

# TANTALUM

CLASIFICACIÓN: PRINTS

SERIE: CAPRICHOS (PRINTS AND DRAWINGS, 1797-1799) (9/85)



## DATOS GENERALES

CRONOLOGÍA

Ca. 1797 - 1799

DIMENSIONES

210 x 152 mm

TÉCNICA Y SOPORTE

Etching and burnished aquatint

RECONOCIMIENTO DE LA AUTORÍA DE GOYA

Undisputed work

FICHA: REALIZACIÓN/REVISIÓN

21 Nov 2010 / 29 May 2024

INVENTARIO

836 225

## INSCRIPCIONES

*Tántalo.* (at the bottom)

9. (in the upper right-hand corner)

## HISTORIA

See *Francisco de Goya y Lucientes, Painter.*

In the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York there is a proof of state before the handwriting, on which is handwritten and crossed out *So that you try?* underneath it reads,

*Tantalum.*

A preparatory drawing in sanguine is kept in the Prado Museum.

#### ANÁLISIS ARTÍSTICO

A man stands in front of a pyramid of which we can only see the base and in which the ashlar blocks that make up the pyramid have been delimited. He clasps his hands in front of his face in a gesture of supplication, while holding the body of a woman on his knees. The woman's torso is uncovered and her breasts are visible, her head is thrown back and her face appears inanimate.

This engraving is somewhat brighter than other prints from *Los Caprichos*. Goya used aquatint to create the surface of the pyramid, while the male figure's clothing is rendered by etching. One of the main points of light in this picture is the young woman's body, which is partially uncovered at the chest and leg. For this part of the woman's anatomy, Goya used an aquatint so pale and delicately burnished that it is barely visible in the earlier, more inky prints.

The title of this print is an obvious allusion to Greek mythology, in which Tantalus was a son of Zeus and the Oceanid Pluto, who was invited to a banquet by the gods, to whom he responded with another invitation. For them he butchered and cooked his own son, Pelops, which earned him an eternal punishment consisting of lying in a lake with chin-deep water under a tree full of fruit that was removed from his reach whenever he wished to eat. In many cases, scholars have seen in this mythological character the rejection of the Olympian religion of human sacrifice, which was carried out especially in the early cults.

The manuscripts we have preserved explain this engraving by Goya; Ayala's says that "if he were more gallant, she would revive. This happens to old men who marry wenches". In the manuscript of the Prado Museum we can read about this engraving that "if he were more gallant and less fastidious, she would come back to life". Slightly more extensive is the explanation given in the manuscript of the Biblioteca Nacional, which states that "a good female next to an old man who does not satisfy her, has delicacies, is like one who is thirsty, is next to water and cannot taste it".

It is precisely the text in the National Library that leads us to the title of this print, *Tantalus*, in which Goya criticises unequal marriages that lead to the dissatisfaction of both spouses. He draws a parallel between the condemnation of the mythological character and the circumstances of those who have to satisfy a younger woman, which creates an enormous sense of frustration.

#### CONSERVACIÓN

The plate of this engraving is in poor condition ( National Chalcography, no. 180).

#### EXPOSICIONES

**Goya. Gemälde Zeichnungen.  
Graphik. Tapisserien**  
Kunsthalle Basel Basle 1953  
from January 23th to April 12th  
1953  
cat. 201

**Goya. Das Zeitalter der  
Revolutionen. Kunst um 1800  
(1980 – 1981)**  
Hamburger Kunsthalle Hamburg 1980  
cat. 24

**Goya. La década de Los  
Caprichos**  
Madrid 1992  
organized by Real Academia de  
Bellas Artes de San Fernando  
sponsored by Fundación Central  
Hispano, Madrid, consultant  
editor Nigel Glendinnig. From  
October 26th 1992 to January  
10th 1993  
cat.15

### **Francisco de Goya**

Museo d'Arte Moderna Lugano 1996  
exhibition celebrated from  
September 22nd to November  
17th.  
cat. 9, p.36

### **Francisco Goya. Capricci, follie e disastri della guerra**

San Donato Milanese 2000  
Opere grafiche della Fondazione  
Antonio Mazzotta  
cat. 11, p.19

### **Goya et la modernité**

Pinacothèque de Paris Paris 2013  
from October 11st 2013 to March  
16th 2014  
cat. 132

#### **BIBLIOGRAFÍA**

### **Some undescribed states of Goya's Caprichos**

HOFER, Philip  
p.179  
1945

### **Goya, la década de los caprichos: dibujos y aguafuertes**

WILSON BAREAU, Juliet  
pp.26-28, cat. 15-16  
1992  
Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San  
Fernando

OROPESA, Marisa and RINCÓN GARCÍA,  
Wilfredo  
p. 193  
2013  
Pinacoteca de París

### **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. 15

### **Goya e la tradizione italiana**

Fondazione Magnani Rocca Mamiano di  
Traversetolo (Parma) 2006  
consultant editors Fred Licht  
and Simona Tosini Pizzetti.  
From September 9th to  
December 3th 2006  
cat. 9, p.148

2022

### **Goya engravings and lithographs, vol. I y II.**

HARRIS, Tomás  
p.79, cat. 44  
1964  
Bruno Cassirer

### **Catálogo de las estampas de Goya en la Biblioteca Nacional**

SANTIAGO, Elena M. (coordinadora)  
p.78, cat. 97  
1996  
Ministerio de Educación y Cultura, Biblioteca  
Nacional

### **Goya. In the Norton Simon Museum**

WILSON BAREAU, Juliet  
pp. 42-75  
2016  
Norton Simon Museum

### **Das Capriccio als Kunstprinzip**

Wallraf-Richartz-Museum, 1996  
from December 8th 1996 to  
February 16th 1997, exhibited  
also in Zurich, Kunsthaus, from  
March 14th marzo 1997 to June  
1st 1997 and in Vienna,  
Kunsthistorisches Museum mi  
Palais Harrach, from June 29th  
1997 to September 21st 1997.  
cat. G. 38

### **Goya. Opera grafica**

Pinacoteca del Castello di San Giorgio  
Legnano 2006  
exhibition celebrated from  
December 16th 2006 to April 1st  
2007  
p.24

### **Vie et ouvre de Francisco de Goya**

GASSIER, Pierre y WILSON, Juliet  
p.177, cat. 467  
1970  
Office du livre

### **El libro de los caprichos: dos siglos de interpretaciones (1799-1999). Catálogo de los dibujos, pruebas de estado, láminas de cobre y estampas de la primera edición**

BLAS BENITO, Javier, MATILLA RODRÍGUEZ,  
José Manuel y MEDRANO, José Miguel  
pp.92-95  
1999  
Museo Nacional del Prado

TORAL OROPESA, María and MARTÍN  
MEDINA, Víctor  
p. 32  
2022  
Museo de Bellas Artes de Badajoz y Diputación  
de Badajoz

#### **PALABRAS CLAVE**

**CAPRICCIO MATRIMONIO DE CONVENIENCIA MITOLOGÍA GRIEGA**

#### **ENLACES EXTERNOS**