

Goya's lost snuffbox

by MERCEDES CERÓN

ON 17TH JUNE 1793, the following advertisement appeared in the 'Lost property' section of the *Diario de Madrid*:

Lost in the afternoon of the 5th of this month, a rectangular gold box, engraved all over [with decoration], and with six paintings whose author is David Theniers [sic]. It went missing between the Convent of the Incarnation and the Prado: anyone finding it should hand it in to Don Francisco de Goya, painter to His Majesty the King, who lives in the Calle del Desengaño, on the left-hand side coming from Fuencarral, No. 1, flat 2, where they will be generously rewarded.¹

What works by Teniers were lost by Goya on the way to the Prado? The ambiguity of the advertisement renders the identification of the paintings problematic. Despite the confusing phrasing, emphasis seems to be placed on the box, rather than on its contents. It seems therefore likely that the six pictures were not inside the case, but rather attached to the sides and to the lid as part of its decoration. Genre scenes loosely derived from Teniers's works were an ornamental motif favoured by Parisian goldsmiths such as Eloy Brichard (1756–62) and Jean Ducrollay (c.1708–after 1776), and they often embellished their gold and enamel snuffboxes with such scenes.

A rectangular gold snuffbox in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, set with six small enamelled plaques showing a portrait and five tavern scenes in the style of Teniers provides an idea of what the missing box might have looked like (Fig.24).² This piece, created by Jean Ducrollay, was presented in 1764 as a gift to the actor David Garrick by Philip, Duke of Parma.³ The following year, the Duke's daughter, the future Queen of Spain, María Luisa of Parma, was portrayed by Laurent Pécheux 'holding a snuffbox, its lid open to display a painted miniature of her fiancé, the Prince of Asturias [. . .], later Charles IV of Spain', which James Parker describes as French (Figs.25 and 26).⁴

Although a box with these characteristics would probably have been beyond Goya's means, it could have been a present to him. It is possible, for instance, that María Luisa considered a snuffbox by Ducrollay, or by an equally prestigious French goldsmith, a suitable gift for an artist in her service with whose work she was particularly pleased, as her father had done before her.⁵ The



24. Box decorated with enamels of peasant interiors in the manner of David Teniers, by Jean Ducrollay. Paris, 1759–60. Gold and enamel, 4.1 by 8.1 by 5.9 cm. (Victoria and Albert Museum, London).

coronation of Charles IV and María Luisa as King and Queen of Spain had taken place in January 1789 and on that occasion Goya, who had already served as royal painter to Charles III, was commissioned to paint the first official portraits of the new monarchs.⁶ Among the number of versions and copies of these pictures that have survived, two fine examples of Goya's work for the new King are the *Portrait of Queen María Luisa with a bustle* (P2862; Fig.27) and the *Portrait of Charles IV* (P3224), both now in the Museo del Prado.⁷ In his portrait of the Queen, Goya has recourse to a composition that recalls Pécheux's, although he replaces the snuffbox with the royal crown and ermine. The outcome must have pleased the sitters, since Goya's appointment as court painter was announced shortly afterwards, in April 1789.⁸ During these months, his letters to Martín Zapater contain frequent references to the particularity with which he was often treated by the King and Queen.⁹

All the circumstances mentioned above suggest that what Goya lost on 5th June may have been an elaborate French snuffbox, possibly given to him by Charles IV, by María Luisa or

I am grateful to Nigel Glendinning for his assistance in the preparation of this article.

¹ 'En la tarde del 5 del corriente se extravió una caja de oro cuadrilonga, toda grabada, con seis pinturas finas: su autor David Theniers [sic], la qual se hechó de menos desde el Convento de la Encarnación, hasta el Prado: quien la hubiese hallado la entregará en casa de D. Francisco de Goya, pintor de Cámara de S. M. que vive en la calle del Desengaño, entrando por la de Fuencarral, á mano izquierda, n. 1 qto. Segundo, donde se dará un buen hallazgo'; *Diario de Madrid* 168 (17th June 1793), p.702.

² Victoria and Albert Museum, London, inv. no.310–1885.

³ On the gift from the Duke of Parma, Garrick wrote: 'I called at Parma on my way hither, and was introduced to the duke [. . .] He had read Shakespeare, and was very desirous to hear our manner of speaking, which desire he shewed with so much feeling and delicacy, that I readily consented [. . .]. He was greatly pleased, and the next morning sent me a very handsome gold box, with some of the finest enameled [sic] painting upon all the sides of it I ever saw'. This present and a second box received from the Duke of Wurtemberg in the course of the same journey prompted Charles Holland's comment on Garrick's going 'about the continent mouthing for snuffboxes'; D. Little and G. Kahl, eds.: *The Letters of David Garrick*, London 1962, II, p.421,

cited in P. Walch: 'David Garrick in Italy', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 3 (1970), p.528.

⁴ Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, inv. no.26.260.9. J. Parker: 'French Eighteenth-Century Furniture Depicted on Canvases', *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 24 (1966), pp.182–83. For the documentation concerning the commission and delivery of the portrait, see A. Ros de Barbero: 'Laurent Pécheux: pintor francés retratista de María Luisa de Parma, Princesa de Asturias', in M. Cabañas Bravo, ed.: *El arte foráneo en España: presencia e influencia*, Madrid 2005, pp.407–16.

⁵ For a discussion of snuffboxes as gifts in the French Court, see C.L. Avery: 'French snuffboxes: a notable loan', *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 30 (1935), p.246.

⁶ See J. Tomlinson: *Francisco Goya: The tapestry cartoons and the early career at the Court of Madrid*, Cambridge MA 1989, p.187.

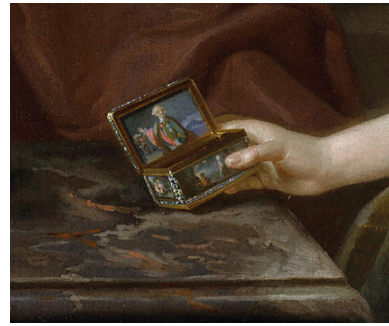
⁷ See V. de Sambricio: 'Los retratos de Carlos IV y María Luisa, por Goya', *Archivo español de arte* 30 (1957), pp.85–113.

⁸ Tomlinson, *op. cit.* (note 6), p.23.

⁹ See, for instance, letter dated 20th February 1790, in S. Symmons, ed.: *Goya: A life in letters*, London 2004, p.196, no.196.



25. *María Luísa of Parma (1751–1819), later Queen of Spain*, by Laurent Pécheux. 1765. Canvas, 230.8 by 164.5 cm. (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York).



26. Detail of Fig.25.

by them both. Some details, however, preclude the unreserved acceptance of such an interpretation. The reference to the 'author' of the paintings seems odd when considering that the enamelled plaques were only genre scenes in the manner of Teniers. Moreover, the text describes the missing object as a box without specifying of what kind, although a number of snuffboxes were identified as such in the same section of the newspaper. Finally, the royal gift is not mentioned in any of the surviving letters from Goya to Zapater.¹⁰

The identification of the 'author' of the pictures as Teniers suggests that the advertiser took for granted the familiarity of the average reader of the *Diario de Madrid* with the work of the Flemish painter. As in France and Britain, in eighteenth-century Spain, Dutch and Flemish genre paintings were dismissed as unworthy of the attention of the enlightened collector.¹¹ Nevertheless, Charles IV, his brother the Infante Don Luis, and the Queen's favourite, Manuel Godoy, were all admirers of Teniers's works. At least fifteen pictures, two sets of prints and three porcelain figures after Teniers were listed in the Infante's inventory.¹² Antonio Ponz mentions several works by Teniers in the collection that Charles IV kept in his country house, the Casita del Príncipe, in El Escorial, when he was still Prince of Asturias.¹³ Some of them were inherited by the Prince from his mother, Isabel Farnese, whose taste for Teniers has been singled

out for comment by Pérez Sánchez.¹⁴ It was not shared, however, by other patrons of Goya, such as Sebastián Martínez and the Duchess of Osuna. Teniers's name does not appear in the inventory of Goya's possessions in 1812.¹⁵

Paintings by Teniers may on the other hand have been part of the collection bought from Goya's brother-in-law, Francisco Bayeu, by the royal goldsmith, Leonardo Chopinot, who had been born in Paris but worked in Madrid from 1763.¹⁶ Chopinot supplied 'a number of boxes and diamonds' to the Spanish Court in 1786,¹⁷ and the description of one of the boxes as 'made of gold and enamelled with a medallion in its centre' suggests that his works followed the French taste exemplified by Ducrollay's snuffboxes. However, most of the commissions that Chopinot received from the court were for jewellery. Enamelled boxes of the type described in the advertisement could be acquired more easily from one of the many Spanish firms that imported French goods.

The ambiguous phrasing in the description of the box in the *Diario de Madrid* indicates a blurred, or even non-existent, distinction between the artist's conception of the work and the craftsman's responsibility for making it. Paradoxically, this was one of Goya's main concerns when producing cartoons for the Royal Tapestry Factory and emphasising on his bills that his designs were 'of his own invention'.¹⁸ Besides a similar status as luxury commodities, the enamels after Teniers's paintings and the tapestries after Goya's cartoons also shared an original approach to popular imagery. Only after being turned into ornaments could the figures that populated these genre scenes gain access to the palatial settings for which such objects were created.

In the past, connections between Goya and Teniers have been established on the basis of the subjects depicted by the former in his tapestry cartoons. As Janice Tomlinson noticed, a growing preference for genre scenes derived from seventeenth-century Dutch and Flemish models can be perceived in the tapestries commissioned by the King, some of which would have been based on prints after Teniers's paintings.¹⁹ This was the tradition within which Goya's career as Court Painter began in the 1770s. In the late nineteenth century, technical similarities between Goya and Teniers were also remarked upon.²⁰

¹⁰ Only a very small number of letters written by Goya between 1789 and 1794 have survived; see Tomlinson, *op. cit.* (note 6), p.190; see also X. de Salas: *Cartas a Martín Zapater*, Madrid 1982, pp.9–35.

¹¹ D. Solkin: *Painting for Money: The visual arts and the public sphere in eighteenth-century England*, New Haven and London 1996, pp.51–52.

¹² I am very grateful to Nigel Glendinning for pointing out the Infante Don Luis's collection in connection with Teniers and for providing me with his own notes from the inventory; Madrid, Archivo Histórico de Protocolos de Madrid, p. no.20.822, Not. Martínez Salazar, fols.463, 465, 470, 473, 474, 477, 478 and 629. For Don Luis's collection, see S. Domínguez-Fuentes: 'Les collections de l'Infant Don Luis Antonio Jaime de Borbón y Farnesio', unpublished Ph.D. diss. (Université Paris-Sorbonne Paris IV, 2001).

¹³ J. Jordán de Urrés: 'La Casita del Príncipe de El Escorial', *Cuadernos de Restauración de Iberdrola* 12 (2006), p.25.

¹⁴ A.E. Pérez Sánchez: 'El Coleccionismo Real', *El arte en las cortes europeas del siglo XVIII*, Madrid 1989, p.582.

¹⁵ For works by Teniers in other private collections in Madrid, see N. Glendinning: *Goya: La década de los 'Caprichos'. Retratos, 1792–1804*, Madrid 1992, pp.54–64.

¹⁶ J.L. Morales y Marín: *Francisco Bayeu: Vida y obra*, Zaragoza 1995, pp.273–78.

¹⁷ A. Aranda Huete: 'Las joyas de la reina María Luísa de Parma, esposa de Carlos IV', in J.F. Rivas Carmona, ed.: *Estudios de platería: San Eloy*, Murcia 2007, pp.21–40.

¹⁸ Tomlinson, *op. cit.* (note 6), pp.26–28.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.9.

²⁰ Eugenio Lucas was commissioned by Marcial Torres Adalid to paint some works in the style of both painters; see N. Glendinning: *Goya and his critics*, New Haven and London 1977, pp.16–17.

²¹ Tomlinson, *op. cit.* (note 6), p.215; and J. Wilson-Bareau and M. Mena Marqués: exh. cat. *Goya, Truth and Fantasy: The Small Paintings*, Madrid (Museo del Prado),



27. *Portrait of Queen María Luisa with a bustle*, by Francisco de Goya. 1789. Canvas, 205 by 132 cm. (Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid).

What is the relevance of the note published in the *Diario de Madrid*? Assuming that it was Goya, and not any other member of his household, who lost the box and published the advertisement, this would bring forward the date of his return to Madrid from Cádiz, formerly thought to be between mid-June and early July 1793.²¹ It also provides the precise location of Goya's home at the time.²² More importantly, if the lost object was a French snuffbox decorated with enamels after Teniers, it suggests that Charles IV and María Luisa may well have shown clear signs of their admiration for Goya's work at a relatively early stage. Tomlinson has referred to 'the limited alternatives' offered to the monarchs by the scarcity of talented painters in the employ of the Spanish court as a probable reason for the commission of the coronation portraits from Goya in 1789.²³ According to the same author, after 1790, 'he received no other royal portrait commissions until 1799', which would suggest that their appreciation of 'his talents as a portraitist' only became manifest ten years later. However, a gift from the sitters would imply that, far from being indifferent, their reaction to the early portraits would have been positive.

A snuffbox was not only an 'object of high-fashion', but also 'a mark of aristocratic favour' traditionally offered to diplomats and to distinguished artists.²⁴ On his return to London, David Garrick showed his proudly as a sign of his international reputation. Goya's enamelled snuffbox would have signified his rising status at court. Was the missing box ever recovered? It is impossible to say, but the advertisement was not published again, and 'two gold boxes', mentioned in an inventory of Goya's belongings dated 1812, were left to his son Javier.²⁵

Chicago (Art Institute) and London (Royal Academy) 1994, p.189.

²² For Goya's address in 1789, see J. Domínguez Bordona: 'Diario del grabador González Sepúlveda', *Archivo español de arte y arqueología* 11 (1935), pp.315–17. I owe this reference to Nigel Glendinning.

²³ J. Tomlinson: *Goya in the Twilight of Enlightenment*, New Haven and London 1992, p.78.

²⁴ C. le Corbeiller: 'German Porcelain of the Eighteenth Century', *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 47 (1990), p.41.

²⁵ J.M. Cruz Valdovinos: 'La partición de bienes entre Francisco y Javier Goya a la muerte de Josefa Bayeu y otras cuestiones', in I. García de la Rasilla and F. Calvo Serraller, eds.: *Goya: nuevas visiones. Homenaje a Enrique Lafuente Ferrari*, Madrid 1987, p.142.

Juan Muñoz's 'Five seated figures' (1996) at the Museo Reina Sofía, Madrid

by LYNNE COOKE

DISPLACEMENT, NOMADISM and estrangement – the foundation of the modern condition – are the psychological states that preoccupied Juan Muñoz throughout a relatively short career, one that began in the early 1980s and ended with his untimely death, aged forty-eight, in 2001. Unidentified and unidentifiable places – that is, places that are neither nowhere nor yet somewhere nameable – were a constant in Muñoz's work from its first public presentations in the mid-1980s. Small iron balconies, a minaret and a miniature staircase were among the subjects of the sculptures that comprised his first exhibition in 1984. Turning interior into exterior, or inside into outside, these works set up a tension between literal and imaginary spaces, thus producing a strangely dislocating effect. In subsequent pieces such as *The wasteland* (1987; private collection), Muñoz created disconcerting

scenarios by introducing optically destabilising substitute floors of linoleum tiles in bold geometric patterns. Often they were inhabited by ventriloquist dummies, prompters or mannequins – surrogate speakers who serve as channels through which narratives might be voiced.

In the early 1990s, in a provocative move, the Spanish-born artist introduced a repertory of near life-size figures of young men whose bodies ended in spheres and whose anonymous faces bore features that indicated their age without betraying more specific traces of character or identity. At once mobile and immobile, these figures were deployed in groupings which Muñoz called 'Conversation Pieces'. Generally, they appeared most animated when seen from a distance, glimpsed askance or spied in passing. This need for a certain physical distance had a



28. *Five seated figures*, by Juan Muñoz. 1996. Resin and mirror, dimensions variable. (Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid).

psychological dimension in that his youthful protagonists tended to be either self-absorbed or, when in dialogue, involved in some enigmatic exchange. More alike than siblings, as doubles or clones of each other, they suggested fissures and displacements at the very core of the self. Thereafter, the alter or double, who may also become a companion and confidant, became the basis for a wide array of Muñoz's sculptural groupings, of which *Five seated figures* (Fig.28) is arguably the most memorable.¹ As in previous works with this repertory of figures, the group is self-contained; each reacts somewhat differently to the shock experienced by one of their members when he sees a reflection in the mirror behind him: whether the heightened reaction is caused by an unexpected moment of self-recognition or by a troubling mis-recognition remains unknowable. If spectators draw close to the group, their feet suddenly invade the reflection – the uncanny effect this intervention produces suggests that some transgression has occurred: some inviolable threshold has been crossed. Here, as elsewhere in his *œuvre*, Muñoz eloquently explores the limits and borders of the self; the setting of boundaries in personal space is experienced, and relations between familiars and the larger social milieu beyond is negotiated. Although in this instance the figural group exists as an autonomous sculpture rather than as part of an installation with a scenographic dimension, like many of Muñoz's key pieces *Five seated figures* is replete with dramatic overtones.

The terms in which Muñoz deployed various theatrical forms and devices are, nonetheless, very different from those found in previous eras. Eschewing the rhetorical bravura typical of the

Baroque *mise-en-scène*, Muñoz's somewhat indeterminate renderings are infused with a haunting sense of mystery that has modernist affinities, whether in the early paintings of de Chirico or the austere stagings that are a hallmark of Samuel Beckett's plays. In his work, as in theirs, melancholy registers a sense of anomie and unidentifiable loss.

Critical acclaim for Muñoz's work in certain quarters was matched by pronounced silence in others. At the heart of these contradictory responses were issues central to late modernism: whether the return to figuration and narrative in sculpture signified an academic retreat from the innovative forays made during the 1970s under the rubric of 'the expanded field of sculpture'; whether the renewed preoccupation with the theatrical, another of the taboos in modernist discourse, indicated an embrace of cross-disciplinarity or, alternatively, a collapse of critical rigour; and whether debts to literary and filmic traditions in service of narrative traduced the formalist integrity of any visual work of art.

Muñoz's challenge to some of the central modernist tenets was part of a broader generational impulse, as is evident in the work of such peers as Thomas Schütte, Katharina Fritsch, Robert Gober and Rosemarie Trockel. His contribution was nonetheless distinguished by traces of his distinctive Spanish heritage, as is evident in his iconography (the use of the figure of the dwarf in a number of key works), materials and techniques (his recourse to a language of constructed metal sculpture in early pieces), and in his sensibility (the mordant tone that permeates so many of his sculptures). Although *Five seated figures* is less overtly indebted to this legacy than many of his other works, its timbre – the way in which the ensemble is suspended in a charged moment riddled with dark forebodings – bears Muñoz's distinctive signature.

¹ The work was acquired by the Museum at Sotheby's, New York, *Contemporary art*, 11th November 2009, lot 51.