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Sargent, heralded on both sides of the Atlantic, was one of the most creative American artists of the late nineteenth century. Born in Florence to American parents living abroad, he retained a deep and lifelong connection to the country famed for its ability to get "ineradicably in one's blood." Sargent vacationed frequently in Italy, and most of the works he created there were painted not for commission but out of his artistic passion for Italy's people, land, and culture. Often hauntingly powerful, they range from dramatically painted genre scenes of Italian peasants and saturated landscapes that celebrate the beauty of the Italian countryside to portraits of other Anglo-American expatriates and tourists, including Henry James and Edith Wharton.

The majority of works are of Italian sites, including well-known tourist spots but also the quieter, more isolated locales that Sargent sought out. His subjects include magnificent Italian gardens with their ancient and Baroque statuary, Rome's Neoclassical and Renaissance buildings, urban street scenes, the Italian Alps, and, of course, Venetian canals. Sargent found Venice particularly alluring, and the city well suited the watercolor medium in which he worked most often in Italy. His use of vivid colors, brushwork that varied from soft and fluid to bold and dashing, and an overwhelming sense of light and air characterize his Italian scenes—and rank Sargent as one of the finest watercolorists of all time. His later Italian works, some in watercolor and others in oil, reveal an artist who relished his materials and made art purely for art's sake. Both beautiful and informative, this lavish volume includes eighty-five color and fifty black-and-white images. It adds a new dimension to our appreciation of Sargent's art and will delight anyone who loves Italy, as Sargent so passionately did.