

MASAVEU COLLECTION Sorolla

29.6.23-1.10.23

Museu Belles Arts València



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The Masaveu Collection, owned by the Corporación Masaveu and managed since 2013 by the Fundación María Cristina Masaveu Peterson, is one of the most important private collections in Spain. It consists of a valuable legacy assembled since the late nineteenth century, and especially since the 1930s, thanks to the passion for collecting shown by several generations of the Masaveu family, Catalan entrepreneurs based in Asturias.

One of the most interesting and important categories of the collection is Spanish nineteenth-century painting, in which the works by the Valencian artist Joaquín Sorolla (1863-1923) occupy a preeminent position for both the quantity and quality of the pieces. In fact, the Masaveu Collection is the private collection with the largest number of works by this artist, and the third largest in the world in terms of volume and importance, surpassed only by two institutions: the Museo Sorolla and the Hispanic Society of America.



In total, the collection comprises forty-six paintings made between 1882, when Sorolla was a young nineteen-year-old student, and 1917, three years before the end of his career as a painter. Among them are indisputable masterpieces, such as *The Suckling Child* (1894), *Sewing the Sail* (1904), *The Family of Rafael Errázuriz Urmeneta* (1905), and *My Wife and Daughters in the Garden* (1910). All of them were acquired thanks to the initiative of Pedro Masaveu Peterson (1938–1993), the foremost Sorolla collector in Spain who also bought another thirteen works by the artist for his personal collection (today the Pedro Masaveu Peterson Collection, owned by the Government of Asturias), which includes major pieces like *Transporting Grapes. Jávea* (1900) and *Running along the Beach. València* (1908).



Organised to mark the centenary in 2023 of Joaquín Sorolla's death, the exhibition features all the Sorolla works in the Masaveu Collection. It is divided into four sections in which the pieces are displayed in a chronological although not strictly linear manner. An attractive and original assembly system based on the glass easels designed by the Italian-Brazilian architect Lina Bo Bardi enables spectators to see the reverse side of the paintings and to establish visual relationships between all the exhibits. The works themselves and the discourse surrounding them also chart the evolution in terms of technique, colour, light and subject matter of the most versatile and brilliant representative of modern, Mediterranean, luminous Spain.



Of Sorolla's formative period (1876-1889), which makes up the first section of the exhibition, the Masaveu Collection owns five works that reflect his roots and evolution, made with a palette still dominated by dark hues and others from the lower end of the spectrum. Outstanding among them are the large-format painting *Queen Mariana of Austria, copy of Velázquez*, from 1884, which exemplifies the profound impression of the master's painting on the Valencian artist; *Last Sacraments. Charles V at Yuste*, from 1882, a formative picture that evidences his early interest in history painting; and *Faust's Kiss*, from 1887, a work on a literary theme for a commercial commission which he painted during a sojourn in Assisi.





Queen Mariana of Austria, copy of Velázquez (detail), 1884
Oil on canvas
Masaveu Collection



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Early maturity
(1890-1899)

In the years of his early maturity (1890-1899), exemplified here by eight magnificent works, Sorolla gradually defined his own language connected to a luminist naturalism that first emerged in 1894 and reached its zenith in the following decade. Outstanding works from this period are *The Suckling Child*, a masterpiece made that same year, the delicate watercolour *Careful, Don't Wake Him!*, from 1899, and studies and paintings related to some of his greatest successes at the time, such as *Return from Fishing*, from around 1895, and the canvas that depicts the beach of El Cabañal, *Sad Inheritance!*, from 1899, the crowning achievement of this period and of which the Masaveu Collection holds three fascinating studies.





The Bath. Study for 'Sad Inheritance' (detail), 1899
Oil on canvas
Masaveu Collection



3

The artist in his prime (1900-1910)

The Masaveu Collection is particularly rich in works from the artist's prime (1900-1911), holding twenty-eight paintings from this period, most of them produced or set in Valencia. Valencian fishermen working and resting, captured at different times of the day and in different seasons of the year, are represented in works like *Beach of Valencia*, from 1902, and *Sewing the Sail*, from 1904; popular bathing scenes, such as *Children on the Beach. Study for 'Summer'*, from 1904, and *Swimmers. Jávea*, from 1905, also exemplify this period. All of these works clearly demonstrate how Sorolla's output evolved at this time through two of his main themes.





After the Bath. Beach of València (detail), 1908
Oil on canvas
Masaveu Collection



Another important part of the collection concerns the portraits made in the first decade of the twentieth century, his finest period as regards this genre. *The Family of Rafael Errázuriz Urmeneta*, from 1905, which owes an indisputable debt to Velázquez, is a perfect example of the elegant society portraits associated with Sorolla. Meanwhile, works like *The French Actor Ernst Coquelin Cadet*, from 1906, and *My Wife and Daughters in the Garden*, from 1910, beautifully illustrate the portraits he painted outdoors, *en plein air*.





My Wife and Daughters in the Garden (detail), 1910
Oil on canvas
Masaveu Collection



From his latter years (1911-1919), which he largely dedicated to *Vision of Spain*, the grand decorative project for the Hispanic Society of America, the collection owns four works, two of them connected precisely to that project: namely, his renderings of the Basque Country (*Fishermen of Lequeitio*, from 1912) and Castile (*View of Toledo*, painted a year later). Finally, *Greek Dancers*, from 1917, is an unusual work in the artist's oeuvre and for this reason occupies a prominent place in the collection. From the chronological point of view, it also represents a fitting finishing touch to the entire exhibition.





View of Toledo (detail), 1913
Oil on canvas
Masaveu Collection



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COVER

Child on the Beach. Study for 'Summer' (detail), 1904

Oil on canvas

Masaveu Collection

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