



PROANTIC
LE PLUS BEAU CATALOGUE D'ANTIQUITES

Series Of Vases Engraved By Giovanni Battista Piranesi, With Brushed Steel Frames

9 000 EUR

Signature : Giovanni Battista Piranesi

Period : 18th century

Condition : Parfait état

Material : Paper

Width : 61,5 cm

Height : 91 cm



Description

Series of three engravings by Giovanni Battista Piranesi, enhanced with brushed steel frames. Etching on laid paper, gouache on paper, brushed steel, brass.

Rome (engravings), France (passe-partouts, frame).

1778.

h. 35 3/4 in. ; w. 24 1/4 in.

This series consists of three etchings taken from the two-volume collection Vasi, candelabri, cippi, sarcofagi, tripodi, lucerne ed ornamenti antichi, published by Giovanni Battista Piranesi in 1778. These engravings are enhanced with modern, hand-painted mats and unique brushed steel frames, adorned with brass patera.

Dealer

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Decorative art of the 18th and 19th centuries

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Architect, decorator, archaeologist, and visionary engraver, Giovanni Battista Piranesi dedicated his career to celebrating Roman architecture -- past, present, and future. Born in 1720 in Mestre, near Venice, or in Venice itself, Piranesi was trained successively by architects, scenographers, and painters. It was in Rome, where he settled in 1740, that his career truly began. He rose to fame, within the artistic milieu with his 1745 *Invenzioni di carceri*, known as the Imaginary Prisons. The publication of the *carceri* was followed by numerous engraved works, including the *Vedute di Roma*, begun in 1748 and continuously expanded until his death in 1778, the *Antichità romane* in 1756, and the *Vasi, candelabri, etc.*, his final collection of engravings, in which these three engravings were published.

Piranesi's etchings, in the words of Nikolaus Pevsner -- quoting Horace Walpole -- are 'true in fact in their details, yet in their scale and composition of a visionary sublimity beyond, as Horace Walpole wrote, what Rome boasted even in the meridian of its splendour.' Though these words were meant to describe the *vedute* and *antichità*, imaginary and fantastical cityscapes almost always meant to render the grandeur of ancient Roman architecture, they also apply to his engravings of vases, reliefs, architectural elements, and archaeological inventions of all kinds. Conceived from genuine archaeological fragments, Piranesi's engraved objects are often imaginary reconstructions, compositions assembled from disparate elements. The vases are sometimes placed on pedestals historically mismatched which yet make sense aesthetically. And the pedestals also are often adorned with anachronistic elements. This tendency finds its highest expression in the famous Piranesi Vase, displayed at the British Museum : a real object restored by Piranesi, not a mere engraving, presenting itself as a genuine, excavated, ancient find. It is in fact an assemblage of disparate fragments -- mostly ancient, but sometimes

modern. The objects depicted in Piranesi's engravings, therefore, are real in their parts, but not always in their entirety, and their expressiveness is heightened by Piranesi's systematic use of aquaforte.

Piranesi's influence on the art of his century and the next, and his tendency to idealise the remnants of Roman art, find perhaps their finest expression in the words of John Flaxman, another great engraver, two generations younger than Piranesi, who confessed that he, upon arriving in Rome, found "the ruins of Rome less striking than he had been accustomed to suppose them after seeing the prints of Piranesi."

Sources

Henri Focillon, Giovanni-Battista Piranesi. 1720-1778, Paris, 1918 ; Nikolaus Pevsner, An Outline of European Architecture, London, 1960.