

Second state, etching on thick laid paper with wide margins (image size 612 x 402 mm), watermark of a fleur-de-lys framed within a double circle (Hind watermark #3), left edge with minor tears from stitching and remnants of binder's glue, margins lightly spotted and toned.

SANTA MARIA MAGGIORE

Veduta della Facciata di dietro della Basilica di S. Maria Maggiore.

Author
PIRANESI, Giovani Battista

Publication date
1742].

Publisher

Publication place
[Rome,

Physical description
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Dimensions
520 by 755mm. (20.5 by 29.75 inches).

Notes
This is one of three prints by Piranesi showing Sta. Maria Maggiore, a major papal basilica built in the 5th century to honor the Virgin Mary. Piranesi here depicts the basilica's apsidal facade as seen

from the Piazza dell'Esquilino. The monumental baroque exterior of the apse dates to the late 17th century. Pope Clement IX had begun the project of remodeling, appointing Bernini as architect in 1669. However, his project was cancelled due to the proposed expense, and in 1673 Clement X appointed Carlo Rainaldi to execute a less ambitious, though still monumental, design. A symmetrical Baroque design was put in place by covering the old apse in a new external cladding, thereby leaving the celebrated 13th century mosaic in the apse's dome untouched. Piranesi also shows the Esquiline Obelisk, an ancient Roman obelisk found near the site of the Mausoleum of Augustus in 1527 and erected on the Esquiline hill by Pope Sixtus V in 1587. The obelisk and the church are surrounded by a varied cast of Roman characters, from the unsavory to the aristocratic, the hard at work to the leisurely – a common characteristic of Piranesi's views, providing the viewer with a realistic glimpse into Roman city life.

Bibliography
Hind, 10.2.

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