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John Singer Sargent and His Muse: Painting Love and Loss

Karen Corsano, Daniel Williman

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This sensitive and compelling biography sheds new light on John Singer Sargent's art through an intimate history of his family. Karen Corsano and Daniel Williman focus especially on his niece and muse, Rose-Marie Ormond, telling her story for the first time. In a score of paintings created between 1906 and 1912, John Singer Sargent documented the idyllic teenage summers of Rose-Marie and his own deepening affection for her serene beauty and good-hearted, candid charm. Rose-Marie married Robert, the only son of André Michel, the foremost art historian of his day, who had known Sargent and reviewed his paintings in the Paris Salons of the 1880s. Robert was a promising historian as well, until the Great War claimed him first as an infantry sergeant, then a victim, in 1914. His widow Rose-Marie served as a nurse in a rehabilitation hospital for blinded French soldiers until she too was killed, crushed under a bombed church vault, in 1918. Sargent expressed his grief, as he expressed all his emotions, on canvas: He painted ruined French churches and, in *Gassed*, blinded soldiers; he made his last murals for the Boston Public Library a cryptic memorial to Rose-Marie and her beloved Robert. Braiding together the lives and families of Rose-Marie, Robert, and John Sargent, the book spans their many worlds—Paris, the Alps, London, the Soissons front, and Boston. Drawing on a rich trove of letters, diaries, and journals, this beautifully illustrated history brings Sargent and his times to vivid life.

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