

### Francisco José de Goya y Lucientes as Ludwig

If you compare the masterpieces of Francisco José de Goya y Lucientes (1746–1828) and Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827), you may feel that they differ greatly in their artistic styles and private lives. Indeed, Goya, who was the elder of the two, lived his life mostly in Madrid whereas Beethoven lived mostly in Vienna. Goya was known to be very sociable whereas Beethoven was not, even towards women. Still, they both lived through the transitional period from monarchy to republic with Napoleon's rule and died around the same time. They both showed their affinity for civil culture and new trends while winning considerable support and admiration from aristocratic people.

Beethoven was supported by aristocratic patrons and supposedly fell in love with a few aristocratic ladies, though these relationships led to naught; he once became enthusiastic about Napoleon and ultimately achieved the earthy appreciation of the masses in his day.

What, then of Goya?

Goya was a talented painter with the ability to capture figures at critical moments, like photographers in the 20th century. He also had a gifted sense of expression, with or without color. He painted vibrant scenes from the everyday lives of ordinary people under typical blue skies which lasted until the late evening in Spain. (Such blue skies are also found in the pictures of Salvador Dali in the 20th century.) Thus Goya captured various Spanish manners and customs with the backdrop of Mediterranean landscapes in pictures filled with his heartfelt affinity for his subjects.

Goya's motifs range from lovely feminine portraits to official portraits for the king and the royal family that touched the core of his subjects' curious characters or shallow humanity, which were usually not depicted in official portraits. He once reached the ultimate position of First Court Painter in Spain, but seemed to maintain his spiritual affinity with the masses.

In later life Goya became deaf and completed the black paintings\*<sup>1</sup> on the walls of the dining room and other rooms of his "Deaf Man's Villa"

in Madrid. These paintings reached into the deep reality of the dark side of real life, especially around the period of the Napoleonic wars. They are like private confessions concerning his advanced age and disabled physical state, but also show the richness of his interest in myths, conflicts, and wars, and absurdity. When any situation is expressed in certain work, it is sublimated from its original essence into fine art through the artist's realistic spiritual activity. In this sense, Goya liked to confront absurd issues in this world, as did the novelist Franz Kafka in the 20th century, in order to create these paintings. He also showed a new sensory field in his "black paintings" using mostly black and white, like in medieval Japanese paintings. His major work "The Last Communion of Saint Jose de Calasanz"<sup>\*2</sup> was painted after these black paintings, in 1819, with a technique expressing natural light by leaving blank spaces, which expressed hope for the younger generation behind the saint, while depicting dramatic holy light for the saint with white color on black. He painted not only the shocking Naked Maja,<sup>\*3</sup> but also the picture of a young woman in warm colors against an impressive back light in his latest years.<sup>\*4</sup>

Thus, Goya's art covered a broad spectrum, playing a huge role in mediating between classical and romantic art, and even suggesting absurdity in our era. He lived his life with a disease that caused his deafness and he was buried in Bordeaux and then later reburied in the Royal Chapel of St. Anthony of La Florida in Madrid, decorated with Goya's paintings celebrating the joyful lives of Spanish people.

In this context, I can tell you that Goya was a true giant in painting, as was Beethoven in music.

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The Last Communion of Saint Jose de Calasanz (1819)

\*1 Pinturas negras (1819–1823); \*2 Última comunión de San José de Calasanz (1819); \*3 La maja desnuda (ca. 1800); \*4 La lechera de Burdeos (1827)