



Smithsonian Associates

The Smithsonian Associates
Wednesday, October 19th, 2022
Dr. Nancy G. Heller

Evening Lecture/Seminar
6:30 – 8:30 p.m. (ET)
Online

**“THE ART OF JOHN SINGER SARGENT:
Virtuosic Portraits, Seductive Dancers, Luscious Landscapes”**

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

Sarah Cash, Elaine Kilmurray, and Richard Ormond with contributions by Javier Barón, Nancy G. Heller, and Chloe Sharpe, *Sargent and Spain* (Yale University Press, October 2022)
(This book complements the current National Gallery exhibition of the same name.)

Elaine Kilmurray and Richard Ormond (eds.), *John Singer Sargent* (National Gallery of Art, 1999)
(An excellent overall introduction to Sargent’s life and work, with an extensive bibliography)

Richard Ormond and Elaine Kilmurray produced the invaluable, nine-part *catalogue raisonné* of Sargent’s works, published between 1998 and 2019. These lavishly illustrated volumes contain in-depth analyses of his oil paintings, watercolors, and charcoal drawings.

There are also exhibition catalogues that focus on *Sargent’s Venice* (by Ormond and Warren Adelson, 2006), *Sargent and the Sea* (Ormond with Sarah Cash, 2009), and *Great Expectations: Sargent Painting Children* (by Barbara Dayer Gallati, 2004), among other specialized topics. In addition, there are myriad biographies of Sargent, and Erica E. Hirshler’s 2009 novel *Sargent’s Daughters*, inspired by his painting, *The Daughters of Edward Darley Boit*.

Also see: *Strapless*, Deborah Davis’s examination of Sargent’s controversial painting known as *Madame X* (2004); Donna M. Lucey, *Sargent’s Women* (2017), about four subjects of the artist’s portraits; *John Singer Sargent and the Art of Allusion* (2016), in which Bruce Redford traces Sargent’s references to Old Master artwork; and Narayan Khandekar (ed.), *John Singer Sargent’s “Triumph of Religion” at the Boston Public Library—Creation and Restoration* (2010).

NAMES, TERMS, & CONCEPTS

--society portraits

--Diego Velázquez, celebrated 17th-century Spanish painter (e.g., of *Las Meninas*, 1656)

- Kehinde Wiley, contemporary Black American portrait painter; admires Sargent's work
- bravura brushwork (= painterly)
- sitter (the subject of a portrait, no matter what posture he/she/they may assume)
- oeuvre (an artist's body of work)
- Richard Ormond & Elaine Kilmurray, principal contemporary scholars on Sargent
- expatriates
- Sargent House Museum (Gloucester, MA)
- JSS's sisters (Emily & Violet), and his "favorite" niece, Rose-Marie Ormond
- Vernon Lee (pen name of Violet Paget), JSS's close friend from childhood
- Nicola D'Inverno, JSS' valet (and model) for 20 years
- Thomas McKeller, hotel elevator operator, and JSS' model
- the Paris Salon (a prestigious, juried, annual art exhibition)
- a succès de scandale (like *Madame X*), a controversial artwork (or something else) that brings Fame (and notoriety) to its creator
- French vs. English painting styles
- the Royal Academy (London)
- stately homes, castles, etc.
- a commissioned artwork (contracted and paid for by another person/institution, vs. something the artist makes for him/her/them self)
- a likeness (recognizable portrait of a real person)
- "Mugs," JSS' nickname for the quick charcoal portraits he made after 1907
- flamenco (a type of Spanish music and dance, often associated with the *Roma* people (a.k.a. *gitanos*) in southern Spain (Andalusia))
- Hispanism (the 19th-century fascination with all things "Spanish" by both foreign and Spanish writers, composers, and visual artists)
- Sacromonte (a section of Granada, Spain, where people have traditionally lived in caves)
- café cantante*, an establishment offering food, drink, and professional flamenco shows, beginning c.1860
- tablao* (a flamenco nightclub, today's version of the *café cantante*)
- genre scenes (images of ordinary people doing everyday things)
- Realism (JSS cf. Gustave Courbet)
- Impressionism (JSS cf. Claude Monet and Joaquín Sorolla)
- Broadway, a 19th-century artists/writers colony/village in central-southwestern England
- watercolors (cf. oil paintings—technique, level of respect)
- The Great War (World War I), 1914-1918
- mustard gas

PRINCIPAL ARTWORKS DISCUSSED
(in the order in which they were presented)

John Singer Sargent (JSS), *Portrait of Lady Helen Vincent, Viscountess d'Abernon*, 1904, oil on canvas, 62 x 42 inches, Birmingham (Alabama) Museum of Art.

JSS, *Carolus-Duran*, 1879, oil on canvas, c.46 x 37 inches, Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, MA.
 JSS, *Madame X* (Virginie Gautreau), 1882, oil on canvas, c.82 x 43 inches, Metropolitan Museum of Art, NYC.
 JSS, *The Daughters of Edward Darley Boit*, 1882, oil on canvas, c.88 x 88 inches, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.
 JSS, *The Acheson Sisters*, 1902, oil on canvas, 8' 8" x 6 ½ feet, Chatsworth House, England.
 JSS, *El Jaleo*, 1882, oil on canvas, 8 x 11 ½ feet, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston
 JSS, *Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose*, 1885-1886, oil on canvas, 69 x 61 inches, Tate Gallery, London
 JSS, *Gassed*, 1919, oil on canvas, c.7 '7" x 20', Imperial War Museum, London
 JSS, *The Triumph of Religion*, 1985-1919, oil on canvas, cycle of murals on the 3rd floor of the Central Boston Public Library at Copley Square

SOME ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Current museum exhibition: "Sargent and Spain," on view at the National Gallery of Art (Washington, DC), through January 2, 2023. Will also be shown at the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Legion of Honor, February 11 – May 14, 2023.

Film by Erik Ryding, "John Singer Sargent and Music" (2021), Quill Classics; an hour-long documentary, accessible via YouTube. An excellent, clear examination of Sargent's musical tastes, and the many musicians he knew and painted, with lovely music clips recorded especially for this film.

An insightful, 3-minute, video from 2015 in which Kehinde Wiley discusses Sargent's society portraits from his perspective as a young Black American painter of portraits. Watch on YouTube: www.metmuseum.org/ArtistProject/kehinde-wiley.

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