

THE DREAM OF REASON PRODUCES MONSTERS

CLASIFICACIÓN: PRINTS

SERIE: CAPRICHOS (PRINTS AND DRAWINGS, 1797-1799) (43/85)



DATOS GENERALES

CRONOLOGÍA

Ca. 1797 - 1799

DIMENSIONES

218 x 152 mm

TÉCNICA Y SOPORTE

Etching and aquatint

RECONOCIMIENTO DE LA AUTORÍA DE GOYA

Undisputed work

FICHA: REALIZACIÓN/REVISIÓN

15 Dec 2010 / 29 May 2024

INVENTARIO

836 225

INSCRIPCIONES

el sueño de la razón produce monstruos (at the bottom)

43. (in the upper right-hand corner)

HISTORIA

See *Francisco de Goya y Lucientes, Painter*.

There is a proof of the state before lettering and of the additional aquatint that is preserved in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Goya made at least two preparatory drawings for this engraving (1) and (2).

ANÁLISIS ARTÍSTICO

On an armchair with wheels on its legs sits a man, possibly Goya himself, who rests his arms on top of a bucket on the front of which we can read *The Dream of Reason Produces Monsters*. On this bucket rest various objects that allude to the man's work: pens, pencils and sheets of paper. Several nocturnal animals, bats and owls of various sizes, advance towards it from the background, which do not seem to bode well. Equally disturbing are the cat and the lynx watching the scene, as well as the two owls leaning on the bucket on which the man is sleeping.

The artist has used a two-tone aquatint, a darker one for the background and a softer one for the front of the table, where he has left a reserve of varnish with which to write the title in white letters. The light illuminates the head and shoulders of the sleeping figure, extending slightly to the owls nearest to him, as if a spotlight had been focused on his head.

This engraving is one of the most complex in the series and, at the same time, one of the richest that has been the subject of many interpretations. In order to understand it, it is necessary to refer to the manuscripts of the period, as the Ayala manuscript states: "Fantasy abandoned by reason produces monsters, and united with it is the mother of the arts". The Prado Museum's manuscript states: "The fantasy abandoned by reason produces impossible monsters: united with it, it is the mother of the arts and the origin of marvels", while the National Library's manuscript states that "when men do not hear the cry of reason, everything becomes visions". From the reading of these texts we conclude that the image has a double meaning. Firstly, Goya stresses the importance of reason, without which all kinds of irrational sentiments lead to ignorance. Reason is the light that makes us emerge from the darkness of our own subconscious and our fears.

However, it should be pointed out that the manuscripts suggest a second meaning in which the dream, as a liberation from an inner world controlled by reason, becomes an immense source of creativity. It is possible that in this print Goya had captured something of his own essence, his condition as an artist in whom the Enlightenment mentality coexisted with pre-Romantic sentiment.

The experience described in the engraving we are dealing with here would be related to what Francisco de Quevedo narrates in the prologue to *The Dreams*: "(...) I fell asleep: as soon as my soul was freed from the task of the external senses, the following comedy struck me in this way; and so my powers recited it in the dark, and I was an auditorium and theatre for my fantasies".

One of the possible visual sources for this engraving is the work by Salvator Rosa (Naples, 1615-Rome, 1673) entitled *Democritus in Meditation* (1650, Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen). In it, a man in the middle of a wild landscape leans on a cube where he appears to be meditating. Both the figure in Goya's print and the Neapolitan and the portrait that the Aragonese artist painted of his friend *Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos* seem to be affected by a strange form of melancholy. In line with these images is the engraving that opens *Alfabeto in sogno* by Giuseppe Maria Mitelli (Bologna, 1634-Bologna, 1718), in which an artist can be seen sleeping on a table.

It is also possible that the Aragonese painter was familiar with the image that opens the second volume of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Philosophie*, published in 1793. In it we can see a figure resting his head on one of his hands, seated at a table, just as the protagonist of the Goyaesque print does.

CONSERVACIÓN

The plate is preserved in the National Chalcography (no. 214).

EXPOSICIONES

Goya. Gemälde Zeichnungen. Graphik. Tapisserien

Kunsthalle Basel Basle 1953

from January 23th to April 12th
1953

cat. 230

Goya y el espíritu de la Ilustración

Museo Nacional del Prado Madrid 1988

from October 6th to December
18th 1988. Exhibited also at
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston,
January 18th to March 26th 1989;
The Metropolitan Museum of Art,
Nueva York, May 9th to July 16th
1989, Madrid curator Manuela B.
Mena Marqués, scientific
directors Alfonso E. Pérez
Sánchez and Eleanor A. Sayre

cat. 52

Ydioma universal: Goya en la Biblioteca Nacional

Biblioteca Nacional Madrid 1996

from September 19th to
December 15th 1996

cat. 122

Francisco de Goya

Museo d'Arte Moderna Lugano 1996

exhibition celebrated from
September 22nd to November
17th.

cat. 43, p.70

Goya e Italia

Museo de Zaragoza Zaragoza 2008

organized by the Fundación Goya
en Aragón, consultant editor
Joan Sureda Pons. From June
1st to September 15th 2008

cat. 290

Expérience Goya

Lille 2021

cat. 8

London 2015

cat. 26

De grafiek van Goya

Rijksmuseum Rijksprentenkabinet Amsterdam

1970

from November 13th 1970 to
January 17th 1971

cat. 36

Goya. La década de Los Caprichos

Madrid 1992

organized by Real Academia de
Bellas Artes de San Fernando
sponsored by Fundación Central
Hispano, Madrid, consultant
editor Nigel Glendinnig. From
October 26th 1992 to January
10th 1993

cat. 7

Francisco Goya. Sein leben im spiegel der graphik. Fuendetodos 1746-1828 Bordeaux. 1746-1996

Galerie Kornfeld Bern 1996

from November 21st 1996 to
January 1997

cat. 49

Goya e la tradizione italiana

Fondazione Magnani Rocca Mamiano di

Traversetolo (Parma) 2006

consultant editors Fred Licht and
Simona Tosini Pizzetti. From
September 9th to December 3th
2006

cat. 43, p.156

Goya et la modernité

Pinacothèque de Paris Paris 2013

from October 11st 2013 to March
16th 2014

cat. 156

Agen 2019

cat. 45

Madrid 2019

cat. 60

Goya. Das Zeitalter der Revolutionen. Kunst um 1800 (1980 - 1981)

Hamburger Kunsthalle Hamburg 1980

cat. 3

Goya

Nationalmuseum Stockholm 1994

consultant editors Juan J. Luna
and Görel Cavalli-Björkman. From
October 7th 1994 to January 8th
1995

cat. 64

Das Capriccio als Kunstprinzip

Wallraf-Richartz-Museum, 1996

from December 8th 1996 to
February 16th 1997, exhibited
also in Zurich, Kunsthhaus, from
March 14th marzo 1997 to June
1st 1997 and in Vienna,
Kunsthistorisches Museum mi
Palais Harrach, from June 29th
1997 to September 21st 1997.

cat. G. 39

Goya. Opera grafica

Pinacoteca del Castello di San Giorgio Legnano

2006

exhibition celebrated from
December 16th 2006 to April 1st
2007

p.34

Goya: Order and disorder

Museum of Fine Arts Boston 2014

cat. 40 / 162

Madrid 2017

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Goya engravings and

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Goya, 1746-1828.

lithographs, vol. I y II.

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p.115, cat. 78
1964
Bruno Cassirer

de Goya

GASSIER, Pierre y WILSON, Juliet
p.181, cat. 536
1970
Office du livre

Biografía, estudio analítico y catálogo de sus pinturas

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p.395, fig. 627
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Goya, la década de los caprichos: dibujos y aguafuertes

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Goya. El capricho y la invención. Cuadros de gabinete, bocetos y miniaturas

MENA, Manuela B. y WILSON-BAREAU, Juliet (comisarias)
pp.59-61, fig. 32
1993
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p.96, cat. 132
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Ministerio de Educación y Cultura, Biblioteca Nacional

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pp.238-245
1999
Museo Nacional del Prado

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2013
Pinacoteca de París

Goya: Order & Disorder

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2014
Museum of Fine Arts Boston Publications

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2015
The Courtauld Gallery

Goya. In the Norton Simon Museum

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2016
Norton Simon Museum

CALVO RUATA, José Ignacio, BORRÁS GUALIS, Gonzalo M. and MARTÍNEZ HERRANZ, Amparo
p. 220
2017
Gobierno de Aragón y Fundación Bancaria Ibercaja

MOTTIN, Bruno, EFEDAQUE, Adrien and WILSON-BAREAU, Juliet
p. 136
2019
Snoeck

MATILLA, José Manuel y MENA, Manuela B. (comisarios)
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2019
Museo Nacional del Prado

Expérience Goya (cat. expo)

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PALABRAS CLAVE

CAPRICCIO ANIMALES NOCTURNOS SUEÑOS ONÍRICO FANTASÍA

ENLACES EXTERNOS