

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### THE SCULPTURES OF EDGAR DEGAS

**Question: Can you provide the names of those associated with Degas' sculptures and their involvements?**

**Answer: Edgar Degas:** Born July 19, 1834 as Edgar Hilaire-Germain de Gas. Later known as Edgar Degas, he made about 150 original sculptures in wax mixed with soft modeling clay. He died on September 27, 1917.

**Albert (Paul-Albert) Bartholomé** (1848-1928): A sculptor and friend of Degas. Based on research, Bartholomé took molds from some Degas' waxes during the artist's lifetime and took molds from other waxes shortly after his death. Sculptures made with plaster materials were then made from those molds.

**Adrien-A. Hébrard** (1865-1937): Established the Hébrard Foundry in 1902 that cast Degas bronze editions beginning in late 1919, about two years after Degas' death. The foundry closed in 1937. Mr. Hébrard died the same year shortly thereafter.

**Nelly Hébrard** (1904-1985): Adrien Hébrard's daughter. She inherited her father's estate. In 1955 she resumed the casting of Degas' bronzes at the Valsuani Foundry.

**Valsuani Foundry:** Established by Claude Valsuani in 1908, the foundry was purchased in 1981 by Leonardo Benatov (1943-2018). He provided documentation to confirm, that in 1955; (i) 75 Degas sculptures in plaster arrived at Valsuani, and (ii) in 1955 Nelly Hébrard resumed the casting of the Degas bronze editions at Valsuani.

**Albino Palazzolo** (1883-1973): Hébrard's master caster, and the person responsible for the bronze editions cast under the direction of Adrien-A. Hébrard at the Hébrard Foundry and the Degas bronzes cast later at the Valsuani Foundry under the direction of Nelly Hébrard.

**Q. Is it true that no Degas bronzes were cast during the artist's lifetime?**

**A.** Yes, it's true. Every Degas bronze in every museum and in every other public and private collection around the world was cast posthumously after the artist died.

**Q. But didn't Degas exhibit a sculpture during his lifetime?**

**A.** Yes, Degas did exhibit a sculpture in the 1881 Sixth Impressionist Exhibition in Paris. But it was not a bronze. It was the original wax creation of his most important sculpture, *La Petite Danseuse de Quatorze Ans* (the "*Little Dancer*").

**Q. You mentioned a wax creation. What are you referring to?**

**A.** Degas created his original sculptures in tinted beeswax sometimes mixed with a soft modeling clay known as plastiline. Today his original sculptural creations are referred to as his "waxes."

**Q. Why did Degas use these materials?**

A. These soft materials, which remained malleable, allowed the artist to rework his sculptures over long periods of time, so that modifications could easily be made.

**Q. Why do you suppose Degas never had bronzes cast?**

A. It is believed that since Degas enjoyed the continual process of reworking his waxes over time that he never considered his sculptures to be finished. It is also believed that his sculptures were very personal intimate objects, created for his own pleasure, not for public viewing. Thus he never had any bronzes cast from the waxes during his lifetime for two probable reasons; (a) bronze is permanent and can not be modified, and (b), likely he did not want his sculptures to be known to the public. It must also be noted that except for the *Little Dancer* wax exhibited in 1881, only a small group of friends and associates knew that any other Degas' waxes existed.

**Q. When did the waxes become known?**

A. It happened shortly after Degas died on September 27, 1917. His heirs and executors found about 150 of his waxes scattered throughout the artist's home and studio. They inventoried the 80 waxes they considered to be complete. The heirs then called in the proprietor of the Hébrard Foundry in Paris, Adrien-A. Hébrard. He, along with the heirs and executors of the artist's estate determined that 74 of the 80 Degas' waxes that were inventoried should be cast in bronze. Each of those 74 waxes was assigned an individual inventory number. Today the waxes, plasters and bronzes are referred by those same inventory numbers; from 1 to number 74.

**Q. Did some waxes survive?**

A. Yes, in 1955 Nelly Hébrard surprisingly announced that 68 of the waxes had survived. Until that time, Degas scholars assumed the waxes had been destroyed in the molding and casting process. The American philanthropist, Paul Mellon, purchased the surviving waxes in 1956.

**Q. Where are the waxes today?**

A. The Fitzwilliam Museum of Art, Cambridge University, Cambridge, England, owns wax inventory numbers 12, 14 and 31.

The Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France, owns wax numbers 6, 20, 38, 60 and 67.

The National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., USA, owns, or holds as a promised gift, wax numbers 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 29, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 39, 40, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 58, 61, 63, 64, 66, 68, 73 and 74.

The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, Virginia, USA, owns wax numbers 3, 11, 21, 30, 41, 51, 59 and 65.

The Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut, USA, owns wax number 57.

Wax numbers 69, 70, 71, and 72 are missing, presumably destroyed in the molding process.

**Q. When did Hébrard cast the bronzes?**

A. Hébrard began casting bronzes in late 1919, about two years after Degas' death. The foundry continued casting until 1936 and closed in 1937. Adrien A.-Hébrard died the same year.

His daughter, Nelly Hébrard, inherited his estate, and, according to documentation, in 1955 she resumed the casting of Degas bronzes at Valsuani. The casting process continued at Valsuani until 1964. Bronzes cast at Valsuani during that time were stamped "Hébrard" (not Valsuani).

**Q. Except for the *Little Dancers*, I understand all the other Degas bronzes of the other 73 sculptural figures cast by Hébrard were made from a master set of bronzes known as the Modèles. What is the significance of this technique?**

A. Foundries do not usually use bronzes as masters from which to cast other bronzes because; (i) bronze shrinks in the casting process by approximately 2% from its molten to its solid state, and (ii) a generation of details is lost. Thus, if one were to cast a bronze from another bronze, the resulting bronze would be somewhat smaller and details would be lost. However, plaster does not shrink and details on plasters remain faithful to those on the artist's original. This is why foundries normally use plasters as masters from which to cast bronzes. In essence, a bronze cast from a plaster would be larger and the details superior when compared to a bronze cast from another bronze.

**Q. Can you explain this in a different way?**

A. In terms of the loss of details, casting a bronze from another bronze would not be unlike making a photograph from another photograph instead of from the original negative—a generation of details would be lost. Making a bronze from a plaster could be considered the same as making a photograph from the original negative -- details would not be lost.

**Q. Why then would the Hébrard family make bronzes from other bronzes?**

A. Most likely because plaster is brittle, subject to damage and must be carefully handled. Bronze is not fragile or subject to such damage. Thus in that respect it is less problematic for a foundry to use bronze masters for casting bronze editions rather than using plasters, even though the results would be inferior. One must also consider that at the time, in late 1919 the casting of the Degas bronze editions was a commercial enterprise privately structured between the artist's heirs, his executors and the Hébrard Foundry. Apparently financial considerations and ease of casting took precedence over the quality of the bronze editions cast by Hébrard.

**Q. What are the consequences of this casting technique, if any?**

A. Bronzes cast from other bronzes are referred to as surmoulages — casts from casts. Such bronzes are usually not accepted by the art world. The Degas bronzes cast by Hébrard are among the few exceptions, because; (a) there was a demand for the sculptures by museums and collectors, and (b) except for the *Little Dancers*, no first generation bronzes existed.

**Q. I understand 75 Degas plasters were uncovered between 2001 and 2004. How could such a large and important body of work have remained unknown for so many years?**

A. The plasters were in storage at Valsuani for decades, and until 2004 their origins had not been researched. Since the plasters did not precisely match Hébrard bronzes and because they were undocumented, Leonardo Benatov, who purchased Valsuani in 1980, thought they might be copies. He only knew the plasters were brought to Valsuani in 1955. Note: there are two different plaster versions of sculpture number 3.

On one of the number 3 plasters the dancer's left arm is extended outward from her body, whereas on the other plaster of number 3 her left arm is attached to her torso. Thus, while there are 74 different sculptural figures, 75 previously unknown plasters were found at Valsuani, two of which are variants of the same sculpture, number 3.

**Q. Do you know of any other instances where such a major body of work was discovered so long after an artist's death?**

A. Yes, and it happened twice before with Degas. First, the fact that 68 of his original waxes had survived was not made public until 1955. Second, the "master set of bronzes," known as the "Modèles," from which the Hébrard bronze editions were cast, was not publicly exposed until 1976, about 60 years after Degas died. The discovery of the 75 plasters is a third such event.

**Q. What is the provenance of the plasters?**

A. Benatov confirmed his knowledge of their provenance. It dates back to 1955 when the plasters were brought to Valsuani. That was the same year during which, (i) it was made public that 68 of Degas' original waxes had survived, and (ii) Nelly Hébrard resumed the casting of Degas bronzes at Valsuani.

**Q. When were the plasters made?**

A. While a pre-1955 provenance cannot be firmly established by any known documentation, based on research and the large corpus of physical, photographic and scientific evidence, the great majority of the plasters were made before the Hébrard Foundry began casting Degas bronzes in late 1919. Thus it is believed that all but a few of the plasters were made either during Degas' lifetime or very shortly after he died in 1917.

**Q. Who made them and why?**

A. Highly likely the great majority of the plasters were made by Degas' close friend, Albert Bartholomé (1848-1928). He was a sculptor and collected plasters for his personal collection. The art historian, Dr. Gregory Hedberg found evidence leading to his conclusions, that; (a) Bartholomé could have made most of the plasters from Degas' waxes sometime between 1887 and 1912, and (b) the previously unknown *Little Dancer* plaster was made from Degas' wax between 1887 and 1903.

Hedberg proposed the following. Assuming Bartholomé made the plasters during Degas' lifetime or shortly after the artist's death, in either case, he might have kept them for his personal collection. After Bartholomé died in 1928 his much younger widow, Florence Letessier-Bartholomé, inherited his estate. In 1955 she was placed in an asylum and the contents of her home were dispersed (she died in 1959). Hedberg concluded that likely the plasters were taken to Valsuani because no one else would have had any use for them.

Aside from Hedberg's proposals, what can be stated for certain is that based on the physical and photographic evidence along with the research and documentation, a minimum of at least ten plasters were made from Degas' waxes during the artist's lifetime. Three were photographed in his studio shortly after he died: plaster numbers 28, 40 and 45. The others are numbers 3, 42, 54, 55, 56, 62 and 73.

For a variety of reasons many more are believed to have been made during Degas' lifetime. For example, Hedberg cites a letter from Degas to Bartholomé dated September 15, 1884, in which Degas wrote he was working on a "...large bust [of Hortense Valpincon] with arms, [made] out of clay mixed with small pebbles." Continuing, Degas wrote, "... it will be necessary to return to Normandy with a molder to assure the cast and also the durability of the work." According to Hedberg this provides evidence that Degas wanted a plaster made from the clay bust of Mme. Valpincon.

As another example, in 1888 Degas wrote a letter to Bartholomé that began, "My dear friend and perhaps caster..." Hedberg suggests this is yet another indication that Degas was seriously considering having plasters made from his waxes, and he probably did so. In any case, for whatever reasons there might have been to make the plasters, it can clearly be stated that based on the large corpus of evidence a number of plasters were made from Degas' original waxes during his lifetime.

As for those plasters not made during the artist's lifetime, logically, either under the direction of Degas' heirs and executors or under his own volition, Bartholomé would have entered Degas' studio shortly after the artist died and made plasters from all the other waxes for two reasons; (a) the plasters would provide a record of what the waxes looked like when Degas died (and before the waxes might have been damaged or deteriorated), and (b) since Degas' heirs were interested in casting bronzes, he made the plasters believing they would be used to cast the bronze editions. After the plasters were made and before any bronzes were cast in late 1919, Hébrard and Palazzolo decided to use bronze masters for casting instead of the plasters. Bartholomé then either kept the plasters for his own collection or they were placed in Hébrard's storage.

It also appears that Hébrard decided not to use the lifetime *Little Dancer* plaster made in 1903 (or before) for casting the bronze edition since, after that plaster was made Degas modified his wax. Due to those modifications some forms and details on the wax had changed by the time Degas died fourteen years later, in 1917. Evidently this is why Palazzolo, Hébrard's master caster, made two posthumous plasters from Degas' *Little Dancer* wax in 1920-1921, one of which was used to cast the bronze edition. Thus, the Valsuani *Little Dancer* bronze edition, cast from the early plaster, reflects Degas' wax as it appeared during his lifetime, in 1903 or before. The Hébrard bronze edition of the *Little Dancer* reflects Degas' wax after the artist made his modifications (and as the wax appeared when Degas died in 1917). In essence, two versions of the same sculpture were cast in bronze editions; both considered to have the same merits by the Succession Degas.

#### **Q. Besides Bartholomé, who else could have made the plasters uncovered at Valsuani?**

**A.** It is possible that upon first seeing the waxes in Degas' apartment and studio Palazzolo could have decided to make plasters for the same two reasons as Bartholomé would have done (as above).

After the plasters were made Palazzolo might have transported them to Hébrard's cellar along with the waxes. It was later decided that except for the *Little Dancer*, bronze masters would be used to cast all the other bronze editions. The plasters were then put in Hébrard's storage. In 1955 Palazzolo would have brought the plasters to Valsuani along with the surviving waxes and the Modèle master set of bronzes.

The same would be true if Bartholomé made the plasters and Hébrard took possession of them circa 1918. When it was later decided that bronze masters would be used for casting, the plasters were then placed in Hébrard's storage. Many years later, in 1955, the plasters would have been brought to Valsuani along with the waxes and the Modèle bronzes.

**Q. Since the plasters arrived at Valsuani in 1955, were they used for casting bronzes there by Nelly Hébrard?**

A. No. Except for the *Little Dancer* bronzes that were cast from a plaster, Nelly Hébrard and Albino Palazzolo continued to use the bronze Modèles as masters for all the other bronze editions when they resumed the casting at Valsuani. That is because except for the *Little Dancers*, all the bronze editions they cast earlier at the old Hébrard Foundry were also cast from the Modèles. Had they decided to switch and cast from the plasters instead of from the Modèles, the bronzes cast at Valsuani from the plasters would have had sharper details and would have been slightly larger than those previously cast between 1919 and 1936 at the Hébrard Foundry. Thus museums, collectors and others might have raised questions about the differences. This could also be the reason why Nelly Hébrard continued to use the old Hébrard stamp on the bronzes rather than the actual foundry in which they were cast (Valsuani).

**Q. Can authenticity of the plasters be substantiated by the 1955 provenance?**

A. No. Unlike other cases in which the provenance could help establish the genuineness of objects, the critical question to determine the authenticity of these plasters was, "Were the plasters made from Degas' waxes?" If the answer is yes, the plasters are authentic, no matter who made them or when. The large corpus of physical, scientific, photographic and other empirical evidence gathered during the past fifteen years substantiates, except perhaps for only a few, the plasters were made from Degas' waxes.

**Q. But couldn't they be copies or have been made in some other manner?**

A. If one were so inclined and had the talent to do so, it would be relatively easy to copy paintings from book illustrations since paintings are two-dimensional. However, with these three-dimensional plasters it would be impossible to make convincing copies without having physical possession of a complete set of Hébrard bronzes from which to copy. That alone would be impossible. Only five sets of those bronzes exist, and all are in museums. Clearly no institution would loan a set of Hébrard bronzes for the purpose of having plaster copies made. One must also keep in mind that the established pre-1955 provenance dates well before the existence of computers or 3-D printers.

**Q. But if one had access to the bronzes, couldn't they take molds from them to make plasters?**

A. Yes, that could have been done. However, had these plasters been made in this manner they would match the size and surface details on the Hébrard bronzes from which they were cast. Yet the plasters are generally larger than the Modèles, and the plasters are even larger than the serialized bronzes cast from the Modèles. The surface details on the plasters are also superior. Thus the plasters could not have been made from any of the Hébrard bronzes, for had they been, the details would match the bronzes from which they were cast and the plasters would be slightly smaller. Therefore the logical conclusion is, the plasters could only have been made from Degas' waxes.

**Q. How else could one proceed if one couldn't take molds from bronzes to make plasters?**

A. Access to one of each of the serialized bronze figures cast by Hébrard would still be critical to make convincing hand crafted copies. Why? Because one would need something as a guide from which to copy, that being the precise forms, sizes and details on each Hébrard bronze. Thus one would need access to each of the 74 different sculptures in bronze cast by Hébrard. While this possibility by itself is extremely unlikely, then consider that one would then have to take hundreds of highly precise point-to-point ("internal") measurements, such as the distance from the tip of a dancer's nose to the tip of the large toe on her right foot, and then take dozens and dozens of photographs of each detail on each of the 74 bronzes, thousands of photos in all, an almost impossible task.

Then one would have to take into account that bronze shrinks by 2% in the casting process from its molten to its solid state. Since plaster has no such shrinkage, each internal measurement, physical form and detail on each bronze would then have to be enlarged by 4% on the plaster. In essence, every size, form and surface detail on the plasters would have to be about 4% larger than the surmoulage bronzes cast by Hébrard from other bronzes.

**Q. Why 4% if bronze only shrinks by approximately 2%?**

A. Because except for the *Little Dancers*, all the other serialized bronze editions cast by Hébrard are bronzes cast from other bronzes (from the Modèle set). Therefore, two separate casting processes were involved in which shrinkage would have occurred; a 2% shrinkage by casting the Modèle bronzes from Degas' waxes, and another 2% shrinkage by casting the serialized bronzes from the other (Modèle) bronzes – a total shrinkage of about 4%.

**Q. Assuming it was possible to make plaster copies by hand how long would it take?**

A. If someone did attempt to make 74 accurate plaster copies by hand in this manner many months of time would be required, more likely years. But no matter how talented the copyist might be, it would be an almost impossible task to make the results convincing enough to pass close scrutiny by specialists.

**Q. How do we know someone didn't go through the process and make convincing copies?**

A. Dr. Thomas Hoving, former Director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, who wrote many books on fakes and forgeries, stated the obvious reason in his opinion as to why the plasters must be authentic. "The only motivation one would have to go through the enormous, time consuming effort required to make 74 plaster copies would be for profit. Yet the plasters remained in storage at Valsuani for half a century without anyone attempting to use them for profit by casting bronzes or by selling them. If the plasters had been copies someone would have profited from them decades ago." Hoving also pointed out, "No copyist would have bothered to make these plasters because it would be much simpler to copy paintings. They would have been much easier to sell and for far more profit."

**Q. Can the plasters be carbon dated?**

**A.** No. Plasters cannot be carbon dated since, unlike ceramics, they are not fired. However, it was common practice in the nineteenth and early twentieth century to add plant fibers and hairs (i.e., horse hairs) to the plaster mix as a binder to add strength. Plant fibers embedded in the Degas' plasters have been carbon dated.

**Q. What was the process and results?**

**A.** An independent New York sculpture conservator, Stev Tatti, took fiber samples from the plasters. The fibers were sent to the University of Arizona laboratory. The laboratory test results indicate the fibers embedded in the plasters predate the atomic era when radiocarbons permeated the earth's atmosphere. Thus the laboratory concluded the plasters predate 1955.

**Q. What other type of scientific testing was done?**

**A.** American Petrographic Services, an independent laboratory in St. Paul, Minnesota, analyzed the component materials in a Degas plaster and compared them with the component materials in a Rodin plaster reported to date from pre-1920. The materials in the Degas and Rodin plasters precisely matched and the material percentage ratios were consistent with each other. This provided evidence to conclude, (a) the Degas and Rodin plasters were made during the same period (pre-1920), and (b) the Degas plaster was made before Hébrard began casting bronzes in 1919. The laboratory then analyzed component materials from a third plaster known to have been made circa 1995. The later plaster contained materials not found in either the Degas or Rodin plaster, thus providing further evidence as to early the dating of the Degas plaster (pre 1920).

**Q. Did the American Petrographic laboratory come to any other conclusions?**

**A.** Yes, the laboratory scientifically rebutted a key point raised by some museum conservators who concluded, the recently discovered plasters are larger than the Hébrard bronzes because, in part, "...plaster expands upon setting." While it was not believed that pure plaster expanded when constrained in a mold it had to be proven. In its analysis the petrographic laboratory confirmed, and reported; "None of the minerals observed in the Degas [plaster] sample were susceptible to expansion," and further, "No evidence of expansion was observed."

**Q. What other physical evidence supports the authenticity of the plasters?**

**A.** It is well documented that the Modèle bronzes were made directly from Degas' waxes. Therefore, because of the 2% shrinkage of bronze in the casting process along with a loss of detail, factually, without doubt, (a) the Modèle bronzes are approximately 2% smaller in every dimension than the artist's waxes, and (b) each detail on each Modèle bronze is similarly smaller than the wax from which the Modèle bronze was cast. With this in mind Hedberg and Sara Campbell, who was Senior Curator of the Norton Simon Museum that has the Modèle set in its collection, took about 500 internal (point-to-point) measurements on those bronzes. For example, the distance from the tip of a dancer's nose to the tip of her extended finger on her right hand was measured.



Those 500 measurements were then compared to the same points on the plasters. In almost every case the measurements on the plasters proved to be larger than those on the Modèles bronzes by the expected amounts.

**Q. What does that prove?**

**A.** First, it proves the plasters could not have been cast from the Modèles or from any of the even smaller Hébrard edition bronzes. Had they been, the plasters would be smaller than they are, and further, the plasters would be exactly the same size as the bronzes from which they were cast. Moreover, if the plasters had been cast from the Modèles, the surface details on them would precisely match the bronzes. But in many instances they do not match.

Given those differences and because the plasters are larger in size than the bronzes, and since American Petrographic confirmed the materials in the Degas' plasters had no expansion properties, it is very clear that the most reasonable and logical explanation is, the plasters must have been made directly from Degas' waxes.

**Q. What other evidence supports this conclusion?**

**A.** Shortly after Degas died 53 waxes were photographed in his studio. While some Modèle bronzes do not match those early photographs, many of the related plasters do match in significant forms and details. This provides evidence to confirm that the plasters; (a) were made from the waxes before they were modified by Hébrard for casting bronzes, (b) were made before any bronzes were cast beginning in late 1919, and (c) could not have been made from the Modèles (or from any other Hébrard bronzes).

**Q. Why don't some sizes, forms and details on the plasters precisely match those on the waxes in the National Gallery?**

**A.** There are a number of related reasons. First, after Degas died and after the great majority of the plasters were made the fragile waxes had to be secured, boxed and transported to either Hébrard's gallery or foundry where they remained in the cellar. Likely this changed some forms and details on the waxes.

Hébrard Foundry personnel then reworked the waxes and made some dramatic modifications, including, as reported by Joseph Czestochowski in the catalog raisonné, "The most notable change [by the foundry] was the elimination of the armatures that for Degas were an integral part of each composition." To be clear, an armature cannot be "eliminated" from a wax without changing some forms.

Molds were then taken from the altered waxes further changing them. Afterwards the waxes were placed in storage at the foundry requiring further handling and potential changes. While in storage during those many years, dramatic seasonal temperature changes might have affected the waxes. When the foundry closed in 1937 the waxes were again secured, boxed and transported to the cellar in Adrien-A. Hébrard's home. In 1955, the waxes were removed from Hébrard's cellar and again reworked (strengthened) by Palazzolo for shipment to Paul Mellon in the United States.

After the waxes arrived in the United States Mr. Mellon's conservator, Joseph Turnbach, undertook further restoration, thereby changing details and forms on the waxes once again. Ultimately most of the waxes then traveled to the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. and some to other museums.

This well-documented series of events confirms that between all the handling, transport and the many alterations made to the waxes over time by Hébrard, Palazzolo and Turnbach, some sizes, forms and details on the waxes changed. This is why the waxes are different today compared to how they looked when Degas died, evidenced by the early photographs of the waxes taken circa 1918. This is also the reason why the plasters, made from the waxes before all these changes took place, do not precisely conform to the waxes as they appear today in the National Gallery.

**Q. Do the plasters match the Modèles?**

A. The plasters do not always match the Modèles for many of the same reasons. As detailed above, after the plasters were made Palazzolo eliminated some armatures and modified the waxes in other ways before casting the Modèle set of bronzes. Essentially, the plasters reflect the forms and details on Degas' waxes at an earlier moment in time (before Palazzolo modified the waxes), whereas the Modèles and all the other bronzes cast by Hébrard reflect the appearance of the waxes after the modifications were made by Palazzolo.

**Q. How can one account for the fact that the 74 plasters correspond to the same figures that were ultimately cast in bronze by Hébrard (why are they the same 74 figures)?**

A. First consider, although about 150 waxes were found in Degas' apartment and studio after his death, only 80 of them were inventoried by his heirs and executors. Therefore, the other 70 waxes were either undeveloped forms or simply lumps of wax and clay. Of the 80 that remained, it is presumed that either, (a) six were not complete enough to cast for commercial purposes, or (b) they were duplicate images of one of the others, or so close one would have difficulty in distinguishing one sculpture from another (Degas worked in series and the images were often very close). The remaining 74 were cast in bronze.

Then again consider that based on the evidence Bartholomé made a number of plasters during Degas' lifetime and made the other plasters shortly after the artist died. Among other reasons he did so because: (a) the plasters would record the waxes as they appeared on Degas death, and (b) they could be used as masters to cast bronzes. Thus, combining the plasters made during Degas' lifetime with those made after his death, Bartholomé had 74 plasters that corresponded to the same 74 figures cast in bronze by Hébrard.

The same would be true if Palazzolo made plasters shortly after Degas' death. While it was later decided that except for the *Little Dancer* plasters the others would not be used for casting. Nonetheless, the plasters would still be the same 74 sculptures that were cast in bronze by Hébrard.

If, as Hedberg proposed the majority of the plasters were made during Degas' lifetime by Bartholomé, he would have advised the heirs that Degas allowed plasters to be made from some waxes. Under this proposal, since Degas allowed plasters to be made from certain waxes, the heirs, under Bartholomé's guidance, decided the same figures should be cast in bronze.

**Q. Are there any other known Degas plasters?**

A. Yes, there are eight. The following four were previously confirmed to be lifetime to Degas:

Number 28: collection National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. This plaster was photographed in Degas' studio in 1918 along with numbers 40 and 45 (below).

Number 40: private collection (sold by the Lefevre Gallery, London in 1998). On May 7, 2014 the plaster was sold by Sotheby's, New York to (presumably) a private collector.

Number 45: whereabouts unknown.

Number 62: collection National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

**Q. Were the other four previously known plasters made posthumously?**

A. Yes. One is another plaster of number 45: casting date unknown but with a provenance beginning with Nelly Hébrard in 1955. Unlike any other known plaster this one has a signature "Degas." Therefore, (a) it is presumed that this plaster of number 45 was cast posthumously, and (b) and therefore it is not the same plaster of the same subject photographed in Degas' studio in 1918. This plaster, stamped "Degas," was sold in 1998 by the Lefevre Gallery in London. Apparently it remains in a private collection.

In 1920-1921, the Hébrard Foundry cast two posthumous plasters from Degas' wax of number 73 (the *Little Dancer*). One plaster is in now the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., and the other is in the collection of the Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska. Arthur Beale, Conservator Emeritus, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, determined the Joslyn plaster was used as the master from which Hébrard cast its edition of *Little Dancer* bronzes.

Number 74: collection Musée d'Orsay, Paris. Evidence indicates this plaster was cast from Degas' wax by the Valsuani Foundry in 1955. It was gifted to the d'Orsay by Gregoire Triet, a grandson of Nelly Hébrard.

**Q. Who authorized the Valsuani bronze editions that were cast from the plasters?**

A. Since Valsuani owned the plasters and because the heirs' exclusive rights to cast under the French Droit Moral had earlier expired, the foundry was free to cast bronzes without needing authorization from any others. However, to ensure the legitimacy of the Valsuani bronzes, in 2007 The Degas Sculpture Project Ltd consulted with the living legal heirs of Edgar Degas (the "Succession Degas") in reference to the casting of the editions. After reviewing the research and conducting its own independent due diligence the Succession Degas approved the casting of the bronze editions from the plasters. In addition, the Succession Degas authenticated the plasters and the bronzes cast from the plasters.

**Q. What is the significance of this authorization?**

A. Under the laws of the French Republic, the legal heirs of an artist hold the right to authenticate and approve such castings. Thus, since the heirs of Degas granted their authority for the editions, the Valsuani bronzes were cast in full accordance with French law.

**Q. Has the more recent Comité Degas authenticated the plasters and bronzes?**

A. Yes. Representatives of the Comité Degas reviewed the research, examined all the plasters and also conducted their own independent due diligence. After doing so, the Comité confirmed; (a) the plasters are authentic, and (b) the bronzes cast from the plasters are authentic.

**Q. Have any museums exhibited the Degas bronzes cast by the Valsuani Foundry?**

A. Yes. Ten museums have exhibited a full compliment of the 74 Degas bronzes cast by Valsuani. Each museum published scholarly catalogs with full-page color illustrations of each bronze. The first exhibition opened on November 29, 2009 at the Herakleidon in Athens, Greece. Since then, nine other exhibitions have taken place in, among other institutions, The Tel Aviv Museum of Art in Israel, the Institut Valencià d'Art Modern (IVAM) in Spain, and most notably at the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, Russia.

**Q. Where can one learn more?**

A. Two documents are available on request. One is *Edgar Degas: The Sculptures*. It is a revision of the catalogue essay published by the various museums that held exhibitions of the bronzes cast by Valsuani from the plasters. This essay provides a brief overview of Degas' sculptural history, the casting of the bronze editions and the discovery of the 75 plasters.

The second document, *Posthumous Bronzes And The Plasters From Which They Were Cast: A Case Study On Determining Authenticity Based On Physical Evidence*, was prepared for a international colloquium on posthumous bronzes. This document summarizes the large corpus of research gathered during many years of study. While information and details about posthumous bronzes is included, this document focuses on the physical, photographic, scientific and empirical evidence that substantiates the bona fides of the 75 Edgar Degas sculptures in plaster.

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