# Grid Drawing

### NORTON SIMON MUSEUM | ART IN THE CLASSROOM



Portrait of Madame Dietz-Monnin c. 1879 Edgar Degas (French 1834–1917) Pastel on brown paper 18½ x 12¼ in. (47 x 31.1 cm) Norton Simon Art Foundation

# **Objective**

Just as builders use architectural plans with detailed measurements to construct sturdy homes, artists often use grids to make accurate drawings. Use this method to explore Edgar Degas's (French, 1834–1917) *Portrait of Madame Dietz-Monnin* by recreating the portrait one square at a time.

## **Background**

Grid drawing is a technique that has long been used by artists to accurately portray the world around them. Ancient Egyptians drew grids underneath their paintings and sculptures to ensure their subjects' **proportions** were correct. Centuries later, when creating tapestry designs, artists would often begin by making a small sketch that would then be covered in a grid so it could be reproduced as a much larger **cartoon**, the life-size model from which a tapestry, like the Norton Simon Museum's **The Death of Dido**, was woven.





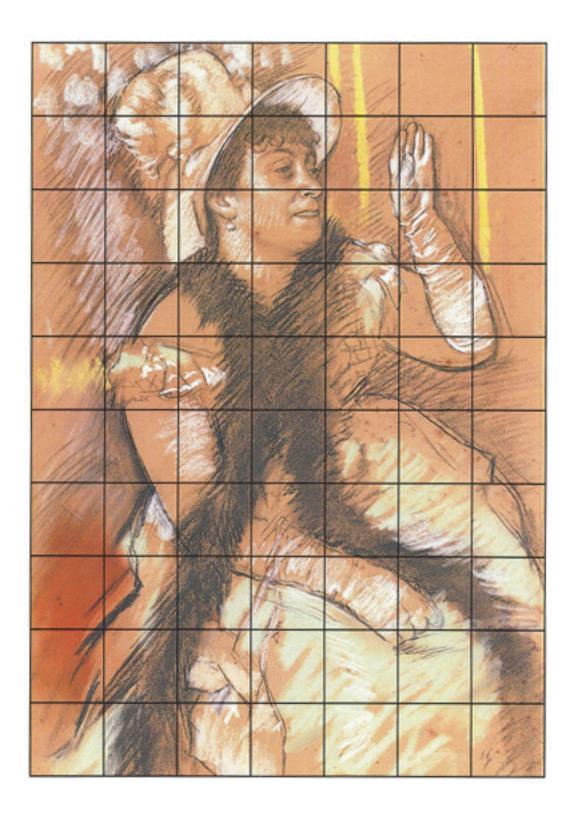
### **Activity**

- Using pencils or pastels on paper, recreate Degas's Portrait of Madame Dietz-Monnin (1879).
- Begin by laying out the attached piece of paper with a blank grid next to the attached image of Degas's drawing overlaid by a grid.
- Then, looking at the image of the drawing overlaid by a grid, draw the contents of each square in the corresponding blank grid. Complete each square until you have finished the drawing.
- Note that you can also trace the grid in pencil onto a blank sheet of paper if you wish to erase the lines of the grid once your drawing is completed.

#### **Vocabulary**

**Proportions:** The relationship of different parts within a whole.

**Cartoon:** A full-sized preparatory design for an artwork in another medium. Cartoons were used in the creation of frescoes, other large-scale wall paintings and tapestries.



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