

For Immediate Release
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Press Release

CHRISTIE'S

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A 'ROYAL' SOROLLA AT CHRISTIE'S LONDON IN JUNE

- Four paintings by the Spanish artist from private collections
 - Most highly sought after theme in the artist's oeuvre
- Includes a work dedicated to its original owner, King Alfonso XIII of Spain



London – Christie's is pleased to present four masterpieces by Joaquín Sorolla Y Bastida (1863-1923), from private collections; forming an exceptional group of highly-desirable works, these paintings are expected to realise a combined total in the region of £2 million and will lead the *19th Century European Art including Orientalist Paintings* sale on 12 June 2012.

Alexandra McMorro, Senior Director, International Department Head, 19th Century European Art:

"It is rare to be able to offer four paintings of such quality by Sorolla together at auction. These works, which condense sun, sea and sand into radically modern canvases, epitomize the qualities for which the artist is best known in terms of subject and technique. They were all executed during a narrow time-frame between late 1907 and 1910, with a view to their exhibition in the United States, where Sorolla's international fame was sealed."

THE SOROLLAS

Joaquín Sorolla y Bastida (1863-1923) is best known for the works that he painted on the beach of his native Valencia. One such work is *Pescadores. Barca varadas*, which is dedicated to its first owner, King Alfonso XIII of Spain. The dedication is a testament both to the artist's pride in this painting as well as his esteem for one of his most illustrious patrons. This painting bears all the hallmarks for which the artist's many depictions of fishing boats on the beach of Valencia are most famed (estimate: £500,000-800,000), *illustrated page 1*. Closely cropped, and with the picture plane thrust forward towards the viewer, this painting has an extraordinary immediacy. The shadow in the bottom left hand corner hints at the artist's own presence in the painting, reminding us that it was, like the vast majority of Sorolla's paintings, executed *sur le motif*.

Leading the group is a charming scene depicting the daily life of the Valencian seashore, *A la Orilla del Mar*, which is expected to realise between £700,000 and £1 million, *illustrated right*. In this tender portrait a fishwife is shown entertaining her young son by the shore as they wait for the return of the fishing boats. The painting bears all the characteristics of Sorolla's mature style: a brilliant palette, fluid spontaneity and broad brushstrokes. The theme of mother and child was close to Sorolla's heart. He painted his own family frequently, often in poignant images which avoid any hint of sentimentality. *A la Orilla del Mar* was exhibited in New York at Sorolla's inaugural exhibition at the Hispanic Society of America in 1909, and later travelled to Buffalo and Boston. The show was a huge success for Sorolla, who sold nearly 200 of the 356 canvases he had sent and it was attended by 160,000 people in New York alone.



Also on offer is a work which highlights Sorolla's mastery of light and atmosphere; *Pescador de quisquillas* is an extraordinarily expressive painting which was once part of a larger composition (estimate: £400,000-600,000), *illustrated left*. The painting would appear to depict its subject in the waning light of the afternoon: the chromatic contrasts are muted compared to many of the artist's other works, although the brighter whites reflecting off the waves light hint clearly that the sun has not yet set. The composition is typically daring: ignoring classical conventions, Sorolla has eschewed a horizon line altogether, compressing

together the different planes of figure, sea and sand.

El Tío Pancho is an unusually modern painting; it could be described as a symphony of white, which manages to simultaneously combine abstraction with realism. Just as in the *Pescador de quisquillas*, the painting also derives great power from the figure's tanned, weatherbeaten face, and the contrast between his black hat and surrounding whites. Framed by the doorway, Pancho exudes wisdom and age; rooted to the spot like an old tree, he stares out into the low winter sun towards the environment that has shaped him.



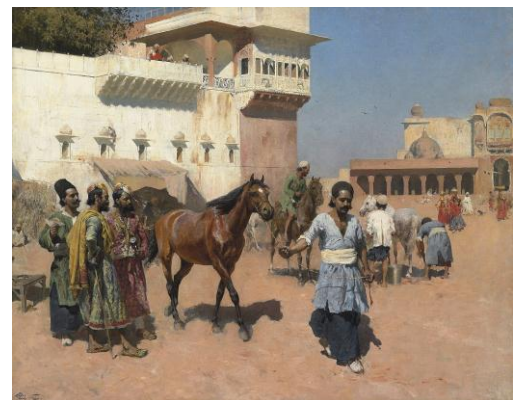
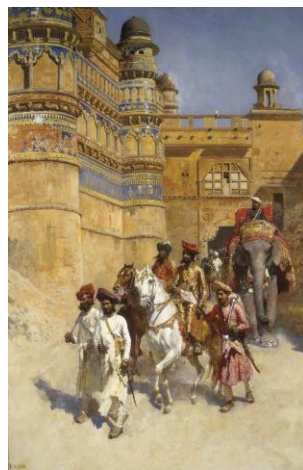
ADDITIONAL HIGHLIGHTS



Comprising 100 lots, the sale is expected to realise a total in the region of £7 million. Further highlights include an important watercolour by Gustave Moreau (1826-1898), *St. George and the Dragon* (estimate: £120,000-180,000, *illustrated left*). This work was completed twenty years before the oil version of the same subject which now hangs in the National Gallery London. This work is characteristic of the artist's eclectic iconography, which combined myth, religion and classical history, with a vibrant, jewel-like palette which, in the artist's watercolours, results in images that have the intensity of a devotional painting. Also in a mythical vein is Eugène Delacroix's *Apollo Slays Python*, a rare preparatory oil sketch for his famous ceiling decoration in the Louvre (estimate: £300,000 - £500,000). Alongside these French paintings, works by the most important landscape painter of the Dutch Romantic period, Barend Cornelis Koekkoek (1803-1882), will also be offered: *A River Landscape in Holland at Sunset* (estimate: £180,000-220,000), *A View of Cleves* (estimate: £100,000-150,000) and *A forest with figures on a path in a hilly landscape* (estimate: £200,000-300,000).

THE ORIENTALIST SECTION

A strong Orientalist category is led by works from the Sursock collection, which includes paintings and watercolours by artists such as John Frederick Lewis, David Roberts and, in particular, three canvases by the leading American artist in this genre, Edwin Lord Weeks (1849 – 1903). These works were influenced by Weeks' travels across the Indian sub-continent; painted in a realist style, they highlight the artist's interest in the minutiae of modern life as he encountered it on his travels, resulting in a sense of light and painterly realism unparalleled among his orientalist contemporaries. *A Street in Jodhpur, India*, *illustrated below left*, is estimated at £80,000-120,000, *The Fort of Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh*, *illustrated below centre*, is estimated at £200,000-300,000 and *Persian Horse Dealer, Bombay*, *illustrated below right*, is estimated at £150,000-200,000.



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Images available on request

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