

# Caylus



**JOAQUÍN SOROLLA Y BASTIDA**  
(Valencia, 1863 – Madrid, 1923)

*Ruins of Buñol*

or

*The Farewell*

1895

Oil on canvas

48 x 68 cm

## LITERATURE:

PONS-SOROLLA, Blanca. *Joaquín Sorolla*. Barcelona: Ediciones Polígrafa, 2005, p. 95.

From an early age Joaquín Sorolla revealed his talents and enthusiasm for painting and drawing, attending the evening classes in drawing given by the sculptor Cayetano Capuz at the Escuela de Artesanos. Having been awarded a prize when he finished these initial studies, Sorolla then entered the Escuela de Bellas Artes de San Carlos in 1879. At the same time he learned the locksmith's trade from his uncle José Piqueras Guillén with whom he lived after the death of his parents in 1865. Sorolla's other activity as assistant in the studio of the distinguished photographer Antonio García Pérez allowed him to meet García's daughter Clotilde, whom he married in September 1888.

Sorolla's visits to Madrid in 1881 and 1882 offered him the opportunity to copy works by Velázquez, Ribera and El Greco in the Museo del Prado. Two years later at the National Exhibition held in Madrid in 1884 the success of his realist and dramatic interpretation of the historical theme *The 2<sup>nd</sup> of May* (Museo del Prado) encouraged him to apply for a grant to study at the Spanish Academy in Rome.

Sorolla set out for Rome in January 1885 but remained in Paris from the spring to the autumn of that year where he was impressed by the work of the realist and the plein air painters, including the German Adolph Menzel and the French Jules Bastien-Lepage. In Rome he had the chance to study in the company of numerous other Spanish painters, including José Benlliure Gil, Emilio Sala Francés and José Villegas y Cordero. To satisfy the terms of his grant, in 1887 Sorolla sent to Valencia *Father Jofré protecting a Lunatic* (Diputación Provincial, Valencia), another work on an obligatory historical theme. Having completed his time in Rome and after spending a period painting in Assisi, Sorolla returned to Valencia in 1889. The following year he moved his home and studio to Madrid.

In 1892 his work revealed a new focus with an interest in contemporary social issues manifested in the sad scene entitled *Another Marguerite!* (Washington University Gallery of Art, St. Louis), which was awarded the First Class medal at the National Exhibition and the same award at the International Exhibition in Chicago in 1893. This focus persisted in Sorolla's scenes of life on the Valencian coast until the end of the decade. Gradually, however, he abandoned the subject of unfortunate children of the type seen in *Sad*

*Inheritance* (Bancaja Collection, Valencia) which was awarded a prize at the Paris World Fair of 1900 and at the National Exhibition in Madrid in 1901. Encouraged by the success of his glowing images of the Mediterranean and stimulated by his love of the light and life of its sunlit beaches, he devoted himself to more agreeable and cheerful scenes of this type, earning world-wide fame.

At his first solo exhibition, held at the Galerie Georges Petit in Paris in 1906, Sorolla also revealed his skills as a portraitist. In 1908 the North American millionaire and collector Archer Milton Huntington visited Sorolla's exhibition at the Grafton Gallery in London and tried to acquire the portraits of *The Painter Aureliano de Bernete* (Museo del Prado) and *Manuel Bartolomé Cossío* (private collection, Toledo) for the Hispanic Society of America that he had founded in New York. The following year Huntington invited Sorolla to exhibit at the Society, which he did in early 1909 with enormous success.

The friendship and mutual respect that grew up between them resulted in the most important commission of Sorolla's career for the painting of the vast canvases illustrating the regions of Spain to decorate the walls of the Hispanic Society. Sorolla's response was his "Vision of Spain", an image of his country's different regions and peoples seen under brilliant sunlight. With the aim of capturing "the psychology and the picturesqueness of each region" Sorolla travelled around the entire country, channelling all his energy and creativity into the project between 1911 and 1919. At the same time he continued to participate in exhibitions in Spain and elsewhere and during the darker seasons of the year he painted in his studio-home in Madrid, producing more portraits, some of which were also commissioned by Huntington for the Society. In 1921 while painting a portrait in his garden Sorolla had his first stroke. Incapacitated from that point onwards, he died on 10 August 1923 without seeing his great "Vision of Spain" on display as it was not installed until January 1926.