A high-voltage collection

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SPECIAL TO THE SENTINEL

Never underestimate the power of modest wealth when combined with and modesty and good taste.

John and Eleanor Mitchell of Mount Vernon, Ill., collected impressionist and early modern American art when it was out of vogue. The highlights of their collection have traveled to the Menil Collection in Houston and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

The Mitchell collection is on display at the Menil Collection in Houston. In "Femme Aiguiere," Mary Cassatt's portrait of a mother nursing her child, Cassatt's use of soft silhouettes and the transparent pink and orange of the impressionist palette creates a soft, almost dream-like atmosphere.

Near at hand is John Singer Sargent's exotic landscape "Fleece Wood at Murolo with Blue Pigs." Sargent was praised for his society portraits, but at the same time in his career he had moved to landscape. The island's twisted tree trunks and scraggly pines seem to have freed Sargent's brushwork. The "Watercolor of a Woman" shows Cassatt's choice of color. Two tourists from polite society, a young boy and girl, are nearly drowned in the wild Mediterranean sunlight.

"The Table Garden" by Frederick Childe Hassam, best known for his landscapes but here applied to a Southern interior. A woman in a blue dress sits at a piano, looking out the window. Hassam portrays the domestic idyll of daily life.

The Mitchell Collection is on display at the Menil Collection in Houston and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. The collection, which includes works by Mary Cassatt, John Singer Sargent, and Frederick Childe Hassam, is a testament to the power of modest wealth when combined with good taste.

Mary Cassatt captures a mother and child in "Jeune Femme."