THE WASHERWOMEN (LAS LAVANDERAS)

CLASIFICACIÓN: EASEL PAINTING. TAPESTRY CARTOONS

SERIE: TAPESTRY CARTONS: POPULAR SUBJECTS (PAINTING, DRAWING AND SKETCHES, 1778-1780). ANTE-BEDROOM OF THE PRINCES OF ASTURIAS, PALACE OF EL PARDO (3/13)



DATOS GENERALES

CRONOLOGÍA	1779 - 1780
UBICACIÓN	The Prado National Museum. Madrid, Madrid, Spain
DIMENSIONES	257.5 x 166 cm
TÉCNICA Y SOPORTE	Oil on canvas
RECONOCIMIENTO DE LA AUTORÍA DE GOYA	Documented work
TITULAR	El Prado National Museum
FICHA: REALIZACIÓN/REVISIÓN	24 Nov 2009 / 27 Oct 2026
INVENTARIO	28 (P00786)

HISTORIA

See *The Blind Guitarist*.

This cartoon was delivered to the Royal Tapestry Factory on 24 January 1780, along with ten other cartoons, completing the decoration of the antechamber to the bedroom. These eleven tapestry cartoons - almost certain to have been made between 21 July 1779, when the artist delivered *A Stickball Game* and *The*

Swing, and this delivery in January 1780 - were executed very rapidly. It is very likely that Goya was aware of the planned suspension of manufacturing work at the factory and was anxious to finish his commissions and receive his wages.

Around 1856 or 1857, the cartoon was moved from the Royal Tapestry Factory of Santa Bárbara to the Royal Palace in Madrid. In 1870, it was taken to the Prado Museum under orders given on 18 January and 9 February.

ANÁLISIS ARTÍSTICO

The Washerwomen was one of the main tapestries on the north wall of the antechamber, along with *The Swing*.

A group of washerwomen take a rest from their work to sit by the riverbank. The head of a lamb appears between the women and one of them holds the animal by a horn. Tomlinson sees some very clear sexual connotations in this scene, including symbols that Goya would have been aware of through some works in the library of his brother-in-law Francisco and which would not have escaped the attention of viewers at the time. The washerwoman was considered to be of the lower class, just like the majas, and her reputation would have been doubtful. As such, her appearance here is a representation of female lasciviousness. In fact, there existed a royal decree at the time prohibiting the washerwomen working along the Manzanares river from attracting the attention of passers-by with their provocative gestures. The presence of the ram would have been to make reference to its horns, which implied an offence for Spaniards in Goya's time. It seems clear that these details would not have been overlooked by viewers of the time.

Of particular interest in this painting are the quality of the colouring, the dramatic sky, and the tones reminiscent of the work of Velázquez, as pointed out by Sambricio, in the background landscape.

Around 37 cm has been lost from the height of the work compared to the size of the tapestry and to the dimensions on the invoice that Goya delivered to the Royal Tapestry Factory.

EXPOSICIONES

Goya. 250 Aniversario
Museo Nacional del Prado Madrid 1996
consultant editor Juan J. Luna. From March 29th to June 2nd 1996
cat. 26

Goya. La imagen de la mujer
Museo Nacional del Prado Madrid 2001
from October 30th 2001 to February 10th 2002. Exhibitied also at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, March 10th to June 2nd 2002, consultant editor Francisco Calvo Serraller
cat. 5

Goya: Luces y Sombras. Obras Maestras del Museo del Prado
The National Museum of Western Art Tokyo 2011
nº 15

Goya luces y sombras
CaixaForum Barcelona 2012
consultant editors José Manuel Matilla and Manuela B. Marqués. From March 16th to June 24th 2012
cat. 14

Goya en Madrid. Cartones para tapices 1775-1794
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Museo Nacional del Prado

Goya, Saturno y melancolía. Consideraciones sobre el arte de Goya
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2020
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ENLACES EXTERNOS