



25.03.-16.07.2017

Francisco de

GOYA

1746-1828

LOS CAPRICHOS

RIGA BOURSE Art Museum
RIGA BOURSE
6 Dome Square, Riga, Latvia

LM LATVIAN
NATIONAL
MUSEUM
OF ART

The exhibition introduces us to one of the world's most famous art masterpieces – brilliant Spanish artist Francisco José de Goya y Lucientes (1746–1828) *Los Caprichos* series of graphics. The album, containing 80 pages of graphics, compiled and published by the artist himself in 1799, gained popularity in Spain and elsewhere soon after its publication, captured the quintessence of de Goya's style, reflecting a new, freer, and much more expressive approach to reality's portrayal. *Los Caprichos* reverberated in 19th century art and ended the dominance of Neo-Classical academic style graphics.

There are many unsolved riddles hidden within the series. It has been assumed that the artist was influenced by various works of philosophy and art. However, de Goya himself, disregarding references to some to well-known poets, for example, Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos, or parallels with the plays of de Goya's friend Leandro Fernández de Moratín, has categorically denied any kind of influence.

De Goya was already focussing on the everyday life of his time and in particular – the position of women in society, in the voluminous selection of drawings in his Madrid album (1796–1797). *La Celestina* – a traditional image in Spanish literature, who takes on particularly symbolic importance in de Goya's art, appears there for the first time. Her image reminds us of the temporality of youth and beauty and the inescapable approach of decrepitude. Like *La Celestina*, the often-utilized image of the prostitute and the focus on the theme of magic, personifies the dark aspects of society.

The blending of fantasy and reality forms the uniqueness of de Goya's vision. The dream motif was a traditional element which was used by Spanish artists and writers and those of other European countries, to tell of fantastic, philosophically tangible or surreal creatures. Initially, de Goya's series was also called *Sueños* – that is, dreams, instead of whims.

Some of de Goya's compositions are like theatrical scenes, others – like a parade of eccentric images. The mood in most of the works has similar qualities to Dante's *Inferno* – every imaginable mischief rages within them: hypocrisy, lies, cruelty and the collapse of morality. The subjects tell of the church, the nation, the court, laws, physicians, art and science, the streets of Madrid, rural life, the poetry and philosophy of the time, about the needy, the rich, the sick, the young and the old, combining all of these images in a unified mirror of society.

The self-portrait of de Goya which is found on the first page explains his attitude to what is portrayed in *Los Caprichos*. The artist, in a way, identifies with the new, modern Enlightenment period, and looked at from these positions, his gaze slides obliquely to the graphics which he himself has created.

De Goya used a complex and innovative graphic technique. At its foundations was traditional etching, which de Goya combined with a comparatively new invention – aquatint. In this way, clean lines, engraved with acid were supplemented with pale, sort of washed-out tones, which were created with fine dots, obtained, by processing the graphic plate with crushed resin. Of equal importance were the very delicate lines which were engraved with a blade, directly onto the surface of the plates. In graphic art, etching with drypoint on a black background or creating delicate lines and subtle shading around the eyes and hands of the images, created the equivalent of airy brushstrokes in painting.

There are works from the second impression in the collection at the Art Museum RIGA BOURSE. The works' annotative texts consist of de Goya's comments, explanations about de Goya's works by art historians, as well as informative materials about people and events in Spain in the late 18th century.

Monographs used in the notes:

Sarah Simmons. Goya. Phaidon Press Limited, London, 1998, pgs. 139-184
Xavier de Salas. Light on the Origin of *Los Caprichos* in *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. 121,
The Burlington Magazine Publications Limited, 1979, pgs. 711-716
В. Прокофьев. Капричос Гойи. 2 т., Искусство, Москва, 1969



#RigasBirza
#GoijaKaprizes

f t i G+ v
www.lnmm.lv