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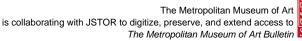


JOHN SINGER SARGENT in The Metropolitan Museum of Art

H. Barbara Weinberg and Stephanie L. Herdrich



THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART





This publication is made possible by the Marguerite and Frank A. Cosgrove Jr. Fund. John Singer Sargent (1856–1925), a prolific and versatile American expatriate painter based in England, enjoyed great international acclaim and patronage. By 1900, when his reputation as a portraitist reached its apogee, he had been elected a member of London's Royal Academy of Arts and New York's National Academy of Design and was an *Officier* of the French Order of the Legion of Honor. By about 1915 he had also achieved distinction as a painter of outdoor scenes, especially of dazzling watercolors made during his travels.

Sargent's death was followed by more than a half century of neglect. As an artist, he was too conservative to please partisans of modernism; too cosmopolitan to gratify cultural nationalists who were seeking American traits in American art; and too facile to satisfy those who preferred probing portraits.

The 1980s witnessed a revival of interest in Sargent that is now at a peak. His virtuoso portraits of gentlemen and elegant ladies attired in sumptuous silks and glittering jewels are as popular now as they were about 1900. His brilliant landscapes and genre paintings have made him one of the most cherished American practitioners of Impressionism. Sargent studies have proliferated and major retrospectives and thematic exhibitions of Sargent's works in England and the United States have enjoyed record attendance. A cordial relationship with Sargent during his lifetime, astute purchases, and generous gifts from his heirs and other donors have created a collection of his works at the Metropolitan that is unparalleled for its size and variety. Sargent's friendship with the Museum's third director, Edward Robinson, and his sister's association with its fifth director, Francis Henry Taylor, were especially fruitful.

In recognition of the seventy-fifth anniversary of Sargent's death and the fiftieth anniversary of an immense gift of his works by his sister, Mrs. Francis Ormond, H. Barbara Weinberg, Alice Pratt Brown Curator of American Paintings and Sculpture, and Stephanie L. Herdrich, Research Associate, American Paintings and Sculpture, have organized an exhibition, "John Singer Sargent Beyond the Portrait Studio: Paintings, Drawings, and Watercolors from the Collection"; published American Drawings and Watercolors in The Metropolitan Museum of Art: John Singer Sargent, with an essay by Marjorie Shelley, Sherman Fairchild Conservator in Charge; and prepared this publication. These three components of our commemoration and celebration of Sargent are all made possible by the Marguerite and Frank A. Cosgrove Jr. Fund, to which we are most grateful.

Philippe de Montebello Director

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On the cover: Detail of *Madame X* (fig. 16) Inside front cover: Detail of *Bringing down Marble from the Quarries to Carrara* (fig. 40) Title page: Detail of *Lily* (fig. 21) Inside back cover: Detail of *Padre Sebastiano* (fig. 38) Back cover: Detail of *Man and Pool, Florida* (fig. 53)

Opposite: Detail of Mrs. Hugh Hammersley (fig. 23)







SARGENT'S CAREER AS SEEN THROUGH THE METROPOLITAN'S COLLECTION

Sargent was born of American parents in Italy, learned to paint like a Spaniard in France, and lived in England for most of his life (see fig. 1). While he was thus the quintessential cosmopolite, he was also very much an American. He painted many portraits of American sitters in Paris, London, and the United States; sold numerous works to American collectors; exhibited in American cities and in the American sections of international expositions; encouraged American museums to acquire his works; devoted decades to creating murals for installation in Boston and nearby Cambridge; and declined knighthood rather than renounce his citizenship. His international success gratified his American friends, patrons, and critics.

Sargent's works are prized possessions of the Metropolitan's American Wing, valued for their rich visual pleasures, their revelation of the artist's skills as a draftsman and as a painter of virtuoso oils and watercolors, and their reflections of life about 1900. This essay, which is in two parts, first summarizes Sargent's career, concentrating on his accomplishments that are best represented in the Museum's holdings. It then traces the growth of the collection from 1897, when the trustees received from Sargent a portrait they had commissioned of their president, to the present.

1. John Singer Sargent (1856– 1925) in his Paris studio ca. 1885, with *Madame X* on an easel. Photographs of Artists Collection 1, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

CHILDHOOD AND YOUTHFUL WORKS, 1856–1874

Sargent's roots were deep New England. His grandfather, Winthrop Sargent IV, descended from one of the oldest colonial families, had failed in the merchant-shipping

business in Gloucester, Massachusetts, and had moved his family to Philadelphia. There his son, Fitzwilliam Sargent, became a physician and in 1850 married Mary Newbold Singer, daughter of a successful local merchant. Accompanied by Mary Sargent's mother, the couple left Philadelphia for Europe in late summer 1854, seeking a healthful climate and a distraction after the death a year earlier of their firstborn child, a two-year-old daughter. The Sargents' stay in Europe was meant to be temporary, but they became expatriates, passing winters in Florence, Rome, or Nice and summers in the Alps or other cooler regions. By 1870 Mary Sargent had given birth to five more children, of whom three survived: John, born in Florence on January 12, 1856; Emily, born in Rome in 1857; and Violet, born in Florence in 1870. An incurable romantic with a strong desire to remain in Europe, Mary Sargent resisted her husband's inclination to return to his responsibilities in Philadelphia. Able to support their peripatetic existence in rented quarters with her small annuity, she persuaded him to give up his profession in exchange for what he described as a "nomadic sort of life." Their residences would change to accommodate the health needs of the family and, increasingly, the education of their talented son.

John Sargent was given little regular schooling. As a result of his "*Baedeker* education," he learned Italian, French, and German. He studied geography, arithmetic, reading, and other disciplines under his father's tutelage. He also became an accomplished pianist. His mother, an amateur artist, encouraged him to draw, and her wanderlust 2. BOTZEN (from Switzerland 1869 Sketchbook) May 29, 1869 Graphite on off-white wove paper 7³/₄ x 11³/₄ in. (19.7 x 29.8 cm) Gift of Mrs. Francis Ormond, 1950 50.130.147h





3. LION MONUMENT, LUCERNE (from *Switzerland 1870 Sketchbook*) After Bertel Thorwaldsen, Danish, 1768 or 1770–1844 June 6, 1870 Graphite on off-white wove paper 8 x 11¹/₈ in. (20.3 x 28.3 cm) Gift of Mrs. Francis Ormond, 1950 50.130.1480

opposite 4. SCHRECKHORN, EISMEER (from Splendid Mountain Watercolours Sketchbook) 1870 Watercolor and graphite on off-white wove paper 10% x 16 in. (27.6 x 40.6 cm) Gift of Mrs. Francis Ormond, 1950 50.130.146f recto furnished him with subjects: ancient monuments, Renaissance and Baroque paintings and sculptures, and dramatic scenery. If, as has been recorded, Sargent's father envisioned a naval career for him, his parents could not ignore his artistic bent. During the winter of 1868–69, they apparently allowed him to take lessons from a German-American landscape painter in Rome.

Among the earliest works by Sargent in the Metropolitan is a remarkable sketchbook that records the family's travels in summer 1869, when they toured southern Italy and then went north to the Alps. Sargent's delicate landscape studies are typified by *Botzen* (fig. 2), a view near the town now known as Bolzano, or Bozen, along the Brenner Pass between Verona, Italy, and Innsbruck, Austria. Such drawings, often inscribed with location and date, reflect the seriousness with which the talented thirteen-year-old chronicled the journey.

The Metropolitan's other two early sketchbooks, from summer 1870, reveal greater artistic confidence. In *Lion Monument*, *Lucerne* (fig. 3), for example, Sargent encoded the power of the Danish sculptor Bertel Thorwaldsen's huge creation of 1821 with assertive contours and careful detail. *Schreckhorn, Eismeer* (fig. 4), one of more than forty views of the Bernese Oberland and the Swiss Alps contained in a large-format sketchbook, *Splendid Mountain Watercolours*, typifies Sargent's skillful handling of the medium.



These prodigious records of travel helped convince his parents to endorse his choice of career. In October 1870 Fitzwilliam Sargent wrote to his mother: "My boy John seems to have a strong desire to be an Artist by profession, a painter, he shows so much evidence of talent in that direction, and takes so much pleasure in cultivating it, that we have concluded to gratify him and to keep that plan in view in his studies."

For the next three years Sargent's general education continued, especially in Florence and Dresden, until he enrolled for his firstdocumented formal art training during the winter of 1873–74 at the Accademia delle Belle Arti in Florence. As Sargent worked with increasing disdain for the limited professionalism of that school, he met several young painters who described to him and his parents the advantages of study in London or Paris. In spring 1874 Fitzwilliam Sargent resolved to nourish his son's talent in the French capital, which had become the world's most powerful magnet for art students.

STUDENT YEARS IN PARIS AND EARLY CAREER, 1874–1889

In May 1874 Sargent entered the teaching atelier of a youthful, stylish painter, Charles-Emile-Auguste Durand (1838–1917), who called himself Carolus-Duran (see fig. 5). Carolus-Duran had been sympathetic to



5. CAROLUS-DURAN (Charles-Emile-Auguste Durand) 1879 Oil on canvas 46 x 37³/₄ in. (116.8 x 95.9 cm) Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Mass.



6. GITANA 1876? Oil on canvas 29 x 23⁵/₈ in. (73.7 x 60 cm) Gift of George A. Hearn, 1910 10.64.10

Realism during the 1860s, painting disquieting contemporary events and seedy types. About 1870 he rejected radical artistic tendencies in order to attract the patrons who would make him a leading portraitist in Third Republic France. His teaching methods, however, remained radical. While the professors of painting at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts (the French government school) insisted on a long preliminary practice in drawing, Carolus-Duran encouraged his students to paint at once, to exploit broad planes of viscous pigment, and to preserve the freshness of the sketch in completed works. He also exhorted them to study artists who demonstrated painterly freedom: Frans Hals and Rembrandt; Sir Anthony Van Dyck and Sir Joshua Reynolds; and, above all others, the Spanish master Diego Velázquez.

The young American moved close to his teacher stylistically and became his protégé. Without ample financial resources to look forward to, he may have grasped the wisdom of painting on commission and may have realized that portraiture suited his temperament. Sargent's interest in physiognomy and gesture, apparent in his juvenilia, informs works from his student years such as *Gitana* (fig. 6), a candid oil study of an exotic woman. The 1877 Paris Salon jury accepted Sargent's portrait of his friend Fanny Watts (1877; Philadelphia Museum of Art), his first submission. His portrait of Carolus-Duran (see fig. 5), an homage and challenge to his teacher, was a critical and popular success at the 1879 Salon.

In addition to studying with Carolus-Duran for almost five years, Sargent matriculated for three semesters of drawing instruction at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts —fall 1874, spring 1875, and spring 1877 and appears to have worked briefly in evening classes conducted by portraitist Léon Bonnat. He also maintained long-standing habits of regular travel and creative eclecticism. He copied Egyptian reliefs; Greek vases; paintings by Tintoretto and Nicolas Poussin and sculptures by Michelangelo; as well as paintings and prints by Jean-François Millet 7. SIESTA ON A BOAT 1876 Graphite on off-white wove paper 4 x 6¾ in. (10.2 x 17 cm) Gift of Mrs. Francis Ormond, 1950 50.130.141m 8. MEN HAULING LIFEBOAT ONTO BEACH 1876 Graphite on off-white wove paper 6% x 9³/₄ in. (16.8 x 24.8 cm) Gift of Mrs. Francis Ormond, 1950 50.130.1540





and other recent masters. He may have joined a group of classmates on an excursion to Barbizon in early summer 1875 and spent time with his family at Saint-Enogat and Saint-Malo on the Brittany coast during 1875–76. In May 1876, accompanied by his mother and his sister Emily, he began his first trip to the United States, which would include visits to the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia and Niagara Falls. Sargent's Atlantic crossings, in May and October, and his stay at Newport, Rhode Island, inspired him to fill sketchbooks with nautical subjects (see fig. 7) of the sort that he had recorded along the French coast (see fig. 8).

Picturesque locales prompted Sargent to paint genre scenes, which he showed alongside his portraits as he built his reputation. His *Oyster Gatherers of Cancale* (fig. 9), which he exhibited in the 1878 Salon, reflects the fascination with peasant life in remote, preindustrial locales that attracted many latenineteenth-century painters and their patrons. The sun-drenched image may also bespeak the influence of Claude Monet, whom Sargent seems to have met in Paris as early as 1876 at the second Impressionist exhibition. For such canvases Sargent often made quick oil sketches *en plein air*, which he combined with more deliberate studies in graphite (see fig. 10) and oil for the final compositions completed in the studio.

By autumn 1879, no longer attending classes regularly and concentrating on building his career, Sargent began a period of extensive travel to view works by the old masters and to gather ideas for pictures. His first destination was Madrid, where he reinforced his interest in Velázquez by copying his paintings in the Prado. Sargent then went to southern Spain and on to Morocco, where he spent January and February 1880 in Tangier. He recorded architectural vignettes such as *Moorish Buildings on a Cloudy Day* (fig. 11)



9. OYSTER GATHERERS OF CANCALE 1878 Oil on canvas 31 x 48½ in. (78.7 x 123.2 cm) Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. 10. CHILD (study for *Oyster Gatherers* of Cancale) 1877–78 Graphite on off-white wove paper 8¼ x 5 in. (21 x 12.7 cm) Gift of Mrs. Francis Ormond, 1950 50.130.114





11. MOORISH BUILDINGS ON A CLOUDY DAY 1879–80 Oil on wood 10¹/₄ x 13³/₄ in. (26 x 34.9 cm) Gift of Mrs. Francis Ormond, 1950 50.130.7



12. EL JALEO 1882 Oil on canvas 94½ x 137 in. (240 x 348 cm) Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston, Mass.

13. AFTER "EL JALEO" 1882 Graphite and watercolor on prepared clay-coated paper 10¹/₈ x 5¹/₂ in. (25.7 x 14 cm) Gift of Mrs. Francis Ormond, 1950 50.130.139



14. YOUNG WOMAN IN BLACK SKIRT Ca. 1880–82 Watercolor and graphite on white wove paper $14 \times 9^{13}/_{6}$ in. (35.5 x 25 cm) Gift of Mrs. Francis Ormond, 1950 50.130.33



during this period. The greatest product of the journey would be *El Jaleo* (see figs. 12, 13), a dramatic portrayal of a gypsy dancer and her accompanists, which Sargent completed two years after his return to Paris.

Sargent went to Holland in August 1880 to study works by Hals and other northern masters, whose techniques would nourish his developing painterly style. During a long visit to Venice in the fall and winter of 1880–81 and a shorter one in August 1882, he produced a memorable group of oils and watercolors that captured the characteristic muted harmonies of the city. Ignoring the canals, he concentrated on the peculiar perspectives offered by the narrow streets and mysterious courtyards, the murky interiors, and the costumes of the people, as depicted in *Young Woman in Black Skirt* (fig. 14). Sargent's travels during the early 1880s also included other cities in Italy, the south of France, and England.



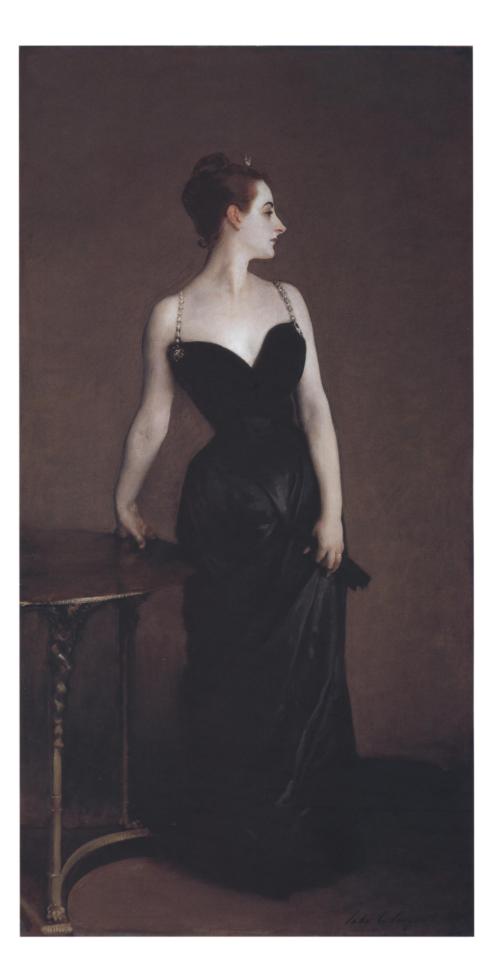
15. LADY WITH THE ROSE (CHARLOTTE LOUISE BURCKHARDT) 1882 Oil on canvas 84 x 44³/₄ in. (213.4 x 113.7 cm) Bequest of Valerie B. Hadden, 1932 32-154

> Although Sargent painted, showed, and won praise for both portraits and subject pictures at the Salons between 1877 and 1882, commissions from French sitters and members of the international community in Paris increasingly demanded his attention and defined his reputation. He also continued to demonstrate his skills in portraits of friends and acquaintances, which allowed him greater artistic freedom than did commissioned works. One of his most widely exhibited and acclaimed such portraits was the lifesize Lady with the Rose (Charlotte Louise Burckhardt) (fig. 15), which he showed in the 1882 Salon along with El Jaleo. Charlotte Burckhardt, who was twenty years old when Sargent painted her, was the daughter of a Swiss merchant and his American wife, members of the Sargent family's cosmopolitan circle. In this engaging picture she offers the viewer a white rose, suggesting innocence, and a seductive look, while the artist offers a tribute to Velázquez in his choice of monochromatic palette and shallow space, his emphasis on the figure's silhouette, and his quotation from the Spanish painter's portrait Calabazas (ca. 1628–29; Cleveland Museum of Art) for the pose. Traits derived from the works of Velázquez would become hallmarks of many of Sargent's portraits. Of Lady with the Rose Henry James wrote in 1887: "It offers the slightly 'uncanny' spectacle of a talent which on the very threshold of its career has nothing more to learn.... It is not simply precocity in the guise of maturity... it is the freshness of youth combined with the artistic experience, really felt and assimilated, of generations."

Sargent's best-known portrait, *Madame X* (*Madame Pierre Gautreau*) (fig. 16), also

conjoined "the freshness of youth...with the artistic experience... of generations." In autumn 1882, when he was twenty-six, Sargent apparently met Virginie Avegno Gautreau, the twenty-three-year-old Louisiana-born wife of a prominent Paris banker, and was attracted by her eccentric beauty. He wrote to his childhood friend Ben del Castillo, "I have a great desire to paint her portrait and have reason to think she would allow it and is waiting for someone to propose this homage to her beauty." Sittings began in winter 1882-83 and continued through summer 1883 at the Gautreau vacation home at Paramé in Brittany. Sargent struggled to find the best pose for his sitter, making more studies than he usually did for a portrait (see figs. 17, 62, 63).

In the canvas Sargent added to traits derived from Velázquez a profile view that recalls Titian's iconic image of Francis I (1539; Musée du Louvre, Paris) and an unmodulated treatment of the face and figure inspired by the style of Edouard Manet and Japanese prints. The picture's novelty and quality notwithstanding, it was a succès de scandale in the 1884 Salon, where, in the standard form of the period, it appeared as Portrait de Mme*** to protect the sitter's identity. (Of course, no one seeing the portrait failed to recognize her!) Madame Gautreau's haughty demeanor, her pale skin accentuated by her favorite lavender powder, and the fact that Sargent had shown the jeweled strap of her daring gown falling off her right shoulder (fig. 18) exceeded the bounds of decorum. Although she had complied with the artist's choices at the time of the sittings, she was embarrassed by the public's reaction.





opposite

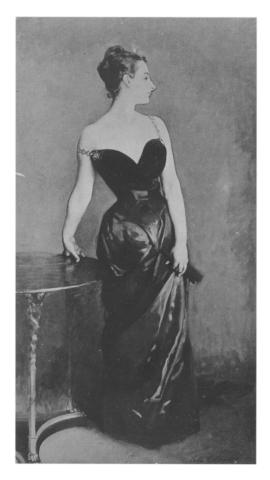
16. MADAME X (MADAME PIERRE GAUTREAU) 1883–84 Oil on canvas 82¹/₈ x 43¹/₄ in. (208.6 x 109.9 cm) Arthur Hoppock Hearn Fund, 1916 16.53

above

17. MADAME X (MADAME PIERRE GAUTREAU) 1883–84 Graphite on off-white wove paper 9³⁄₄ x 13³⁄₁₆ in. (24.6 x 33.5 cm) Purchase, Charles and Anita Blatt Gift, John Wilmerding Gift, and Rogers Fund, 1970 1970.47

right

18. Photograph of MADAME X before repainting of shoulder strap. Gift of Mrs. Francis Ormond, 1950



While Sargent would not yield to demands from her and her family that he withdraw the painting from the Salon, he repainted the shoulder strap after the exhibition and kept the canvas (see fig. 1).

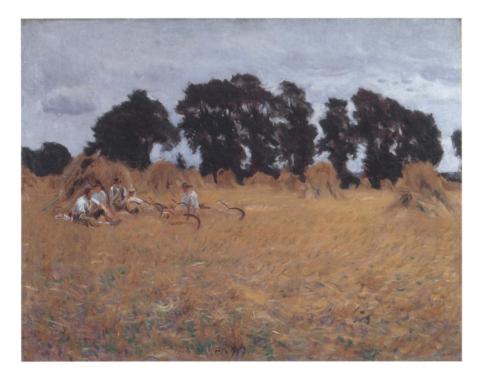
Madame X was disastrous for Sargent, who anticipated neither the public's disdain for Virginie Gautreau's bizarre glamour nor many critics' complaints about his indifference to conventions of pose, modeling, and treatment of space, even twenty years after Manet's pioneering efforts. A writer for *Art Amateur* captured the common reaction in a particularly brutal review:

This portrait is simply offensive in its insolent ugliness and defiance of every rule of art....The drawing is bad, the color atrocious, the artistic ideal low, the whole purpose of the picture being, not an artistic and sensational "tour de force" still within the limits of true art, as Sargent's Salon pictures have hitherto been, but a wilful exaggeration of every one of his vicious eccentricities, simply for the purpose of being talked about and provoking argument.

Having gained notoriety rather than fame, Sargent decided that London, where he had thought of settling as early as 1882, would be more hospitable than Paris. In spring 1886 he moved to England for the rest of his life.

Fearful that Sargent might sacrifice characterization to a show of "French style," which they associated with Madame X and, perforce, disliked, English patrons at first withheld commissions. With time and creative energy to spare, Sargent spent several summers engaged in Impressionist projects. These were nourished by his contact with Monet, whom he visited several times at Giverny, beginning in early summer 1885, and by the chance to work outdoors during the summers of 1885 and 1886 in the Cotswolds village of Broadway, Worcestershire. There, in an informal colony that included American painters Francis Davis Millet and Edwin Austin Abbey, Sargent painted scenes such as Reapers Resting in a Wheat Field (fig. 19), which captures with animated brushwork the rural activities and golden sunlight that attracted urbanites to the Cotswolds.

Sargent's most ambitious Broadway canvas was the ravishing *Carnation*, *Lily*, *Lily*, *Rose* (fig. 20), a lifesize depiction of illustrator Frederick Barnard's daughters lighting Japanese paper lanterns in Millet's garden.



19. REAPERS RESTING IN A WHEAT FIELD 1885 Oil on canvas 28 x 36 in. (71.1 x 91.4 cm) Gift of Mrs. Francis Ormond, 1950 50.130.14 20. CARNATION, LILY, LILY, ROSE 1885–86 Oil on canvas 68½ x 60½ in. (174 x 153.7 cm) Tate Gallery, London





21. LILY (study for *Carnation*, *Lily*, *Lily*, *Rose*) 1885–86 Graphite and pen and ink on off-white wove paper $13\frac{1}{2} \times 9\frac{5}{8}$ in. (34.5 x 24.5 cm) Gift of Mrs. Francis Ormond, 1950 50.130.125

The girls posed every afternoon just after sunset so that Sargent could record the contrast between fading daylight and glowing candlelight. Although he created the effect of an impression, he planned the picture carefully—by adding artificial flowers to the actual shrubbery, for example—and made many precise drawings such as *Lily* (fig. 21). The painting's display at the Royal Academy in 1887 assuaged English patrons' and critics' doubts about Sargent; its acquisition for the British nation augured well for his career in London.

Sargent spent portions of the summers of 1887, 1888, and 1889 in, respectively, Henley, Calcot Mill, and Fladbury, England. Perhaps because he was not working on a major exhibition piece, he painted more canvases than he had at Broadway and made them more candid and informal in composition and paint handling. Additional visits to Monet between 1887 and 1891 strengthened Sargent's commitment to Impressionism. He experimented with the French painter's chromatic palette and high key; adopted a distinctive spiky stroke; and balanced his portraitist's interest in specificity with Monet's corrosive light. The results included *Two Girls with Parasols at Fladbury* (fig. 22), in which Sargent portrayed his sister Violet, at left, and a friend, using a few brushstrokes to suggest hands, reducing faces to masks, and saturating the garments with dazzling sunlight.

Although English patrons hesitated to sit for Sargent during the late 1880s, Americans were eager to do so. In September 1887 he traveled to Newport to fulfill his first commission in the United States: a portrait of Elizabeth Allen Marquand (1887; Art Museum, Princeton University), wife of the future president of the Metropolitan Museum. Sargent spent six months in the United States, dividing his time between 22. TWO GIRLS WITH PARASOLS AT FLADBURY 1889 Oil on canvas 29¹/₂ x 25 in. (74.9 x 63.5 cm) Gift of Mrs. Francis Ormond, 1950 50.130.13





23. MRS. HUGH HAMMERSLEY 1892 Oil on canvas 81 x 45¹/₂ in. (205.7 x 115.6 cm) Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Douglass Campbell, in memory of Mrs. Richard E. Danielson, 1998 1998.365

> Boston and New York, painting more than twenty portraits, and having his first solo exhibition at Boston's St. Botolph Club in January 1888. His third visit to the United States, which began in December 1889, lasted eleven months and included stays in New York, Boston, and Worcester, Massachusetts. By the time he returned to London, he had painted nearly forty portraits and had received a prestigious mural commission for McKim, Mead and White's Boston Public Library, constructed between 1887 and 1894 in Copley Square.

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITY, 1890–1925

During the 1890s Sargent's accomplishments as a portraitist confirmed his seemingly predestined role as the "Van Dyke de l'époque!" -as Auguste Rodin characterized him in 1902. The manifestation of his diverse approaches to portraiture in two London exhibitions in 1893 particularly captured the attention of critics and the confidence of potential sitters. To the progressive New Gallery he sent portraits of Mrs. George Lewis (1892; private collection) and Mrs. Hugh Hammersley (see fig. 23), a British banker's wife, shown wearing a brilliant magenta dress and seated in a vivacious pose that suggests the influence of Impressionism. To the venerable Royal Academy he sent Lady Agnew of Lochnaw (1892; National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh), a depiction of a languorous aristocrat, a harmony in mauve. Critics described the picture of Mrs. Hammersley as chic, clever, unconventional, realistic, daring, bizarre, and bold,

qualities that were admirable or lamentable, depending on the writer. By contrast, they characterized that of Lady Agnew as solid, convincing, and enduring, traits that were rewarded by Sargent's election as an associate of the Royal Academy in January 1894.

Reassured by that honor, positive reviews, and the conspicuous quality of Sargent's portraits themselves, British patrons responded with numerous commissions. While his subjects included businessmen and their families, artists, and performers, Sargent flourished particularly as a purveyor of likenesses to the English aristocracy. He maintained a dialogue with tradition, creating grand-manner pendants to family heirlooms by Van Dyck, Reynolds, and others. A fine example is The Wyndham Sisters: Lady Elcho, Mrs. Adeane, and Mrs. Tennant (fig. 24), which presents the three beautiful daughters of the Honorable Percy Wyndham arranged like huge white flowers on a sumptuous sofa. Rather than conducting sittings in his Tite Street studio as usual, Sargent studied the sisters in the drawing room of their family's residence on Belgrave Square, London. From the dark wall above them, George Frederick Watts's portrait of their mother (1866–77; private collection) emerges like a shade to establish their genealogy as well as Sargent's, by reminding the viewer of his ties to painters of the past.

American patrons continued to call upon Sargent's skills. For example, in February 1896 the Metropolitan's trustees resolved to recognize the contributions of Henry G. Marquand to the Museum by commissioning his portrait. Marquand had made his fortune in real estate, banking, and railroads. After 1880 he devoted himself to collecting art and



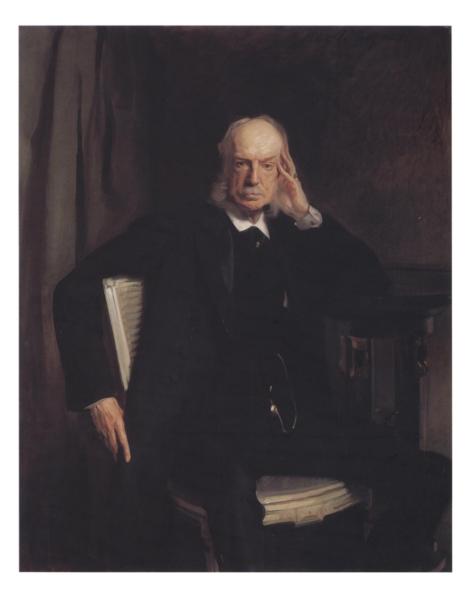
to efforts on behalf of the Metropolitan, to which he gave a notable collection of oldmaster paintings and which he served as its second president between 1889 and his death in 1902. Although the trustees were responsible for selecting an artist, Marquand probably favored Sargent, who had painted his wife in 1887 and his daughter, Mrs. Henry Galbraith Ward (see fig. 64). In the canvas (fig. 25), which Sargent executed in his London studio during the summer of 1897, the probing gaze of the frail seventy-eight-year-old Marquand belies his ill health.

Other American sitters included Ada Rehan (see fig. 26), the Irish-born Shakespearean actress whom Sargent painted in London for

an American admirer of Rehan's, and Isaac Newton Phelps Stokes, the scion of a wealthy New York family and an architecture student in Paris, with his wife, the former Edith Minturn. The Stokeses had been married in August 1895 and the picture (fig. 27) was a wedding gift from a friend. Sargent had been asked to paint Mrs. Stokes alone; he selected a blue satin evening gown for her to wear and began the sittings. He soon decided instead to portray her in the starched white piqué skirt, light shirtwaist, and serge jacket in which she walked to his studio one day. She was to be shown accompanied by a Great Dane, borrowed from the kennel of one of Sargent's friends. When the couple abandoned their

24. THE WYNDHAM SISTERS: LADY ELCHO, MRS. ADEANE, AND MRS. TENNANT 1899 Oil on canvas 115 x 84¹/₈ in. (292.1 x 213.7 cm) Wolfe Fund, Catharine Lorillard Wolfe Collection, 1927 27.67

25. HENRY G. MARQUAND 1897 Oil on canvas 52 x 41³/₄ in. (132.1 x 106 cm) Gift of the Trustees, 1897 97.43





26. ADA REHAN 1894–95 Oil on canvas 93 x 50¹/₈ in. (236.2 x 127.3 cm) Bequest of Catharine Lasell Whitin, in memory of Ada Rehan, 1940 40.146

27. MR. AND MRS. I. N. PHELPS STOKES 1897 Oil on canvas 84¹/₄ x 39³/₄ in. (214 x 101 cm) Bequest of Edith Minturn Phelps Stokes (Mrs. I.N.), 1938 38.104



plan to have James Abbott McNeill Whistler paint Mr. Stokes's portrait—and the dog was unavailable—Stokes had "a sudden inspiration," he recalled, and "offered to assume the role of the Great Dane in the picture. Sargent was delighted, and accepted the proposal at once.... He painted me in three standings purely as an accessory." While the portrait invokes the usual stylistic traits from Velázquez and recalls Van Dyck in its attenuated forms, it also encodes the couple's modern spirit: an emblematic "new woman," encouraged but not dominated by her husband, seems to have stopped by the studio and caught her breath only an instant before Sargent snapped her image onto the canvas.

Sargent's portraits of noted American painter William Merritt Chase (fig. 28) and museum director Edward Robinson (fig. 29) reveal his gift for characterization, despite the limitations of somber male attire and the waning of his enthusiasm for accepting



28. WILLIAM M. CHASE, N.A. 1902 Oil on canvas 62½ x 41¾ in. (158.8 x 105.1 cm) Gift of the Pupils of Mr. Chase, 1905 05.33



commissions after 1900. A group of Chase's students ordered the portrait of their teacher, planning to pay for the canvas by exhibiting it and intending to give it to the Metropolitan. When he arrived for his sittings in London in July 1902, Sargent insisted that Chase don his old studio coat. The costume, palette and poised brush, and Chase's assured stance suggest his dual persona as painter and gentleman.

Robinson had probably met Sargent in the early 1890s, when he was curator of classical antiquities at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and the artist was painting murals for the Boston Public Library. Robinson helped to raise funds so that Sargent could continue 29. EDWARD ROBINSON 1903 Oil on canvas 56½ x 36¼ in. (143.5 x 92.1 cm) Gift of Mrs. Edward Robinson, 1931 31.60

the mural project and was on the committee that organized an exhibition of his works at Copley Hall, Boston, in 1899. Robinson was appointed director of the Boston museum in 1902, the year before Sargent painted him; he would come to the Metropolitan as assistant director in 1905 and serve as director from 1910 until 1931. As in his portrait of Chase, Sargent illuminated only the subject's face and hands. The library interior and the Etruscan relief on the table refer to Robinson's scholarly interests.

After the turn of the century Sargent grew tired of the demands of portrait painting. He railed against taking on commissions: "No more paughtraits... I abhor and abjure them and hope never to do another especially of the Upper Classes," he wrote to fellow artist Ralph W. Curtis. "Ask me to paint your gates, your fences, your barns, which I should gladly do, but not the human face," he told his friend Lady Radnor. Instead of portraits in oil, Sargent offered patrons bust-length images in charcoal that he could draw in one sitting lasting two or three hours, rather than the eight or ten sittings that an oil might require. The Metropolitan owns two of Sargent's hundreds of charcoal likenesses, Anna R. Mills (fig. 69) and Helen A. Clark (1924; 53.186).

Beginning in 1890, when Sargent was awarded the prestigious commission for murals for the Boston Public Library, he was constantly preoccupied with similar projects for important institutions in Boston and in Cambridge. Although he had painted only a portion of a mural as an assistant to Carolus-Duran, he was well prepared to undertake major decorative work by his cosmopolitan education, academic training in Florence and



Paris, extensive travel, familiarity with traditional art, and wide circle of well-educated American and European friends. Still only in his mid-thirties by 1890, he may have wished to establish a reputation as an even more serious and multifaceted artist than his subject pictures and his increasingly successful portraits had announced him to be.

In the spirit of the American Renaissancethe movement in architecture and art that flourished in the United States from 1885 until about 1915-Charles Follen McKim, the Boston Public Library's chief architect, wished to create an impressive ensemble that invoked, and might even rival, classical precedents. He designed a building that was indebted principally to Henri Labrouste's beaux-arts-style Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève (1844-50), Paris, with quotations from Leon Battista Alberti's Church of San Francesco (Tempio Maletestiano, 1447–56), Rimini; and he invited Sargent, Abbey, French muralist Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, and sculptors Augustus Saint-Gaudens and Daniel Chester French to decorate it.

Sargent was asked to create murals for the Special Collections Hall, a long, windowless, barrel-vaulted corridor at the top of the main

30. MAN STANDING, HANDS ON HEAD 1890–1910 Charcoal on light blue laid paper 24¼ x 18‰ in. (61.5 x 48 cm) Gift of Miss Emily Sargent, 1930 30.28.1

staircase, and was allowed free choice of content and style. While he initially considered a subject from Spanish literature, he soon settled on Triumph of Religion, an erudite program that described the evolution of religious thought from paganism through Judaism to Christianity. This theme would allow him to display his ability to conceive and execute an abstruse allegory, and it would require extensive travel, which he enjoyed. For the project Sargent adopted a more calculated technical approach than he used for portraits-drawing compositional arrangements and studies of individual figures and restraining his customary painterly verve-thus affirming his respect for the formal rigors of the beaux-arts tradition. The Metropolitan owns a representative selection of the sort of life drawings that Sargent made for the project, including Man Standing, Hands on Head (fig. 30), as well as Astarte (fig. 31), one of his several oil studies for the figure of the ancient Middle Eastern goddess associated with love and fertility in The Pagan Gods, painted on the vault. The last elements of Sargent's murals were installed in the library in 1919.

In 1916 Sargent had agreed to decorate the elliptical dome of the rotunda in the new extension of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. In November 1921, a month after the rotunda was unveiled, he was asked to expand the program, based on classical and allegorical themes, onto the barrel-vaulted ceiling over the main stairway to the rotunda, the ceilings of the corridors on either side of the staircase, and the wall that then served as the entrance to the library. In the Metropolitan are six drawings for the Boston museum commission, as well as small oil studies for 31. ASTARTE Ca. 1890–95 Oil on canvas 385⁄8 x 12 in. (98.1 x 30.5 cm) Gift of Mrs. Francis Ormond, 1950 50.130.3



32. DEATH AND VICTORY (study for mural, Harry Elkins Widener Memorial Library, Harvard University)
1921–22
Watercolor, gouache, and graphite on white wove paper
20% x 8¹⁵/₆ in. (53 x 22.7 cm)
Gift of Mrs. Francis Ormond, 1950
50.130.84



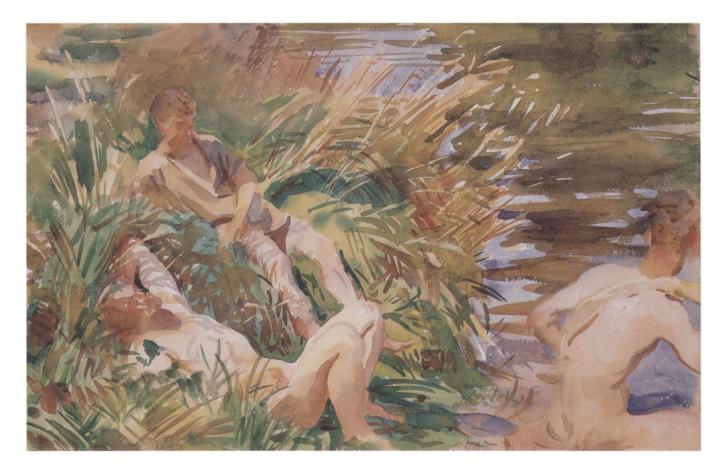
Philosophy and *Science* (ca. 1921–25; 50.130.1–2) for the library entrance wall.

While working at the Boston museum, Sargent undertook his third and most modest mural commission, canvases that flank a doorway on a landing of the main staircase of Harry Elkins Widener Memorial Library at Harvard University. Painted in 1921–22, the subjects commemorate alumni who perished in World War I. To the left of the doorway is *Death and Victory*; to the right is *Coming of the Americans to Europe*. Two watercolors in the Metropolitan's collection (see fig. 32) reflect the near-final designs. Upon completing the murals for the Museum of Fine Arts, Sargent remarked to a friend: "Now the American things are done, and so, I suppose, I may die when I like." Three days before he was to sail for Boston to oversee the installation in April 1925, he suffered a heart attack in his sleep and died.

Originally well received, Sargent's murals have since been ignored or dismissed, despite his preoccupation with them during thirty-five of his forty-eight years of professional activity. Although they kept him from other pursuits, they were by no means detached from them. For example, the artist allowed the imperatives of murals and grand-manner portraits to inform each other. His group portraits from about 1900, such as The Wyndham Sisters, reiterate some of the technical choices he made in his decorative works: broadly treated forms, large scale, clear contours, dramatic tonal contrasts, and frieze-like arrangements of figures close to the picture plane. Trips that Sargent took to make studies for

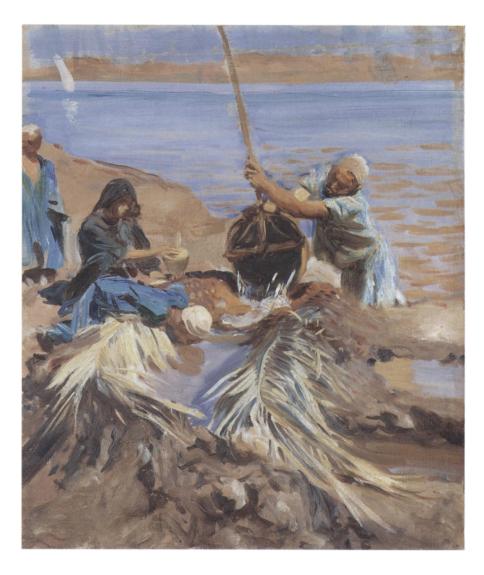
his murals inspired subject pictures and landscapes in oil as well as bravura watercolors.

The interdependence of Sargent's major commissions and his informal subjects is also demonstrated by works that he executed at the Western front in 1918, when battles were still being waged. Sargent had accepted a commission from the British Ministry of Information's War Memorial Committee to create a picture that would honor the joint efforts of British and American forces. At the end of a three-month tour at the edge of the fighting in war-torn France, Sargent witnessed a scene that involved only British troops and made it the subject of Gassed (1919; Imperial War Museum, London), a twenty-foot-long canvas in which soldiers blinded by mustard gas are led to treatment. Gassed, a melodramatic panorama of pain, is distant in spirit from many much more candid watercolors in the Metropolitan's collection that Sargent painted at the front. Although these sheets depict the French



33. TOMMIES BATHING
1918
Watercolor, gouache, and graphite on white wove paper
13⁵/₈ x 20⁷/₈ in. (34.6 x 53 cm)
Gift of Mrs. Francis Ormond, 1950
50.130.58

34. EGYPTIANS RAISING WATER FROM THE NILE 1890–91 Oil on canvas 25 x 21 in. (63.5 x 53.3 cm) Gift of Mrs. Francis Ormond, 1950 50.130.16

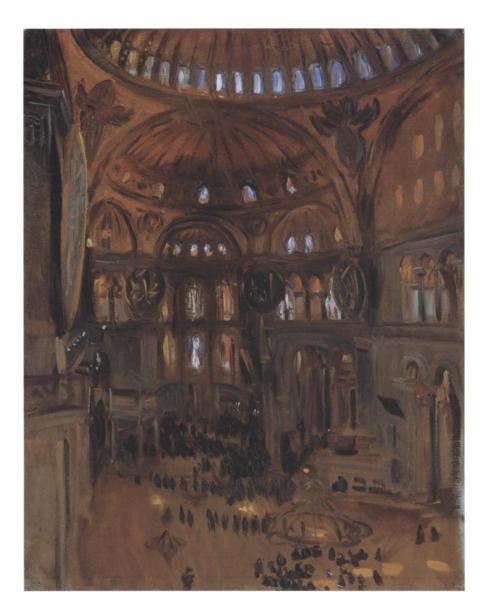


countryside in ruins, the machinery of war, and camp life, the puffy clouds, foliage, and figures lounging in deep grass or swimming (see fig. 33) often resemble Sargent's holiday vignettes.

RECORDS OF TRAVEL AND OTHER STUDIES, 1890–1925

While Sargent was focused on establishing his reputation as a portraitist in London and with painting murals during the 1890s, he began a process of self-reinvention as an artist that would culminate after 1900. It was then that travel studies in oil and especially in watercolor, and canvases inspired by them, would occupy more of his time and become a new source of critical and financial support.

Having decided to elucidate in the Boston Public Library decorations the origins of Western religion, Sargent visited Egypt, Greece, and Turkey to sketch and paint just after he received the commission in 1890. In fact, his wish to travel and his longstanding fascination with exotic places may have prompted him to contrive the complex library program, which, as an empiricist, he was obliged to render with as much authenticity as possible. Among the records of this trip in the Metropolitan's collection are *Egyptians Raising Water from the Nile* (fig. 34), which shows men and women using a *shaduf*, a simple irrigation device, to fill ditches, and



35. SKETCH OF SANTA SOFIA 1891 Oil on canvas 31¹/₂ x 24¹/₄ in. (80 x 61.6 cm) Gift of Mrs. Francis Ormond, 1950 50.130.18

Sketch of Santa Sofia (fig. 35), a view enlivened by figures whose minute size emphasizes the immense interior volume of the great building in Constantinople.

Throughout the library project, Sargent traveled to research and paint subject pictures. He went to Syria, Palestine, and Lebanon in 1905–6 and created more than forty watercolors and a dozen oils. Among them are *Arab Woman* (fig. 36) and *Landscape with Goatherd* (fig. 37). These works reflect the impact of Sargent's increasing use of watercolor on his handling of oil, and his ultimate ability to call on the two media interchangeably, broadly brushing thin, fluid pigment over paper or canvas to create instantaneous impressions.

Between 1900 and the beginning of World War I, Sargent enjoyed annual holidays that sometimes lasted three or four months. He usually went with a group of family and friends to rural locales in temperate climates where he could indulge his passion for pleinair work (see figs. 61, 71). He favored regions that he had visited as a child: the Alps, the Italian lake district, and Spain. Having passed July and August in such places, he often traveled on to Venice or to destinations farther south. As he had always done, he recorded the sites and people, drawing in sketchbooks, painting in watercolor, completing informal oils, or making studies for more ambitious canvases, which, like four pictures in the

36. ARAB WOMAN 1905–6 Watercolor and gouache on off-white wove paper 17% x 11% in. (45.4 x 30.2 cm) Gift of Mrs. Francis Ormond, 1950 50.130.43

37. LANDSCAPE WITH GOATHERD 1905–6 Oil on canvas 24¹/₄ x 31⁷/₈ in. (61.6 x 81 cm) Gift of Mrs. Francis Ormond, 1950 50.130.17





38. PADRE SEBASTIANO Ca. 1904–6 Oil on canvas 22¹/₄ x 28 in. (56.5 x 71.1 cm) Rogers Fund, 1910 11.30



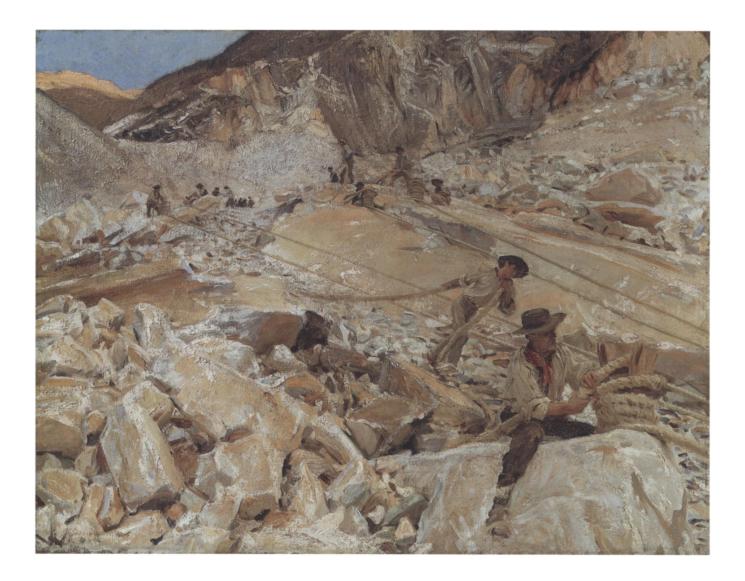
Metropolitan's collection, he exhibited and sold.

In *Padre Sebastiano* (fig. 38), probably executed at Giomein, a village in the Italian Alps, Sargent captured the priest's thoughtful demeanor and described his interest in botany by showing him in his cluttered bedroom making notes about the flowers that cover the table. Sargent based *The Hermit* (*Il Solitario*) (fig. 39) upon woodland sketches that he had painted in Val d'Aosta, in the foothills of the Alps in northwest Italy. Although he seems to have been preoccupied with textured brushstrokes and patterns of light and shadow in rendering the landscape, he included two gazelles (contrived from a stuffed specimen) and a figure whose harmonious relationship with his surroundings invokes religious characters such as Saint Anthony and philosophical ideas such as pantheism.

For Bringing down Marble from the Quarries to Carrara (fig. 40), Sargent consolidated many on-the-spot studies of workers in his account of the grueling labor, conducted without modern technology, at the historic Italian quarries. In *Tyrolese Interior* (fig. 41) he depicted peasants pausing for a benediction 39. THE HERMIT (IL SOLITARIO)
1908
Oil on canvas
37³/₄ x 38 in. (95.9 x 96.5 cm)
Rogers Fund, 1911
11.31



40. BRINGING DOWN MARBLE FROM THE QUARRIES TO CARRARA 1911 Oil on canvas 28¹/₈ x 36¹/₈ in. (71.4 x 91.8 cm) Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1917 17.97.1



41. TYROLESE INTERIOR 1915 Oil on canvas 28% x 22¹/₁₆ in. (71.4 x 56 cm) George A. Hearn Fund, 1915 15.142.1



before their midday meal in an old castle in or near Sankt Lorenzen that had been transformed into farmers' quarters. The dark palette and the religious statues in the background suggest the somber mood that affected Sargent's holiday in the Tyrol during summer 1914, when Austria declared war on Serbia.

Portable watercolors were well suited to Sargent's peripatetic summers and, as he traveled more often after 1900, his output of radiant works in the medium increased dramatically. Beginning in 1903 he showed such pictures to acclaim in London and New York, stimulating a great demand for them. Sargent engineered his career so astutely that by 1907, when he pledged not to accept any more portrait commissions, he had established a solid reputation as a watercolorist.

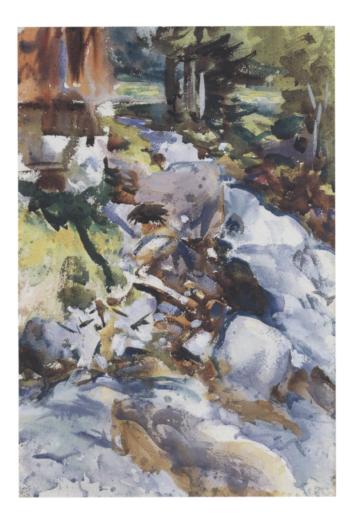
Sargent's unfailing interest in color and light was well served by the transparency and spontaneity of watercolor. His early biographer Evan Charteris remarked in 1927: "To live with Sargent's water-colours is to live with sunshine captured and held." These works demonstrate his sprezzatura, or studied nonchalance. One of his friends characterized the economy with which he suggested forms: "It is astounding to note the almost magical skill by which the swift touches of his brush build up and express the infinite varieties of the surfaces and substances which he was painting." Sargent's gift for fashioning objects as if by magic was enhanced by his unconventional compositions. He often cropped his images dramatically, providing only partial views of monuments or fragments

of architecture. In pastoral settings he rejected broad vistas, ignored the sky, adopted close vantage points, and directed his gaze downward to grass, rocks, and brooks. His broad application of pigment, indifference to details, and attention to pattern rather than form make many images nearly abstract and in some measure unresolved.

Between 1904 and 1908 Sargent paid annual visits to Val d'Aosta, where he usually settled at a pension in the remote town of Purtud. Sargent's Val d'Aosta watercolors in the Metropolitan's collection reveal his transformation of flowing pigments into flowing brooks and his fascination with light on water: rippling, as in *Rushing Brook* (fig. 43), or relatively still; reflecting objects along the banks or transparent. Even an oil such as *Alpine Pool* (fig. 42) captures the appearance of forms submerged in sparkling water.

Sargent also painted the mountains at Val d'Aosta and the nearby Simplon Pass during annual visits between 1909 and 1911; the French Alps (1912); northern Italy (1913); and the Tyrol (1914). While he preferred near views, he was sometimes tempted by panoramas and transitory atmospheric conditions, as in *Sirmione* (fig. 44), which records clouds over a peak at the edge of Lake Garda.





opposite 42. ALPINE POOL 1907 Oil on canvas 27½ x 38 in. (69.9 x 96.5 cm) Gift of Mrs. Francis Ormond, 1950 50.130.15

left

43. RUSHING BROOK Ca. 1904–11 Watercolor, gouache, and graphite on off-white wove paper 18³/₈ x 12³/₈ in. (46.8 x 31.4 cm) Gift of Mrs. Francis Ormond, 1950 50.130.80i

below

44. SIRMIONE Ca. 1913 Watercolor and gouache on off-white wove paper 15³/₄ x 21¹/₁₆ in. (40 x 53.6 cm) Purchase, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 1915 15.142.5

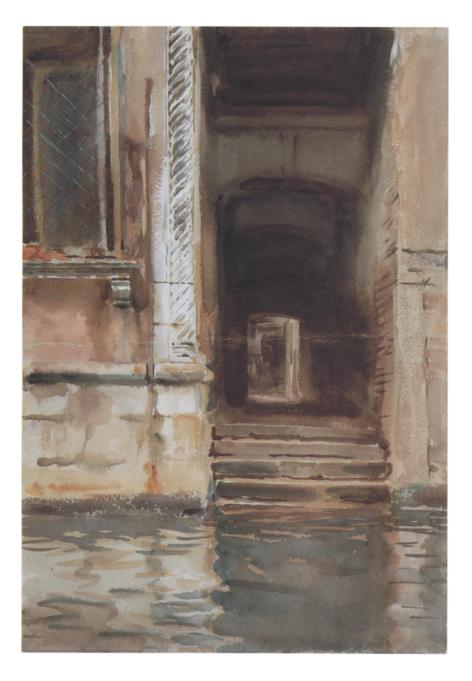


45. VENETIAN CANAL Ca. 1913 Watercolor and graphite on off-white wove paper 15³/₄ x 21 in. (40 x 53.3 cm) Purchase, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 1915 15.142.10



Like many of his contemporaries, Sargent was captivated by Venice. Between 1898 and 1913 he made nine sojourns there, creating more than 150 watercolors and oils. The principal attraction for Sargent during these late visits to Venice was sunlight shimmering off the canals onto buildings, casting patterns across the ornament. While he occasionally captured broad vistas, as in *Venetian Canal* (fig. 45), he most often painted the city as it is seen from a gondola, exploiting low vantage points, cropping forms abruptly, offering oblique, partial glimpses of major landmarks and less familiar sites. Sargent was enchanted by intimate, sometimes obscure views, which appear in watercolors such as *Venetian Passageway* (fig. 46). He noted, as he had also done earlier (see fig. 47), the graceful movement of the gondoliers with a marvelous graphic shorthand. 46. VENETIAN PASSAGEWAY Ca. 1905 Watercolor, gouache, and graphite on white wove paper 21³/₁₆ x 14¹/₂ in. (53.9 x 36.8 cm) Gift of Mrs. Francis Ormond, 1950 50.130.77

47. GONDOLIER 1880–1900 Graphite on light buff wove paper 10% x 7% in. (27 x 19.9 cm) Gift of Mrs. Francis Ormond, 1950 50.130.111 recto







48. GARDEN NEAR LUCCA Ca. 1910 Watercolor and graphite on white wove paper 13% x 9¹⁵/16 in. (35.2 x 25.2 cm) Gift of Mrs. Francis Ormond, 1950 50.130.81i

> 49. ESCUTCHEON OF CHARLES V OF SPAIN 1912 Watercolor and graphite on white wove paper 12 x 18 in. (30.5 x 45.7 cm) Purchase, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 1915 15.142.11

> 50. IN THE GENERALIFE
> 1912
> Watercolor, wax crayon, and graphite on white wove paper
> 14³/₄ x 17⁷/₈ in. (37.5 x 45.4 cm)
> Purchase, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 1915
> 15.142.8

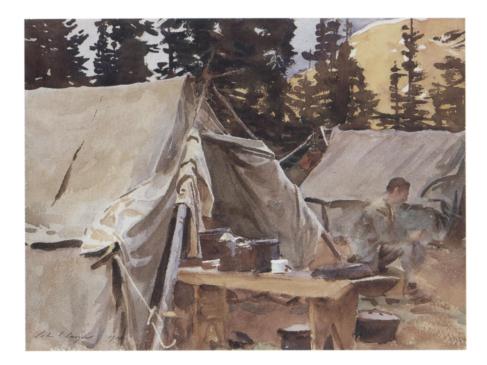
Sunlight and shadow are the near-universal protagonists in watercolors that Sargent made in Italy and Spain between 1905 and 1912. *Garden near Lucca* (fig. 48) celebrates sunlight on stone and lush foliage. *Escutcheon of Charles V of Spain* (fig. 49) translates the relief representing the emperor's coat of arms into a pattern of saturated light and deep shadows. *In the Generalife* (fig. 50) depicts Sargent's sister Emily painting in the dusky gardens of the Alhambra in Granada, as artist Jane de Glehn, at the left, and a companion, Dolores Carmona, look on.

When World War I limited Sargent's European holidays, he found alpine subjects on a 1916 trip to the Canadian Rockies that is represented in the Metropolitan by *Camp at Lake O'Hara*, in British Columbia (fig. 51). In 1917 he visited longtime friends, the Deerings, in Miami, Florida. Vizcaya, James Deering's Renaissance-style villa, and its Italianate gardens struck a resonant chord; familiar with the old European originals, Sargent was delighted by their new American counterparts. He described Vizcaya in a letter to Thomas A. Fox, an architect with whom he had worked closely in Boston: "The great big villa that James Deering has built down here (*Chalfin architect*) is a mine of sketching. It is like a giant Venetian Villa on the Brenta with columns & loggias & porticoes and ships down to the water, and dark gardens with statues just like Frascati. I can't tear myself away."

Of his Vizcaya watercolors the Metropolitan owns *Terrace at Vizcaya* (fig. 52), which shows a carved balustrade and an urn-shaped finial against the landscape and ocean, and *Man and Pool, Florida* (fig. 53), one of several studies of a nude male made in the preserved natural area on the outskirts of the property. Other Florida watercolors include *Palmettos* (fig. 54), in which Sargent explored patterns of the spiky stalks.







51. CAMP AT LAKE O'HARA 1916 Watercolor and graphite on off-white wove paper 15³/₄ x 21 in. (40 x 53.3 cm) Gift of Mrs. David Hecht, in memory of her son, Victor D. Hecht, 1932 32.116

52. TERRACE AT VIZCAYA 1917 Watercolor and graphite on white wove paper 13³/₄ x 21 in. (35 x 53.4 cm) Gift of Mrs. Francis Ormond, 1950 50.130.81n





53. MAN AND POOL, FLORIDA 1917 Watercolor, gouache, and graphite on white wove paper $13^{11}/_{16} \ge 20^{15}/_{16}$ in. (34.8 ≥ 53.2 cm) Gift of Mrs. Francis Ormond, 1950 50.130.62

54. PALMETTOS 1917 Watercolor, graphite, and wax crayon on white wove paper 15¹/₄ x 20³/₄ in. (38.7 x 52.7 cm) Gift of Mrs. Francis Ormond, 1950 50.130.65





THE FORMATION OF THE METROPOLITAN'S COLLECTION OF SARGENT'S WORKS

In addition to forty-one oils by Sargent, of which ten are formal portraits, the Metropolitan owns more than 335 of his drawings and watercolors and four sketchbooks that contain more than 200 images. These works reflect the artist's multifaceted career, bear witness to his long association with the Museum, as well as that of his family, and document their generosity and that of several unrelated donors.

Like most owners of Sargent's works during the late nineteenth century, the Metropolitan acquired its first painting by the artist through a commission for a portrait: that of Marquand, completed in 1897. The second arrived in 1905 when the Museum received the portrait of Chase from his pupils.

The works by Sargent that the Metropolitan accessioned between 1905 and 1931 represent the shift of his focus from portraits to more varied subjects, painted in oil and watercolor, and to his mural commissions. These acquisitions also memorialize the cordial relationship between Sargent and Edward Robinson, which was sustained after Sargent's death by his sisters, who were responsible for his estate.

In 1910 and 1911 the Metropolitan acquired three oils. *Gitana* was given by its most generous donor of American paintings, George A. Hearn; *Padre Sebastiano* and *The Hermit (Il Solitario)* were purchased from the artist. But, like most other museums, the Metropolitan had not yet acquired any of Sargent's watercolors.

Although Sargent had painted watercolors since childhood, it was only after 1900 that he made them as independent works and showed them. At this time he wished to build respect for the medium and, as an astute scholar has recently argued, to "create a market demand for his watercolors that allowed him to reduce his portrait activity without having to relinquish his position of priority in the artistic spotlight." He sent them to the Carfax Gallery in 1903 for his first solo exhibition in London, and again to the same gallery in 1905 and 1908. He showed a watercolor at the New English Art Club in 1904, contributed to the annuals at the Royal Society of Painters in Water-Colours beginning in 1904, and was elected an associate soon thereafter and a full member in 1908.

Sargent restricted the sale of these works until February 1909, when he exhibited eighty-six sheets at M. Knoedler and Company in New York. The Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences (now the Brooklyn Museum of Art) purchased eighty-three of them for \$20,000, pursuant to Sargent's stipulation that the watercolors be sold en bloc to a museum or collector in an Eastern state. Brooklyn's unprecedented acquisition seems to have strengthened the resolve of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston-which had wished to purchase that group-to buy the forty-five sheets that Sargent intended for his next major show, even before it opened at Knoedler in March 1912. These wellreceived exhibitions and well-publicized sales encouraged the Metropolitan also to pursue Sargent's watercolors.

On behalf of the trustees Robinson approached the artist on December 17, 1912, with a plea for eight or ten watercolors. "Have you, by chance," he wrote, "any now on hand by which you would like to be represented in our collection? And if not will you keep us in mind when you do some more? We should naturally be guided largely by your

55. Detail of IN THE GENERALIFE (fig. 50)

56. SPANISH FOUNTAIN
1912
Watercolor and graphite on white wove paper
21 x 13³/₄ in. (53.3 x 34.9 cm)
Purchase, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 1915
15.142.6

own selection and if you say you have some which you would recommend, you will hear from me very promptly."

As Sargent had orchestrated the placement of his watercolors in Brooklyn and Boston and as he would when he began, in 1913, to arrange to sell them to the Worcester Art Museum—he entered into an artful negotiation with the Metropolitan. Responding from England on December 31, 1912, to Robinson's request, he agreed to sell only one, but promised to set aside others in the coming year. He wrote:

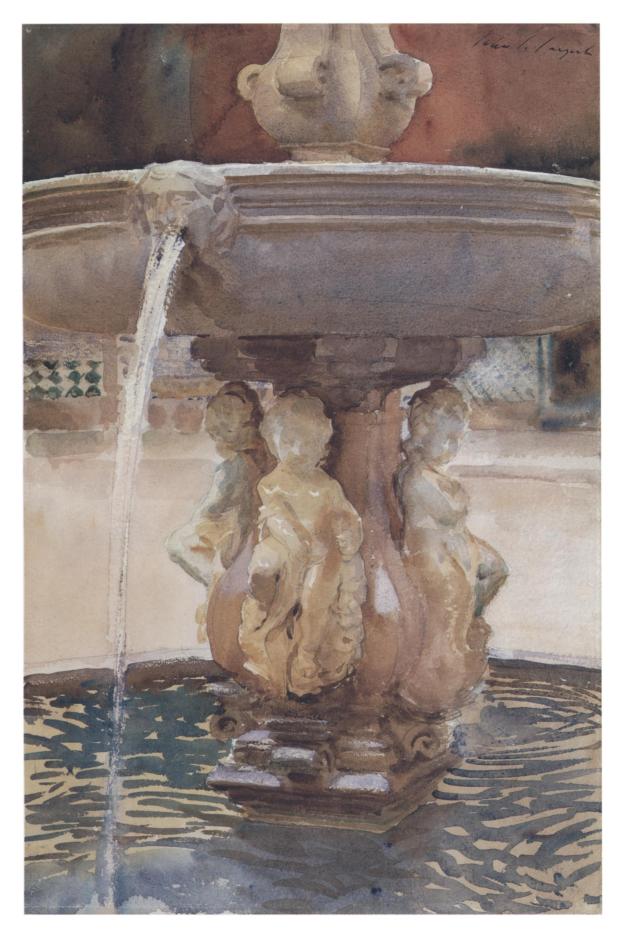
I am very flattered that the Metropolitan Museum should want a few of my water colours and wish I had the choice to offer, but I have done very few this year, and sold two or three of them. I kept back the two best for myself, but I would sell at least one of them to the Museum for £75—it is of a fountain in Granada [*Spanish Fountain* (fig. 56)] ... I should be glad to reserve the best of the water colours that I shall do next year for the Museum to make up eight or ten as you say. I hope £75 [\$364; the equivalent of \$6,319 in 1999] does not seem an unreasonable price—it is a rise on the two previous sales, but these were for an enormous number of water colours.

On January 20, 1913, upon the recommendation of curator of paintings Bryson Burroughs, Robinson agreed to purchase *Spanish Fountain* for £75, and told Sargent that the trustees appreciated his offer to reserve eight or ten watercolors. However, Sargent's ambivalence about the sheets that he had on hand and, later, his worries about transatlantic shipping during World War I delayed the sale.

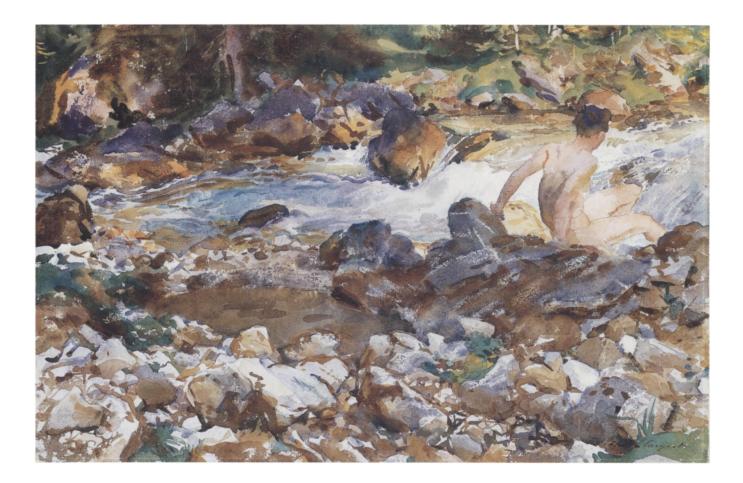
Almost two years later, on December 24,

1914, Sargent wrote to Robinson that he was still trying to decide which watercolors to send; volunteered to drop the price of each sheet to £50; and offered to include "the best oil picture I did in the Tirol last summer" for an additional \pounds_{400} . The artist enclosed a photograph of Tyrolese Interior and wrote: "I feel more justified this time in acting on your repeated suggestion that I should report something that strikes me as worthy of the Museum." In December 1915 Sargent finally sent to the Metropolitan the oil painting and ten watercolors that he had made in Spain, Italy, and the Tyrol. The oil and the watercolors, which included Mountain Stream (fig. 57), painted during one of Sargent's Alpine holidays, and Boats (fig. 58), executed at Lake Garda, were put on display in a gallery in January 1916, together with watercolors by Winslow Homer from the collection.

In a letter of December 28, 1915, the Metropolitan's secretary, Henry W. Kent, expressed to Sargent the trustees' thanks for his "generosity in giving them this opportunity" to acquire the watercolors. Less than two weeks later Sargent proposed to the Museum another key acquisition: Madame X. Sargent had shown the portrait at the Carfax Gallery in 1905 and at three other European exhibitions, in 1908, 1909, and 1911, before sending it to the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition, San Francisco (where it appeared as Madame Gautrin). On January 8, 1916, he wrote Robinson, offering the picture to the Museum: "My portrait of Mme. Gautreau is now, with some other things I sent from here, at the San Francisco Exhibition, and now that it is in America I rather feel inclined to let it stay there if a Museum



57. MOUNTAIN STREAM Ca. 1912–14 Watercolor and graphite on off-white wove paper 13³/₄ x 21 in. (34.9 x 53.3 cm) Purchase, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 1915 15.142.2



should want it. I suppose it is the best thing I have done. I would let the Metropolitan Museum have it for £1,000" [\$4,762; \$76,158 in 1999].

Robinson conveyed Sargent's offer to the Committee on Purchases in a letter of January 24 and added that he had "tried in vain for years to get this picture from him, first for the Boston Museum and later for the Metropolitan, but for personal reasons he has always refused to part with it, and his change of decision therefore comes as a complete surprise." Robinson further noted: "Mr. Burroughs agrees with me in strongly recommending the purchase, and in regarding this as an extremely favorable opportunity, both in the importance of the work and the moderate price at which it is offered." The committee accepted Robinson's recommendation unanimously, and the trustees endorsed it.

Although the death of Virginie Gautreau in 1915 may have allayed Sargent's concern about publicity associated with the sale of her portrait, he asked the Metropolitan to be discreet. Replying to the news of the intended purchase on January 31, he told Robinson: 58. BOATS 1913 Watercolor and graphite on off-white wove paper 15¹¹/16 x 21 in. (39.9 x 53.3 cm) Purchase, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 1915 15.142.9



"I should prefer, on account of the row I had with the lady years ago, that the picture should not be called by her name, at any rate for the present, and that her name should not be communicated to the newspapers (I dare say this latter recommendation comes too late)." The painting was installed as *Madame X* in the Metropolitan's gallery of recent accessions in May 1916. The acclaim it garnered more than thirty years after its scandalous debut is typified by the headline in the *New York Herald* on May 12, 1916: "Sargent Masterpiece Rejected by Subject Now Acquired by Museum." *Madame X* and *Bringing down*



59. Gallery of oil paintings at the Metropolitan's memorial exhibition, January 4 to February 14, 1926



60. Gallery of watercolors at the memorial exhibition



61. Sargent, with his sister Emily, painting at Simplon, 1911. Private collection

> Marble from the Quarries to Carrara, which was received in 1917 from the estate of collector Harris Brisbane Dick, were the last two works by Sargent to enter the Museum before the artist's death on April 15, 1925.

> In the catalogue of the Metropolitan's 1926 memorial exhibition, Robinson noted that although Sargent's "visits to New York were rare and brief, he remained a steadfast friend of our Museum, greatly interested in its growth and a firm believer in its future." Sargent had set aside watercolors; sold *Madame X* at a favorable price; and, in 1924, helped to arrange for the Metropolitan to purchase from the estate of Aureliano de Beruete y Moret, a former director of the Prado, *Portrait of a Man* (24.197.1) by El Greco and *The Libyan Sibyl* (24.197.2) by Michelangelo, a superb red-chalk drawing for the Sistine Chapel ceiling.

The Metropolitan's memorial exhibition followed one at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and coincided with the largest memorial exhibition, which was held at the Royal Academy, London. It included fiftynine oil paintings dated between 1876 and 1918 (fig. 59), of which forty-one were portraits, as well as sixty watercolors and two drawings (fig. 60). Although memorial exhibitions were regular events at the Metropolitan, Sargent's was unusually popular. More than 8,000 people attended the opening, the supply of 2,000 catalogues sold out within the first twenty-four hours, and at least 60,000 visitors viewed the show during its installation.

The catalogue included an appreciation by critic Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer that cited especially the artist's reticence:

Apart from the work that filled his life, history will have little to say of John Sargent. And this is what he would have wished. His work he gave lavishly to the world. Himself, including his thoughts about his work, he kept for his friends.... Few anecdotes have been told about him, few opinions attributed to him, for he did not teach or lecture or write or submit to the interviewer, and "society," especially in the latter part of his life, attracted him little....Unmarried, he found the domestic atmosphere he craved in the close companionship of his sisters and nieces.

Sargent's reticence has defeated efforts to confirm hypotheses that some of his works provoke about his taste, affections, and sexuality. Although such questions continue to preoccupy scholars of today, most are hesitant to make assumptions.

In 1927 the Metropolitan purchased The Wyndham Sisters from the sitters' nephew. At about the same time Violet Sargent Ormond (Mrs. Francis Ormond) and Emily Sargent (see figs. 61, 65) were considering how to dispose of material not included in the July 1925 sale of their brother's estate at Christie's, London. At first they gave a few works to institutions that had direct connections with Sargent or that he had decorated. Faced with dispersing a mass of large charcoal drawings for his murals, they enlisted the help of Thomas Fox and distributed many drawings to art schools for the use of students. The major beneficiaries were the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (which received more than 500 drawings in 1928), the Corcoran Gallery of Art (which received about 200 drawings in 1928—and deaccessioned 90 of them in 1960), and the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University (which received about 350 drawings and more than 20 sketchbooks in five installments between 1929 and 1937). In 1929–30 Yale University, the Pennsylvania

(later Philadelphia) Museum of Art, the Worcester Art Museum, and Amherst and Dartmouth colleges received at least ten drawings each; several other colleges and art schools received smaller groups of drawings. (For the most part, these drawings are kept in curatorial departments of the museums or in the museums associated with the colleges or universities, and they are as accessible to the general public as they are to art students.)

The gift to the Metropolitan in 1930 of six charcoal figure studies, including *Man Standing, Hands on Head*, was also modest, reflecting the sisters' awareness, noted in a letter of November 25, 1927, from Emily Sargent to Fox, that "New York... has so many of John's good paintings." In 1931 Sargent's sisters gave to the Metropolitan a drawing of the duchess of Marlborough (Consuelo Vanderbilt; 31.43.1), who appears in his monumental portrait of the Marlborough family (1905; Blenheim Palace, Oxfordshire, England), and two studies in graphite for *Madame X* (figs. 62, 63).

Five of the six additional works by Sargent that came to the Metropolitan between 1930





opposite 62. MADAME X (MADAME PIERRE GAUTREAU) 1883–84 Graphite on off-white wove paper 12⁵/₈ x 8¹/₄ in. (32 x 21 cm) Gift of Mrs. Francis Ormond and Miss Emily Sargent, 1931 31.43.2

63. MADAME X (MADAME PIERRE GAUTREAU) 1883–84 Graphite on off-white wove paper 12⁵/₈ x 8¹/₄ in. (32 x 21 cm) Gift of Mrs. Francis Ormond and Miss Emily Sargent, 1931 31.43.3

right

64. MRS. HENRY GALBRAITH WARD 1887 or ca. 1891–94 Oil on canvas 27 x 22 in. (68.6 x 55.9 cm) Gift of Hon. Henry Galbraith Ward, 1930 30.26



and 1940 were portraits: *Mrs. Henry Galbraith Ward* (fig. 64), given by her widower in 1930; *Edward Robinson*, given by his widow in 1931; *Lady with the Rose*, bequeathed by Charlotte Burckhardt's sister in 1932; *Mr. and Mrs. I. N. Phelps Stokes*, bequeathed by Edith Minturn Phelps Stokes in 1938; and *Ada Rehan*, bequeathed by its owner in 1940. In 1932 *Camp at Lake O'Hara* was given by Mrs. David Hecht in memory of her son.

That the Metropolitan accessioned no works at all by Sargent during the 1940s reflected the fact that American interest in late-nineteenthcentury American cosmopolitan painters was at its nadir. When patriotism was paramount and international impulses of all sorts were distrusted, the American art world had little use for Sargent. By November 1947 illustrator James Montgomery Flagg would complain in a letter to the New York Herald Tribune that the only work by Sargent on display at the Metropolitan was the portrait of Mr. and Mrs. Stokes. He continued: "The great portrait of the three Wyndham sisters has been hidden away for twelve years! The famous portrait of Mme. X is not hung. The finest portrait the museum has... is banished. That is the marvelous portrait of Marquand." Just two years later the Metropolitan's indifference to Sargent would cease, and its collection of his works would suddenly become one of the world's largest.



65. Violet Sargent Ormond, ca. 1930. Private collection

66. ALLIGATORS 1917 Watercolor, graphite, and wax crayon on white wove paper 15¹³/₁₆ x 20¹⁵/₁₆ in. (40.1 x 53.2 cm) Gift of Mrs. Francis Ormond, 1950 50.130.63

67. MAN WITH RED DRAPERY After 1900 Watercolor and graphite on white wove paper 14¹/₄ x 21¹/₈ in. (36.1 x 53.8 cm) Gift of Mrs. Francis Ormond, 1950 50.130.73

In November 1949 Violet Ormond contacted her distant cousin, Francis Henry Taylor, the Metropolitan's fifth director (1940–54), about her wish to make a substantial gift. The donor's grandson has speculated recently:

I suspect the late gift to the Met was due to Francis Taylor's influence. The existence of the drawings and sketchbooks must have come up in the course of conversation (maybe he asked about them), and because he was enthusiastic she decided to donate them. As she got older, she may have wondered what to do with the mass of the material left over from studios, and Taylor provided the right answer at the right time.

Anticipating the sale of her house in London, Mrs. Ormond wrote to Taylor on November 21, 1949: "I have a quantity of sketches, studies, some water colours, & some drawings by my brother. I should like to give them all to you, to dispose of as you see fit, to give to art schools, museums, or students, where you think they might be of service. You would have an absolutely free hand, even destroying those you consider of no interest." She added, "I also have quantities of photographs of my brother's works," and offered these, too. "I should be very grateful if you would cable me the one word 'yes,'" she concluded. Taylor replied on November 28 that the Museum would welcome the gift "with a formal recommendation to the trustees that distribution be made to other public, tax-free institutions in the United States in their discretion," and added, "We should of course want the photographs for our library!"

Violet Ormond's gift comprised two dozen oil paintings by Sargent, about 120 of his watercolors—in general, less resolved and more experimental than those that he had arranged to sell (see figs. 66, 67)—about 225 drawings, four sketchbooks, impressions of five of his rare lithographs, and the photographs. Along with two sketchbooks by Sargent's mother (50.130.150–51), a few





drawings and prints by his friends Abbey, Paul Helleu, and Albert Belleroche, two prints by Francisco Goya, and three Japanese prints, the collection arrived in two suitcases and several rolls and parcels in April 1950 and was accepted by the Museum's trustees in June. The Metropolitan kept all the works.

After the immense Ormond donation, the Metropolitan's collection of Sargent's drawings was enhanced by gifts of charcoal portraits of Helen A. Clark and Anna R. Mills (see fig. 69). In 1966 sculptor Paul Manship bequeathed to the Museum a drawing of himself (fig. 68), which demonstrates Sargent's gift of stenographic characterization and suggests the rapport between the two artists. In 1970 the Museum purchased its third drawing for *Madame X*. Three years later gifts from two donors added to the collection six large-scale studies for Sargent's murals in the Boston Public Library (1973.267.4) and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (1973.267.1–3 [see fig. 70], 1973.268.1–2); these drawings, which Sargent's sisters had given to the Corcoran Gallery of Art in 1928, had been deaccessioned.

Since 1972 the Metropolitan has acquired two oils by Sargent: a study from his student years of a male model standing before a stove (1972.32) and, in 1998, the dazzling *Mrs. Hugh*



68. PAUL MANSHIP January 30, 1921 Black chalk on pinkish-brown wove paper 22¹/₈ x 17⁷/₁₆ in. (56.1 x 44.3 cm) Bequest of Paul Manship, 1966 66.70 69. ANNA R. MILLS 1917 Charcoal on off-white laid paper mounted to pulpboard 23³/₄ x 18 in. (60.3 x 45.8 cm) Gift of Mary van Kleeck, 1954 54.96.2



70. APOLLO (study for *Apollo and Daphne* mural, Museum of Fine
Arts, Boston)
Ca. 1918–20
Charcoal on off-white wove paper
16³/₄ x 21 in. (42.5 x 53.4 cm)
Anonymous Gift, 1973
1973.267.1



Hammersley. As the portrait pertains to paintings by Sargent already in the collection, it is a fitting climax to the story of the Metropolitan's acquisitions of Sargent's works to date. The favorable reviews that *Mrs. Hugh Hammersley* received in London in 1893 quashed misgivings that *Madame X* had aroused nine years earlier. The sitter's lively pose echoes the informality of Sargent's Impressionist canvases, many of which are displayed in the same gallery in the American Wing. The portrait is among the earliest of Sargent's series of ravishing images of glamorous English women, culminating in *The Wyndham Sisters*. That *Mrs. Hugh Hammersley* came to the Metropolitan from a descendant of Charles Deering—James's brother, whom Sargent had met as a student in Paris and who had purchased the painting from Mrs. Hammersley's widower at Sargent's suggestion—vivifies additional aspects of the artist's career and patronage. Finally, the very fact that it was a gift reiterates the extraordinary generosity that created the Museum's collection of Sargent's works.



NOTES

P. 5. "nomadic sort of life": Letter, Fitzwilliam Sargent to Emily Haskell Sargent, Florence, Italy, October 10, 1870, Fitzwilliam Sargent Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

P. 5. "Baedeker education": Stanley Olson, John Singer Sargent: His Portrait (New York, 1986), p. 45.

P. 8. "in view in his studies": Letter, Fitzwilliam Sargent to Emily Haskell Sargent, Florence, Italy, October 10, 1870, Fitzwilliam Sargent Papers, Archives of American Art; quoted in Stephen D. Rubin, *John Singer Sargent's Alpine Sketchbooks* (exhib. cat., The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1991), p. 9.

P. 15. "and assimilated, of generations": Henry James, "John S. Sargent," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 75, no. 449 (Oct. 1887), p. 684.

P. 15. "homage to her beauty": Letter, Sargent to Ben del Castillo, 1882; quoted in Richard Ormond and Elaine Kilmurray, *John Singer Sargent: Complete Paintings*. Vol. 1, *The Early Portraits* (New Haven, 1998), p. 113.

P. 18. "provoking argument": "Eccentricities of French Art," *Art Amateur* 2, no. 3 (Aug. 1884), p. 52.

P. 23. characterized him in 1902: Olson, *John Singer Sargent: His Portrait*, p. 157.

P. 28. "purely as an accessory": I. N. Phelps Stokes, *Random Recollections of a Happy Life*, rev. ed., 1941, pp. 117–18; ms., Department of American Paintings and Sculpture, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

P. 29. told his friend Lady Radnor: Undated remarks to Curtis and Radnor quoted in Olson, *John Singer Sargent: His Portrait*, pp. 227–28.

P. 32. "die when I like": Adrian Stokes, "John Singer Sargent, RA, RWS," *The Old Water-Colour Society's Club* (1925–26), vol. 3, ed. Randall Davies (London, 1926); quoted in Olson, *John Singer Sargent: His Portrait*, p. 268.

P. 39. "captured and held": Evan Charteris, *John Sargent* (New York, 1927), p. 225.

P. 39. "which he was painting": Martin Hardie, *Famous Water-colour Painters: J. S. Sargent, R.A., R.W.S.*, vol. 7 (London, 1930), pp. 4–5.

P. 44."tear myself away": Letter, Sargent to Thomas A. Fox, Brickell Point, Miami, Florida, April 10 [1917], Thomas A. Fox–John Singer Sargent Collection, Boston Athenaeum.

P. 49. "in the artistic spotlight": Barbara Dayer Gallati, "Controlling the Medium: The Marketing of John Singer Sargent's Watercolors," in Linda S. Ferber and Barbara Dayer Gallati, *Masters of Color and Light: Homer, Sargent and the American Watercolor Movement* (exhib. cat., Brooklyn Museum of Art, 1998), p. 120.

P. 50. "from me very promptly": Except as noted, all letters quoted or cited are in The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives.

P. 50. eight or ten watercolors: Robinson added, "Please understand, however, that the acquisition of these watercolors does not in any way affect our desire to have the large painting, of which I have written to you before, whenever the inspiration may seize you." While the identity of the painting referred to is unknown, subsequent events suggest that it might have been *Madame X*.

P. 52. "a complete surprise": See preceding note.

P. 55. "in its future": Edward Robinson, Note, in *Memorial Exhibition of the Work of John Singer Sargent* (exhib. cat., The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1926), p. xi.

P. 55. "of his sisters and nieces": Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer, Introduction, in *Memorial Exhibition of the Work* of John Singer Sargent, pp. xx-xxi.

P. 56. hesitant to make assumptions: For the typical response to this issue, see Elaine Kilmurray and Richard Ormond, eds., *John Singer Sargent* (exhib. cat., Tate Gallery, 1998), p. 14. Compare Trevor J. Fairbrother, *John Singer Sargent* (New York, 1994), pp. 8, 83.

P. 56. "John's good paintings": Letter, Emily Sargent to Thomas A. Fox, London, November 25, 1927, Thomas A. Fox–John Singer Sargent Collection, Boston Athenaeum.

P. 57. "portrait of Marquand": James Montgomery Flagg, "Sargents in the Cellar," letter to the editor dated November 27, 1947, *New York Herald Tribune*, December 1, 1947, p. 22.

P. 58. "at the right time": Letter, Richard Ormond to Stephanie L. Herdrich, Greenwich, England, July 30, 1997, Department of American Paintings and Sculpture, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

71. Sargent sketching, Simplon Pass, ca. 1909–11. Private collection

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