

## ***Students at the Pestalozzian Military Academy***

**Francisco de Goya, Spanish, 1746-1828**

**1806, Oil on canvas, 21 3/4 x 38 1/4 inches**

**The Algur H. Meadows Collection, Meadows Museum, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas**

### **About the Artist**

Francisco José de Goya y Lucientes was born in 1746 in a village in northeastern Spain. As a young man, he may have tried bullfighting, but this is only one of the many uncertainties historians have concerning the life of this intriguing man. By the age of 20, he had gone to Madrid, where his earliest works were commissions for churches. In 1786, he was named "Painter to the King" for Charles III. He then became "First Painter to the King" for Charles IV in 1799. His paintings of the royal family were often subtle revelations of the greed and corruption that existed within the ruling class.

Goya gained both financial success and fame early in his career, but his personal life was filled with tragedy. He and his wife Josefa Bayeu had many children, perhaps as many as twenty, but only one lived to maturity. In 1792, he suffered an illness that left him almost totally deaf. After a nearly fatal illness in 1819, he bought a house near Madrid that he named La Quinta del Sordo, or "The House of the Deaf Man."

Goya's work includes some 500 oil paintings and murals, approximately 300 etchings and lithographs, and hundreds of drawings. His work expresses a wide range of emotions.

### **About the Art**

This painting is a landscape that contains figures and animals that tell a story (see the story on the back of the Artlinks print).

*Jacob Laying the Rods Before the Sheep of Laban* is the fourth in a series of five paintings that tell the story about Jacob from Genesis, the first book of the Bible. Two other paintings that tell other parts of the story are in the Hermitage in Leningrad, Russia. The titles of these two are: *Jacob's Dream* and *Jacob Receiving the Blessing of Isaac*. Another painting from the series is *Laban Searching for his Household Gods in Jacob's Hut*, and it is in the Cleveland Museum of Art, in Cleveland, Ohio. The whereabouts of the fifth painting, actually the third in the series of five, *The Meeting of Jacob and Rachel*, was unknown until quite recently when the National Gallery of Ireland acquired a painting believed to be the missing work. Records exist of the sale of this painting in 1817 by art dealer Alexis Delahante, but nothing is known about its provenance (the history of the ownership of the work) from that time until its recent discovery in Dublin.

### **Additional Information**

This painting is a fragment of a larger work that was originally a portrait of Manuel Godoy. The artist presents a number of young men involved in activities representing the ideas of Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, the Swiss educator who believed in educating all

children. He felt that every individual should be taught the dignity of honest work and be prepared to work and achieve independence. The well-dressed boys are holding triangles of wood, which indicate the emphasis placed on studying and drawing basic forms. On the left, a boy in more common clothing uses a hammer that represents Pestalozzi's emphasis on manual and vocational training for the poorer students. All of the students are male, since, at this point in history, girls, even those of the wealthier classes, were not given a formal education.

### **About the Time and Place**

During the years before Goya painted *Students from the Pestalozzian Military Academy*, Spain enjoyed a period of prosperity. Charles IV made many government reforms. Taxes were lowered and collected more fairly. Roads and other public improvements were built, and the economy of the country began to grow. During this period strong ties between Spain and France developed because the rulers of both countries were members of the Bourbon family.

While Spain had a close relationship with France, Spain and Great Britain came into conflict during this period because the two countries were in competition for power in colonial America. Spain came to the aid of the American colonists against Great Britain in the Revolutionary War. In 1783, the Treaty of Paris ended the Revolutionary War and granted Spain control of Florida. With the acquisition of Florida, Spain's empire in America was at its height, but the fighting with the British had weakened the once powerful country.

Napoleon Bonaparte seized control of France in 1799. At first France and Spain were allies, but in 1808, French forces invaded Spain and took control of the government. The Spanish people strongly resisted the French occupation of their country and fought back with a method of fighting that they called guerrilla or little war. The word has been used ever since to describe unconventional fighting carried out by bands of people engaging in harassment and sabotage. The destruction of parts of Goya's *Students from the Pestalozzian Military Academy* probably occurred in 1808, during a period of unrest when angry citizens attacked images of unpopular leaders.