

GIOVANNI BATTISTA PIRANESI. THE COMPLETE ETCHINGS.

JOHN WILTON-ELY.

Two volumes: Volume I: Catalogue Nos. 1 – 558. Volume II: Catalogue Nos. 559 – 1018. 1267 pp. Cloth. 1,073 Illustrations. First illustrated edition of the completed etched work. With concordances to Focillon, Hind, The Calcografia, and Robison. 1994. ISBN 1-55660-150-6 \$295.00

Giovanni Battista Piranesi was born near Venice in 1720 and died in Rome in 1778. He was the most influential etcher of the 18th century and the major artist in this medium between the times of Rembrandt and Goya. Piranesi produced more than 1,000 etchings, all of which are described and reproduced in this catalogue. His early architectural and decorative fantasies, notably the *Imaginary Prisons (Carceri)*, have always been highly prized images. In his next period, he created more than 200 views of Rome, culminating in the magisterial *Vedute di Roma*. He then turned his attention to archaeological works, including *Le Antichita Romane* with similar works on Lake Albano, Cora and Pesto. These were followed by his theoretical and polemical works, including *Delia Magnificenza ed Architettura de Romani*. In his final prolific stage, he etched almost 200 decorative antiquities, including his celebrated works on Cammini (chimney pieces) and the *Vasi, Candelabri*.

This is the first publication to describe and illustrate all of the master's etchings. Less than a third of his oeuvre has previously been reproduced in a systematic way. This catalogue incorporates the previous partial works of Focillon, Hind and Robison. It also contains the complete catalogue of the extant copperplates in the Calcografia, Rome. Extensive concordances and indexes will make *The Complete Etchings* an unrivaled reference for cognoscenti from the diverse fields to which Piranesi contributed.

Over years of studying, teaching and writing about the life, works and widespread influence of Piranesi, I have become increasingly aware of the need for a readily usable source of reference on the artist's achievements which would provide not only essential information but, above all, reproductions of all his known etchings. This has been regularly confirmed by conference proceedings as well as informal discussions with colleagues in such diverse fields as architectural history and theory; urban and landscape history and topography; ancient history, archaeology and epigraphy; the history of furniture, interior design and the decorative arts; the history of taste, collecting and patronage; and, not least, the history of ideas and iconography.

The foundations for this catalogue owe considerably to the many who have gone before, not least to Giambattista and his sons, Francesco and Pietro. While their catalogues were followed with an ever increasing degree of accuracy and comprehensiveness by those of J.C. Brunet (1863), C.K. Nagler (1841), Arthur Samuel (1910) and Albert Giesecke (1911), it was Henri Focillon's unillustrated 1918 catalogue raisonné that presented a pioneering attempt to divide the etchings into their respective series, volumes and editions. Since then, Arthur M. Hind's catalogues of the *Vedute di Roma* and *Carceri* (1922) have been followed in recent years by Andrew Robison's study of the revisions of the *Vedute* and definitive catalogue of the *Early Architectural Fantasies* (1986), which have established new and highly rigorous standards.



Dust-jacket illustration: *Veduta del Campidoglio difianco*. (The Campidoglio seen from the side.) *Vedute di Roma*. W.-E., no. 189.