

Drawing and its Double  
*Selections from the  
Istituto Nazionale per  
la Grafica*

Paolo Canevari  
*Decalogo*

98

THE  
DRAWING  
CENTER





The Drawing Center

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MAIN GALLERY

Drawing and its Double  
*Selections from the Istituto Nazionale  
per la Grafica*

*Curated by*  
Brett Littman, Ginevra Mariani, and Antonella Renzitti

Organized in collaboration with the Istituto Nazionale  
per la Grafica del Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali  
della Repubblica Italiana



## DRAWING PAPERS 98

*Texts by* Maria Antonella Fusco, Brett Littman,  
Ginevra Mariani, *and* Antonella Renzitti



# Introduction

In keeping with our tradition of working with academic and archival institutions to mount scholarly exhibitions of the highest caliber, *Drawing and its Double* is the result of an extraordinary collaboration between The Drawing Center and the Istituto Nazionale per la Grafica (ING) in Rome, the world's premiere institution devoted to the graphic arts. This tightly focused exhibition presents a comprehensive selection of metal plates (copper, zinc, lead, steel, and brass) engraved by Italian masters from the sixteenth century to the present.

My co-curators and I have decided to present the plates as primary art objects that delineate the relationship between drawing and printmaking. We have purposefully chosen not to show any prints or preparatory drawings related to these plates in order to highlight the creative act of drawing on the matrices themselves. By presenting the plates on their own, we are advocating for an understanding of drawing broadly conceived, one that addresses several pressing issues in contemporary art, including: the status of the unique artwork, the concept of the original picture and its translation, the relationship between craftspeople and artists, the use of unconventional media in drawing, and finally the roles that archives play in preserving and disseminating history.

Many people must be thanked for their dedication to realizing this exhibition. First, I would like to acknowledge the invaluable support of Dr. Maria Antonella Fusco, Director of the ING, as well as her colleagues who remain instrumental in promoting the systematic study of printing plates and the conservation of historical printmaking techniques. Secondly, I would like to extend my extreme gratitude to the exhibition's co-curators, Antonella Renzitti, art historian with the Istituto Nazionale per la Grafica of the Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali, specializing in contemporary graphic art and the Italian print workshops of the 1960s, and the Director of the Institute's

Collezione opere multimediali (Multimedia Works Collection); and Ginevra Mariani, art historian with the Istituto Nazionale per la Grafica of the Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali and the Director of the Institute's *Calcoteca*, whose extensive knowledge of and particular focus on eighteenth-century Italian printmaking made it possible to present this innovative show and to produce new scholarship on these rarely seen works.

I am grateful to Paolo Canevari who first introduced me to the ING in 2008. His series of plates and monoprints entitled *Decalogo*, produced at ING under the direction of Serenita Papaldo, and included in this exhibition, provide us with an important contemporary exploration of the current state of the medium. I also want to thank Gallery Christian Stein in Milan for their generosity and assistance in facilitating the Canevari loans.

Staff members at both institutions deserve recognition as well. At The Drawing Center, special thanks to Claire Gilman, Curator; Joanna Kleinberg, Assistant Curator; Giulia Smith, Curatorial Intern; Emily Gaynor, Public Relations and Marketing Officer; Anna Martin, Registrar; Dan Gillespie, Operations Officer; Nicole Goldberg, Director of Development; Jonathan T.D. Neil, Executive Editor; Joanna Ahlberg, Managing Editor; as well as to Peter J. Ahlberg, AHL&CO, and Irina Oryshkevich, translator. At the Institute, special thanks to Giovanna Scaloni of the Calcoteca; Ilaria Savino of the Collezione opere multimediali; Giuseppe Trassari Filippetto, Director of the Matrix Diagnostic Lab, and Lucia Ghedin, also from the Matrix Diagnostic Lab; Orsola Bonifati, Registrar; Antonio Iorio, Photographer; Rita Parma, Public Relations; and Marcella Ghio, Press Officer.

Finally, I am incredibly appreciative of the steadfast support of The Drawing Center's Board of Trustees and the exhibition funders who have championed this exhibition and its publication, which include The National Endowment for the Arts and Robert Lehman Foundation, The Pierre and Tana Matisse Foundation, C.G. Boerner LLC, New York, Vincent J. Buonanno, Arthur Ross Foundation, and Harris Schrank.

—Brett Littman  
*Executive Director*, The Drawing Center

## Art in the Negative

Istituto Nazionale per la Grafica (The National Institute for Graphic Arts) of the Ministero per i Beni e la Attività Culturali Italiano (Italian Ministry of Heritage and Cultural Activities) is a very unusual museum, in many respects unique: in addition to hundreds of thousands of prints, drawings, photographs, and art videos, it preserves and exhibits a collection of over twenty thousand printmaking matrices and photographic negatives.

We welcomed with enthusiasm the request to exhibit these matrices—that is, works which from the time of their conception to the printing stage bear the sign of the artist's intervention. They are, in short, art in the negative, the reverse of art. For a public institution such as ours, engaged in the national system that safeguards the cultural heritage of Italy, this means assuming responsibility for the preservation of artistic expression from the inception of the graphic design process to the image that the engraver will see complete only in its definitive state.

Consider the immense charm of Giovanni Battista Piranesi's plates, of those *Carceri* filled with violent afterthoughts, to which the matrices—more than their impressions on paper, the prints in their various states—testify in their excavated furrows, hammer blows, and patches; or think of the physical relationship with the copper plate, a rapport with the engraved mark, which in the aggregate nearly surpasses the import of the image. One might also consider the force of those so-called “reproductive engravings,” which constitute the major part of our collections, and which are commonly reduced to the simple, nearly mechanical transcription of a painting into a “wieldy and readable” print on paper. The printmaker, who is not always the same as the inventor of the image, must be endowed with a rare visual ability in addition to consummate technical skill.

If knowing how “to write” matrices is difficult, if it is difficult to conceive and carry out a design in reverse, then surely it is no easier to know how to read one. At our Institute we are fortunate to have highly qualified technicians, such as Giuseppe Trassari Filippetto, in charge of the Matrix Diagnostic Lab, who teach us how to look at art in the negative by training our visual perception and providing us with historical background. Exhibiting matrices and inviting audiences to read them is thus a bold and refined undertaking from an intellectual point of view, and one that demands a special sort of courage from the public, if not the ability to be innovative and curious spectators of images and techniques.

To the audience of an exhibition of matrices, our Institute offers an interpretive guide that addresses both technical and historical perspectives. In this catalogue, these are provided by Ginevra Mariani, with regard to the past, and by Antonella Renzitti, with regard to the modern and contemporary. In 2010, Mariani, the curator of our Institute’s Calcoteca, initiated a project to produce a general catalogue of the matrices of Giovanni Battista Piranesi, to be completed in time for the tricentennial of the artist’s birth in 2020; Renzitti, in turn, is responsible for the contemporary division and artists’ videos, and she has accumulated much experience and many contacts with artists who have produced graphic works on our press since the late 1970s.

We ask each artist who works in our lab to leave behind a piece as evidence. The same holds true for Paolo Canevari, an internationally established Roman artist who has been active for some time in New York, whose works complete and conclude the course of this exhibition. Observing an artist engrave and wrestle with the press and pressers is certainly essential to anyone wishing to work in a setting as unique as the Istituto Nazionale per la Grafica, a museum in which the preservation and reproduction of a cultural legacy as well as ongoing artistic production come together in an indivisible unity.

—Maria Antonella Fusco  
*Director, Istituto Nazionale per la Grafica*

# Roman Calcografia and the Art of Engraving

Ginevra Mariani

When an engraver creates a print, he sets in motion a series of actions through which an idea and a creative gesture become closely interwoven and conditioned by a variety of supporting media. The artist executes his work on a matrix, but conceives it for a sheet of paper, on which, with successive printings, it will be reproduced as a mirror image of the engraving. The nature of the act consists in implementing the drawing while simultaneously considering its double; the matrix becomes the central point between the gesture of the engraver and the printed sheets destined to multiply the uniqueness of that creative act. “The drawing is not on my sheet of paper, I admit, but is complete in my head and you will see it through the plate,” Giovanni Battista Piranesi explained to the French painter and engraver, Hubert Robert, as if to say that it is on the plate that the artist’s idea takes concrete shape.

Exhibiting the matrices from the Calcoteca, the largest collection of its kind in the world, with 23,400 objects in copper, zinc, lead, steel, brass, wood, linoleum, and paper, offers a unique opportunity for learning about the crucial moment in the process of printmaking, inasmuch as the plate preserves intact the artist’s direct intervention and documents its history: potential *pentimenti*, techniques, editorial changes, and varied inscriptions. Research on the matrices of the Calcoteca at the Istituto Nazionale per la Grafica has contributed to a deeper knowledge of the graphic language of prints, above all with respect to methods of execution, and this research has benefited from a number of factors, such as diagnostic analyses of the engraved marks carried out by the matrix laboratory, data compiled from the comparison of preparatory drawings to matrices and printed proofs, and access to archival documents with information on the techniques, artists, and cultural politics of Rome up until the mid-twentieth century.

An exhibition of matrices from the sixteenth century until the present makes it possible to trace the principle history of graphics in Italy, and especially to delve into the phenomenon of the reproductive engraving, of which the Calcografia Camerale was the chief center of production. Founded in 1738 by Clement XII Corsini (1730–1740), after the acquisition of 9,000 matrices belonging to the prestigious Roman Printing House De Rossi alla Pace, the Calcografia of the Reverenda Camera Apostolica offers unusual evidence of the importance of an artistic category in which creative originality and a need for documentation co-exist.

Indeed, the importance of graphic material resides in its reproducibility. When in the course of the fifteenth century printmaking began to gain ground in Europe, it provided the impetus for a true and proper cultural revolution. The many proofs drawn from one matrix offered an ever larger public the same image and message. The legacy accumulated between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by the De Rossi Printing House thus constituted an enormous archive that was to be used for both cultural and political ends. If on the one hand the acquisition was meant to counteract the dispersion of the artistic patrimony of Italy in order to preserve, as the Corsini pope noted, “the most celebrated works—especially those engraved in copper—of the Old Masters, which so greatly confer and promote Rome’s magnificence and splendor among foreign nations...,” then on the other hand it was also a formidable propaganda tool. The Roman curia was able to control and send everywhere a significant number of images—that is to say, it enjoyed the most powerful means of mass communication of the age. The Pope favored the production of works that best testified to the magnificence of Rome and the papacy. Thus it was no accident that in earlier periods the pope considered the Calcografia more as a personal collection and an instrument of political promulgation than as a mere production center.

It was only after 1786, when Pius VI (1775–1799) appointed the architect Giuseppe Valadier (1762–1839) as its director, that the Calcografia began to enjoy a more efficient administration, which made it more competitive in the print market. During this period, the value of matrices came to depend primarily on their marketability, so much so

that after the French occupation of Rome in 1798, 1,158 unpopular copper plates were melted down to mint coins. In order to reorganize the sale of prints in 1804, Valadier himself eliminated many subjects considered unmarketable by melting down an additional 3,700 copper plates. The institution's activities inevitably reflected papal politics too, as in 1823, when during a campaign to direct the moral lives of his citizens, Leo XII (1823–1829) ordered the meltdown of many plates deemed obscene, and stipulated that veils and fig leaves be engraved to cover nudity in others.

Fortunately, many matrices were acquired in the meantime, including the important collection of engraved plates by the Neapolitan painter Salvator Rosa (1615–1673); the stock of the engraver Giovanni Volpato (1735–1803), who was called to the Calcografia in order to reproduce the frescos of Raphael; and, in 1827, nearly all the copper plates rendering the sculptures of Antonio Canova. With the 1837 inauguration of the building on Via della Stamperia, designed by the Valadier himself, the pontifical institute was finally able to establish a stable base. A year later, Gregory XVI concluded negotiations for one of its most prestigious acquisitions: all 1,180 plates by Giovanni Battista and Francesco Piranesi, then in the possession of the Parisian publisher Ambroise Firmin Didot.

From the second half of the nineteenth century until the first decade of the twentieth, commissions for and acquisitions of matrices continued despite the uncertain objectives of the institution, which were ever more subject to the politics of the Calcografia. Photography and photo-engraving defined a new niche in the market and initiated some much needed reconsideration of the Institute's commercial policies. Still, the Institute's transition to the Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione (Ministry of Public Education), after the proclamation of Rome as capital in 1870, induced a final burst of activity. When commissioning matrices, the Calcografia had privileged those intended to reproduce works of art, insofar as its principal mandate was to illustrate the artistic heritage of Italy. Hundreds of images of city views, monuments, and landscapes were printed by the presses of the Calcografia, even though by that point such an enterprise was destined to be supplanted by the use of more modern reproductive techniques.

A new reality slowly began to modify the Institute's profile, however, so much so that in 1920 a decision was made to interrupt the production of new matrices. From an active center of the production and sale of prints, the Calcografia began its transformation into a cultural institute dedicated to conservation and exhibitions, and which, thanks to the peculiarity of its history, was soon to acquire a central role as a reference center for the study of the graphic arts. In the first half of the twentieth century the Calcografia made many acquisitions, including more than 700 plates by Bartolomeo Pinelli (1781–1835) and 616 plates by the landscapist Luigi Rossini (1790–1857). But the Institute's real innovation came with the opening of the division of contemporary graphics under Carlo Alberto Petrucci, who served as director of the Calcografia for three decades after 1933. An indefatigable promoter of exhibitions and initiatives, Petrucci carried through two prestigious acquisitions: copper and zinc plates by Giorgio Morandi (1890–1964), who printed his works in the laboratory of the press, and those by Carlo Carrà (1881–1966), another hero of Italian art.

In the seventies the Calcografia was definitively transformed into a museum. At that point a decision was made to stop printing the matrices in order to prevent their further deterioration and to devote greater care to exhibitions tied to the study of the collections. With the establishment of the Ministero per i Beni Culturali e Ambientali in 1975, the Calcografia Nazionale and the Gabinetto Nazionale delle Stampe were united, giving birth to the Istituto Nazionale per la Grafica. (The actual fusion only occurred in 2008, however, with the completed restoration of the Palazzo Poli by the Trevi Fountain, and the transfer of the collection out of the Villa Farnesina, the base of operations of the Gabinetto delle Stampe.)

The choice of works in this exhibition illustrates an institutional history of Italian graphics over the course of three centuries. The chief artist to initiate this history is none other than Marcantonio Raimondi (c. 1480–1534), who, with the *Lion Hunt* [PL. 1], drawn from a sarcophagus in the Vatican Belvedere, offers evidence of a precocious interest in Rome and Antiquity. With his burin, Raimondi undoubtedly initiates the phenomenon of the “reproductive engraving,” which, over the course of several decades, would

become an indispensable tool for the future discipline of art history. It was not by chance that Raimondi was an artist esteemed by Raphael, who chose him to reproduce his drawings—a sign of artists' growing attention to the use of prints as vehicles for the diffusion of their works.

Toward the middle of the sixteenth century, interest in "Ancient and Modern Rome," and in the documentation of archaeological sites, stimulated attempts to reconstruct monuments in their original form. Of these, the *Speculum romanae magnificentiae*, published by Antoine Lafreri and from which was created the matrix of *Trajan's Port* [PL. 13], after a drawing by Etiénne Du Pérac (c. 1540–1604), constitutes one of the most famous examples. In the case of modern Rome there are reproductions of incredibly famous paintings, such as Michelangelo's *Last Judgment*, executed by the burin of Giorgio Ghisi (c. 1520–1582) [PLS. 2–12].

Next to these engravers, who specialized in the transfer of others' works of art to print, we also find artists experimenting with the direct transfer of their own works. Among these was Titian, who for a brief time probed the inherent potential of the woodcut; Parmigianino, who was regarded by Vasari as the inventor of etching; and Federico Barocci (1535–1612), who perfected this technique, fine-tuning it in his *Annunciation* [PL. 18], one of the first examples of "multiple biting," in which special varnishes are used to coat the incisions allowing for variations in chiaroscuro and tonal passages that are better adapted to rendering the pictorial matter of paintings.

The need to document and disseminate information encompassed all fields of knowledge. The press reproduced drawings of herbals [PLS. 23, 24] that were jealously guarded in monastic libraries; it became an instrument for physicians with the publication of illustrated anatomy treatises [PL. 22]; and it became a means of diffusing curious bestiaries depicting domestic, exotic, and fantastic animals, as in the case of the more than 200 matrices by Antonio Tempesta [PLS. 14–17].

Before the advent of photography in the nineteenth century, prints were objects of great interest for cultivated travelers and pilgrims, who

could purchase images of Rome as souvenirs. Piranesi's (1720–1778) views are among the most famous of those depicting Rome and testifying to her grandeur. Indeed, the Colosseum [PL. 29], the Piazza del Popolo, and the Piazza di Monte Cavallo [PL. 26] inaugurated a new type of view directed at the ever growing number of foreigners traveling through Italy. In turn, the early years of the nineteenth century are represented in the collection principally by matrices drawn from paintings and sculptures: the group *Hercules and Lica* [PL. 32], by Antonio Canova (1757–1822), belongs to a series that the sculptor commissioned for a catalogue meant to publicize and promote his own works.

The study of art in these years was heavily dependent on the knowledge of reproductive engravings. In the *Storia pittorica dell'Italia*, published in its definitive form in 1809, Luigi Lanzi wrote that “a fine connoisseur of prints has traveled half the road to becoming a connoisseur of paintings.” Yet engraving was also an expressive medium for artists who regarded it as suited to their own creative powers, and for whom the invention of a subject coincided with the execution of the work. *Le peintre graveur* is the title that the great print connoisseur Adam Bartsch chose deliberately for his monumental, twenty-one volume catalog (1803–1821) of the most important “painter-engravers,” a term destined to signify the production of so-called original prints. The Calcoteca’s holdings of matrices made by “painter-engravers” is chronologically discontinuous. Many of them were created by artists who shaped the graphic arts in Italy in the seventeenth century, such as Giovanni Benedetto Castiglione (1609–1664), Pietro Testa (1611–1650), or Salvator Rosa (1615–1673). Excluding landscape and cityscape prints, there are few from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Besides Morandi and Carrà, the twentieth century is represented mostly by artists from the sixties, thanks to a generous donation from the Stamperia Romero.

During the nineteenth century, the Calcografia continued to fluctuate in its attempts to keep alive the production of reproductive engravings as demonstrated by Alessandro Porretti's (1838–after 1880) assignment to engrave Correggio's *Danae* [PL. 33] while acquiring works by skilled engravers and photographers as well as experimental

painters, such as Filippo Palizzi (1818–1899), one of the first representatives of Italian Verist painting.

Over the course of the twentieth century, the Calcografia redesigned its institutional profile to privilege the study and expansion of its collections, but without abandoning its tradition of collaborating with artists, who ever more frequently produce their works inside the Stamperia's laboratory. After nearly three centuries, the art of engraving continues to be practiced in the building of the Calcografia, inspired by both modern techniques and the graphic language of individual artists.

# Without Paper: Italian Graphics in the Twentieth Century

Antonella Renzitti

In Europe, engraving enjoyed a discrete market in the first decades of the twentieth century; Italy on the other hand, somewhat paradoxically, proved to be impermeable to what was occurring in France, Holland, and Germany. There the artistic avant-garde was recuperating the expressive value of a graphic language. In Italy, even the Futurists, though revolutionizing typography to enhance the visual qualities of the written word, never considered engraving as a medium up to their subversive aspirations. For this reason some Italian artists felt the need to go to those cities in which other avant-garde artists were reviving the grammar of graphics: Alberto Marini went to Munich in 1898 and to Paris in 1904; Anselmo Bucci and Gino Severini followed him two years later; in 1934, Savinio and Alberto Magnelli moved to Paris as well.

But let us single out those artistic personalities who enhanced the art of engraving through the matrices in the collection of the Istituto Nazionale per la Grafica. Despite his ties to the previous century, Adolfo De Carolis's (1874–1928) activity was intense in the twentieth. Distinguishing himself through the medium of the woodcut, particularly between 1902 and 1910, De Carolis is represented by fifty-five pieces in the Institute's small collection of woodcut blocks. The collection, which includes woodblocks by Diego Pettinelli (1897–1989) and the linoleum matrices of Mino Maccari (1898–1989), had its beginnings only in 1966, with the gift of two woodblocks by Luigi Veronesi (1908–1998). The lack of pieces by the Futurist Umberto Boccioni (1882–1916) is justified; he produced few engraved works within the limited years of 1907–1910, which, according to Maurizio Calvesi, were the less known and more expressionistic side of his work.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Maurizio Calvesi, *Boccioni incisioni e disegni* (Florence: La nuova italia, 1973).

With Luigi Bartolini (1892–1963) we begin to delve into those personalities who used the language of graphics exclusively and with the rigor of a nearly existential inquiry. The Institute possesses only a few beautiful sheets of his work, however; Bartolini's plates never entered collections because they were violently marked up by the artist himself and, unfortunately, are nearly illegible.

Notwithstanding some significant gaps, the Calcoteca counts among its holdings the matrices of twentieth-century Italian masters that have entered as donations thanks to the watershed activities of Carlo Alberto Petrucci, Director of the Calcografia from 1931 to 1959. These include four plates by Renzo Vespignani (1924–2001); a few works by Anselmo Bucci (1887–1955); sixty-five plates donated by Giorgio Morandi (1890–1964) himself, to which can be added the twenty donated by his sisters; and the plates of Carlo Carrà (1881–1996), completed by a later gift from his heirs.<sup>2</sup>

One could say that the first half of the century was characterized by Carrà, Morandi, Vespignani, and their rigorous study of the “ductile and insidious” marks produced by etching at a time when public interest in Italy was lacking. Attention to prints began to grow with the journal *Il Selvaggio* (1924–1943), particularly when it was under the direction of Mino Maccari (beginning in 1926) who, besides publishing prints and drawings of contemporary artists, organized exhibitions of the graphic arts.<sup>3</sup>

Carrà's somewhat “primitive” etching reveals his desire to define the very essence of things through utmost simplification. In his plates, he reproduces themes that he deals with in many of his metaphysical paintings, and “though...he is deliberately careless about the endless possibilities of the plate, he creates highly interesting works that help [viewers] penetrate the essential character of his art.”<sup>4</sup> Carrà's written

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<sup>2</sup> Giulia De Marchi and Ginevra Mariani, *Istituto Nazionale per la Grafica* (Rome: De Luca, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> Among these we should note the Second International Exhibition of Modern Engraving at the Palazzo delle Esposizioni, 1927; and the black and white section of the Fascist Board of the Fine Arts, curated by Carlo Alberto Petrucci, in 1929. See Ginevra Mariani, “Esempi di grafica del Novecento italiano,” in *Lineamenti di storia delle tecniche 3, l'acquaforte e l'acquatinta* (2005), 102–111.

<sup>4</sup> Carlo Alberto Petrucci, “Un Maestro,” in *La Fiera Letteraria*, December 14, 1952.

self-analyses are in line with his work on the graphic sign. Many of his drawings, often re-elaborated in etching, represent the moment in which ideation and the realization of form are synthesized: “...what technique [is] better adapted to simplifying a meditation on ‘making art’ than a graphic one...due to its popular nature, etching and all other forms of intaglio...are the powers that are better able to elevate the taste of the public...If we do not inculcate a love for white and black it is difficult to shape the reform of collective taste.”<sup>5</sup>

Carlo Alberto Petrucci maintained that printing Morandi was not difficult because “everything is already on the plate...there is no need for help from stimulants in the final hour.”<sup>6</sup> For Morandi as for many twentieth-century artists, engraving on metal marked a moment of artistic reflection equivalent to that of working graphically on paper. It is the intrinsic reproducibility of matrices that grants them the value of an aesthetic function, without conditioning the research. The correspondence between Morandi’s paintings and etchings is occasionally very precise. Both lines of exploration did in fact travel in a parallel but autonomous manner throughout his artistic career. His landscapes and still lives have been studied obsessively for their various relations between light and shadow, both in the medium of etching and in that of painting.<sup>7</sup>

Renzo Vespignani, a highly skilled technician, worked on zinc and copper with the confidence of someone sketching in a notebook. He began engraving in the forties, depicting the disasters of war almost “photographically.” Interesting too are his images of the suburbs of Rome, which he rendered with a precise and intricate mark throughout most of his life.<sup>8</sup>

The second half of the century was characterized by the phenomenon of abstract art. Italy too had its protagonists, and graphics

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<sup>5</sup> Carlo Carrà *Tutti gli scritti*, ed. M. Carrà (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1978).

<sup>6</sup> See Carlo Alberto Petrucci, *Giorgio Morandi* (Rome: Calcografia Nazionale, 1948).

<sup>7</sup> F. Di Castro, “Modern Italian Engraving,” in *From Pollaiolo to Paladino. Italian Engraving from Renaissance to the Present* (Haifa: Haifa Museum of Art, 1997), 104–99.

<sup>8</sup> See Alida Moltedo Mapelli, *Paesaggio Urbano. Stampe italiane della prima metà del '900 da Boccioni a Vespignani* (Rome: Istituto Nazionale per la Grafica, 2003), 9–25.

constituted an important benchmark for their experimentation.<sup>9</sup> Though not represented in the collection, foremost among these artists is Alberto Magnelli (1888–1970), who opened up to abstraction from 1915 on. “Through engraving,” claims Federica Di Castro, “Magnelli fully affirmed the quality of a poetic, abstract-geometric expression of Kandinskian origin.”<sup>10</sup> But only in 1934 were the ideas of a pure abstract art accepted, thanks to an exhibition at the gallery Milione di Milano, where Kandinsky showed (for the first time in Italy) forty-five watercolors and thirty drawings from the years between 1924 and 1933. Abstract art in Italy was never an organized or unified movement. In the fifties, the *Informale* movement took the lead, prompting experiments and fermentation characterized by the gesture-sign and the choice of material.<sup>11</sup>

The abstract works in graphics produced by the Renzo Romero press in Rome from 1961 onwards, and donated for the most part to the Institute in 1986 when the press’s activity came to an end, make it possible to reconstruct the general tendency and exploration that found a particularly high point of synthesis in the graphic arts. The curator of the acquisition at the time noted that, save a few work-related jottings, “there was not a single preparatory drawing,” in the stock of roughly 700 matrices and related final proofs,

“that attested to the formulation of an idea, experimentation with a sign, or definition of form in space. The work is entirely on plates. The engraving is a sort of writing, the pressure of which, so as not to be distributed randomly, must be consistently controlled. Rhythmic marks, delicate grids, points, and lines score the metal. The images that are born correspond to an ideal project of identity, achieved through the precise appropriation and consequent definition of space...”<sup>12</sup>

Some of the most qualified and representative artists of the abstract line in Italian art—Afro (1912–1976), Giuseppe Capogrossi

<sup>9</sup> Antonella Renzitti, “La grafica tra Roma e Milano,” in Letizia Tedeschi, *Incidere ad arte: Giorgio Upiglio stampatore a Milano, 1958–2005* (Mendrisio: Fondazione Archivio del Moderno; Lugano: Museo Cantonale d’arte, 2010).

<sup>10</sup> F. Di Castro, “Modern Italian Engraving,” op.cit.

<sup>11</sup> Maurizio Calvesi and D. Durbè, *Aspetti della ricerca informale in Italia fino al 1957* (Rome: De Luca, 1963).

<sup>12</sup> F. Di Castro, *La linea astratta dell’incisione italiana* (Rome: Istituto Nazionale per la Grafica, 1989).

(1900–1972), Piero Dorazio (1927–2005), Giulio Turcato (1912–1995), Carla Accardi (1924–), to name but a few—experimented freely at the Romero press. Convinced as he was of the immense expressive possibility and flexibility of the graphic medium, and conscious of his own indispensable role as technical collaborator in obtaining the artists' desired results—in the manner of centuries past—Romero also placed his laboratory and experience at the disposal of sculptors, chiefly Fausto Melotti (1901–1986), Nino Franchina (1912–1987), Umberto Mastroianni (1910–1998), and Pietro Consagra (1920–2005).

That act of engraving a zinc, iron, lead, or brass plate with a direct or indirect technique, occasionally with the help of untraditional instruments, allows the problems peculiar to Italian non-formal sculpture to be transferred to a plate. The laceration of matrices and the dry print technique, which bring out the whiteness and thickness of the paper after the impression has been made by the press, grant to the print the three-dimensionality of a sculptural work as well. The graphic language is thus enriched with remarkable potential.

It was through engraving that Capogrossi tested the possibilities of his formal model, reproduced either in dry point or etching to excellent pictorial effect; Pietro Dorazio began to work in black and white with dry point and burin on small copper plates; later he began to use many colors. The technical superiority of etchings produced with the assistance of Romero was a characteristic feature; his skill allowed the production of works with many saturated yet transparent colors while only using a few plates. Afro, on the other hand, who in the *Informale* milieu expressed himself basically through chromatic values, transferred the essential impressions of his stroke in black and white to etching and dry point.

Achille Perilli (1927–) and Gastone Novelli (1925–1968) represent an area of abstract experimentation that focused on recuperating the remote forms tied to the subconscious. In Perilli's prints the narrative intent is so pressing that it leads him to produce true “artists' books.” These printed cards assembled in the form of a book of the highest aesthetic quality, and jointly composed by a poet and painter according to the French nineteenth-century

tradition, were printed in small editions. “The drawing must demonstrate the manner in which the painter perceives and documents his own reasoning; through the stroke and the mark he declares his own sensibility,” writes Turcato, adding “the abstract drawing... grants one a perception of what one discovers in one’s fantasy in its most dynamic form.”<sup>13</sup> Other artists agree with this assessment of the drawing as an instrument of consciousness.

“The objective of our age is a cognitive objective,” affirms Accardi, “[A]rt today too is related to the problems of research, of knowledge, of communication.”

With the same objectives in the late fifties, the authorial print acquired its particular position in the panorama of the arts, winning again for itself an “aura” of originality, notwithstanding its intrinsic reproducibility and seriality.<sup>14</sup> The print is thus confirmed as the medium best qualified to bring together diverse linguistic codes that permeate and mutually exalt one another.

The graphic arts, even “solely” in black and white, allow unrecog-nized aspects of some artists’ work to be revealed. “[I]n a field such as that of black and white, in which reigns a sort of rigorous liberty, one may chance upon an opportunity to wheedle out an essential secret...we penetrate a singular universe, rich in suggestions, in which light, deprived of all prismatic iridescence, makes the mark flow with delicate purity – unadulterated, firm, concise yet blurred by a new radiant form.”<sup>15</sup> In the rigorous formal research—for the most part in black and white—of the master Guido Strazza (1922–), whose “mark even when it reinstates a hint of the figurative, is never a quotation of the real...but its essence,”<sup>16</sup> we find continuous freshness capable of conveying the study of engraving into the new millennium.

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<sup>13</sup> Achille Perilli, “Segno astratto e disegno concreto,” in *Civiltà delle macchine*, Vol. IV, No.6 (November–December 1956), 22–24; reprinted in Achille Perilli, *Gli anni di “Civiltà delle machine”* (Rome: Edizioni della Cometa, 2002).

<sup>14</sup> Antonella Renzitti, “Note sull’opera grafica,” in F. Di Castro, *Achille Perilli: le carte e i libri 1946–1992* (Rome: Carte Segrete, 1992), 169.

<sup>15</sup> Henri Focillon, *Grandi maestri dell’incisione*, ed. A. Emiliani (Bologna: Edizioni Alfa, 1965; [Orig. *Maitres de l'estampe. Peintres-graveurs*, Paris, 1930]), 329.

<sup>16</sup> Michele Cordaro, “L’ordine del segno. L’attività grafica di Guido Strazza,” in *Guido Strazza: Opere grafiche 1953–1990* (Rome: Istituto Nazionale per la Grafica / Edizione della Cometa, 1991).

The Institute has shared with The Drawing Center a proposal to present a recent work by Paolo Canevari (1963–) side by side with a select group of historical matrices in its collection. The Roman artist, in New York now for around a decade, has taken up the challenge of working with the copper plate and its alchemy in order to create not matrices for printing but true and proper three-dimensional drawings in metal. At the Institute's Printing House in 2008, for the installation of *Decalogo*, Canevari substituted the fragile support of paper with copper, and the intimate dimensions appropriate to graphic design with a large format. The installation consists of ten matrices modified into sculptures with mirrored surfaces, each set in relation to the other and, above all, to the surrounding space and the viewer, whose reflection forms part of the work.<sup>17</sup> It was also thanks to Canevari's invaluable suggestions that we were capable of understanding, in this light, a number of historical masterpieces, which were presented to the public for the first time on such scale and without being shown alongside either printed papers or drawings.

Since the seventies, the Istituto Nazionale per la Grafica has continued its natural vocation for artistic experimentation in Calcografia.<sup>18</sup> Bringing together artists of national and international renown in a unique, active laboratory within a public museum, the Institute encourages a suggestive confrontation with masters from the past as well as a union of ancient techniques with the most recent artistic experimentation.

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<sup>17</sup> Antonella Renzitti, *Paolo Canevari: Decalogo* (Rome: Istituto Nazionale per la Grafica, 2008).

<sup>18</sup> Alida Moltedo Mapelli, *Gli anni '60-'70 alla Calcografia* (Rome: Istituto Nazionale per la Grafica, 2007).

## *Plates*

All works from the Istituto Nazionale per la Grafica, Rome

Photographs by Spazio Visivo, Rome

“Our art owes a great deal to Marcantonio, since in Italy he gave birth to printmaking, with great benefit and utility to art and much profit to all the virtuosi....” The little we know about Marcantonio comes from the 1568 edition of Giorgio Vasari’s *Lives*. Indeed, despite considering him one of the most important printmakers of the Italian Renaissance, scholars have inferred the date of Marcantonio’s birth solely on the basis of his portrait by Raphael, who depicted him in the garments of Julius II’s chair-bearer in the *Expulsion of Heliodorus from the Temple* in the Vatican. During his training in Bologna, under the painter and goldsmith Francesco Francia, Marcantonio had an opportunity to learn the art of the burin, a technique closely tied to the world of the goldsmith. In 1507 he traveled to Venice where, according to Vasari, he spent all his money on prints by Dürer, who became a fundamental point of reference for his study of landscape and the human figure. Nonetheless, his work is associated above all with the name of Raphael, whom he met in 1510 after his arrival in Rome. In those years, Raimondi began to reproduce the drawings and later frescos of the Urbinese artist, creating the basis of that most important phenomenon known as the reproductive engraving. The matrix of the *Lion Hunt* documents a tradition going back to classical antiquity, taken up by the artist in the second decade of the sixteenth century, inasmuch as it reproduces a bas-relief of a sarcophagus in the courtyard of the Belvedere in the Vatican. By this point Marcantonio had attained significant technical skill, and on this copper plate he designed an image by incising planes of varying thickness in such a way as to render the sculptural effect of bas-relief on paper.

PL. 1

Marcantonio Raimondi (b. St. Andrew in Argine, c. 1480 – d. Bologna, before 1534)

*Caccia ai leoni*, c. 1528

Burin on copper, 270 x 418 mm

VIC 1366



DAE SEPARANT AX HOS LITIGIAZ SECEGNAHD SELATCZYA DAVITZKIS

On October 31, 1541, Michelangelo uncovered his fresco of the *Last Judgment* in the Sistine Chapel, causing great amazement and admiration but also numerous polemics over the youthful appearance of Christ and the nudity of the figures. In 1564 and the charged climate of the Counter Reformation, these critiques led to the censoring of the work, a task entrusted to Daniele da Volterra, who covered the scandalous nudity and thus earned the nickname “Braghettone,” or the “painter of knickers.” The reproduction made by Ghisi, an engraver trained in Mantua in the workshop of Adamo and Giovanni Battista Sculptori, is compiled from ten plates, whose varying sizes probably served to avoid an interruption in the composition’s flow and granted greater homogeneity to the transfer to the graphic mode. The work was among his most highly admired due to its faithful rendering of the fresco despite the enormous difference in their dimensions. The prints of the first edition are a document of the fresco prior to Daniele da Volterra’s censorship, while the current state of the matrices reveals Pope Leo XII’s 1823 order to dispose of those matrices in the Calcografia Camerale whose subjects were deemed obscene, and to censor the remainder by having veils and fig leaves engraved over nude figures. Some scholars maintain that Ghisi engraved the plates of the *Judgment* before moving to Antwerp in 1550, while the portrait of Michelangelo, which appears between the two lunettes in later editions, could have been engraved as a frontispiece for the series when it appeared bound in a volume.

PLS. 2-12

Giorgio Ghisi (b. Mantua, 1520 – d.1582)

*Il Guidizio universale* after Michelangelo, c. 1549

10 matrices and an additional portrait of Michelangelo

Burin on copper, 1220 x 1070 mm (entire composition)

VIC 201/1-11



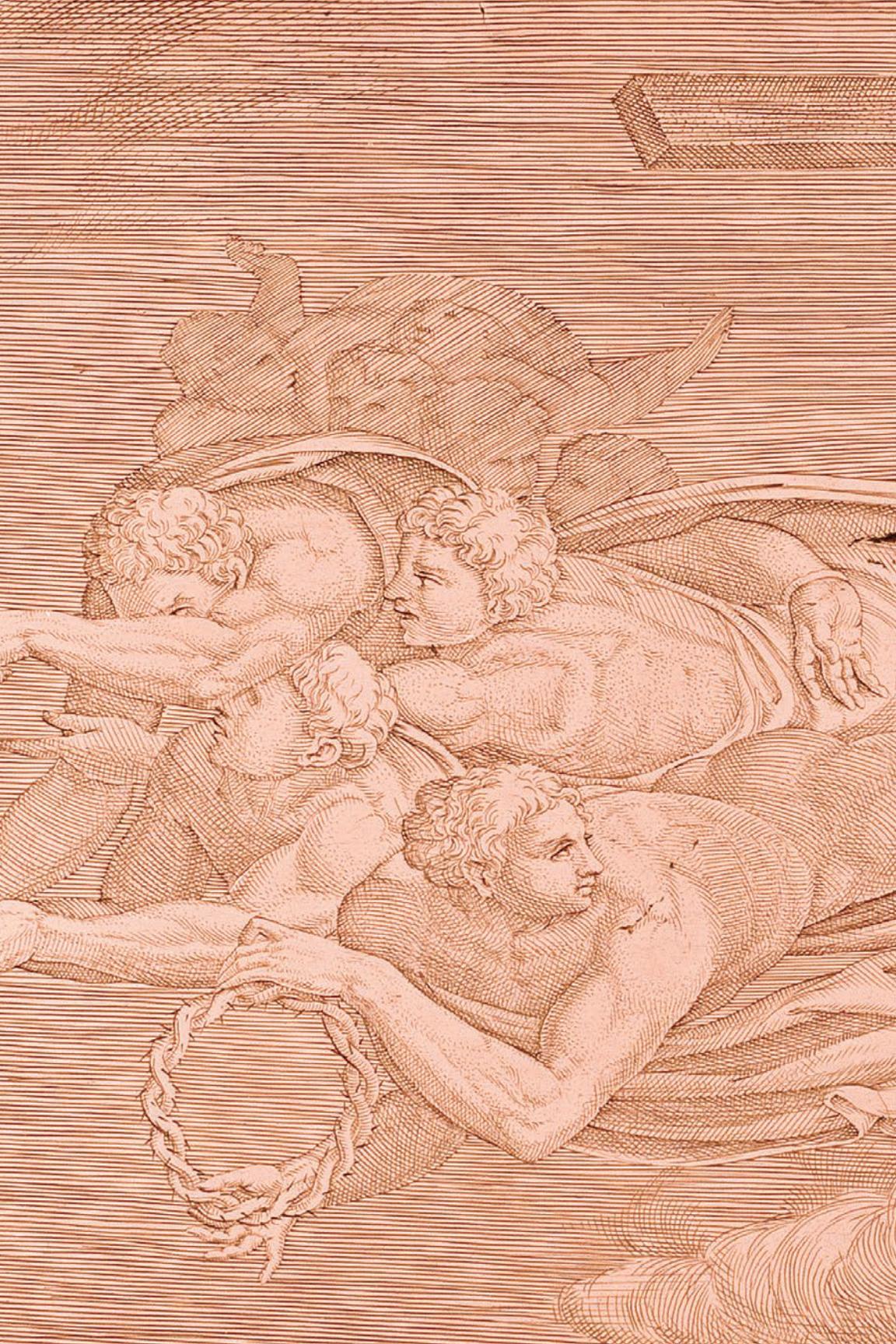




MICHAEL ANGELOS BONAROTI  
TACORUM FLOS DELIBATAS  
DARUM ARTIVM PATERINVM  
HUMANE VITAE AVICINAVM  
PICTARVM STALAVIRI GAE  
SUO PENTAS SECATO EXTINGUITA  
ALTER INVENTOR FICERET  
-G-W-







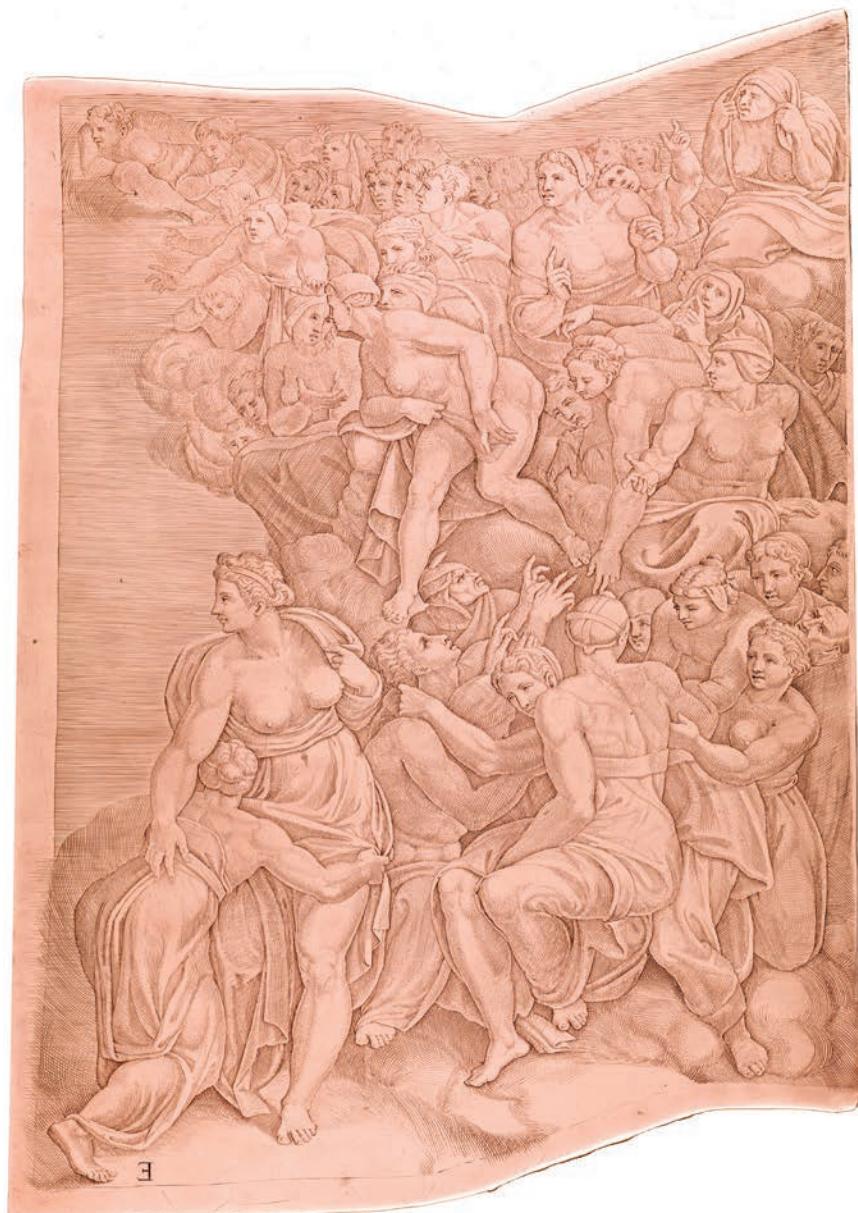






















This copper plate belongs to the group of images in the *Speculum romanae magnificentiae*, first printed in Rome in the mid-sixteenth century by the French publisher Antoine Lafrery. The series documents the architecture of both the modern and ancient city and also suggests reconstructions of certain monuments, such as Trajan's Port, engraved here by Du Pérac in 1575. The port in Ostia was erected by the Emperor Trajan, who inaugurated it in 113 AD; soon afterwards it became the most important station for the commerce of grain. The series became famous and a collectible immediately; it contained many plates by various artists of which only some entered the Calcografia with the De Rossi collection in 1738. Du Pérac, a painter, draftsman, and topographer, worked for a long time in Rome and left behind prints and drawings that portrayed places in the city, such as those in the notable series *Vestigi dell'Antichità di Roma*.

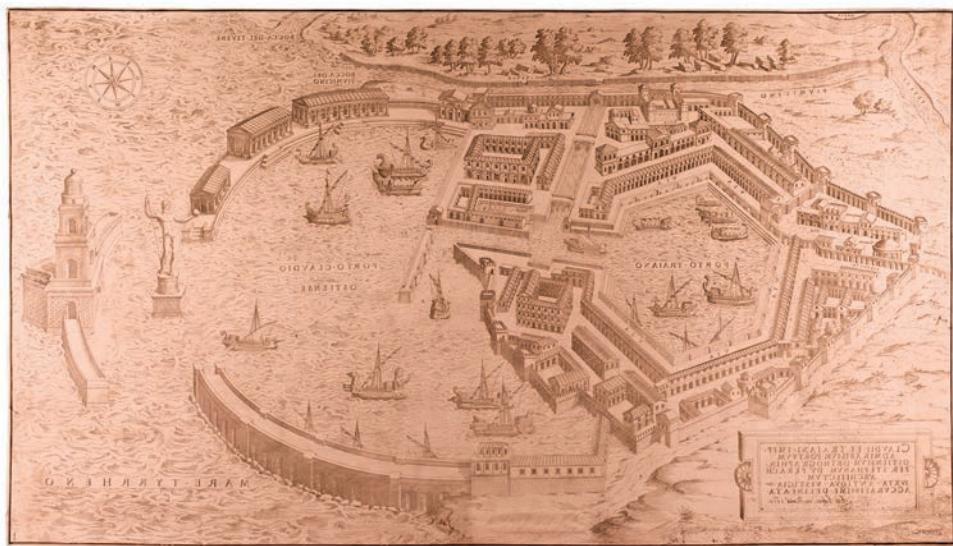
PL. 13

Etiénne Du Pérac (b. Paris?, c.1520 – d. 1604?)

*Porto di Traiano nella sua forma antica*, c. 16th century

Burin on copper, 416 x 722 mm

VIC 1432



These matrices are part of Antonio Tempesta's series *Nova raccolta degli animali più curiosi del mondo*, 206 plates that include exotic animals following the fashion for everything unusual that prevailed among collectors in the early sixteenth century and led to the creation of the first *Wunderkammern*. Trained in Florence in the shop of Stradanus, Tempesta learned from the Flemish painter how to portray animals, which always appear in great quantities in his famous battle and hunting scenes. Moving to Rome in 1575, where he produced paintings for Sixtus V, he was the creator of the famous map of Rome which soon became a model for all those that followed. In addition, Tempesta was a highly prolific engraver. In the first decade of the seventeenth century he began to print matrices on his own. The stylistic discontinuity of the plates demonstrates that in this series he relied on the help of his workshop; the copper plates are engraved with a burin but reveal areas retouched by etching to better render the fur of each animal. Tempesta's matrices belonged to the collection of the De Rossi Printing House and thus entered the Calcografia when it was established in 1738.

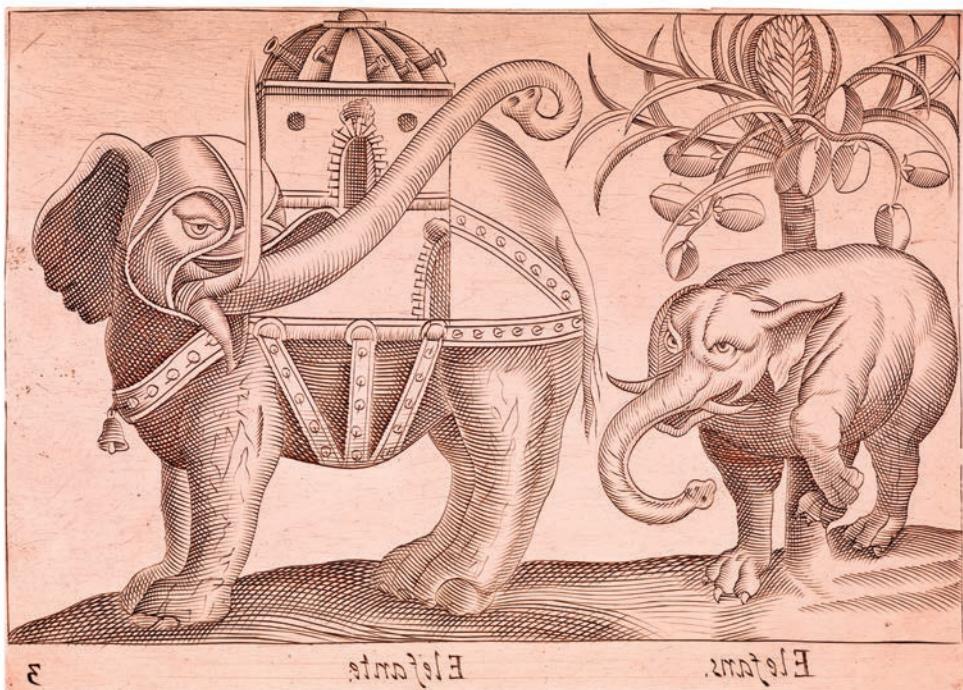
PLS. 14-17

Antonio Tempesta (b. Florence, 1555 – d. Rome, 1630)

*Elefante, Rinoceronte, Porco Spinoso, Tarantola*, first quarter of 17th century

Burin and etching on copper, 101 x 141 mm

VIC 974/3;4;44;176



3

Elefant.

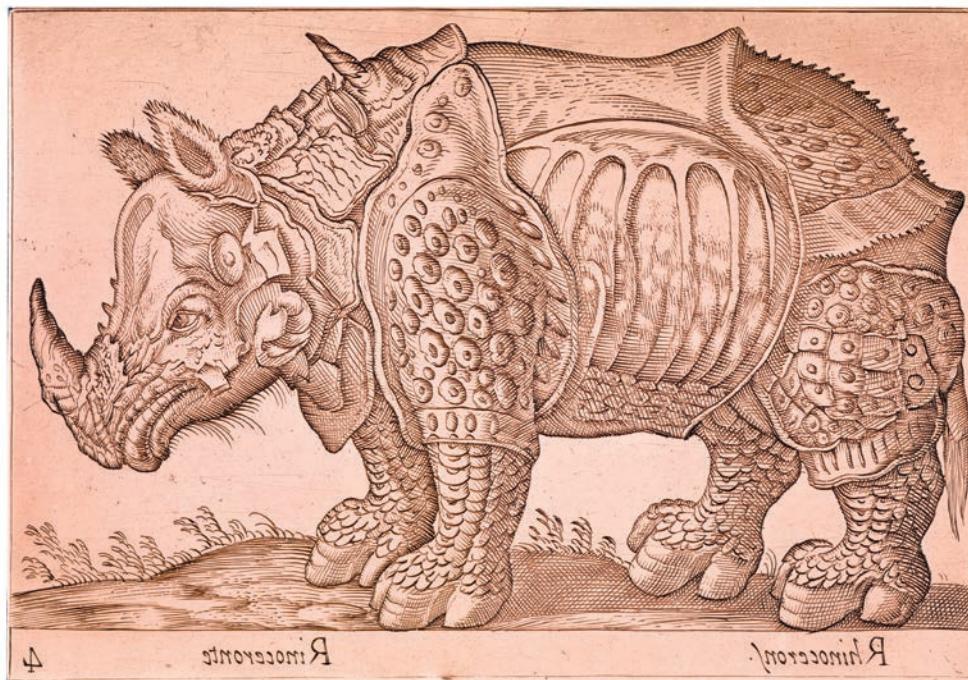
Elefant.



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Rhinoceros

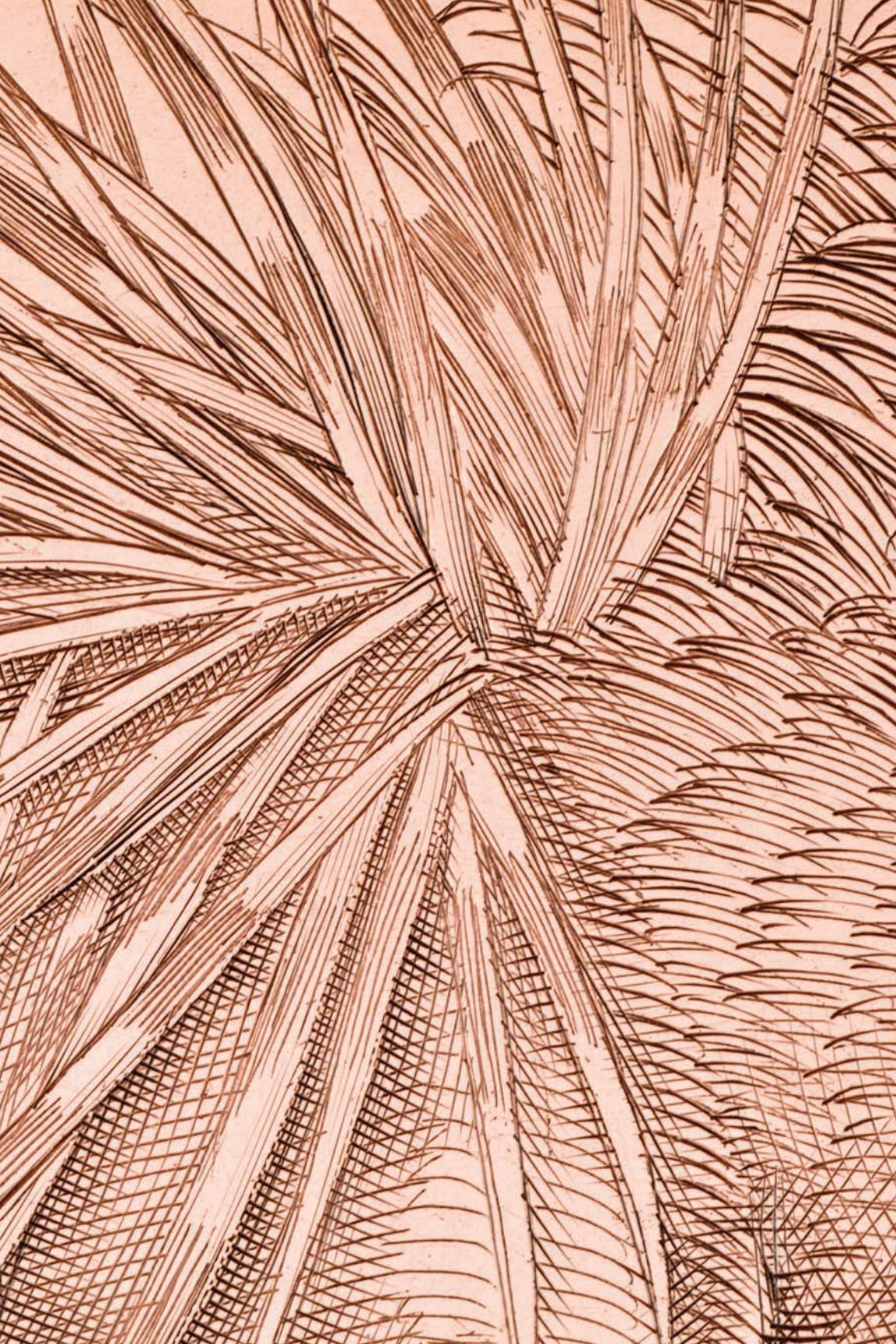
Rhinoceros



¶

Porco Spinoso

Hystrix



Barocci translated into a print this painting, now in the Vatican Pinacoteca, that he had executed between 1582 and 1584 for the ducal chapel in the basilica of Loreto. Highly attentive to painterly qualities, the artist reproduced the chromatic atmospheric quality of his painting through an extremely innovative technique, the so-called “multiple biting,” which has the plate soak in acid for various lengths of time. This method enhances the expressive quality of etching and enables the creation of new chiaroscuro effects, as can be seen in the view of Urbino that appears through the window of the room. The effect of sfumato, which provides a sense of distance, is achieved by calibrating the depth of the strokes. The differing periods of the plate’s immersion in acid is a technique anticipating the use of special stop-out varnishes that protect areas meant to have paler tones than the more strongly contrasting ones of the foreground. The result is a perfect tonal balance in the vibration of colors achieved through an infinite spectrum of grays and blacks. Through his technical experiments, which he formulated to transpose his paintings onto paper, Barocci introduced a new language of signs that surpassed the excessive linearity of the burin and were to become the basis of all future development in etching, from this point tightly bound to the transposition of painting. In the mid-twentieth century the copper was chrome-plated in order to reinforce the grooves of the image, which by that time had become worn out by continuous print runs.

PL. 18

Federico Barocci (b. Urbino, 1535 – d. 1612)

*Annunciazione*, 1584/88

Etching and burin on copper, chrome-plated matrix, 450 x 321 mm

VIC 83



The complex scene represented here, executed towards the mid-seventeenth century, was inspired by the Vatican fresco of Raphael's *School of Athens* and the colonnade of the Forum of Nerva in Rome. It can also be regarded as a manifesto of the artistic and philosophical theories that Testa expounds in his *Trattato di Pittura*. Theory, represented by the woman with a compass and bound hands on the right, and Practice, who gropes blindly next to an ape, a symbol of Imitation, are the two virtues on which Painting is founded. A group of youths in the center study by drawing models, while Judgment, the old man with wings on his head, points towards Painting at the right, who is accompanied by Perspective. The center of the portico is dominated by a statue of Minerva, goddess of Wisdom, between Mathematics on the left and Public Felicity, with a caduceus and cornucopia (symbols of peace and abundance) on the right. At the foot of this statue, Aristotle incarnates the ethical ideal of man as expressed in Greek philosophy, and indeed in the portico, artists and philosophers stroll and discuss as was the custom in the Athenian peripatetic Lyceum. The extensive formulation of this complicated iconography is documented in numerous preparatory drawings. The copper plate constitutes part of a group of Testa's matrices that belonged to the De Rossi alla Pace Printing House.

PL. 19

Pietro Testa (b. Lucca, 1611– d. Rome, 1650)

*Il Liceo della Pittura*, c. 1638

Etching on copper, 480 x 750 mm

VIC 993



This painter and printmaker, born in Genoa, was exposed to the Flemish painting of Rubens and Van Dyck, then spent time in Rome and Naples, where he was subject to the influence of Nicolas Poussin's classicism. A highly talented etcher, Castiglione (known as "il Grechetto") used graphic means to illustrate subjects inspired by stoic philosophy, drawing an iconographic repertory from the classicizing themes followed by many artists of the period, among whom were Salvator Rosa [PL. 21] and Pietro Testa [PL. 19]. This etching, executed between 1645 and 1648, portrays the allegory of Fame, impersonated here by a youth in a plumed hat who clutches a trumpet and a book with the print's title, referring to the stoic theme of the vanity of worldly glory. Even if intellectual and artistic virtues are the sole means of man's redemption, they are nonetheless destined to perish, as is expressed symbolically by the palette with brushes and the musical score abandoned in the foreground next to the rabbit and the chicken coop, allusions to art's fertility. The artist illustrates the themes with recourse to the famous *Iconologia* of Cesare Ripa. At the center, rising above a dilapidated tomb with creeping foliage, is a female bust with a headdress—the allegory of Invention—to whom a putto with a trumpet draws attention by proclaiming the glory symbolized by her laurel crown. The copper plate, for which there were various preparatory sketches (unfortunately divided among many museums), was part of the collection belonging to the De Rossi alla Pace Printing House. The Calcografia possesses another eight plates that are among the most significant in Castiglione's graphic oeuvre.

PL. 20

Giovanni Benedetto Castiglione (b. Genoa, 1609 – d. Mantua, 1663/65)

*Il Genio della Pittura*, 1648

Etching on copper, 378 x 252 mm

VIC 369



The complex symbolism of the composition as well as its demonstration of a profound knowledge of the technical aspects of etching make this one of Salvator Rosa's most famous prints. Executed in 1662, it was meant to celebrate the figure and virtue of the artist, represented by the youth who—semi-nude—is pure and free of all material fetters. Many allegorical figures surround him: Liberty in the act of placing a hat on his head; Sincerity receiving his heart; Painting, a precise quote from Raphael's *Transfiguration*, kneeling in the foreground; Satire, symbol of satirical poetry; and a man standing with a book and scale symbolizing Stoicism, whose ethical ideals were regarded by Rosa as the key to moral integrity and the affirmation of artistic liberty. This theme, dear to many painters of the first half of the seventeenth century, had already been treated in the print by Giovanni Battista Castiglione [PL. 20]. The copper plate is part of a stock that was acquired by the Calcografia Camerale in the 1790s. The Institute also possesses the preparatory drawing for the matrix.

PL. 21

Salvator Rosa (b. Naples, 1615 – d. Rome, 1673)

*Il Genio di Salvator Rosa*, 1662

Etching refinished with dry point on copper, 473 x 282 mm

VIC 747H



etiamque in primis quod non sibi  
concedit ut in primis quod non sibi  
concedit ut in primis quod non sibi  
concedit ut in primis quod non sibi

This refined treatise was composed on the basis of an outline prepared by Errard (1606–1689), a French painter and founder of Louis XIV's *Académie royale de peinture et sculpture* and the French Academy in Rome, which Errard directed from 1666-1684. The 56 plates follow the instructions of Bernardino Genga, who taught pupils at the French Academy how to draw human anatomy correctly. Following the first 23 purely scientific plates, the remaining ones depict the most important statues of antiquity, including the *Farnese Hercules*, the *Laocoon*, the *Faun*, and the *Borghese Gladiator*. Published in 1691 by Domenico de Rossi, and entering the Calcografia in 1738, the treatise contains an explanatory text by Giovanni Maria Lancisi, pontifical archiator and anatomy instructor at Rome's Sapienza. The copper plate here, the frontispiece of the series, depicts an allegory of death and is attributed to the French engraver Andriot, active in Rome in the final two decades of the seventeenth century. At this time the publishing market in Rome was quite active and had at its disposal many professional printmakers who devoted themselves to intaglio in order to illustrate treatises and catalogs of art collections that were being published in ever-greater quantities. As always, the burin is the technique most often used in the case of representing sculpture.

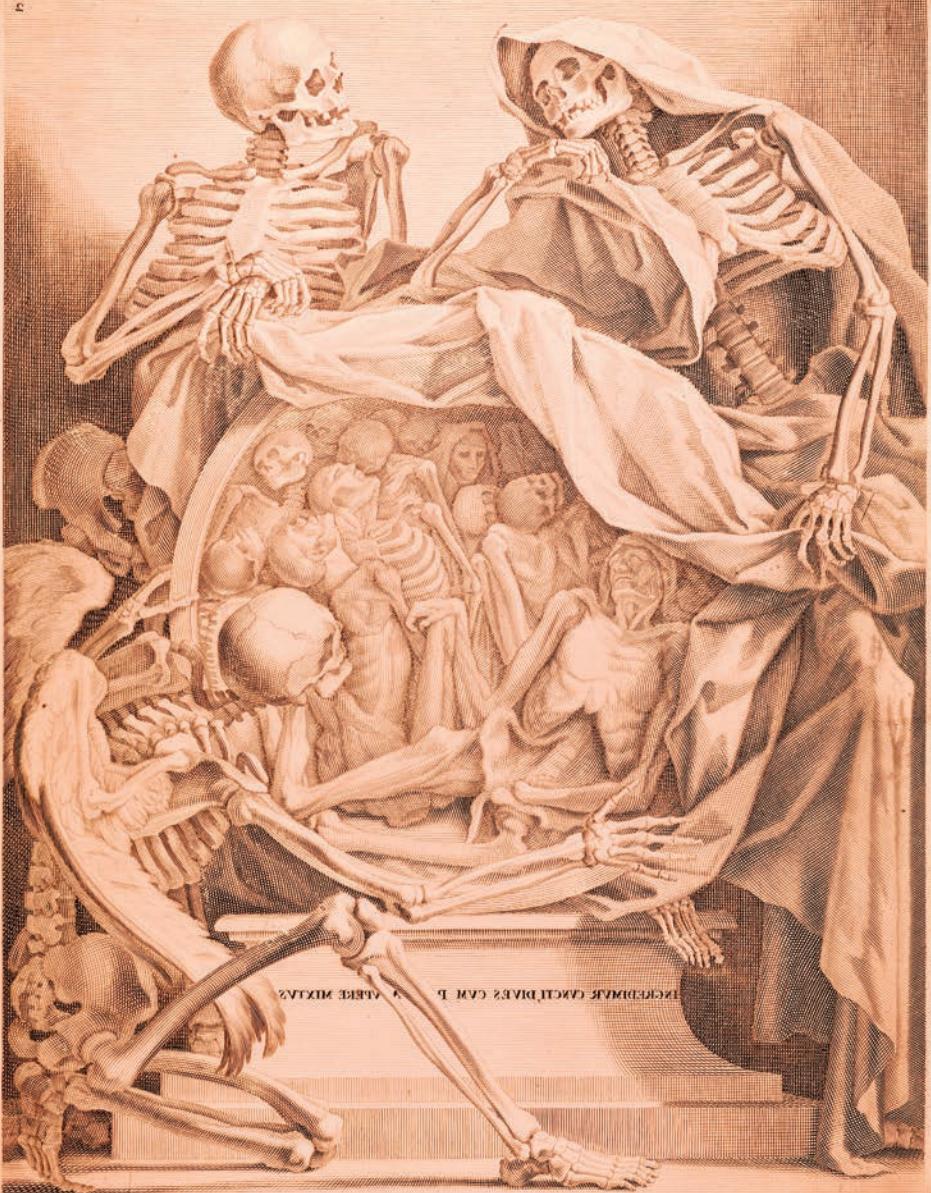
PL. 22

François Andriot (attr.) (d. 1704)

*Anatomia per uso et intelligenza del disegno* after Charles Errard, c. 1691

Burin on copper, 325 x 238 mm

VIC 1164/2







These two matrices belong to a series of thirteen plates that illustrate flower species “drawn from nature” by Jacques Bailly. The frontispiece notes the publisher as Giovanni Giacomo De Rossi “at the sign of Paris,” and 1681 as the date of the privilege; the copper plates thus belong to the collection belonging to De Rossi’s Printing House, the founding core of the Calcografia Camerale. De Rossi counted many foreign artists among its engravers, including the Fleming Westerhout, who, arriving in Rome in 1681, was employed in the workshop of Cornelis Bloemart, soon established himself as an expert in reproductive engraving, and became known for his reproductions of Carlo Maratta’s paintings. This work, which copies the drawings of Jacques Bailly, illustrates various species of flora (following a widespread late-seventeenth-century fashion) and succeeded in satisfying the demands of both scientific classification and collectors, who preserved such floral assortments in bound volumes in their libraries.

PLS. 23, 24

Arnold van Westerhout (b. Antwerp, 1651– d. Rome, 1725)

*Nuova raccolta di varie e diverse sorti di fiori*, 1631

Etching on copper, 300 x 209 mm; 299 x 206 mm

VIC 1469/8;12







This matrix contains an illustration for Book X of the *Magnificenze di Roma* (1747–1761), a monumental work with over 250 plates depicting the monuments of the modern city and organized typologically: churches, monasteries, squares, buildings, etc. Indeed, in the polemic regarding the ancient vs. the modern city, Vasi—who in these very years so impassioned Piranesi—tended to favor the latter, preferring to disregard the “junk of the miserable periods of the low periods.” This engraver worked in Rome at a time of active cultural ferment, itself reflected in growing public demand for greater knowledge and more precise documentation of urban spaces. These were the prints that spread throughout Europe the image of that “Alma città di Roma,” which was so sought after by foreigners committed to the idea of a voyage of enlightenment to the Eternal City. The copper plate represents the villa built on the Palatine in 1535 by Vignola for Alessandro Farnese. The villa, with its famous groves and botanical garden—one of the oldest of its kind in Europe—was destroyed in the nineteenth century due to excavations undertaken in the area.

PL. 25

Giuseppe Vasi (b. Corleone, 1710 – d. 1782)

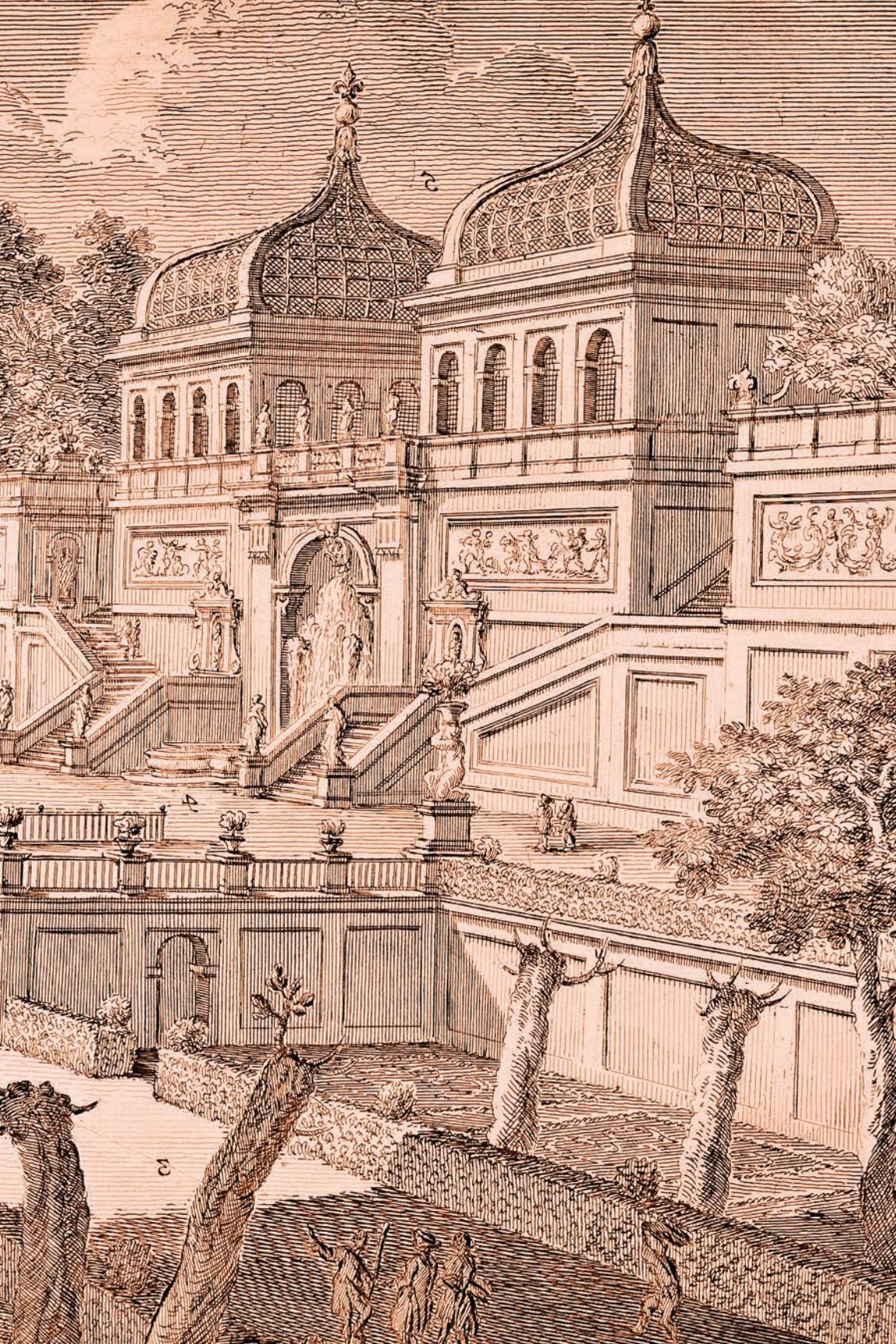
*Orti Farnesiani sul monte Palatino*, 1761

Etching on copper, 222 x 346 mm

VIC 3592/96







During a review of Piranesi's matrices in 1965–1967, a composition identified as the *La caduta di Fetonte* was discovered on the versos of two plates of views of Santa Maria Maggiore and the piazza of Monte Cavallo. There are no impressions of the image save a few printed at the time of the discovery, since the two plates were crossed out by Piranesi himself, perhaps due to damage caused by a mistake in the plates' immersion in acid. It was probably for this reason that the artist reused the copper plate to etch two views of Rome. In the *Piazza di Monte Cavallo* on the recto, the artist exaggerated the Roman sculptural group of the Dioscuri from the Baths of Constantine with respect to the Quirinal Palace on the left. On the verso, he attempted to experiment with the intangible quality of the space, drawing on the plate a sort of explosion of Phaeton with the chariot of the sun, an attempt that ended up as a technical failure. The spiraling turrets on the left are a quote of the cupola atop Francesco Borromini's church of St. Ivo at the Sapienza.

PLS. 26, 27

Giovanni Battista Piranesi (b. Venice, 1720 – d. Rome, 1778)

*Piazza di Monte Cavallo / La caduta di Fetonte* (recto/verso), c. 1748

Etching on copper retouched with burin, 394 x 555 mm

VIC 1400/708



Quirinal Palace, Column of Phocas, Palazzo Madama





This copper plate is one in the definitive edition of the sixteen plates of the *Carceri*, a series reprinted between 1760 and 1761 with significant interventions, but already appearing in an earlier version between 1749 and 1751. The work is important insofar as it signals the peak of Piranesi's clarification of form, the fusion of his Venetian training, and his illusionistic interpretation of space that resulted from his study of Roman Baroque architecture. By the early 1760s, Piranesi was already an expert in the use of multiple biting and had fine-tuned a recipe of his own invention—a compound comprised of strong acid, copper sulfate, table salt, and rock alum—that resulted in a more gradual mordant, which in turn enhanced the precision and depth of the scored line. This method allowed the artist to obtain a broad range of sfumato—from jet black to silver-grey—and granted the image a strong painterly quality. The *Carceri* enjoyed enormous success in Europe and were particularly appreciated by nineteenth-century artists and writers for their visual emotional charge.

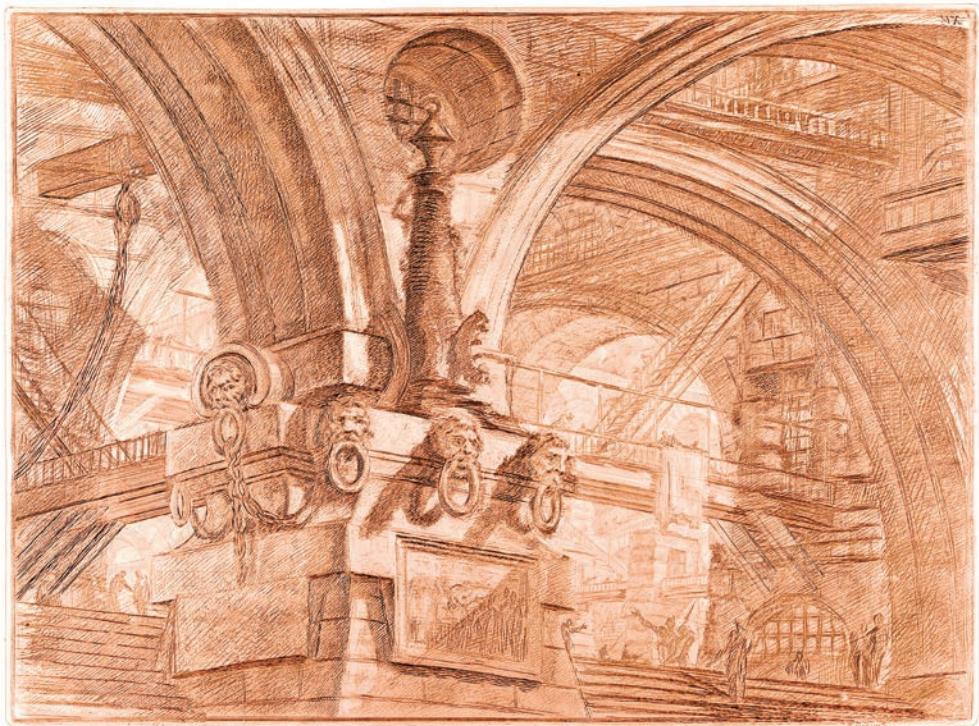
PL. 28

Giovanni Battista Piranesi (b. Venice, 1720 – d. Rome, 1778)

*Capriccio con pilastro ornato con mascheroni*, pl. XV of the *Carceri*, 1749/50–1761

Etching and burin on copper, 416 x 558 mm

VIC 1400/363







This plate is part of the *Vedute di Roma*, a series composed of 137 plates executed by the artist between 1745 and 1778 (the year of Piranesi's death). More than any of his other works, these views served to spread Piranesi's fame as well as his manner of interpreting the city and its monuments. One may speak of "Piranesi's Rome," inasmuch as he started a revolution in a genre that conquered a large sector of the publishing market. His views were immediately in great demand throughout Europe, thanks to foreign tourists who flocked to Italy in the eighteenth century and collected the prints for the sake of study, since prior to the invention of photography, prints were one of the few tools available for learning about monuments. The Colosseum represents one of the few subjects taken up repeatedly by Piranesi, whose creative powers seem to have exceeded the monument that symbolizes Rome herself, conferring on it a special aura that encapsulated not only the actual site but even the emotion it aroused in the artist. Piranesi exalted its gigantic scale, representing it from a frontal perspective that barely squeezes into the border of the plate. The minuscule human figures, reduced to pure ornament, help emphasize the grandeur of Roman architecture.

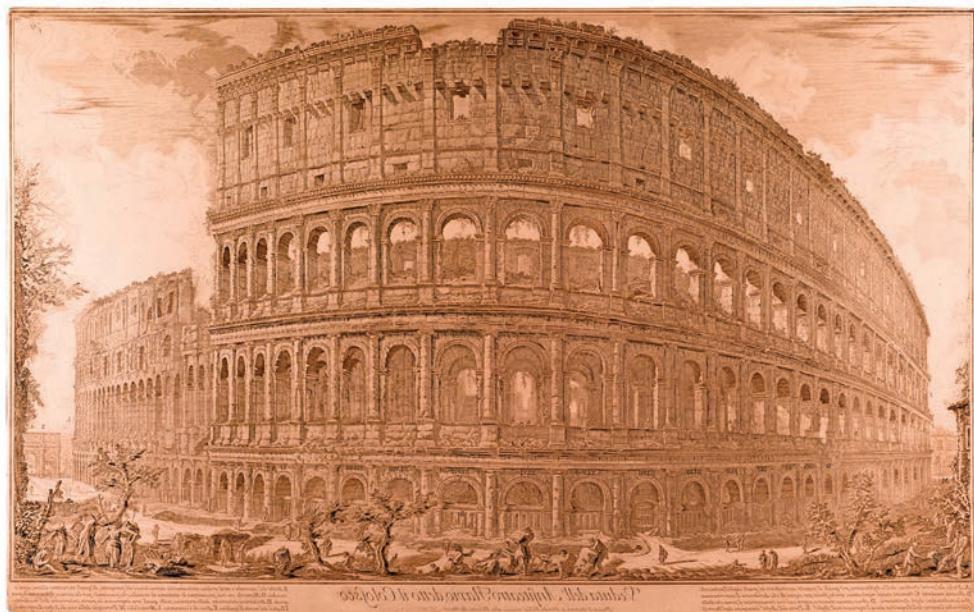
PL. 29

Giovanni Battista Piranesi (b. Venice, 1720 – d. Rome, 1778)

*Veduta dell'Anfiteatro Flavio detto il Colosseo*, c. 1761

Etching on copper retouched with burin, 446 x 716 mm

VIC 1400/781



This copper plate belongs to a series of seven plates that reproduce the decoration of Julius II's Vatican apartments. The series was executed by Raphael between 1510 and 1517. After training in Bassano, where he worked at the famous Remondini Printing House, Volpato moved to Rome in 1771 to work on the very project that was to make him famous: the reproduction of the Vatican Loggias, another masterpiece by the Urbinese artist. It was precisely these reproductive engravings that began to assume a central role at this moment for collectors and others who were beginning to use them as the basis for the budding study of art history. Volpato's use of mixed technique—going over the etched drawing with a burin—helped achieve a better sense of the relations among various degrees of chiaroscuro and a more faithful copy of the frescos' chromatic values. After Volpato's death, his heirs sold his 168 copper plates to the Calcografia.

PL. 30

Giovanni Volpato (b. Angarano di Bassano, 1735 – d. Rome, 1803)

*La cacciata di Eliodoro dal tempio*, after Raphael, 1775–1784

Etching and burin on copper, 500 x 700 mm

VIC 793



PIO SEXTO PONT MAX

JOANNES VOLPATO D - D - D

This copper plate was commissioned by the Calcografia Camerale to reproduce the fresco executed in 1545 by Daniele da Volterra, which may be found in the Roman church of Santa Trinità dei Monti. Most likely it was meant to document the restoration of the work initiated by Vincenzo Camuccini, a Roman painter and vice-president of the artistic Commission of the Calcografia, the committee assigned to select subjects for engraving and to control the manufacture of matrices. Following his teacher Giovanni Volpato to Rome in 1781, Giovanni Folo often worked with the Calcografia. The technique used here—an etched outline entirely retouched by the burin—was applied for copying works of art at the Roman Institute in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In this case, the complexity of the work and the large format of the plate affected the completion of the project, which extended from 1824 to 1840.

PL. 31

Giovanni Folo (b. Bassano, 1764 – d. Rome, 1836) and

Pietro Folo (b. Rome, 1790 – d. 1867)

Drawing by Giovanni Battista Borani (active at the Calcografia 1824–39)

*Deposizione dalla croce*, after Daniele da Volterra, c. 1841

Etching and burin on copper, 740 x 508 mm

VIC 743



This copper plate, which reproduces the sculptural group commissioned by Giovanni Torlonia in 1801 and now preserved in the Galleria d'arte moderna in Rome, belongs to the so-called Calcografia Canova. The Venetian sculptor had this collection of matrices made in order to document his works. It served not only as a sort of catalogue to publicize his sculpture—and thus affirm his artistic glory—but at the same time as a convenient instrument for selling it. Although the artist himself never engraved a plate, documents reveal that he directed the entire organization of the project: from the choice of printmakers (the engraver Folo in this case) to that of the paper for the impressions. The 167 matrices were acquired by the Calcografia in 1827, and were printed so many times that, as in this case, it was necessary to steelify the plates with an electrolytic process in order to protect the incised grooves from further wear and tear. This process actually permits the matrix to be used longer. Tognoli, an expert in making drawings for prints, made most of the preparatory drawings for Canova's plates.

PL. 32

Giovanni Folo (b. Bassano, 1764 – d. Rome, 1836)  
Preparatory drawing by Giovanni Tognoli  
*Ercole e Lica*, after Antonio Canova, post-1841  
Etching and burin on steelified copper, 631 x 476 mm  
VIC 1287



Engraved after modelled by the Author of Hercules. UNTIL PUBLISHED BY JOHN COOKSON.





This copper plate reproduces Correggio's celebrated painting of Danaë receiving Jupiter (transformed as a shower of gold) after its return to Italy in 1827 and restoration by Vincenzo Camuccini, then a member of the Calcografia's artistic Commission. In those years the Calcografia often commissioned matrices to document restorations taking place in the pontifical state. Preserved in the Institute's collections are many preparatory drawings for plates as well as the so-called transitional prints: sheets used to demonstrate to the commission the engraver's results in the course of his work, which testify to the printmaking practices in the chamber's shop at the time. The matrix was executed between 1873 and 1879. In the late nineteenth century, attempts were made to rival photography through means that accelerated the system for producing prints, and in this case, Porretti used mechanical means, such as the ruling pen, to simplify the execution of the image's background.

PL. 33

Alessandro Porretti (b. Rome, 1838 – d. after 1880)

Preparatory drawing by Nicola Ortis

*La Danae*, after Correggio, 1874–1879

Dry point, etching and burin on copper, 610 x 760 mm

VIC 16



DAVID

Palizzi, a painter trained in Naples in the milieu of Verist and landscape painters, was one of the first to make use of photography, of which he possessed sound technical understanding. From his writings we know that he also used photographs as models for his paintings. This plate offers a clear example of the popular taste for everyday subjects that was so common to the pictorial Realism of the nineteenth century, and which also renewed an interest in etching among European painters, who in the final three decades of the century began increasingly to experiment with new techniques of print production. This matrix belongs to a group of four plates sold to the Calcografia Regia in 1910 by the artist's nephew, Doralice De Guglielmo.

PL. 34

Filippo Palizzi (b. Vasto, 1818 – d. Naples, 1899)

*La pastorella*, 1880

Etching retouched with burin on chrome-plated copper, 231 x 153 mm

VIC 1715



In the second half of the nineteenth century, Palizzi rediscovered the painterly qualities of etching. In addition to themes such as that of the *La Pastorella* [PL. 34], which are so dear to Italian Realism, Palizzi, with a few dry and vibrant strokes, made an image in 1879 of a lion in the desert that reveals a renewed interest in exotic landscapes. Having by this point become one of the main protagonists of Italian art, he devoted himself to teaching and contributed to the founding of a school of applied art at the Industrial Arts Museum in Naples. The matrix was probably chrome plated in the late nineteenth century to enable the production of further impressions.

PL. 35

Filippo Palizzi (b. Vasto, 1818 – d. Naples, 1899)

*Amore ne deserto*, 1870

Etching retouched with burin on chrome-plated copper, 151 x 340 mm

VIC 1712



This plate was commissioned by the Calcografia in 1909 from Spinelli, who made both the preparatory drawing and intaglio on the plate. The work was etched. Indeed the use of this technique is often associated with the transfer of a charcoal preparatory drawing since it allows for greater fidelity to the original painting. This is true above all in this case, since Spinelli reproduces a painting, now in the Galleria nazionale d'arte moderna in Rome, by the Venetian artist Favretto, one of the masters of late-nineteenth-century Italian naturalism. The rich chromatic range, made possible by etching, perfectly duplicates the strong luminosity of the work. The excellent result achieved by the engraver, who succeeded in creating a varied range of marks, found immediate confirmation in public demand, so much so that that the plate was steelified in order to enable the printing of additional impressions.

PL. 36

Raffaele Spinelli

*After the Bath*, after Giacomo Favretto, 1910

Etching on steelified copper, 366 x 533 mm

VIC 1716



DOPPI BAGNO

After a brief digression in Futurism and metaphysics, which marked his first steps as an artist, Carlo Carrà arrived at an art that was monumental, synthetic, and ideal, albeit in its seeming reproduction of the real. Known also as *Barche in porto* or *Vele al chiuso*, this work is characterized by its simple, completely unmodulated line—nearly a contour—by means of which the artist conquers the contrasting rhythm suggested by the trees and sails of the vessels in the port. Actual data was conceived by Carrà “as a simple occasion and stimulus for invention”—whether in painting or in print. In the 1920s his two lines of experimentation ran parallel; some of the subjects of his paintings were anticipated in the concise language of prints. In this plate, the two vessels with gathered sails in the near center of the composition relate closely to the two in an oil painting of the same period entitled *Vele nel porto*. The language of both conveys the geometric rigor of the intersecting nets rather than the atmosphere of the landscape. The plate bears the etched name of the artist.

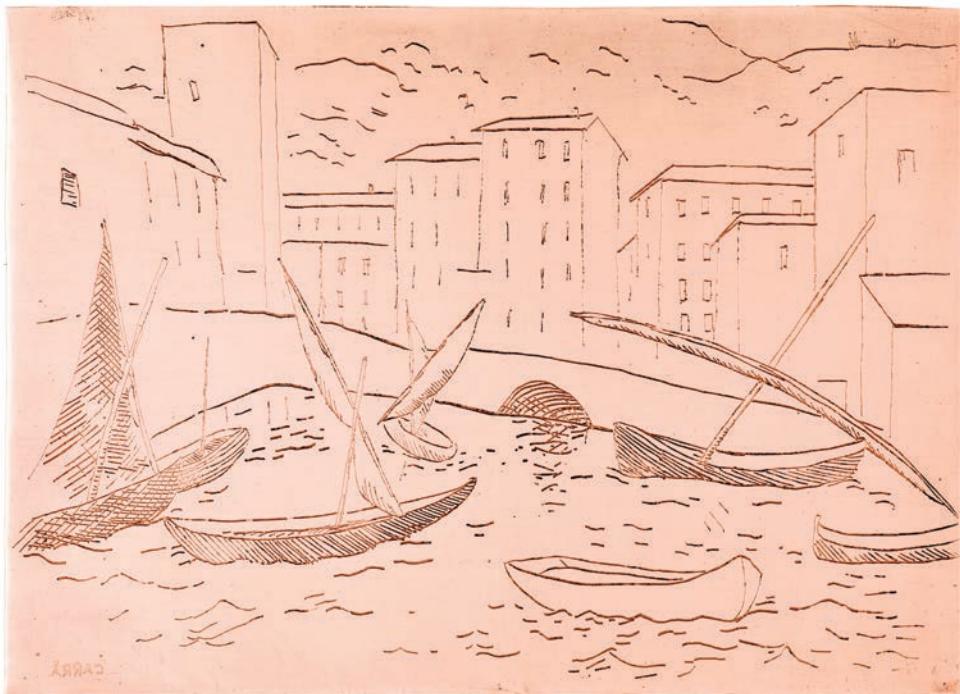
PL. 37

Carlo Carrà (b. Quargnento, Alessandria, 1881– d. Milan, 1996)

*Porto di Camogli*, 1923

Etching on copper, 226 x 312 mm

VIC 1794/5



This 1924 etching is characterized by the archaic and monumental figures that are typical of Carlo Carrà. The work contains some features that differ from those of the 1919 painting of the same subject. In the painting, the pregnant condition of the girl at the door is more obvious; the girl kneeling on the right seems to be addressing or even stroking the quadruped, depicted on this plate as a unicorn, which, along with the budding leaves on the frame, is a symbol of rebirth. The subject, in fact, goes back to the problematic story of the daughters of the patriarch Lot in the Book of Genesis, which Carrà has succeeded in transforming into a celebration of life through an explicit allusion to the Annunciation. The subject, rendered in a very stark line, was selected in 1920 for the cover of *Valori Plastici* no. VII–VIII, a journal edited by Mario Broglio from 1918 to 1922, in which Carrà, together with Giorgio de Chirico, Gino Severini, and Ardengo Soffici, rejected the experimentalism of the avant-garde while proposing a return to a traditional figurative style. The plate contains the etched name of the artist.

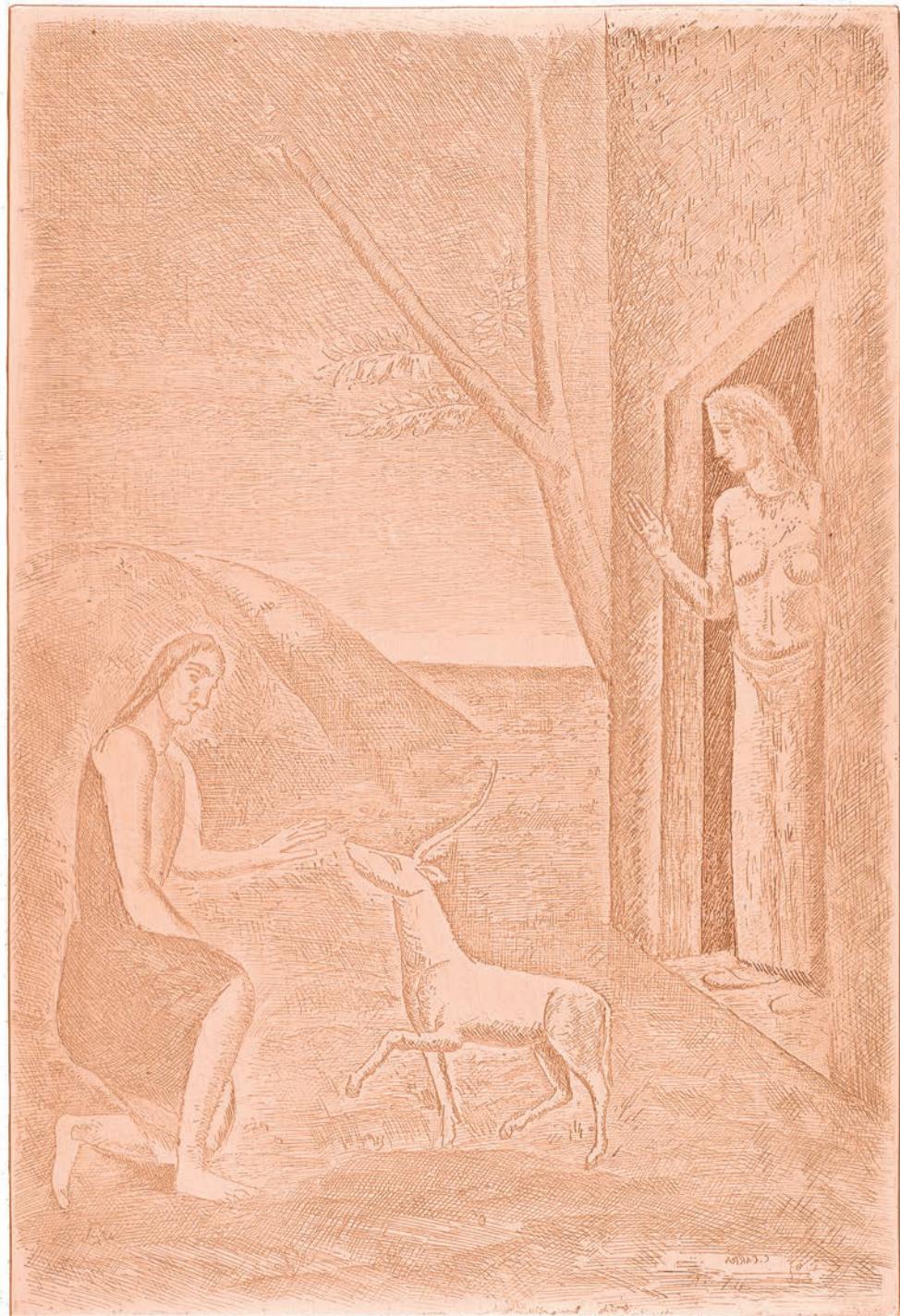
PL. 38

Carlo Carrà (b. Quargnento, Alessandria, 1881– d. Milan, 1996)

*Le figlie di Lot*, 1924

Etching on copper, 400 x 278 mm

VIC 1794/13







Giorgio Morandi, who fell under the spell of the teachings of Cézanne and the Cubists, had ties with Futurism and metaphysics, which helped him achieve his highly personal poetics of everyday subjects. Indeed, both in painting and then in his graphic work, he transcended reality by rendering the geometric relationships among pure forms. The artist concentrated most on the etched mark between 1927 and 1934, when he made over eighty plates. Among these is the beautiful landscape of 1927, which reveals his extreme technical mastery. The plate's surface, which is etched at various depths and with clusters of hatched strokes, offers a broad spectrum of chiaroscuro, out of which emerge limited areas of smoothness that, though more easily appreciable in the print (because white) can be seen in the copper matrix too.

PL. 39

Giorgio Morandi (b. Bologna, 1890 – d. Bologna, 1964)

*Paesaggio del Poggio*, 1927

Etching on copper, 236 x 292 mm

VIC 1799/20







Consistent in his poetics, Giorgio Morandi chose to depict common landscape views of the bare hills around Bologna, a city he rarely left. His landscapes are characterized by a meditative atmosphere, one nearly of alienation, in which time seems to stop and man's existence is suggested solely by the presence of houses. The human figure was a subject little explored by Morandi, who, perhaps due to his own reserved nature, always respected its mystery. Both sides of this plate are etched with a single bath. On the recto appears a landscape by the Savena River, a subject already treated in a print in 1912; on the verso appears a still life [PL. 41] executed in the reverse orientation from the landscape. In the case of this and the preceding print, Morandi made a tracing to illustrate Vincenzo Cardarelli's *Il sole a picco*, published in 1930. The trace is performed only in outline, summarizing the image with a very simplified dashed line.

PL. 40

Giorgio Morandi (b. Bologna, 1890 – d. Bologna, 1964)

*Paesaggio sul Savena* (recto), 1929

Etching on copper, 258 x 249 mm

VIC 1799/30



From the outset Morandi was interested in the genre of still life, which thanks to him acquired a solemn monumentality that no one before his time had thought possible. This matrix is a rarity in Morandi's corpus of plates, since it is the sole example of the artist's use of aquatint, which is distinguishable in the area of the white lamp near the composition's center. In it, as in other plates executed in these same years, the variety of tools used to score the wax has been essentially reduced; it is the pressure of the hand that determines the depth of the incision. The tonal effect is created by the varied relationships of the etched lines and, for the most part, a single bath. The marks are nearly identical, but they appear different from those around them in their density and their interdependence, which modifies their function and meaning.

PL. 41

Giorgio Morandi (b. Bologna, 1890 – d. Bologna, 1964)

*Natura morta con vaso, lumino e piatto* (verso), 1929

Etching and aquatint on copper, 249 x 258 mm

VIC 1799/30r



830. D. 1860. 1

A meticulous and demanding artist, Giorgio Morandi also skillfully calibrated various etching components in this rather complex and challenging composition, typical of his intense work of the 1930s. He chose to use the slow Dutch mordant, which etches almost exclusively in depth and thus respects the width of the grooves and the density of the texture; he adapted the tip of the burin to score the acid-resistant coating in order to enhance the tonal scale of the same marks. As in many of his other still lives, he represents the everyday objects here with a solemn monumentality, paying extreme attention to perceptible phenomena and optical reconstruction: figure-ground, positive-negative, solid-void. No object appears to dominate the others just as none is complete unto itself. The print pulled from this plate was published in *Il selvaggio* on November 1, 1932.

PL. 42

Giorgio Morandi (b. Bologna, 1890 – d. Bologna, 1964)

*Grande natura morta con lampada a petrolio*, 1930

Etching on copper, retouched with burin, 307 x 365 mm

VIC 1799/39







Regarded as an exponent of the postwar Realist movement, Renzo Vespiagnani described and decried the conditions of Rome's suburbs in this 1947 work, using a graphic mode that is simple but simultaneously rich in detail. Beginning in 1940 and through the war, the artist captured in a nearly photographic manner scenes of life—buildings under construction, corpses, convoys of merchandise—on copper "slides." On copper and zinc plates recovered from the refuse of demolished printing houses because difficult to find in those years, he transferred "certainly not the faithful cast of reality...but its presence in the negative." The Roman artist was immediately appreciated abroad. As early as 1946, a group of his works entered the collection of the Museum of Modern Art in New York. In 1947 he was in Paris in the company of Piero Dorazio, Achille Perilli, Gillo Pontecorvo, and Enrico Berlinguer. Illustration was congenial to Vespiagnani's highly literary sensibility, and he contributed writings, illustrations, and politically satirical drawings to many journals.

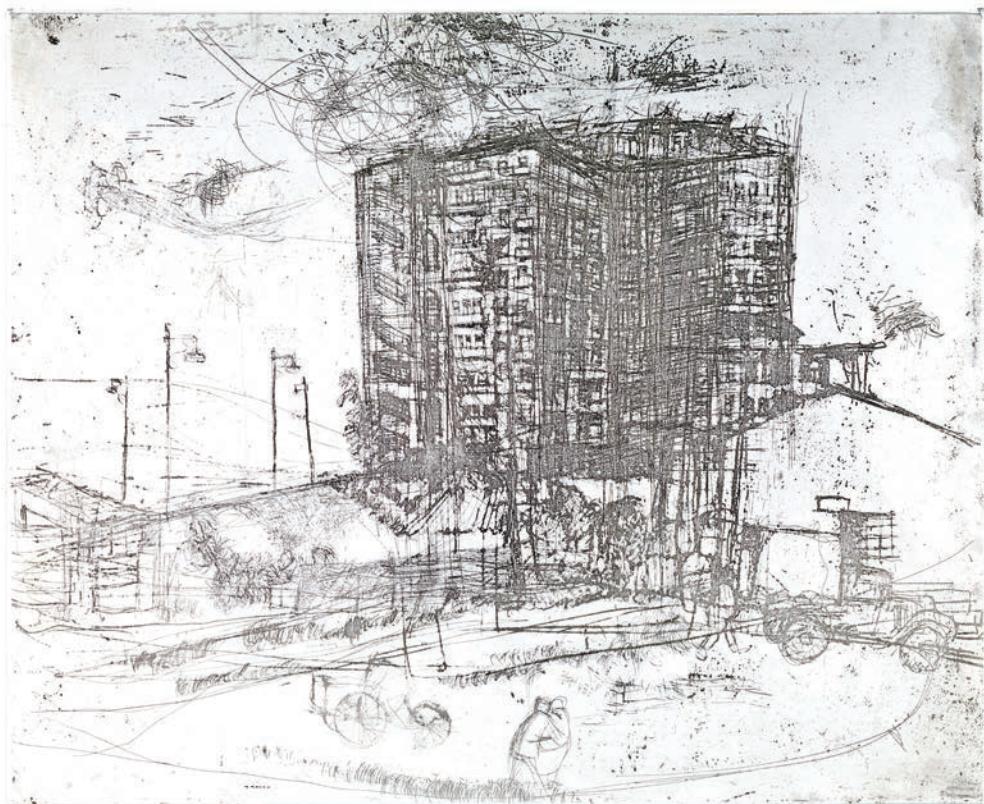
PL. 43

Renzo Vespiagnani (b. Rome, 1924 – d. Rome, 2001)

*Case popolari*, 1947

Etching on zinc, 243 x 297 mm

VIC 1976



This vertical composition, executed by Giuseppe Capogrossi in aquatint, was commissioned by the journal *Civiltà delle macchine* in 1966. It is part of a group of prints, all black and white, presented by the journal in exhibitions that traveled to many Italian cultural institutions in order to publicize how much the graphic arts had progressed in Italy in the early sixties. The zinc matrix brings to mind some *Rilievi* of the same year, which were exhibited by the artist and presented by Giulio Carlo Argan in the Galleria del Cavallino in Venice. In the print, the artist tried to obtain the effect of the absolute white of the reliefs and surfaces, printing some dry inkless proofs from this matrix. The composition, clearly more static than those teeming with points scored in multiple directions, displays the “sign-form” and the well-defined contours typical of the Roman master. The two comb-like forms create a circular composition that gathers into itself the cardinal features of space: the curve of the horizon and planes of vision. The plate contains the impression of the Romero Printing House seal.

PL. 44

Giuseppe Capogrossi (b. Rome, 1900 – d. Rome, 1972)

*Untitled*, 1966

Aquatint on zinc, 289 x 241 mm

VIC 3504



The gradual evolution of Giuseppe Capogrossi from figuration to abstraction reached maturity around 1950, the year he first exhibited abstract works in Rome, Milan, and Venice, though to little public acclaim. In 1951, however, he (the sole Italian) was invited along with Pollock, De Kooning, Wols, and others to Michel Tapié's exhibit *Véhémences confrontées* in Paris. In 1954, Seuphor published the first monograph on Capogrossi. With ever-growing critical and public acclaim, he took part in many exhibitions in Italy and abroad. In 1962 Tapié devoted a monograph to him, which was succeeded in 1967 by another by Giulio Carlo Argan, Maurizio Fagiolo, and Paola Frandini, followed by a supplement edited by Guglielmo Capogrossi in 1974, when the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna in Rome held a retrospective of his work. This plate presents two bands running parallel to uneven contours that confer a peculiar dynamic vibration reminiscent of oriental script. The plate bears the Romero Printing House seal.

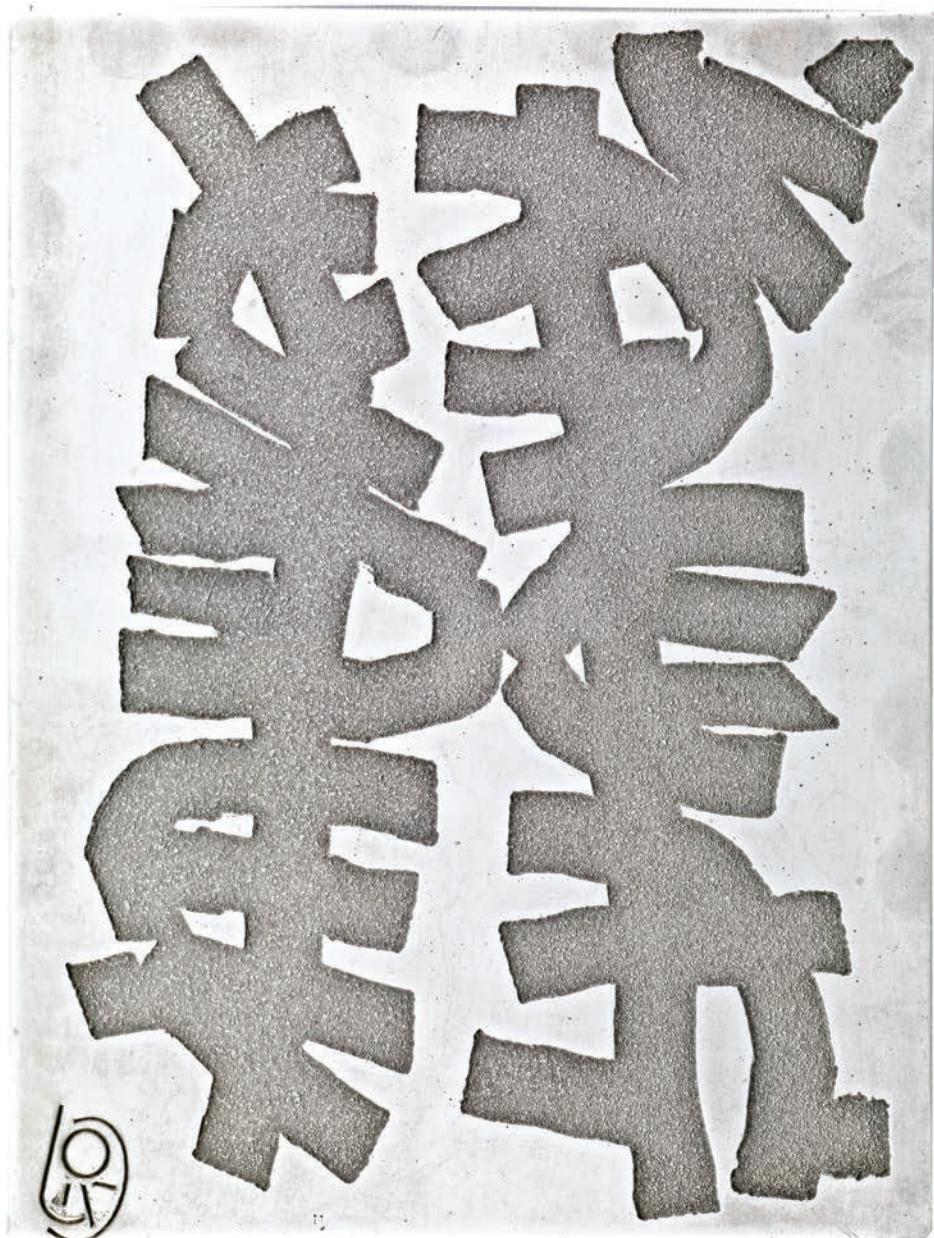
PL. 45

Giuseppe Capogrossi (b. Rome, 1900 – d. Rome, 1972)

*Untitled*, 1966

Aquatint and open bite on zinc, 143 x 111 mm

VIC 2806



The Friulian Afro Basaldella was encouraged to paint at an early age by his family of artists. From 1938 to 1941 he painted murals and executed mosaics in both public and private villas and buildings in Italy and abroad. He devoted himself enthusiastically to experimental printing techniques; his first print dates to 1954. This horizontal composition on copper, among those commissioned by the journal *Civiltà delle macchine* in 1966, arises from the seemingly automatic and surrealist derivation of the sign. Crucial to his shift to abstraction was his 1950 trip to the United States, where he met and was influenced by Arshile Gorky, and came to know the works of Franz Kline and Willem de Kooning. In the late sixties he discovered etching and aquatint, and with chiaroscuro passages of various grays, he filled black and white works with "color." He worked as a docent in 1958 at Mills College in Oakland; in 1966 at the Fine Arts Institute at the New College of Sarasota, Florida; and from 1967 to 1973 at the academy of fine arts in Florence. The plate bears an impression of the Romero Printing House seal.

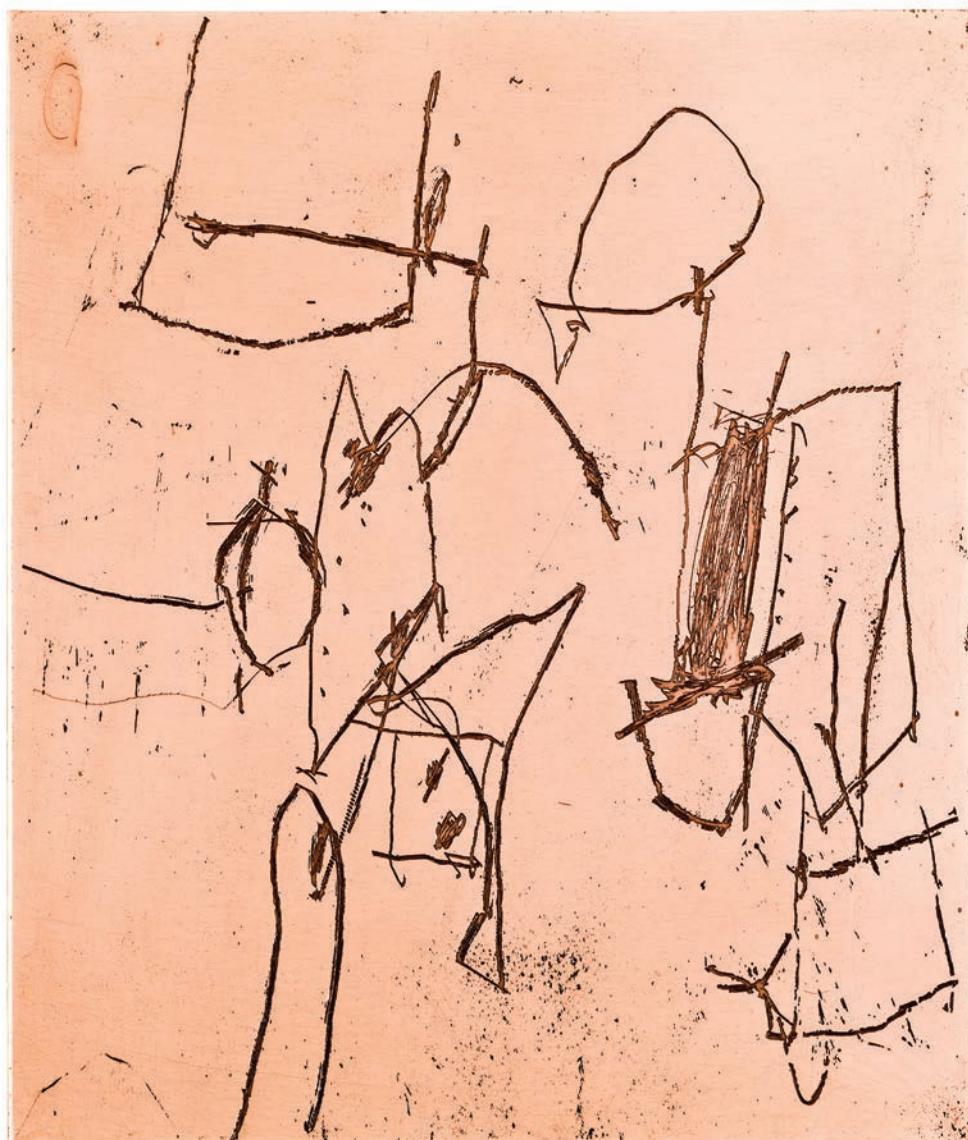
PL. 46

Afro Basaldella (b. Udine 1912 – d. Zurich, 1976)

*Untitled*, 1966

Etching and engraving on copper, 251 x 210 mm

VIC 3505







Pietro Consagra, a sculptor who embraced abstraction, participated in *Forma 1* as well as in the first exhibit of non-figurative art after the war. In Rome, along with Antonio Corpora, Piero Dorazio, Achille Perilli, Giulio Turcato, and Carla Accardi, he represented the avant-garde that rejected any association with the *Scuola Romana*. In order to represent a fuller and stronger contingent of abstract artists, Lionello Venturi linked this group to other artists who had reached maturity in other cultural circles, Venice and Turin for example. In the mid sixties, Consagra made sculptural reliefs that were practically two-dimensional, light, and transparent, the so-called “transparent irons,” in which he aimed to refute depth and matter. A better synthesis of such an effect appears in this brass matrix of the same title. The vertical composition presents an irregular, soft form, resolved in its contrast against the aquatint of the burnished background that emerges from within the figure. The contours are interrupted by pricked dots, and at intervals this speckling expands to shape more intensive spots.

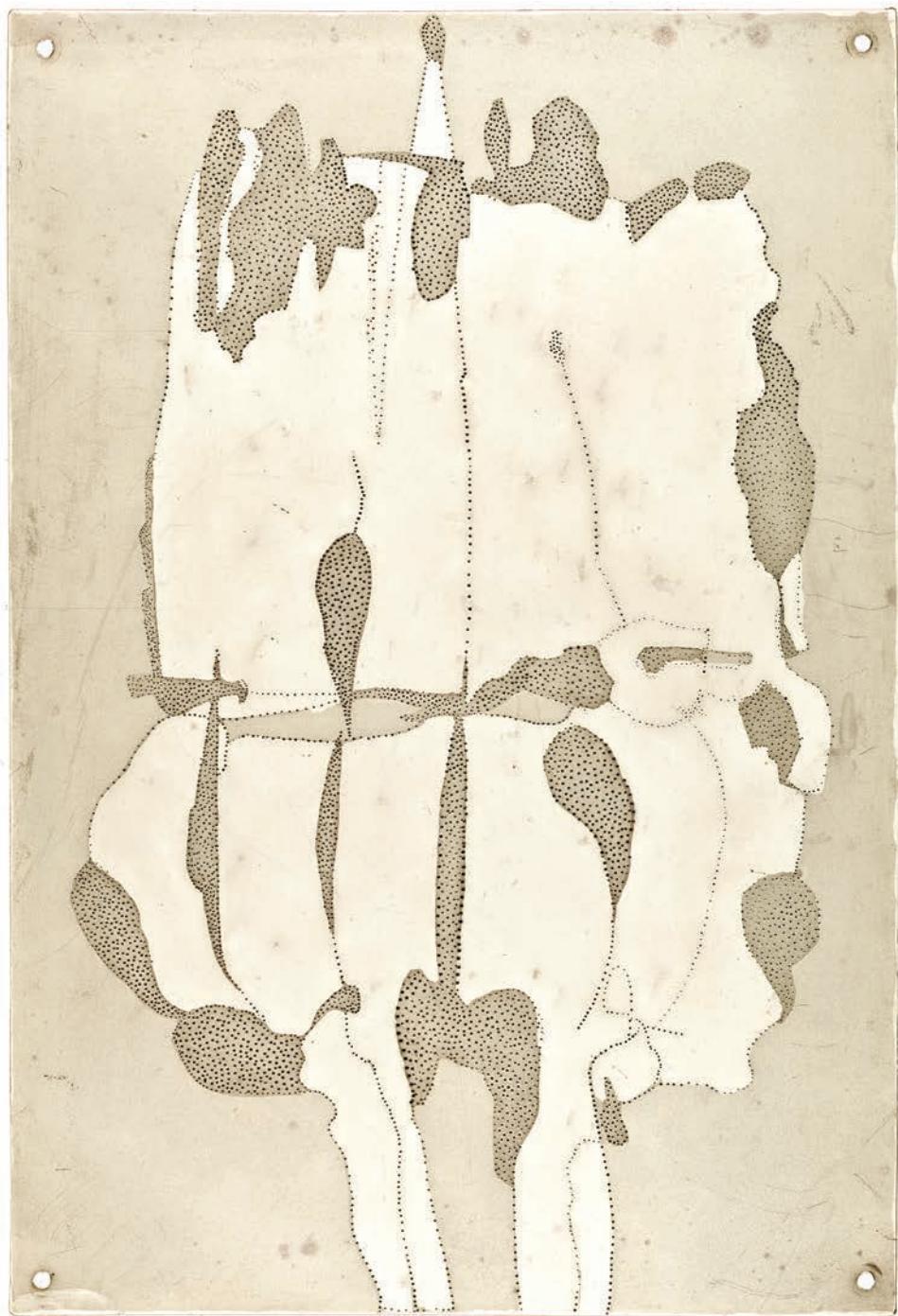
PL. 47

Pietro Consagra (b. Mazzara del Vallo, 1920 – d. Milan, 2005)

*Un ferro trasparente*, 1966

Aquatint and punch on brass, 462 x 319 mm

VIC 3498



Having moved with his family to Turin in 1925, Umberto Mastroianni came in contact with Luigi Spazzapan, one of the most important Italian exponents of abstract painting in the early postwar period. In 1945 Mastroianni won the prize for Turin's monument to those who had fallen for the sake of liberty and he began to exhibit in the avant-garde shows promoted by the *Art Club*, thereby establishing himself in Europe and America. After winning the International Grand Prize for sculpture at the twenty-ninth Venice Biennial in 1958, he worked as a docent in many Italian academies of fine arts. In 1962 he began devoting himself to intaglio, initially on lead plates, such as the one here. In the seventies he also did many colored etchings and aquatints on zinc. The artist handled this matrix with his usual aggressiveness, as if it were a bas-relief. The sense of plasticity has been obtained through the use of a hammer and scalpel, with various types of blows and scores evident on the lead. Such a support, unusual for intaglio because easily compressible and thus unsuitable for making impressions, was printed with special devices in order to guarantee consistent results. The artist exploited the rough and impure surface of the plate itself, which he used without any form of preparation or burnishing, to obtain a nearly surrealist-inspired frottage effect on the paper. The plate bears the incised name of the artist.

PL. 48

Umberto Mastroianni (b. Fontana Liri, 1910 – d. Marino, 1998)

*Lo stregone*, 1966

Engraved directly on lead, 457 x 377 x 4.5/7.8 mm

VIC 3489



After making contact with Gino Severini and Enrico Prampoloini, Piero Dorazio took a precocious interest in the essential values of visual perception. He played an active role in the artistic ferment that followed the war, belonging to and initiating many art movements. Through Severini he came to circulate among artists and writers in Paris. In 1953 he came to the United States and to Harvard, where he also had a solo premiere. The incised sign was always an instrument of methodological study for Dorazio. From the early sixties on he devoted himself to the graphic arts. For a long time he worked in black and white before arriving at his masterful definition of multi-colored aquatints. The expressive power of his 1970 works issues from the intertwining of orthogonal and diagonal lines rendered more vibrant through the addition of precious drypoint. This vertical composition on copper goes back to the engraved plates made the previous year for the volume *Cinque poesie di Vinicius de Moraes*, translated by Giuseppe Ungaretti. Dorazio often interacted with renowned poets, creating works for “four hands.” He succeeded in interpreting the verses without illustrating them, thereby relating the two expressive languages on equal terms.

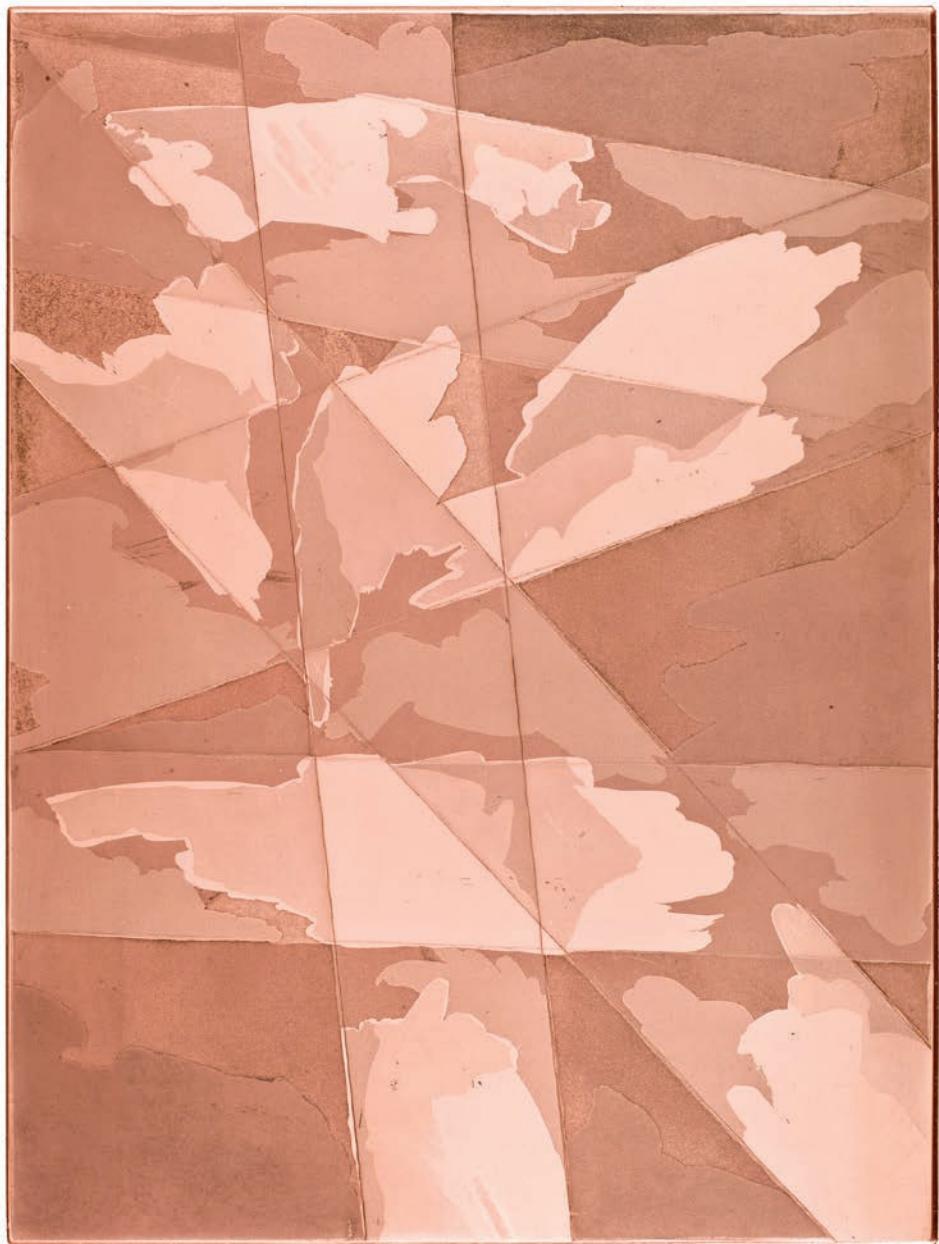
PL. 49

Piero Dorazio (b. Rome, 1927– Rome, 2005)

*Monk*, 1970

Aquatint, drypoint and punch on copper, 426 x 326 mm

VIC 3167







In 1939 Nino Franchina settled in Rome where he met and married Gina Severini, daughter of the great Futurist and Cubist painter. Severini's intense activity as advocate of culture pushed Franchina into a decidedly European atmosphere, in notable anticipation of his peers, who were inhibited by Fascism and the war. From 1947 to 1951 he lived and worked at length in Paris. In the sixties, he made a series of sculptures for some of the most beautiful piazzas in Italy, and at the same time devoted himself enthusiastically to intaglio, successfully transferring to the plate his skills as a sculptor. With this welded steel matrix from 1971, Franchina created a complete sculptural object and at the same time a most beautiful calcographic matrix, from which were printed bi-colored paper proofs for the journal *Civiltà delle Macchine*. He acted on the material with fury but also with the elegance and sense of proportion that always set his work apart, obtaining forms that both penetrate and are penetrated by space. The plate has on its verso three welded pins and an inscription in red felt-tip pen.

PL. 50

Nino Franchina (b. Palmanova, 1912 – d. Rome, 1987)

*Aquigrana*, 1971

Engraving molded on steel with welded points, 410 x 280 x 12 mm  
VIC 3494



Influenced by the lectures of Leonello Venturi and Giuseppe Ungaretti at the University “la Sapienza” in Rome, Achille Perilli took an active part in the postwar artistic ferment and joined many art movements. He collaborated with Ettore Colla in the journal *Art Visive*, with Gastone Novelli in the journal *L'Esperienza Moderna*, and in 1964 with the poets Giuliani and Manganelli in the journal *Grammatica*. For Perilli printmaking was an expressive mode not at all secondary to painting, and he often tied it to the verses of his poet friends. Representative in this respect is the title of the artist's book *Il parlar rotto*, which he created in 1972, in collaboration with the poet Jean-Clarence Lambert. In this fantastical account of disjointed narratives, the artist's geometrical structures float over the space of the page, creating immaterial images that at times circle around the poet's text and at other times seem to express it. The analogical relationship between Perilli's image-writing and Lambert's writing-image, which visually arranges the words in the text, is thus underscored. From both languages arises a complex and ambiguous “speaking” with images. The two matrices that make up this work retain in their grooves the colored ink of the 1972 printing.

PLS. 51, 52

Achille Perilli (b. Rome, 1927)

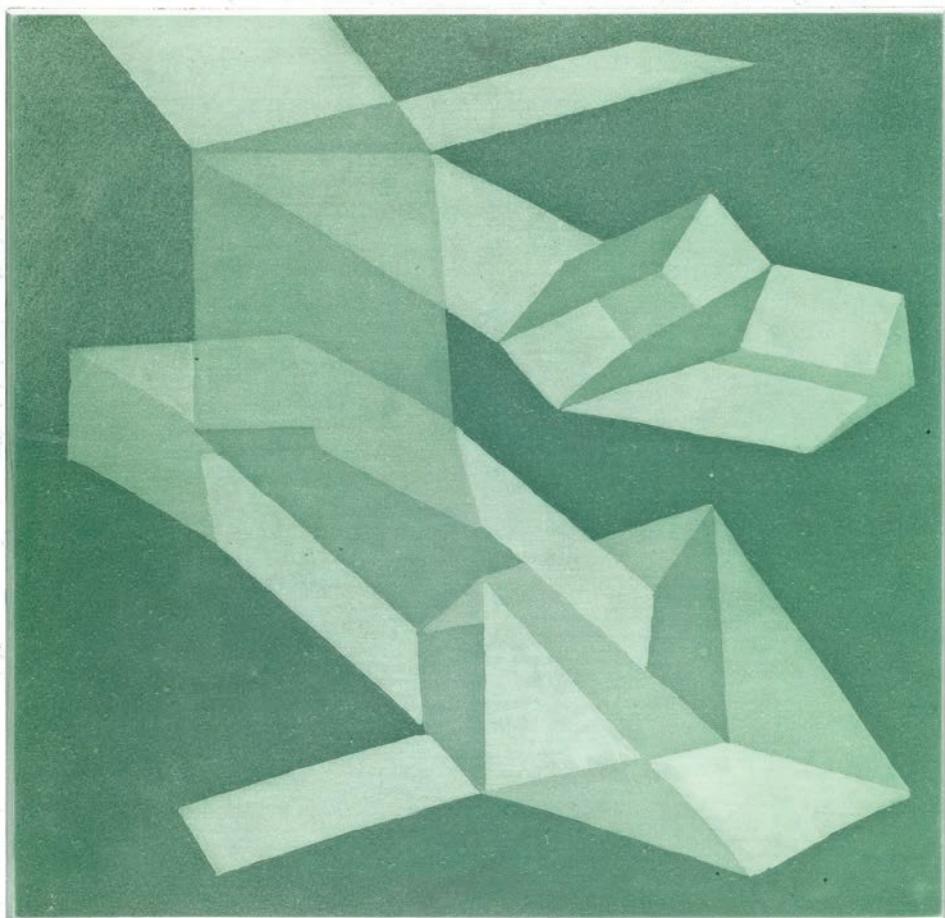
*Ni de rever* from *Il parlar rotto*

Artist's book with 12 prints by Achille Perilli and text by Jean-Clarence Lambert

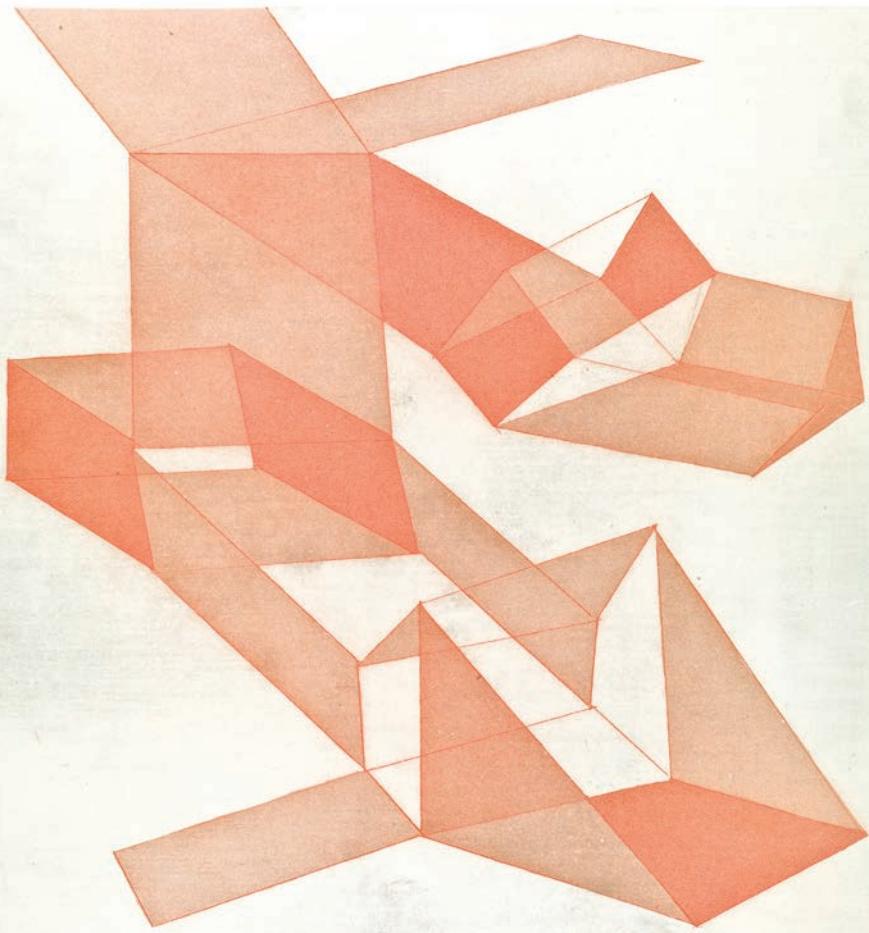
Grafica Romero, Roma, 1972

Etching and aquatint in two colors on zinc, 337 x 327 mm

VIC 2950A/B







Born in Mantua, Giulio Turcato moved to Rome, where he took an active part in postwar artistic developments and joined many movements that found fertile ground in the capital: from the *Art Club* to the group *Forma 1*, and from *Fronte nuovo delle arti* to the *Gruppo degli Otto*. After 1962 he devoted himself to the Oriental derivation of the art of the sign. It is to this circle of works that we can assign this 1973 plate, in which the mark, highly decisive, is more gestural and already beyond informal. The vertical composition, executed in aquatint and engraving, hints at two distinct fields, of which the darker one at the bottom reveals a fragment of a reclining female body. The matrix retained the blue and gold inks used in the print pulled in 1973, but the restoration carried out for the present exhibition necessitated their removal as well as an application of a protective film in order to halt the process of oxidation that had already spread over the matrix's surface.

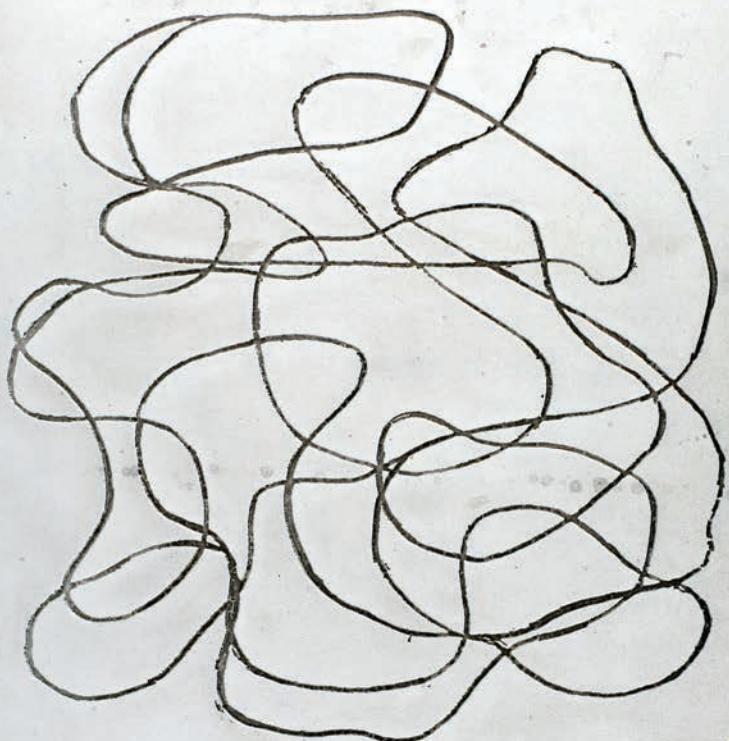
PL. 53

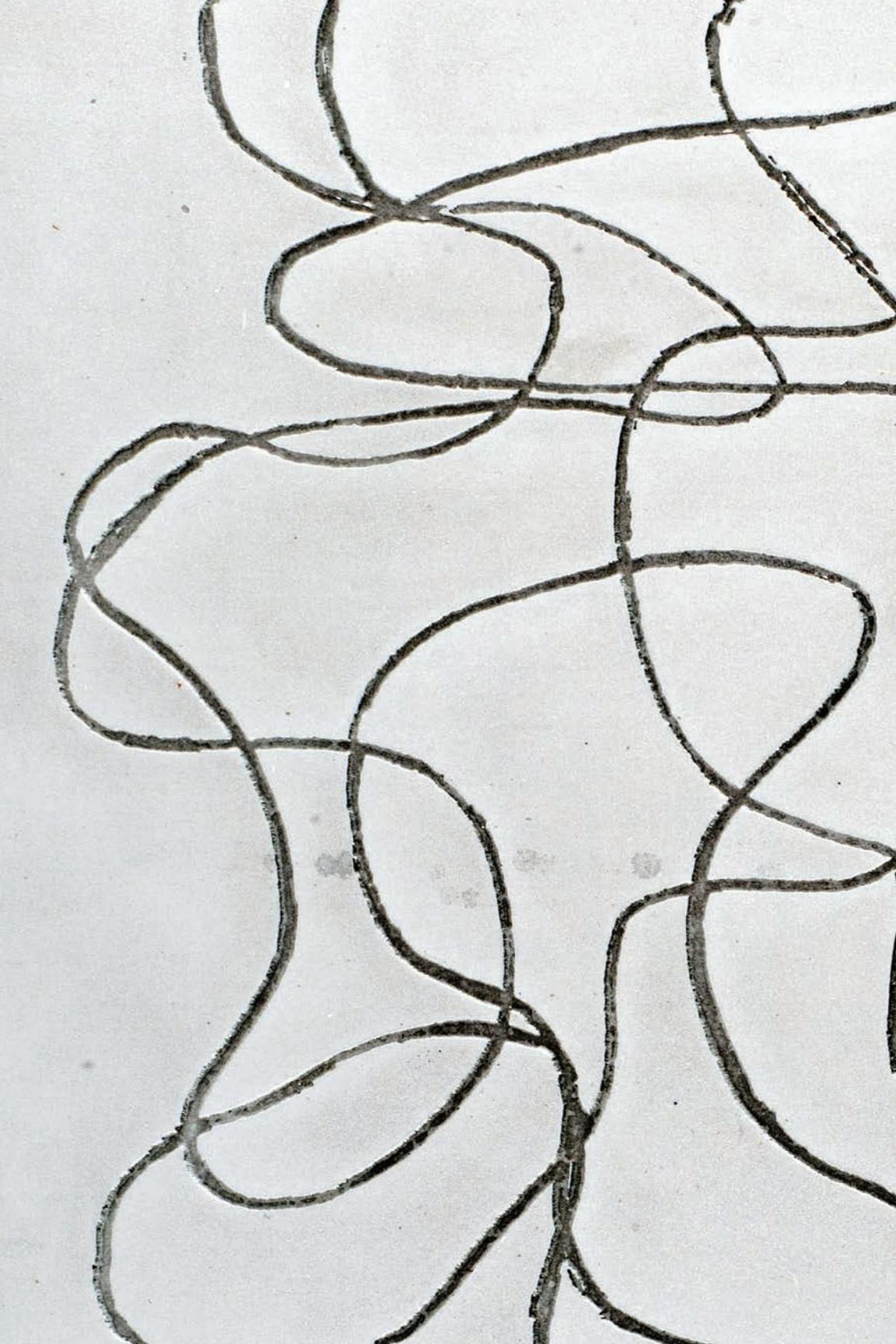
Giulio Turcato (b. Mantua, 1912 – d. Rome, 1995)

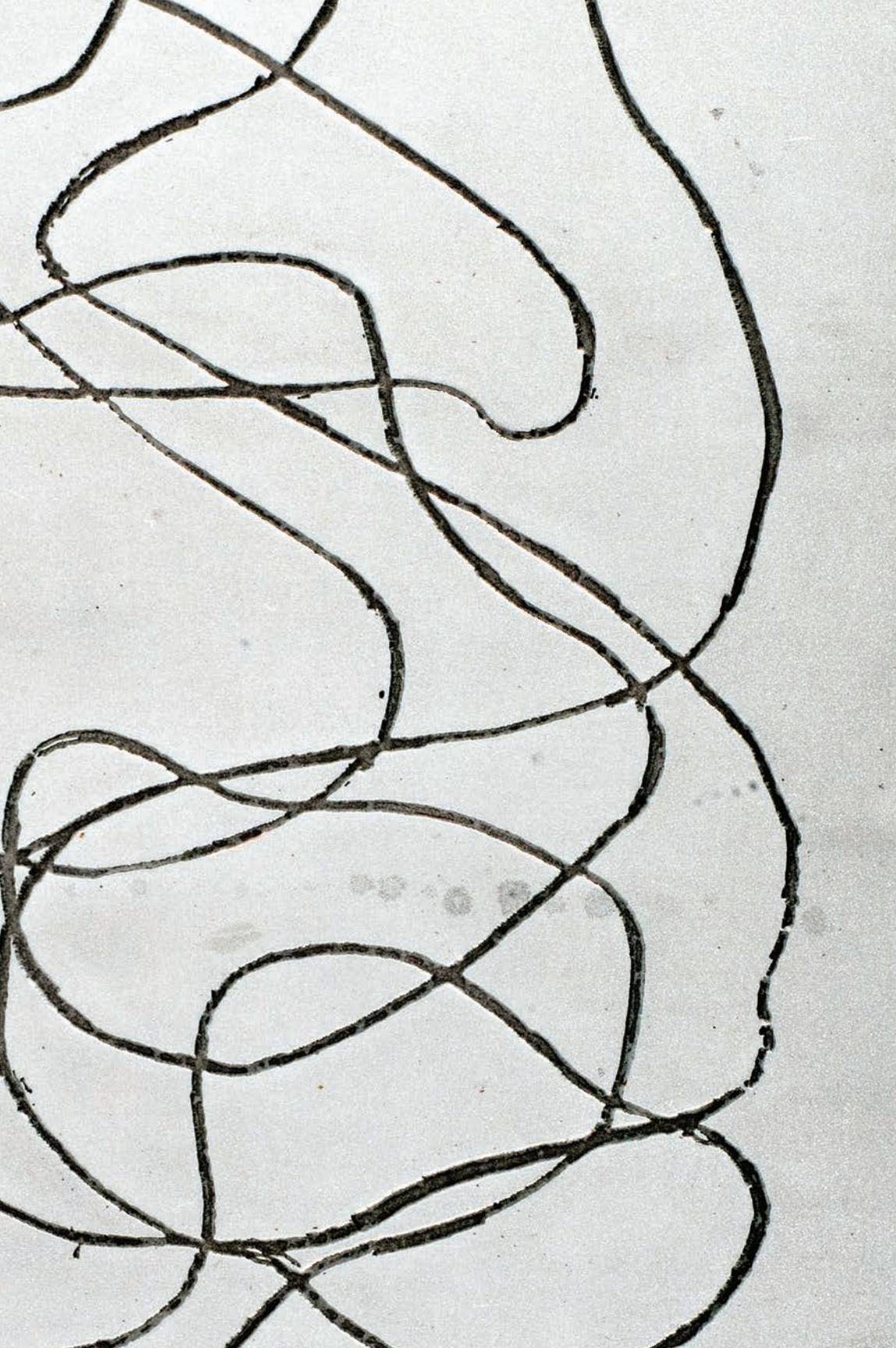
*Untitled*, 1973

Aquatint and engraving on zinc, 452 x 327 mm

VIC 2891







Living between Trentino and Florence, with a degree in engineering from Milan, and a member of the Academy of Brera, Fausto Melotti was always split between his study of mathematics, love of art, and performance of music. In 1935, he had his first solo show in the Il Milione gallery in Milan, which received no public or official critical attention from Italians. The definitive discovery of this artist's importance occurred only in the sixties. Representative of the first wave of abstraction, which reached artistic maturity in the cultural ambience of Milan and benefitted from the theoretical contribution of Edoardo Persico in the journal *Casabella*, Melotti's sculpture is characterized by compositions that consist of simple, often wispy forms that allude to musical rhythms. His composite method in sculpture, which he executed mostly in metal, and which ironically evokes an imaginary world, is transposed into the graphic mode without losing any of its poetic quality. The scantily etched as well as aquatint marks create an atmosphere suggestive of a lyrical episode.

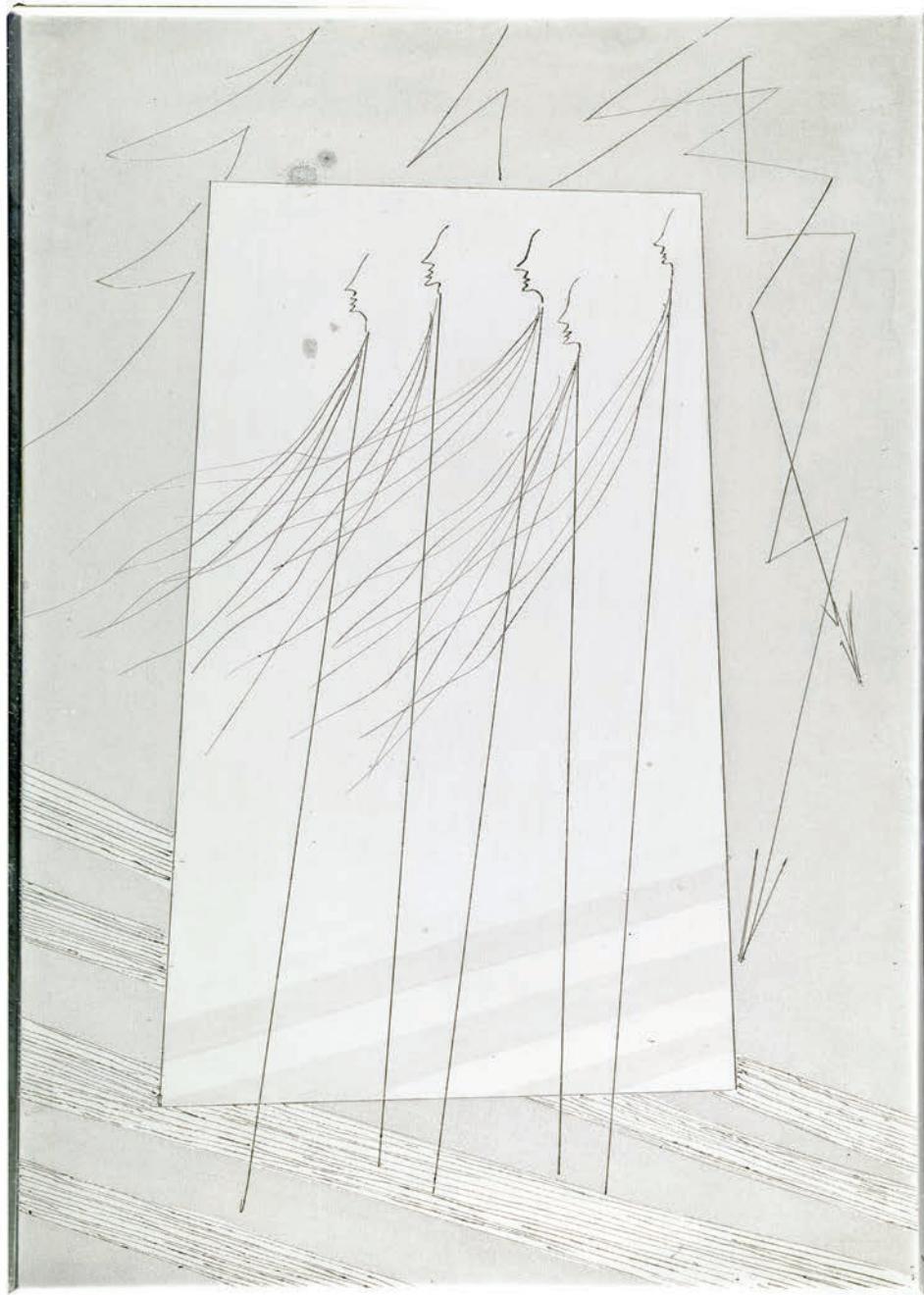
PL. 54

Fausto Melotti (b. Rovereto, 1901– d. Milan, 1986)

*FM 18*, 1978

Etching and aquatint on zinc, 240 x 143 mm

VIC 2852



The intent of the Italian abstract artists of the thirties was to achieve “lyrical transmission of spatial concepts.” This group, which in addition to Fausto Melotti included Lucio Fontana, Attanasio Soldati, Mario Radice, Mauro Reggiani, and Osvaldo Licini, was ignored in its time, but it constituted one of the chief preludes to Italian art of the second postwar period. The publication of Vanni Scheiwiller’s volume, *Sculture astratte di Fausto Melotti 1934–35 e 1962*, promoted Melotti’s discovery. Solo and group exhibitions as well as publications succeeded each other in Italy and abroad until he received the Rembrandt Prize in 1973. In April 2008, the first retrospective of Melotti’s work in America took place in New York. Melotti used precise modules that could be repeated in infinite variations; and he dedicated himself to art as he did to music, applying himself to the intellect rather than to popular tastes.

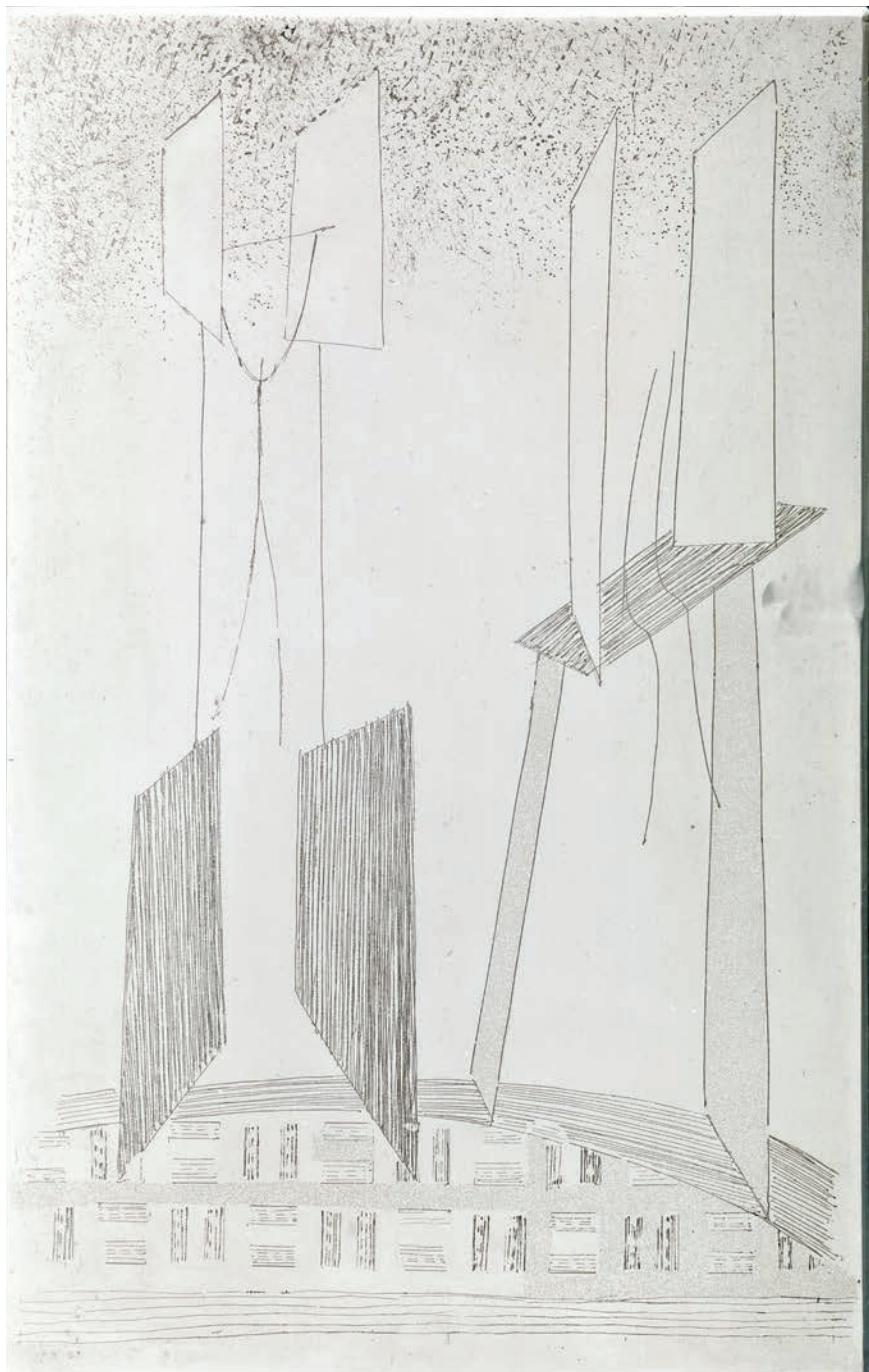
PL. 55

Fausto Melotti (b. Rovereto, 1901– d. Milan, 1986)

*FM 19*, 1979

Etching and aquatint on zinc, 216 x 150 mm

VIC 2855



Sicilian by birth, Roman by adoption, Carla Accardi is regarded as one of the greatest representatives of Italian Abstractionism. Her coherent and systematic experimentation with and exaltation of the mark-color is equally affirmed in this small vertical composition in green, fuchsia, and orange on two zinc plates. It is a skillful composition of one nearly decorative mark on plate A accompanied by irregular forms in color on plate B. These effects were achieved through the use of a painterly technique such as aquatint, which enables the creation of backgrounds and veils of color, even on plates. The two matrices that compose the work retain in their grooves the colored inks from the prints pulled in 1983.

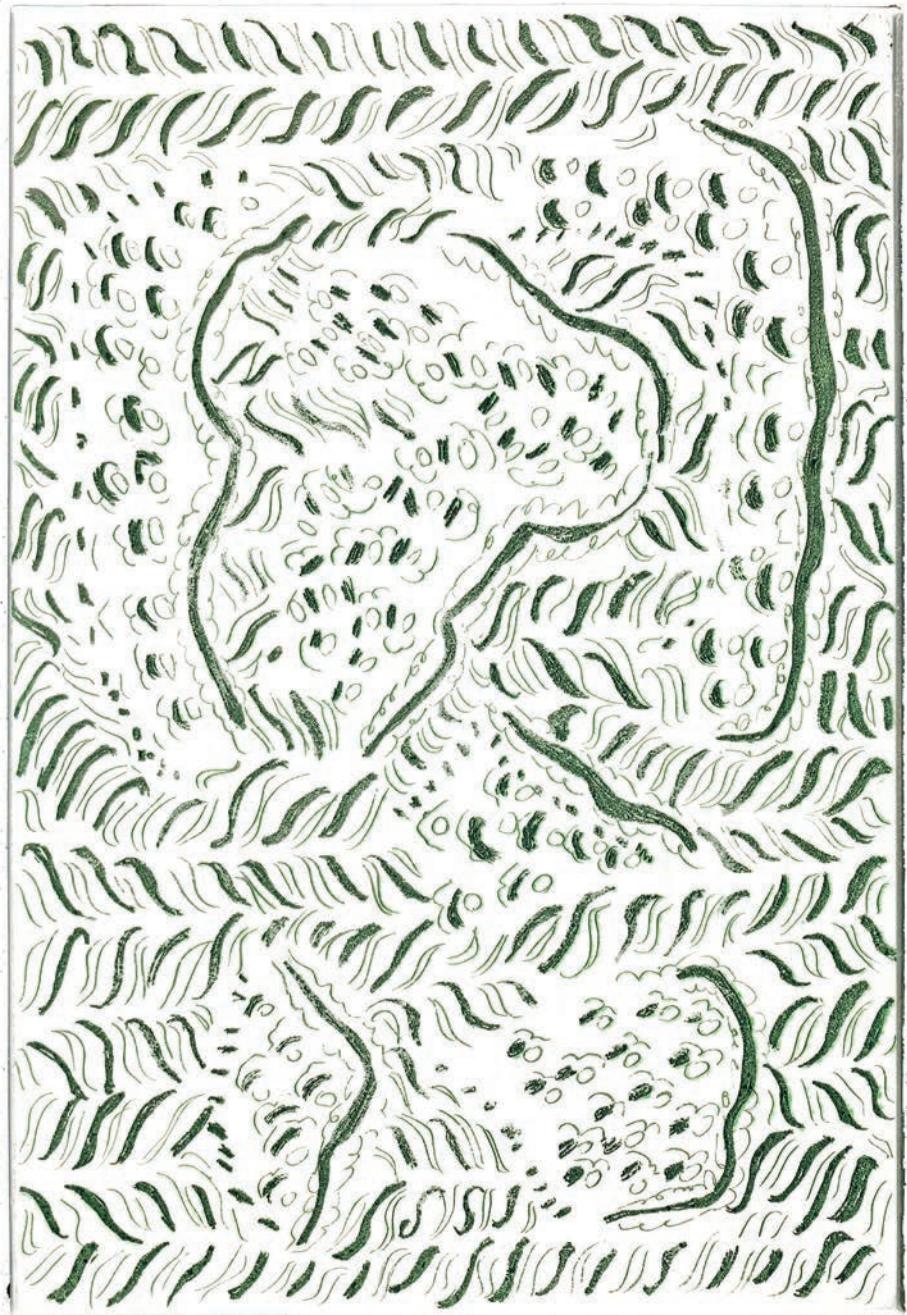
PLS. 56, 57

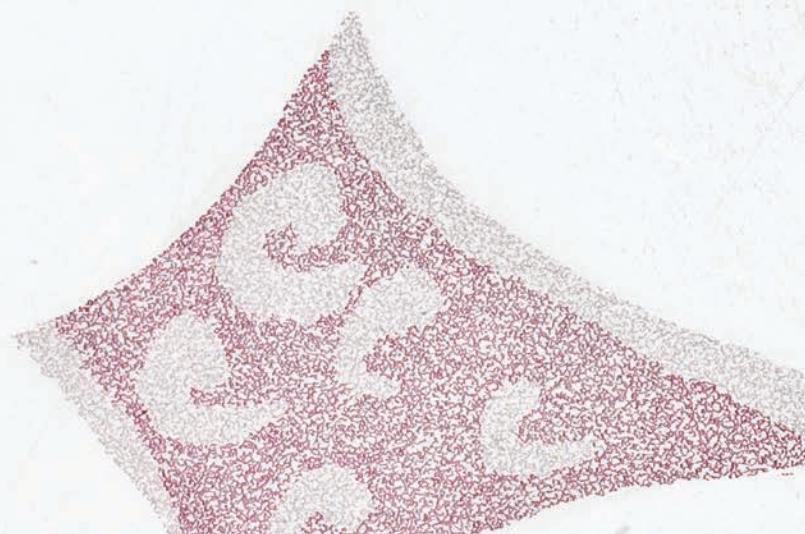
Carla Accardi (b. Trapani, 1924)

*Capriccio*, 1983

Aquatint and etching on zinc, 232 x 161 mm

VIC 2809 A/B







Associated with the Calcografia Nazionale in Rome since 1964, Guido Strazza was the first research fellow, and later, in the seventies, the leader of didactic experimentation at the Istituto Nazionale per la Grafica. The artist, who got his cue from the immense dictionary of engraved marks in the Calcografia's collection of copper plates, meditated constantly—with scientific and poetic rigor—on the primary problems of the sign. His intaglio prints, based on the contrast of light and shadow, are often organized as a combination of engraved orthogonal strokes in primary geometric forms. This zinc plate is a study that followed on a 1982 series that was devoted to Rome and articulated on various sheets “Columns,” “Signs and Textures,” “I Cosmati”—works in which “signs” recognizable as the Roman landscape were re-channeled as multidirectional, more or less intense lines of force. The artist attributes to the “print, in its truest form as a sign...the power either to analyze or synthesize and to serve as an instrument of self-consciousness.”

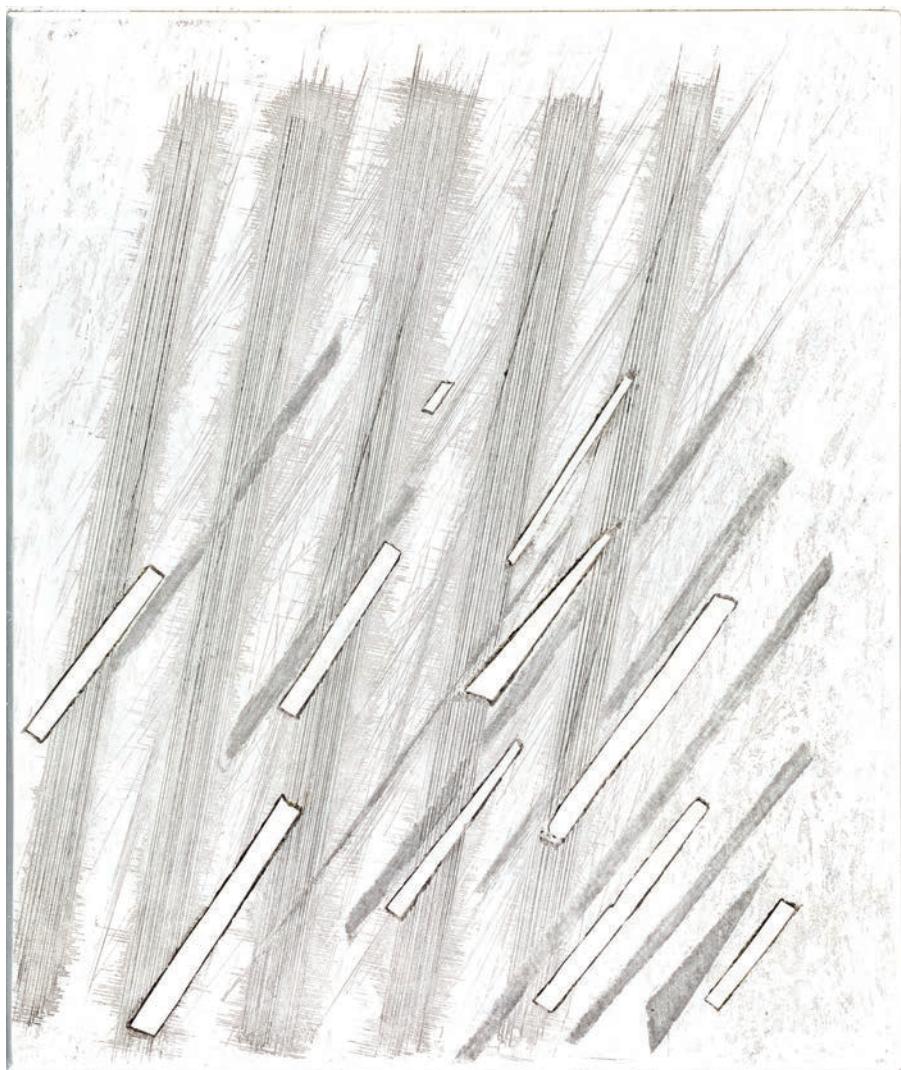
PL. 58

Guido Strazza (b. Santa Fiora, 1922)

*Studio relativo a Roma*, 1988

Etching, aquatint, drypoint and zinc inlay on zinc, 276 x 227 mm

VIC 3594/9



The Drawing Center

April 22 – June 24, 2011

DRAWING ROOM

Paolo Canevari

*Decalogo*

*Curated by*

Brett Littman *and* Antonella Renzitti



# Decalogo

Brett Littman

Paolo Canevari's recent project entitled *Decalogo*, a commission for the Istituto Nazionale per la Grafica of Rome and produced with the assistance of the master printer Antonio Sannino at the Calcografia Nazionale, directly inverts our expectations of how prints operate. Here, in place of the prints on paper, the plates themselves become the primary art object.

Although Canevari employs traditional engraving techniques—he learned how to engrave and etch plates when he was a young art student in Rome, and since that time, he has incorporated the logic of printing into his large and varied body of work—he purposefully created the plates as discrete objects whose end goal is sculptural rather than functional. The ten large plates (the largest ever produced at the Institute) have been bent and mounted on the wall and are displayed independently of the prints, which is rare, as one does not often see the plate itself displayed as a work of art. As well, since the plate is mounted, it can no longer be archived or reprinted, which cancels one of its main *raisons d'être*. In showing the plates themselves, Canevari focuses our attention on their impressive and technically challenging scale and on the role that the quality and density of the lines on the plate play in creating the print on the paper.

A word about the process: these copper plates are first ground with wax to create an engraving surface, and then the wax is scored with points of different sizes to articulate the depth of the lines that will form the image. After the engraving is set, the plate is “bit” with acid, which is left on for varying durations depending on the depth of the etching and the desired effect on the plate. For *Decalogo*, the images have been etched into the plates so that they may be “read,” after

inking, on the plate surface itself rather than only on the ensuing print. This decision determines that any text in the print will appear backwards, which further reflects the secondary status of the print with regard to the primacy of the plates.

Each plate bears an iconic image from Canevari's personal visual lexicon. They are challenging, provocative, and direct in their message. Six plates and their accompanying prints show conflagrations: a burning gun, skull, tree, dress on a cross, the Roman Coliseum, and a copy of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. Such gothic images of torched objects and places highlight the destructive property of fire and provide an excellent opportunity for Canevari to exploit the relationship between drawing and etching: representing fire in a drawing, plate, or print is not an easy task, but Canevari, through his total control and knowledge of how to work the wax-ground plate, is able to capture the fleeting kinetic energy that is released when something burns.

The remaining four plates and prints show an ominous tire swing on a hangman's wooden frame, a dog chained to a tire upon which "god" is written, a Bible with a gun placed on it, and a man poised to catch a falling bomb. These images are more static than the fire images but no less powerful. To my mind, they are meditations on personal freedom, destiny, and the negative effects of religion on our society.

The exploration of these ideas are not new territory for the artist. He has been mining the harrowing nature of war and torture in much of his recent work. Shown in the P.S.1 courtyard in 2004, *Welcome to Oz*, composed of inner-tube tires and a wooden frame, simulated the barbed wire outside of the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq. It was a stark reminder of the newspaper photos showing smiling American military personnel outside of the prison where terrible atrocities were being committed. In Robert Storr's 2007 Venice Biennial, Canevari's arresting video, *Bouncing Skull*, showed a young Serbian boy kicking a rubber skull like a soccer ball in a bombed out courtyard. Powerful in its economy of means, this video is one of the best examples of Canevari's clear vision when it comes to difficult material.

For Canevari, *Decalogo*, the Italian shorthand for the Ten Commandments and perhaps the most well-known social contract or “rules to live by,” is a logical extension of his continued investigation into how these dynamic images reveal political and social crises.

## *Plates*

*Burning Colosseum*  
*Burning Skull*  
*Hanging Around*  
*Beata Vergine*  
*Burning Mein Kampf*  
*Burning Tree*  
*Seed*  
*Burning Gun*  
*Holy Bible*  
*Godog*

Photographs by A. Osio

PLS. 59-68

Paolo Canevari

*Decalogo*, 2008

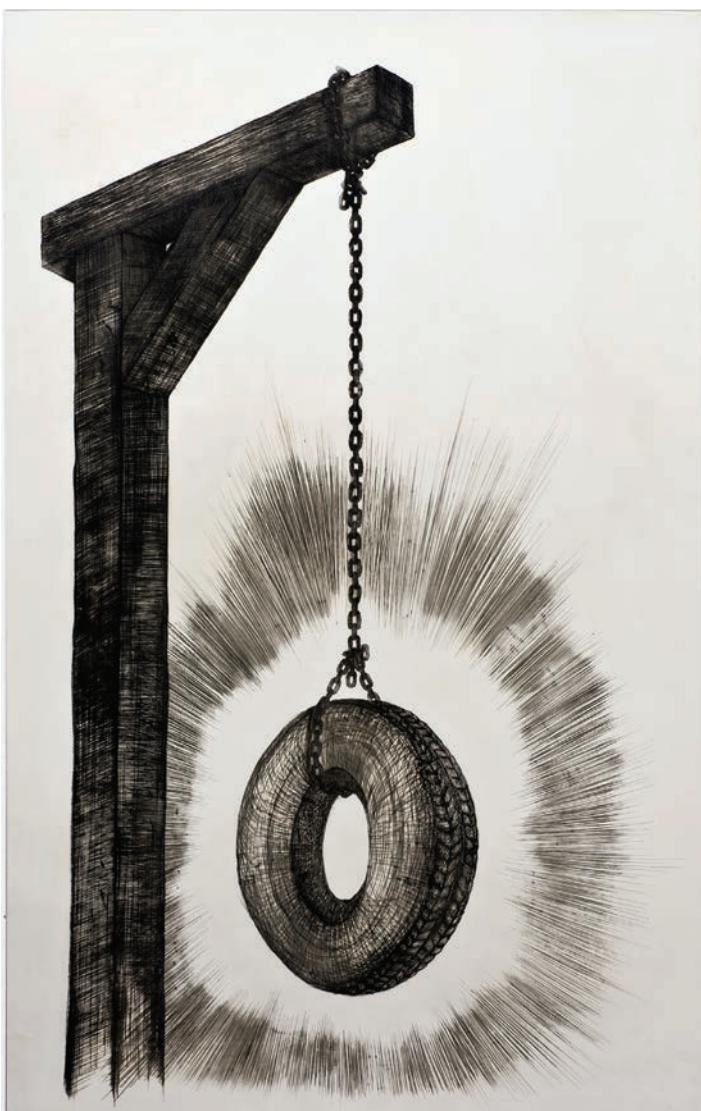
Etched copper and dry-point, nickel plated

10 incised plates, each: 55 x 35 x 3/4 inches / 139.7 x 88.9 x 1.9 cm

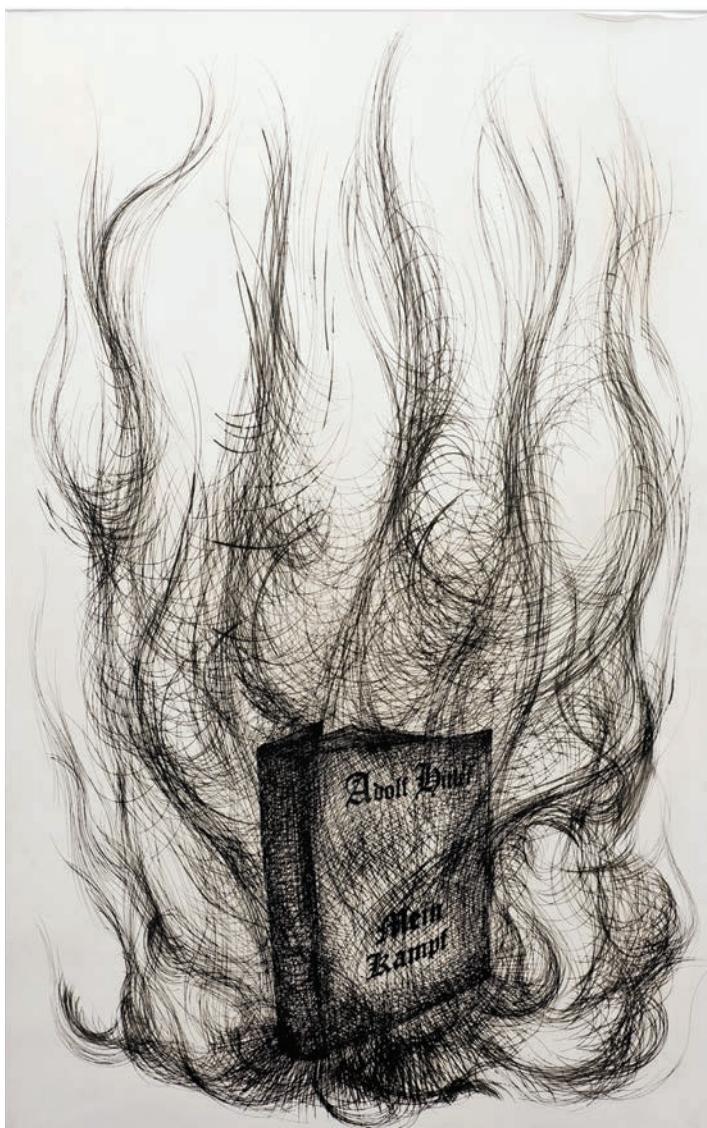
Courtesy of the artist and Christian Stein, Milan

















The Holy  
Bible









## CONTRIBUTORS

Dr. Maria Antonella Fusco is an art historian who, since 1978, has been part of the Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali. She was director of the Museo Pignatelli Cortes in Naples and of the Sezione di Museologia of Museo Nazionale di Castel Sant'Angelo in Rome. Her research focuses on nineteenth-century art and the history of photography.

Ginevra Mariani is an art historian of the Istituto Nazionale per la Grafica del Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali, with a particular focus on eighteenth-century printmaking. Currently, she is the director of the Institute's *Calcoteca*, where the world's largest collection of printing plates is stored. She is an editor of the general catalogue of the plates of Giovanni Battista Piranesi, the first volume of which was released in June 2010. Until 2006, she directed the Institute's education department, organizing lectures, exhibitions, and handbooks relating to the ING's decennial project, *Lineamenti di storia delle tecniche* (Outlines for History of Technology) (1996–2006), a study of classic engraving techniques. She has taught at Università degli studi della Tuscia; Istituto statale d'arte di Urbino; l'Università internazionale dell'arte di Venezia; Accademia di belle arti di Venezia; Centro regionale di catalogazione e restauro di Villa Manin a Passariano and has written for numerous ING publications, most recently, *Giambattista Piranesi, Matrici incise 1743–1753* (Milan, 2010). She is also a contributor to other exhibition catalogues including *Goya e l'Italia* (Saragozza, 2008); *Clemente XIII Rezzonico. Un papa veneto nella Roma di metà Settecento* (Milan, 2008); *Dürer e l'Italia* (Milan, 2007) and *Il Settecento a Roma* (Milan, 2005).

Antonella Renzitti is an art historian of the Istituto Nazionale per la Grafica del Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali, specializing in contemporary graphic art and the Italian print workshops of the 1960s. She is the director of the Institute's *Collezione Opere Multimediali* (Multimedia Works Collection), where a series of artists' films is preserved. Until 2006, she co-produced lectures, exhibitions, and handbooks related to the ING's decennial project *Lineamenti di storia delle tecniche* (Outlines for a History of Technology) (1996–2006), and coordinated both children's classes and lectures for universities and academies on the subject. She has taught at the Università degli studi dell'Aquila and is the editor of recent publications such as *Poesie d'amore di Alfonso Gatto graffite da Giuseppe Caccavale* (Rome, 2010); *Prospettiva mobile* (Rome, 2009); and *Paolo Canevari. Decalogo* (Rome, 2008). She is also a contributor to the exhibition catalogue for *Rendering. Traduzione, citazione, contaminazione, rapporti tra i linguaggi dell'arte visiva* (Rome, 2010).



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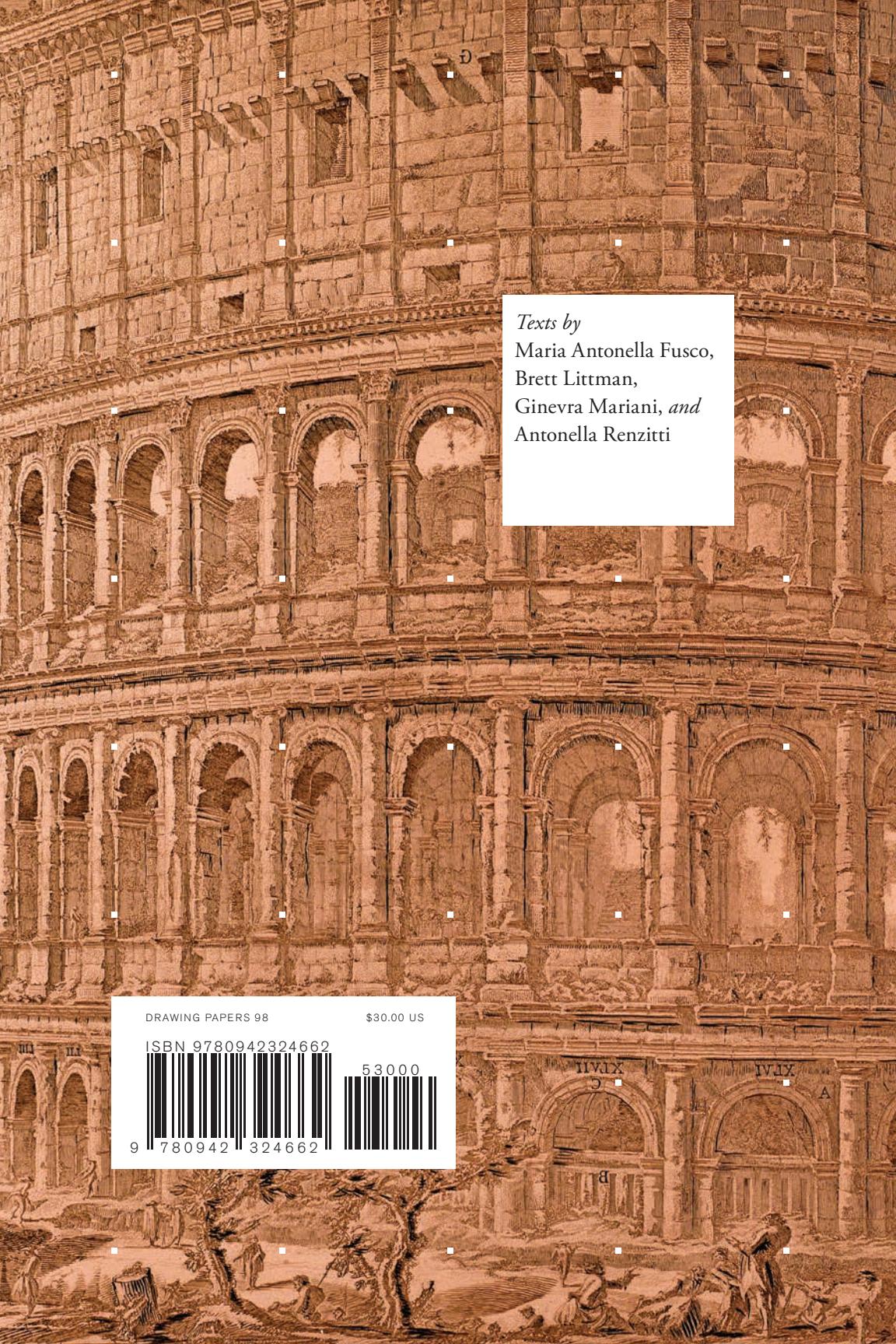
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