

PAINTING A PORTRAIT

BY

DE LÁSZLÓ

"How To Do It" SERIES

No. 6

Painting a Portrait BY [Philip Alexius] de László

RECORDED BY A. L. Baldry

(newly complied in 2013 with
additional commentary & converted into a PDF
by
Indra Anderson)

THE STUDIO LIMITED, 44 LEICESTER SQUARE, LONDON
THE STUDIO PUBLICATIONS INC., 381 FOURTH AVENUE, NEW YORK
1934

Copyrights

The UK copyright on this 1934 book (original text and photographs) expired in 2007 and is now in the public domain. In the US, the book was published but the copyright was never renewed. This happened largely because Philip de László, while famous in the early 20th century swiftly (and unjustly) fell into obscurity within a decade of his death in 1937.

The contents of this work is mainly from a 1934 version printed and engraved in Great Britain by Herbert Reiach Ltd., 43 Belvedere Road, London, S.E. 1. Although it must be said there were four subsequent "impressions" of the book (1937, 1941, 1944, 1947). In the 1947 impression there is a different Plate 1 and a different Plate 20, also there have been removed or added color or b/w photos of artwork in the second section. I have tried to compile a cohesive edition that includes the different Plate 1 (as Plate 1a) and Plate 20 (as Plate 34 in a supplemental section at the end of this book).

All artwork, including the sculpture of A.L. Baldry, is by de László except where noted. The artwork found on page 55 and photo on page 57, I found on a website without attribution. I'm going to presume the copyright for both is The de László Trust. because I assume both images are owned by the de László family still.

The images of artworks in the second section were mostly from Wikipedia or from photographs in the public domain. Wherever possible I have tried to provide a high-resolution image (or direct readers to such images) so that the plates can be magnified without loss of detail.

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My intention was to have an easily accessible portable version of this material because I refer to it frequently. I posted it for friends, who are artists of all levels, all over the world, to help them rediscover this great artist and his extremely helpful work. Any complaints, comments or thanks? Feel free to share.

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Table of Contents

Section 1: The Demonstration

Cover 1

Title Page 2

Copyright 3

Indra's Prologue 7

Editor's Foreword 9

Illustration: *Mr. Charles Geoffrey Holme (1933)* 9

Illustration: *Mr. Charles Holme, Sr (1928)* 10

Introduction 11

Illustration: *Sculpture of Mr. A. L . Baldry* 11

Illustration: *Mr. A. L . Baldry in Spanish Dress (1916)* 13

Frontispiece *Miss Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies (1933)* 14

Preface 16

1 The Artist's Palette 16

2 The Medium 16

Plate 1a: *Palette colors chart* 17

Plate 1b: *Wood palette with paint* 18

Note About the Palette Colors 19

Note About Extra Palette Colors 20

Note About the Medium 20

3 Brushes 21

Plate 2: *Brushes* 21

4 Posing the Sitter 22

5 The First Sketch 22

Plate 3: *First sketch* 23

6 Starting on the Canvas 24

Plate 4a: *The first brush lines* 25

Plate 4b: *Gradual development of main masses* 25

7 General Effect 26

Plate 10: *The portrait after three hours' work* 27

8 The Evolution of Detail 28

Plate 5: *Indicating the general form of the mouth* 29

9 Developing the Likeness 30
Plate 6: *Developing the likeness* 31
10 Unity of Effect 32
Plate 7: *The head and accessories* 33
Plate 8a/b: *The building-up process* 34
Plate 9: *Using the mahlstick* 35
Plate 11: *Continuing with the head, expression and accessories* 36
11 Standing back from the Canvas 37
Plate 12a/b: *Sight sizing the canvas* 38
12 The Value of a Mirror 40
13 Keeping the Sitter's Interest 40
Plate 13: *Checking the portrait with a mirror* 41
Plate 14: *The standing mirror* 43
14 The Study of Psychology 44
Plate 15: *The portrait after six hours* 45
15 The Treatment of Hands and Body 46
Plate 16: *Work on hands and arms* 47
Plate 17: *Bringing up the degree of finish* 48
16 The Accessories 49
17 When to Stop 50
Plate 18: *The sitter, the painter and the completed portrait* 51
18 When a Fresh Start Is Necessary 52
19 Choice of Subject 54
Illustration: *Philip de László in his studio (1937)* 55
20. What Makes a Great Portrait 56
Illustration: *The Artist At Work (1918)* 57
21. Four Works by Philip de László, Discussed by A. L. Baldry 58
Lucy De László 58
Plate 19: *Mrs. De László, Lucy (1919)* 59
Count Albert Apponyi 60
Plate 20: *Count Albert Apponyi (1930)* 61
J. F Peacocke Archbishop 62
Plate 21: *The Late Most Rev. J. F. Peacocke, Archbishop of Dublin (1908)* 63
Mariano, Cardinal Rampolla 64

Plate 22a: Portrait of *Mariano, Cardinal Rampolla del Tindaro (1900)*.....65
Plate 22b: B/W Detail of Hands of *Mariano, Cardinal Rampolla del Tindaro (1900)*.....66
Plate 22c: Color Detail of Hands of *Mariano, Cardinal Rampolla del Tindaro (1900)*.....67

Section 2: Some Great Portraits Discussed

1. Holbein 70
Plate 23*: The Duchess of Milan* 71
2. Titian.....72
Plate 24: *Philip II of Spain* 73
3. Frans Hals 74
Plate 25: *A Man and His Wife* 75
4. Velasquez 76
Plate 26: Detail from *The Surrender of Breda.* 77
5. Van Dyck 78
Plate 27: *The Earl of Strafford and His Secretary* 79
6. Rembrandt 80
Plate 28: *Self Portrait* 81
7. Reynolds 82
Plate 29: *The Duchess of Devonshire and Daughter* 83
8. Gainsborough.....84
Plate 30: *The Morning Walk* 85
9. Reaburn 86
Plate 31: *The Macnab* 87
10. Goya 88
Plate 32: *Charles IV of Spain and His Family* 89
11. John Singer Sargent 90
Plate 33: *H. G. Marquand* 91

Supplemental Section

The Final Work of Philip de László, Discussed by A. L. Baldry 92
Plate 34: *HRH The Duke of Connaught (1937)* 93
Note: Comparing Palettes: Sargent v. de László.....94

Indra's Prologue

Philip Alexius de László, during his lifetime, was considered the successor to John Singer Sargent. The Hungarian-born artist was thirteen years younger than Sargent but had a similar artistic training, work ethic, flair for languages, and genius for portraiture. De László set up his London studio in 1907, the year Sargent retired, and he remained the world's premier portrait painter up until his death in 1937.

In 1933, at the peak of his powers, de László demonstrated his portrait technique (captured in a series of black and white photographs), while answering questions posed by English artist, prolific art writer, and life-long friend, Alfred Lys Baldry. This documentary was published in 1934 by The Studio of London in Volume Six of their "How to Do It" series, which was created to inform and instruct aspiring artists.

The book enjoyed widespread popularity in Europe and the US and went through several printings, the last of which was in 1947. By that time, however, a decade after, de László's passing, he—much like Sargent—had fallen out of both popular and critical favor. Modern art had become abstract. It was no longer based in classical realism. Treasured plaster casts were thrown away by art schools.

In the 1950s however, as a backlash against modern art, John Singer Sargent enjoyed renewed popular favor. This led to a revival of critical interest and, by the 1960s, to Sargent's recognition as the great master we know him as today. But, de László's reputation did not enjoy a similar resurgence as a result and is still struggling to recover its former popular and critical glory.

In 2004, a show of his works was mounted by Christie's of London sparking renewed interest and consideration of de László and his work. Almost annually since, a major museum in Europe or the US has mounted a show of his work. Recently, the de László's Archive Trust has established a Catalogue Raisonné for the artist's work, now accessible online.[1] Also, two very good books have been written about de László: *de László, A Brush with Grandeur*, by Sandra de László (Paul Holberton Publishing; 2nd ed., April, 2010); and *Philip de László: His Life and Art* by Duff Hart-Davis, Caroline Corbeau-Parsons (Yale University Press, May, 2010). Yet, de László's work remains largely unknown by the public and little appreciated by critics.

I created this PDF version of de László's book in because it's a valuable resource that's hard to find these days. I've made it available because, perhaps, other artists might find it valuable too. Whereas The de László Trust's site presents readers with an opportunity to explore in depth de László's life and view his works, none of that is informative in a technical sense. Though I confess, watching Philip de László paint a portrait of a model from Lady Duff-Gordon's fashion house, "Lucile" from start to finish (September, 1928) is incredibly informative, even if the film is silent.[2]

In the end, there is nothing quite so helpful for artists as hearing from the artist himself[3] and no

book can match *Painting a Portrait*, which is jam packed with the artist's many interesting insights and much deceptively simple instruction. And I am not alone in this opinion. The world-renown portrait painter John Howard Sanden often lectures on this book (see http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IEg8CtEA-xo)

In resurrecting this book, I hope to help de László provide instruction and inspiration to a new generation of artists, particularly those aspiring to be portrait painters. Though advanced and professional artists should be able to glean many helpful bits of advice on their own, I have added commentary (in the serif font seen here) for the benefit of beginners and non-art-historians as, after 80 years, once commonplace art teachings and tools are no longer.

It is hoped the commentary will add to the book's usefulness and enjoyment for beginning and intermediate level artists. I have tried to give links to pictures by de László, useful videos of him, or websites on him, as well as books which expand on certain topics de László mentions. In addition, I give some biographical material and make reference to John Singer Sargent now and then because of his similar art training and having worked with some of the exact same sitters.

I encourage readers to explore the artwork presented in the second section of the book online and not just as presented here. Many of these portraits can now be found on museum sites where one can zoom in for a high-def examination. This second section is often skipped over but in it there are many fascinating insights and tips for artists. A careful consideration of this section will lead to much revelation.

If any reader has additional information or spots an error, please let me know so that they might be added in future editions of this volume, as time permits. This book is not for sale. It's a free educational work. Please feel free to distribute it. But don't use any of it for commercial purposes.

Anyone wishing to give a donation in appreciation should direct it to the The de Lazslo Archive Trust to help them further their work.

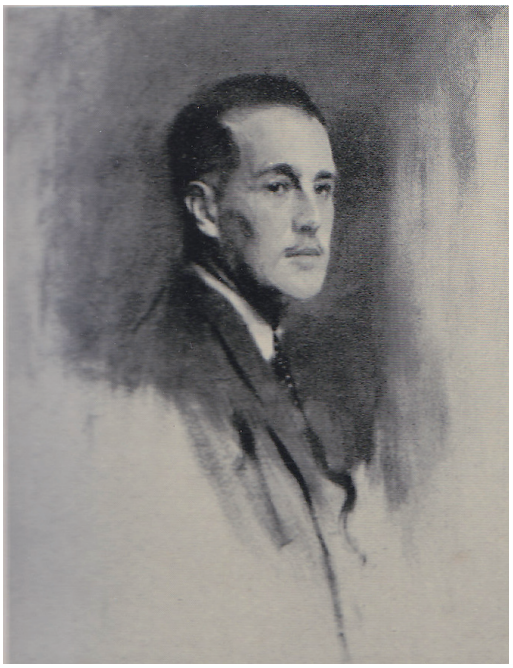
INDRA ANDERSON

NOTES

1. For art: https://www.deLászlóarchivetrust.com. For a page related to this book (with plates), see, https://www.delaszloarchivetrust.com/index.php?cid=8&sid=4. The Lucille model: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mx9abKh-XPc There is also a silent film of the artist painting the bronze horses of St Mark's in Venice, in 1926. You may need to click on the image to enlarge it. Commentary is proviced by the artist's son. http://www.bridgemanart.com/asset/480151/Philip-de-László-painting-The-Bronze-Horses-of-St.?lang=fr To see the finished picture: http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings/paintings/the-bronze-horses-of-st-marks-92586

3. For an older work, see the 1939 book *Portrait of a Painter. The Authorized Life of Philip de László* by Owen Rutter.

Editor's Foreword



PORTRAIT OF C. G. HOLME

There is no Royal Road to the painting of a successful portrait. Success depends upon the painter's observation, his understanding and the ability to paint what he wishes. It is a personal affair.

Much can be learned from those who have won for themselves the title of Master, but it is impossible to have our questions answered, first-hand, by great masters who are no longer with us. De László has painted, and is painting, a great number of important people throughout the world. His name is a household word as a portrait painter of our time. I determined to ask him to pain a portrait especially for this book. He said he would, but he did not wish to appear to be a teacher of portrait painting. It was only his way of doing it, he said, but he would try to answer any questions that might be put to him while he was painting.

I was again fortunate in finding A. L. Baldry—that enquirer into methods and reasons why people paint—enthusiastic for the experiment. Then the sitter—who was there with vivaciousness and with subtlety of expression, easy to behold? We didn't mention this when we asked her, but Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies undertook the double task of posing for painter and camera at the same time. To hold an expression for nine hours odd is really hard work, and is not a talent usually possessed by the average sitter. Upwards

of one hundred forty photographs were taken by me in order to provide the pick for our illustrations, and I take this opportunity of thanking for their skill, patience and their enthusiastic support in producing this book, de László, A. L. Baldry and Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies.

C. G. Holme

Note

Charles Geoffrey Holme (1887-1954) was the son of Charles Holme, (1848-1923) whom de László also painted in 1908 (shown below).

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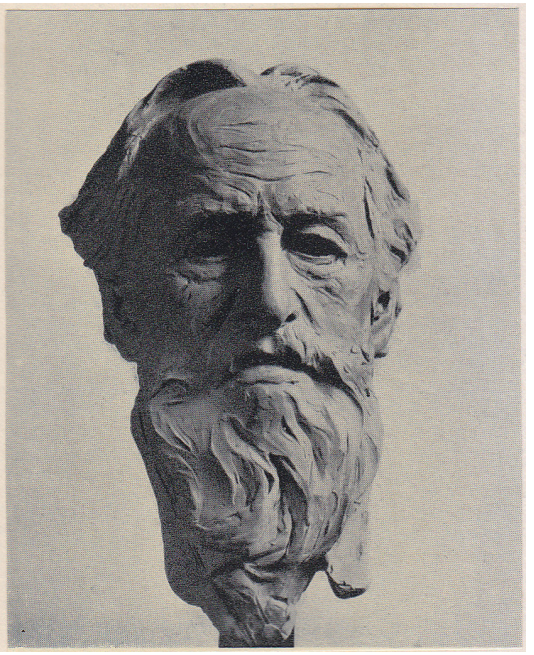
Charles Holme, Sr.

Holme, Sr, worked in the silk trade, as his father had, but following his retirement in 1892, he founded *The Studio: an illustrated magazine of fine and applied art*, a magazine dedicated to treating fine and decorative arts equally. He served as editor of the magazine and also published a series of art books. In 1919, he retired from *The Studio* for health reasons and was succeeded by his son C. G. Holme.

C. G. was already the experienced editor of the special number editions and annual yearbooks of *The Studio* at the time he became editor in chief. As his father had before him, C. G. also wrote a number of books on art, including topics such as early and modern English watercolors, British marine paintings, art collecting, lithography, printing and even embroidery.

C.G envisioned the "How To Do It" series as handbooks providing not only knowledge of certain artistic crafts but a better appreciation of famous artists whose works were used as illustrations.

Introduction



Bust of A. L. Baldry by de László. In this head, the third only that he has done from life, the artist has treated the material exactly as though he were painting, with the same regard to architectural formation, character and expression

How many people are there who really appreciate what it is that enables an artist to take an honoured place in the higher ranks of his profession? Apparently the popular idea is that the master achieves distinction more or less automatically, because nature has endowed him with faculties which will bring him inevitably to the front because without any particular effort on his part. He is, it is assumed, born and not made, and to be eminent is his birthright, his destiny which must be fulfilled.

This assumption, like so many more of the popular ideas, is based upon a misconception. That the potential master is born with faculties definitely out of the ordinary may be true enough, and that by the exercise of these faculties he can hope to command success is probably not less correct, but to suggest that he can dispense with systematic study of the mechanism of his art is, of course, absurd. Indeed, there lies upon him a special obligation to develop to the utmost his power of technical expression because he has so much more to convey by means of it than comes within the reach of men less generously endowed, and this obligation he must always be ready to recognise. As a matter of fact, the artist of the high rank is almost invariably an earnest student and a sedulous craftsman, consistent in his pursuit of knowledge and assiduous in his striving after the fullest control over executive processes—a firm believer in Emerson's dogma "skill

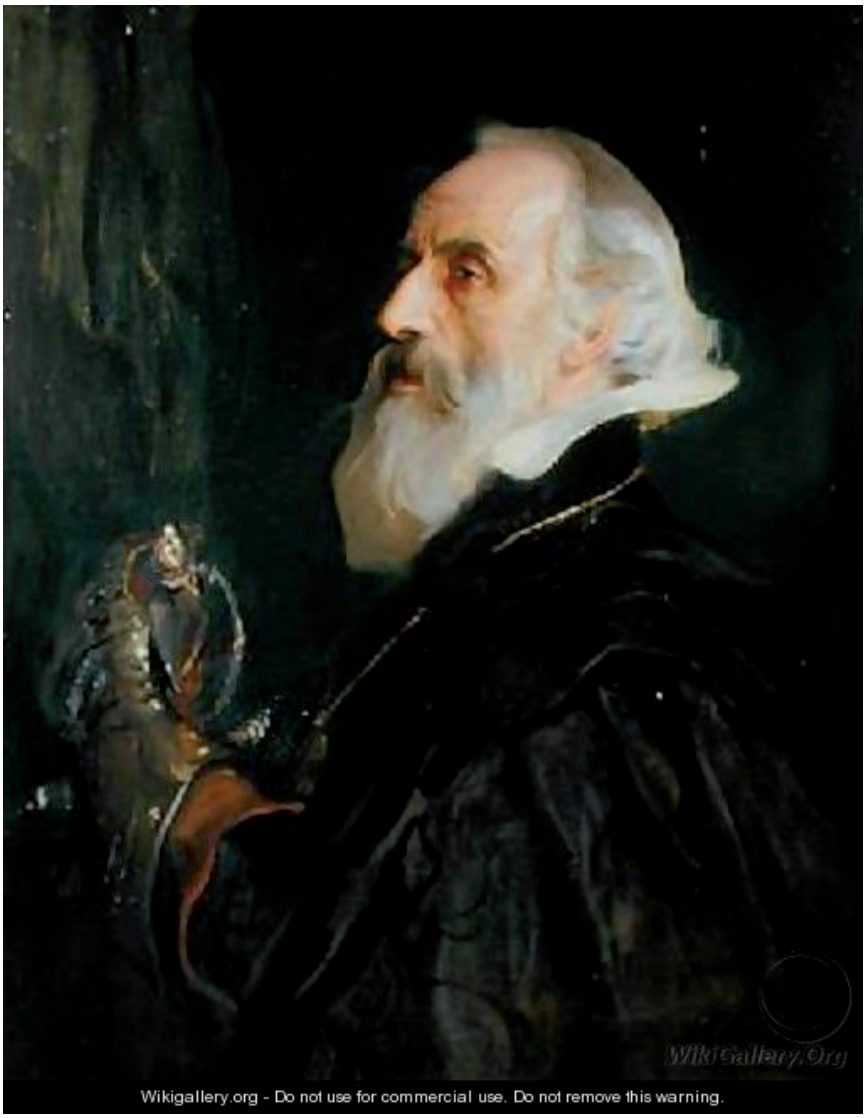
to do comes of doing." It is only the smaller minds in the brotherhood of art that are too conceited to seek for self-improvement and too satisfied with themselves to trouble about the development of what powers they may happen to possess.

It would be difficult to find a better illustration of the working of a serious artistic conscience than is afforded in the career of de László, or of the earnestness with which a greatly gifted artist can approach the problems of his profession. The qualities by which his art is distinguished have their origin, no doubt, in the temperamental equipment which was born in him and are the natural outcome of those essential personal qualities by which his whole attitude to life has been determined. He has an exceptional acuteness of vision and a remarkable perception of both refinements of form and subtleties of tone, he is unusually shrewd in his insight into character and he has a ready responsiveness to impressions which stimulate his imagination and appeal to his aesthetic sense. In the shaping of his individuality all these have played a part and the stamp of them is evident in his work.

But especially it is evident because to the presentation of them he has brought a completeness of technical resource that he has attained only by a lifetime of unflagging effort. Through a long series of busy years he has built up a record of progressive achievement in which there has never been any relaxation in his intention to master all the difficulties of the painter's craft and attain by perfected practice the executive freedom which he knew to be necessary for full self-expression. Even today, with all his accumulated experience and with the quiet confidence which this experience justifies, he is as searching in his observation and as scrupulous in his transcription of significant realities and he was at the outset of his career.

By virtue of this conscience he is able to speak with full authority on all the practical questions with which his fellow artists are concerned; no one, assuredly, can accuse him of laying down the law about matters with which, thorough insufficient experiment, he is imperfectly acquainted. Nor can anyone say that the position which he occupies now is the art world is not one to which he is amply entitled as a reward for his devoted efforts to make his capacities entirely efficient. He has earned his honours fairly and squarely, but that they have been earned and not automatically acquired is just the point that needs to be impressed not only upon the unenlightened public, but upon the art student as well.

A. L. Baldry



Mr. A. L. Baldry in Spanish Dress

Alfred Lys Baldry was from a family of artists. He was an painter, but is best known today as the author of numerous books and articles on artists, art techniques, and the contemporary art scene of his day. He was friends with many artists including Philip de László, whose work he championed.

The painting above, from 1916, is one of several de László, did of Baldry. In this one, he's dressed as a 17th-century Spaniard and painted after the style of Velasquez. I suspect this was done because of Baldry's 1903 biography of Diego Velasquez, an artist whose popularity revived dramatically in the late 19th century.

Baldry and de László were lifelong friends. Baldry wrote several articles about de László, the first in 1911. That admiration continued over the course of 30 years. Baldy was eleven years older but died 18 months after de László, in May of 1939 at age 80.



Miss Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies, 1933

By Philip de László

Oil on canvas, 43 x 30½ inches (100.2 x 77.5 cm)

This painting is of the actress dressed as Queen Anne of Bohemia, from the play *Richard of Bordeaux*, which opened in February of 1933. Critics disliked the play, but the public loved it. It ran for fourteen months in the West End, an unheard of achievement at the time. Then it went on to run in the provinces and the US.

Richard of Bordeaux starred a young John Gielgud, who was also the play's producer and director. It was Gielgud's first time producing or directing a play. The stakes were high. The play's author, Gordon Daviot, had seen Gielgud in a production of Shakespear's *Richard II* and written her new play, a romantic view of a young Richard II as a charming but immature anti-war idealist, specifically for him. Though, it was also a veiled political piece, with WWII about to break out.

In 1924, John Gielgud and Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies had starred together in *Romeo and Juliette*. It was one of Gielgud's first roles. She was so supportive and kind to him that he never forgot it. When it came time to cast *Richard of Bordeaux*, he naturally called upon her to be Queen Anne to his King Richard II.

Some critics felt Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies was weak in her role, but perhaps the truth was more John Gielgud simply outshown her. Prior to *Richard of Bordeaux*, Gielgud was regarded as a respected classical actor, but this role catapulted him to the status of wildly popular superstar. In small part, no doubt, to Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies' friendship and support once again.

In 1942, when Gielgud mounted a production of *Macbeth* (in which he starred), he called on Gwen again, this time to be Lady Macbeth, continuing their tradition of portraying a famous Shakespearean couple every nine years. In reality, the theater's "longest running couple" were not romantically linked. Gielgud was gay and Ffrangcon-Davies a lesbian.

In 1953, John Gielgud was knighted. Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies was made a Dame in 1991, the same year in which she made her final theatrical appearance, in a *Sherlock Holmes* mystery for television. She was the oldest person to ever receive such an honor. She died a year later, at age 101!

British publisher Pickering and Chatto recently released a new 255-page biography on "Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies, Twentieth Century Actress," by Helen Grime, in May, 2013. It's Book 3 of their Dramatic Lives series. See, http://www.amazon.com/Ffrangcon-Davies-Twentieth-Century-Actress-Dramatic-Lives/dp/1848933193

Gordon Daviot was the a pen name of Scottish author Josephine Tey. She was also a famous mystery writer under the pen name Elizabeth Mackintosh. Alfred Hitchock's favorite English flim, among the many he directed, *Young and Innocent* (1937) was based on Tey's novel *A Shilling for Candles* (1936). Interestingly, the murder victim in *Shilling* left her estate to the National Trust, something Tey did at her passing in 1952.

Section 1: The Demonstration

Preface

The best way to make people understand properly the methods which de László employs in his work is to follow him through the evolution of a portrait, explaining stage by stage how he arrives at his results. Let us, by putting questions to him, get this explanation from him in his own words and induce him to tell us what he is aiming at as he builds up his pictures and what is the purpose of the various technical processes he employs.

1. The Artist's Palette

First of all, it would be well to know something about the materials he uses, so the most appropriate question to begin with would be:

Q: What is your palette? May I have a list of the colors on which you mainly depend?

"It is not a very long list. Here they are, in the order in which I put them on my palette- ultramarine, madder, rose madder, zinc white, light cadmium, dark cadmium, yellow ochre, burnt sienna. These are the chief colors I use and ordinarily they are sufficient for any work, but sometimes, when there is a particular reason, I add to them ivory black, Veronese green, lac garance, and orange cadmium." (Plates 1a and 1b)

Q: I notice you choose zinc white. Why is that ?

"Because it is more brilliant than flake white and is not supposed to darken. I may say, too, that I have it specially prepared for me with poppy oil; I like it thin as it would not work freely if it were too stiff."

2. The Medium

Q. What is your reason for having it prepared with poppy oil?

"Poppy oil is a slow drier and that is the reason why I prefer it. I like my painting to keep wet as long as possible so that I can finish straight away the part of the picture I am working on before the paint dries; the slow drying is helpful, it enables me to finish more deliberately and it makes the consistency of the paint more pleasant to handle. Work finished while the paint is still wet always looks fresher and more direct."



Plate 1a. The artist's palette, specially prepared for this volume by Winsor and Newton.

Note

The zinc white is thin to the point of semitransparent. Color strings therefore can contain more tints of slighter gradation. Upshot: an expanded and more versatile color palette.

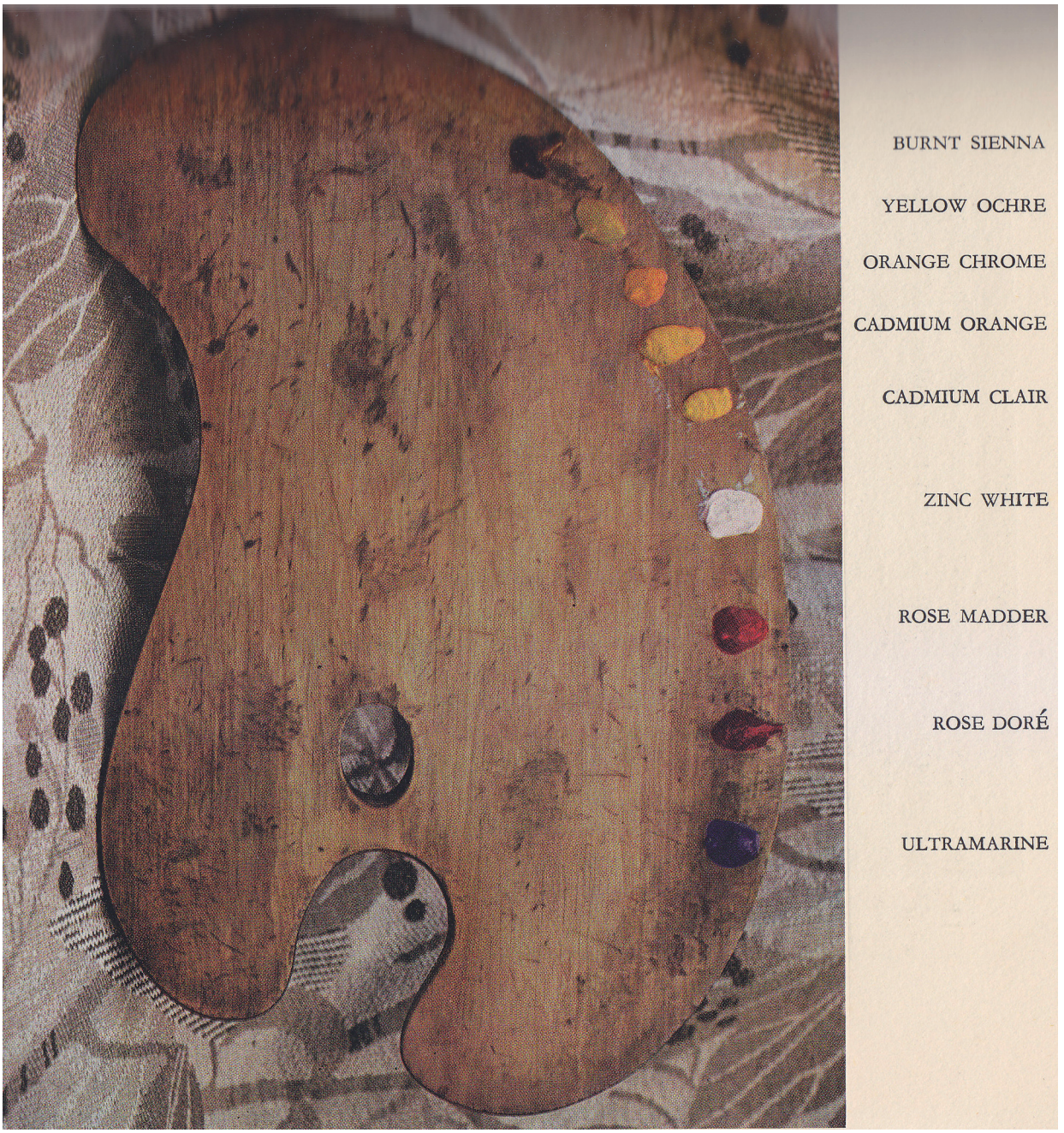


Plate 1b. The artist's palette, showing the colours used and their arrangement.

Note

The names given for the palette colors versus the paint chart versus the descriptions beside the actual palette are somewhat different. The key is to note the hue and the transparency of each. Also, some may find the use of white in the middle of the palette strange, but this practice is fairly common even today. Landscape artist Marc R. Hanson, to name but one, uses this arrangement of colors. http://www.marchansonart.com

Note About the Palette Colors

Palette colors are listed in different ways in different editions of this book, as one can see by comparing the two palette pictures with the actual text. The edition which displays the paint chart does use actual paint on each chart. This chart was made by Winsor & Newton, who approximated some colors de László used. The palette laid out with paint is de László's own. In an effort to clear things up, here is the list including the modern paint names and pigment numbers.

Ultramarine: PB29.

Madder: NR9. Rose Doré is Winsor & Newton's equivalent for sake of the painted chart. We don't know de László's actual brand. Madders came in many shades. De László's was obviously a yellow-biased pink.

Rose Madder: NR9. Genuine Rose Madder is still made. It's blue biased.

Zinc White (made with Poppy Oil): PW4. This color, made with poppy oil, can still be obtained from Blockx, a Belgian maker. Zinc White takes a *long* time to dry even to the touch -- weeks. Made with poppy oil would make the dry time even longer.

Note that de László states he uses this white as opposed to Flake White (aka Lead White). This is due to a common misconception that lead in paint causes it to darken. In reality, with well-made modern lead paints, this never happens.

Many years ago, in the early 20th century, there were incidents of darkening. These were due to badly made paint and using barium sulphate as an extender (used extensively from the 19th century on). For the most part, barium sulphate was the real culprit. Van Gogh's paintings darkened because of his use of this product.

Permalba white contained barium sulphate until recently. Today some cadmium paints still contain it. Avoiding paints with barium sulphate is probably as far as one needs to go if one plans to use lead-based paints.

Light Cadmium / Cadmium Clair: PY35. This is Cadmium Yellow Pale.

Dark Cadmium/ Cadmium: PY35. This is Cadmium Yellow Deep.

Yellow Ochre: PY43. This color is still made.

Burnt Sienna: PBr7 or PBr6. The modern version of this color is not fully transparent as it was in the artist's day. PR101 is often substituted now because it's transparent, but it is a different color.

Anyone wishing to imitate de László's palette would do well to check pigment numbers rather than names and purchase only high-end brands.

Note About the Extra Palette Colors

Ivory Black: PBk9. This color is still made.

Veronese Green: PG21. This color is not made. It is extremely poisonous. There are versions of this color, usually made from Viridian, PG18. Viridian is a transparent color. Veronese Green was semi-opaque.

Lac Garance: PR83. This color is still made. It is typically called Alizarin or Alizarin Crimson. Permanent Alizarin is a different, more brown, product.

Orange Cadmium. PO20. This is Cadmium Orange and it is still made. However, it would seem the actual color de László used was Chrome Orange, PO21. It is available from Rublev as Orange Molydbate.

Chrome Orange contains lead. So, in fact de László did use a lead paint, albeit rarely, but his pictures didn't darken. He uses chrome orange in the demo portrait here.

Note About the Medium

Mediums are something de László *never* mentions. He seems to have used paint straight from the tube without any mediums, for the most part. A careful study of photographs and archived videos of the artist painting show no containers on his palette for mediums. However, it is difficult to believe he didn't use some medium, considering the dripping paint on the canvas in some photographs here.

There is a large metal pitcher just in front of the two vases filled with brushes in his studio, but what does it contain? My guess is turpentine or mineral spirits. It was common practice to do the preliminary sketch using thinned burnt sienna, then proceed, using paint from the tube. Sargent often said he only used paint from the tube. But read his letters. He used a "sparing" amount of turpentine at the beginning, in the first stages.

With de László, we must assume the same method because he finishes his paintings rapidly and works alla prima. Also, the evidence of turps being used is obvious on the canvas, which I'll comment on later. The demo painting here was accomplished in three sittings, each one lasting three hours. His usual method was short sittings on consecutive days. But C.G. Holme implies three sittings of three-hours each all in one marathon day in his foreword and pg 30 confirms that.

A metal pitcher containing some turpentine for the early stage of the painting and later rinsing used brushes (before laying them in a butcher tray to further clean with oil) would be logical. The butcher tray is seen in other studio photos. Frankly he kept his brushes immaculate. Just look at the picture. Not a fleck of paint on them.

3. Brushes

Q: You have there a remarkable sheaf of brushes; do you really use them all?

"I do use most of them because I am very anxious to keep my color always clean, and for a clean touch a clean brush is necessary. I have my sheaf beside me and I can pick a fresh brush from it whenever I want one. By the way, too, I would like to mention that for the sake of purity of color I avoid, as far as possible, mixing more than two colors together at any time." (Plate 2)

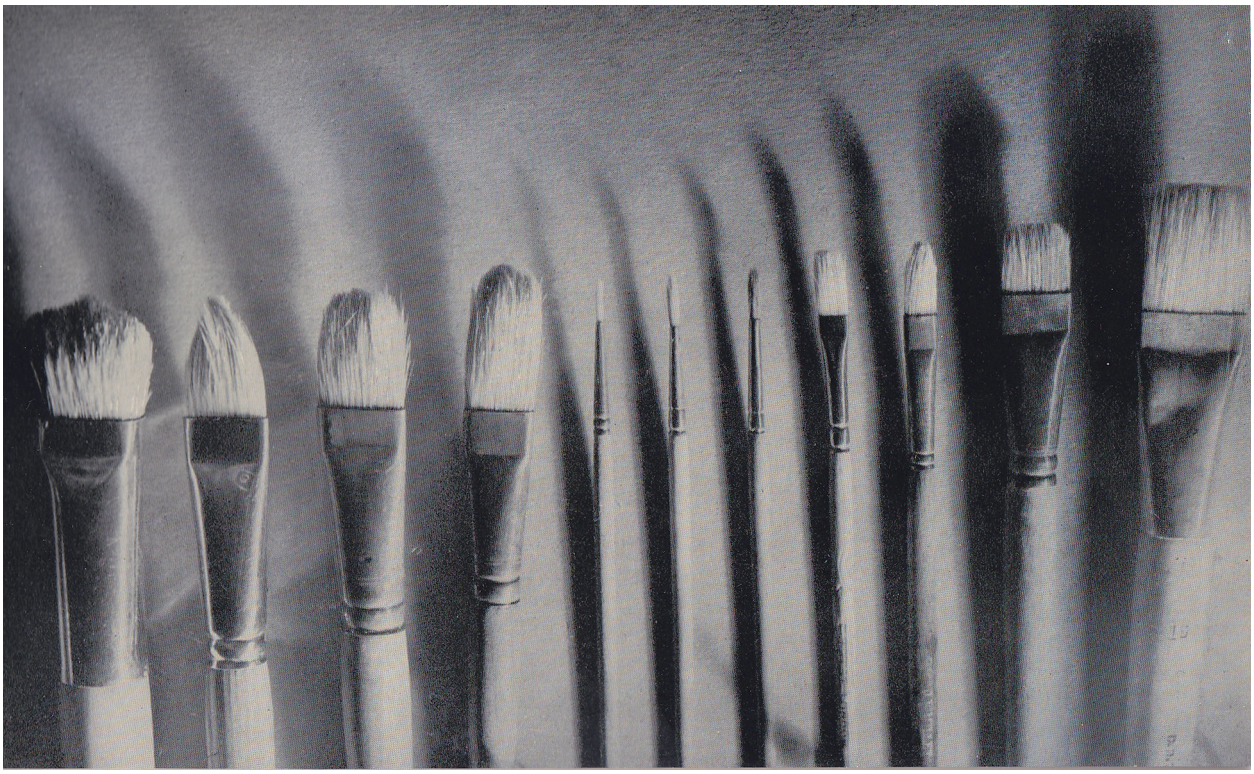


Plate 2. Brushes used by de László. The artist allows himself a wide range so that a clean brush is always at hand.

Note

The flat on the far left is a size 12. All the brushes are hog bristle, but for one small round which might be sable. We see various egberts, filberts, flats, brights, rounds, and even a mop, but nothing of a truly giant nature.

In the pictures of de László's studio, further on in this book, observe the two large ceramic jars stuffed with brushes. Many brushes are multiples of the same brush shape and size so the artist could quickly grab a fresh one and continue on. This is a real necessity if one tries to avoid mixing more than two colors at a time.

4. Posing the Sitter

Q: Now tell me, how do you begin a portrait?

"I find that people are often very shy and awkward when they come into a studio; they seem to look upon being painted as something of an ordeal which more or less alarms them. So, first of all, I like to have a little chat with my sitter, to make him feel at home. This gives me a chance to observe him quietly and to see what kind of pose and expression will suit him best and be most characteristic of his personality. As far as possible I try to get him to pose himself so that the suggested movement shall be easy and natural and free from self-consciousness."

Q: Yes, I can imagine that to be very important. What comes next?

5. The First Sketch

"Then follows the consideration how to distribute the light and shade and last of all comes the decision on a suitable background in harmony with the intended color scheme of the picture. When these matters have been arranged to my satisfaction I do a rapid drawing of the subject in my sketchbook to make sure that the movement, light and shade, and placing are as I wish them to be; in other words, to be certain that the decorative effect of the picture is complete. (Plate 3) But in the case of a larger picture or a group, I do a similar sketch, from nature, in color, to be able to judge the effect of the color scheme in which I want to keep the portrait."

Q: Do you transfer your drawing to the canvas?

"No, I do not use it again; it has served its purpose as a record of my intention, and it has helped me to decide how I should deal with my subject. But the picture is by now fully formed in my mind."

Note

The sketch is where all decisions are finalized. De László's training involved developing solid drawing skills, followed by mastering the capabilities of a chosen palette of colors and selection of brushes. Painting then becomes just a form of drawing.

Once the idea was concretized in a sketch, he was free to paint. It is only with the decisions all already made that the brush can become a spontaneous instrument and bravura is possible. Artist Stapleton Kearns has a short but informative post on bravura http://stapletonkearns.blogspot.com/2010/11/sargent-and-bravura-brushstroke.html



Plate 3. The first sketch made with black and white chalk on toned paper.

Note

Note the white lines denoting the highlights on nose, cheek, forehead and hat. The artist identifies the placement of darks and lights. In a few cases, de László was known to have done a full color study in oil, but his practice was a simple black and white chalk sketch done in a matter of minutes. Something one can see him do in the 1928 film of him painting the fashion model from Lucille.

6. Starting on the Canvas

Q: How, then, do you start on the canvas?

"My clean canvas is now on the easel before me, in its frame—"

Q: In its frame?

"Yes, certainly. I believe that the frame is an integral part of the picture and must be there from the beginning. If it is added at the last moment after the picture is finished there is always the risk that it may not agree with the character of the work."

Q: Well, you have the canvas and the frame, what about the picture? What do you do to set that going?

"You seem to think that my practice is full of dark secrets. I assure you, my dear friend, that I have no tricks to reveal; I have no enlarged photographs up my sleeve and no other mechanical devices which I can produce for your benefit. I just put my canvas beside my sitter and begin to paint." (Plates 4a and 4b)

Note

For more on his selection and use of frames, see, http://www.npg.org.uk/research/programmes/the-art-of-the-picture-frame/artist-lazlo.php

The placement of sitter beside canvas was commonly taught in Paris at the time de László and Sargent were students. This was a result of training in the use of sight size technique. This technique was immortalized by Charles Bargue, who developed a series plates to be copied (using sight size) for artists and designers in 1868. They, along with the plaster casts they referenced, were used in every art school up until the 1940s when art departed from Classical Realism.

Typically, the artist moves six feet back to compare canvas to model, then moves back to correct the painting. The artist is seeing the painting (and the model) as one would in real life, from a slight distance, and recording that experience. Sargent was know to rush at his canvas shouting "Demons, Demons!" because he found capturing halftones so frustrating. See, *John Singer Sargent* by the Hon. Evan Charteris, KC, (Scribner, 1927). It's a font of information.

An excellent book on the Bargue method, containing a complete set of plates, is still available today. *Charles Bargue Drawing Course*, by Charles Bargue and Jean-Leon Gerome, with excellent instructional commentary by Gerald Ackerman (ACR Edition, 2011). A must-have book since its initial release in 2003.



Plate 4a. The first brush lines of the portrait.



Plate 4b. The gradual development of the main masses.

In film clips de László can be seen really scrubbing the paint into the canvas at the start. Close examination also shows use of a vertical easel for the most part, which was common practice.

7. The General Effect

Q: Do you really mean that you begin straight away with the brush?

"Why, of course. With my brush I paint in a few lines to indicate the placing of the figure on the canvas. As a first step this is essential since the way in which the figure is placed in the space available is vitally important in the decorative arrangement of the picture. It is the foundation of the whole design."

Q: What next?

"I begin to deal with the head, seeking to express by means of light and shade the construction of the skull and defining accurately the larger planes. In this I aim always at as correct a realization as possible of the tones of nature which I see before me, and I strive constantly to establish the exact relation between the head and its surroundings. All this is a process of gradual building up, but, mind you, it must be done rapidly and directly."

Note

Here de László's mentions the importance of values (sometimes called halftones as a result of early printing jargon) and the use of planes. Values are still used by artists today and almost everyone has heard of a Munsell Value Scale, which starting from white depicts progressively greyer halftones until ending at black. Planes are little less well known today. Planes were something many artists of the late 19th and early 20th century were taught.

A plane is a simplfied, often flat-sided, area. One might think of the top of a nose as a plane, with its two sides and bottom portion three additional planes. Together, they make a rough nose shape. Statues of the 1930s are generally composed of flat planes (a design style which sprang directly from Bargue's course illustrations).

In looking at the b/w photographs, one can see both values and planes. Note the eye, composed of white plane, near a grey plane, and a dark plane. It is obvious it is a nose. But the planes need to be further refined by addressing ever smaller planes (say nostrils) which have different halftones.

An artist typically begins by blocking in the planes (aka developing the masses), and then working to develop (aka refine) ever smaller planes within the first large blocks. There are a variety of blocking and refining methods.

Sargent preferred the "local color" method, i.e., lay in something's actual color, unmodified by light or shadow, then refine the halftones from there, working up to the highest highlights and the darkest darks. It's still a method regularly taught in some art schools.



Plate 10. The portrait after three hours' work.

Note

This is Plate 10. But there is no reference to it in the book. For sake of convenience I place it here. The facial expression changes significantly between this stage and the end. It is interesting to view together the portrait here at hour three, with the portrait at hour six and the finished work.

8. The Evolution of Detail

Q: I take it that at this stage you are dealing only with the general effect; when do you begin to concern yourself with the details?

"How can you separate details from the general effect? The details are a part of the general effect and come gradually and naturally as I develop it."

Q: But surely you cannot get correctness in your forms without drawing them precisely?"

"Can't you see that I have been doing nothing else but drawing from the beginning? I draw by putting lights and shades in their right places, expressing the forms thereby." (Plate 5)

Q: It seems to me that you have been painting all the time, not drawing.

"Certainly you have seen me painting all the time, but whatever I do in the way of putting down lights and shades in their correct relationship to one another develops naturally both likeness and character, and that is what I call drawing. Don't you realize that I draw with the brush and that all my painting is drawing?"

Q: I am sorry to have been so dense, but I think I grasp your meaning now. May I suggest, though, that while we have been talking, your sitter has got very tired and ought to have a rest.

"You are quite right, a rest is overdue. I do not usually go on long enough to bring my sitter so near to collapse and on this occasion I fear that I have been too exacting. But my excuse must be that I was especially anxious to secure a record of the fascinating movement and expression which Miss Ffrangcon-Davies is giving me before any change was made in the pose."

Note

For de László, known as a master draftsman, painting was merely an extension of his drawing skills using other tools. Drawing as painting was a "new" concept borrowed from Japanese art, which deeply influenced Europe in the late 19th century. Japan having been "opened" in 1854 by Perry.

An excellent and complete, illustrated explanation of how values and planes work together in portrait painting can be found in William F. Powell, *1500 Color Mixing Recipes,* (Walter Foster, 2012), pages 80-81. Just those two pages explain it all. It's also in his *Color Mixing Recipes for Portraits*.



Plate 5. Indicating the general form of the mouth.

Note

Look at the amount of dripping paint. It pays to flip through the photos studying the drips. It's very clear this is solvent thinned paint from its behavior and qualities, i.e., it's incredibly fast drying time.

9. Developing the Likeness

Q: During the rest would you explain what you meant when you said just now that a likeness was developed by establishing the correct relation of light and shade?

"I cannot think of a likeness as something apart from the general effect. There is definitely the beginning of the likeness directly the right beginning of the general effect is made and the development of the likeness goes on steadily as the general effect is amplified and made more complete.

At first, as I have already told you, I deal with the larger planes only, but as I proceed I occupy myself more and more with the smaller planes and with those lesser subtleties by which what I would call the intimacy of the likeness is attained. But, of course, all through I aim at the correct relationship of values because without that a real likeness is impossible." (Plate 6)

Q: It still seems strange to me that you can get a likeness in a portrait without a preparatory drawing on the canvas, something plainly stated that you can build upon—most artists seem to regard a drawing as an indispensable foundation.

"I do not believe in doing a drawing first and then painting over it. That way there is a danger of losing one's freedom to take in the general effect and of becoming a slave to one's own doings. I consider that an artist should acquire such a thorough understanding of drawing that he can use it instinctively in his work without thinking of it as being separate from painting—but I see my sitter is ready again so I must get back to my picture."

Note

The preparatory drawing method was something de László was taught, but abandoned. It's a method still used today. Solomon J. Solomon, *The Practice of Oil Painting and Drawing*, (Lippincott, 1910). Another method was to repeatedly paint a highly finished color oil sketch, scrape it off, and repeat, infinitedly, until the concept was worked. Once solidified, a final scrape, and then began the finished work—on the same canvas. Sargent did this on "Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose."

In time, artists began to sell their oil sketches, instead of scrape them down, and used new canvas for final works. This is not to say artists didn't also at times draw sketches on canvas the paint over them as well. Sargent used both approaches, depending on the circumstances, though his sketches tended to be brief affairs much like de László's. He used charcoal directly on the canvas and went on from there, typically with a thinned paint, building up to paint direct from the tube. For a look at Sargent's tools, including his palette covered in heaps of paint see http://ids.lib.harvard.edu/ids/view/14512272?width=560&height=560



Plate 6. Developing the likeness.

This sitter is on a riser (typically about 16 inches high) to be equal to her portrait self and slightly above the artist's eye level. This is very important when using a sight-size technique. Notice too that there is cloth background behind the sitter. Nothing is left to the imagination. The artist needs to see the background color as reflected color plays a big part in any portrait.

10. Unity of Effect

Q: Well, what is the next stage?

"Hitherto I have been concerned mainly with the head, as you have, I expect, noticed. (Plates 8 and 9) Now, before I carry that further, I want to bring the rest of the picture to the same stage of harmonious unity throughout. This is necessary to enable me to judge how much more development the head will require to have the strength and significance of effect at which I am aiming.

But remember this, that no two heads can be treated in exactly the same way and that in each one the character and type must to a great extent dictate the manner of dealing with it which should be adopted. A head with strongly marked features, for instance, does not demand such detailed treatment as one with less definite forms. It can be presented much more broadly and simply because its characteristics are more immediately apparent."

Q: For a while, then, you will leave the head as it is?" (Plate 7)

"Yes, before I finish it I must attend to the surroundings and give them, or at all events the more important part of them, their full strength. I can tell then what degree of force should be added to the head to make it, as it should be, the dominant fact in the picture. Even when I am not actually working on the head, I am still thinking about it and the relation which must be established between it and the accessories among which it is set."(Plate 11)

Note

De László used a mahlstick perpetually. An absolute necessity when working with wet paint -- in a suit! Sargent used to carry pieces of day-old bread in his pockets for when his suits were hit with oil paint. But a mahlstick will keep one out of the paint and frankly is less prone to attracting mice and pigeons!

Videos of de László painting are like watching a swordsman with mahlstick in one hand and brush in the other dueling with the canvas. There is self-portrait of him mahlstick in hand. http://www.wetcanvas.com/Community/images/11-Jan-2011/192352-DeLászló-Family.jpg Or, see the end of this section. Today most mahlsticks are made by the artist using them. Few are manufactured.

For two brief looks at mahlstick usage, watch http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O0C1seBi-uI Or http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wFuge-5CXyA Note, too, that when de László isn't holding his mahlstick, he has a clean white rag in hand. A clean, lint-free, white rag is still a necessary piece of equipment for most oil painters. But papertowels are generally used instead.



Plate 7. Head and accessories receive almost simultaneous attention to achieve unity of effect.

Note

These pictures also provide a record of how de László held and used brushes and, if one looks at his palette, how he mixed colors.

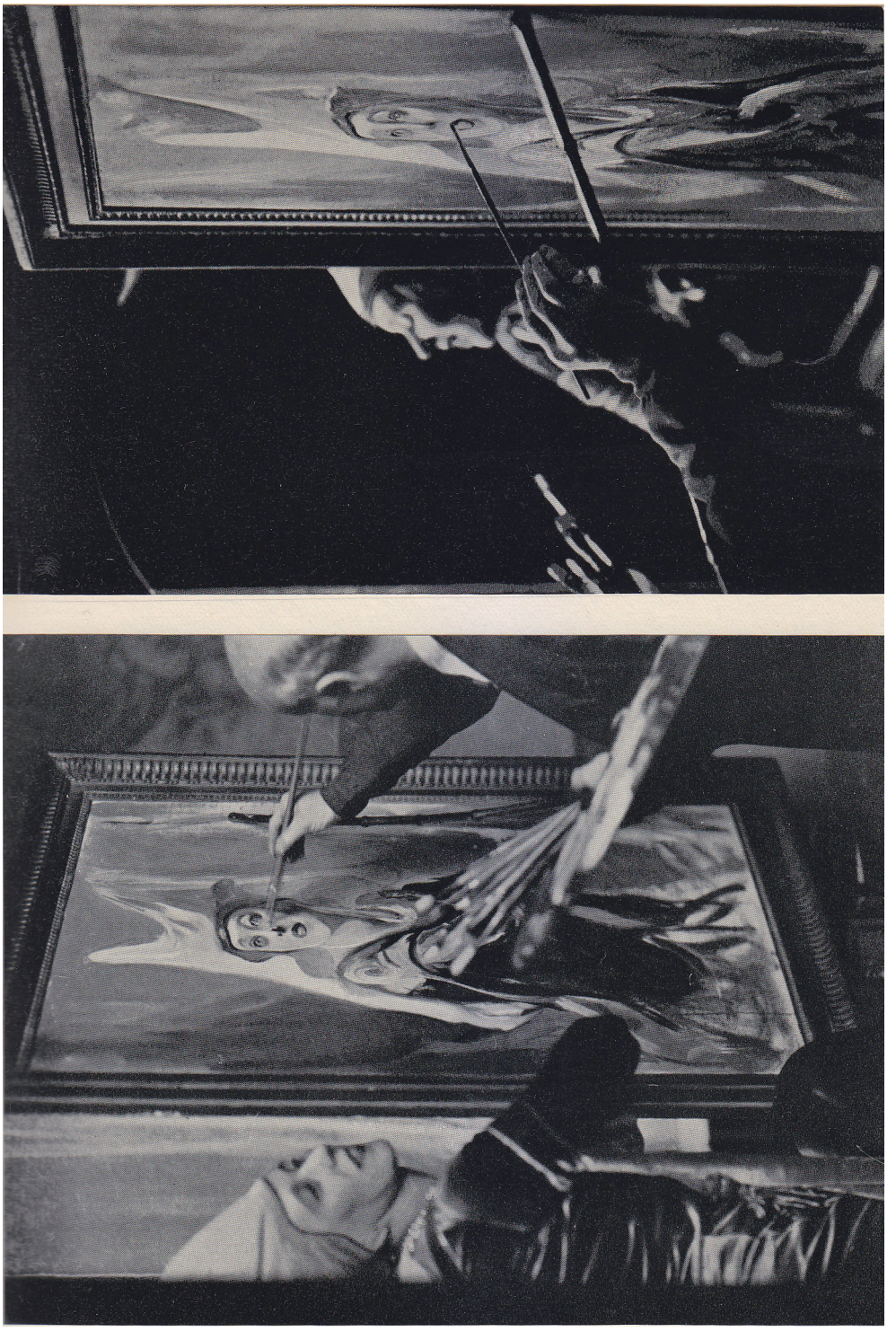


Plate 8a/b. The building-up process, alternately of the nose and mouth.

Note

De László held his brushes as one would a drawing pencil.



Plate 9. Using the mahlstick as a support for the hand, the artist applies detailed touches.

Note

De László's palette is not at all neat nor does it contain pretty color strings. His vigorous style of painting is reflected in his mixing style.

Note too how his continual refinement of the planes and values transforms the work.



Plate 11. While paying attention to the accessories, observation of head and expression continues.

Note

De László's lighting system remains unseen throughout, but it is clear that he's chosen to light Gwen from the right and slightly above. This is not an unusual choice, but it would seem he's attempting to give her the same type of flattering she would receive on stage. As this would be the way most viewers would have seen her, and the reason for her fame, this is how she would want to be remembered to posterity. Once again, de László's choice in lighting, as in everything, is perfect for this sitter.

It's difficult to emphasize just how meticulously portraits were planned and how wide the scope of knowledge artists were trained to possess. It's almost disheartening to read manuals on oil painting written in 1890 compared to those of 1990. But in the end, it's always down the artist to commit to do the work and to discover all the aspects of his/her craft.

11. Standing Back from the Canvas

Q: There is one question I have been waiting to ask you—why do you take so much exercise while you are painting? Why do you move backwards and forwards so incessantly?

"Well, as you see, I set my canvas beside my sitter, but what I put on that canvas I judge from a certain distance. I must go fairly far off to see the general effect of my subject as a whole in all that rightness of relation upon which I insist so much. When I stand back I am recording mentally what I am going to put on my canvas when I walk up to it." (Plate 12a/b)

Q: Really, one might say that you paint your picture while you are away from your canvas.

"In my mind; yes, I do. What I put on with my brush is considered and settled before I touch the picture, so much so, indeed, that I do not look at my sitter when I am close enough to put that touch on the canvas. How do you think I could judge the texture of any material if I were near enough to it to put my hand upon it? I must be sufficiently far off to appreciate properly the characteristic tones and values by which varieties of texture are made apparent."

Note

As an aside, note in de László's studio and in paintings of himself and his family, there is almost always a Virgin Mary or Christ in some form, including in floral such as the lilies. (Plate 14)

De László was married to Lucy Guinness, of Stillorgan, Co. Dublin, Ireland, in 1900. She was 30 years old, an accomplished violinist, enormously wealthy, and devoutly Irish Catholic. Philip was also Catholic, having converted from Judaism prior to meeting Lucy in Munich in 1892 and about the same time he changed his name from Laub to de László.

Although an earnest Catholic, his mother-in-law seemed to doubt his faith for a time. This in part accounted for him being forbidden to see Lucy and an eight year delay in their marriage—despite moving in the same social circles and portrait painters of de László's stature being consider an excellent catch. After he painted Emperor Franz Joseph and Pope Leo XIII, objections ceased.

The overt presence of Catholic iconograpy in de László's home, studio, and paintings may seem almost over the top. However, at that time in England, overtly being Irish Catholic was socially not a plus, especially given Lucy's Guinness family ties to the violently anti-British Irish independence movement. Choosing to be openly Roman Catholic under such circumstances would only be further proof of a true devotion.



Plate 12a/b. "When I stand back I am recording mentally what I am going to put on my canvas when I walk up to it."

Note

The rimmed lid of de László's useful three-drawer cabinet-top variant of a french companion can be seen (along with its square palette resting on the open drawer) in the background.

But back to Lucy. Related to the famous Guinness banking family, Lucy's father, Henry Guinness, was a managing director of the Guinness Mahon Bank. Her brother, Henry, later used his director's position with the same bank, then called The Bank of Ireland, to fund Sinn Féin's revolutionary activities. He became one of the first senators of Ireland (in 1922) after the Irish Revolution.

The de Lászlós were Catholic, Irish-Anglo aristocracy but both were British citizens. They had five British sons and a daughter (who died in infancy). Despite all that, de László was imprisoned then interned as a "dangerous alien" in December 1917. He ended up having a nervous breakdown and being placed in a sanitorium. He was later paroled, then exonerated six months later in June 1919. His career recovered, but the trauma of that time followed him long after.

Hyme House, No. 3 Fitzjohn's Avenue, Swiss Cottage, London, was where the de Lászlós lived and Philip de László kept his London studio from 1921 till his death in November 1937.

During the 1920s and 1930s the avenue was home to many artists, writers, magazine and newspaper editors, merchants and physicians. Fitzjohn's close proximity to the center of London made a daily commute easy. Practically nextdoor, at No. 6. portrait painter Frank Hol (1845-88) had his home. Painter Edwin Long (1829–91) resided at No. 61, artist John Pettie (1839–93) lived at No. 62, and artist Paul Falconer Poole (1807–79) lived at No. 75.

Because so many artists lived on the avenue, it became a tradition for them to open their houses on "Show Sundays" so that friends, colleagues, and neighbors might see their latest works. According to novelist Max Pemberton (1863–1950) resident at No. 50, Show Sundays attracted everyone that was anyone.

Philip de László's last royal portrait was of the Duke of Connaught and Strathearn. It was completed at the Fitzjohn's Avenue studio on the morning of October 20, 1937. A month later, on November 20, Hungary conferred upon him the Badge of the Corvinus Order of Honour, Hungary's highest award for artistic merit. Two days later, de László died on November 22, 1937. He was 68.

His death was a result of heart problems caused by overwork and his perpetual travels, though his incarceration and nervous breakdown had probably been lingering, underlying factors. Lucy survived her husband some 13 years and died in London in 1950, but she sold Hyme House almost immediately after Philip's death.

In March 1938, the house was sold to Cardinal Einsley, the Catholic Archbishop of Westminster who shortly after invited the Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross, a Swiss Catholic order, to acquire the property. It would be their first foundation in the UK. The house became a convent and de László's studio, rather fittingly, was converted into a chapel.

During WWII the house served as a nursing home for injured civilians and military personnel, run by the Sisters of Mercy. A church, dedicated to St Thomas More was later erected on the site of the former garage and tennis court in 1944. The church is still there.

Several articles about de László, as well as an interesting obituary and an article he himself wrote, can be found at the John Singer Sargent Gallery, which has page dedicated to de László. http://jssgallery.org/other_artists/philip_alexius_de_László/Philip_Alexius_de_László.htm

12. The Value of a Mirror

Q: Does that little mirror you keep looking into help you to decide what you are going to do?

"Yes, to some extent it does. But its chief value is that it gives me a new view of both picture and sitter and therefore enables me to discover any faults there may be in drawing, or in the relations of tones. It acts like the fresh eye which can often perceive defects that the painter, having got accustomed to them, has failed to detect. I take a look in the mirror from time to time as a sort of self-criticism—at any rate the mirror is an honest critic." (Plate 13)

Q: Is it useful as a means of studying your sitter's expression?

"No, not particularly. But sometimes a mirror can be used in such a way that it helps to give the sitter the expression I want. When, for instance, he is getting tired or restless, or even, in some cases, when he is shy and I cannot, by talking, arouse in him the vivacity that he must have to make his portrait reasonably successful, I place a mirror in his line of vision so that he can watch in it the progress of the picture as I work. I like my sitters to see what I am doing to the portrait at every stage and I am sure that by letting them look on in this manner I not only induce in them the interested expression at which I aim, but also offer to some of them, who have, hitherto, not had an opportunity to see a picture in the making, an educational experience which they enjoy." (Plate 14)

13. Keeping the Sitter's Interest

Q: Oh, yes, people always do enjoy being taken behind the scenes and shown how things are worked.

"Then why not encourage them? I have often noticed that a sitter's interest in painting and even in art in general grows while he is in the studio and I do believe that as a result of his experience there he will always in the future approach art with much more interest than before."

Note

A mirror is still a useful tool today. Artist Marc Dalessio has put up a one-minute video on mirror techniques. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qEArczFBPgk He also has one on using sight size in plein air painting which is definitely worth watching. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G0QeUviRgqY



Plate 13. The chief value of the hand-mirror is that it gives a new point of view of both sitter and portrait. It acts as a check on drawing and the relation of tones.

Note

Other books on late 19th and early 20th painting techniques, such as de László would have been familiar with, make for fascinating reading. They often shed light on aspects of the artist's process which are not well explained because anyone doing oil painting and reading this book at the time of its release would commonly have been taught to do the basics in the same way.

The Art of Painting Portraits, John Cawse, 1840. *The Art of Portrait Painting*, Henry Murray, 1851. *Practical Directions for Portrait Painting in Water-colours,* Mary Philadephia, 1851. *Hints to Young Painters and the Process of Portrait Painting*, Thomas Sully, 1873. *Oil Painting: A Handbook for the Use of Students*, Frank Fowler, 1885. *A Manual of Oil Painting*, by John Collier, 1887. *Portrait and Figure Painting*, by Frank Fowler, 1894. *The Painter in Oil*, Daniel B. Parkurst, 1897. *The Art of Portrait Painting,* by John Collier, 1905. *Portraits and Portrait Painting*, Estelle M. Hull, 1907, *The Practice of Oil Painting*, by Solomon J. Solomon, 1910. Most of these books are available on Google books as free e-books.

Q: The only objection that occurs to me is that watching you at work might have a tendency to make him move about: don't you want him to keep still?"

"Naturally I do, but there is a great difference between being still and becoming set and lifeless. If the sitter's face is lacking in animation the risk that the portrait, no matter how hard one tries, will be a dull record is very great and I feel that such a risk ought to be avoided at all costs. My way of preventing it is to do all I can to keep his interest awake and to make him alert and lively. Still, I do not deny that it is difficult at times, as all people are not equally responsive. "

Q: I suppose sitters do vary greatly in their ways: you cannot deal with them all in the same manner."

"Very definitely not, and what is the right manner in which each one should be dealt with is the first thing a portrait painter has to find out; indeed, upon that will often depend the success or the failure of his picture. Before he can decide what kind of treatment he should adopt he has to give at least as much attention to his sitter's mental characteristics as to his physical appearance; a portrait is not a still-life study, therefore it must be a good deal more than a simple record of a face. It must be a psychological revelation as well."

Note

". . . a portrait is not a still-life study, therefore it must be a good deal more than a simple record of a face. It must be a psychological revelation as well."

De László lived in an age when photography, even home movie-making, was becoming more prevalent among the upper and middle classes. His response as to how portraiture is different than merely capturing an image photographically still rings true today. Compare the portrait of Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge (2013) by Paul Emsley done from photos to HRH the Duchess of York (1925) by de László done from life.

Today, the most pervasive image of any living person is photographic. Lives are documented cradle to grave, but because of this photographic images are regarded as banal. Adding to this problem are online lifestyles which studies suggest are causing humans to lose their ability to read facial expressions or interact in a live social situations. People do not look for psychological insight or revelation, even from live people, and increasingly lack the ability to even recognize such things.

"As still-life" is becoming the way people see and interact with others. Embracing great portraiture of the past, while striving to create great portraits today, could be a way of reversing that trend.



Plate 14. The standing mirror entertains the sitter and helps to maintain the desired expression.

Note

Lilies are often pictured with, or standing in for, the Virgin Mary. Lilies are a summer garden flower in England. They are often in bloom during mid-August's Feast of the Assumption. The lily is a symbol of virginity and purity. Tradition says Mary's body was taken to heaven and her tomb, when opened by the Apostles was found empty but for lilies and roses.

14. The Study of Psychology

Q: How can you manage that; is it all a matter of facial expression?

"To a certain extent it is, but by no means entirely. If you study people observantly and with understanding, you will soon see that they have, each one of them, individualities of movement and gesture, tricks and mannerisms even, which are personal and characteristic, and in these individualities you can often find a very helpful clue to your sitter's temperament. They will guide you in choosing for the portrait the movement that is most natural and appropriate, and which agrees best with the expression of the face. To make a portrait convincing the right pose of the body is very important. "

Q: Even so, I suppose the expression you get in the face is the chief consideration.

"Well, that is what people are interested in mostly, though it would be really amusing to paint a portrait in which the face did not show at all. It might be quite a good likeness if the general characteristics of the sitter had been skillfully realized. But the more shrewd the insight one can obtain into the sitter's personality, the more revealing will be the expression of the face and especially of the eyes. Who was it that called them the' windows of the soul'? That just describes how they appear to the portrait painter who is exploring the sitter's mind. I concentrate on them from the first and I study them with the closest possible attention through every stage of the painting of the head so as to make them as expressive as I possibly can.

Note

The portrait frame after the second sitting clearly shows a great deal of paint spatter. It would have been ridiculous to use a finished frame. De László's insistence that the frame is always a part of the picture, is true. It's unquestionable that he chose a frame beforehand. However, this chosen frame was unfinished. After the painting was finished, the frame was then removed from the picture, to be cleaned and gilded before being reunited with the completed, dry (i.e., cured) portrait.

De László doesn't state his method for finishing his pictures here. But it's known he used or recommended to sitter's J.G. Vibert retouch varnish, which is still made by LeFranc & Bourgeois. An oil painting on average takes six months to a year to cure. De László's might have taken longer given his love of poppy oil zinc white.

Also, observe the long drip of paint on the right hip of the sitter in Plate 15. That drip is first seen in Plate 4b during the first sitting, when he scrubbed in some background color. Now in Plate 15, during the second sitting, we can see that the drip as been covered somewhat by a lighter paint. The problem is, one can still see the drip. That drip would have blended into any wet paint brushed



Plate 15. The portrait after the second sitting of three hours, that is after six hours' work.

over it, if the drip had still been wet. But because the drip remains, we know it was fully dried. How could the drip have dried in under a few hours if the only medium used was poppy oil? It could not. Ergo, de László had to have used thinned paint during early part of the first sitting at least. Most likely the paints were thinned with copious amounts of turpentine or oil of mineral spirits.

15. The Treatment of Hands and Body

Q: And when the head is finished what do you do next?

"By the time the head is finished I have the body and hands firmly sketched in and the background definitely suggested because, as you have seen, my method is to develop the general effect of the picture continuously. (Plate 15) So I proceed with the hands—and the feet when the opportunity is given me to paint them—which I consider quite as important for the revelation of character and personality as the face itself and quite as enjoyable to paint." (Plates 16 and 17)

Q: Is it not supposed to be very difficult to paint a hand properly?

"A hand is in some ways more difficult than a head, for while the face has features which do not change their relative positions and which remain immobile until the whole head is moved, the whole appearance of the hand can he altered by even a slight movement of one of the fingers. I insist that the painter should take a hand every bit as seriously as a face and recognize how eloquent it is in its power to tell us what are the intellectual and physical qualities, and even the age, of the person to whom it belongs."

Note

Notice the reduction of detail on the sleeves so that one doesn't see the buttons on the sleeve or clear details of jewelry in the final portrait even though the camera shows they were there. By leaving these things suggested, attention is more sharply focused on the face, particularly the eyes.

This is a type of portrait de László often did. It is a good example of his use of *sfumato* (Italian for smoke). Because the human eye can only focus on one thing, the edges of what we look at tend to be smoky (or blurred). *Sfumato* means to soften the edges of a contour. Leonardo da Vinci described *sfumato* as "without lines or borders, in the manner of smoke or beyond the focus plane."

Because de László focused on the face, the eyes in particular, the rest is beyond the focus plane. So he leaves the rest a bit blurry and less defined. That is not to say the work lacks detail or nuance. However, the artist chose to present Gwen as a human eye would see her, not as a photographic representation filled with mindless descriptions of every detail.

Many artists today talk about soft vs hard edges but lack an understanding of *sfumato*, which informs the concept of edges. For more on *sfumato*, see, William L. Maughan, *The Artist's Complete Guide to Drawing the Head,* (Watson-Guptill Pub., 2004), page 15. He's a master of this technique.



Plate 16. Work on hands and arms.

Note

De László mentions a portrait without a face. He's referencing Sargent's *Madame X*. While not quite faceless, the uncommonly used pose was chosen to show off her hair, skin, nose, and body for which she was famed. Yet the portrait brilliantly captured her shallow, arrogant, trivial personality.



Plate 17. Next in importance to the face are the sitter's hands. The painter is here bringing the hands up to the necessary degree of finish.

Note

The sitter, left, was not very attractive in actuality. But de László chose a pose that made her appear feminine and charming, with even an attractive nose. He did not falsely flatter his subject. He simply chose the most flattering pose for her. See the 1933 publicity still from *Richard of Bordeaux* a http://www.photographersdirect.com/buyers/stockphoto.asp?imageid=1847793

Gwen was a great actress and a beautiful soul, just not a great beauty. De László captures both her inner beauty and remarkable dramatic talent in this painting.

16. Accessories

Q: What about the rest of the portrait, the draperies and accessories, how do they rank in relative importance?

"Most of what I have just said about the manner in which hands and feet reveal personality applies to the movement of the sitter's body and, I repeat, rightness in recording that movement is necessary for the making of a successful portrait. There is, in the pose he adopts an unconscious assertion of himself, and the way he wears his clothes emphasizes this assertion. A woman's dress, a man's uniform, robes or everyday suit fall into lines on the sitters themselves quite different from those they would take on any model or lay figure and so you may fairly say that the arrangement of the draperies must be seriously studied because in it is seen a further revelation of character."

Note

It is interesting to hear de László comment on clothes as revelation of character. This is something all great portrait artists understand. Born Fülöp Laub, a Hungarian tailor's son, de László shared a common background with Anthony Van Dyck, a Flemish draper's son. Both became rich in their adopted land, had London studios, spent time painting royal hoi polloi, and understood intimately fabrics, clothes construction, and the importance of clothes.

Reubens, Hals, Valesquez, Vigée-Le Brun, M.-Q. de La Tour, Fragonard, Sargent, they all captured clothing in ways that didn't simply reveal a sitter's social status or wealth, but actually informed viewers about the sitter's personality. Some chose to do renderings of clothing and accoutrements that were photographically realistic, others went a more suggested route. But all understood the revelatory nature of clothes and how they draped.

For a great example of clothes v man, see Sargent's *Dr Samuel Jean Pozzi at Home* (1881). The bright vermilion dressing gown reeks of sexuality. The pure silver white cuffs and collar with their crisp pleats are dazzling. Look at the sensitivity of Pozzi's long fingers, playing with the cord belt and at his throat. But in this case, it's clothes used as counterpoint. (Sargent always chose the clothes.)

Dr Pozzi was a respected, very gifted, gynecologist in Paris. He was on the cutting-edge of scientific practice and research. He saved many lives and contributed greatly to his field. However, he was a prodigious womanizer. He bedded everything in a skirt (including *Sara Berhardt*, his mistress, whom he hangs beside at the UCLA Hammer Museum today, and *Madame X,* painted by Sargent in 1883). However, his wife was immune to his charms and always took her mother's side over his.

In point of fact, Dr Pozzi was almost never "at home" because his massive ego simply couldn't take his wife's indifference and his lust was practically uncontainable. Even into advance old age, he arranged and took part in orgies at his private sex club! Sargent's portrait is the essence of the man, intensely vain, sexual by nature, but also a bit of a joke.

17. When to Stop

Q: Is that why, as you put it, you develop the general effect of your picture continuously?

"Yes; I say once more that by the time I have finished the head I reckon to have brought all the rest of the picture into harmony and right relation with it without necessarily dwelling upon the lesser details. That is the stage at which this portrait of Miss Ffrangcon-Davies has now arrived and there is, I think, no need to carry it any further. It is an example of a type of picture I often paint in which I concentrate on the head and hands and leave the rest unelaborated but, as nearly as possible, correct in forms and values. (Plate 18 and Frontispiece) Still, now that the head and hands are finished, I could, if I wished, complete the draperies and accessories with the help of a model or lay figure, without losing the qualities of the picture, because I have already painted all the main facts of the draperies on the sitter. I might mention that when I do paint a completely finished large picture I endeavour to keep the draperies restrained in tone so that, however rich the dress or uniform and accessories may be, the attention of the spectator is not diverted from the head and hands by any over-insistence upon the incidentals."

Q: But surely your method is a little unusual. Do many artists paint the draperies in their portraits on the actual sitters?

"I really cannot tell you, but I am inclined to think that a good many do not. You will often see in a portrait that the head gives the impression of not belonging to the body. This is generally because the head has been painted throughout and finished independently of the rest of the picture and then the clothes on someone else's body have been added to it. The result must almost inevitably be a misfit, which is to be deplored. Of course, the risk of over-tiring the sitter must be avoided and for this reason I have always aimed at rapidity and directness in my handling of the draperies which the sitter wears. To paint a hand or foot from a model and not from the sitter would be, of course, unpardonable."

Note

"... if I wished, complete the draperies and accessories with the help of a model or lay figure, without losing the qualities of the picture, because I have already painted all the main facts of the draperies on the sitter."

It's interesting to hear him explain his practice when going for a more elaborate finish. He finds nothing wrong with a stand-in or model, so long as the essential facts of the sitter have already been captured in full relation to all the main components of the portrait.



Plate 18. The sitter, the painter and the completed portrait. In this instance, the entire process occupied only eight and a half hours.

Note

Focusing attention on the head and hands is nothing new. Charles Bargue's was really the first drawing course where this was *de rigueur*. After all, what else could one focus on pre-1900 on a society sitter? Andrew Loomis's 1956 *Drawing the Head and Hands* (Titan Books, 2011) is still a useful classic. As is his 1943 *Figure Drawing for All It's Worth* as a jumping off point for anatomy and perspective. Sargent took drawing courses in anatomy and perspective (earning a silver) at the École des Beaux-Arts (in addition to studying with Duran, running a studio where he practiced like a dog, and copying famous artworks in museums) because he understood the importance of this knowledge to capturing accurately any human attribute.

18. When a Fresh Start is Necessary

Q: I can quite appreciate that rapidity and directness are essential in all stages of work like yours, but I can also imagine that if you were not absolutely sure of yourself and knew exactly what you meant to do they might easily get out of control. What would happen if a picture did not develop in the way that you intended?"

"Before I go into that I would like to point out that no artist can ever be absolutely sure of himself; even to pretend to think that he is infallible would be a most dangerous form of conceit. At no time can he afford to relax his effort to acquire greater acuteness of vision and more complete command over the technical processes of his craft. Of course, because he is human, he will always be liable to make mistakes, and he must constantly be on his guard against them; and when they do happen they must be frankly recognized and boldly dealt with. I am convinced that when a piece of work has gone wrong it is no good tinkering with it and trying to pull it into shape. That only makes things worse. For myself, if I am not content with the way a portrait is developing, if from the moment when I have made my first drawing I cannot go straight ahead to a satisfactory finish, I throw aside what I have done and begin again."

Q: What! Another picture on a fresh canvas?"

"What else? To find that I was not succeeding in realizing my intention would mean that I could no longer take pleasure in my work and decidedly I should not feel inclined to waste my energies on something that annoyed me. Besides, even if I did fight my way out of the difficulty, all the freshness and spontaneity of my picture would be gone. With a fresh canvas I have a new problem to solve and I can start with my way clear before me. I have even, on occasions, discarded a half-finished portrait and begun another because I chanced to discover that my sitter had a more interesting aspect than the one I had first chosen to paint. It seems to me obvious that I should want his portrait to show him at his best."

Note

Sargent did likewise and taught his students to do the same. If a canvas went bad, it was his practice (and advice) to always throw it out and start afresh. Of course, this was when he could now afford to throw away canvases -- 40 years after "Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose." http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/sargent-carnation-lily-lily-rose-n01615 That canvas took two years to finish and was scraped almost daily for months. Interesting, Sargent even went so far as to send Mrs Millet lily bulbs to be planted so they'd be in bloom when he returned to finish the picture of her daughter! Real artists plan ahead as much as possible while trying to remain open to the moment. Of course, feelings can still be hurt -- Ms. Millet's was replaced by girls with better hair coloring!

Q: Would it not be permissible sometimes to improve on the original? For instance, when you were painting a woman might you not idealize her a little?

"Indeed, you surprise me! You are as bad as a very mature lady who once asked me to paint her, but insisted that I should make her look like what she told me she had been when she was twenty years younger."

Q: How amusing. Did you do it?

"Can you imagine my doing anything so ridiculous? If I were so foolish as to start trying to improve on nature what could I expect but an entirely artificial and conventional result. In serious portraiture there is no place either for what you call idealizing or for that sort of caricature which some people affect because they fancy that a portrait gains in strength by over-accentuation of the sitter's facial peculiarities. Very often these peculiarities are wholly accidental and have no significance whatever for the student of the sitter's character, and by exaggerating them a thoroughly false impression of his personality might be given. The painter's mission is to find and record intelligently the best and most characteristic view of his sitter, not to make him look like a freak."

Q: Do you think our modernist artists would agree with you in that?

"To such a question I have nothing to reply. I am not discussing the opinions of other people, I am explaining to you what I believe. Whether others do or do not agree with me has nothing to do with the matter. I claim the right to think for myself."

Note

De László's dictum "The painter's mission is to find and record intelligently the best and most characteristic view of his sitter, not to make him look like a freak," and his ability to stick to his own artistic vision without needing to denigrate other artists whose vision differed from his own, go far to explain why he was became such a wildly popular and well beloved artist.

Sargent said he lost a friend every time he painted, but de László made a friend every time he picked up a brush. Having painted over 2,700 portraits in his lifetime, one imagines a quite large funeral for de László.

Philip and Lucy de László were buried in Surrey, at Tilford Churchyard, part of All Saints (Church of England). Eva Guinness, Lucy's older, spinster sister, lived at The Willows in Tilford, with her friend Miss Gerard Little. http://www.bridgemanart.com/asset/480185 Eva was a constant support and help to the de László family. She and Lucy were extremely close. The de Lászlós often stayed with Lucy and Gerard or rented a cottage nearby during the summer and at Easter.

19. Choice of Subject

Q: Tell me, which do you like best to paint, a man, a woman or a child?

"I do not think I can answer that question either, as the point is one I have never considered. Really, I believe that they all interest me equally. It is fascinating to analyze in a man what makes him worth noting—his strength of character shown in his face, his masculinity, his racial peculiarities and the stamp impressed upon him by his station in life—in a woman, her grace and charm, her refinement, her subtlety and that appealing quality which is called femininity, in a child its innocent beauty, its miniature perfection, its delicacy of coloring. Why should a portrait painter limit himself to specializing in one sex or in a particular age? He ought to be receptive of impressions of all kinds and from all sources, and every new impression that is worth accepting should be to him a fresh inspiration. But whoever it may be that an artist is going to paint I am certain that he cannot hope for success unless there is between him and his sitter confidence and sympathy."

Note

There are paintings of de László's which are not portraits, but they are more rare and typically painted for his own pleasure. It must be said also that de László always took the opportunity to paint people who were not white, rich, or royalty. For examples, see: two of his army portraits *Lt-Col. Rasaldar Jagat Singh and Lt-Col Rasaidar Man Singh* (1916) and *Lt.-Gen. Sir William Pulteney*; compare the royal dignity of *Pandit, Mr Vamanrao S. as an Indian Prince* (1906), to *HRH the Duchess of York* (1925); and note the delicate innocence of both *A Marrakesh Girl* (1932) and *John, the Artist's Fifth Son* (1918). To see more, go to The de Laszlo Trust site and view the Catalogue Raisonné.

The Singhs: http://imgur.com/YLbwd; *Lt. General Pulteney:* http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/3f/Sir_William_Pulteney_Pulteney_by_Philip_Alexius_de_László.jpg *Indian Prince:* http://www.oceansbridge.com/paintings/artists/2012/june/02/big/Philip-Alexius-de-László-xx-An-Indian-Prince-xx-Corcoran-Gallery-of-Art.jpg *HRH the Duchess of York*: http://c300221.r21.cf1.rackcdn.com/hrh-the-duchess-of-york-philip-de-László-1925-1369144945_b.jpg *A Marrakesh Girl:* http://www.wetcanvas.com/Community/images/25-Oct-2010/192352-de_Lászlo5.jpg *Fifth Son John*: http://www.oceansbridge.com/paintings/artists/2012/june/02/big/Philip-Alexius-de-László-xx-John-the-Artists-Fifth-Son-xx-Private-collection.jpg

Photo following page: 1937. Behind de László are a portrait of Dr Lang, Archbishop of Canterbury (July, 1937; he'd presided over George VI's coronation in May); a study for Prince George, the Duke of Kent (1935); portraits of Princess and Prince Chichibu of Japan (Setsuko and Yasuhito), who attended the coronation; and a study for the 8th Duchess of Northumberland (July 1937) wardrobe mistress to the queen (floor, left). On the back corner hang his mother Johanna (1914, in black) and wife Lucy (1918, with mirror), while in center below them sits son John's portrait (1919). The portraits of the Chichibus and John were destroyed by fires in later years.



Tired of portrait painting by this time, de László yearned to create a definitive masterwork, one symbolizing the suffering endured by millions of women during WWI (a counterpoint to Sargent's *Gassed*) and to write his memoirs. But it was not to be.

20. What Makes a Portrait Great?

Q: By way of summing up would you say what in your opinion entitles a portrait to be called great?

"The best summing up would be to repeat what I have just said, that confidence and sympathy between the artist and his sitter are essential, because the truly great portrait is the one in which this contact has been so close that it has spurred the artist to his highest achievement. Really, there is a collaboration in which the sitter and the artist both contribute something vital, the sitter a character and a personality which are inspiring and a right instinct, as well, for self-revelation in pose and gesture, the artist a special capacity to observe acutely and to record convincingly those subtleties of characterization which the sitter consciously or unconsciously gives him and, in addition a finely cultivated taste which enables him to make his picture harmonious in design and satisfying in its color scheme. The artist, it is true, can only record what he sees, but when the opportunity is afforded him to look into the mind and soul of his subject he can, if he is equal to his task, produce a portrait in which everyone will be able not only to recognize the physical features of the sitter, but to perceive also the deeper-lying qualities by which he is distinguished. That would be what I should call a great portrait."

Q: What responsible work then it is, portrait painting.

"Of course it is. On the portrait painter lies a very great responsibility indeed, for he has not only to satisfy his contemporaries but also on many occasions to create for the benefit of future generations an historic document of his times and this document would be without authority if it were not at least as much a study of character as a representation of plainly visible facts. The merely exact reproduction of the sitter's features at a particular moment—as a camera would do—is scarcely worthy to be called a portrait at all; I say, once more, that in this branch of artistic practice the only painting that can be held to justify itself is the one which in the rendering of those features expresses the full mental and moral stature of the human being to whom they belong. Here it is that the individuality of the painter appears and here it is that his powers are subjected to the severest test. Different artists painting the same sitter would produce differing results, because their individualities would vary; so, you see, the inadequacy of the artist who has assumed a responsibility he has not qualified himself to bear would show in his work and he must stand for all time self-convicted of failure."



Philip de László, Artist At Work, with Lucy and elder son Henry (1918). Note palette, mahlstick, and rag in hand; rosary around his neck, and Christ in the back left corner painting. See, https://www.delaszlocatalogueraisonne.com/paintings/details/10491 for additional information. This was painted during his internment, but at the sanitarium.

21. Four Works by Philip de László Discussed by A. L. Baldry

Mrs. De László, (*née* Lucy Guinness, 1919)

There is really no necessity to make a portrait always a piece of formal arrangement in which it is difficult to avoid giving to the sitter an air of self-consciousness; something which looks less studied will often serve the purposes of portraiture quite as well. Here is an example of a portrait which is agreeably intimate in its informality and an interesting illustration of the artist's meaning when he says that the pose and attitude of the body can do as much to reveal the sitter's characteristics as the expression of the face. This might almost be called a portrait without face, and yet its realization of the sitter's personality amply suffices and its pleasant unconventionality does not diminish its value as a record. It is successful because in its departure from convention it has been guided by a complete understanding of the problems involved in the subject and the manner of treatment.

Note

Prior to this painting, de László had been interned and then, after a nervous breakdown, confined to a sanitarium. Philip was released from the sanitarium in the December of 1918. but lived on parole at Littleworth Corner, the country home of his solicitor Sir Charles Russell, where this portrait of Lucy was painted.

The painting is inscribed: "My Lucy, she loved the madonna. She inspired me to do this summery inspiration. Easter, 1919." This portrait is full of interesting subconscious symbolism. His wife Lucy holds her favorite object, her violin, but she has no bow so it's impossible for her to play. The violin without its bow implies a pair parted, as they had been for the previous year. She is contemplating the view near a statue of the Virgin Mary, the Immaculate Conception. During this time of incarceration, de László's devotion to his faith increased. No doubt many prayers were directed to the Blessed Virgin—as she stood ever after in his studio. His family is represented by a 1919 portrait of his second son, Stephen, dressed as a Spanish noble. and the coral necklace (which appeared in a 1918 portrait of his fifth son, John). Coral was thought to ward off sickness in children and evil in general, so trouble with both are implied as well. The daffodils indicate it's Spring and imply a time of rebirth. Finally, a Japanese element (the bowl here), which is a frequent motif in his work of this period (partly a result of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1902-21).

In June, 1919, the artist was finally cleared of all wrong doing by the Revocation Committee. He was immediately given his freedom and his British citizenship was confirmed.



Plate 19.

Enlarge the image and note the incredible casts of light at Lucy's feet. They are done with single strokes of a flat brush. It is sometimes difficult to appreciate the technical virtuosity of de László because he makes images so effortless we never ponder how the details were created.

His Excellency Count Albert Apponyi (1930)

A portrait technically similar to that of Miss Ffrangcon-Davies, in which the head is carried to a high degree of completeness while the rest of the picture is for the most part little more than suggested. The aim in this manner of treatment is to focus attention upon what is, after all, the main fact of the picture—the sitter's face—and to add in the surroundings and accessories only just sufficient details to prevent the head from seeming isolated in an empty space. The apparently haphazard lines by which an impression of the body is conveyed are, however, set down with full consideration for the part they play in an ordered composition, and everything that they suggest accords with the intention of the pictorial scheme—there is nothing careless or accidental in the freedom of the picture, it is directed throughout by confident understanding.

Note

The count was painted three times by de László, 1897, 1900, and 1930. Apponyi was President of the Hungarian Society for Foreign Affairs, and it was the members of this society that asked de László to paint this portrait.

Apponyi was extremely famous in his day as a statesman and orator. He was the Henry Kissinger of his day. He spoke six languages. He served as Speaker of Parliament numerous times. As Minister of Religion and Education, he introduced free primary education and bolstered Hungarian nationalism by requiring four years of Hungarian language instruction. And he lead the Hungarian delegation at the 1919 Versailles peace talks.

In the early 20s he became Chief Hungarian Delegate to the League of Nations in Geneva. In February of 1933, at age 86, he died in Geneva while awaiting the reopening of the disarmament conference of the League of Nations. He was there as a Hungarian delegate.

In the lower corner of the portrait is an inscription in Hungarian giving this work "To the Hungarian Nation." The count is in evening dress wearing the red sash and star of the Imperial Order of Leopold. The insignia of the Order of the Golden Fleece is around his neck.

In discussing this portrait with a friend, de László remarked that he'd completed it in five hours. The whereabouts of the original portrait is currently unknown, but a copy hangs in the Hungarian National Museum.

Interestingly, the portrait of 1897 is done in exactly the same pose. One assumes this was the most flattering presentation of the sitter. (The earlier version can be seen on Apponyi's wikipedia.com entry.) Perhaps de László wished to show the honored statesman of 1930 juxtaposed to the undecorated but undisputably talented man of 1897.



Plate 20.

The Late Most Rev. J. F. Peacocke, Archbishop of Dublin (1908)

It is interesting to compare this drawing with the other one shown in which de László set down his intention when he began his portrait of Miss Ffrangcon-Davies. The purpose of both was the same, to fix and make visible a mental impression of his subject and of the way in which he proposed to deal with it in his subsequent painting. But while in the slighter one he was content with a sort of shorthand note, which was sufficient to provide him with a reminder of what he had in his mind, he gave way in his drawing of the Archbishop to an inclination to go further and, instead of a brief note, to make a more searching study of his sitter. As an exercise in draughtsmanship this study is full of interest and it is important as an illustration of one phase of his practice.

Note

Joseph Peacocke was the Archbisop of Dublin, for the Church of Ireland (Anglican). He was born, raised, and educated in Ireland. He graduated Trinity College in 1857 having distinguished himself in History, English Letters, Political Economy, and Divinity. He became a curate the following year. He strongly believed in the church's evangelical mission and served for few years as secretary to the Hibernian Church Missionary Society.

He held a series of appointments, including Professor of Pastoral Theology at Trinity College, Curate of Monkstown, Prebendary of Dunlavin, Rector of St George's, Dublin, Select Preacher before the University of Dublin, and, ultimately, was made Bishop of Meath in 1894.

In 1897, at age 62, he became Archbishop of Dublin. He was the first archbishop in 200 years to have served as a parish priest in the diocese before being elected. He possessed excellent administrative skills as well as pastoral talents and his election was well received. His coat of arms summed him up accurately: *Volens et Valens*, that is, willing and able.

He was forced to resign his post in 1915, after almost 20 years of service, on the grounds of ill health. He died in London in May of 1916 at age 81. His memorial tablet in Kildare Cathedral says that he was a *pastor fidelis, humilis, et sanctus corde* (a faithful, humble and holy pastor). His reputation for "tolerance, holiness, and varied pastoral experience" and as "a man of fine presence."

His eldest son, Joseph, was elected a bishop of Derry and Raphoe a few weeks before his death. Joseph Jr.'s son, Cuthbert also became bishop of Derry and Raphoe in 1970. One of J.F. Peacocke's sermons, preached in 1878, is still available today: *Christ the Model Shepherd*.

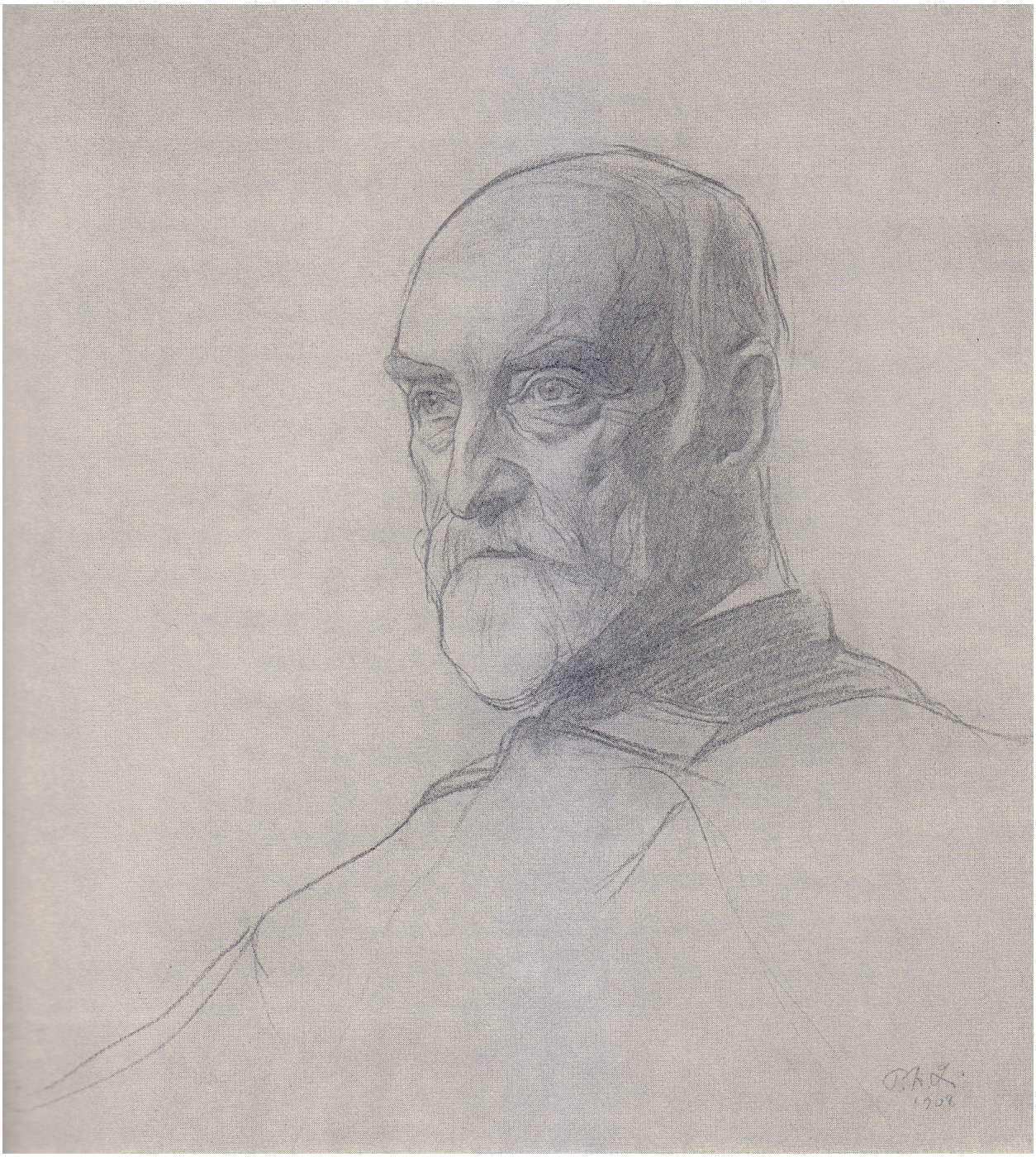


Plate 21.

This working sketch is for a portrait in oil that was done at the request of the parish, as a gift, and now hangs in the bishop's palace in Dublin.

It is quite highly finished and not typical of de László's working sketch style. But it is typical in the way attention is focused on the eyes of the sitter. One almost can't look away from them. This sketch displays the Olympian level of draftsmanship de László possessed.

Detail of a Portrait of Mariano, Cardinal Rampolla del Tindaro (1900)

This detail from de László's portrait of His Eminence Cardinal Rampolla illustrates what he said earlier in these pages about the importance of observing the character in hands. The Cardinal was physically a man of large frame but mentally he was exceedingly subtle, and he had hands which belonged to his mind rather than his body. De László, recognizing this, dwelt specially on them, and in his arrangement of the portrait gave them particular prominence. When he came to the painting of them he asked his sitter to put them in the position in which they appear in the picture and to keep them without moving as long as possible; the Cardinal remained absolutely still for an hour and in that time they were finished.

Note

The original black and white photo of Rampolla's hands is on the page succeeding his portrait. I want to give a side by side comparison with a full color version of the same detail so readers could appreciate de László's use of values.

Rampolla was born into Sicilian noble family. He entered the priesthood with an eye to becoming pope. He had a flair for both politics and Asian languages, and in quick order found himself Secretary for Oriental Rites of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith. In 1880 he was appointed Secretary of the Propaganda and two years later, Papal Nuncio to Madrid. In March of 1887 he was made a cardinal, and three months later Cardinal Secretary of State to Pope Leo XIII.

In 1896 he was elected Grand Prior of the Order of Malta (the Sacred and Sovereign Military Order of St. John of Jerusalem), the insignia of which he is wearing in his 1900 portrait. His position of Secretary of State for Pope Leo proved a difficult one. Through a series of controversial (politically speaking) choices, such as opposing the burial in sacred ground of Crown Prince Rudolph (who committed suicide, 1889) and approving a morganic marriage (in 1900) between Heir Apparent Franz Ferdinand and a Bohemian countess (who was not noble enough), he burned his bridges with the Austrian Empire. When Leo died in 1903, the Austrians vetoed his papal nomination.

Rampolla arranged for de László to paint Pope Leo XIII in 1900. The portrait won the Gold Medal in the Paris Salon of that year. It was the portrait that launched de László's career and convinced the Guinness family he was a successful Catholic worthy of Lucy. The Hungarian Minister of Religion and Education subsequently asked de László to paint the cardinal and the portrait took a Gold Medal at Austria's Art House Exhibition of 1902 in Vienna. The cardinal died in1913.

Cardinal Rampolla was blind in one eye, which is why he appears to be winking. The portrait is an interesting combination of sinister power and piercing intelligence. It is much like Velasquez's *Pope Innocent X*, who frankly was anything but innocent, and very probably Rampolla's role model.



Plate 22a.

This portrait hangs at the Hungarian National Gallery. It was donated by de László in 1929.

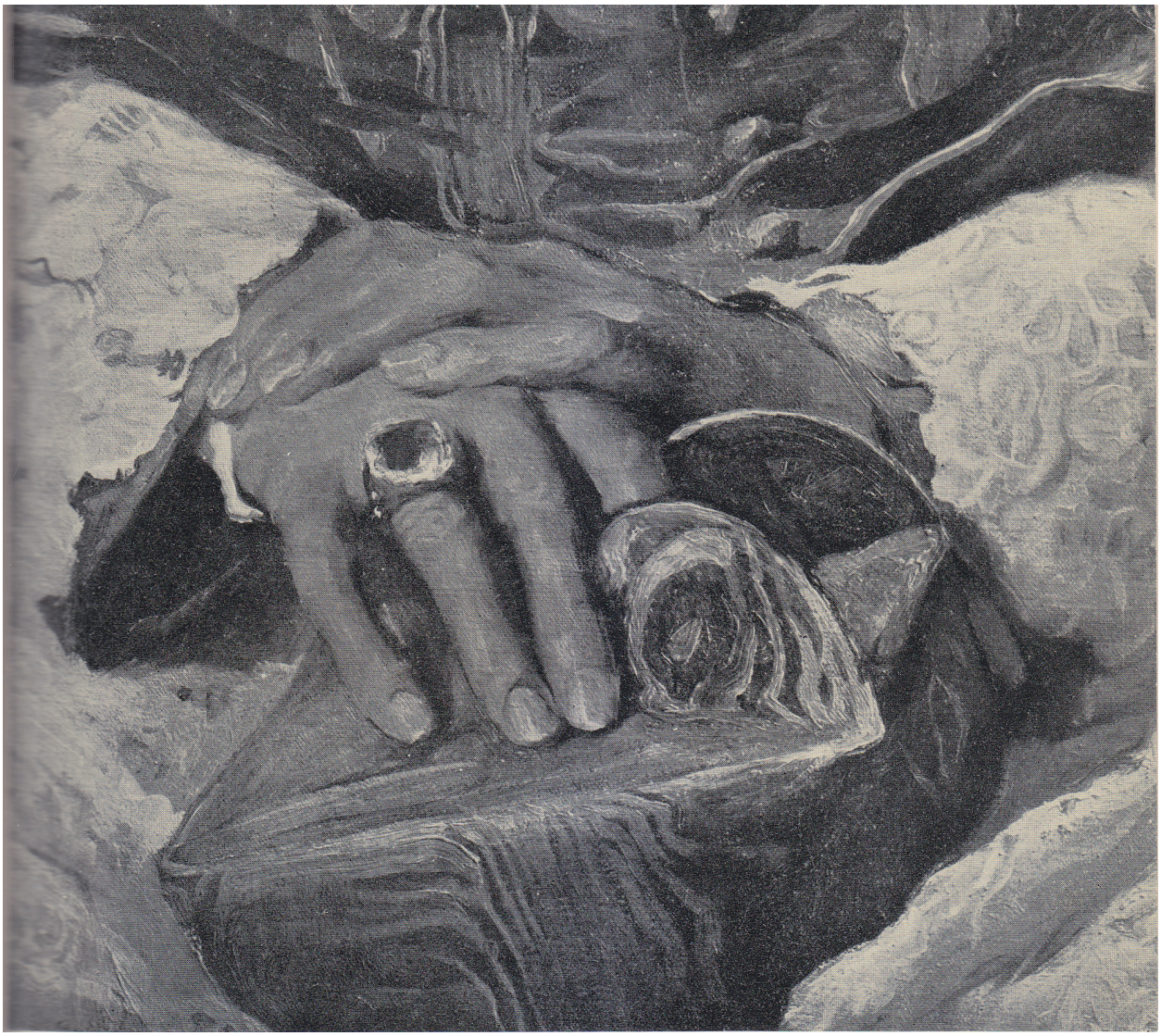


Plate 22b.

It is interesting to see how similar in value the hands are to the cassock and hat. This is the genius of de László. He does not try to make the hands stand out, even though he considers hands to be one of the most telling features of a person, and in particular *this* person. In this case, it is because he wishes to imply Rampolla's subtlety. Note too the emerald ring. It's a strong contrast to the red of the cassock and hat and pulls the viewer's eye to the hands.

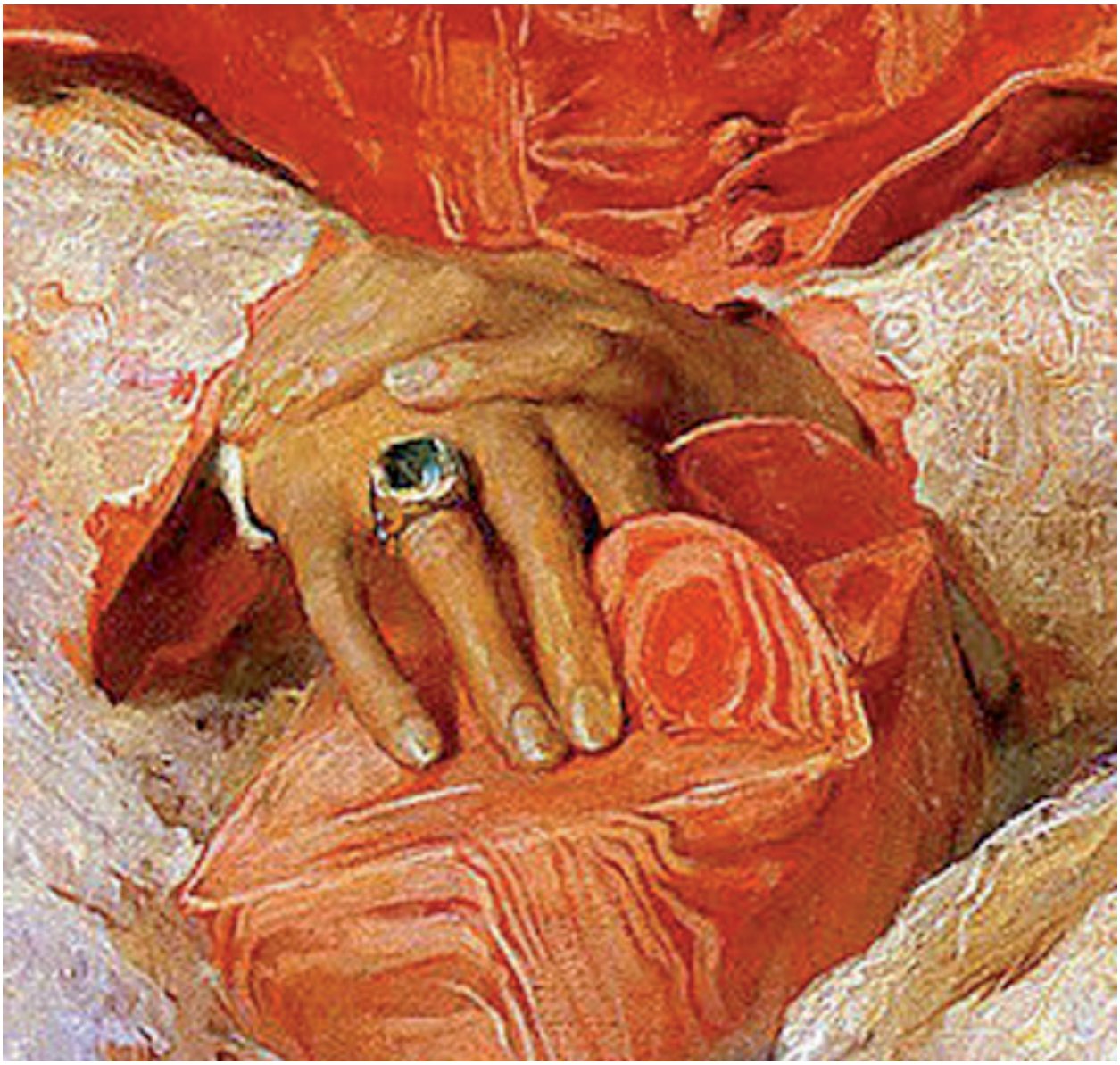


Plate 22c.

To symbolize their bond with the papacy, a pope traditionally gives each newly appointed cardinal three rings, a pontifical ring, a gemmed ring, and an ordinary ring. The cardinal's ring is kissed by Catholics when greeting him. In the past, the gemmed ring was usually sapphire but not always. Both sapphire and emerald (along with pearls) are considered Marian stones. It may be this ring is sapphire, but it's depicted with hint of green for artistic reasons. Or it may be my monitor!

Section 2: Some Great Portraits Discussed

The portraits which appear on the following pages have been selected for reproduction not because they can all be reckoned as masterpieces but because each one of them has qualities that can be profitably discussed and on which instructive comment can be made. They offer opportunities for comparisons which will help the student of portrait paint to understand how artists approach the problems of their craft and to see how, in the results at which they arrive, their individualities of outlook and practice are plainly reflected.

Note

For the sake of modern readers, I have replaced all the black and white photographs of art that originally appeared in the book. I believe de László would have used better images if available. His use of photographs in the book proves his commitment to providing cutting-edge visuals no matter the expense. I have also updated the locations / owners of the pieces, as some have changed hands since 1934.

Whenever possible please refer to a high-resolution image of each painting—typically available on the holding museum's website. I have tried to provide copyright free high-resolution images which can be easily enlarged, but in some cases that was not possible.

Most of the notes I provide related to the sitters and their lives. Most of the sitters (and their life stories) are not as well known now as they would have been at the time of their painting. Knowing about the person and why their portrait was commissioned helps people further appreciate what the artist achieved and how he accomplished his task.

Holbein (1497 - 1543)

Christina of Denmark, The Duchess of Milan. **The National Gallery (London)**

1538. Oil on oak, 179.1 x 82.6 cm.

If Holbein's Duchess of Milan were compared with Titian's portrait of Philip II of Spain, it might at first sight give the impression of being much more dry and formal and of lacking to some extent in spontaneity. But its formality is not of that lifeless kind which comes from mechanically conventionalizing the facts of nature so as to shirk the task of studying them seriously, it is an expression of a deliberate intention to use these facts in the building up of a carefully considered decorative design in which they play parts of the greatest importance. Indeed, the essential character of the picture is its earnest and intimate statement of realities; there is nothing accidental in it and certainly it shows no attempt to rely upon ingenious suggestion to gloss over imperfect understanding of necessary details—everything that has been included in the design and that helps to make it complete is set down with the sincere conviction that is the outcome of exact knowledge. To the modern student the picture, with its exquisite precision of drawing, its delicate subtleties of tone gradation and its monumental simplicity of effect, can be confidently commended as a perfect example of what is attainable by the painter who brings to his art a devout spirit of research and has the ability to apply with intelligence the knowledge he requires.

Note

Hans Holbien, the Younger, painted this in 1538. Christina was the younger daughter of Christian II of Denmark and Isabella of Austria (sister of Charles V). She was born in 1522 and married by proxy at age 11 to the Duke of Milan, who died two years later in 1535.

The English ambassador to Denmark arranged for 47-year-old Henry VIII to see the 16-year-old Duchess's likeness, via Holbien, in hopes Henry might marry her. Holbein visited Brussels and for three hours (on March 11th, from 1 to 4 pm) Christina sat for him. Presumably, in that time, he did a working sketch for this portrait, which was completed later in London.

Christina wears mourning clothes, despite the Duke having died three years earlier. She was opposed to marrying Henry VIII and expresses that in the image. By 1539 it was obvious she would never marry him. But Henry kept the portrait because he found her incredibly beautiful.

In July 1541 she married the 24-year-old François, Duc de Bar, who, ironically, had been briefly engaged to Anne of Cleves in the mid-1530, who later became Henry VIII's fourth wife (for 6 months) in 1540. François succeeded his father as Duc de Lorraine in 1544 but died a year later, leaving Christina Regent of Lorraine. She was extremely intelligent, witty, and politically astute, all of which shows in her portrait. She died in 1590.



Plate 23.

There's a lovely discussion of this painting by artist Humphrey Ocean on the National Gallery website. See the high resolution of this portrait on the same page at the National Gallery's site: http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/hans-holbein-the-younger-christina-of-denmark-duchess-of-milan

Smart History from the Khan Academy also has a nice video discussion of this work: http://smarthistory.khanacademy.org/holbein-christina-of-denmark.html

In older images of this picture, including the one original to this book, there is a small white *cartellino* behind Christina's left shoulder. This was added at a later date by another artist at the request of a later owner, Lord Lumley (d. 1609). In 1968 the *cartellino* was removed. At that time also, the face was said to have suffered from wear, but the face changed after "cleaning."

This is not how Baldry in 1933 would have seen the painting. To see a vintage print that is more representational of the pre-cleaned version, see. http://images-02.delcampe-static.net/img_large/auction/000/129/192/709_001.jpg?v=2

Titian (1477-1576)

Philip II of Spain. **Museo Nacional del Prado (Madrid)**

1551. Oil on canvas, 193 x 111 cm.

When Titian's magnificent portrait of Philip II of Spain is studied one thing becomes immediately evident, that he approached his subject with a full sense of the obligations which it imposed upon him and that in his treatment of it he overcame a difficulty which an artist of less commanding ability might well have found to be almost insurmountable. How to paint a sitter in a costume so sumptuous without reducing the portrait to a sort of still-life study in which the human interest was swamped by inanimate accessories might have seemed a puzzle even to a master. But Titian, although there can be clearly seen in his handling of the armor the keen enjoyment he derived from dealing with the technical problems it presented, was enabled by the acuteness of his psychological insight and by his masterly realisation of character to make the head of the king the domination fact in the picture and to convey a convincing impression of his fanatical personality. The costume sets off the man, but everyone who looks at the portrait sees the man first. The pose of the figure is easy and informal and yet perfectly dignified, and there is in it a suggestion of movement that is kept discreetly from giving even a hint of restlessness.

Note

See the Prado's online gallery at http://www.museodelprado.es/en/the-collection/online-gallery/on-line-gallery/obra/felipe-ii-5/

This full-length portrait of Felipe II (1556-1598) was done he was a 23-year-old prince. It was painted in Augsburg between November 1550 and March 1551. This was very little time for the artist, and the resulting work did not please Philip, as he wrote on May 16 when he shipped it off to his aunt, Queen Maria of Hungary (a younger sister of Charles V, Philip's father). Christina of Denmark went to this aunt's court after her husband the Duke of Milan died.

The composition places special emphasis on the symbols of royal authority, such as the red table cloth and gold embossed armor which today resides at the Royal Armory in Madrid, and male virility. Note the sword is angled to direct the eye to the overstuffed codpiece, a feature made more prominent by the lack of the lower half of his armor.

Philip's father arranged his marriage to Queen Mary I of England (aka Bloody Mary). They married in 1554 but had no children. After Mary's death in 1558, Elizabeth I became queen. Relations gradually deteriorated until 1585 when the undeclared Anglo-Spanish War broke out. In 1588, a year after the death of Mary Queen of Scots, Philip sent the Spanish Armada to invade England. Elizabeth and Philip would both die before the war ended, such was the bitterness between them.



Plate 24.

Frans Hals (1580-1666)

***A Man and His Wife.* Rijksmuseum (Amsterdam)**

c. 1622. Oil on canvas, 140 x 166 cm.

This fascinating portrait group belongs to the middle period in the life of Hals, before he had developed that characteristic liveliness of handling by which in his later years his paintings were distinguished. But even with its comparative restraint it is remarkable for its certainty and directness of execution and it shows throughout a confidence of statement that is entirely convincing because it comes so obviously from perfect accord between the painter's eye and hand. Possessed of powers of observation more than ordinarily shrewd, exceptional acuteness of vision, an extremely accurate perception of subtleties of colour and tone relation, and an unfailing gaiety of outlook, he was able to give to them all their full value in his work because he had made himself a brilliant executant and had the mechanism of his craft under complete control. The strength of the appeal which this picture makes is due at least as much to its technical mastery—to its vigorous draughtsmanship and its expressive brushwork—as to its atmosphere of good humour and its charm of scenic effect. It is interesting, too, because the artist in arranging his composition has chosen to depart from the more rigid conventions of portrait painting and to introduce a touch of comedy into the posing and treatment of his sitters.

Note

See the Rijksmuseum's online gallery at https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en/explore-the-collection/overview/frans-hals/objects#/SK-A-133,3

The couple in this portrait is thought to be Isacc Abrahamsz Massa and Beatrix van der Laen. Posing a couple together like this was unusual at the time. Generally the man and woman were painted separately but in such a way that when the two portraits were hung together the effect communicated they were a couple. A convention of the time in Holland was to wear the wedding ring on the right hand forefinger, thus Beatrix right hand is draped over Isacc's akimbo left arm.

Isacc and Beatrix were friends of Hals and this may have been commissioned for their marriage in April 1622. The painting contains many stock references to love and devotion, such as the couples in the garden with peacocks (the emblem of Hera, goddess of marriage) in the background, the thistle at left which in Dutch is called the true man (*mannentrouw*), implying fidelity and devotion, and the ivy on the right, implying the woman clings to her husband, female fidelity or friendship. Note even the statue invites the couple to join the others in couples in the garden.

Hals handling of lace, ribbons, and fabrics is amazing. Black and white were the predominant colors of "good" Christian clothing, yet he still managed to illuminate and individualize every article.



Plate 25.

For a look at how Hals (then others) was rediscovered and came to drastically influence the late 19th century art world, including portrait painters such as John Singer Sargent and Philip de László, see *Inspiring Impressionism: The Impressionists and the Art of the Past*, ed. Ann Dumas (Yale Univ. Press, 2007), which is put out by the Denver Art Museum.

Velasquez (1599-1660)

Detail From *The Surrender of Breda.* Museo Nacional del Prado (Madrid)

1635. Oil on canvas, 307 x 367 cm.

If it were possible to pigeon-hole masters, or to draw up a sort of table in which each one was assigned his exact position according to the number of marks which his abilities might entitle him to claim, there can hardly be any doubt that the first place would have to be given to Velasquez as the master craftsman who in his work touched the highest level that the painter's art can reach. For him, certainly, painting seems to have presented no difficulties; his mastery is so serene, so unconscious, that it imparts a sort of inevitableness to his accomplishment. It may be, oddly enough, for that very reason that his greatness is apt to be insufficiently appreciated by the superficial observer; it is only the intelligent student who can estimate at anything like its full worth achievement so perfect that no sign of struggle or hesitation can be detected in it and, after all, what people without intelligence might think about such a supreme master as Velasquez does not matter in the least. To choose, from the series of memorable pictures he produced during his comparatively short life, one to represent him is not altogether easy, but perhaps the most suitable is *The Surrender at Breda*, which is an impressive record of an important historical event and a magnificently handled composition in which he brought together portraits of many Spanish notables. It was painted when he was between forty and fifty years old and when with the accumulated experience of some five-and-twenty years, his powers had finally matured.

Note

See the Prado's online gallery at http://www.museodelprado.es/en/the-collection/online-gallery/on-line-gallery/obra/the-surrender-of-breda-or-the-lances/

This a painting is a strange mix of propaganda and friendship. Philip IV of Spain asked Velasquez to do this painting to go in the throne room (aka The Hall of Realms) of his new palace outside Madrid. The piece needed to reflect Spain's military might as well as its magnanimity to visiting ambassadors.

The surrender of Breda was a key moment during the Eighty Years' War, in which Spain fought to keep the Dutch from gaining independence, and one Philip IV wanted immortalized. Velasquez would have known intimate details about this event because he was a personal friend of General Spinola. So although he was not with Spinola at Breda (in June 1625), he'd heard firsthand accounts.

In the painting, done five years after Spinola's death, we see Spinola (in charge of the Spanish troops in Flanders) cordially receiving the keys to the city of Breda—as if from a friend. In reality, he was receiving them from the defeated Dutch general, Justin of Nassau, at the end of a long



Plate 26.

siege. This was the high point of Spinola's military career.

The painting is impressive as imperial propoganda, but it's more Velasquez's tribute to Spinola. Velasquez (and Reubens) traveled with Spinola to Genoa, Spinola's native land, in the Fall of 1629. Spinola was to die a year later during another siege. Velasquez returned to Spain six months later, but always felt Spinola had be grossly mistreated by Philip IV. Even today, Ambrogio Spinola is considered one of Spain's greatest generals and often called Ambrosio, meaning the immortal one.

Van Dyck (1599-1641)

Thomas Wentworth Earl of Strafford and His Secretary, Sir Philip Mainwaring.

Private Collection of Lady Juliet Tadgell (UK)

c. 1639. Oil on canvas, 131.8 x 142.9 cm.

Although when Van Dyck died he was only forty-two he had done more than enough to establish fully his right to be counted among the greatest of the masters. He was exceedingly versatile and remarkably prolific, and throughout the whole range of his practice he maintained consistently a very high standard of accomplishment. As a portrait painter he was conspicuously successful, because to exceptional sensitiveness of draftsmanship and an expressive directness of brushwork he added a delightful quality of style which gave to every canvas he handled an air of true distinction and the stamp of fine taste; and, also, because his pictures, with all their elegance and refinement of manner, were never lacking in frankness of statement or in firmness of characterisation. In the example of his achievement which is reproduced here all the technical essentials of his art are amply in evidence; the composition, drawing and executive rendering are completely satisfying but, in addition, the picture sounds a dramatic note which increases its significance. The story of the tragic circumstances in which the sitter was involved and the suggestion of his impending fate are conveyed with a subtlety that is wonderfully persuasive in the posing of the figures and the expressions on the two faces.

Note

See the Tate's article on Van Dyck http://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/articles/man-who-would-be-british See this page for an closer look at the painting: http://www.luminarium.org/encyclopedia/strafford-vandyck.jpg

Wentworth began his career as an MP for Woodhouse, Yorkshire in 1614, and served in Parliament until 1628. Leading up to the English Civil War his life was one long quest for power and money. Ultimately, he was made Lord Deputy of Ireland in 1632, the same year he married his third wife, a squire's daughter. The previous two, both the daughter of earls, having died.

In Ireland he was widely hated and acquired many powerful enemies. But he'd made himself rich there. When he was recalled to court in 1639, he became a *de facto* minister to the king and in 1640 was created the Earl of Stafford. But Charles I could not save him from the Long Parliament, who wanted him dead, and he was executed in 1641 just after this portrait was finished.

Charles restored all property and titles to Wentworth's son and his successors at Wentworth Woodhouse, the earls of Rockingham, became one of the great political dynasties of Hanoverian England. They built the lavish Wentworth Woodhouse edifice that is still today one of the most beautiful houses in England. http://www.wentworthwoodhouse.co.uk/



Plate 27.

Philip Mainwaring trained in law and served as a member of Parliament throughout the 1620s. In 1634, he was appointed by Wentworth as Secretary of State (in Ireland) at age 45. Under the Commonwealth, he ended up in prison in 1650 for remaining in London after the Parliament was dismissed. But he was released in 1651 on bail. He wasn't actively involved in any Royalist intrigues, though he was a sympathizer. He returned to Parliament in 1661, but died in two months later.

Did he not appear in this portrait, Mainwaring would perhaps not be remembered at all.

Rembrandt (1606-1669)

Self-Portrait with Two Circles. **Private Collection, Kenwood House (London)**

c. 1665-9. Oil on canvas, 114.3 x 94 cm.

When Rembrandt painted this portrait of himself he was approaching the end of a career which, beginning in his early youth with every promise of a brilliant future, had brought him at the last, through years of increasing anxieties and troubles, to poverty and neglect. Yet the tragedy of his life did not weaken his powers and even when there might have seemed to be a danger that his trials would prove too much for him to endure he never failed to justify himself as a master of the highest rank. As he represents himself in this picture he does not suggest a man bowed down by misfortune; he is vigorous, alert and sure of himself and, if the face is that of a man fairly advanced in years, it gives no hint of senility. Indeed, the keynote of the portrait is a robust self-confidence, the confidence of a man who, as is plainly seen in his features, has suffered greatly but who still believes in his ability to deal firmly with whatever Fate may have in store for him. As an exercise in painting it is particularly instructive because the manner of the handling, loose and apparently careless as it is, shows very definitely the guidance of the knowledge of forms and modellings which he had acquired by years of searching observation. Only the artist who has subjected himself to strict discipline for a long period can hope to express himself with such freedom without running the risk of lapsing into incoherence.

Note

See the Wikipedia's online gallery at http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/19/Rembrandt_Self_Portrait_with_Two_Circles.jpg

This is one of nearly 100 self-portraits, but perhaps Rembrandt's most important. It's unclear if the portrait is finished or not as he typically signed and dated his self-portraits but failed to do so on this occasion. Rembrandt typically lit himself from the right-hand side and slightly above and almost always wore a hat because his hairline began to recede dramatically early in his youth.

This painting is notable for its color and expressive brushwork, which was not typical of the time. Fragonard was inspired to copy it and create similar works himself. In 1860, the rediscovery of Fragonard, as well as Hals whom he also admired, would kick off the Impressionist movement.

The meaning of the two circles has been widely debated. Personally, I think he's referencing the Vitruvian Man, which was designed as a tool for artists. They are two different sizes and may have been used in working out compositions. Too, the ability to draw a perfect circle in one motion has long been held (in many cultures) to be the proof of artistic mastery. Giotto, when called before the pope to give a demonstration of his talent, drew a single perfect circle in one motion. The Zen Buddhist enso is also an example of this.



Plate 28.

Personally, I find this painting quite interesting. One can see the sleeve of his robe through the wood palette he holds. There are touches of paint on the brushes. It would have been nice to see paint on his palette as well. Note he is holding his mahlstick and rag as well. Nothing really changes regarding the tools of a painter's trade.

Reynolds (1723-1792)

The Duchess of Devonshire and Her Daughter.

Private Collection, Duke of Devonshire (Chatsworth)

1784. Oil on canvas, 112.4 x 140.3 cm.

To call Reynolds a follower of Van Dyck would not be unfair, for certainly he was greatly influenced by his famous predecessor and profoundly admired his work. But this admiration, though it persisted throughout his life, did not degenerate into merely mechanical imitation, and did not induce him to sacrifice his independence; rather can it be said that he used the inspiration of Van Dyck to stimulate the development of his own individuality, but that the character and quality of his paintings were determined by that individuality, which gave to them their special charm. Decidedly it is to him that must be ascribed the essentially English atmosphere which pervades his portrait of the Duchess of Devonshire and her daughter—even if in manner of treatment it is somewhat reminiscent of Van Dyck—for Reynolds was consistently English in sympathy and outlook. In other ways, too, it can be taken as a typical example of his practice; it has a characteristic suavity of design and beauty of decorative arrangement, it shows his finely cultivated taste in the rendering of the grace and distinction of the mother and the engaging innocence of the child and, though it is conceived in the joyous spirit appropriate to what may be called a domestic incident, it has no touch of triviality to diminish its dignity as a serious work of art.

Note

The duchess in question here, is Georgiana, who was the subject/victim of a recent biopic staring Kiera Knightley. The real duchess was famously beautiful, vastly intellectual, and highly political. She surrounded herself with all the noted literary, scientific, and political figures of her day.

Born Lady Georgiana Spencer, daughter of the Earl of Spencer (an ancestor of Diana, the Princess of Wales), she married the duke at the age of 17. She was passionate about women's rights and was an early, outspoken, suffragette, much to the duke's embarrassment.

She had several miscarriages before giving birth to her first child, a daughter named Georgiana, or "Little G,"in 1783. Little G is the child pictured here, in this portrait celebrating her birth. Reynolds painted Georgiana a number of times, so it was natural he'd be called on for this portrait.

The duchess had a flair for fashion, an addiction to gambling, and a disasterous ability to always pick the wrong lover. She spent money like water and both the Spencers and the Cavendishes cut her off to try and curb her spending. She simply went on spending and putting it all on account. When she died in 1806, the bills came home to roost. Her husband was said to have remarked, upon seeing them. "Is that all?" In today's money, it would be close to $5 million.



Plate 29.

Georgiana's best friend Lady Elizabeth Foster lived at Chatsworth from 1781, in a *ménage à trois*. "Bess" bore the duke two children and finally married him after Georgiana's death.

Gainsborough (1727-1788)

The Morning Walk (Squire Hallett and His Wife).

The National Gallery (London)

1785. Oil on canvas, 236.2 x 179.1 cm.

Gainsborough and Reynolds, the two most outstanding figures in British art history, were contemporaries and rivals, but they had one thing in common, their worship of Van Dyck. In all other respects they were widely apart; Reynolds was a student of styles who was interested in the theories of art and had a devout regard for tradition, Gainsborough was something of a revolutionary, cheerfully irresponsible and a passionate lover of nature, and he was content to seek in nature the inspiration for his work without stopping to consider whether or not the stylists would approve of what he was doing. His disposition was to take things as he found them and to paint them as he saw them, without troubling himself much about the reasons why they were as they were. With a weaker man this habit of mind might easily have led to superficiality, but he was too keen an observer to be satisfied with any incomplete record of his impressions. His pictures, indeed, were delightful in their freshness and delicacy of statement. To appreciate their qualities, to understand properly such a painting as *The Morning Walk*, it is necessary to take into account his temperament and his manner of approaching his subjects. This group, though in its general effect it does conform more or less to conventions of portraiture as they were then accepted, has a freedom and vivacity of treatment which no one by Gainsborough could have given it.

Note

To view this portrait at the National Gallery site, see: http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/thomas-gainsborough-mr-and-mrs-william-hallett-the-morning-walk

The dog was considered a symbol of fidelity in marriage in this period. The dog here belonged to the artist and he frequently painted Fox (its name) into portraits. At the time of this painting in the summer of 1785, the couple were engaged but not yet married. William Hallett and Elizabeth Stephen were both 21 years old. Elizabeth was actually older than William by almost year and brought a fortune of 20,000 pounds to the marriage. Hallett had also inherited enormous wealth from his grandfather, an upholsterer. He had no university education, but became a magistrate and Deputy Lt. of Berkshire County.

The couple had six children. Three girls survived him. One son died in infancy, another in battle. The eldest son he disowned. Elizabeth died in 1833 after almost 48 years of marriage. William remarried the following year to Mary Jane Croudace. She was 35, he was 70. He died 10 years later. His informative last will and testament can be read here: http://genforum.genealogy.com/hallett/messages/1112.html



Plate 30.

Raeburn (1756-1823)

***The Macnab*. Kelvingrove Art Gallery & Museum (Glasgow)**

1802. Oil on canvas, 241.3 x 152.4 cm.

It is only in comparatively recent years that the greatness of Raeburn has been properly recognized and his right to rank among the best of the British masters admitted, yet by but a few of the artists who were his contemporaries was he equalled and by fewer still was he surpassed. Possibly the straightforwardness and simplicity which generally characterized his work as a portrait painter may have kept from him a due measure of popular favour, or it may be that the majority of his works, despite their splendid vitality, were too unpretending in subject to appeal to more than a limited number of discerning people. Still, though this may be the reason, it is no excuse for the lack of appreciation of his portraits which was formerly only too common. For they have, and have always had, qualities which make them supremely distinguished, and among them there are some which must be reckoned as very definitely ambitious both in scale and manner of treatment. One of the most notable of these is the full-length of *The Macnab*, a striking figure of a Highland chieftain in the uniform of the Breadalbane Fencibles, of which he was lieutenant-colonel. It is an exceedingly powerful technical exercise in which Raeburn turned to full account the picturesqueness of the Highland costume and realized with a fine sense of character the rugged personality of his sitter. The robustness of sentiment is emphasized by the grim and lowering Scottish landscape which serves as background to the figure.

Note

Francis Macnab, was the 12th laird of Macnab. He was a large man of large appetites, mostly for drink, women, and gaming. He was widely known to brew the best illegal whiskey in the country. He lived extravagantly, racking up enormous debts. But as he'd inherited his title and lands in 1778 with large debts attached, he considered this a normal way of life. He never married but was believed to have fathered some 70+ children.

At his death in 1816, at age 82, his nephew and heir was compelled to sell the Macnab lands to pay off almost $50,000 in debts. The 13th laird, Archibald, was subsequently forced to move, with several hundred now landless Macnabs, to Canada. They did well in Canada and decades later, in the 1850s, one of their descendants, Sir Allen Napier Macnab, became Premier of Canada.

The Macnab was 6'3" and known as Francis Mòr (Gaelic) or Francis the Large. He is shown here at age 68, standing guard over a mountain pass, dressed in his regimentals, and carrying a dirk, pistol, and sword. The badger the sporran he wears is common in Scotland, badgers being known for their tough nature. Appropriately enough given The Macnab's drinking and keeping an illegal still, Raeburn's portrait hung for many years in the offices of whiskey maker John Dewar's.



Plate 31.

Goya (1746-1828)

Charles IV of Spain and His Family.

Museo Nacional del Prado (Madrid)

1800-1. Oil on canvas, 280 x 336 cm.

In character and temperament Goya was essentially Spanish and in his art he reflected vividly the atmosphere of his country. Indeed he is famous quite as much for his paintings of historical subjects as for his portraits, though in this latter branch of practice he showed clearly his remarkable powers of observation and penetration into human nature. Sometimes these powers were exercised with more than a hint of malice, as in the interesting collection of illustrations in which he depicted the dramatic events of the period during which he lived, a sort of pictorial commentary on Spanish history. But in portraiture he worked in a more serious spirit and, as can be seen in the royal portrait group, his achievement was of high rank—it is worth while to quote what has been said about it by a man whose opinion deserves respect, De Beruete, the famous Spanish art historian: "It reveals the power of a mighty artist in the exact moment of his maturity and fullness, and is the summary, the synthesis and the archetype of his whole creation. The mastery of the art of painting shown in this work is perhaps what we admire most in it, for here, in a few days of work, he has shown us all the knowledge acquired in fifty odd years of toil and constant effort. It is truth itself, translated from nature to the canvas without formulas or preoccupation; and set there with paint brush, the palette knife, the finger and with the soul, with a spontaneity which enchants us, for it has something in it of the childish, and in its entirety astonishes us by its many traces of genius."

Note

See the Prado's online gallery at http://www.museodelprado.es/en/the-collection/online-gallery/on-line-gallery/obra/the-family-of-carlos-iv/

The man in the back left corner shadows is Goya at his easel. Presumably this is the royal family visiting the studio of Goya, and recalls Velaquez's *Las Meninas*. Prominent figures in the painting include King Carlos IV, right, Queen Maria Luisa of Parma, center, and the crown prince, the future Ferdinand VII, left. Beside Ferdinand is a lady with her face turned away from viewers. She is Ferdinand's wife, but at the time, no one knew who that would be. He married Maria of Naples the following year (but she died in 1806).

The Spanish royals of this century were hopelessly inept, widely hated, and practiced incest. Goya captures their sparkling ridiculousness with merciless accuracy. Carlos IV let Maria Luisa (also his first cousin) rule Spain, which is why she appears in the center position. Carlos preferred hunting. Not surprisingly, he was forced to abdicate in 1808 after a series of riots and popular revolts.



Plate 32.

Ferdinand abdicated a day later, for fear of the French. Napoleon held them all in France for several years until Ferdinand (he married two of his nieces) was finally returned to the throne in 1813. His disastrous rule set Spain on a 150-year course of revolutions, civil wars, and Franco's "fascism-lite."

John Singer Sargent (1856-1923)

H. G. Marquand.

Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York)

1897. Oil on canvas, 132.1 x 106 cm.

The master with whom Sargent might most fairly be compared is Frans Hals and that he was much influenced by Hals can hardly be questioned; there is a suggestion, too, of Raeburn in his work, something of that forcible directness which helped the Scottish painter to be so convincing as an interpreter of character. But, whatever may have been the influences which were combined to form the manner of Sargent's expression, it was assuredly the driving force of his own individuality that made him the dominant figure he became in our modern art world. He had an uncanny power of delving beneath the surface to read his sitter's mind, and this power enabled him to produce portrait after portrait which were amazing psychological studies marked sometimes by an almost disconcerting frankness but always observed and recorded with the shrewdest insight. He is excellently represented by this painting of Mr. Marquand, an uncompromising and, perhaps, unflattering likeness of a man with a very definite personality and mental characteristics well out of the ordinary, but a technical achievement that shows us, beyond possibility of dispute, what a splendid craftsman Sargent was and with what depth of understanding and certainty of draftsmanship and brush control he could create a portrait design that would do credit to a master of the first rank.

Note

See the Met's online gallery at http://www.metmuseum.org/Collections/search-the-collections/12108?rpp=20&pg=1&ao=on&ft=henry+marquand&pos=1 Marquand had Sargent paint his wife, Elizabeth, in 1887 (Sargent's first American commission) and his daughter, Mabel Ward, in the early 1890s. However, both died (Feb. 1895, Nov. 1896 respectively) and Henry became very ill. He was still sick in the summer of 1897, in London, sitting for this portrait. All of this shows in the work.

Marquand was known in his day as businessman, philanthropist, and art collector. He served as Met president from 1889 till his death in 1902. He was extremely financially generous to the Met, helping it purchase many significant pieces from around the world and even underwriting its total operating expenses some years. This portrait was a gift of the Met's trustees to the Met.

Marquand devoted his time and money to collecting art, donating much of it to the Met for the benefit of the public. He also worked to encourage other wealthy collectors to do he same. His gift of 50 major paintings (by Velasquez, Rembrandt, Van Dyck, Vermeer, and others) and 2,400 decorative *objet d'art* gave depth and breadth to the Met's rather parochial and unremarkable (at the time)collection. It was Marquand who set the Met on its way to becoming an internationally recognized museum on a par with the Louvre, the National Gallery, or the Prado.

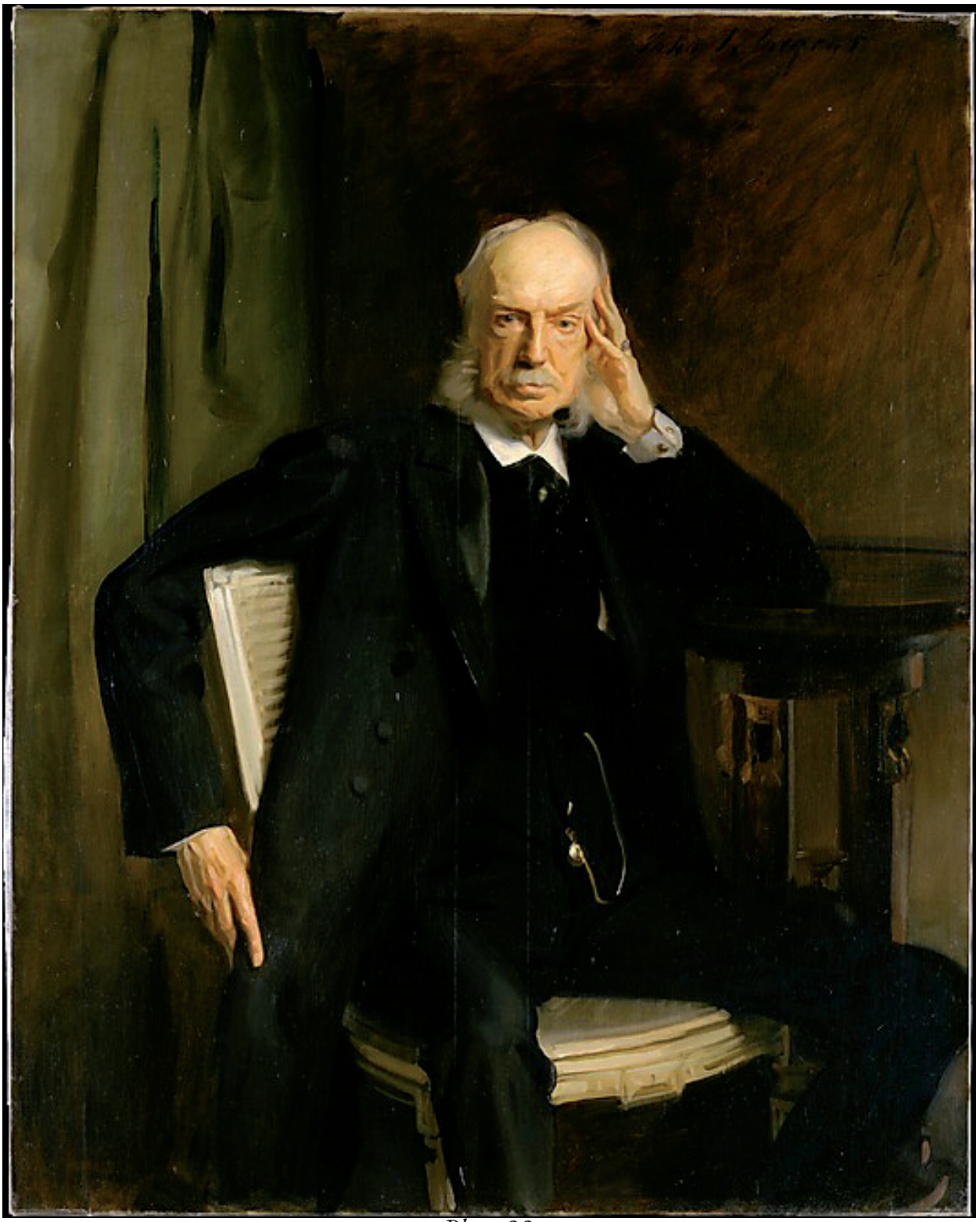


Plate 33.

For more on Marquand, read, Adrianna Del Collo's 2011 MA Thesis, *Cultivating Taste*, *Henry G. Marquand's public and private contributions to advancing art in Gilded Age New York,* available at http://libmma.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/ref/collection/p16028coll4/id/2747. It's wonderful!

HRH Prince Arthur, The Duke of Connaught and Strathearn (1937)

A portrait technically somewhat similar to that of Miss Ffrangcon-Davies, in which the head is carried to a high degree of completeness, while the rest of the picture—little more than the heraldic decorations of the order worn—for the most part is suggested. The aim in this manner of treatment is to focus attention upon what is, after all, the main fact of the picture—the sitter's face—and to add in the surroundings and accessories only just sufficient details to prevent the head from seeming isolated in an empty space. The deep tone of the blue velvet cloak is laid in with full consideration of the part it plays in an ordered composition. There is nothing a careless or accidental in the execution of this, the last work of de László. It is directed throughout by confident understanding.

Note

The duke, the seventh child and third son of Queen Victoria, was painted here at age 87. It was the final commission de László completed before his death in November, 1937. As commentary goes, it's almost identical to that in regard to Count Apponyi, whose image was replaced by the duke's in the second imprint of this book, post de László's death, in 1937.

This work is similar to a 1927 painting of the Field Marshall in his robes as Grand Prior of the Order of St John of Jerusalem in the British Realm, done by Edward Caruna Dingili. That work can be viewed here: http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings/paintings/field-marshal-hrh-the-duke-of-connaught-18501942-kg-grand182636 The mission of the order was (and is still) "to prevent and relieve sickness and injury, and to act to enhance the health and well-being of people anywhere in the world." It's interesting he twice chose to be depicted as a soldier cloaked in charity.

The duke's long and distinguished military career began at age 16, when he entered the Royal Military Academy. He would serve for 40 years all over the empire. He was made Commander-in-Chief in Ireland (1900-04), Commander-in-Chief in the Mediterranean (1907-09), and in 1911, his nephew, King George V appointed him Governor-General of Canada (1911–16)

His wife of almost 40 years, Princess Louise Margaret of Prussia, died in 1917, his daughter Margaret, Crown Princess of Sweden, died in childbirth in 1920. The duke was survived by only one of his children, Lady Patricia Ramsay, who had married a naval commander and one of the duke's aides de camp. His son, also called Arthur, died less than a year after this portrait was painted, of stomach cancer.

The retired from the military in 1922 and from public life in 1928. He would return to active service in WWII acting mainly as a recruiter but he had ties to Winston Churchill—in that Winston's mother Jennie was sister to his long-time mistress Leonie, Lady Leslie. The duke would die in 1942, just short of his 92nd birthday.



Plate 34.

Note: Comparing Palettes: Sargent v. de László

Because I've put in commentary about John Singer Sargent, I wanted to talk about his palette in comparison to de László's. The following are the colors Sargent himself said he regularly used (on the right, with pigment designations where needed). On the left de László's colors.

Blanc D'Argent (P1)		Zinc white (Poppy oil)
	Ivory Black	Ivory Black
	Burnt Sienna	Burnt Sienna
Transparent Gold Ochre (PY42)		Yellow Ochre
Chrome Yellow Pale (PY34)		Cadmium Yellow Pale
Chrome Orange		Cadmium Orange
	Rose Madder	Rose Madder
	Ultramarine	Ultramarine
Viridian (PG18)		Veronese Green
Vermilion (PR106)		Rose Doré
Venetian Red (PR101)		Lac Garance
Raw Umber (PBr6)		Cadmium Yellow Deep

Cobalt Blue (PB28)
Cobalt Violet (PV14)

Both palette's contain crossover, but Sargent's palette runs cool. He chooses chromes and viridian (all "modern" invented colors of his time) over cadmiums and Veronese green (all "modern" invented colors of his time).

De László's warmer palette features rose doré. But Sargent could use vermilion to achieve the same effects. The only signficant difference is Sargent's use two "new in his time" colors: the cobalts. These fell out of fashion (literally, the hot colors of women's fashion, especially cobalt violet and viridian, and then they weren't) and so, naturally, left many portrait painters' palettes.

De László's choice of a warmer yellow and a more opaque yellow ochre reflect his overall warmer, brighter, more cheerful palette. Sargent's colors lend themselves to darker more dramatic works, but that was the fashion in art in his day. Palettes often reflect the fashions in clothing and taste they need to replicate.

In de László's day, "happy" was the fashion. Art critics often miss the fact he painted "bright young things" and ignorantly consider his works trivial as a result. In reality, de László beautifully captured his time and has left us a wealth of searching portraits of people quintessentially of that era.

Sargent used poppy oil for light colors, linseed for dark ones. But lead makes paint dry faster.

Another topic people seem to forget when discussing colors is transparency. In the case of these two artists' palettes, there are wide divergences.

Sargent's white is opaque. But de László's is so thinned with oil it's semi-opaque at best.

Ivory black is semi-opaque to semi-transparent.

Burnt Sienna is transparent.

Sargent's gold ochre is transparent. But de László's is yellow ochre is opaque.

Chrome/Cad Yellow (pale or deep) and Chrome/Cad Orange are all opaque.

Rose Madder and Ultramarine are both transparent.

Sargent's viridian is transparent. But de László's Veronese green is opaque.

Sargent's vermilion and Venetian red are opaque.

But de László's rose doré and lac garance are transparent.

Sargent's raw umber is opaque. But the cobalts tend to be semi-opaque to semi-transparent.

The choice of colors and their inherent unique individual properties (e.g., maker, type of oil, transparency, tinting strength, color bias, drying time, light fastness or if it's a pure hue, meaning it can't be replicated by mixing other colors together) all set parameters on what an artist can achieve with their paint and dictate how he will achieve certain secondary and tertiary colors.

Sargent's reds are opaque; de László's transparent. Sargent's green and gold are transparent; de László's opaque. Transparent colors make glazes. Opaque colors do not. It's is on the palette that the paths of artistic individuality begin to diverge. Tools, techniques, and times simply further that divergance. These may all like small insignificant choices, but from a myriad of small choices comes the stamp that makes an artist's final work recognizable as his own.

The End

Thanks for reading this far!

Indra