

Piranesi today

Vedute and *Capricci* by Giambattista Piranesi, Gabriele Basilico, Sebastian Felix Ernst, Flaminia Lizzani, Elisa Montessori, Gloria Pastore, Max Renkel and Judith Schalansky



Museum Casa di Goethe Roma

16. 10. 2020 –28.02.2021

Giambattista Piranesi (1720-1778), **master of etchings**, was born on 4 October 1720. The Casa di Goethe, the only German museum abroad, celebrates the great artist with a particular juxtaposition: some forty engravings, Views of Rome (*Vedute*) and *Capricci* from the museum's own collection are exhibited together with works by contemporary German and Italian artists. Right up to the present day, Piranesi's imagery and artistic influence are extremely present. The show, curated by museum director Maria Gazzetti, is a dialogue between contemporary artists and architects from different generations with the great master.

Photographers, visual artists, a writer and an architect: **Gabriele Basilico** (1944-2013), **Sebastian Felix Ernst** (*1987), **Flaminia Lizzani** (*1963), **Elisa Montessori** (*1931), **Gloria Pastore** (*1949) **Max Renkel** (*1966) and **Judith Schalansky** (*1980). One of the 964 valuable original Piranesi printing plates stored at the **Istituto Centrale per la Grafica in Rome** (Palazzo Poli), is also on display. From 1854 to 1884, Palazzo Poli had been the headquarters of the German Artists' Association, whose archive and library are now kept in the Casa di Goethe (we remind you of the recent exhibition "Sources of Inspiration" on the library's history)

Pronounced shadows, close-ups, diagonal cuts, moving skies and refined gradations -the Venetian-born and Roman-by-choice Piranesi shows us classical ruins and ancient monuments of the Eternal City, adding vegetation and phantasmagorical figures to these places. Piazza del Popolo, the Colosseum, the Pantheon, Piazza Navona, St. Peter's Square –yesterday the same as today, reprints of the motifs from the etching series created between 1747 and 1778 are an extremely popular souvenir. "*If we wanted to compare him with other creators, we could not help but call it the Rembrandt of the ancient ruins*", said the first biographer Ludovico Bianconi in 1779.

J.W. Goethe knew the works of Piranesi, who had prepared him for the "colossal concept" of Roman monuments. However he had some problems with the extreme expressiveness of these images. During the Italian journey he recalls the visit of the "ruined baths of Caracalla, of which Piranesi has given us so many a rich imaginary impression"

Piranesi looks at the city as an architect, set designer and connoisseur of Roman history. An artist influenced by Venetian perspective painting of *vedute*. But also as a visionary, creator of utopias, who brings ancient structures back to life through perfect printmaking techniques and special perspectives. The project "**Piranesi Roma Basilico**", with which the legendary landscape photographer **Gabriele Basilico** was commissioned by the **Giorgio Mini Foundation** in 2010, ties in

with this. This year, the photographs will be on show again in Venice at Palazzo Cini (until 23 November 2020). Giovanna Calvenzi, photo editor and Basilico's widow, has made one of these photographs available for the exhibition in the Casa di Goethe.

The central theme of the Roman show is the fascination that Piranesi exerts on contemporary artists.

The architect **Sebastian Felix Ernst**, 2019-2020 scholar of the German Academy Villa Massimo, together with his team of students from Dessau, studied Piranesi's works as well as the original sites of ancient and modern Roman architecture. They captured them on 21 panels using creative digital media, underlining the speculative, interpretative and utopian character of Piranesi's visions. An example of this engagement will be on display. For **Flaminia Lizzani** it is Piranesi's "desperate, piercing, deep and heightened inwardness", for others the exaggerated representation of detail in monumentality. **Elisa Montessori**, on the other hand, concentrates on the imaginary world of Piranesi, which borders strongly on the *pastiche*. For **Gloria Pastore**, Piranesi's exaggerations have expanded the boundaries of imagination, thus enabling a new vision of the ruins. With his own works, examples from his Piranesi collection, and some memories, **Max Renkel** shows his relationship to the historical Piranesi and thus its continuity in today's imagery. In addition, excerpts from the short story Villa Sacchetti by Berlin writer **Judith Schalanksy** will be incorporated into the show (From the volume: *Verzeichnis einiger Verluste*, Berlin 2018, It., *Inventario di alcune cose perdute*, Milano 2020).

In this way, the exhibition questions the reactions of today's artists to antiquity: with their works, some of which were created especially for this exhibition, they face the complex questions of the artistic dream of perfection, the fascination with ruins, which evoke an eternal present that today, more than ever, seems to erase the past and memories.

Opening (Open house)

Friday, 16 October 2020, 11:00 -21.30
no reservation required

Publication

The exhibition is accompanied by a volume of the same name, which can be purchased at the museum and on the homepage.

Related events

Sognare il sogno impossibile

Exhibition

Istituto Centrale per la Grafica di Roma (15.10.2020 –28.2.2021)

www.grafica.beniculturali.it

8-10 October 2020

Kanons der Renaissance-Architektur (working title—in German language)

Exhibition and Seminar organized by Hertziana/Max-Planck-Institut für Kunstgeschichte on Piranesi, with works by Sebastian Felix Ernst on Piranesi and Giacomo Antonelli (Details folgen)

www.biblhertz.it