



JOAQUÍN SOROLLA
(Valencia 1863 – Madrid 1923)

Portrait of María Planas de Gil with a black mantilla, 1906

Oil on canvas

209.5 x 91.5 cm

Inscription: "A la señora de Gil / recuerdo de su atto / J. Sorolla B. 1906".

Certified by Blanca Pons-Sorolla, Patron and President of the Joaquín Sorolla Foundation.

Provenance

The descendants of María Planas de Gil Moreno de Mora.

Bibliography

Pantorba, Bernardino de. *La vida y la obra de Joaquin Sorolla*. Mayfe. Madrid, 1953, cat. n.1983.

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Joaquín Sorolla y Bastida is one of Spain's leading artists in the last decades of the 19th century, whose style has been defined as a variant of Impressionism.

Sorolla was born on February 27, 1863 and at age two he and his little sister were orphaned. As he showed an early talent for drawing and painting, he was admitted to the Academy of San Carlos in Valencia at age fifteen. In January 1885, he left for Rome, a decision that would be decisive for the further development of his work. His teachers included Francisco Pradilla (1848-1921), José Villegas (1844-1921) and his countryman Emilio Sala (1850-1910), three consecrated masters in painting of academic tradition. The Spanish painter was impressed by the works of realist artists such as Adolf Menzel and Jules Bastien-Lepage, among others. In April of the same year, he travelled to Paris with his friend and later adviser Pedro Gil Moreno de Mora (1860-1930). In this first experience in France, Sorolla was fascinated with the work of Bastien Lepage, which especially influenced his way of understanding figures in the open air.

After his stay abroad, he and his wife Clotilde García decided to move to Madrid in 1890. Until 1900, Sorolla participated in salons and collective exhibitions all over Europe. His style slowly but steadily changed into what today is defined as post-impressionist luminist. In fact,

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he exhibited in Paris in 1906 at the Galeries Georges Petit, where the public was introduced to an original personality, inherently different from the Impressionists. After this success, the painter continued to send his works to other European capitals, such as Berlin or London, which contributed to his new fame. Soon his career would reach a higher peak when he exhibited in New York, Chicago, St. Louis, Buffalo and Boston in 1909, with immense success, which led to him painting a portrait of President Taft in Washington DC.

During most of his life, Sorolla painted for two long sessions a day: in the morning and in the afternoon, usually in the clarity of natural light outdoors. The artist developed an extraordinary fluency of technique, which is attested to by over 4,000 paintings and sketches in oil or watercolour and around 8,000 drawings. As Francisco Pons Sorolla, Director of the Sorolla Museum until 1973 and the artist's grandson, claims: "He had the necessary sensuality with which to capture the life and beauty of the world around him. His aspiration was to reproduce in his paintings all that he was capable of seeing and loving."¹

The sitter of this portrait is María Planas de Gil, wife of Pedro Gil Moreno de Mora, the friend and adviser mentioned earlier. Pedro was also a painter, but he mainly worked at his family's bank. They both met in Rome and their ensuing friendship lasted all their lives. In the Museo Sorolla archive, a huge number of letters are preserved, some of which mention the sitter, María, who was in a delicate state of health. This is one of the numerous portraits created by Sorolla, in which the beholder can appreciate the artist's vigorous brushstrokes, and his delicate and expressive sensitivity. María, who sits outdoors, is pictured surrounded by an abundance of vegetation and holding a fan in her right hand. She looks directly into the observers' eyes, capturing an intimate moment.

¹ Pons Sorolla, Francisco. "Sorolla: his Painting and his Family", in Edmund Peel (Ed.), *The Painter. Joaquín Sorolla*, London, Philip Wilson Publishers, 1989.