

# In Madrid, “Goya: images of women” shows current academic preoccupations while in Washington it will be more conventional

Double duty Goya: the travelling show adapts to its contexts

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Have you ever wondered whether Goya slept with the Duchess of Alba? Do not expect the answer in “Goya: images of women”, an exhibition at the Prado (until 9 February) travelling to the National Gallery of Art, Washington DC (10 March to 2 June 2002). This exhibition, to its credit, considers Goya’s myriad images of women not as clues to his putative trysts with the rich and famous, but as evidence of broader social, political, economic, and popular issues of his time.

You may be wondering, in the absence of new and salacious details from the painter’s bed, why mount an exhibition about Goya’s images of women? There has been a spate of themed shows that use works of art as documents of social history, politics, economics, fashion, and so on. One of the trendiest has been Woman—as artist, patron, worker or wife, and as iconographic material to be consumed by the much decried (predominantly) male gaze.

So when the Friends of the Prado asked the museum’s former director Francisco Calvo Serraller to organise a show marking the philanthropic group’s twentieth anniversary, the critic/professor opted out of a costly career survey and decided to zero in on Goya’s women. Madrid can wait until

2028, the bicentennial of the painter's death, to mount a Goya blockbuster.

“The range of Goya's representation of women is unmatched by any artist of his time,” says Janis Tomlinson, the Goya scholar co-ordinating the show for Washington. Moreover, “it exceeds in scope and complexity what is available from the written record. Particularly in the drawings and prints we find that part of society undocumented elsewhere. He picks the kinds of women who fall through the cracks in history”—which is not to forget that he made his fortune painting aristocrats. Goya trains his cynical eye on the young and old, elite and common, male and female for that matter. But if one plans to walk away with a sharply chiselled portrait of Goya the proto-feminist or Goya the sardonic chauvinist, guess again. As Dr Tomlinson comments, “The artist did not represent a single point of view: women are sometimes portrayed as virtuous, at other times victimised, and even as the perpetrators of violence.”

Whereas the Prado assembles around 86 oils and 34 works on paper grouped by theme (“intimacies”, “allegories”, “witchcraft”, etc.), Washington will have some 50 paintings and 65 works on paper arrayed in a cursory chronology. There has not been a Goya survey in the US for decades and the National Gallery decided a career overview would best serve the American public.

Top billing at both venues will go to the ever-popular *Majas*. Dr Tomlinson calls them “gentlemen's paintings” and notes they were painted when the Inquisition was still prosecuting owners of such images. Charles III would have burned works by Titian, Veronese, Rubens, the Carracci, and Reni had his court painter Mengs not intervened. And in 1792, Charles IV renewed the threat, but a nobleman removed the offending art to the Royal Academy for use only by students. “That Goya painted a nude in the later 1790s testifies to the power of his patrons, who evidently believed themselves beyond Inquisitional scrutiny,” said Dr Tomlinson.

The “Black paintings” will not travel to Washington, but nine oil-on-canvas tapestry cartoons will make their maiden voyage across the Atlantic, along with six of the silk tapestries woven by the Royal Tapestry Factory of Santa Barbara (still operating in Madrid). The National Gallery will also have the

large group portrait of the Family of Infante Don Luis (1784) from the Magnani Foundation, Parma, and the Metropolitan's "Majas on a balcony", now only "attributed to" owing to the debate concerning its authorship. Unfortunately, another New York institution, the Hispanic Society, has not loaned its full-length portrait of the jaunty Duchess of Alba. Wearing a ring inscribed "Goya" she stands before the dedication, "Solo Goya" scratched in the dirt at her feet. It exudes mutual admiration and friendship, and Goya had it in his studio when he died. Was she his lover or just an especially familiar model and patron? Go see the movie *Goya in Bordeaux* for a more definite answer.

The catalogues for the Prado and Washington shows are slightly different: both include Dr Serraller's flabby tract on "Goya's women in European context", Dr Tomlinson's scholarly treatment of the printed imagery, and Courtauld costume historian Aileen Ribeiro's discussion of dress, to which Madrid adds an essay by Maria Carmen Iglesias on women in 18th-century Spain, while Washington appends a tapestry overview by Concha Herrero Carretero.

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