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Joaquín Sorolla  
*Children bathing on the beach, 1908*

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JOAQUÍN SOROLLA

(Valencia 1863 – Madrid 1923)

*CHILDREN BATHING ON THE BEACH*, 1908

oil on canvas

53 x 60 cm; 20 7/8 x 23 5/8 in.

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## Provenance

The Artist;  
Inheritance of Elena Sorolla, Madrid;  
Directly to her daughter.

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## Literature

Bernardino de Pantorba, *La vida y la obra de Joaquín Sorolla*, Madrid, 1953, n° 895

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## Exhibitions

Madrid, *I Centenario del nacimiento de Sorolla*, Casona del Buen Retiro, 1963, n°. 76  
Valencia, *La edad dichosa*, Valencia 2022, n°. 88, p. 187

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A certificate issued by Blanca Pons Sorolla on 26 December 2022 will be given to the buyer. The inventory number of this work in the catalogue raisonné is BPS2133.

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The year 1908 was a crucial one for Sorolla, not only for his artistic advances but also for his international recognition. In April of that year, he opened a monographic exhibition at the Grafton Galleries in London, an event of great importance that was inaugurated by the Spanish ambassador in London. This exhibition brought him into contact with Archer Huntington, who invited him to present his work at the Hispanic Society in New York in February 1909. Sorolla spent that summer with his family on the Malvarrosa beach in Valencia, where he devoted himself to preparing his most important paintings of the sea for the exhibition in New York.

Sorolla was fascinated by the movement of children playing on the beach. In 1908, he experimented particularly intensively with this theme, capturing scenes of children playing and running in and out of the water. One of the most important works of this period is *Running along the beach* (Figure 1), which is in the Museo de Bellas Artes de Asturias. Sorolla felt the need to paint quickly in order to capture the sense of the fleetingness of the moment. He used to say: 'You have to paint quickly, because everything slips away'.

Sorolla achieved this sense of movement through hard work, making hundreds of small-format pencil and oil sketches, as well as medium-sized studies. These enabled him to understand how to synthesise his gaze through rapid, precise brushstrokes and, as he himself said, to 'temper his hand'. Sorolla, in this sense, behaved like a dancer or a virtuoso musician who works on the motif repeatedly and then tackles the large work in one stroke. He considered these sketches and studies to be fundamental for understanding his work and they contained all its essence, comparing them in importance with the finished work.

The composition of *Children bathing on the beach* is a masterly example of how Sorolla achieved a great sense of movement and spontaneity through a studied organisation of elements. He began by arranging the landscape in parallel bands showing different shades of blue according to the depth of the sea. On the last band, he placed one or more white sails of the boats. A vertical element, placed on one of the lateral margins, helped to structure the composition. As the blue bands approached the shore, they were interrupted by the foam of the waves, which was never completely white, but full of subtle nuances. These waves twisted in a gentle diagonal, contributing to the dynamism of the scene. Finally, the children playing in the water were arranged in clear diagonal lines, guiding the viewer's gaze towards the bottom of the sea.

*Children bathing on the beach* not only demonstrates Sorolla's technical skill but is also a masterly study of how Sorolla organised his compositions and managed to capture the essence of movement and spontaneity.

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Fig. 1. Joaquín Sorolla y Bastida, *Running along the Beach*, 1908.  
Museo de Bellas Artes de Asturias. Pedro Masaveu Collection

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