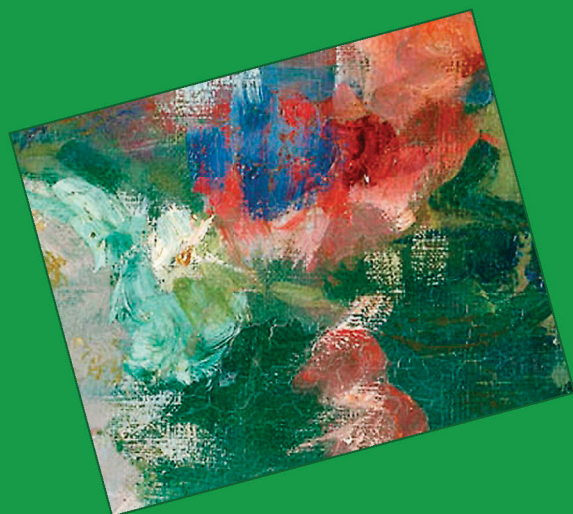


The Works



MARY
CASSATT

Little Girl in a Blue Armchair

Oil on canvas
89.5 cm × 129.8 cm
(35¼ in × 51½ in)

1878



With her white, lace-trimmed dress and plaid accessories, this little girl looks like she has just stepped away from a party. Patches of white paint capture the gleam of the buckles on her bowed, black shoes. While the adults celebrate elsewhere, she has climbed or flung herself into an overstuffed armchair (her legs are too short to have simply sat down). Her utterly unselfconscious posture is characteristic of childhood, while her apparent ennui is echoed by the small, curled-up dog. Their languor is in marked contrast to the lively brushwork that describes the patterning of the chairs' upholstery.

Cassatt later reported that the model was the child of friends of Degas. He also advised her on the painting and, 'he even worked on the background'. Infrared imaging has since shown that Degas likely eliminated a rear flat wall, which was parallel to the picture plane, and added the present corner. This addition adds further dynamism to a room that appears to tip, unconventionally, towards us.

The novel nature of this remarkable painting meant that when Cassatt submitted it to the American section of the 1878 Paris Exposition, it was rejected. She was furious, not least because one of the jurists 'was a pharmacist!'









