



Cecelia Beaux, *Mrs. Beauveau Borie and Her Son, Adolphe*, 1896

- Beaux was compared to Sargent, often favorably. Her strong technique, her perceptive reading of her subjects, and her ability to flatter without falsifying, were traits similar to his.
- Like Sargent, she remained single and devoted her life to her art. Like Sargeant, she developed a structured, professional routine, arriving promptly to her studio and expected her models to do so also.
- Earned high praise:
 - In 1933 Eleanor Roosevelt honored Beaux as **“the American woman who had made the greatest contribution to the culture of the world.”**
 - One critic stood in front of Beaux’ paintings and exclaimed: **“The ordinary ones are signed John Sargent, the best are signed Cecilia Beaux.”**
- Born in Philadelphia in 1855, 22 days before her mother died, the youngest daughter of a French silk merchant. Heartbroken, he left his girls with their maternal grandmother to raise and went back home to France.
- As a female she was denied direct study in anatomy and could not attend drawing classes with live models. Even after having her work published at 18, she did not consider herself an artist.
- Attended the new Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts but steered clear of the scandalous Thomas Eakins, so she never was a part of his inner circle.
- Studied in NY and in Paris at the Academy Julian. Degas, Monet, Sisley, Caillebotte, Pissarro, Renoir, and Berthe Morisot had been receiving the wrath of the critics for several years. Their art, though varying in style and technique, was the antithesis to the type of Academic art taught by her teacher William-Adolphe Bouguereau. However, she adopted the Impressionist use of more white and paler coloration in her oil painting, particularly in depicting female subjects, an approach favored by Sargent.
- While living in Paris, her Aunt Eliza reminded her niece to avoid the temptations of Paris, **“Remember you are first of all a Christian – then a woman and last of all an Artist.”**
- In the summer of 1888 she tried the plein-air painting techniques with little success and thus remained a realist painter for the rest of her career, even as Cézanne, Matisse, Gauguin, and Picasso were beginning to take art into new directions. Beaux mostly admired classic artists like Titian and Rembrandt.
- In 1889 she returned to the states and decided to paint portraits in the “grand manner” earning her commissions from the elite including President Teddy Roosevelt at the White House.
- In 1895 she became the first female teacher at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, where she taught portrait drawing and painting for 20 years. She was a popular teacher.
- About her struggle for perfection: **“A perfect technique in anything means that there has been no break in continuity between the conception and the act of performance.”**
- About her work ethic: **“I can say this: When I attempt anything, I have a passionate determination to overcome every obstacle...And I do my own work with a refusal to accept defeat that might almost be called painful.”**

