



Edgar Degas (1834-1917). *Les Repasseuses*. Circa 1884-1886. Oil on canvas. Photo credit: Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY. Musee d'Orsay, Paris, France.

Unlike many Impressionists, Degas was not interested in landscapes. He focused on activity and the human body in motion. Although his compositions were very calculated, his subjects usually appear to be caught unaware in the midst of a movement, as though by a hidden camera. Sometimes described as “clinical” in his approach, Degas is best known for his paintings and sculptures of ballerinas, but he also painted laundresses. His dancers are lithe and luminous; his laundresses, weighed down and soaked in shadow or steam. Here, a woman presses down on an iron, her back and neck bent forward, arms tensed and fully extended. Her companion stretches and yawns in exhaustion.

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