

GIOVANNI BATTISTA PIRANESI

Mogliani/Mestre 1720 - 1778 Rome

Fantasy of Ruins with the Statue of Minerva

The frontispiece for the "Vedute di Roma", 1748

Etching. 51.5 × 75.3 cm (sheet); 49.5 x 63 cm (plate)

Signed in the image at the lower right *PIRANESI. / INVT. INCI.* and in the lower right margin *Piranesi inventò, incise in Roma*

Literature Focillon 786; Hind 2 I (VII); Wilton-Ely 135

Brilliant atmospheric impression of the extremely rare first state, before the addition of an address and prior to the reworking of the plate, in a very good state of conservation.

Even though he enjoyed immense fame as a printmaker during his lifetime, Piranesi considered himself more as an architect. Seeing this magnificent etching of an imaginary architectural compound, his interest in the inner construction as well as the grandeur of the ancient Roman monuments immediately become apparent. The print served as the frontispiece of the famous *Vedute di Roma*, Piranesi's masterwork of one hundred thirty-five sheets with depictions of important landmarks in Rome, which the artist worked on from about 1748 onwards until his death in 1778.

Piranesi's etchings of the ruins of ancient times fundamentally changed the reception of classical antiquity in Europe. Through compelling compositions, a refined mastery of the etching technique, and his unsurpassed understanding of perspective, he realized the most sophisticated and dramatic depictions. In this respect, the frontispiece of *Vedute di Roma* embodies the complexity of Piranesi's work in its entirety.



Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Fantasy of Ruins with the Statue of Minerva*.
The frontispiece for the "Vedute di Roma", 1748.