



Sargent and Spain: A review by Lola Jiménez Blanco

VISUAL ARTS
WASHINGTON, D.C.

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Venue

Former Residence of the Ambassadors of Spain, 2801 16th St NW, Washington, DC 20009

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Admission

Free, [RSVP required](#)

Credits

Presented by the Cultural Office of the Embassy of Spain in Washington, D.C.



Spanish art historian Lola Jiménez-Blanco will go over Sargent's fascination with Spain, placing him in the so called "Spanish crazed" in the U.S. in the late 1800.

When John Singer Sargent first arrived in Madrid in 1879, he not only confirmed his admiration for Velázquez at the Prado, but he immediately spread his fascination throughout the country, which he visited again and again up until 1912. From Santiago de Compostela to Granada, local characters, scenes of daily life and dazzling monuments stimulated his imagination and provided new and exotic subjects to his art. In this process, Sargent was joining a wave of foreign admiration to a place largely ignored during centuries by European and Americans alike, as it escaped the customary concept of good taste embodied mainly by English, French or Italian traditions.

This lecture will synthetically explore the so-called "Spanish craze," America's fascination with Spanish culture during the Gilded Age and beyond, with the aim of contextualizing and assessing Sargent's place in the international reformulation of Spanish art and culture critical fortunes.

ABOUT LOLA JIMÉNEZ-BLANCO

Jiménez-Blanco is a distinguished Spanish art historian, whose main field of interest is the relationship between art and politics in 20th century Spain. Since 1995 she has been a faculty member of the Department of Art History III (Contemporary) of the Complutense University of Madrid, and from 2002 to 2006 she taught at the Departament d'Humanitats of the Universitat Pompeu Fabra of Barcelona.

Her doctoral dissertation, published in 1989 under the title of *Arte y Estado en la*



España del siglo XX (Art and State in 20th Century Spain), became a reference for the study of Spanish State policies towards modern art, focusing on the dysfunctional relationship between modern art and official museums. In 2016 she curated for the Reina Sofia Museum the greatest review made to date of Spanish art under the first years of the Franco dictatorship: *Campo Cerrado: Arte y Poder en la Postguerra española. 1939-1953 (Campo Cerrado: Art and Power in the Spanish Post-war period. 1939-1953)*. This exhibition, which generated great academic, media and general audience attention, altered the traditional narrative and proposed new approaches to a very convulsive era by incorporating pieces of diverse nature (painting, sculpture, photography, architecture, cinema, magazines, official documents, unpublished correspondence). Along the same lines the catalogue, edited by Jiménez-Blanco, compiles published and unpublished documents of various types and provenances, thus showing how renewed historiographical methods may expand the knowledge of a period still little explored for obvious political reasons, and at the same time highlight unresolved issues.

In between these two projects, Jiménez-Blanco has undertaken many others on Spanish modern art and artists, and on museums and art collecting, both in the form of publications and exhibitions. From 2002 to 2013 she was an art critic for *Cultura/s*, the cultural supplement of the newspaper *La Vanguardia* from Barcelona, and among her recent publications are *El coleccionismo de arte en España, una aproximación desde su historia y su contexto (Art collecting in Spain, an approach from its history and its context, 2013)* and *Una historia del museo en nueve conceptos (A history of the museum in nine concepts, 2014)*, both dealing with the place of artistic institutions in social and political life from different perspectives.

Between 2018 and 2020, Jiménez-Blanco was named Director of the Art History Department at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid. In 2020, she was pointed General Director of Fine Arts of the Culture Ministry of Spain, a position she held until 2021.

Currently, Jimenez-Blanco is working on a book about post-war culture based on the extensive archival material gathered for the exhibition *Campo Cerrado*, aiming at broadening and deepening its main theme: the connection between art and politics under authoritarian regimes and its nuances.

Jiménez-Blanco's interest in 20th century art and politics is not exclusive: in 2008 she coordinated and edited the Prado Museum Guide, and since 2013 she has been a member of the Royal Board of Trustees of the Prado Museum.

This conference is part of the program related to the major exhibition *Sargent and Spain* at the National Gallery of Art on view from Oct. 2, 2022 to Jan. 2, 2023. [View the written presentation and accompanying slides](#) (PDF, 8 MBs).