

## Portraits of an Artist

By Mary F. Burns

John Singer Sargent was an enigmatic figure in his private life—he never married, but was intimate with many of the *fin de siècle* celebrities in Paris, London, Venice: Henry James, Oscar Wilde, Edward Burne-Jones, Sarah Bernhardt. In 1882, Sargent was twenty-six and rising rapidly to fortune and fame, especially in Paris—but by the end of 1884, he had retreated from the City of Lights, disgraced and grieving, to make a new home in London.

During these years, Sargent produced what are widely considered to be two of his very finest paintings, the *Daughters of Edward Darley Boit* and *Madame X*, haunting portraits with dark psychological depths that engage and puzzle the viewer. Mary F. Burns' second work of historical fiction—*Portraits of an Artist*—imaginatively portrays the motivations and passions that underlie Sargent's creative force and brilliantly revealing art.

**“Set in the Europe of 1882, the writing is richly subtle and each character exquisitely drawn. One hears murmurs behind doors and the truth just beyond the corner until the hearts of two women—one very young and one very beautiful—are broken forever. In the end of this fascinating novel, however, it is the portrait of the young artist himself, still an enigma, which lingers in the reader's mind. Wonderful writing!”**

—Stephanie Cowell, *Claude & Camille, Marrying Mozart*

**“Glittering surfaces reveal surprising secrets in bedrooms and galleries, and you couldn't ask for a better docent as you travel from Paris to Venice to Florence to Nice. You'll likely never look at Sargent's glorious portraits in the same way again because Burns has given us a new way of appreciating their genius.”**

—Lev Raphael, *Rosedale in Love: A Gilded Age Novel*



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Ms. Burns writes historical fiction, is a member of and book reviewer for the Historical Novel Society, has won awards for short stories, and lives in San Francisco.

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