



Sargent Abroad: Figures and Landscapes

Donna Seldin Janis, Elaine Kilmurray, Richard Ormond

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Although most renowned for his dazzling society portraits, Sargent took greatest pleasure in escaping his studio to paint out of doors. In the past, his far-flung expeditions have been dismissed as little more than tourist jaunts. But with this book—the first significant study of the figures and landscapes that Sargent painted from 1900 (after he had established himself as one of the foremost portraitists of the age) through 1914 (when World War I changed his world)—it becomes clear that his travel paintings constitute a far larger and more important aspect of his work than previously realized. Many of these oils and watercolors come from private collections and have rarely, if ever, been seen in the years since the artist's death in 1925.

Three of the book's five chapters approach Sargent's paintings thematically, investigating the work he produced in the Alps, around the Mediterranean, and in Venice; as these enlightening essays make clear, each locale inspired a distinctive response from the artist. In the mountains he painted bubbling streams, distant views, and languorous girls in alpine meadows. In the south, he painted fruits and flowers, fragments of architecture, and villas and gardens that are dreamlike in their evocation of the past. The first essay provides a useful background to Sargent's preoccupation with landscape subjects after 1900 and traces the broad development of his style and the major influences on his work. The final essay recounts the diverse critical responses to Sargent's plein-air painting during his lifetime.

For the first time, Sargent's extensive travels are thoroughly documented here, using letters and diaries written by his companions. Charming vintage photographs, including some that Sargent is believed to have taken himself, chronicle his adventures and cast new light on this intensely private artist. The book also includes an invaluable chronology of the artist's travels as well as brief biographies of his traveling companions—mostly beloved family and dear friends—who accompanied Sargent on his creative journeys.

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