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## A Man in the Middle: Giuseppe de Nittis in Paris in the 1870s

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A Man in the Middle: Giuseppe de Nittis in Paris in the 1870s

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During the spring of 1874 Giuseppe de Nittis (1846-1884) came to the most important crossroads of his career. Edgar Degas (1834-1917) had invited the artist to exhibit in the Indépendants exhibition to be held in Nadar's photography studio in Paris. This was the first of the eight Impressionist exhibitions that eventually overthrew the hegemony of the Salon in the construction of artists' careers in the Parisian art world. At nearly the same time, de Nittis had successfully submitted two paintings to the Salon's jury. De Nittis, in a telling reflection of the art politics of this period, later told the story that he had entered three paintings. But his jealous dealer, Adolphe Goupil, who was unhappy that the artist chose to show with the Indépendants, used his considerable influence with the jury to reject all but one of the artist's submissions.<sup>1</sup> Although de Nittis's story is not true, the dealer did write to both the artist and his wife complaining about his showing with the Indépendants.<sup>2</sup> What Goupil perhaps did not anticipate is that one of the artist's two Salon submissions, *Fait-il froid!!!* (private collection) would receive considerable press attention, so much so that the gallery later decided to have the work engraved and included the image in Goupil's lavish portfolio of illustrations of Salon highlights.<sup>3</sup> Goupil then went on to sell the painting that August to a collector for 10,000 francs, a record price thus far in the young artist's career.<sup>4</sup>

The paintings de Nittis showed at the Indépendants did not receive similar attention. He later claimed that Auguste Renoir (1841-1919) deliberately held back hanging his contributions until well after the show opened, so that his paintings were effectively ignored.<sup>5</sup> This story may also not be true. However, de Nittis never again showed with the Impressionists. And the artist's relationship with some of the Impressionists became quite strained. These jealousies were no

doubt the result of de Nittis's choice to steer a middle path between the art of the Salon and the modernist imagery and techniques of the Impressionists.

The choices de Nittis made in 1874 defined de Nittis's subsequent place in the history of European modernism. De Nittis is said to be a model for the character of Fagerolles in Émile Zola's 1886 novel *L'Oeuvre*.<sup>6</sup> Another character in the novel, Bongrand, probably based on Gustave Courbet, harshly condemns Fagerolles: "What Fagerolles does is merely a stunt.... You take a modern subject, use light colors, but stick to the correct and commonplace drawing, the pleasant, standardized composition, the formula, in short, guaranteed by the [Ecole des] Beaux-Arts to give satisfaction to people with plenty of money and no taste."<sup>7</sup> For Zola, Fagerolles represented a generation of artists who reconciled the innovations of Manet and the Impressionists to broader public taste, the *juste milieu*.<sup>8</sup> Zola witnessed the *juste milieu*'s Salon recognition and corresponding sales, even as the core Impressionists struggled to attract an audience for their art.

The international revival in recent years of the reputations of artists like de Nittis suggests that an overall reevaluation of the *juste milieu* is due. It should no longer be enough to say, as Zola did, that de Nittis made modernism acceptable to an uncritical public. Instead of casting his art as watered-down Impressionism, we should understand where de Nittis was innovative and why he made the choices he did. De Nittis's art had a complex relationship with both Salon painting and Impressionism. His painting technique, for example, could be described as positioned halfway between photographic precision, tailored to a Salon public and painterly performance more in keeping with experimental modernism. His Parisian compositions are similarly typically halfway between the up-close portrayal of the person on the street (see

Édouard Manet, 1832-1883 and Gustave Caillebotte, 1848-1894) and the distant veduta in the Italian tradition of cityscapes. And de Nittis took what was then the popular genre of intimate domestic interiors into the public arena of the street. All of these were unique contributions by the artist to contemporary European painting.

De Nittis also negotiated the marketing aspects of his career between the commercial galleries and the Salon. After 1874 de Nittis was no longer wholly obedient to Goupil's ideas about what art would sell. But he would also no longer openly side with artists who defied the Salon system. His professional career eventually sat halfway between the old Parisian art world dominated by the Salon and the new art world belonging to independent exhibitions and commercial gallery shows. He died young, but de Nittis's career presaged what I call the generation of 1900, an international body of artists, trained in the academic tradition, who espoused various forms of naturalism and modern subject matter, and who achieved international prominence by the end of the century. These same artists mostly saw their reputations swept away by the rising tide of modernism and the later avant-gardes of post-1900 Europe.

Art scholars tend to overlook such important factors in artists's careers as the new international railroad system, of which de Nittis was an early beneficiary. He was able to move freely and rapidly from Naples to Paris and from Paris to London. In a way few artists before him had experienced, de Nittis was liberated from a close identification with any of these cities. The painter's themes became all French when in France, all English in England, and all Italian in Italy. Yet his internationalism never overwhelmed by his national identity. He was, after all, an Italian in Paris, and it was his "Italianicity" that got him a foothold in the Parisian art world in the first place. This in-between quality is also manifest in de Nittis's social life. He was a social

climber, from his humble background in Barletta to Parisian high society; but he never climbed so high as to lose his roots. His life history was not all that different from many of international clients, the *nouveau riche*, neither bourgeois nor aristocratic, the rags to riches beneficiaries of the rapid industrialization of Britain and the United States.

We tend to think of the Parisian art world in the time of the Impressionists as strongly divided between the progressive artists in the Impressionist camp and everyone else. This is far from reality. Friendships united artists with very different aesthetic proclivities. And no one, of course, knew the directions innovative European art would take over the next half century. No one was certain even what good contemporary art should look like. The situation was no different than in today's contemporary art world. Looking backward, we tend to underrate the complexity of the decisions artists make both about the ambitions they have for their art but also the ambitions they have for their careers. Seen in retrospect a famous artist's career acquires an aura of inevitability rather than a history of choices the artist made in uncertain circumstances.

As a gregarious person, de Nittis readily assimilated himself in the full breadth of Parisian culture. The Goupil firm had found de Nittis an initial position in the late 1860s as a studio assistant to Ernest Meissonier (1815-1891), one of the gallery's star artists.<sup>9</sup> For the first few years in Paris, de Nittis appears to have been comfortable working within the artistic conventions of such Goupil artists as Meissonier, Léon Gérôme (1824-1904), the Madrazo family, including Mariano Fortuny (1838-1874), and his countryman Alberto Pasini (1826-1899). De Nittis provided Goupil with small narrative, costume pictures as well as *plein-air* landscapes from the region around Naples, in particular a large suite of paintings documenting the eruption of Vesuvius in 1872. In service of Goupil, de Nittis learned to be a particular kind of painter,

someone who painted small pictures for which there was a ready market and a reasonable reward for the dealer's investment. And no doubt with Goupil's help de Nittis developed his career within the Paris Salon system. His first successful submission was *The Road from Naples to Brindisi* (Indianapolis Museum of Art) exhibited at the Salon of 1872.<sup>10</sup> The painting attracted the attention of a number of critics, despite its comparatively small size.

Formal elements present in *The Road from Naples to Brindisi* (fig. 1) would continue throughout most of de Nittis's later work. In his intensely sunlit scene the artist appears to provide the viewer with precise details, what we would now call photographic. Yet oddly the painting is slightly out of focus, as if atmosphere prevents one from seeing more sharply the people and things within the image. This attention to atmosphere occurs often in the artist's cityscapes. The relatively small size of the figures, usually placed in the middle ground of the landscapes they occupy, is another constant in de Nittis's art. Finally, and perhaps most characteristically, de Nittis would return again and again to the convention of a roadway, treated as if it begins below the viewer's feet and then sweeping across the canvas to disappear into a distant horizon.

As much as de Nittis behaved like a Goupil/Gérôme kind of artist, even as early as 1870, de Nittis had already become friends with both Edouard Manet and Degas. Several years later he developed a close relationship with Caillebotte, who became the godfather to his child. It is likely too that de Nittis was friendly with James Tissot (1836-1902) before the latter moved to London in 1872. Early biographers reported that Manet painted *In the Garden*, 1870 (Shelburne Museum, Vermont) while staying with de Nittis (fig. 2). They attributed the figures in the garden to the de Nittis family, although this attribution has been challenged in recent years.<sup>11</sup> What is



known is that Manet exchanged this painting for one of de Nittis's. After the death of both artists, the widows re-exchanged the pictures.<sup>12</sup> We should therefore consider Manet's painting as the beginning of an extended conversation between de Nittis and some of the artists within the Impressionist circle, a conversation parallel to the one he was having with the artists in Goupil's stable of painters. Rather than looking for direct influences on de Nittis's art, we should consider the development of his artistic vocabulary as formed within a common currency found broadly in the artistic circles de Nittis frequented, both innovative and conventional.

With its high horizon, asymmetrical composition, and brightened palette, *In the Garden* foretells the direction Manet's Impressionist-inspired paintings took during the 1870s. Imagine owning a painting that represented such a distinctive departure in Manet's career. And then consider how unlike Manet's painting is to the works that made de Nittis famous. A more impressionable artist might have fallen under the influence of the great French artist. But clearly, de Nittis, from the beginning of his career, marked out an independent path for himself between the style and aesthetic sensibilities of the Goupil/Salon artists and the much more artistically daring Manet.

De Nittis's conversations with other artists' work extended well beyond Manet's. Degas's frequent use of cropping and asymmetry to create visual immediacy (which may have been inspired by Japanese prints) found a receptive response in de Nittis's art, as did Degas's racing themes. The Belgian painter Alfred Stevens (1823-1906), another of Manet's friends, provided an even more congenial artistic and professional model. Stevens experienced considerable success at the Paris Salon, winning a succession of medals and related honors. Stevens combined his admiration for all things Japanese with representations of fashionable women set in

richly appointed interiors in paintings like *La Parisienne Japonaise*, 1872 (La Boverie, Liège) (fig. 3). In Stevens's paintings, the clothes his models wear are far more important than the women inside them. De Nittis's friend, Tissot, extended Stevens's fashion-plate approach by depicting women in expanded social settings, in particular portraying women in public places and at leisure. Grounded in the Goupil/Gérôme tradition, de Nittis's paintings of women rarely achieved the scale found in either Stevens's or Tissot's paintings, but they unmistakably fed the same taste that made these artists so successful with collectors and juries. What was new in de Nittis's paintings is that he effectively placed Stevens's and Tissot's models on the Parisian boulevard.

Meissonier, Gérôme, Manet, Degas, Stevens, Tissot, and *Japonisme* were all before de Nittis when he chose to turn away from what had so far been selling well with Goupil in favor of images of modernity in the form of the well-dressed *haute bourgeoisie* on the streets of Paris. In the fall of 1873, de Nittis painted a small picture of three women and a pack of small dogs strolling down the Avenue de l'Impératrice (fig. 4).<sup>13</sup> These elegantly dressed women occupy the center of the composition, while the path of the avenue dramatically recedes into a broad vista culminating with a distant view of the Arc de Triomphe. The artist gave the painting to Goupil for sale in January 1874, which he did almost immediately for 5,000 francs.<sup>14</sup> The sale of this picture must have encouraged the artist to revisit the theme, only now as a winter scene, with a child replacing the dogs. The result was de Nittis's first great success at the Salon, *Fait-il froid!!!*.

*Fait-il froid!!!* (fig. 5) contains elements derived from the Goupil/Gérôme position from which he began, by placing his subjects at a middle distance, as well as keeping the three

women and a rebellious child squarely in the spatial middle of his scene. De Nittis, however, then departs from their conventions by taking a viewpoint that places the beholder on the street. The dramatically receding perspective recalls *The Road from Naples to Brindisi*, as does the atmosphere haze that engulfs the landscape. De Nittis artfully contrives a subtle asymmetrical composition, in which the street on which the women are walking pulls the viewer's attention to the left and toward a distant carriage, while the women lean forward to the right against the winter wind, held back only by the child who is attempting to pull her mother away from her companions. This little genre tidbit is reminiscent of the narrative incidents found in Tissot's London paintings. And of course, de Nittis shares with Tissot and Stevens the interest in the dresses, hats, and veils of these *Parisiennes*. *Fait-il froid!!!* announced de Nittis as perhaps *the* painter of life on the Parisian street.

Goupil sold *Fait-il froid!!!* for 10,000 francs in August 1874. To get some sense of what 10,000 francs meant in 1874, we know that Theo van Gogh, the artist's brother, worked for the Goupil gallery from 1882 until his death with an annual salary averaging about 12,000 francs. With this salary, Theo was able to support his family, his brother—about 17,500 francs during the artist's lifetime), maintain a large Paris apartment, and employ a maid.<sup>15</sup> Rising sale prices and the attention of the Salon undoubtedly encouraged de Nittis to abandon his Italian-themed paintings and to become as it were wholly Parisian in his subjects.

De Nittis's sudden shift to painting scenes of contemporary Parisian streets exactly paralleled Giovanni Boldini's cityscapes that the artist painted for Goupil in 1874.<sup>16</sup> Boldini (1842-1931) chose to depict two squares in the Montmartre district, the Place Pigalle and, near the other end of the Boulevard de Clichy, the Place de Clichy.<sup>17</sup> These working-class

neighborhoods held no interest for de Nittis, who chose instead the neighborhoods of the Parisian *haute bourgeoisie*. Of much greater significance, however, is the fact that Boldini's cityscapes, unlike *Fait-il froid!!!*, belong to the Italian veduta tradition of Canaletto and Guardi.

In veduta paintings, artists generally took a distant view of the urban landscape and featured significant landmarks within the represented cityscapes. They combine a breathtaking attention to detail with panoramic vistas. One comes away from such pictures with a holistic sense of place as well specific information about the various monuments represented. In such paintings, human figures if present have a minimal role, at best contributing to the 'local atmosphere.' On the famous Grand Tour, these vedute functioned like the 20th-century postcard as tourist souvenirs (albeit of very high quality). Boldini's *Place de Clichy* is similarly panoramic, provides great specificity regarding place and picks out important monuments. And he populated his scene with a variety of figures, representing different social classes, but without taking much interest in them as individuals.

We don't know the degree to which Boldini and de Nittis interacted during this period, but de Nittis's next submission to the Salon in 1875 was *La Place de la Concorde* (Turkish Presidential Collection, Ankara), probably painted in the winter of 1874-75 (fig.6). Boldini's veduta may have pushed de Nittis away from the narrative incidents of *Fait-il froid!!!* in favor of the monuments themselves. De Nittis places the viewer closer to his scene than vedute paintings normally would, more than Boldini had. One of the square's fountains, with its soaring jets of water, and the square's Egyptian obelisk, dominate the cityscape. The artist also offers a distant view of the Rue Royale and the Madeleine. De Nittis's figures, while not individualized, are representative of a singular social class, the *haute bourgeoisie*. Despite its apparent informality,

de Nittis carefully constructed his cityscape, dividing the painting into four equal zones, with the obelisk marking the central vertical axis and the horizon, indicated by the base of the distant architecture, meeting at the exact center of the composition.

*La Place de la Concorde* received considerable press attention, was engraved by Goupil, and sold in October 1875 to the Sultan of Turkey for 25,000 francs. For the first time de Nittis clearly established his middle path between the narrative and conventionally painted cabinet pictures of Meissonier and Gérôme and the overtly experimental compositions of Manet and Degas, while painting a modern, urban scene. The picture made a significant impression on the critics. One even wrote that *La Place de la Concorde* along with Manet's *Argenteuil* (Musée des beaux-arts, Tournai), "represented the balance of modernity at the Salon of 1875."<sup>18</sup>

More important than the critics, however, were other artists' response to *La Place de la Concorde*. Jean Béraud (1849-1935), for example, who subsequently became well-known for his Parisian street scenes, had yet to paint any before de Nittis's *La Place de la Concorde*. After de Nittis's success at the Salon, Béraud and other French artists were quick to imitate his Parisian street scenes. Similarly, many international artists working in Paris from the late 1870s onward painted boulevard scenes directly or indirectly inspired by de Nittis's work, such as the Americans John Singer Sargent and Childe Hassam, the Scandinavians Akseli Gallen-Kallela and Albert Edelfelt, the Spaniard Francesc Miralles, and the British painter, Frank Boggs, among others. While some of these artists are largely forgotten today, they were celebrated fixtures at international art exhibitions until the end of the century.

The most interesting of these exchanges regarding the Parisian street occurred between de Nittis and Degas. We know that the two artists spent much time together during the 1870s and

on one occasion, at least, in February 1875 they worked side by side on a series of etchings.<sup>19</sup>

Although scholars have casually compared Degas's celebrated *La Place de la Concorde (Portrait of Vicomte Lepic and his two daughters)*, 1875 (fig. 7), with de Nittis's version of the same square, a deeper dialog existed between the two artists. Degas's *Place de la Concorde* likely dates from the winter of 1875-76, certainly after Degas had seen de Nittis's *Place de la Concorde* in the Salon the spring before. Notably, Degas's *Place de la Concorde*, as an urban landscape/portrait, was unique in the artist's oeuvre.

Degas's "one off" might be explained by another de Nittis painting, *La Place des Pyramides* (fig. 8), also painted in the winter of 1875-76, in which Vicomte Lepic and his daughters also make an appearance, albeit at a much smaller scale than Degas's. Lepic's daughters are the same relative height to each other, one brunette, the other blonde, as they are in Degas's painting. They also wear precisely the same coats. The close proximity of these two "portraits" of Lepic and his daughters suggests that Degas was directly responding to de Nittis's work.<sup>20</sup> And if this is true, then we probably need to rethink the prevailing interpretations of Degas's painting, which have largely attempted to interpret his picture in reference to the Franco-Prussian war and its aftermath.<sup>21</sup>

One sees in the distance of Degas's painting the statue of the city of Strasbourg, a city annexed by the Germans in the wake of the recent Franco-Prussian war; or rather, one would see the sculpture if it were not obscured behind Vicomte Lepic's top hat. Scholars have repeatedly argued that there is a political meaning to this obscurity, that by hiding the monument behind Lepic's hat, Degas echoes how Parisians often wreathed the sculpture to commemorate the loss of Alsace-Lorraine to the Germans after the disasters of 1870-71. Yet in Degas's painting the

Strasbourg monument appears as insignificant window-dressing compared to the prominently figured Lepic and his children. Degas's picture also turns its back to the famous monuments on the square—the fountains and obelisk—that play such a prominent role in de Nittis's earlier version. If we compare the two paintings, at best we can say that Degas's painting is ambiguous in its political messaging, if any exists at all, whereas de Nittis's painting clearly celebrates the monuments of Paris, and by extension, French national pride. This is even more obvious in de Nittis's *La Place des Pyramides*, which includes the newly erected equestrian monument of Jeanne d'Arc as well as the reconstruction work then being carried out on a portion of the Tuileries palace burned in 1871 during the suppression of the Paris Commune.

De Nittis exhibited *La Place des Pyramides* at the Salon of 1876 where its political significance was much commented on by the critics. Degas appears to have sold his painting to Lepic shortly after its completion; it remained in Lepic's possession, un-exhibited, un-reproduced, until his death and therefore only known to his circle of acquaintances. Ironically, when Lepic's collection went up for auction in 1897, the auction catalogue attributed Degas' painting to de Nittis. The dealer Paul Durand-Ruel realized the difference, purchased the Degas, and later sold it in 1910 to the Berlin collector Otto Gerstenberg. Recovered by the Russians at the end of World War II it now hangs in the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg. Goupil was unable to sell de Nittis's *La Place des Pyramides*. De Nittis and Goupil had set the purchase price at 20,000 francs, probably with the expectation that they would sell it for 25,000 francs as they had with *La Place de la Concorde*. After sitting for five years in the gallery, Goupil appeared to have a purchaser through Christie's in London in 1881, but the sale fell through.<sup>22</sup> Eventually in 1883, de Nittis bought the painting back from Goupil for 25,000 francs, which, if

we use their 1872 contract as a guide, was actually half of the purchase price (10,000 francs) plus half of the sales price above the purchase price (2,500 francs) for a total of 12,500 francs. The artist then donated the painting to the Musée du Luxembourg, which is why it hangs in the Musée d'Orsay today.

What we learn from the de Nittis/Degas conversation is how much the Italian artist chose a middle path between the portrayal of the elusiveness and transitory nature of modern life that so interested Degas and Manet, and the anecdotal minutiae of the Meissonier/Gérôme tradition. In doing so, de Nittis was often hailed during his lifetime as the best “Impressionist” because his paintings had the “finished” character that the “sketches” of the other Impressionists often intentionally lacked. De Nittis’s work was also consistently unambiguous. The artist provided a positive image of a rebuilding Paris (and nation) moving confidently past the humiliation, destruction and horror of 1870-71. And de Nittis, unlike Stevens and Tissot, was never really a painter of fashion plates—of beautiful women in fashionable costumes. It was enough for the artist to present a positive image of a sophisticated and economically booming Paris, untouched even by the financial crash of 1872.

*La Parisienne*, the monuments of national identity and national tragedy, these are the stuff of de Nittis’s mature art. De Nittis traded in accessibility—which was also a recipe for profitability. He would never confuse the genres, the way Manet and Degas so often self-consciously did, by treating, for example, the portrait like a genre painting and a genre painting like a portrait. Whatever was troubling for the public at large about a Degas or a Manet painting de Nittis “fixed.” Finally, de Nittis argued for a positive, finished version of the painting of



modern life first in the Salon before selling his work independent of the Salon and the commercial galleries alike.

For an artist so central to the artistic activities in Paris during the 1870s de Nittis fell for a long time into undeserved obscurity, especially outside Italy. Much of the artist's innovations were dismissed either as *juste milieu* commercial accommodations or were overwhelmed by the large number of both French and international adopters of his treatment of the Parisian boulevard. Yet de Nittis was the exact opposite of a peripheral figure; he was central to all that was happening in the aesthetic and institutional upheavals of 1870s Paris. Leaving de Nittis out of the historical narrative for this period impoverishes our understanding of this critical chapter in European modernism.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> See Van Gelder, 1974, p. 9. Also cited in Goldberg, 1995, p. 59. The 1874 Salon catalogue lists two paintings by de Nittis, *Fait-il froid!!!* and *Dans les blé*, at that time the normal number for artists to show.

<sup>2</sup> Goupil signed de Nittis to an exclusive contract in January 1872; the artist would receive an annual credit of 18,000 francs with five percent interest in exchange for supplying the dealer with a proscribed number of works of a predetermined genre. The letter of agreement has been reprinted in full in Serafini, 2013, pp. 19-20.

<sup>3</sup> The other painting shown in the Salon of 1874 was from his series on the eruption of Vesuvius.

<sup>4</sup> The stock books of the Goupil gallery and its American collaborator, Knoedler's are available online. See <http://www.getty.edu/research/tools/provenance/search.html>.

<sup>5</sup> Rewald, 1973, p. 318 recounts how Renoir, in order to find places for all the submissions and to make visual sense of their diversity left out one of de Nittis's paintings, which was only later hung at Degas's insistence. Goldberg, 1995, p. 98, relying on de Nittis's later memoirs, states that Renoir deliberately held back the hanging of de Nittis' paintings, apparently already resenting de Nittis' success at the expense, he believed, of the Impressionists.

<sup>6</sup> See Vaisse, 1979, p. 147.

<sup>7</sup> Zola, 1993, p. 209.

<sup>8</sup> See the chapter "The *Juste Milieu* International," in Jensen, 1994.

<sup>9</sup> I have found no record of the gallery's involvement in getting de Nittis' appointment to Meissonier's studio, yet there can hardly be another explanation for how a poor, unknown artist from southern Italy was able to find a position in the studio of the most decorated French artist then living immediately after arriving in Paris.

<sup>10</sup> The Goupil gallery sold *The Road from Naples to Brindisi* for 1300 francs to another Parisian dealer, Tedesco frères.

<sup>11</sup> The painting is now believed to be a portrait of Berthe Morisot's younger brother Tiburce Morisot and older sister, Edma, and Edma's baby. See Cachin, 1983, p. 318.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 319

<sup>13</sup> Under the Third Republic this avenue had just been renamed the Avenue du Bois de Boulogne.

<sup>14</sup> The Goupil stock book entries note that it was likely initially given to a London dealer for 4,000 francs and ultimately sold later in the year for 7,500 francs.

<sup>15</sup> See "The financial background" essay in the online collection of van Gogh's letters: [http://www.vangoghletters.org/vg/context\\_3.html](http://www.vangoghletters.org/vg/context_3.html).

<sup>16</sup> In 1871 Goupil signed Boldini to a contract in which the dealer stipulated that the artist would provide cityscapes among other themes. See *Boldini*, 1991, p. 27.

<sup>17</sup> The painting of the Place Pigalle is lost. *Place de Clichy* is in a private collection.

<sup>18</sup> François Coppée, “Salon de 1875, *Le Moniteur Universel*, 11 May 1875, quoted in Goldberg, 1994, p. 94.

<sup>19</sup> Because Degas’ portrait bust etching of Alphonse Hirsch is dated February 20, 1875 we know precisely when de Nittis worked alongside Degas, the painter Alphonse Hirsch, and the graphic artist Marcellin Desboutin to create portrait etchings of each other. De Nittis also etched a bust portrait of Hirsch. And both Desboutin and de Nittis created bust portraits of Degas.

<sup>20</sup> It is possible that this artistic exchange could be extended to embrace Gustave Caillebotte’s *Paris Street, Rainy Day*, of 1877 which seems clearly to be rooted in Degas’ example and by lineage, in de Nittis’ urban scenes.

<sup>21</sup> See, for example, Dombrowski, 2011.

<sup>22</sup> In Goupil’s stockbook no. 8, p. 150 one can see faintly the sales price of 25,000 francs, which was erased once the sale failed to take place.

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Fig. 1 Giuseppe de Nittis, *The Road from Naples to Brindisi*, 1872 oil on canvas 27 x 52 cm  
Indianapolis Museum of Art



Fig. 2. Edouard Manet, *In the Garden*, 1870 oil on canvas, 44 x 54 cm Shelburne Museum, Vermont



Fig. 3. Arthur Stevens, *La Parisienne japonnais*, 1872 oil on canvas 150 x 105 cm. La Boverie, Liège



Fig. 4 Giuseppe de Nittis, *Avenue de Bois du Boulogne*, circa 1874 oil on canvas 32.2 x 42.2 cm. Private collection





Fig. 5 Giuseppe de Nittis, "A Winter's Walk" (after *Fait-il froid!!!*) from the *Illustrated London News* extra supplement, 2 January 1875. 1875 Wood-engraving, 30 x 41.5 cm. British Museum



Fig. 6 Giuseppe de Nittis, *Place de la Concorde* oil on canvas 59 x 83 cm. Presidential collection Ankara, Turkey.



Fig.7. Edgar Degas, *La Place de la Concorde*, 1875 oil on canvas 78.4 cm × 117.5 cm.  
Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg



Fig. 8. Giuseppe de Nittis, *La place des Pyramides*, 1875 oil on canvas 92.3 x 75 cm. Musée d'Orsay, Paris



Fig. 8a. Giuseppe de Nittis, *La place des Pyramides*, 1875 (detail) oil on canvas 92.3 x 75 cm. Musée d'Orsay, Paris

