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SEEKING SARGENT AT THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, BOSTON

Highlights of the MFA's Sargent Collection Include Dazzling Murals and Iconic Portraits

The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (MFA), houses one of the most comprehensive collections of artwork by John Singer Sargent (1856-1925) anywhere in the world—comprising approximately 500 objects. Sargent's extraordinary talents continue to amaze—from his intimate portraits and light-filled landscapes to figure studies and dramatic murals. Visitors can view *John Singer Sargent Watercolors* in the Ann and Graham Gund Gallery, and then search for his masterpieces throughout the Museum. Works on paper not currently on view can be seen by appointment in the Morse Study Room.

Ruth and Carl J. Shapiro Gallery



The Daughters of Edward Darley Boit, 1882,
John Singer Sargent

The MFA's Ruth and Carl J. Shapiro Gallery, located on the second floor of the Art of the Americas Wing, is dedicated to Sargent's art, featuring approximately 25 of his renowned paintings. Among the masterpieces is the iconic painting *The Daughters of Edward Darley Boit* (1882), flanked by the two large Japanese ceramic vases that appear in the work. Formal portraits include *Edith, Lady Playfair* (1884) and *Mrs. Edward Darley Boit (Mary Louisa Cushing)* (1887)—the mother of the famous daughters. The pageantry of a coronation can be seen in *Charles Stewart, Sixth Marquess of Londonderry, Carrying the Great Sword of State at the Coronation of King Edward VII, August, 1902*, and *Mr. W. C. Beaumont, His Page on That Occasion* (1904). An early work by Sargent that demonstrates his talents beyond portraiture, *Fishing for Oysters at Cancale* (1878), is a sparkling image of local

“fisherfolk” on the beach in Brittany. The gallery is presently enhanced by significant loans from private collections that will be on view through the end of *John Singer Sargent Watercolors*.

Carol Vance Wall Rotunda

Sargent made numerous preparatory drawings, oil sketches and paintings for his mural project at the MFA, many of which are on view in the Carol Vance Wall Rotunda, directly below the soaring murals. In 1921, the artist donated 50 of these drawings to the Museum for study by students at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts. After his death, Sargent's sisters made a second gift of

sketches in memory of their brother, bringing the Museum's total number of mural drawings into the hundreds. Works on display, such as the oil *Sketch for Atlas and the Hesperides* (1922-4), reveal Sargent's creative process as he crafted mythological scenes from live models. Other studies on view, including *The Judgment of Paris* (1922-24), represent ideas that were never fully realized by the artist.

Ruth and Carl J. Shapiro Colonnade

The MFA's famed Upper Rotunda is the permanent home of Sargent's soaring masterpiece of public art. These allegorical murals and bas-reliefs (created 1916-1925) adorn the Museum's Rotunda and Colonnade. The entire installation—20 paintings, 18 bas-reliefs and elaborate architectural ornaments—is populated with characters from Greek mythology and classical art, and features representations of gods and heroes whose legends often relate to the mission of the Museum. This installation was the culmination of Sargent's career and remains one of the Museum's greatest treasures. Angled mirrors located in the Carol Vance Wall Rotunda provide an opportunity for closer inspection.



Detail of *Rotunda Skylight*, 1927, John Singer Sargent

Curator's Picks

John Singer Sargent Watercolors co-curator Erica Hirshler picks her Top Seven Sargents:

- *The Daughters of Edward Darley Boit* (1882), located in the Ruth and Carl J. Shapiro Gallery
- *Rehearsal of the Pasedeloup Orchestra at the Cirque d'Hiver* (about 1879-80), located in the Ruth and Carl J. Shapiro Gallery
- *Helen Sears* (1895), located in the Ruth and Carl J. Shapiro Gallery
- *A Capriote* (1878), located in the Ruth and Carl J. Shapiro Gallery
- *Architecture, Painting and Sculpture Protected by Athena from the Ravages of Time* (1921), located in the Ruth and Carl J. Shapiro Colonnade
- *Nude Study of Thomas E. McKeller* (about 1917-20), located in the Ruth and Carl J. Shapiro Gallery
- *Frieze of the Prophets* (about 1892), located in the Carol Vance Wall Rotunda

The MFA Bookstore

Visitors can find MFA Publications related to Sargent, including the catalogue for *John Singer Sargent Watercolors*, *Sargent's Daughters: A Biography of a Painting* by Erica Hirshler and *John Singer Sargent's Murals in the MFA* by Carol Troyen, at the MFA Bookstore.

*The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (MFA), is recognized for the quality and scope of its encyclopedic collection, which includes an estimated 450,000 objects. The Museum's collection is made up of: Art of the Americas; Art of Europe; Contemporary Art; Art of Asia, Oceania, and Africa; Art of the Ancient World; Prints, Drawings, and Photographs; Textile and Fashion Arts; and Musical Instruments. Open seven days a week, the MFA's hours are Saturday through Tuesday, 10 a.m. – 4:45 p.m.; and Wednesday through Friday, 10 a.m. – 9:45 p.m. Admission (which includes one repeat visit within 10 days) is \$25 for adults and \$23 for seniors and students age 18 and older, and includes entry to all galleries and special exhibitions, including **John Singer Sargent Watercolors**. Admission is free for University Members and youths age 17 and younger on weekdays after 3 p.m., weekends, and Boston Public Schools holidays; otherwise \$10. Wednesday nights after 4 p.m. admission is by voluntary contribution (suggested donation \$25). MFA Members are always admitted for free. The MFA's multi-media guide is available at ticket desks and the Sharf Visitor Center for \$5, members; \$6, non-members; and \$4, youths. The Museum is closed on New Year's Day, Patriots' Day, Independence Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. For more information, visit mfa.org or call 617.267.9300. The MFA is located on the Avenue of the Arts at 465 Huntington Avenue, Boston, MA 02115.*

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