



Goya's Mastery in Prints: Los Disparates

June 21 - September 30, 2007

Acknowledgements

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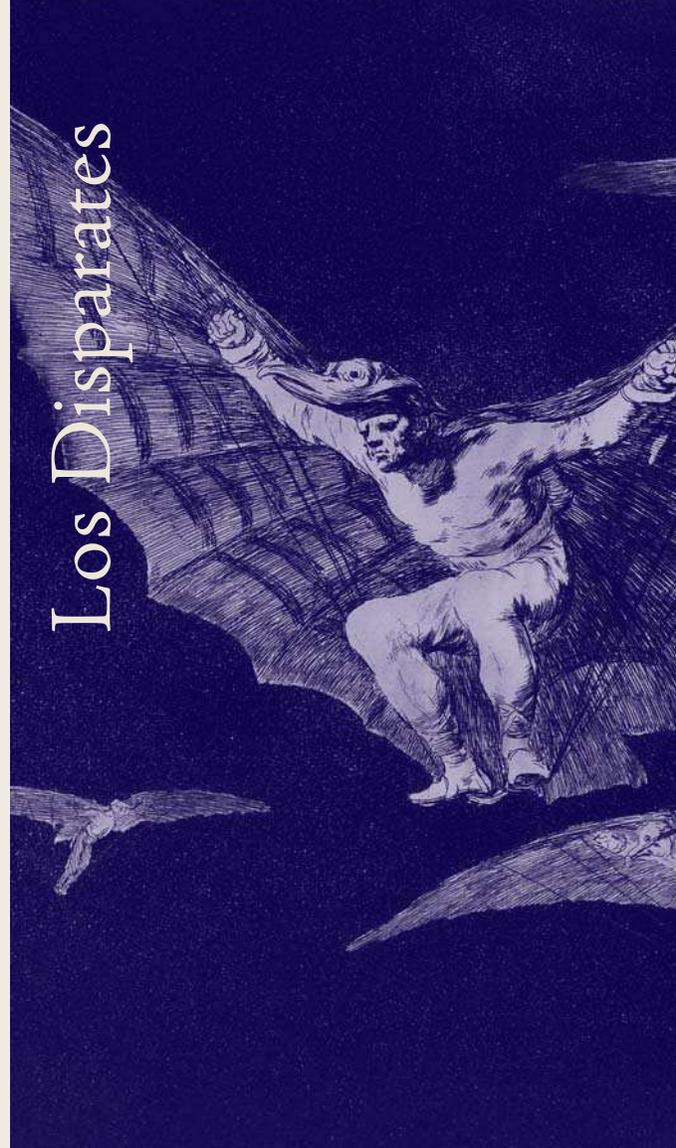
Cover Detail & Title Panel: Francisco José de Goya (1746-1828), *Modo de Volar (A Way of Flying)*, Plate No. 13 from *Los Disparates*, 1815-1824, etching and burnished aquatint, Meadows Museum, SMU, Dallas, Algur H. Meadows Collection, MM.67.09.13. Photograph by Michael Bodycomb.

Interior, from Left to Right:

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Detail of Francisco José de Goya (1746-1828), *'Disparate' quieto (Loyalty)*, Plate No. 17 from *Los Disparates*, 1815-1824, etching and burnished aquatint, Meadows Museum, SMU, Dallas, Algur H. Meadows Collection, MM.67.09.13. Photograph by Michael Bodycomb.

Francisco Goya y Lucientes, Painter, 1797-98, etching and aquatint, Meadows Museum, SMU, Dallas, Algur H. Meadows Collection.



The University of Arizona Museum of Art presents *Goya's Mastery in Prints*, a celebration of the graphic techniques and visionary achievements of Spanish master Francisco José de Goya y Lucientes (1746-1828). The four-exhibition series presents in succession the artist's most significant print suites—in first-edition imprints—on loan from the Meadows Museum at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas.

This extraordinary exhibition cycle continues with *Los Disparates* (mad and absurd ideas), an enigmatic group of 18 etchings (with 4 supplementary etchings added later) that constitutes the artist's last major undertaking in printmaking. The precise date of the series is unknown. While one of the prints likely dates to 1815-16, most scholars agree that Goya completed the majority of the etchings from 1820-24 (when Goya was in his seventies)



due to thematic and stylistic similarities with the *Black Paintings*, which were completed during this period.

The first edition of the suite was not published until 1864, 36 years after the artist's death. Given the inscrutable nature of the imagery, Goya may never have intended to publish the etchings. The Royal Academy

of San Fernando had acquired the 18 copper plates of the series in 1862 and published them two years later as *Los Proverbios* (The Proverbs) in an attempt to explain the images by linking them with popular Spanish adages. However, a set of trial print proofs was discovered in which several scenes had captions beginning with the word "disparate," and these titles are generally accepted as Goya's own—hence the series title *Los Disparates*.

In 1877, the French periodical *L'Art* published four plates owned by the Spanish painter Eugenio Lucas Velázquez (1817-1870) that scholars assume were created as part of the original series—bringing the total to 22. Goya did not number the prints, and so the order in which they were published (and which this presentation reproduces) does not necessarily follow the artist's original intentions for their arrangement.

While "Los Disparates" has sometimes been interpreted as "The Follies" or "The Riddles," the word "disparates" cannot be translated directly into English. In Spanish, it suggests a mixture of the absurd, ridiculous, foolish, nonsensical and fantastical. The etchings in *Los Disparates* represent an interior world filled with mysteriously imagined, nightmarish scenes of violence, distress, and the grotesque that are difficult to characterize and interpret. Scholars have attempted to connect the dark, dream-like scenes with political events, the

Spanish carnival, and Goya's private fears as he approached the end of his life. But the images lack overt narratives, and, as Goya scholar Janis Tomlinson has noted, "the protagonists suffer a great range of emotions with no apparent cause."

The French philosopher and historian Michel

Foucault powerfully described the etchings of *Los Disparates* in his 1973 book entitled *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*:

Goya's forms are born out of nothing; they have no background, in the double sense that they are silhouetted against only the most monotonous darkness, and that nothing can assign them their origin, their limit, and their nature. *Los Disparates* are without landscape, without walls, without setting; there is not a star in the night sky of the great human bats we see in the *Way of Flying*. . . [They represent] a madness beneath that eats away faces, corrodes features; there are no longer eyes or mouths, but glances shot from nowhere and staring at nothing, screams from black holes.

Los Disparates contains many of the artist's finest accomplishments in the medium and demonstrates a virtuosity with printing techniques accumulated over his career. While the prints defy easy explanation, they exemplify Goya's ability to create works that retain a vitality and intrigue among artists and viewers of subsequent generations.

Susannah Maurer
Assistant Curator, University of Arizona Museum of Art
June, 2007



Francisco José de Goya y Lucientes

Born on March 30, 1746 in the Spanish village of Fuendetodos, Francisco de Goya would prove to be one of the most innovative and provocative artists of all time.

Although he came of artistic age surprisingly late in life, Goya produced a revolutionary and unforgettable oeuvre.

The young Goya sought education through studio apprenticeships and travel, yet it was not until 1773 that he was formally engaged as an artist. By painting tapestry cartoons for the Royal Tapestry Workshop in Madrid, he garnered the attention of the Spanish royal court. In the years following, Goya found increasing favor among noble society and received many distinguished portrait commissions.

In 1777 and 1778, Goya executed his first etchings, copies of paintings by the highly regarded 17th-century Spanish court painter, Diego Velázquez (1599-1660).

Scholars posit Goya's deafness, the result of illness in 1792, as a turning point in his subject and style. In 1794, he wrote: "In order to occupy my imagination which was troubled by the consideration of my ills... I dedicated myself to painting a set of cabinet pictures in which I have succeeded in making observations for which the commissioned works, in which fantasy and invention had no place, never gave the opportunity."

By 1797, Goya was at work on a suite of satirical etchings, known as *Los Caprichos* (which were published in 1799). In that same year, Goya was appointed First Court Painter and with the enhanced social access of the position produced his greatest aristocratic portraits—those marked by a distinctive and often unflattering realism.

In 1808, amidst the war against Napoléon in Spain, Goya's world of court patronage dissolved; the artist found himself increasingly isolated and gripped by psychological crisis. After the death of his wife, in 1812, the artist produced some of his most politically charged work, including the print suite *Los Desastres de la Guerra*.

Through his last years, Goya was astonishingly prolific—producing portraits, religious paintings and genre scenes, the series known as the *Black Paintings*, and various drawings and print suites, including *La Tauromaquia* and *Los Disparates*. Threatened by escalating political, social and artistic repression under the regime of Ferdinand VII, Goya chose self-exile in 1824. He settled in Bordeaux where he died, on April 16, 1828, at age 82.

