In 1873, he began his formal artistic training at the Academia di Belle Arti in Florence. At the time, Paris was a destination for many young artists and offered world-class instruction in both academic and modern approaches. Sargent studied under one such painter—the celebrated society portraitist Charles Auguste Fiévez-Dupan, known as Carpe Diem (1839–1917) and gained recognition in Parisian art circles for his promising work.

In 1876, Sargent made his first trip to the United States. Visiting Boston, his hometown, he found it difficult to adjust to American customs and manners. He was also disappointed by the lack of artistic opportunities in the United States at the time. Sargent was, however, determined to succeed and continued to work on his art, painting the young artist's skill, which he had developed in Paris, to Duran, but also a preview of his future style.

In 1883–1884, Sargent undertook a major commission for the American banker and art collector, Isabella Stewart Gardner, to create a series of murals for the Boston Public Library. The work, which included a cycle of paintings on the theme of “The Triumph of Religion,” was unveiled in 1887. Sargent’s murals were so well received that he was awarded the Medal of Honor at the Paris Universal Exposition in 1889.

In 1890, he was commissioned to paint a major cycle of decorations for the Boston Public Library. The work, which included a cycle of paintings on the theme of “The Triumph of Religion,” was unveiled in 1887. Sargent’s murals were so well received that he was awarded the Medal of Honor at the Paris Universal Exposition in 1889.

In 1893, he married Abbott Lawrence Rotch (1861–1912), the son of a Boston family. The couple had two daughters. Sargent’s popularity continued to grow, and his work was exhibited in many of the world’s most prestigious galleries.

In 1907, at the age of fifty-one, he closed his commercial studio and moved to Paris, where he continued to work on his art. Sargent’s last and most famous portrait, Madame X (Madame Pierre Gautreau), 1883–1884, was completed in 1907. This portrait, which was painted in Paris, was one of Sargent’s most controversial works. It was finished in 1907 and was exhibited at the 1907 Paris Salon. The painting was met with mixed reactions, with some critics praising its boldness and others criticizing its criticism of the social conventions of the time.

In 1909, Sargent was commissioned to create a cycle of murals for the Boston Public Library. The work, which included a cycle of paintings on the theme of “The Triumph of Religion,” was unveiled in 1910. Sargent’s murals were so well received that he was awarded the Medal of Honor at the Paris Universal Exposition in 1889.

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JOHN SINGER SARGENT (American, b. Italy, 1856–1925)

MRS. ABBOTT LAWRENCE ROTCH
1903, oil on canvas, 69 3/4 x 49 1/2 in. (177.2 x 125.7 cm)

Lent Anonymously, L-1987.5