



Sargent

Portraits Of Artists And Friends
At Metropolitan Museum Of Art

NEW YORK CITY — John Singer Sargent, arguably the finest American portrait painter of his generation, was also known for the audacity of his oeuvre. He was seen as pushing the limits of art in lighting effects, color, composition and occasionally subjects. His unfailing ability to surprise and even shock ensured that his work always attracted attention.

Sargent (1856–1925) became an international superstar for his bravura portraits of the jet-set of his day on both sides of the Atlantic, but throughout his career he also created likenesses of artists, writers, musicians and actors, many of whom were close friends. These works were rarely commissioned, leaving Sargent free to try more experimental approaches to portraying those he liked than was possible in his formal portraiture. He frequently posed these sitters informally while painting, performing or singing.



“An Artist in His Studio,” 1904. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. The Hayden Collection-Charles Hayden Fund.



These portraits of friends constitute a group of diverse paintings and drawings – some sensual, some highly charged, others intimate, idiosyncratic or humorous. Some 90 of these portraits have been brought together in “Sargent: Portraits of Artists and Friends,” on view at the Metropolitan Museum of Art through October 4. It was organized by the National Portrait Gallery in London, where it has already been seen, in collaboration with the Met. Sargent scholar Richard Ormond curated the show with advice from retired Met curator H. Barbara Weinberg, and it has been organized in New York by Met curators Elizabeth Kornhauser and Stephanie L. Herdrich. The catalog is outstanding.

Ormond posits that “This exhibition challenges the conventional view of ... Sargent as a bravura painter of the old school, of limited imagination and originality. It documents a painter in the vanguard of contemporary movements in the arts, in music, in literature and the theater. His enthusiasms were all for things new and exciting.”

Virginie Avegno Gautreau (1859–1915), or “Madame X.” The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Arthur Hoppock Hearn Fund, 1916.



Famed actor Edwin Booth, 1890. Amon Carter Museum of American Art, Fort Worth, Texas.

The exhibition is organized chronologically following the sequence of locales where Sargent worked and formed relationships during his cosmopolitan career: Paris, the English countryside, London, the United States (primarily Boston and New York), Italy, the Alps and other places in Europe.

Born in Florence, Italy, to expatriate American parents, Sargent grew up traveling around Europe. Although he lived abroad most his life, he never renounced his American citizenship and considered Boston his American home.

In Paris, 1874–1886, he began his formal art studies, enrolling for academic

Portrait of Carolus-Duran, Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Mass.
—Michael Agee photo





“Claude Monet Painting by the edge of a Wood,” 1885.

Tate: presented by Emily Sargent and Mrs Ormond through the Art Fund © Tate, London, 2015.

training at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, while simultaneously developing his fluid painting style with Carolus-Duran, a fashionable French portraitist. Under the Frenchman’s tutelage, says Ormond, “Sargent became a maestro of the brush, able to tackle the most difficult passages of representation with complete confidence, and with

more depth and insight even than his master.” The 23-year-old American’s informal likeness of Carolus-Duran, painted in his mentor’s free-flowing style, won an award at the Paris Salon in 1879, which caused some contemporary observers to remark that the student had surpassed the master.

“An Out-of-Doors Study,” 1889. Brooklyn Museum, Museum Collection Fund.



“Self-Portrait,” 1906. Istituti museali della Soprintendenza Speciale per il Polo Museale Fiorentino. Galleria degli Uffizi.



The success of the Carolus-Duran portrait likely led to commissions to paint bohemian playwright Edouard Pailleron, who posed carelessly attired, and his elegantly dressed wife, en plein air, “signifying that this is portraiture in the modern manner,” says Sargent expert Elaine Kilmurray.

Sargent’s first formal double portrait depicts the Pailleron children. “Edouard and Marie-Louise Pailleron,” 1880, shows the seated 11-year-old Marie-Louise staring at viewers with disquieting intensity. Battles over costume, hair styles and endless sittings — 83 — put Marie-Louise in the bad mood reflected on the canvas. Her older brother sits off to the side, almost an afterthought.

(Continued on page 30 inside the E-Edition)

Read Full Article

**Read Full Article
on Mobile**

Browse More



**Baltimore Antiques Show
Offers Sumptuous Bounty
Of Fine Objects**



**35 Years & Counting
For Stanton Auctions**



**In The Realm Of
Papermaniacs, 40th
Anniversary Is Still Paper**