



Exhibition: **The Sculptures of Edgar Degas**

IVAM Institut Valencia d'Art Modern  
3rd March– 17th April 2011

Curated by: Walter Maibaum & Carol Conn

Sponsored by: M.T. Abraham Center for the Visual Arts  
Logística del Arte

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The exhibition presented by the IVAM comprises a new edition of 74 bronze sculptures, which were cast thanks to the recent discovery (in 2004) of the plaster figures made by Degas's close friend, the sculptor Paul-Albert Bartolomé, taken from the artist's original wax figures. On this occasion, Degas's sculptural work is arranged according to themes, focusing on the major subjects of his oeuvre: ballerinas on the stage or in the wings, bathers, horses and riders and busts.

A catalogue has been brought out for the exhibition with texts by professors Amir Kabiri, Mordechai Omer and June Hargrove, the curator of the exhibition, Walter F. Maibaum, and the director of the IVAM, Consuelo Císcar.

Edgar Degas (Paris, 1834-1917), one of the most outstanding French artists of the late 19th century, has recently been rediscovered as an artist with an unusual intellectual strength. His profound interest in capturing the "spirit of his times" at the same time as he closely examined ordinary everyday things – putting to good advantage the lessons he had learned from the masters of the past – make him a pioneer in creating perspectives regarding the visual arts and social and genre issues regarding the concept of time.

He was a sharp observer of humankind –especially women, who appear in a large part of his oeuvre – and both in his portraits and his studies of dancers, hatters and laundresses, he cultivated absolute objectivity, striving to reflect postures of his models as natural and spontaneous as if they were photographs.

From 1880 onwards, Degas began to produce impressionist sculpture, creating hand-painted wax models that he later adorned. These sculptures had a great impact on the society of the time due to their realism. Only one model was exhibited in Degas's lifetime, in the impressionist exhibition held in 1881: *La Petite danseuse de 14 ans* (The Little Fourteen-Year-Old Dancer), made in natural colours, wearing real hair and dressed in a real tutu and cloth slippers. In this way, Degas reached the limits of the logic of realism, on the other hand so much in fashion, by describing without duplicity, without hypocrisy, in an almost scientific manner, the society of his time. The bronze version, cast after his death, a copy of which can be found in the Musée d'Orsay, attempts to preserve the characteristics of wax as much as possible.

Degas used a broad range of techniques: drawing, oil- and pastel-painting, he experimented with engraving and monotypes, made wax sculptures took photographs and even wrote sonnets. His complete works are a token of the great affinity between the dimensions of his work, and show the extent to which his sculptures complement and enrich his paintings, just as his paintings make his sculptures possible or are even indispensable for them. Degas was not very famous in his lifetime and his real artistic dimension was not appreciated until after his death in Paris, on 27th September 1917.