

Should I stay or should I Goya?

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Voices Palette

The Art Institute of Chicago's Prints and Drawings Gallery show *Goya's Vision*, though not possessed of the same hype-ability as the up coming Caillebotte show in a few weeks, has understated rewards all its own. *Goya's Vision*, an exhibit of prints from the permanent collection, covers works from six of Goya's series, including a healthy dose of prints from his well-known *Los Caprichos*, *The Follies*, and *Disasters of War* series, as well as his reproductions of Velazquez's work, his pictorial history of bullfighting, and some of his landscapes.

Goya often created prints in series for narrative focus, and the exhibit in the Prints and Drawings Gallery gives visitors an opportunity to compare and contrast his work both within a series of prints and among series of prints. Among all of the series, one can recognize instantly his thin and feathery strokes, his textured use of line and shading, and inventive use of lights and darks which alternately heightens the depth of field or subverts the illusion of depth in his compositions.

Goya's prints after Velazquez were executed in 1778 in order to make

Velazquez's compositions better known to the general public. Though not slavish imitations of the original paintings by Velazquez, this series of etchings bears the least resemblance to Goya's other work. The one stand-out piece among them is "A False Bacchus Crowning Some Drunkards."

Next in the gallery are works from Goya's famous *Los Caprichos*, a series of eighty prints he began in 1799. Considered a breakthrough in his creation of tones in print making using aquatint, the series satirically depicts the vices and vanities of Spanish society and displays his flair for rendering grotesque distortions of human faces and figures. "Birds Of A Feather" (Plate 5) has a grainy, unrefined texture which gives a sleazy cast to an illustration of a sordid involvement between a man and a woman. "No One Knows Himself" (Plate 6) uses selective lighting to emphasize the foreground figures in a scene which appears to take place during Carnival.

Goya began *The Bullfight*, a pictorial history of the Spanish pastime, in 1816. The series is characterized by a sensitivity to naturalistic renderings of figures, convincing illusions of depth of field, and shifting perspective. "Mariano Ceballos, Alias the Indian, Kills The Bull From Horseback" (Plate 23) is

notable for its objective perspective and depth of field.

Executed between 1810 and 1823, *Disasters of War* is arguably Goya's finest work, or at least the Art Institute really picked the absolute best prints for display in this exhibit. The series depicts the ravages of war from the Napoleonic occupation of Spain and the restrictive reign of Fernando VII which came not long after.

Each of the prints from this series is riveting in their use of lighting and composition. The strongest pieces are "What More Can Be Done," a disturbing castration scene that appears to take place in broad daylight, and "Barbarians," a masterfully lit rendering of a man tied to a tree and about to be shot.

Perhaps derived from Goya's observations of Carnival, *The Follies* depicts monsters, grotesqueries, and other mysterious figures. The work in this series varies between fairy-tale-ish renderings such as "Flying Folly" (Plate 5) and grotesques

such as "Carnival Folly" (Plate 14) and "Disorderly Folly" (Plate 7).

Though not as well known as his other prints, Goya's landscapes are notable for their craftsmanship and tranquillity. Etched between 1799 and 1810, these works contain his best use of light for depth, especially "Landscape With Great Rock, Buildings, And Trees," in which

the textured lines create a sense of movement, the lights and darks are composed elegantly, and Goya's use of aquatint reveals him to be not only the pioneer of its use but one of its masters as well.

Goya's Vision runs through January 29, so be sure to check it out before

it closes, for it makes for a good overview of Goya's work in etchings. While you're there, be sure to walk the extra twenty steps over to the exhibit *Recent Acquisitions In Master Drawings*, which features drawings and studies by Cassatt, Destouches, DuCornet, Gauguin, Picasso, Leger, Le Corbusier, and Klee, among others.

Goya's Vision

Exhibited at The Art Institute of Chicago through February 11.

Hours: Mon, Wed-Fri 10:30am-4:30pm; Tues 10:30am-8pm; Sat 10am-5pm; Sun and Holidays 12pm-5pm.

Admission: Adults \$6.50; Students and Seniors \$3.25. Tuesdays free.

Call (312) 443-3600 for more information