

# 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, Kunsthaus, 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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**Vie et ouvre de Francisco**

**Goya, 1746-1828.**

### **lithographs, vol. I y II.**

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

### **de Goya**

GASSIER, Pierre y WILSON, Juliet  
p.181, cat. 536  
1970  
Office du livre

### **Biografía, estudio analítico y catálogo de sus pinturas**

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

### **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

### **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

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

SANTIAGO, Elena M. (coordinadora)  
p.96, cat. 132  
1996  
Ministerio de Educación y Cultura, Biblioteca Nacional

### **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

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

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

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

POU, Anna  
pp.31-38  
2011  
Ediciones de la Central

### **OROPESA, Marisa and RINCÓN GARCÍA,**

Wilfredo  
p. 221  
2013  
Pinacoteca de París

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

ILCHMAN, Frederick y STEPANEK, Stephanie L. (comisarios)  
pp. 101/248-249  
2014  
Museum of Fine Arts Boston Publications

### **WILSON-BAREAU, Juliet y BUCK, Stephanie**

(eds.)  
pp. 134-135  
2015  
The Courtauld Gallery

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

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

### **CALVO RUATA, José Ignacio, BORRÁS**

GUALIS, Gonzalo M. and MARTÍNEZ HERRANZ, Amparo  
p. 220  
2017  
Gobierno de Aragón y Fundación Bancaria Ibercaja

### **MOTTIN, Bruno, EFEDAQUE, Adrien and**

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p. 136  
2019  
Snoeck

### **MATILLA, José Manuel y MENA, Manuela B. (comisarios)**

p. 131  
2019  
Museo Nacional del Prado

### **Expérience Goya (cat. expo)**

COTENTIN, Régis  
p. 32  
2021  
Réunion des Musées Nationaux

#### **PALABRAS CLAVE**

**CAPRICCIO ANIMALES NOCTURNOS SUEÑOS ONÍRICO FANTASÍA**

#### **ENLACES EXTERNOS**