

# *Sargent and the Sea*

September 12, 2009–  
January 3, 2010



In *Sargent and the Sea*, the Corcoran Gallery of Art brings together for the first time more than 80 paintings, watercolors, and drawings depicting seascapes and coastal scenes from the early career of John Singer Sargent, the pre-eminent American expatriate painter of the late nineteenth century. The Corcoran's 1878 masterwork *En Route pour la pêche* (*Setting out to Fish*), serves as the centerpiece of the exhibition, and is joined by other works produced during, and inspired by, the artist's summer journeys from his home in Paris to Brittany, Normandy, and Capri, as well as two transatlantic voyages. *Sargent and the Sea* travels to the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (February 14–May 23, 2010) and the Royal Academy of Arts, London (July 10–September 26, 2010).

While Sargent is best known for his society portraits and much of his artistic career has been well documented in exhibitions and publications, this groundbreaking exhibition and its accompanying catalogue will be the first to examine in depth the little explored—but highly important—marine paintings and drawings executed during the first five years of the artist's career.

Sargent's two paintings depicting villagers fishing at *Cancale* (1878, Corcoran Gallery of Art and Museum of Fine Arts, Boston) are central works in the canon of the artist's early career. It is no coincidence that he came from a New England family steeped in trade and shipping. His passion for the sea and his knowledge of seafaring are evident in this important group of early paintings, watercolors, and drawings, executed when he was between eighteen and twenty-three years old (1875–1879). The extent and quality of his marine output will be a complete revelation to nearly all audiences, even to specialists in the field.

#### IMAGE 1

John Singer Sargent, *En Route pour la pêche* (*Setting Out to Fish*) (detail), 1878, oil on canvas. Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Museum Purchase, Gallery Fund, 17.2.



With the exception of the two well-known Cancale oils, Sargent's seascapes have not been widely studied or reproduced, proving that even for a renowned, frequently studied artist there is yet new material to be mined. Moreover, these pictures and their preparatory and related works (not to mention the unrelated marines), have never been considered in the context of Sargent's career in particular and the history of marine painting in general. Similarly, the artist's work as a marine draughtsman has never been studied in relation to his output as a marine painter.

*Sargent and the Sea* features works dating from 1874 to 1879 drawn from public and private collections in the United States and Europe. Richard Ormond, grandnephew of the artist and a leading Sargent scholar who has directed and jointly authored all five (of the projected eight) volumes of the Sargent catalogue raisonné, is serving as consulting curator for the exhibition. Ormond served as director of the National Maritime Museum in London from 1986 to 2000; over the past twenty-seven years, he has been working to complete the Sargent catalogue raisonné. The exhibition is enriched by his latest research.

*Sargent and the Sea* is organized by Sarah Cash, Bechhoefer Curator of American Art at the Corcoran Gallery of Art.

Included in the packet are works from the exhibition *Sargent and the Sea* as well as works from the Corcoran's collection.

**IMAGE 2**

John Singer Sargent, *Sketch for 'En Route pour la pêche' and 'Fishing for Oysters at Cancale,'* 1877, oil on canvas. Private Collection.

## ABOUT THE ARTIST



John Singer Sargent (1856–1925) was the most sought-after portrait painter working in Europe and the United States in the late nineteenth century. Born in Florence, Italy to American parents, the young Sargent traveled extensively with his family to different European locales as the seasons dictated. He studied in Paris with the fashionable portrait painter Carolus-Duran and received formal training at the École des Beaux-Arts, soon distinguishing himself by his keenness of eye and facility of hand. He demonstrated an early interest in landscape and seascape subjects, evident in works such as the Corcoran’s *En Route pour la pêche*.

Portraiture, however, became Sargent’s chosen genre, and by 1900 he was the leading society portrait painter on both sides of the Atlantic, the “Van Dyck of our times,” as Auguste Rodin called him. The Corcoran’s portraits *Madame Pailleron* (1879) and *Mrs. Henry White* (1883) exemplify his incisive bravura style, enriched with Impressionist qualities of light and color. These dazzling portrayals present his sitters in real spaces, capturing moments of arrested movement. One of Sargent’s most famous works is a portrait of the celebrated beauty *Madame Gautreau* (1884, The Metropolitan Museum of Art). Painted simultaneously with *Mrs. Henry White*, *Madame Gautreau* (better known as *Madame X*) created a scandal when it was exhibited at the Paris Salon of that year.

In 1890 Sargent began a mural cycle at the Boston Public Library which, along with a later one at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, was to occupy a large part of his energies for the rest of his life. After 1900 he spent his summers on long sketching holidays in the Alps, creating compositions such as the Corcoran’s *Simplon Pass* (1911).



### IMAGE 3 (TOP)

James Carroll Beckwith, *In the Atelier of Carolus-Duran: Portrait of John Singer Sargent Painting at the Easel in the Company of Frank Fowler and an Unidentified Artist*, c. 1874–76. Graphite on paper, accession # 1935.85.2.245. Collection of the New York Historical Society.

### IMAGE 4 (BOTTOM)

James Carroll Beckwith, *Profile Portrait of John Singer Sargent*, c. 1874–8, graphite on paper, accession # 1935.851.1.9. Collection of the New York Historical Society.



## AN ALPINE SCENE



Although John Singer Sargent's family made their home in Italy when he was boy, they traveled regularly in Switzerland, France, Austria, and Germany. From an early age Sargent sketched what he saw while traveling through Europe with his family. A friend of the artist remarked that "drawings were literal records of what was immediately before him. He drew whatever came to hand never worrying to find special subjects, but just enjoying the sheer fun of translating on to paper the record of what he saw." During these trips, Sargent received early drawing lessons from his mother, a Philadelphia patrician who was an amateur watercolorist. Sargent's first sketches were done when he was five, but his formal training began in Switzerland when he was twelve or thirteen years of age. It was around this time that Sargent decided to pursue a career as an artist and devote even more of his time to drawing.

### DISCUSSION

In what country do you think Sargent made this drawing? What do you see that tells you that the image could be from the place you chose? Have you ever taken photos or made a drawing of a place that you have visited with your family? What did you do with these images when you returned home?

#### IMAGE 4

John Singer Sargent, *An Alpine Scene*, 1868–1869. Pencil on cream paper, 7 5/16 x 10 1/2 inches. The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC. Gift of Emily Sargent and Violet Ormond, sisters of the artist 49.141a.

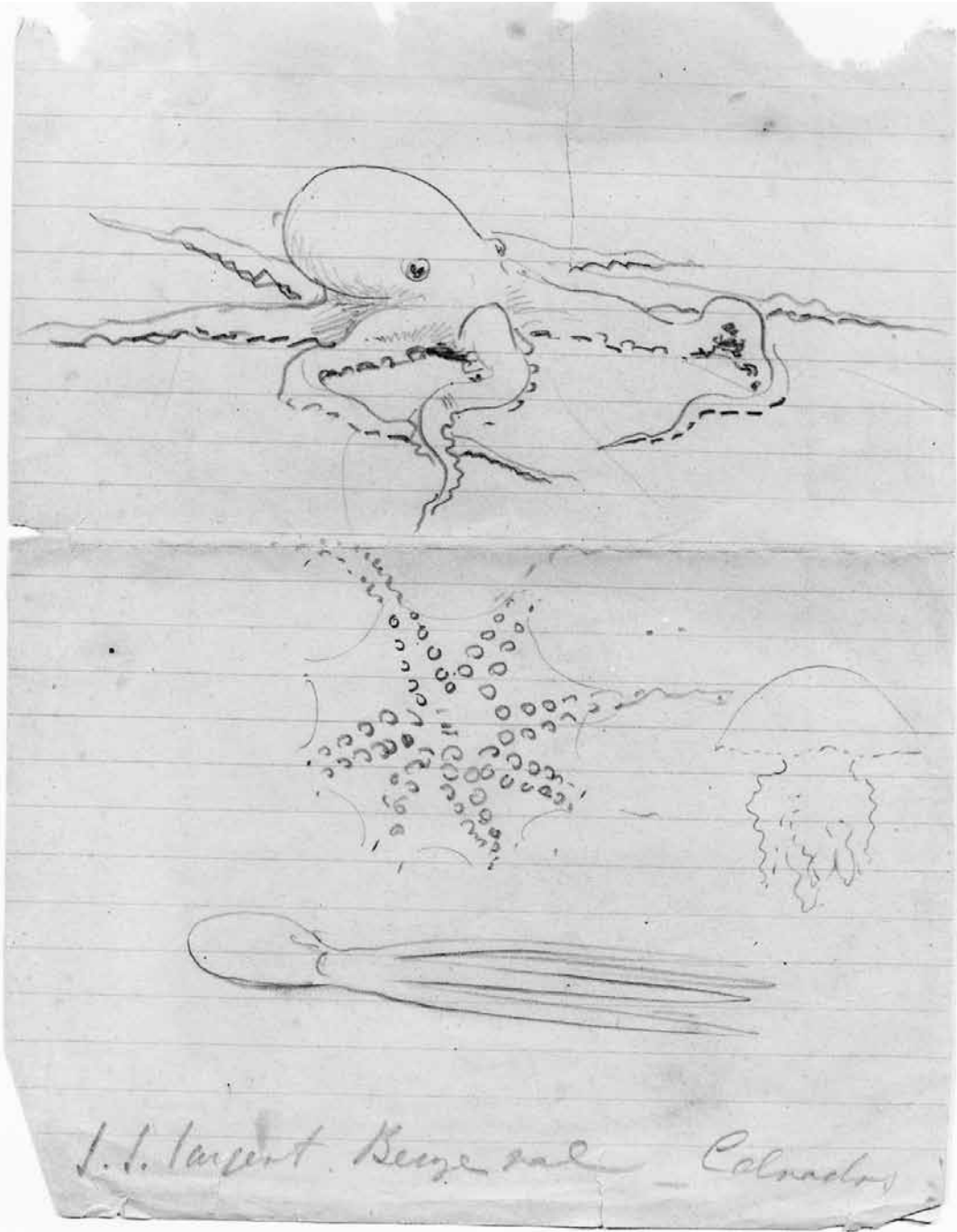


## SKETCHBOOK DRAWINGS



### IMAGE 5

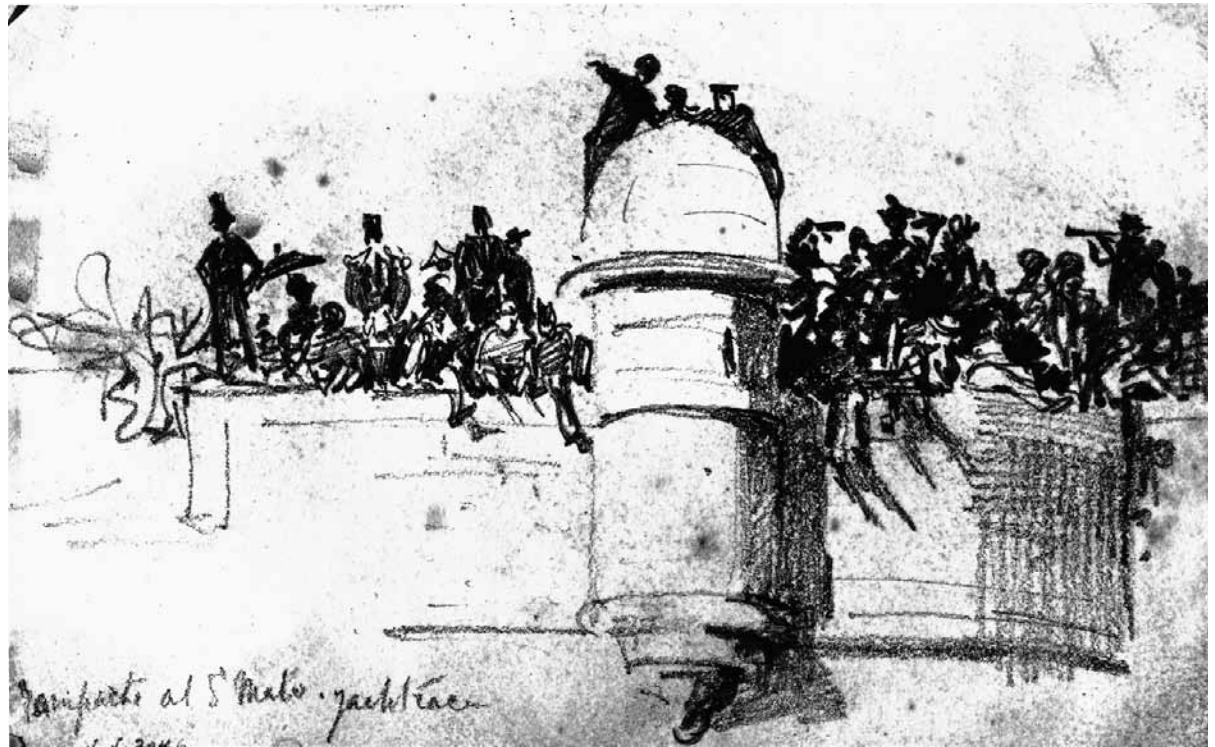
John Singer Sargent, *Sailboat*, 1872.  
Graphite on paper. 15.6 x 11.3cm.  
Harvard Art Museum, Fogg Art Museum.  
Gift of Mrs. Francis Ormond, 1937.7.9.10.  
Photo: Allan Macintyre © President and  
Fellows of Harvard College.



**IMAGE 6**  
John Singer Sargent, *Octopus and Starfish*,  
*Beuzeval (Calvados)*, Normandy, 1874.  
Graphite on paper. Private Collection.



## SKETCHBOOK DRAWINGS (CONTINUED)



By the time he was eighteen, Sargent had filled thirteen sketchbooks with his drawings. He completed these three drawings before he was twenty years old. By looking at these images, what do you think interested him? It seems that Sargent was drawn to the creatures, boats, places, and people connected with the sea.

### DISCUSSION

Other than those listed in the title, *Octopus and Starfish, Beuzeval (Calvados)*, what other images can you see on the lined paper?

Have you ever sailed on a boat like the one in *Sailboat*?

This sketch of Saint-Malo was done during the summer of 1875 when Sargent and his family were on the coast of Brittany. What do you think is happening in this picture? Is the scene connected to the sea? How do you know? Here, sailors watch a yacht race at Saint-Malo, Brittany, some using telescopes and others gesturing excitedly.

Where does your family like to go in the summer? If you sketched what you see on summer trips what would be in your drawings? Water? Trees? Buildings? Sargent often included his sketches in scrapbooks as a way of organizing, editing and preserving his drawings. What else do you think Sargent kept in his scrapbooks? Have you ever made a scrapbook? What kind of things did you include?

### IMAGE 7

John Singer Sargent, *"Ramparts at St. Malo—Yacht Race"*, 1875. Pencil on cream paper. The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC. Gift of Emily Sargent and Violet Ormond, sisters of the artist 49.148c.



# ATLANTIC STORM



In May 1876, Sargent's mother took him and his sister Emily on a transatlantic voyage from Liverpool, England to New York so they could meet their American cousins. Can you think of an important celebration that took place in the United States during that year? The journey took about ten days sailing on a ship called *S.S. Abyssinia*, a very modern vessel at the time. The family stayed for four months and made the return trip aboard *S.S. Abyssinia's* sister ship *S.S. Algeria*. Unlike the previous Atlantic crossing, this return trip lasted seventeen days due to stormy weather. As Sargent was very interested in all things nautical, he spent his time sketching the equipment on the ship's deck, the ocean, and occasionally the crew and passengers. Sargent would make the transatlantic journey multiple times throughout his life and often sketched and painted what he saw on these trips. When you visit the exhibition at the Corcoran, you can sketch the same type of marine objects that are seen in Sargent's work.

This vigorously painted scene documents a storm Sargent experienced on his October 1876 return from America. It presents an awe-inspiring spectacle of the sea witnessed from the plunging aft (rear) deck of the ship. Several figures struggle against the elements; the wake streams out behind in a glistening web of white froth; and the huge waves seem likely at any moment to overwhelm the ship.

## DISCUSSION

Do you think Sargent could have set up his easel on the ship's deck and painted with so many high waves moving the boat up and down? He likely painted this work back in his Paris studio. Have you ever experienced extreme weather conditions? How would it feel to be in a storm at sea? How does Sargent convey the tumultuous conditions of the ocean in the painting? How would you make a work of art that described this event?

### IMAGE 8

John Singer Sargent, *Atlantic Storm*, 1876.  
Oil on canvas. Curtis Galleries, Minneapolis.



## EN ROUTE POUR LA PÊCHE



This painting and its smaller companion, *Fishing for Oysters at Cancale* (1878), give the impression of an effortless execution. However, both canvases resulted from an extensive, methodical artistic process. In preparation for the finished paintings, Sargent produced fifteen related works in oil and pencil (also included in the exhibition) in Brittany during the summer of 1877.

Painted in his Paris studio when Sargent was only twenty-two years old, *En Route pour la pêche* (*Setting Out to Fish*) presents a picturesque view of women and children setting out to gather the fruits of the sea at low tide in the small Breton fishing town of Cancale. Sargent carefully arranged the figures against a wide expanse of beach and a glistening backdrop of summer weather. The heads and upper bodies of the well-scrubbed peasants break the line of the horizon to give the figures a monumental presence.

### DISCUSSION

Have you spent time at a beach? What did you do? What did you wear? Did you see anyone at the beach you visited dressed like the people in Sargent's painting? What are the women carrying? The group is strolling on the beach and looking in the small tidal pools for clams, mussels, scallops, and other things to include in their evening meal. Does this activity look enjoyable? What do you see in the background of the painting? Did you see boats or a light house at the beach you visited? How do you think it would feel to stand on the beach in Sargent's painting?

When you visit the Sargent exhibition at the Corcoran, you can see the two Cancale paintings side by side on the same gallery wall. This is a wonderful opportunity as the smaller one is from the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. Besides size, how are the works different?

### IMAGE 9

John Singer Sargent, *En Route pour la pêche* (*Setting Out to Fish*), 1878. Oil on canvas. Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC. Museum Purchase, Gallery Fund 17.2.



## FISHING FOR OYSTERS AT CANCALE



### WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Over the years, the title *The Oyster Gatherers of Cancale* has been used frequently to refer to both of the Cancale paintings. However, neither canvas bore that name during Sargent's lifetime, and today each is known by the title he chose for its first public display. In the Paris Salon of 1878, the Corcoran's painting was called *En Route pour la pêche*, which translates roughly to "Setting Out to Fish." The artist titled the smaller canvas *Fishing for Oysters at Cancale* when he showed it in New York City at the Society of American Artists.

Despite the latter title, Sargent witnessed no oyster gathering in Cancale—justly famous for its oysters in Sargent's day as now—since the activity was strictly prohibited there during the summer. Government regulations protected the bivalves—weakens and not prime for eating during their spawning season—and also mitigated the effects of longstanding overfishing. The artist likely chose the name *Fishing for Oysters at Cancale* to appeal to his first-ever American audience, as he must have known that New York was the epicenter of the country's rage for oysters. The city boasted oyster cellars on nearly every street corner as well as vast floating wholesale markets along the Hudson and East Rivers, and may well have seen itself as the American counterpart to the famous Breton port.

### IMAGE 10

John Singer Sargent, *Fishing for Oysters at Cancale*, 1877–78. Oil on canvas. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Gift of Miss Mary Appleton, 35.708.





## NEAPOLITAN CHILDREN BATHING



Sargent was inspired to paint this beach picture after a visit to Italy. Just as he did in Cancale, Sargent made a number of sketches and studies for this painting. How does this scene differ from the one at Cancale? Note that Sargent placed the horizon line in this landscape much higher than the one in Cancale. How does that change the appearance of the figures?

### IMAGE 11

John Singer Sargent, *Neapolitan Children Bathing*, 1879. Oil on canvas. Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Mass. © Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Massachusetts.

### DISCUSSION

Which beach would you prefer to visit? Do you think that it is hot on this beach? How does Sargent paint the scene to make you think so? Do you think the boys are brothers? Cousins? Friends? Are they communicating with one another? Can you find the fifth boy in this painting if you look closely? What does the boy looking out at the water have on his back? Have you seen anything like this before? Did you wear something similar when you were learning to swim? These balloon-like objects are animal bladders made into floatation devices.



## MARIE BULOZ PAILLERON (MADAME ÉDOUARD PAILLERON)



Sargent became very well known for the portraits he painted of wealthy society women from France, England, and America. Portraits not only served as a way of documenting one's appearance but also as a means of indicating social status and wealth. The noted playwright and poet Édouard Pailleron commissioned Sargent to paint his wife's portrait when she was thirty-nine. In what type of place is Marie Buloz Pailleron posed? Is she moving or standing still? What do you see in the background of the picture? The setting is the family estate in Savoy, at Ronjoux, France. Does Madame Pailleron appear to be dressed for outdoors? What season is shown in the painting? How do you know? What does this painting tell you about Madame Pailleron?

### DISCUSSION

Sargent painted the portrait of Madame Pailleron one year after the Cancale beach scene, *En Route pour la pêche*. Think about the women in the Cancale painting. How do you think their lives differed from that of Madame Pailleron?

Do you have portraits of you or your family in your home? What did you choose to wear in the portrait? What objects did you want to include in your portrait?

### IMAGE 12

John Singer Sargent, *Marie Buloz Pailleron (Madame Édouard Pailleron)*, 1879. Oil on canvas. 82 x 39 1/2 inches. Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC. Museum Purchase and gifts of Katherine McCook Knox, John A. Nevius and Mr. and Mrs. Lansdell K. Christie 64.2



## MARGARET STUYVESANT RUTHERFURD (MRS. HENRY WHITE)



Margaret (“Daisy”) Stuyvesant Rutherford White, twenty-six years old at the time this portrait was painted, lived in Paris with her husband, an important American diplomat. She saw Sargent’s work at the Paris Salon and commissioned him to paint her portrait. Sargent completed this work four years after the portrait of Madame Pailleron. Compare the two images—how are they different from one another? What similarities do you find?

### DISCUSSION

Unlike Madame Pailleron, Mrs. White posed for her portrait in Sargent’s studio. The elegant couch and drapery were studio props. Mrs. White appears to be ready for an evening out, perhaps at the opera. What is she holding? How is she dressed? Sargent was known for his ability to paint white cloth as a beautifully shimmering surface with many variations of color. How many shades of white can you find in Mrs. White’s dress? Sargent’s celebrated skill at capturing complex hand gestures such as twisting wrists and folded fingers is also evident in this portrait. Careful inspection of the canvas reveals subtle changes he made to the composition—the angle of Mrs. White’s head, the position of the fan, and the direction of the gown’s train—resulting in a more static and formal portrayal. Ultimately, Mrs. White’s regal pose is one more commonly associated with male portrait subjects. Standing erect, she gazes directly at the viewer, commanding attention and respect.

### IMAGE 13

John Singer Sargent, *Margaret Stuyvesant Rutherford (Mrs. Henry White)*, 1883. Oil on canvas. The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC. Gift of John Campbell White 49.4.



## SIMPLON PASS



As his interest in portraiture and commissioned works waned, Sargent found joy in painting the daily scenes of his travels in Europe. During this period, Sargent harnessed the same diligent work ethic that made him one of the most sought-after artists in the Western world, waking early and working through most of the day.

Sargent traveled to the Swiss Alps in the summers from 1909 to 1911 with an intimate group of friends and family. It was during one of these sojourns that he produced *Simplon Pass*. The artist divided his canvas into four distinct strata, each with its own textures and colors: the brilliant sky, the purple-gray Hübschhorn, a sloping rock face, and a cluster of boulders. Sargent's canvas resolves into a majestic landscape as the viewer shifts his or her vantage point.

Compare this painting to the early drawing of the Alps. Are the images alike in any way?

### IMAGE 14

John Singer Sargent, *Simplon Pass*, 1911.  
Oil on canvas. The Corcoran Gallery of Art,  
Washington, DC. Bequest of James  
Parmelee 41.22.





# SARGENT'S TRAVELS



## REGION OF BRITTANY

Comprising a peninsula in the northwest of France, Brittany is bordered by the English Channel and the Bay of Biscay. Originally under the control of Celtic tribes, it came under Roman rule before becoming independent. In 1532 it became a part of France and today is composed of the Departments of Finistere, Cotes-d'Armor, Ille-et-Vilaine, and Morbihan.

Due to Brittany's long isolation from the rest of France, its people still dressed in traditional costumes and spoke in regional dialects well into the nineteenth century. This uniqueness attracted painters such as Paul Gauguin and Vincent van Gogh to visit the region in search of inspiration. Although the people of Brittany have traditionally worked as sailors and fishermen, today tourism is quickly becoming the fastest growing industry in the region.

## IMAGE 15

Map documenting the locales and periods of John Singer Sargent's travel when he created his marines of 1874–1880 and 1884.

## SAINT-MALO

A walled port city located in Brittany, Saint-Malo has a colorful history as a fort, monastery, and home to corsairs (French pirates). The original city walls were destroyed during World War II but were painstakingly reconstructed. Today hundreds of thousands of tourists visit Saint-Malo each year.

## CANCALE

The scenic fishing village of Cancale, located along Brittany's Emerald Coast, is known as the oyster capital of France. In Sargent's time oyster gathering was a labor-intensive practice. Men used flat-bottomed sailboats called bisquines to retrieve the bi-valves from their beds using large nets. Women and children would wait on shore for the boats to return and then remove empty shells, starfish, algae, and rocks. All of this activity created scenes that proved to be very picturesque for artists.

## NICE, FRANCE

Located on the French Riviera, Nice's history is just as rich and lengthy as that of Brittany. As the city is close to Italy, the culture of Nice was influenced by French and Italian traditions. As was true during the nineteenth century, today Nice has a mix of European cultures and still attracts many tourists.

## NORMANDY, FRANCE

Brittany's neighbor to the east, Normandy was also a popular site for travelers during Sargent's time. Once controlled by Gallic tribes, like Brittany it was conquered by the Romans. Normandy's history is linked with that of England through leaders such as William the Conqueror, who was also the Duke of Normandy. During World War II, Normandy became the landing site for the invasion and liberation of Europe from Nazi Germany; this is recognized as a turning point for the war in Western Europe.

## NAPLES, ITALY

Founded by the Greeks, Naples is located on the coast of the Gulf of Naples, halfway between two volcanic areas; Mount Vesuvius and Campi Flegrei. The Naples National Archaeological Museum is considered one of the most important repositories of ancient artifacts from the Mediterranean area. The coastal city lies just north of the Amalfi coast and the area has often been portrayed by artists. The island of Capri off of Naples is also very picturesque with beautiful beaches and monumental rock formations.

## TRANSATLANTIC VOYAGE

During Sargent's time the only way to travel between Europe and America was by sailing across the Atlantic Ocean. The steamship revolutionized the long and dangerous voyage and made travel between continents much easier. Those who chose to make the crossing could travel in first class, second class, or steerage. Sargent's first trip to America was in late May 1876, when he was twenty. Sargent made the transatlantic journey multiple times throughout his life and often sketched and painted what he saw on these trips.

# ACTIVITIES



## ‘EN PLEIN-AIR’ GRADE LEVEL: K-8

**AIM:** To experience the process of drawing or sketching outdoors.

**MATERIALS:** sketchbook, pencil

**SUGGESTED WORK:** *"Ramparts at St. Malo—Yacht Race"*, 1875, pencil on cream paper, 3 15/16 x 6 1/2 inches, The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, Gift of Emily Sargent and Violet Ormond, sisters of the artist, 49.148c

**INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS:** Think about the time you spend outdoors. Are you on a playground, in a field or park, by the water, or in your backyard? What are people doing around you? Are they climbing, reading, biking, hiking? Artists often find inspiration in the places and people that surround them. What in your environment inspires you?

**ACTIVITY:** Sketching outdoors was very important to Sargent's artistic process. Create or buy your own small sketchbook and spend some time outdoors drawing whatever you see. You can draw anything—from a scene of your entire backyard to the small details on a leaf. Be sure to pay close attention to the way light affects the colors and shadows on whatever you chose to draw.



## YOUR SCRAPBOOK GRADE LEVEL: K-8

**AIM:** To explore the process of scrapbooking in order to better understand its significance to Sargent's work.

**MATERIALS:** ‘en plein-air’ sketch, glue, paper, various materials

**SUGGESTED WORK:** John Singer Sargent, *Sailboat*, 1872. Graphite on paper. 15.6 x 11.3cm. Harvard Art Museum, Fogg Art Museum. Gift of Mrs. Francis Ormond, 1937.7.9.10. Photo: Allan Macintyre © President and Fellows of Harvard College.

**INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS:** Have you ever brought home a souvenir from a family vacation or made a scrapbook in order to remember certain events? What kinds of things do you collect when traveling? Sea shells, postcards, ticket stubs? Artists often collect objects or make sketches of places they visit to serve as models for things they want to paint.

**ACTIVITY:** Sargent made a scrapbook in which he included clippings, photographs, and sketches from his travels through Europe. For this activity you need the ‘en plein-air’ sketch and portrait you made in the previous activities. Glue your sketch onto a larger piece of paper. Decorate the rest of the page with objects you have collected from the place represented in your drawing. You might choose leaves, shells, sand, grass, or other objects.



## COMPOSITIONAL STRUCTURE

GRADE LEVEL: K–5

AIM: To understand the elements of art.

MATERIALS: pencil, paper

SUGGESTED WORK: *Atlantic Storm*, 1876.  
Oil on canvas, 23 x 32 in. Curtis Galleries,  
Minneapolis.

**INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS:** Much like writing a poem, story, or essay, paintings start with an idea. In order to get that idea on paper or canvas, writers and painters need to brainstorm and plan how their story or image is going to fit together. Have you ever written a story or essay for school? Did you already know how it was going to end? Have you ever drawn something and known what it would look like once you are finished? Did you make a sketch before you started?

**ACTIVITY:** By exploring Sargent’s maritime paintings and sketches you’ve learned about his process for constructing the composition of his works. Focus your attention on the formal structures—the shapes, lines, and colors that make up *Atlantic Storm*. Describe what you see in this painting and the mood it creates. Imagine if you could change all the forms of the painting into geometric shapes. What would those shapes look like? On your paper draw the most important shapes and lines you see. Compare your compositional drawing to the real work of art. Does the dark and stormy mood come through on your drawing or has it changed? Where did you draw the most shapes and lines? What does your drawing reveal about the actual painting’s structure?



## SLOW DOWN AND LOOK

GRADE LEVEL: K–8

AIM: To teach students the value of taking time to enjoy looking at art.

MATERIALS: paper, pencil, watch

SUGGESTED WORK: *En Route pour la pêche (Setting Out to Fish)*, 1878, oil on canvas, 31 1/8 x 48 1/2 inches, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, Museum Purchase, Gallery Fund, 17.2

**INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS:** Have you ever been to an art museum? How much time do you take to look at a painting or sculpture? An average museum visitor spends only seconds looking at a work of art. Do you think this is enough time to really appreciate and understand an artist’s work? Will you miss things by looking so quickly?

**ACTIVITY:** The key to understanding a work of art is taking the time to look. To begin your journey through *Sargent and the Sea*, look at a selected image for only twenty seconds. What did you notice immediately? What are your observations about the work based on your first impressions? Explore the image more slowly this time. What more do you see? How does taking your time to look change your experience with the work of art?

## ACTIVITIES (CONTINUED)



### BUILDING A NARRATIVE

GRADE LEVEL: 5–8

AIM: To demonstrate how paintings can tell stories.

MATERIALS: pencil, paper

SUGGESTED WORK: *Neapolitan Children Bathing*, 1879. Oil on canvas. 16.8 x 41.1 cm. Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Mass. © Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Massachusetts.

**INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS:** Paintings can sometimes have a narrative quality that allows us to imagine a story. Have you ever imagined what would happen if a painting came to life? Pretend that you are making a movie with your imagination and picture yourself in a painting. What type of movie would it be? Comedy? Drama? Action?

**ACTIVITY:** Select a work from *Sargent and the Sea* that has action. Are there people? If so, what are they doing? Can nature tell us a story? Observe the work and imagine a scene that you think would happen just before or after the one depicted. Be sure to think about what you've learned about the places Sargent visited when painting his maritime works. Now write a paragraph narrating what you have imagined.



### YOUR PORTRAIT

GRADE LEVEL: K–8

AIM: To discover how portraits can capture a subject's identity.

MATERIALS: newspapers, magazines, scissors, glue, paper, pencil

SUGGESTED WORK: *Margaret Stuyvesant Rutherford (Mrs. Henry White)*, 1883, oil on canvas, 87 x 55 inches, The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, Gift of John Campbell White, 49.4

**INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS:** A portrait is a painting, photograph, sculpture, or other artistic representation of a person (or an animal). Have you ever posed for a portrait? Was it a photograph or a painting? Many people have portraits made for their school yearbooks. Can these capture your personality or just your image? If you could make a portrait that expresses something about you, what would it look like?

**ACTIVITY:** Instead of drawing a traditional portrait of yourself, look through magazines and newspapers for clippings; think of words or draw images that might express your identity. Remember to be creative and think outside the box. Even though Sargent's portraits may look very traditional to us today, in the artist's time they were considered innovative and exciting. Be creative!



## YOUR GENRE PAINTING

GRADE LEVEL: K–8

AIM: To reflect on the subject matter and characteristics of genre painting.

MATERIALS: paper, pencils, paint

SUGGESTED WORK: *Fishing for Oysters at Cancale*, 1877–78. Oil on canvas. 41 x 61 cm. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Gift of Miss Mary Appleton, 35.708.

INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS: What do you do every morning? Do you eat breakfast with your family? Ride the bus? Play or talk with friends? Even though these activities may sound very ordinary, they could be the subject of a genre painting.

ACTIVITY: A genre painting is a work of art that depicts a scene of everyday life. What would an artist paint if he/she wanted to show your life? Think about your daily activities and choose a favorite one. It can be anything—eating dinner with your family, playing a sport, or walking your dog. Now become the artist and paint, draw or sketch this scene from your life. Share and discuss your genre painting with others.

# NATIONAL ART EDUCATION ASSOCIATION STANDARDS VISUAL ARTS

## GRADE LEVEL K-4

- 1 Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes
  - a. know the differences between materials, techniques, and processes
  - b. describe how different materials, techniques, and processes cause different responses
  - c. use different media, techniques, and processes to communicate ideas, experiences, and stories
  - d. use art materials and tools in a safe and responsible manner
- 2 Using knowledge of structures and functions
  - a. know the differences among visual characteristics and purposes of art in order to convey ideas
  - b. describe how different expressive features and organizational principles cause different responses
  - c. use visual structures and functions of art to communicate ideas
- 3 Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas
  - a. explore and understand prospective content for works of art
  - b. select and use subject matter, symbols, and ideas to communicate meaning
- 4 Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures
  - a. know that the visual arts have both a history and specific relationship to various cultures
  - b. identify specific works of art as belonging to particular cultures, times, and places
- 5 Reflecting upon and assessing the characteristics and merits of their work and the work of others
  - a. understand there are various purposes for creating works of visual art
  - b. describe how people's experiences influence the development of specific artworks
  - c. understand there are different responses to specific artworks
- 6 Content Standard: Making connections between visual arts and other disciplines
  - a. understand and use similarities and differences between characteristics of the visual arts and other arts disciplines
  - b. identify connections between the visual arts and other disciplines in the curriculum

## GRADE LEVEL: 5–8

- 1 Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes
  - a. select media, techniques, and processes; analyze what makes them effective or not effective in communicating ideas; and reflect upon the effectiveness of their choices
  - b. intentionally take advantage of the qualities and characteristics of art media, techniques, and processes to enhance communication of their experiences and ideas
- 2 Using knowledge of structures and functions
  - a. generalize about the effects of visual structures and functions and reflect upon these effects in their own work
  - b. employ organizational structures and analyze what makes them effective or not effective in the communication of ideas
  - c. select and use the qualities of structures and functions of art to improve communication of their ideas
- 3 Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas
  - a. integrate visual, spatial, and temporal concepts with content to communicate intended meaning in their artworks
  - b. use subjects, themes, and symbols that demonstrate knowledge of contexts, values, and aesthetics that communicate intended meaning in artworks
- 4 Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures
  - a. know and compare the characteristics of artworks in various eras and cultures
  - b. describe and place a variety of art objects in historical and cultural contexts
  - c. analyze, describe, and demonstrate how factors of time and place (such as climate, resources, ideas, and technology) influence visual characteristics that give meaning and value to a work of art
- 5 Reflecting upon and assessing the characteristics and merits of their work and the work of others
  - a. compare multiple purposes for creating works of art
  - b. analyze contemporary and historic meanings in specific artworks through cultural and aesthetic inquiry
  - c. describe and compare a variety of individual responses to their own artworks and to artworks from various eras and cultures
- 6 Making connections between visual arts and other disciplines
  - a. compare the characteristics of works in two or more art forms that share similar subject matter, historical periods, or cultural context
  - b. describe ways in which the principles and subject matter of other disciplines taught in the school are interrelated with the visual arts