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Okakura Kakuzō Case and Bernard Berenson Case

Okakura Kakuzō (1862–1913) became a close friend of Isabella Gardner soon after he arrived in Boston in 1904 to become the first curator of Japanese art at the Museum of Fine Arts. He promoted interest in Japan’s traditional culture and deepened Gardner’s appreciation for Asian art in general. This case (located under the window) contains a poem written by Okakura for Gardner as well as mementoes of nineteenth-century American writers Walt Whitman, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Sarah Orne Jewett, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Henry Adams. You will find this thought-provoking mixture of East and West throughout the galleries.

In the case just to the right is a photograph of Bernard Berenson (1865–1959), taken around 1897. Isabella Gardner first met the future art dealer about this time, when he was an undergraduate at Harvard College and just beginning his studies of Italian painting. Berenson became Gardner’s chief art advisor, arranging her acquisition of some of the greatest paintings in her collection, including Rembrandt’s Self-Portrait (second floor) and Titian’s Europa (third floor).

In order to preserve the originals, many of the letters and photographs in these cases are facsimiles.

John Singer Sargent
American, 1856–1925

Mme Gautreau Drinking a Toast, about 1882–83
Oil on wood

Virginie Gautreau was renowned for her beauty, low-cut dresses, and lavender pancake makeup. The brushwork of this charming and intimate oil sketch also is daring, from the sitter’s quickly sketched forearm to the blobs of paint that still manage to suggest flowers. Isabella Gardner saw this work in Paris when she visited Sargent’s studio with writer Henry James (whose portrait hangs nearby); she acquired it from the collection of Gautreau’s lover, physician Samuel-Jean Pozzi. Apparently this unconventional picture of an unconventional woman contributed to Isabella Gardner’s decision to commission the next year her own portrait from Sargent. This portrait now presides over the Gothic Room on the third floor.
4. Side Chair (four in this room). Italian (Piedmont), 1780s. Painted wood
5. Portrait of Violet Sargent, 1890. John S. Sargent. Oil on canvas
8. The Marriage at Cana, about 1900. George Hawley Hallowell. After Tintoretto's painting in Santa Maria della Salute, Venice. Pencil and watercolor on paper
9. Case with memorabilia
10. Carved Table. Chinese, 19th century. Ebony
11. Marble Torso of a Woman, about 1878. Dennis Miller Bunker (American, 1861–1890). Oil on canvas
12. Case with Okakura Kakuzō memorabilia
14. Case with Bernard Berenson memorabilia
17. Head of Isabella Gardner, 1894. Anders Zorn. Pencil and chalk on paper
20. Armchair (two). Italian, late 18th century. Painted wood
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John Singer Sargent
American, 1856–1925
**Yoho Falls**, 1916
Oil on canvas

Sargent was best known as a society portraitist, but he yearned for recognition of his talents in subjects of his own choosing. Landscape paintings like this large oil (and the watercolors displayed elsewhere in the room) allowed Sargent more freedom to experiment with point of view and brushwork. *Yoho Falls* shows Sargent at his most modern; rather than a conventional view of this landmark in the Canadian Rockies, its emphasis is on paint and atmosphere.


3. **Noonday**, 1860s. Camille Corot (French, 1796–1875). Oil on canvas


5. **Armchair**. Italian, about 1780. Painted and gilded walnut


7. **Chair** (six in this room). Italian, about 1800. Walnut


9. **Writing Desk**. Italian (Veneto), about 1790. Walnut; the top is marquetry from southern Germany

On the desk:

- **Teapot Tray** (with 5 keys). English, 18th century. Silver
- **Inkstand**. French, 18th century. Faience
- **Tobacco Box**. Dutch, 18th century. Brass
- **Tapestry Fragment**. Chinese, 19th century. Silk
- **Letter Opener with figure of a satyr**, 19th century. Bronze

10. **Tray with The Adoration of the Magi**. Dutch, 18th century. Painted wood

11. **Settee**. American, late-19th century. Wood


13. **Side Chairs** (four in this room). Italian (Piedmont). 1780s. Painted wood

14. **Mirror Top**. American, 19th century. Gilded wood


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Isabella Gardner loved flowers and gardening, as the courtyard of this museum makes wonderfully clear. This painting of blooming chrysanthemums in the greenhouses at Green Hill, the Gardner’s summer residence in Brookline (about six miles away), is among the earliest examples of American Impressionism. It is less a description of a particular place than a rendering of the riot of colors found there.

Bunker gave this work to Gardner just before his tragic death at the age of 29, calling it “A very poor sketch of your favorite flower—and which was painted entirely to please you.” The picture was painted after Bunker spent the summer in France with John Singer Sargent, both of them working outdoors under the influence of French Impressionist Claude Monet.

Isabella Gardner first met Ralph Curtis in Venice, in 1884. He was the son of Bostonians who had moved to Venice in the late 1870s; later, the Curtis’s Palazzo Barbaro in Venice became Gardner’s home-away-from-home. In this painting, a gondola wends its way back at dusk from the Lido, a little island with a popular beach. Gardner and Curtis spent many hours floating through Venice’s canals, which may have added to her attraction to this languid and slightly mysterious painting.


4. **Vase with fish-shaped handles**. Korean, 18th century. Lacquer

5. **Side Table** (two in this room). Italian (Naples), about 1790. Painted poplar with marble top


On the back of the door:


11. **Chairs** (five). Italian, about 1800. Walnut


13. **A View Across the River**, 1860s. Gustave Courbet (French, 1819–1877). Oil on canvas


17. **Refectory Table**. Italian, 17th century. Walnut


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**Edouard Manet**  
French, 1832–1883  
*Portrait of Madame Auguste Manet*, 1863  
Oil on canvas

Manet was very close to his mother, who encouraged his interest in becoming a painter. In this somber portrait, Manet’s mother—who appears both sympathetic and a bit formidable—wears mourning clothes for her husband, who had died the year before. The subtly differentiated shades of black sharply contrast with the lighter, flatter paint of Mme Manet’s face and hands. Compare this work to Sargent’s sketch of the socialite Mme Gautreau on the wall behind, noticing how the younger woman’s gauzy clothing and extravagant gesture contrast with the solemn stability of Mme Manet.

**Antonio Mancini**  
Italian, 1852–1930  
*The Standard Bearer of the Harvest Festival*, about 1884  
Oil on canvas

Notice how the boy and the standard are dark and light, complementing each other, and how the solid stance of the boy contrasts with the billowing fabric of the standard. Ralph Curtis (whose work is on view on the opposite wall) introduced Isabella Gardner to Mancini’s painting and negotiated the purchase of this work. Curtis was entranced by Mancini’s thick, expressive brushwork and his unsentimental pictures of life in the Italian countryside.


3. **Portrait of Madame Auguste Manet**, 1863. Édouard Manet (French, 1832–1883). Oil on canvas

4. **Side Table**. Italian (Venice), late-18th century. Painted pine

5. **Surge of the Sea**, about 1900. Andreas Andersen (American, 1869–1902). Oil on canvas

6. **Vitrine**. Italian, mid 18th century. Painted wood. *Inside: Head of a Crozier (bishop’s staff)*. Italian, 15th century

7. **Chest**. Chinese, 19th century. Lacquer with brass mountings


11. **Armchair**. Italian (Veneto), 1780s–90s. Wood


13. **A She-Goat**, 1880s. Rosa Bonheur (French, 1822–1899). Oil on canvas


17. **Cinerary Urn (container for ashes)**. Roman, 1st century A.D. Stone

18. **Side Table** (two). Italian (Naples), about 1790. Painted poplar with marble top


21. **Armchair** (two). Italian (Piedmont), 1780s. Painted wood

22. **Cope (an ecclesiastical vestment)**. French or Italian, 18th century. Brocaded satin


27. **At the Window**, before 1918. Louis Kronberg (American, 1872–1965). Oil on canvas

28. **Case with selections from Isabella Gardner’s library**

29. **A Bandaged Head**, about 1919. Denman Ross. Oil on canvas


31. **Chrysanthemums**, 1888. Denis Miller Bunker. Oil on canvas


33. **Santa Maria della Salute from the Giudecca, Venice**, about 1883. Francis Edward James. Watercolor on paper

34. **Vase with fish-shaped handles**. Korean, 18th century. Lacquer