

# COLNAGHI



JOAQUÍN SOROLLA Y BASTIDA  
(Valencia 1863-1923 Cercedilla)

*ESTUDIO DE MAR. VALENCIA, C. 1900*

Oil on canvas.  
21 x 68 cm; 8 1/4 x 26 3/4 in.

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## Provenance

Inherited directly from the artist by his daughter Elena Sorrolla (1895-1975);  
Private collection, Madrid.

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"It would be impossible for me to paint slowly in the open air, even if I wanted to. The sea swirls up at every instance, the cloud is deformed as it changes place [...]. But even if everything were petrified and fixed, it would be enough for the sun to move, as it goes continually, to give things a different appearance... Painting has to be fast, because so much is lost, fleeting, never to be found again".<sup>1</sup>

*Estudio de Mar. Valencia* (c. 1900) is an exquisite example of the artist's keen interest in capturing the movement and luminosity of the Mediterranean coast. This interest had already begun to shape his practice in the early 1890s. Following a series of travels between Italy and France, Sorolla and his wife, Clotilde García, returned to Spain and settled in Madrid in 1889. Over the ensuing decade, he participated in numerous salons and collective exhibitions across Europe, gradually developing what has come to be identified as a post-impressionist luminist style. A significant turning point was marked by the exhibition of nearly 500 of his works at the renowned Galeries Georges Petit in Paris in 1906. This show introduced French audiences to an artist who did not conform to the strictures of either the Impressionist or Realist movements, combining instead elements from both approaches to create a distinctive personal idiom. Throughout most of his life, Sorolla maintained a strict regimen of painting two long sessions a day - morning and afternoon - almost always in natural light. Francisco Pons Sorolla, the artist's grandson and former Director of the Sorolla Museum, has observed that Sorolla possessed a "necessary sensuality" which enabled him to express "the life and beauty" of his surroundings in a strikingly immediate manner.<sup>2</sup> This approach is evident in Sorolla's maritime scenes, a subject he began exploring in earnest in the early 1890s. One of his first major efforts in this vein, *The Return of the Catch* (1894), was exhibited the following year at the Paris Salon, where critics praised its dynamic composition. Presently, the work is part of the Musée d'Orsay's permanent collection in Paris.

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<sup>1</sup> B. de Pantorba, *La Vida y la Obra de Joaquín Sorolla, Estudio Biográfico y Crítico*, Madrid, 1970, p. 60.

<sup>2</sup> Pons Sorolla, Francisco. "Sorolla: his Painting and his Family", in Edmund Peel (Ed.), *The Painter. Joaquín Sorolla*, London, Philip Wilson Publishers, 1989.

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As José Luis Diez writes: "an intense perception of the sea and shore was intrinsic to Sorolla's artistic personality from the very start. The Mediterranean Sea that bordered his birthplace was always the horizon of his most personal and inner space [...]".<sup>3</sup> *Estudio de Mar. Valencia* belongs to the same lineage of seascapes, distinguished by vigorous brushstrokes and a bright palette. As in many of his works from this date, Sorolla has depicted the scene from a slight angle, and by cropping a small slice of the sandy beach on the right side of the composition he draws the viewer almost into the water itself. Sorolla demonstrated a particular attentiveness to the interplay of waves under shifting skies and the strong contrasts of light and shade. While his dynamic technique has been compared to Impressionism, with parallels being drawn to figures such as Edgar Degas, who also engaged with photography, Sorolla's preference lay in maritime subjects rather than cityscapes or ballet dancers. The Valencian coast is vividly portrayed with broad, expressive brushstrokes and bold highlights, producing a clear sense of the wind and the brine-laden air - see notable examples at the Museo Sorolla (Figs. 1-8). In the present work, the application of loose, swirling passages of *impasto* serves to convey the dynamism of the sea in motion. The intensity of the colouring and the directness of the brushwork capture the immediacy of an artist painting *in situ*, intent on translating the sparkle of the sunlit waters into painting. Portions of the underneath bare canvas enhance this sense of luminosity as if invaded by the waves' foam. The qualities evident in this study position Sorolla as a painter who adapted and redefined Impressionist innovations to express the visual and atmospheric particularities of the Spanish seashore.

We are grateful to Blanca Pons-Sorolla for confirming the authenticity of this painting, included in her Joaquín Sorolla y Bastida *catalogue raisonné* with the number BPS 4746.

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<sup>3</sup> Madrid, Museo del Prado, *Joaquín Sorolla*, exh. cat., 2009, p. 69.

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Fig. 1. Joaquín Sorolla, *Apunte de mar*, 1899, oil on canvas. Museo Sorolla, Madrid.



Fig. 2. Joaquín Sorolla, *Mar de tormenta, Valencia*, 1899, oil on canvas. Museo Sorolla, Madrid.

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Fig. 3. Joaquín Sorolla, *Mar de Valencia*, 1899, oil on canvas. Museo Sorolla, Madrid.



Fig. 4. Joaquín Sorolla, *Mar*, c. 1902, oil on canvas. Museo Sorolla, Madrid.

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Fig. 5. Joaquín Sorolla, *Mar*, c. 1902, oil on canvas. Museo Sorolla, Madrid.

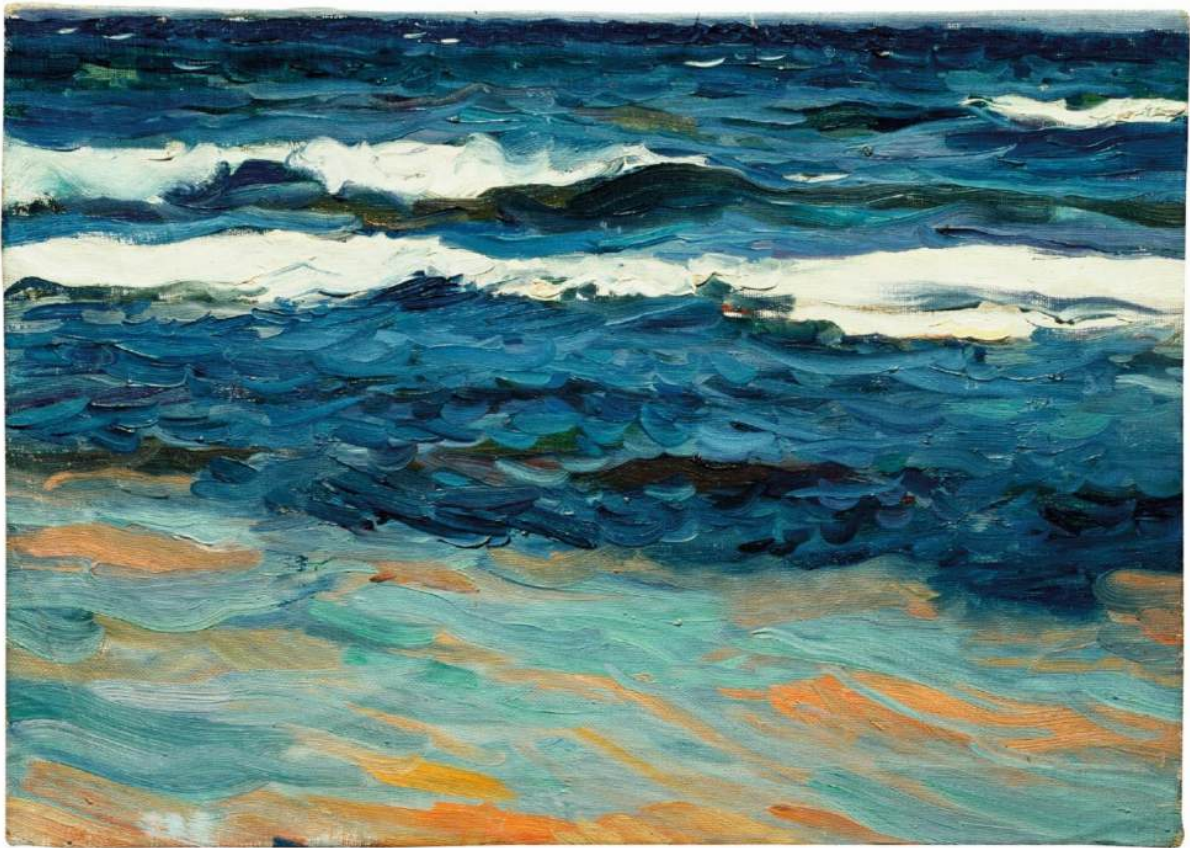


Fig. 6. Joaquín Sorolla, *Estudio de mar, Valencia*, c. 1902, oil on canvas. Museo Sorolla, Madrid.

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Fig. 7. Joaquín Sorolla, *Estudio de mar*, Valencia, 1902, oil on canvas. Museo Sorolla, Madrid.



Fig. 8. Joaquín Sorolla, *Estudio de mar*, Valencia, c. 1904, oil on canvas. Museo Sorolla, Madrid.