

SARGENT SICKERT SPENCER

8 December 2009 - 5 April 2010

ADMISSION FREE

OPEN: Tuesday - Saturday: 10.00 - 17.00
Sunday & Bank Holiday Monday: 12.00 - 17.00
CLOSED: 24, 25, 26, 31 December,
1 January & Good Friday, 2 April

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I

John Singer Sargent

1856–1925

Dorothy Barnard 1889

Oil on canvas

Dorothy Barnard was the daughter of Sargent's friends, the artist and illustrator Fred Barnard, and his wife, Alice Faraday. After her husband's tragic early death, Alice Barnard and her daughters became very close to Sargent and they often holidayed together, especially in the Alps. With her sister, Polly, Dorothy Barnard had previously modelled for one of Sargent's best-known paintings, *Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose* (1885-6, Tate, London) - a painting Sargent jokingly nicknamed 'Darnation, Silly, Silly Pose' ! (Charteris 178).

This contemplative portrait was painted at Fladbury, near Pershore on the River Avon in Worcestershire, where Sargent had rented the rectory for the summer. Sargent appears to have captured his sitter spontaneously, in a moment of quiet introspection. At the same time, although the paint is fluidly applied, the image is anything but impressionistic: rather, her static, upright pose and sharply silhouetted profile create an arresting image of permanence.

If the little girl is lost in her thoughts, Sargent himself was not given to reverie, artistic or otherwise; as one contemporary, Graham Robertson, pithily remarked, 'Dreams were not in Sargent's line' (*Time Was*, 241).

Bequeathed by the sitter, 1949

PD.34-1949



John Singer Sargent
1856–1925

Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose 1885-6

Oil on canvas. 174 x 153.7 cm Tate London.

Dorothy Barnard is on the left; the other figure is her younger sister, Polly

William Rothenstein

1872-1945

Portraits of John Singer Sargent 1897-98

Lithograph

Rothenstein was a friend of both Sickert and Sargent, and in later life came to know Stanley Spencer, too.

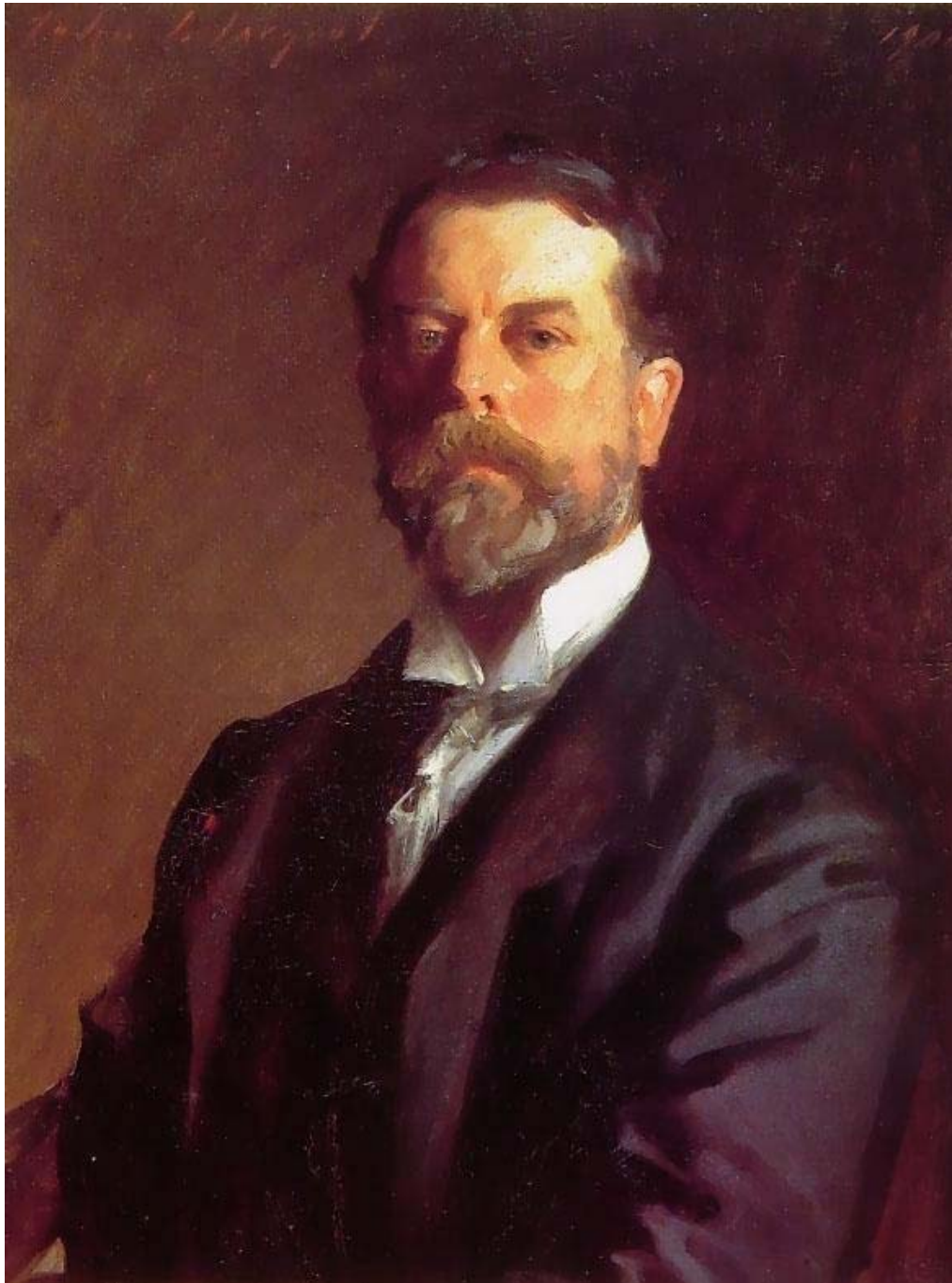
In his memoirs, Rothenstein described Sargent as 'reticent but cordial,' but hinted that his remote, self-contained nature made him seem somewhat aloof: 'Like Henry James, he had the English correctness of most Europeanised Americans, which brought a certain *je ne sais quoi* of self-consciousness into his relations with his friends' (*Men and Memories. Recollections 187 –1938 of William Rothenstein*, London, 1978, 82). As this portrait shows, Sargent's 'correctness' extended to wearing bespoke Savile Row suits, even in the studio.

Despite his own significant experience as a portrait painter, Sargent was uncomfortable at sitting for his own: '...he could not bear to remain idle,' Rothenstein recalled, 'he puffed and fumed (his friend Jacques-Emile Blanche recorded he habitually smoked Havana cigars 'as large as logs'), and directly I had done, he insisted on *my* sitting to him.' Rothenstein did, but only six impressions of Sargent's lithographic portrait were pulled (Rothenstein, 108).

This is one of a group of lithographs that Rothenstein published in 1898 under the title *English Portraits*. Each of the portraits was intended to have a written commentary about the sitter. However, on being asked to write a few lines to accompany Sargent's portrait, Henry James politely declined, on the grounds that he had already written 'so much and so hyperbolically and so often' on Sargent: 'Why shouldn't it, this characterisation, be complete in itself?' (Rothenstein 109)

Rothenstein recognised that the series of *English Portraits* had not been a great success: only a small proportion of the edition of 750 copies was ever bound; the remaining parts (they were first issued in paper covers, two at a time) were destroyed in a fire at the binders.

Given by the Friends of the Fitzwilliam Museum, 1943
P.100-1943



John Singer Sargent

1856–1925

Self Portrait 1906

Oil on canvas

76.2 x 63.5 cm

Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence

John Singer Sargent

1856–1925

Giudecca 1913 (?)

Watercolour over graphite on paper

The subject of this watercolour has been identified as the Rio della Convertite on Giudecca Island. Comparison with a similar, dated, view in the Metropolitan Museum, New York suggests that it was painted in 1913. Sargent focuses on a part of Venice away from the well-trodden tourist track, inhabited by a working community of sailors and fishermen; the building in the distance on the right is the sixteenth-century church of San Cosmè, which at the time Sargent visited had been transformed into a textile factory.

When Sickert met Sargent in Venice in 1903, he told a friend that Sargent was busy painting ‘watercolours in gondolas, slapdash gouaches.’ The elongated perspective of the canal in this watercolour and the intruding prows of a nearby gondola, confirm that Sargent continued his practice of painting from the low viewpoint of the water’s surface.

Sickert rarely worked in watercolour with the freedom Sargent did (but see no. 52). But what he dismissed as ‘slapdash’, others appreciated for sureness of touch, and suggestiveness; as one critic wrote in 1903, Sargent had an extraordinary ability to paint ‘water ... wetter than water’ (quoted Ormond and Kilmurray, VI, 27).

Sargent orchestrated a number of exhibitions of his watercolours at galleries in London and New York in the first decade and a half of the twentieth century, largely in the hope of selling them *en bloc* to an institution. This strategy paid off in 1909, when the Brooklyn Museum of Art acquired 83 watercolours from the dealer Knoedler & Co. The Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, and Worcester Art Museum also bought groups of watercolours between 1912 and 1917.

Other than that, Sargent was reluctant to part with many of the watercolours he painted after 1900, and gave most away to friends and family – this one almost certainly given to Alice Barnard (1847-1917) the mother of the sitter in no. 1, and the donor of this watercolour, sometime before 1916.

Bequeathed by Dorothy Barnard, 1949
PD.35-1949

4

John Singer Sargent

1856–1925

The Spanish Fountain 1912

Watercolour and bodycolour over graphite on paper

This sixteenth-century fountain was at the centre of the Hospital de San Juan de Dios at Granada. It is one of around thirty watercolours and oils that Sargent made of fountains and other monuments in the city during a visit in 1912. In these, he fully exploited the strong architectural forms to create dramatic contrasts of light and shade. Here, these create a solid framework for the rippled water surface, reflected in a few curled strokes of bodycolour on the underside of the wide fountain basin.

Bequeathed by D.M. Berry, 1971

PD.1-1971

CASE

5

John Singer Sargent

1856–1925

Jack Millet as a baby c.1888-9

Graphite on paper

Jack (John Alfred Parsons) Millet (1863-1940) was the youngest child of Sargent's great friends, Frank and Lily Millet. He was named after Sargent, and another painter, Alfred Parsons, who like Frederick Barnard (see no. 1) regularly stayed with the Millets at their two successive homes in Broadway, a village in the Cotswolds. As an adult, Jack became a famous American psychiatrist. His father, Frank, died in April 1912 when RMS *Titanic* struck an iceberg in the North Atlantic.

With a few deft strokes, Sargent adds a thumb and a hint of a shoulder, showing that the child has fallen asleep in adult arms, those of his friend Mrs Nettie Huxley Rollar. In 1926 she recorded that it was drawn on a hot summer's afternoon in the Millet's garden. Leaving the others playing tennis, she had sought shade on a sheltered bench, 'Suddenly Sargent appeared, stopped, gazed at us, seized my sketchbook lying by me on the seat, and proceeded to make this exquisite drawing – I am represented by a thumb on the left.'

Sargent's inscription reads: 'The dark look buddy'.

Given by Mrs Sigmund Goetze, 1943
no.2569

CASE

6

John Singer Sargent

1856–1925

Two tarpon 1917

Graphite on paper

Sargent spent two years in the United States, from April 1916 to May 1918, working principally on the third cycle of mural decorations for Boston Public Library. In February 1917, he travelled to Miami, and from there, made a fishing trip off the Florida coast in April. His inscription on this drawing records that these fish were caught at 'Harbour Key'; the precise location is uncertain: it could be either Little Harbour Cay or Great Harbour Cay among the Barry Islands in the Bahamas, or a spot on the Florida coast.

Tarpon are considered by anglers to be one of the great game fish. Like a true fisherman, Sargent records their size: 6 ft 10 inches (208 cm) long.

Given by Emily Sargent and Francis Ormond, 1930
no.1530 (2)

CASE

7

John Singer Sargent

1856–1925

George Meredith 1896

Charcoal on paper

This is one of two drawings of the novelist, poet and playwright, George Meredith, that Sargent executed during a visit to the latter's home in Box Hill, Surrey, in the summer of 1896; the other, more full-face, is in a private collection. The two men had first met a few years earlier, and the commission for this 'mug', as Sargent liked to call his portraits, was probably prompted by the decision to include a portrait of Meredith in the 1896 edition of his works.

Meredith was a reluctant sitter at the best of times. When he sat for G.F. Watts four years earlier, he complained that he had 'no ambition to provoke an English posterity's question, "Who is he?" and my grizzled mug may be left to vanish.'

While Sargent's drawings are both more vigorous than Watts's portrait (1893, National Portrait Gallery, London), Meredith was far from happy at the result: 'I beheld ... a face of gruel in which floated balls like the eyes of a codfish kept for three days in ice. There were also brown concaves in the gruel. The nose was a reed shaken in the wind; the grim mouth was packed full of savage teeth – and this was an Impressionist's impression of me. One eye was completely dead. Sargent made me an amicable Shade.' (Lomax and Ormond, 1979, 73)

Purchased by the Friends of the Fitzwilliam Museum from Captain George Meredith, and given to the Fitzwilliam Museum, 1944
no.2713

John Singer Sargent

1856–1925

Sicilian Peasant 1907

Oil on canvas

This was the first painting by Sargent to enter the Fitzwilliam's collection. It was presented as a gift by Sargent himself, possibly in recognition of the fact that he had been awarded an honorary degree by the University of Cambridge the previous year (Charteris 22). Writing to the Museum's then-Director, Sydney Cockerell, in February 1914, Sargent described the painting as 'rather a study than a picture,' but for all that the best painting he owned.

Sargent visited Sicily on several occasions from the 1880s. In 1907 he began the summer painting with his friend Wilfrid de Glehn in the Val d'Aosta, and made his way to Rome and Frascati in the latter part of the year. Other than a record in the Museum archive of 1914 that the picture was 'painted in Sicily by the donor,' there is no indication that Sargent visited the island that year.

Increasingly, one of the attractions of Sicily for Sargent was that it offered a diversion from the demanding practice of portrait-painting. In 1901, for example, he told his friend the sculptor Saint Gaudens, that he had gone there to avoid painting portraits, adding, 'the *plage* in Naples answers very well, too' (Olsen, 225). Studies such as this gave him the opportunity to work informally as a figure painter without the burdensome demands of patrons.

Given by the artist, 1914
no.753

John Singer Sargent*1856–1925***Olives in Corfu 1909**

Oil on canvas

From the turn of the twentieth century, Sargent typically travelled to a number of European countries, in the late summer and autumn of each year. Although he claimed his trips were to help him escape the human 'species', he was generally accompanied by a close set of friends and family. In 1909, for example, he began the year in the United States, but returned to Europe in August, travelling first to the Val d'Aosta and Venice and continuing on to Corfu at the end of September, where he rented a villa four miles from the town.

One of his companions on this trip, Eliza Wedgwood, remembered that the house was spartan, but beautifully situated: 'The villa had hardly a stick of furniture in it, but the walk through the lemons and oranges in the garden straight to the silky blue sea was worth all the discomforts.' Here, Sargent turns away from the sea, to paint the lush green countryside in the interior of the island. Although the painting is dated 1912 by Sargent, he did not visit Corfu that year. It may well have been added in error in 1922, when the painting was acquired for the museum.

Bought from the artist, 1922, and presented by the
Friends of the Fitzwilliam Museum that year
no. 1067

John Singer Sargent

1856–1925

Santa Maria della Salute, Venice

c. 1906

Oil on canvas

Sargent first visited Venice in the early 1880s, went there with the deliberate intention to paint only in 1898. Between then, and the outbreak of World War I, he re-visited the city on at least nine occasions, mostly in the autumn months. This painting was exhibited in 1907 at the New English Art Club in London, following a painting expedition to Venice at the end of the previous year.

The seventeenth-century church of Santa Maria della Salute stands at the entrance to the Grand Canal and is the masterpiece of the architect Baldassare Longhena. It was one of Sargent's favourite Venetian subjects.

In all, he painted fifteen different views of the church, each a partial view of the façade and steps, using an oblique viewpoint that creates a powerful sense of immediacy. Sargent probably painted this view from the edge of the Campo della Salute, the square in front of the church, but for other paintings (no. 3), he achieved similarly arresting perspectives by taking to the waterways of the city in a gondola.

Sickert also painted several views of Santa Maria Salute, including one from the steps with a similarly naturally unorthodox viewpoint, in 1895-6 and again in c.1901-03 (Tate Britain).

Given by Harold, Viscount Rothermere, 1926

no. 1169

II

Walter Richard Sickert

1860-1942

The Lion of St. Mark's c.1895-6

Oil on canvas

Sickert made several extended visits to Venice over the decade from 1894 to 1904. This painting was begun during a visit in the latter part of 1895, and finished in London the following year. The view shows the Piazzetta San Marco between the Doge's palace (on the right) and the Old Library. At the centre of the all-but square canvas is the granite column bearing the winged lion, the symbol of Venice, and of its patron saint, the apostle St Mark.

Sickert's Venetian views were particularly popular in France at the beginning of the 1900s. This painting belonged to the writer André Gide, to whom Sickert was introduced by the painter Jacques-Emile Blanche in the summer of 1902. Blanche was especially keen that Gide acquire one of Sickert's works, telling him that his paintings of Venice were among the best on display at the dealer Bernheim Jeune's. He piqued his curiosity by describing Sickert as 'an Immoralist, of the kind that might interest you', a reference to Gide's recently published book of that title (Sturgis, 309). For his part, Sickert put their success down to his client's nostalgia for La Serenissima: 'They (the French) are very sentimental about Venice, & Dieu merci, rather ignorant. So I impress them.'

Given by Guy John Fenton Knowles, 1959

PD.17-1959

Walter Richard Sickert

1860-1942

Mrs Swinton c.1906

Oil on canvas

Mrs Elsie Swinton, née Ebsworth, married George Swinton, a retired army captain fifteen years her senior in 1895. Born and raised in St Petersburg, she possessed a fine singing voice, and from 1906 performed professionally.

Sickert first met her at a reception in 1904 (see no. 30), and quickly became infatuated. At a party in London the following year, he was observed by his hostess gazing at her 'like a pale flame. And it seemed ... she was singing only to him. She stirred and excited one's senses, and troubled me with the mysteries of sex' (Sturgis, 355).



Mrs Swinton was painted by a number of artists at the beginning of the century, including William Orpen and Charles Conder, but the earliest, and perhaps the most glamorous, is Sargent's full-length portrait of her of 1897, now in the Art Institute, Chicago. At Mrs Swinton's request, Sargent (another admirer) drew her again in May 1906, as a promotional drawing advertising her début at the Aeolian Hall in London.

John Singer Sargent
1856-1925

Mrs George Swinton, 1897

Oil on canvas

Art Institute, Chicago



John Singer Sargent

Portrait drawing of Mrs George Swinton, 1906

Charcoal on white paper 610 x 476 mm Private collection

Sittings for the portrait took place in Sickert's Fitzroy Street studio, although to complete the painting, Sickert also used photographs of Mrs Swinton which he took there. The end result is a fusion of fantasy and reality. While Sickert retained the arresting studio pose, he transformed the 'mood' of the image by adding a lowering sky and troubled sea in the background (possibly Venice?) and Mrs Swinton's day dress with a resplendent red evening gown. The dramatic setting may have been introduced in part to offset Mrs Swinton's features against a weak *contrejour* light (an effect Sickert used a great deal in these years. Some considered it a botched job, but its indeterminate character also allowed Virginia Woolf to weave an elaborate fictional narrative about the portrait as an equivalent literary setting, dwelling on the tragedy of a disillusioned life.



'You looked 'regal, ... sultry and glorious,' Sickert wrote to Mrs Swinton after one of her performances in 1905. Others were bewildered by her appeal to painters, and found her good looks a matter of debate, seeing in them too much of the 'German frau', with all the allure of a 'sledgehammer woman'. However 'like' as a portrait, Sickert creates an image which exudes an air of authority through the confronting stance, unsettling, pupil-less gaze and uncompromising red of the dress. As such, it can perhaps be understood as much a tribute to the passionate feelings the sitter inspired as a portrait.

Bequeathed by James William Freshfield, 1955
PD.2-1955

CASE

13

Jean François Millet

1814-1875

Study for *The Gleaners* c.1857

'If Millet had been born a modern cockney, he would have found sublime themes in Upper Street [Islington] or Piccadilly. He would have had supreme contempt for the latter-day 'Romanticist' of Bond Street.' Sickert, 1892

Sickert was an enthusiastic admirer of Millet, both as a draughtsman and as a colourist. He believed that Millet's keen powers of observation, combined with his relentless study of nature, meant that the older artist had little need to draw on the spot, beyond a few scant annotations on 'an old cigarette paper.' 'Ninety nine times out of a hundred he had seen his picture happen somewhere in nature,' Sickert wrote, so that sketches of figures in movement such as this drawing did not have to be made at first hand, but were rather the result of years of 'cumulative observation' (Robins, 86) .

Sickert drew inspiration from Millet's paintings of the realities of the world of impoverished agricultural labour for his own scenes of the shabbier parts of London, and held firmly to the latter's own tenet that "Nature does not pose."

This is a study for one of the figures in Millet's most famous painting, *The Gleaners* (Musée d'Orsay, 1857).

Bequeathed by Charles Haslewood Shannon, 1937

no. 2123e

CASE

14

Walter Richard Sickert

1860-1942

Couple at a restaurant table

Graphite on lined paper (a sheet torn from a notebook)

Given by the Sickert Trust, 1947

PD.25-1947

CASE

15

Charles Samuel Keene

1823-1891

The Omnibus ?1860s

Pen and brown ink with traces of graphite on paper

Charles Keene worked extensively as an illustrator, and from the 1850s was a major contributor to *Punch* magazine. His witty, summarily-drawn, caricatures of everyday life were greatly admired by the most progressive artists of the day in France, notably Manet and Degas, while Impressionist artists such as Pissarro and Monet considered his drawings to be 'models of style' (Robins, 508).

Sickert considered him to be 'the first of the moderns', and the 'greatest English artist of the nineteenth century,' and his enthusiasm was shared by numerous British artists of the 1890s, such as William Rothenstein, Charles Ricketts and Charles Shannon, and his own master, Whistler. Sickert believed that Keene's greatness lay, like Millet's, in his preference for drawing 'what he, as an artist, had easy access to' (1896, Robins, 109). Sickert became close to Keene in the last decades of the latter's life, and enjoyed his robust sense of humour. Keene was not insensitive to Sickert's attentions, and on his deathbed invited him and another young admirer, Sidney Starr, to choose one of his drawings in memory of their friendship.

Given by D.E.A Garrod, 1948

PD.24-1948

CASE

16

Walter Richard Sickert

1860-1942

Study of a man holding a double bass ?1920s

Graphite on lined paper (discoloured)

Possibly related to other drawings that Sickert made of *The London Music Hall* in Shoreditch High Street in the 1920s; another drawing (private collection, Baron 576) shows a similar view of the orchestra pit.

Given by the Sickert Trust, 1947

PD.26-1947

17

Walter Richard Sickert

1860-1942

The façade of St Jacques, Dieppe c.1899-1900

Oil on panel

'Delicious' Dieppe was an important base for Sickert throughout his life. He had holidayed there with his family from the mid-1860s, and by the 1880s had become fully integrated in the local and seasonal artistic community; he eventually came to consider himself a 'native' of the town. This view was painted during one of his longest stays in the city, from 1898 to 1905, a period that was punctuated by occasional long trips to Venice (see no. 11). Sickert explored the town's pictorial potential to the full, painting its grand civic spaces, monuments and cafés (nos. 30 and 35). These proved highly popular, and so distinctive a part of Sickert's work that he became known as the 'Canaletto' of Dieppe. The Gothic church of St Jacques was one of his favourite subjects.

Bequeathed by the Rev. Eric Milner White, 1970

PD.28-1970

John Singer Sargent

1856–1925

Palma, Majorca 1908

Watercolour, bodycolour and traces of graphite on Whatman board

Sargent spent the autumn of 1908 on Majorca, with his sisters and their close friend, Eliza Wedgwood. This was his second visit to the Mediterranean island, and, while he painted a great deal in the interior of the country, he also was also drawn to the sea, where he painted the shipping from the same low viewpoint as he did when working from a gondola in Venice (see no. 3). The practice of painting from a boat was one he would have learned from Monet, who in turn followed Charles Daubigny's habit of using a barge as a floating studio when painting on the River Oise in the 1860s.

This watercolour, and Sargent's painting of Santa Maria della Salute (no. 10), were given to the museum in 1926 (the year of the artist's death) by the newspaper proprietor Harold, 1st Viscount Rothermere, who served as Air Minister during the First World War.

Given by Harold, 1st Viscount Rothermere, 1926
no. 1170

John Singer Sargent

1856–1925

Rock graves at Jerusalem 1905-06

Oil on canvas

After spending the autumn of 1905 in Switzerland, Sargent continued on in November to Syria and Palestine, and remained there until January of the following year. His notional purpose in making the trip was to gather new material for on-going work on the murals of the Boston Public Library, but he found that the trip presented other, richer, opportunities, in terms of landscape painting.

Previously entitled *Near the Mount of Olives, Jerusalem*, recent research has established that this painting was one of only two oils by Sargent, included with its present title, in an exhibition which was otherwise exclusively devoted to his watercolours, held at the Carfax Gallery in London in 1908.

The extraordinary fluidity of the paint handling and light-infused palette, using coloured shadows to convey the intensity of the sunlight, suggests why Sargent might have thought it would complement the watercolours in the exhibition.

Sargent's views of Palestine were among the first pure landscapes which he exhibited publicly, and reflect his conscious decision to establish a reputation beyond his portraiture work. These proved popular, but some contemporaries - Sickert, for one - doubted the wisdom of Sargent's new departure. In an article entitled 'Sargentology', published in 1910, Sickert regretted the indiscriminate praise which critics were prepared to lavish on Sargent's landscapes, simply on the basis of his existing reputation. "Blinding light" is the consecrated phrase,' Sickert wrote; though compositionally adept, Sargent's colour was '*quelconque* the quality of execution is slippery, and has no beauty or distinction of its own.'

Given by the artist's sisters, 1925
no. 1506

20

Stanley Spencer

1891–1959

Sarajevo, Bosnia 1922

Oil on canvas

Spencer had spent 1916 -17 on active service in Macedonia, and returned to the region in the summer of 1922 on a painting excursion with his Slade school friend Richard Carline, and his family. Their trip was partly inspired by photographs seen in the *National Geographic Magazine*; in his later career, Spencer would habitually have recourse to photographs, rather than travel, to feed his curiosity about distant peoples and cultures.

This is one of nine landscape studies and a group of watercolours that Spencer painted during his visit, several of which also show the River Miljacka which flows through the centre of Sarajevo.

Given by Mrs. Frederick Leverton Harris, 1928
no.1481

John Singer Sargent*1856–1925***Highlanders resting at the Front 1918**

Watercolour and graphite on paper

Sargent spent a large part of the war years in the United States, but on his return to London in the spring of 1918, accepted a commission from the Ministry of Information (run by Lord Beaverbrook) to paint British troops on the move. Beaverbrook planned to construct a Hall of Remembrance as a war memorial, and commissioned a series of large-scale paintings by a range of artists for its interior; ultimately this scheme was replaced by the creation of the Imperial War Museum.

Even before the commission was proposed, Sargent wrote to his friend and future biographer, Evan Charteris, that, should the war continue, he would find it difficult not to go to witness events for himself, 'But would I have the nerve to look, not to speak of painting? I have never seen anything in the least horrible – outside of my studio.'

He went out to the Front via Boulogne and then to the Field Headquarters of the Guards' Division south of Arras, where he met up with his friend, Henry Tonks (no. 23). He accompanied the troops to the Front from mid-January to late September, when he contracted influenza and returned to England the following month.

Sargent complained that, as a war artist, his ability to work was severely compromised by cramped conditions at the Front, and by the devastation caused by years of hostilities these kilted soldiers would have provided a rare picturesque interlude.

Given by Miss Emily Sargent, 1925

no. 1151



Julian Grenfell's poem *Into Battle* was the only war poem that Sargent claimed he admired.

It was written in Flanders in April 1915. A few weeks later, on 13 May 1915, Grenfell was wounded in the head at Hooze, near Ypres. He died two weeks in hospital at Boulogne. On the day his death was announced (27 May), *Into Battle* was published in *The Times*. It became one of the most popular poems of the First World War.

Julian Henry Francis Grenfell (1888-1915)

Into Battle

*The naked earth is warm with spring,
And with green grass and bursting trees
Leans to the sun's gaze glorying,
And quivers in the sunny breeze;
And life is colour and warmth and light,
And a striving evermore for these;
And he is dead who will not fight;
And who dies fighting has increase.*

*The fighting man shall from the sun
Take warmth, and life from the glowing earth;
Speed with the light-foot winds to run,
And with the trees to newer birth;
And find, when fighting shall be done,
Great rest, and fullness after dearth.*

*All the bright company of Heaven
Hold him in their high comradeship,
The Dog-Star, and the Sisters Seven,
Orion's Belt and sworded hip.*

*The woodland trees that stand together,
They stand to him each one a friend;
They gently speak in the windy weather;
They guide to valley and ridge's end.*

*The kestrel hovering by day,
And the little owls that call by night,
Bid him be swift and keen as they,
As keen of ear, as swift of sight.*

*The blackbird sings to him, "Brother, brother,
If this be the last song you shall sing,
Sing well, for you may not sing another;
Brother, sing."*

*In dreary, doubtful, waiting hours,
Before the brazen frenzy starts,
The horses show him nobler powers;
O patient eyes, courageous hearts!*

*And when the burning moment breaks,
And all things else are out of mind,
And only joy of battle takes
Him by the throat, and makes him blind,*

*Through joy and blindness he shall know,
Not caring much to know, that still
Nor lead nor steel shall reach him, so
That it be not the Destined Will.*

*The thundering line of battle stands,
And in the air death moans and sings;
But Day shall clasp him with strong hands,
And Night shall fold him in soft wings.*



22

Henry Tonks

1862-1957

Head of a soldier 1916-18

Pastel

Tonks was a close friend of Sargent, and accompanied him on several of his painting trips abroad. In 1918, the two men travelled to the Front, where Sargent drew his long-limbed friend resting in a cramped iron hut (no. 23).

After returning to Britain, Tonks was appointed artist to a newly-established unit under the surgeon Harold Gillies. As part of his duties, he made a remarkable series of pastel portraits of the often hideous facial injuries which Gillies and his team treated. In 1916 he told a friend he was drawing 'wounded soldiers who had had their faces knocked about. It is a chamber of horrors, but I am quite content to draw them as it is excellent practice.'

This soldier seems to have escaped injury, but the use of pastel suggests that may be related to the wider series.

Given by C.H. Collins Baker, in memory of his wife, Mrs Muriel J. Baker,
1957

PD.1-1957

John Singer Sargent*1856–1925***Portrait of Professor Henry Tonks, in uniform 1918**

Graphite and ink on paper

Sargent and Tonks first met in 1890, and they went on to become lifelong friends and sometime painting companions. They left together for the Front in June 1918, and, after splitting up for two weeks, met up again at General Fielding's Guards Division Headquarters near Berles au Bois on 16 July.

They shared one of the iron huts which had been built in a high bank to avoid observation; this sketch was made there.

General Fielding recorded that Sargent was 'a delightful companion' at this time: 'He used to talk the whole time, and there was always some competition to sit next to him. He took an enormous interest in everything that was going on ...' Tonks was more qualified in his appreciation of Fielding, finding him almost incredibly blasé about the risks of war: 'sometimes I used to wonder if he knew how dangerous a shell might be ... he was merely annoyed if they burst sufficiently near to shake him'

Tonks greatly admired Sargent's gifts as a draughtsman; Sargent had equal admiration for Tonks as a truly 'great' teacher. Tonks delighted in caricaturing Sargent. In one take-off of Velasquez's *Las Meninas*, Sargent is shown painting a postage stamp-sized picture, as the Princess Royal, the ghost of Queen Victoria, Lytton Strachey, Lloyd George and others look on.

Given by Henry Tonks to the Friends of the Fitzwilliam Museum, and by them to the Museum, 1937
no.2301

Walter Richard Sickert

1860-1942

'La belle alliance' c.1916-17

Pen, ink and graphite on paper

Sickert was in Dieppe at the outbreak of war, but returned to London later that year. He was distressed by reports of German atrocities in Belgium and proposed to paint a picture inspired by these events in support of a Belgian Relief Fund. He sought permission to borrow the uniforms of wounded soldiers in London hospitals, and also invited Belgian soldiers whom he encountered in London cafés to come and pose for him.

This drawing was probably made in the Café Belge in Fitzrovia, where many Belgian soldiers gathered. It is close to a painting in a private collection, USA (Baron 461.1). The title refers to the name of an inn south of Brussels, which Napoleon used for his headquarters in June 1815, during the battle of Waterloo.

One of the donors of this drawing, R.E.A. Wilson, ran the Savile Gallery in London, where Sickert regularly exhibited from the late 1920s; Sir Hugh Walpole wrote the preface to the catalogue of his exhibition in 1928. Sickert acknowledged that his unfailing support had 'saved his old age'.

Given by R.E.A. and Oliver B. Wilson, 1930
no.1528

Stanley Spencer*1891–1959***Study for the Resurrection of the Soldiers at Burghclere**

Graphite, blue and grey wash on paper laid down on card

In 1923 Spencer was invited to paint a cycle of paintings to decorate a private chapel in Burghclere, for Mr and Mrs J.L. Behrend. The chapel was erected in memory of Mrs Behrend's brother, Henry Willoughby Sandham, who died of an illness contracted in active service in Macedonia. The work occupied Spencer almost continuously from 1926 to 1932.

Intended as a memorial to the troops who had died in Salonica, the *Resurrection of the Soldiers* was the focal point of the cycle, placed above the altar. Unlike the side walls, which use earlier ideas, the Resurrection was designed only after the chapel was built. Spencer initially intended to paint a scene dominated by barbed wire, but his ideas went through several re-workings before he was satisfied.

This study is for the (relatively diminutive) figure of Christ in the upper register of the wall. The white crosses that soldiers heap up against him are those Spencer would have known that were erected in military cemeteries across Europe.

Given by Lord Croft, 1976

PD.47-1976

Stanley Spencer*1891–1959***Scrubbing the Floor and soldiers washing, Beaufort Hospital,****Bristol c.1921**

Graphite and grey wash with some white highlights on paper

Soon after Spencer returned from active service in Macedonia in 1918, he began to conceive of a cycle of paintings which would record his wartime experience. He realised his ambitions with the commission in 1923 to decorate the Sandham Memorial Chapel. Before then, he had been invited in 1921 by Muirhead Bone, Official War Artist and great admirer of Spencer's work, to paint a mural in the Memorial Chapel in the village of Steep in Hampshire, though the scheme was eventually abandoned.

This is one of two surviving studies for the project. It is based on Spencer's experience as a medical orderly at the beginning of the war in Beaufort Hospital in Bristol. Spencer seems to have recognised its potential as subject-matter early in his service: 'I thought in agony ... afterwards how marvellously I could paint this moment in this corridor now, & if at any time this war ends I will paint it!'

Spencer appears to have relished the variety of work – often menial – he was required to undertake, telling his sister it made him feel as if his head were 'anointed by oil.' Scrubbing floors was 'wonderful', he claimed; and gathering up brushes and pails to prepare for work reminded him of getting ready to go to church. He had a special fondness for the space between the two baths (shown in the foreground of this drawing) where he could scrub undisturbed. Like his teacher Tonks (no. 23), he was appalled by the war-wounded, but felt compelled as an artist to study them, and the operations they underwent.

Given by Lord Croft, 1976

PD.46-1976

David Muirhead Bone

1876-1953

Sleeping wounded from the Somme c.1916-17

Charcoal on paper, laid down

Muirhead Bone was made first official war artist in July 1916, at the instigation of Charles Masterman of the War Propaganda Bureau. He arrived at the Western Front in the following month, at the height of the Somme offensive, and over the next three months made over 150 drawings of life behind the lines.

In 1919, he organised a large exhibition of paintings and drawings of war subjects at the Royal Academy in London; his devotion to the project was such that he became known as 'our new Peter the Hermit'. Two years later, he arranged for Spencer to paint a mural for the Memorial Hall in the village of Steep, near Petersfield in Hampshire. Spencer spent around five months working on the scheme, while lodging with Bone and his wife. The scheme was abandoned, but Spencer's drawing of soldiers scrubbing the floor (no. 26) - modified for use in the Sandham Memorial Chapel - was originally intended for this scheme.

Bone's drawing is curiously evocative of Sargent's description of being confined to a hospital tent with influenza in September 1918. Despite the chaos going on around him, his overwhelming impression was one of calm: *... with the accompaniment of groans of wounded, and the chokings and coughing of gassed men, which was a nightmare – it always seemed strange on opening one's eyes to see the level cots and dimly-lit long tent looking so calm, when one was dozing in pandemonium.*

This is one of a number of drawings of his wartime experiences which Bone presented to the Fitzwilliam in 1920.

Given by the artist, 1920

no.993



Muirhead Bone crossing a muddy road, Maricourt, September 1916

Imperial War Museum, Photograph Archive: neg Q 1464

CASE

28

Walter Richard Sickert

1860-1942

La Gaité Montparnasse

Black and white chalk, pen and black ink on blue paper, faded

Sickert painted a number of music halls in Paris at the end of 1906 (see no. 34), but appears to have painted at the Gaité Montparnasse on the left bank of the Seine as part of a separate campaign in 1907. He made three paintings of the theatre, each of which shows partial views of the gallery from below, focussing on the decorative serpentine curves of the suspended boxes; in one case the view is shown reflected in a large green-framed mirror (Baron 295 and 296).

This is one of eight recorded drawings of the theatre, apparently made from close to the stage. It related to none of the finished paintings, but was used as the basis of a print, published c.1919 (Bromberg, 186).

Bought from the Hilton Gallery, Cambridge, 1973

PD.36-1973

CASE

29

Walter Richard Sickert

1860-1942

The New Bedford, Camden Town c.1906-7

Charcoal, pen and ink on paper

The New Bedford opened to the public as the Bedford Palace of Varieties at the beginning of 1899 after the old Bedford (no. 33) had been destroyed by fire the previous year. For his finished paintings, and a large number of the related drawings, Sickert chose to paint what he called a 'tall slice' of the music hall that showed the audience in the stalls and a balcony box, flanked by two large caryatids, and dramatically lit from the stage lights below. This sketch focuses only on the lower part of this composition, in the stalls, although Sickert retained the close-up profile of the figures in the foreground in the finished paintings (Leeds City Art Gallery and Tate, London).

Bequeathed by Henry Scipio Reitlinger, 1991

PD.62-1991

CASE

30

Walter Richard Sickert

1860-1942

Café concert at Vernet's, Dieppe 1920

Graphite and brown ink on lined (?writing) paper, squared up in red ink

Unlike the quieter daytime view in Sickert's painting, shown elsewhere in this gallery (no. 35), this rapid sketch records the bustling café concert by night, with the performer on stage.

Throughout his career, Sickert followed Degas's recommendation to paint in the studio on the basis of numerous drawings. Like this study, many of his drawings are annotated with colour-notes or other inscriptions (sometimes including the names of the songs!), that were intended to evoke the ambience once back in the studio.

The dedication at the lower left, from a 'très dévoué ('very devoted') Sickert is to the society hostess, Mrs Mary Hunter, at whose house he met Elsie Swinton in 1905 (no. 12); her receptions were noted for the quality of their musical performances (she and Sargent were also good friends). The reference to the 'end of the quay' ('bout du quai') is to the part of Dieppe facing the harbour where the Café Vernet was located.

Given by D.E. Coombe, 1998

PD.24-1998

Walter Richard Sickert

1860-1942

The Trapeze 1920

Oil on canvas

Sickert was first drawn to circus subjects on seasonal summer visits to Dieppe in the 1880s. He returned to the subject in 1920, and made a series of drawings of the circus animals and performers, possibly encouraged by Thérèse Lessore (no.46) Inscriptions on related drawings identify the troupe as the Cirque Rancy, a travelling circus founded in the 1850s. The daring artiste may be 'Mademoiselle Alexis'.

In focussing on a female performer, seen from a neck-cranking perspective, Sickert has clearly drawn inspiration from Degas's famous painting of over forty years earlier, depicting the circus performer, Mlle Lala (a.k.a 'Cannon woman'), suspended from her teeth in the dizzying heights of the Cirque Fernando (1879, National Gallery, London; see no.32). Indeed, at one of their earliest meetings in 1885, Sickert recorded how Degas had told him how he had engaged a professional draughtsman to help him with the complicated perspective in his painting. In November 1917, Sickert wrote a tribute to Degas, published in the *Burlington Magazine*. Degas died the following year; it may be that this picture is a form of painted homage to his old friend.

Bequeathed by Frank Hindley Smith, 1939

no.2410

~ Cirque Raney. (Napoléon Raney.) ~



~ Cirque Raney. (Albert et André.) ~



~ (L'Espresso,)

~ (St. Se. Gorgiou.) ~

Edgar Degas

1834-1917

Ordination ceremony at Lyons Cathedral 1855

Oil on paper, laid down on canvas

Sickert met Degas in 1883, while still a pupil of Whistler, but formed his lifelong friendship with him during a visit to Dieppe in 1885. He consistently acknowledged his debt to his older friend, and eventually went on to publish a tribute to him in the *Burlington Magazine* a few months after Degas's death in 1917. Returning to London after his summer holiday in 1885, he told the painter Jacques-Emile Blanche that he found, 'more & more, in half a sentence that Degas has said, guidance for years of work.'

In this early work, painted during a two-month visit to Lyons in the summer of 1855, Degas experiments with an unusual perspective, adopting a bird's eye viewpoint that plunges dramatically downward, to the procession of ordinands in the nave of the cathedral from high in the triforium gallery.

Bequeathed by A.S.F. Gow through the National Art Collections Fund,
1978

PD.11-1978

Walter Richard Sickert*1860-1942***The Gallery of the Old Bedford Music Hall 1894-95**

Oil on canvas

In 1889, wrestling with the meaning of the term 'Impressionism', Sickert insisted that it should not be understood as a 'struggle to make intensely real and solid the ... superficial details' of the subject selected, but rather as a form of art which drew its inspiration from 'the magic and the poetry' of London, the most wonderful and complex city in the world (Robins, 172-3).

The following decade, he went on to explore in earnest one of the most 'magical' and modern of these: the musical halls and popular theatres of London. He would have found inspiration for them in popular cabaret and café concerts painted by his hero, Degas, but in translating it into a British 'vernacular' he made the subject his own. His earliest paintings focus on the performers in the stage spotlight, but by the end of the decade - and in this painting for the first time - he chose instead to paint the audience, perhaps influenced by his own early experience as an actor. Often, as here, they are painted in the cheap seats, high in the gallery, which allowed Sickert to adopt the unconventional viewpoints he would also have known from Degas's work (see no. 32). Sickert makes further play on spatial ambiguity and reflected light by including the large gilded mirror on the left of this painting which illuminates the audience from the sides, as well as from the footlights.

Another, more finished, version of the painting is in the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool.

Bequeathed by Edward Maurice Berkeley Ingram, 1941
no. 2458

Walter Richard Sickert*1860-1942***Théâtre de Montmartre 1906**

Oil on canvas

After painting in the music halls of London during the 1890s, Sickert switched his focus to Paris in the first decade of the twentieth century, painting at a number of popular entertainment venues in Paris, notably the Gaité Rochecouart, Gaité Montparnasse (no. 28), Eldorado and the Théâtre de Montmartre (which survives as the Théâtre de l'Atelier). He spent the autumn of 1906 in Paris, and from there wrote to his friend, William Rothenstein, to say that he was busy painting a series of six theatre paintings he described as 'busters', though 'only red and blue places, instead of black ones' (Sturgis, 370). Sickert's decision to adopt bolder colours may have been influenced by seeing paintings by the Fauves, exhibited at the Salon d'Automne in Paris that year. However, the vibrant red colouring – intensified by contrast with the dark, amorphous, crowd and warm reflections of the stage lights – is not without precedent in some of his early music hall paintings, and also echoes the dramatic red of Mrs Swinton's fictive dress, probably painted earlier that year (no. 12).

This painting was bought in 1924 by John Maynard Keynes. It is one of three paintings by Sickert that Keynes acquired in the 1920s, including a portrait of his wife, Lydia Lopokova (see. no. 36).

Lent by the Provost and Fellows of King's College, Cambridge, Keynes Collection

Walter Richard Sickert

1860-1942

Café Vernet, Dieppe 1925

Oil on canvas

Vernet's on the Quai Henri IV in Dieppe became one of Sickert's favourite haunts at the end of 1920. He sketched there in the early part of the evening, before going on to the Casino, where he met (and sometimes surreptitiously drew) many of the fashionable players. However, this painting shows the café by day, with the clients' attention evidently caught by something beyond the picture frame. A similar view with slightly different figures, probably painted some years earlier, was sold at Sotheby's in 1998 (Baron 582).

The painting is dated 1925, after Sickert had returned to London. This confirms his practice of working in the studio from numerous preliminary drawings; one of these, used for another view of the café by night (no. 30) is displayed in the adjacent case.

The donor of this painting also gave the painting of *Little Rachel* (no. 39).

Given by Keith Baynes, 1974

PD.92-1974

Walter Richard Sickert

1860-1942

Studies for a portrait of Lydia Lopokova

Pen and blue ink over graphite on notepaper with a letter head (8 rue Aguado, Dieppe), roughly squared up in red ink

This amusing (but hardly flattering !) sketch of the Russian ballet dancer Lydia Lopokova (1891-1981) was possibly drawn in Ostend, where she and the economist John Maynard Keynes had gone to see the Russian ballet (Lopokova may have performed) and to gamble at the fashionable Casino. Lopokova and Keynes later married, in 1925.

Sickert and Thérèse Lessore saw the couple socially on a number of occasions at the beginning of the 1920s. Keynes acquired a Venetian drawing and two major paintings from Sickert in these years (see no. 34, displayed nearby). In 1924, Sickert gave Keynes a portrait of Lydia (which shows her in profile to left), now in the collection of King's College, Cambridge (Keynes Collection).

Sickert described Lopokova's head as having the shape of a pigeon's or a plover's. He evidently enjoyed making these ornithological allusions: he compared his second wife, Christine, to a pelican!

Bequeathed by Henry Scipio Reitlinger, 1991
PD.60-1991

Walter Richard Sickert*1860-1942***Œillade c.1911**

Oil on canvas

In 1911, Sickert was closely implicated in setting up the Camden Town Group of painters; this painting was included in the Group's exhibition at the Carfax Gallery in London the following year. Both it, and no. 40, continue the theme of female nudes in domestic interiors which Sickert explored from 1907 (no. 40), although in each case the models are shown only to head and shoulder, filling the picture space, with the interior only sketchily indicated. Sickert's handling is loose and very summary. His concentration on the patterned wallpaper and bedcover recall the intimist interiors of Pierre Bonnard and Edouard Vuillard, whom Sickert knew, and exhibited with, in Paris in the first years of the twentieth century. Spencer would continue to exploit this notionally reassuring hint of domesticity in his own interiors with nudes (no. 42).

Œillade literally means 'the wink', or 'glance'.

Given by J. Howard Bliss, 1945

no. 2727 Baron 382

Walter Richard Sickert*1860-1942***Triple studies of a standing Venetian model, nude 1903-4**

Black chalk on blue paper

On his last visit to Venice in 1903-4, Sickert turned from landscape to figure painting. He partly justified this on the grounds of the miserable winter weather, although he had already begun to make drawings of nudes in Dieppe the previous year.

The inscription 'Calle dei Frati' on this drawing is the name of the sidestreet where Sickert first took a studio in 1896. There, from 9 to 4 daily, he enjoyed the 'uninterrupted joy' of the company of 'nice little obliging models' whom he recruited at the local trattoria or via his landlady: they laughed, he wrote, and 'amuse me with smutty talk while posing like angels' (Sturgis, 329). The paintings of these women, posed nude and clothed in the stark surroundings of the studio interior, anticipate a theme Sickert went on to explore in his Camden Town paintings of c.1907-11.

The model is probably La Giuseppina, Sickert's favourite model in Venice, or her friend Caroline d'Acqua, so-called, it appears, because of her aversion to water.

The letters 'ARA' after Sickert's initials show that he added the inscription at a later date, after being elected Associate of the Royal Academy in 1924.

Given by Louis C.G. Clarke, 1943

no. 2527

Walter Richard Sickert*1860-1942***Little Rachel at a mirror 1907**

Oil on canvas

This is one of six paintings of the model, Rachel Siderman (1893-1963), whom Sickert described as 'a little Jewish girl of 13 or so with red-hair.' It was painted in his first floor lodgings in Mornington Crescent, Camden Town during the rainy summer of 1907. She is shown in a moment of quiet contemplation, her head on one side, haloed by the oval mirror and highlights in her red hair. The stillness, tenderness and slight melancholy of his portrayal are characteristic of his paintings of this sitter, whom he nicknamed in an annotation on a preliminary drawing 'le petit Jesus' (Baron, 70).

This is one of the paintings that Sickert described as 'Studies of illumination' (see also no. 40), although he might also have added 'reflection'. The model gazes at herself in the mirror, which in turn reflects the half-lit penumbra of the interior and the daylight as it enters through the grimy window panes (the view looks onto Oakley Square, in Camden Town). The same light source frames the mirror in contrejour and illuminates the contours of Miss Siderman's arm and hair.

The donor of this painting, Keith Baynes, met Sickert in Bath in 1917. A painter himself, he went on to rent a studio not far from Sickert's in Camden Town. When Sickert gave the painting to Baynes in 1925, he apparently told him that it had been painted in Jack the Ripper's bedroom. This was presumably to perpetuate the allusions to the murder which occurred in Camden Town in 1907, an association that Sickert had encouraged in the suggestive titles he gave his paintings from 1908.

Given by Keith Stuart Baynes, 1974

PD.91-1974

Walter Richard Sickert

1860-1942

Mornington Crescent nude 1907

Oil on canvas

At the beginning of 1907, Sickert rented a 'room-studio' above his own lodgings at 6 Mornington Crescent, Camden Town, in order to paint 'the interiors I love' (Baron, 70). Over the summer, he produced a series of paintings he described as 'sets of Studies in illumination', some studies of the adolescent model, Rachel Siderman (no.39) others paintings of nudes on beds.

For Sickert, the 'chief source of pleasure' in painting the nude was 'in the nature of a gleam – a gleam of warmth and life' (1910, Baron, 129). As he realised, the reflective 'gleam' was enhanced by setting the figure against more light absorptive surfaces – here, the curtains, bed linen, and the model's clothes, abandoned on a nearby chair. If this suggests that Sickert painted his models as he might a still-life, it ignores the powerful psychological dimension of his work. Sickert wanted his paintings to entice the viewer to enter into them, to give 'the sensation of something exciting happening, taking place in a box.' In this case, the relationship of the model to the dimly-lit interior, her immobility, and the coolness of the painter's gaze all beg questions of meaning and interpretation: model? prostitute? corpse? Contemporary events would have played into the way the painting was read. Not long after this was painted, in September 1907, a prostitute was found brutally murdered elsewhere in Camden Town, lying naked on the bed in her lodgings. Sickert was quick to respond to this lurid case, and the following year took to adding a clothed male figure in poses of menace or despair to his interiors, and adding titles such as *The Camden Town Murder*.

Sickert intended his scenes of nudes in interiors to shock, and they did: luminaries of the Royal Academy were appalled by his 'bordello' paintings and likened them to 'Slum art'; Sickert himself felt it was wise to follow them by painting more sellable 'landscapes for the weaker brethren.'

Given by Mrs Maurice Hill, 1990

PD.103-1990

41

Walter Richard Sickert

1860-1942

Woman with ringlets c.1911

Oil on canvas

Although the model appears to be different, the subject – a head and shoulders study of a nude - and handling are close in style to *Oeillade* (no.37) Her features exemplify the *joli-laide* that so appealed to Sickert in his models.

The donor of this painting, Frank Hindley Smith was a textile manufacturer, whose fine collection of British and French paintings included a number of works by Sickert. When Sickert visited Smith's collection in Southport, he was outraged to find a drawing attributed to him, but bearing a false signature, in the downstairs loo! (Sturgis, 542-43).

Bequeathed by Frank Hindley Smith, 1939

no.2411

Stanley Spencer

1891–1959

Self-portrait with Patricia Preece 1936

Oil on canvas

Spencer first met Patricia Preece in Cookham in 1929. An artist herself, she was at the time co-habiting with another painter, Dorothy Hepworth, with whom she almost certainly had a lesbian relationship. Spencer went on to develop what he himself described as a ‘sort of religious fervour’ for Preece, culminating in his divorce from his wife Hilda in 1937 and his remarriage to Preece shortly after.

This is the first of two double nude portraits that Spencer painted of himself and Preece. The other, in Tate, London, painted the year after this portrait, shows Spencer squatting behind his wife, with a leg of mutton in sharp focus in the foreground, echoing the shape of her thigh: male, female and animal flesh,’ as he put it. He intended both to be included in a room devoted to nudes in his Church House.

Spencer was fascinated by flesh, ‘the most mysterious of all matter’, and compared women’s bodies to plucked chickens or ‘carcasses’. He liked to paint his nudes at close quarters, and with all the detailed inquisitiveness of an ant, crawling over every mound and crevice of Preece’s body. He replicated this in his painting technique by working directly on the canvas from the top left, methodically covering the surface patch by patch using comparatively small brushes.

For all the heightened realism of sagging flesh, awkward protruding bones and raw, ruddy, colouring, Spencer’s image seems more a testament to a troubled relationship than a portrait. His neck is twisted sharply to look at Preece, who lies self-absorbed and dispassionate, with an expression somewhere between fatality and repressed despair. As viewers, we follow Spencer’s bespectacled gaze, uncomfortably complicit.

Like Sickert (no. 40) , Spencer includes a decorated iron bedstead, crumpled sheet and prettily patterned wallpaper as the sole ‘props’ in the composition, though here they become almost an ironic reference to the non-existent domestic stability they otherwise suggest. While

Spencer's debt to the psychological dimension of Sickert's interiors is clear, the implicit menace in this painting is not the hinted presence of an invisible, potentially malevolent, male, but the relentless destructiveness of their own relationship.

Spencer's dealer, Dudley Tooth, quite understandably told Spencer that he thought the portrait would be a 'very "difficult" seller'. It remained with Tooth for eight months before being bought by Wilfred Evill, largely as a gesture to help Spencer in his very parlous financial situation. Tooth advised Spencer to 'accept anything reasonable' for the painting, and waived the usual gallery fee, treating the sale as a private deal between Evill and the artist. That Evill was an especially courageous collector is borne out by the fact that he also bought two other 'difficult' subjects, nos. 57 and 58.

Bequeathed by Wilfrid Ariel Evill, 1963
PD.967-1963

CASE

43

Walter Richard Sickert

1860-1942

L'armoire à glace 1922-24

Pen and purple ink with white highlights on purple paper, faded to grey

This is one of eleven known drawings that Sickert made in preparation for the painting of this title, dated 1924, now in Tate, London. In 1922 Sickert also made an etching based on this drawing (Bromberg, 200). The sitter is Marie Pepin, the French maid who worked for Sickert for over a decade; she is shown in the bedroom of Sickert's house in Dieppe.

Sickert often gave his drawings and paintings titles in French or Italian and well as English (the English translation of this title is 'Mirrored Wardrobe'). Often, the source is obscure, or relates only very loosely to the subject represented.

Sickert explained to the original owner of the painting, W.H. Stephenson, that the subject was '*a sort of study à la Balzac. The little lower middle-class woman in the stays that will make her a client for the chiropodists, fed probably largely on "Ersatz" or "improved" flour, salt substitutes, dyed drinks, prolonged fish, tinned things etc., sitting by the wardrobe which is her idol and her bank, so devised that the overweight of the mirror door would bring the whole structure down on her if it were not temporarily held back by a wire hitched on an insecure nail in insecure plaster. But a devoted, unselfish, uncomplaining wife and mother, inefficient shopper and atrocious cook.*'

It might be that - if only for the title - Sickert also had in mind Louis Aragon's play *L'armoire à glace, un beau soir*, published in 1923, a vaudevillesque surrealist text that explores boundaries of internal and external space, 'where visible and invisible rub against one another.' (see Gray Read, 'Aragon's Armoire', in *Surrealism and Architecture*, Thomas Mical, ed. London, 2005, 31).

Given by Louis C.G. Clarke, 1943

no.2526

CASE

44

Walter Richard Sickert

1860-1942

Coster child: seated woman in a straw boater c.1911

Charcoal, pen and brown ink on paper

Sickert was attracted to the colourful lives and characters of his models. These costermonger models first caught his eye by their distinctive dress. In December 1907 he wrote that he had come across 'two divine coster girls', each wearing 'the *trompe l'oeuil* [sic] hat all the coster girls wear here, with the crown fitting the head inside & expanded outside to immense proportions. It is called an "American sailor"' (Baron, 73).

Inevitably, as a self-confessed 'literary' painter with a distinctive, often extravagant, sartorial style, Sickert read meaning and narrative into the clothes they wore. They spoke of the 'sumptuous poverty of their class,' he wrote, 'always wearing for everyday, dirty, old, worn clothes, but Sunday clothes. Extraordinary lives. Men, who live on them, now & again hitting them with 'ammers, putting poisonous powders on cakes, trying to cut their throats, drugging their whisky &c' (Baron, 369).

This drawing possibly relates to a painting showing a coster woman and her daughter which was exhibited with the title *Mother and Daughter* at the Carfax Gallery in December 1911. (Private collection, Baron 368). Sickert published a related etching in 1915.

Bought from Roland, Browse and Delbanco, 1960

PD.6-1960

CASE

45

Walter Richard Sickert

1860-1942

Woman seated on a bed ?1920s

Pen and blue ink on paper

The date of this drawing and its location are difficult to establish. Sickert tackled similar themes in both Paris, in 1906, and London from 1907 although stylistically his drawing does not accord with other of works of that date. Sickert's sketch has a caricatural element – in the face of the women in particular - which recalls the witty drawings of Charles Keene. Despite the grim setting and psychological tensions of his finished paintings, Sickert's relationships with his models were generally very jovial. In Venice, for example, he relished the bawdy jokes of his prostitute models (see no. 36), while one of his models in Paris, a milliner he picked up in the street, remembered their séances as being very high spirited: 'Ah ce Monsieur Sickert, qu'il aimait à rigoler!' ('Oh that Mr Sickert, how he loved to laugh!')

Bequeathed by Henry Scipio Reitlinger, 1991

PD.61-1991

Thérèse Lessore

1884-1945

Portrait of Walter Richard Sickert 1919

Coloured chalks and watercolour on paper

Thérèse was the youngest daughter of the French artist, Jules Lessore, who came to London in 1871. She attended the Slade School of Art and on leaving in 1909, married Bernard Audeny, a leading figure in the Bloomsbury Group, but they divorced in 1921.

She and Sickert met in 1914 at a meeting of the London Group. In the same year, Sickert favourably reviewed her contribution to an exhibition at the Whitechapel Gallery, praising the 'strange alchemy of genius' which allowed her to capture the very essence of her models: 'being and movement are torn from them and presented in ordered and rhythmical arrangements of the highest technical brevity and beauty' (Robins, 373).

Lessore (or 'Lainey' as he called her) grew increasingly close to Sickert over subsequent years, during which she painted this striking portrait. Sickert's fiercesome bearded features seem to have been part of a new rustic persona he was keen to cultivate around this time (although he also claimed that he grew his beard as a 'war economy'!) On his return from an extended trip to France at the end of 1919, his new look did not go unnoticed: 'the lower part of him [was] correctly attired for Golfing (very thin legs) and an upper part quite indescribable, surmounted by an absolutely square beard ... it was cut off – only just below his chin and stood out very wide each side and horribly disconcertingly square – it was really most embarrassing.....' (Alice Rothenstein to Max Beerbohm, 1920, quoted Sturgis, 513).

In June 1926 Thérèse became Sickert's third wife, in a low-key ceremony in Margate, at which passers-by were invited to be witnesses!

Given by Sir Ivor and Lady Batchelor, 1997

PD.5-1997

47

Walter Richard Sickert

1860-1942

**The Garden of Love, or
Lainey's Garden** c.1927- 28

Oil on canvas

This is the most personal of a group of landscapes painted in Islington, north London between 1924 and 1928. It depicts the garden of Sickert's house in Quadrant Road, where he moved with his third wife, Thérèse Lessore (whom he called 'Lainey'), in 1927. A keen gardener, she is shown attending to the plants on a trellis; the sculpture at her feet has been identified as a cast of Michelangelo's *Bruges Madonna*.

Sickert returns to the theme of day-lit exteriors viewed from a dark interior space, that he explored in his Camden Town paintings (see no. 39). Only in this case, very little of the room is seen: his focus instead is on the sun-drenched lawn and the long shadows created by the fall of light.

The preparatory drawing for this painting is exhibited nearby (no. 48) Close similarities in composition and detail – the curtain, shadows and patterned trellising, for example – show how closely Sickert followed his drawing. The striking mauve colour of the paper is replicated in a more muted key on the walls of the houses at the far end of the garden, suggesting that Sickert was planning his composition tonally from the very earliest stages.

Thérèse Lessore's portrait of Sickert is exhibited elsewhere in this exhibition (no. 46).

Given by James Howard Bliss, 1945
no.2726

48

Walter Richard Sickert

1860-1942

Lainey's Garden 1927-28

Pen and ink on paper hand-dyed mauve, squared up in ink

A study for Sickert's painting, *The Garden of Love*, exhibited nearby.

The sheet shows that some of the original vivid purple colouring has faded, due to exposure to light after the drawing was mounted.

Possibly inspired by Degas's example, Sickert frequently used coloured papers for his drawings, often using strong magentas, mauves, greens, and yellow-lined foolscap, although with time many have faded badly (see no. 42). The 'pooling' marks on this sheet suggest that it was hand-dyed, probably by Sickert himself, perhaps using 'Dolly Dyes', a popular domestic brand made by William Edge & Sons Ltd in Bolton.



Sickert first gave the title *Londra benedetta* ('Blessed London'), inscribed on this drawing, to the views of London (including the garden of his school in Hampstead Road) which he made around 1911-12. He alternated it with the French phrase 'Ce Londres que les Anglais appellent London', a saying borrowed from the dandy, Count Robert de Montesquiou (1855-1921). Both reflect the objectivity that Sickert may have felt as a result of his immersion in French and, to a lesser extent, Italian culture, as well as his conviction that London was the 'most wonderful and complex city in the world.'

Given by James Howard Bliss, 1946
no. 2775

Walter Richard Sickert

1860-1942

Rushford Mill, near Chagford, Devon 1916

Oil on canvas

Sickert first visited Chagford in 1912, when he accompanied one of his students, Christine Angus, to a health cure there; they returned from the trip engaged. In 1916, they rented a house close to the River Teign (in which Sickert enjoyed a regular morning swim), with a view towards Rushford Mill.

The summer months away from London and the seasonal bustle of Dieppe, gave Sickert a rare opportunity to concentrate on landscape painting. Three years earlier, he began to experiment with painting large landscapes out-of-doors at Envermeu, but soon gave this up in favour of making small oil sketches and detailed drawings (often squared up, see no. 53), which he would work up as a painting in the studio; he maintained this practice while painting at Chagford.

For part of the summer, Sickert painted with his Fitzroy Street neighbour, Matthew Smith, there for the summer with his wife. It has been suggested that the bold, dark outlines which Sickert used in some places in this painting (and others at Chagford), reflect the influence of Smith's technique. However, they also correspond to his own recommendations, made in 1913 to his friend Ethel Sands, to build up the a painting using 'an infinity of series of touches ... ranging from the size of a postage stamp to the size of a pea.' The touches should be represented by black lines at 'first sitting', he told her; thereafter the sequence of touches should be left to dry with no further changes, 'Don't look at the canvases between. Don't revise the day's touches. Let them be & let them dry & forget them' (Baron, 91).

Bought from Arthur Tooth & Sons, Ltd., 1953

PD.25-1953

Walter Richard Sickert

1860-1942

Chagford churchyard, Devon 1916

Oil on canvas

The graveyard of the church of St. Michael's was one of Sickert's favourite subjects at Chagford: at least five painted versions (some sketches) and four related drawings have been recorded. Painted during the war years, the prominence of the gravestones – here, in particular, the sharply-profiled black cross in the foreground - has been considered to be 'a lament for the dead youth of Europe' (Baron, 106).

The donor, Lillian Browse, was an acquaintance of Sickert's, who organised a major retrospective of his work the year before his death in 1941. An art historian and paintings dealer, she went on to publish widely on his work.

Bequeathed by Lillian Browse, C.B.E. (Mrs Sidney Lines)
PD.42-2006

Walter Richard Sickert

1860-1942

Lansdown Crescent, Bath c.1917-18

Pen, ink and watercolour over graphite on a sheet of paper that has been cut into four and remounted on a backing sheet, squared in red ink for transfer

Sickert may have visited Bath while staying at Chagford in 1916, but returned for longer stays in 1917 and again in the summer of 1918. He came to love the town, the surrounding countryside, and the 'mellifluous amiability' of the West Country people (Sturgis, 493).

As in Venice and Dieppe, he was attracted to the great civic spaces of the city, in this case the magnificent Georgian terrace, designed by the architect John Palmer, and constructed by a succession of builders between 1789 and 1793.

Sickert painted six different versions of this scene in oil, almost certainly on the basis of a photograph, as well as this and another drawing. Two related prints (etchings and engravings) were published (Bromberg 178, 179).

Bequeathed by G.F. Webb, 1972

PD.5-1972

Walter Richard Sickert

1860-1942

Rue d'Eu, Le Pollet, Dieppe c.1899-1900

Black chalk with watercolour on paper

Le Pollet is the fishermen's quarter of Dieppe.

Sickert moved to Dieppe in 1898 with the intention of giving up portraits and producing some 'Picturesque work', by which he meant landscapes, or, more accurately, views of the town's streets and monuments. Although not generally attracted to watercolour, he experimented with a number of 'tinted charcoal drawings' in Dieppe in 1899, mainly in the hope of securing 'an occasional fiver or tenner' from his dealers in London (Baron, 39).

In 1906 Sickert gave this watercolour to Hubert Wellington, a Slade School student who came to visit him. In a broadcast of 1954, Wellington remembered that Sickert repeatedly told them that 'all good modern painting derives from France' and regaled them with stories of the artists whom he had known. He was a generous mentor, Wellington wrote, and 'in no way stand-offish. He treated us as younger brothers in the craft' (Sturgis, 367).

Bought from Thomas Agnew and Sons Ltd, 1962
PD.15-1962

Walter Richard Sickert*1860-1942***Le Chateau d'Hibouville, Envermeu 1913**

Pen, ink, black chalk and watercolour on Ingres paper, squared for transfer in red ink and laid down

Sickert rarely worked directly from nature, but occasionally tested himself to do so. An ideal opportunity came in 1913 when he moved to Envermeu, a village ten miles outside Dieppe in the valley of the Eaulne. Beautiful wooded countryside was readily accessible, and provided many attractive scenes for him to paint. The distant view of the Château d'Hibouville, 'peeping from its woods with an avenue and a cornfield in front' proved an especially appealing site: it was 'like a dream out of *Midsummer Night's Dream!*' Sickert enthused to his friend, Ethel Sands. 'An oval gap amongst trees framed at the bottom by sprinkled tiny flowers like Waldmeister. Through the gap the path continues between trunks, the whole inside like a glowing transparent green cave ... the rhythm and swing is incredibly beautiful' (quoted, Sturgis, 444).

However he soon tired of working on large canvases, which he found he too often left unfinished and quickly became 'stale'. Instead, he decided to paint fewer subjects that he would work up later in the studio on the basis of small pochade oil sketches, and drawings, such as this. He claimed that this method would result in elaborate finished canvases, 'carried out in paint suavely, as delicately and as nervously sharp as my drawings' (Sturgis, 459).

The painting based on this drawing is unrecorded.

Bought from Thomas Agnew & Sons, Ltd, 1964

PD.24-1964

Walter Richard Sickert*1860-1942***Hugh Walpole 1928**

Oil on canvas

Hugh Seymour Walpole (1884-1941) was born in New Zealand and educated at Emmanuel College, Cambridge. He became a prolific writer, and a passionate art collector, describing his addiction to buying paintings as 'worse than drink.' His taste was principally for contemporary painting. He owned paintings by Cézanne, Derain, Picasso and Klee, among others, and considered Sickert to be 'simply worlds ahead' of any other British painter (Sturgis, 565).

Walpole sat for this painting in Highbury Place in 1928, the same year that he wrote an introduction for the catalogue of Sickert's one-man show in London. On day one of the sitting he recorded: 'The old man very charming, beautiful eyes, soft voice, very gentle, with sudden irascible obscurities'; next day, however, Sickert painted nothing, complaining about the light. Walpole began to despair. After making a drawing and taking a photograph, things proceeded more smoothly, although it was made clear to Walpole that thereafter it was 'his [Sickert's] affair' (Hart-Davies, 299).

Sickert used photographs to prepare his paintings from the 1890s, and increasingly from the 1920s, when he came to consider them as 'the most precious document' available to the painter. Similarities between the background of this painting and one by Sickert's wife, Thérèse Lessore, showing children at play in Victoria Park, Islington (Manchester City Art Gallery) have led to the suggestion that the portrait is in part based on a photograph taken in Sickert's house, when this (at the time unfinished) painting was hanging on the wall behind him.

Another portrait of Walpole, painted the following year, is in Glasgow Museum and Art Gallery (Baron 692). Painted solely from a photograph, it is a highly personal record of Walpole's appearance, more a filtered recollection than an attempt at a realistic likeness.

Walpole and Sickert clearly enjoyed one another's company. Walpole later wrote perceptively about his friend's character and idiosyncracies:

'Thinking of Sickert ... he isolates himself utterly from everybody, even his little Oriental-faced wife. It is not that he is hermit-like or scornful of life. Far from it; he is eager to hear anything about life at all – morals, furniture, personal habits, colours, games – but his personality is so entirely of its own and so

distinctive that he makes a world of his own. A world that has all its own laws ... Wandering about his studio (which is dirty, tumbledown Camden Town, Charlie Pearce, pubs and cabbage) with his little grey peaked beard (grown since his illness), his most beautiful eyes (his eyes blue and affectionate, his forehead of a fine, noble, sustained whiteness), without a collar, and old grey suit with sometimes a black cap on his head, he walks like a sick man (he will not, I think, live much longer) and chuckles and laughs at almost everything. He is most affectionate, always wanting to give one something, takes nothing seriously, is French in his lightness, German in his love of food, Camden Town in his love for his boxing cabman, Regency in his love of Bath, the old London streets and [an] artist unselfconsciously all the time' (Hart-Davies, 300).

Bequeathed by Sir Hugh Walpole, 1943
no. 2515

Stanley Spencer*1891–1959***Cottages at Burghclere c.1930**

Oil on canvas

Spencer moved to the Hampshire village of Burghclere in 1927 to work on his mural paintings for the Sandham Memorial Chapel (see no. 25), returning to Cookham only at the end of 1931. This is one of relatively few landscapes he painted during these years.

This was one of the most settled periods of Spencer's life. He had married Hilda Carline (1899-1950) in 1925, and their two children were born in the five years that followed. On one level, this painting reflects this stability, as a reassuring vision of a timeless rural England with its comforting thatched cottages, lush hedgerows and picturesquely rampant gardens. But Spencer subverts this by using a bizarre double vanishing point, one on either side of the central house, which disturbs the 'natural' perspective in unsettling way. The quirky, almost anthropomorphic, topiary foreshadows the schematic figures in Spencer's paintings of the 1930s and 1940s.

Bought by the Friends of the Fitzwilliam Museum from the Goupil Gallery, London, 1930 and given by them to the Museum that year.
no. 1533

Stanley Spencer*1891–1959***Landscape in North Wales 1938**

Oil on canvas

In 1938, Spencer travelled to Snowdonia in North Wales, to meet up with his ex-wife, Hilda, who was staying with her mother at the house of a friend. This was the first time he had seen her since they had divorced the previous year. He arrived at some point at the beginning of September and appears to have stayed just over a month.

Encouraged by his supportive dealer, Dudley Tooth, Spencer painted increasing numbers of landscapes in the 1930s, largely in an attempt to boost his severely flagging finances. Few buyers were forthcoming for his more challenging figure paintings (nos. 42, 57 and 58), but his landscapes found a ready market among collectors who recognised a 'sense of exaltation and pride' in his representations of countryside and suburbia (Robinson, 80).

Spencer resented the time he spent on these, claiming some years earlier that the lack of a spiritual dimension left him feeling 'lonely' in front of Nature. (to Desmond Chute, Nov. 1926, quoted Rothenstein, 38).

'I feel really that everything in one that is not vision is mainly vulgarity ...It has always puzzled me the way people have always preferred my landscapes. I can sell them, but not the Joachims [his religious paintings].'

Bequeathed by Edward Maurice Berkeley Ingram, 1941
no.2452

Stanley Spencer*1891–1959***Love on the moor 1949-54**

Oil on canvas

This complex, multilayered painting combines all the elements which had been central to Spencer's work over previous decades: sexual love, religious worship, the 'sacred presence' of his native Cookham, and of course Spencer himself, doubly present as the small child-spectator behind the makeshift goal posts on the left, and as the devotee at the foot of the statue.

The crowd greet one another affectionately, giving presents, trying on clothes and smelling flowers. Dominating the composition in the guise of a marble statue of Venus is Spencer's wife, Hilda, whom he divorced the year this composition was begun, and who died of cancer in 1950, before it was completed. Behind her is a wire wastepaper basket, filled with their discarded love letters. Spencer and Hilda exchanged numerous love letters in the early years of their relationship, and Spencer continued the habit after her death. The first letter he wrote to her after she died began 'Come ducky and tread on the Moor with me'.

Spencer first conceived of the composition in 1937, but set it aside when he was advised by his dealer, Dudley Tooth, that it would be difficult to sell. Matters were made worse by a contemporary scandal in the press that branded Spencer as a 'pornographic painter'. When he returned to the painting in 1949, he began by painting a small separate canvas, subsequently attached to form the left hand side of this canvas. The final work was completed in 1955 after several abandoned attempts, and was bought by the collector Wilfred Evill, who acquired several of Spencer's more controversial works.

Spencer intended this to form part of the Hilda Chapel - which he otherwise called the 'you and me' room - in his Church House.

Bequeathed by Wilfrid Ariel Evill, 1963
PD.968-1963

Stanley Spencer

1891–1959

Love among the nations 1935-36

Oil on canvas

Spencer exhibited this painting in 1936, with the title 'Humanity'. It survives as a single canvas, but was originally intended as part of the Church House project, his 'temple of salvation through the flesh', which he was planning from the early 1930s.

He described it as a memento of his visit to Mostar and Sarajevo in 1922 (see no. 20) and of his feelings towards the East generally: 'I have longed as usual to establish my union with those aspects of life which I feel are definitely to do with me and not cut off by nationality; love breaks down barriers' (quoted Bell, 437).

Here, barriers of age and race are broken down with gusto, while sexual curiosity knows no bounds. Turkish men stroke, and are stroked by, black and white women; a toothless old woman is fondled by two virile black men and Muslim women in what appear to be the burkas are embraced, unseen, by besuited white men. On the right, in the loud checked jacket, a younger version of Spencer's self is explored and gently undressed by two black women. While clearly erotic, the painting is not without tenderness, or gentle humour.

The indeterminate setting – with a formidable stone wall, and brick ?pedestal/well, a chalet-like dwelling and the oddly 'cracked' (or torn?) foreground – give the painting a dreamlike, visionary quality. As such it can perhaps be considered a visual expression of his own fervent belief that the only way to counter the horrors of war was by indulging in 'every degree and form of sexual love, carnal love, bestiality, anything you like to call it. These are the joyful inheritances of mankind.'

Spencer travelled relatively little, but fed his curiosity about distant peoples and cultures by reading, looking at photographic reproductions and informing himself through informed friends. His ideas about the sacredness of erotic art were stimulated by Sir Edwin Arnold's *The Light of Asia*, in the 1920s, and by his friendship with the artist James Wood, from whom he learned the philosophy of Islam and Taoism. Both provided Spencer with an alternative moral position with regard to polygamy, which accorded with his own liberated views of sexuality, conveniently sustaining his wish for a *ménage à trois* with his wife,

Hilda and mistress, Patricia Preece in precisely these years. As key visual references, Spencer was also familiar with the entwined bodies on the erotic relief panels on the Buddhist temple of Borobodur, and especially with the 10th-11th century stone sculptures on the temples at Khajuraho in India, which he claimed had given him 'longings greater than those inspired by the Bible' (quoted Robinson, 1979, 53).

Bequeathed by Wilfrid Ariel Evill, 1963
PD.967-1963

Stanley Spencer*1891–1959***The Centurion's Servant 1914-15**

Oil on board

After leaving the Slade School of Art in 1912, Spencer began a series of religious scenes drawn from the New Testament. These were partly inspired by his return to live at Cookham, the 'earthly paradise' of his childhood which he believed as 'possessed by a sacred presence.'

This is a study for the finished painting of this subject in Tate, London. It is based on the story of Christ and the centurion in St Luke, 7, 1-10. On hearing of Christ's ability to heal the sick, a Roman centurion asks him to heal a favourite servant who was in great pain. Christ does so without ever seeing the servant, confirming the Centurion's faith in his powers.

Spencer locates the scene in the attic bedroom of the family maid at his home in Cookham. He believed this simple setting had miraculous associations, having heard the maid in conversation there, when he knew she was alone. Blake-like, he imagined she was talking to an angel (she was talking to the next-door maid through the thin attic wall).

Spencer's art was intensely autobiographical throughout his life: what he called the 'me-myselfness' of his work. Here, he is the figure of the servant, sprawled on the bed, and the other figures his siblings, in the 'praying positions' that Spencer himself adopted at this time. They encircle his childhood bed, tilted at a bizarre perspective that – with the background – in many respects anticipates the work of Francis Bacon.

The finished painting was very favourably received when exhibited at the New English Art Club in 1915; Spencer later claimed the plaudits had 'sustained him through the war' (Rothenstein, 186). He gave this sketch to his friend James (Jas) Wood, a writer, philosopher and philologist who informed Spencer's views on eastern religions (see no. 58).

Bought, from the Cunliffe Fund, with a contribution from the National Art Collections Fund 2006

PD.24-2003

Stanley Spencer*1891–1959***Elsie at Chapel View, Burghclere**

Graphite on buff paper, squared up

In 1946, Spencer recorded that he had begun a series of pencil drawings representing what he called 'Domestic Scenes'. This sheet is one of over one hundred and fifty on related themes that Spencer compiled in four scrapbooks between 1939 and 1949.

Spencer explained his experience of domesticity in quasi-religious terms: 'My art, whatever it is, is a home-finder, for me a nest-maker. It goes to prepare a place for me ... I approach heaven through what I find on earth. What is in my life and around me leads to such hopefulness that I feel the surrounding happenings of the village are of heaven if not heaven itself ... When I see an ordinary circumstance, I see the whole of life of which it forms a part. All these isolated happenings touch on a conception of life which I call religious; they tell of it and there is truth in their revealing. I like to celebrate all lovable acts. All ordinary acts such as the sewing on of a button are religious things and part of perfection ... When I am composing these ordinary scenes I am seeing them in this redeemed and after resurrection and Last Day state.'

The subject is Elsie Munday, the maid who had worked for Spencer and his wife, Hilda, at Burghclere, and moved with the family to Cookham. Chapel View is the name of the house at Burghclere that was built for Spencer by his patrons Mr and Mrs Behrend, while he worked on the Sandham Memorial Chapel (no. 25). In other drawings, Spencer shows her cheerfully engaged in some sort of domestic duty: collecting firewood, ironing, hanging up washing, polishing door handles and picking brussel sprouts.

Spencer evidently harboured a longing – apparently unreciprocated – for Elsie: 'I don't know what our feelings would have been had we been lovers ... But I don't know of any similarity of aim & thought, only that we both knew what we liked & knew how not to interfere. She & I naturally thought in the same "rhythm" had the same sense of joy.'

Spencer planned to devote a chapel to her as part of his Church House.

Given by the Friends of the Fitzwilliam Museum, 1976
PD.11-1976

CASE

61

Sermons by artists 1934

London, Golden Cockerell Press 1934

Published in an edition of 300, with texts by Paul Nash, Sir David Low, Robert John Gibbings, Eric Kennington, Stanley Spencer, Edmund Joseph Sullivan, Roger Eliot Fry, Will Dyson, Percy John Smith

Donated by Mrs Florence Image in 1942
PB 1934.2

The quotes on the wall come from Spencer's published text in this volume.

Stanley Spencer

1891–1959

Self-portrait 1939

Oil on canvas

Spencer was conscious of the highly autobiographical nature of his art: its 'me-myselfness,' as he called it. Part of this included a documentation of his own appearance, in a series of penetrating self-portraits painted between 1914 and his death in 1959.

This was painted at a particularly difficult moment in Spencer's life, in the wake of the crises in his personal relationships and a year after he resigned from the Royal Academy. His pose is defiant, his palette blockading the viewer as if to assert his authority as an artist. He is shown using his left hand, but in fact used his right to paint. His brother Gilbert, also an artist, suggested that this was because Spencer had used a single mirror. The crumpled bed in the background harks back to the double portrait of his more vulnerable self and Patricia Preece, painted three years earlier (no.42), although by this stage, Spencer was living alone in Hampstead, separated from both his wives.

Given by the Friends of the Fitzwilliam Museum, 1942
no.2506

Stanley Spencer

1891-1959

Holy Family 1909

Pen and black in with brown wash over graphite on paper

Spencer made this drawing when he was eighteen years old, around the time he began to study at the Slade School of Art. As a child, he was familiar with reproductions of works by the Pre-Raphaelites which hung in the family home at Cookham, and was also fascinated by the imaginative work of artist-illustrator such as Richard Doyle and Arthur Rackham, whose style this drawing powerfully recalls.

As a student, Spencer went on to join the Slade Sketch Group, and made a number of drawings on biblical and literary themes. Although a brilliant student at the Slade, whose originality was recognised by his professor, Henry Tonks (nos. 22 and 23), Spencer later spoke disparagingly of the education he had received there: his years of study were 'mere barnacles on this me that makes this journey [through life].'

Bought with the Biffen Fund, 1982

PD.17-1982

Walter Richard Sickert

1860-1942

St Mark's, Venice c.1900-01

Oil on panel

'Ach Venedig!', Sickert proclaimed to a friend on his return to the city at the beginning of 1901, 'Kilburn-in-the-sea, as it were.'

This sketch of the crowded square, with St Mark's clocktower (the torre dell'Orologio) on the left, was painted either during this trip, or one made the following year.

The thinly-applied paint is reminiscent of views of Venice painted in the same medium by Sickert's master, Whistler, although the Impressionistic handling also reflects Sickert's conscious attempt to lighten his palette by comparison with the works he painted on earlier trips to Venice.

Bequeathed by Dr. M.I.A. Hunter, 1983; received 1984

PD.24-1984

Further Reading

For information on all works by Sargent, Sickert and Spencer in the Fitzwilliam, see the Museum's Online Public Access Catalogue:

<http://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/opac/index.html>

The label text for the exhibition *Sargent, Sickert, Spencer* (8 December 2009 to 5 April 2010) can be downloaded at

<http://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/article.html?2047>

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Richard Ormond and Elaine Kilmurray, *John Singer Sargent. The Complete Paintings*, vols 1,2,3,4,6. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, published for The Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 1998-2009

Stanley Olson, *John Singer Sargent: his portrait*, London: Macmillan, 1986

<http://www.npg.org.uk/research/programmes/the-art-of-the-picture-frame/artist-sargent.php>

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Lillian Browse, *Sickert*, London 1960

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