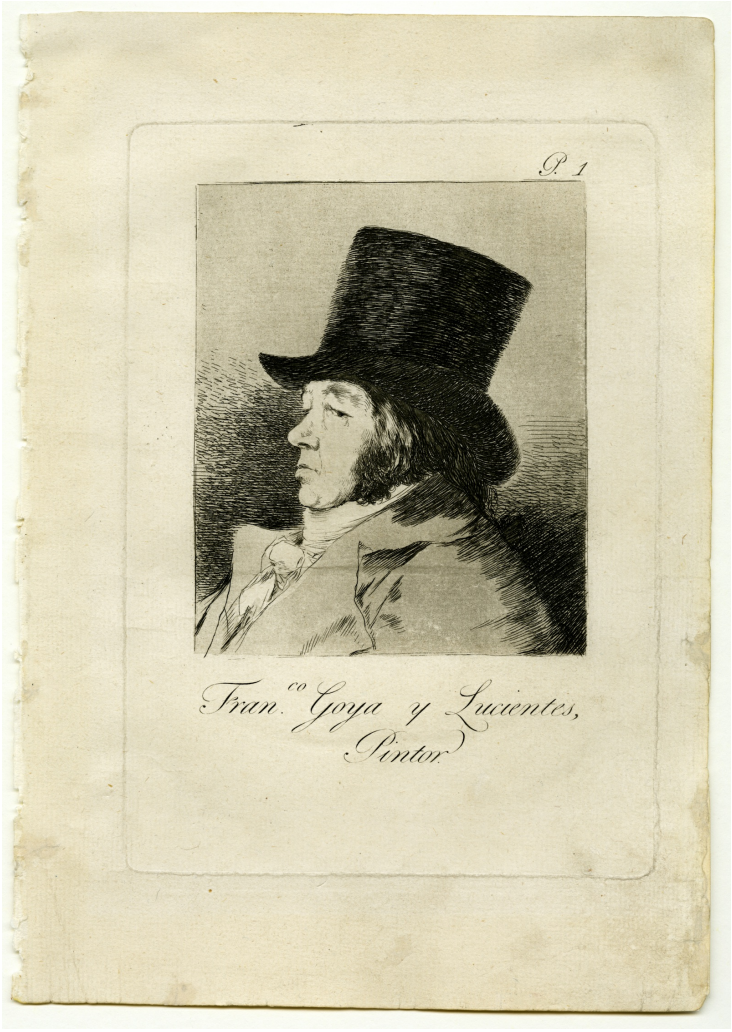
FRANCISCO DE GOYA Y LUCIENTES, PAINTER

CLASIFICACIÓN: PRINTS

SERIE: CAPRICHOS (PRINTS AND DRAWINGS, 1797-1799) (1/85)



DATOS GENERALES

CRONOLOGÍA	Ca. 1797 - 1799
DIMENSIONES	220 x 153 mm
TÉCNICA Y SOPORTE	Aguafuerte, aguatinta, punta seca y buril
RECONOCIMIENTO DE LA AUTORÍA DE GOYA	Undisputed work
FICHA: REALIZACIÓN/REVISIÓN	08 Nov 2010 / 29 May 2024
INVENTARIO	836 225

INSCRIPCIONES

Fran.co Goya y Lucientes, Painter (in the lower part of the print)

P.1 (in the upper right-hand corner)

HISTORIA

Although it is not known for certain when Francisco de Goya began to work on the series of *The Caprices,* its germ can be found in some drawings from *Notebook A* and, above all, *Notebook B*. The first pages of *Notebook B* continue the theme of *Notebook A,* although from page 55 onwards Goya began to sketch a

variety of images in which witches and masks proliferate, accompanied by brief handwritten comments. The first of these notebooks is thought to have been produced around 1793-1794, although critics today rule out the possibility that the first of them, *Notebook A*, was produced in 1796, during his stay in Sanlúcar de Barrameda in the company of the Duchess of Alba. Progressing on the ideas set out in those notebooks, the artist conceived the project of engraving a series of prints conceived as personal visions, and for this purpose he made twenty-seven preparatory drawings numbered and labelled under the common term of dreams. Eleven of them are fully consistent with drawings from *Notebook B.* The one numbered first bears the following inscription: *Dream 1°. Universal Language*. Drawn and engraved by Francisco de Goya. Year 1797. *The Author dreaming. His sole intention is to banish harmful vulgarities and to perpetuate with this work of whimsy, the solid testimony of truth.* This is the subject that the painter originally intended as the title page for the series of engravings. It is a title that points to sources of literary inspiration, especially Francisco de Quevedo's *Dreams and Discourses* (1606-1623), which consists of five short stories in which the writer satirically reviewed the customs, trades and popular characters of his time. In addition to the *Dreams*, Goya expanded his preparatory studies for the future *Caprices* by making numerous *loose drawings*, mostly in reddish tones, executed in gouache and pencil.

Valentín Carderera passed on the news that in 1797, in order to gather subscribers, Goya announced in a leaflet the imminent publication of a set of seventy-two engravings at a price of 288 royals. The leaflet added that "the work is finished, all that remains is to print the plates". However, there is no actual proof that the printing of *The Caprices,* finally of eighty prints, was definitive until the Duchess of Osuna acquired four complete sets, as recorded in a receipt from the archive of the House of Osuna dated 17 January 1799. A few days later, on 6 February, the Madrid newspaper *Diario de Madrid* announced the sale of the *Collection of prints of capricious subjects, invented and etched by Francisco de Goya.* The newspaper indicated the Aragonese painter's desire to criticise human errors and vices, as had usually been done in literature, and which in this case was to take the form of "painting". With a print run of 300 copies, the series of 80 engravings could be bought in a perfume and liquor shop at No. 1 Desengaño street, in the same house where the painter lived, for 320 reales de vellón. Thus, between 1797 and 1799, the series grew from seventy-two to eighty prints and the title page with the title *Universal Language* was replaced by a self-portrait of Goya in profile.

The Caprices were supported by the enlightened group of Goya's circle of friends, who saw the criticism of certain aspects of human conduct and Spanish society as an important spur to regeneration. But fear of the reprisals that might result from their critical content towards certain classes, such as the clergy and the aristocracy, led the painter to withdraw the prints from sale. He sensed that the Inquisition, which was responsible for overseeing public morals, would increase its influence, and this could cause him a number of problems. This circumstance was well explained by the enlightened philologist and Hebraist Antonio Puigblanch (Mataró, 1775-Somers Town, London, 1840) who, under the pseudonym of Nataniel Jomtob, published in Cadiz in 1811 a book entitled *The Inquisition without a Mask.* In it he pointed out that several prints in the series openly criticised the Inquisition, which was hardly acceptable for someone who held the position of painter to Charles IV. The delicate situation in which Goya found himself, having been denounced by the Inquisition as he himself wrote in 1825, led him to decide to offer the intaglio plates and 240 printed sets to the king to be deposited in the Royal Chalcography, asking in exchange for a pension for his son. The painter, however, retained some sets that were sold in Cadiz during the War of Independence (1808-1814).

The second edition of *The Caprices* was printed between 1821 and 1836 at the Real Calcografía Nacional, followed by other editions throughout the 19th and 20th centuries in a somewhat uncertain number. The last complete edition was produced between 1936 and 1939, during the Civil War, and around 1970 another edition was printed, but incomplete. The plate of the first engraving was used as the cover of the second, fifth, sixth, eighth and ninth editions of *The Caprices,* as well as the second edition of *Bullfighting*, and was sold as a single print at the National Chalcography.

Several state proofs of this first engraving have survived, such as the one in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, which shows a single layer of aquatint with drypoint retouching in the tie and burin in the lower right corner; it shows the shadow of the jacket, a background drawn in black pencil and a frame made in pen, as well as a handwritten inscription added later. He then engraved his name and his profession as a painter on the plate in elegant calligraphy. Finally, he decided to rectify this inscription and added a comma after the name, as well as a feature adorning the final letter "r" of the word "Painter". The inscription "P.1" in the upper right-hand corner indicates the order number of the print in the series. There is a *preparatory drawing* for this print in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

ANÁLISIS ARTÍSTICO

The term *capriccio* was used by Jacques Callot (Nancy, 1592-1635) to designate a series of engravings produced in 1617 that preceded his series *Les Misères et les Malheurs de la guerre* (1733). This work was well known to Goya, as he was inspired by it in his *Disasters of War*. Later, the term *Capriccio* - which, practically speaking, designates an artistic genre - was used by Giovanni Battista Tiepolo (Venice, 1696-Madrid, 1770) for his series of etchings, *Capricci*, which was published around 1743. The common denominator in these images is the fantasy that unfolds freely in the prints and in which the figures and settings are the fruit of associations dictated by criteria derived from the imagination. In 1756 Giovanni Battista Piranesi (Mogliano Veneto, Treviso, 1720-Rome, 1778) also published a series of engravings entitled *Capricci decorativi romani*, in which he created views of the eternal city that were the result of the fusion of elements from reality and fantasy.

Goya, who must have been very familiar with these artistic precedents by virtue of his stay in Rome (1769-1771), made his first approach to *capriccio* in the cabinet paintings he produced while recovering from the serious illness he suffered in 1793.

In these works, as Goya himself remarked, he was able to allow himself to "make observations that are not usually found in commissioned works, in which caprice and invention have no scope". It was in this process of discovering creative freedom, which brought Goya closer to the Romantic artist, that the series of engravings *The Caprice*s was born, in which he censured various aspects of the society of his time.

The engravings in this series are a critique of superstition and witchcraft, themes he had already tackled in his *paintings* for the Dukes of Osuna, the life of certain sectors of the Church, prostitution, the proliferation of unequal marriages, the education of children and the Inquisition, all from an Enlightenment point of view. It is a work that censures human vices and weaknesses with sarcastic, acid and sometimes fanciful language. Goya also avoided personal references in most cases, aware of the risk that this could entail, especially in his capacity as a painter for the camera.

There is no structure to provide an order to the prints in the series of *The Caprices,* , but rather the themes are approached spontaneously, according to the painter's ideas and criteria. However, we note a more realistic tone in the first half of *The Caprices,* while in the second half Goya adopts a more fanciful language that sometimes verges on the absurd. In this second part, the painter frequently uses monstrous and deformed beings that provoke hilarity and at the same time invite bitter reflection. In some cases it is possible to establish formal and thematic links between several engravings which serve the artist to reiterate certain ideas. Thus, the first part of the series could be interpreted as erotic satire, while a second group of prints deals with social conventions. There is also a group of prints in which, with a certain continuity, the theme of witchcraft and superstition is dealt with. In addition, between engravings 37 and 42 of the series there are what have been called asnerías, prints featuring donkeys in which human stupidity and ignorance are criticised.

The titles of each of the engravings, aphorisms that follow in the footsteps of those of Baltasar Gracián (Belmonte de Gracián, Calatayud, 1601-Tarazona, 1658), are indispensable for a proper interpretation of the images. They are brief, sometimes almost cutting titles that provide a first reading of the engraving and

often contain a second interpretation in which the criticism that Goya unfolds before our eyes is condensed. In many cases, however, the title is not enough to grasp the deeper meaning of the prints and it is necessary to turn to the contemporary manuscripts in which the prints are analysed. The most relevant, and the ones to which we will refer in most cases, are the Ayala manuscript, in which the satires of the Goyaesque images are frequently personalised, and the Prado Museum manuscript. The latter begins with the phrase This explanation of Goya's Caprices is written by his own hand, although there are serious doubts as to whether it was the painter who actually wrote it. A careful study of both leads us to the conclusion that there is a link between the two, since the explanations of 30 of the engravings in the series share explanations or expressions in which the variations are really minimal, so that it could be thought that one was inspired by the other. Finally, in many cases we will resort to the interpretation of the prints provided by the so-called manuscript of the National Library.

Goya produced the prints of *the Caprices* by working the plates with etching, which he then toned with aquatint and finally perfected with dry retouches with drypoint and burin. He did not draw directly on the plate in the manner of other artists such as Rembrandt (Leiden, 1606-Amsterdam, 1669), by whom Goya owned a number of prints, and he made preparatory drawings for almost all the prints in the series. The sketches are careful, sometimes extremely precise, to the point that the painter was obliged to lighten them in some cases in order to simplify the work on the copper. In this series the painter shows greater skill than in his copies of Velázquez's paintings, a greater knowledge of the technique and seems to feel freer, which could also be due to the private nature of this work.

There are many sources of inspiration, both literary and formal, and these will be analysed in the corresponding files on each of the prints in this series. In any case, it should be pointed out that, in general terms, *The Caprices,* owing to their highly critical content, can be related to English satirical prints, especially some works by William Hogarth (London, 1697-1764). Although Hogarth's work was not particularly widespread in Spain, Goya may have been aware of it thanks to the collection of this artist owned by Luis Paret y Alcázar (Madrid, 1746-1799, Madrid), Sebastián Martínez and even the Duke and Duchess of Osuna. It is also likely that his friend the learned Leandro Fernández de Moratín (Madrid, 1760-Paris, 1828) brought him some satirical prints after his return from London.

The first of the *The Caprices* prints was conceived by Goya as a frontispiece for the collection. The concept, intention and dimensions are different from those of the other prints, and it is the only one that lacks a commentary in the Prado manuscript, which only states "portrait of the author". However, in the Ayala manuscript it says "true portrait of him, with a satirical gesture" and in the National Library manuscript it says "true portrait of him, in a bad mood, and with a satirical gesture".

In this image, Goya is about fifty years old and is portraying himself in profile, with a serene expression, a grim gesture and a sharp gaze that is in keeping with the satirical gesture noted in the Ayala manuscript and in the National Library manuscript. The character in this engraving is the fine observer who will unfold before our eyes the social and political panorama of his time from the perspective of sarcasm and irony.

CONSERVACIÓN

The plate, which is kept at the National Chalcography (no. 172), began to deteriorate after the fourth edition of Los Caprichos. It is now badly damaged, as the aquatint has disappeared, as have the drypoint details and some areas of the etching.

EXPOSICIONES

Goya: zeichnungen, radierungen, lithographien
International Tage Ingelheim 1966
exhibition displayed from May 7th to June 5 th 1966

Etchings by Francosco Goya
Johannesburgo Johannesburgo 1974

Los Caprichos de Goya
Museo de Zaragoza Zaragoza 1978

Grabados de Goya: colección

Goya. La década de Los

Ydioma universal: Goya en la

propiedad de la Biblioteca Nacional, que se conserva en su Gabinete de
Casa de la Amistad de Moscú Moscow 1979
exhibition displayed from January 18th to 31st 1979

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. 2

Biblioteca Nacional
Biblioteca Nacional Madrid 1996
from September 19th to December 15th 1996
cat. 108

Goya grabador
Museo del Grabado Español Contemporáneo Marbella 1996
from March 8th to May 5th 1996

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

Mirar y leer: Los Caprichos de Goya
Palacio de Sástago Zaragoza 1999
15 diciembre 1999-6 febrero 2000

Schlaf der Vernunft. Original radierungen von Francisco de Goya
Munich 2000

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

Goya. Opera grafica
Pinacoteca del Castello di San Giorgio Legnano 2006
exhibition celebrated from December 16th 2006 to April 1st 2007

Goya en tiempos de guerra
Museo Nacional del Prado Madrid 2008
consultant editor Manuela B. Mena Marqués, from April 14th to July 13th 2008

Goya e Italia
Museo de Zaragoza Zaragoza 2008
organized by the Fundación Goya en Aragóna, consultant editor Joan Sureda Pons. From June 1st to September 15th 2008

Goya y el Mundo Moderno
Museo de Zaragoza Zaragoza 2008
organized by the Fundación Goya en Aragón at the Museo de Zaragoza, consultant editors Valeriano Bozal and Concepción Lomba Serrano. From December 18th 2008 to March 22nd 2009

Goya et la modernité
Pinacothèque de Paris París 2013
from October 11st 2013 to March 16th 2014
cat.1, p.48

Hamburg 2019
cat. 98

Agen 2019
cat. 53

Expérience Goya
Lille 2021
cat. 6

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Goya, la década de los caprichos: dibujos y aguafuertes
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PALABRAS CLAVE

AUTORRETRATO SOMBRERO CAPRICCIO

ENLACES EXTERNOS