

John Singer Sargent 1856-1925

A Survey of his Life and Work

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“John Singer Sargent - The Van Dyke of our times” - Auguste Rodin

John Singer Sargent (1856-1925) was an American virtuoso portrait painter who settled in London and painted high society in the late 19th and early 20th century. He was born in Italy of American ex-patriate parents and was trained in Florence and Paris, settling in London in 1884/5 and continuing the *bravura* (bold and daring) tradition of Sir Thomas Lawrence, crossed with Velasquez. He visited the US frequently and painted large-scale decorations in Boston Public Library, the Museum of Fine Arts and Harvard University, but is best known for his portraits and for his brilliant watercolours, which may reflect his friendship with Monet, whom he met in 1870 and whose paintings he bought.

In 1880 he visited Spain where he saw paintings by Velasquez. The technical skill and simple colour schemes of Sargent's portraits reflect Velasquez, but seen through the eyes of Manet and Courbet: Sargent's *Mme Gautreau*, exhibited in Paris 1884, shows all this but was a *success de scandal* and was one of the reasons for his leaving Paris for London. His huge output means that his portraits are almost everywhere in Britain and America. “His superficial brilliance is very like that of Boldini”. The entry for John Singer Sargent in Penguin *Dictionary of Art and Artists* by Peter and Linda Murray. Boldini will be examined in Notes 4

“John Singer Sargent (1856-1925) was the greatest portrait painter of his generation. Acclaimed on both sides of the Atlantic, he was closely connected to many of the other leading artists, writers, actors and musicians of the time. His portraits of these friends and contemporaries, including Auguste Rodin, Claude Monet and Robert Louis Stevenson, were rarely commissioned and allowed him to create more intimate and experimental works than was possible in his formal portraiture”. From the National Portrait Gallery promotion of the JSS exhibition Feb-May 2015. *Self-portrait* 1907.



Sarah Churchwell, professor of American Literature wrote (Jan 2015):

In 1893, Sargent's close friend Henry James (author of many novels including Gothic tale *Turn of the Screw*) admired Sargent's “faculty of taking a fresh, direct, independent, unborrowed impression”. This admiration was widely shared: after seeing *The Misses Hunter* in 1902, Rodin called Sargent “the Van Dyck of our times”. But after Sargent's death, his realism was viewed increasingly as anachronistic and facile, the work of a society painter, a careerist happy to pander to aristocratic privilege. One of the most successful and esteemed painters of his day was rapidly dismissed as virtuosic but lightweight, a slick craftsman rather than an innovative creator, superseded by Matisse and Picasso. He was a Gilded Age flatterer, “not an enthusiast,” sniffed Pissarro, “but rather an adroit performer”.



The Misses Hunter
JSS 1902

In these five lectures John Singer Sargent (JSS) will be examined under three different lights - the historical influences on his work, his many paintings and the work of his contemporaries. During his career, he created over 900 oil paintings and 2000 watercolours

VIDEO 1 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UWREAOtHuLk&t=14s> John Singer Sargent's Changing Vision

Key dates:

1856. Born in Florence, Italy
1878. Medal for <i>Oyster Gatherers of Cancale</i>
1880. <i>Fumee d'ambre gris</i> displayed at the <i>Salon</i>
1880. <i>Portrait of Madame Pailleron</i> entered at <i>Salon</i>
1881. Won medal for Portraiture at the <i>Salon</i>
1884. Moved to Paris to study art in the atelier of Carolus-Duran
1884. <i>Portrait of Madame Gautreau</i> entered at <i>Salon</i>
1886. Moved to London
1887. <i>Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose</i> shown at Royal Academy of Arts
1890. Murals for the Boston Public Library
1893. <i>Lady Agnew of Lochnaw</i> shown at Royal Academy
1894. Elected as an Associate of the Royal Academy
1907. Abandoned portrait painting
1907. <i>The Fountain, Vila Torlonia, Franscati, Italy</i>
1916. Painted the rotunda for the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
1925. Died in London

<p>1856</p>	<p>Sargent's father Fitzwilliam Sargent was an eye surgeon in Philadelphia 1844–1854. After John's older sister died at the age of two, his mother Mary (née Singer) suffered a breakdown and the couple decided to go abroad to recover. They remained nomadic expatriates for the rest of their lives. Although based in Paris, Sargent's parents moved regularly with the seasons to the sea and the mountain resorts in France, Germany, Italy, and Switzerland.</p>			
	<p>While Mary was pregnant they were stuck in Florence - because of cholera epidemics elsewhere. Sargent was born there in 1856. A year later, his sister Mary was born. After her birth, Fitzwilliam reluctantly resigned his post in Philadelphia and accepted his wife's entreaties to remain abroad. Four more children were born abroad but only two lived past childhood. <i>Boboli Gardens Florence</i> by JSS 1875.</p>			
<p>1878</p>	<p><i>Oyster Gatherers of Cancale</i> by JSS 1878. This was exhibited at the prestigious <i>Salon</i> in Paris where it won an “Honourable Mention”. There was a fierce competition to have works accepted by the Salon. Edouard Manet - often regarded as the leading French painter of the period - had just a few accepted despite many attempts.</p>			
<p>1880</p>	<p><i>Fumée d'ambre gris (Smoke of Ambergris)</i> by JSS 1880. Painted in North Africa 1880. It is his own interpretation of orientalism, a common theme at that time in which artists sought out exotic subjects. A heavily draped woman is inhaling the smoke of ambergris— a resinous substance found in tropical seawater and believed to come from whales. It was both an aphrodisiac and safeguard from evil spirits. She may be a priestess or a European modelling as one. The painting is a mélange of Moroccan objects and customs that Sargent encountered in Tangier and Tétouan. Therefore, the scene must be viewed as an imaginary one. Accepted by the Salon.</p>			
<p>1880</p>	<p>Back to Key Dates. <i>Madame Edouard (Marie) Pailleron</i> by JSS 1880. She was the daughter of Francois Buloz, a prominent literary publisher. In 1862 Marie married the young playwright, Edouard Pailleron, who was had become a celebrated writer. It was painted at the Pailleron's country estate in the Haute-Savoie. Sargent is painting a formal portrait, but, in placing his sitter en plein air, he is signifying that this is portraiture in the modern manner. It was displayed at the Salon.</p>			
<p>1881</p>	<p>JSS won the Portraiture prize at the Salon with a painting of Madame Pailleron's children. Pages from the 1881 Salon catalogue:</p>			
	<p>SARGENT, John “Le banalite est le pire default des portraitistes ...” - “Banality is the worse fault of portraitists ...” Cependant ... However ... “Le portrait des enfants est tout simplement un chef-d’oeuvre” - “The portrait of the children is totally a masterpiece”</p>			
	<p>Edouard (b.1865) and Marie-Louise (b. 1870). The children are dressed traditionally in black and white, but there are exotic references in the accessories: the Persian carpet and Marie-Louise's torque bracelet and brooch. Marie-Louise Pailleron became a literary figure in her own right. She recounts eighty-three sittings for the portrait, as well as battles about costume and the arrangement of her hair.</p>			
	<p>“Equally, or perhaps even more, menacing is the portrait of Edouard and Marie-Louise Pailleron. This painting is not a traditional portrayal of childhood but a haunting one in which its subjects are depicted as sombre and intelligent. It is no wonder that this chilling portrait was chosen as the cover of the Penguin Classics’ edition of Henry James’ renowned tale of terror <i>The Turn of the Screw</i>”. From JSS web forum.</p>			
<p>1884</p>	<p>Moved to Paris to study art in the studio of <i>Carolus-Duran</i>. JSS portrait 1879. Charles Durand, known as Carolus-Duran (1837-1917), was a French painter and art instructor. He is noted for his stylish depictions of members of high society in Third Republic France (1870-1940). <i>Drawing by JSS of Carolus-Duran as Mephisto.</i></p>			
	<p><i>Lady with a Glove</i> by Carolus-Duran 1869. (His wife). A huge success at the Salon where he was feted at an equal to Jacques-Louis David (d. 1825) and Jean Ingres (d. 1867).</p>			
	<p>VIDEO 2 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KxGvM6v1r9U</p>			

	Artworks by Carolus-Duran and Fritz Zuber-Buhler (1822-1896). They were “academy” painters. This was the art that the Pre-Raphaelites and Impressionists were rebelling against. Music by Bach
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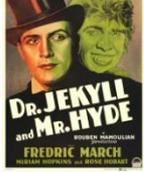
1884	The Salon (from 1725) was the official art exhibition of the <i>Académie des Beaux-Arts</i> in Paris. Before the 20th century it was the greatest annual or biennial art event in the Western world. There was fierce competition to have paintings displayed there. It was almost the only route to success for an artist in France.			
	<i>Satirical 19th century cartoon showing posh ladies shocked by the nudes at the Salon. The Salon 1890.</i>			

1884	<i>Portrait of Madame Gautreau</i> entered at Salon. (or “Madame X”) <i>Madame Gautreau</i> 1891 by Courtois <i>Madame Gautreau</i> 1898 by Gandara. Gustave Courtois (1852-1923) was a French painter, a representative of the academic style of art. Antonio de La Gándara (1861-1917) was a French painter, pastellist and draughtsman.			
	VIDEO 3 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a3_gzS93QIA Madame X portrait			

1884	Sargent's painting created a cultural scandal when it was exhibited in 1884 at the Paris Salon. The suggestiveness of the portrait and the style of clothing were considered scandalous, as well as publicizing Gautreau's reputation. Such a high-class woman would not usually be a model. The scandal caused Gautreau to retire for some time from society and evidently caused Sargent to uproot and move to London. There is a nearly finished earlier version in Tate Britain.	
	However, the “scandal” seems to have been somewhat manufactured. The painting is hardly even “suggestive” and there was no scandal in her life, but at the Salon there was a very conservative audience that enjoyed portraits of wealthy society women, <i>but with no controversy attached</i> . Madame Gautreau wears a black dress that is almost strapless except for two slender gold threads; money and sex are both flaunted by a fashion incompatible with staid lifestyle of the usual Salon audience.	
	How could an audience that had seen Manet's <i>Olympia</i> (1865) be shocked by <i>Madame Gautreau</i> . Answer - social class. Manet showed a working-class woman in an immoral pose - that's OK - but with an upper-class lady, there must be no suggestion of impropriety. Opp. <i>John Singer Sargent in his studio with Portrait of Madame X</i> 1884.	

1886	JSS moved to London to 31 Tite Street Chelsea. In 1890s Oscar Wilde lived at number 34. Other famous residents in the street: Artist James Whistler (1834-1903), artist Glyn Philpot (1884-1937), novelist Radclyffe Hall (1880-1943), artist Augustus John (1878-1961). Fellow portraitist Giovanni Boldini (1845 -1931) moved into Sargent's vacated Paris studio and there had a successful career, in parallel with Sargent's in London.		
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1887	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose</i> shown at Royal Academy of Arts. In 1885, while Sargent was on a boating trip on the Thames, he saw what he described as 'a paradisiac sight': two little girls lighting paper lanterns at dusk in a garden planted with roses. This vision was the direct inspiration for this picture, painted during the late summer in 1886 in Broadway, Worcs. The portrait is poised between several aesthetics: French Impressionism, English Pre-Raphaelitism and Aestheticism. Sargent had almost certainly been to Giverny and seen Claude Monet painting out of doors and recording the conditions of light at a particular time of day. Sargent's chief aim in this portrait, all who watched him create it agreed, was to capture en plein air the transient quality of “fugitive evening light”. It took him two years to achieve, for he could only paint for 25 minutes each night in late summer: every evening at 6:45 Sargent “would drop his tennis racquet”, remembered a friend, and “lug out the big canvas” from his studio into the garden, where he would paint for as long as “the effect lasted”. He had almost certainly been to Giverny by then, and had watched Monet paint out of doors. He came to share Monet's preoccupation with the play of natural light, but he never fully 	
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		embraced impressionism’s subordination of subject to technique, its willingness to dissolve representation into paint, colour and light. 3. Although he developed a close friendship with Monet (1840-1926) and was even asked to join the Impressionist group, Sargent deliberately opted for establishment art, no doubt because it provided the more assured avenue to worldly success.	
1885 Worcs.	<i>Robert Louis Stevenson And His Wife</i>	<p>Sargent had known Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-94) since his early years in Paris when he studied with Stevenson's cousin, R.A.M. Stevenson. This is the second of three portraits of Stevenson, painted in Bournemouth, when his literary star was in the ascendancy.</p> <p>Sargent shows Stevenson in a characteristic manner 'walking about and talking' constructing an apparently accidental, snapshot-like composition. Fanny Stevenson (1840-1914), is the peripheral, and apparently passive, figure in the painting, despite her redoubtable personality. The picture was subsequently hung in the Stevenson’s' home.</p> <p>The picture (half) includes Stevenson’s wife, Fanny Van de Grift Osbourne, while decisively excluding and marginalising her.</p> <p>Stevenson wrote of the painting: “... too eccentric to be exhibited. I am at one extreme corner; my wife, in this wild dress, and looking like a ghost, is at the extreme other end... all this is touched in lovely, with that witty touch of Sargent’s; but of course, it looks damn queer as a whole.”</p> <p>Stevenson had also once told a friend that his marriage to Fanny had left him “as limp as a lady’s novel”, and it seems Sargent agreed. He painted Stevenson as an awkward prisoner in his own home, “the caged animal lecturing about the foreign specimen in the corner”.</p> <p>One may assume that her first sight of this painting was probably a bit awkward and left poor Louis with some explaining to do</p> <p>It was around the time of this painting that Stevenson came up with his most famous and enduring work, <i>Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde</i> (1886). He apparently did so while delirious and bed-ridden, although most likely not while completely whacked out on drugs as has sometimes been suggested. We’ll probably never know for sure, but it certainly seems that in his delirium Stevenson inadvertently outed himself in ways that Sargent already understood but Stevenson possibly didn’t, otherwise he wouldn’t have allowed Jekyll and Hyde to be published at all. This painting certainly portrays several memorable and salient features of the story: there is schizoid compartmentalisation and its staging evokes a sense of profound alienation from domesticated life.</p>	  <p>Poster for 1931 movie</p>
VIDEO 6 Robert Louis Stevenson A Summary https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-h2lhMEnx9s			
1887 Worcs.	<i>Robert Louis Stevenson</i>	<p>This is the third of Sargent's portraits of Stevenson. The subject's wife, Fanny Stevenson, wrote “Mr Sargent came last night to do the portrait. It begins well, and one hand that is finished expresses almost all of Louis. God grant the head may follow suit”.</p> <p>The composition and characterisation contrast with those in the preceding portrait, where everything is oblique and enigmatic, and Stevenson is mid-movement and alert with nervous energy. Here, the wicker chair provides stability, and the figure is still and centred within the confines of the canvas.</p>	
1890	<p>Murals for the Boston Public Library. 1890-1919 Sargent worked on a huge project - murals on the theme <i>The Triumph of Religion</i>. Opp. The Sargent Hall. <i>Israelites Oppressed</i> lunette and the <i>Frieze of Prophet</i>.</p> <p>It as an enormous task, involving ceiling and wall paintings in many different rooms and it occupied him long after had stopped portrait painting.</p>		 

1893	<p><i>Lady Agnew of Lochnaw</i> shown at Royal Academy. According to an unattributed article in <i>The Times</i> dated 29 April 1893, the portrait was "not only a triumph of technique but the finest example of portraiture, in the literal sense of the word, that has been seen here for a long time. While Mr Sargent has abandoned none of his subtlety, he has abandoned his mannerisms, and has been content to make a beautiful picture of a charming subject".</p>	
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1894	<p>Elected as an Associate of the Royal Academy. This was possibly triggered by the public acclaim for the <i>Lady Agnew of Lochnaw</i> portrait. Opp. Royal Academy Piccadilly</p>	
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1907	<p><i>The Fountain, Vila Torlonia, Frascati, Italy.</i> The artist Jane de Glehn is shown sketching beside the great pool of the Villa Torlonia in Frascati outside Rome, watched by her husband and fellow artist Wilfrid de Glehn. The great pool, enclosed within a magnificent balustrade, lies at the top of a spectacular cascade that falls down the hillside to a Renaissance villa. Jane de Glehn is alert and concentrated as she places a brushstroke on the canvas, her feet resting on a fold-up stool. Wilfrid, on the other hand, leans back, his thumbs caught in his belt. The figure of Wilfrid helps to balance the design and introduces both a narrative element and a mood of intimacy.</p>	
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1916	<p><i>Museum of Fine Arts Boston. The Rotunda.</i> John Singer Sargent 1916. It is one of the largest museums in the United States, about half a million works of art. As well the Rotunda, it has 500 of Sargent's paintings.</p>		
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<p>After the 1890s Sargent grew tired of the demands of portrait painting. He was constantly preoccupied with mural paintings for the Boston Public Library, Boston's Museum of Fine Arts, and the war Memorial at Harvard University. Travel studies in watercolour also came to occupy more of his time and became a new source of critical and financial support. After 1907 he abandoned portrait commissions entirely and his time was spent on the huge decorative schemes in the USA and landscape watercolour paintings. Opp. The murals at Harvard University by Sargent that honour World War I dead. 1919. <i>Death and Victory. The Coming of the Americans.</i></p>			
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<p>"The subjects represented are the symbols of Death and Victory in the left panel and the Coming of the Americans to Europe on the right. Happily, Mr. Sargent made no attempt at historical rendering and treated his scheme broadly from the decorative point of view. In the panel of the Coming of the Americans he has filled the space with a mighty column of American youths in uniform, slashing the composition boldly from right to left in the lower right hand side are three figures symbolic of France, Belgium, and England. France in the foreground, wearing the Phrygian cap, carries an infant on her left arm and stretches out her right to receive the support of the American soldiers. Behind her, Belgium, a broken sword in her hand, has swooned, and is upheld by other soldiers, while she protects herself partially with the robe of Britannia, a helmeted figure behind her. In the upper left-hand corner is a magnificent representation of the American eagle silhouetted, against the flag". USA art writer 1920.</p>
<p>VIDEO 4 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wn5XvMiAyyY&t=137s Murals at Boston Public Library</p>

<p>John Singer Sargent 1856-1925. Brookwood Cemetery Woking Surrey</p>		
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Ten paintings by JSS in London

<p><i>Gassed</i> 1919. Imperial War Museum. 6m x 2.5m. Sargent was commissioned by the British War Memorials Committee to document the war and visited the Western Front in July 1918. It was voted picture of the year by the Royal Academy in 1919.</p>	
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1. The scene is the aftermath of a mustard gas attack on the Western Front during World War One, as witnessed by the artist. It is the end of the day. Two groups of eleven soldiers approach a dressing station - the station guy ropes can be seen leading off to the right.
2. Sargent here depicts soldiers who are displaying an heroic dignity, the sons of the salon society that he has spent his career flattering. Are they walking towards the Christ-like redemption that their bravery and sacrifice has earned? Or is the sun setting on the sort of society that allows its 'gilded' youth to be wasted in a cruel war? In this painting Sargent is holding together two ideas, developed as society was trying to make sense of the war and its cost.
3. The painting gives clues about the management of the victims, their lack of protective clothing, the impact and extent of the attack as well as its routine nature - there is a football match, going on regardless, in the background. In sharp contrast to the victims, the players are physically and visually co-ordinated and have full kit.
4. The football scene might seem to be out of place. Perhaps it is included in contrast to the crippled victims, or to show the indifference of their colleagues to a routine event. However, killing and sport have often been seen as closely linked. The two are often merged, for example, or in the common description of killing as good hunting and sport, and it may be this notion that the artist is trying to convey.
5. The Western Front, 1919
6. Mustard gas was a weapon that was used indiscriminately during World War One, causing widespread injury and burns, as well as affecting the eyes. It offered the chance of making significant military advances, but in practice defences against it were usually prepared, soldiers replaceable, and the land it was used on could be contaminated for lengthy periods, so it was not as effective as at first thought.
7. John Singer Sargent was commissioned by the British government to contribute to a Hall of Remembrance for those who died in World War One. He was asked to work on the theme of 'Anglo-American co-operation', but as the American forces were notorious for acting independently, it was not surprising that he could not find a suitable way of illustrating this.
8. His own choice of theme was in blunt opposition to the suggestion of comradeship. And it led to the creation of an image still frequently used to illustrate the horrors of technological and, specifically, chemical warfare, and to question the morality of its use.

Lord Ribblesdale 1902. National Gallery London (Thomas Lister (1854-1925) was a British Liberal politician of aristocratic background).
Study of Mme Gautreau 1884. Tate Britain
Claude Monet Painting by the Edge of a Wood 1885. Tate.
 Ribblesdale (1854-1925) was an unusual "toff". He was a celebrated amateur boxer. George Bernard Shaw used him as the model for Professor Higgins in *Pygmalion*. The portrait came from a suggestion by king Edward VII.



His impeccable lineage, imposing presence and archaic mannerisms of speech and dress encapsulated everything an Englishman "ought to be". Ribblesdale's life was at its zenith in those early Edwardian days, but became progressively sadder: his eldest son died in Somaliland in 1904; his first wife Charlotte died in 1911; his second son Charles died at Gallipoli. In their memory he gave Sargent's painting to the National Gallery, of which he was a trustee. Prone to deep depression and violent temper, Ribblesdale took refuge as a semi-permanent resident of the Cavendish Hotel, where he was an unlikely companion of Rosa Lewis, the former shilling-a-week maidservant turned cook who ran the place as a haven of discreet, upper-crust misbehaviour.

Sargent became a close friend of Claude Monet (1840-1926) in 1885 when they painted together at Monet's home in Giverny, near Paris. Sargent admired the way that Monet worked out of doors, and imitated some of his subjects and methods in sketches such as this. It is characteristic of Sargent to give a human view of Monet's practice and of the patience of his wife, who sits behind him. When he settled in London in 1885 Sargent was initially viewed as avant-garde, but came to be the greatest society portraitist of his day.

Ellen Terry (1847-1928) played the role of *Lady Macbeth* in London 1888. It shows Terry placing a crown on her head after the murder of Duncan, the king. The incident does not occur in Shakespeare's text, nor was it a part of the performance. However, Sargent needed a dramatic motif to make his portrait convincing, both as the personification of a role, and as the characterisation of an individual actress. The dress is of green silk and blue tinsel sewn all over with red beetle wings, with a border of Celtic design decorated with rubies. *Ellen Terry As Lady Macbeth*. 1889. In Tate Britain.



VIDEO 5 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CMLpUY44dtk> Life of Ellen Terry

An Interior in Venice 1899. Royal Academy.
 Done the Venetian home of the incredibly wealthy Curtis family, it was painted as a gift for Mrs Curtis, in thanks for the many times the artist stayed and worked in the house as his 'Venetian base', she apparently declined it on the grounds that it made her look too old and that the lounging pose of her son was indecorous.



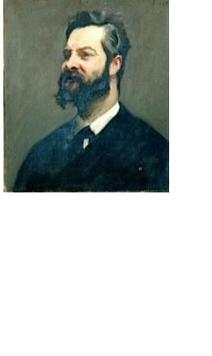
<p><i>Coventry Patmore</i> 1894. National Portrait Gallery London. <i>Coventry Patmore as Ezekiel in Frieze of the Prophets</i>. Boston Public Library. c. 1900</p> <p>He is most famous for a poem <i>Angel in the House</i> 1862, and title came to be used for Victorian feminine ideal: a wife and mother who was selflessly devoted to her children and submissive to her husband.</p>		
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<p><i>Henry James</i> 1913. National Portrait Gallery London.</p> <p>The American-born novelist Henry James settled in Dorset in 1898. By then he was at the end of a career which had seen the success of early novels such as <i>Portrait of a Lady</i> (1881), followed by the late masterpieces <i>The Wings of the Dove</i> (1902) and <i>The Golden Bowl</i> (1904). This portrait was commissioned to celebrate James's seventieth birthday by hundreds of enthusiastic followers although ultimately Sargent, a fellow American and friend, waived his fee. When it was completed James pronounced the portrait to be 'a living breathing likeness and a masterpiece of painting'.</p>	
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<p><i>Arthur James Balfour</i> 1908. National Portrait Gallery London. Balfour would almost certainly have been forgotten except for Balfour Declaration in 1917, contained in a letter to Baron Rothschild, leader of the British Jewish community.</p> <p>“His Majesty's government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.”</p> <p>It was incorporated into the peace treaty with the Ottoman Empire and the Mandate for Palestine.</p>	
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<p><i>Val d'Aosta</i> 1908. Tate. Given to the Tate by his sister Emily Sargent.</p>	
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Paintings from the John Singer Sargent exhibition at National Portrait gallery 2015

<p>1880 Paris</p>	<p><i>Madam E Ramon Subercaseaux</i></p>	<p>This portrait is a collaboration between a young artist making his way in the Parisian art world and a young couple with progressive tastes. It depicts Amalia (1860-1930), the wife of the Chilean diplomat and artist Ramon Subercaseaux seated at a piano in the couple's residence on the Avenue du Bois de Boulogne.</p> <p>The portrait occupies an important place in the narrative of Sargent's early career. Exhibited at the Paris Salon in 1881, it earned him a second-class medal, which meant that he was allowed to exhibit at future Salons without submitting to the jury.</p>	
<p>1884 Paris</p>	<p><i>Louis De Fourcaud</i></p>	<p>Louis de Bousses de Fourcaud (1851-1914) was an art critic, art historian, poet, musician and musicologist, and an influential figure in Parisian cultural life. Fourcaud championed artists of the avant-garde and was professor at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, Paris from 1893. He studied music at the Conservatoire, campaigned for the revival of French instrumental music and was a passionate advocate of Richard Wagner whom he met in Bayreuth to meet in 1879.</p> <p>It is possible that shared musical enthusiasms brought Fourcaud and Sargent together. Fourcaud began his career as an art critic at about the same time that Sargent began exhibiting at the Salon, and from the beginning his comments on Sargent's early work were perceptive and laudatory.</p>	
<p>1879 Paris</p>	<p><i>Edouard Pailleron</i></p>	<p>Edouard Pailleron (1834-99) and his family were among Sargent's earliest French patrons. The young artist probably owed the commissions from the family to the success of his portrait of Carolus-Duran at the Salon of 1879.</p> <p>Although this portrait was not exhibited in public until 1893, the image of Pailleron - the bohemian writer, standing in a pose of studied informality with a dog-eared book in his hand - was widely circulated. Pailleron was elected to the Academie Francaise in</p>	

		1882 and, in a publicity coup, the portrait was reproduced on the front of a prestigious magazine <i>L'Illustration</i> in which it was compared to a Van Dyck portrait.	
1902 London	<i>Essie, Ruby and Ferdinand, Children of Asher Wertheimer John Singer Sargent 1902</i>	These three Wertheimer children were painted in the schoolroom of their home at 8 Connaught Place, London. Essie (aged 22) is presented as an adult, seated slightly detached on the sofa with a small dog on her lap. Her younger siblings, Ruby (aged 12) and Ferdinand (13), lean more informally across an ottoman, dressed in clothes typical of the upper classes at this time. Despite the naturalness of the grouping, certain critics disliked the atmosphere of privilege. The <i>Spectator</i> observed 'Here the pet dogs are bedecked with bows, and the air we feel smells of scent and burnt pastilles'.	
1881 Paris	<i>Dr Pozzi At Home</i>	Samuel-Jean Pozzi (1846 -1918) was the father of modern French gynaecology. His practices advanced the reproductive safety and dignity of women, while founding the League of the Rose, a society devoted to the confession and acting out of sexual experiences. Sargent portrays this most worldly of men in an almost ecclesiastical mode. The gracious and slightly mannered pose, the costume and the palette reference old masterly images of popes and cardinals. This portrait was the first work Sargent exhibited at the Royal Academy in London (1882).	
1880 Paris	<i>Ramon Subercaseaux In A Gondola</i>	In September 1880 Sargent had taken a studio on the Grand Canal. Several other artists were also there, including one of his Paris friends, Ramon Subercaseaux (1854 -1937), who had been Chilean consul in Paris since 1874. He was also a writer and artist and an enthusiastic observer of the art world. Subercaseaux is shown seated in a gondola, with a sketch-book and a watercolour box on his lap, looking at the figure opposite, by implication Sargent. However if a portrait of Sargent was completed, its whereabouts are unknown.	
1880 Paris	<i>Ralph Wormeley Curtis</i>	This sketch of Sargent's friend and distant cousin Ralph Wormeley Curtis (1854- 1922) was painted at Scheveningen, a seaside resort in the Netherlands in 1880. Sargent had travelled there with Curtis. The main purpose of the young artists' trip was to see the work of Dutch artists and to copy works by Frans Hals in Haarlem. Sargent's impressionistic sketch is painted on one of the small panels that he carried with him on his travels in these early years. It is painted very thinly, and a large area of foreground, making up over half the picture space, is left empty.	