

John Singer Sargent (American, 1856-1925)

Portrait of Norah Gribble, 1888

Oil on canvas

Acquired with Funds Provided by the Horace G. Fralin Charitable Trust, 2000.021

This evocative piece by Sargent, one of the greatest portrait artists in American history, is among his largest full-length portraits. He won praise and critical acclaim for his looser approach to brushstroke and ability to reveal the psychology of his sitters. Sargent's Paris studio flourished in the late 1880s until he exhibited the scandalous and widely criticized portrait *Madame X*, a work he later sold for £1,000 to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1916. The tumult drove him out of France and into Britain, where he established a prosperous studio as a portrait painter for wealthy, elite patrons from England and the United States. The portrait of Norah Gribble (a London based socialite in her early 20s) is particularly notable for its massive scale, lifelike quality, and her alluring glance at the viewer. During Sargent's career, he painted some 900 oil paintings and more than 2,000 sketches and charcoal drawings.

"I see a woman who is confident in her dress and in her presence. She seems unafraid to express herself in fashion accessories and hairstyle. The quality of the fabric seems high-end and she appears comfortable in her being. As a flight attendant and boutique owner, I have learned a lot about fashion and quality. As I sell a medium to a higher quality line of clothing, I see women that have not had access to a style that they would not have broached... a style that is a little outside of their comfort zone, but they embrace it and enjoy. Mrs. Norah Gribble, in this work of art, is comfortable. My client (we will call her Gussie), once exposed, steps outside the box. In some cases, for the first time outside the box, slips into the garment, approaches the mirror, and for the first time in a long time, feels good! I am happy to have an eye and an opportunity to make 'Gussie' smile!"

**—Diane Speaks, Owner and Buyer,
she's international boutique**