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Enlightened Collector and Writer Ceán Bermúdez

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Ceán Bermúdez. Historiador del arte y coleccionista ilustrado, edited by Elena M.^a Santiago Páez, contributions by Javier González Santos, Daniel Crespo Delgado, David García López, Beatriz Hidalgo Caldas, Miriam Cera Brea, Concha Huidobro Salas, Ángeles Santos Almendros, exhibition catalogue, Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional de España, 20 May–11 September 2016, Madrid, Centro de Estudios Europa Hispánica, 2016, 543 pp., 263 ills., €50.

The catalogue under review accompanied the exhibition held in Madrid devoted to the Enlightenment writer and collector Juan Agustín Ceán Bermúdez (1749–1829; figs. 104 and 105). Ceán is best known for his six-volume dictionary of Spanish artists, *Diccionario*

histórico de los más ilustres profesores de las bellas artes en España, published in 1800 and one of the fundamental sources for Spanish art history. Less appreciated are his intellectual preoccupations reflected in his extensive writings, his association with leading Enlightenment figures and artists, and his tremendous activity as a collector of prints and drawings and promoter of their worth within a progressive social ideology. The catalogue that contains five chapters and individual entries presents groundbreaking scholarship and is the most complete study of this fascinating figure.¹

Ceán is introduced by Javier González Santos through a comprehensive annotated chronology that sets his life and work within the context of key political, social and cultural events. González Santos is also the author of the biography of Ceán, which traces his background and education, professional career, political beliefs and publications. Ceán is often described as the first historian of Spanish art and his writings include translations, catalogues and descriptions of art collections.² Daniel Crespo Delgado reassesses Ceán's reputation as a writer showing that he was not an encyclopedist producing extensive tracts on art history, as he has sometimes been described, but one closely attuned with Enlightenment principles. Ceán's knowledge of art was based on not only his extensive research and travels but also his associations with artists. David García López examines these matters and Ceán's methodology.

Ceán regarded the progress of the arts as a sign of an enlightened society. Printmaking was key to achieving this. It was seen as providing access to art of the past and present and disseminating information of technological and scientific interest. The establishment of the Royal Academy of San Fernando in Madrid in 1744 had a profound consequence for the professional recognition and training of artists in Spain. Engraving first appeared in the curriculum in 1752 and evolved into a core activity. In August 1790, José Vargas Ponce addressed the subject of printmaking at the Academy in his *Discurso histórico sobre el principio y progreso del grabado* (Historical discourse on the origins and development of engraving) where he describes the different types of engraving and strongly supports its value for the



104. Francisco de Goya, *Juan Agustín Ceán Bermúdez*, c. 1798–99, red chalk, 124 x 98 mm (Private collection).

1. See also J. Clisson Aldama, *Juan Agustín Ceán Bermúdez escritor y crítico de Bellas Artes*, Oviedo, 1982.

2. Details of Ceán's writings (published and unpublished) are provided in the Bibliography.



105. Francisco de Goya, *Juan Agustín Ceán Bermúdez*, c. 1786–88, oil on canvas, 1,220 x 880 mm (Private collection).

sciences and the fine arts.

Ceán's activity as a collector of prints and drawings complemented his intellectual disposition. Beatriz Hidalgo Caldas examines Ceán's classification of drawings, his writings on collecting and the market in Spain to form a comprehensive understanding of his ambitions. In addition to drawings by Italian, Flemish and Spanish artists from the sixteenth and seventeenth century, he owned works by artists he knew, such as Goya.

In the last essay, the curator of the exhibition, Elena Santiago Páez, examines Ceán's interest in prints. Ceán's assessment of their value and reasons for collecting them is made clear in his lengthy introduction to the catalogue of his collection, *Cátalogo razonado de las Estampas que posee D. Juan Agustín Ceán Bermúdez formado por él mismo* (1820). He laments the paucity of print collections in Spain with the exception of the Escorial that he notes was little accessible. Ceán observes that he built his collection without having to leave Spain. He began collecting prints in Seville between 1768 and 1778 sourced from vendors in the Baratillo and from estate sales of deceased artists. Upon his return to Madrid a year later, he bought an impression of Pedro Perret's engraving, of c. 1594, made in honour of the architect Juan de Herrera that he described with great enthusiasm in a letter to Antonio Ponz (fig. 106). This is the first document by Ceán relating to printmaking. It also provides a model for how to describe, analyse and interpret a print. In 1791 Ceán returned to Seville where he remained until 1797. Early in his stay there, he wrote the *Discurso sobre el discernimiento de la pinturas, dibuxos y estampas originales de las copias*, a small manual dedicated to *aficionados* who wanted to form a collection. Around the same time he also wrote the *Ensayo para el arreglo por escuelas o reynos de una colección de estampas escogidas* (Essay on the arrangement by school or country of a print collection). The *Discurso* describes the different types of prints and their history as well as what qualifies as a good print. The *Ensayo* is a catalogue of his collection that around 1791 comprised 756 loose sheets. The collection was organized chronologically by school and mainly comprised prints by European masters, amongst them Dürer, Altdorfer, Cranach, Parmigianino, the Carracci, Della Bella, Piranesi, Callot, Lucas van Leyden, Rembrandt and prints reproducing paintings by Raphael, Titian, Rubens and others. The list contains 42 Spanish prints, a number of which today are very rare. The earliest is Diego de Astor's 1606 *St Francis* after El Greco (fig. 107). The collection did not contain popular or devotional prints. By the end of

his life, Ceán's collection is thought to have comprised around 13,000 prints that included single sheets and book illustrations. More than 80 per cent of these are now in the Biblioteca Nacional where they arrived in 1867 after the State purchased the collection of Valentín Carderera (1796–1880).

Three further closely related manuscripts by Ceán dating from 1819–20 concern prints. The first is a bibliography on printmaking covering from 1550 to 1807 that was to serve as an incomplete outline of its history in two parts and a catalogue of his collection (his second catalogue). This second catalogue records almost 13,000 prints (including book illustrations) indicating that he had added over 12,000 prints since his first catalogue. The outline provides a fascinating account of Ceán's view of the development of printmaking, abandoning Florence in favour of Germany as its birthplace and acknowledging important print scholars such as Sandrart and van Mander. The second part of the outline describes the progress of printmaking, with Dürer at the helm but incorporating Italians such as Marcantonio Raimondi. The progress is incomplete, neglecting the Spanish, Flemish, French and English schools but we find the discussion in the catalogue of his prints (the third manuscript) that is known through a copy made by his son Joaquín Ceán in 1833. The manuscript also discusses the origins for printmaking in Spain and accounts for its erratic development. The catalogue lists 227 prints by Goya, including a first edition of the *Caprichos* that Goya gave to Ceán's wife, Manuela Margarita Camas, the set of proofs of the *Disasters of War* with Goya's manuscript captions in pencil and the set of the *Tauromaquia* reordered by Ceán, all of which are now in the British Museum.³ Although the relationship between Ceán and Goya has been explored in an earlier exhibition at the Biblioteca, it is a strange omission not to have an essay on the subject in the present catalogue.⁴ Their mutual passion for prints fueled their friendship.

The bulk of the catalogue comprises entries for 158 works divided into nine sections that correspond to the preliminary essays. The first section draws on material relating to Ceán's biography and includes letters, prints and Goya's portrait from around 1786–88 where Ceán is seated next to a table covered with prints (fig. 105; no. 1.1). The material presents a profile of his life and the same judicious balance can be found in the following section relating to Seville, where Ceán spent long periods of his life. He knew the city's art collections intimately and was the earliest promoter of the Sevillian

3. See British Museum collections online. *Caprichos*, 1975.1025.420.1–5; *Disasters of War*, 1975.1025.421.3; *Tauromaquia*, 1975.1025.422.3.

4. See E. Santiago Páez, 'El gabinete de Ceán Bermúdez' in *Idioma Universal* Goya and la Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid, 1996, pp. 53–98.



106. Pedro Perret, *Minerva Protecting Youth: Homage to Juan de Herrera*, c. 1594, engraving, 311 x 216 mm (Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional de España).

school of painting, especially Murillo. The third part of the catalogue relates to the *Diccionario* and includes some of Ceán's manuscript entries and genealogies for artists (for example, nos. 3.4, 3.6, 3.9). In the *Diccionario*, printmakers have equal footing with painters and sculptors. In Volume V, one of the indexes is dedicated to

etchers and engravers in which 130 artists are identified (from 1524 to 1798). Ceán planned to illustrate the *Diccionario* with portraits of artists. Goya prepared a number of red chalk portraits including one of Ceán (fig. 104), but the *Diccionario* was published without illustration (nos. 3.14–18). The catalogue sections that



107. Diego de Astor, after El Greco, *St Francis*, 1606, etching and engraving, 228 x 147 mm (Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional de España).

follow address Ceán's interest in architecture, his unpublished manuscripts, extensive library and his drawings, before turning to Ceán's print collection. 65 works are described. They include a transcription of the letter relating to the Perret print mentioned above (fig. 106; no. 9.2) and other documents pertaining to his writings on prints followed by a selection of those he owned: key works by German artists followed by the Italians, Dutch and Flemish and Spanish. Each entry includes Ceán's observations allowing us to appreciate what he regarded as important about an artist or a print.

For example, Pietro Testa is described as 'a professor of great genius born of poor parents and difficult circumstances' (no. 9.32). Elsewhere he comments on the influence particular prints had on Spanish artists; for example, Murillo based his painting of the prodigal son on Rembrandt's 1636 etching (no. 9.37).

The catalogue is a model for how to present such a complex subject lucidly. The meticulous research is expressed through engaging essays and an up-to-date bibliography, supported by excellent illustrations and a high overall standard of production.

Prints in Paris c. 1900

Mary Weaver Chapin

Fleur Roos Rosa de Carvalho, *Prints in Paris 1900: From Elite to the Street*, exhibition catalogue, Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum, 3 March–11 June 2017; Tokyo, Mitsubishi Ichigokan Museum, 17 October 2017–17 January 2018; Brussels, Mercatorfonds, 2017, 192 pp., 185 ills, €45.

The Van Gogh Museum is beloved by scholars and tourists alike for its world-class collection of paintings by the eponymous artist and his contemporaries. Less well known is the fact that, over the last two decades, the museum has built a significant body of graphic art, making it one of the most important repositories of French printmaking between 1880 and 1905 (fig. 108). Moreover, the museum has shown an admirable commitment to publishing its collection, first with a book aimed at a general audience in 2013, followed by an extensive print database launched in 2015.¹ A major exhibition and catalogue are the latest contributions to publicizing this extensive collection.

In *Prints in Paris 1900: From Elite to the Street*, Fleur Roos Rosa de Carvalho, curator of prints and drawings at the Van Gogh Museum, investigates the mobile nature of the original print in *fin-de-siècle* Paris. She traces its journey from the rarified realm of the *cabinet d'amateur* of the wealthy print connoisseur to the raucous streets of Paris, which were awash with posters and handbills (fig. 109). Rather than rehearsing the research of print historians such as Phillip Dennis Cate (who contributes

a fine introduction) and others who first studied the explosion in graphic arts in France at the time, Roos Rosa de Carvalho instead takes a large step back from the material. This distance allows her to examine the contexts in which these objects circulated and to understand, as she states, 'the broader field of cultural production to which the critic, the dealer and the consumer also belonged, each contributing in their own way to the appreciation and hence also the significance of the artistic print'.² To this end, the author approaches the subject from multiple perspectives. Part one of the catalogue focuses on the private amateurs – the men (for they were all men) who developed the language of rarity and codified the first canon of contemporary printmaking in the 1890s. She explores not only the attitudes and collecting habits of these gentlemen collectors, but also their environments, which were richly appointed with custom-made furniture for their ever-expanding print collections. At the opposite end of the spectrum were the everyday citizens who saw colour posters and *petites estampes* (handbills, illustrated sheet music, theatre programmes, and the like) in profusion throughout Paris. Regretfully, as the author notes, the voices of the common spectator on the street have been lost to posterity, but we can nonetheless survey the vast variety of graphic displays he or she would have seen, as well as the new visual idiom created by artists that was meant to 'speak in a language as rapid as electricity'.³ To conclude, in part three Roos Rosa de Carvalho considers

1. F. Roos Rosa de Carvalho and M. Vellekoop, *Printmaking in Paris: The Rage for Prints at the Fin de Siècle*, Brussels, 2013; review by M. Chapin, *Print Quarterly*, xxxi, 2014, pp. 330–33; the

website can be found at www.vangoghmuseum.com/prints.

2. Roos Rosa de Carvalho, op. cit., p. 16.

3. Louis Morin, quoted in Roos Rosa de Carvalho, op. cit., p. 64.

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