



Figure 4. Roman, *Allegorical Figure of Autumn*, c. 3rd-4th century C.E., marble. The Trout Gallery, Gift of Commodore Jesse Duncan Elliott, 1958.16.3.

- 1 Richard Wendorf, "Piranesi's Double Ruin," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 34, no. 2 (2001): 161-180. See also Terry Kirk, "Piranesi's Poetic License: His Influence on Modern Italian Architecture," *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 4 (2006): 239-274.
- 2 Wendy Thompson, "Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720-1778)" in *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History* (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2003). See also Kirk, "Piranesi's Poetic License," 240-241.
- 3 There are some scholars who view the *Imaginative Prisons* series as "bizarre" works of a young artist, while others claim it to be some of his most complex work due to its "indefinable temporality." See Andreas Huyssen, "Nostalgia for Ruins," *Grey Room* 23 (2006): 14-17.
- 4 Piranesi's precise depiction of the "material qualities" of architecture is seen frequently in his *Vedute* series. See John Pinto, *Speaking Ruins* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012), 106.
- 5 Restructuring a ruin's "spatial dimension" provided Piranesi with the ability to situate the viewer within the archaeological site, which in turn evoked a stronger emotional response and connection to the print. See Pinto, *Speaking Ruins*, 110.
- 6 Scholars often cite Goethe, who claimed that his first encounter with Roman ruins was somewhat disappointing after seeing the "rich imaginary impression" of Piranesi's prints. Wendorf, *Piranesi's Double Ruin*, 162.
- 7 Studies about the Grand Tour participants indicate that most travelers were from the British aristocracy in the beginning, while the travelers in the latter half of this period identified as "wealthy commoners." See Jozsef Böröcz, "The Structure of Europe and the Advent of the Tourist," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 34, no. 4 (1992): 710.
- 8 See "Vedute di Roma (Series)," Bowdoin College Museum of Art, <https://bcma.bowdoin.edu/antiquity/objects/vedute-di-roma-series/>.
- 9 Commodore Jesse Duncan Elliot, U.S. Ship Constitution, Gibraltar Bay, to the President of the Trustees of Dickinson College, January 31, 1836, Dickinson College Archives and Special Collections.
- 10 Among the artifacts Jesse Duncan Elliot donated to Dickinson College are a varied range of objects, including linen taken from the body of a mummy in the Catacombs of Memphis and a collection of Roman coins from the reign of Augustus Caesar. *Book of Donations to the Cabinet of Natural History to Dickinson College*, Dickinson College Archives and Special Collections.

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Souvenirs of Ruin: Piranesi and the Birth of Western Tourism,
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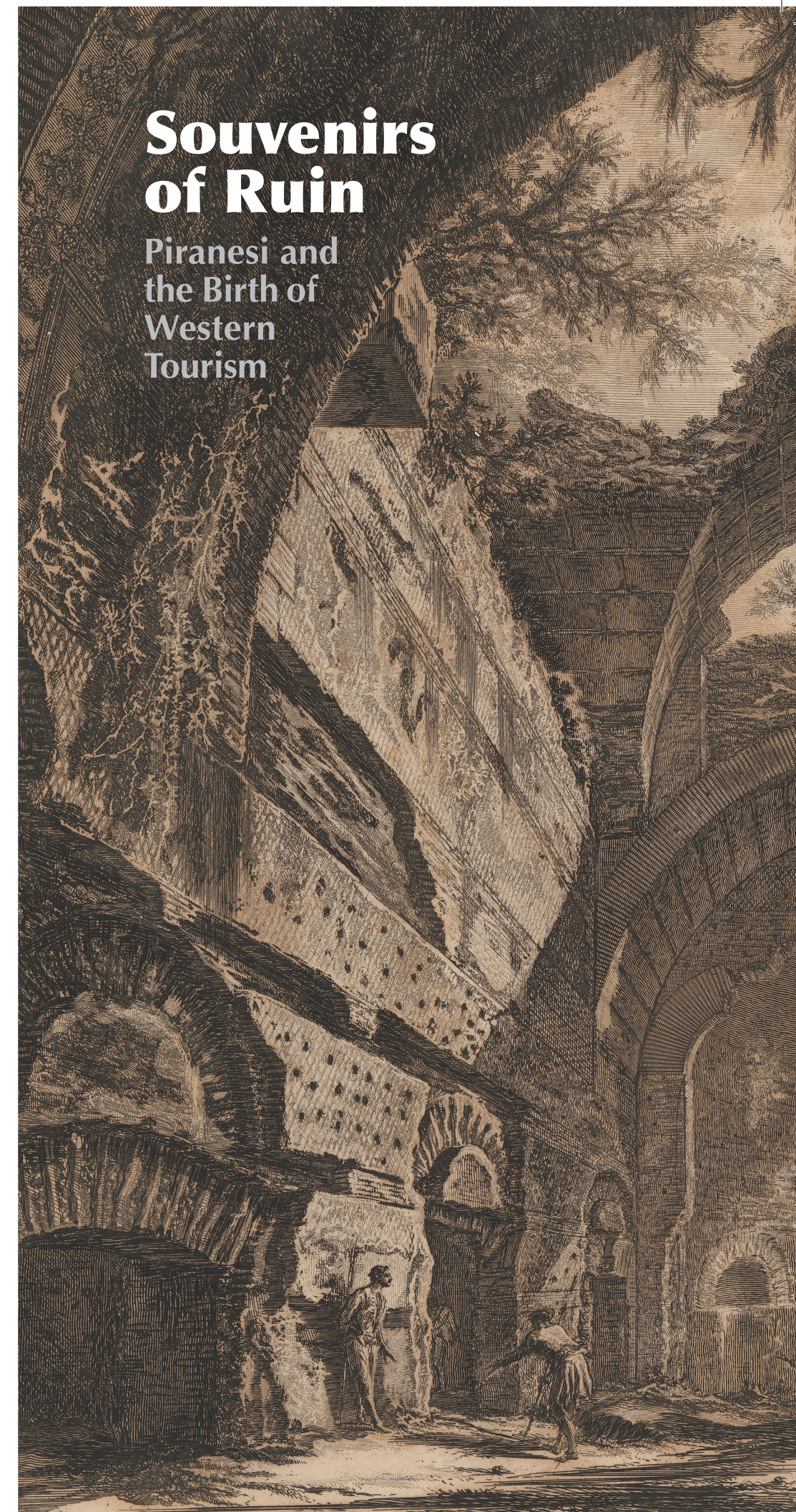
Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Ruins of a Gallery of Statues in the Villa of Hadrian at Tivoli*, 1835-1839, engraving and etching on paper, 45.085 x 59.055 cm.
 The Trout Gallery, 190.1.33.

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Souvenirs of Ruin

Piranesi and the Birth of Western Tourism

Souvenirs of Ruin Piranesi and the Birth of Western Tourism

Celebrated as a master printmaker, Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720-1778) dedicated his multidisciplinary career to creating detailed etchings and engravings that integrated his education in art, architecture, and archaeology. Following his father and uncle before him, Piranesi received formal training in both engineering and stone masonry and developed an intimate knowledge of architectural design. Piranesi's passion for archaeology, coupled with his background in architecture, motivated him to make dynamic prints that commemorated ancient Roman monuments, challenged conventions of pictorial perspective, and inspired others to revere the history of Rome.

After studying in the workshop of renowned Italian engraver Giuseppe Vasi (1710-1782), Piranesi demonstrated in his prints of Rome both a commitment to the documentation of specific ancient ruins and what has been called the “imaginary reach” of his compositions. Piranesi's series *Vedute di Roma* (*Views of Rome*) and *Antichità Romane* (*Roman Antiquities*) are distinguished for their innovations in perspective, chiaroscuro, proportion, and scale. In his series titled *Carceri d'Invenzione* (*Imaginary Prisons*), Piranesi takes this architectural and pictorial experimentation even further, as he creates scenes that are not bound to either specific ruins or the conventions of spatial illusion. Although Piranesi's motivations for producing this series are unknown, scholars assert these prints reflect his artistic imagination and invention of fantastical, experimental, and almost illogical spaces. While many other works by Piranesi reveal his reverence for the architectural complexity of Rome's ancient structures, the *Imaginary Prisons* do not correspond to actual archaeological sites. Instead, Piranesi's prints challenge the viewer to imagine their way through somewhat strange and complex multi-storied structures, up labyrinthine staircases, and down dark passageways. In *The Arch with a Shell Ornament* from Piranesi's *Imaginary Prisons* (fig. 1), for example, shadows envelop the large crane in the right foreground. Upon visually entering the image, a viewer might imagine how they would climb the ladder to the upper level. Piranesi suggests no clear path to the central imposing archway, flanked by turrets, massive blocky steps, and grand mezzanines.



Figure 1. Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *The Arch with a Shell Ornament*, c. 1761, intaglio print, from *Carceri d'Invenzione* (*Imaginary Prisons*), Plate XI, the second state, 1760.



Figure 2. Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Interior View of the So-Called Temple of Tosse*, c. 1764, intaglio print, from the *Le Vedute di Roma* (*The Views of Rome*), 1748-78.

Piranesi's series *Vedute di Roma* perhaps best reflects his engagement with the ruins of ancient Rome. For example, Piranesi meticulously delineates every brick of the colonnade that supports the cracked rotunda in the *Interior View of the So-Called Temple of Tosse* (fig. 2). Piranesi's almost dizzying use of interior perspectives at once immerses the viewer within the temple's space and allows for exploration into every crumbling niche and a clear glimpse through the oculus above. Frequently overshadowed by the monumental scale of the structure, the figures in the foreground encourage viewers to envision themselves in the scene. Similarly, the print depicting the ruins of *Hadrian's Villa: The Apse of the So-Called Hall of the Philosophers* (fig. 3) depicts tourists gesturing in astonishment as they explore the ruins of the Villa. The small sightseers point towards the structure, effectively drawing their companions' – and by extension the viewers' – attention to the façade. Piranesi's own fascination with the grandeur of antiquity also inspired travelers, many of whom may have first encountered these sites through Piranesi's prints that circulated through Europe in deluxe editions.

These travelers and antiquarians were often eager to bring home a work of art that could rival the monuments seen on their Grand Tour. From the mid 17th through the early 19th centuries, the Grand Tour became customary for a privileged class of European men, usually scholars, authors, clergy, scientists, and gentry, to learn about classical antiquity and the Renaissance through sustained travel through Europe, and primarily to Rome. The Grand Tour was a capstone experience for their years of education in the classics, archaeology, literature, and language, as the aristocratic travelers sought to learn directly from the ruins of the past. Although the prints collected during Grand Tours can be understood as souvenirs, they should not be confused with the mass-produced trinkets that appeal to contemporary middle-class



Figure 3. Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Hadrian's Villa: The Apse of the So-Called Hall of the Philosophers*, 1774, intaglio print, from the *Le Vedute di Roma* (*The Views of Rome*), 1748-78.

sightseers. Of course, compared to painting and sculpture, prints were largely more affordable and transportable for wayfarers wishing to collect art and commemorate their travels. While other artists produced views of Rome at this time, Piranesi's prints were often more highly valued and admired by wealthy Grand Tourists. His prints display an attention to detail that surpassed those of his contemporaries, including his teacher Vasi, who catered to visitors in Rome.

Also on display in this exhibition are objects of antiquity collected by former Dickinson College Trustee, Commodore Jesse Duncan Elliott (1782-1845). Although Elliott did not participate in a traditional Grand Tour, his time stationed in the Mediterranean Sea commanding the USS Constitution in the 1830s was spent collecting sculptures and architectural fragments which he donated to over twenty separate academic institutions upon his return. In 1836, while still on board his ship, Elliot wrote a letter to the Trustees of Dickinson College, offering pieces of the Parthenon, shavings of an Italian fresco, a sarcophagus fragment, and, in his words, other “specimens of antiquity which I collected myself from places famous for past histories and present grandeur.” Despite the vast differences between Piranesi and Elliott, each of them contributed to a broader understanding of the academic and artistic value of the ancient world. Piranesi's prints and the objects Elliott collected both provide an opportunity for education and the exploration of antiquity.

Souvenirs – defined as Elliot's “specimens of antiquity” – play a vital role in bridging the past to the present, emphasizing the importance of history for continuously engaged education. Elliott's contributions to the College in the 1830s brought the ancient past into his contemporary era, preserving it for future educational study. Grand Tourists traveled to Europe to experience the sites of antiquity firsthand, immersing themselves in history. Piranesi's prints enable modern viewers to envision themselves as these Grand Tourists, roaming through the ruins of classical antiquity. Likewise, this exhibition is intended to collapse temporalities and to bring Elliott in dialogue with Piranesi. Audiences are invited to engage with eclectic nineteenth-century collecting practices, to imagine travel along eighteenth-century tourist routes, and to search for ancient ruins. –Emily Angelucci '24