

Captured Genius. Giovanni Battista Piranesi. Exhibition on the 300th Anniversary of His Birth

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September 28th, 2020 – January 5th, 2021

The Former Deputies' Chamber

At the exhibition we are presenting prints from the series *Carceri* (Prisons) by G.B. Piranesi (1720–1778), which originate from a second edition containing sixteen prints. The series depicts a fantastical vision of prisons and is considered to be the artist's most interesting creative work. Analysed many times over the years, it has brought to light Piranesi's technical skill as an artist and printmaker, a builder of multidimensional architectural and scenographic compositions, as well as an insightful observer of antiquity, who was able to weave elements of Roman artefacts into the composition of his *Carceri*. However, above all, the *Carceri* series is one of the most mysterious works in the history of printmaking, and contains many interpretative threads relating to metaphysics, philosophy and literature.

The prints on display are from the collection of King Stanisław August Poniatowski which is housed in the Print Room of the University of Warsaw Library . It is the largest collection of works by the Piranesi artists – Giovanni Battista and his son Francesco – in Poland and one of the largest in the world. The collection's outstanding feature is the freshness and excellent quality of these relatively early impressions which were printed in Piranesi's workshop in Rome. They are being put on display at the Royal Castle in Warsaw for the first time and herald more exhibitions of Piranesi's prints at the Royal Castle.

The exhibition is complemented by a very fine portrait of the artist made in 1750 by his friend Francesco Polanzani, known as Felice; like the *Carceri* series, the portrait contains many symbolic references to Piranesi's work.

Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720–1778) printmaker and architect; he first studied in Venice, then furthered his education by travelling to Rome, Naples, Herculaneum and Pompeii. In 1745 he settled in Rome permanently and was fascinated by its ancient architecture. He is known primarily from his series of prints of ancient and early modern Rome, the most famous of which is *Vedute di Roma* (1746–1778). The vision of antiquity and the modern approach to archaeology which he recreated in his etchings are still to this day a source of delight and inspiration to new generations visiting the Eternal City.

The exhibition on display at the Royal Castle in Warsaw is part of the worldwide celebrations commemorating the 300th anniversary of the artist's birth, which are taking place on 4th October.

The exhibition is accompanied by the publication *Uwięziony geniusz. Giovanni Battista Piranesi*.

Wystawa w 300. rocznice urodzin (Captured genius. Giovanni Battista Piranesi. Exhibition on the 300th anniversary of his birth), ed. Tomasz Jakubowski, Arx Regia Publishing House of the Royal Castle in Warsaw – Museum, Warsaw 2020.

Curator: **Tomasz Jakubowski**

Collaboration: **Prof. Jolanta Talbierska**

The exhibition available as part of the Castle Tour

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