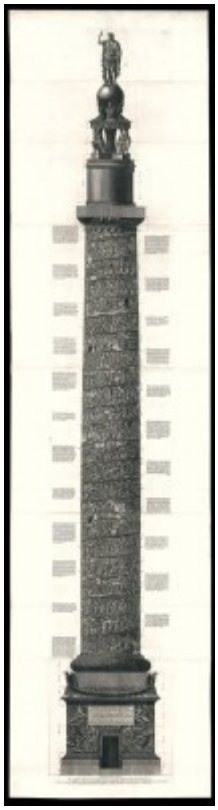

Pair of engravings, each on six sheets of laid paper, joined, some areas of restoration at sheet edges.

A PAIR OF PIRANESI’S COLUMNS

[Pair of columns]. Veduta de prospetto principale della Colonna Trajana [WITH] Veduta del prospetto principale della Colonna Antonina.

Author
PIRANESI, Giovanni Battista

Publication date
1774-79].

Publisher

Publication place
[Rome,

Physical description
Pair of engravings, each on six sheets of laid paper, joined, some areas of restoration at sheet edges.

Dimensions
770 by 2960mm. (30.25 by 116.5 inches).

Notes
A magnificent pair of plates taken from “Trofeo o sia Magnifica Colonna di marmo composta di grossi macigni ove si veggono scolpite le due guerre daciche fatte da Trajano inalzata nel mezzo del Gran Foro eretto al medesimo imperadore per ordine del senato e popolo romano doppo i svoi trionfi.”, Published toward the end of Piranesi’s career, “Trofeo o sia Magnifica” is comprised of three series of plates created between 1774 and 1779 that depict the colossal relief columns of

Rome: the Trajan column, the Antonine column (of Marcus Aurelius), and the column of Antoninus and Faustina. With the assistance of Francesco Piranesi, Giovanni Battista's son, and Vincenzo Dolcibene, the three groups of plates were published as a single volume.

Trajan's Column was raised in honour of emperor Trajan and constructed by the architect Apollodorus of Damascus at the order of the Roman Senate. It is located in Trajan's Forum, built near the Quirinal Hill, north of the Roman Forum. Completed in 113, the freestanding column is most famous for its spiral bas relief, which commemorates Trajan's victory in the Dacian Wars. The structure is about 30 meters (98 ft) in height, 38 meters (125 ft) including its large pedestal. The shaft is made from a series of 20 colossal Carrara marble drums, each weighing about 40 tons, with a diameter of 3.7 meters (11 ft). The 190 meter (625 ft) frieze winds around the shaft 23 times. Inside the shaft, a spiral staircase of 185 stairs provides access to a viewing platform at the top. The capital block of Trajan's Column weighs 53.3 tons which had to be lifted at a height of ca. 34 m. According to coins depicting the column, it was originally topped with a statue of a bird, an eagle, and later by a heroically nude statue of Trajan himself which disappeared in the Middle Ages. On December 4 1587 it was replaced by a statue of St. Peter (which still remains), commissioned by Pope Sixtus V.

Erected in the Piazza Colonna, Rome in 193 A.D., the Antonine Column was commissioned by Marcus Aurelius's son Commodus to commemorate his father's glorious triumph over the Germanic Marcomanni tribe in 176 A.D. It is composed of nineteen marble blocks and measures approximately 30 meters in height. Similar in style to the Trajan column, it is covered with spiral decorative friezes depicting the emperor's victorious military campaign.

Giovanni Battista Piranesi, Venetian architect, draftsman, scholar, archaeologist, and designer, was tremendously influential in the development of neo-classicism. Foreign and Italian patrons included Pope Clement XIII, and he was internationally renowned for his etchings of the scenery and ruins of classical Rome. Piranesi, the son of a stonemason, was born in 1720 in the village of Mogliano, near Venice. Pursuing an early ambition to become an architect, he was apprenticed to his uncle Matteo Lucchesi, a prominent architect and hydraulic engineer, and then to the Palladian architect Giovanni Scalfurotto. He later studied etching and perspective composition in the workshop of Carlo Zucchi. In 1740, he traveled to Rome where he studied set design with Domenico and Giuseppe Valeriani and engraving with Giuseppe Vasi.

Bibliography

Wilton-Ely, Giovanni Battista Piranesi: The Complete Etchings, 707 & 708.

Provenance

Price:

Inventory reference: 1210

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