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ART IN THE ROOM

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ARTISTS' STUDIO**

L.A. LOVE

**JOHN SINGER SARGENT
IN THE HOUSE**

+
**SHOULD THE MATISSE
MATCH THE DRAPES?**
BY RITA KONIG

SARGENT AT ARMS

Ten years in Paris showed John Singer Sargent how to live. A new exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art shares his lessons.

By Camille Okhio Photographs by Frank Frances
Produced and styled by Benjamin Reynaert



Le Verre de Porto, 1884



1930s Ruby vase, \$450; nydc.com/antiques. Charles X Urn lamp, \$2,275, and Sari silk lampshade, \$600; krbnyc.com. Hanson champagne flute, \$175 for set of two; aerostudios.com. Colette red wineglass, white wineglass, and coupe, from \$360, by Charlap Hyman & Herrero; modaoperandi.com. Starry Nights carafe (with glass), \$300; williamwhite.com. Fabric: Blackjack by Métaphores; kravet.com; Damask Pierre; brunschwigfils.com; to the trade.

as his sitters. Covering the 10 years he spent in the French capital starting when he was 18, the show also explores the artist's most experimental phase.

"This decade in Paris lays the groundwork for his professional career," says the show's curator, Stephanie Herdrich. "It's the foundation of his future success."

The show will include Sargent's

famous portrait of Madame Pierre Gautreau (*Madame X* to most), along with several preparatory sketches of that painting—with her infamous dress strap off the shoulder, rather than on. “The works of art from this period are some of the most intense, ambitious, and energetic of Sargent’s career,” says Herdrich.

Following the upheaval caused by ►



Madame Paul Escudier
(*Louise Lefevre*), 1882

Girasole mirror, \$8,820; formationsusa.com. 17th-century Verdure tapestry, \$18,000; shahkarfinecarpets.com. Vintage bowl; ebay.com. Footed cup and Loop vase, \$375 and \$550; francespalmerpottery.com. Footed Vaso, \$125; mkporcelain.com. Dolphin centerpiece, \$175; mottahedeh.com. Fabric: Pencil Sketch wool sheer and Cavalier velvet; to the trade, deleuona.com

Madame X's unveiling at the Paris Salon, Sargent began to consciously explore the dichotomies between formal and informal, perception and reality, motion and stillness.

Shortly after that painting's completion he undertook *Le Verre de Porto* ("The Glass of Port"), which depicts Edith and Albert Vickers after a long dinner. "He's fascinated with light and

rendering it," Herdrich says, adding that Sargent was intent on "creating an atmosphere and a mood." In the Vickerses' dining room, Sargent's steady brushstrokes and use of color and shadow effectively communicate the languorous, sumptuous hours after dinner.

Elsewhere, visitors will see snapshots of quieter moments, unknown sitters, and architecture from his travels

to the Netherlands, Spain, North Africa, and Italy. His compositions express the beauty of the natural world—wind, waves, smoke—alongside images that showcase the refinement of 19th-century domestic life.

In *Madame Paul Escudier* (otherwise known as *Louise Lefevre*), Sargent effectively communicates the way mid-winter afternoon light wafts in ►



Ramón Subercaseaux in a Gondola, 1880



Italian Louis XVI armchair, \$8,565; dennissandleen.com. 1930s artist palette, \$199; chairish.com. Wild Strawberry teacup and saucer, \$75; wedgwood.com. Ulysse PM notebook cover and refill, \$435; hermes.com. Pen-Pin glasses, \$299; ralphlauren.com. Lugano tumbler, \$158; nickeykehoe.com. Norina mirror by Mark Evans, \$1,875; krbnyc.com. Fabric: Tabularasa silk (on chair); dedar.com; Grace stripe by Madeaux; johnrosselli.com; to the trade.

through windows bedecked in white cotton and tasseled taffeta. The walls are a dusky plaster hung with a single ornament: an Italian Rococo shield-shaped mirror. In this painting Sargent's hand seems more confident, less studied. His expert rendering of the texture on Lefevre's sumptuous velvet slipper chair suggests that she has

just risen from it.

In *Ramón Subercaseaux in a Gondola* Sargent turns his gaze to a patron turned friend. "There is a camaraderie here that allows Sargent to be casual, informal, and experimental," Herdrich says. Similarly relaxed is *Young Man in Reverie*, the subject of which rests suggestively against a whitewashed wall,

his dark, tousled hair bursting with sensuality. It's one of many moments from the Paris years that speak to a brilliant mind in mid-development, as Sargent articulated what could be revealed in a gaze, and which elements—light, materials, arrangements, actions—make a moment worth capturing. ■



Murano glass pedestal vase and fruit, \$1,800 and \$175; aerostudios.com. Marbled glass, \$720, set of six; craftadvisory.com. Blue Canton by Mottahedeh soup plate, sauce boat, cookie plate, and dinner plate, \$140, \$150, \$70, and \$65; largercross.com. Zodiac dinner plate and bread and butter plate, \$200 and \$100; williamwhite.com. Fabric: Stockton linen, \$370 per meter; florasoomes.com.



Young Man in Reverie, 1878