

John Singer Sargent Bravura Painting *Mrs. Carl Meyer and her Children* Focus of Exhibition at the Jewish Museum

First Time on View in the U.S. in Over Ten Years

New York, NY – Few paintings by John Singer Sargent better exemplify his artistic prowess as a portraitist than *Mrs. Carl Meyer and her Children*. Seductive and revealing, this bravura painting captures the world of a privileged English family of Jewish origin during the late Victorian era. On view at the Jewish Museum from September 16, 2016 through February 4, 2017, *John Singer Sargent's Mrs. Carl Meyer and Her Children* will highlight this remarkable portrait – contextualizing it with other family portraits, ephemera, documents, personal correspondence, and caricatures.

On loan from the Tate Britain, it has been over ten years since the painting was on view in the United States. The work depicts Adèle Meyer, a wealthy British philanthropist, well-known society hostess, and political activist, with her children, Elsie Charlotte and Frank Cecil.

When he painted the Meyer family in London in 1896, Sargent was the most sought after society portraitist in Britain and the United States. Within four years of its creation, the large-scale work (79 ½" x 53 ½") was shown in three venues to great popular and critical acclaim. Sargent's painting was a highlight of the Royal Academy's exhibition in 1897. It was subsequently shown at the Copley Society of Boston in 1899, where it was considered one of the artist's greatest achievements. In 1900, the picture was awarded a medal of honor at the Exposition Universelle in Paris. Sargent carefully staged his stylishly dressed sitters against 18th century French furniture and architectural elements. The animated Mrs. Meyer is posed just to the right of center at the edge of a canapé. She wears a dress of satin, velvet, and organdy which may have been supplied by Worth in Paris. A rope of oriental pearls drapes across her prominently featured bodice, touching the tips of her shoes. Sargent's worms-eye view troubled some critics and left much room for sly commentary. One caricature in *Punch* (1897) in which the two children struggle to keep their mother from falling off the sofa, was described as "a sort of a drawing room tobogganing exercise."

In this work, as in many of Sargent's portraits, the artist builds upon European masters such as Titian, Velázquez, and Gainsborough in his brilliant reinterpretation of grand manner portraiture.

Mrs. Carl Meyer (the former Adèle Levis, c. 1861–1930) was the daughter of Julius Levis, a wealthy European rubber manufacturer, and his wife, Emily Levis (nee Hecht). Adèle Levis married the banker Carl Ferdinand Meyer in 1883. He was born in Hamburg and became a naturalized British subject in 1877. He was a foreign emissary for the London branch of the Rothschild bank, representing their interests in some of the major financial negotiations of the time, and later became London chairman of the De Beers Company as well as director of the National Bank of Egypt. Carl

Meyer was created Baronet of Shortgrove in 1910. A vivacious hostess and leader of the artistic society of the day, Lady Meyer was passionately interested in music, theatre, and opera, as well as social causes including women's suffrage, conditions for female factory workers, and support for underprivileged families.

John Singer Sargent's Mrs. Carl Meyer and Her Children is organized by Norman L. Kleeblatt, Susan & Elihu Rose Chief Curator, the Jewish Museum.

Support

John Singer Sargent: Mrs. Carl Meyer and Her Children is made possible by the PNF Fund and the Maurice I. Parisier Foundation. Additional support is provided by Susan and Elihu Rose and by Ealan and Melinda Wingate.

About the Jewish Museum

Located on Museum Mile at Fifth Avenue and 92nd Street, the Jewish Museum is one of the world's preeminent institutions devoted to exploring art and Jewish culture from ancient to contemporary, offering intellectually engaging, educational, and provocative exhibitions and programs for people of all ages and backgrounds. The Museum was established in 1904, when Judge Mayer Sulzberger donated 26 ceremonial objects to The Jewish Theological Seminary as the core of a museum collection. Today, the Museum maintains a collection of over 30,000 works of art, artifacts, and broadcast media reflecting global Jewish identity, and presents a diverse schedule of internationally acclaimed temporary exhibitions. Visitors can now also enjoy Russ & Daughters at the Jewish Museum, a kosher sit-down restaurant and take-out appetizing counter on the Museum's lower level.

The Jewish Museum is located at 1109 Fifth Avenue at 92nd Street, New York City. Museum hours are Saturday, Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday, 11am to 5:45pm; Thursday, 11am to 8pm; and Friday, 11am to 4pm. Museum admission is \$15.00 for adults, \$12.00 for senior citizens, \$7.50 for students, free for visitors 18 and under and Jewish Museum members. Admission is Pay What You Wish on Thursdays from 5pm to 8pm and free on Saturdays. For information on the Jewish Museum, the public may call 212.423.3200 or visit the website at TheJewishMuseum.org.

#

6/29/16

Press contacts:

Anne Scher and Alex Wittenberg

The Jewish Museum

212.423.3271

ascher@thejm.org

awittenberg@thejm.org

pressoffice@thejm.org (general inquiries)

