

Reviews of Books

CARLOS SÁNCHEZ DÍEZ, *Dibujos de Rosario Weiss (1814–1843). Catálogo razonado*. Madrid: Centro de Estudios Europa Hispánica. 2018. v + 419 pp.; 377 colour illustrations.

The obituary of Doña Rosario Weiss by J. A. de Rascón, which appeared in *La Gaceta de Madrid* on 3 September 1843, established the outlines of a biography worthy of a tragic heroine. Born in 1814, she began her studies of art at the age of seven under Francisco Goya, who was by then in all likelihood an intimate friend of her mother, Leocadia. In Bordeaux with Goya, her mother, and brother, she also studied in the drawing academy of Pierre Lacour. She returned to Spain in 1833, and to support herself and her mother copied works in the Museo del Prado. When her privileges there were curtailed, ostensibly because of the damage caused in de-installing paintings so that Weiss, with her poor eyesight, could copy them, she continued to make copies in the Royal Academy of San Fernando which, according to Rascón, were easily confused with the originals. She found employment with an unnamed restorer, creating copies that were than varnished to give them the appearance of originals.

This possibly illicit work did not keep her from participating in the exhibitions at the Liceo Artístico y Literario de Madrid after 1837; the following year, the Liceo offered subscribers a lithograph by Weiss of *La pasiega*, a nursemaid in the regional costume of Pas (Cantabria, Catalogue, 82). Elected as a member of the Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando in 1840, she was appointed as drawing instructor to Isabel II two years later. But the *desdichada suerte* that, according to Rascón, fate reserved for her played out: six months after her appointment, she was granted a medical leave of absence and returned to her position only briefly before her death at the age of twenty-nine in 1843.

Sánchez Díez has brought together drawings and lithographs, accompanied by succinct and informative entries, to bring her artistic career to life. Her earliest known works are drawings done in imitation of, or in collaboration with, Goya (Catalogue, numbers 1–16), which are dated to 1821–1824 on the basis of their rudimentary style, and on the Spanish paper used; contrary to academic principles, Goya started his seven-year-old student with pen, brush and ink. In 1823, according to Rascón, Goya left Rosario in the care of the architect Tiburcio Pérez, who introduced her to the more subtle effects of wash, illustrated by her copies after two of Goya's *Caprichos* (Catalogue, number 20). A pencil and charcoal drawing of a sculpture of Ceres, dated to 1825–1828 betrays Lacour's academic approach and illustrates the young Rosario's versatility in transitioning among media and styles. At twelve years of age, she created her first identifiable miniature portrait, of Goya at eighty years of age (Catalogue, numbers 24–25). There follow studies of fashion, and of the gestures and postures of women seated or reading (Catalogue, numbers 34–36, 37). Dated by Sánchez to 1828, these invite comparison with the painting of the *Lechera de Burdeos* (c.1825–1827) in the Museo del Prado, whose attribution to Goya has been questioned in favour of its identification as a possible collaboration between the aged artist and his pupil. By 1830, these studies inform her pencil portrait of the sexagenarian Madame Duret, seated, wearing a bonnet and dress with mutton-chop sleeves, who has interrupted her reading of a letter and put her glasses in her lap to look up to us with a kind smile (Catalogue, number 52).

Sánchez introduces several lithographs of figures after other artists, landscapes and scenes, trees and an occasional allegory, all printed in Bordeaux prior to 1833 (E4-E 17). But when Rosario returned to Madrid, commissioned copies after master works (most of them lost, their mentions recorded in an Appendix) and small-scale or miniature portraits provided the mainstay of her career. Her subjects included the Duke of Híjar, who argued

unsuccessfully to de-install paintings in the Museo del Prado so that Rosario could continue to copy (Catalogue, number 80), women of letters (Catalogue, numbers 85, 88), and liberal writers and politicians, including Manuel José Quintana, Agustín Argüelles and Ramón Mesonero Romanos (Catalogue, numbers 90, 94, 163).

Writers have attributed Weiss' appointment as drawing instructor to Isabel II to her brother's relationships with the Liberals who came to power after 1840. If this was a factor, it should not eclipse the modest fame she had attained within artistic circles. Nor should it be overlooked that, in recommending three candidates to Argüelles for the position, Quintana named Valentín de Carderera and Antonio Esquivel, but added the nomination of Doña Rosario Weiss in a separate paragraph, in the case that a female teacher ('una Profesora del Arte') was desired (371). Unable to foresee what lay ahead, Weiss enjoyed success, after the many tribulations of a life and career well-documented by this important study.

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