

# THE ARTCARE™ ADVANTAGE: PROFILES IN CONSERVATION



## THE CLIENT PROFILE

Located in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, Naumkeag was the 44-room summer home of Joseph Hodges Choate, an eminent New York lawyer and American ambassador to the Court of St. James, England. Designed by Stanford White and built in 1884, Naumkeag is a reflection of the affluent, aristocratic America that resulted from the Industrial Revolution. Its architecture, furnishings and landscaping provide a time-capsule of the Victorian era, spanning the Gilded Age, the Gay Nineties and the halcyon years preceding World War I. Surrounded by 49 acres of gardens, greenhouses and farmland, this historic home houses premier collections of period furniture, ceramics from around the world and artwork by some of the most noted artists of the day. Naumkeag was bequeathed in 1958 by Choate's daughter to The Trustees of Reservations, a non-profit organization whose mission is to preserve areas of exceptional scenic, historic and ecological value for public use and enjoyment.

## THE CONSERVATION CHALLENGE

Among the precious artifacts at Naumkeag are two charcoal portraits by John Singer Sargent. The first, a rendering of Joseph Choate, is inscribed by the artist, "To my friend Mr. Choate/John S. Sargent, London 1905". The second, a drawing of Choate's daughter, Mabel, is dated 1911. Also on display at Naumkeag are several hatbox panels depicting early American images in block printed designs on cardboard. These were collected and framed by Mabel Choate who perceived their value as turn-

## John Singer Sargent Portraits

### Preserved with Artcare™

of-the-century memorabilia. The Sargent drawings and hatbox panels are on permanent display at Naumkeag, and were selected to receive conservation treatment because of their importance in interpreting the historic house and its era, and because of their vulnerability to the uncontrolled interior climate of Naumkeag.



2 charcoal portraits by John Singer Sargent

## THE PROCESS AND SOLUTION

Conservation assessment was performed by the Williamstown Art Conservation Center. Since aqueous treatment on these materials presented too many risks to the artist's medium, the treatment approach proposed to the Trustees of Reservations focused on preventive conservation. The proposal included the use of Artcare™ matboard to slow on-going deterioration from the inherent acidic mounts of the hatbox panels and from previous acidic framing materials used on the charcoal drawings. Use of Artcare™ matboard, which contains active zeolites, combined with moisture absorbent sheeting (Artsorb®) within a sealed frame package will trap off-gassed acids from the artwork and buffer the artwork from moisture.

Alpharag® Artcare™ 8-ply Ivory matboard was chosen for both Sargent portraits. For the portrait of Joseph Choate, an antiqued gold foil strip was adhered to the face of the window mat to replicate the look of the original mat. Both unfixed charcoal portraits were hinged onto 4-ply Ivory Alpharag® Artcare™ and vapor-sealed with



Hatbox panel

Artsorb between the disinfected original old glass and Coroplast® (a polypropylene/polyethylene corrugated sheeting). The perimeter edges were taped with 3MBook Tape #845 to provide the seal.

The hat box panels had spacer mats made of a single piece of 8-ply Colonial Cream Alpharag® Artcare™ to separate the glazing from the surface of the panel. This spacer mat was hidden beneath the lip of the frame. The panels were vapor-sealed in the same fashion as the Sargent drawings with the exception that the panels were tape-sealed between Acrylite OP2 and Coroplast. The original old glass was placed outside the sealed frame package to preserve the original appearance. The acrylic glazing will protect the colors from ultra-violet light and the surface from breakage. It was not possible to use an acrylic glazing on the unfixed Sargent drawings due to the static electric charge of the plastic.

## THE SUCCESS OF ARTCARE™

The reframed portraits by John Singer Sargent and two reframed hatbox panels will be on permanent display to coincide with Naumkeag's season opening on Memorial Day 2002. The Artcare™ products will enhance the longevity of these priceless artifacts by protecting them from environmental pollutants and inherent vices, making them available for the use and enjoyment of generations to come.

## The Artcare™ Archival System

The art of protecting your art.

1-800-9ARTCARE  
[www.artcare.com](http://www.artcare.com)

### MATERIALS USED

8-ply Ivory Alpharag® Artcare™ matboard was chosen for both Sargent portraits.

4-ply Ivory Alpharag® Artcare™ was used for backing.

8-ply Colonial Cream Alpharag Artcare was used to separate the glazing from the surface of the hat box panels.