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Unseen Sorolla Leads Spanish Section of 19th Century European Paintings Sale

London, 2 June 2010

--Joaquin Sorolla's *The Baptism* has not been seen in public since it was commissioned in 1900 by a prominent Spanish collector and it will be exhibited for the first time in Barcelona and Madrid in May--



ONCE AGAIN Sotheby's is delighted to announce that the Spanish section of its 19th Century European Paintings sale on Wednesday, 2 June, 2010 will be headed by a rare work by Joaquín Sorolla (1863-1923). Joaquín Sorolla stands out as the period's most prolific and renowned artist and was the subject of a major retrospective of his life and work at the Prado Museum in Madrid in 2009. Sorolla's luminous landscapes, scenes of Spanish life and portraits are highly sought after on both sides of the Atlantic; over the last 16 months Sotheby's has successfully sold four of the major works by this Valencian

artist that have come to market. The auction will also include works by Spain's leading international artists of the time such as Hermenegildo Anglada-Camarasa, Ramón Casas, José Gutiérrez Solana, Joaquín Mir, Santiago Rusiñol and Fernando Álvarez de Sotomayor.

Adrian Biddell, Senior Director of the 19th Century European Paintings Department and responsible for the record-breaking sale of Sorolla's *La hora del baño* for £3.7 million in 2003, says: "In spite of the financial challenges within the 12 months from November 2008 to November 2009, we have sold four works by Sorolla for a total of £6.9 million, with a low estimate of £4.8 million. Three of the four works have sold over their high estimate, representing 95% of the artist's market during this period."

Painted during the summer of 1900 in Valencia, *The Baptism* is a masterpiece and it holds a unique position among Sorolla's oeuvre. In May of that year, his work had been critically acclaimed at the *Exposition Universelle* and he was awarded the Grand Prix. In Paris to receive his award his achievement was fêted by coteries of leading artists present at the exhibition and, when standing in front of Sorolla's work, Claude Monet pronounced the Valencian painter 'the master of light'. On his return to Valencia, a banquet was held in his honour, a street re-named in recognition of his achievement and he was appointed a 'favourite and right worthy son of the city'.

Following such accolades Sorolla embarks on *The Baptism* with renewed confidence, and with his characteristic sense of immediacy, he creates a tableau brimming with vignettes of local folklore. Sorolla captures the moment in which the baby, in a crisp white christening robe, is arriving in the church in the arms of his mother. One guest turns to see the arrival, as others reflect and pray. In the background, a man pulls a curtain aside as he enters. Light floods in to illuminate the scene. In the second pew, a lady whispers into the ear of an elegantly attired older gentleman. Blanca Pons Sorolla, the expert on the artist comments: "The lady in a green skirt and black mantilla sitting in the second row is undoubtedly his [the artist's] wife Clotilde". Like some of the other ladies, Clotilde sports a traditional outfit of bright patterned silk skirts typical for the Region of Valencia.

Marta Enrile, Senior Specialist in 19th and 20th century Spanish Paintings, explains: "*The Baptism* falls in the category of those few accomplished canvases by Sorolla which have never been included in an exhibition. Furthermore, since it was commissioned by a prominent Spanish collector in 1900, it has been illustrated only once in a publication. We are really delighted that this painting, which has been cherished by the family and handed down from generation to generation, will be on view for the first time to the public in Barcelona and Madrid in May."

Remarkably, *The Baptism* has always remained in the same family that commissioned the work 110 years ago. It has never been exhibited in public before and carries an estimate of £700,000-1,000,000 (€ 800,000 - 1,140,000)*. Also by Sorolla is the seascape from 1899, *Día de Tempestad (Approaching Storm)* valued at £150,000-200,000 (€ 171,000 - 228,000).

Religious Traditions and Popular Customs:

Another image depicting Spanish religious customs is Hermenegildo Anglada Camarasa's *Romeria en Pollensa*, painted in Pollensa circa 1945-50, during the artist's final sojourn on the island of Mallorca where he settled following his years in Montserrat and exile in France. In *Romeria en Pollensa* (Est. £150,000 - 200,000 / € 171,000 - 285,000) the use of rich saturated colours is typical of his work from this late period. The blood orange of the sky, the mystical mauves of

the hills and the effulgent greens of the two dominating trees dwarf the procession of figures who make their weary way by donkey and on foot across this distinctive Mallorcan terrain. This sale also includes *Flores (Flowers)*, painted in 1935 during an earlier stage on the island and is offered with an estimate of £150,000 – 200,000 (€ 171,000 – 285,000)

Religious traditions and popular fairs in Spain would also be a continued source of inspiration for José Gutiérrez Solana whose *Procesión de Semana Santa (Easter Procession)* (left) was executed in the late 1930's. This grand composition, painted in Solana's unique style, nevertheless shows the influence of Goya, whose oeuvre would have been familiar to Solana from his years of lessons at the Academia de San Fernando and Prado Museum. Both Solana and Goya favoured the use of dark palettes and dirty paint surfaces for the expression of moral misgiving and psychological unease. Privately owned for four decades, *Procesión de Semana Santa* is now offered with an estimate of £300,000-500,000 / € 342,000 - 570,000.

Another artist who devoted much of his work to portraying the influence of religion in popular culture was Fernando Álvarez de Sotomayor. *Salida de Misa en Jorres (Leaving Mass, Jorres)* (Est. £60,000 – 80,000/€ 68,500 – 91,500) captures a young couple in traditional costume, providing a snippet of local customs and moral fibre in his native Galicia. Religion also featured frequently in the works of José Gallegos, whose small format but incredibly detailed portrayals are treasured bijoux. His oil on panel entitled *Interior de iglesia (Church Interior)* has been in the same private collection for half a century and is offered at £30,000 – 50,000 / €34,200 - 57,000.

Intimate Portraits and Luminous Gardens :

Ramón Casas' brother-in-law was the sitter for the *Portrait of Eduardo Nieto, the Marquis of Villamizar*, painted circa 1892-94 and now offered with an estimate of £200,000 – 300,000 / € 228,000 – 342,000 . This elegant depiction of his in-law standing in a courtyard in the Casas family home exhibits the high regard the artist felt towards this subject. During the mid-1890s Casas was in particular demand for his likenesses, painting the intellectual, economic and political elite of Barcelona, Paris, Madrid and beyond.

It was also during the 1890's that Casas shared a flat near the *Moulin de la Galette* in Paris with Santiago Rusiñol, who is represented in the sale with *Jardín de las Elegías (Garden of the Elegies)*, a canvas from 1902-04 of the alberca (fountain) in Son Moragues, part of the estate Archduke Luis Salvador of Austria acquired on the island of Mallorca. Rusiñol's fascination with the Mallorca endured throughout his life and referred to it as the 'island of tranquillity'. During his many sojourns there, Rusiñol was able to explore the full range of his resonant palette and completed many of his most powerful and evocative works. *Jardín de las Elegías* is offered for £120,000 -180,000/ € 137,000 - 205,000.

Another garden scene is that of *Jardín de la Casa del Artista (The Artist's Garden)* by Joaquín Mir. In 1922 Mir acquired a substantial property in his wife's home town of Vilanova near Tarragona. Suffused with light and teeming with colour, the oil painting depicts a fountain in one of the corners of the gardens, which became a sanctuary, open air studio, and repeated source of inspiration for the artist. The work has been in the same private collection for seventy years and now is up for auction with an estimate of £120,000 - 180,000 / € 137,000 - 205,000.

*Estimates do not include buyer's premium.

IMAGES AVAILABLE VIA EMAIL

NOTES TO EDITORS:

Since June 2000, when Sotheby's 19th Century European Paintings Department held its first sale dedicated to *Spanish Painting* in London, Sotheby's has consolidated itself as the only auction house to provide such a strong international sales platform for Spanish painting. Sotheby's sales have generated artist's records for works sold at auction for the leading Spanish artists from this period, such as:

- Joaquín Sorolla y Bastida: *La hora del baño*, sold for £3,701,600 (€5.323.990) in 2003
- Julio Romero de Torres: *Fuensanta*, sold for £825.000 (€1.173.400) en 2007
- Santiago Rusiñol: *Jardí de muntanya, Sa Coma, IV* sold for £568,000 (€819.600) in 2006
- José María Sert: *El tió vivo* sold for £145,250 (€168.955) in 2009
- Benjamín Palencia, *El Librero* sold for £ 133,250 (€158,450) in 2008

Aside from generating the record for Sorolla in November 2003 and despite the financial uncertainty over the last year and a half, Sotheby's has obtained remarkable success in selling works by this artist:

- Sotheby's London: Tuesday, November 24, 2009: *Barcas en la playa - Boats on the Shore*, sold for £1,665,250 (Est. £800,000 - 1,200,000) € 1,844,000
- Sotheby's New York: Wednesday, November 04, 2009: *La siesta en el jardín*, sold for \$2,882,500 (Est. \$1,800,000 - 2,500,000) € 1,960,000
- Sotheby's London: Wednesday, June 03, 2009: *Niña entrando en el baño-The bathing hour*, sold for £1,665,250 (Est. £1,700,000 - 2,500,000) € 1,937,000
- Sotheby's London: Wednesday, November 12, 2008: *Antes del baño - Before bathing*, sold for £1,777,250 (Est. £1,200,000 - 1,800,000) € 2,160,000

TRAVELLING EXHIBITION:

Highlights of the sale will be on public view in:

Barcelona

El Palauet

Paseo de Gracia, 113

Tuesday, 11 May, 12:00-19:00

Wednesday, 12 May, 11:00-19:00

Madrid

Fundación Pons

Serrano, 138

Monday, 17 May, 12:00-19:00

Tuesday, 18 May, 11:00-19:00

EXHIBITION IN SOTHEBY'S NEW BOND STREET:

All of the works in the catalogue will be exhibited prior to the sale:

Thursday, 27 May, 2010, 9:00 - 16:30

Friday, 28 May, 2010, 9:00 - 16:30

Domingo, 30 May, 2010, 12:00 - 17:00

Monday, 1 June, 2010, closed for bank holiday

Tuesday, 2 June, 2010, 9:00 - 12:00