

THE WITCHES' SABBATH

CLASIFICACIÓN: EASEL PAINTING. VARIOUS SUBJECTS

SERIE: WITCH AFFAIRS FOR THE ALAMEDA DE OSUNA (PAINTING, 1798) (2/6)



DATOS GENERALES

CRONOLOGÍA

1797 - 1798

UBICACIÓN

Lázaro Galdiano Museum, Madrid, Spain

DIMENSIONES

43 x 30 cm

TÉCNICA Y SOPORTE

Oil on canvas

RECONOCIMIENTO DE LA AUTORÍA DE GOYA

Undisputed work

TITULAR

Lázaro Galdiano Foundation

FICHA: REALIZACIÓN/REVISIÓN

09 May 2010 / 15 Jun 2023

INVENTARIO

354 (2.006)

HISTORIA

Goya was commissioned to paint this canvas to decorate the country house of the Duke and Duchess of Osuna. It later belonged to the Duke of Tovar, and was acquired by José Lázaro Galdiano in 1928.

ANÁLISIS ARTÍSTICO

In the centre of the scene, a demonic ritual is taking place by the light of the moon. The devil,

in the form of a he-goat and wearing a crown of vine leaves, alluding to the iconography of Bacchus, presides over a circle of witches. One of the women is offering him a sacrifice of a new-born baby whilst an old hag presents him with a skeletal child. To one side of the he-goat, another woman has a pole slung over her shoulder, from which several human foetuses hang. Behind the main group, and picked out by a halo of light surrounding each of them, we see another group of female figures dressed in white tunics. Flying in the sky above them are several bats.

It is likely that Goya came across the subject for this painting in the text and humorous commentary which Leandro Fernández de Moratín wrote in 1812 about the auto-da-fé declared in Logroño in 1610. According to the inventory that was made of it in 1823, the Duke and Duchess of Osuna's library included a copy of Fernández de Moratín's text. It tells the story of two women who poisoned their children, after having been told to do so by the devil. Goya's painting also depicts the popular view held at the time that witches would often suck the blood of children, leaving them in such a weakened state that little could be done to save them.

This canvas, which openly criticizes superstition and ignorance, is related to a number of etchings sharing this same objective in the *Caprices* series: no. 47, *A Gift for the Master* and no. 60, *Trials*, in which human foetuses and the figure of the he-goat also appear.

The reclining female figure with her back to the viewer in the foreground of this painting, and under whose blanket another child is hiding, with only his legs visible, bears a strong resemblance to the drawing that appears on page 6r of Goya's *Italian Sketchbook (Cuaderno italiano)* (1771-1793, Prado Museum, Madrid). This drawing, a study in rendering drapery, depicts a completely covered figure and shows the influence of Salvator Rosa (Naples, 1615-Rome, 1673). Goya may have seen the work of this artist, who also regularly dealt with themes of magic and the supernatural, during his stay in Italy (1769-1771).

For more information, see *The Witches' Flight*.

EXPOSICIONES

Bosch, Goya et le fantastique

VII Bordeaux International Exhibition Burdeos
1957

consultant editor Gilberte
Martin-Méry. From May 20th to
July 31st 1957
cat. 67

cat. 52

Goya

Koninklijk Kabinet van Schilderijen
Mauritshuis The Hague 1970
organized by Ministerio de
Estado y Asuntos Culturales and
Réunion des Musées Nationaux,
July 4th to September 13th 1970.
Exhibited also at the Musée de
l'Orangerie des Tuileries, Paris,
October 25th to December 7th
1970, consultant editors
Jeannine Baticle and A. B. de
Vries
cat. 27

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

Goya and his times

The Royal Academy of Arts London 1963
cat. 66
cat. 79

Goya. El Capricho y la Invención. Cuadros de gabinete, bocetos y miniaturas

Museo Nacional del Prado Madrid 1993
from November 18th 1993 to
February 15th 1994. Exhibited
also at the Royal Academy of
Arts, London, March 18th to
June 12th 1994 and The Art
Institute of Chicago, Chicago,
July 16th to October 16th 1994,
consultant editors Manuela B.
Mena Marqués and Juliet
Wilson-Bareau

cat. 26

Goya: Prophet der Moderne

Alte Nationalgalerie Berlin 2005
from July 13th to October 3th
2005. Exhibited also at the
Kunsthistorischemuseum,
Vienna, October 18th 2005 to
January 8th 2006, consultant
editor Manuela B. Mena
Marqués
cat. 67

cat. 46

Goya: Order and disorder

Museum of Fine Arts Boston 2014
cat. 160

Goya

Basle 2021
p. 151

BIBLIOGRAFÍA

L'œuvre peint de Goya. 4 vols

DESPARMET FITZ - GERALD, Xavier
p. 208, cat. 170
1928-1950

Vie et ouvre de Francisco de Goya

GASSIER, Pierre y WILSON, Juliet
p. 188, cat. 660
1970
Office du livre

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

MENA, Manuela B. y WILSON-BAREAU, Juliet
(comisarias)
pp. 211, 212, 213, 214, 215 y 218 (il.),
1993
Museo del Prado

Goya, Saturno y melancolía. Consideraciones sobre el arte de Goya

NORDSTRÖM, Folke
pp. 160-164
1962
Alquimis & Wiksell

GUDIOL RICART, José
vol. I, p. 295, cat. 356

t. I
1970
Polígrafa

Francisco de Goya, 4 vols.

CAMÓN AZNAR, José
vol. III, pp. 130 y 131
1980-1982
Caja de Ahorros de Zaragoza, Aragón y Rioja

Goya and his sitters

DU GUÉ TRAPIER, Elizabeth
p. 17, il. 32
1964
The Hispanic Society of America

L'opera pittorica completa di Goya

ANGELIS, Rita de
p. 110, cat. 339
1974
Rizzoli

Goya en la Fundación Lázaro Galdiano

CANO CUESTA, Marina
pp. 84, 85 (il.), 86 y 87
1999
Fundación Lázaro Galdiano

Goya y sus seis asuntos de brujas

Goya
IRVING HECKES, Frank
pp. 197-214
295-296
2003

www.flg.es

ENLACES EXTERNOS