BOB THOMPSON

Bob Thompson's *Tree* is based on the fantastical, morally charged work of <u>Francisco de Goya</u>, the Spanish master known for his scathing commentary on the Spanish royalty and religious persecution in the late eighteenth century. Thompson's painting combines two consecutive plates from Goya's 1799 collection of etchings: *Los caprichos: <u>Volaverunt (They Have Flown)</u>* on the left and *<u>Quien lo creyera! (Who Would Have Thought It!)</u>* on the right. Instead of merely re-creating Goya's etchings, however, Thompson produced a different narrative by modifying the characters and adding new elements. Goya's adulteress becomes a redheaded, winged angel holding an uprooted tree. Her human form watches over several bestial figures, suggesting that human reason presides over primal instincts. To unify Goya's two images, Thompson incorporated the color red throughout the work and positioned the tree on a diagonal.

Thompson attended the University of Louisville in Kentucky before moving to New York City in 1959. In New York he studied the old masters at the city's museums and became friends with luminaries such as jazz musician Ornette Coleman and multimedia artist <u>Red Grooms</u>. Thompson traveled to Europe on a fellowship, painting *Tree* in Paris. Like *Tree*, many of his paintings are renditions of old master compositions. Sadly, Thompson died in Rome of complications after gallbladder surgery at the age of twenty-nine, cutting short his promising career.

From the classroom of HANNAH SIMS VISUAL ART   Text from the National Gallery of Art