

# NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

FOURTH STREET AT CONSTITUTION AVENUE NW WASHINGTON DC 20565 • 737-4215/842-6353

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
January 5, 1992

CONTACT: Tina Coplan  
Liz Kimball  
(202) 842-6353

## JOHN SINGER SARGENT'S EL JALEO

OPENS AT THE NATIONAL GALLERY ON MARCH 1, 1992

Washington, D.C. -- One of John Singer Sargent's most important paintings, his early masterpiece El Jaleo will be the focus of an exhibition at the National Gallery of Art from March 1 through July 5, 1992. John Singer Sargent's El Jaleo also will include six related paintings, forty-two drawings and watercolors, and two book illustrations that trace Sargent's creative evolution in portraying the Spanish dance theme, a process culminating in the dynamic, life-size El Jaleo.

Restored by recent cleaning to reveal its full brilliance of color and brushwork, El Jaleo will be on loan for the first time since 1914, when it was installed in the home of Isabella Stewart Gardner in Boston, now the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum.

Conservation of the painting and the exhibition have been made possible by generous grants from NYNEX Foundation, the philanthropic arm of NYNEX Corporation, and New England Telephone, a NYNEX subsidiary.

-more-

el jaleo . . . page two

"We are most fortunate to be able to show John Singer Sargent's great painting, which is evidence of his enthusiasm for Spanish culture," said J. Carter Brown, director of the National Gallery of Art. "We are enormously grateful to the Gardner Museum for lending us this great treasure, newly revealed, and to the other lenders of related works, some previously unknown even to Sargent scholars. This marks a milestone in the National Gallery's policy of restricting certain exhibitions to a very narrow focus, centered on a major masterpiece."

"NYNEX Foundation is delighted to help bring this national treasure to both Boston and the nation's capital for the enjoyment of visitors from around the world," said Pattie Gallatin, vice president of programs for NYNEX Foundation.

El Jaleo, an eight-by-eleven foot painting of a magnificent flamenco dancer, was the highlight of the Paris Salon in 1882. Critics marveled at the painting's energy and theatricality, comparing it to the work of Goya and Velázquez.

Spain held a powerful attraction for European and American artists and tourists in the second half of the nineteenth century. Many made the journey not only to study the paintings of the Spanish masters in the Prado and other museums, but also to experience the exotic ambiance, especially of southern Spain. The sinuous movements of the gypsy dances of Andalusia, performed for tourists in taverns and accompanied by traditional songs and guitar music, were potent experiences.

el jaleo . . . page three

Sargent recorded his emotional and aesthetic response to Spain in the works on view in this exhibition. An addition of special interest is The Spanish Dancer, a full-length study for the central gypsy figure in El Jaleo. This large canvas (seven-by-five feet) was unknown until its rediscovery in 1988 in Grenoble, France.

El Jaleo was acquired during the first week of the Paris Salon by a prominent Boston collector, Thomas Jefferson Coolidge. He gave it to his relative Isabella Stewart Gardner, who had created a dramatic setting especially for the painting at her Boston home.

Curator of the exhibition at the National Gallery is Nicolai Cikovsky, Jr., curator of American and British paintings. Mary Crawford Volk, guest curator, contributed an essay to the fully illustrated exhibition catalogue, published by the Gallery. Other contributors are Warren Adelson, Elizabeth Oustinoff, and Nicolai Cikovsky, Jr.

# # # # #