


SPANISH CLOISTER

101  The Spanish Cloister reflects Isabella Gardner’s lifelong interest in the intermingling of cultures across continents. John S. Sargent’s painting of a Gypsy dance is framed by a Moorish-style arch designed specifically for this space, reminiscent of the architectural style that developed in Islamic Spain in the early Middle Ages. On either side of the painting are artifacts that evoke Spain’s ties with the Islamic world: tiles from Asia and carved panels from Africa.

The nearly 2,000 seventeenth-century Mexican tiles on the gallery walls evoke Spain’s empire in Latin America. Her friend, the artist Dodge Macknight, bought the tiles for her in Mexico in 1909 and Gardner herself spent hours assembling the tiles into the appealing pattern we see today. Look for the nearby Macknight room to see works by this painter, including views of the Mexican landscape.

3  John S. Sargent
American, 1856–1925
El Jaleo, 1882
Oil on canvas

Sargent’s monumental painting, based on drawings he made in southern Spain in 1879, is named for an Andalusian dance and is roughly translated as “the ruckus.” This is a painting you can *hear* as well as see: heels clicking, fingers snapping, hands clapping, the sounds of singing and guitars.

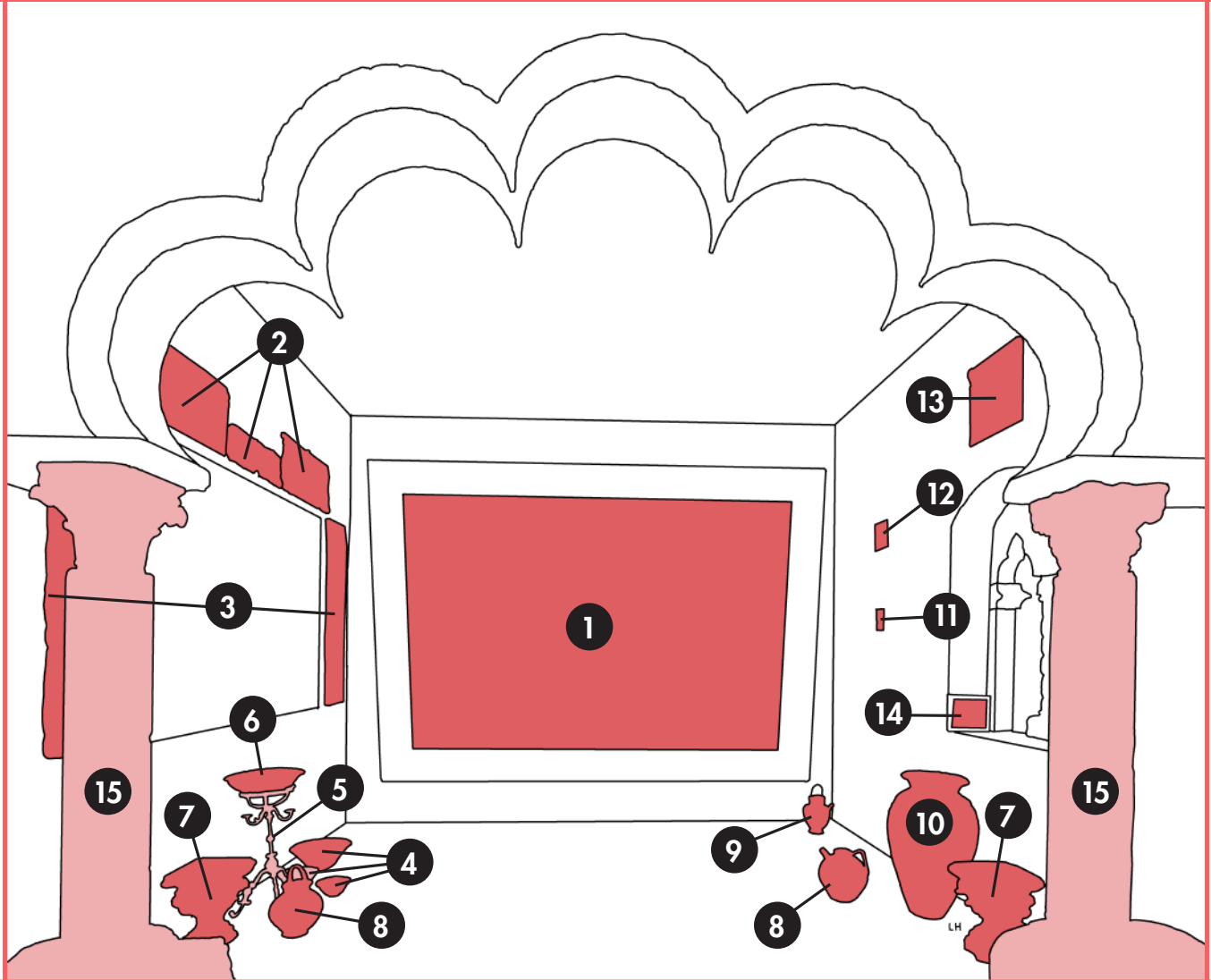
Isabella Gardner’s elaborate setting for this painting features an alcove defined by a Moorish arch. The mirror on the left seems to extend the space, and the everyday objects placed casually on the floor in front continue the illusion that viewers are part of the painted scene—we have wandered into the tavern and become the audience for the performance.

The idea for this dramatic installation dates from 1914, when Gardner decided to remodel this side of the museum. She replaced the two-story music room that originally occupied this space with three galleries on the first floor (the Spanish Chapel, Spanish Cloister, and Chinese Loggia) and the spacious Tapestry Room on the second floor. Remarkably, *El Jaleo* didn’t even belong to Gardner at this point—it was owned by her cousin, T. Jefferson Coolidge. When Coolidge saw the extraordinary custom-made setting, he apparently gave her the painting on the spot.



The Music Room, 1903–1914. Photograph by Thomas Marr

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1. El Jaleo, 1882. John S. Sargent (American, 1856–1925). Oil on canvas

2. Inscription Panels. Egyptian, early 14th century. Carved wood

3. Pair of Shutters. Egyptian, late 13th–early 14th century. Gilded wood

4. Green Bowls (three). Origin unknown. Glazed pottery

5. Tripod Stand. Spanish, 16th century. Wrought iron

6. Basin. Spanish, 18th–19th century. Glazed pottery

7. Stools with lion bases and scenes of centaurs. Italian, 19th–early 20th century. Glazed terracotta

8. Green Water Pitcher. Origin unknown. Glazed pottery

9. Water Pitcher. Italian, 18th century. Brass and copper

10. Large Jar. Spanish, 15th century. Unglazed terracotta

11. Tile with a figure of a mounted warrior. Iranian, 19th century. Glazed pottery

12. Tile with the emblem of Seville. Spanish (Seville), possibly 19th century. Glazed pottery

13. Tile from a *mihrab* (prayer niche) with a verse from the *Koran*. Iranian, 13th century. Pottery with cobalt and luster glazes

14. Tile. Turkish (Iznik), around 1575–1600. Glazed pottery

15. Columns with animal bases. South Italian, 13th century. Marble

On the walls:

Tiles (nearly 2,000) from the Church of San Agustín, Atlixco, Puebla. Mexican, 17th century. Glazed pottery

On the floor:

Tiles purchased from the Grueby Faience and Tile Company, Boston, 1914