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## BIOGRAPHY of SARAH GRIFFIN THIBODEAUX

Sarah Griffin Thibodeaux studied drawing, painting and portraiture for years before going professional. A figure drawing class at the New Orleans Academy of Fine Arts in high school opened her eyes to this new world where draughtsmanship and the craft of painting held court, a world that invited her in, asked her to stay awhile. Figure drawing led to figure painting, which led to portraiture, her passion.

After a life path centered around the written word—a B.A. in English, jobs in book publishing and online journalism—painting called her back. More specifically, portraiture.

In the intervening years she continued to practice painting. In the late nineties she studied with Ronald Sherr at the legendary Art Students League in Manhattan, the place where all realist painters logged their hours in front of the model. She remembers the day she went in to register. On the wall was a portrait by New York artist Robert Henri, author of every art student's bible, *The Art Spirit*. On another wall was a still life by Georgia O'Keefe. Yes, O'Keefe studied there too, till she found her way to the desert and her own visual voice.

In time Thibodeaux found her way to the books of Everett Raymond Kinstler, studied his graceful, bold, and gesturally (to coin a phrase) portraits, such as one of Tom Wolfe in a white linen suit, resting casually on his cane. These recalled portraits by John Singer Sargent, the American master of portraits who made it look so easy, just a stroke here or there, one for the highlight of the nose, there one for the flash in the eye. Years later, she found that Kinstler was still teaching. Life came full circle when, in his workshop, he stopped her mid-stroke and walked her painting around the room as a good example of how to block in a head. "Get the effect," he said.

Later life brought her back to New Orleans, where in another world online news was her profession. When Hurricane Katrina struck in 2005, this work became as big as the disaster would allow. All consuming as the flood waters that overtook her beloved city. In time, things settled down, and painting again became a part of life, like breath.

Thibodeaux's focus is portraits. Her subjects are friends, family, new friends, characters, Louisiana icons. Her great love is to depict them honestly, with respect and authority.

Thibodeaux has taken Sargent's advice and paints not only portraits, but still life and landscape as well. "Paint outside!" is the best advice she ever got, next to "Paint from life!" and her landscapes carry the freshness of a Louisiana spring day, before it's too hot.

Painters she loves who are living? Let's say she wouldn't turn down a dinner invitation from Everett Raymond Kinstler, Richard Schmid, Sherrie McGraw, David Leffel, Jeremy Lipking.

# *Studio Thibodeaux*

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Painters of another time? Rembrandt, Velasquez, Holbein, Vermeer, Manet, Cassatt, Beaux, Sargent, Sorolla, Zorn, among others.

Portraits, to Thibodeaux, mean a lot. Care goes into the choice of background, clothes, setting. But more than that, the portrait is about the moment, about what it means to be you, alive, this year. She loves the sitting, the worktime that feels like visiting on a Southern porch over iced tea.

Thibodeaux tips her hat to master teachers Auseklis Ozols and Dell Weller, who've handed her the torch and now expect her to light the way.

She's grateful to be a member of the Portrait Society of America and the Oil Painters of America, groups that help fellow travelers find each other and teach each other their ways.

Her poetic imagination finds its home in New Orleans, and somewhere in every painting she paints, every photograph she takes, this place exists. A magical place with sticky air and tropical fruit trees and neverending nights full of horns and heartbreak.

As of 2007 her home is Washington, D.C., a place somewhere in between New Orleans and Manhattan, nicely not too northern, but northern enough to have autumn. She is splitting her time between New Orleans and Washington, D.C., hoping to return to her home Louisiana in the not-too-distant future.

In the meantime, she continues to paint from life, outdoors whenever possible, with her dog Boudreaux at her side.