THE MANUFACTURE OF GUNPOWDER (LA FABRICACIÓN DE PÓLVORA)

CLASIFICACIÓN: EASEL PAINTING. ALLEGORY, MYTHOLOGY, HISTORY

DATOS GENERALES

CRONOLOGÍA	Ca. 1810 - 1814
UBICACIÓN	Galería de las Colecciones Reales, Madrid, Spain
DIMENSIONES	32.9 x 52.2 cm
TÉCNICA Y SOPORTE	Oil on wood panel
RECONOCIMIENTO DE LA AUTORÍA DE GOYA	Undisputed work
TITULAR	National Heritage
FICHA: REALIZACIÓN/REVISIÓN	14 Mar 2010 / 09 Jan 2024
INVENTARIO	2314 10009052

INSCRIPCIONES

Numero 1 / Fabrica de pólvora establecida por D. Josef Mallen / en la Sierra de Tardienta / en Aragón / en los años de 1811, 12 y 13 ("Number 1 / Manufacture of gunpowder established by Mr Josef Mallan / in the Sierra de Tardienta / in Aragón / in the years 1811, 1812, and 1813"), on the back.

690 (lower right-hand corner, in white)

HISTORIA

Goya was called to Zaragoza in 1808 by José Palafox to visit the ruins of the city, which had been devastated by French troops, and paint the "triumphs" of the people of Zaragoza at this site. Goya wrote a letter to José Munárriz which confirms this trip to his home region. The artist painted two works on panel which form a pair based either on this visit or on a subsequent one which took place before the end of the

War of Independence. These were entitled *The Manufacture of Gunpo*wder and *The Manufacture of Bullets*.

Both entered into royal collections when they were acquired by Ferdinand VII some time after his return to Madrid in 1814. They appear in the *Inventory of Paintings, Furnishings, and Jewels of the Royal Palaces of Madrid, Sites and Country Houses* (Inventario de pinturas, muebles y alhajas de los Palacios Reales de Madrid, Sitios y Casas de Campo) drawn up in 1834, registered to the Royal Seat of San Lorenzo de El Escorial. They then moved to the Royal Palace in Madrid before moving once more to the Zarzuela Palace.

ANÁLISIS ARTÍSTICO

Although they are not signed, thanks to the inscriptions on the back of the paintings we know that they depict clandestine activities carried out in the Sierra de Tardienta in Huesca, some 50 km north of Zaragoza. In 1810, José Mallén, shoemaker to Almudévar, organized a party of guerrillas and ordered the manufacture of gunpowder (the gunpowder produced in Aragón was famous for its quality) and bullets at his secret factory to supply the regions of Aragón, Valencia, and Catalonia. We do not know if Goya was able to see these scenes in real life (although it is probable that he did not, given the inaccessibility of the site) or if they were inspired by descriptions and news items, but it is clear that the story these paintings tell is also a historical reality.

The panel on which this scene is painted is very irregular. It seems to be a cedar panel from a door or a window shutter, which suggests the lack of available materials during the war.

Despite its rudimentary support, the painting is executed with documentary precision, showing Goya's lasting interest in "the glory of his country". The energetic activity of the men is clearly depicted, giving two very vivid scenes. With these works the painter wished to pay homage to his countrymen and his native region.

The setting is painted in detail, dominated by the trees which tower over the sandy terrain. It has been noted that landscape plays a fundamental role in these paintings, and is therefore not reduced to a background screen against which the figures are outlined; rather, it has a life of its own, expressed by means of different pictorial qualities. The figures of the men busily going about their tasks are arranged in an orderly fashion which allows the viewer to follow each step of the gunpowder manufacturing process. On the left, they pound the mix. Then, in the centre of the scene, the powder is sifted before it is placed in boxes and carried away by the figures on the right. A man dressed in black who might be the factory owner, José Mallén, gives instructions to the other men.

EXPOSICIONES

Goya 1900
Ministerio de Instrucción Pública and Bellas Artes Madrid 1900
consultant editors Aureliano de Beruete, Alejandro Ferrant, Marqués de Pidal and Ricardo Velázquez. May 1900
cat. 3: Casa Real

Pinturas de Goya
Museo Nacional del Prado Madrid 1928
consultant editor Fernando Álvarez de Sotomayor. From Apri to -May 1928
cat. 78/29: S.M. el Rey

Les chefs-d'œuvre du Musée du Prado
Musée d'Art et d'Histoire Geneva 1939
consultant editors Fernando Álvarez de Sotomayor y Pedro Muguruza Otaño. From June to September 1939
cat. 34

Exposición conmemorativa del centenario de Goya
Palacio de Oriente Madrid 1946
organized by Patrimonio Nacional. June 1946
cat. 280

Goya. Gemälde Zeichnungen. Graphik. Tapisserien
Kunsthalle Basel Basle 1953
from January 23th to April 12th 1953
cat. 27

Stora Spanska Mästare
Nationalmuseum Stockholm 1959
cat. 147

Francisco de Goya. IV Centenario de la capitalidad
organized by Ayuntamiento de Madrid and Dirección General de Bellas Artes at the Casón del Buen Retiro Madrid 1961
consultant editor Valentín de Sambricio

cat. 62

Goya and his times
The Royal Academy of Arts London 1963
cat. 66
cat. 100

Sambricio
cat. 55

Goya en las colecciones madrileñas
Museo Nacional del Prado Madrid 1983
consultant editor Enrique Lafuente Ferrari. From April 19th to June 20th 1983
cat. 43

Goya
Koninklijke Musea Voor Schone Kunsten Van België Brussels 1985
consultant editor Luis González Seara. From October 26th to December 22nd 1985
cat. 32

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. 68

La alianza de dos monarquías: Wellington en España
Museo Municipal Madrid 1988
organized by Fundación Hispano-Británica in collaboration with Ayuntamiento de Madrid. From October 19th to December 11th 1988
cat. 262

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. 90

Realidad e imagen. Goya 1746 – 1828
Museo de Zaragoza Zaragoza 1996
consultant editor Federico Torralba Soriano. From October 3th to December 1st 1996
cat. 55

Goya
Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica di Palazzo Barberini Roma 2000
consultant editors Lorenza Mochi Onori and Claudio Strinati. From March 18th to June 18th 2000
cat. 25

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
cat. 95

Goya en tiempos de guerra
Museo Nacional del Prado Madrid 2008
consultant editor Manuela B. Mena Marqués, from April 14th to July 13th 2008
cat. 76

Goya y el infante don Luis: el exilio y el reino.
Palacio Real, Madrid Madrid 2012
Arte y ciencia en la época de la ilustración española. Responsable científico Francisco Calvo Serraller. Del octubre de 2012 a enero de 2013.
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ENLACES EXTERNOS