



MEADOWS MUSEUM
SMU · DALLAS

MEADOWS MUSEUM TO PRESENT WORKS BY JOAQUÍN SOROLLA Y BASTIDA AS PART OF “YEAR OF SOROLLA” CELEBRATIONS IN SPAIN & AMERICA

DALLAS (SMU)—July 19, 2023—From September 17, 2023 through January 7, 2024, the Meadows Museum, SMU, will present *Spanish Light: Sorolla in American Collections*, featuring 26 paintings from American private collections, some of which will be displayed publicly for the first time in decades. The curator of the exhibition is Blanca Pons-Sorolla, renowned Sorolla scholar and the artist’s great-granddaughter. It joins a worldwide celebration of the artist—dubbed the “Year of Sorolla/Año Sorolla” by Spain’s Ministry of Culture—during the centennial anniversary of his death. Of the approximately 30 exhibitions taking place, the Meadows’s is one of only two in the U.S.

“This exhibition offers a unique look at Sorolla’s work from private American collections. Thanks to a group of exquisite paintings rarely seen in public, audiences are invited to appreciate the artist’s captivating talent as a painter of light,” said Amanda W. Dotseth, the Linda P. and William A. Custard Director of the Meadows Museum.

“*Spanish Light: Sorolla in American Collections*, reveals Sorolla’s continued popularity in this country, which can be traced back to the American collectors who supported him during his lifetime. By participating in the Sorolla Centennial, the Meadows joins other institutions in Spain and elsewhere to introduce or reengage audiences with the work of this important artist.”

Joaquín Sorolla y Bastida’s (1863–1923) artistic talent was apparent from a young age. As a teenager he exhibited paintings at the Exposición Nacional de Bellas Artes in Madrid, attended the Academy of Fine Arts in Valencia and, in 1884, his first large painting was acquired by the Spanish government. By the next decade, Sorolla’s work was being regularly shown in salons and international exhibitions across Europe and in America, including at the 1893 World’s Fair in Chicago. Capitalizing on this interest, the Hispanic Society of America invited Sorolla to present an exhibition of his work there in 1909. From that show, the artist sold nearly 200 works to American collectors—and remained in the U.S. for several months, painting a number of portraits on commission, including one of President William Howard Taft.

Spanish Light: Sorolla in American Collections captures this long-standing affection for Sorolla in the US by bringing to public view some two dozen paintings drawn from private collections. Highlighting Sorolla’s most popular and characteristic subjects—such as the white sails of Valencian fishing boats, children frolicking on the shoreline, lively garden scenes, and pensive figural studies—the exhibition offers a singular opportunity to see Sorolla through the lens of his current American collectors, who represent the legacy of the artist’s popularity in this country.

Curated by renowned scholar Blanca Pons-Sorolla, the exhibition will cover a multi-decade arc of Sorolla’s career and includes an early painting, *Female Nude from Behind*

(Desnudo femenino de espaldas) (c. 1886). A decade or more later, Sorolla's *Pines of Galicia (Pinos de Galicia)* (1900) captures the light in a stand of pine trees and demonstrates his trademark skill at capturing the way light moves in and around people and nature. That capacity continues to grow, exemplified by his port scene, *Castle of Málaga* (1910), with water and hillsides that catch and reflect the sunlight. The latest work, completed about five years before the artist's death, is *Detail of the Garden of the Sorolla House (Detalle del jardín de la Casa Sorolla)* (c. 1918). The exhibition also takes advantage of the Meadows Museum's own excellent holdings of paintings by Sorolla, which represent the only works on display from public collections. Among the Meadows paintings is *View of Las Pedrizas from El Pardo* (1907), which was owned by Algur H. Meadows prior to his foundation of the museum, and helps to contextualize the loans from American private collections upon which the exhibition is focused.

Spanish Light will be accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue, an opportunity to gather and present images of these privately held works even after the close of the exhibition. The catalogue will feature an introduction by curator Pons-Sorolla, who was recently invited to be the inaugural affiliated scholar of the Custard Institute for Spanish Art and Culture at the Meadows Museum. This honor is in recognition of her research on Sorolla as well as her support and collaboration with the Meadows Museum. Art historian Cristina Domenech has also contributed an essay that offers perspectives on the artist's popularity among American private collector past and present and explores the collecting history of the featured works. The research is based in part on that conducted for museum's groundbreaking 2013–14 exhibition *Sorolla and America*, which was also curated by Pons-Sorolla, and in which Cristina Domenech also contributed an essay. The Meadows Museum will also feature an installation of works on paper by Sorolla from its permanent collection to coincide with *Spanish Light*.

"An important part of my work as curator of this exhibition is to offer the public the opportunity to see paintings that are in American private collections. These are works I am fortunate to know thanks to my research for the Sorolla catalogue raisonné," according to Blanca Pons-Sorolla.

"Sorolla's success was largely due to his masterful representation of light and the joy his paintings convey; this joy is precisely that which the artist felt as he painted. His enthusiasm and passion for his craft and his love for his country is what the American public especially appreciated, and what private collectors continue to appreciate when they purchase his paintings. That is why we pay this tribute to Sorolla in this special year, with an exhibition celebrating the extraordinary reception Sorolla has received by the American people."

"It is a pleasure to have this new opportunity to collaborate with the Meadows Museum and its professional staff, and I am especially honored to have joined the Custard Institute as an affiliated scholar; I will contribute to its mission to the best of my abilities."

About the Meadows Museum

The Meadows Museum is the leading U.S. institution focused on the study and presentation of the art of Spain. In 1962, Dallas businessman and philanthropist Algur H. Meadows donated his private collection of Spanish paintings, as well as funds to start a museum, to Southern Methodist University. The museum opened to the public in 1965, marking the first step in fulfilling Meadows's vision to create "a small Prado for Texas." Today, the Meadows is home to one of the largest and most comprehensive collections of Spanish art outside of Spain. The collection spans from the 10th to the 21st centuries and includes medieval objects, Renaissance and Baroque sculptures, and major paintings by Golden Age and modern masters. For more information visit meadowsmuseumdallas.org.

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