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**FRANCISCO DE GOYA Y LUCIENTES
(FUENDETODOS 1746-1828 BORDEAUX)**

A Woman with two Boys by a fountain – a sketch

oil on canvas
14 x 7¼ in. (35.4 x 18.4 cm.)

£4,000,000-6,000,000

\$4,900,000-7,300,000

€4,500,000-6,700,000

PROVENANCE:

Doña María Josefa Alonso-Pimentel y Téllez-Girón, Duquesa de Osuna (1752-1834), Alameda de Osuna, near Madrid, by 1798, and by descent. Duque de Osuna collection; Madrid, May 1896, lot 81, when acquired by the following, The Lafora collection. Duque de Valencia, Madrid. Mercedes de Borbón. Carlos de Borbón. Alonso Ferrer, Madrid. with Colnaghi, London, 1960. Private collection, Hertfordshire. with E.V. Thaw, New York, from whom acquired by Baron Heinrich Thyssen-Bornemisza, as a gift for the present owner.

EXHIBITED:

Madrid, Palacio de la Industria y de las Artes, *Catálogo de los Cuadros de la Antigua casa Ducal de Osuna*, October 1896, no. 81. Madrid, Museo Arqueológico Nacional, *Exposición histórico-artística del centenario del Dos de Mayo*, 1908, no. 3661. The Hague, Mauritshuis; and Paris, Orangerie des Tuileries, *Goya*, 4 July-7 December 1970, no. 9. Madrid, Museo del Prado; London, The Royal Academy of Arts; and Chicago, The Art Institute of Chicago, *Goya: Truth and Fantasy – The Small Paintings*, 18 November 1993-16 October 1994, no. 23. Madrid, Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum, on loan. Berlin, Alte Nationalgalerie; and Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, *Goya: Prophet der Moderne*, 13 July 2005-8 January 2006, no. 16. Madrid, Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum, on loan.

LITERATURE:

C. Yriarte, *Goya: Sa biographie, Les fresques, les toiles, les tapisseurs, les eaux-fortes et le Catalogue de l'Oeuvre*, Paris, 1867, p. 145. G. Cruzada Villaamil, *Los tapices de Goya*, Madrid, 1870, p. 140, no. XXXV. V. von Loga, *Francisco de Goya*, Berlin, 1903, p. 220, no. 557. A. Beruete y Moret, *Goya, composiciones y figuras*, Madrid, 1917, II, p. 164, no. 101. A.L. Mayer, *Francisco de Goya*, Munich, 1924, p. 216, no. 681. V. de Sambricio, *Tapices de Goya*, Madrid, 1946, p. 257, no. 45a. F. Nordström, *Goya, Saturn and Melancholy. Studies in the Art of Goya*, Stockholm, 1962, pp. 51-54. J. Guidol, *Goya 1746-1828: Biographie, Analyse Critique et Catalogue de Peintures*, Paris, 1970, I, p. 251, no. 222; II, fig. 319. P. Gassier and J. Wilson, *Goya: His Life and Work, with a catalogue raisonné of the paintings, drawings and engravings*, London, 1971, p. 97, no. 261. R. de Angelis, *L'opera pittorica completa di Goya*, Milan, 1974, p. 100, no. 204. R. de Angelis, *Tout l'oeuvre peint de Goya*, Paris, 1976, p. 100, no. 204. M. Agueda, 'Novedades en torno a una serie de cartones de Goya', *Boletín del Museo del Prado*, V, 1984, p. 44. J.M. de Arnaiz, *Francisco de Goya. Cartones y tapices*, Madrid, 1987, p. 294, no. 49b. J.A. Tomlinson, *Francisco Goya: The Tapestry Cartoons and Early Career at the Court of Madrid*, Cambridge, 1989, pp. 175 and 179. J.A. Tomlinson, *Francisco de Goya. Los cartones para tapices y los comienzos de su camera en la corte de Madrid*, Madrid, 1993, pp. 228 and 231. J.L. Morales y Marín, *Goya: A Catalogue of his Paintings*, Saragossa, 1997, pp. 196-197, no. 163.





Francisco de Goya y Lucientes, *Self Portrait in his studio*, c. 1790, oil on canvas
 © Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando, Madrid, Spain / Bridgeman Image

Intimately associated with the most important Spanish Royal commission of its time, and hung over recent years on the walls of the Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum, Madrid, this delightful and beautifully-preserved sketch displays many of the qualities that make Goya stand out as one of the very greatest artistic geniuses of his, or indeed any, age. In part a fleeting and perhaps lightly humorous look at a moment in the relationship of a mother and her children, this canvas - within restricted dimensions - is also a quintessential example of Goya's extraordinary inventiveness and ability to combine a wonderful freedom of execution with a varied yet individualised expression of character.

Goya's marriage in 1773 to Josefa Bayeu was a felicitous union in several ways, not least that she was the sister of the Zaragoza painter, Francisco Bayeu y Subías (1734-1795), professor at the Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando, Court Painter to Charles III of Spain, and, most significantly, from 1777,

the Director of the Royal Tapestry Factory. Through the offices of his brother-in-law, Goya was commissioned to provide large painted designs, or cartoons, which were used by the Royal Tapestry Manufactory of Santa Barbara as models for tapestries to decorate the walls of the royal palaces in and around Madrid. From 1775 to 1780, and again from 1786 to 1792, Goya provided some 45 designs for the factory, most of them spirited, colourful, French-inflected confections of rococo exuberance. Following his nomination as Painter to the King in June 1786, Goya mentioned in a letter to his closest childhood friend, Martin Zapater, a new project for tapestry cartoons: 'I'm now very busy making sketches for a room in which the king dines'. The sketches to which the artist refers were for tapestries to decorate the dining room, or 'conversation room' of the heir to the throne, Carlos, Prince of Asturias, and Princess Maria Luisa, in the Pardo Palace, located on the outskirts of Madrid. Carlos III had requested 'paintings of pleasant, light-hearted subjects that are needed for that palace', and Goya

was given measurements for six principal panels, a corner-piece, and six overdoors. The designs for the dining room are among the finest of Goya's cartoons, and include the largest work he ever painted, *Summer; or The Harvest* (oil on canvas, 276 x 641 cm.; Madrid, Prado). Invoices suggest that the cartoons were executed between November 1786 and at least the end of April 1787. In the end, as a consequence of the death of Carlos III the following year, the tapestries woven from Goya's designs were never hung in El Pardo.

The principal theme of the designs is the *Four Seasons*. Rather than turning to mythology or history as the basis for his seasonal representations, Goya looked instead to contemporary genre imagery, often comic in nature. His approach is entirely original, as Juliet Wilson-Bareau has noted (*op. cit.*), and 'each image is built around a particular incident and tells its own story'. *Spring* and *Autumn* illustrate pastoral amusements: in *Spring, or The Flower Girl* (fig. 1), a country girl kneels in an open landscape offering flowers to a



Fig. 1 *Spring; or The Flower Seller*, 1786-87, oil on canvas © Prado, Madrid, Spain / Bridgeman Images



Fig. 2 *Summer, or The Harvest*, 1786-87, oil on canvas © Prado, Madrid, Spain / Bridgeman Images

woman out walking with her charmingly dressed little girl. Behind them, a coarsely dressed rustic holds up a rabbit to startle the unsuspecting woman, while pressing his finger to his lips to caution the viewers not to give his trick away; a verdant, blossoming landscape indicates the time of year. In *Autumn, or the Grape Harvest* (fig. 3), a gallant and handsome *majo* offers a bunch of ripe grapes to the elegant mistress of the large estate on which they were grown. The vast cartoon for *Summer, or The Harvest* (fig. 2) depicts peasant workers and their families resting from their labours during the harvest, huge stacks of straw piled beside them. *Winter, or The Snowstorm* (fig. 4), has a darker, more somber setting, appropriately: it shows three windblown peasants, huddled beneath blankets, trudging along an obscured path in a blinding snowstorm, about to collide with two men approaching from the opposite direction.

Although the royal dining room for which the tapestries were intended no longer exists, its layout required six overdoor decorations: these were much smaller decorative compositions depicting animals, or one or two genre figures in traditional Spanish costume. The four large representations of the *Seasons* were the principal components of the room, with *Summer* filling one long wall beside a single set of double doors. However, the long wall opposite apparently had two sets of double doors, necessitating that the composition of *Winter* be significantly narrower than that of *Summer*, and also requiring the addition of two further panels, narrower than the *Seasons* but of the same height, to complete the wall on which

Winter held the central position (fig. 5). One of the two tapestry panels that Goya designed to serve this function depicts a drunken mason who, having injured himself when he fell from the scaffolding on which he was working, is carried off to safety by two companions; the other is of the present composition, showing a woman and two children by a fountain.

Goya's contract with the Royal Tapestry Works required that he present oil sketches for each of his designs to the king for his approval, and sketches for the six principal designs in the series survive, including the present sketch: the sketch for *Spring* is in a private collection; *Summer* is in the Museo Lázaro Galdiano, Madrid; *Autumn* is in the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown; *Winter* is in the Art Institute of Chicago; and *The Injured Mason* is in the Prado, Madrid. Unlike the cartoons,

however, which were royal property (all are today in the Prado, Madrid), the sketches evidently remained the property of the artist, and were bought in 1798 by the Duke and Duchess of Osuna (fig. 6), together with sketches associated with other tapestry series, for the Duchess's study at La Alameda. They remained together (with one exception) until their sale at auction in Madrid in 1896, after which they were dispersed.

The sketches do not appear in Goya's Palace accounts, a fact which probably indicates that the artist executed them in his own studio. The luscious and liquid surface of the present sketch, with its rapid, creamy brushwork, luminous palette and numerous *pentimenti*, is remarkably intact. A comparison with the final cartoon reveals Goya's evolving thinking about his subject. In the sketch, the landscape



Fig. 3 *Autumn; or The Grape Harvest*, 1786-87, oil on canvas © Prado, Madrid, Spain / Bridgeman Images



Fig. 4 *Winter; or The Snowstorm*, 1786-87, oil on canvas © Prado, Madrid, Spain / Bridgeman Images

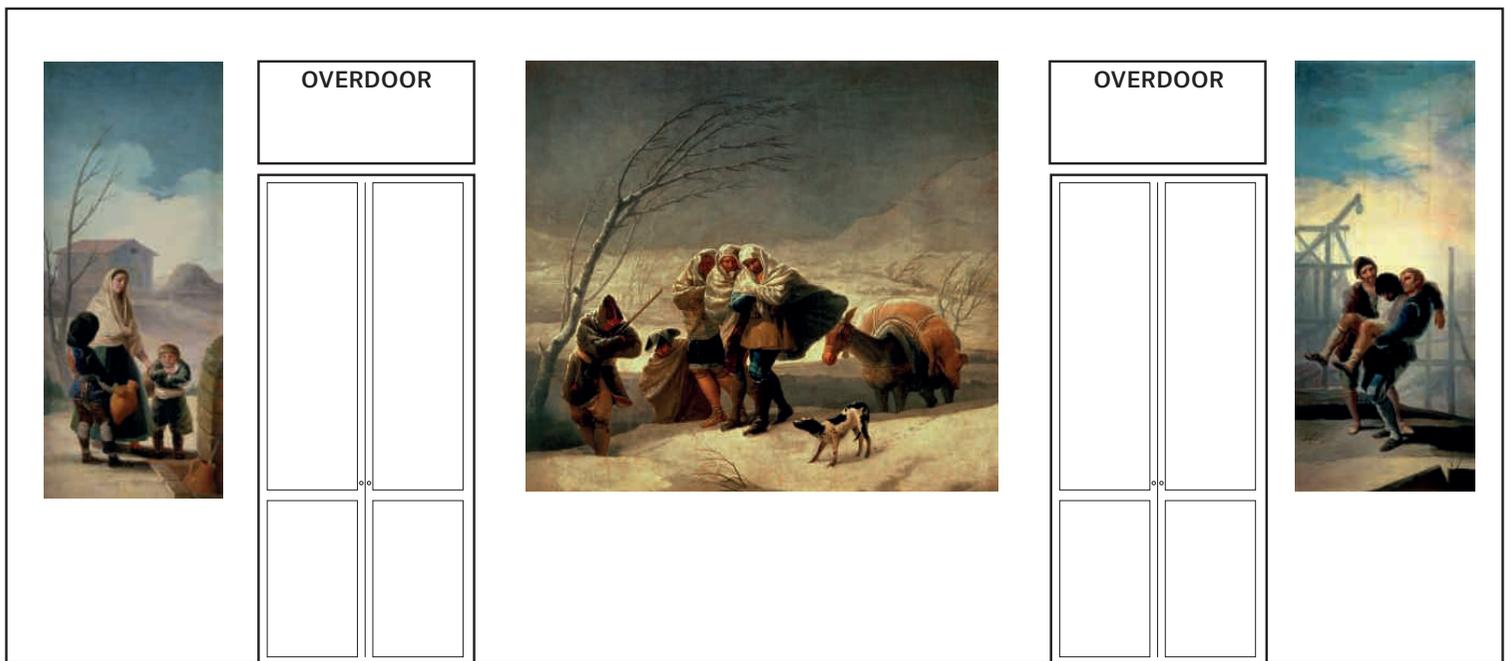


Fig. 5 Reconstruction of the wall in the Royal Dining Room in El Pardo Palace, Madrid, showing the positioning of the tapestry designs for *Winter*, flanked by *A Woman with two Boys* and *The Injured Mason*

is spare but not entirely barren, and the setting seems chilly but not obviously wintery: green reeds sprout up and the woman and her two boys – while warmly dressed – are not bundled up. Perhaps to make the subject accord more harmoniously with the larger tapestry of *Winter*, which would be installed beside it, Goya inserted a bare tree to the left of the family group in the cartoon. In the sketch, the young woman with two children stands beside a fountain at which a pitcher is filling, while another pitcher sits on the ground. The older boy holds a small pitcher and faces his younger brother who stands with folded arms, shoulders hunched, his face grimacing; the woman places a consoling hand on his shoulder; in the cartoon, she instead holds in pitcher in that hand.

Perhaps the very simplicity and ambiguity of the scene has led critics to widely differing interpretations of Goya's intentions. For Wilson-Bareau (*op. cit.*), the woman and her sons are warm and well-dressed, and obviously of a status above the peasantry: the scene is a gentle comedy of maternal patience in which the small, grimacing boy is angry because he has been treated like a child and not allowed to carry a pitcher as his older brother has. For others, the family is desperately poor and the boy grimaces at the icy temperature as he hugs his arms close to his body, protecting himself from the biting cold. Indeed, by 1870, Cruzada

Villaamil entitled the composition '*Los Pobres*' ('Poor People') and described it as representing 'a poor woman, shivering with cold near a fountain, accompanied by two children, [as she] waits for a pitcher placed under the spout to fill with water. Snowy landscape background' (*op. cit.*). A more recent and controversial analysis by Mercedes Agueda suggests (*op. cit.*) that in *The Injured Mason* and *A Woman with two Boys by a fountain*, Goya was depicting states of physical ailment, with the injury of the mason compared to the physical deformity – as she sees it, probably the result of birth defects – in the face of the small boy in the present composition. A good look at the sketch suggests a reading closer to that of Wilson-Bareau: indeed, the family seems reasonably prosperous, the woman appears happy and content, the small boy looks peevish at worst – and cold, one suspects! All told, the notion of darker interpretations would be at odds with the king's stated request that the series depict 'pleasant, light-hearted subjects'.

According to letters from Goya to Zapater, the artist was hard at work on the sketches for the dining room tapestries as of September 1786, and his account books include payment for 'a coach to the Royal Palace of El Escorial to present His Majesty (whom God preserve) the sketches for the dining room at El Pardo', an event that probably took place in November or December 1786. The tapestry of *A Woman*

with two Boys by a fountain was woven in 1788. Curiously, the present sketch and the sketch for *The Injured Mason* (Prado, Madrid) are not accounted for in the 26 April 1799 order of payment from the Osunas to Goya for the cartoon sketches, the sale of which was invoiced on 6 May 1798, suggesting that they were either gifts from Goya to the couple, or acquired separately at a later date.



Fig. 6 Francisco de Goya y Lucientes, *The Duke of Osuna and his Family*, 1788, oil on canvas © Prado, Madrid, Spain / Bridgeman Images

