

# 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

## BIBLIOGRAFÍA

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HARRIS, Tomás  
p.115, cat. 78  
1964  
Bruno Cassirer

### **Goya, la década de los caprichos: dibujos y aguafuertes**

WILSON BAREAU, Juliet  
pp.9-13, cat. 139.141  
1992  
Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando

### **El libro de los caprichos: dos siglos de interpretaciones (1799-1999). Catálogo de los dibujos, pruebas de estado, láminas de cobre y estampas de la primera edición**

BLAS BENITO, Javier, MATILLA RODRÍGUEZ, José Manuel y MEDRANO, José Miguel  
pp.238-245  
1999  
Museo Nacional del Prado

OROPESA, Marisa and RINCÓN GARCÍA, Wilfredo  
p. 221  
2013  
Pinacoteca de París

### **Goya. In the Norton Simon Museum**

WILSON BAREAU, Juliet  
pp. 42-75  
2016  
Norton Simon Museum

MATILLA, José Manuel y MENA, Manuela B. (comisarios)  
p. 131  
2019  
Museo Nacional del Prado

### **Vie et ouvre de Francisco de Goya**

GASSIER, Pierre y WILSON, Juliet  
p.181, cat. 536  
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.59-61, fig. 32  
1993  
Museo del Prado

### **Zwischen Hexensabbath und Psychoanalyse Goyas sueño de la razon und Carl du Prels dramatische Spal-tung des Ich im Traume**

Staedel-Jahrbuch  
CLAUSBERG, Karl  
pp.213-250  
18  
2001

### **Goya: Order & Disorder**

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pp. 101/248-249  
2014  
Museum of Fine Arts Boston Publications

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

### **Expérience Goya (cat. expo)**

COTENTIN, Régis  
p. 32  
2021  
Réunion des Musées Nationaux

### **Goya, 1746-1828. Biografía, estudio analítico y catálogo de sus pinturas**

GUDIOL, José  
p.395, fig. 627  
1970  
Ediciones Polígrafa s.a.

### **Catálogo de las estampas de Goya en la Biblioteca Nacional**

SANTIAGO, Elena M. (coordinadora)  
p.96, cat. 132  
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Ministerio de Educación y Cultura, Biblioteca Nacional

### **Francisco Goya. Los Caprichos**

POU, Anna  
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2011  
Ediciones de la Central

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pp. 134-135  
2015  
The Courtauld Gallery

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

## PALABRAS CLAVE

### **CAPRICCIO ANIMALES NOCTURNOS SUEÑOS ONÍRICO FANTASÍA**

## ENLACES EXTERNOS