

## WHY WE CHOSE THIS MASTERPIECE

### **Mario Carreño (1913-1999)**

Cuban born Mario Carreño was one of the shaping artists of Latin-American and especially Caribbean art in the 20th century. Known for his dynamic style that blended modernism with Afro-Cuban themes and Latin American identity, Carreño had studied at the San Alejandro Academy and later continued his education in Madrid and Paris. Here, he absorbed the influences of European avant-garde movements, especially Surrealism and Cubism. By the 1940s, Carreño had emerged as a key figure in the Cuban modernist movement, alongside artists like Wifredo Lam. His works from this time feature vibrant scenes of Cuban life, folklore, and sugarcane workers, evolving later into geometric abstraction. His work was exhibited internationally, and he received multiple awards, including Chile's National Art Prize in 1982, where he lived until his passing in 1999.

His work adorns some of the most prestigious collections of Latin American art and is frequently included in renowned exhibitions including at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) New York, Museum of Fine Art Houston, Centre Pompidou Paris and the Venice Biennale.

### **Modern Cuban art**

"Mario Carreño is the most versatile, learned, and courageous of the new generation," Alfred H. Barr, Jr. declared on the occasion of the 1944 landmark exhibition, *Modern Cuban Painters*, which he organized for the Museum of Modern Art, New York. As the present work and other paintings from this decade constitute Carreño's most celebrated body of work and an outstanding contribution to the development of Cuban modernism, the present work was included in the exhibition. Here it was shown for the last time to the public before resurfacing at an auction in the 90's, which makes this work particularly attractive. In the meantime, Modern and Contemporary Cuban artists grew in numbers and importance and are recognized as a crucial movement of Latin American art. More recently and following a rising market for Cuban art, auction houses such as Bonhams start to dedicate entire sales to the movement.

### **Rarity**

However, works by Carreño rarely come to the auction easel and connoisseurs and collectors have to resort to private sales and specialized art dealerships to get hold of a work by the Cuban artist. Since 2000 only 130 paintings by the artist sold at auction and turn his scarce market appearances into a sought-after occasion. Carreño's paintings generate a turnover of over 17.5 million USD and account for 91% of his auction market. However, as paintings make up only for 54% of works sold, the paintings category - albeit rarely sold at auction - is the motor of the artist's market.

### **1943**

The present work created in 1943 is a prime example of Carreño's 'neo-classical' style from the late 1930s and early 1940s and combines his Cuban artistic heritage with European Baroque nuances and Modern influences from Renoir to Picasso. Actually, the early 40s are Carreño's best-selling period and the six highest prices paid for a painting by the artist were all for works from 1943: The bold coloring and gigantic figures in lavishly filled compositions, in the same manner as the present work, are the most sought-after creations by the artist.

(Sources: Artemundi 2025, Artprice 2025)

\*\*\* Our selection incorporates masterpieces that are so unique they can be considered “monopolies” of universal recognition. Moreover, they have a track record of growth that continues for generations.