

Francisco Goya - The Father of Modern Art

The Spanish-speaking world, rich in culture and history is no stranger to artistic genius having given birth to the likes of Pablo Picasso, Frida Khalo, Diego Rivera, Diego Alfonso Siquieros and Joan Miro. Each of these artists has in his or her own way, richly contributed to elevating the levels of creative perfection seen by mankind. Convincing murals and haunting works serve as silent testimony to the historical blunders and injustices of their countries as well as the artists' own personal pains and burdens. It is among this group of gifted creators that Francisco Goya has earned his place for his enchanting, yet 'grotesque' style of art. This brief journey to the past examines the amazing world of Goya and the skillful manner in which he used his art to illustrate the atrocities that soiled the existence of mankind.

Francisco Goya was born on March 30th, 1746 in a small village in the north of Spain called Fuendetodos. He spent much of his young life there and at the age of 14 his family relocated to Saragossa. There, Goya was apprenticed to Jose Luzan, a local painter from whom he learned the basics of drawing. His relationship with art further blossomed in Italy where he went to study and improve his technique. Goya returned to Saragossa in 1771 where he specialized in painting frescoes for the local cathedral following the rococo tradition style painting. These early works established him as an artist of some talent. From 1775 – 1792, Goya worked at the royal tapestry factory in Madrid, where he painted cartoon like designs. This era was very instrumental in his artistic development since he began painting scenery of daily life activities. It is also during this period that he developed his skill as a keen observer of human behavior.

Goya is known as the "Father of Modern Art" since he was the first to use revolutionary artistic tendencies in the 19th century. His paintings, drawings and engravings have been described as multifarious and focus on important contemporary and polemic issues. He subsequently became the mentor of many infamous 19th and 20th century artists since he was true to his works and was one spiritually and emotionally with them. Furthermore, the majority of his themes were a mirror of his beliefs and his outlook on life, as well as his views on the social and political sphere of his time and country. He began his works towards the end of the late Baroque period and being loyal to highlighting the wrongs of mankind, his frankness managed to set him apart from the rest.

Goya was employed as a Spanish court painter and became a follower of neoclassicism at the expense of abandoning his rococo style of painting. He was further influenced by the last of the great Venetian painters Tiepolo and Antonio Raphael Mengs and the works of Valesquez, which saw him painting with a more spontaneous fervor. A grave period of illness made Goya permanently deaf and in this lonely world of silence and segregation, he became more dependent on the mysteries of his imagination, and his mind, and more and more critical of human beings. According to Web museum, during this period "he evolved a bold, free new style close to caricature". In 1799 he published the Caprichos, a series of etchings satirizing human folly and weakness. His portraits became penetrating

characterizations, revealing their subjects as Goya saw them. In his religious frescoes he employed a broad, free style and an earthly realism unprecedented in religious art.

Goya's personal masterpieces cover the graphic violence and bloodshed of the French invasion of Spain and the Spanish War of Independence. His horror of the gruesome and unceremonious invasion of Napoleon was documented in the collection of his etchings entitled "Los desastres de la Guerra 1810-1814" (The disasters of war, 1810-1814). So controversial were they that they were not published until long after his death in 1863. Other renowned pieces that manage to draw surprise were The Naked Maja (one of the few nudes in existence in the sphere of Spanish art) and The Clothed Maja (1800-1805). His painting of the Naked Maja resulted in him being called before the infamous Inquisition. The new king was not in favor of his work and as a result Goya lived in seclusion in a little house outside of Madrid where he would be safe from the restrictions and anger of the monarchy. On the walls of this house is the "Black Painting" in which he exhibited his deepest and darkest thoughts on the social and political forum and on life as a whole. According to WebMuseum, "A similar nightmarish quality haunts the satirical Disparates, a series of etchings also called *proverbios*." One of his creations that produces an aura of altitude and awe is the breathtaking portrait called Senora Sabasa Garcia. He also acknowledged the Spanish tradition of bullfighting in his work, called Tauromaquia. Some of his other well known works are "Portraits of Mariana Waldstien" and, "The Countess of Carpio, Marquise de la Solana" both oil on canvas located at the Louvre museum in Paris. "The Colossus", "The Shooting of May Third 1808" and "Satan Devouring his son" are located at the Prado museum of Madrid. All are oil on canvas except the third which is composed of oil on plaster transferred to canvas. "The incantation" found at the Lazaro Galgiano Foundation in Madrid and "Dona Teresa Sureda" found at the Nation Gallery of Art in Washington are works of oil on canvas. He used his bold technique and his unique and haunting satire to emphasize that the most important aspect of art did not stem from religiously following that which all other painters of his time found to be vogue and the norm, but to prove that the foresight, will and the vision of the artist must be a pertinent issue when one has the responsibility of immortalizing chronicles of history.

In 1824 Spain was yet to see a democratic government after a futile attempt to claim their democracy. Goya could no longer bear the oppression taking place in Spain and subsequently went into voluntary exile in France where he lived his days in the state of Bordeaux until his death in 1828. He continued his paintings there and today the best of his ensemble can be seen in all their grandeur and splendour at the Prado Museum in Madrid.

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