

# THE MANUFACTURE OF GUNPOWDER (LA FABRICACIÓN DE PÓLVORA)

CLASIFICACIÓN: EASEL PAINTING. ALLEGORY, MYTHOLOGY, HISTORY



## DATOS GENERALES

CRONOLOGÍA

Ca. 1810 - 1814

UBICACIÓN

Galería de las Colecciones Reales, Madrid, Spain

DIMENSIONES

32.9 x 52.2 cm

TÉCNICA Y SOPORTE

Oil on wood panel

RECONOCIMIENTO DE LA AUTORÍA DE GOYA

Undisputed work

TITULAR

National Heritage

FICHA: REALIZACIÓN/REVISIÓN

14 Mar 2010 / 09 Jan 2024

INVENTARIO

2314 10009052

## INSCRIPCIONES

*Numero 1 / Fabrica de pólvora establecida por D. Josef Mallen / en la Sierra de Tardienta / en Aragón / en los años de 1811, 12 y 13 ("Number 1 / Manufacture of gunpowder established by Mr Josef Mallan / in the Sierra de Tardienta / in Aragón / in the years 1811, 1812, and 1813"), on the back.*

690 (lower right-hand corner, in white)

## HISTORIA

Goya was called to Zaragoza in 1808 by José Palafox to visit the ruins of the city, which had been devastated by French troops, and paint the "triumphs" of the people of Zaragoza at this site. Goya wrote a letter to José Munárriz which confirms this trip to his home region. The

artist painted two works on panel which form a pair based either on this visit or on a subsequent one which took place before the end of the War of Independence. These were entitled *The Manufacture of Gunpowder* and *The Manufacture of Bullets*.

Both entered into royal collections when they were acquired by Ferdinand VII some time after his return to Madrid in 1814. They appear in the *Inventory of Paintings, Furnishings, and Jewels of the Royal Palaces of Madrid, Sites and Country Houses* (Inventario de pinturas, muebles y alhajas de los Palacios Reales de Madrid, Sitios y Casas de Campo) drawn up in 1834, registered to the Royal Seat of San Lorenzo de El Escorial. They then moved to the Royal Palace in Madrid before moving once more to the Zarzuela Palace.

#### ANÁLISIS ARTÍSTICO

Although they are not signed, thanks to the inscriptions on the back of the paintings we know that they depict clandestine activities carried out in the Sierra de Tardienta in Huesca, some 50 km north of Zaragoza. In 1810, José Mallén, shoemaker to Almudévar, organized a party of guerrillas and ordered the manufacture of gunpowder (the gunpowder produced in Aragón was famous for its quality) and bullets at his secret factory to supply the regions of Aragón, Valencia, and Catalonia. We do not know if Goya was able to see these scenes in real life (although it is probable that he did not, given the inaccessibility of the site) or if they were inspired by descriptions and news items, but it is clear that the story these paintings tell is also a historical reality.

The panel on which this scene is painted is very irregular. It seems to be a cedar panel from a door or a window shutter, which suggests the lack of available materials during the war.

Despite its rudimentary support, the painting is executed with documentary precision, showing Goya's lasting interest in "the glory of his country". The energetic activity of the men is clearly depicted, giving two very vivid scenes. With these works the painter wished to pay homage to his countrymen and his native region.

The setting is painted in detail, dominated by the trees which tower over the sandy terrain. It has been noted that landscape plays a fundamental role in these paintings, and is therefore not reduced to a background screen against which the figures are outlined; rather, it has a life of its own, expressed by means of different pictorial qualities. The figures of the men busily going about their tasks are arranged in an orderly fashion which allows the viewer to follow each step of the gunpowder manufacturing process. On the left, they pound the mix. Then, in the centre of the scene, the powder is sifted before it is placed in boxes and carried away by the figures on the right. A man dressed in black who might be the factory owner, José Mallén, gives instructions to the other men.

#### EXPOSICIONES

##### **Goya 1900**

Ministerio de Instrucción Pública and Bellas Artes Madrid 1900

consultant editors Aureliano de Beruete, Alejandro Ferrant, Marqués de Pidal and Ricardo Velázquez. May 1900

cat. 3: Casa Real

##### **Exposición conmemorativa del centenario de Goya**

Palacio de Oriente Madrid 1946

organized by Patrimonio Nacional. June 1946

cat. 280

##### **Pinturas de Goya**

Museo Nacional del Prado Madrid 1928

consultant editor Fernando Álvarez de Sotomayor. From April to -May 1928

cat. 78/29: S.M. el Rey

##### **Goya. Gemälde Zeichnungen. Graphik. Tapisserien**

Kunsthalle Basel Basle 1953

from January 23th to April 12th 1953

cat. 27

##### **Les chefs-d'œuvre du Musée du Prado**

Musée d'Art et d'Histoire Geneva 1939

consultant editors Fernando Álvarez de Sotomayor y Pedro Muguruza Otaño. From June to September 1939

cat. 34

##### **Stora Spanska Mästare**

Nationalmuseum Stockholm 1959

cat. 147

**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. 55

**Goya en las colecciones madrileñas**  
Museo Nacional del Prado Madrid 1983  
consultant editor Enrique Lafuente Ferrari. From April 19th to June 20th 1983  
cat. 43

**La alianza de dos monarquías: Wellington en España**  
Museo Municipal Madrid 1988  
organized by Fundación Hispano-Británica in collaboration with Ayuntamiento de Madrid. From October 19th to December 11th 1988  
cat. 262

**Goya**  
Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica di Palazzo Barberini Roma 2000  
consultant editors Lorenza Mochi Onori and Claudio Strinati. From March 18th to June 18th 2000  
cat. 25

**Goya y el infante don Luis: el exilio y el reino.**  
Palacio Real, Madrid Madrid 2012  
Arte y ciencia en la época de la ilustración española.  
Responsable científico Francisco Calvo Serraller. Del octubre de 2012 a enero de 2013.  
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consultant editor Jean-Gabriel Domergue. From December 1961 to February 1962  
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**Goya**  
Koninklijke Musea Voor Schone Kunsten Van België Brussels 1985  
consultant editor Luis González Seara. From October 26th to December 22nd 1985  
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**Goya. El Capricho y la Invención. Cuadros de gabinete, bocetos y miniaturas**  
Museo Nacional del Prado Madrid 1993  
from November 18th 1993 to February 15th 1994. Exhibited also at the Royal Academy of Arts, London, March 18th to June 12th 1994 and The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, July 16th to October 16th 1994, consultant editors Manuela B. Mena Marqués and Juliet Wilson-Bareau  
cat. 90

**Goya: Prophet der Moderne**  
Alte Nationalgalerie Berlin 2005  
from July 13th to October 3th 2005. Exhibited also at the Kunsthistorischesmuseum, Vienna, October 18th 2005 to January 8th 2006, consultant editor Manuela B. Mena Marqués  
cat. 95

**Goya and his times**  
The Royal Academy of Arts London 1963  
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**Goya y el espíritu de la Ilustración**  
Museo Nacional del Prado Madrid 1988  
from October 6th to December 18th 1988. Exhibited also at Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, January 18th to March 26th 1989; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Nueva York, May 9th to July 16th 1989, Madrid curator Manuela B. Mena Marqués, scientific directors Alfonso E. Pérez Sánchez and Eleanor A. Sayre  
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consultant editor Federico Torralba Soriano. From October 3th to December 1st 1996  
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**Goya en tiempos de guerra**  
Museo Nacional del Prado Madrid 2008  
consultant editor Manuela B. Mena Marqués, from April 14th to July 13th 2008  
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**ENLACES EXTERNOS**