

PIECES OF LAMB (TROZOS DE CARNERO)

CLASIFICACIÓN: EASEL PAINTING. VARIOUS SUBJECTS

SERIE: STILL LIFE (PAINTING, CA. 1806 - 1812) (1/10)



DATOS GENERALES

CRONOLOGÍA	Ca. 1806 - 1812
UBICACIÓN	Musée du Louvre, París, France
DIMENSIONES	45 x 62 cm
TÉCNICA Y SOPORTE	Oil on canvas
RECONOCIMIENTO DE LA AUTORÍA DE GOYA	Documented work
TITULAR	Musée du Louvre
FICHA: REALIZACIÓN/REVISIÓN	20 Apr 2010 / 15 Jun 2023
INVENTARIO	365 (1937-120)

INSCRIPCIONES

Goya (in small red letters, below the sheep's head).

Traces of the letter X in the lower-left hand corner.

HISTORIA

Javier Goya inherited this series of still lifes from his father, and in turn left them to his own son, Mariano. When he was unable to repay a loan made to him by the Count of Yumuri, Carabanchel, Mariano gave this set of paintings as security, and in the end the works became the property of the count. When the Count of Yumuri died in 1865 the series of still lifes was

sold. Today these works are scattered between different museums and institutions around the world, and some of the paintings have now been lost.

This particular canvas was acquired by the Louvre in 1937.

ANÁLISIS ARTÍSTICO

According to many scholars of Goya's work, the elements which appear in this series of still lifes, which was possibly made during the Spanish War of Independence (1808-1814), are evocations of the many episodes of death and violence that Spain witnessed during those years. The flesh of the animals - inert, discarded material, depicted with a surprising crudeness - could therefore be a reference to the human remains left behind by the violent conflict. Goya perhaps considered the dead bodies of these animals in the same way as he did the human bodies, chopped up and deprived of all dignity, which appear in some of the images in his Disasters of War series of etchings (for example, no. 37, *This is worse (Esto es peor)*, and no. 39, *Great deeds! With dead bodies! (Grande hazaña! Con muertos!)*).

All of the paintings that make up the series share various formal characteristics which give the set an important sense of unity. In each of them, the animals are isolated from their surroundings, shown in front of a neutral background but drawn out from it by the way the scene is lit.

This series of still lifes represents an important reinvention of the genre, refusing as it did to comply with the way in which themes of this kind had traditionally been treated. We are not, therefore, looking at foodstuffs arranged to decorate and brighten a table; rather, these are dead animals, heaped before us with little care. In these pictures, Goya distanced himself from traditional still lifes such as those by Luis Egidio Meléndez (Naples, 1716-Madrid, 1780) and from the sensuality and opulence of the still lifes of the Dutch painters. In response to the painstaking study of materials and shapes that Meléndez undertook for his works, Goya sets out to capture the whole, which is, in most cases, a mass of lifeless corpses. The only other work to which Goya's series could be linked is *The Flayed Ox* (1655, Musée du Louvre, Paris) by Rembrandt (Leiden, 1606-Amsterdam, 1669), in which the Dutch artist, just like Goya, has concentrated on the expressive force of the dead matter, later echoed by Chaïm Soutine (Smilovich, 1893-Paris, 1943) in *Carcass of Beef* (1925, Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Minnesota).

Although we do not know exactly where they were hung, it is believed that these still lifes could have decorated the dining room of Goya's home in Madrid, although they also could have been kept in another room or even in his studio.

In *Pieces of Lamb*, Goya has painted, on top of a table and in front of a black background, a decapitated lamb's head, turned to face the two crossed slabs of ribs in the centre of the composition, as if looking at them, with an absorbed, impassive, almost resigned expression on its face. The dulled colours and the purplish red help to emphasize the idea of dead meat.

Goya's still lifes heralded the treatment that this genre was to receive at the hands of the naturalist movements of the 19th century. Gudrun Maurer suggests that this painting could have inspired some of the still lifes by Pablo Picasso (Málaga, 1881-Moulins, 1973), particularly the one entitled *Still Life with Sheep's Skull (Naturaleza muerta con cráneo de carnero)* (1939, Collection of Vicky and Marco Micha, Mexico).

EXPOSICIONES

Goya

Koninklijk Kabinet van Schilderijen
Mauritshuis The Hauge 1970

organized by Ministerio de
Estado y Asuntos Culturales and
Réunion des Musées Nationaux,
July 4th to September 13th 1970.
Exhibited also at the Musée de
l'Orangerie des Tuileries, Paris,
October 25th to December 7th
1970, consultant editors
Jeannine Baticle and A. B. de
Vries
cat. 35

Goya, un regard libre

Palais de Beaux Arts Lille 1998

from December 12th 1998 to
March 14th 1999. Exhibited also
at The Philadelphia Museum,
Philadelphia, April 17th 1999 to
July 11th 1999, consultant editor
Arnauld Brejon de Lavergnée
and Joseph J. Rishel in
collaboration with Manuela B.
Mena Marqués
cat. 46

Goya

Basle 2021
p. 254

Goya

Nationalmuseum Stockholm 1994

consultant editors Juan J. Luna
and Görel Cavalli-Björkman.
From October 7th 1994 to
January 8th 1995
cat. 32

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. 62

El bodegón español de Velázquez a Goya

The National Gallery London 1995

exhibition celebrated from
February 22nd to May 21st 1995,
curated by Peter Cherry
cat. 69

Goya: Order and disorder

Museum of Fine Arts Boston 2014

cat. 24

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p. 262, cat. 903
1970
Office du livre

Francisco de Goya, 4 vols.

CAMÓN AZNAR, José
vol. III, p. 187
1980-1982
Caja de Ahorros de Zaragoza, Aragón y Rioja

Goya en tiempos de guerra

MENA MARQUÉS, Manuela B.
pp. 240, 241 y 247 (il.), cat. 62
2008
Museo Nacional del Prado

GUDIOL RICART, José
vol. I, p. 353, cat. 596
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pp. 158-160, il. 139
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SUREDA PONS, Joan
pp.159-160, il. 91
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L'opera pittorica completa di Goya

ANGELIS, Rita de
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JORDAN, William B. and CHERRY, Peter
pp. 175, 176, 177, 180, 183 (il.) y 184,
1995
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ENLACES EXTERNOS