WHAT COURAGE! (QUE VALOR!)

CLASIFICACIÓN: PRINTS

SERIE: DISASTERS OF WAR (PRINTS Y DRAWINGS, 1810-1815) (7/82)

DATOS GENERALES

CRONOLOGÍA	Ca. 1810 - 1815
DIMENSIONES	155 x 208 mm
TÉCNICA Y SOPORTE	Aguafuerte, aguatinta, buril, punta seca y bruñidor
RECONOCIMIENTO DE LA AUTORÍA DE GOYA	Undisputed work
FICHA: REALIZACIÓN/REVISIÓN	25 Nov 2010 / 05 Jun 2023
INVENTARIO	836 225

INSCRIPCIONES

41 (lower left-hand corner).

HISTORIA

See *Sad presentiments of what must come to pass.*

There exist no known state proofs made prior to the addition of the numbers. One of these proofs bears the number 41 and shows some retouching in drypoint and burnisher on the woman's dress. Another state proof is engraved with the number 7, the last in the series, and shows some touches of drypoint on the woman's dress and more extensive work in burin on the outline of her head and shoulders, on the cannon and in the shadow below the wheel.

The title was handwritten by Goya on the first and only print run that we know to have been made at the time, and which the painter gave to his friend Agustín Ceán Bermúdez. The title was engraved on to the copperplate at a later date, and no other modifications were made to the image for the first edition of the Disasters of War, which was printed by the Royal Academy of Fine Arts of San Fernando, Madrid, in 1863.

Two preparatory drawings for this print are conserved in the Prado Museum.

ANÁLISIS ARTÍSTICO

In What courage! we see a woman, her back to the viewer, preparing to fire a cannon. At her feet lie several bodies, which the woman has clambered on top of, thus forming a triangular composition.

Goya has used aquatint in the background, achieving a peculiar luminosity by gradually darkening the sky the further it gets from the cannon. In the distance we see a mountain, rendered by the etching of very tightly-packed horizontal lines. This shape echoes the triangle made by the woman atop the pile of dead bodies. Her clothes, along with those of some of the corpses, are white and provide an important area of brightness, drawing the viewer's eye to her.

The protagonist of this scene has been identified by Piot and Mélida as Agustina de Aragón (Barcelona, 1786-Ceuta, 1857), who was present at the first siege of Zaragoza, where she became famous for her contribution to defending the city against the French attack on 1 July 1808. It has also been suggested that this could be a representation of Manuela Sancho y Bonafonte (Plenas, 1783-Zaragoza, 1863), who also fought to defend Zaragoza. Alternatively, this image could be a reference to all those women who played an active role in the war and who bravely defended their country, which would explain why Goya has portrayed the figure with her back to us and with her face hidden from view.

What courage! is, at first glance at least, one of the most serene prints in the series, featuring as it does no violent acts or graphic representations of suffering. But when we look more closely at this superficially peaceful scene, we see that this print depicts a moment of intense drama. We are reminded that this is an image of war when we notice that the woman in the picture is standing atop a pile of bodies, the result of a bloody struggle.

An anonymous print made sometime after 1808 tackles a similar subject to the one addressed by Goya in this print (National Chalcography Museum, Antonio Correa Collection, Madrid, inv. 1609). It portrays the heroism of the women of Aragón as they take arms to defend their loved ones. The scene shows a woman next to a cannon as she reaches for the gunpowder, ready to load it. At her feet there lies the lifeless body of a man. Both Goya and the unknown author of this other print tell a similar story, although the artist from Aragón confers on his work a heroic tone which is absent in the print from the Antonio Correa collection.

It is also possible that the anonymous print inspired another by Fernando Brambila (1763-1834) and Juan Gálvez (1774-1847) depicting the Portillo Gate battery (1812-1813, Lázaro Galdiano Museum, Madrid), in which we can see a woman loading a cannon, one foot resting on a dead body.

The triangular structure formed by the woman on top of the pile of bodies also recalls the painting *The Raft of the Medusa* (1818, Musée du Louvre, Paris), by Géricault (Ruán, 1791-Paris, 1824), not only from a formal point of view but also in terms of its content. In both cases we are presented with a scene of despair and death, but one in which a small flicker of hope still remains.

CONSERVACIÓN

The etching plate is conserved in the National Chalcography Museum (cat. 258)

EXPOSICIONES

De grafiek van Goya
Rijksmuseum Rijksprentenkabinet Amsterdam 1970
from November 13th 1970 to January 17th 1971
cat. 59

Goya. Das Zeitalter der Revolucionen. Kunst um 1800 (1980 – 1981)
Hamburger Kunsthalle Hamburg 1980
cat. 103

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. 84

Francisco de Goya: Maleri, Tegning, Grafikk
Nasjonalgalleriet Oslo 1996
from 10th to April 14th 1996
cat. 131

Francisco de Goya
Museo d'Arte Moderna Lugano 1996
exhibition celebrated from September 22nd to November 17th.
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. 96

Ydioma universal: Goya en la Biblioteca Nacional
Biblioteca Nacional Madrid 1996
from September 19th to December 15th 1996
cat. 204

Francisco Goya. Capricci, follie e disastri della guerra
San Donato Milanese 2000
Opere grafiche della Fondazione Antonio Mazzotta
cat. 87

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. 105

Goya. Opera grafica
Pinacoteca del Castello di San Giorgio Legnano 2006
exhibition celebrated from December 16th 2006 to April 1st 2007
p. 54

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. 83

Goya et la modernité
Pinacothèque de Paris París 2013
from October 11st 2013 to March 16th 2014
*cat.*46

Goya: Order and disorder
Museum of Fine Arts Boston 2014
cat. 193

2022

BIBLIOGRAFÍA

Goya, grabador
BERUETE Y MONET, Aureliano de
cat. 109
1918
Blass S.A.

Goya engravings and lithographs, vol. I y II.
HARRIS, Tomás
cat. 127
1964
Bruno Cassirer

Vie et ouvre de Francisco de Goya
GASSIER, Pierre y WILSON, Juliet
cat. 1000
1970
Office du livre

Goya y el espíritu de la Ilustración
PÉREZ SÁNCHEZ, Alfonso E. y SAYRE, Eleanor A. (directores) and MENA, Manuela B. (comisaria)
cat. 84
1988
Museo del Prado

Catálogo de las estampas de Goya en la Biblioteca Nacional
SANTIAGO, Elena M. (coordinadora)
cat. 192
1996
Ministerio de Educación y Cultura, Biblioteca Nacional

OROPESA, Marisa and RINCÓN GARCÍA, Wilfredo
p. 123
2013
Pinacoteca de París

Goya: Order & Disorder

Goya. In the Norton Simon

TORAL OROPESA, María and MARTÍN

ILCHMAN, Frederick y STEPANEK, Stephanie L. (comisarios)
p. 288
2014
Museum of Fine Arts Boston Publications

Museum
WILSON BAREAU, Juliet
pp. 114-151
2016
Norton Simon Museum

MEDINA, Víctor
p. 55
2022
Museo de Bellas Artes de Badajoz y Diputación de Badajoz

ENLACES EXTERNOS