

Bathing in Modernity:  
Undressing the Influences Behind Edgar Degas and Mary Cassatt's Baigneuses

Maiji Castro  
Department of Art History  
University of Colorado - Boulder

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Thesis Advisor  
Marilyn Brown | Department of Art History

Defense Committee  
Robert Nauman | Department of Art History | Honors Chair  
Priscilla Craven | Department of Italian

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## **Abstract**

This thesis examines how the motifs used in bathing genre paintings from Greek and Roman myths to eighteenth-century eroticism are evident in the bathing series of Edgar Degas and Mary Cassatt. The close professional relationship of Edgar Degas and Mary Cassatt is evident in the shared themes and techniques in their work and in personal accounts from letters by each other and their contemporaries. Both Degas and Cassatt desired to move away from historical genre painting, and instead to portray the changing emotions and social constraints of modern life. However, the extensive tradition from the *Aphrodite of Knidos* to Ingres' *Valpinçon Bather* of the erotic female nude impacted both their depictions and critics and scholars' interpretations. I examine the prevailing iconography of the female nude through an analysis of the classical representations of the female nude, Japanese prints of bathers, and Degas and Cassatt's respective depictions. I argue that a new way of examining modern understandings of privacy and cleanliness may have been at the root of Degas and Cassatt's representations of bathers, but their classical training throughout Europe and the influx of Japanese prints of bathhouses influenced these representations.

## Introduction

In the latter half of the twentieth century the effect of the male gaze on women's bodies emerged as a highly contested topic of scholarship; both male and female scholars began analyzing the origin of the nude in art and its lingering repercussions on perceptions of women today. In this large scholarly literature, I have found Griselda Pollock, Norma Broude and Eunice Lipton's interpretations most helpful in my analysis of Degas and Cassatt's bathers.<sup>1</sup> In this scholarship Praxiteles' *Aphrodite of Knidos* is generally agreed to be the genesis of the idealization of the female form created with the perfect pretext: bathing. The eroticism and justification for the female nude applied in classical sculptures persevered in representations of the female nude in western traditions for many centuries. The female nude at her bath responded to hygienic, religious and social practices regarding water, while continuing to provide a pretense for depictions of female nudity by male artists.

In late nineteenth-century France two major influences marked a turning point for the representation of the female nude by both male and female artists. The first was an influx of Japanese Ukiyo-e prints from the Tokugawa Period, with their interest in expressing the importance of bathing to Japanese society without explicit eroticism, contrasting the inherent eroticism of western nudes. The second influence was the spreading awareness that regular hygienic practices were necessary to prevent the spread of disease. However, the long held associations linking water with the devil and sin meant that the increase of sanitary hygiene practices occurred gradually. A new way of examining these modern understandings of privacy and cleanliness combined with Japanese formal and social attitudes towards bathing motivated artists in their desire to depict modern baigneuses and move away from classical iconography.

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<sup>1</sup> In the expansive scholarly discourse, the other sources I have found to be the most useful in interpreting Degas and Cassatt's bathers include: John Berger's *Ways of Seeing*, Kenneth Clark's *The Nude: A Study in Ideal Form*, Carol Armstrong's "Edgar Degas and the Representation of the Female Body," Heather Dawkins' *The Nude in French Art and Culture, 1870-1910*, Wendy Lesser and Brian E. Lebowitz's *His Other Half: Men Looking at Women through Art*, and Anthea Callen's *The Spectacular Body: Science, Method, and Meaning in the Work of Degas*.

Edgar Degas (1835 - 1917) and Mary Cassatt (1844 - 1926) were members of the group of artists during this time who were interested in modern bourgeois life in public and private spaces. However, contemporary artists responding to the slow return to an essentially Greco-Roman attitude towards bathing quickly shifted how bathing was depicted. Male artists commenting on this shift in bathing began painting nudes further entrenched in Greco-Roman mythology, while female artists left behind the classical idealizations. In my thesis I will analyze the extensive tradition of the female nude as it relates to social attitudes towards bathing represented by Degas and Cassatt.

A brief overview of the history and repeated iconography of the bathing female nude in western traditions since the *Aphrodite of Knidos* to Ingres' *Valpinçon Bather* reveals the explicit eroticism of the female nude. Despite the deep rooted eroticism of the female nude various influences impacted artists' depictions of the idealized form, and the evolving attitudes towards hygiene in nineteenth-century France motivated Degas and Cassatt's representations of modern middle-class bathers. However, regardless of their desire to represent modern life, the myths, allegories and stereotypes that formulated ideas about women's bodies since the *Aphrodite of Knidos* continued to shape their modern depictions of the female nude. I will argue that the motifs used in bathing genre paintings from Greco-Roman myths to eighteenth-century eroticism are evident in the bathing series of Degas and Cassatt. On the heels of the Impressionists, the bathers of Paul Cézanne and Suzanne Valadon exemplify the perpetually shifting visions of the female nude.

## Chapter 1:

### Visions of the Female Nude

#### Testing the Waters

Unclothed women have been a popular subject of all artistic mediums since 28,000 BCE, with the *Venus of Willendorf*, ancient Babylonian and Egyptian arts. However, the popularity of the female nude dissipated in ancient Greece, and the female body retained its clothes until the fourth century BCE. Since the fourth century BCE the female nude has become an everlasting category of all artistic mediums in western artistic traditions. The eroticism of the female body was visually expressed in the growth of depictions of the female nude in western traditions, unlike in Japanese prints where the female nude could be represented without explicit eroticism.<sup>2</sup> The female nude in her bath furthermore reflected hygienic, religious and social positions regarding water. Evolving cultural attitudes towards water, bathing and the female body shaped artistic traditions in both Europe and Japan.

The idealized human body most commonly found in ancient Greece belonged to men, as there were many taboos against rendering the female body without clothes. In ancient Greece, before the mid fourth century BCE, depictions of the nude body pervading society were overwhelming of masculine figures.<sup>3</sup> The ancient Greeks were restrained from depicting the female nude because of social and religious reasons. Socially, male nudes were more common because men felt the need to see themselves reflected in their images of heroes and gods, creating an archetype to strive towards. Religiously, female nudes were prohibited as a result of the multitude of myths revolving around the ire of goddesses and the downfall of the human men who viewed them unclothed. The parable of Artemis and Actaeon was a popular myth in which the

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<sup>2</sup> As we shall see, scenes of bathing in Japanese prints belonged to a different category from explicitly erotic prints or scenes of courtesans of the pleasure quarters.

<sup>3</sup> Kenneth Clark, *The Nude: A Study in Ideal Form*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1956). 72.

hunter Actaeon accidentally happens upon Artemis bathing in the woods; he is spotted by the goddess and she turns him into a deer. In his deer form Actaeon is hunted down and killed by his own dogs. Stories about the deadly fate of humans who saw goddesses naked proscribed depictions of nude women. This narcissistic desire and entrenched fear changed in the middle of the fourth century BCE with the unveiling of Praxiteles' *Aphrodite of Knidos*.<sup>4</sup>

The *Aphrodite of Knidos*, the original of which was destroyed, with only Roman copies remaining, was praised as the apotheosis of the female form. The sculpture was created for an Athenian temple, as an offering of gratitude to the Goddess Aphrodite after the successful defeat of the Spartans off of the Knidos Peninsula, the south-west coast of modern day Turkey. In the temple the sculpture was positioned such that worshippers who visited first approached the sculpture from the back and could view the sculpture in the round (fig. 1, *Venus Colonna*, Roman copy of Praxiteles' *Aphrodite of Knidos*, fourth century BCE, Pius-Clementine Museum, Vatican City).<sup>5</sup> The *Aphrodite* sculpture utilizes the contrapposto stance, with her left leg bent as if to take a step forward; this imparity of balance creates a gentle curvature of her body. The relaxed geometric curve remains an essential part of the female nude today and a familiar symbol of desire.<sup>6</sup> The arc of her right arm emphasizes the sinuous line of her body as she modestly covers her genitalia. Aphrodite's head is turned towards her left shoulder, exhibiting indifference towards any viewers who may be standing in front or behind her, and permits their gaze. Praxiteles' success showed people that goddesses would not strike them down if depicted disrobed. However, Praxiteles still did not dare to represent Aphrodite in the nude without cause; her nakedness required a degree of elucidation.<sup>7</sup> The explanation was provided by the water jar at Aphrodite's side, a sign of the female body as a vessel, over which her robes are draped. In

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<sup>4</sup> Michael Squire, *The Art of the Body: Antiquity and its Legacy*, (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2011). 93.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 95.

<sup>6</sup> Clark, *The Nude: A Study in Ideal Form*, 81.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 94.

ancient Rome and Greece bathing was a way of life, and the water jug would be instantly recognizable in both Greece and Rome as another symbol of Aphrodite's divine nature and her femininity. The Greeks related cleanliness to divinity; the elaborateness of the toilette and physical cleanliness directly related the individual's proximity to the gods.<sup>8</sup> In Rome bathing was essential; bodily hygiene was not only promoted, but made accessible to all citizens by way of the clean water running through the numerous aqueducts.<sup>9</sup> It was commonplace for both the upper and lower classes, men and women, to take advantage of the numerous public baths and fountains around the cities. The prevalent motif of bathing in Greek and Roman arts acknowledged this social expectation. Bathing was an indispensable part of most inhabitants' day in both the Greek and Roman empires. Its social importance was reproduced in the *Aphrodite of Knidos*, which captures the moment either just before or after Aphrodite's bath, signaling her divinity. The sudden opening of the female nude to artistic ventures was the impetus of an aesthetic shift, a response to hygienic practices and especially scopophilic desires in society exploited through images of bathing.

Praxiteles' *Aphrodite* signaled a transformation in art: men were no longer as interested in portraying or seeing themselves in the nude; now they wanted to be able to see the ideal woman, a previously inviolable goddess, touched by their gaze. Michael Squire and John Berger argue vehemently for the indelible harm caused to women by the female nude. Squire argues that: "modern women are enslaved through the ancient Greek: today the female nude still performs a revolving dance for her cocksure male scopophiliacs."<sup>10</sup> This argument implies that male scopophiliacs would impose the idealization of the female nude on real woman. John Berger advances the argument, as he famously claims that:

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<sup>8</sup> Virginia Smith, *Clean: A History of Personal Hygiene and Purity*, (New York City: Oxford University Press, 2007). 59.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>10</sup> Squire, *The Art of the Body: Antiquity and its Legacy*, 96.



Men act and women appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves. The surveyor of woman is herself a male: the surveyed female. Thus she turns herself into an object and most particularly an object of vision: a sight.<sup>11</sup>

Berger argues that the female nude, starting with the *Aphrodite of Knidos*, is viewed as an object on display, and women have been transformed into objects as a result. The *Aphrodite of Knidos* supports Berger and Squire's argument as the genesis of women as objects as she could be viewed from all angles, and her averted gaze did not challenge the male viewers' inspection. Both of these arguments assert that the predilection of women as objects of the male gaze still pervades society today.

In a contrasting position, Kenneth Clark and Lynda Nead claim that the female nude does not reflect on the bodies of real women, and instead belongs in its own art category. Clark argues that the female nude is simply an art form created by the Greeks in the fourth century BCE, and the nude is not the subject of art, but a form of art.<sup>12</sup> In Clark's interpretation the female or the male nude has no connection with real bodies; they are entirely their own genre. Nead asserts that the individual woman's body belongs outside of aesthetic judgement, and the female nude transforms the body through artistic style and renders it into an object of beauty, suitable for aesthetic consumption.<sup>13</sup> To Clark and Nead the nude exists beyond erotic desire and disregards voyeuristic tendencies through its purity as its own subject. These two approaches to the female nude and its evolution and impact on society are antipodal. I argue that the female nude is its own art form as it has developed its own iconography, aesthetic and history, but that does not mean the

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<sup>11</sup> John Berger, *Ways of Seeing: A Book*, (London: British Broadcasting Corp., 1977). 47.

<sup>12</sup> Clark, *The Nude: A Study in Ideal Form*, 4.

<sup>13</sup> Lynda Nead, *The Female Nude: Art, Obscenity, and Sexuality*, (New York: Routledge, 1992). 25.

nude does not respond to the social changes and attitudes towards women, as it illuminates how men look at women.

## Evolution

The essential elements of the *Aphrodite of Knidos*, including the placement of her feet, the sinuous curve from her hip to her breast, appearance of modesty, pretense for her nudity, and the added social connotations towards water and bathing, would be replicated time and time again by artists from Classicism to Romanticism. The small variants to the female nude came about as a result of varying social attitudes towards water. After the fall of the Roman Empire, and the accession of Christianity, bathing became sporadic at best and personal hygiene fell to the wayside. In exchange, the cleansing of the inner soul became the focus of bathing rituals, while immersive bathing for physical cleanliness was considered a carnal distraction.<sup>14</sup>

One of the few acceptable reasons for full immersion in water was baptism, but even immersive baptism was rare. In Catholicism there are three ways to baptize: aspersion, affusion and immersion.<sup>15</sup> The most common forms are aspersion, the sprinkling of water, and affusion, the pouring of water onto the initiate.<sup>16</sup> The final form, immersion, involves the full submersion of the body into water. Immersion is known as the original baptism, as it was how Christ was thought to be baptized, and the most symbolic in terms of total regeneration, and new birth. The most common nude male bather is the half submerged figure of Christ during his baptism, as seen in *Baptism of Christ* in the Scrovegni Chapel (1305, Padua, Italy) by Giotto (1266 - 1337).<sup>17</sup> Medieval bathing was restricted to baptism or other rites where one had to be purified or given a symbolic rebirth, as before marriage or knighting ceremonies. These restrictions on immersive bathing

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<sup>14</sup> Nead, *The Female Nude: Art, Obscenity, and Sexuality*, 126.

<sup>15</sup> Terje Oestigaard, *Water, Christianity and the Rise of Capitalism*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013). 48.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>17</sup> Oestigaard, *Water, Christianity and the Rise of Capitalism*, 48.

indoors came partly from the laborious and time consuming task of acquiring clean water; only those who had servants could afford the time to haul enough water to take even the rare immersive bath. The prevailing theme that water was reserved for the upper classes and those close to the gods continued to express itself in art.

The exalted iconography of the combination of the female nude and water shows itself with continued depictions of divine women. Sandro Botticelli's (1445 - 1510) *The Birth of Venus* (fig. 2, 1485, Uffizi Gallery, Florence), utilizes water and Greek mythology to elevate the female nude as she stands on a shell emerging from the sea. Similar to the *Aphrodite of Knidos*, Botticelli's *Venus*' displaced weight as she stands creates the sensuous curve, and her strategic hand and hair placement protects her modesty even as the curve of the hair over the genitals calls attention to them through displacement. The depiction of the sea in this painting brings together Greek and Roman mythology with Christianity, associating the water with the origin of the cosmos, earth, life, along with divinity and moral purification.<sup>18</sup> *The Birth of Venus* is a rendering of a goddess whose nudity and associations with water reinforce her divinity and personification of pure divine love. As Botticelli's *Venus* is not immersed in the sea the importance of the cleansing of the soul over the physical is reiterated.

While the rare immersive baths for rituals and inner purification were allowable, the scarcity of water meant that people were discouraged from taking full baths regularly. European denizens post Roman Empire were discouraged from bathing by relating the use of water for physical cleanliness with hedonism, fornication, the devil and sin.<sup>19</sup> The story of Susanna and the Elders from the biblical book of Daniel, chapter 13, chronicles the events succeeding the moment when two lecherous old men solicit the married Susanna after watching her bathe alone. Although Susanna is innocent of any wrongdoing, when the elders accuse her of adultery after she refuses

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<sup>18</sup> Oestigaard, *Water, Christianity and the Rise of Capitalism*, 15.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 112.

their advances, she is sentenced to death. Before Susanna is wrongly executed, Daniel interrupts the proceedings and demands a fair trial, during which she is proven innocent. Susanna and the Elders satisfies all the requirements of painting a female nude: some degree of modesty, men as spectators, and a reason for the nudity, while also vilifying bathing for pleasure. Regarding Susanna and the Elders as a subject for painting Mary D. Garrard said:

Few artistic themes have offered so satisfying an opportunity for legitimized voyeurism as Susanna and the Elders. The story was an opportunity to display the female nude, but with the added advantage that the nude's erotic appeal could be heightened by the presence of two lecherous old men, whose inclusion was both iconographically justified and pornographically effective.<sup>20</sup>

*Susanna and the Elders* (fig. 3, 1686, Stibbert Museum, Florence) by Luca Giordano (1634 - 1705) depicts the most voyeuristic moment of the story. In this painting Susanna's body is turned fully forward her arm splayed out, leaving her body open to the viewer, as she rejects the elders' advances and titillates the male audience. She is half covered demurely with a sheet and the bath is indicated by the shallow pool at her feet and the fountain streaming down from the cupid sculpture. Although her feet do not actually touch the water, its very presence indicates bathing invites sin and the devil. The surroundings include lush foliage and a cherub fountain, which further the eroticism of the scene. All the figures are placed on the same level, which creates a less threatening scene than the story would suggest. Giordano's version of *Susanna and the Elders* is typical for a male artist; he and the audience both connect with the lecherous actions of the elders.

Contrasting Giordano's overt male gaze, is Artemisia Gentileschi's (1593 - 1653)

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<sup>20</sup> Norma Broude, "Artemisia and Susanna," in *Feminism and Art History: Questioning the Litany*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed, edited by Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard, New York: Harper & Row, 1982). 149.

*Susanna and the Elders* (fig. 4, 1610, Pommersfelden, Schloss Weissenstein, Private Collection).

In direct opposition to Giordano's *Susanna*, Gentileschi's *Susanna* is shown with her foot in the water; she is preparing to actually take a bath; it is not just a pretense. In Gentileschi's painting the elders are looming threateningly above the innocent Susanna as one large imposing force. Susanna is seated on the step below the elders, barricaded into place by the stone wall. The position of her body is not open, inviting the gaze, but closed off as her knees point towards the side and her arms come across her body to ward off the elders. Her gesture can be read as derived from Michelangelo's *Adam Being Expelled from Paradise* in the Sistine Chapel (1509), where the gesture is used to fend off the avenging angel, or a female version of *Noli me Tangere*.<sup>21</sup> Both interpretations bestow a level of purity and divinity upon Susanna, whose face is frozen in a grimace of distaste and fear. The Pommersfelden *Susanna* is subject neither to Kenneth Clark's ideas about the female nude as a form of art nor to John Berger's ideas about the woman on display, as Giordano's *Susanna* is. I argue that the female gaze of the artist changes the voyeuristic narrative; Gentileschi took a familiar subject matter and created a woman who was not on display or an allegory. Instead Gentileschi depicts a Susanna who is real, whose terror at the situation can be understood and felt; there is no scopophilic pleasure derived from this painting. However, Gentileschi still adheres to the social stigmas surrounding bathing, as Susanna only dips one foot in the water. The stigmas surrounding water only became more stringent as depictions of one foot in the water reflecting its vilification were rotated out of paintings and scenes of women's toilette evolved to dry setups that only showed clothes being changed, powders or a very small basin of water.

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<sup>21</sup> See Roberto Contini, Gianni Papi, and Luciano Berti, *Artemisia*, (Roma: Leonardo, 1991). 21 for interpretation of gesture as a feminine *Noli me Tangere*. See Francesco Solinas, Roberto Contini, Roberto Paolo Ciardi, Luciano Arcangeli, Michele Nicolaci, and Yuri Primarosa, *Artemisia Gentileschi: The Story of a Passion*, 1st ed, (Pero, Milan: 24 ORE Cultura, 2011). 53 for analysis of gesture derived from Michelangelo's *Adam Being Expelled from Paradise*.

The relegation of immersive bathing to allegorical or biblical scenes restricted the average day toilette to a waterless ritual. Although the toilette was basically waterless, people still had to take care of their hygiene in some way, so washing only the feet, hands, face and genitals using only a cloth and a shallow bowl became common practice, until the 1600s when water became considered dangerous for the skin. Instead dirt was espoused as a protectant against disease and the daily toilette was performed with towels and powders.<sup>22</sup> By the 1600s, the nude was tacitly understood as the female nude, full of erotic, scintillating connotations, erotic of course implying erotic for men.<sup>23</sup> Between biblical stories, pagan allegories, and ever changing hygienic practices the female baigneuse provided the perfect alibi for male artists to depict the submissive, ideal nude female.

Between the fall of the Roman Empire and the mid 1800s the majority of people ceased to wash, and it was in this climate in Europe at the dawn of the nineteenth century, when water was a rarity and Europe had no accepted bathing culture that Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780 - 1867) started his illustrious career. Ingres ascribed to Neoclassicism, which began in the late 1700s and lasted through the first half of the 1800s, and was defined by a rediscovery of classical ideals. Art historian Walter Friedlaender claims the precepts for behavior and art in this time were based on the history, literature and art of antiquity; the ideal man was once again the hero found in the mythology of Homer and Ovid.<sup>24</sup> Art during this time revolved around idealized, stoic depictions of history and myths at the zenith of drama. Ingres was renowned for his portraiture and use of line to create forms and space. He placed his figures in two-dimensional planes, an element that gave his paintings a detached air, elevating the subjects and distancing them from the viewers. The lack of the toilette during this time does not mean there was a dearth of female

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<sup>22</sup> Nadeije Laneyrie-Dagen, and Georges Vigarello, *La Toilette: Naissance de l'intime: the Invention of Privacy*, (Paris: Hazan, 2015). 57.

<sup>23</sup> Linda Nochlin, "Eroticism and Female Imagery in Nineteenth Century Art," in *Woman as Sex Object: Studies in Erotic Art, 1730-1970*, edited by Linda Nochlin and Thomas B. Hess, (London: Allen Lane, 1973). 9.

<sup>24</sup> Walter Friedlaender, *David to Delacroix*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952). 7.

nudes; Ingres in particular is known for his idealized nudes, which he approached through exoticism and Orientalism.<sup>25</sup>

Later copied by Degas in a drawing, Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres' *The Valpinçon Bather* (fig. 5, 1806, Louvre, Paris) is perched on a bed adorned with white sheets, facing away from the viewer, a position he repeated in several of his paintings of nudes. The curved line of her head, shoulders and back create a unified form that the eye follows down to the bather's feet hovering above the spout of water flowing into a shallow floor tub. Her back reveals nothing of her individuality, as she appears to embody the romanticized, ideal beauty, but instead there is a haughty chill to the image. *The Valpinçon Bather* is not the average voyeuristic nude; even though the body is classically beautiful, there is a detachment through the cool colors and aloofness of the image.

*The Valpinçon Bather* is an example of the type of female nude John Berger would consider on display for a male audience. While her expression is cold and removed, her idealistic beauty is presented for immediate male titillation. Norman Bryson argues that the element that makes *The Valpinçon Bather* erotic is the intimation of possibility: the exposed back of her neck, curve of her spine and the underside of her foot, all hint at the promise of the explicitly erotic.<sup>26</sup> However, this idea of possibility contradicts Berger's immediate desire, because the moment of waiting pushes the viewer further from the woman and with distance there is a lack of immediate satisfaction. Ingres' nudes embody the ideas of Kenneth Clark, that the nude is just a form of art, an idea backed by Joyce Brodsky who argues that Ingres' nudes' object-like qualities create a form of art that is too pure to arouse a sense of touch.<sup>27</sup> Ingres' depictions of nudes lead to

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<sup>25</sup> Nochlin defines Orientalism as a western fascination with the Near East as a "project of imagination, a fantasy space or screen onto which strong desires - erotic, sadistic or both - could be projected with impunity." Linda Nochlin, "The Imaginary Orient" in her *The Politics of Vision: Essays on Nineteenth-Century Art and Society*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1989). 41.

<sup>26</sup> Norman Bryson, *Tradition and Desire: From David to Delacroix*, Vol. 5., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984). 130.

<sup>27</sup> Joyce Brodsky, "Delacroix's 'Le Lever,' Cézanne's 'Interior with Nude,' Picasso's 'Les Femmes d'Alger,' and the Genre of the Erotic Nude," *Artibus Et Historiae* 7:13, (1986). 135.

varying opinions on accessibility and tactility that were not contested in earlier depictions of bathers.

In *The Valpinçon Bather*, the shallow tub, which evolved from the first washbasin in the sixteenth century, is an indication of the surreptitious hygienic practices of the 1800s. In the mid eighteenth century the toilette had been allocated to the privacy of the bedroom, as there was not yet a specific place for the toilette in the house. The floor tubs similar to the one depicted were on their way to acquiring a definitive shape in accordance with technical norms in the second half of the nineteenth century and would appear in the work of Degas. They had become an everyday object for the upper social classes.<sup>28</sup> This move into the privacy of the bedroom affected artists and the toilette all but disappeared from the repertoire of painters.<sup>29</sup> Women of all milieux appeared to cease personal hygiene practices. Although water does not have a central role in Ingres' painting its implied presence is still very significant. Ingres' inspiration for *The Valpinçon Bather* may have come from Lady Mary Montagu's account of visiting the Turkish baths, but Ingres' Orientalist perspective is revealed as he uses the Near East subject matter as a guise to depict western practices.<sup>30</sup> Considering the lack of hygiene practices and the coolness of the painting, water here may signify an association with divinity and soul purification as Ingres elevates the harem slave. *The Valpinçon Bather* is unusual because even though its influence came from the Oriental bathhouse, it shows a simple toilette unlike Ingres' other works of bathers and other paintings by neoclassical artists.

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This idea is argued against by John Connolly who claims that *The Valpinçon Bather* is an allegory of the five senses which viewers would recognize, and to Ingres, the erotic was that which is recognizable and desirable, but known to be unattainable and therefore all the more desirable, implying that there is immediate desire in *The Valpinçon Bather*. See John Connolly, "Ingres and the Erotic Intellect," in *Woman as Sex Object: Studies in Erotic Art, 1730-1970*, edited by Linda Nochlin and Thomas B. Hess, (London: Allen Lane, 1973). 17-31.

<sup>28</sup> Jean-Pierre Goubert, Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, and Andrew Wilson, *The Conquest of Water - the Advent of Health in the Industrial Age*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

<sup>29</sup> Laneyrie-Dagen, *La Toilette: Naissance de l'intime: the Invention of Privacy*, 125.

<sup>30</sup> Marilyn R. Brown, "The Harem Dehistoricized: Ingres' Turkish Bath," *Arts Magazine* 61, (1987). 60.



Even though Ingres' odalisque supposedly depicted the lowest class of harem slaves, female nudes since the *Knidian Aphrodite* mostly represented women of the higher classes. Until the second half of the nineteenth-century depictions of women bathing were geared towards the bathing habits of goddesses and upper-class women, because of the hygiene as well as sacredness that surrounded the bathing ideal. European artistic traditions depicted the imagined, idealistic woman that responded to consistently shifting attitudes towards bathing and water.

### In Another Tub

Cultures around the world had more varying attitudes towards the female nude and bathing than the restrictive perspectives of Europe. The Japanese prints that influenced Degas and Cassatt's work came from the Tokugawa Period, a time in Japan from 1600 - 1868, when peace had been imposed by the Tokugawa Shoguns after several centuries of civil war.<sup>31</sup> The borders of Japan were closed during this time to all but the Dutch, and in Japan's isolation it experienced accelerated urbanization and the rise of the merchant class. The growth of the merchant class in both population and economic strength shaped culture and art during this time period, as they carved a niche for themselves out of a Japanese society whose government recognized a strict hierarchy of four classes. The political and social importance of the classes aligned with their contribution to society at the top; the samurai protected everyone, then the farmers fed the population, then artisans made items to be enjoyed, and at the bottom were the merchants, who produced no goods.<sup>32</sup> However, in defiance of their social position recognized by the government, the burgeoning economy was ruled by the merchants. As the merchants could not gain any true

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<sup>31</sup> Elizabeth de Sabato Swinton, Kazue Edamatsu Campbell, Liza Carihfield Dalby, and Mark Oshima, *The Women of the Pleasure Quarter: Japanese Paintings and Prints of the Floating World*, 1st ed, (New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1995). 13.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

political power by the rules of the Tokugawa hierarchy, they channeled their new excess wealth into the arts, and pleasure quarter of Edo (modern day Tokyo), the Yoshiwara.<sup>33</sup>

In the Tokugawa Period art imitated life; Japanese artists had abandoned traditional religious and historical scenes, instead focusing on translating contemporary life into image. The artists painted scenes from the Yoshiwara such as the Kabuki theater, popular literature, and high end courtesans, as well as scenes of everyday life. The encompassing name for the style of prints from this period was Ukiyo-e meaning pictures of the floating world.<sup>34</sup> The Ukiyo-e prints were complete with imagery that was easily recognizable to a closed homogenous society, from the glamorous women of the pleasure quarters and erotica to the more prosaic bathhouses. The courtesans of the Yoshiwara had their own category of Ukiyo-e prints, separate from the bathers and erotic images. The courtesans of the Yoshiwara were cultural icons for women to emulate, not only for their beauty, but also for their behavior and style almost akin to movie stars of today.<sup>35</sup> Although, they were constructed as implicitly erotic icons for men to desire but never obtain, their eroticism came through their clothed bodies, rarely depicted nude, and never in their bath.<sup>36</sup> The Yoshiwara was set apart from everyday reality, completely enclosed by walls, containing its own bathhouses only for the courtesans use that kept them distant from both the average citizen.<sup>37</sup> The high-class prostitutes of the Yoshiwara were distant figures for men and women to lust after, unlike the depictions of bathers.

In contrast to the pervasive European genre of female nudes there was not an equivalent in Japan; for a start there was no nude genre, mainly because male and female bodies were not

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<sup>33</sup> Swinton, *The Women of the Pleasure Quarter: Japanese Paintings and Prints of the Floating World*, 13.

<sup>34</sup> Jill DeVonyar, and Richard Kendall, *Degas and the Art of Japan*, (Reading, Penn: Reading Public Museum, 2007). 12.

<sup>35</sup> See Swinton, *The Women of the Pleasure Quarter: Japanese Paintings and Prints of the Floating World*, 32 for courtesans as cultural icons.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. A visit to the Yoshiwara courtesans not only required wealth, but the proper connections to garner an introduction to the brothels that were governed by a strict code of behavior, and to which most people could never gain an invitation.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 54.

polarized but believed to hold the majority of their bodily traits in common.<sup>38</sup> However, depictions of naked women could still be separated into two genres in Ukiyo-e prints: the *shunga*, the graphically sexual prints of the Ukiyo-e, and the bathhouses which were not overtly erotic.<sup>39</sup> The *shunga*, sexually explicit scenes, were of men and women belonging to the common classes of Edo Japan. The participants depicted in the sexual acts of the *shunga* prints were not the courtesans of the pleasure quarters as western viewers are prone to assume. In actuality, only a tenth of the *shunga* prints depicted the courtesans of the Yoshiwara.<sup>40</sup> However, it is possible to find depictions of men and women bathing in public baths in the *shunga* albums, but they are fancifully erotic, and would not fall in the non-erotic bathing genre. These scenes were considered explicitly erotic by Japanese viewers of the Tokugawa period because of exposed genitals and a complicated language of clothing that created images with sexual tension.<sup>41</sup> The prints of bathing women on the contrary represented the importance of hygiene to Japanese society, and the bathers' nudity lacked explicit eroticism. These prints lacked eroticism to the Japanese viewers because there was very little erotic value assigned to the skin, so despite the women's nude bodies they were not erotic scenes. The women depicted in the bathing prints were respectable middle class women who used the public bath houses, not the courtesans of the Yoshiwara. All three of these genres of prints were images constructed for both male and female viewers, because generally the women and the men are equally active in the prints, unlike in European traditions where nakedness, and sexual attraction tend to show the woman's passivity.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Timon Screech, *Sex and the Floating World: Erotic Images in Japan, 1700-1820*, 2nd ed, (London: Reaktion, 2009). 104.

<sup>39</sup> Monta Hayakawa, Y. Shirakura, and Timothy Kern, *Nihon no zuzō: Shunga = Japanese Erotic Art*, (Tokyo: Pie Bukkusu, 2009). 6.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Screech, *Sex and the Floating World: Erotic Images in Japan*, 104.

<sup>42</sup> Berger, *Ways of Seeing: A Book*, 53. See Hayakawa, *Nihon no zuzō: Shunga = Japanese Erotic Art*, 7 for evidence of women's familiarity with *shunga* comes from their method of distribution by book lenders. In Japanese household negotiations with book lenders were the responsibility of the wives and daughters of the homes, making it so women were equally familiar with the contents of *shunga* as men.

Establishing that the images of courtesans and *shunga* were different from the images of bathers reveals the lack of explicit eroticism in depictions of bathers who represented an important part of daily life separate from the pleasure quarters. Japan never experienced the Christian revolution like Europe so the Japanese never switched to viewing water as harmful to both the body and soul. To the Japanese water was only a purification element and the bath was seen as a place to clean, refresh, relax and invigorate not only the body, but also the *Kokoro*: the heart or spirit.<sup>43</sup> During the Tokugawa Period there were very few public wells in Edo so bathing for the middle classes occurred in unsegregated public baths, which were easily accessible throughout Edo. Although in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the government attempted to regulate the bath houses and proscribe mixed bathing, the laws were perfunctorily enforced.<sup>44</sup> In a half-hearted attempt to follow the laws most bathhouses set aside special times for women or segregated the tubs while the dressing areas remained mixed.<sup>45</sup>

A famous Tokugawa Period print is Torii Kiyonaga's (1752 - 1815) *Interior of a Bathhouse* (fig. 6, 1787, Museum of Fine Arts Boston, Massachusetts), a copy of which was owned by Degas. The vertical Oban diptych, the rectangular Oban being the most common format for Ukiyo-e prints, shows the inside of a what appears to be the woman's side of a public bath. Eight women are depicted in various states of undress, along with one child being cleaned by his mother, and one man whose face and legs can be seen through a window and doorway in the upper left. There is a shallow pool at the man's feet with a ladle inside and bucket just inside the women's area. Jill DeVonyar and Richard Kendall suggest that the man in this print represents the Japanese voyeur, watching the women bathe.<sup>46</sup> However, I argue that the man is a Sansuke, a common male attendant there to help the women bathe, who would assist with the difficult to reach process of

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<sup>43</sup> Scott Clark, *Japan, A View from the Bath*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994). 5.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> DeVonyar, *Degas and the Art of Japan*, 68.

scrubbing one's back and hair.<sup>47</sup> These men generally did not engage in sex with their clients and were considered essential to the bathing process, due to the elaborate hairstyles and bathing facilities lacking spigots and faucets.<sup>48</sup> The man could also be representative of the unsegregated nature of public bathhouses, which was a matter of contention in Tokugawa Japan. Despite being undressed and in one instance exposing public hair, the women are not explicitly sexualized; they are completely engaged in their own pursuits. Whereas from a western perspective one could posit the view of the print to be voyeuristic, the kneeling bather features predominately, the bent knees and arched back serving practical purposes instead of titillating ones. Prints in the same genre of Kiyonaga's *Interior of a Bathhouse* show bathing was an essential aspect of contemporary life in Japan during the Tokugawa Period.

When Ukiyo-e prints made their way to Paris in the 1850s, first through Dutch channels and, after the borders were opened, through Parisian art dealers, Parisians felt like they could recognize many of the everyday activities and gestures depicted in works like Kiyonaga's diptych.<sup>49</sup> The contemporary tone drew Impressionist artists like Edgar Degas and Mary Cassatt to use both stylistic and cultural elements from the Ukiyo-e prints in their work to represent modern life in Paris. The social changes in Tokugawa Japan were equivalent to the social upheaval the Impressionists were experiencing a century later and the Japanese aesthetics were applied to their representations of modern life.

The evolution of the female nude from the *Aphrodite of Knidos* to Ingres' depictions of the exotic female responded to the changing cultural attitudes towards bathing in Europe. The differences between European artistic traditions and Japanese traditional approaches to the female nude express their cultural values towards water, bathing, and the female body. However, as Ukiyo-e prints and scientific advances influenced European art and life, social changes

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<sup>47</sup> DeVonyar, *Degas and the Art of Japan*, 33.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 13.

regarding water, bathing and the female nude could be represented in art. Both male and female artists had a hand in traversing the terrain back to a society where cleanliness was associated with elevated social classes.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> My area of study focuses on Degas's pastel bathers, not the bathing scenes occasionally found in the brothel monotypes, and I am arguing that the former depict bourgeois women, despite contemporary critics and more recent art historians who have read them as prostitutes.

## Chapter 2:

### The Bourgeois Bather

#### An Education

Mary Cassatt had spent years traveling around Europe receiving her education from masters located in both studios and museums. However, her artistic style was stagnated by the inclinations of the male jury of the French official exhibitions. Edgar Degas's invitation to Cassatt to join the Independents empowered her to find an individual voice and style away from the confines of the Academy-educated Salon. Degas and Cassatt's artistic relationship was based on a mutual appreciation of the other's works and skill. Their shared desire to illustrate and comment on modern life informed how they approached the familiar bathing female nude. I shall trace Degas and Cassatt's relationship, from Cassatt's background and artistic development, through the evolution of Degas and Cassatt's relationship, to their combined interest in bathers and issues of propriety. I establish that Cassatt and Degas's exchange of techniques and subjects was mutually beneficial and facilitated aesthetic explorations of modernity's effect on bourgeois women's personas and issues of propriety in public and private spaces.

Mary Stevenson Cassatt was born May 2, 1844 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania to Mr. and Mrs. Robert Simpson Cassatt. Mr. Cassatt had made his money through the stock and real estate markets, and had accumulated enough wealth that they were considered American "aristocrats."<sup>51</sup> Mary was their fourth child with two older brothers, Robert and Alexander, one sister, Lydia, and one younger brother, Joseph. When Mary Cassatt was six, the family spent five years traveling throughout Europe, staying longest in Paris, Heidelberg and Darmstadt, for her brother Robert's health.<sup>52</sup> During their stay in Europe Cassatt's brother Robert passed away from his ill health and their grief prompted the family's return to the United States. This early introduction to European

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<sup>51</sup> Griselda Pollock, *Mary Cassatt: Painter of Modern Women*, (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1998). 7

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

art, language and culture had a formative impact on young Cassatt. After the family's return she chose to study at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia, the oldest art school in the United States.<sup>53</sup> In 1865 Cassatt traveled to Paris where she spent her time receiving private tutoring in various masters' studios and copying paintings in the Louvre. For almost ten years Cassatt traveled all over Europe to learn from different painters, and see all the art she could. Her studies in Belgium, Spain, Italy and London were interspersed with visits back to the United States to see her family and to avoid the Franco-Prussian War.<sup>54</sup> She was known for her self-sufficiency, fierce independence, and the tendency to pursue her own interests with an unusually persistent single-mindedness. Cassatt frequently traveled under difficult circumstances and without a chaperone to arrive at a desired artistic destination.<sup>55</sup> In fall of 1874, Cassatt moved to Paris permanently, where she was joined three years later by her parents and sister, Lydia.<sup>56</sup> By this time, Cassatt had already exhibited several paintings at the Salon, and was making a name for herself in contemporary circles. *The Mandolin Player* (fig. 7, 1868, private collection), submitted to the 1868 Salon under Mary Stevenson, was the first Salon-exhibited painting by Cassatt.<sup>57</sup>

*The Mandolin Player* shows a half-length female figure positioned in the center of the canvas holding a mandolin. The flat brown background emphasizes the face half in shadow, staring off vacantly to the side. The ambiguous age of the figure, and her lack of enthusiasm in playing the mandolin, creates a tension that captures the viewer's gaze. The subject of a peasant music maker followed prevailing trends of romanticized portraiture, as seen in Manet's *The Spanish Singer* (1860, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York) and Jean François Millet's *The Spinner: Goat Girl of Auvergne* (1868-69, Musee d'Orsay, Paris).<sup>58</sup> *The Mandolin Player* is a

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<sup>53</sup> Pollock, *Mary Cassatt: Painter of Modern Women*, 10.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Nancy Mowll Mathews, *Cassatt and Her Circle: Selected Letters*, (New York City: Cross River Press, Ltd., 1984). 11.

<sup>56</sup> Pollock, *Mary Cassatt: Painter of Modern Women*, 11.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>58</sup> Jean Baptiste Camille Corot also created a whole series of this pervasive Salon-approved subject of a female peasant music maker. See *Girl with Mandolin* (1860-65, Saint Louis Art Museum).



technically adroit rendering of a Salon-approved subject. As Cassatt's first exhibited work it shows her early attempt to identify with the masculine norms of her colleagues. The literary inspiration for this painting may have come from Tennyson's poem, "Mariana in the Moated Garage," as Cassatt was a fervent admirer of Tennyson's poetry. Further evidence of this comes from a letter her brother Alexander sent to his fiancé, Lois Buchanan, around the time it was exhibited. He declared, "Mary is an enthusiastic admirer of Tennyson, and she always said she would paint a picture of Mariana."<sup>59</sup> Unfortunately, very few of Cassatt's early works remain, so it is impossible to view her copies of the old masters to track the evolution of her technique as art historians can with Degas, but it is easy to see the transformation in her technique and subject matter in the works that remain. The paintings that resulted from her travels reveal the influence of her teachers' techniques on her work. Cassatt was still very much a student learning from the masters for the next couple years until 1874, which marked her return to Paris.

The 1874 Salon heralded a great change for the Parisian art scene and Cassatt. It was the year her rendition of *Ida* (fig. 8, 1874, private collection) was accepted by the Salon. At the same time, a group of artists decided not to showcase their work in the Salon, and chose to host their own independent exhibition, a group of artists who would later be known as the Impressionists. Cassatt's painting *Ida* is once again based off a central character in a Tennyson poem, this time "The Princess" (1847).<sup>60</sup> In "The Princess," Ida refuses to accept an arranged marriage to a neighboring prince and leaves home to found a female-only university. The poem was intended to promote the movement for women's equality and education.<sup>61</sup> Cassatt's *Ida* is a pale woman whose red hair is covered by a yellow head scarf, and unlike *The Mandolin Player*, Ida stares out of the frame directly at the viewer. Ida's direct gaze expresses her defiance towards traditional

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<sup>59</sup> Alexander Cassatt in a letter to Lois Buchanan, August 1868, Pollock, *Mary Cassatt: Painter of Modern Women*, 84.

<sup>60</sup> Pollock, *Mary Cassatt: Painter of Modern Women*, 110.

<sup>61</sup> "Tennyson's Poems Summary and Analysis of 'The Princess'," *Gradesaver*, accessed April 8, <http://www.gradesaver.com/tennysons-poems/study-guide/summary-the-princess>

women's roles. *Ida*, a woman who was “*someone* and not *something*,”<sup>62</sup> was a literary role model, and Cassatt's painting was her declaration to remain unwed and become someone. After Cassatt submitted *Ida* to the Salon she soon followed the piece to Paris where she took up permanent residency. According to Cassatt's first bibliographer, Achille Segard, upon seeing *Ida* for the first time Degas exclaimed, “Here is someone who feels as I do.”<sup>63</sup> Already an affinity between Cassatt and Degas for each other's work was developing. It would be another three years before Cassatt and Degas would begin working together.

### A Beneficial Partnership

When Cassatt returned to Paris in 1874 she was introduced to Louisine (Elder) Havemeyer, who would become an important supporter and collector of both Cassatt and Degas's works.<sup>64</sup> Upon Cassatt and Havemeyer's meeting Havemeyer wrote: “I felt that Mary Cassatt was the most intelligent woman I had ever met and I cherished every word she uttered, and remembered every remark she made. It seemed to me, no one could see art more understandingly, feel it more deeply, or express themselves more clearly than she did.”<sup>65</sup> Firsthand accounts of Cassatt favor her as a remarkably intelligent, art-conscientious individual, who was done with her studies and ready to create her own place in the world. Cassatt was also the one who convinced Louisine Havemeyer to purchase her first Degas pastel, *The Ballet Rehearsal* (1874, Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art), in 1875 for 500 Francs (\$100).<sup>66</sup> Louisine Havemeyer's recorded first impressions of the pastel may have been Cassatt's impression reiterated: “The drawing in the picture was as firm as a primitive, the difficulties of planes and perspective handled

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<sup>62</sup> Mary Cassatt from Susan Fillin Yeh, “Mary Cassatt's Images of Women,” *Art Journal* 35:4, (Summer 1976). 363.

<sup>63</sup> Edgar Degas, George T. M. Shackelford, “Pas De Deux: Mary Cassatt and Edgar Degas,” in *Mary Cassatt: Modern Woman*, edited by Judith A. Barter, (Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago, 1998). 109.

<sup>64</sup> Pollock, *Mary Cassatt: Painter of Modern Women*, 114.

<sup>65</sup> Louisine Havemeyer in Pollock, *Mary Cassatt: Painter of Modern Women*, 114.

<sup>66</sup> Pollock, *Mary Cassatt: Painter of Modern Women*, 114.

like a master, while the effect of light and shade and the beauty of color were simply entrancing.”<sup>67</sup>

Louisine Havemeyer’s acquisition of this pastel was the first of Degas’s works to be purchased by an American.<sup>68</sup> Through the individual appreciation and purchase of each other’s works Degas and Cassatt were growing closer together, as the Salon’s obdurate jury process drove them to find new ways to exhibit their work.

Degas, Claude Monet, Camille Pissarro and other artists, fed up with the jury process of the annual Salon, found a new way to show their work by holding their own exhibition titled the Anonymous Society of Painters, Sculptors, Printmakers, etc. in 1874.<sup>69</sup> This group of artists would later be grouped together as the Impressionists, although Cassatt and Degas never approved of the title, preferring to call themselves Independents. Their work was connected by their use of bright colors, loose brushwork and scenes of modern life that were prompted by Baudelaire’s *Painter of Modern Life* (1863). The exhibition was met with varying degrees of success as some lauded the work as a new approach to painting and others criticized their divergence from the classical canon. By 1877, Mary Cassatt had become frustrated with the sexist jury process of the Salon after her work was rejected for the third year in a row.<sup>70</sup> Somehow aware of Cassatt’s rejection, Degas approached her and issued an invitation to exhibit with the Independents. Cassatt was the only American and one of three women to show with them.<sup>71</sup> How exactly this invitation came about is unknown since the letters exchanged between the two were lost; additionally it is unknown if Degas and Cassatt were acquainted before 1877.<sup>72</sup> It is conceivable

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<sup>67</sup> Louisine Havemeyer, Pollock, *Mary Cassatt: Painter of Modern Women*, 114.

<sup>68</sup> Shackleford, “Pas De Deux: Mary Cassatt and Edgar Degas,” 110.

<sup>69</sup> Jean Sutherland Boggs, *Degas*, (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1988). 212.

<sup>70</sup> The Salon’s selection process was corrupt and highly discriminatory, especially against women artists. Cassatt’s strong will would not have endeared her to the jury and “the jurors were very unlikely to make a stand for the work of a woman who would neither flatter nor flirt with them.” See Nancy Mowll Mathews, *Mary Cassatt: A Life*, (New York: Villard Books, 1994). 105.

<sup>71</sup> Perhaps Cassatt’s American background interested Degas, whose mother was born in New Orleans.

<sup>72</sup> Apparently, Cassatt destroyed her letters from Degas after their falling out, but no one knows if Degas simply did not regularly keep his letters from Cassatt or he also intentionally destroyed his.

they met before this time, because they ran in the same circles in Paris, but between 1874 and 1877 both Degas and Cassatt spent time traveling abroad, so it is also possible they had not met.<sup>73</sup> Cassatt did not show work with the Independents until 1879, taking time to individualize her style and technique away from the restrictions of the Academy-based Salon.

Degas and Cassatt began their close working relationship once he invited her to join the Independents in 1877. Affirmation of their immediately close professional relationship was evident among the pieces they chose to display at the 1879 Independent Exhibition. Degas's piece *Dance School* (fig. 9, 1876, Shelburne Museum, Vermont), is a demonstration of his love of both the behind the scenes practices at the ballet as a subject and the forced diagonal perspective that crops the room. The female ballerinas create a white line across the painting, highlighted on either side by diffused light coming through the full length windows. The light colors of the ballerinas are offset by the ominous back of the male figure playing the violin dressed in black positioned in the left hand foreground. Although, this painting depicts a female-dominated space the masculine gaze is still present in the form of the teacher and musician. The viewer takes the position of a *flâneur*, both a welcome and unwelcome presence. Elements of Degas's technique from this work are perceptible in one of Cassatt's first entries as an Independent.

Cassatt's entry, *Little Girl in a Blue Armchair* (fig. 10, 1878, National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.), reflects the close working relationship she had with Degas and reveals the advent of her own stylistic maturity. The painting depicts a young girl, the daughter of a friend of Degas, sprawled ungainly on an armchair with a blue and white floral pattern.<sup>74</sup> The young girl is lounging with her legs apart, and a rebellious expression in direct retaliation to the social expectations that children conform to strict behavioral codes. The forced diagonal perspective

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These lost letters have left room for speculation about their relationship. See *I Have Always Loved You: A Story of Mary Cassatt and Edgar Degas* (2014) a fictional biography by Robin Oliveira.

<sup>73</sup> Degas was back and forth from Naples after the death of his uncle, and Cassatt visited New York and Philadelphia on separate occasions during this time period. See Pollock, *Mary Cassatt: Painter of Modern Women*, 11, and Boggs, *Degas*, 213.

<sup>74</sup> Pollock, *Mary Cassatt: Painter of Modern Women*, 129.

seen in *Dance School* is present in the cropped view of the living room, while the small dog curled up on the armchair to the girl's right takes the eye catching place of the male figure in black. The background also reveals their close relationship as Cassatt mentioned, years later, that Degas worked on the background.<sup>75</sup> The dog in this painting may have been the one Degas made inquiries about for Cassatt in a letter to Count Lepic.<sup>76</sup> Yet the picture is entirely her own in theme. *Little Girl in a Blue Armchair* continues Cassatt's theme of depicting female figures inside closed environments, but the girl's attitude in this painting rejects the enclosed space.<sup>77</sup> *Little Girl in a Blue Armchair* has a naturalistic, individual style that is absent in Cassatt's earlier works, and indicates her successful movement to Impressionism. Her independence in doing so was later praised by a prominent French critic:

Miss Mary Cassatt, though, has not gone the way of fashion, of the popular styles, of success, for she has gone to the disparaged Impressionists. A similarity of vision determined this choice, and this vision has expanded, has become increasingly searching: this strong-willed woman has truly learned to paint. (Gustave Geffroy, *La Vie Artistique*, 1893)<sup>78</sup>

After Cassatt's lauded showing with the Impressionists in April of 1879, she decided to join Degas in his efforts to publish a periodical that would contain original prints by the Impressionists accompanied by articles from amiable journalists.<sup>79</sup> Throughout 1879 to early 1880 Degas, Cassatt and Camille Pissarro worked together on prints in hopes of being able to publish *Le Jour et La Nuit* as a secondary way to exhibit their works.<sup>80</sup> They made countless prints together during this year, sharing sketches and plates, which presents a challenge when determining which print

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<sup>75</sup> "[Degas] advised me on the background, he even worked on the background," Mary Cassatt to Ambroise Vollard, 1903, Mathews, *Mary Cassatt: A Life*, 126.

<sup>76</sup> Mathews, *Cassatt and Her Circle: Selected Letters*, 148.

<sup>77</sup> Griselda Pollock, "Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity," in *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism, and Histories of Art*, (New York/London: Routledge, 1988). 65.

<sup>78</sup> Pollock, *Mary Cassatt: Painter of Modern Women*, 114.

<sup>79</sup> Shackelford, "Pas De Deux: Mary Cassatt and Edgar Degas," 119.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

was done by which artist. Cassatt's skill and technique in drawing and printmaking grew during this year, and evidence of this year of hard labor would be demonstrated in her later prints. At some point amidst the work, Cassatt posed for several drawings by Degas, which he used to create one pastel and two prints of her and her sister Lydia in the Louvre.

Degas and Cassatt's close relationship during this year of avid printmaking prompted Cassatt to model for the two prints. *Mary Cassatt at the Louvre: The Paintings Gallery* (fig. 11, 1879-80, The Cleveland Museum of Art, Ohio) shows the continued effect Degas's love of Japanese prints had on his work with its narrow vertical configuration, further emphasized by the marble column taking up a fourth of the left side. The print depicts Cassatt leaning on an umbrella with her back to both her sister, who is reading, and the viewer. As Cassatt's back faces the viewer, her expression is hidden as she examines the paintings in the Louvre, and it is impossible to determine which painting she is looking at. The second print, *Mary Cassatt at the Louvre: The Etruscan Gallery* (fig. 12, 1879-80, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Massachusetts) utilizes the same positions, Cassatt leaning on an umbrella with her back to her seated sister and the viewer. This print does not have the same Japanese characteristics as *The Paintings Gallery*, the quadratic shape further emphasized by the rectilinear sarcophagus in the background.<sup>81</sup> These prints align with writer Edmond Duranty's argument that "a back should reveal temperament, age and social position."<sup>82</sup> Anthea Callen argues that the view of Cassatt from the back, experiencing a private moment in a public space, makes her a voyeuristic spectacle which affirms the masculine gaze and undermines Cassatt's position in the art world.<sup>83</sup> However, Wendy Lesser argues that

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<sup>81</sup> The Etruscan marriage sarcophagus might have been an allusion to Cassatt's unmarried status.

<sup>82</sup> Pollock, *Mary Cassatt: Painter of Modern Women*, 117.

<sup>83</sup> Anthea Callen, "Privileged Sights/Sites of Privilege," in *The Spectacular Body: Science, Method, and Meaning in the work of Degas*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995). 12.

these prints show us that the person who appreciates the art and makes the art can both be female, which indicates acceptance and a possible feminist attitude on Degas's part.<sup>84</sup>

Undoubtedly, these portraits of Mary Cassatt in the Louvre reveal how her male counterparts viewed her as a female in a traditionally male career. I agree with Lesser's assessment of Degas's intentions, and possible feminist attitude.<sup>85</sup> Similar to Degas's portraits of their male contemporaries, Degas positioned Cassatt in a place related to her profession. However, depicting her in a private space, such as her studio, would not have been socially acceptable as it had been for the males; the Louvre was a public space that was appropriate for any bourgeois woman. Cassatt's dominance over that space is shown by the focus on her rather than the works she is looking at; her gaze is the empowering one, the viewer is not important enough to be aware of her thoughts or even acknowledged. By placing Cassatt in the Louvre, Degas also paid a small homage to the masters and teachers to whom they owed their skill. These prints are indicative of how Degas saw Cassatt as a bourgeois woman demanding her rightful place in the male art world.

*The Paintings Gallery* and *The Etruscan Gallery* were intended for the first edition of *Le Jour et La Nuit*. Unfortunately, when the time came to publish the periodical the artists were unprepared and the periodical was never realized. In a letter Cassatt's mother sent to Cassatt's brother Alexander, it is clear they blamed the incompleteness on Degas: "and as usual with Degas when the time arrived to appear, he wasn't ready - so that "Le Jour et La Nuit" which might have been a great success has not yet appeared - Degas never is ready for anything - This time he has

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<sup>84</sup> Wendy Lesser and Brian E. Lebowitz, *His Other Half: Men Looking at Women through Art*, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press. 1991). 58. It is important to note that Degas's feminist or misogynistic attitude was never documented.

<sup>85</sup> Norma Broude, "Edgar Degas and French Feminism, ca 1800: The Young Spartans, the Brothel Monotypes and the Bathers revisited," *Art Bulletin* 70:4 (Dec. 1988). 658 also argues for a possible feminist awareness on the part of Degas based on his association with Diego Martelli, a self-declared feminist.

thrown away an excellent chance for all of them.”<sup>86</sup> Degas's prints of Cassatt for *Le Jour et La Nuit* show his awareness of social issues that were influencing him in his everyday life, but it was not only women's changing role in society that interested him. In particular, as regards Degas's topic of bather, which he shared with Cassatt, it has been argued that new attitudes towards hygiene and propriety also would have influenced their subject matter.

### A New Perspective

In nineteenth-century France there was a growing awareness of the relationship between disease and hygiene. The need for new hygienic practices came not only from a desire to avoid illness, but also the spreading association between cleanliness and a person's moral character. However, new hygienic practices were implemented gradually because of the lack of bathrooms in strategic places in Parisian homes, and the absence of clean running water in Paris on the Right Bank until 1865.<sup>87</sup> In the 1880s the round floor bathtubs were commonplace in upper class houses, even though they continued to be associated with prostitution.<sup>88</sup> The idea of women bathing had many sexual connotations because of various associations, and the very act of a woman undressing was titillating. Bathing was associated with prostitution as a result of the laws that demanded that prostitutes bathe before clients, as well as the earlier vilification of water which associated bathing with fornication and sin.<sup>89</sup> Other aversions to water came from the orthodox regulations on bathing based on sex, age, and profession. Women were held to even harsher restrictions when it came to bathing, because water had been linked with infertility to prevent women from taking immersive baths.<sup>90</sup> However, the new awareness linking hygiene and disease

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<sup>86</sup> Katherine Cassatt in a letter to Alexander Cassatt, 1880, Matthews, *Cassatt and Her Circle: Selected Letters*, 151.

<sup>87</sup> Philippe Ariès, and Georges Duby, *A History of Private Life*, V. 4, (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987). 370.

<sup>88</sup> Eunice Lipton, "The Bathers: Modernity and Prostitution," in *Looking into Degas: Uneasy Images of Women and Modern Life*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986). 169

<sup>89</sup> In his brothel monotypes Degas depicted prostitutes bathing in front of their male clients.

<sup>90</sup> Ariès, *A History of Private Life*, V. 4., 382.



meant that people had to be encouraged to bathe, because by the latter half of the nineteenth-century people had become so unfamiliar with bathing in France that guides on how to properly take a bath were published.<sup>91</sup> Katherine Ashberg points out that many people also attempted to promote bathing by comparing body cleanliness to moral purity, citing pamphlets on the toilette which promoted bathing. According to one pamphlet, “Doctors, who should preach the purity of the body as the doctors of the soul preach the purity of the spirit are also failing young women. Cleanliness takes us close to the angels of light, while dirtiness drags us down into the primordial sludge.”<sup>92</sup> Pamphlets and other forms of media which advocated bathing pervaded France.

However, bathing remained as difficult in the late 1800s as in the seventeenth century, and the little bathing that occurred was still done in the bedroom with basins, large pitchers and big round tubs, objects which Degas used as studio props. Bathing also required the help of servants as running water in every home was still an ideal for the future. Since only bourgeois families could afford it, the immersive bath that had once been considered a luxury of sin, was now being surreptitiously enjoyed by decent bourgeois women. Water was returning to its classical affiliations of purity, rebirth, and life. The advent of undergarments and lingerie further delegated women’s nudity and toilette to the most private of spaces, and in public women were never more covered up as they were between 1830 and 1914.<sup>93</sup> There was a disconnect between the expectations of women’s hygiene and their social standing. Bourgeois women who raised the children were the moral compasses of society; they were expected to be clean and take baths, but society continued to connect bathing and prostitutes. Changing societal standards in regards to hygiene and privacy were struggling against the long held beliefs and associations concerning

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<sup>91</sup> Harriet N. Austin, *Baths and How to Take Them*, (1861).

<https://archive.org/details/101142706.nlm.nih.gov>

<sup>92</sup> Katherine Ashenburg, *The Dirt on Clean: An Unsanitized History*, 1st American ed, (New York: North Point Press, 2007). 192.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 487.

water. Degas and Cassatt's desire to portray modern life would have found these warring ideals a motivator for their decision to represent women bathers.

The subject of women bathing, well-trodden artistic ground, established an acceptable place to represent the familiar and idealized nude found in western art. Contemporary critics of Degas's bathers, expecting the idealized nude, criticized them as portraying Degas's believed misogynistic tendencies in his work and could even see them as prostitutes.<sup>94</sup> In his 1886 review, Octave Mirbeau provided a deprecatory analysis of one of Degas's bather monotypes: "fat, dumpy, her flesh puffy, resting her hands on her enormous buttocks. Her head is small, her legs are curved, a little knock-kneed, her arms thin, idiotic, the arms of a baby, ending in a short, chubby hand attached by a roll of fat."<sup>95</sup> Another contemporary critic, Gustave Geffroy, saw Degas's bathers, shown from the back, as animalistic: "woman reduced to the gestures of her limbs, to the appearance of her body, woman considered as female, expressed in her animality alone, as if this were a zoological treatise requiring superior illustration."<sup>96</sup> Contemporary male viewers found the imperfect female body in art difficult to compliment, since the idealized version had, for so long, been the object of their fantasies. However, several modern art historians have argued that Degas's bathers are separate from his prostitutes and actually potentially promote a feminist outlook of women. In contrast to Mirbeau's harsh commentary on the physical characteristics of Degas's bathers, Norma Broude has documented Degas's refusal to flatter any of his female sitters, no matter their profession or social position.<sup>97</sup> Broude argues this equality of homeliness also suggests that the bathers are "respectable" women, not the prostitutes for which Callen advocates. Callen argues they are prostitutes because of rules about hygiene and how Degas

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<sup>94</sup> Heather Dawkins, in *The Nude in French Art and Culture, 1870-1910*, (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002). 85 argues that Degas's bathers were prostitutes based on the reviews of contemporary critics who read them as such.

<sup>95</sup> Octave Mirbeau, 1886, in Dawkins, *The Nude in French Art and Culture, 1870-1910*, 72.

<sup>96</sup> Gustave Geffroy, in Dawkins, *The Nude in French Art and Culture, 1870-1910*, 77.

<sup>97</sup> Norma Broude, "Degas's 'Misogyny'," *Art Bulletin* 59:1 (March 1977). 105.

replaced the eroticism gained through the gaze with touch.<sup>98</sup> Wendy Lesser argues that the perspective of the women's backs provides a feeling of delicacy and privacy.<sup>99</sup> Each bathers' unique physiognomy produces a genuine, real life woman who could be any woman on the street. Eunice Lipton contends that the anonymous nature of these women, which Geffroy claimed made them animalistic, actually makes the women universal and approachable by cutting across class lines.<sup>100</sup> Degas was depicting the modern woman, diverse and aware of her body, which potentially threatened his male audience's feelings of masculinity and superiority, even as it possibly alluded to voyeurism through what is known as the 'keyhole' view.

Degas presents his modern woman in the pastel, *Woman Bathing in a Shallow Tub* (fig. 13, 1886, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York), which depicts a woman bent at the waist in a shallow tub washing her feet and was bequeathed to the Met by Louisine Havemeyer. When the pastel was exhibited, along with the rest of the bather series, at the 1886 Impressionist Show it was highly criticized for its seemingly unfinished quality and the body's lack of traditional beauty, associating it with prostitution.<sup>101</sup> The pastel was considered unfinished because Degas allowed the natural pale tan of the paper to remain as the prevailing tone of the woman's body, adding shadow and the light pink pastel sparingly. The paper's natural color also shows through as reflections of light in the tub and the midtone of the pitcher in the bottom right corner. Overall, there is very little color used in the piece, the most belonging to the towel or sheet draped over a chair in the background. The heaviest application of pastel went onto the sheet, where an

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<sup>98</sup> Broude, "Edgar Degas and French Feminism, ca 1800: The Young Spartans, the Brothel Monotypes and the Bathers revisited," 655. Callen also argues that the bathers are prostitutes because of associations of water with prostitution that reinforce the erotic reading. See Anthea Callen, "Degas' Bathers: Hygiene and Dirt," in *Dealing with Degas: Representations of Women and the Politics of Vision*, edited by Richard Kendall, and Griselda Pollock, (New York, NY: Universe, 1992). 159-185.

<sup>99</sup> Lesser, *His Other Half: Men Looking at Women through Art*, 67. See also Katherine Brown, "The Aesthetics of Presence: Looking at Degas's 'Bathers'," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 68:4 (2010). 331-41 for a similar argument on the backs providing privacy.

<sup>100</sup> Lipton, "The Bathers, Modernity and Prostitution," 152.

<sup>101</sup> Boggs, *Degas*, 446.

amalgamation of white and blue accentuates the folds. The bluish white color provides an outline for the woman's body, accentuating the shape of the back and awkward bend of the body. The emphasis of her back constructs a woman who is at once both an individual and anonymous, but is also perhaps subject unknowingly to a voyeur's gaze, as if through a keyhole.<sup>102</sup> The idea of the 'keyhole' view comes from Degas's shop talk:

Hitherto the nude has always been represented in poses which presuppose an audience, but these women of mine are honest, simple folk, unconcerned by any other interests than those involved in their physical condition. Here is another; she is washing her feet. It is as if you looked through a keyhole.<sup>103</sup>

France Borel argues that by the elevated perspective provided by the 'keyhole' view Degas reveres his model as "she ignores her admirers, never lowers her gaze upon them, looks only at herself, into her own center, her navel. Such independence renders her supreme. There, more than anywhere else, she escapes."<sup>104</sup> This perspective allows the baigneuse to dominate her own space and removes the viewer from the position of a voyeur. However, Callen argues the exact opposite, that the elevated 'keyhole' view gives the viewer the masculine, controlling position.<sup>105</sup> I argue that the perceived 'keyhole' view actually deprives the male viewer of any voyeuristic titillation because of the combined distance and denial of the frontal view of the body. Comparable to Kiyonaga's *Bathhouse*, this decidedly anti-classical rendering of the female nude profiles a modern woman unconcerned with any spectator.

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<sup>102</sup> Carol Armstrong argues that the crouched position is evidence of Degas's celibacy rather than his misogynistic or erotic tendencies. See Carol M. Armstrong, "Edgar Degas and the Representation of the Female Body," in *The Female Body in Western Culture*, edited by Susan Rubin Suleiman, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1986). 223-42.

<sup>103</sup> Degas in Elizabeth Basye Gilmore Holt, *From the Classicists to the Impressionists: Art and Architecture in the 19th century*, (Anchor books ed. Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1966). 403.

<sup>104</sup> France Borel, *The Seduction of Venus: Artists and Models*, (New York: Skira/Rizzoli, 1990). 120.

<sup>105</sup> Callen, "Degas' Bathers: Hygiene and Dirt," 169.

Although there are no distinguishing features to determine the bather's social standing or profession, I argue that Degas is portraying a bourgeois woman.<sup>106</sup> Degas chose to represent a powerful woman with her back to the viewer in his prints of Cassatt at the Louvre; by portraying her facing away from the viewer he gave her a power over the viewer's gaze and her own space. He is showing the viewer that, despite her sex, Cassatt is as worthy and talented as any male artist. Additionally, Degas is commenting on the persona upper class women express in public, unbending and covered up, the moral compasses of society. The bathers allowed Degas the opportunity to explore upper class women's persona in private, out of the public eye. The perspective of her back is reminiscent of Cassatt's back, and allows her a private space to complete her hygiene ritual. Her bend at the waist, in direct contrast to Cassatt's vertical posture, further indicates her location in a private sphere, probably her bedroom where she would be safe from the rules governing middle-class women. Depicting a bourgeois woman bathing authorized Degas to address the changing social connections between cleanliness and propriety. Bathing, a laborious and time consuming activity, implies availability to either a servant or running water and extra time, privileges of the bourgeoisie and thus indicative of a superior social class and hygiene. As the viewer is not permitted to see the woman's face, her physiognomy is not as critical to the interpretation of work as her actions. Contemporary critics were not analyzing physiognomy of the bathers' faces, but rather their bodies when they critiqued the series of bathing female nudes as depicting prostitutes. In spite of their critiques, I argue that the bodies are more idealized than those in Degas's brothel monotypes, and the pastel bathers can be read as bourgeois women, a taboo topic, yet one that did not offend feminist women who bought the pastels, including Louisine Havemeyer and Mary Cassatt.

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<sup>106</sup> Roy McMullen, *Degas: His Life, Times, and Work*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1984). 277. McMullen also argues for the bourgeois bather "these women are obviously, emphatically not Venuses, Bathshebas, exotic geishas, or Renaissance athletes; they are the sisters and wives of middle class Third Republic Frenchmen."

Cassatt was familiar with Degas's bourgeois bathing series, especially *Woman Bathing in a Shallow Tub*, as she had acquired it for her personal collection in an exchange with Degas for her painting, *Girl Arranging Her Hair* (1886, National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.). The back view of a woman at her toilette was probably one inspiration for *Woman Bathing (La Toilette)* (fig. 14, 1891, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York), which was one of ten color prints she showed at her first solo exhibition at Galeries Durand-Ruel in 1891.<sup>107</sup> The woman's sensuous curvilinear back shows off Cassatt's adroit drawing skills. Degas is said to have exclaimed about this print, "I do not admit that a woman can draw like that."<sup>108</sup> The statement was, in Degas's usual abrupt and backhanded fashion, his way of complimenting Cassatt's skill. At this point in her career Cassatt had completely rejected the canon of female bodies as objects. Cassatt's bather is half dressed in a green, pink and white striped dress, leaning at the waist over a basin of water. The woman's hands are cupped together in the basin, allowing the placement of her arms to cover up any detailed frontal nudity. The top of the woman's head, but not her body, is reflected in the mirror of the vanity, leaving her anonymous and chaste. The lack of detailed female anatomy in this piece is a result of both social expectations that women artists not depict nudes, because of the thought that a successful rendition of a female nude was the artist painting herself, combined with the desire to show women complete within themselves, declining male validation.<sup>109</sup> The floral pattern, which is repeated on both the pitcher in the lower left and the blue carpet, contrasted with the dark blank expanse of the wall, and the tilted perspective of the piece shows the influence of Japanese Ukiyo-e style. The influx of Japanese prints into the European art market influenced both Cassatt and Degas's work from the technique to the material.<sup>110</sup> *Woman Bathing (La Toilette)* does not

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<sup>107</sup> "Mary Cassatt, *Woman Bathing (La Toilette)*," *The MET*, accessed April 10, 2016, <http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/337064>

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Anne Higonnet, "Mirrored Bodies," in *Berthe Morisot's Images of Women*, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1992). 173.

<sup>110</sup> See Higonnet, *Berthe Morisot's Images of Women*, chapter 7 for explanation of Ukiyo-e style on Cassatt's prints.

allow for any voyeuristic titillation from the viewer as the woman is completely absorbed in her ritual and the modest form strays far from the idealized nude.

Cassatt's representation of a woman at her toilette depicts a woman of the upper social class similar to that of Degas's bather.<sup>111</sup> As art historian Anne Higonnet pointed out, Berthe Morisot had problems divorcing her own class from that of her scenes of working-class women, continuing to include signs of middle class respectability.<sup>112</sup> I assume that Cassatt would have had a similar problem with her works, inserting women of her own class in various situations no matter how culturally inappropriate. The influence of the Ukiyo-e distanced perspective and cultural attitude towards bathing gave Cassatt the freedom to illustrate a topless woman lacking explicit eroticism of her own class away from the western canon. She was inspired by the prints of Utamaro, who depicted women from various classes in non-erotic bathing scenes, and of whose prints she owned several. As an upper-class woman Cassatt directly experienced the issues surrounding the changing ideas of hygiene and the contention with women entering public spaces. Intimately aware of the social guidelines regarding women in public, she would have found the prints of herself in the Louvre an allowable way to be portrayed by a male colleague. Unlike a portrait Degas did of her titled *Mary Cassatt* (c.1880-1884, Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery, Washington D.C.), of which her dislike is well documented, there is no record of her distaste for the *At the Louvre* set, and as opinionated and strong-willed as Cassatt was no doubt she would have expressed that opinion at some point. Cassatt's acceptance of the prints shows she knew the boundaries of acceptability and the importance of a public persona, even as she challenged them in her art. Her work allowed her the opportunity to examine the domestic obligations of

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<sup>111</sup> I disagree with Griselda Pollock's claim that Cassatt's *Woman Bathing (La Toilette)* depicts a working class woman in the attic of a bourgeois house. Even though Cassatt may have used a domestic as a model, this does not preclude reading the image itself as evoking a middle class milieu. See Pollock's "Some Letters on Feminism, Politics and Modern Art: When Edgar Degas Shared a Space with Mary Cassatt at the Suffrage Benefit Exhibition, New York," in her *Differencing the Canon: Feminist Desire and the Writing of Art's Histories*, (New York: Routledge, 1999). 222.

<sup>112</sup> Higonnet, "Mirrored Bodies," 167.

women, and how women in the late nineteenth century were not abiding by the extreme strictures but negotiating them, taking advantage of the new opportunities offered by living in modern Paris.<sup>113</sup>

Cassatt and Degas's examination of the interface between the socially expected demeanor of bourgeois women in public and private was facilitated through their prints and pastels of bathers. However, when it came to impartial depictions of bathers they were both hampered by their own sex and social positions. Cassatt was blocked in her attempt to portray female nudes because it was not accepted for women to paint nude women. Degas was handicapped because as an upper class male he could only observe the daily restrictions women faced in society; he could never truly understand the constrictions imposed on them. It was their symbiotic artistic relationship that provided opportunities for growth for both artists. As Louisine Havemeyer said about their partnership at a tribute to Degas and Cassatt in 1915: "she could do without him, while he needed her honest criticism and her generous admiration."<sup>114</sup> Cassatt had a plethora of skill and determination that, encouraged and inspired by Degas, allowed her to challenge both social and artistic conventions. Through Degas's relationship with Cassatt, and perhaps the other bourgeois women in his life, he could glimpse and reproduce the effect society's fetters had on the daily life of women in his own class. The common assumption that Cassatt was a follower or pupil of Degas is incorrect; they both learned from each other's technique and outlook on life as artistic partners, to which their bathers attest. Additionally, their depictions of bathers predicate to their shared inspirations from both eastern and western sources.

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<sup>113</sup> Ruth Iskin, *Modern Women and Parisian Consumer Culture in Impressionist Painting*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007). 201.

<sup>114</sup> Louisine Havemeyer, Nancy Mowll Mathews, *Cassatt, a Retrospective*, (New York: H.L. Levin Associates, Inc., 1996). 313.



### Chapter 3:

#### Bathing in Modernity

##### Building the Bridge

Examining the idealized form of the *Aphrodite of Knidos* reveals she was the woman that endured for centuries in Academic art. The elements that make her desirable were replicated by Botticelli, Giordano, Ingres and many other artists throughout European artistic traditions. However, not all artistic traditions only illustrated the erotic nude; Ukiyo-e prints were comprised of several subcategories of the female nude that reflected varying important social aspects of society. In nineteenth-century France there was an artistic movement to depict modern people and ideas, to emulate the Japanese and move away from illustrations of classical myths and allegories. Edgar Degas and Mary Cassatt were members of the group of artists who made the first leap into modern art, but despite their best intentions, the myths, allegories and stereotypes that formulated ideas about women's bodies since the *Aphrodite of Knidos* continued to shape their modern depictions of the female nude.

As I have established female nudes from the *Knidian Aphrodite* to Ingres were representations of women who were either inherently divine or elevated from their low status. Their elevated status was made evident through their relationship to water and their surroundings. Even when water was regarded by society as a carnal distraction, it continued to carry the iconographic meaning of purification and rebirth as a result of baptismal practices, and Greco-Roman mythology. The images of nude women in the proximity of water or in the process of their toilette are indicative of allegorical women being reborn and purified. The female body was constructed to be looked at by the male viewer, on display; the female nude titillated and represented an ideal. However, following Ingres' idealized exotic nudes, artists began to slowly discontinue painting the female on display for her male audience and progressed to realistic women invalidating the scopophilic gaze.

Gustave Courbet (1819 - 1877) was a Realist artist who strove to renounce the idealized female nude in Academic painting. Courbet wished to depict contemporary scenes with impartial observation; he endeavored to maneuver away from the subject matter of the Salon. However, his style and technique continued to mostly adhere to the Academy teachings until the 1850s, when his paintings reveal a stylistic shift to “materialism,” as he applied excess pigment to the canvas and left his brush and palette knife strokes visible.<sup>115</sup> Courbet’s anti-classical rendering of bathers prompted controversy as his female bodies strayed far from Ingres’ traditional beauty. Courbet’s *Bathing Women* (fig. 15, 1853, Musée Fabre, Montpellier, France) depicts two women at the river side. The central realistically full figure is unclothed, a white cloth held draped underneath her posterior as she steps out of the water. Even though contemporary critics at its exhibition at the Salon of 1853 saw the nude as repulsively fat and vulgar her position as a symbol of desire continues to be indicated by the sensuous curve formed by the contrapposto stance.<sup>116</sup> Her fully clothed companion, her maid who reveals the dirt on her one bare foot, is reclining on the grass to the right, and hints at either the process of undressing or dressing. Petra ten-Doesschate Chu claims that depicting two women allowed Courbet to represent feminine intimacy, either between bourgeois women and their maids or between sisters and friends.<sup>117</sup> This painting lacks any allegorical story, appearing to represent only two women bathing in a stream, an unconventional subject choice because of the lack of permitted immersive bathing at this time. However, the topic remained an acceptable pretext for representing the female nude. Courbet was painting female nudes that were unique and challenged Academic conventions, while continuing to utilize the classical pose and justification for the nude.

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<sup>115</sup> Linda Nochlin, *Gustave Courbet: A Study of Style and Society*, (New York: Garland Pub, 1976). 3-4.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 190.

<sup>117</sup> Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, *The Most Arrogant Man in France: Gustave Courbet and the nineteenth-century Media Culture*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007). 128.

Courbet painted the authentic body of a bourgeois woman, but he dressed her in a woodland setting and the heroic pose of a pagan goddess to justify the nudity.<sup>118</sup> Eugene Delacroix (1798 - 1863), who is known to have admired Courbet's technique and style, was disturbed by this lack of symbolic intent in the *Bathing Women*, and protested that: "between these two figures there is an exchange of thought which one cannot understand."<sup>119</sup> Delacroix saw the painting as vulgar, and his strongly voiced opinion towards this painting which lacked a clear narrative was repeated by other critics.<sup>120</sup> *The Bathers* shocked male viewers; Proudhon, who supported the painting saw the women as representing the gluttony and greed of the bourgeoisie.<sup>121</sup> It was clear that these women were not idealistic allegories or mythical representations, like Diana discovering Actaeon, and the fact that Courbet had dared depict the nude without that traditional narrative was the reason critics were so vocal.<sup>122</sup> However, Gautier, offended by the painting, saw the nude figure both defying and adhering to classical trappings, referring to it as a Hottentot Venus or a bourgeois Callipyge.<sup>123</sup> Courbet was attempting to cease depicting women as myths and allegories through illustrating realistic bodies, but despite his contemporaries' opinions he had continued to drape them in the entrenched iconography surrounding the female nude. They existed in a liminal space between classical ideals and modern women.

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<sup>118</sup> Beatrice Farwell, *Manet and the Nude: A study of Iconography in the Second Empire*, (New York: Garland Pub, 1981). 47.

<sup>119</sup> Beatrice Farwell, "Courbet's Baigneuses and the Rhetorical Feminine Image," in *Woman as Sex Object: Studies in Erotic Art, 1730-1970*, edited by Linda Nochlin and Thomas B. Hess, (London: Allen Lane, 1973). 65.

<sup>120</sup> Chu, *The Most Arrogant Man in France: Gustave Courbet and the nineteenth-century Media Culture*, 126 recounts how contemporary viewers were perplexed by the ambiguity of *The Bathers*.

<sup>121</sup> Sarah Faunce, and Linda Nochlin, *Courbet Reconsidered*, (Brooklyn, N.Y: Brooklyn Museum, 1988). 113.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 112. The Hottentot Venus has anti-classical connotations despite the "Venus" because "Hottentot" is an offensive name for the Khoisan people.

The nude, hallowed by Ingres, revered by the Academic tradition, and then reinterpreted by Courbet, was evolving away from its position as the embodiment of ideal beauty.<sup>124</sup> From Courbet's *Bathers* the quickly changing genre took another step to contesting the idealized female nude with Manet's depictions of nudes such as the *Surprised Nymph* (1859-61, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Buenos Aires) and *Le Déjeuner sur L'Herbe* (1863, Musée d'Orsay, Paris) originally titled *Le Bain*.<sup>125</sup> Manet's *Surprised Nymph* provided an updated view of the familiar Susanna and the Elders, as the elders' presence is implied by the viewer's gaze. Manet's *Le Déjeuner sur L'Herbe* wrought more controversy than Courbet's *Bathers* because of the clothed men, nude women juxtaposition, and the challenging gaze of the seated nude.<sup>126</sup> However, perhaps if the title had remained *Le Bain* it would have justified the nude women. Paul Tucker suggests it also may have been a coy reference to Courbet's *Bathers*.<sup>127</sup> Manet is considered the founder of Impressionism, even though he never exhibited with them, and his interest in modern life paved the way for Degas and Cassatt's bourgeois bathers. Kenneth Clark argues that Degas's bather pastels were the ultimate antithesis of the *Knidian Aphrodite*, because Degas painted real women who refused to be on display.<sup>128</sup> Clark takes the stance that Degas's bathers were prostitutes, a detail which made them the antipode of the *Knidian Aphrodite*, as they did not belong in the higher echelons of society.<sup>129</sup> However, accepting my argument that Degas's bathers were not prostitutes, but women of the middle class, minimizes the distance between the *Knidian Aphrodite*, Ingres' *Valpinçon Bather* and Degas's bathers.

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<sup>124</sup> Farwell, *Manet and the Nude: A Study of Iconography in the Second Empire*, 67.

<sup>125</sup> Paul Hayes Tucker, *Manet's Le Déjeuner sur L'Herbe*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988). 6.

<sup>126</sup> There is a plethora of critical debate written on Manet's *Le Déjeuner sur L'Herbe*, which I will not be discussing.

<sup>127</sup> Tucker, *Manet's Le Déjeuner sur L'Herbe*, 30.

<sup>128</sup> Kenneth Clark, *The Nude: A Study in Ideal Form*, 346.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

### Similar Circumstances

The other precedent to Degas and Cassatt's images of bathers came from the other side of the world in the form of widely disseminated prints from Japan. Degas and Cassatt were both admirers of Japanese prints, Degas even experimenting with fans as canvases on which to paint.<sup>130</sup> Japanese prints came to Paris through museum and gallery shows as well as on the packing material in which fragile Japanese collectables were wrapped. Degas and Cassatt studied Japanese prints avidly, and did sketches of them, just as they had done sketches of the classical masterpieces. They were interested in the Ukiyo-e prints of all genres both for their structural qualities, as displayed in Degas's prints and pastels of Cassatt, and their subject matter. One of the Ukiyo-e subjects Degas and Cassatt sketched most frequently was that devoted to the bathing ritual.<sup>131</sup> Torii Kiyonaga's *Interior of a Bathhouse* was displayed prominently in Degas's bedroom.<sup>132</sup> Through Degas and Cassatt's clear familiarity with these images of feminine activity, they must have absorbed some of the attitudes towards the bather and bodily positions that were exhibited in the Japanese prints.

The other genre of Ukiyo-e prints that Degas was familiar with were the *shunga*.<sup>133</sup> Similar to the *shunga*, Degas depicted lower class women in explicit sexual poses in his brothel monotypes. In these representations of prostitutes, the women were equally as active as the men, in some cases even more so. The majority of the brothel monotypes include only illustrations of women, but some do include men, their clients, sitting or standing passively or watching the woman bathe in a tub. The prostitutes in the monotypes are even depicted reading; Carol Armstrong argues the fact that Degas depicted literate prostitutes is another piece of evidence that

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<sup>130</sup> Marc Gerstein, "Degas's Fans," *Art Bulletin*, 64 (March 1982): 105-18.

<sup>131</sup> Karin Breuer, *Japanesque: The Japanese Print in the Era of Impressionism*, (San Francisco: Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, 2010). 76.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

<sup>133</sup> Degas was undoubtedly familiar with the *shunga* prints because Goncourt collected an album of "Japanese obscenities" in 1863. See DeVonyar, *Degas and the Art of Japan*, 68.

contradicts the frequent charges of misogyny.<sup>134</sup> These brothel monotypes were a distinct genre and collection from Degas's depictions of upper-class bathers. Degas never exhibited the brothel monotypes, which I argue is the division between the prostitutes and the bathers, which were exhibited at the 1886 Impressionist exhibition.<sup>135</sup> Cassatt, as a proper, upper middle-class woman, could never have gone to the brothels, so she did not create a similar graphically sexual collection. The *shunga* and the brothel monotypes were explicitly erotic in contrast with the bathing scenes of both Ukiyo-e and Degas.

There was a lack of intended eroticism in the prints of Ukiyo-e female bathers, even though the upper-class women of Japan and the bourgeois women of Paris were equally covered up. The female population in Edo during the Tokugawa Period was very small, only twenty percent of the city's population. The majority of these women were either locked away behind walls of mansions or engaged in proper female occupations, such as laundering, depending on their social position.<sup>136</sup> This lack of women out and about in society paralleled Paris in the 1860s where upper-class women were not allowed outside without a male chaperone and covered up when they were strolling the boulevards. The diaries of French educated artist Marie Bashkirtseff (1858 - 1884) reveal how restricting bourgeois life was for women:

What I long for is the freedom of going about alone, of coming and going, of sitting in the seats of the Tuileries, and especially in the Luxembourg, of stopping and looking at the artistic shops, of entering churches and museums, of walking about old streets at night; that's what I long for; and that's the freedom without which one cannot become a real artist.

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<sup>134</sup> Carol Armstrong, "Degas in the Dark," in *Degas: A Strange New Beauty*, ed. by Jodi Hauptman, and Carol M. Armstrong, (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2016). 45.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>136</sup> Alfred Haft, *Aesthetic Strategies of the Floating World: Mitate, yatsushi, and fūryū in Early Modern Japanese Popular Culture*, Vol. 9, (Leiden: Brill, 2013). 18.

Do you imagine that I get much good from what I see, chaperoned as I am, and when, in order to go to the Louvre, I must wait for my carriage, my lady companion, my family?<sup>137</sup>

Women in these societies were further restrained by the uniform like precision of their apparel, which defined their class positions, and role in society.<sup>138</sup> For both the upper-class Japanese women of the Tokugawa Period and the bourgeois women of nineteenth-century Paris, the bath was one of the few places where they could exist as themselves without the trappings of class. The focus of contemporary depictions of women bathing was less the male gaze, and more a modern occupation that was driven by societal trends regarding the status of women and bathing practices. The Ukiyo-e prints were an example for Degas and Cassatt to follow in depicting modern life without subjecting the women to the *flâneur*, despite Degas's 'keyhole' view.<sup>139</sup>

### Cleanliness and Propriety

The Ukiyo-e prints were one of numerous influences on Degas and Cassatt's bathers' series. Their other influences came from varying interpretations of Susanna and the Elders, as well as the *Aphrodite of Knidos* and Ingres. Through their bathers, Degas and Cassatt were striving to depict scenes of modern life, and challenge the hallowed Salon-approved subjects and techniques. They, and the other Impressionists, strove to create a modern iconography which appropriately represented the modern era. However, the subject of women bathing has an extensive and unique history which kept the baigneuses of Degas and Cassatt tied to the classical iconography.

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<sup>137</sup> Pollock, *Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity*, 70. On the other hand, Cassatt was known to have traveled without a chaperone. See my point on page 24.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>139</sup> The crouched position, which Degas saw in the Ukiyo-e prints, Carol Armstrong argues is evidence of Degas's celibacy and also denies the gaze of the *flâneur*. See Carol Armstrong, "Edgar Degas and the Representation of the Female Body," 223-42.

I did not go into depth on Degas's biography because his education and growth as an artist was traditional for a male in the nineteenth century. He grew up in a wealthy family, worked in an older artist's studio, went to the École des Beaux-Arts, and traveled around Europe to experience the masters for himself. The main significant point about his education was the studio he worked in, on the advice of Édouard Valpinçon, was under the direction of Louis Lamothe who taught him Ingres' dogmas.<sup>140</sup> In his Ingres-directed education, which focused on line and drawing, Degas absorbed the formal elements of the expressive back of Ingres' female nudes, which undoubtedly had an impact on Degas's bathers. The traditional classical education meant that Degas and Cassatt were both educated by the masters before they joined the Impressionist movement, which guided their presentation of bathers.

Evidence of historical influences on Degas and Cassatt's baigneuses can be seen in their use of water. From the *Aphrodite of Knidos* onwards water was used with important social connotations as well as the justification for female nudity. Compared to Cassatt, who was restricted from her depictions of the female nude because of her sex, Degas's requirement for a justification depended on the class of the woman he was depicting. He freely depicted lower-class women nude without justification, as shown in his brothel monotypes, but in order to show women of his own class without any clothes he needed a pretext just like Cassatt. Comparing Degas's *Woman Bathing in a Shallow Tub* to Giordano's *Susanna and the Elders* reveals how changing social attitudes towards water were expressed in art. Both of these works required a reason for female nudity, which was provided through water, but the water reflects different meanings as a result of the social trends. Degas's bather is standing in the water, which symbolizes both the growing awareness of the necessity of hygienic practices as well as the purification and regeneration of women.<sup>141</sup> The symbolized awareness aligns with the new changing habits

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<sup>140</sup> Boggs, *Degas*, 35.

<sup>141</sup> Recently, Armstrong argued that the pastels of the small bathers, which Degas did not exhibit, are layered over monotypes, "protecting and deflecting the gaze, from the earthy uncouthness



regarding bathing in nineteenth-century Paris; all people had to be encouraged to take immersive baths, after so many centuries of its defamation.<sup>142</sup> Degas, from his perspective as a male artist, may have seen women needing to be purified and experiencing a modern rebirth through cleanliness. The campaign to purify women contrasts sharply with Giordano's association of water with the devil and sin, created during a time when water was vilified. However, despite the differing connotations of water both of these women are of an inscrutable moral character and most likely of the upper-classes.

Degas's bather is anonymous, her privacy provided by her back, and the kneeling position, which also serves a practical purpose similar to Kiyonaga's women in *Interior of a Bathhouse*. Giordano not only puts his bather on display, but names her; she belongs to a specific place and time. The kneeling position reinforces the absence of the elders in the Degas's pastel; this bather is in a safe private space, and unlike in Manet's *Surprised Nymph*, the viewer does not take the place of the elders. She not only lacks but refutes the lecherous, voyeuristic gaze permitted in the majority of classical works. Degas's bather raises questions about the interpretations of both Berger and Clark; she is neither performing a revolving dance, nor is she solely a form of art. Degas's bather is a real woman who remarks on the historical aesthetics and contemporary social trends of women in the bath. Degas was once reported to have said: "to think that in another age I would have been painting Susanna and the Elders."<sup>143</sup> However, instead of painting Susanna and the Elders, Degas is painting women who are respected in society and above reproach because of their hygienic practices and the new encouragement for bathing which associated cleanliness with social respectability.

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beneath the applied color, with its hints of sewer and scatology, its obscene body language and its rude laying bare of the nocturnal secrets of the flesh." In the monotypes the bath does not clean the bathers, but dirties them. Carol Armstrong, "Degas in the Dark," 38.

<sup>142</sup> See my argument about changing hygienic standards in chapter 2 in "A New Perspective," 31.

<sup>143</sup> Edgar Degas in Daniel Halévy, *My Friend Degas*, 1st American ed, (Middletown, Conn: Wesleyan University Press, 1964). 119.

Cassatt brought a different point of view to her few depictions of women bathers. Cassatt's *Woman Bathing (La Toilette)* holds different meanings about women and water than either Degas's depictions or classical idealizations. While Degas was constructing bourgeois women bathing in the private sphere, Cassatt was taking it a step further and using water to comment on how bourgeois women navigated changing attitudes towards water and the fetters associated with it. Cassatt is not purifying her women; women of her class were already pure; instead she is creating women who are purifying others and showing their supreme moral character through her use of water. Cassatt's bather in *Woman Bathing (La Toilette)* is not kneeling in a tub, partly because of the restrictions on women artists painting nude women at the time, but also because to paint an immersive nude would be to admit that women needed purifying. Instead *Woman Bathing (La Toilette)* evokes the *Aphrodite of Knidos*, who is not shown during an immersive bath, because why would a goddess need to be purified? The viewer understands the significance of the bathing paraphernalia: she is already pure, and morally virtuous. While Cassatt's bather conveys a similar attitude regarding bathing and moral cleanliness to the *Aphrodite*, their differences are evident in the display of the female bodies.

The long tradition of the female bather dictates that the female nude should be on display for her male viewers, but Degas and Cassatt did not adhere to that requirement of the iconography. The *Aphrodite of Knidos* is on display for all viewers; her standing figure only halfheartedly attempts to protect her modesty. Cassatt's bather rejects the male gaze by presenting her half clothed back to the viewer. She does not belong to the canon of the idealistic female nude, nor a passive form of art; *Woman Bathing* visualizes the social changes of hygiene and attitudes towards women. Cassatt's bather asserts her dominance over her private space, where she is not restrained by societal requirements. In asserting her dominance Cassatt's *Woman Bathing* is similar to Gentileschi's *Susanna*; they both are representing women who are not on display, refuting the familiar voyeuristic narrative. Just as Gentileschi portrayed the real

emotions of a woman experiencing a threatening scenario, Cassatt illustrates the authentic position of an upper-class woman at her toilette.

Degas's bathers all assert similar positions about women's new hygienic goals associated with class and respectability. However, Cassatt evolved her bathers in a different direction by commenting on women's existing moral purity through their cleansing of others. In Cassatt's series commonly referred to as her Madonna and Child paintings, she illustrates numerous secularized, bourgeois mothers bathing their children. Cassatt's *The Child's Bath* (fig. 16, 1893, The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago) is one of her seminal pieces that depicts the mother and child theme.<sup>144</sup> Similar to *Woman Bathing*, *The Child's Bath* utilizes Ukiyo-e stylistic techniques. Analogous to Utamaro's depictions of women and children, which Cassatt collected, the viewer looks down at the figures, distanced from their intimate pose. In *The Child's Bath* the mother, fully dressed in a green, pink and white vertically striped dress, exactly like the dress in the *Woman Bathing*, is holding her child in her lap. The child has a white cloth covering its lower half, just as if the child was a classical female. Both the mother and child are focused on the child's feet in the basin. Similar to Cassatt's bather they do not acknowledge any viewer. It presents a private moment between mother and child in the sphere of the bedroom, indicated by the dresser in the background.<sup>145</sup> The male gaze is excluded from this painting, as it presents a woman artist's perspective of a female role inside the house. Cassatt tended not to include men in her domestic scenes to reinforce the domestic sphere as a female-dominated space.

In the intimate scene, Cassatt is addressing the new role of the child and mother dynamic that was expected in bourgeois families. There was a new degree of intimacy and bonding encouraged between mother and children; mothers were expected to train respectable children

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<sup>144</sup> Although the "mother" may be a nanny, the image still reads as Madonna and Child iconography.

<sup>145</sup> As I previously established the bedroom was the bourgeois space for the toilette in the late 1800s in Paris.

who were shaped to moral perfection by providing outwards displays of affection and approval.<sup>146</sup> Pollock argues that Cassatt's paintings create a 'matrixial space' that works against the new ideas of intimacy and bonding, in which the child defines itself separate from the mother, their thoughts unknown to each other.<sup>147</sup> Harriet Scott Chessman argues that Cassatt was applying classical iconography to encode eroticism into the mother and child scenes, which is represented by the erotic presence of the child, a visual metonym for the mother's sexuality.<sup>148</sup> However, based on my earlier argument of Cassatt's use of Ukiyo-e perspective, I argue that Cassatt used the iconography of the nude and water to illustrate the intimate bonds between mother and child, in part because the naked child may have provided, in a restricted form like that other adult woman bather, this upper-middle-class woman artist's respectable access to the nude figure and the accompanying iconography.<sup>149</sup>

The water can be seen to represent the moral perfection children were expected to achieve based on the guidance of their mothers, which is shown through the mother's presence and the guiding hand on the child's foot. The water additionally indicates the upper-class position of both the mother and the child. The painting reflects on the mother's role to encourage the hygienic practices that had been taboo for the preceding centuries. Sharon Johnson argues that by their alternative depictions of feminine space, feminine agency, and female sexuality Cassatt's works challenged the boundaries of acceptability in mid to late nineteenth-century France and offered actual women alternative models by which to live.<sup>150</sup> However, I argue that Cassatt's works

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<sup>146</sup> Mark Poster, *Critical Theory of the Family*, (New York City: The Seabury Press, 1978). 170.

<sup>147</sup> Pollock, "Some Letters on Feminism, Politics and Modern Art: When Edgar Degas Shared a Space with Mary Cassatt at the Suffrage Benefit Exhibition, New York," 210.

<sup>148</sup> Harriet Scott Chessman, "Mary Cassatt and the Maternal Body," in *American Iconology: New Approaches to Nineteenth-century Art and Literature*, edited by David Miller, (London;New Haven;: Yale University Press, 1993). 247.

<sup>149</sup> Norma Broude, "Mary Cassatt: Modern Woman or the Cult of True Womanhood?" in *Reclaiming Female Agency: Feminist Art History after Postmodernism*, edited by Norma Broude, and Mary D. Garrard, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005). 266.

<sup>150</sup> Sharon P. Johnson, *Boundaries of Acceptability: Flaubert, Maupassant, Cézanne, and Cassatt*, Vol. 63, (New York: P. Lang, 2000). 180.

did not offer alternative models for actual women, but represented how actual women were already living. Cassatt used her position as a woman artist in a time of changing roles for women both in public and private spaces to portray these subjects from a woman's point of view, a point of view Degas would never have the privilege of understanding.<sup>151</sup>

The historic iconography and aesthetic associated with the position of the body and the symbolism of water are manifest in Degas and Cassatt's bathers but visualize social changes regarding the toilette and in Cassatt's case women's moral character. In Degas's bathers, despite the fable surrounding the 'keyhole' view and all the voyeuristic suggestions it implies, he did not seek to exploit their nudity. Their nudity, associated with bathing, comments on the rebirth of the toilette, the expected respectability of women, and their freedom in private spaces. Degas portrayed women who were being reborn in modernity, while Cassatt portrayed women who did not need to be reborn; they were shaping the next generation with moral and physical cleanliness. Degas and Cassatt had appropriated the iconography of the female baigneuse to elucidate modern perceptions pertaining to gender and hygiene.

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<sup>151</sup> Regarding her point of view as a woman Cassatt said, "If I have not been absolutely feminine, then I have failed." See Debra N. Mancoff, *Mary Cassatt: Reflections of Women's Lives*, (New York: Stewart, Tabori & Chang, 1998). 86.

## Chapter 4:

### Epilogue

#### Full Circle

Degas and Cassatt were representing the transformation back to bathing and hygiene as both an accepted and expected daily ritual in society. The push for hygienic practices was endorsed by society by the 1900s, as people of all classes began to bathe regularly again. This return to an essentially Greco-Roman attitude towards bathing influenced another shift in how bathing was depicted by contemporary artists. Male artists commenting on this shift in bathing began painting nudes that revisited and revised Greco-Roman mythology, while female artists left behind the classical idealizations. Paul Cézanne was a post-impressionist artist who reinvented the classical representation of the nude, while Suzanne Valadon abandoned the idealized female body and its accompanying iconography.

Moving from the last decade of the nineteenth century into the beginning of the twentieth reveals a complete reversal of hygienic rituals. The importance of bathing, and new ideas about germs and dirt were being taught in schools.<sup>152</sup> Cleanliness had emerged as a new requirement in Parisian society and people were expected to bathe regularly. Society had rebounded to the Greco-Roman eras, when bathing was an essential, easily accessible aspect of society. For the bourgeoisie and the upper classes hygienic practices and the bath began to be associated with hedonism, because of the ease of bathing. Although it was still several decades before everyone accepted the strict hygienic rules, the bath was becoming a site of relaxation, a banal activity for every class, a move which found expression in post 1890s nudes.

Paul Cézanne (1839 - 1906) was born in Aix-en-Provence to a wealthy banker who discouraged his son's interest in the arts. Cézanne's father first entreated him to attend law school, but despite his father's disapproval, Cézanne attended various art schools, before moving

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<sup>152</sup> Ashenburg, *The Dirt on Clean: An Unsanitized History*, 195.

to Paris in 1861 to further his studies. After a series of rejected Salon entries, Camille Pissarro invited him to exhibit with the Independents in 1874.<sup>153</sup> As an Impressionist, he was dedicated to *en plein air* painting, and strove for naturalistic depictions, reflected in his landscapes and still lifes. However, Cézanne's nudes fall into a different category, because he rarely worked from a live nude model; his nude bodies are often distorted and have an androgynous air. Many art historians who study and write on Cézanne's life and works have focused on his biography for the motivator behind his harsh, angry depictions of both male and female nudes. Cézanne painted several series of nudes, mostly bathing, modeled after his sketches of masters or from his time at the Academy.<sup>154</sup>

Cézanne's biography was stressed by the art historians who examined Cézanne's groups of baigneuses and baigneurs from a psychobiographical perspective. Mary Louise Krumrine, Theodore Reff and Meyer Schapiro all agree that Cézanne's distorted depictions of bodies stem from his repressed sexuality. Krumrine argues that Cézanne returned time and time again to the bathers as a way of confronting, expressing and finally controlling his changing attitudes toward women and attempting to resolve his doubts about his own sexuality.<sup>155</sup> Reff claims that Cézanne's stylistic choices represent his attempt to control his sexual impulses, which gives the bathing paintings an air of tense repressed sexuality.<sup>156</sup> Schapiro says that separating Cézanne's earlier nudes and later nudes into distinct categories, and understanding the minute differences between the two sets, reveals a sexual narrative, which reflects Cézanne's move from sexual

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<sup>153</sup> James Henry Rubin, *Impressionism*, (London: Phaidon, 1999). 365.

<sup>154</sup> Paul Cézanne in P. M. Doran, *Conversations with Cézanne*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001). 28.

<sup>155</sup> Mary Louise Elliot Krumrine, Gottfried Boehm, and Christian Geelhaar, *Paul Cézanne: The Bathers*, (Basel: Öffentliche Kunstsammlung Basel and Eidolon AG, Einsiedeln, 1990). 33.

<sup>156</sup> Theodore Reff, "Painting and Theory in the Final Decade," in *Cézanne: The Late Work: Essays*, (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1977). 39. For an analysis of the solo male nudes see Theodore Reff "Cézanne's Bather with Outstretched Arms," *Gazette de Beaux-Arts* 59 (March 1962): 173 - 90. Reff focuses on Cézanne's single male nudes about which he argues for the sexual implications of the stretched out arms that represent repression of homoerotic impulses.

excess to sexual asceticism.<sup>157</sup> Analyzing the bathers through this psychobiographical narrative places the importance of depicting nude bathers on the formal qualities of their body, and the eroticism of the flesh that they assume is inherent in the genre.

Other art historians argue that the eroticism in Cézanne's nudes is read through his formal techniques and structure. Tamar Garb reasons that in the face of a formal method that obliterated sexual difference between the male and female nudes, sexual difference was instead established in the pictorial structure of the image: in the arrangements of the male bathers in a horizontal, frieze like patterns that heighten the phallic nature of the figures and of the female bather within pyramidal schemes that purportedly evoke the female sex.<sup>158</sup> Aruna D'Souza argues that through the lack of the idealized figure, Cézanne's use of paint fashioned a new language of the erotic, with which Cézanne displaced the fetishism of the image itself with touch.<sup>159</sup> Eldon Van Liere on the other hand presents a contradictory image of Cézanne's female nudes, saying Cézanne vacillated between presenting women either as an object of adoration or a threatening female.<sup>160</sup> Against the prevailing theme of eroticism, Joyce Brodsky argues that Cézanne's bathers lack eroticism because he was primarily interested in the structural relationship between the many figures and the landscape.<sup>161</sup> There are numerous interpretations of Cézanne's nudes, whether male or female, and many argue for the implied eroticism in his paintings of bathers.

It is impossible to know what Cézanne's sexual preferences were, or if he even cared about establishing sexual differences in his figures through his formal and structural techniques.

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<sup>157</sup> Meyer Schapiro, *Paul Cézanne*, 3rd ed, (1965; repr., New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1988), 44.

<sup>158</sup> Tamar Garb, "Cézanne's Late Bathers: Modernism and Sexual Difference," in *Bodies of Modernity: Figure and Flesh in Fin-de-Siècle France*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1998). 202.

<sup>159</sup> Aruna D'Souza, *Cézanne's Bathers: Biography and the Erotics of Paint*, Vol. 8, (University Park, Pa: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008). 31.

<sup>160</sup> Eldon N. Van Liere, 'Le Bain': The Theme of the Bather in Nineteenth-Century French Painting, (Bloomington; Indiana: Indiana University, Jan 14, 1974). 126.

<sup>161</sup> Brodsky, "Delacroix's 'Le Lever,' Cézanne's 'Interior with Nude,' Picasso's 'Les Femmes d'Alger,' and the Genre of the Erotic Nude," 140.



I agree that he was most likely repressed emotionally or sexually, but no matter his sexual identity, even though it may have influenced some aspects of his art, I argue that Cézanne was commenting instead on an artistic movement where bathing encouraged a new perspective on the nude. I agree with Brodsky in that Cézanne's bathers lack eroticism, a bit because he was focused on the structural relationship between the figures, but mainly because they lack clear depictions of the flesh expected in an eroticized image of the nude.<sup>162</sup> Cézanne's *Baigneuses* (fig. 17, 1895-98, Musée Granet, Aix-en-Provence) and *Les Baigneurs* (fig. 18, 1895-1900, The Baltimore Museum of Art, Maryland) both depict a group of single sex bathers in an Arcadian landscape that reinvents Mediterranean classicism. Nina Athanassoglou-Kallmyer posits that Cézanne envisioned his home land of Aix-en-Provence as a modern day "Arcadia in which myth and reality, idealism and rustic naturalism merged inextricably in the true spirit of its Roman antecedent."<sup>163</sup> The poses of the bathers practically mirror each other, some seated, some lounging against trees, some paused in a lunge, and some standing with their hands above their heads. *Les Baigneurs* would have been unusual because of the relative absence of the male nude in art in the late nineteenth century.<sup>164</sup> None of the men are fully facing the viewer, although one is in the middle of a turn as if to suggest the possibility, while half of the women are depicted facing front. The sexual differences can also be read through Garb's interpretation, with the male nudes arranged in a phallic frieze, and the female nudes composed in uterine pyramid. However, their sexual differences carry very little weight because Cézanne's bodies are very abstract, especially compared to the bathers of Degas and Cassatt; they more embody ideas than actual

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<sup>162</sup> Cézanne's bathers lack eroticism because of the absence of eroticized flesh in contrast to Renoir's bathers, whose displayed bodies are sensuous, natural and erotic. See Linda Nochlin, "Renoir's *Great Bathers*," in *Bathers, Bodies, Beauty: The Visceral Eye*, Vol. 2004, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2006). 3-53 for varying interpretations of Renoir's *Great Bathers*.

<sup>163</sup> Nina M. Athanassoglou-Kallmyer, "Arcadia," in *Cézanne and Provence: The Painter in his Culture*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003). 189. She also discusses how Cézanne combined characters from Virgil with Provence's landscapes.

<sup>164</sup> Margaret Walters, *The Nude Male: A New Perspective*, (London: Paddington Press, 1978). Exceptions are Frédéric Bazille and Gustave Caillebotte who both painted male nudes near water.

women or men. Cézanne's bathers conform to Kenneth Clark's theory of the nude as an art form, because they are abstracted from actual bodies.

Contemporary critic Georges Rivière reviewed Cézanne's bathers by saying, "M. Cézanne is, in his works, a Greek of the Classical era; his canvases have the calm, the heroic serenity of classical paintings and ceramics, and the ignorant who laugh in front of the *Baigneurs*, for example, are like barbarians criticizing the Parthenon."<sup>165</sup> Cézanne utilized poses taken from classical works in his paintings, combining modern subject matter with traditional references. Krumrine provides a complete analysis of the classical influences Cézanne copied and replicated in his bathers from statues of Greek athletes to Renaissance portrayals of the baptism of Christ.<sup>166</sup> He was recreating classical scenes, akin to Botticelli's *Venus* in structure, but with modern formal techniques. Degas and Cassatt had appropriated classical imagery to comment on the modern attitudes towards hygienic rituals, while Cézanne was using classical references to elevate the banal activity bathing had become. The social position of bathing was less important during this time period, because society had revolved back to completely accepting immersive bathing. Cézanne no longer needed to worry about commenting on the promotion or condemnation of the immersive bath.

### The Future

Suzanne Valadon (1865 - 1938), in direct contrast to the other artists mentioned, was born to a working-class mother. Suzanne, born Maria Clementine, lived with her mother, Madeleine Valadon who worked as a cleaner, in Montmartre.<sup>167</sup> Despite her name change, Degas always referred to Valadon as 'Terrible Maria'.<sup>168</sup> By the time Valadon was a teenager she had held a

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<sup>165</sup> D'Souza, *Cézanne's Bathers: Biography and the Erotics of Paint*, 91.

<sup>166</sup> Krumrine in *Paul Cézanne: The Bathers*, does a full analysis of classical influences on Cézanne's bathers.

<sup>167</sup> Gillian Perry, *Women Artists and the Parisian Avant-Garde: Modernism and Feminine Art, 1900 to the late 1920s*, (Manchester; England: Manchester University Press, 1995). 158.

<sup>168</sup> Degas in Marcel Guérin, *Letters*, (Oxford: Bruno Cassirer, 1947).

variety of jobs from milliner's apprentice to waitress.<sup>169</sup> Her working-class status permitted her, unlike Cassatt, to go to the bars and cafés of Paris where she met various artists, and subsequently began modeling for them.<sup>170</sup> Between 1880 and 1885 Valadon modelled for Puvis de Chavannes, Renoir, Toulouse-Lautrec and others.<sup>171</sup> It was during these five years of modeling that her artistic talent flourished, as she taught herself to draw from watching the artists for whom she modeled. Her first known work is a self-portrait dating from 1883, the same year she gave birth to her son, Maurice Valadon (Utrillo).<sup>172</sup> In 1880 Valadon and Degas developed a professional relationship, similar to his and Cassatt's relationship, except that she was paid as a professional model, and he gave her advice on technique and encouraged her work. Her bohemian personal life set her outside the accepted societal norms especially after she became wealthy herself, exhibiting in solo gallery shows and earning international fame. Degas encouraged her to exhibit her work at the Salon de la Nationale for the first time in 1894. Her work was exhibited alongside Degas and Lautrec in private galleries in the 1890s and 1900s and after 1909 she exhibited regularly at the most important venues for modern art in Paris, the Salon d'Automne and the Salon des Indépendants. Her social position gave her the freedom, in such a restrictive society, to associate with the leading members of the Parisian avant-garde.<sup>173</sup>

In 1909 she left her husband of 13 years for a man twenty-one years younger than her, a friend of her son, and a fellow artist, André Utter. They would eventually marry in 1914.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> Perry, *Women Artists and the Parisian Avant-Garde: Modernism and Feminine Art, 1900 to the late 1920s*, 158.

<sup>170</sup> Patricia Mathews, "Gendered Bodies II," in *Passionate Discontent: Creativity, Gender and French Symbolism Art*, (Chicago; The University of Chicago Press, 1999). 179.

<sup>171</sup> Perry, *Women Artists and the Parisian Avant-Garde: Modernism and Feminine Art, 1900 to the late 1920s*, 158.

<sup>172</sup> Patricia Mathews, "Returning the Gaze: Diverse Representations of the Nude in the Art of Suzanne Valadon," *The Art Bulletin* 73, no. 3 (1991): 415.

<sup>173</sup> Rosemary Betterton, "How Do Women Look? The Female Nude in the Work of Suzanne Valadon," in *Feminist Review*, no. 19 (1985): 15.

<sup>174</sup> Perry, *Women Artists and the Parisian Avant-Garde: Modernism and Feminine Art, 1900 to the late 1920s*, 158.

Valadon worked outside of any particular artistic tradition, but was heavily influenced by the Impressionists whom she had modeled for in her youth, and other avant-garde styles. Valadon lived unfettered by the restraints felt by Cassatt and past female artists, because of her social position and her bohemian attitudes which allowed her refusal to conform to any particular movement. Patricia Mathews argues that this freedom allowed her to paint the nude without “degendering” herself, without jeopardizing her own position or threatening her status as a woman, unlike Morisot and Cassatt whose social positions were framed within more conventional and constrained middle-class definitions of gender.<sup>175</sup> Valadon emerged from the studios of the male Impressionists and their classically inflected nudes for which she modeled free from the restraints on depicting nudes felt by nineteenth-century female artists.

Valadon’s female nudes transport the nude farther away from the familiar, idealized classical trappings. Valadon’s *After the Bath* (fig. 19, 1909, Musée National d’Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France) depicts two nude women draped in white cloths. The woman on the left is lounging on an orange and green couch, her body positioned awkwardly for the viewer, but in what may be a comfortable position for a real lounging woman. One side of her body is mostly covered up with the white cloth, while on the other side her breast and leg are highlighted by the cloth. Her face can be seen, but only one side as her head is tilted up towards the ceiling. The body of the bather on the right is framed by the cloth which she is using to dry herself. Her body appears to be on display for the viewer, her body almost achieving the contrapposto position. However, Valadon did not idealize the body’s proportions, and the pubic hair is a clear statement against the idealized female body. This second woman is looking down at the tub, the curve of which occupies the lower right corner. The vertical floorboards underneath the standing nude emphasize her vertical body, while the horizontal geometric designs on the

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<sup>175</sup> Mathews, “Returning the Gaze: Diverse Representations of the Nude in the Art of Suzanne Valadon,” 416.

carpet under the reclining nude punctuate her slouched position. The floor works to extend the space of each woman in the painting, allowing them to possess their private space and rendering them self-absorbed and aware of their own bodies. These working-class women are not the Academic nude nor the vulgar caricature of the working-class that was prevalent in the paintings of other avant-garde artists. Rosemary Betterton argues that by painting two women bathing together Valadon represented female experiences that are familiar and banal ones, not mystified through representation into a timeless moment.<sup>176</sup> Valadon rarely depicted women at their toilette alone, reminding viewers that bathing is an important everyday activity.

Valadon further challenged conventional rules for women artists during this time period by painting male nudes. Valadon only painted the nude male body between 1909 and 1914 with André Utter as her sole model. She did not however represent him engaged in everyday tasks as she did her female sitters. As Thérèse Diamand Rosinsky points out, the scenes in which Utter appears are historical paintings presented in outdoor settings; the subject matter is either biblical or allegorical.<sup>177</sup> One of Valadon's male nudes is *The Net Throwers* (fig. 20, 1914, Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France) in which she depicts André Utter in three positions as he throws a net into a river. The muscular figure of the three male nudes is never completely revealed as Valadon painted rope over his genitalia on the frontal figure on the right. Valadon abides by the glorious body expected of the male nude while the landscape setting provides the justification. *The Net Throwers* provides us with an example of a female artist's gaze on the male nude. Utter is depicted as young, muscular and strong, perhaps romanticized. Valadon's depictions of Utter adhere to all the classical iconography that her female nudes lack.

From her perspective as a female artist Valadon had taken the traditional female nude and by employing the banal culture of cleanliness, created women who were bold, casual and denying

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<sup>176</sup> Betterton, "How Do Women Look? The Female Nude in the Work of Suzanne Valadon," 15.

<sup>177</sup> Thérèse Diamand Rosinsky, *Suzanne Valadon*, (New York: Universe, 1994). 84.

the male gaze. Patricia Mathews argues that Valadon disrupted the male gaze and the expected eroticism of the female nude by her position as a female artist and her use of non-objectified, working-class women as models.<sup>178</sup> Valadon's nudes decline the role of the desired by being allowed to relax into their own bodies - tired, bored or indifferent, in the absence of the sexual tension of a male gaze.<sup>179</sup> Betterton argues that Valadon's nudes, in showing women's nakedness as an effect of particular circumstances and as differentiated by age and work, therefore challenged the idea that nakedness is an irreducible quality of the eternal feminine.<sup>180</sup> The attention brought to these individualistic working-class women perhaps suggests the women in Valadon's *After the Bath* are on display as Berger claims all female nudes are, but they are not on display for the male gaze. I argue that they are on display for the female gaze. These are female nudes created by an unfettered female artist for female viewers. Valadon's nudes mark the inauguration of women having the freedom to portray their life experiences without justification. Valadon extended the previously restricted subject, in contrast to Cassatt and Gentileschi, with her abandonment of classical accoutrements as a pretext for her female nudes to comment on modern attitudes towards hygiene, while she kept them for the male nude. Valadon broke with centuries old traditions by disregarding the eroticism of female nudity and by venturing into the genre of the nude male, which had been previously forbidden to women artists.

## Conclusion

Cassatt and Degas may have used their bathing series to depict real bourgeois women at their toilette, but Cassatt was hampered because of her position as an upper-middle-class woman, while Degas was hindered by his gender. Examining the progressing bathers of Cézanne and

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<sup>178</sup> Mathews, "Returning the Gaze: Diverse Representations of the Nude in the Art of Suzanne Valadon," 418.

<sup>179</sup> Mathews, "Returning the Gaze: Diverse Representations of the Nude in the Art of Suzanne Valadon," 428.

<sup>180</sup> Betterton, "How Do Women Look? The Female Nude in the Work of Suzanne Valadon," 18.

Valadon reveals changing perspectives of the iconography permitted to male and female artists in regards to depictions of both the male and female nude. Male artists were altering the traditional bather scenes which required the idealization of the flesh, while female artists had been released from the limiting restraints on representing all nudes. Beginning with the *Aphrodite of Knidos* to Ingres' *Valpinçon Bather* the female nude by male artists had been idealized and eroticized for the male gaze. This perspective and attitude contrasted sharply with Japanese attitudes towards the bath and the lack of the eroticism in the flesh.

In late nineteenth-century France the spreading awareness that regular hygienic rituals were necessary to prevent the spread of disease clashed with laws governing prostitutes and long held associations between sin and water. Degas and Cassatt were among the first artists who challenged the eroticism of the nude by examining modern connections between class, privacy and cleanliness. I argued that the classical trappings used in bathing genre paintings, excepting the eroticism, were evident in the bourgeois bathing series of Degas and Cassatt. Whereas John Berger argued that the nude female is perpetually an object to be viewed by the male gaze, I have attempted to argue against that claim in some cases. However, it is a continuing debate as to whether artists, society and the contemporary female nude will ever be free of the desire and eroticism established by the classical idealized form. From my perspective, the campaign by women to portray their life experiences free from the male gaze championed by Cassatt and Valadon, is an ongoing struggle represented by contemporary artists and by all women who employ new media technologies.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> Mattie Kahn, "Why Snapchat is the Techno-Social Expression of the Female Gaze," *i-D Vice*, published 26 August, 2016, [http://i-d.vice.com/en\\_us/article/why-snapchat-is-the-techno-social-expression-of-the-female-gaze](http://i-d.vice.com/en_us/article/why-snapchat-is-the-techno-social-expression-of-the-female-gaze). Kahn argues that Snapchat enables the female gaze because "it's the place where you go to see yourself. You are the appraiser, the painter, the eye."

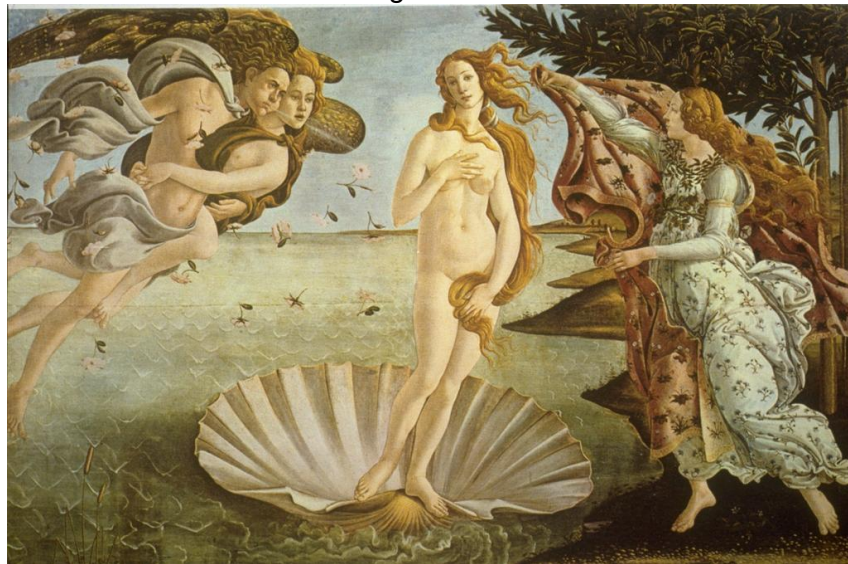
## Illustrations

Figure 1:



Roman copy of Praxiteles' *Aphrodite of Knidos*, *Venus Colonna*, Fourth Century BC, Marble, Pius-Clementine Museum, Vatican City

Figure 2:



Sandro Botticelli, *The Birth of Venus*, 1485, tempera on canvas, 175 x 278 cm, Uffizi Gallery, Florence



Figure 3:



Luca Giordano, *Susanna and the Elders*, 1686, oil on canvas, 175 x 233 cm, Stibbert Museum, Florence

Figure 4:



Artemisia Gentileschi, *Susanna and the Elders*, 1610, oil on canvas, 170 x 121 cm, Pommersfelden, Schloss Weissenstein

Figure 5:



Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, *The Valpinçon Bather*, 1806, oil on canvas, 146 x 97.5 cm, Louvre, Paris

Figure 6:



Torii Kiyonaga, *Interior of a Bathhouse*, c. 1787, woodblock print, ink, and color on paper, two vertical Oban Diptychs, each sheet 38.8 x 16.3 cm, Museum of Fine Arts Boston, Massachusetts

Figure 7:



Mary Stevenson Cassatt, *The Mandolin Player*, 1868, oil on canvas, private collection

Figure 8:



Mary Cassatt, *Ida*, 1874, oil on canvas, private collection



Figure 9:



Edgar Degas, *Dance School*, 1876, oil on canvas, 43.8 x 58.4 cm, Shelburne Museum, Vermont

Figure 10:



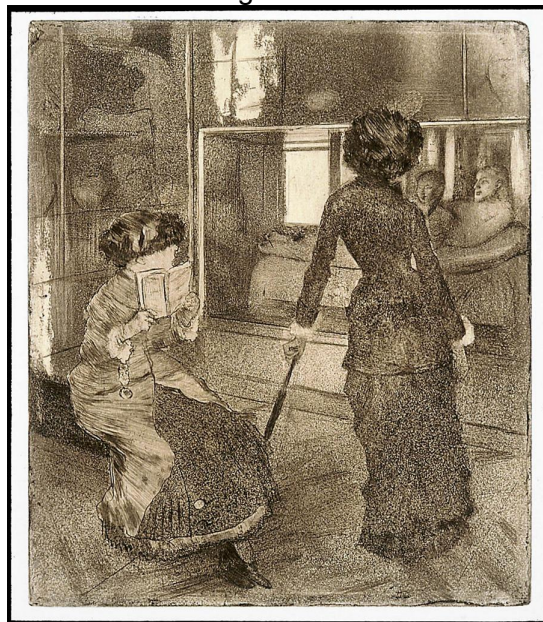
Mary Cassatt, *Little Girl in a Blue Armchair*, 1878, oil on canvas, 90 x 129 cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.

Figure 11:



Edgar Degas, *Mary Cassatt at the Louvre: The Paintings Gallery*, 1879-80, soft ground etching and aquatint, 36.5 x 22.3 cm, The Cleveland Museum of Art, Ohio

Figure 12:



Edgar Degas, *Mary Cassatt at the Louvre: The Etruscan Gallery*, 1879-80, soft ground etching, drypoint, and aquatint, 26.7 x 23.2 cm, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Massachusetts

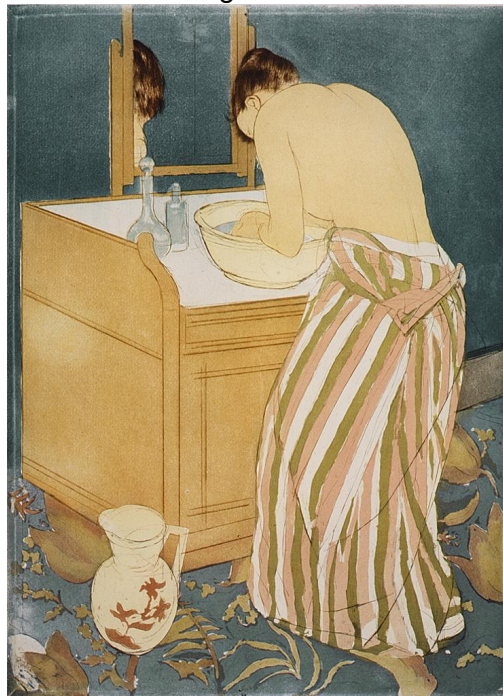


Figure 13:



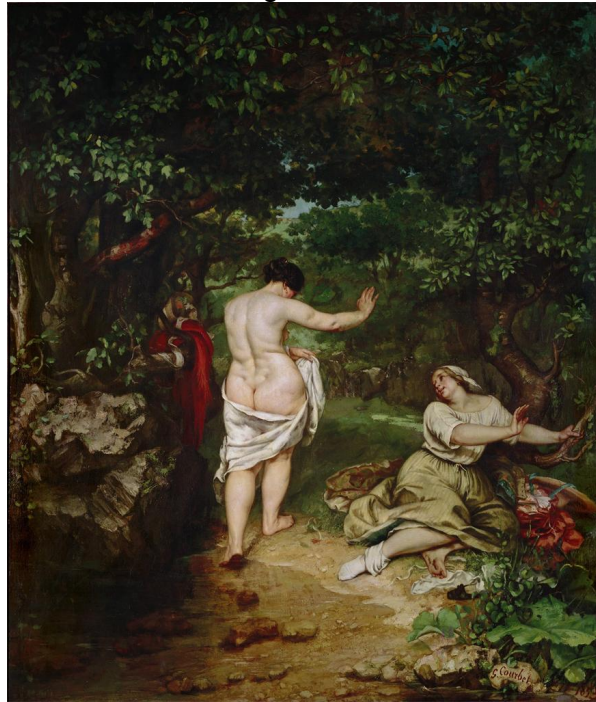
Edgar Degas, *Woman Bathing in a Shallow Tub*, 1886, charcoal and pastel on light green wove paper laid down on silk bolting, 81.3 x 56.2 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Figure 14:



Mary Cassatt, *Woman Bathing (La Toilette)*, 1891, drypoint and aquatint, 36.3 x 26.8 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Figure 15:



Gustave Courbet, *Bathing Women*, 1853, oil on canvas, Musée Fabre, Montpellier, France

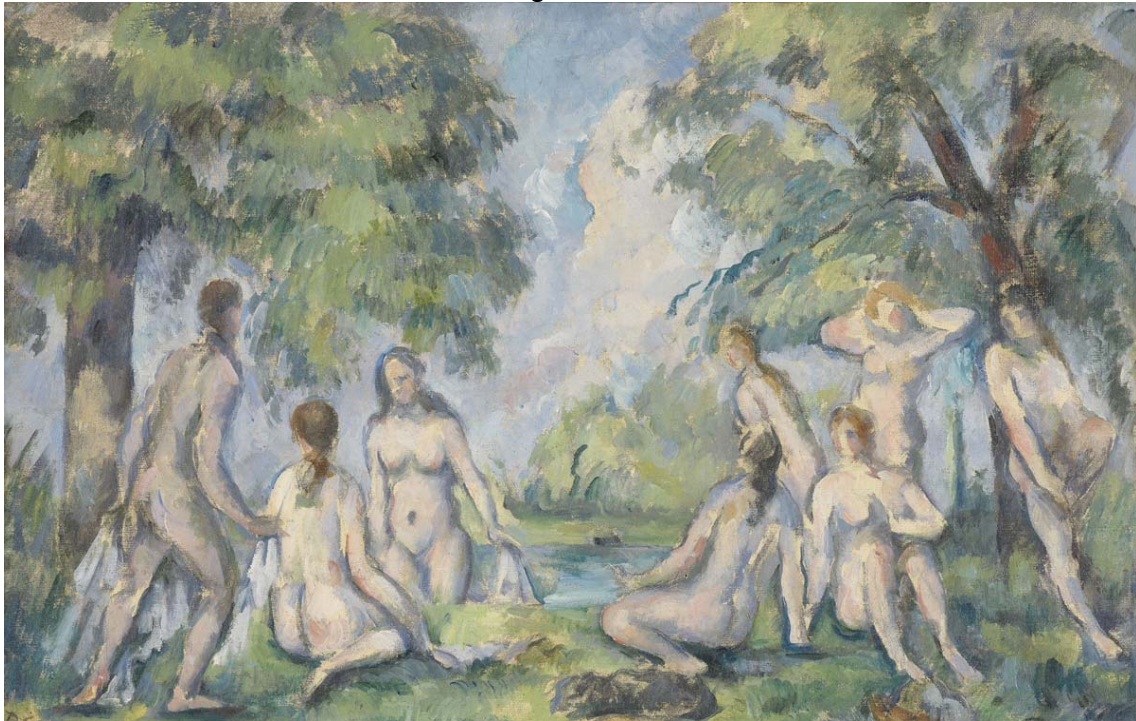
Figure 16:



Mary Cassatt, *The Child's Bath*, 1893, oil on canvas, 100.3 x 66.1 cm, The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago



Figure 17:



Paul Cézanne, *Baigneuses*, 1895-98, oil on canvas, 29 x 45 cm, Musée Granet, Aix-en-Provence

Figure 18:



Paul Cézanne, *Les Baigneurs*, 1895-1900, oil on canvas, 27 x 46.1 cm, The Cone Collection, The Baltimore Museum of Art, Maryland

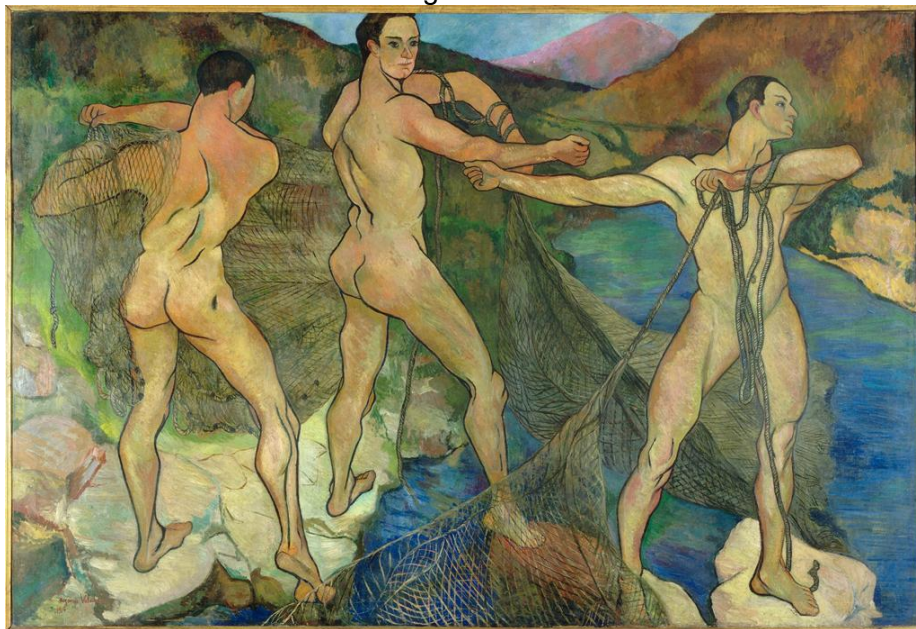


Figure 19:



Suzanne Valadon, *After the Bath*, 1909, oil on cardboard, 101 x 82 cm, Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France

Figure 20:



Suzanne Valadon, *The Net Throwers*, 1914, oil on canvas, 201 x 301 cm, Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France

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