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Cover picture

The Madhouse (painted some time between 1808 and 1814) is one of Francisco de Goya's (1746–1828) best known paintings. His aunt and uncle had suffered from major mental illnesses and when Goya developed a sudden loss of balance with deafness and partial blindness in 1792 he must have wondered if he was himself on the edge of madness. Around this time, in 1793 or 1794, he painted *The Yard of Madmen* based on a visit he had made to a psychiatric hospital in Zaragoza. He made only a partial recovery from his illness and was left totally deaf. Reliant upon sign language for communication, he became increasingly isolated and mistrustful with periods of profoundly depressed mood. Through the staged composition of *The Madhouse* Goya uses the asylum as a pessimistic metaphor for the corruption of Spanish society following Napoleon's invasion and occupation of Spain in 1808 to 1814. The patients are each symbolic representations of the Church, Army, King and People of Spain. Reproduced with permission of the Museo de la Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando, Madrid. Thanks to Dr Miriam Barrett for submitting the image.

