THE ROPE BREAKS

CLASIFICACIÓN: PRINTS

SERIE: DISASTERS OF WAR (PRINTS Y DRAWINGS, 1810-1815) (77/82)



DATOS GENERALES

CRONOLOGÍA	Ca. 1820 - 1823
DIMENSIONES	178 x 221 mm
TÉCNICA Y SOPORTE	Aguafuerte, aguatinta bruñida o lavis, punta seca y bruñidor
RECONOCIMIENTO DE LA AUTORÍA DE GOYA	Undisputed work
FICHA: REALIZACIÓN/REVISIÓN	28 Feb 2013 / 05 Jun 2023
INVENTARIO	836 225

INSCRIPCIONES

77 (in the upper left-hand corner of the plate)

HISTORIA

See *Sad forebodings of what is to come*.

The title of the print was handwritten by Goya on the first and only series known to us at the time of its production, which the painter gave to his friend Agustín Ceán Bermúdez. Thus the title was subsequently engraved on the plate without any modification from Ceán Bermúdez's copy for the first edition of the

Disasters of War published by the Royal Academy of Fine Arts of San Fernando in Madrid in 1863.

A *preparatory drawing* of this engraving is in the Prado Museum

ANÁLISIS ARTÍSTICO

An ecclesiastical figure dressed in pompous robes walks with his arms outstretched on a knotted rope. The people watching him show disbelief and suspense on their faces, or simply look on with a certain indifference, waiting for the rope to break.

The study of his preparatory drawing, in which the figure wears a papal tiara on his head, is decisive for the interpretation of this engraving. We therefore conclude that it is quite likely that the figure walking on the tightrope was Pius VII (Cesena, 1742-Rome, 1823) and that Goya subsequently thought that it might be advisable not to make the identification of the figure in the print so obvious with a view to a possible publication of the series of engravings.

Pius VII was well described in his texts by Juan Antonio Llorente (Rincón de Soto, La Rioja, 1756-Madrid, 1823); secretary of the Inquisition during the nineties of the 18th century and ambassador of the second constitutional government to the Vatican between 1820 and 1823. His stay in Rome helped him to write a history of the papacy in which he gave some interesting insights into the opportunistic personality of the supreme pontiff: "Pius VII will be ungrateful if he denies that he owes Napoleon Bonaparte the freedom and power of his electors and the peaceful possession of his chair in Rome". Further on he wrote: "The French wanted to elevate their first consul to the dignity of emperor and Pius VII went from Rome to Paris with great pleasure to crown him, as he did in a great ceremony with incomparable solemnity. Subsequently, political affairs took a different turn, and the Emperor stripped Pius VII of the temporal sovereignty of the Roman states". After the fall of Napoleon, Pius VII removed from office all the bishops who had been placed there by virtue of an agreement between him and Napoleon.

Ferdinand VII asked the Pope to promulgate a bull in which he pardoned the religious who had joined the guerrillas during the War of Independence. In addition, the Spanish monarch asked the Church, with the approval of Pius VII, for priests to demand that the people pay taxes from their pulpits. This commitment on the part of the Church placed it in a position that could be what Goya has captured in this engraving, that of someone walking a tightrope full of knots and patches that presage the fall before the attentive gaze of the people.

Nigel Glendinning makes some interesting observations about this engraving, as he considers the image to be a representation of the saying "to walk on a tightrope", which means to be involved in some dangerous action. In this way Goya refers to the somewhat ambiguous dealings in which the Church found itself at that time with the Spanish monarchy in order to obtain its protection, although accepting conditions of a certain risk.

The Rope Breaks continues the compositional scheme employed by Goya in the previous engravings, No. 75, *A Charlatan's Parade* and No. 76, *The Carnivorous Vulture,* in which the centrepiece of the image is a large central figure with its limbs spread out.

CONSERVACIÓN

The plate is in the National Chalcography (cat. 328).

EXPOSICIONES

Goya and his times
The Royal Academy of Arts London 1963
cat. 66
cat. 253

Goya. Das Zeitalter der Revolucionen. Kunst um 1800 (1980 – 1981)
Hamburger Kunsthalle Hamburg 1980
cat. 63

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. 159

Francisco de Goya
Museo d'Arte Moderna Lugano 1996
exhibition celebrated from September 22nd to November 17th.
cat. 77

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. 167

Ydioma universal: Goya en la Biblioteca Nacional
Biblioteca Nacional Madrid 1996
from September 19th to December 15th 1996
cat. 232

Francisco Goya. Capricci, follie e disastri della guerra
San Donato Milanese 2000
Opere grafiche della Fondazione Antonio Mazzotta
cat. 157

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. 125

Goya et la modernité
Pinacothèque de Paris París 2013
from October 11st 2013 to March 16th 2014
cat. 116

Goya: Order and disorder
Museum of Fine Arts Boston 2014
cat. 143

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Vie et ouvre de Francisco de Goya
GASSIER, Pierre y WILSON, Juliet
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1970
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GLENDINNING, Nigel
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Goya en tiempos de guerra
MENA MARQUÉS, Manuela B.
p.344, fig. 117.1
2008
Museo Nacional del Prado

OROPESA, Marisa and RINCÓN GARCÍA, Wilfredo
p. 158
2013
Pinacoteca de París

Goya: Order & Disorder
ILCHMAN, Frederick y STEPANEK, Stephanie L. (comisarios)
p. 225
2014
Museum of Fine Arts Boston Publications

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