

Tutor Notes for Edgar Degas:

Pronouncing Edgar Degas's Name:

Hilaire Germain Edgar Degas

"Ill-AIR Sher-MAY Ed-GAR De-GAH"

But he went by his third name and surname, so that's all you need to worry about.

Interestingly, his first two names were honoring both his grandfathers.

Rene-Hilare De Gas (ca. 1760 – 1858) was an upper-middle class Frenchman from the city of Orleans (Or-lay-AHN). He had to flee the French Revolution and settled in Naples Italy, where he married an Italian noblewoman named Giovanna Aurora Feppa (1783 – 1841). Their house still stands, and is called "Palazzo (Palace) d'o Gasso" Hilaire De Gas placed a space between the "de" and "gas" to emphasize what noble blood he did have—it wasn't as much as he wanted others to think. His children kept the space in their name, but Edgar Degas, obviously, did not, and reverted to the original spelling "Degas." Nonetheless, the elder de Gas would be a profound influence on Edgar's life

Germaine Musson (1787 – 1847) was born on the French Island Colony of Saint Dominique, as a plantation son. He too fled an uprising—in this case, fleeing the Haitian Revolution. Settling in New Orleans, he met Marie Celestine Desiree Rillieux (1794 – 1819), the daughter of a Louisiana plantation owner. Celestine was considered a Creole, a name which, at that point, indicated a person of French descent who had been born in the New World. Germaine Musson and Marie Celestine had five children, before Celestine died at the age of 25. After that, Germaine moved to Paris for a couple of years, where his youngest daughter, Marie-Celeste, tried her hand at Opera singing, but fell in love with Auguste, son of Rene-Hilaire De Gas instead.

Helpful hints for the projects:

Honestly, I HATE these projects. As much as I like Degas's work, I really, really, wish we'd drop this artist due to the ridiculous projects. None of them really have anything to do with action, nor ballet, nor anything that would help someone identify Degas's works.

That being said, if you are doing one or the other, here's some ideas.

Project 1: Resist in Motion

I dislike this project because copying a figure over and over again while you move it from one page to another doesn't really "show" motion. AS stated in the Vocabulary in the Degas packet, in art, motion is shown through diagonal and curving lines.

This project centers around a "resist." It uses the classic science "Oil and Water don't Mix" project and expands it to art.

Crayons are made of wax, which is a type of fat or oil. Watercolors are, of course, water soluble. So anything you draw with a wax-based art medium will literally “resist” having any water-based art medium applied to it afterward.

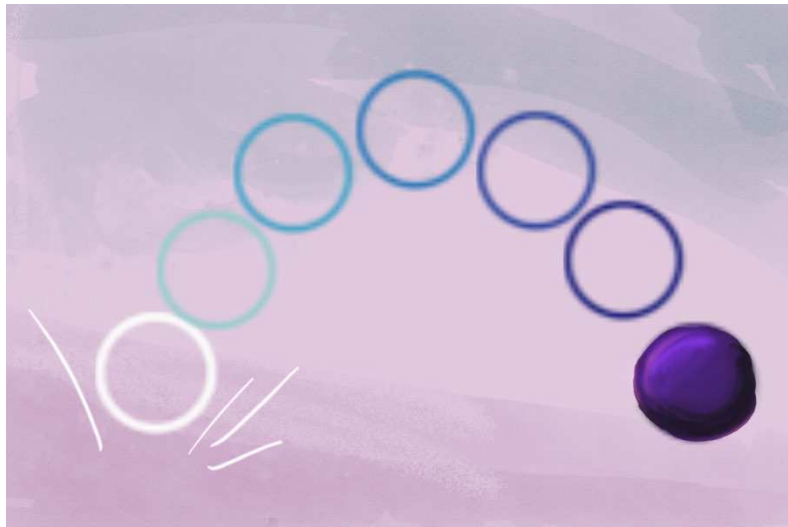
So this project would have an additional vocabulary word: Resist.

Resist:

In art, this is a technique where an artist applies something to his or her surface to prevent a later, usually water-based paint, from sticking to the surface. Some resists are removed. Some are not. Using crayons and watercolor is an example of a resist which is not removed after the painting is finished.

Now, taking the stencil or cookie cutter and tracing it over and over is not the most effective way to show movement, but using colors in a certain way can help.

For example, if you increase the color’s saturation as you move it across the page, that helps create the sense of movement, because we psychologically think of the past as almost “faded” compared to our present. So, if you trace your first pattern in white, then pale blue, medium blue, then dark blue, then color in the final tracing, our brain will more easily say, “Oh, motion!” than random colors, or all one color. (All one color can lead to mass confusion.)



Another way is to trace the pattern going in a diagonal motion across the page, either “bouncing” up or down. Since diagonals indicate motion, this will also help create the sense of movement across the page. (See sample on the left.)

Honestly, it doesn’t do much for me, but if this is the project you’re doing, you can link this technique to the classic oil-and-water science experiment.

Batik [Bah-Teek] fabric prints are made using Resist techniques.

Stamps dipped in wax are applied to the fabric, then the fabric is dyed. The water-based dye cannot adhere to the fabric below the wax-protected pattern, leading to the iconic batik style prints.



(This Indonesian artisan is carefully applying wax to her fabric which will then be dyed again)

Today, most watercolorists use resist techniques (a rubberized solution is applied to the paper then removed later) and we will re-visit resist in Cycle 3 when we study Andrew Wyeth.

Chalk on Cloth:

This project mixes milk-soaked fabric with pastels which are then set with an iron.

WARNING:

Be sure the children wear smocks, aprons, or art shirts as the pastel pigments can stain, depending on color and brand.

Cover table and floor (if necessary) with protective coverings—again, in case the pigment in your particular pastel is a staining pigment.

Milk-Paint is a real thing and was used for many years, especially on houses and furniture. It is non-toxic and can remain vibrant for many years if protected from the elements. Wikipedia has a good article about it, and if you want a step-by-step recipe for creating authentic milk paint, check out “Casein or Milk Paint” by Naturalpigments.com.

But this isn't milk paint. Milk paint also includes lime or borax to help the milk proteins turn into the binder portion of the paint. Milk paint also quite brittle, which is why it was used on wood, not canvas.

What I don't understand is this project uses pastels, which are already quite soft and easy to create vibrant, soft images. You don't need the milk to soften them much more. If I have one problem with pastels, it's they are so soft you can have more problems laying down too much pigment and not enough sharp details.

I've heard a lot of problems with this project, and our director had difficulties when she tried to create a sample. The canvas nearly burnt while being ironed (milk is, after all, filled with sugars as well as proteins, which can burn) and the house smelled terrible as the milk scorched. It was such a pain, and we were concerned about the extra time needed for the ironing after the “painting” was done, we decided to skip one step and just apply pastels to paper, no wetting of anything required.

If you are using colored chinks, not paint, the milk could help break down those chinks which will have more filler and less pigment. But actual pastels will have so much pigment, they won't need additional help.

Honestly, I wish the project was simply soft pastels on paper, which are available at most art stores like Hobby Lobby, ([Master's Touch Soft Pastels](#)), Michaels ([Artist's Loft Brand](#)), Amazon ([Mungyo Non-Toxic Pastels](#) review well and are a good price for the selection), even WalMart has them occasionally. Faber-Castell and Reeves are also decent brands. Just search for “Soft Pastel” and you'll find what you're looking for. Avoid Oil Pastels, as those are the artist version of crayons.

Working with Pastels

Whether you're mixing them with milk or using them straight, pastels cannot be blended the same way paints can.

You can blend pastels, by placing them next to each other, then rubbing them with a dry paintbrush, your finger (which will then be the same color as your pastel, so be careful), Q-Tips, or a Kleenex.

You can layer colors of pastels (look at Degas's dancer's skirts for examples of this.) Just layer colors one over the other, without completely covering the area. The various pastels will blend optically on the paper (kind of like optical blending for Cycle 3s Roy Lichtenstein!)

Some more tips for finishing pastels and cleaning up after

Anytime you work with a powdery substance, be careful about inhaling too much. This is where using non-toxic pastels can be your friend, though most commercially available pastels will not pose a health hazard after only one exposure, or even multiple exposures. The pigments used can stain, however, so be sure to wear smocks, aprons, or other protective gear, and cover the tables with paper or plastic coverings.

Pastel will smear, and most artists either mount it under glass or spray it with a fixative aerosol spray. The "art fixatives" are available at most art stores listed above, for around \$10 for a can which will cover several drawings. You can use aerosol hairspray which will darken the pastels somewhat, but will work. Pastel will smear no matter what if you touch or rub it. Be sure to use any aerosol product in a well-ventilated area, or better yet, outdoors.

As you use pastels, they can powder. This should not be blown off your paper (it will then go everywhere) but is best removed with a dry paintbrush, which can then be washed.

Be sure to thoroughly wash hands after you are done to remove the pigments from the hands, and wash any surfaces with a damp paper towel.

If pastel does get on clothes, follow these suggestions.

- Remove article (when you can) and shake it off outside to remove as much pastel dust as possible.
- Using tape, place sticky side down on the pastel stain, to further remove as much of the powdered pigment without getting the garment wet.
- Once you've done that, treat the stain with laundry stain treatment. Let soak (if safe for your fabric), then wash as normal in the hottest water the fabric will stand. CHECK THE GARMENT BEFORE YOU DRY IT. If the stain is still there, or you're not sure the stain is there, then hang dry the garment.
- If stain persists, soak the stain in equal parts water and white vinegar for 5-10 minutes, rinse, then try again.
- I've also coated stains in DAWN detergent for a night, then hand washed with great success.

Of course, the best bet is to wear protective gear or clothes which can take some art abuse with ease.