Portraits of the artists
as young men

Degas’ debt to Rembrandt

AMSTERDAM. Goya found inspiration in Rembrandt’s etchings, Fragonard in his drapery and anatomy, and Picasso was so taken by the Dutch old master’s 1655 drypoint Ecce Homo that he created his own version in 1970. Edgar Degas (1834–1917) is another celebrated artist who looked to Rembrandt for inspiration. Now, the Rijksmuseum is mounting the first exhibition exploring Rembrandt’s influence on the French impressionist. It includes 20 paintings and etchings—all self-portraits—created by both artists when they were in their early 20s. Degas’ familiarity with Rembrandt’s work is revealed: he adopts similar poses and experiments with light and shade. A highlight of the show is a Degas self-portrait on loan for the first time from a private collection. Self-portrait en face, around 1857 (right), is an unfinished oil on canvas depicting a rather serious young Degas. After opening at the Rijksmuseum, the show, which is part of an ongoing series exploring how masters of the Dutch Golden Age inspired later artists, will travel to the US, first to the Sterling & Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown (November-February 2012) before heading to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (February-May 2012).

Emily Sharpe

Rembrandt & Degas
Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam
1 July–23 October