



Degas Landscapes

Mr. Richard Kendall

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Degas is renowned for his masterful studies of the human body - powerfully rendered paintings of dancers, jockeys, washerwomen, and bathers. It is less well known, however, that he also produced challenging and varied landscapes at almost every phase of his career - from his early travels in Italy, to his association with the impressionist movement, and to his final decades. Remarkably, Degas chose the subject of landscape for his only one-person show in 1892. This illustrated book by Richard Kendall deals with Degas's landscapes, relating them to his other work and to evolving views of art. Kendall demolishes the myth of Degas's indifference to the landscape art. He traces Degas's first experiments in watercolour, oil, and etching; his progress as a painter of equestrian scenes and pastel seascapes in the 1860's; and his association with Pissarro, Cassatt, and Gauguin and rivalry with Monet and Cezanne in the middle of his career. Kendall provides a detailed examination of Degas's audacious colour monotypes from the early 1890's, showing how they reveal the artist's engagement with contemporary colour printing, his interest in Japanese art, his involvement with symbolism, and his affinity for contemporary philosophy and literature. He concludes by discussing the last flowering of Degas's landscape activity - the little-known series of paintings produced at Saint-Valery-sur-Somme in the late 1890s - and with the help of photographic evidence proves that these pictures relate directly to surviving streets and buildings, often in radical and innovative ways. Illustrated with many previously unpublished works, this book demonstrates that Degas had an affectionate, original, and complex relationship with the landscape, a relationship that has profound implications for this more familiar repertoire of subjects. The book accompanies an exhibition of Degas's landscapes opening at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in January 1994 and at the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston in April 1994.

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