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Yale Art Historian Sally Promey to Deliver 12th Annual Kanof Lecture at N.C. Museum of Art
Free lecture presented in conjunction with public unveiling of major gift

RALEIGH, N.C.—The North Carolina Museum of Art recently received the gift of a major painting by renowned American artist John Singer Sargent. The work is one of two known finished oil studies for Israel and the Law, one of the panels in Sargent’s monumental mural cycle The Triumph of Religion at the Boston Public Library.

Though celebrated as the foremost portrait painter of the Gilded Age, Sargent expressed a desire to be remembered also as a painter of great and ambitious themes. Occupying his time intermittently for nearly 30 years, the Boston murals were as much an academic as artistic undertaking for the artist.

According to John Coffey, deputy director for art and curator of American and modern art at the NCMA, “Judging from the large number of preparatory drawings and studies, Israel and the Law worried the artist more than any other mural in the cycle.”

The Museum’s newly acquired canvas depicts a cowled Jehovah teaching the Law to the boy Israel. One-third the size of the final mural, it was used by Sargent to make last-minute adjustments to the composition. For its debut in the Museum’s galleries, the painting has received a new frame, incorporating colors and architectural details from Sargent Hall at the Boston Public Library.

The donor, who wishes to remain anonymous, was inspired to give the painting after visiting the Museum’s Judaic Art Gallery—one of only two galleries in an American art museum devoted to the ceremonial art of the Jewish people. The painting is now on view adjacent to the Judaic Art Gallery in the Museum’s West Building.

The public unveiling of the Museum’s study for Israel and the Law is appropriately timed with the 12th annual Abram and Frances Pascher Kanof Lecture on Sunday, March 25, at 2 p.m. in the Museum Auditorium. The lecture and reception afterward are free and open to the public.

“John Singer Sargent's Israel and the Law: The Key to a Missing Keynote” will be delivered by award-winning author and respected Sargent scholar Sally M. Promey, professor of American studies and professor of religion and visual culture at Yale University. Dr. Promey will explore the multiple meanings of Israel and the Law in the context of the mural cycle’s grand theme and its controversial reception by the public.

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About the Abram and Frances Pascher Kanof Lecture

This program honors the memory of two of the Museum’s most devoted patrons, Drs. Abram and Frances Pascher Kanof. Abram Kanof was the founder and longtime curator of the Museum’s Judaic art collection. The program and the reception that follows are the gift of the Kanof family.

About the Judaic Art Gallery

The Judaic Art Gallery, founded in 1983 by Dr. Abram Kanof, displays the Museum’s important collection of Jewish ceremonial art. The ritual objects, often made of precious metals and embellished with great artistry, served to beautify the ceremonies that define Jewish life. For more information on the Judaic Art Gallery or the Friends of the Judaic Art Gallery, call (919) 664-6759. For more information on the Museum, visit www.ncartmuseum.org or call (919) 839-NCMA (6262).

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The North Carolina Museum of Art’s permanent collection spans more than 5,000 years, from ancient Egypt to the present, making the institution one of the premier art museums in the Southeast. The Museum’s collection provides educational, aesthetic, intellectual, and cultural experiences for the citizens of North Carolina and beyond. The 164-acre Museum Park showcases the connection between art and nature through site-specific works of environmental art. The Museum offers changing national touring exhibitions, classes, lectures, family activities, films, and concerts.

The Museum recently opened its new gallery building, home to the permanent collection. The North Carolina Museum of Art, Lawrence J. Wheeler, director, is located at 2110 Blue Ridge Road in Raleigh. It is the art museum of the State of North Carolina, Beverly Eaves Perdue, governor, and an agency of the Department of Cultural Resources, Linda A. Carlisle, secretary. Admission to the Museum’s permanent collection and Museum Park is free. Museum hours are Tuesday–Thursday and Saturday–Sunday, 10 a.m.–5 p.m.; Friday, 10 a.m.–9 p.m.; Closed Monday. For information call (919) 839-NCMA, or visit www.ncartmuseum.org.