THE ARREST OF CHRIST (EL PRENDIMIENTO)

CLASIFICACIÓN: EASEL PAINTING. RELIGIOUS



DATOS GENERALES

CRONOLOGÍA	1798
UBICACIÓN	Toledo Cathedral , Toledo, Spain
DIMENSIONES	300 x 200 cm
TÉCNICA Y SOPORTE	Oil on canvas
RECONOCIMIENTO DE LA AUTORÍA DE GOYA	Documented work
TITULAR	Chapter of the metropolitan cathedral of Toledo
FICHA: REALIZACIÓN/REVISIÓN	26 Jan 2011 / 15 Apr 2026

HISTORIA

In around 1788 Goya received the commission for this painting from the Bishop of Toledo, as we know from the letter he wrote to his friend Martín Zapater on 2 June 1788. In the letter, he says that he had not even had time to produce a sketch for this work, although he goes into no further details. It seems that the commission he refers to was the *Arrest of Christ* (there are no details of any other work that Goya could have carried out for this cathedral) and that it was delayed for some years, a fact confirmed when Sánchez Cantón published the minutes of a meeting held at the San Fernando Academy on 6 January 1799, in which it is recorded that Goya presented the commission there. Two days later it was hung in the sacristy of Toledo Cathedral, where it has remained ever since.

ANÁLISIS ARTÍSTICO

Goya knew that the work was going to be lit by the candles which stood on the altar below the painting, as well as those which stood on the altar of the El Greco painting *The Disrobing of Christ* which dominates the sacristy of Toledo Cathedral. Aware that the upper part of the canvas would be obscured by the gloom of the sacristy, illuminated only by a small window and the candles, he placed the focal point of the action in the lower part of the canvas. The scene is constructed around the crowd of people and, above all, the heads which surround Christ. He is placed in the centre of the canvas, directly lit up by the lamp held by someone positioned behind Judas, who has the light behind him. The Messiah's robe attracts the eye, contrasting with the soldiers' clothing.

The grouping of the figures echoes that of *The Disrobing of Christ*, as if Goya wished to compete with the other artist. The play of light is reminiscent of Rembrandt. Above all, in this work we find elements which Goya would return to in later years, such as the lantern, here an omen of death, which inevitably reminds us of the lanterns of his Third of May (rec. no.?), or the deformed, unpleasant grimaces of those who surround the pained face of Christ, as if they themselves were a crown of thorns, and a clear predecessor of the Black Paintings. The contrast between bad and good characters is a sign of Goya's Romanticism, which he would employ on other occasions.

The Arrest is a dramatic work, very Goyaesque in nature, with those sketched touches which maintain the tension of the subject. Without a doubt, this is one of the most representative religious works of Goya's oeuvre, even of his work as a whole.

EXPOSICIONES

Francisco de Goya. IV Centenario de la capitalidad
organized by Ayuntamiento de Madrid and Dirección General de Bellas Artes at the Casón del Buen Retiro Madrid 1961
consultant editor Valentín de Sambricio
cat. LXX

Goya
Koninklijk Kabinet van Schilderijen Mauritshuis The Hauge 1970
organized by Ministerio de Estado y Asuntos Culturales and Réunion des Musées Nationaux, July 4th to September 13th 1970. Exhibited also at the Musée de l'Orangerie des Tuileries, Paris, October 25th to December 7th 1970, consultant editors Jeannine Baticle and A. B. de Vries
cat. 25

El arte de Goya
Museo de Arte Occidental de Tokio Tokyo 1971
from 16th 1971 to January 23th 1972. Exhibited also at the Kyoto Municipal Museum of Art, January 29th to March 15th 1972.
cat. 18

Pabellón de la Santa Sede
Exposición Universal de Sevilla Sevilla 1992

Goya
Nationalmuseum Stockholm 1994
consultant editors Juan J. Luna and Görel Cavalli-Björkman. From October 7th 1994 to January 8th 1995
cat. 20

Goya en las colecciones españolas
Sala de Exposiciones del BBVA Madrid 1995
consultant editor Juan J. Luna. From December 14th 1995 to February 17th 1996
cat. 32

Goya en tiempos de guerra
Museo Nacional del Prado Madrid 2008
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