

Artist: Francisco Goya

Title: Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters

Date: 1799

Location: Spain

“A man sleeps, apparently peacefully, even as bats and owls threaten from all sides and a lynx lays quiet, but wide-eyed and alert. Another creature sits at the center of the composition, staring not at the sleeping figure, but at us. Goya forces the viewer to become an active participant in the image—the monsters of his dreams even threaten us.

In the image, an artist, asleep at his drawing table, is besieged by creatures associated in Spanish folk tradition with mystery and evil. The title of the print, emblazoned on the front of the desk, is often read as a proclamation of Goya’s adherence to the values of the Enlightenment—without Reason, evil and corruption prevail.

Goya believed that imagination should never be completely renounced in favor of the strictly rational. For Goya, art is the child of reason in combination with imagination.”

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