

Patrick Bade | Painted Women: Misia Sert, Helena Rubinstein, and Suzy Solidor

Welcome everybody. I'm going to talk today about these three women, three glamorous, forceful, extraordinary personalities. And between them, they were portrayed well over a thousand times by some of the leading artists of the 20th century. We have Misia Sert on the left, Helena Rubinstein in the middle, and Suzy Solidor on the right.

I'm beginning with Misia. She's the oldest of these. She was born in 1872 and she's often just known by her first name, Misia. She was born Misia Godebska, of Polish origin. Her father was a very successful Polish sculptor, possibly of Jewish origin, although she was nominally a Catholic, but she's also known as Misia Natanson, Edwards and Sert after her three different husbands. She has a lot in common with Alma Mahler, you can say she's the French equivalent of Alma, in the fact, of course, that she was the daughter of a famous artist. And, you could give a Freudian explanation to both of them that they were so attracted to gifted artists, but these artists were also attracted to both of them. They were kind of magnets for the talented men of their time. Now Misia was very much a man's woman. She wasn't really interested at all in other women. And, she had, in some ways, a very retrograde idea about the role of women. She thought it was a role of women to inspire men and above all to be beautiful. And she said, "The quality of beauty is in my opinion, so essential for a woman that I have been unable ever to have an ugly woman friend." Now, you may not think that from these photographs that she was all that beautiful herself. I think she possibly could be described as pleasingly plump, rather than ravishingly beautiful, but she obviously had enormous sex appeal. And, I think that sex appeal was partly through her force of personality and through her intelligence. Jean Cocteau, who was a lifelong friend noted her feline qualities. In fact, a number of people commented on that. He said, "She had the silhouette of a beribboned tiger," and he also described her face as "soft and cruel." I think you can see it here and here, stretching in an armchair. She definitely looks very feline. She was like so many human beings, of course, she had a multifaceted personality. There were very sympathetic sides to her personality and less sympathetic sides. Proust, who of course was like so many people, was fascinated by her. He used her as the basis of two different characters in his great novel, "A la recherche du temps perdu". She is the gracious, elegant, cultivated princesse jeune belle and here you see her. This is by a Lautrec too. He was an artist who knew her very well. And, I think he could see both sides of her personality. Here, she could be the charming, elegant, cultivated princess. But Proust also used her for the nasty and manipulative, Madame Val-de-Reuil. And here is a rather less sympathetic depiction of her by Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec. This could be a portrait of Madame Val-de-Reuil. But, her allure, her sex appeal was unmistakable. I think it comes across in this wonderful

woodcut by Felix Vallotton. She was a very gifted musician. And you can see her here playing the piano and you can see how all the men listening to her are totally caught up and fascinated by her seductive personality. Now, she's born in 1872, but like a lot of women of her age, she lied about her age. She tried, on her passport, she tried to pass herself off as 10 years younger. If she'd really been the age she admitted to, she would've been 15 years old when she married her first husband, Thadee Natanson. We see them here together. The first man, a great man who was fascinated by her actually was the composer Franz Liszt as an old man. She sat on his knee as a little girl, and he was enchanted by her. The next genius who came along who was entranced by her was the French composer Gabriel Faure. And, she took piano lessons from him. He was obviously besotted with her. And when she told him that she was going to marry Thadee Natanson, he apparently burst into floods of tears. He may have been the first, but he certainly wasn't the last man that she reduced to tears.

So Misia and Thadee Natanson, they were the golden couple of Paris in the 1890s. He came from a wealthy Jewish family. And he set up the most interesting Avant garde arts magazine in Paris, probably in Europe, in the 1890s. That was "La Revue blanche". It was created in 1889 and it lasted until 1903. "La Revue blanche" covered visual arts, it covered music, it covered literature, it covered theatre. This is a poster for "La Revue Blanche" by Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec which shows Misia apparently ice skating. The offices of "Revue blanche", on one night a week, they had an at-home, and, the crème de la crème of Parisian cultural life would come. You can see Misia just coming up the stairs to enter the office on the left-hand side. And so, you would have the composers Faure, Debussy, Ravel, the artists Odilon Redon, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, all the Nabis artists. That's Bonnard, Vuillard, Maurice Denis, Vallotton. They were all practically house artists. And leading writers Mallarmé, Verlaine, and so on. They would all gather here. So it was one of the great intellectual centres of Paris in the 1890s. And Misia was the queen of this. She was the centre. She was the one who really attracted everybody.

And, I should say also, it was a very important centre for the Dreyfusards. At the time of the Dreyfus Affair, of course all Paris was divided. Families were divided, bitterly divided, and every journal and every salon, you had to be either pro-Dreyfus or anti-Dreyfus. And the "Revue blanche" was passionately pro-Dreyfus. Here are again some of the luminaries who came along to the "Revue blanche". Obviously Faure painted by Sargent on the left, Proust in the middle, Debussy and Ravel at the bottom. We get a wonderful idea really of the life of the "Revue blanche". It was a kind of carefree life that they led in the 1890s, not only these wonderful parties in the offices of "La Revue blanche", but Misia and Natanson had a country house, and they had open house. So all these artists and intellectuals would turn up for wonderful weekend parties. And all at this life was recorded on camera. The box camera that enabled you to

take snapshots had recently been invented. And on the right-hand side we see the artist Vuillard with his little box camera, and he took the picture of Misia on the left-hand side. These photographs evoke what must have been a very delightful, hedonistic life. I'm sure there were fabulous meals and wonderful wines and sparkling conversation between all of these people. Here, Misia and Thadee, obviously very much in love at this stage in their relationship. Here they are again in an interior photograph taken by Vuillard. And another weekend picture at Misia's house. The man on the left with his back to us is Pierre Bonnard. And the man seated next to her on the bench is the great impressionist artist, Renoir, who I'll tell you more about in a minute. He was also completely besotted with her.

So there are many, many portraits. These portraits were not commissioned. The artists wanted to paint her portrait. So, here she is in a very sympathetic portrait, I think by Bonnard. Again, by Bonnard. Here, she is again, stretched out on a canape rather like a cat by Bonnard. Bonnard again. Vuillard, both the photograph and the painting, both Misia by Vuillard. Felix Vallotton, the Swiss member of the Nabis group also made many, many portraits of her. Here are two of them. This is also a Vallotton. And, this is, Vuillard again. Now, we can also trace through all these portraits, very often they're double portraits of Misia with Thadee. And we can trace the trajectory of their relationship through these portraits, starting off very warm and loving, and gradually becoming more estranged from one another. This is a Vuillard, we get a slight sense here, that there is Misia as usual at the piano, Thadee standing behind her. Another Vuillard with Misia playing the piano, and Thadee at the opposite end of this rather long picture turned away from her. Vuillard on the left. Bonnard on the right. Read the body language, and we can sense that this marriage is somehow going wrong and that there is an estrangement between the two.

So what happened eventually was that this man that you see on the right-hand side, he was a multimillionaire newspaper proprietor, whose name was Alfred Edwards, but he was apparently not British. He was apparently of Turkish origin. He was a very powerful man. He was a kind of Murdoch, I would say, of his period. And he was a man who needed trophy women. He wanted to have glamorous women in his power. And of course, Misia, she was the toast of Paris, she was a great trophy. So he set his sights on getting hold of her. And he did it in a very unscrupulous way. He managed to track Thadee into a very dodgy business deal. And eventually he presented him with the alternative. He said, "Either you face financial ruin and possible prison, or I'll bail you out, and you hand over your wife to me." And that's what happened.

Now, as I've already told you, Misia had three marriages. Each one of them ended in spectacular disaster in the full glare of publicity. And with all of Paris absolutely agog at what was happening, everybody

gossiping about it. So, everybody knew about this, that Misia and Thadee divorced. And she married Edwards. For a while, all seemed to go well, because I think she quite enjoyed being the wife of a multimillionaire. Obviously there were perks to that. One of them was that he commissioned a luxurious yacht for her. The yacht was called the Aimee. Here, you see her on the Aimee. You can see Edwards in the background. This is a portrait by Bonnard of Misia when she's Madame Edwards. You can see a certain transformation. Of course, she's dressed very luxuriously. She's wearing a luxurious fur and wonderfully lavish furnishing around her. And it's at this time that she posed for no less than nine different portraits by Renoir. Renoir by this time was quite an elderly man. He was in his seventies, a great impressionist of the 19th century. And like so many men, he completely fell under her spell. He was besotted with her. He was particularly obsessed with her. He loved her milky white skin and he was obsessed by her breasts. She describes this actually in her autobiography that with tears in his eyes, he would be begging her, "Oh, just a bit lower, just a bit lower." And he'd say, "Oh, can't I see your nipples. I'm longing to see your nipples." She said in her autobiography that later that she regretted that she hadn't given him this simple harmless pleasure of exposing her breasts fully to him. But, you can see in the portrait on the left, she gets pretty close to it. She's lowered the décolletage very much, almost to the point of the nipples.

On the right-hand side, I'd like to point out to you, her pearl necklace. This is going play a role in her story. Here she is reclining on board the Aimee. And at this time she had an intense friendship with the composer Maurice Ravel, very much a sort of elegant dandy, as you can see with his manicured moustache and beard. Now, Ravel is a man of mystery. He was extremely private. His private life he kept fastidiously very secret and private. There's been a lot of expert speculation about it, about his sexuality. Was he heterosexual? Was he homosexual? Was he bisexual? Was he asexual? A lot of people think that he may have been completely asexual. Well, you may say to me, what does that matter? He wrote wonderful music and what do we care? Do we care who he slept with or what he did in bed? But, I'm afraid we do care, in a way. And a couple of years ago, an American academic published an article in which he claimed that Maurice Ravel was absolutely obsessively in love with Misia, and that several of his works contain secret clues in the music itself to his love for Misia. Notably, his wonderful "Introduction et Allegro". It's a piece for harp and small chamber group that he wrote in 1905. And it's dedicated to Misia. Now in 1905, she invited him to go for a voyage on the yacht Aimee. And he had just completed the "Introduction et Allegro". It was the unique manuscript, hadn't yet been published, and he wanted to give it to her. But before going on the ship, of course, he was very concerned that he would be elegantly dressed. And he went to his shirt maker and carelessly left the unique score of the "Introduction et Allegro" at the shirt maker's. Luckily, luckily,

luckily the shirt maker looked after it, and he got it back again, and he was able to give it to Misia. So he went off on this voyage on the Aimee. And about two years ago, I was very, very lucky and happy to acquire the letter that you see on the right-hand side, which was written on this voyage on the yacht Aimee. You can see that it's headed paper, it says at the top 'Yacht Aimee'. And it's an interesting letter, it's to a fellow composer called Maurice Delage who was a lifelong friend. It doesn't suggest to me that this was a man who was desperately in love. He actually spent most of the letter complaining about not enjoying this trip on the Aimee, and how uncomfortable it was and how you can see at this point he's in Amsterdam. And he says some very rude things about the Dutch in the letter.

Now I want to play you a bit of this piece of music, which is dedicated to her. And this is a recording which is very close to my heart. It's one of the very first pieces of classical music I ever got to know. It's in this recording, must have been about 1956. God, tells you how old I am. My mother bought a gramophone to play LP records. And one of the first LPs she bought was this record of the "Introduction et Allegro" by Ravel, played by the Hollywood Quartet, Ann Stockton Mason. My sister and I, we loved this piece. We were always asking our mother to play it to us. We liked it because to us it sounded Oriental because of all the chromatic harmonies. So here is the opening of that piece in this recording.

(An audio clip of "Introduction et Allegro")

Now, this woman turned out to be Misia's nemesis, or at least as far as her marriage to Monsieur Edwards was concerned. As I said, he was one of those men who lusted after trophy women. And having got Misia, he wasn't satisfied. This woman, she was called Lantelme. She was the most glamorous actress in Paris. If you go to flea markets, as I do every weekend, you can find mountains of images of this woman, piles of glamour postcards. She's on the front of every magazine between say, 1908 and 1910. Just for a couple of years her image was everywhere. And Edwards decided he had to have her. Well Misia was not happy about this. I mean, she was used to being the object of desire. She certainly wasn't used to being passed over for another woman. So she went to Lantelme in her dressing room at the theatre. And she said "Look, I know you don't want my husband. You just want his money. How much money do you want for me to buy you off?" And Lantelme, I mean, look at this, come either expression on her face. Imagine her saying this. She said to Misia, "Well, okay. I want a million francs, I want that pearl necklace that you are wearing, and I want you to have sex with me. And then I'll give you your husband back again." Well Misia signed it, threw the check and the pearls at her, but she balked at the idea of having sex with her rival. When she got home, she found that Lantelme had already sent back the pearls and the check. And in fact, the marriage ended in divorce for Misia and Edwards. Edwards

married Lantelme, but it wasn't a long-lasting marriage. Here are more wonderful images of her. I mean, she is drop-dead gorgeous, isn't she? Very, very sexy woman. You know, often glamour photographs in the past don't necessarily look very sexy to us today. But I think hers do. She was the bees knees of sexiness. So what happened was she married Edwards. He kept the yacht, by the way, even though he commissioned it for Misia. And their honeymoon voyage was on the yacht on the River Rhine and then very mysteriously she disappeared off the yacht. Nobody knows if she jumped, was pushed or fell, but she was found floating naked down the River Rhine with her beautiful blonde hair floating behind her and wearing nothing but, guess what? A pearl necklace. So that was a huge scandal in Paris. She was buried in a cemetery next to the River Seine, which promptly flooded and her coffin was then swept down the Seine. So the joke in Paris was that the next Madame Edwards had better learn how to swim.

But Misia, she moved on swiftly. And two men came into her life. Two very important men. On the left is the Catalan artist, Josep Maria Sert. He was her third husband and that lasted quite a while, it did eventually end in divorce, but it was a happy marriage for many years. And at the same time, another very important man came into her life. This was Serge Diaghilev, the great Russian impresario. Now, as you know, I've talked about him before, he was completely homosexual, but they had an incredibly intense, loving friendship. I mean, if he'd been able to marry anyone, I think he would've liked to marry her. You get a sense, I think, of the closeness of their relationship from this photograph on the right-hand side. Of course, one reason, what Diaghilev had to get out of this, quite apart from the fact that I'm sure he actually liked her, was Diaghilev always knew the right people to cultivate. And he knew that Misia had connections with everybody who was anybody in Paris. And through her, she was incredibly useful to Diaghilev, and for the history of the Ballets Russes. Here's a drawing by Cocteau, which shows the three of them in an opera box with the bearded Sert on the left and Diaghilev on the right-hand side. And I love this little drawing by Cocteau of one of the great evenings of the Ballets Russes with Nijinsky who performed a short but extremely athletic ballet, "La Spectre de La Rose", where he has to embody the scent of a rose. And he's whirling around the stage like crazy and eventually he has to leap out of a window and drop onto a mattress, presumably. And after this he was totally exhausted. And you see this, I think very witty drawing by Cocteau of Nijinsky flopped in a chair, like a boxer being fanned. And in the background you can see Diaghilev and the rather formidable looking Misia.

Now I said that she really didn't like other women. And that she certainly couldn't have a friendship with a woman who was not beautiful. But she had one very important lifelong friendship with Coco Chanel, the great couturière. In fact, she really helped Coco Chanel start her career. Coco started off with a hat shop in Paris. And again, it was Misia's connections that helped Coco to establish

her business. Now, on the left-hand side is a portrait by Kees Van Dongen, one of the Vogue artists. That came up for sale at Christie's, I was still working at Christie's, so it's probably about seven or eight years ago. And I happened to walk through the auction room the day before this picture came up for sale. I saw this picture, and it was catalogued Van Dongen, of course, but no further information other than it had the inscription "L'amie de Madame Edwards". Well, whoever catalogued that was not very well informed, because they clearly didn't know that Madame Edwards was Misia. She was Misia Edwards at the time, and L'amie de Madame Edwards was Coco Chanel. So, this is the very young Coco Chanel that you see on the left-hand side. I immediately emailed him when I got back to my office and said, "You do realize, of course, that this portrait of Van Dongen is a portrait of Coco Chanel," which would've made quite a difference, I think, to its value. Here is a photograph of Misia somewhat later in life. As I said, they remained lifelong friends. They were a bit like ab-fab. They aged together, absolutely disgracefully with lots of booze and drugs and so on. Here's Misia in later life, a very rather sad picture, right at the end of her life after the second world war where she was heavily addicted to morphine.

Now, moving on to my second great subject of portraits. This is Helena Rubinstein with her collection of portraits. Now these were portraits that she commissioned. It wasn't the same as Misia. Mostly in the case of Misia, the artists chose to portray her. Helena Rubinstein was one of the most successful female businesswomen of the 20th century. She was certainly the first woman to be a self-made millionaire. And this was a mixture of luck and determination and astuteness. It's all very well to have luck, but she always knew how to exploit that luck and to make the best of it. She was born in Krakow into quite a poor family. She was born in 1870 and she was the eldest of eight daughters. And they were a very religious Jewish family. She wanted to marry a goy. She wanted to marry a non-Jew, and her family wouldn't let her. And they tried to arrange a marriage for her with an Orthodox Jew, and she didn't want this. She was a very determined young woman. And she bravely fled her family. She went first to Vienna, and then she went off to Australia. Can you imagine a young girl travelling all that way to Australia? Here are more portraits from her collection, which are now in her museum in Tel Aviv. This is where she was born in Krakow, you can see, in quite humble circumstances. She was also a beautiful woman. She had later, a very stocky figure, but I think she had a very beautiful face. And very importantly, she had the most fabulously beautiful skin. She had a wonderful complexion. And her face turned out to be her fortune.

So she lands up in Australia, in a tiny little town in Australia called Coleraine. I don't know if we have any Australians listening who might know it. It's still there apparently, I've looked it up, and today it has a population of 991 human beings. But it does have a population of tens of thousands of sheep. And that is also very

important to the story. So she lands up in Australia. And all the local women say to her, "Oh, your skin is so beautiful. How did you get that beautiful complexion?" And she said, "Well, I have this secret recipe for a skin cream that gave me my complexion." Well, I think it was God really who gave her complexion rather than skin cream. But, of course, sheep, you've got lanolin, and that was the basis of the original Helena Rubinstein beauty cream. Now, lanolin doesn't smell very nice. So she found ways with herbs and things to put in it to make it smell better. And she claimed there were magic herbs that she bought from Hungary. I don't know whether that was true or not, and perhaps it works, I don't know. Maybe some people can tell me at the end of this talk who may have used Helena Rubinstein beauty creams, whether it really works or not, or whether it was all a big scam. But she could make this cream with the lanolin was dirt cheap. And she could make, you know, a lot of her beauty cream cost pence, but she sold it for a very inflated price. And that was one of her marketing policies all the way through her life was if you want to make something desirable, make it expensive. So that was always her policy was to put up prices, to make them higher. Anyway, it worked, and she then moved to Sydney and she moved to Melbourne in 1908. Everywhere she went, she was a huge success. She went to London in 1908. She went to Paris in 1912, and she landed up in New York in 1915. A lot of this, her success was very clever, skillful marketing. And she presented all her products as being scientifically tested. She and her staff dressed in white medical uniforms like there were nurses or doctors. And she promoted this idea that there was some kind of scientific basis for all her beauty products. Some rather outlandish contraptions, you can see. This is her Mayfair Beauty Parlour. This is her Fifth Avenue Beauty Parlour, beautiful, elegant modernist building. So also very much part of the marketing was the packaging, in the broadest sense of the word that she commissioned leading artists to make. Those carpets, you can see here, are actually designed by the great Catalan surrealist artist, Miro. And so she was very much up to the minute in her knowledge of modern art from her time in Paris. She knew all the leading artists and she commissioned them to design her whole lifestyle, which of course was part of the packaging and selling of her products, the interior design of her apartment. You can see a Dali painting in the background, and a piece of African sculpture, very trendy at the time, in the foreground.

So in America she eventually encountered her great bitter rival, which was Elizabeth Arden. Here you see the two of them, they were lifelong enemies and rivals. It was recently turned into a musical play. This is the American production, and there was a British play also in the Finsbury Park Theatre with our own beloved and wonderful Miriam Margolyes as Helena Rubinstein. She looks fantastic as Helena Rubinstein, I must say, the ageing elena Rubinstein, there's really quite a resemblance. So here she is, she married twice. She got rid of the first husband who was a rather shy scholarly man. And when she was in her 60s, she bagged herself a handsome Georgian prince who was 23



years her junior. Why not? If you can get it, why not? Here, you see them. She's looking like the cat that got the cream, isn't she, with her handsome Georgian prince. And she's a woman of taste, she really understood. She was a great collector and she was a pioneer collector, for instance, of African sculpture, as you can see here. Again, surrounded by her collection of African sculpture. She had an extensive collection of modern art, and she created a museum of modern art in Tel Aviv. Here she is as an elderly lady opening that museum.

I'm going to run through briefly some of the many portraits made of her. This is one of the very first. This would be before the first world war. This is when she first arrived in Paris as still a relatively young woman, and a glamorous portrait by Paul Helleu, who was one of the great glamour portraitists of the Belle Époque. But we tend to associate her more with the period between the wars. And this is, I think, also one of the best portraits of her. This is by Marie Laurencin, Raoul Dufy. This is a not very interesting portrait by an American called Edward Barnard Lintott, an artist called Roberto Montenegro, Candido Portinari, Christian Berard, one of the great theatre designers of the interwar period. Americans will be, and I do know Australians will be very familiar with this artist, William Dobell who's considered one of the best Australian artists of the mid 20th century. Here she is with Picasso. She befriended Picasso, and he made a number of drawings of her. And she commissioned a very famous portrait from Salvador Dali. And, this is a sketch that he made for that portrait. This is Pavel Tchelitchew, another surrealist artist, and Graham Sutherland. Of course, immediately post second world war Graham Sutherland had a very great reputation, he did a famous portrait of Winston Churchill, I'm sure you know. The final portrait you can see is quite conventional. I find the preliminary sketches are actually rather more forceful or more interesting. When I suppose he couldn't really have got away with selling her a painting that looked like the one on left-hand side. Here's another sketch for his final portrait. This is Graham Sutherland of Helena Rubinstein. And right at the end of her life, because she was a kind of an icon, you can see that she was the kind of personality that would've fascinated Andy Warhol. This is a Warhol, and another Warhol portrait of Madame Rubinstein.

Now my last of the three ladies is Suzy Solidor. She was born in Brittany in 1900 into a very poor background. Here you see her towards the end of her life in a nightclub that she had in Cagnes-sur-Mer on the Cote d'Azur. And you can see that the nightclub is completely lined even on the ceiling with portraits of her. She arrived in Paris in the 20s a very beautiful striking woman, as you can see here. And she became an artists' model. So it's reckoned there are well over 600 portraits of Suzy Solidor. Some, where she was just, she was actually being paid by the artist to model for them. But later she commissioned many portraits of herself. You can see she was an extraordinary looking woman. I love this photograph by Man Ray on the right-hand

side, where she is wearing cellophane. Of course in the 30s, cellophane had just been invented. And it was a very sexy material. It was a very sexy idea to go out, you would, I don't think any of you today would want to go out to a glamorous dinner party wearing cellophane, but, and I wouldn't think it was very comfortable, but of course it's immortalised in the Cole Porter song "You're the Tops". One of the lines goes, "You're Garbo's salary. You're the National Gallery. You're cellophane."

She was a very out lesbian. And I think I've mentioned before how open and tolerant Paris was compared with most other European cities, certainly compared with London, certainly compared with any American city. And particularly welcoming and tolerant towards women in same-sex relationships. There was really very little stigma against it. Suzy Solidor for quite a long time was a lover of this woman who was an aristocratic antique dealer, but a very, very fashionable member of society. Her name was Yvonne de Bremond D'ars. She introduced Suzy to French high society and also supported her when she set up what became a very fashionable night club. Here you see her in her nightclub with Jean Cocteau. Jean Cocteau is everywhere, but with her finger in every pie you could say. And here she is again. She was a very successful chanteuse, made a number of records. She had a very deep voice. And Cocteau said, "Oh, her voice comes from," well, I won't say where it comes from. It's a rather rude word to say online, and I'm going to play you the start of her most famous record, which is an extraordinary lesbian declaration of desire, the desire of one woman for another. It's called "Ouvre", open. And, she says, "Open your window in the morning." And then, she moves on. She says, "Open your chemise, because I want to see and touch your breasts." And she moves gradually down the body always saying, "oeuvre," open, and ending up with "ouvre tes cuisses tremblantes", "open your trembling thighs".

(An audio clip of "Ouvre" by Suzy Solidor)

I'm going cut her off before she gets too far down the body. She got into trouble as many people did in the second world war for supposed, and I put an inverted comments, because I remember somebody recently really objecting to even hearing a piece of music conducted by a conductor who is accused of collaboration. I want to say all these accusations are extremely complicated and not straightforward at all. Her collaboration, what did it consist of? She continued to run her nightclub all the way through the war, and the nightclub entertained people in German uniform. That's a form of collaboration, I suppose. Also she recorded the best known French version of the song "Lily Marlene". Well, this is interesting because everybody loved "Lily Marlene" in the second world war, lots of English singers and American singers. Well I think Marlene Dietrich recorded it, and they weren't accused of collaboration. I think it was a bit different maybe in France where of course the country was occupied by the Germans. So as far as England and America were never occupied by the Germans, there

was never any connotation of collaboration in singing the song. Anyway, many, many portraits of her. These are by lesser artists Pierre Sichel, Felix Labisse. This is by Van Dongen. I think Van Dongen, well, he must have, well he certainly knew all three women, probably painted all three. This is Moïse Kisling, important Jewish member of the Ecole de Paris, two portraits. I think she certainly posed for him as a model early in her career, rather than whereas the one on the right, on the left may be a commissioned portrait, I'm not sure. This is Foujita, the Japanese artist who was often called the King of Lamont. He's certainly, I think, at every party going in, Montparnasse, not Lamont, Montparnasse in the 1920s. So this is a portrait of Suzy by Foujita. And there's a photograph of Foujita showing off his muscly torso with Yvonne de Bremond D'ars, Suzy's lover. Two portraits of her by the avant garde artist Picabia. And this is a slightly freaky picture. This actually doesn't exist anymore. This was a commission from Suzy from, of all people, Francis Bacon. He was, of course, always in financial trouble, because he had huge gambling debts. He was a terrible gambler. And on one occasion, he was in the south of France, and so, she said, "Okay, I'll commission a portrait from you." And she paid quite a large sum of money for this, but unsurprisingly, she didn't love it. Later he was ashamed of it and he bought it back from her and then he destroyed it.

All these women you can see, portraits of Misia, of course, are all around the world in the great museums of the world. There's a wonderful Renoir in the National Gallery in London. There are several portraits of Misia in the Musee d'Orsay in Paris. If you want to see portraits of Helena Rubinstein, they're all in her museum in Tel Aviv. And if you want to see portraits of Suzy Solidor, there's a selection, I think about 40 of them in the Castle Museum of Cagnes-sur-Mer. The Castle's at the top of the hill. It's a very steep climb to the top of hill, but it's worth it, I think, to see all these portraits by Suzy. And, that is it.

So, let's see what questions or comments we have.

#### Q & A and Comments

Yes. This is from Myrna saying Martha Ross saying, "Arthur Gold, the concert pianist co-wrote with a man called Fizdale, Gold and Fizdale."

It's on my list, I think. It's a wonderful book. So, it was a huge bestseller. So you won't have any trouble in getting it. If you go on Amazon or AbeBooks, you'll probably be able to buy second hand for, you know, like two cents or something. And it's a very, very entertaining book. I actually got most of my information for this talk about Misia from that book.

(Book: "Misia: The Life of Misia Sert" by Arthur Gold and Robert

Fizdale)

"Looks like Misia got the pearl necklace back after the death of her rival."

I'm not sure if she did, or well, maybe she just kept it. There's no doubt there was more than one pearl necklace circulating.

From Herbert, "Very interesting, Ravel harmonies, which could easily." Yes, of course Ravel, the work that's always compared to the "Introduction" is the "Danses sacree et profane", but usually they're paired on a CD or an LP. Ravel "Introduction et Allegro", they're both written for harp and chamber ensemble and have very similar chromatic harmonies. The piece I played was the "Introduction and Allegro" by Ravel.

Yes, I do recommend the biography of Gold and Fizdale that I've just mentioned, an extremely entertaining book, a wonderful holiday read if you've still got a holiday coming to you this summer.

Thank you, Mona. "Did Helena marry a goy for her husband?"

No, I don't think she did. I think her first husband was actually Jewish.

Q – Did any of Helena's family in Krakow survive?

A – Yes. Yes they did because she systematically employed her sisters and nieces. So certainly a lot of them got out. I don't know if they all did.

Q – Did Misia have any children?

A – No, she didn't.

Thank you, Nikki.

Q – Did Helena Rubinstein keep in contact with her family in Poland after she left?

A – Yes, she did. As I said, she invited many of them to work for her.

Q – How many portraits of Saskia are about?

A – By Saskia, presumably you mean Rembrandt's wife? Well, as in, how many paintings? Maybe not that many paintings, but there is, if you include drawings, there are a great many drawings by Rembrandt of Saskia.

Ironically Helena Rubinstein's company was taken by– Oh, do you know, I forgot to tell you one of, yes. L'Oreal, of course, and all the scandals associated with L'Oreal and German occupation and so on. But, one of the things I forgot to tell you about Helena, which is so interesting. I mean, she was such a very clever, astute businesswoman.

She sold her company for an enormous sum of money in 1928. And then, of course, the stock market crash happened, and she bought it back again for a fraction of the amount of money that she sold it for. So that is generally considered to be one of the great financial coups of the 20th century that she did all of it.

Thank you, Carla.

This is Rochelle who has lithographs, I think you mean, by Kisling, and how wonderful your aunt was painted by Kisling. Very wonderful artist of the Ville de Paris.

So that seems to be everybody and everything. Thank you all very, very much. And, I look forward to being with you again next week for "La belle juive."