Sheila Newbery

LOS CAPRICHOS / AFTER GOYA

With contributions by Raúl Quintanilla Armijo and Larissa Archer
Sheila Newbery is a photographer who works with traditional printing techniques, including the platinum-palladium method, in her Northern California studio. She studied art history at Trinity College (Hartford, Connecticut) and English literature at Princeton University. Her photography projects have included *Ordinary Dancers*, shot in Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil (2008), and *Ohio Woods*, photographs of an evening’s snowfall taken during a cross-country journey by train (2013). This is her first published book of photographs. 

Los Caprichos evolved from a project presented to the bookmaking workshop organized by David Chickey (Radius Books), Alex Webb (Magnum) and Rebecca Norris Webb in Santa Fe, New Mexico, in 2011. Early caprichos from this series were first exhibited in the 12th Annual Joyce Grant Photography Exhibition (2013), curated by Sarah Kennel (High Museum of Art, Atlanta) and Con(Text) (2015), juried by Tim Clark, founder and editor of 1000 Words photography magazine (UK).
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LOS CAPRICHOS / AFTER GOYA

Epigraph by Raúl Quintanilla Armijo
Interview with the artist by Larissa Archer

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EL SUEÑO DE LOS MONSTRUOS PRODUCE RAZONES
Raúl Quintanilla Armijo

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Oh, no, I see a darkness.
Oh, no, I see a darkness.
Oh, no, I see a darkness.
Oh, no, I see a darkness.
—Will Oldham
El sueño de los monstruos produce razones.
Practice being brave. America First.
American Fist. American fisting. Alternate facts. We begin bombing in five seconds.
I heard that one before. Hardcore post-truth.
Los Ringling brothers se despiden poniendo a su elefante en la casa blanca mientras levanta las patitas delirando cabalgado por the new Mona Lisa que ni se inmuta y copia.
Devota Profesión. The Red Units on the loose.
Let’s be unpredictable. Let’s make America Great again. Grab her by the crotch. Make the bitch go down like a #10 again. Cock sucker blues America. Tantos adeptos. We begin bombing in five seconds. El sueño de los monstruos produce razones. Razones suficientes para morir de nuevo. Let’s go nuke on the biscuit heads. Let’s show mommy to the sand n——s. Let’s raid the berry pickers. Let’s ban the head bangers. De quién tanto papeleo. Let’s deflower the Mayflower with a corncob. Let’s build a beaaauuuutiful wall. Compact the dreamers dream. Let’s make America Great. And White again. Out: The Founding Fathers. In: The Mother of All Bombs flying swiftly towards a place near you, and the family and the dog, and the cat. You will be fired. You will all be fired. Roasted. Sálvese quien pueda. Let’s start the witch hunt now. This is HUGE. We begin bombing in five seconds. Vade retro Satana.
Practice being brave. Hack into the future. Art into the future. Art as a wall. As all walls enlightened. Art as perpetual criticism illuminating this dreadful darkness of whiteness. Let’s make America Great whether you like it or not. Get a little help from your duplicitous friends. Put it in. Collide collude idiocy. Don’t say you didn’t see it coming. The dark dead end. Such a fine piece of chocolate cake. Just like captions meant to puzzle. Plead the 5th. Take a selfie tweet a tweet. Get the picture. Name it. Salto de fe.
It’s just Detroit. Take the leap of faith / read the signs on the face of monstrosity.

Panama, Junio 2017
Take siete
PREFACE
Los Caprichos is an artist’s book based on a series of eighty palladium prints. The title is from Francisco Goya’s album of the same name: a collection of eighty aquatint etchings published in 1799. Goya’s prints are a mordant distillation of his world, loosely modeled on earlier satires, most notably, the Sueños (1607–1635) of the Spanish poet Francisco de Quevedo.

Following Quevedo’s example, Goya started out thinking of his images as a series of dreams: we know this because he used the word sueño in the title of each of his preparatory sketches.* Also, though he ultimately decided to call his prints caprichos, he included a group of the earlier dream titles as captions in the final album. The prints are markedly nocturnal in feel; many swerve into nightmare. In the most famous of these, “El sueño de la razón produce monstruos” (The sleep of reason produces monsters)—the album’s original frontispiece—the artist shows himself actually dreaming, surrounded by a frightening tumult of night creatures. Their frenzied wing-flapping and moon-eyed intensity is a signal that in the twilight universe we’re about to enter, anything can happen. Take a look, he seems to tell us, and keep your wits about you.

You could say that the terrain of dreams is my point of departure, too, yet these caprichos plumb a different sort of dreamscape, no less tinged with nightmare. The photographs, all stills shot from moving “footage” found in online videos, freely adapt Goya’s subject matter, even as my captions sometimes quote his captions directly. The whole relies on some of the same devices that Goya put to use: the tension of words paired with images, the mixing of “high” and “low,” and the freedom to wander among (and borrow from) art history’s multitude of slyly tilting mirrors.

LIST OF PLATES

01 Be careful going down
   Tenga cuidado al bajar

02 In good hands
   En buenas manos

03 He scares the babysitters
   Asusta a las niñeras*

04 So well trained
   Tan bien entrenado

05 There is much to suck
   Mucho hay que chupar*

06 So many followers
   Tantos adeptos

07 Sink or swim
   O te hundes o te sales a flote

08 More prisoners
   Más prisioneros

09 Are you ready to learn new skills?
   ¿Está dispuesto a adquirir habilidades nuevas?

10 He’s just a little boy!
    ¡Es solo un niño!

11 Love and death
    El amor y la muerte*

12 Test of obedience
    Prueba de obediencia

13 Whose is all this paperwork?
    ¿De quién este papeleo?

14 The lucky one
    La afortunada

15 A bad night
    Mala noche*

* Asterisks indicate a direct quotation from Goya’s 1799 album. Philip Hofer’s edition of Los Caprichos (Dover, 1969) is still an excellent introduction to the original series.
16  Correction  
Corrección*

17  Because he broke the rules  
Porque rompió las reglas

18  Trickle down  
Riego por goteo

19  Stronger than an ox  
Más fuerte que un buey

20  So eloquent!  
¡Qué boca de oro!* 

21  Just as you wish  
A pedir de boca

22  If I were a rich girl  
Si fuera una chica rica

23  The plucking  
El desplume

24  Un genio sin duda  
A genius no doubt

25  Out hunting for teeth  
A caza de dientes*

26  Look what a surgeon can do  
Lo que pueda un cirujano

27  The game is rigged  
El resultado está amañado

28  Bon voyage  
Buen viaje*

29  Whatever he says  
Diga lo que diga

30  Interrogation  
Interrogatorio

31  God help them  
Dios los ayude

32  Anda suelto  
He's on the loose

33  No necesitan manos  
No hands needed

34  Until death  
Hasta la muerte*

35  Cured (again)  
Curado (de nuevo)

36  Hands together  
Las manos juntas

37  Through thick and thin  
En las buenas y en las malas

38  It's very big  
Es muy grande

39  No more no less  
Ni más ni menos*

40  A bid from the rafters  
Una puja de las vigas

41  The cleaning  
La limpieza

42  Pretty teacher  
Linda maestra*

43  For your safety  
Para su seguridad

44  Zzzzzzz  
Zzzzz

45  Learn to swallow  
Aprenda a tragar

46  She hides the seams  
Oculta las costuras

47  Sleep overcomes them  
Las rinde el sueño*

48  Place your bets  
Hagan sus apuestas

49  Leap of faith  
Salto de fe
Take a peek!
¡Eche un vistazo!

Two of a kind
Tal para cual*

He’s blowing off steam
Se desahoga

Under the spell
Bajo el hechizo

Devout profession
Devota profesión*

Experiments
Ensayos*

They congratulate each other
Se felicitan entre ellos

The critique
La crítica

Calling to the demons
Llamando a los demonios

The speculators
Los especuladores

Nothing could be done about it
No hubo remedio*

Open wide
Abra bien

Where is Mama going?
¿Donde va mamá?*

Unexpected kiss
Beso inesperado

What one does to another
Unos á otros*

Homage to the master
Obsequio al maestro*

Everyone for himself
Sálvase quien pueda

Has his time come?
¿Le ha llegado la hora?

You cannot escape
No te escaparás*

What’s going on out there?
¿Qué está passando ahí afuera?

And you believed them!
¡Y tu los creíste!

Won’t they stop that racket?
¿No pararán ese aullido?

On the prowl
A hurtadillas

No one has seen us
Nadie nos ha visto*

What a party!
¡Qué fiesta!

He found the button
Encontró el botón

Hurrah!
¡Viva!

Well, it’s already over
Bueno, ya acabó

There’s no need to panic
No hay motivo para el pánico

Don’t mess with witches
No te metas con las brujas

It is time
Ya es hora*
LOS CAPRICHOS
01 Be careful going down
Tenga cuidado al bajar
In good hands
En buenas manos
He scares the babysitters
Asusta a las niñeras
04 So well trained
Tan bien entrenado
There is much to suck
Mucho hay que chupar
So many followers
Cantos adepts
**Raúl Quintanilla Armijo** is an artist and critic based in Managua, Nicaragua. His work was included in the 56th Venice Biennale (2015) and in David Craven’s landmark study, *Art and Revolution in Latin America, 1910–1990* (Yale University Press, 2006). He is a founding editor of *Artefacto* (1990–2002) and a founding member of the Malagana Collective and editor of its magazine. He is a current member of the Mácula Collective and of the Somoto Blues Band. A solo exhibition of his work, *No tiene nombre* (Unspeakable), was held at the Museo de Arte y Diseño Contemporáneo in San José, Costa Rica in 2018.

**Larissa Archer** is a writer, critic and performing artist based in San Francisco and New York. She has contributed essays and interviews to *Frieze, Hyperallergic, SF Weekly, Huffington Post, The Rumpus* and *Art Practical*, among others. Her interviews of writers, artists and performing artists have ranged widely in subject matter—from Shostakovich (interview with Wendy Lesser) to striptease (Dita von Teese), and she has written evocatively about the experience of *being* photographed by Todd Hido in her essay, “I Modeled for Todd Hido,” published in the online journal *Vantage*.
Los Caprichos is an artist’s book of palladium prints inspired by Francisco Goya’s album of the same name, a series of eighty aquatint etchings he offered for sale directly to the Madrid public in 1799. Goya conceived of his images as a series of sueños—dreams—through which he could explore the foibles of his world with barbed impunity. This collection takes up the artist’s mordant spirit with a photographic (and digital) twist: Newbery turns the lens on the phosphorescent dreamscapes that flow through our sundry devices, drawing pointed connections between our photographic life, miniaturized and ubiquitous, and its deeper roots in Western printmaking.

“Where Goya wavered about the power of reason over his wild world of dreams...these Caprichos entangle us in a post-internet reality: their dark allure draws us in. From this shimmering ether, they seem to say, there is no escape.” —LARISSA ARCHER