

SOROLLA AND EEUU

Dates: September, 23 2014 – January, 11th 2015

Place: Sala Recoletos, 23

Curator: Blanca Pons Sorolla

Number of works: 150

From September 26, 2014 to January 11, 2015 the exhibition SOROLLA Y ESTADOS UNIDOS can be seen at the halls of FUNDACIÓN MAPFRE in Paseo de Recoletos. This exhibition is the first to include 150 paintings by Joaquín Sorolla (1863-1923); it follows the fascinating story of the Valencian painter in the United States, displaying some of his best work outside Spain and examining his extraordinary international fame.

After building a well-established reputation in Europe, Sorolla showed his work in two major exhibitions in the United States, sponsored by the Hispanic Society of America and its founder Archer M. Huntington. He had tremendous success. The American public fell in love with his beach scenes soaked by the Mediterranean sun, his exquisite Spanish gardens and his sophisticated and elegant portraits. This success had major impact on the painter's career, as most of his mature years were dedicated to exhibitions and commissions related to his American adventure.



Lighthouse Walk at Biarritz, 1906. Oil on canvas, 68.3 x 188.6 cm. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Peter Chardon Brooks Memorial Collection. Gift of Mrs Richard M. Saltonstall. INV. 22.691 Photograph © 2014 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Following four years of research, this exhibition offers a unique chance to enjoy a fundamental part of Sorolla's work currently found in the United States. The paintings were kindly lent by The Hispanic Society of America, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Brooklyn Museum, The Morgan Library & Museum, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, The Art Institute of Chicago, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Saint Louis Art Museum, Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum, San Luis, San Diego Museum of Art, The J. Paul Getty Museum, among others. Several paintings from prestigious private American collections will also be shown, many of which were located in the course of research completed prior to this exhibition. The exhibition is also generously supported by several Spanish collections, such as Museo Sorolla, Museo de Bellas Artes de Asturias, Colección Santander and Fundación Bancaja.

EXHIBITION OVERVIEW

Sorolla en Estados Unidos antes de sus grandes exposiciones (Sorolla in the US before his great exhibitions)

The exhibition starts with works by Sorolla that could already be found in American collections before the painter's arrival in the US. Some of these paintings such as ***The Port of Valencia*** or ***The Carob Tree*** were acquired by European *dealers* in exhibitions in Paris, Munich, Berlin and London. Nevertheless, the most important ones arrived in the United States after receiving important awards: in 1893 ***Another Marguerite!*** won the medal of honor at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago and ***Sad Inheritance!*** was given the Grand Prix at the Exposition Universelle in Paris in 1900. These early paintings clearly show how Sorolla's work was gradually shaped in the context of the international style evident in all major artistic events.

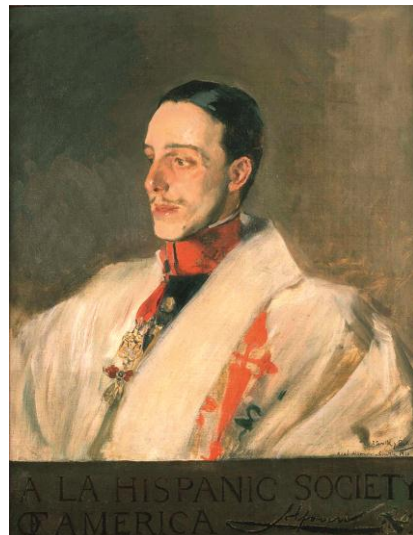


Sad Inheritance!, 1899
Oil on canvas, 212 x 288 cm
Colección Fundación Bancaja, Valencia
© Colección Fundación Bancaja, Valencia (Juan García Rosell)

Huntington. Mecenaz de Sorolla en América (Sorolla's patron in America)

Archer Huntington, an American millionaire passionate about Spain, discovered Sorolla's work in London and suggested that the painter exhibited his paintings in the Hispanic Society of America, which Huntington had founded only four earlier as a museum and study center for promoting Spanish art and culture. Held in New York in 1909 (followed by Buffalo and Boston) the exhibition was an unprecedented success, with more than 160,000 visitors, 20,000 catalogs sold and extraordinary reviews. This triumph was repeated two years later at an exhibition in Chicago and San Louis, also organized with the support of the Hispanic Society.

Huntington and Sorolla formed an unshakable partnership from the very beginning. This section focuses on their relationship through a series of works representing its main milestones: *Leonese Peasants* or *Afternoon Sun* represent Huntington's first purchases. A series of *gouaches* outlines the project about Spain's regions that was to occupy most of the artist's last years. Similarly, the two portraits *Portrait of King Alfonso III* and *Queen Victoria Eugenia of Spain* reflect the support of Spain's kings at these international exhibitions.



Alfonso XIII, King of Spain, 1910
 Oil on canvas, 89.2 x 69 cm
 The Hispanic Society of America, New York. INV. A55
 © Courtesy of The Hispanic Society of America, New York

Ryan. El otro mecenas americano (The other American patron)

Sorolla met the American magnate Thomas Fortune Ryan at his 1909 New York exhibition. In the following years Ryan acquired over 20 of Sorolla's works, especially paintings of main Spanish themes. He also commissioned several portraits and some very important paintings. To create the first one, **Christopher Columbus leaving Palos**, Sorolla traveled to Andalucía to follow the explorer's footsteps and paint nine remarkable oil studies, shown for the first time beside the final painting. **Women Dancing Flamenco at the Café Novedades**, finished in 1914, is one of Ryan's main commissions and is intended to portray a scene centered around flamenco.



Dancing in the Café Novedades of Sevilla, 1914
Oil on canvas, 246 x 295 cm
Colección Banco Santander
© Colección Banco Santander, Madrid (Joaquín Cortés)

Retratos vendidos en Estados Unidos (Portraits sold in the United States)

Despite their growing importance in the context of his work and their extraordinary quality, Sorolla did not see himself as a portrait painter. However, he exhibited several family portraits in the United States, mainly to publicize his ability in this genre and to attract new clients. **Clotilde in a Black Dress**, **Clotilde in a White Dress** and **Maria at La Granja** are especially noteworthy. Sorolla also showed portraits of great personalities of Spanish culture such as the painter **Raimundo de Madrazo**, **Aureliano de Beruete** or **Vicente Blasco Ibáñez**, three paintings that represent the beginning of the fantastic portrait collection of distinguished Spaniards at the Hispanic Society of America.



Mrs. William H. Gratwick, Emilie Victorine Piolet Mitchell Gratwick, 1909
 Oil on canvas, 152.4 x 99 cm
 Loan courtesy of Emilie Mitchell Gratwick Lewis
 © Loan Courtesy Emilie Mitchell Gratwick Lewis

Portraits painted in the United States (Retratos pintados en Estados Unidos)

Following the success of the portraits included in the 1909 and 1911 exhibitions and thanks to Huntington's help, who supported Sorolla in creating lasting relationships with illustrious American clients, the artist received more than fifty commissions to paint respected members of the American elite. Even though most of these paintings reflect the formulae used in commissioned portraits, Sorolla demonstrated his ability to convey the subject's personality, such as **Juliana Armour Ferguson** or **Mrs. William H. Gratwick**. The portraits painted in 1911 show more creative freedom than those created in 1909. We should mention **Mrs. Ira Nelson Morris and her children**, where we can find a close similarity to the portraits of John Singer Sargent and **Louis Comfort Tiffany**.

Paisajes y jardines (Landscapes and gardens)

Landscape painting is fundamental in Sorolla's work. He developed this genre alongside his consolidation as an artist, and achieved great success among American critics and consumers. The influence of the Regenerationist landscape paintings,

inspired by Sorolla's friend Aureliano de Beruete, coincides with the growing importance of this genre in international painting. Thus from 1906, the views of Segovia and Toledo combine very modern perspectives with the solemnity of Castilian architecture and streets. Moreover, from the time of his first visits to Andalucía in 1908, Sorolla fully develops a poetic representation of silence and privacy. It is surprisingly in line with the symbolist sensitivity of the time and can be seen in his paintings of the gardens of the Alcazar in Seville and the Alhambra in Granada.

Mar y playas en las exposiciones de 1909 y 1911 (Sea and beaches at the 1909 and 1911 exhibitions)

Sorolla fascinated the American public with his paintings of the sea and the beach, exceptional examples of his research into light and color. *The White Boat, Javea* and *The Bath, Javea* demonstrate his masterful ability to represent light, in this case reflecting off the subjects in the water. Alongside the naked boys swimming in the Valencian beaches Sorolla shows the cosmopolitanism and sophistication of the beaches in Northern Spain, in paintings such as *Lighthouse Walk at Biarritz* and *Under the Awning, Zarauz*. This exhibition also includes one of the masterpieces shown at the 1909 exhibition: *Running along the Beach*, which is shown together with four studies exhibited for the first time after being located at the Brooklyn Museum in New York during research completed for this exhibition.



Under the Awning, Zarauz, 1910. Oil on canvas, 99.1 x 114.3 cm
Saint Louis Art Museum. Museum Purchase. INV. 20:1911. © Saint Louis Art Museum

Two Sisters, Valencia, 1909. Oil on canvas, 176.2 x 112.1 cm. The Art Institute of Chicago. Gift of Mrs. William Stanley North in memory of William Stanley North. INV. 1911.28. Photography © The Art Institute of Chicago

Estudios, apuntes y notas de color (Studies, sketches and notes on color)

At the same time as he painted on a bigger scale, Sorolla continuously worked on smaller pieces either as sketches for bigger paintings or for the simple pleasure of painting. This exhibition includes thirty of his best sketches shown at US exhibitions, which garnered exceptional reviews and sales results. You can also see the frames designed by Sorolla for these specific paintings.

Dibujos y *gouaches* (Drawings and gouaches)

During his visits to the United States, Sorolla was profoundly inspired by the modernity of the big cities and the sophisticated environment of American high society. During his stay in New York and Chicago in 1911, he painted a series of low-angle views from his hotel room inspired by the skyscrapers, and created drawings on the back of menus of customers in his hotel restaurants. Extremely spontaneous and refreshing, these pieces are shown for the first time at this exhibition.