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John Singer Sargent: Watercolors



Synopsis

John Singer Sargent's approach to watercolor was unconventional. Going beyond turn-of-the-century standards for carefully delineated and composed landscapes filled with transparent washes, his confidently bold, dense strokes and loosely defined forms startled critics and fellow practitioners alike. One reviewer of an exhibition in London proclaimed him "an eagle in a dove-cote"; another called his work "swagger" watercolors. For Sargent, however, the watercolors were not so much about swagger as about a renewed and liberated approach to painting. In watercolor, his vision became more personal and his works more interconnected, as he considered the way one image--often of a friend or favorite place--enhanced another. Sargent held only two major watercolor exhibitions in the United States during his lifetime. The contents of the first, in 1909, were purchased in their entirety by the Brooklyn Museum of Art. The paintings exhibited in the other, in 1912, were scooped up by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. John Singer Sargent Watercolors reunites nearly 100 works from these collections for the first time, arranging them by themes and subjects: sunlight on stone, figures reclining on grass, patterns of light and shadow. Enhanced by biographical and technical essays, and lavishly illustrated with 175 color reproductions, this publication introduces readers to the full sweep of Sargent's accomplishments in this medium, in works that delight the eye as well as challenge our understanding of this prodigiously gifted artist. The international art star of the Gilded Age, John Singer Sargent (1856-1925) was born in Italy to American parents, trained in Paris and worked on both sides of the Atlantic. Sargent is best known for his dramatic and stylish portraits, but he was equally active as a landscapist, muralist, and watercolor painter. His dynamic and boldly conceived watercolors, created during travels to Tuscan gardens, Alpine retreats, Venetian canals and Bedouin encampments, record unusual motifs that caught his incisive eye.

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Customer Reviews

Experimenting with unusual compositions and new techniques, he reinvented himself aesthetically... far from stagnating Sargent was innovating in his watercolors. (Judith Dobrzynski The New York Times)

I had the privilege of seeing this exhibit at the Brooklyn Museum, and immediately comparing the book's reproductions to the actual watercolors.. this is easily the best i have seen. nothing of course, compares to the original but this is pretty darn close. Also, painters will enjoy the extensive chapter on Sargent technique, including material and technique analysis using modern technologies such as infra red.

This book is a great idea. And accompanies a great exhibit. However, the color reproductions are NOT first rate. They're just okay, I guess. Which is why I deemed the book "okay".I believe I'm being realistic. I've had the pleasure of seeing Sargent watercolors in person and up close. Of course there's no way a printed page could match that. But I have other books on Sargent watercolors that do much better than does this.I'm still glad I bought the book, just wished the images were better, were first rate.

This is the best book on Sargent I've seen yet! The works are very well selected, representing the range of his works, and the supplemental material is excellent--there are homologous works of his inspirations, his companion oil paintings, and a detailed analysis of his watercolor method. Not my first book of Sargent's watercolors, but worth every penny!

I just became aware of Sargent's watercolors. They are gorgeous. He was a master in this medium, and this book does a very nice job of showcasing his work. I have not finished the text, so my review is based mostly on the reproductions.I had a chance to see the Sargent exhibit at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. The watercolors featured in the book were on display. The colors in the book are less vibrant than the actual paintings, but I feel that this is typical of colors reproduced in a book. If you ever get the opportunity to see these works in person, you will not regret it.

Sargent's art is reproduced here with great colors and clarity. This is a high quality book!

Beautiful book. Lovelt photos. Well written and informative text. Good quality book too.

I took this book to my watercolor class today. The paintings are exquisite and everyone in the class were enthralled. One can learn a lot about watercolor painting from this book by this artist who is a master of oil painting and also watercolor. I bought the book used and it is in such good condition that it looks brand new.

In my opinion, John Singer Sargent is arguably, the most outstanding society portrait painter in oils of all time. His watercolour portraits are similarly, outstanding. However, I have some reservations about his watercolour scenes, particularly those of sailing ships, in which the subject focus seems to me, to be lost amongst the various items of detail, such as masts and rigging. Criticisms apart, this is an outstanding collection of Sargent's watercolour paintings in a publication of the highest quality.

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