

## Goya, The Disparates

9 August – 3 September 2004

The celebrated eighteenth-century Spanish painter and etcher Francisco Goya (1746-1828) was in his seventies and recovering from a serious illness when he made his last series of powerful etchings, *The Disparates*. Depicting the folly of mankind, the etchings, produced between 1819 and 1824, are a savage satirical attack on the political and social customs of his time. Unpublished during Goya's lifetime, the etchings were hidden away in Spain after the artist's self-imposed exile to Bordeaux. This National Touring Exhibition organised by the Hayward Gallery tours to Harlow in August.



*Disparate alegre (Merry folly)*, etching, burnished aquatint and drypoint, 24.5 x 34cm, plate 12 from *The Disparates*, c. 1815-24

Dark in mood and similar to the terrifying 'black paintings' with which he decorated his house, *The Disparates* were produced while Goya was living in the *Quinta del Sordo* (the House of the Deaf Man), on the outskirts of Madrid.

These are amongst his most disturbing and obscure plates and convey Goya's unsettled state of mind. Spain had returned to a dictatorship after a brief liberal period, and many of Goya's works, including a series of macabre etchings titled *The Disasters of War*, were not published under the oppressive climate of the Inquisition.

Goya emphasises the frenzied, grotesque side of carnival festivity in *Bobalicon* (Silly idiot), in which a dancing giant drawn from a popular carnival character is transformed into a disturbing phantom with ghostly faces looming up beside him. In *Disparate alegre (Merry folly)*, a ring of dancers suggests

the Dance of Death, the wizened faces of the figures contrasting with the finery of their clothes. In *Disparate cruel* (Cruel folly), a man strikes another with a lance. The fierce expressions and the decaying wall in the background have been interpreted as the crumbling of order and the onset of barbarism. Other 'Disparates' include old men in monkish disguise, a mysteriously shrouded figure addressing a group of listeners on the branch of a tree and a voluptuous young woman with two heads seized by a prancing horse.

Published for the first time by the Academy of San Fernando in Madrid in 1864, under the title *Los Proverbios*, each plate from The Disparates series was given the name of a popular Spanish proverb. Proofs of many of the plates exist in titles written by Goya containing the word 'Disparate' (Folly).

This National Touring Exhibition consists of the 18 prints from the third edition, published in 1891. A fully illustrated catalogue accompanies the exhibition.