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REGINALD GRENVILLE EVES, RA
(1876-1941)

THE MISSES HUNTER
(after John Singer Sargent)

oil on canvas
63.5 x 76.2 cm; 25 x 30 in.

Provenance

Private collection, Europe.

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We are grateful to Richard Ormond for suggesting an attribution to Reginald Eves, on the basis of photographs (email correspondence, 16 Nov. 2022).

Reginald Eves was a successful British artist who painted portraits of many prominent military, political and cultural figures between the two World Wars. He exhibited at the Royal Academy from 1901 and was elected as an Associate on 21 April 1933 and a full member on 21 April 1939.

Society figures flocked to Eves' London studio where he painted luminaries such as Thomas Hardy, Sir Ernest Shackleton, George VI and Sir Max Beerbohm. When the Second World War broke out, Eves was among the first artists offered a full-time, salaried contract by the War Artists' Advisory Committee, the WAAC, and, along with Barnett Freedman, Edward Ardizzone and Edward Bawden, he was sent to France in 1940 with the British Expeditionary Force, the BEF. There, Eves mainly painted portraits while based at a hotel in Arras.

Eves was close friends with the American painter John Singer Sargent and was encouraged by Sargent in his painting. Sargent drew portraits of both Eves and of his wife Bertha. Eves recalled the happy memories of Sargent's visit to his studio: 'He insisted on looking at all my pictures when going through innumerable sketches as well. You can imagine my pleasure when the most celebrated painter of his time showed approval of my oil paintings.' (quote in A. Bury, *The Art of Reginald Eves, RA*, Leigh-on-Sea, 1940, p. 24).

Eves studied Sargent's own work closely and the present painting is based on Sargent's triple portrait of the Hunter daughters, which was painted in London in 1902. Sargent was commissioned to paint Kathleen, Cary Phyllis and Sylvia Hunter by their mother, Mary, who was a leading Edwardian society hostess and close friend of both Sargent and Rodin. The fan held by the centre figure echoes the overall sweep of the young women's full skirts in this innovative composition. The sisters are seated on a 'confidante' circular sofa, and are shown with their dog Crack. On seeing this picture when it was first exhibited Rodin declared that Sargent was 'the Van Dyck of our times'.

The handling of the paint in the present painting with a wide brush is closely consistent with other copies by Eves after Sargent, such as his unsigned portrait of *Dame Octavia Hill* (20 Grosvenor Gardens, National Trust) from 1920, and his society portraits, such as that of *Hazel MacNaghten* (Reading Museum), *Dame Margaret Janson Tuke* (Royal Holloway, University of London) and *W.J. Warley* (Bristol Museum & Art Gallery).

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Fig. 1. John Singer Sargent, *The Misses Hunter*, 1902, Tate Gallery, London