

Sublime Ideas
*Drawings by Giovanni
Battista Piranesi*

MARCH 10 THROUGH JUNE 4, 2023

LARGE PRINT LABELS

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Morgan
Library &
Museum

Sketches showing temples, tombs, sarcophagi, ground plans, vases, and a circus, ca. 1742

Pen and brown ink

Sketches for a palace courtyard with an equestrian statue, ca. 1742

Pen and brown ink

The Morgan Library & Museum, bequest of Junius S. Morgan and gift of Henry S. Morgan; 1966.11:17 and :18

When Piranesi began his architectural training, his masters were still deeply influenced by Johann Fischer von Erlach (1656–1723), the leading architect at the court of the Holy Roman Emperor in Vienna around 1700. Piranesi studied Fischer's *Plan of Civil and Historical Architecture* (1721), one of the first comparative studies of world architecture. He copied the temples, mausoleums, and fantastic vases on the right sheet from several different plates of that treatise, while the left sheet depicts Fischer's reconstruction of the Forum of Trajan.

Fischer's imaginative historicism underlies Piranesi's *Prima parte* inventions; only later in his career would Piranesi make careful studies of the ancient monuments themselves.

Architectural complex: A court with a domed building, ca. 1743

Pen and brown ink and wash, over black chalk

**The Morgan Library & Museum, bequest of Junius S. Morgan
and gift of Henry S. Morgan; 1966.11:2**

Here, another architectural fantasy from the early 1740s shows Piranesi in an academic mode. Taking a step beyond Fischer's imaginative reconstruction of the second-century Forum of Trajan with its triumphal arches, equestrian monuments, columns, and arcades (see the adjacent drawing), Piranesi combines the pedimented front of the Pantheon with a dome raised on a high drum, a scheme derived from Michelangelo's design for St. Peter's Basilica. An inscription at lower right, "Statua al Cavallo," suggests that an equestrian sculpture would be added to the scheme. The lively rendering and calligraphic shorthand—for example, the twisting lines that indicate sculpture at the roofline of the courtyard—demonstrate Piranesi's growing confidence as a draftsman and inventor.

A church interior with tombs, urns, and a freestanding monument, ca. 1742–43, with later retouching by the artist
Pen and brown ink and brown and gray wash, with black and red chalk and compass incisions

The Morgan Library & Museum, purchased as the gift of the Fellows; 1959.14

The architectural framework of this interior seems to have been inspired by Andrea Palladio's sixteenth-century church of the Redentore in Venice, though the space has been amplified by bigger columnar bases, coffering on the arches, and deeper flights of stairs. Piranesi probably created the drawing as an independent architectural fantasy, but it had an afterlife. The design seems to lie behind the *Vestibule of an Ancient Temple* in the *Prima parte*, and elements such as the screen of columns in the apse reappear in the church of Santa Maria del Priorato, built by Piranesi in the 1760s. He likely added the heavy lines of brown ink and the red chalk in the foreground long after creating the original drawing, probably when he mounted and signed the sheet around 1760.



Vestibolo d'antico Tempio, from the *Prima parte di architettura, e prospettive*, 1743. Etching. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Palatial courtyard surrounded by colonnades, ca. 1741–42

**Pen and brown ink and wash with touches of white
heightening, over black chalk**

Collection of Andrew Robison

Colonnaded courtyard, 1742–43

Pen and brown ink and gray wash, over black chalk

**The Morgan Library & Museum, bequest of Junius S. Morgan
and gift of Henry S. Morgan; 1966.11:3**

These two drawings relate to the *Prospect of a Royal Courtyard*, plate 9 in the first edition of Piranesi's *Prima parte di architettura*. The design began with the larger sheet, which is carefully rendered in the crisp, ruled lines typical of a finished architectural drawing. The more freely drawn Morgan study scales down the scheme to match the size of the copper plate and includes additional details seen in the final composition, such as the third story of the building and several figures; the faint black chalk at upper left also hints at the towers that would be added. Piranesi presumably copied the Morgan drawing directly to the plate: the right side of the courtyard in the drawing becomes the left in the reversed etching, as the vegetation on the entablature and the direction of light and shadow make clear.

Prospect of a Royal Courtyard

Plate 9 of *Prima parte di architettura, e prospettive*

First edition, first issue, 1743

Etching, engraving, and drypoint

Collection of Andrew Robison

This is one of five known copies of the first issue of the *Prima parte*, the earliest publication by the young Piranesi. Most known versions of the work are from later copies of the *Opere varie di architettura, prospettive, grotteschi, antichità* (Various works of architecture, perspectives, grotesques, and antiquities), an anthology printed in the 1750s and after, with added plates and minor state changes made to the older ones. Piranesi's early prints reveal the same cautious execution as his first drawings. He appears to have inked his plates lightly and consistently, without the more deliberate and artful printing techniques found in later works.

***Architectural fantasy with a colossal facade*, ca. 1743–45
Pen and brown ink and wash, over graphite and red chalk
The Morgan Library & Museum, purchased as the gift of Alice
Tully; 1971.4**

With a colossal facade, a Pantheon-inspired dome, obelisks, fountains, and a wide stair, this architectural fantasy is similar to the *Ancient Capitol* plate in the *Prima parte*. Yet the structure's monumental grandeur, bordering on the megalomaniacal, points to Piranesi's developing vision of Rome. To emphasize the building's size, Piranesi populated the scene with hundreds of miniscule figures and has the top of the frame cut off the main facade, a compositional device he adopted for many of his views of Rome. In contrast to the often-generic fountains and sculptures of the earlier *Prima parte* scenes, Piranesi inserts actual Roman sculptures at lower left, including the Palazzo Spada *Seneca*, the Giustiniani *Domitian*, the Quirinal *Horsetamers*, and more.

Perspective of massive piers and arches, ca. 1742–43, with later retouching by the artist

**Pen and brown ink and gray and brown wash, over black chalk
The Morgan Library & Museum, bequest of Junius S. Morgan
and gift of Henry S. Morgan; 1966.11:16**

Vaulted interiors with thick piers and heavy masonry were part of the standard repertoire of stage designers and architectural draftsmen before Piranesi's time. Spaces akin to the one seen here can be found in drawings by Ferdinando Galli Bibiena, Filippo Juvarra, and others. These works are often identified as prison interiors, even when there is no hint of the building being used for confinement or punishment. The diminutive figures in the foreground, which are in a darker ink and abstracted style different from the original drawing, likely result from Piranesi reworking the sheet sometime in the 1750s.

***Vaulted interior*, ca. 1744**

Pen and brown ink and gray wash, on blue paper

Collection of Andrew Robison

This freely drawn study relates to other drawings executed in the early 1740s. It is the artist's only known example on blue paper, however, thus indicating that it may have been made during or after Piranesi's brief 1744 trip home to Venice, where the support was more common. The heavy vaults, funerary monuments, and hanging lamps suggest that it depicts a crypt, although in retrospect we can see Piranesi considering the kind of spaces that would appear in his *Carceri* a few years later.

Interior with arches and piers, ca. 1747–48

Pen and brown ink and wash, over black chalk

**The Morgan Library & Museum, bequest of Junius S. Morgan
and gift of Henry S. Morgan; 1966.11:5**

While the adjacent drawings show Piranesi's longstanding interest in prison-like spaces, this sheet, made after Piranesi's second Venetian sojourn, gets closer to the spirit of his soon-to-be-produced *Carceri*, depicting a deeply shadowed and somewhat irrational construction. The freely drawn and quickly hatched pen lines, combined with a painterly fluid wash, highlight Piranesi's skills as a draftsman and show a technical facility commensurate with his mastery of printmaking techniques. The dark shapes in the foreground and under the arches in the distance, which do not resolve themselves into clear forms, have the same allusive power as do the figures and devices of the prison etchings.

The Pier with a Lamp

From the *Invenzioni caprici di carceri*

First edition, first issue, ca. 1749

Etching and engraving

Collection of Andrew Robison

In 1749 or 1750, Piranesi published the first edition of the *Carceri*, the work that would—even more than his views of Rome—come to define the artist for future generations, especially in the twentieth century. The fourteen plates of the original set are in some ways related to the theoretical structures of the *Prima parte*, but rather than studying building typologies, the *Carceri* offer a mysterious and irrational approach to architectural space. In the first edition of the prints, one can see Piranesi's exquisite printmaking technique—for example, in the careful layers of sulfur tinting and burnishing of the plate, as well as the rich inking of this early impression.

Title plate from *Le carceri d'invenzione*

Second edition, 1761

Etching

Collection of Andrew Robison

Around a decade after he first issued the *Carceri*, Piranesi added two prints to the group and reworked the original plates, making them darker and more foreboding. He also changed the title, as seen here, from “Capricious inventions of prisons” to “Imaginary prisons.” The dramatic revisions not only demonstrate Piranesi’s lasting interest in the plates but also indicate the evolution of his work more generally: Piranesi had grown bolder, more self-confident, and more original. This very rare example is among the earliest impressions of the revised title plate, printed after Piranesi made his changes but before he added the roman numbers to the set.

Fantasy of a magnificent forum, ca. 1765

Pen and brown ink and brown wash

The Morgan Library & Museum, gift of Janos Scholz; 1974.27

By the 1760s, Piranesi had abandoned both the academic qualities of his early architectural exercises and the light, decorative irregularity of the Venetian Rococo. His later architectural fantasies incorporate conventional forms of ancient Rome—though combined in new, unconventional ways. In this example, a triumphal arch is approached by a monumental stair and surrounded by a colonnade, an arrangement with no real historical precedent. Piranesi drew a frame around the scene to signal that it was a finished work of art rather than a study for a construction or an etching. The darker, denser ink is found in many drawings from the 1760s and corresponds to the moodier late states of the *Carceri* and other prints of the time.

Assassination scene, 1744–45

Pen and brown ink and wash, over red chalk

The Morgan Library & Museum, Thaw Collection; 1968.13

Possibly during his first trip home to Venice in 1744, but more likely in 1745 at the beginning of his second trip, Piranesi drew several figural compositions that seem to indicate an experimental phase of his work. Five of these drawings survive, all the same size and with the same green stain at upper right, suggesting that they were from a single sketchbook. Here, the oblique backdrop of classical columns resembles some of Veronese's altarpieces, and the fallen figure recalls Titian's famous *St. Peter Martyr* altarpiece. As with the other drawings in the set, the subject of this energetic scene is not entirely clear, but it is generally read as the assassination of the figure at left.

Design for a ceremonial gondola, 1745–47

Pen and brown ink and wash, over black chalk

**The Morgan Library & Museum, bequest of Junius S. Morgan
and the gift of Henry S. Morgan; 1966.11:10**

The Marriage of Venice to the Sea was an annual pageant celebrating Venetian maritime power. A procession of boats, which included large ceremonial gondolas known as *bissone*, escorted the doge in his magnificent *bucintoro*, a massive galley propelled by 168 oarsmen. This design for a *bissona* employs the elaborate Rococo style favored for Venetian interiors and decorative objects in the first half of the eighteenth century. There is no evidence that it was ever realized, but Piranesi reused much of the decorative language—including shells, satyrs, a spread wing, medallions, and crowns—in other works that followed, including his *Grotteschi* etchings. Moreover, he turned the center of the *bissona* into the horse-drawn coach that appears in the foreground of his *St. Peter's with Bernini's Colonnade*, displayed elsewhere in the exhibition.

***Design for a wall panel with sconces and
Decorative wall panel with shields and a winged female figure,
ca. 1746–47***

Pen and brown ink and wash, over black chalk

**Morgan Library & Museum, bequest of Junius S. Morgan and
the gift of Henry S. Morgan; 1966.11:11 and :12**

These wall-panel designs perhaps relate to the “works of architecture and decoration within the palaces of certain Venetian senators and nobles” that Piranesi is said to have executed while in the city. Shadows indicate that his forms were meant to be carved in fairly high relief, and the flanking sconces in one drawing suggest that they are designs for elaborate mirror frames, rather than for carved wall panels. The delicate female figure of the other sheet shows Piranesi’s newfound appreciation and skill for drawing the human body. This could have resulted from his participation in life-drawing exercises held in the mid-1740s when Giovanni Battista Tiepolo was training his sons and a new generation of assistants.

Design for a wall panel with ornamental moldings, ca. 1746–47
Pen and brown ink, over black chalk, squared in graphite
The Morgan Library & Museum, bequest of Junius S. Morgan
and gift of Henry S. Morgan; 1966.11:13

Unlike the adjacent designs for wall panels, this example has measured squaring—not at right angles but seemingly conveying some perspective projection—which suggests that it was planned for a real architectural space. If Piranesi designed interiors in Venice, however, no such works survive. The unfinished nature of the sketch reveals Piranesi's process more clearly than the adjacent drawings, and his technique of making free sketches in a dull black chalk and then refining them with pen lines and brown ink washes is closely comparable to Tiepolo's drawing manner.

Decorative shell ornament, ca. 1747

Pen and brown ink and wash, over black chalk

**The Morgan Library & Museum, bequest of Junius S. Morgan
and gift of Henry S. Morgan; 1966.11:14**

The purpose of this drawing is not clear. While it seems to be a scheme for some sort of lidded vessel—an urn or perhaps even a coffeepot—Piranesi had not yet started to produce decorative objects when he drew the sheet. It is more likely an exercise in invention, akin to the fantastic vases found throughout Tiepolo's works from the mid-1740s. Nonetheless, in its mix of natural form and whimsical abstraction, the drawing demonstrates an approach to ornamental design that Piranesi would employ throughout his career.

Design for title page with a pulpit, ca. 1746–47

**Pen and brown ink and wash and pink watercolor,
over black chalk**

**The Morgan Library & Museum, bequest of Junius S. Morgan
and gift of Henry S. Morgan; 1966.11:8**

The drawings of Piranesi's Venetian period astonish in the range and complexity of their imaginative devices, although the function of many of these sheets remains uncertain. Scholars have often considered this example to be part of the preliminary process for the later *Grotteschi* etchings, and it indeed relates to *The Monumental Tablet* in that series. Yet, Piranesi often reused studies, and this composition may have been originally created as an elaborate presentation design for the ornate pulpit seen in both elevation and plan. The pulpit is shown as though it is on a just-unfurled sheet of paper or parchment, held open by a string of medallions. Such drawings-within-drawings that play with levels of reality would become a mainstay of Piranesi's later etchings.

Design for title page with a crown and sarcophagus,
ca. 1747–48

Pen and brown ink and wash, over black chalk

**The Morgan Library & Museum, bequest of Junius S. Morgan
and gift of Henry S. Morgan; 1966.11:7**

Piranesi must have made this drawing after the adjacent title page design and before *The Monumental Tablet* plate from the *Grotteschi*, adopting the curling parchment and energetic hatched lines of the former and adding the scythe, architectural elements, spatial ambiguity, and claustrophobic intensity of the latter. While related to his Venetian sheets, this drawing is on paper made in central Italy and was almost certainly executed after Piranesi returned to Rome in September 1747.

The Monumental Tablet

From the *Grotteschi*

First edition, first state, ca. 1748

Etching, engraving, and drypoint

Collection of Andrew Robison

Piranesi probably did not produce any etchings while in Venice, but upon returning to Rome he was eager to put his new artistic vision to the printing plate, probably beginning with the *Grotteschi* (Grotesques). This composition relates to the inventions—tablets, curling papers, scythes, swags, and medallions—seen in the *Design for title page with a pulpit* and other works of his Venetian period. The print, however, conveys a darker, more foreboding message through the addition of an hourglass, skulls, and the trumpets of fame. One of only five known copies from the first edition, this impression retains evidence of Piranesi's subtlest marks on the plate, using drypoint and delicate scratching to convey a range of tone and texture.

***Capriccio with fountain, fallen columns, and satyrs,*
ca. 1747–48**

Pen and brown ink and wash, over black chalk

**The Morgan Library & Museum, bequest of Junius S. Morgan
and gift of Henry S. Morgan; 1966.11:9**

Although the dramatically jagged hatching of the pen lines at right gives the impression that this sheet was dashed off in a fury of invention, Piranesi actually constructed the drawing with care. He first laid out the composition with black chalk, then added pen lines of varying thickness, and finished with several layers of transparent brown wash. The sheet is one of several inspired by Tiepolo's *Scherzi*, though the architectural elements in the background recall some of Piranesi's own earlier studies for the *Prima parte di architettura*. The vase pouring water, muscular nude, and half-skeletal creatures sitting atop the ruins all reappear in the adjacent print from Piranesi's *Grotteschi*.

The Skeletons

From the *Grotteschi*

First edition, first state, ca. 1748

Etching, engraving, and drypoint

Collection of Andrew Robison

The *Grotteschi* prints evoke Piranesi's Venetian heritage, but they also reflect the artist's increasing fascination with Roman antiquity and archaeology. In *The Skeletons*, for example, the fallen columns and other evocative motifs from the adjacent drawing intermingle with studies of ancient sculpture (including the Farnese Hercules and a draped torso now in the Vatican Museum). This is one of only three known copies of the first state of this plate, without the slight alterations Piranesi later made to deepen shading and distinguish forms.

Architectural complex, ca. 1747–50

Pen and brown ink and wash, over black chalk

**The Morgan Library & Museum, bequest of Junius S. Morgan
and gift of Henry S. Morgan; 1966.11:4**

Once he returned from Venice to Rome, Piranesi turned back to architectural exercises, although these later fantasies are characterized by new energetic lines, painterly washes, and dramatic shadows. The drawing's oblique perspective, the foreground cut by a balcony that leaves the viewer nowhere to stand, and even the heavy iron rings held by the lion heads relate to the vocabulary of the *Carceri*, which Piranesi was conceiving around this time. In contrast to his earlier architectural drawings, this sheet seems not to be concerned with a logical plan or building typology, focusing instead on the structures' visual effect.

Architectural fantasy, ca. 1750

Pen and brown ink and wash

Private collection

This drawing, showing part of an octagonal court with a distant view beyond, has its roots in stage designs of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. In contrast to the opulent Baroque curves and overdecorated spaces designed by Juvarra and the Bibiena family, however—and even in contrast to some of Piranesi's own earlier scenographic drawings—the architectural detail has been simplified to a more classical scheme with triangular pediments and fluted pilasters. This simplification reflects Piranesi's study of Roman architecture, while the calligraphic pen lines and layers of wash that enliven the drawing are evidence of his time in Venice studying the work of Tiepolo.

The Bridge and Mausoleum of Hadrian (recto) and The Tomb Chambers of L. Arruntius and His Household (verso)

1755–56 (recto); 1751–52 (verso)

Etching, retouched with pen and brown ink and graphite

Collection of Andrew Robison

Intact proof states of Piranesi's views, showing the works before lettering or with edits drawn on the image, are exceedingly rare, although four are included in this exhibition. This particularly notable example includes two of the artist's proofs, one on either side of the sheet. The recto has a view of Hadrian's mausoleum that would be included in the *Antichità romane*. Piranesi's changes are most obvious in his added inscriptions, but he also drew corrections to the far side of the bridge to indicate its ancient level. The verso is a proof for a print from the *Camere sepolcrali* (Burial chambers) series of circa 1751, made before Piranesi revised the shading and added the correct caption. The print was reused in the *Antichità romane*, which might explain why Piranesi had the sheet on hand when working on the *Bridge and Mausoleum*.

St. Peter's with Bernini's Colonnade

First state, 1747–48

Etching and engraving

Collection of Andrew Robison

This is among the first plates made for the *Vedute di Roma*, a set of more than 130 views of Rome and its environs that Piranesi produced over many years, from the mid-1740s until his death. The piazza and basilica of St. Peter are shown from a conventional viewpoint, but Piranesi enlivened the scene by adding a dramatic sky and the animated group at the entrance to the piazza. Never one to waste a moment of inspiration, Piranesi based the Rococo coach in the left foreground on the fantastic ceremonial gondola he designed in Venice a few months earlier, on view elsewhere in the exhibition.

View of the Esquiline obelisk and the apse of Santa Maria Maggiore, ca. 1755

Pen and brown ink and wash, over red chalk and charcoal

The Morgan Library & Museum, Thaw Collection; 2017.191

This view depicts the rear facade of the fifth-century Santa Maria Maggiore and the obelisk erected behind the church by Pope Sixtus V in 1587. It is probably a first sketch for an early plate in the *Vedute di Roma*, although the printed image is from a slightly different viewpoint that is less dramatically foreshortened but more conducive to describing the church's details. The print retains the sketch's lighting scheme, however, with shadows falling across the building in the morning sun. The drawing's verso features a fragmentary letter referring to the purchase of large sheets of paper (*carta papale*) for Piranesi's *Antichità romane*, published in 1756.



View of the Rear Facade of Santa Maria Maggiore, ca. 1756–57.
 Etching. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of
 Mrs. David Keppel, 1960.

A vaulted chamber with sculptures of monumental lions,
ca. 1750

Pen and brown ink and wash, over red chalk

A high vaulted chamber with square portal, ca. 1750

Pen and brown ink and wash, over red chalk

Private collection

After publishing the *Prima parte, Grotteschi*, and *Carceri*, Piranesi began to turn away from architectural theory and fantasy and to focus more on archaeology and antiquarianism, resulting in his four-volume *Antichità romane* of 1756. In the following years, moreover, he reissued his anthology *Opere varie* with a new title page and previously unseen plates. These drawings are preparatory for two of these new plates, the *Entrance to an Ancient Gymnasium* and the *Ancient School Built According to the Egyptian and Greek Manners*. Their Greco-Egyptian style reflects Piranesi's archaeological proclivities and his investigation of the differences between various ancient modes of building.

Two views of a capital with confronted sphinxes (the Lyde Browne capital), ca. 1760

Red chalk over black chalk; red chalk on oiled paper

The Morgan Library & Museum, bequest of Junius S. Morgan and gift of Henry S. Morgan; 1966.11:19 and :20

In these drawings, Piranesi depicted a capital that was then owned by Belisario Amidei but shortly afterward acquired by the English collector Lyde Browne. Decorated capitals were an important element of Piranesi's arguments regarding the richness of Roman architecture. This example, with Egyptian sphinxes stylized into decorative forms, first appeared in the *Della magnificenza* of 1761 and was subsequently used as the model for the ionic capitals of the facade of Piranesi's church of Santa Maria del Priorato. The second drawing was made on oiled paper, which was translucent and allowed the design to be traced from the first sheet and then reversed.

Head of bearded man three-quarters left and Head of bearded man three-quarters right, ca. 1755–60

Red chalk over traces of black chalk

The Morgan Library & Museum, bequest of Junius S. Morgan and gift of Henry S. Morgan; 1966.11:31 and :32

These two drawings almost certainly copy ancient sculpture, probably—given the men’s long beards and hair—some image of Dacians, members of a Balkan kingdom conquered by the Roman emperor Trajan. The precise source, however, has not yet been identified. The brilliant lighting, using the white reserve of the paper as a strong highlight against the drawn lines and stumped red chalk, is typical of Piranesi’s draftsmanship in the later 1750s and around 1760.

Giovanni Battista Piranesi and workshop

Horned grotesque with protruding tongue, Design for a bracket with an acanthus motif and Design for a capital or bracket with a dolphin motif, ca. 1760

Red and black chalk

The Morgan Library & Museum, bequest of Junius S. Morgan and gift of Henry S. Morgan; 1966.11:21, :22, and :40

These decorative motifs all appear in the plates of Piranesi's *Della magnificenza ed architettura de' Romani* (On the magnificence and architecture of the Romans), a polemical compendium of ancient Roman ornaments published in 1761 to combat the growing taste for the purity of Greek architecture. Piranesi admired the variety and license with which the Romans had applied ornament to various architectural forms. He himself used designs such as the grotesque head (copied from an ancient capital) and the dolphin not only on architectural capitals or brackets but also as decorative motifs in chimney-pieces and other objects. Only the *Horned grotesque* is surely by Piranesi himself; the other studies are likely by his assistants.

Decorative shield with a shell ornament, signs of the zodiac, garland, and acorn border and Classical head with two heads of rams, ca. 1760–62

Red chalk over black chalk, with pen and brown ink

The Morgan Library & Museum, bequest of Junius S. Morgan and gift of Henry S. Morgan; 1966.11:23 and :29

These drawings relate to details on the title page of Piranesi's *Lapides capitolini* (Stones of the Capitol), a 1762 publication on the ancient Roman tablets with lists of government officials, now in the Capitoline Museum. The shield derives from statues of Diana of Ephesus, but Piranesi made changes in the associated print: he substituted a garland for the acorn border, and a Medusa head appears in place of the shell ornament. The ram heads of the other sheet were the sort of motif—stemming from the natural world but easily stylized—that Piranesi loved, and they are found not only in the *Lapides capitolini* but throughout his work.



Title page of the *Lapides capitolini*, 1762. Etching. The Morgan Library & Museum.

**Attributed to Nicolas François-Daniel Lhuillier (French,
1736–1793)**

Lunette with trophies, ca. 1760

Red and black chalk

**The Morgan Library & Museum, bequest of Junius S. Morgan
and gift of Henry S. Morgan; 1966.11:35**

This drawing represents an ancient Roman relief that was heavily restored before being installed in the Villa Albani in the mid-1750s. The drawing, long thought to be in Piranesi's hand, has often led scholars to suggest that Piranesi had restored the relief. The very careful draftsmanship, however, is at odds with Piranesi's work, and it has recently been proposed that it is by Lhuillier, who acted as a sort of professional draftsman in Rome before returning to France and specializing in decorative ornament. It seems that, like other architects in Rome, Piranesi would acquire Lhuillier's drawings to serve as source material. This realization has provided new insights into practices in Piranesi's workshop.

The Smaller Waterfalls at Tivoli, 1769–70

Etching, retouched with black chalk

Collection of Andrew Robison

The town of Tivoli, east of Rome, held a particular attraction for Piranesi and the artists of his day. The excavations at the villa of the second-century AD emperor Hadrian provided a rich and ever-expanding body of archaeological material, and the city also offered some of the most picturesque views in the area, especially at the site where the Aniene River rushed over the cliffs in the dramatic waterfalls seen here. In this unique working proof of his etching, before making many changes throughout the image, Piranesi used black chalk to strengthen areas of the landscape.

Three figures and architectural details, ca. 1770–75

Pen and brown ink and red and black chalk

The Morgan Library & Museum, purchased as the gift of the Fellows; 1950.9

Many of Piranesi's figure drawings are quick impressions of daily encounters in the street or studio, such as these three pen studies of workmen with aprons, caps, and rolled-up sleeves, who must be printers in his workshop. As with many of Piranesi's figure studies, the drawing is executed on the back of a discarded etching—in this case, a plate from the *Antichità romane*. The architectural studies at right are details of the transept facade and bell tower of San Giovanni in Laterano, likely drawn in connection with Piranesi's circa 1775 *Veduta* of the church and adjacent piazza.

***Standing man*, ca. 1772–75 (recto) and *Arch of Septimius Severus* (verso), ca. 1770–72**

Pen and brown ink and black chalk (recto); red chalk and graphite (verso)

Collection of Vincent Buonanno

This unusually large and bold figure shows one of Piranesi's printers wearing an apron, a subject seen in a number of his drawings. The verso is a fragment of the preparatory study for the *Arch of Septimius Severus* from the *Vedute di Roma*. It seems surprising that Piranesi would have cut up such highly finished preparatory drawings for his views, but their rarity—and the evidence of fragments like this one—suggests that this was indeed his practice. He appears to have kept sheets with architectural ideas or decorative motifs, which could be repurposed, but to have reused those that simply recorded views.

Standing man gesturing with his right arm, ca. 1770–75

Black chalk

**The Morgan Library & Museum, gift of Richard S. Davis;
1958.6**

Like drawings nearby (and many others not included in the exhibition), this quick sketch of a man with rolled up sleeves and an apron depicts a printer in Piranesi's workshop. Sometimes these figures are shown in inking copperplates or carrying them to the press. In other cases such as this, they gesticulate dramatically, akin to many figures in Piranesi's *Vedute*. Piranesi perhaps asked his assistants to strike such poses so that he could study them prior to adding figures to his prints.

Seated man holding a drawing board, ca. 1775

Pen and brown ink

The Morgan Library & Museum, Thaw Collection; 2017.192

This atypically large figure study appears to show one of Piranesi's assistants holding a board or tablet and sketching outdoors, to judge from the man's cap and cloak. The drawing was made quickly with a thick pen, and the man's features and left arm are distorted. As is often the case in Piranesi's figure sketches, he was evidently more interested in capturing a moment of activity than in accurately depicting anatomy.

Five crouching figures, ca. 1750

Red chalk

Morgan Library & Museum, gift of Janos Scholz; 1983.38

In these early sketches, Piranesi simplifies figures with marvelous efficiency, a technique that must have served him well as he tried to capture Roman street life. Although so summarily drawn that they cannot be precisely identified, the hunched, seated, and squatting men depicted here are akin to the beggars seen among Roman ruins in many of his etchings.

Workman lifting an antique fragment at Albano or Tivoli, ca.

1762–64

Red chalk

Collection of Andrew Robison

This quickly sketched drawing shows a workman with his sleeves and trousers rolled up, lifting an unearthed fragment from the ground. Stylistically, the sheet dates to the early 1760s. Piranesi thus probably drew the workman from life while observing one of the excavations then ongoing in the wet landscapes at Albano and Tivoli.

Gentlefolk, merchants, constables, and workmen, ca. 1750–70

Red and black chalk

Collection of Andrew Robison

An unknown collector assembled this assortment of figure drawings, whose varying styles point to diverse dates of creation. Depicting figures from various social classes, these vignettes of urban life were likely produced in notebooks or on scraps of paper that Piranesi kept on hand while walking through Rome.

Study of a kneeling man, ca. 1760–65

Pen and brown ink

The Tobey Collection, New York

Contemporary figures studying Rome's monuments add interest to Piranesi's views. They are most often shown discussing and gesticulating, but sometimes they too are drawing. One imagines Piranesi, especially later in his career, arriving at a site and dispatching his assistants to record it. This sketch seems to show a draftsman at work, kneeling at some convenient plinth, holding an ink bottle in his left hand and drawing with his right as he looks up to observe his subject.

Four figure studies, ca. 1765

Pen and brown ink

The Morgan Library & Museum, gift of Janos Scholz; 1976.34

These sketches, made with a thick pen and employing parallel zigzag hatching, date to the 1760s and are unusual in having remained together: many of Piranesi's figure studies have been cut apart to make scraps with individual figures. This sheet includes an expressive sketch of apron-clad printer at lower right, as well as more restrained images of men in long coats. These are likely young British Grand Tourists or other aristocrats visiting Piranesi's studio.

Standing man seen from behind, ca. 1765

Pen and brown ink and wash

Private collection

This sheet appears at first to be an example of Piranesi seeking to improve his figure drawing by copying from an earlier printed source, in this case Marco Dente's circa 1520 engraving of the boxers *Entellus and Dares*. The print may have been of interest, however, because it was based on an ancient relief at the Lateran that was also studied around this time by art historian Johann Joachim Winckelmann and sculptor Bartolomeo Cavaceppi. It is one of many figure drawings that Piranesi made on fragments of earlier printed pages, which served as scrap paper in his workshop.

A standing boy and a seated girl, with a geometric architectural plan, ca. 1770–75

Pen and brown ink and red chalk, on oiled paper

Collection of Andrew Robison

Even late in his career, Piranesi seems never to have been entirely satisfied with his drawings of the human figure. He had great facility for capturing figures in quick sketches, but more detailed drawings of people in elaborate eighteenth-century dress proved difficult for him. Nonetheless, Piranesi continued to train himself by copying from models, hoping to improve. In this example, which dates stylistically to the last decade of Piranesi's life, he used oiled paper (an early version of tracing paper) to copy the elegant figures in a circa 1735 print by Nicolas de Larmessin after Nicolas Lancret.

Hadrian's Villa: Vaulted Gallery of the Portico Suite, 1777–78
Etching, retouched with black chalk and white heightening
Collection of Andrew Robison

This is a view of the so-called Heliocaminus, part of a bath complex at Hadrian's Villa. Its rooms were heated by sunlight pouring through large windows (as Piranesi would explain in the inscription eventually added to the print). In this working proof, Piranesi's corrections to the composition are visible in the black chalk and white heightening. Corrected proofs of this type are extremely rare: there are only a handful of intact proof states with drawing additions by the artist.

***View of the Tiber in Rome with the opening of the Cloaca
Maxima, 1775***

Red and black chalk

Private collection

This is a study for one of the later plates added to the *Vedute di Roma*: a view of the Tiber River and the outfall of the Cloaca Maxima, the principal sewer line in ancient Rome, which carried wastewater to the river and drained the marshy low-lying area near the Roman Forum. This might seem an odd subject for a view. In fact, Piranesi had already made much of the Cloaca in his *Della magnificenza* of 1761, citing it as representative of the engineering prowess and grandiose scale of ancient Roman building. This drawing projects the architectural framework for the scene, which would be enlivened in the final print by the addition of masonry texture, boats, and the Temple of Hercules Victor and bell tower of Santa Maria in Cosmedin rising above the long riverside building.



View of the Tiber with the Mouth of the Cloaca Maxima, 1775.

Etching. The Morgan Library & Museum.

Giovanni Battista Piranesi and workshop

Proposed alteration of San Giovanni in Laterano, with forechoir and ambulatory, ca. 1763–64

Pen and brown ink and wash, over graphite

The Morgan Library & Museum, bequest of Junius S. Morgan and gift of Henry S. Morgan; 1966.11:56

In the mid-seventeenth century, Pope Innocent X commissioned Francesco Borromini to renovate the nave of the ancient Lateran Basilica, and Alessandro Galilei built a new facade in the 1730s under Pope Clement XII. By 1763, another project was underway: Pope Clement XIII commissioned Piranesi to design a new high altar, which soon grew into a scheme to refurbish the entire choir end of the church, as it was cramped and ill-suited for liturgical purposes. Piranesi devised a number of alternate ideas, which survive in the drawings shown here and in a set of finished studies at Columbia University's Avery Library. This proposal shows an ambulatory added around the choir (at right in the drawing), an idea not developed further in any other extant plan.

Proposed alteration of San Giovanni in Laterano, with forechoir and choir aedicule, ca. 1763–64

Pen and brown ink and gray wash, over graphite

The Morgan Library & Museum, bequest of Junius S. Morgan and gift of Henry S. Morgan; 1966.11:57

Borromini rebuilt the nave of the Lateran Basilica in a Baroque style that was decidedly out of fashion by Piranesi's generation, but Piranesi had long held a deep admiration for his predecessor. In this idea for the rebuilding of the Lateran, Piranesi planned to copy Borromini's series of pedimented altarpiece frames from the nave and to have them continue into the choir and the area around the high altar.

Giovanni Battista Piranesi and workshop

***Proposed alteration of San Giovanni in Laterano, with
columnar ambulatory, ca. 1763–64***

Pen and brown ink and wash, and gray wash, over graphite

**The Morgan Library & Museum, bequest of Junius S. Morgan
and gift of Henry S. Morgan; 1966.11:55**

This large, careful drawing shows Borromini's 1646–49 refurbishment of the nave, the transept renovation of around 1600 with Giuseppe Cesari's *Ascension* fresco, and Piranesi's proposed rework-ing of the area around the high altar. Rather than extending the choir with an ambulatory, in this scheme he divided the space with a screen of columns under the apse, not unlike the solution he would adopt (on a much smaller scale) at Santa Maria del Priorato. The idea recalls one of Piranesi's earliest architectural drawings, the *Church interior with tombs*, on view at the beginning of the exhibition. This proposal is also notable for the clerestory window at upper center, which would have flooded the apse with light.

***Study for proposed alteration of San Giovanni in Laterano,
with forechoir and expanded choir aedicule, and a sketch of
putti, ca. 1763–64***

Pen and brown ink and gray wash, over graphite

**The Morgan Library & Museum, bequest of Junius S. Morgan
and gift of Henry S. Morgan; 1966.11:58**

This quick study seems to reflect an early idea to expand the pedimented aedicule of the choir wall, eliminating the square panel seen above it in most sketches (including the nearby *Proposed alteration with forechoir and choir aedicule*), and to use a window rather than a medallion in the curving apse. The putti, drawn with the paper turned 180 degrees, do not relate to any of the design schemes seen in the Morgan drawings, but they likely correspond to the angels with garlands and banderoles found in a number of related drawings for the project.

Study for the reliquary at the Lateran, ca. 1763–64

Pen and brown ink and gray and brown wash, over black chalk

**The Morgan Library & Museum, bequest of Junius S. Morgan
and gift of Henry S. Morgan; 1966.11:110**

Although his plans for the choir of the Lateran are the most dramatic aspect of the project, Piranesi was originally commissioned to design only a new high altar. This drawing is one of several for the reliquary that contains the heads of Saints Peter and Paul, which constitutes the upper part of that altar. The sheet was once joined to the adjacent *Sketch of a choir wall*: note the heavy hatching at the sides of both sheets.

***Design for a vertical wall panel with the Maltese cross, for
Santa Maria del Priorato, ca. 1764–66***

Pen and brown ink, over black chalk

**The Morgan Library & Museum, bequest of Junius S. Morgan
and gift of Henry S. Morgan; 1966.11:53**

As part of his Santa Maria del Priorato commission, Piranesi designed the piazza in front of the priory. On one side of the square, a high wall screened the garden of the Knights of Malta. On the opposite side, Piranesi created a matching wall paneled with high stucco reliefs. This drawing is a final design for one such relief. The Maltese cross at center is the symbol of the knights. The design also features a lyre and panpipes, which Piranesi included as a reference to the Aventine Hill's legendary history as a site of Etruscan cult practices.

Design for a horizontal panel with trophies and insignia of the Rezzonico family, ca. 1764–66

Pen and brown ink, over black chalk

The Morgan Library & Museum, bequest of Junius S. Morgan and gift of Henry S. Morgan; 1966.11:54

In this design for another relief for the piazza in front of the priory, Piranesi includes the tower from the Rezzonico coat of arms at center, amid piles of shields and weapons that are based on ancient Roman reliefs of trophies. First sketched in black chalk, the drawing was then refined in pen and ink, presumably to clarify the forms for the artists who translated the design into the deep stucco relief of the panel.

Sketch for the altar of Santa Maria del Priorato, ca. 1764–65

Pen and brown ink

The Morgan Library & Museum, purchase; 1952.26

This is likely Piranesi's first sketch for the sculptural high altar of the church, although it already includes most elements of the final design: a sarcophagus as the base and table of the altar, an elaborate superstructure with a medallion (on which a Madonna and Child would be carved), and a depiction of the Apotheosis of St. Basil (the namesake of the order's original church in the Forum of Augustus). The elaborate candelabras flanking the altar call to mind those that Piranesi would later design—both for his own funeral monument and as decorative objects sold to British Grand Tourists—but they were eliminated in the final scheme.

Design for lower section of the high altar of Santa Maria del Priorato, ca. 1764–65

**Pen and brown ink and wash, and gray wash, over black chalk
The Morgan Library & Museum, bequest of Junius S. Morgan
and gift of Henry S. Morgan; 1966.11:51**

While the adjacent drawing is a quick first sketch for the high altar of the church, this careful study shows the lower part of the altar more or less as it was executed. Nonetheless, the black chalk underdrawing, ruled and measured lines, and a few elements that differ from the final monument indicate that it is indeed Piranesi's preparatory drawing and not a later record. The design lacks the figural group of St. Basil atop the globe, which constitutes the upper part of the completed altar. Piranesi, never primarily a figural artist, may have left the final form of that group to be executed by the sculptor Tommaso Righi.

Workshop of Giovanni Battista Piranesi

Vault design with emblems of the Knights of Malta, for Santa Maria del Priorato, ca. 1764–65

Pen and brown ink and gray wash, over black chalk

The Morgan Library & Museum, bequest of Junius S. Morgan and gift of Henry S. Morgan; 1966.11:50

This drawing shows Piranesi's design for the stucco decorating the vault above the church's nave. It is rich with symbols of the Knights of Malta, featuring St. John the Baptist (the knights are formally the Order of St. John) as well as references to the order's maritime and military history. Although long identified as Piranesi's own study, it is not in his hand and must instead be a copy by a studio assistant—probably a clean copy of the master's drawing supplied to Tommaso Righi, who executed the stucco vault decoration.

Sketches for chimneypieces and a candelabrum, ca. 1766–70

Pen and brown ink and black chalk

**The Morgan Library & Museum, bequest of Junius S. Morgan
and gift of Henry S. Morgan; 1966.11:92**

Nearly one hundred drawings connected with the *Diverse maniere* survive: roughly fifty at the Morgan, thirty at Berlin's Kunstbibliothek, and scattered examples in public and private collections. They offer prime opportunities to see Piranesi thinking through problems, for most are energetic sketches, full of shorthand notations and revisions. His ideas flowed onto and scattered across the page. At some point, most sheets were cut into fragments to isolate individual designs. This example, still largely intact, includes seven chimneypieces, a group of individual motifs, and a candelabrum.

Design for a chimneypiece and a shield-backed chair,
ca. 1764–67

Pen and brown ink over black chalk

**The Morgan Library & Museum, bequest of Junius S. Morgan
and gift of Henry S. Morgan; 1966.11:86**

This drawing serves as a reminder that Piranesi envisioned his chimneypieces not as isolated works but as the central elements of design schemes that would also include wall panels, mirrors, and furniture. As with his decorations for chimneypieces, he derived motifs for his furniture from ancient ornament. In this case, Piranesi's inscription *scudo* (shield) makes clear that the chair back was modeled on ancient sculptures of trophies, which depicted the arms and armor of vanquished foes.

Study of a sphinx-footed pedestal or base, ca. 1761–65

Red chalk over black chalk

Sphinx-footed pedestal, over a study of a lion, ca. 1770–75

Pen and brown ink over black chalk

**The Morgan Library & Museum, bequest of Junius S. Morgan
and gift of Henry S. Morgan; 1966.11:101 and :47**

This sphinx-footed (or perhaps griffin-footed) pedestal is akin to numerous ancient Roman examples. The precise model has not yet been identified, however, and Piranesi's design might be his own invention. This pair of studies demonstrates his tendency to return to motifs across the years: the red chalk example is in his style of the early 1760s, whereas the pen drawing dates to his final decade. The same motifs also appear in one of the adjacent chimneypiece designs. The pen drawing is atop an earlier study of the Barberini lion relief, although that may be the work of a studio assistant.

Design for a chimneypiece with volutes, dolphins, and a shell,
ca. 1764–67

Pen and brown ink, over red chalk

**The Morgan Library & Museum, bequest of Junius S. Morgan
and gift of Henry S. Morgan; 1966.11:65**

Study for a chimneypiece with winged victories and a mask, ca.
1764–67

Pen and brown ink, with traces of black chalk

Collection of Andrew Robison

Piranesi's chimneypiece designs routinely included decorative elements encountered elsewhere in his work: the upper example here has the medallions found even in his early Venetian drawings, the shell seen in his Lateran designs, and the dolphins adopted from archaeological fragments. The lower drawing, preparatory for plate 25 of the *Diverse maniere*, adapts a familiar type of ancient Roman pedestal (studied elsewhere in Piranesi's drawings) to serve as the lintels of the chimneypiece.

Design for a chimneypiece with a tablet and a medallion with the She-Wolf on the lintel, and rams' heads, serpents, medallions, and greyhounds on the jambs, ca. 1764–67

Pen and brown ink, over black and red chalk

Design for a chimneypiece with double portrait medallions, and a seated figure, ca. 1764–67

Pen and brown ink, over black chalk

The Morgan Library & Museum, bequest of Junius S. Morgan and gift of Henry S. Morgan; 1966.11:67 and :62

Classical iconography was just a starting point for Piranesi. A ram's horn might turn into a serpent, or a serpent into a ribbon. In the upper study, what appears at first to be a volute on the jamb of the chimneypiece is actually a snake, whose tail rings the neck of the greyhound like a collar and leash. As he invented ideas, Piranesi also jotted notes: that on the upper drawing reads "medallions with Rome of the Caesars, triumvirs, and dictators," while that on the lower sheet indicates a *fiacola*, or "torch." The figure, unrelated to the chimneypiece, is one of Piranesi's many quick sketches of people seen in his studio.

Design for a chimneypiece with elephant heads, and a sketch for a pilaster with a lion head, ca. 1764–67

Pen and brown ink, over black chalk

Design for a chimneypiece with masks on the lintel, a bird, and a rabbit, ca. 1764–67

Pen and brown ink, over red chalk

The Morgan Library & Museum, bequest of Junius S. Morgan and gift of Henry S. Morgan; 1966.11:61 and :66

While some of the Morgan's drawings relate to the published plates of the *Diverse maniere*, others represent further ideas and variations for chimney-piece designs. The chimneypiece was a modern architectural form, but it was also something of a blank canvas to which Piranesi could apply his ideas for ornament drawn from nature and from Egyptian, Etruscan, Greek, and Roman sources. These two designs highlight natural forms: elephants, birds, and the creature at right on the lower sketch, which Piranesi identified with an inscription as a *coniglio*, or "rabbit."

***Design for a chimneypiece with masks and addorsed victories,*
ca. 1764–67**

Pen and brown ink, over black chalk

***Design for a chimneypiece with tablet, griffins, and candelabra*
and *Design for a chimneypiece with an eagle, festoon, and*
satyr heads, ca. 1764–67**

Pen and brown ink and red chalk

**The Morgan Library & Museum, bequest of Junius S. Morgan
and gift of Henry S. Morgan; 1966.11:59, :69, and :70**

The masks of the upper drawing were one of Piranesi's favorite motifs. He used them in his designs for the piazza outside Santa Maria del Priorato and in his reconstruction of the Warwick Vase, as seen in drawings nearby. The lower studies show how Piranesi often kept designs cut from larger sheets, presumably as ideas for future projects. Amazingly, the other half of the *Chimneypiece with tablet, griffins, and candelabra* also survives, at the Kunstbibliothek in Berlin.

***Design for a chimneypiece with a vase between volutes,
with monopods, ca. 1767–75***

Pen and brown ink over black chalk

***Design for a chimneypiece with Egyptian ornament,
ca. 1764–67***

Pen and brown ink

**The Morgan Library & Museum, bequest of Junius S. Morgan
and gift of Henry S. Morgan; 1966.11:84 and :68**

Piranesi's inscriptions on the upper study indicate that the chimneypiece was to be a mix of white marble, black slate, porphyry, and other materials, which suggests that the design was intended to be fabricated, not merely an idea for a print.

The lower study calls to mind Piranesi's infamous interior for the Caffè degli Inglesi, near the Spanish Steps. Its Egyptian motifs struck most of Piranesi's contemporaries as overly fanciful, but the café's design, and the *Diverse maniere's* numerous Egyptian-inspired chimneypieces—like that here, with sphinxes, vulture, and hieroglyphs—helped establish a taste for the style in the following generation.

Design for a clock with the face incorporated into a pinecone and Designs for three sconces with tree branch candelabra, ca. 1766–67

Red and black chalk

The Morgan Library & Museum, bequest of Junius S. Morgan and gift of Henry S. Morgan; 1966.11:103 and :106

These are preliminary sketches for a clock and sconces that appear in related plates of the *Diverse maniere*. In the publication, the clock is shown beside a timepiece made for Abbondio Rezzonico, while the sconces appear above a table made for Cardinal Giambattista Rezzonico. This suggests that Piranesi may have intended to produce actual objects corresponding to these drawings as well, although none is known to have been executed. Regardless, the sketches represent Piranesi's use of natural forms in design, which he stressed were complementary to those derived from ancient art.

Designs for coaches and sedan chairs, ca. 1767

Red chalk and pen and brown ink

**The Morgan Library & Museum, bequest of Junius S. Morgan
and gift of Henry S. Morgan; 1966.11:96, :97, and :98**

In addition to designs for interior decoration, the *Diverse maniere* includes ideas for coaches and sedan chairs. These plates must have been relatively late additions to the book, as the drawings for them are on discarded proofs of the furniture design plates that appear in the earliest copies of the work. Piranesi had adapted his elaborate Venetian gondola design for the coach in his first printed view of Piazza San Pietro from the 1740s. His later view of the Vatican from circa 1771–73 instead includes a simpler coach akin to those seen here.



Veduta della gran Piazza e Basilica di S. Pietro, 1772. Etching.
Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven.

Sir William Hamilton (1730–1803)

Letter to Giovanni Battista Piranesi, Naples, 3 October 1767

The Morgan Library & Museum, purchased by J. Pierpont

Morgan, 1901; MA 321.49

In this letter, Sir William Hamilton, the British ambassador to the Kingdom of Naples, thanks Piranesi for having sent etchings of chimney-pieces, noting how useful they would be “in my country where we make much use of chimneys.” Hamilton had received an early version of what would be published in 1769 as the *Diverse maniere*. Unfortunately, Hamilton’s copy is not known to survive.

Diverse maniere d'adornare i cammini

Proof copy, 1767

Collection of Andrew Robison

This is the earliest known proof copy of the *Diverse maniere*. Piranesi sent it in 1767 (two years before the formal publication of the volume) to Joseph Smith, who had served as British consul in Venice from 1744 to 1760. Smith was not only a notable collector but also an impresario who acted as an agent for British Grand Tourists purchasing works by Canaletto and others. Smith sold his important art collection and library to King George III in the early 1760s, but he continued to collect thereafter.

**Notes for the *Diverse maniere*, with a sketch of an ornament,
ca. 1767**

Pen and brown ink and black chalk

**Fragment of a proof, before letters, of the *View of Ponte
Lugano* from the *Vedute di Roma*, 1763**

Etching

**The Morgan Library & Museum, bequest of Junius S. Morgan
and gift of Henry S. Morgan; 1966.11:84 verso and :68 verso**

The notes on the upper sheet appear to be Piranesi's draft for the introduction of his *Diverse maniere*, which was added to the publication at a late stage. The chimneypiece on the other side of the sheet relates not to one of the prints in the volume but to an actual work, likely ordered in response to the publication. By contrast, the lower sheet is a proof of an etching published in 1763, and the chimneypiece on the other side of the reused sheet was likely drawn well before the eventual publication of the *Diverse maniere* in 1769.

Fragment of Giovanni Ottaviani, *Angelica and Medoro*, after Guercino, from the *Raccolta di alcuni disegni del Barberi da Cento, detto Guercino*, 1764

Etching

Preparatory study for the *Plan of the Amphitheater of Domitian*, plate 11 of the *Antichità d'Albano*, ca. 1762–64

Red and black chalk, pen and brown ink

Fragment of a proof of plate 15 of the *Le rovine del Castello dell'Acqua Giulia*, ca. 1761

Etching

The Morgan Library & Museum, bequest of Junius S. Morgan and gift of Henry S. Morgan; 1966.11:59 verso, :69 verso, and :70 verso

The drawing inscribed *Pianta dell'Anfiteatro* corresponds, roughly, to the section view of the Amphitheater of Domitian at Albano in the *Antichità d'Albano* and is presumably preparatory for that etching. The writing is not Piranesi's but that of an assistant who inscribed several drawings from the time.

The small fragment of the etching showing bricks and lead pipes from the Acqua Giulia aqueduct also includes changes in the published version, revealing it to be a proof.

Fragment of Giovanni Ottaviani, *Angelica and Medoro*, after Guercino, from the *Raccolta di alcuni disegni del Barberi da Cento, detto Guercino*, 1764

Etching

Preparatory drawing for the *Ruins of the Temple of Castor and Pollux in the City of Cori* in the *Antichità di Cora*, 1763

Red and black chalk

The Morgan Library & Museum, bequest of Junius S. Morgan and gift of Henry S. Morgan; 1966.11:61 verso and :66 verso

In 1764 Piranesi published the *Raccolta di alcuni disegni del Barberi da Cento*, a series of etchings—by Piranesi and other printmakers, including Giovanni Ottaviani—after drawings by Guercino. Ottaviani's *Angelica and Medoro* was meant to be plate 26 of the *Raccolta*, but for some reason, it was not included in any of the early copies, and Piranesi used the back of many impressions for his chimney-piece drawings.

The lower study is one of Piranesi's rare fragmentary preparatory sketches for a view, in this case of the Temple of Castor and Pollux at Cori.



Rovine del Tempio de' Castori, 1764. Etching. The Morgan Library & Museum.

**Fragment of a proof of the *Orthographic Elevation of the Temple of Hercules*, plate 6 of the *Antichità di Cora*, 1764
Etching**

Fragment of a proof, before letters, of the *View of the Stairway of the Reservoir*, plate 13 of the *Antichità d'Albano*, ca. 1764

The Morgan Library & Museum, bequest of Junius S. Morgan and gift of Henry S. Morgan; 1966.11:67 verso and :62 verso

The absence of letters in the blank area of the lower print makes clear that it is a proof state, but Piranesi also made changes to the buildings after pulling proof impressions. The upper sheet, for example, lacks small brackets added to the roofline in the published version, as well as the numbers eventually added to the corner.

**Fragment of a proof, before letters, of the *View of the Pool*,
plate 17 of the *Antichità d'Albano*, ca. 1764**

Etching

**The Morgan Library & Museum, bequest of Junius S. Morgan
and gift of Henry S. Morgan; 1966.11:65 verso**

**Fragment of a proof, before letters, of the *Internal View of
the Villa of Maecenas* from the *Vedute di Roma*, ca. 1764**

Etching

Collection of Andrew Robison

Unlike many printmakers, Piranesi did not consider the proof impressions of his etchings as special items to be kept for collectors. Instead, he reused the backs of those sheets for further studies. Many of the drawings for the *Diverse maniere*, which Piranesi worked on in the mid-1760s, are found on the back of prints produced at the same time.

Studies of Roman masks, ca. 1776–77

Pen and brown ink

**The Morgan Library & Museum, bequest of Junius S. Morgan
and gift of Henry S. Morgan; 1966.11:43**

These drawings correspond in style and character to Piranesi's studies of Pompeii, and they could have been based on any number of masks found in the paintings and mosaics there. One detail, however, suggests that these may be Piranesian inventions rather than simple copies of ancient works. The mask at lower right—bald, with prominent ears and frowning brows that match the artist's own—is annotated in black chalk "B.P." (Battista Piranesi). It is a humorous Pompeiian self-portrait!

Design for the artist's tomb, 1778

Pen and brown ink

Collection of the Maryland State Archives

Dated 12 May 1778, this design is inscribed (not by Piranesi) as a “drawing made by Cavaliere Piranesi to give an idea for his burial.” Despite the specificity of the inscription, it is difficult to imagine a tomb in which a sculpture of Piranesi would have sat reclined in front of one of his chimneypieces (the one depicted here was eventually sold to the King of Sweden). Yet, the artist’s funerary monument, which was built in Santa Maria del Priorato, does show Piranesi standing with his head on his hand as in the drawing, and leaning against a herm akin to that in the background.



Giuseppe Angelini, *Funerary Monument for Piranesi*, 1779. Marble. Santa Maria del Priorato, Rome. Photo: © Andrea Jemolo / Bridgeman Images.

Ruins at Pozzuoli, ca. 1776–77

Pen and brown ink, over black chalk

The Morgan Library & Museum, purchased as the gift of the Fellows; 1961.1

In the 1750s, excavations in a vineyard near Pozzuoli unearthed the remains of the macellum, or marketplace, of the ancient town of Puteoli, which had been a major trading port in antiquity. A statue discovered at the site led to the mistaken notion that it had been a temple dedicated to the Egyptian god Serapis; this undoubtedly would have piqued Piranesi's interest, given his fascination with Egyptian design. Nonetheless, as the nature of the remains was not clearly understood, Piranesi treated the scene more like a view of evocative ruins—akin to the scenographic fantasies of his youth—than a site of archaeological study.

The Strada Consolare, leading to the Herculaneum Gate,
ca. 1776–77

Pen and brown ink over black chalk or graphite and red chalk
Private collection

This must be one of the first views Piranesi made while in Pompeii in 1776 or 1777, for it began on the piece of paper at center, where Piranesi used a thinner pen than is found on other drawings from the trip. He then expanded the scene by attaching additional pieces of paper and eventually reworking it, adding bold hatching and shadows with the thicker pen and a brush and brown ink. These heavier lines may have been used to unify the composite sheet, but they also begin to show the new style that characterizes these late drawings.

The Strada Consolare, Pompeii, seen from the Herculaneum Gate, ca. 1776–77

Pen and brown ink, over graphite, with touches of red chalk

The George Ortiz Collection

Like the adjacent drawing, this sheet depicts the remains of shops on the Strada Consolare, just inside the Herculaneum Gate. By contrast, however, it is on a single sheet of paper, presumably done as a clean version after Piranesi had decided on the larger format. This and the work at right, *Tombs outside the Herculaneum Gate*, also from the Ortiz collection, first came to light in 1950 in an English auction, together with the Morgan's three late views of Southern Italy. The group is here reunited for the first time in over half a century.

Tombs outside the Herculaneum Gate, Pompeii, ca. 1776–77

Pen and brown ink

The George Ortiz Collection

Showing the tombs of the Via dei Sepolcri, this is arguably the greatest and most complex of the Pompeii drawings. It began as a small sketch (now the part to right of center), but Piranesi seems to have been dissatisfied with the columns and cornice at right. He took another piece of paper, redrew the ancient remains, and sewed it to the first with a string. He then switched to a much larger format, folded the left side of the original sheet under, sewed the first two sheets to a new, large sheet, and carried out the rest of the drawing.

Giovanni Battista Piranesi and workshop

***The Temple of Isis at Pompeii*, ca. 1776–77**

Pen and brown ink, over black chalk

**The Morgan Library & Museum, gift of Marvin L. Levy;
1963.12**

The Temple of Isis was the first major discovery of the excavations at Pompeii in the mid-1760s, and it was completely unearthed by the time Piranesi visited in the mid-1770s. He studied it from different angles in a series of drawings. More schematic and stilted than the nearby drawings of Pozzuoli and Pompeii, however, this and the adjacent drawing of the temple are typical of Piranesi's late collaborative works. In both, an assistant—probably Benedetto Mori—set out the architectural framework. Piranesi then reworked the sheets, adding the bold hatching and emphasizing certain details.

**Francesco Piranesi, with Giovanni Battista Piranesi and
Benedetto Mori**

The Temple of Isis at Pompeii, ca. 1776–77

**Pen and black and brown ink, gray wash, and black chalk,
squared with graphite**

The Morgan Library & Museum, Thaw Collection; 1979.41

This drawing must have started under Piranesi's supervision like the other studies of the temple, and it does feature details in his distinctive penwork. The sheet was worked up more than the others, however, with squaring and heavily applied wash. Both the wash and the lumpish figures, out of scale with the scene, are typical of Francesco Piranesi. It is unclear why he worked more on this drawing than the others, but Francesco would eventually make use of all these sheets in his *Antiquités de la Grande Grèce* (Antiquities of Magna Grecia), published in Paris in three volumes between 1804 and 1818.

Giovanni Battista Piranesi

Letter to Charles Townley, Rome, 3 August 1772

Charles Townley (1737–1805)

Draft of letter to Giovanni Battista Piranesi, Naples, 14 August 1772

The Morgan Library & Museum, purchased as the gift of J. P. Morgan Jr., Julia P. Wightman, and Mrs. Charles Wrightsman in memory of Mrs. J. P. Morgan, 1985; MA 4220 and 4220.1

The Warwick Vase is arguably the most famous of the *all'antica* pastiches sold as genuine antiquities to foreign travelers in eighteenth-century Rome. Twenty-four ancient fragments were discovered at Tivoli in 1770 or 1771, and by February 1772 Piranesi had devised a reconstruction in a stucco setting. He must have shown it to Townley when the collector passed through Rome, for Piranesi's proposed reconstruction of the vase is drawn at the top of this letter but not discussed therein. Townley replied that only Piranesi could "resuscitate such a phoenix." In 1774–75 the sculptor Antoine Guillaume Grandjacquet used newly quarried Carrara marble to consolidate the ancient fragments and make the work that exists today, held in the Burrell Collection, Glasgow.



The Warwick Vase, ca. 1778. Etching. The Morgan Library & Museum.