August 2013

Media Contact:
Leslie Denk, Director of Public Affairs
media@nortonsimon.org; (626) 844-6900

Unflinching Vision: Goya’s Rare Prints
At the Norton Simon Museum

Pasadena—In celebration of the rare loan of The Frick Collection’s Don Pedro, Duque de Osuna by Spanish master Francisco de Goya y Lucientes (1746–1828), the Norton Simon Museum presents the exhibition Unflinching Vision: Goya’s Rare Prints. While the majority of the artist’s prints were published posthumously, this exhibition presents a selection of works that Goya himself worked on during his lifetime. More than 30 working proofs, trial proofs and published prints made under his supervision are on view, as well as a small selection of posthumous examples from his later numbered editions. With exceptional examples from his series Los Caprichos, The Disasters of War, La Tauromaquia and Los Proverbios, these artworks demonstrate Goya’s mastery of printmaking and, most significantly, his care in meaningfully capturing the spirit of his time.

From royal portraiture to scenes in a bullring, Goya infused his keen vision of the observed world with his own creative impulses. This delicate dance is visible throughout the artist’s incredible output of prints. Goya began to experiment with printmaking well after he had established himself as a successful painter to the royal court in Madrid. He started, tentatively, etching a few religious subjects, yet rather quickly he began his first ambitious series of etchings: 11 copies after masterpieces by the father of Spanish painting, Diego Velázquez. Goya’s skill as a draftsman is pronounced in these prints, as is his facility with working on a copper plate, for it is in this series that he first experiments with aquatint, a technique that allows the artist to create subtle
tonal areas in the image rather than just scratched lines. “Un Infante de España,” on view in this exhibition, not only presents the formality of Velázquez’s composition but also exhibits Goya’s growing skill with intaglio techniques. Though aquatint is used here primarily in the background, Goya came to master its use, harnessing its subtlety to create depth and even to draw entire compositions.

By the mid-1790s, Goya began to work on Los Caprichos, the first of four major print series that came to define his career as a printmaker. Images of people, witches and imagined creatures identifying specific social and cultural problems, with titles carefully narrating the scenes, make up this series. An early working proof of plate 6, “Nobody Knows Himself,” presents Goya’s concerns with deception and artifice, and it shows the print before numbering and with the title handwritten in ink. In plate 20, “There They Go Plucked (i.e. Fleeced),” prostitutes sweep out their customers, cowering and pathetic, as the women prepare for the next group of clients who hover above. The drama of the scene is enhanced by the contrast between completely uninked areas and the various gradations of aquatint that define recessional space, but as the edition was printed, this contrast was lost as the aquatint faded nearly completely. Exhibiting the working proof alongside the first, second and eighth editions of the same plate highlights this degradation.

While Los Caprichos describes a time before the turn of the century, when the French monarchy fell and Napoleon rose to power, Goya’s next series tells of the grueling six-year war between France and Spain that began in 1808. In addition to its cruel, disorganized and prolonged combat (the term “guerilla” warfare was coined from this war), it caused a disastrous famine. Many of its battles and events, including torture and starvation, are depicted brutally in the 82 plates of Goya’s print series The Disasters of War. “One Can’t Look,” plate 26, is a triumph of Goya’s compositional acumen. Men and women cower, plead and surrender in desperation within a web of dramatic shadows, and only the tips of the executioners’ bayonets reveal the reason for their suffering.

Perhaps due to the sensitivity of the subject, Goya decided not to publish an edition of The Disasters during his lifetime. Turning instead to a public project that was more benign, Goya prepared a series of bullfighting scenes, equally brilliantly executed and known ultimately as La Tauromaquia.
This group of 33 prints traces the history of bullfighting in the country and can be read as being both respectful and critical of the pastime. In plate 20, the theatrical physical feats accomplished by a torero are on display. Yet, in the following plate, Goya reminds us of the deadly nature of the sport. His interest in the popular subject matter and its connection to his national identity were further illuminated when Goya was living in exile in Bordeaux, France. There, in 1825, he used lithography for the first time. The technique is very similar to drawing, and Goya was immediately able to create lively compositions with greater ease than aquatint, in a series of four prints with the same theme, known as The Bulls of Bordeaux.

Whereas the two intaglio series—La Tauromaquia and The Disasters—depict real-life events, Goya continued to create wildly imaginative scenes that comment on contemporary behavior as in Los Caprichos. In the group of 18 prints gathered together and sold as Los Proverbios upon their first publication in 1864, Goya magnificently illustrates a number of human follies. Two-headed women, animals, giants and monsters are all situated in a world with no setting, no real context. The scenes are executed with brilliant technical facility: etched lines creating dynamic scenarios set off against the rich darkness of a field of aquatint, as in “A Way of Flying,” a fantastical illustration of the idea that “Where there’s a will, there’s a way.”

Unflinching Vision: Goya’s Rare Prints is organized by Curator Leah Lehmbeck. It is presented in conjunction with The Frick Collection’s loan of Goya’s Don Pedro, Duque de Osuna, and in anticipation of the scholarly catalogue Goya in the Norton Simon Museum, to be published in 2014.

Image credits from top: All works by Francisco de Goya y Lucientes (Spanish, 1746–1828), Copies After Velázquez: UnInfante de España [Infante Don Fernando], c. 1778-79, etching with burnished aquatint and drypoint, Norton Simon Art Foundation; Los Caprichos: There They Go Plucked (i.e. Fleeced), c. 1798, etching with aquatint, working proof, The Norton Simon Foundation; Los Disparates: Where There’s a Will There’s a Way: A Way of Flying, 1864, etching with aquatint, The Norton Simon Foundation.

About the Norton Simon Museum
The Norton Simon Museum is known around the world as one of the most remarkable private art collections ever assembled. Over a 30-year period, industrialist Norton Simon (1907–1993)
amassed an astonishing collection of European art from the Renaissance to the 20th century, and a stellar collection of Indian and Southeast Asian art spanning 2,000 years. Modern and Contemporary Art from Europe and the United States, acquired by the former Pasadena Art Museum, also occupies an important place in the Museum’s collections. The Museum houses more than 12,000 objects, roughly 1,000 of which are on view in the galleries and gardens. Two exhibition spaces feature rotating installations of artworks not on permanent display.

**Location:** The Norton Simon Museum is located at 411 W. Colorado Blvd. at Orange Grove Boulevard in Pasadena, Calif., at the intersection of the Foothill (210) and Ventura (134) freeways. For general Museum information, please call (626) 449-6840 or visit www.nortonsimon.org. **Hours:** The Museum is open from noon to 6 p.m. every day except Tuesday and noon to 9 p.m. on Friday. **Admission:** General admission is $10 for adults and $7 for seniors. Members, students with I.D., and patrons age 18 and under are admitted free of charge. Admission is free for everyone on the first Friday of every month from 6 to 9 p.m. All public programs, unless stated otherwise, are free with admission. The Museum is wheelchair accessible. **Parking:** Parking is free, and no reservations are necessary. **Public Transportation:** The City of Pasadena provides a shuttle bus to transport passengers through the Pasadena Playhouse district, the Lake Avenue shopping district and Old Pasadena. A shuttle stop is located in front of the Museum. Please visit www.cityofpasadena.net/artsbus for schedules. The MTA bus line #180/181 stops in front of the Museum. The Memorial Park Station on the MTA Gold Line, the closest Metro Rail station to the Museum, is located at 125 E. Holly St. at Arroyo Parkway. Please visit www.metro.net for schedules.