



Edgar Degas (French, 1834–1917). *Russian Dancers*. 1899. Pastel on paper. Robert Lehman Collection, 1975. Image copyright © The Metropolitan Museum of Art / Art Resource, NY.

At the turn of the 19th century, Degas drew a series of pastels that have been called “one of the most unexpected departures of his late career.” Compared with his depictions of ballet dancers from the 1880s (on last month’s cover) or from the early 1900s (on our September 2007 cover), these dancers are joyously unrestrained and unrehearsed in their movements. Their flowing skirts and billowing blouses—even the loops of their beads—become part of the dance. The blurring of the 3 figures and the cropping of the background dancer’s foot makes the viewer “feel” the dancers moving across and beyond the canvas.

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