

Alterations Description of Workshop Content

I recently (April 2016) saw the Degas mono print exhibition at the MOMA in NYC and was impressed by the way Degas worked. He started by making several sketches of the same image. He used the sketches to make a mono print, and then made a painting from the mono print. Using the painting as information for more sketches, another mono print, and a second painting, the creative cycle was repeated each time losing some of the information about the original model, but gaining something in its place. The images become more about making art and less about the flesh and blood of the model or the photographic likeness of an image.

In this workshop I would like to explore creative and destructive possibilities to create new art using one idea or inspiration. We will alter one photographic image again and again. Then we will work from our altered image to create new images. This is challenging work because I will be asking you to embrace the idea of destruction. Through our work we will be discussing how to become a better critic of our own work.

“It is essential,” Degas argued to his friend and fellow artist Paul-Albert Bartholomew, “to do the same subject over again, ten times, a hundred times.” Such close attention to a form — studying it from a variety of viewpoints or multiplying and varying it — is common to Degas’s approach in drawing and printmaking. When drawing, he returned to his chosen subjects and made small changes from one work to the next, testing his own practice. In monotype and other forms of printmaking, variation was central to the very act of making: he began with a composition on the plate, which resulted in a printed inversion, then often reworked the plate to further vary the image. Here, following his own advice, Degas used pastel and charcoal to depict the same subject in two different ways, each raising her shoulders and grasping her hand to suggest a song imbued with emotion.

From an exhibit at MoMA, March 26–July 24, 2016
book by Jodi Hauptmann Edgar Degas: A Strange New Beauty