

Elle est partie le lendemain
 pour un bonjour d'adieu
 exact - Mon amour
 Et chez Lucien au
 moment à Paris, et c'est
 votre grande condition
 pour le classer. J'ai
 insisté sur la rue
 de la cour de
 Saint-Denis future
 avec des autres à usage,
 et elle s'y tienne.
 Il faut que le bâtiment
 soit en état de recevoir
 chez Lucien et à Paris

les mentes  en place de
 l'autre.

Sont autres arrangements?
 Mieux que comment sur le classer
 à faire. Surtout sans être à
 la mode. (abus). Je suis sur
 ici pour quelques jours.
 winterman & Co
 par la voie

SARGENT, MONET... AND MANET

Elaine Kilmurray

In December 2006, I went to Paris to look at a cache of over a thousand letters written to Claude Monet by fellow artists (Caillebotte, Mary Cassatt, Cézanne, Manet, Pissarro, Renoir, Rodin, Sisley), writers (Octave Mirbeau, Gustave Geffroy) and his principal dealer (Paul Durand-Ruel) that had remained in the collection of Monet's descendents and were about to be auctioned. They had passed through generations of the Monet family and many were unreleased and/or unpublished. Those of us working on the John Singer Sargent catalogue raisonné project were particularly interested in seventeen letters from Sargent to Monet. There has always been a sense of the provisional in accounts of the relationship between the two artists, a scarcity of fixed points and an absence of detail. We wanted to see how illuminating these letters were and how helpful they might be in filling lacunae and deepening our understanding. The timing was fortuitous: we were engaged on research for Volume V of the catalogue raisonné, in which we would catalogue Sargent's most 'Impressionist' paintings.

At the Artcurial auction house, I spoke to Thierry Bodin, who had done initial transcriptions of *all* the letters for the sale catalogue to a daunting deadline. The members of the catalogue raisonné team have struggled with Sargent's writing (especially when in French, Italian or Spanish) for decades, and it was gratifying to hear from M. Bodin that, while Octave Mirbeau's tight, closely worked hand had given him the most trouble, Sargent's had come a close second. During the auction, the Musée d'Orsay bid for two of the Sargent letters—one concerning Manet's *Olympia* and a second with particular biographical significance for Monet—and it seemed fitting that these two letters should be housed in the museum's archive, but Adelson Galleries was fortunate in acquiring the rest.¹

It seemed to us that this was an opportunity to trace the relationship between the two artists, using the 'new' letters, previously published correspondence and other relevant research material, conscious that it would be a work in progress rather than a definitive account. We decided to transcribe, translate and annotate the 'new' letters in full to make them available to scholars, and to keep personal intervention and authorial interpretation to a minimum. In this essay, I hope to provide a summary but more discursive commentary on the piece of work we entitled (using a phrase from one of the 'new' letters): 'John Singer Sargent and Claude Monet: Cher Ami et Grand Artiste'.²

There is little in the new material that sheds light on the relationship between the two men during Sargent's years in Paris (1874-1886). To summarize, it is very likely that Sargent and Monet met in Paris 'around 1876'. We have this from Monet's own account, as told to Evan Charteris, Sargent's biographer, who visited the French artist in Giverny after Sargent's death. Monet was an old man at this stage, but there is no reason to doubt the substance of his version of the first meeting. The young American's impact at the Paris Salon from 1877 onwards meant that he had a high profile in the press and he must have been the subject of conversation among artists: Edgar Degas, for example, was certainly aware of him at an early stage.³ Degas, Monet, Renoir



FIG. 1 *A Gust of Wind*, c. 1883, Oil on canvas, 24 1/4 x 15 inches (61.6 x 38.1 cm). Private collection

LEFT Excerpt of 1891 letter from Sargent to Monet (see fig. 18)

and Sargent all contributed to an exhibition at the Cercle des Arts libéraux on the rue Vivienne in the spring of 1881. Other contributors included Sargent's teacher, Carolus-Duran, Jean-Charles Cazin, Gustave Doré, Charles Giron, Robert-Fleury and Edouard-Alexandre Sain.⁴ Recent scholarship has made it apparent that the artistic milieu in Paris was less polarized and less tidy than the seductive narrative that lined the avant-garde heroes up against the academic villains would have us believe. In light of this still emerging understanding, it is not extraordinary that artists like Monet and Degas, who are so associated with the independent Impressionist shows, were also exhibiting at the same venue as an artist like Sargent, who was perhaps closer to the *juste milieu*. This, however, illustrates the breadth of the general artistic environment, rather than providing evidence of individual associations.

During his early Paris years, Sargent developed a distinctive, even startling style. He looked to the model of the past, but he was not overawed by it, and he was responsive to contemporary patterns of change. He was making his own way between academic probity and the impulse towards immediacy and informality associated with the 'new painting'. He trod a very fine line. His facture was brushy and visible in the manner of young French-trained artists whose education reflected an interest in the technical élan of Velázquez and Frans Hals and his compositional devices were daring and unorthodox, but he seems to have relished fraying the edges of genre and tradition, and he is adept at slipping in and out of categories. In *El Jaleo* (1882, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston), his vertiginously exciting study of the Spanish dance, he used a virtually monochromatic palette and he is consciously old masterish (Velázquez, Goya) in his references, but his handling is sketchy in the extreme and was seen as controversial at the Salon, where the issue of 'finish' remained something of an artistic litmus test.

At a certain point in the early to mid 1880s, there is a sense of new departure as Sargent's approach moves from an expressive tonal realism towards a brighter, more highly keyed palette, a more broken brushwork, a charged concern with natural light. The first instance of his creating a painting in what might be called a Monetesque vein is probably *A Gust of Wind* (fig. 1), Sargent's flagrantly sketchy study of the writer Judith Gautier. She stands windblown on a sand dune amid spears of marram grass against a sapphire blue sky and scudding clouds, holding on to her hat, her features abbreviated in bold shorthand that recalls Manet. It would be difficult to look at this painting and not conclude that Sargent had Monet's study of his wife and son, *La Promenade* (fig. 2) in his mind; he would have seen the painting at the second Impressionist exhibition in 1876. *A Gust of Wind* is undated and has been dated as late as 1887, but catalogues raisonnés are lengthy enterprises, the time span giving one the opportunity to revise one's opinions. In Volume I of the catalogue raisonné, we dated it c. 1883-85, but we are now minded to place it at the earlier end of that date bracket. This change of opinion was influenced by another group of letters that have recently surfaced from a private collection. We know that Sargent was in Brittany in the summer of 1883 where he had been invited to work on what would be his infamous portrait of Madame Pierre Gautreau (*Madame X*, 1883-84, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York). In Brittany, there were comings and goings between the houses of three women, all of them Sargent sitters: Amélie Gautreau at Les Chênes at Paramé; the writer and translator, Emma Allouard-Jouan at Villa Beauvoir, nearby at Dinard; and Judith Gautier at Le Pré des Oiseaux at St Enogat. It seems to



FIG. 2 Claude Monet, *La Promenade (Woman with a Parasol—Madame Monet and her Son)*, 1875, Oil on canvas, 39 ½ x 32 in. (100 x 81 cm). National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon (1983.1.29)



FIG. 3 Claude Monet, *Painting, by the Edge of a Wood*, 1885, Oil on canvas, 21 x 25 ¼ in. (53.3 x 64.1 cm). Tate, London (N04103)

us that the evidence placing Sargent and Judith Gautier securely in Brittany in 1883 (and the chronology of the next few summers which sees Sargent so much in England) alters the balance of probability in favour of *A Gust of Wind's* being painted in Brittany that summer.⁵

The most sustained contact between Sargent and Monet took place in the second half of the 1880s. They were both at a dinner to honour Edouard Manet on 5 January 1885 at the restaurant Père Lathuille on the avenue de Clichy (Sargent appears to have been the only non-French artist or writer to attend).⁶ Both Sargent and Monet contributed paintings to Georges Petit's *Quatrième exposition internationale de peinture*, which was held at his sumptuous gallery on the rue de Sèze in May. We lack firm evidence placing Sargent at Giverny that summer, but it is very likely that his iconic study of Monet painting *en plein air* (fig. 3) shows the French painter at work on *Pré à Giverny* (*Meadows with Haystacks near Giverny*, fig. 4), which was certainly painted in 1885. There are some differences in the palette between Monet's painting and the small canvas in Sargent's study, but the compositional similarities are marked: the tree line mimics that in the Monet painting, a haystack is visible in the far left hand corner of the canvas on the easel in Sargent's study, and the sky is painted with similar diagonal strokes. Over the next few years, there are indications that Sargent is seeking Monet's advice and experimenting with similar painting strategies. We know that Sargent wrote to Monet in October 1885, asking his advice about a picture he was working on at the time (probably *Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose*) and making what Monet described as 'an unusual enquiry about the use of yellow and green'.⁷ We also know from a recorded conversation between the dealer Georges Bernheim and Monet that Monet and Sargent painted together at Giverny and that Sargent did not embrace whole-heartedly the Impressionist notion of 'pure colour'. Monet used black pigment rarely at this stage, and Sargent could not paint without it: 'One day the American painter Sargent came here to paint with me. I gave him my colors and he wanted black, and I told him: "But I haven't any." "Then I can't paint," he cried, and added, "How do you do it!"'⁸

By spring 1886, Sargent had decided to settle in London, but a revealing letter to Monet written the following March makes it clear that he had some



FIG. 4 Claude Monet, *Pré à Giverny (Meadow with Haystacks near Giverny)*, 1885, Oil on canvas, 29 x 36 inches (73.7 x 91.4 cm). Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Bequest of Dr Arthur Tracy Cabot, 1942 (42.541)

anxieties about what he might have lost in leaving Paris. There is also an implication that he is still fretting about *Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose*, his English study of children lighting lanterns by twilight, a painting that he had worked on over two campaigns in Broadway in Worcestershire in 1885 and 1886 (and that he hoped to send it to the Salon in 1888).⁹ With the London exhibition season weeks away, it was ‘still not quite right’:

I have spent so much time on the same two canvases this year thanks to this climate, that I barely have anything to exhibit at the two shows here [The Royal Academy and the New English Art Club in London]. I really must be represented or I have failed in my purpose of coming to this country. I deeply regret that I shall have nothing for the Salon, because I really do not want to be forgotten in Paris. It would upset me if I were considered a poor idiot, who has ceased to exhibit there to make a statement. Next year I shall send my picture, which is still not quite right. I beg you, if you hear from our friends that I am a bolter or ungrateful, or that I am sulking, to contradict such nonsense.¹⁰

It would be instructive to read this in concert with a letter Sargent wrote to Edwin Russell, an artist friend, eighteen months previously. In the latter, Sargent considers his situation after the *Madame X* scandal, writing in an unusually reflective vein. These letters indicate just how transitional this period was for the artist and how delicate was his equilibrium.¹¹

Sargent visited Monet in Giverny at least once in 1887 (in company with Auguste Rodin), probably painting his profile study of Monet (c. 1887, National Academy of Design, New York) at this time. From 1887 to 1889, Sargent brought the spirit of Monet to England, painting riverside studies at Henley-on-Thames and Wargrave in 1887, at Calcot in 1888 and at Fladbury in Worcestershire in 1889. He used a *bateau atelier*, as Monet had famously done, and complained about ‘the practical difficulties of painting people on boats on the water, in between boats, etc’, as if to a fellow sufferer.¹² He was successful in enticing Monet to visit him at Calcot (‘the countryside is charming, with a delightful little river’)¹³ and he experimented with similar motifs, painting women in punts (plates 12, 20, 21, 28) and a figure study of his sister Violet walking by the river at Calcot with a parasol, *A Morning Walk* (1888, fig. 5).¹⁴ The latter seems to use Monet’s recently painted *Essai de figure en plein-air: Femme à l’ombrelle tournée vers la gauche and vers la droite* (Musée d’Orsay, Paris (RF 2621) as its prototype, but it acts almost as a counterpoint to Monet’s work. His figure is physical whereas Monet’s are ethereal; the form of his model is set against grass and water, whereas Monet’s models are creatures of air and light; his chromatic range is rich and vivid, whereas Monet’s is all powdery pastel, and his pigment is thickly, sensuously applied, whereas Monet’s is elaborately varied. The following year, Sargent wrote to Monet from Fladbury, inviting him to visit him there and mentioning a specific picture that he was about to embark on: ‘It is really very pretty here, and I urge you again to come — it is an old house with grassy terraces sloping down to the water. I am going to start work on a picture of my sister dressed in white against a background of blue water with clouds reflected in it’ at Calcot, and *Lady Fishing—Mrs Ormond* and *Violet Fishing* (1889, Tate, London and plate 31) at Fladbury.¹⁵ The individual artistic personalities of the two men are evident in their respective punting scenes. Monet’s are flatly decorative studies painted very much *à la japonais*, while Sargent’s betray an interest in dream and suspended life, a sensibility associated with a poet like Stéphane Mallarmé in France and with the art of painters like Albert Moore and Frederic Leighton in England.



FIG. 5 *A Morning Walk*, 1888, Oil on canvas, 26 ½ x 19 ¾ inches (67.3 x 50.2 cm). Private collection



FIG. 6 *Lady with a Blue Veil*, 1890, Oil on canvas, 30 x 25 ¼ inches (76.2 x 64.1 cm). Private collection

Sargent was reticent about discussing technique, but a recorded conversation hints at his interest in the way Monet painted. When he was in America in 1890, Sargent painted an unusual outdoor study of Sally ('Satty') Fairchild (1869-1960), the daughter of his friends Charles and Elizabeth Fairchild of Boston. She is in profile, wearing a boater-like hat, and her face is covered with a blue veil. (fig. 6). Lucia Fairchild transcribed what Sargent had said to her about wanting to paint like a Monet he had seen at the Boston dealer Doll and Richards on Tremont Street:

...he, sketching Satty this morning, said he should like to do her just the way the sky of the Monet at Dolls was done — 'very good for one, that', he said — and then went on saying how painting portraits especially 'one got into a sort of way — like handwriting, you know — capital letters and that sort of thing. It's very good for one to get quite away from it once in a while — etc.' Later he mentioned Whistler as being remarkably free from 'anything like that'.¹⁶

Sargent sent two of his Calcut studies, *A Morning Walk* and *Saint Martin's Summer*, to the New English Art Club exhibition in London in April 1889 and *A Morning Walk* and *Paul Helleu Sketching with His Wife* (1889, plate 30) to various exhibition venues in America the following year. The New English Art Club exhibition coincided with an exhibition of Monet's work at Goupil Galleries and, inevitably, comparisons were drawn. Monet recognized that he was the inspiration for Sargent's experimental work, telling Alice Hoschedé: 'Above all, I see that Sargent is engaged in this project and proceeds by imitating me'.¹⁷ In a later letter, he was gleeful about the fact that the English artists were 'savaged by the newspapers. I alone am viewed favourably and sympathetically'.¹⁸

SARGENT'S MONETS

This incipient artistic dialogue is paralleled by Sargent's interest in acquiring paintings by Monet. Research can be a serendipitous business. I was only in Paris for just over 24 hours that day in December 2006, but a friend urged me to visit the Institut néerlandais on the Left Bank, near the Musée d'Orsay. The Institut has a collection of autograph letters, a few Sargents among them. It is one of the letters in the Frits Lugt collection at the Institut that gives the first record of Sargent's desire to buy a Monet. Sargent wrote to Paul Durand-Ruel from Russell House, Broadway in September 1886, indicating to Durand-Ruel that he was willing to loan a sculpture he owned by the French academic sculptor, Jean Alexandre Joseph Falguière (1831-1900), to an exhibition the French dealer was organizing in New York, only if he could exchange it for Monet's *Maison de jardinier* (fig. 7). *Maison de jardinier* is a sunlit study of part of Francesco Moreno's celebrated garden at Bordighera on the Italian Riviera showing a gardener's house amid a mass of citrus trees. Sargent was nothing if not persistent, eventually acquiring this Mediterranean garden scene, which he described as 'two houses amid orange and lemon trees' in 1891.¹⁹ The letter in which he tells Monet about his purchase includes a little sketch of the painting (fig. 8).

Sargent had bought three Monets in the meantime, the first two in 1887. *Bennecourt* (fig. 9) is a square format early spring landscape in which the little village in the Ile-de-France is seen through a line of trees almost bare of leaves, their slender trunks cropped at the top by the picture frame making a sylvan screen with a strong perpendicular emphasis.²⁰ *Vagues à la Manneporte* (fig. 10) is an extremely freely painted study of the largest, most spectacular



FIG. 7 Claude Monet, *Maison de Jardinier*, 1884, Oil on canvas, 23 ½ x 28 ¾ inches (60 x 73 cm). Private collection.



FIG. 8 Illustration in letter from Sargent to Monet

and most inaccessible of the three great limestone portals at Etretat on the Normandy coast. The dramatic cliffs, the sea and the changing light drew artists like Eugène Boudin and, most notably, Gustave Courbet, who painted at least fourteen cliff studies and over twenty seascapes in the area. Monet was undoubtedly inspired by Courbet's example, but he was also eager to find motifs that were not stale and over-worked by other artists. Unless you could persuade a local inhabitant with a *cabaheu* (small boat) to take you there, the Manneporte could only be reached via a long tunnel that passed through the cliff behind the Porte d'Aval. Once there, the little cove was physically confined, it offered restricted angles of vision and the tides could be perilous. Monet was unperturbed, describing his delight in discovering an untrammelled site to Alice Hoschedé from Etretat:

You are right to envy me, you cannot imagine the beauty of the sea over the past two days, but what talent is required to portray it, it is enough to make one insane. As for the cliffs here, there is nothing like them. Today, I got down to a place where I have never dared hazard before, and I saw some admirable things there, and so I went back very quickly to find my canvases, and finally I am very happy.²¹

We can only speculate about why Sargent chose to buy *Vagues à la Manneporte*. The monumental arches of Etretat have entered the canonical imagery of nineteenth century French art: they have a meaning for artists of the period. Painting the Manneporte from the beach represents the extremity of Monet's commitment to finding new motifs, to painting *sur le motif* and to overcoming difficult physical and logistical conditions in order to be able to do so, and to painting at a specific moment in time under specific conditions of light. It is also a painting in which the process of painting is very apparent, and it may be that it was its very rawness, the evidence of the physical laying on of pigment, that appealed to Sargent.²² It is a painting that seems to sum up Monet's own manifesto. The letter Sargent wrote to Monet about his new acquisition implies that Monet was not altogether happy with the picture, possibly regarding it as unfinished, but it breathes Sargent's own delight and wonder: 'I can hardly tear myself away from your delightful picture, for which 'you do not share my enthusiasm' (what nonsense!), to tell you again how much I admire it. I could stay gazing at it for hours on end in a state of sensuous abandon or enchantment if you prefer. I am thrilled to have something that gives me such joy in my home'.²³ The American artist Theodore Robinson noted a conversation he had with Monet a few years later. It suggests that Monet had changed his mind about the painting, or at least about what it represented about his way of working:

Called on Monet. He said that he regretted he could not work in the same spirit as once, speaking of the sea sketch Sargent liked so much. At that time anything that pleased him, no matter how transitory, he painted regardless of the inability to go further than one painting. Now it is only a long continued effort that satisfies him, and it must be an important motif, that is sufficiently entraînant.²⁴

Vagues à la Manneporte and *Maison de jardinier* remained in Sargent's possession until the end of his life.²⁵

Two years later, Sargent bought a figure study that is unusual in Monet's oeuvre, *Paysages avec figures, Giverny* (fig. 11), a family study depicting, from left to right, in the foreground, Michel Monet, Germaine Hoschedé, and Jean-Pierre Hoschedé, and, in the background, Jean Monet and Suzanne Hoschedé.



FIG. 9 Claude Monet, *Bennecourt*, 1887, Oil on canvas, 32 x 32 inches (81 x 81 cm). Private collection



FIG. 10 Claude Monet, *Vagues à la Manneporte*, c. 1883 or 1885, Oil on canvas, 28 3/4 x 36 3/4 inches (73 x 92 cm). Private collection



FIG. 11 Claude Monet, *Paysages avec figures, Giverny (Five Figures in a Field)*, 1888, Oil on canvas, 31 1/2 x 31 1/2 inches (80 x 80 cm). Private collection

When Sargent talks about Monet's work, the sense of reverence borders on idolatry. Here he is in 1889: 'I am still haunted by the memory of your most recent paintings, full of unfathomable things. Do not hold it against me if I exclaim loudly at the merest trifle when I return to your studio. I am fully aware that your work at the moment is surpassing that of all others and nearing perfection'.²⁶

OLYMPIA

Sargent bought *Paysages avec figures* in 1889, a year marked by a special collaboration between him and Monet. They were the combined driving force in raising money by subscription to purchase Edouard Manet's *Olympia* (fig. 12) for the French national museums.²⁷ Manet had challenged the French artistic establishment throughout his career and, after his death in 1883, he became a hero to artists representing a range of sympathies. *Olympia* had caused a sensation at the Salon of 1865 on several counts: its unidealized portrayal of a nude woman; the unapologetically modern sexuality it presented; the way in which it seemed to play fast and loose with its old master references and the blatant flatness of its handling. Its talismanic status was reinforced when it was again exposed to public view (it was one of several works by Manet included in an exhibition of French art held in Paris at the same time as the great Exposition Universelle of 1889). Sargent heard that an American was interested in buying the painting for 20,000 francs and he was anxious that it should not leave the country and be lost from sight in a private collection.

There is certainly no shortage of evidence of Sargent's admiration for Manet (fig. 13). He was enthusiastic about the Manet retrospective, which was held at the École Nationale des Beaux-Arts, Paris from 6-28 January 1884.²⁸ He bought two paintings at the Vente Manet (Hôtel Drouot, 4th and 5th February 1884);²⁹ he attended a banquet in Paris in honour of Manet early in 1885 and, later that year, he went with the artist Georges Jeanniot to see Manet's widow at her house in Gennevilliers and saw *Olympia* hanging in pride of place over the piano.³⁰ It was not unusual to hear the names Sargent and Manet linked together in the press in the early 1880s: critics wrote about the young Sargent as if they expected him to pick up the master's torch.³¹ It is unsurprising then that Sargent should have been active in the campaign, but the degree of his involvement demonstrates that, several years after his move from Paris to



FIG. 12 Edouard Manet, *Olympia*, 1863,
Oil on canvas, 51 1/2 x 74 3/4 inches (130.5 x 190 cm).
Musée d'Orsay, Paris (RF 644)

London, he was still embedded in French cultural life. It is quite clear that Monet took charge of the administrative burden (he virtually gave up painting for six or seven months to devote himself to the project) and liaised with the museum authorities, but Sargent played his part in pursuing donations (he seems to have been active in securing the contributions of the artists Giovanni Boldini and Alfred Philippe Roll, and the critic and collector Théodore Duret, for example). He acted as informal mediator between Princesse Scy Montbéliard (later Princesse de Polignac), heiress to the Singer sewing machine fortune, and Monet, with regard to payment for a Monet she was buying (*En Norvégienne*: Wildenstein no. 1151) and her donation to the subscription fund. The princess was an ardent devotee of Manet; she owned, his *La Lecture* (1865, Musée d'Orsay, Paris), for example, and she made the single largest financial contribution to the *Olympia* subscription (two thousand francs).

SARGENT AND THE COLLECTORS

One fascination of the correspondence of this period lies in what the criss-crossing of the various personalities reveals about the Parisian artistic landscape of the time. Princesse Scy owned several works by Monet, and she shared musical tastes with Sargent (notably Fauré and Wagner). Sargent painted a formal full-length portrait of her (fig. 14) and introduced her to the French sculptor and ceramicist Jean-Joseph-Marie Carriès (of whom Sargent painted a lively head and shoulders study [fig. 15]).³² She envisaged a completely white room which would be decorated with ceramic work by Carriès and in which she would hang her Monets.³³ This does not appear to have become a reality, but the princess did commission Carriès to create the work which (though unfinished—only fragments survive) is regarded as his masterpiece, a monumental decorative doorway in ceramics for a room in her new Paris home on avenue Henri-Martin (now avenue Georges-Mandel), which she intended to house the original manuscript of Wagner's opera, *Parsifal*. *La Porte de Parsifal* (1890-94) was a remarkable, fantastical and eccentric conception, one of the fascinating might-have-beens of nineteenth century French art.³⁴

Sargent was also acquainted with Maurice Leclanché (1848-1923) and his wife Céline. They amassed an important collection of Impressionist paintings, including several Monets, and works by Manet, Mary Cassatt, Camille Pissarro, Paul Gauguin, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, and Paul Signac. There was a proposal that Sargent should do a portrait head of Madame Leclanché (this was not, as far as we know, carried out).³⁵ It is apparent that Sargent enjoyed making connections between people. Here he is writing to Monet: 'Madame Leclanché asked me to bring you to lunch at her place. She very much wants to meet you and I am sure you will find her charming, and then you will also be able to see what she has done with your paintings', and is keen to smooth out difficulties: 'The way she said we shall have [the art critic and musician Armand] Gouzien makes me think that you were wrong in believing that he has spoken about you to her disparagingly. He has always seemed very nice to me and that is also the opinion of Helleu [their mutual friend Paul Helleu] and others'.³⁶ The Leclanchés were very much part of the circle of Impressionist collectors: each gave five hundred francs to the *Olympia* fund.³⁷

Sargent's cultural fluency, a confidence in several languages and a wide range of contacts in France, England and America, made it possible for him to draw people together in creative ways. We catch glimpses of him at the nexus of interesting relationships between artist and patron/collector. Sargent was



FIG. 13 Edouard Manet, *Self-Portrait with a Palette*, 1878-79, Oil on canvas, 26 ½ x 32 ¾ inches (67.3 x 83.2 cm)



FIG. 14 *Princesse Louis de Scy-Montbéliard*, 1889, Oil on canvas, dimensions unknown. Private collection

the portraitist of choice to several collectors whose collecting interests leaned towards the avant-garde. Thomas Lincoln Manson (1849-1918) was a New York banker and a patron of Sargent's friend, the American artist, Edwin Austin Abbey. Sargent painted a portrait of Manson's wife Mary (fig. 16), but he also seems to have played an informal role in advising Manson or acting for him.³⁸ Inevitably, Sargent promoted his own enthusiasms. Manson owned a pastel portrait by Manet, *Femme à la fourrure de face* (c. 1879, private collection), which Sargent apparently purchased for him.³⁹ He liaised with Monet about a painting that Manson purchased at the Monet/Rodin retrospective, which was held at the Galerie Georges Petit in 1889, sending Monet Manson's cheque for 4000 francs and explaining the arrangements for delivery.⁴⁰ Sargent spent a good deal of time in France in 1889, serving on the Salon jury, painting studies of the cultish Javanese dancers at the Exposition Universelle (to which he contributed six paintings)⁴¹ and visiting Monet at Giverny. He returned to Paris from Giverny on the day of the formal opening of the Monet/Rodin retrospective, lamenting to Monet that he had missed the opportunity to be of any service to him as he 'only saw [Antonin] Proust from a distance, showing [the politician Sadi] Carnot around. Besides, it was probably too late to do anything for you'.⁴² He seems to have made several visits to the retrospective, accompanied on at least one occasion by a collector: 'I went to your exhibition today with an American who offered Petit 6000 francs for the beautiful dam of the Creuse and the Opal of Antibes [both unidentified at present]'.⁴³ He was attuned to the commercial realities of the art market as they affected Monet: 'I am sorry that you are so unhappy about the exhibition, which has after all done you an enormous amount of good, and I cannot believe that you and Petit have not made money from it'.⁴⁴

A couple of years later, Sargent accompanied his friend Mrs Charles Fairchild to Giverny.⁴⁵ She was so captivated by what she saw that she could not make up her mind what to buy. Sargent told Monet: 'I insisted on the view of the sea seen from the top of a cliff with the shadows of clouds and she reserved it. She apparently returned to Durand and took *Les Meules* (see fig. 17, 18) instead of the other' (probably *Sur la falaise à Pourville* [(1882, Wildenstein no. 755, now Nationalmuseum, Stockholm)], which the Fairchilds did acquire from Durand-Ruel in 1891. Sargent concludes this letter with: 'Two other Americans here are asking me about which of your pictures to choose. Decidedly you are in vogue over there'.⁴⁶ He was clearly not operating as an agent, but he seems to have relished his role as advocate and informal mediator.

It was Monet's own opinion that Sargent's enthusiasm for his work had influenced the purchase of his paintings in America. Toward the end of his life, Monet told the American artist Robert Henry Logan that this [*Valley of the Creuse: Gray Day* (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 06.115)] and 'other purchases of his work made by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, at this period were among the first of his paintings bought by any museum and that these had been bought by the Museum through the influence of John Singer Sargent'. It was the painter, collector and scholar Denman Waldo Ross (1853-1935) who bought this painting and presented it to the museum, but Sargent's high profile in Boston and his advocacy of Monet's work may well have been influential.⁴⁷ In an article about Impressionism and American collectors, Hans Huth noted: 'Perhaps we might also expect valuable information from letters American patrons exchanged with Sargent. The special interest shown in Manet might have something to do with Sargent's high admiration for this master, especially since we know that Sargent spent the winter of 1887-1888



FIG. 15 Jean Joseph Marie Carriès, c. 1880, Oil on canvas, 22 x 18 ¼ inches (55.9 x 46.4 cm). Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Nebraska Art Association Collection, Nelle Cochrane Woods Memorial Collection 1972. N-304.

and again the summer of 1890 in this country [America]'. Mark Elder believed that Sargent's admiration of Monet's *La Creuse* series encouraged his fellow Americans to acquire these pictures.⁴⁸

Monet's letters to Sargent have not survived, which inevitably compromises our understanding of the relationship. Sargent was sensitive to Monet's preoccupations. In one letter, written from Morgan Hall, Fairford in Gloucestershire, probably in 1894: 'I was on the point of telegraphing you recently from London to tell you that the weather there seemed to be a settled fog', and again 'every day in London there is beautiful, absinthe-coloured weather. Is not that enough to lure you here?'⁴⁹ The references to the weather imply that Sargent knew that Monet was interested in painting atmospheric city studies (Monet expressed an interest in painting city scenes in diffuse light conditions as early as 1887, but did not begin his London series until 1899). Sargent is always animated about Monet's projects: 'I am hoping to see some Rouen Cathedral pictures at Durand-Ruel's. So leave off the flowers', and makes self-deprecating references to his own mural work: 'I have been working hard on my terrible decorations, which are coming along a little'.⁵⁰ He is anxious to hear that 'painting is finally taking precedence over gardening'.⁵¹ In 1900, Monet told Alice about Sargent's response to his most recent work: 'Sargent seemed a little stunned by some of my canvases but he stood in front of others in admiration'.⁵² When he heard that Monet had decided against having an exhibition at Dowdeswell's in London and might have destroyed some canvases, Sargent was distraught and almost strident in his admonishments.⁵³ There are very few indications of Monet's interest in what Sargent was doing. At one point in 1900, Monet told Alice that he had been to Chelsea to see a portrait that Sargent was working on and to give his opinion on it, but this is a rare occurrence.⁵⁴

A PERSONAL FRIENDSHIP

Sargent could not do enough for Monet and was his first point of contact in London. When Monet proposed a visit, he arranged for him to have access to the collections of Sir Richard Wallace and the Duke of Westminster (mentioning that there were works by Gainsborough and Velázquez to be seen).⁵⁵ He was eager to bring people together. He introduced one of his English friends Alfred Parsons (1847-1920), painter and landscape designer, to Monet. Parsons' landscapes are traditional in character and it seems unlikely that the two men would have found much artistic common ground, but they were both passionate about gardens and gardening and we hear Sargent passing on advice from Parsons to Monet about flowers: 'He asks me to tell you that the perennial orange poppy is called *Papaver pilosum* [Hairy Poppy] — and that you should also get the *Papaver nudicaule* [Iceland Poppy]'.⁵⁶ It is an unlikely but delightful collaboration. In personal terms, Sargent was extremely kind. Monet's son, Michel (1878-1966) came to London to study English. When Michel had an operation (tonsils and adenoids), Sargent went across the river to see him in Battersea, where he was lodging with an English family. Monet's letters to Alice of this period are punctuated by bursts of frustration at Michel's general fecklessness, but Sargent wrote gently, reassuring Monet about his son's health and praising 'the progress he [Michel] has made in English — he is a professor'.⁵⁷

MONET IN LONDON

Sargent's personal kindness and the energy he put into his relationships



FIG. 16 *Mrs Thomas Lincoln Manson*, 1890, Oil on canvas, 56 x 44 1/4 inches (142.4 x 112.4 cm). Honolulu Academy of Fine Arts, Hawaii

were very much to the fore when Monet made an extended visit to London in 1900 to paint studies of the Thames and the Houses of Parliament, repeating the visit the following year. Sargent's friend, the indefatigable Mrs Charles Hunter arranged for Monet to have access to a large room at St Thomas's Hospital with its terrace view of the Houses of Parliament on the other side of the river. Monet seemed to find the intense social round organized by Sargent and Mrs Hunter too much.⁵⁸ Monet and Sargent saw exhibitions together including an exhibition of Impressionist paintings organized at the Hanover Gallery in 1901 by Durand-Ruel, which had nine paintings by Monet, and paintings by Pissarro, Renoir, and Sisley.⁵⁹ Sargent and Asher Wertheimer helped Monet gain access to the Green Room, a club on St Martin's Street.⁶⁰ It has a good view over Leicester Square, enabling Monet to begin work on a small group of city scenes by night.⁶¹ Monet always paid tribute to Sargent's kindness and thoughtfulness. He was gratified and relieved to find Sargent there when he arrived in a funereal London in January 1901, calling him 'very kind and considerate.'⁶² When, in March, Monet became ill, Sargent arranged for his own doctor, Dr William Smoult Playfair, to attend him.⁶³ Sargent, his mother and sister went to see the ailing Monet in his room at the Savoy. Monet was grateful for the attention and asked his wife to write to Mrs Sargent and Mrs. Hunter to thank them for their kindness because, were it not for them, he would have been quite abandoned.⁶⁴

There are a few charming vignettes and fascinating asides: Monet and Sargent walking by the river at Chelsea, and Monet arriving at Sargent's studio and finding him playing Wagner on the piano.⁶⁵ Monet was in London at the time of Queen Victoria's death and found the city in mourning. Sargent arranged for him to watch the funeral procession from the house of an acquaintance opposite Buckingham Palace. Monet was captivated by the ceremonial, but it was the company of 'a great American writer', who lived in England and spoke extremely good French that made the day for him. He told Alice that this man, whom Sargent described as 'the greatest English writer' was 'completely charming to me, explained everything and pointed out all the Court personalities to me, etc. (his name is Henry James).⁶⁶ It is perfectly clear that Monet had no idea who Henry James was.

After around 1905, contact between the two men appeared to wane. The pattern of both their lives changed. After his three visits to London (1899-1901), Monet did not return again, devoting his attentions to his Venetian and then his Water-Lily paintings. For his part, Sargent was increasingly preoccupied by his murals, which meant that his gaze was directed towards America. His sojourns in Europe tended to take him south; he rarely visited Paris and never for any length of time, and then the War effectively put an end to his European travels. At some point (the letter is difficult to date securely), Sargent feared that he had offended the French artist and it is clear from his language that he attached great importance to the friendship:

If this silence [he had not written to Monet for some time] implied anything at all, it was that I felt secure in the knowledge that we had a sound understanding between us, which for my part remains unwavering. It would be a real blow to me if my friendship with you, which is so precious to me, were to suffer in any way.⁶⁷

When Sargent died on 15th April 1925. Monet remembered him affectionately, writing the following day to their mutual friend Paul Helleu: 'We [have] lost an old friend. It is very sad and I immediately thought of you'.⁶⁸



FIG. 17 Claude Monet, *Meules fin de l'été, effet du soir* (*Stacks of Wheat [End of Summer]*, 1890-91 (60 x 100 cm). The Art Institute of Chicago, Arthur M. Wood, Sr., in memory of Pauline Palmer Wood (1985.1103)

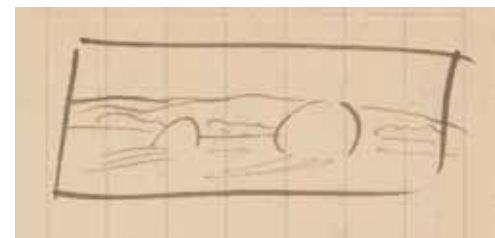


FIG. 18 Illustration in letter from Sargent to Monet

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NOTE

Monet's paintings and letters are identified by the numbers given to them in Daniel Wildenstein, *Claude Monet: Biographie et catalogue raisonné*, 5 vols, Lausanne and Paris, 1979-91. The relevant volumes are abbreviated as Wildenstein II, III and IV.

All works illustrated are by John Singer Sargent unless otherwise indicated.

1. The letter with biographical significance concerns Monet's marriage to Alice Hoschedé in July 1892. Sargent writes to congratulate Monet on the occasion of his marriage.

2. See Richard Ormond and Elaine Kilmurray, *John Singer Sargent: Figures and Landscapes, 1883-1899*, vol. V of *Complete Paintings*, New Haven and London, 2010, pp. 51-73. This volume is hereafter cited as Ormond and Kilmurray 2010.

3. Sargent's 73 rue Notre Dame des Champs address is noted in one of Degas's notebooks, c. 1877-83. Notebook 30, *Bibliothèque Nationale, Dc327d réserve, Carnet 9 (formerly f). Boggs, 'Notebooks', CIX*; see Theodore Reff, *The Notebooks of Edgar Degas: A Catalogue of the Thirty-Eight Notebooks in the Bibliothèque Nationale and Other Collections*, Oxford, 1976, vol. I, p. 133.

4. For more on this exhibition, see Richard Ormond and Elaine Kilmurray, *John Singer Sargent: Figures and Landscapes, 1874-1882*, New Haven and London, 2006, vol. IV of *Complete Paintings*, New Haven and London, p. 24. This volume is hereafter cited as Ormond and Kilmurray 2006.

5. See Deborah Davis and Elizabeth Oustinoff, 'Madame X speaks', *The Magazine Antiques*, vol. CLXIV, No. 5 (November 2003), pp. 116-25.

6. For the dinner in honour of Manet, see Ormond and Kilmurray 2010, pp. 51-52.

7. Wildenstein letter 592. Wildenstein II, p. 262. See also Ormond and Kilmurray 2010, p. 52.

8. René Gimpel, *Diary of an Art Dealer*, New York, 1966, p. 75.

9. *Carnation, Lily, Lily Rose* was sold after its exhibition at the Royal Academy, London in 1887. It was bought for the nation under the terms of the Chantrey bequest.

10. Sargent to Monet, 11 March [1887], Adelson Galleries, New York. See Ormond and Kilmurray 2010, p. 53.

11. Sargent to Edwin Russell, 10 September [1885], Hyman Kreitman Research Centre, Tate Britain, London. See Ormond and Kilmurray 2010, pp. 98-99 for the full text.

12. This is one of two letters given by Monet to Evan Charteris when the latter was preparing his biography of Sargent. The originals have not survived and we are dependent on Charteris's flawed transcription from the French. See Evan Charteris, *John Sargent*, London, 1927, p. 97 (hereafter cited as Charteris 1927). For a translation of the letter, see Ormond and Kilmurray 2010, p. 55.

13. Sargent to Monet, undated ['Tuesday evening'], Adelson Galleries, New York. See Ormond and Kilmurray 2010, p. 55.

14. For a discussion of the punting scenes, see Warren Adelson, 'John Singer Sargent and 'The New Painting'', in *Sargent at Broadway: The Impressionist Years*, New York, 1986, pp. 44-56.

15. Sargent to Monet, undated [1889], written from Fladbury Rectory, Pershore, Worcestershire. Ormond and Kilmurray 2010, p. 60.

16. Lucia Fairchild Fuller Papers, Dartmouth College Library, Hanover, New Hampshire. The painting by Monet to which Sargent refers is almost certainly *Antibes Seen from the Plateau Notre-Dame* (1888, Wildenstein, no. 1172). It is the only pre-1890 painting by Monet with a recorded Doll and Richards provenance. For Sargent's portrait of Sally Fairchild, *Lady with a Blue Veil*, see Richard Ormond and Elaine Kilmurray, *John Singer Sargent: Portraits of the 1890s*, vol. II of *Complete Paintings*, New Haven and London, 2002, no. 261. This volume is hereafter cited as Ormond and Kilmurray 2002.

17. Wildenstein letter 959. Wildenstein III, p. 245. See Ormond and Kilmurray 2010, p. 56.

18. Wildenstein letter 971. Wildenstein III, p. 247. See Ormond and Kilmurray 2010, p. 56.

19. The description comes from a letter from Sargent to Monet dated 1 September [1891], Adelson Galleries, New York. See Ormond and Kilmurray 2010, p. 62.

20. The two works by Monet exhibited in London at the New English Art Club in the winter of 1891, *Early Spring* and *Orange and Lemon Trees*, are almost certainly Sargent's *Bennecourt* and *Maison de jardinier*. In the exhibition catalogue, Monet's address was given as 'c/o John S. Sargent, 33 Tite Street, Chelsea'.

21. Monet to Alice Hoschedé, 3 February [1883], Wildenstein letter 314. Wildenstein II, p. 223.

22. For a description of Monet's facture in *Vagues à la Manneporte*, see Richard Brettell *et al.*, *Monet in Normandy*, New York, 2006 (exhibition catalogue), pp. 130, 132.

23. The letter is in French in Charteris 1927, p. 97. For a translation, see Ormond and Kilmurray 2010, p. 55. See also note 11.

24. Theodore Robinson's diary, 3 June 1892, Frick Art Reference Library, New York.

25. These two works by Monet were in Sargent's studio sale, Christie's, London, 24 and 27 July 1925, lots 302 (as *A Rock at Tréport*) and 303 (as *Bordighera*) respectively.

26. Sargent to Monet, 'Sunday' [summer 1889], Adelson Galleries, New York. See Ormond and Kilmurray 2010, p. 60.
27. The Olympia subscription is well documented. See Ormond and Kilmurray 2010, p. 57 (the principal accounts are cited in the endnotes). For Madame Manet's letter of thanks to Monet, which mentions Sargent specifically, see Ormond and Kilmurray 2010, p. 57.
28. Sargent wrote about the Manet retrospective: 'The most interesting thing in Paris now is Manet's exhibition. It is altogether delightful.' A letter addressed to 'Interesting Mad One' [Miss (Charlotte Ida) Popert] of 18 January 1884 (Boston Athenaeum, Sargent Papers, box 1, folder 18). A transcription of the letter, not in Sargent's hand, and with some discrepancies is on notepaper headed 'Mrs Winthrop Sargent' (AAA roll D317, frames 561-3).
29. Sargent bought an oil study for *Le balcon* (a portrait of Fanny Claus) for 580 francs and a water-colour of irises (both private collections) at the Manet studio sale.
30. For Sargent's visit to Gennevilliers with Georges Jeannot, see Ormond and Kilmurray 2010, p. 16.
31. See, for example, Louis Leroy's imagined conversation between Carolus-Duran and Manet in *Le Charivari*, (13 May 1880, p. 94), in which they fight over the young Sargent's allegiance. See Ormond and Kilmurray 2006, p. 303.
32. See Sylvia Kahan, *Music's Modern Muse: A Life of Winnaretta Singer, Princesse de Polignac*, Rochester, New York, 2003, p. 47.
33. Sargent to Monet, 'Monday' [June 1889], Musée d'Orsay Archives, Paris, ODO 2007.I.163). See Ormond and Kilmurray 2010, pp. 58-59.
34. See Amélie Simier, ed., *La matière de l'étrange*, Petit Palais, Musée des Beaux-Arts de la Ville de Paris, 2007 (exhibition catalogue), pp. 129-50. For Sargent's portrait of Carriès, see Richard Ormond and Elaine Kilmurray, *John Singer Sargent: The Early Portraits, 1874-1889*, vol. I of *Complete Paintings*, New Haven and London, 1998, no. 88. This volume is hereafter cited as Ormond and Kilmurray 1998.
35. A Portrait of Céline Leclanché by Giovanni Boldini of 1881 is in the collection of the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, MA.
36. Sargent to Monet, 'Sunday' [summer 1889], Adelson Galleries, New York. See Ormond and Kilmurray 2010, p. 60.
37. The list of subscribers and the amount of their individual contributions is documented in several places. See, for example, Wildenstein III, pp. 255-56. Letter 1047.
38. For Sargent's portraits of Mrs Manson, see Ormond and Kilmurray 2002, nos 241, and 242.
39. This detail of provenance comes from *The Adolph Lewisohn Collection of Modern French Paintings and Sculptures*, with an essay on French Painting During the Nineteenth Century and Notes on Each Artist's Life and Works by Stephan Bourgeois, New York, 1928, p. 68. The picture is catalogued under the title 'Portrait of a Lady', with the note: 'Purchased by John S. Sargent for Thomas L. Manson, from whose collection it was obtained'. This information almost certainly came from Manson, but we have not, as yet, found a primary source to confirm it.
40. Sargent to Monet, undated [summer 1889], written from Fladbury Rectory, Pershore, Worcestershire. See Ormond and Kilmurray 2010, p. 60.
41. Sargent exhibited in the American section of the Exposition Universelle. He was awarded a *grand prix* and was created Chevalier of the Légion d'honneur.
42. Sargent to Monet, 'Sunday' [summer 1889]. See Ormond and Kilmurray 2010, p. 60. The two men Sargent mentions were extremely influential figures at the time. Antonin Proust (1832-1905) was a journalist and politician and a supporter of the Impressionists (and of Manet in particular). When Sargent saw him at the opening of the Monet/Rodin retrospective, Proust was serving as president of the Exposition Universelle. Mare-François-Sadi Carnot (1837-1894) was president of the Third Republic (1887-1894).
43. Sargent to Monet, undated [June 1889], Adelson Galleries, New York. See Ormond and Kilmurray 2010, pp. 58-59.
44. Ibid.
45. Elizabeth Fairchild (1845-1924) was the wife of the Boston banker Charles Fairchild, who handled Sargent's financial affairs in America. She was a woman of lively, progressive tastes. Sargent painted a portrait of her in 1887 (Ormond and Kimurray 1998, no. 200) and several studies of her children, including fig. 6.
46. Sargent to Monet, 'Tuesday' [1891], Adelson Galleries, New York. See Ormond and Kilmurray 2010, p. 61.
47. Logan's recollections (which include conversations with Monet) of 3 April 1942, recorded by W. G. Constable, curator of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (Curatorial files, European Paintings Department, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston).
48. Hans Huth, 'Impressionism Comes to America', *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 6th series, vol. 29, 1946, pp. 250-51. See also Mark Elder, *A Giverny: Chez Claude Monet*, Paris, 1924, p. 65.
49. Sargent to Monet, undated [1894], written from Morgan Hall, Fairford, Gloucestershire, and sergeant to Monet, 28 December [1894]. See Ormond and Kilmurray, pp. 64-65.
50. Sargent to Monet, undated, [1894]. See Ormond and Kilmurray 2010, pp. 64-65.
51. Sargent to Monet, 28 December [1894]. See Ormond and Kilmurray 2010, p. 65.
52. Monet to Alice Monet [23 March 1900], Wildenstein letter 1536. Wildenstein IV, p. 345.
53. Sargent to Monet, 'Friday' [February? 1905]. See Ormond and Kilmurray 2010, p. 67.
54. Monet to Alice Monet, 4 March 1900. Wildenstein letter no.1523. Wildenstein IV, p. 344.
55. Sargent to Monet, 'Monday' [November 1891]. See Ormond and Kilmurray 2010, p. 63.
56. Sargent to Monet, 'Friday' [1891], written from Morgan Hall, Fairford, Gloucestershire. See Ormond and Kilmurray 2010, p. 63.
57. See Wildenstein IV, pp. 14-15.
59. 58. Joseph Frank Payne (1840-1910) was an eminent physician at St Thomas's Hospital. See Wildenstein IV, pp. 12, 15, and letters 1503-05. Sargent to Alice Monet, [25 January 1901], Wildenstein IV, p. 350, letter 1587.
60. Asher Wertheimer (1844-1918) was a successful London art dealer and Sargent's most important patron. Wertheimer commissioned the artist to paint twelve portraits of his family, ten of which are now in Tate, London. For Sargent's portrait of him (1897-98), see Ormond and Kilmurray 2002, no. 347.
61. Wildenstein IV, p. 24, and letters 1606a, 1608c, 1610,1610a, 1611-12, 1616, and 2999. For the Leicester Square paintings, see Wildenstein nos. 1615, 1616, and 1617.
62. Monet to Alice Monet [25 January 1901], Wildenstein letter 1587. Wildenstein IV, p. 350.
63. Dr William Smoult Playfair (1836-1903) was a celebrated obstetrician and a friend of the artist who painted him c. 1887 (see Ormond and Kilmurray 1998, no. 176).
64. See Wildenstein IV, p. 25, and letters 1620, 1623, 1624.
65. For references to the relevant letters, see Ormond and Kilmurray 2010, pp. 66-67.
66. Monet to Alice Monet, 2 February 1901, Wildenstein IV, p. 351, letter 1592.
67. Sargent to Monet, undated, 'Tuesday evening', written from 1 rue Tronchet, Paris, Adelson Galleries, New York. See Ormond and Kilmurray 2010, p. 67.
68. Claude Monet to Paul Helleu, 16 April 1925, private collection.