

<http://buenosairesherald.com/article/215206/putting-goya-under-the-magnifying-glass>

Monday, May 30, 2016

## Putting Goya under the magnifying glass

Monday, May 30, 2016

## Putting Goya under the magnifying glass

A visitor to the MUNTREF's Goya exhibition looks at an etching through the magnifying glass.

**By Silvia Rottenberg**

*For The Herald*

### **MUNTREF offers insight into the Spanish master's graphic work in unique exhibition**

A unique exhibition opened on Saturday at the Museum of the University of Tres de Febrero (MUNTREF): Goya. The Dream of a Genius shows more than 100 graphic works of the Spanish master of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, brought together from the National Museum of Fine Arts, the Lázaro Galdiano Museum in Madrid, and the Castagnino Museum in Rosario.

The exhibition predominantly displays Goya's later graphic work, showing his imaginative fantasy and cruel irony. As a court painter, he stayed true to the romantic representation of royalty and aristocracy, but his sketches and graphic work show another side of the master.

"I wanted to show the character of the artist, with his dreamlike scenes and sarcastic depictions of society and people," explains investigator-curator of the exhibit and Argentina's "work-on-paper" specialist, Professor Angel Navarro.

Navarro has selected works from Goya's series of whims and frenzies, or, as they are entitled, Caprichos and Disparates, where Goya's imagination and societal critique are obvious: they are funny, gruesome and offer an insight into Goya's personal thoughts.

In the Tauromaquia (Bullfighting) series, displayed in the first room of the exhibition, the artist's opinion on the Spanish tradition of bullfighting is less clear. "It is indeed ambiguous," the curator says. "Goya was intrigued by bullfighters. He is said to have even put on a toreador's outfit, which shows some form of admiration. But look here at the audience..." Navarro says, pointing at works of bullfights made later on. The wall behind him shows an enlarged detail, which can also be discerned with the magnifying glass offered to each visitor at the entrance to the exhibition.

"We offer the magnifying glass to every visitor so that they can study these works, which are smaller in size, and have so many different elements to discover, if one takes the time. We invite the audience to take their time," says Diana Wechsler, Director of the Arts at the UNTREF. Upon studying the details of the later Tauromaquia, one discovers the expression on the faces of people in the audience: the broad grins and grim gazes turn the bullfighting lovers into demons.

Francisco Goya was born in Spain in 1746 and died in France in 1828. The court painter left his country disappointed with the Bourbon family, which reclaimed its power after war and Napoleonic rule, for not accepting the more liberal direction the country was taking. "They returned to an absolute way of ruling, and were ruthless to people who had sided with the French," Navarro explains. "Goya, after having portrayed the Bourbons, also portrayed Joseph Bonaparte and was practically knighted by him." It seems though that Goya publicly chose neutrality, which kept him working, yet inwardly developed an ever more critical view of society. Some art historians believe the rise in critique came with his deafness. In 1793, Goya was diagnosed as such and "it made him grow bleaker," as Navarro also confirms. He began his series Caprichos, published in 1799 in parallel with his official paintings, in which he condemned the foolishness of the Spanish society where he lived. In Caprichos, he ridiculed superstitions, the ignorance of the ruling class, and marital mistakes. Goya himself wrote that the series shows "the innumerable foibles and follies to be found in any civilized society." The most famous of the Caprichos is etching No. 43 The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters, which is also on view at the MUNTREF. This image shows the artist asleep amid his drawing tools, surrounded by nightmarish owls and bats, symbols of folly and ignorance. The full epigraph for Capricho No. 43 reads: "Fantasy abandoned by reason produces impossible monsters: united with her (reason), she (fantasy) is the mother of the arts and the origin of their marvels."

The etchings weren't on view for long. Society wasn't ready for the witty and critical satire — that would take another century. Goya is therefore often regarded as a precursor to the modernist era.

He was also ahead of his time in his series *The Disasters of War*. "It wasn't until photography that such historical moments were captured," says Wechsler. "They are considered eye-witness accounts and as such precede the role of television or the internet today." Goya himself referred to these works as "the more explicit caprichos".

In *The Disasters of War*, he depicts battlefield horrors, famine and the disappointment of the Bourbons' opposition to liberal reform. This series was not displayed until 35 years after the artist's death, when it was considered politically safe enough to distribute imagery criticizing both France and Spain. Such as in the earlier *Tauromaquia* series, there is an ambiguity in Goya's position. He seems to have stood on the Spanish side at the beginning of the war, and then shifted. Yet it is unclear to which side the unfortunate sufferers he depicts belong: what remains is the tremendous result of war — horror and misery. There is no magnifying glass necessary to see that.

The tool is interesting though to investigate the experiments Goya went through in his etchings. Navarro purposefully placed two prints of the same image next to each other. "It is clear Goya experimented in his graphic works. Whether with the material, adding sugar, working with more or less acid, changing the plate ... it is a far more interesting development than what he went through with his painting," says Navarro. As if true detectives, or scholars, we are invited to examine the differences and discover the finesse of Goya's work. "We invite you to look differently, more studiously — providing a different insight."

"We are very proud to have been able to produce this exhibit," says Anibal Jozami, president of the UNTREF. "It is the first time that these excellent quality prints have left the Lázaro Galdiano Museum in Spain, and together with the works selected by Angel Navarro from Argentine collections, this promises to be another important show, equalling the Picasso exhibit six years ago."

It is a worthwhile trip to Caseros to go back in time and scrutinize history, masterfully depicted, with a magnifying glass in hand.

#### **When and where**

Goya. *The Dream of a Genius* is on view until October 2, at the MUNTREF (Valentín Gómez 4838, Caseros). Opening hours: Monday to Sunday from 11am to 8pm. Free admission.

There is a side programme with films, talks and workshops. For more information:

<http://untref.edu.ar/muntref/goya>

**By Silvia Rottenberg**

*For The Herald*

### **MUNTREF offers insight into the Spanish master's graphic work in unique exhibition**

A unique exhibition opened on Saturday at the Museum of the University of Tres de Febrero (MUNTREF): Goya. *The Dream of a Genius* shows more than 100 graphic works of the Spanish master of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, brought together from the National Museum of Fine Arts, the Lázaro Galdiano Museum in Madrid, and the Castagnino Museum in Rosario.

The exhibition predominantly displays Goya's later graphic work, showing his imaginative fantasy and cruel irony. As a court painter, he stayed true to the romantic representation of royalty and aristocracy, but his sketches and graphic work show another side of the master.

"I wanted to show the character of the artist, with his dreamlike scenes and sarcastic depictions of society and people," explains investigator-curator of the exhibit and Argentina's "work-on-paper" specialist, Professor Angel Navarro.

Navarro has selected works from Goya's series of whims and frenzies, or, as they are entitled, *Caprichos* and *Disparates*, where Goya's imagination and societal critique are obvious: they are funny, gruesome and offer an insight into Goya's personal thoughts.

In the *Tauromaquia* (Bullfighting) series, displayed in the first room of the exhibition, the artist's opinion on the Spanish tradition of bullfighting is less clear. "It is indeed ambiguous," the curator says. "Goya was intrigued by bullfighters. He is said to have even put on a toreador's outfit, which shows some form of admiration. But look here at the audience..." Navarro says, pointing at works of bullfights made later on. The wall behind him shows an enlarged detail, which can also be discerned with the magnifying glass offered to each visitor at the entrance to the exhibition.

"We offer the magnifying glass to every visitor so that they can study these works, which are smaller in size, and have so many different elements to discover, if one takes the time. We invite the audience to take their time," says Diana Wechsler, Director of the Arts at the UNTREF. Upon studying the details of the later *Tauromaquia*, one discovers the expression on the faces of people in the audience: the broad grins and grim gazes turn the bullfighting lovers into demons.

Francisco Goya was born in Spain in 1746 and died in France in 1828. The court painter left his country disappointed with the Bourbon family, which reclaimed its power after war and Napoleonic rule, for not accepting the more liberal direction the country was taking. "They returned to an absolute way of ruling, and were ruthless to people who had sided with the French," Navarro explains. "Goya, after having portrayed the

Bourbons, also portrayed Joseph Bonaparte and was practically knighted by him.” It seems though that Goya publicly chose neutrality, which kept him working, yet inwardly developed an ever more critical view of society. Some art historians believe the rise in critique came with his deafness. In 1793, Goya was diagnosed as such and “it made him grow bleaker,” as Navarro also confirms. He began his series *Caprichos*, published in 1799 in parallel with his official paintings, in which he condemned the foolishness of the Spanish society where he lived. In *Caprichos*, he ridiculed superstitions, the ignorance of the ruling class, and marital mistakes. Goya himself wrote that the series shows “the innumerable foibles and follies to be found in any civilized society.” The most famous of the *Caprichos* is etching No. 43 *The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters*, which is also on view at the MUNTREF. This image shows the artist asleep amid his drawing tools, surrounded by nightmarish owls and bats, symbols of folly and ignorance. The full epigraph for *Capricho* No. 43 reads: “Fantasy abandoned by reason produces impossible monsters: united with her (reason), she (fantasy) is the mother of the arts and the origin of their marvels.”

The etchings weren’t on view for long. Society wasn’t ready for the witty and critical satire — that would take another century. Goya is therefore often regarded as a precursor to the modernist era.

He was also ahead of his time in his series *The Disasters of War*. “It wasn’t until photography that such historical moments were captured,” says Wechsler. “They are considered eye-witness accounts and as such precede the role of television or the internet today.” Goya himself referred to these works as “the more explicit *caprichos*”.

In *The Disasters of War*, he depicts battlefield horrors, famine and the disappointment of the Bourbons’ opposition to liberal reform. This series was not displayed until 35 years after the artist’s death, when it was considered politically safe enough to distribute imagery criticizing both France and Spain. Such as in the earlier *Tauromaquia* series, there is an ambiguity in Goya’s position. He seems to have stood on the Spanish side at the beginning of the war, and then shifted. Yet it is unclear to which side the unfortunate sufferers he depicts belong: what remains is the tremendous result of war — horror and misery. There is no magnifying glass necessary to see that.

The tool is interesting though to investigate the experiments Goya went through in his etchings. Navarro purposefully placed two prints of the same image next to each other. “It is clear Goya experimented in his graphic works. Whether with the material, adding sugar, working with more or less acid, changing the plate ... it is a far more interesting development than what he went through with his painting,” says Navarro. As if true detectives, or scholars, we are invited to examine the differences and discover the finesse of Goya’s work. “We invite you to look differently, more studiously — providing a different insight.”

“We are very proud to have been able to produce this exhibit,” says Anibal Jozami, president of the UNTREF. “It is the first time that these excellent quality prints have left the Lázaro Galdiano Museum in Spain, and together with the works selected by Angel Navarro from Argentine collections, this promises to be another important show, equalling the Picasso exhibit six years ago.”

It is a worthwhile trip to Caseros to go back in time and scrutinize history, masterfully depicted, with a magnifying glass in hand.

#### **When and where**

Goya. *The Dream of a Genius* is on view until October 2, at the MUNTREF (Valentín Gómez 4838, Caseros). Opening hours: Monday to Sunday from 11am to 8pm. Free admission.

There is a side programme with films, talks and workshops. For more information:

<http://untref.edu.ar/muntref/goya>