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QUOTABLE QUOTES by SARAH GRIFFIN THIBODEAUX

On paint quality:

“I love the way paint feels, the way it can be put on thin or thick, how you can let it linger on the brush, how it can straggle off. I love the way paint speaks. I love thin washes of color. The way heavy blobs make a statement. The way blended paint loves softness, awaits its hard-edged end.”

On colors:

“My favorite colors? Pthalo blue--maybe just because it has a “p” in it, but really more because it’s a blue that tends toward the green. And it comes from a dream.”

“I love the colors that find themselves in a portrait—the greens and golds of light skin in shadow, the bronzes of brown skin and the high pinks of highlights. I love how backgrounds, put in well, can set the skin to glow. I love how the harmony of colors has a science to it, as well as an art.”

On John Singer Sargent:

“John Singer Sargent is every portrait painter’s first love. I was no exception. When I first saw Sargent, it was like love at first sight. I knew I wanted to spend my life putting paint on canvas, learning how to make brushstrokes as luscious and delicate as he, and in the service of a portrait. What better way to spend one’s life?”

On James McNeil Whistler:

“There are a pair of Whistler’s at the Frick Museum in Manhattan, full figures on gray backgrounds. I remember being struck by his color harmonies and how he was bold enough to put them in the titles: *Harmony in Pink and Gray: Valerie, Lady Meux* (1881-82) and *Arrangement in Black No. 5: Lady Meux* (1881). I’m only now scraping the surface of what I hope to learn about color harmonies.”

On Edouard Manet:

“No one can paint a peony as fleshy and full as Manet. I love how he planted his bold strokes and just left them there.”

On my first figure drawing class:

“When I was fifteen, my father signed me up for a drawing class. Beginning painting was full, so they suggested figure drawing. Little did I know that the model was nude. When that day came around, there she was, and when the bell



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of the timer went off, her robe dropped to the floor and so did my jaw. But I picked up my charcoal and started drawing, and by the end of the night managed a fair drawing. Dell Weller picked it up and showed it to everyone. My heart ascended! From then on I was hooked.”

On painting children:

“Children under eight can be tough subjects. They’re just so wiggly. I do love their energy and company, though. A child is so honest, and I love capturing the delicate beauty of early youth, full face, full lips, carefree curls. I do my best to honor that age.”

On painting young women:

“The beauty of young women is often that they are unaware. At sixteen often a girl is shy and self-conscious. I know she doesn’t know how beautiful she is. It’s that quality I try to bring out in the painting.”

On occasional portraits:

“I’ve learned recently that portraits are about the moment, bottling up the feelings embodied in that moment and holding it in time. The sitter, when she looks at the painting, remembers that year, what happened to her (Did her heart break? Was there a death? A love?). I want her to remember it fondly, to love the painting as much as I loved painting it. It is that gift I try to offer.”