

# GREAT DEEDS! WITH DEAD BODIES! (GRANDE HAZAÑA! CON MUERTOS!)

CLASIFICACIÓN: PRINTS

SERIE: DISASTERS OF WAR (PRINTS Y DRAWINGS, 1810-1815) (39/82)



## DATOS GENERALES

CRONOLOGÍA

Ca. 1812 - 1815

DIMENSIONES

156 x 208 mm

TÉCNICA Y SOPORTE

Etching, lavis and drypoint

RECONOCIMIENTO DE LA AUTORÍA DE GOYA

Undisputed work

FICHA: REALIZACIÓN/REVISIÓN

08 Dec 2010 / 24 May 2023

INVENTARIO

836 225

## INSCRIPCIONES

Goya (lower left-hand corner), 51 (lower left-hand corner of the plate)

## HISTORIA

See *Sad presentiments of what must come to pass* (*Tristes presentimientos de lo que ha de acontecer*).

The title was handwritten on the print by Goya in the first and only series that is known to have been printed at the time the works were created, which the artist gave to his friend

Agustín Ceán Bermúdez. Therefore, the title was etched into the plate at a later date and left unchanged as of the first edition of the *Disasters of War* printed by the San Fernando Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Madrid in 1863, after the printing of the series in the possession of Ceán Bermúdez.

There are no surviving preparatory drawings for this print.

#### ANÁLISIS ARTÍSTICO

*Great deeds! With dead bodies!* is the last image in the series *The Disasters of War* in which Goya depicts a scene of terrible violence. In the middle of a wasteland, three corpses have been tied to a tree. The figure suspended upside down has had his arms and head cut off. The head has been nailed to a branch, while his missing limbs hang from the tree, tied at the wrists. Next to the body is another that has been tied with a rope at the waist, arms behind his back. On the left is a third corpse whose head rests on the floor while his legs have been tied to the tree trunk.

This print is clearly related to print no. 33, *What more can be done?* (*Qué hai que hacer mas?*) in which soldiers dismember a corpse and print no. 37, *This is worse* (*Esto es peor*), showing a mutilated body impaled on a tree. These prints highlight the common practice during war of mutilating corpses to strip them of any dignity, a method that was applied particularly in the case of traitors. Accusing someone of treason was extremely serious, and those who pointed the finger at another who they suspected of being a traitor had to be very sure of their grounds for the accusation. A decree dated 3 February 1809 regulating the punishments meted out for disturbances ("*Penas sobre bullicios y conmociones*") stated that whoever accused a person of being a traitor had to prove it: if they could not, they could be subject to the punishments stipulated by law, which could even include the death penalty.

Goya was likely to have known about many sentences handed down to traitors, some of which would have been featured in the press at the time. One of the most debated cases was that of General Benito de San Juan, who led the Spanish troops during the Battle of Somosierra on 30 November 1808. The general retreated to Talavera where he was killed on 7 December 1808 by various soldiers who accused him of being a traitor. Not content with his death, the soldiers also stripped the body and mutilated it in a public act.

This print portrays a kind of macabre art work in the middle of nature, a curious composition in which the human remains have been distributed over a tree with almost aesthetic criteria. Despite the fact that the landscape that the painter depicts is an extremely tormented one, it also has a certain beauty. The artist depicts the mutilated body's anatomy with care in a marked classical style: the body that hangs upside down is reminiscent of the sketches Goya produced based on the *Belvedere Torso* in his *Italian Sketchbook*.

As in the case of other works in the series, the title of this print is critical. Goya exclaims "*Great deeds!*" but questions the merit of such a brutal gesture.

#### CONSERVACIÓN

The plate is stored in the National Chalcography (cat. 290) .

#### EXPOSICIONES

##### **Goya. Drawings, Etchings and Lithographs**

Goya. Drawings London 1954

from June 12th to July 25th 1954

cat. 61

##### **Goya and his times**

The Royal Academy of Arts London 1963

cat. 66

cat. 244

##### **Goya. Das Zeitalter der Revolutionen. Kunst um 1800 (1980 – 1981)**

Hamburger Kunsthalle Hamburg 1980

cat. 88

**Goya y el espíritu de la**

**Francisco de Goya**

**Francisco de Goya: Maleri,**

## 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. 89

**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. 125

**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. 99

Madrid 2019  
cat. 126

## BIBLIOGRAFÍA

**Goya, grabador**  
BERUETE Y MONET, Aureliano de  
cat. 141  
1918  
Blass S.A.

**Goya y el espíritu de la Ilustración**  
PÉREZ SÁNCHEZ, Alfonso E. y SAYRE, Eleanor A. (directores) and MENA, Manuela B. (comisaria)  
cat. 89  
1988  
Museo del Prado

**El Libro de los Desastres de la Guerra**  
BLAS BENITO, Javier and MATILLA, José Manuel  
II, pp. 80-82  
2000  
Museo del Prado

**Goya. In the Norton Simon Museum**  
WILSON BAREAU, Juliet  
pp. 114-151  
2016  
Norton Simon Museum

Museo d'Arte Moderna Lugano 1996  
exhibition celebrated from September 22nd to November 17th.  
cat. 39

**Francisco Goya. Capricci, follie e disastri della guerra**  
San Donato Milanese 2000  
Opere grafiche della Fondazione Antonio Mazzotta  
cat. 119

**Goya et la modernité**  
Pinacothèque de Paris Paris 2013  
from October 11st 2013 to March 16th 2014  
cat.78

**Expérience Goya**  
Lille 2021  
cat. 94

**Goya engravings and lithographs, vol. I y II.**  
HARRIS, Tomás  
cat. 159  
1964  
Bruno Cassirer

**Goya. Arte e condizione umana**  
PAZ, Alfredo de  
lam. 198  
1990  
Liguori editore

**Goya. Los desastres de la guerra, I**  
GALLEGO GARCÍA, Raquel  
pp. 35, 38  
2011  
La Central

MATILLA, José Manuel y MENA, Manuela B. (comisarios)  
p. 204  
2019  
Museo Nacional del Prado

**Tegning, Grafikk**  
Nasjonalgalleriet Oslo 1996  
from 10th to April 14th 1996  
cat. 142

**Goya. Opera grafica**  
Pinacoteca del Castello di San Giorgio Legnano 2006  
exhibition celebrated from December 16th 2006 to April 1st 2007  
p. 70

**Goya: Order and disorder**  
Museum of Fine Arts Boston 2014  
cat. 2

**Vie et ouvre de Francisco de Goya**  
GASSIER, Pierre y WILSON, Juliet  
cat. 1055  
1970  
Office du livre

**Catálogo de las estampas de Goya en la Biblioteca Nacional**  
SANTIAGO, Elena M. (coordinadora)  
cat. 244  
1996  
Ministerio de Educación y Cultura, Biblioteca Nacional

OROPESA, Marisa and RINCÓN GARCÍA, Wilfredo  
p. 139  
2013  
Pinacoteca de Paris

**Expérience Goya (cat. expo)**  
COTENTIN, Régis  
pp. 169-170  
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Réunion des Musées Nationaux

## ENLACES EXTERNOS

