

CHRISTIE'S

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CHRISTIE'S TO OFFER GRAPHIC MASTERPIECES BY FRANCISCO JOSÉ DE GOYA Y LUCIENTES

35 WORKS FROM A PRIVATE COLLECTION TO BE SOLD DURING
OLD MASTERS WEEK IN NEW YORK



Francisco José De Goya y Lucientes, *Los Caprichos*, the complete set of eighty etchings with burnished aquatint, drypoint and engraving, 1797-1798
Estimate: \$400,000-600,000

New York - Christie's is honored to present the sale of *Francisco José De Goya y Lucientes: Graphic Masterpieces from a Private Collection* on January 28, 2014. Featuring 35 important examples the sale encompasses a survey of his graphic work, containing imagery which sheds light on the tumultuous times in which he Goya lived.

One of the highlights of the sale is an early example of *Los Caprichos* (pictured above and page 2, top right), a complete set of eighty etchings first published in 1799. These prints exposed the corruption that earned Goya's homeland the appellation Black Spain. Here, Goya mocks the peasantry's superstitious belief in witchcraft, the arrogance of the nobility, and the widespread corruption of the Catholic Church. It offers a kaleidoscope view of evil, encompassing prostitutes, imagined witches and goblins. In order to protect himself from the wrath of the Inquisition, Goya masked his satire by means of images that could inspire multiple interpretations. This subtle layering of meanings is one of the

hallmarks of Goya's genius. Never before had any artist presented such a complex group of images, which effortlessly show the mundane and the supernatural. Conceived and executed in less than three years, the project as a whole involved an extraordinary amount of labor as many of the etchings are masterpieces in their own right. Technically, Goya was one of the first artists to work in aquatint and used the medium to its full effect - layering veils of tone one upon the other, sometimes coarse and granular and other times smooth or so fine that it resembles watercolor wash. One of the earliest series, *Los Caprichos* became Goya's most popular and influential and was largely responsible for Goya becoming known outside Spain.



Another series to be offered is *Los Desastres de la Guerra* (pictured left; estimate: \$150,000-250,000). Still as brutal and shocking now as they were two centuries ago, these eighty etchings show the enduring barbarity of war. Conceived over a ten-year period and based on his travels through the war-torn countryside, the series is

profoundly shocking. As eyewitness accounts these prints dispel any romantic notions of the Age of Enlightenment, providing instead a portrayal of the anonymous, confused quality of war and mankind's capacity to inflict cruelty on one another. Enhancing the power of each image is Goya's mastery of the etching technique, using great control to subtly build and balance contrasts. Hidden away for fear of financial ruin and political reprisals, the plates remained unpublished until 1863.

La Tauromaquia (pictured right; estimate: \$450,000-600,000) is a complete set of 33 etchings depicting the origins and history of bullfighting, including the extraordinary acrobatic feats of Martincho, a famous bullfighter known for his daring stunts during the corrida. Goya portrays movement and captures tense excitement by playing with the light and darks in the Baroque manner to show the tragedy and cruelty that accompany this sport. Through the violent combat of man and beast, Goya condemns the atrocities of the war in his



youth while also managing to recapture his youthful vitality and love of life.



Goya's final and most enigmatic print series is *Los Proverbios* (pictured left; estimate: \$150,000-250,000) a set of 18 etchings printed between 1815 and 1824. Like Goya's 'black' paintings, each of the etchings depicts isolated figures in dark, often nightmarish landscapes. While some plates appear rather whimsical, other depicts gruesome monsters or attacks on innocents. The compositions have few precedents and virtually no parallels in 19th century art, but may be connected with the artist's interest in carnival themes. Never intended for public view the plates were left in

Goya's son, Javier's, possession upon Goya's departure from Spain and remained hidden until Javier's death in 1854.

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