Parisian criminal underclass. This caricatural practice inflects otherwise *un*conventional bodies with a very strong accent of the conventional.[78]

Clayson claims that Degas created the monotype prints for two purposes: formal experimentation and to record a provocative contemporary practice. These ambitions, I argue, are also reflected in Degas's creation of *La Coiffure*, which exemplifies his experimentation with different media through the relationship between the painting and Degas's previous artworks and photographic experiments.

Hair as a marker of difference is further exemplified in the *Dictionnaire de la femme*, published in 1897.[79] This text provides health and beauty advice that was targeted at middle-class, white French women. Personality differences are categorized based on hair colour and texture to claim that blondes are dreamy, patient and thoughtful, while women with brown hair are expressive in gesture and lively. Women with red hair, it claims, consistently have a bad reputation.[80]

For bourgeoise women, hair colour was a stylistic choice through which one could assert individual identity or participate in shifting trends. In 1888, the percentages of the different

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[78] Hollis Clayson, *Painted Love: Prostitution in French Art of the Impressionist Era* (Los Angeles, California: Getty Research Institute, 2003), 48. In this analysis, Clayson references Alan Sekula's, "The Body and the Archive," which argues that the new technology of photography in the nineteenth-century was used to classify and criminalize individuals by comparing photographs of different subjects. Alan Sekula, "The Body and the Archive," *October* 39 (Winter 1986): 3-64.

[79] Gaston Cerfberr and M.V. Ramin, *Dictionnaire de la femme: encyclopédie-manuel des connaissances utiles à le femme* (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1897), 174.

[80] As translated form the French, "Les blondes sont rêveuses, patientes, réfléchies ; les brunes, expressives de la parole et du geste, vives…" and "Enfin les cheveux rouges ont eu de tout temps mauvaise réputation." Cerfberr and Ramin, *Dictionnaire de la femme,* 174-175.

colours of hair pieces collected by rag pickers in the streets of Paris were examined in order to compare the prominence of different hair colours. The results, published in the book, *Les Coulisses de la mode*, suggest that there was a high percentage of auburn hair, followed by grey and blonde.[81] The text also concludes that there was an increase in blond, reddish and red hair found in recent years due to the use of dyes.[82] Hair fragments were collected by rag pickers to be cleaned and recirculated to the upper-middle class as hairpieces, which could be purchased individually by patrons or in bulk by hairdressers in order to fashion hairstyles such as braids and *chignons*.[83] In this way, hair, once separated from the body, was also an object of consumption and a market product. Significantly, France was producing over eighty thousand kilograms of hair a year in the 1880s.[84] France exported hair, primarily to England and the United States. However, to supply the demand for hair, one-third was imported from abroad.[85] Hair was also collected by *coupeurs*, or haircutters, who traveled to the countryside of Normandy and Brittany where women gathered to have their heads shaved in exchange for terribly poor prices, at worst a piece of cloth to cover their heads.[86] The *Journal de la Coiffure* published in July 1903, reports this event from an upper-class perspective that is removed from sympathy: "If the spectacle was sometimes amusing…it was also pitiable for the great sacrifice and the great poverty it revealed."[87] Hair could also be obtained from hairdressers' brushes and combs. In this case, upper-class woman could have potentially purchased back parts of their own, discarded hair. Nevertheless, the multiple sites of collection for hair pieces left an anonymity and also anxiety

[81] Ali Coffignon, *Les Coulisses de la mode* (Paris: Librarie Illustrée, 1888), 43.
[82] Coffignon, *Les Coulisses de la mode*, 43.
[83] Rifelj, *Coiffures*, 130.
[84] Rifelj, *Coiffures*, 211.
[85] Rifelj, *Coiffures*, 211.
[86] Rifelj argues that in the beginning of the century, women would sometimes receive in exchange for their hair a scarf to cover their head, yet later in the century increasingly demanded money. Rifelj, *Coiffures*, 211.
[87] As translated by Steven Zdatny. Steven Zdatny, *Fashion, Work, and Politics in Modern France*, 7.

surrounding hair as a point of contact with lower-class women, criminals, or the deceased.[88] The circulation of hair, severed from its origins, presents a tense point of contact between bourgeoise ideals of beauty and lower-class poverty. The study of hair as a commodity in nineteenth-century Paris thereby reveals how bourgeoise, feminine ideals were reliant on lower-class sacrifice and labour; a labour that was far removed from the lengthy task of hair brushing.

In addition to the use of hair dye as a method to keep up with the changing trends in fashion, both bourgeoise women and men used hair dye in order to cover grey and appeal to ideals of youth. This is exemplified in an advertisement for *Le Sublimior: Régénératuer des Cheveux*, from 1891 (fig. 12). The ad presents a youthful-looking woman with incredibly long, loose hair that is juxtaposed with the small, curled fringe pressed against her forehead. The hair is divided in the middle, presenting as white on one side and black on the other, corresponding to the coal-coloured bottle in her left hand. The ad promises to be the only hair regenerator that will not make hair sticky and is approved by the French Society of Medicine.[89] This medical approval would have contributed to the marketability of the product, as warnings against the dangers of hair dye, which included harmful metals such as quicklime, mercury and silver, continued into the end of the century.[90] Another advertisement from 1892, (fig. 13) describes *Eau Sublime* as, "the only regenerator recognized and awarded as hygienic."[91] On the reverse side (fig. 14), an advertisement for *Chromatogène* is stated to be "based on scientific data" and can be used to

[88] Rifelj, *Coiffures,* 209.
[89] Morag Martin argues that practitioners of medical science attempted to influence women's decision-making towards purchases of products for the *toilette,* as primarily exemplified in beauty manuals. Morag Martin, "Doctoring Beauty: The Medical Control of Women's Toilettes in France, 1750–1820," *Medical History* 49, no. 03 (2005): 351-68, doi:10.1017/S0025727300008917.
[90] Rifelj, *Coiffures,* 123.
[91] "Advertisement for 'Eau Sublime' by Bonfils & Cie," supplement to the publication *Alpes Illustrés,* 30 January 1892, Donation of Mr. William H. Helfand, Osler Library of the History of Medicine, Montreal, Canada.

colour hair as well as revitalize the vitality of hair.[92] It is suggested that those who desire more immediate recoloration can use *Chromatogène,* followed by *Eau Sublime* to preserve and regenerate their hair.[93] These advertisements exemplify how scientific discourse played a significant role in the ideals of beauty and youth placed on the body in late-nineteenth century France. As stated by Carol Rifelj, "Because of its malleability and the many ways it could be altered, hair was particularly useful in constructing the new ideal body."[94]

Degas would have been aware of the ideals of youth exemplified by modern hair culture, and the products that made fashionable hair attainable to those who could afford it. This is exemplified in an incident that was recorded by Daniel Halévy in his memoire of Degas. Halévy recalls Degas's first-hand description of his marriage proposal to the much younger, Henriette Taschereau, Daniel Halévy's cousin, in which Degas states: "I told her that if she wanted me to dye my hair I would."[95] The vibrant, red hair depicted for both female figures in *La Coiffure* could thus be interpreted as a signifier of youth.

Hair Care

Degas was fascinated by female beauty standards and self-care rituals, particularly those of white French women. The action of repetitive hair brushing, as depicted by Degas, is a white European beauty ideal that has often been misrepresented as universal, as the thick, curly nature of most African hair can make brushing a painful and ineffective task.[96]

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[92] "Advertisement for 'Chromatogène' and 'Parfum Caméléon,'" supplement to the publication *Alpes Illustrés,* 30 January 1892, Donation of Mr. William H. Helfand, Osler Library of the History of Medicine, Montreal, Canada.
[93] "Advertisement for 'Chromatogène' and 'Parfum Caméléon,'" supplement to the publication *Alpes Illustrés,* 30 January 1892, Donation of Mr. William H. Helfand, Osler Library of the History of Medicine, Montreal, Canada.
[94] Rifelj, *Coiffures,*14.
[95] Halévy, *My Friend Degas,* 96.
[96] Different tools, such as hair picks or combs, have been used for hundreds of years. However, in the period of Transatlantic Slavery, the neglect of black bodily care by white slave owners resulted in the need to find alternative means for hair care. Furthermore, the lack of time and tools for hairstyling practices led to the loss of cultural and diverse forms of hairstyling. See: Shane White and Graham White, "Slave Hair and African American Culture in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," *The Journal of Southern History* 61, no. 1 (February 1995): 49.

Nineteenth-century manuals that were created for white bourgeoise women, some written by doctors and pharmacists, explained the benefits of clean hair and grooming on health.[97] Manuals also advised women on the healthiest ways to carry out their hair routines. For instance, in her *cabinet de toilette* manual published in 1891, Baroness Staffe advised that hair should not get wet.[98] Debates about washing and wetting hair with water continued throughout the century, however, the benefits of extensive hair brushing remained widely accepted and encouraged as a means to eliminate dirt and distribute natural oils through the hair. Powders were also used in hair to remove dirt and excess oil, as an alternative to soap and water, yet it was also suggested that one could comb through hair with *eau du Cologne*, soapy water or perfumed liquids, drying hair thoroughly afterwards.[99] The *Dictionnaire de la Femme*, published in 1897, argued that aeration, the action of letting one's hair down in order to expose it to the air, was indispensable for hair care, suggesting that ventilation should be a daily action along with hair brushing or combing. The text advised that women let their hair down and face their back to the sun for half an hour whenever possible.[100] Hygiene manuals for the home also emphasized the importance of aeration in the spatial layout of the interior, especially for the *toilette.* A hygiene manual published in 1871 conceived the *toilette* as a space that could communicate with the bedroom; it argued that a door between them was not needed because an open atmosphere promoted better health and circulated humidity.[101] Hair care was thus determined by the ideals of bourgeoise lifestyle, which were governed by social, economic and scientific structures. The

[97] Morag Martin, "Doctoring Beauty," 351.
[98] Rifelj, *Coiffures*, 158.
[99] Rifelj, *Coiffures*, 158.
[100] This is translated from the French: "…en secouant ses cheveux à l'air, en se plaçant les cheveux épars et le dos au soleil, pendant une demi-heure, quand la chose est possible…" Cerfberr and Ramin, *Dictionnaire de la femme,* 176.
[101] J. B. Fonssagrives, *La maison: tude d'hygi ne et de bien- tre domestiques* (Paris: Delagrave, 1871), 119.

European ideal of long, thick hair required an immense amount of privilege, time and assistance and was defined by product advertisements and dialogues on hygiene that circulated in Paris.

Degas's Painting: Experimenting With Sight and Touch

Degas's *toilette* images have been examined by numerous art historians through their connection to an interior space deemed both domestic and feminine. Griselda Pollock has discussed spaces of interiority through a psychoanalytic lens. Pollock has studied the difference between private and public spaces to examine the construction of gendered difference in both.[102] Additionally, Anthea Callen has examined gendered difference in terms of sensation. In her discussion of interior space, Callen has explained the gendered polarity between the gaze and touch, which can be measured in terms of distance and perception.[103] Furthermore, Eunice Lipton has argued that Degas's monotypes of women bathing show them as unaware of an outside gaze; she claims they express the private delight in caring for one's own body.[104] Building upon their research, I aim to push beyond the polarization of gendered space, domestic space as well as public and private space to instead think about the technical qualities of space. As a site of experimentation for Degas's artistic process, the painting can be examined as a surface on which the sensory relation between subject matter and media, including the material support of the canvas, are emphasized over the spatial interiority of the toilette setting. I argue that Degas's painting, *La Coiffure* elicits the tension between touch and sight. Through analysis of the technical qualities of Degas's image in relation to the chosen subject matter, I aim to accentuate the image as a product of Degas's artistic experimentation within his studio and thus as a representation of Degas's artistry rather than a reality of female experience.

[102] Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Feminism, Femininity and The Histories of Art* (London: Routledge, 2003), 87.
[103] Callen, *The Spectacular Body*, 109.
[104] Lipton, *Looking into Degas*, 175.

Jonathan Crary has examined the relationship between touch and sight in the nineteenth century. He argues that changes in perception were strongly associated with a modernist rupture of new technology. However, Crary argues that shifts in theories and understanding of perception are also dependent on a continuity model of realism and experimentation.[105] He states:

> It is not enough to attempt to describe a dialectical relation between innovations of avant-garde artists and writers in the late nineteenth century and the concurrent "realism" and positivism of scientific popular culture. Rather, it is crucial to see both of these phenomena as overlapping components of a single social surface on which the modernization of vision had begun decades earlier.[106]

In this statement, Crary claims that artistic innovations in the nineteenth-century did not exclusively result from scientific invention and vice-versa, but rather, both were a continuation of social and cultural shifts that supported the modernization of vision. Crary's claim that the modernization of vision takes place on a "single social surface" reflects Degas's conception of the image of *La Coiffure,* in which Degas's interest in art historical convention and visual experimentation, both products of his social influences, overlap on the surface of the canvas. An examination of his artistic processes exposes the multiple sources and types of vision involved in the creation of the painting, which are marked by the traces of this image in Degas's experimentations with different media.

In her analysis of Degas's late pastels, Kathryn Brown argues that the artist used the medium of pastel in order to explore the ways an image related to its material support. Brown examines how Degas expanded and reformed the visual field of his work through an emphasis on

[105] Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990), 4.
[106] Crary, *Techniques of the* Observer, 5.

the process of production, particularly through the addition of paper to pastel works.[107] Brown concludes that Degas imposes his own anxiety on the viewer by altering the image in a way that departs from a single, stable form.[108] I expand from Brown's argument to examine how the subject matter of hair brushing relates to the material support of the painting, *La Coiffure*. I therefore consider how Degas was interested in the subject matter of hair brushing as it connected to his own interest in the tactile and visual qualities of his individual, artistic experimentation.

Degas showed an interest in the gendered *toilette* practices of observation and production. This is evident in a passage from Degas's notebook from the years 1868 to 1872, in which Degas states:

> Devise a treatise on ornament for women or by women, according to their way of observing, of combining, of feeling their *toilette* and everything. Every day they compare a thousand visible things with each other – much more than men."[109]

Thus it is possible that Degas was interested in the *toilette* subject matter, as it presented the performance of a gendered, upper-class material fascination; a performance that reflected Degas's interest in the materiality of art making.

Anthea Callen has argued that there is a close relationship between touch and sight in Degas's pastels of women bathing. She argues that Degas's pastel technique allowed for the individual marks made by the artist to be visible rather than blended. Callen states that the tactility of the media encode "…the artist's touch as well as the experience of touching skin."[110] Callen also argues that the surfaces of Degas's images serve as a metaphor for the physical

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[107] Kathryn Brown, "Degas in Pieces: Form and Fragment in the Late Bather Pastels," *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* 17, no. 2 (Autumn 2018): 128, https://doi.org/10.29411/ncaw.2018.17.2.5.
[108] Brown, "Degas in Pieces: Form and Fragment in the Late Bather Pastels," 312.
[109] As translated from Degas' notebook from the years 1868-72 by Robert Gordon and Andrew Forge. Gordon and Forge, *Degas*, 12.
[110] Callen, *The Spectacular Body,* 136.

experience of female flesh.[111] She claims that the female figure is contained and constructed within Degas's tactile surface, as she states:

> Signified by this materiality, woman's body is literally embedded in the physical *facture* of the pastel medium. The female body is thus represented as the site/sight of a naturalized otherness: it is constituted not merely as the object of the sexualized male gaze, but as the sign of masculine difference.[112]

Callen concludes that the voyeuristic male gaze is ultimately the subject of Degas's bathing images. I however, argue that hair brushing was an ideal subject matter for Degas's artistic experimentation, as the emphasis on the surface of the canvas and the physical act of touching through painting and pastel emphasizes the materiality of canvas, paint, pastel and also hair. For instance, in Callen's analysis of the physical touching required when using pastel, she claims that Degas's unblended pastel technique elicits the direct physicality of the medium, which captures its suitability as a metaphor for the texture of skin.[113] This associates Degas's application of pastel on paper to the depiction of the nude female body through common visual and tactile qualities. I argue that Degas's painting *La Coiffure* expresses his interest in material routines that were categorized as feminine, such as hair combing, as they displayed a tactile and visual exploration that was also central to Degas's artistic creation.

In Degas's painting, both figures appear to have their eyes closed, thereby accentuating the sense of touch evoked in the act of having one's hair brushed and in combing someone else's hair: the strain of hair pulling and its tactile qualities. Furthermore, there is no mirror depicted in Degas's painting despite the prominence of mirrors in nineteenth-century *toilette* images as a

[111] Callen, *The Spectacular Body,* 137.
[112] Callen, *The Spectacular Body,* 137.
[113] Callen, *The Spectacular Body,* 136.

widespread object in modern Paris.[114] This negates the female figure's agency by renaming the representation of self-reflection or scrutiny. For instance, Martha Lucy has argued that the reflected image in the mirror, frequently depicted in images by Impressionist artists, such as Mary Cassatt and Berthe Morisot, may be seen as an anxious engagement with modern selfhood.[115] Additionally, Anne Higonnet has argued that the mirror image became the symbol for female self-scrutiny.[116] Tamar Garb has also argued that images of women with mirrors, many of which were exhibited in the Salon in Paris during the late nineteenth century, were double-edged, as women were expected to present themselves according to contemporary ideals, yet were also accused of vanity.[117] However, Degas's *La Coiffure* displaces this psychological interiority from the *toilette* setting by omitting the depiction of the mirror and by equating the domestic setting with the female form through his limited colour palette. With this, the canvas is the primary surface from which vision is explored, as Degas conceptualizes the image of *La Coiffure* as part of his experimentation with the visual qualities of paint on its surface. The emphasis on the canvas as site for experimentation thereby collapses the spatial interiority of subject matter.

While Degas's painting expresses his experimentation with the qualities of hair as subject matter and material, resulting in the compromised agency of the depicted female figures in his work, accounts from working-class models and bourgeoise friends of the artist expose how women played a significant role in Degas's artistic study. Degas's tactile and visual study of hair brushing is exemplified in a statement from a woman who modeled for Degas, as quoted by

[114] Martha Lucy has argued that Degas, "...inserted mirrors into nearly all of his genres, from brothel scenes to depictions of milliners." Martha Lucy, "Impressionism and the Mirror Image," in *A Companion to Nineteenth-Century Art*, ed. Michelle Facos (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2018), 264.
[115] Lucy, "Impressionism and the Mirror Image," 263-279.
[116] Anne Higonnet, "Mirrored Bodies," in *Berthe Morisot's Images of Women* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1992), 179.
[117] Garb, *Bodies of Modernity,* 120.

writer Edmond de Goncourt: "He's an odd gentleman – he spent the whole four hours of the session combing me."[118] Degas's status as an artist allowed him to observe a female model performing the routines of the *toilette* for the purpose of artistic study, Degas also relied on the aid of the women in his social sphere, such as Geneviève Halévy Bizet Straus, for access to spaces where the performance of material rituals could be observed.[119] In a letter to the art dealer and collector Michel Manzi, Degas writes:

> After leaving you yesterday, I met Mme Strauss and I was forced to abandon you for tomorrow. It is almost the only day that this person, in demand on all sides, has free and simple, and I had neglected her so much that I had to yield. I was dragged to a fashionable dressmaker where, like a Béraud, I assisted at the fitting of a most effective *toilette*.[120]

Therefore, Mme Straus provided Degas with access to dress fittings, in which he could observe and possibly, "assist" in order to obtain a tactile understanding of what was categorized as a female production.

Degas's tactile and visual understanding of the subject matter of hair can be directly related to his creation of the painting. For instance, Degas's stretching of the canvas and as a result, the expansion of his artistic production, corresponds to the stretching of hair from the process of combing or brushing. This action is expressed in the gesture of the seated figure, who reaches with her right hand to counter the pull of her hair, thereby eliciting a tension that parallels the relationship between touch and sight in Degas's artistic process. Degas expands the subject from previous pastels *Woman combing her Hair* and *La Coiffure*, which present the same subject matter in a smaller format, to continue experimenting with the qualities of hair in

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[118] As quoted in Robert Gordon and Andrew Forge. Gordon and Forge, *Degas,* 267.
[119] Geneviève Halévy Bizet Straus was Ludovic Halévy's cousin and led a well-known Salon in Paris. Degas sometimes accompanied Mme Straus to dressmakers and milliners in order to observe women looking at clothing and hats. Straus also allowed Degas to observe her in the act of brushing her hair. Caroline Weber, *Proust's Duchess: How Three Celebrated Women Captured the Imagination of Fin-De-Si cle Paris* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2018), 122.
[120] Marcel Guérin, ed., *Degas Letters*, no. 5, trans. Marguerite Kay (Oxford: B. Cassirer, 1947), 142. The letter is undated.

different media: its weight, colour, texture and tone. As outlined by David Bomford, evidence for these changes is supported by Degas's addition of a primer, tinted with yellow in order to match the original primer, to the remainder of the unused canvas. Furthermore, there is evidence that Degas filled the tack holes from the initial stretching, which were brought to the front of the picture, with a rough grey oil putty comprised of lead white and chalk.[121] Bomford also claims that for the sale, the studio stamp was added to the lower right blank strip, with the larger dimensions given in the sale catalogue.[122] This confirms that the painting was sold in its enlarged format and then later returned to its original size, sometime before it was placed in the collection of the National Gallery in London. The excess canvas was turned back around the sides of a different standard stretcher and the studio stamps are now visible upside-down at the back of the bottom right corner.[123] Therefore, Degas expands the canvas through force, as the maid applies pressure to comb out the length of the red hair.

While Degas's depiction of the comb is defined through its function, combined with the hair in the image, the hair brush is rendered as a still object, resting on the table in the foreground. The hairbrush in *La Coiffure* is enforced by its stark shadow, which resembles an accompanying hand mirror. The hairbrush also stands out for its yellow hue, a dramatic alteration from the red hues that encompass most of the image. However, a small, red fragment is visible within the bristles of the brush (fig. 15), which may represent a discarded lock of hair, suggesting the recent use of the object.

The shape of the hairbrush in Degas's painting is similar to those presented in advertisements for "electric" hair brushes from the late nineteenth century. Carol Rifelj has

[121] Bomford, *Art in The Making: Degas*, 145.
[122] The larger dimensions of the expanded canvas are provided in the sale catalogue as 124 x 150 cm. Bomford, *Art in The Making: Degas*, 145.
[123] Bomford, *Art in The Making: Degas*, 145.

argued that the popular connection between hair and electricity, exemplified by writers such as Honoré de Balzac, was likely enforced through the static that brushing hair can create.[124] In an advertisement from 1890 (fig. 16), a woman holds a bristled hair brush and turns away from the viewer to gaze over her left shoulder, left exposed from her garment that resembles a *peignoir*. The advertisement suggests that the, "Florentine Electric Hair Brush," made of pure bristles, will not only strengthen hair and prevent balding, but also relieve headaches in a matter of minutes.[125] A similar product was advertised in England and also in France in *Le Monde Illustré* in 1883 (figs. 17, 18).[126] The identical advertisements depict a hairbrush, designed by Dr. Scott, and both claim to relieve headaches through Dr. Scott's medical authority. The medical assurance for the relief of the tension of bodily pain through hair brushing accentuates the connection of hair to the body. The advertisement also ensures that the electric brush is "made of pure bristles, not wires – elegantly carved and unbreakable."[127]

The relationship between the subject matter of hair brushing and the materiality of Degas's artmaking is accentuated through connection of the hairbrush to Degas's paintbrush, as both are tools used to shape and form material. Additionally, both types of brushes are primarily made of organic materials, such as animal hair, and require cleaning in order to ensure their prolonged quality. Furthermore, Degas's paintbrushes, likely made of hog hair, could be cared for using the same methods advised for the care of human hair. For instance, it was recommended that those who paint everyday should cleanse oil brushes by immersing the

[124] This is argued by Carol Rifelj in her analysis of Balzac's *Louis Lambert* published in France in 1832. Rifelj, *Coiffures*, 159.
[125] "The Florentine electric hair bush," 1890, Bibliothèque Nationale de France. https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b9011228n.
[126] Advertisement for Dr. Scott's "Brosse à Cheveux Electrique," printed serial, *Le Monde illustré*, (May 5 1883), 286. Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris.
[127] "Advertisement for Dr. Scott's 'Electric Hair Brush,'" 1880s, in Susan J. Vincent, *Hair: An Illustrated History* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018), 49.

bristles in oil, rather than using soap and water.[128] Both paintbrush and hairbrush also assist in rituals of maintenance; the hairbrush tames and promotes the health and beauty of hair while the paintbrush can be used to apply layers of paint to better ensure the continuance of a painting through time. Finally, both types of brushes participate in material productions, as the hairbrush is used as an aid to create hairstyles and the paintbrush is used in the creation of an image or artwork. In *La Coiffure* the presence of the paintbrush is visible through Degas's loose, roughly rendered brush strokes (fig. 19). The connection of Degas's production of the painting to the action of hair brushing reveals a tactile and visual relationship between subject matter, artistic media and artistic production. This relation is expressed visually as the hair blends into the surrounding hues of colour to visually combine substance and form. I argue that the tactile and visual qualities of hair as a material surface encouraged Degas's experimentation with the technical qualities of paint on the surface of the canvas.

Chapter Two: Photographic Negatives

An analysis of Degas's artistic processes involved in the creation of *La Coiffure* sheds new light on Degas's heightened interest in photography in the years 1895 and 1896. The colour and visual effects presented in the painting are similar to three negative glass plates from Degas's studio, attributed to the same years. The plates present a ballet dancer in three different poses, displayed in shades of red and orange with some portions reading as negative and others as positive.[129] No known vintage prints of the negatives exist, thus it has largely been acknowledged by scholars that Degas was interested in the photographic negatives for the effects

[128] R.D. Harley, "Artist's Brushes – Historical Evidence from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Century," *Studies in Conservation* 17, sup. 1 (1972): 125, https://doi.org/10.1179/sic.1972.17.s1.003i.
[129] Daniel, *Edgar Degas, Photographer,* 43.

caused by technical and chemical error.[130] However, scholarship on the relation of the colouristic effects of the plates to *La Coiffure* is lacking.

Eugenia Parry and Marni Reva Kessler have individually argued that Degas referenced the medium specific, visual effects of photography in paint. Parry has argued that Degas used photography as an aid in his artistic practice and ongoing study of the female form, as it allowed him to capture models in a still pose.[131] Additionally, Parry claims that photography for Degas was, "…an area of experimentation– not a complete body of work in the usual sense" as Degas considered the visual effects and also the errors produced by the medium.[132] Parry states: "A few portraits in lamplight succeed, further proof of Degas's insistence that everything about his art was trial and error."[133] In her analysis of Degas's portrait of Princess Pauline de Metternich from 1865, Kessler has argued that Degas reproduced the visual effects of a *carte de visite* style photograph of the princess, as his painting references not only her likeness but also the visual and media specific qualities of the photograph, such as the blurry quality of the image caused by error and the slow development process of early photography.[134] Kessler claims that Degas's unconventional portrait produces unique pictorial strategies that work to blur the boundaries between background and foreground. With this, she argues that Degas's method of production emulates the subject of the princess, who was known to be an unconventional trend-setter.[135] Ultimately, Kessler claims that the pictorial strategies expressed in the painting exemplify

[130] Daniel, *Edgar Degas, Photographer*, 44.
[131] Eugenia Parry, "Edgar Degas's Photographic Theatre," in *Edgar Degas, Photographer,* ed. Malcolm Daniel (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1998), 68.
[132] Parry, "Edgar Degas's Photographic Theatre," 67.
[133] Parry, "Edgar Degas's Photographic Theatre," 67.
[134] Marni Reva Kessler, "Edgar Degas's *Princess Pauline de Metternich* and the Phenomenological Swirl," in *Perspectives on Degas,* ed. Kathryn Brown (London: Routledge Press, 2017), 142.
[135] Kessler describes Princess Pauline de Metternich as follows: "Pauline was, indeed, the consummate lady and performer; she both played at, and pushed beyond, boundaries of respectability, the latter as aspect of her personality that would have intrigued the ever-irreverent Degas." Kessler, "Edgar Degas's *Princess Pauline de Metternich*, " 135-136.

Degas's exploration of how painting can reflect and resist the visual effects of photography.[136] This chapter expands from both Kessler and Parry to argue that the negative plates and Degas's painting *La Coiffure*, were both sites for Degas's artistic experimentation.

Degas's painting does not read as entirely pictorial, as it also stresses the material. The contrast between the shadows and the limited colour palette in *La Coiffure*, also visible in the negative glass plates, creates a dimensionality that departs from realism to accentuate the materiality of the art object, the combination of paint and canvas or the chemical combination on the glass surface. I argue that the limited colour palette and contrast of light and dark expresses the relationship between the visual and tactile qualities of the painting and glass plates.

The visual similarities between the negative plates and Degas's *La Coiffure* suggest the possibility that Degas rendered the effects of photography in the painting. The black outlines depicted in the painting through the combination of paint and charcoal are visually similar to the dark shadows produced by the prolonged exposure to light exhibited in the negative plates. Additionally, the formless hands of the figures and the unfinished qualities of the painting reference the disappearing form of the model, who exists between negative and positive, in the glass plates. The visual similarities between the painting and the photographic plates thereby elicit recognition of the multiple levels of transformation involved in Degas's artistic exploration.

The negatives represent a liminal space that exist in between sight and touch. Each negative plate is a surface that uses light as a material to distil an image onto a glass plate with infinite reproducibility. Seen in relation to the negative plates, Degas's painting also presents an experimental space for reflection of touch and sight, as a space of invention and reproduction.

[136] Kessler, "Edgar Degas's *Princess Pauline de Metternich*," 143.

From this analysis, I further argue that Degas's manipulation of the canvas, in addition to the unfinished quality of the painting, suggest the infinite reproducibility of the work.

The New, Modern Technology of Photography

The introduction of photography in nineteenth-century France prompted debate on the status of the new technology as a science or an art.[137] Photography could be manipulated at multiple levels of process, by human hand or by chemical error. The conventions of fine art could be applied to photography thus linking it to the art world. However, the technological and chemical properties of the medium, along with its ability to distil an image of reality, also marked its presence within scientific discourse.[138] Furthermore, photography was used as an industrial technology, as it became a means to record the rapidly shifting modern environment and also the architectural redesign of Paris under the direction of urban planner Georges-Eugène Haussmann.[139]

Around the time that Degas became interested in photography, in the years 1895-1896, new technological advancements in camera and film development made it more accessible to middle-class and upper-class people. In particular, the dry plate process, described in an essay from 1887 by Alexander Black as, "…the keynote of amateur photography," made it possible for upper-class people to easily experiment with photography in their leisure time, as readily prepared dry plates could be purchased and kept for months before exposure and also kept again afterwards, before being developed.[140] The accessibility of photography for the upper-class was further influenced by the growing popularity of lightweight, handheld cameras in the

[137] Mary Hunter, *The Face of Medicine: Visualising Medical Masculinities in Late Nineteenth-Century Paris* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), 22.
[138] Hunter, *The Face of Medicine*, 22-23.
[139] Monique L. Johnson, "Figuring Industry in the Photographic Archive," in *Impressionism in the Age of Industry*, ed. Caroline Shields (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 2019), 86.
[140] Alexander Black was a popular American writer and was also an amateur photographer. Alexander Black, "The Amateur Photographer," in *Photography, Essays and Images: Illustrated Readings in the History of Photography,* ed. Beaumont Newhall (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1980), 149.

1890s.[141]Additionally, excitement around the possibilities of the technology increased when cinematography was introduced in France by the Lumière brothers, Louis and Auguste, who presented a program of short films at the Grand Café, Paris on December 28th 1895.[142]

Degas's heightened interest in this new technology in 1895 was recorded by his young admirer and family friend, Daniel Halévy. Halévy states: "He acquired a camera and used it with the same energy that he put into everything. Aided by the daylight, and even by the lamplight he wanted to resume his life-work – to play with light and shadow."[143] Degas had long been interested in the visual effects of light, even before his frequent use of photography. As noted in the artist's notebook from 1869: "Work a lot on night effects, lamp, candle, etc. The fun is not always showing the source of light but rather the effect of the light."[144] Photography can be examined as a modern technology that encouraged Degas's later experimentation with the effects of light.

Degas's photographic experiments were aided by the Halévy family, whom Degas had a close friendship with for many years. Degas's receding interest in photography corresponds to the dissolution of this relationship during the Dreyfus Affair, a political scandal that divided people for or against the innocence of Jewish army officer Alfred Dreyfus.[145] At this time, Degas expressed strong antisemitism and separated himself from the Halévy family, who were avid

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[141] Newhall, *Photography, Essays and Images,* 149.
[142] Newhall, *Photography, Essays and Images,* 130.
[143] Degas, *My Friend Degas,* 81.
[144] As translated from the French by Linda Nochlin. Nochlin, ed., *Impressionism and Post-Impressionism, 1874-1904*, 62.
[145] Alfred Dreyfus was falsely convicted of providing secret French military information to the German government in 1894. Dreyfus declared that he was innocent yet was found guilty and denied the right to examine evidence against him. He was imprisoned on a remote island for four years. This event intensified political divisions and growing anti-Semitism in France, which was further influenced by the newspaper, *La Libre Parole*, founded in 1892 by the journalist Édouard Drumont. Degas read this newspaper and expressed his position as anti-Dreyfusard. Degas also shunned people in his social circle who were Jewish, including the artist Camille Pissaro and the Halévy family. See: Frederick Busi, "A Bibliographical Overview of the Dreyfus Affair," *Jewish Social Studies* 40, no. 1 (1978): 25-40. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4466985.

defenders of Dreyfus. Degas's last visit to the Halévy household was in November, 1897.[146] Prior to this, on the 29th of December, 1895, Daniel Halévy recorded an evening photography session in which the family posed for Degas. This included an instance in which his cousin, Henriette, did not tilt her head enough to suit Degas, so the artist, "...caught her by the nape of the neck and posed her as he wished."[147] This presents Degas's persistent desire for control over the elements of pose and composition, despite his amateur use of the technology. Additionally, Halévy recorded Degas's private attempts at capturing various effects of light, which he refrained from showing to anyone else.[148]

Furthermore, Degas's relationship with the medium of photography is expressed in a statement by his niece, Jeanne Fèvre, in her memoire of the artist. On the topic of Degas's late interest and informal experimentation with photography, Fèvre states that, "…il a rendu la photographie *intelligente*" thereby suggesting that Degas elevated his photographic practice.[149] However, Degas's experimentation with photography was often dependent on the help of others at the developmental stage. On numerous occasions, Degas submitted his negatives to be enlarged, with detailed instructions, to the tradesman and colour merchant Guillaume Tasset, a recognized dealer in the field of photography and a painter himself. Degas also requested that Tasset's daughter, Delphine Tasset, make enlargements for him.[150] In letters written by Degas to Tasset, Degas outlines the cuts and corrections that he desired and mentions the numerous negatives he has spoiled through his experiments.[151] Furthermore, in a letter to Ludovic Halévy,

[146] Linda Nochlin, "Degas and the Dreyfus Affair: A Portrait of the Artist as an Anti-Semite," in *The Politics of Vision: Essays on Nineteenth-Century Art and Society* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989), 144.
[147] Halévy, *My Friend Degas,* 83.
[148] Halévy, *My Friend Degas,* 83.
[149] Jeanne Fèvre, *Mon Oncle Degas: souvenirs et documents inédits* (Geneva: P. Cailler, 1949), 139.
[150] Daniel, *Edgar Degas: Photographer*, 23.
[151] Daniel, *Edgar Degas: Photographer*, 23.

Degas asks that Ludovic send his regards to "Louise the developer", suggesting that Louise Halévy may have also developed negatives for Degas.[152]

The accounts of Degas's relationship with photography present a contrast between his desire for control over the components of image-production, such as pose, composition and lighting and the process of trial and error expressed in Degas's private experiments with the medium and the development stage. Photography was a medium in which error was inherent, as stated in a text published in 1891 on the chemical components of the new technology: "Not only is the colour of the developed image dependent on the nature of the developer, but the production of a positive or negative is also in a sense accidental."[153] This contrast, part of Degas's complicated relationship with photography, corresponds to the experimentation involved in his late artistic production, through which Degas increasingly expanded his exploration of photography's media-specific effects.[154] This is exemplified in Degas's repetition of form in his photographs and in his manipulation of his late artworks through combining, altering and alternating between different media.

Photographic Plates: Surfaces for Sight and Touch

The three glass plates from Degas's studio are complex, fragile surfaces that are open to alteration and error due to their chemical properties and exposure to light. The fragility of each glass plate is made visible through the colorization and visual effects caused by error in development. With the new technology of dry plate negatives, light was examined as an agent

[152] There has been debate over the meaning of this nickname, as the original French, "Louise la révéleuse" has been translated to Louise, "the dreamer," connecting the nickname to the photographic portrait of Louise Halévy by Degas, in which she is reclining with her eyes closed. This has also been translated to Louise, "the developer" suggesting that Louise developed negatives for Degas. Furthermore, Eugena Parry has interpreted this to mean, "she who reveals or brings to light." Daniel, *Edgar Degas, Photographer,* 25. See also: Parry, "Edgar Degas's Photographic Theatre," 66. And: Françoise Balard, ed., *Geneviève Straus: Biographie et Correspondance avec Ludovic Halévy* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2002), 165.

[153] Raphael Meldola, *The Chemistry of Photography* (London: Macmillan, 1891), 145.

[154] Parry argues that Degas's practice of trial and error with photography relates to his late artistic experimentation. Parry, "Edgar Degas's Photographic Theatre," 67.

that could produce both a chemical combination and decomposition on the glass surface.[155] The visual effects of error and the resulting tension between negative and positive on the surface of the glass expose the process of their developmental and chemical production, eliciting a sense of their material fragility.

La Coiffure can also be examined as a material surface that is open to alteration, as presented in the unfinished qualities of the artwork that mark Degas's artistic process. For instance, the visible *pentimento,* exposure of the canvas and loose brushstrokes elicit the instability of the painting as a completed work and thereby express its status as an experimental surface. The experimental status of the painting is strengthened through connection to the glass plates. For instance, in addition to the colouristic effects and tone, the physical boundaries of the glass plates are altered visually through chemical error. The lower, right-hand corner of the plate, *Dancer (Adjusting Her Shoulder Strap)* (fig. 5), exemplifies this most apparently, as the edges of the image are ruptured by chemical alteration, thereby ending the image before the boundary of the glass object and support (fig. 20). The resulting effect reveals the chemical interaction that encompasses the visual properties of the photographic plate. This visual rupture of the image, resulting in the exposure of the materiality of the supporting structure, is also presented in Degas's painting, *La Coiffure*, as Degas leaves the canvas exposed at various points. For example, the texture and white ground of the canvas is discernable in the table represented in the foreground of the composition, as well as in the roughly-rendered right hand of the seated figure, which is positioned against the crown of her head. Degas's interest in media-specific error thereby elicits the connection between photographic plates and painting.

This section will explore how *La Coiffure*'s relation to the photographic plates presents the painting as an experimental space that references the instability of the glass objects,

[155] Meldola, *The Chemistry of Photography*, 9.

particularly their colouristic effects and acidic qualities. Additionally, I will investigate how the materiality of hair brushing can be connected to the plasticity of the photographic negatives, accentuating both as material processes. For instance, the visual effects produced on the surface of the negative plate *Dancer (Adjusting Both Shoulder Straps)* (fig. 6), what Malcolm Daniel refers to as a "rippled texture," resemble the tactile and visual quality of hair.[156] These effects are primarily visible in the upper portion of the image, perceived as red lines that overlay and contrast the yellow tones. Moreover, the effects overlaid on the surface of *Dancer (Adjusting Her Shoulder Strap),* (fig. 5), appear as varying hues of red that are pictorially similar to the visual effects of paint strokes. However, these effects are created through photographic error.

The ties between hair maintenance and photographic development also elicits the tension between touch and sight that is part of Degas's creation of *La Coiffure*, particularly in his actions of painting and stretching the surface of the canvas. For instance, the exposure of hair to light for extended amounts of time to be, "aired out" as a health standard in nineteenth-century France, recalls the exposure of the gelatin dry plate negatives to light.[157] Additionally, the chemical process involved in the development of the glass plates can be related to the modern products used to alter and colour hair. The effects produced on the dry gelatin plate result from their exposure to light as well as the decomposition and combination of certain chemical compounds, primarily silver salts.[158] Silver was also used as a chemical component in nineteenth-century hair dyes, included despite safety and health concerns because of the ability of the chemical to alter the colour of hair with lasting effects.[159] Therefore, the material processes of hair care and the photographic development of dry plate negatives are related

[156] Daniel, *Edgar Degas, Photographer,* 45.
[157] Rifelj, *Coiffures*, 157.
[158] Meldola, *The Chemistry of Photography*, 7.
[159] Rifelj, *Coiffures,* 123.

through the exposure to light and chemical alteration, which results in a change of visual appearance that has both negative and positive effects. Like the negative plates, hair can also be examined as a surface for experimentation with the visual and tactile effects of light and colour.

The Reproducibility of Images

In her analysis of Degas's depictions of ballerinas, Tamar Garb has argued that Degas's dancers, unlike their subject of movement, stand still, as they express temporalities that are fictive rather than real. Time thus resonates as spatial rather than durational. Garb states, "now the dancers take up their positions in a field of color, their identities merging with that of the surrounding space." [160] Garb defines durational time as registered through, "serial production of figures" referencing Degas's repetition of figures as part of his ongoing artistic practice. I expand from Garb's argument to argue that *La Coiffure* exists as part of Degas's continuous repetition of the female form, yet also references photography as a modern technology that produced and encouraged the reproducibility of images. The use of photography as a technology for reproduction significantly influenced the circulation of images in the nineteenth century, within the years of Degas's artistic career. This has been described by Michael Foucault:

> The years 1860 to 1880 witnessed a new frenzy for images, which circulated rapidly between camera and easel, between canvas and plate and paper—sensitized or printed; and with all the new powers acquired there came a new freedom of transposition, displacement, and transformation, of resemblance and dissimulation, of reproduction, duplication, and trickery of effect.[161]

Degas understood how photography could inform painting through its ability to capture pose and gesture, which could be replicated in paint. This is exemplified in Degas's recreation of the various poses portrayed in the negative glass plates in his late artworks, such as the painting

[160] Garb, *The Body in Time*, 27.
[161] Michel Foucault, "Photogenic Painting," in *Gérard Fromanger: Photogenic Painting,* trans. Dafydd Roberts, ed. Sarah Wilson (London: Black Dog, 1999), 83.

Four Dancers, dated 1899 (fig. 21).[162] The combination of various poses onto a single surface in Degas's *Four Dancers* has the effect of displacing the figures from each other expressively. The relationship between forms is thus reliant on the effects produced by colour. For instance, the tutus of the three dancers in the foreground of the painting appear to synthesize into a single plane. Therefore, the figures are visually united within the same space through the shared hues of their costume. This demonstrates the use of photography as a mechanical aid that promoted the repetition of form. Degas would have likely been aware of the limitations of the reproduction of the female figure, such as the uniformity that could arise when working with copies rather than drawing or rendering directly from reality. However, Degas's combination and repetition of pose using a single model, captured in a still image in the negative plates, allowed for increased exploration of the visual effects that can be produced in different media.

I argue that through Degas's late experimentation with media-specific effects, particularly those of photography, pastel and paint, form is not only repeated, but also compromised. This is evident in *La Coiffure,* where Degas's use of photography paralleled his long-standing practice of repetition through draftsmanship. For instance, similar figures to those depicted in *La Coiffure* are presented in multiple studies created by Degas in the 1890s, recurring in different media. This is exemplified in numerous pastels of women drying their hair with a towel, dated 1889-1890, in which Degas depicted a similar figure to the maid in *La Coiffure*. This figure is consistently rendered in profile, as exemplified in the pastel and charcoal image *Le Petit Déjeuner Après le Bain* (fig. 22), in which the figure presents a tea cup to a second woman in a *toilette* setting.[163] The figure is often featureless, thus she is reduced to the signs of her status; the long-sleeved dress, white apron and high *chignon* dispossess her of individuality through

[162] Daniel, *Edgar Degas, Photographer*, 45.
[163] Lemoisne, *Degas Et Son Oeuvre*, vol. III, p. 629, no. 1086 (illustrated, p. 628).

repetition.[164]A similar uniform reappears in Degas's pastel studies of milliner themes. For example, the figure depicted in a pastel titled *Modiste Garnissant un Chapeau* and dated 1898, resembles the gesture and pose of the maid in *La Coiffure* (fig. 23). However, the depiction of a tea cup or hair comb in the hand of the figure is replaced by decorative feathers and a hat.[165] The feathers in this pastel study resemble hair pieces and thus signify the repetition and reproduction of various commodities throughout Degas's artistic production. Therefore, the recurrence of specific figures in different subject matter and media suggests that Degas was not only representing the same models, but that he continuously relied on still images from his own work, as well as his memory, to replicate forms. In this way, the female figure becomes an interchangeable substance for Degas's artistic experimentation. The interchangeability of the female figure is further exemplified in the pastel titled, *Landscape: Steep Coast*, dated 1890 to 1892, in which Degas transformed the female form into a landscape (fig. 24).[166] Richard Thompson has claimed that the pastel began as a depiction of a female nude, from which Degas continuously applied pastel to alter the form. The colour and texture of the medium allowed Degas to convert the depiction of hair into a steep cliffside, turning the image from a vertical format to a horizontal one. Additionally, Degas transformed his representation of the female figure, including his depiction of breasts and hips, into hills.[167] Through Degas's emphasis on colour and the material qualities of pastel, the female form dissolves.

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[164] In her analysis of the figure of the wet nurse in Georges Seurat's *A Sunday on La Grande Jatte* from 1884-85, Linda Nochlin compared the figure to Seurat's earlier studies to argue that the wetnurse is reduced to her trade and social status. Nochlin states: "Types are no longer figured as picturesquely irregular, as in the old codes of caricature, but flattened into sardonically eloquent logos of their trades – a process akin to the workings of capitalism itself…" Linda Nochlin, "Seurat's Grande Jatte: An Anti-Utopian Allegory." *Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies* 14, no. 2 (1989): 133-242. doi:10.2307/4108747.
[165] Lemoisne, *Degas Et Son Oeuvre*, vol. III, p. 768, no. 1319 (illustrated, p. 769).
[166] Richard Thomson, *The Private Degas* (London: Herbert, 1987), 111.
[167] Richard Thomson argues that Degas created the landscape from a version of the pastel *Woman having her Hair combed*, dated 1884-6, now in the H.O Havemeyer Collection at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Thomson, *The Private Degas*, 11.

In the negative plates, the body of the model appears and reappears through the visual effects produced by chemical interaction on the surface of the glass plate. I argue that these visual effects give way to the disappearance of the body of the model. Carol Armstrong has examined Degas's photography in relation to his artistic process of replication. Armstrong states:

> Unlike painting, photography is unavoidably a representational medium – no matter how 'abstract' photographs may look, they can never be abstract, for they must always re-present something…[168]

Armstrong further asserts that photography has the capacity to divide the body, therefore photographs represent a fragmented aspect of the body. Armstrong states that Degas's photographs, "insist on the divided and duplicated self as the function of the photograph by taking up the process of internal division and multiplication seen in his pastels of dancers…"[169] Armstrong thereby considers Degas's process of repetition as encouraged by photography, as a medium that produces the "effects of reversal and replication."[170] Additionally, the negative and positive exposure of the plates has been examined by Douglas Crimp, who argues that the negatives demonstrate Degas's original experimentation with photography as an extension from his experiments with black and white monotypes ten years earlier.[171] On the status of the body of the model represented in the negatives, Crimp states: "And she is suspended not only between rise and fall, but also between appearance and disappearance, between negative and positive."[172] However, both Armstrong and Crimp omit consideration of Degas's interest in the experimental properties of the photographic plates for their colouristic effects. A parallel can be drawn between Degas's process of experimentation and the surface of pictorial production, as the

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[168] Carol Armstrong, "Reflections on the Mirror: Painting, Photography, and the Self-Portraits of Edgar Degas," *Representations*, no. 22 (1988): 129, doi:10.2307/2928413.
[169] Armstrong, "Reflections on the Mirror," 129.
[170] Armstrong, "Reflections on the Mirror," 129. Armstrong argues this with reference to a later print made from the negative glass plate, *Dancer (Arm Outstretched).*
[171] Douglas Crimp, "Positive/Negative: A Note on Degas's Photographs," *October,* vol. 5, (Summer 1978): 98.
[172] Crimp, "Positive/Negative: A Note on Degas's Photographs," 98.

chemical combination produces the visual disintegration of the female form on the surface of the glass plates through colour and light, just as Degas's repetition and combination of media dissolves the working-class body of the model.

The dissolution of the female body is central to *La Coiffure,* as the visual effects of monochromatic colour and light rendered in paint leads the figures to dissolve into the background at various points. For example, the *peignoir* of the seated figure, which covers the figure like an obscure veil and encompasses her lower form, is difficult to distinguish from the chair behind her, as her form composes into the red environment. Furthermore, the main subject matter of the image, the seated figure's long red hair, becomes indistinguishable from the surrounding red environment (fig. 25). The rouged cheek of the seated figure also corresponds exactly to the surrounding shades of red, suggesting that the human form could dissolve to become part of the background surface. The ends of the hair that fall in front of the white skirt of the maid also create this affect, thereby providing the illusion that she too, is at risk of fading into the surface. Therefore, the dissolution of the figures in Degas's painting through the resolution of colour corresponds to the dissolution of the model in the negative glass plates.

A study of Degas's use of repetition exposes how his representations of the marginalized, working-class body were compromised, revised and at times erased through Degas's artistic exploration with different media. I argue that Degas expended the limitations of the female form by expanding and experimenting with the visual, material and technical limitations of different media.

Conclusion

This thesis has critically examined Degas's depiction of the female figures in *La Coiffure* through analysis of the technical qualities of the painting in relation to the provocative subject matter. My argument is based on representations of white women's hair in nineteenth-century French art and visual culture. However, further scholarship is required on the representation of African hair and African hair culture in nineteenth-century, French art.[173] Additionally, further research is needed on the importation of hair from East Asia in nineteenth-century France. My research contributes to art historical scholarship on Degas's interest in self-care rituals, particularly those of white French women, through analysis of *La Coiffure* as a product of Degas's artistic experimentation and repetition.

The relationship between Degas's painting and the three dry plate negatives reveals the possible processes of translation involved in Degas's artistic fabrication. The tension between touch and sight is expressed in the photographic negatives, as the visual effects caused by error mark the chemical process that takes place on the surface of the glass plates, thereby revealing their material fragility. Likewise, the loose brush strokes and unfinished qualities of *La Coiffure* rupture the image and emphasize the materiality of the support, which was manipulated and altered by Degas through the touch and the force applied upon stretching the frame. The tension between touch and sight is thereby elicited through emphasis on the image as art object, the combination of paint and canvas, accentuating it as a surface for Degas's artistic experimentation. Additionally, the materiality and fragility of the respective surfaces of canvas and plate are emulated in Degas's chosen subject matter of hair combing. Degas's subject matter,

[173] Denise Murrell's scholarship on the black female figure in modern art provides an example of important research on the significance of the black figure in late nineteenth-century, French art. Denise Murrell, *Posing Modernity: The Black Model from Manet and Matisse to Today* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018).

his artistic production and experimentation - in both painting and the development of the negatives - are thereby linked through material processes involving exposure, maintenance, and chemical alteration.

The correlation of Degas's painting with photography also brings to light the working-class body of the model, which becomes compromised through Degas's artistic experimentation. The female form is key to Degas's established practice of repetition, through which the figure, like a mass-produced commodity in nineteenth-century Paris, materializes from Degas's invention. The association of women with routines that were contextually marked as feminine, such as hair brushing, also contributed to this sense of repetition and mass production. As Jonathan Crary claims:

> Vision and its effects are always inseparable from the possibilities of an observing subject who is both the historical product and the site of certain practices, techniques, institutions, and procedures of subjectification.[174]

With this, Crary argues that the effects of vision are the product of contemporary social influences on the observer. Degas's interest in the visual effects produced on the surface of the canvas and glass plates coincides with his technical practices, such as repetition, and the social influences surrounding the depiction of the gendered routine of hair brushing. In her analysis of Degas's late studio projects and self-portraits, Armstrong has argued that through photography, the image of the present becomes past, separating the body (of Degas) and the visible surface (the image).[175] I have argued that Degas's artistic production emphasized the surface of the image, in paint or photography, as a site of Degas's visual and tactile experimentation. Through the repetition of form and figure, and the reconstruction of previous images, the identity and

[174] Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, 5.
[175] Armstrong states, "…the image of the present become past, torn from its moorings in the (bodily) world, ripped out of its temporal continuity. What the second project could be said to articulate, with its splitting apart of body and image, is the mirror as photograph." Armstrong, "Reflections on the Mirror," 110.

agency of Degas's female model fades on the surface. The representation of the female body, which threatens to dissolve completely into the painterly and photographic surfaces through the monochromatic reds of the surrounding environment, recalls the nineteenth-century advice to bourgeoise, white women to match their hair colour to the colour of their domestic surroundings.[176] I thereby conclude that with the potentiality for ongoing transformation, Degas's canvas is stretched, the negative plates are altered, and the female form is compromised through Degas's experimentation with different artistic media.

[176] Tiersten, *Marianne in the Market*, 179.

Plate List

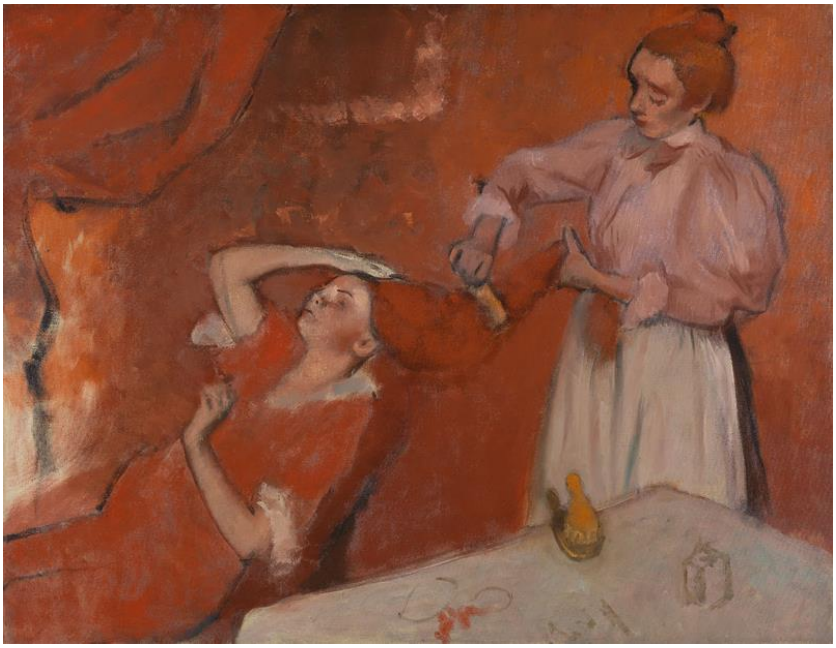


Figure 1. Edgar Degas, Combing the Hair (*La Coiffure*), about 1896. Oil on canvas, 114.3 x 146.7 cm. National Gallery of Art, London. Purchased with the Knapping Fund in 1937. Inv. NG4865 © Copyright The National Gallery, London.

Figure 2. Edgar Degas, *Woman combing her Hair*, about 1892-96. Pastel on tracing paper, 56 x 56 cm. David Bomford, *Art in The Making: Degas* (London: National Gallery, 1988), 145. Private Collection.

Figure 3. Edgar Degas. *After The Bath (Woman Drying Herself)*, 1896. Oil on canvas, 89.5 x 116.8cm. Philadelphia Museum of Art. Purchased with funds from the estate of George D. Widener, 1980.

Figure 4. Anonymous. *Dancer (Arm Outstretched)* late 1895 or 1896. Gelatin dry-plate negative, 18 x 13 cm. Partially solarized. No vintage prints known. Malcolm Daniel, *Edgar Degas, Photographer* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1998), 121. Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris.

Figure 5. Anonymous. *Dancer (Adjusting Her Shoulder Strap),* late 1895 or 1896. Gelatin dry-plate negative, 18 x 13 cm. Partially solarized. No vintage prints known. Malcolm Daniel, *Edgar Degas, Photographer* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1998), 122.
Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris.

Figure 6. Anonymous. *Dancer Adjusting Her Two Shoulder Straps,* late 1895 or 1896. Gelatin dry-plate negative, 18 x 13 cm. Partially solarized. No vintage prints known. Malcolm Daniel, *Edgar Degas, Photographer* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1998), 123.
Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris.

Figure 7. Edgar Degas, *La Coiffure*, about 1896-1900. Oil on canvas, 82 x 87 cm. Oslo, Nasjonalgalleriet. Photo: Art Resource, NY.

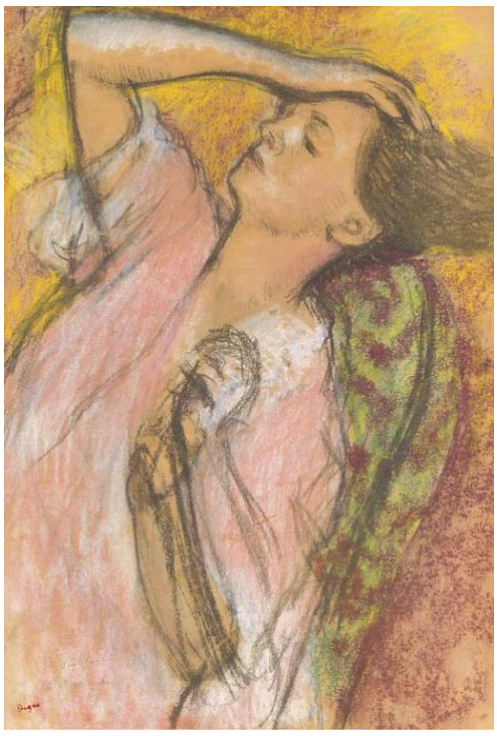


Figure 8. Edgar Degas, *La Coiffure*, 1892-1895. Pastel on paper laid down on board, 75.6 x 51.4 cm. Image: Christie's, New York. Private collection.

Figure 9. Edgar Degas, *The Tub,* 1886. Pastel on card, 60 x 83 cm. Musée d'Orsay. © Musée d'Orsay, dist. RMN-GP / Patrice Schmidt.

Figure 10. Edgar Degas, *The Millinery Shop*, 1879/86. Oil on canvas, 100 x 110.7 cm. Art Institute of Chicago. Mr. and Mrs. Lewis Larned Coburn Memorial Collection.

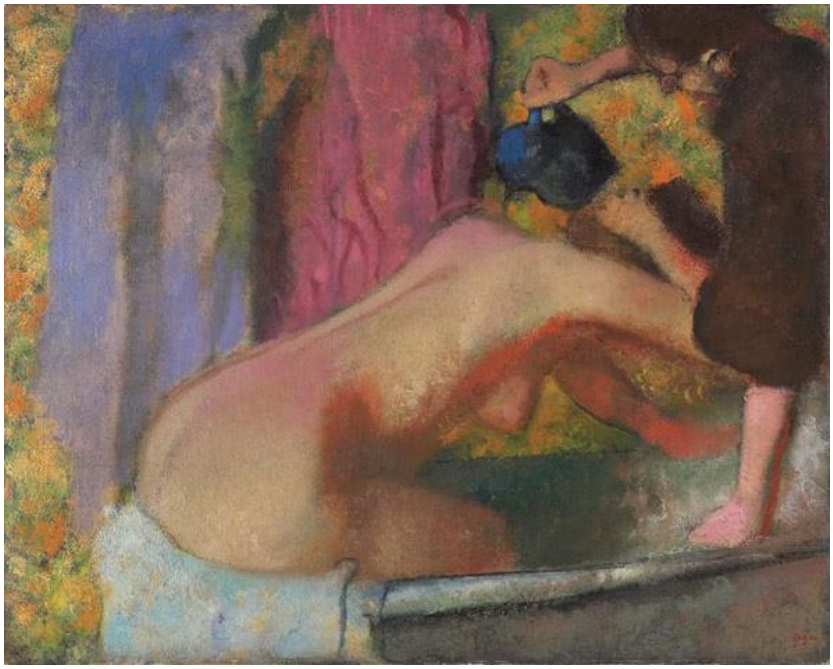


Figure 11. Edgar Degas, *Woman at Her Bath*, 1895. Oil on canvas, 71.1 x 88.9 cm. Art Gallery of Ontario. Purchase, Frank P. Wood Endowment, 1956.

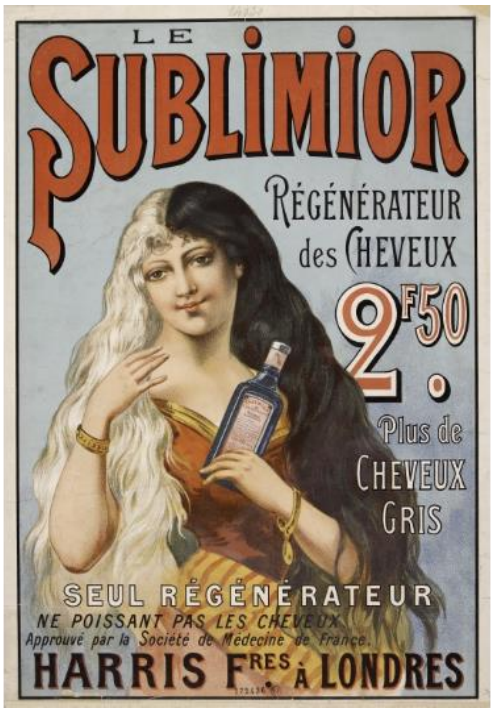
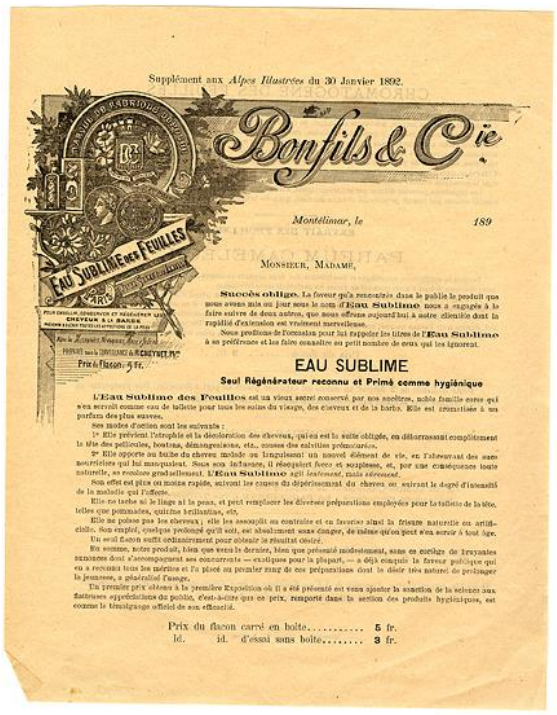


Figure 12. Champenois Imprimeur. "Le Sublimior, Régénérateur des Cheveux," 1891. Lithograph, 53 x 83 cm. Ville de Paris / Bibliothèque Forney / Roger-Viollet.



Supplément aux *Alpes Illustrées* du 30 Janvier 1892.

Bonfils & Cie

EAU SUBLIME DES FEUILLES

Montélimar, le 189

MONSIEUR, MADAME,

Succès oblige. La faveur qu'a rencontrée dans le public le produit que nous avons mis au jour sous le nom d'**Eau Sublime** nous a engagés à le faire suivre de deux autres, que nous offrons aujourd'hui à notre clientèle dont la rapidité d'extension est vraiment merveilleuse.

Nous profitons de l'occasion pour lui rappeler les titres de l'**Eau Sublime** à sa préférence et les faire connaître au petit nombre de ceux qui les ignorent.

EAU SUBLIME

Seul Régénérateur reconnu et Primé comme hygiénique

L'Eau Sublime des Feuilles est un vieux secret conservé par nos ancêtres, noble famille corse qui n'en servait comme eau de toilette pour tous les soins du visage, des cheveux et de la barbe. Elle est aromatisée à un parfum des plus suaves.

Ses modes d'action sont les suivants :

1° Elle prévient l'atrophie et la décoloration des cheveux, qui en est la suite obligée, en débarrassant complètement la tête des pellicules, boutons, démangeaisons, etc., causes des calvities prématurées.

2° Elle apporte au bulbe du cheveu malade ou languissant un nouvel élément de vie, en l'abreuvant des sucs nourriciers qui lui manquaient. Sous son influence, il récupère force et souplesse, et, par une conséquence toute naturelle, sa couleur grandit sensiblement. **L'Eau Sublime** agit *lentement*, mais *sûrement*.

Son effet est plus ou moins rapide, suivant les causes du dépérissement du cheveu ou suivant le degré d'intensité de la maladie qui l'affecte.

Elle ne tache ni le linge ni la peau, et peut remplacer les diverses préparations employées pour la toilette de la tête, telles que pommades, quinine brillantine, etc.

Elle ne graisse pas les cheveux ; elle les assouplit au contraire et en favorise ainsi la frisure naturelle ou artificielle. Son emploi, quelque prolongé qu'il soit, est absolument sans danger, de même qu'on peut s'en servir à tout âge.

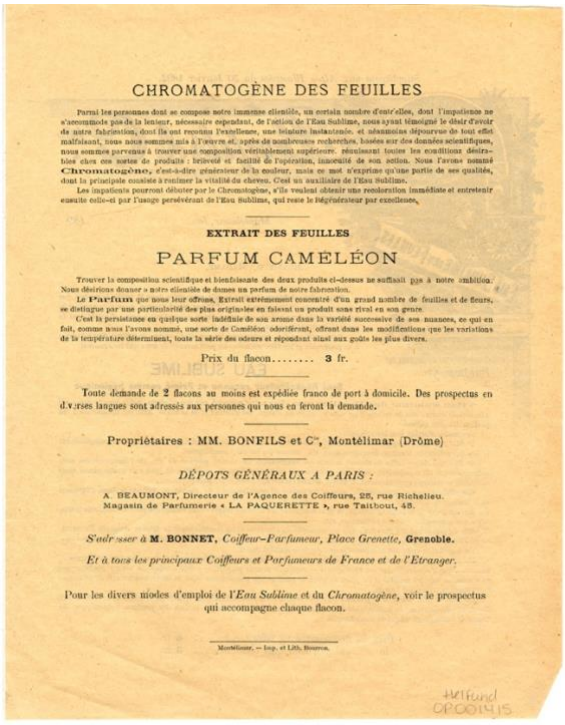
Un seul flacon suffit ordinairement pour obtenir le résultat désiré.

En somme, notre produit, bien que venu le dernier, bien que présenté modestement, sans ce cortège de bruyantes annonces dont s'accompagnent ses concurrents — exotiques pour la plupart, — a déjà conquis la faveur publique qui en a reconnu tous les mérites et l'a placé au premier rang de ces préparations dont le désir très naturel de prolonger la jeunesse, a généralisé l'usage.

Un premier prix obtenu à la première Exposition où il a été présenté est venu ajouter la sanction de la science aux flatteuses appréciations du public, c'est-à-dire que ce prix, remporté dans la section des produits hygiéniques, est comme le témoignage officiel de son efficacité.

Prix du flacon carré en boîte..... **5** fr.
Id. id. d'essai sans boîte..... **3** fr.

Figure 13. "Advertisement for 'Eau Sublime' by Bonfils & Cie," 30 January 1892. Print, 21.8 x 27.8 cm. Supplement to the publication "Alpes Illustrés." Donation of Mr. William H. Helfand, Osler Library of the History of Medicine, McGill University, Montreal, Canada.



CHROMATOGÈNE DES FEUILLES

Parmi les personnes dont se compose notre immense clientèle, un certain nombre d'entr'elles, dont l'impatience ne s'accommode pas de la lenteur, nécessaire cependant, de l'action de l'Eau Sublime, nous ayant témoigné le désir d'avoir de notre fabrication, dont ils ont reconnu l'excellence, une teinture instantanée, et néanmoins dépourvue de tout effet malfaisant, nous nous sommes mis à l'œuvre et, après de nombreuses recherches, basées sur des données scientifiques, nous sommes parvenus à trouver une composition véritablement supérieure, réunissant toutes les conditions désirables chez ces sortes de produits : brièveté et facilité de l'opération, innocuité de son action. Nous l'avons nommé **Chromatogène**, c'est-à-dire générateur de la couleur, mais ce mot n'exprime qu'une partie de ses qualités, dont la principale consiste à ranimer la vitalité du cheveu. C'est un auxiliaire de l'Eau Sublime.

Les impatients pourront débuter par le Chromatogène, s'ils veulent obtenir une coloration immédiate et entretenir ensuite celle-ci par l'usage persévérant de l'Eau Sublime, qui reste le régénérateur par excellence.

EXTRAIT DES FEUILLES

PARFUM CAMÉLÉON

Trouver la composition scientifique et bienfaisante des deux produits ci-dessus ne suffisait pas à notre ambition. Nous désirions donner à notre clientèle de dames un parfum de notre fabrication.

Le **Parfum** que nous leur offrons, Extrait extrêmement concentré d'un grand nombre de feuilles et de fleurs, se distingue par une particularité des plus originales en faisant un produit sans rival en son genre.

C'est la persistance en quelque sorte indéfinie de son arome dans la variété successive de ses nuances, ce qui en fait, comme nous l'avons nommé, une sorte de Caméléon odoriférant, offrant dans les modifications que les variations de la température déterminent, toute la série des odeurs et répondant ainsi aux goûts les plus divers.

Prix du flacon..... **3** fr.

Toute demande de **2** flacons au moins est expédiée franco de port à domicile. Des prospectus en diverses langues sont adressés aux personnes qui nous en feront la demande.

Propriétaires : MM. BONFILS et C^ie^, Montélimar (Drôme)

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Pour les divers modes d'emploi de l'*Eau Sublime* et du *Chromatogène*, voir le prospectus qui accompagne chaque flacon.

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Figure 14. "Advertisement for 'Chromatogène' and 'Parfum Caméléon," 30 January 1892. Print, 21.8 x 27.8 cm. Supplement to the publication "Alpes Illustrés." Donation of Mr. William H. Helfand, Osler Library of the History of Medicine, McGill University, Montreal, Canada.

Figure 15. Edgar Degas, *La Coiffure* (detail), 1896. Oil on canvas, 114.3 x 146.7 cm. National Gallery of Art, London. Purchased with the Knapping Fund in 1937. Inv. NG4865

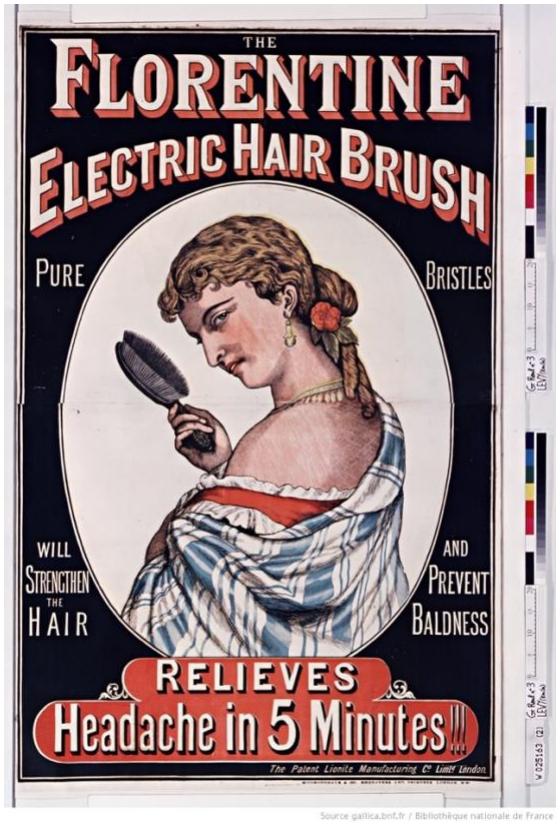

Figure 16. "The Florentine electric hair bush. Pure bristles. Will strengthen the hair and prevent baldness. Relieves headache in 5 minutes!!! The Patent Lionite Manufacturing C° Limtd, London," 1890. Engraving, 180 x 114 cm. https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b9011228n. Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

Figure 17. Advertisement for Dr. Scott's "Electric Hair Brush," 1880s. Susan J. Vincent, *Hair: An Illustrated History* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018), 49. EPH160A. Wellcome Library, London.

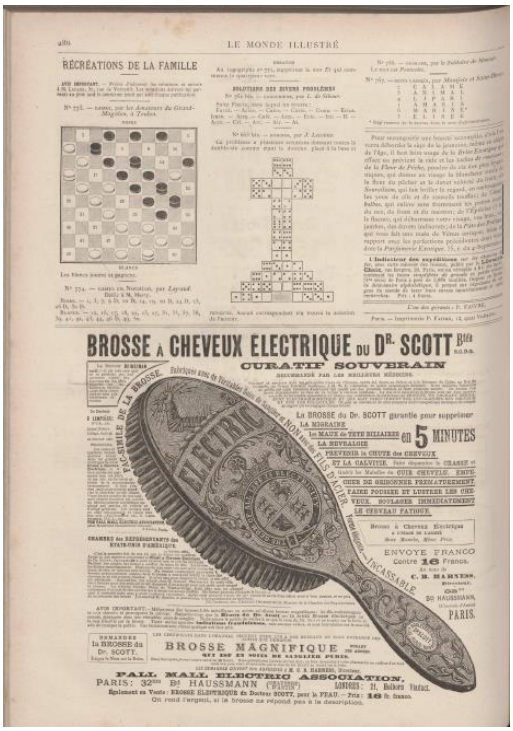

Figure 18. Advertisement for Dr. Scott's "Brosse à Cheveux Electrique," printed serial,"Le Monde illustré" (May 5 1883), 286. Identifier:ark:/12148/bpt6k6219579v. Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris.

Figure 19. Edgar Degas, *La Coiffure* (detail), 1896. Oil on canvas, 114.3 x 146.7 cm. National Gallery of Art, London. Purchased with the Knapping Fund in 1937. Inv. NG4865

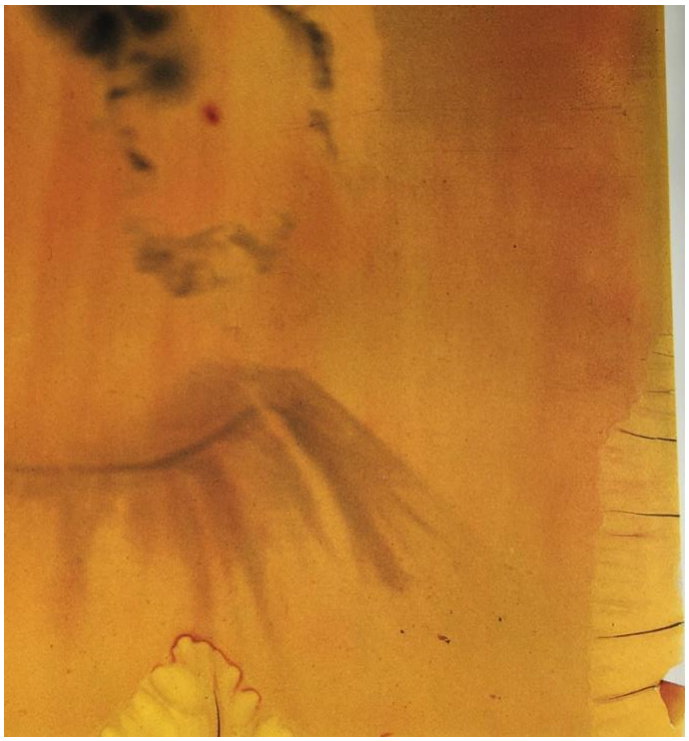

Figure 20. Anonymous, *Dancer (Adjusting Her Shoulder Strap)* (detail), late 1895 or 1896. Gelatin dry-plate negative, 18 x 13 cm. Partially solarized. No vintage prints known. Malcolm Daniel, *Edgar Degas, Photographer* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1998), 122. Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris.

Figure 21. Edgar Degas, *Four Dancers,*1899. Oil on canvas, 151.1 x 180.2 cm. National Gallery of Art, Washington. Chester Dale Collection.

Figure 22. Edgar Degas, *Le Petit Déjeuner Après le Bain*, 1890-95. Pastel and charcoal, 61 x 74 cm. Paul André Lemoisne, *Degas Et Son Oeuvre* (Paris: Arts et métiers graphiques, 1948), vol. III, p. 629, no. 1086 (illustrated, p. 628).

Figure 23. Edgar Degas, *Modiste Garnissant un Chapeau*, 1898. Pastel on paper. 44 x 27 cm. Paul André Lemoisne, *Degas Et Son Oeuvre* (Paris: Arts et métiers graphiques, 1948), vol. III, p. 768, no. 1319 (illustrated, p. 769).

Figure 24. Edgar Degas, *Landscape: Steep Coast,* 1890-1892. Pastel, 42 x 55 cm. Richard Thomson, *The Private Degas* (London: Herbert, 1987), 110. Galerie Jan Krugier, Geneva.

Figure 25. Edgar Degas, *La Coiffure* (detail), 1896. Oil on canvas, 114.3 x 146.7 cm. National Gallery of Art, London. Purchased with the Knapping Fund in 1937. Inv. NG4865

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