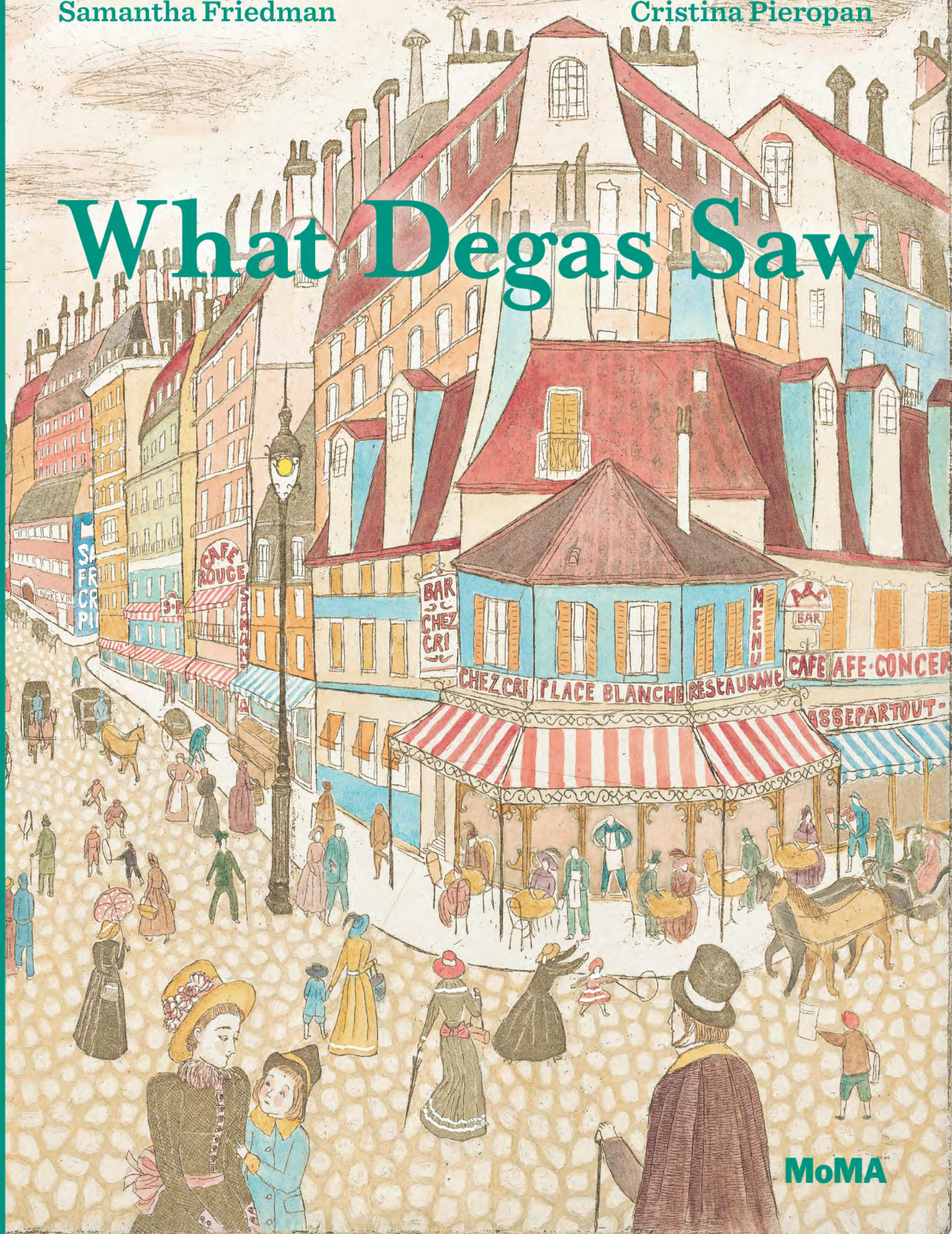


Samantha Friedman

Cristina Pieropan

What Degas Saw



MoMA

Samantha Friedman

Cristina Pieropan



What Degas Saw

With reproductions of works
by Edgar Degas



The Museum of Modern Art, New York



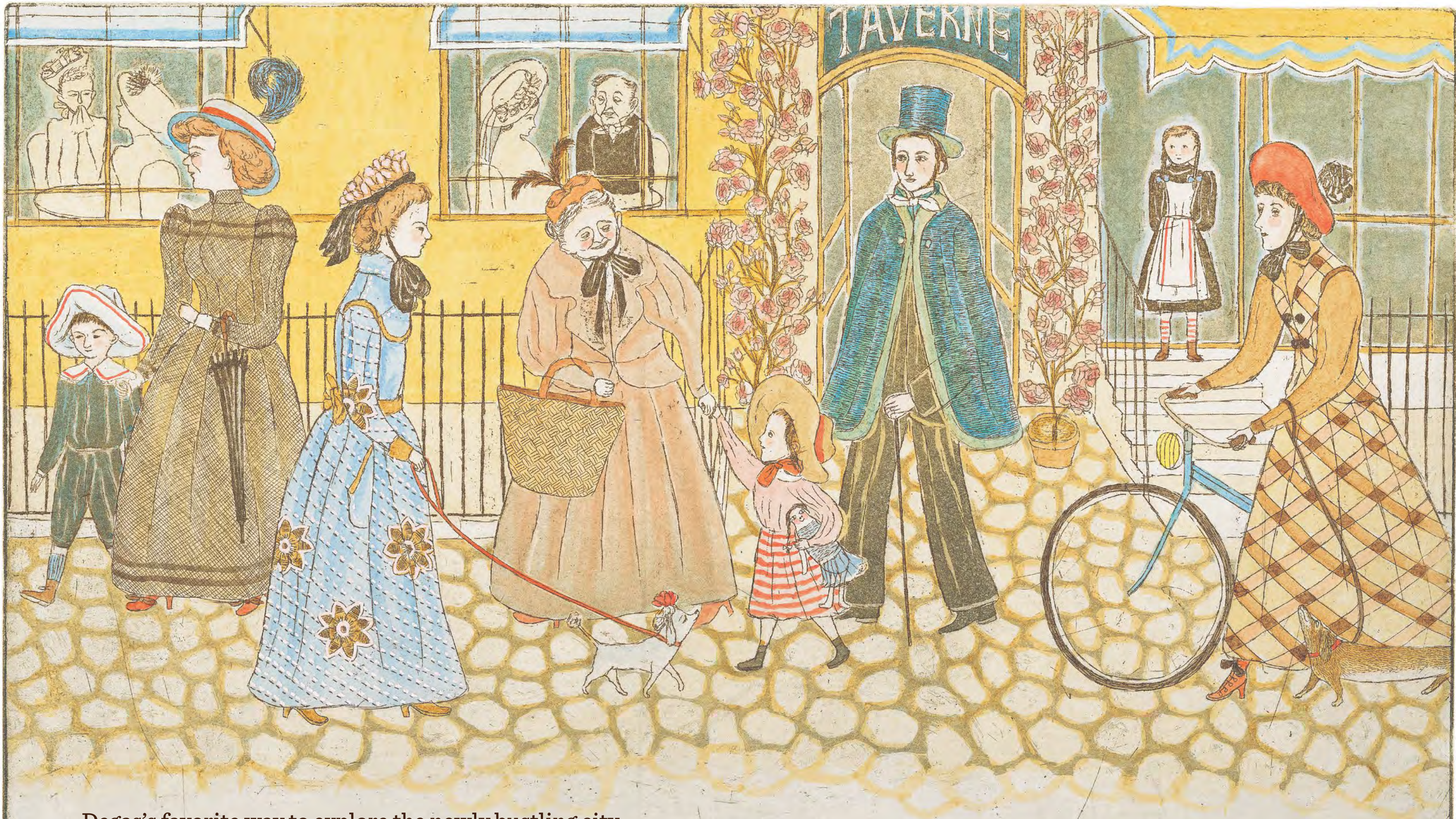
The world was changing.
Paris was alive.

From his studio window on rue Victor Massé, the artist Edgar Degas could see pedestrians strolling on wide, new boulevards . . . smoke rising from new factories . . . grand new buildings of iron and glass.

Degas used to make pictures about the past. He drew figures draped in cloth, and he painted scenes from ancient wars.

But what was happening outside his window was much more exciting. He wanted to find a way to capture the beauty of the passing moment.





Degas's favorite way to explore the newly bustling city was to walk—wearing his cape and tapping his cane—or to take the bus.

That way, he thought, “you can watch people. We are made to look at each other, don’t you think?”

From the window of the moving bus, the faces of passersby looked blurry. Modern life, Degas was realizing, was life in motion.

All across busy Paris, he studied the movements of people at work and at play.

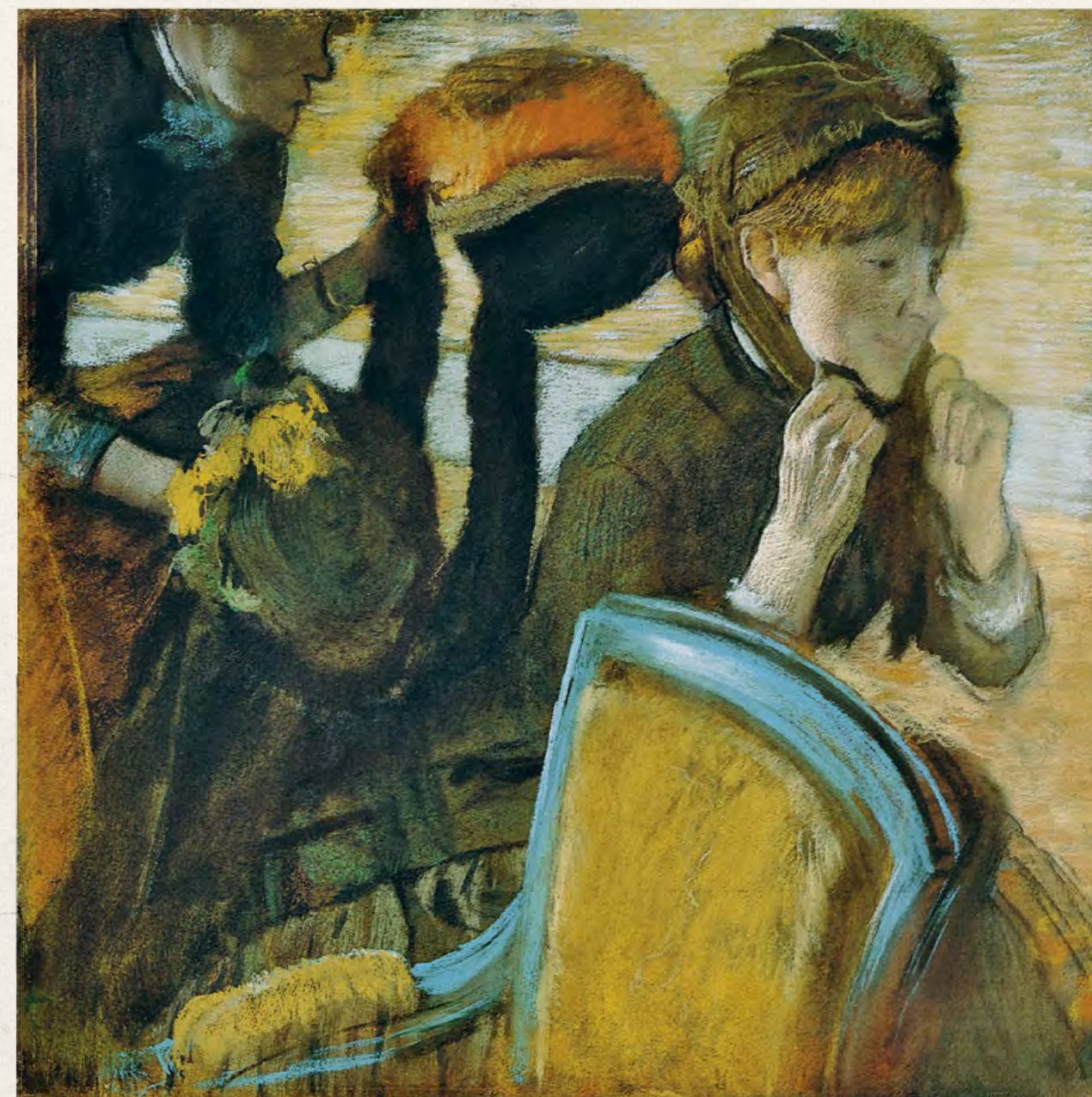




At the milliner's shop, an eager salesgirl juggled several hats for a fashionable lady to try on.



Which one would the customer choose?



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© The Cleveland Museum of Art (*Frieze of Dancers*)

The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Department of
Imaging and Visual Resources (*At the Milliner’s*)








Private collections (*Ironing Women, At the Races, Pas battu, Dancer Onstage with a Bouquet*)

Edgar Degas (1834–1917)

Hilaire-Germain-Edgar Degas—painter, draftsman, printmaker, and sculptor—was born in 1834 in Paris. There, as a young man, he studied at the École des Beaux-Arts, and at the Musée du Louvre he copied the work of Italian Renaissance masters, whose work he studied during a period spent in Italy. He was also influenced by the flowing, arabesque line of the French Neoclassical artist Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres. Degas exhibited works in the Paris Salon in the 1860s and later was among the founding members of the Impressionist group, which broke with academic tradition and began, in 1874, to exhibit independently. Degas, however, disliked the term

Impressionist and preferred to align himself with the Realists, who based their work on direct observation of the everyday world. In the 1870s he began to depict scenes of life in the modern city, at the racetrack, cabaret, and ballet, among other milieus. These new subjects called for new techniques: in the late 1870s and 1880s Degas began to experiment with the possibilities afforded by the monotype—a unique print, sometimes layered with pastel—and wax sculpture, and in the 1890s he worked in the relatively new medium of photography as well. These explorations across various mediums, all of them suited to repetition and variation, shaped the artist’s late work. He died in Paris in 1917.

What Degas Saw features these works:

Heads of a Man and a Woman. c. 1877–80	
Monotype on paper Plate: 2 ¹³ / ₁₆ × 3 ³ / ₁₆ in. (7.2 × 8.1 cm) British Museum, London. Bequeathed by Campbell Dodgson	
At the Milliner’s. c. 1882	
Pastel on paper mounted on board 27 ⁵ / ₈ × 27 ³ / ₄ in. (70.2 × 70.5 cm) The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of Mrs. David M. Levy	
Ironing Women. c. 1877–79	
Monotype on paper Plate: 9 ¹ / ₂ × 17 ¹ / ₂ in. (24.1 × 44.5 cm) Private collection	
At the Races. c. 1876–77	
Oil on canvas 7 ¹ / ₂ × 9 ¹¹ / ₁₆ in. (19.1 × 24.6 cm) Private collection	
Pas battu. c. 1879	
Pastel over monotype on paper 10 ³ / ₄ × 11 ⁵ / ₈ in. (27.3 × 29.5 cm) Private collection	
Dancer Onstage with a Bouquet. c. 1876	
Pastel over monotype on paper Plate: 10 ⁵ / ₈ × 14 ⁷ / ₈ in. (27 x 37.8 cm) Private collection	
Frieze of Dancers. c. 1895	
Oil on canvas 27 ⁹ / ₁₆ × 78 ¹⁵ / ₁₆ in. (70 × 200.5 cm) The Cleveland Museum of Art. Gift of the Hanna Fund	

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