THE SPELL (EL CONJURO)

CLASIFICACIÓN: EASEL PAINTING. VARIOUS SUBJECTS

SERIE: WITCH AFFAIRS FOR THE ALAMEDA DE OSUNA (PAINTING, 1798) (3/6)

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 / 05 Dec 2024
INVENTARIO	355 (2.004)

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 middle of the night, a group of old witches practise their magic upon a terrified man,

who is dressed only in a white nightshirt. One of the witches chants by candlelight, and another, with an owl perched on her head, holds a basket full of babies. On the other side of the group, a third witch sticks pins into a wax effigy, whilst two bats cling on to her robe, lifting it up. In the centre of the composition, an old crone with a yellow tunic gropes her way towards the crouching man. At the top of the painting, and left largely unfinished, we see a figure looking down over the scene, holding some bones in his or her hands. Some have identified this figure as the devil, whilst others say it is the queen of the witches' coven. Also in the sky are a number of bats and owls in flight.

The composition of the painting is formed by two equilateral triangles, joined by the circle in the centre formed by the main figures. This arrangement, the same one which Goya used in the work known as *Berganza and Cañizares* or *The Witches' Kitchen*, brings to mind the Seal of Solomon, a magical symbol often used in witchcraft, to summon the devil or to cast a spell upon an enemy.

According to Marina Cano, the dramatic effect of this composition is heightened thanks to the way in which Goya has used colour: starting out from a layer of black paint which covers the entire canvas, he has applied the colours only to create the areas of light, leaving the rest in darkness.

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

EXPOSICIONES

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. 47

Goya: Prophet der Moderne
Alte Nationalgalerie Berlin 2005
from July 13th to October 3th 2005. Exhibitied also at the Kunsthistorischemuseum, Vienna, October 18th 2005 to January 8th 2006, consultant editor Manuela B. Mena Marqués
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CANO CUESTA, Marina
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2000

Goya y sus seis asuntos de brujas
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