



**NINETEENTH-CENTURY EUROPEAN PAINTINGS  
AT THE STERLING AND FRANCINE CLARK ART INSTITUTE**

**VOLUME TWO**

Edited by Sarah Lees

With an essay by Richard Rand  
and technical reports by Sandra L. Webber

With contributions by Katharine J. Albert, Philippe Bordes, Dan Cohen,  
Kathryn Calley Galitz, Alexis Goodin, Marc Gotlieb, John House,  
Simon Kelly, Richard Kendall, Kathleen M. Morris, Leslie Hill Paisley,  
Kelly Pask, Elizabeth A. Pergam, Kathryn A. Price, Mark A. Roglán,  
James Rosenow, Zoë Samels, and Fronia E. Wissman

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Details:

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PAGES 890–91: Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, *The Women of Amphis* (cat. 3)

**PROVENANCE** [Possibly Marie Harriman Gallery, New York];<sup>8</sup> Gerald Brooks, New York; [Knoedler, New York, sold to Clark, 1 Apr. 1946, as *Paysage, effet de Neige*]; Robert Sterling Clark (1946–55); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.

**EXHIBITIONS** Palm Beach 1937;<sup>9</sup> Williamstown 1956a, no. 125, pl. 42; Milwaukee 1988, pp. 134–35, no. 50, ill.

**REFERENCES** Daulte 1959, no. 781, ill.; Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute 1963, no. 141, ill.; Hamilton 1970, p. 102, fig. 89, as *Landscape, Snow Effect*.

**TECHNICAL REPORT** The support is a linen of moderate weight (19 threads/cm) with a very taut lining glued onto a linen of similar weight (16 x 19 threads/cm). The lining is American and was probably done close to the time of the 1946 sale. All the old labels were transferred to the new six-member mortise-and-tenon stretcher. The tacking edges are presumed missing, although a half-inch width of the left edge was saved, opened out, and included in the surface dimensions. There are scattered dark age cracks in the sky, some weave enhancement, and scattered moated impastos from the lining pressure. Old vertical mechanical cracks from an impact damage in the lower left quadrant 7.6 cm above the signature are probably the reason for the lining. The present varnish is a thin, natural resin layer over scattered residues of an earlier coating. The edges are retouched, especially on the left extension, and there are scattered retouches in the sky and one in the left water area. In reflected light, the strong vertical threads of the original canvas are very visible.

The ground is a commercially applied gray color, which is visible between the paint strokes throughout the surface. There may be a few underdrawing marks for the shoreline and horizon, which are visible as short lines and charcoal deposits under magnification. A few incongruous strokes in the river seem unrelated to the final image. The paint was applied wet-into-wet in a paste consistency, with a few scumbles and no glazing. The artist used the prominent threads to capture individual paint strokes to create the flickering effects of light. Small adjustments were added to the lower left sky after the trees were completed. Small contraction drying holes in the paint and ground layer may be the result of the artist working in cold weather.

1. See Technical Report; examination of the surface indicates no evidence of preliminary drafting, underpainting, or pentimenti.
2. In many areas, brushstrokes clearly disturb the paint previously applied or blend with existing colors.
3. Sisley first settled in the area in 1880, living at Veneux-Nadon, where *Banks of the Seine at By* (cat. 306) was painted. He subsequently moved between Moret, Veneux-Nadon, and nearby Les Sablons before finally settling in Moret in 1889. See London–Paris–Baltimore 1992–93, pp. 267–73.

4. His first impressions of Moret were reported in a letter to Monet: see Sylvie Patin, “Veneux-Nadon and Moret-sur-Loing: 1880–1899,” in London–Paris–Baltimore 1992–93, p. 184.
5. See, for example, D 663–781. The mills in the Clark painting were situated in mid-stream, at the center of the bridge, a situation evident in a work such as D 677. A letter from the Mayor of Moret in the Clark’s curatorial file, dated 1985, reports that these mills were destroyed during the German retreat in World War II.
6. See D 818–22, 834–40.
7. While Sisley may have worked in the open air, it is also possible that he sheltered in the mill at the opposite end of the bridge, which is clearly visible in works such as D 817.
8. A label on the back of the painting from the Harriman Gallery suggests that it may have been owned by the gallery, or simply exhibited there. The gallery was in business between 1930 and 1942.
9. From Knoedler invoice in the Clark’s curatorial file.

## Joaquín Sorolla y Bastida

Spanish, 1863–1923

### 308 | Beach at Valencia c. 1904

Oil on laminate cardboard, 8.6 x 12.3 cm

Lower left: J Sorolla B

Gift of Harding F. Bancroft in memory of his wife, Jane Northrop Bancroft

1984.165

The success of Joaquín Sorolla’s work is based on a combination of his skills as a draftsman and colorist and on his embrace of modern ideas, such as an interest in plein air painting and attention to light. He adapted these ideas to a very personal range of subjects, including beach scenes, especially depictions of the calm blue Mediterranean waters off the sunny Levantine coast of Spain.

The beaches of Valencia increasingly inspired Sorolla’s work from the first part of the 1890s to the end of his career. Early examples of works based on this subject are, among other paintings, *The Happy Day* (1892; Galleria d’Arte Moderna, Udine), *The Nets* (1893; private collection), and one of his greatest early masterpieces, *The Return from Fishing* (1894; Musée d’Orsay, Paris), a monumental painting depicting two oxen dragging a fisherman’s boat, its sail billowing, to the shore. This



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painting was acquired by the French state shortly after its exhibition in Paris, and it influenced the way in which Sorolla painted beach scenes for most of his life.

The sea became an intrinsic part of Sorolla's oeuvre, a subject on which he worked incessantly, producing hundreds of paintings, oil sketches, and drawings. Over the years, he became less interested in elaborating preparatory drawings and studies for these beach scenes. For *The Return from Fishing*, at least fifteen preparatory studies are known, and for another of his masterpieces, *Sad Inheritance* (1899; Bancaixa Collection, Valencia), he made several sketches, two of which were given to his friends the American painters John Singer Sargent (1856–1925) and William Merritt Chase (1849–1916). As Sorolla matured as a painter, he preferred a more direct manner of painting in which he would be satisfied with the final result after just one painting session.

Sorolla's characteristic quick and direct style of painting is exemplified not only in his larger paintings, but also in his color sketches. In most cases, these intimate small works were not intended as preparatory studies for paintings; instead, they were made to capture a fleeting moment, simply for the pleasure of painting. Due to the sheer volume of these sketches, it is impossible fully to understand Sorolla as a painter without analyzing these small chefs d'oeuvre. They are evidence of the artist's extraordinary capacity to

capture all the light, color, and atmosphere of the Spanish beaches, landscapes, and people in just a few rapid brushstrokes, and they exemplify Sorolla's passion for plein air painting and interest in recording the world around him.

Sorolla used many kinds of supports for his small paintings. The earliest examples are painted on paper, small pieces of canvas attached to panel or cardboard, or thin wood panels, usually fragile cedar planks.<sup>1</sup> Beginning in the 1880s, Sorolla began using cardboard more frequently, and it remained one of his favorite supports throughout his career. The artist often used photographic cardboard mounts taken from the studio of his father-in-law, Antonio García Peris (1841–1918), one of Valencia's most prestigious professional photographers of the time. This is clearly the source of the inscription "A. García" stamped on the verso of the present work.<sup>2</sup>

In 1879, while Sorolla was still studying at the Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Carlos in Valencia, García employed him as a photograph illuminator and also allowed him to use the top floor of his house in the Plaza de San Francisco as his first studio.<sup>3</sup> It may have been thanks to this connection that Sorolla began to use this type of cardboard, a support that was already being produced industrially, and was increasingly used by artists during the last third of the nineteenth century. Certainly his father-in-law's studio provided

Sorolla with vast quantities of the material, which he used for most of his career. Although the sketches were spontaneous and informal, Sorolla exhibited and marketed them alongside his larger, more ambitious paintings. In fact, due to their extraordinary quality and their comparatively low prices, these sketches sold extremely well. This painting was no exception. It was one of approximately one hundred sixty sketches that Sorolla took to New York, Buffalo, and Boston, to be exhibited in his 1909 solo exhibition organized by The Hispanic Society of America, and it was sold during the course of the exhibition. MR

**PROVENANCE** The artist, sold 1909; private collection (from 1909); Harding F. Bancroft (until 1984, given to the Clark); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1984.

**EXHIBITIONS** New York–Buffalo–Boston 1909, no. 238 (Buffalo–Boston, no. 126), as *Playa de Valencia*.

**REFERENCES** Beruete et al. 1909, vol. 2, p. 157, ill.; Roglán 2003, p. 392.

**TECHNICAL REPORT** The support is a section cut from a photograph card 0.2 cm thick bearing the photographer's name "A. García" pressed into the prepared surface. The image is painted on the back face of the card, which now has a convex warp. The blank reverse has a shiny and crazed photosensitized paper adhered to it. Viewing the reverse, the top and left edges have been cut, suggesting this support was perhaps one corner of a larger photo card. Across the reverse are large black numerals "238" on a mustard-colored painted rectangle. This paint covers an earlier large red number that may read "407." There are filled holes at the centers of the left and right edges, probably where the artist pinned down the support during painting. The impastos are slightly pressed and grimy. There is an old impasto loss in a pale passage of the central area. The image was cleaned of discolored varnish in 1984, shortly after it was given to the museum.

The ground layer is a textured gray paint applied by the artist, possibly with a palette knife. The artist also accidentally applied some to the unpainted side of the card. No underdrawing was used. The paint layer is fluid and abbreviated, using the exposed gray ground to create the middle tones of the scene. The surface, with only a light spray coat of synthetic resin, looks unvarnished.

1. For more on Sorolla's supports for small format paintings as well as his sketches, see Puerto de Valencia 1995.
2. For more on Antonio García Peris, see Traver 1990, pp. 476–77.
3. See Pons-Sorolla 2005, p. 18.

### 309 | La Concha Beach, San Sebastián 1906

Oil on panel, 13.7 x 19.3 cm

Lower left: J Sorolla. B.

Gift of Harding F. Bancroft in memory of his wife, Jane Northrop Bancroft

1984.166

A group of swimmers wearing fashionable bathing suits of the period are enjoying a day at the beach. On the right side of the composition are several covered mobile structures that were used by the bathers as changing rooms. The background depicts a partial view of the Basque city of San Sebastián, in which can be seen the silhouette of the monumental façade of the Grand Casino, a building constructed between 1882 and 1887. It was converted into the present-day Town Hall after renovations in 1941 and 1947.

San Sebastián is one of the most beautiful cities on the northern coast of Spain, and during the first two decades of the twentieth century, it developed into one of the most important summer resorts for members of the European aristocracy; the Spanish royal family vacationed there nearly every summer from 1893 to 1928. Sorolla visited this important Basque city early in his career, paying his first documented visit in 1889, one year after his marriage and following his return to Spain after several years spent working in Italy. This visit would be repeated many times until his death. Sorolla usually visited San Sebastián accompanied by his entire family, and would combine leisure time with work, making portraits, sketches, and more elaborate paintings. Although he mainly produced beach scenes, Sorolla also depicted impressions of the port, boats, the ocean, landscapes, and figures dressed in fashionable summer attire.

In June of 1906, the year this sketch was painted, Sorolla spent the summer with his family in Biarritz and San Sebastián following an extraordinarily successful showing of four hundred and ninety-seven works at the prestigious Galerie Georges Petit in Paris. Capping off his success, Sorolla was decorated as an *officier* of the Legion of Honor that year. In fact, the body of work he created during this period, roughly between 1900 and 1913, is considered among the most original and creative of his career. During this decade, Sorolla developed a singular artistic language that, although formally similar to that of the Impressionist painters and other important artists