

In conjunction with its exhibition *Royal Splendor in the Enlightenment: Charles IV of Spain, Patron and Collector*, on view from March 7 through July 18, 2010, the Meadows Museum presents two complementary exhibits focusing on related aspects of world history and the work of the era's court painters: *Contours of Empire: The World of Charles IV* and *Goya and López: Court Painters for Charles IV*.

## **Contours of Empire: The World of Charles IV**

The Spanish King Charles IV witnessed a series of momentous events during his life (1748-1819) and reign (1788-1808). In Europe, it was a time of revolution and reaction, with the coming of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars. In the New World, 13 of the British colonies in North America revolted in 1776, and by the first quarter of the 19th century, Mexico as well as other countries in South America had embarked on the road to political independence. It was also a time of significant economic and social change, with the beginning of the industrial revolution and the renewed growth of capitalism and commerce. *Contours of Empire: The World of Charles IV* includes rare books, broadsides, pamphlets, maps, prints, newspapers and periodicals from SMU's DeGolyer Library that help illustrate this dynamic period in history. The materials are drawn not only from Spain but also from her colonies, her allies, and her enemies, each of them contributing to the ever-changing geo-political dimensions of the Spanish Empire. *Contours of Empire* will be on view in the museum's first floor galleries. This exhibition has been organized by the Meadows Museum in collaboration with DeGolyer Library, SMU, and has been made possible by a generous gift from The Meadows Foundation.

## **Goya and López: Court Painters for Charles IV**

During his two-decade reign, from 1788 to 1808, Charles IV of Spain employed numerous court painters, each of whom helped shape the royal collection. The two most prominent were Francisco Goya y Lucientes (1746-1828) and Vicente López y Portaña (1772-1850). The Meadows Museum's rich holdings from the period include paintings, prints and drawings by both artists, featured in the exhibition *Goya and López: Court Painters for Charles IV*.

The best known and the senior of the two artists was **Goya**, who was in his early 40s when Charles IV came into power and had already served as the official court painter for that monarch's father and predecessor, Charles III. During the turn of the 19th century, Goya completed some of his most accomplished works, on both canvas and paper, from both royal and private commissions. One of them was his print series, *Los Caprichos*, completed in 1799 and depicting "the foibles and follies" of civilized society. A rare first edition of the series is featured in the exhibit.

Also featured is a single etching Goya produced some 20 years earlier in 1778-79, a portrait of Queen Margarita of Austria (1584-1611; wife of Philip III of Spain and mother of Philip IV).

The etching was inspired by the monumental painted portrait of the queen by Diego Velázquez (1599-1660), also a court painter, whom Goya greatly admired. Goya's oil-on-canvas *Portrait of Francisco Sabatini*, depicting an Italian Neoclassical architect who designed a number of prominent buildings in Spain, was completed around 1775-1779; it reveals that Goya did not just paint for his royal patrons but also portrayed fellow artist-intellectuals of the day, including those employed by the Crown. By contrast, the 1794 painting on tin, *Yard with Madmen (Corral de locos)*, represents a decidedly less courtly side of Goya's output in the last decade of the 18th century. Here the artist depicts a terrific contemporary scene that he claims to have witnessed in his native Zaragoza, not of the high nobility or intelligentsia, those occupiers and creators of lofty, light-filled spaces, but of society's trapped and tortured souls institutionalized in the darkest recesses.

**Vicente López y Portaña** served as an honorary court painter (alongside Goya, whose portrait he painted in 1826) for Charles IV before being officially appointed under Ferdinand VII (1784-1833) and, eventually, Queen Isabella II (1830-1904), for whom he worked until his death. He was known as one of the best portraitists of his day, as well as a painter of allegories and religious scenes. He was also celebrated for his mastery of drawing, a result of his Neoclassical training. Indeed, Ferdinand VII appointed him the drawing instructor to his second and third wives (the Queens María Isabella of Portugal and Maria Josepha of Saxony, respectively). Although this exhibition is limited to the works López created for his first royal patron, Charles IV, they are excellent examples of the artist's output and range of skills in terms of medium and genre. The *Portrait of Baron Mathieu de Faviers* from 1812, in which the sitter, in full military dress, addresses the viewer directly, is just the kind of beautifully painted, assertive aristocratic portrait for which López's talents were sought. By contrast, the artist employed a loose, fluid style to animate the story of *Saint Vincent Martyr Before Dacius* (ca. 1796) with the colorful movement of muscles and drapery. López painted the Zaragozan saint, martyred in the 4th century during the persecutions of Diocletian, at the moment in which he appeared before the local Roman governor, Dacius, who imposed numerous heinous tortures on the saint before his execution. Its humble size and sketchy quality suggest that López created this work in preparation for a larger-scale ecclesiastical commission, offering some insight into how the artist developed his composition.

Similarly, a pair of delicate drawings created in the first half of the 19th century and featured in the exhibition demonstrate López's renowned accomplishment as a draughtsman. They depict the four most important, or cardinal, virtues in Christian tradition - Prudence, Justice, Temperance and Fortitude - represented as four female figures (two per sheet). These popular allegorical figures appear elegantly draped and may be identified by their traditional attributes: a mirror and a sword (Prudence and Justice) and wine/water jugs and a column (Temperance and Fortitude).

Through the Meadows collection, this exhibition offers a representative summary of the quality and breadth of artwork produced during the relatively short reign of Charles IV, within his court and by artists he patronized. Alongside the opulent royal collections, however, many of the paintings and works on paper featured in this exhibition, particularly those by Goya, invite viewers to consider an opposing view of art and life in turn-of-the-19th-century Spain - prostitutes (*Los Caprichos*), the mentally ill (*Yard with Madmen*), and the dead (*The Garrotted Man*, 1778-80 and *Still-Life with Woodcocks*, 1808-12). It was perhaps a foreshadowing of the fact that Spain was about to be riddled by war and the monarchy itself forced into exile.

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