



**Bergman, Carol**

**SITTING FOR KLIMT:**

*Five Novellas*

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Five captivating tales of women as both artist and muse.

An accomplished journalist (*Another Day in Paradise: International Humanitarian Workers Tell Their Stories*, 2003), short-story writer, memoirist (*Searching for Fritzi*, 1999), biographer and NYU writing instructor, Bergman is no stranger to capturing the unique alchemy that makes a character come to life. Here, she collects stories depicting strong women coming into their own, whether as artists—King Tut's mother Tia, Maria Izquierdo—or in their relation to famous male painters of their day—Gustav Klimt, Marc Chagall, John Singer Sargent. With the exception of "When I See Her," set in ancient Egypt, these refreshingly feminist tales explore challenges faced by late-19th and early-20th-century women attempting to break from the persistent Victorian role as "Angel in the House." The title story follows the trapped life of the beautiful Anna Glass, whose husband offers her favors to Emperor Franz Joseph; Glass decides to sit for the phi-

landering emperor's great rival Klimt in hopes of turning the emperor's attentions away from her by seducing the artist, but much strife ensues in this tragic tale from war-torn Austria. "Lovers in Blue & Green" traces friendship against all odds, in the story of Marc Chagall and his wife's move from Russia to Paris to New York as they and their Jewish friends flee Nazi-ravaged Europe. The worlds of art and politics also collide in "Three Women," in which Maria Izquierdo recalls the hard-won artistic triumphs of her Mexican triumvirate with Lola Álvarez Bravo and Frida Kahlo, here movingly described in her last days as "translucent, she was a bulb shining through a shade." The most fully developed story, "In Full Sail," places Victorian conventions squarely on the block, when a budding artist who befriends Sargent must acknowledge and embrace her own values as she encounters both his homosexuality and the shifting topography of the modernist art scene.

Ardent stories of female self-empowerment from all corners of the art world.

