

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

Agua fuerte, aguafinta bruñida o lavís, 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

Goya. Das Zeitalter der

Goya y el espíritu de la

The Royal Academy of Arts London 1963
cat. 66
cat. 253

**Revolucionen. Kunst um 1800
(1980 – 1981)**
Hamburger Kunsthalle Hamburg 1980
cat. 63

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. Exhibited 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 Paris 2013
from October 11st 2013 to March
16th 2014
cat. 116

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

BIBLIOGRAFÍA

Goya, grabador
BERUETE Y MONET, Aureliano de
cat. 179
1918
Blass S.A.

**Goya engravings and
lithographs, vol. I y II.**
HARRIS, Tomás
cat. 197
1964
Bruno Cassirer

**Vie et ouvre de Francisco de
Goya**
GASSIER, Pierre y WILSON, Juliet
cat. 1128
1970
Office du livre

**A solution to the enigma of
Goya's emphatic caprices nº
65-80 of The Disasters of War**
Apollo
GLEDINNING, Nigel
pp.186-191
107
1978

**Goya y el espíritu de la
Ilustración**
PÉREZ SÁNCHEZ, Alfonso E. y SAYRE, Eleanor
A. (directores) and MENA, Manuela B.
(comisaria)
pp.443-445, cat. 159
1988
Museo del Prado

**Catálogo de las estampas de
Goya en la Biblioteca Nacional**
SANTIAGO, Elena M. (coordinadora)
cat. 301
1996
Ministerio de Educación y Cultura, Biblioteca
Nacional

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
Norton Simon Museum

