



The Prisons / Le Carceri (Dover Fine Art, History of Art)

Giovanni Battista Piranesi

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The timeless *Carceri* etchings of Piranesi (1720–1778) represent not only spectacular artistic accomplishments but also unforgettable expressions of psychological truths. Combining the influences of Tiepolo, Bibiena, and Rembrandt, these works of architectural fantasy challenge the boundaries of perception, creating a vast system of visual provocation. Innumerable staircases, immense vaults, and other ambiguous structures are compounded with projecting beams, pulleys, rickety catwalks and gangways, dangling ropes and chains, and the occasional shadowy human figure.

This full reproduction in book form of *The Prisons*, made directly from mint copies of original prints, presents both editions of Piranesi's work, with prints on facing pages for convenient comparison. The first edition (circa 1745) ranks among the most rare and valuable print collections in existence and abounds in a multiplicity of perspectives—an innovation that predates Cubism by two centuries. For the second (1761) edition, Piranesi reworked the plates, adding elaborate details that alter some of them almost beyond recognition. It is in the second, more emotionally challenging renditions that his masterful management of light and shadow is most evident. This edition features an informative Introduction by Philip Hofer, in addition to a Preface by John Howe, a conceptual designer on Peter Jackson's *Lord of the Rings* film trilogy.

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