Spanish painter and engraver. One of the major figures of European art, Goya depicted all aspects of Spanish life – portraits, including those of the royal family, religious works, scenes of war and of everyday life. Towards the end of his life, he created strange, nightmarish works, the ‘Black Paintings’, with such horrific images as Saturn Devouring One of His Sons (c. 1822; Prado, Madrid). His series of etchings include The Disasters of War (1810–14), depicting the horrors of the French invasion of Spain.

Goya was born in Aragón. After studying in Italy, he returned to Spain and was employed on a number of paintings for the royal tapestry factory as well as numerous portraits. In 1789 he was appointed court painter to Charles IV. The eroticism of his Naked Maja and Clothed Maja (c. 1800–05; Prado, Madrid) caused such outrage that he was questioned by the Inquisition. The Shootings of May 3rd 1808 (1814; Prado, Madrid), painted for Ferdinand VII, is passionate in its condemnation of the inhumanity of war. Technically, Goya attained brilliant effects by thin painting over a red earth ground. Much influenced by Rembrandt (‘Rembrandt, Velázquez, and Nature’ were, he said, his guides), he turned in later years to a dusky near-monochrome. His skill, however, seemed to increase with age, and the Milkmaid of Bordeaux, one of his last paintings, shows him using colour with great freedom.

Goya showed early promise and was apprenticed at 14 to a painter in Saragossa, José Luzán y Martinez. At 19 he left for Madrid, where he worked for the painter Francisco Bayeu (1734–1795). He married Bayeu's sister Josefa 1773, after a short visit to Rome, and settled in Madrid. His brother-in-law's connections helped him to gain an important commission 1775 for a series of 40 tapestry designs. These were not strictly ‘cartoons’ but large paintings on canvas depicting various aspects of Spanish life in a decorative style which owed something to rococo art and particularly to the Italian painter Tiepolo, though such examples as The Four Seasons were essentially Spanish in type and landscape setting, and individually brilliant in execution. He worked on these designs for a number of years, as well as on wall paintings for churches, and by 1786 was chief painter to Charles III.

Goya became deaf 1792 as the result of a serious illness, and his position during and after the Napoleonic invasion of Spain was uneasy. When Ferdinand VII was driven out, he continued to work for the usurper Joseph Bonaparte. When Ferdinand was restored, Goya was not penalized but seems to have found the restored court uncongenial and sought permission 1824 to retire to France, spending the last few years of his life in Bordeaux.

It is part of the complexity of Goya's life and work that he enjoyed court life; that he was at the same time a revolutionary in taking an intensely critical view of institutions; that he hated war; that he was a patriot, yet one with an artist's detachment. His portraits of Charles IV and his queen were mercilessly unflattering, though the royal family is grouped in splendour in the Family of Charles IV (Prado). Examples of his portraits of men include Don Sebastian Martinez (New York, Metropolitan Museum) and Francisco Bayeu (Prado); his portraits of women include Doña Tadea de Enriquez (Prado) and the sultry beauty of Doña Isabel de Porcel (National Gallery, London). His paintings of Spanish festivals, religious processions, and bullfights reveal his passionate interest in and critical analysis of human behaviour. They include sombre representations of the madhouse, prison cell, and scene of execution. His revolutionary spirit appears in the etched and aquatinted series of graphic works: Los Caprichos,
with their covert attack on the corruption of court and clergy, the *Proverbs*, *Los Disparates*, a series of etchings made c. 1820–23, and *Los Caprichos/Extravagances* of 1819, with their further sardonic comment on the ‘extravagances and follies common to all society’. *The Disasters of War* was a more direct impeachment of the cruelty and horrors perpetrated during the French invasion. They have their equivalents in the later paintings. War inspired the grim masterpiece *The Shootings of May 3rd 1808* (Prado), which incited Edouard Manet to paint *The Execution of the Emperor Maximilian*. The paintings in Goya's own villa conjured up such dreadful visions as his *Saturn*, *The Witches’ Sabbath*, and the weird pathos of the *Pilgrimage to San Isidro*. Here his deafness seems to have heightened his sensitivity to the strangeness of human grimace.

His religious pictures count for less in the estimate of his art. His frescoes for the church of S Antonio de la Florida in Madrid are inappropriately mundane, yet he was capable also in his late years of a work as full of spiritual emotion as his *Communion of S José* (Bayonne).

**quotations**

Goya, Francisco José de Goya y Lucientes

**images**

Goya, Francisco *The Picnic*

*Shootings of May 3rd 1808, The*

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