many other historical compounds in China where symmetrical formality is the rule in planning. The more “organic” format of the Jinzi site reflects the importance of the sacred landscape. The geometry and orientation were determined by the historic relationship among structural groups of diverse art and architectural styles. In chapter seven, Miller summarizes the dynastic changes and related social events associated with the site. Again, the documents she presents provide convincing interpretations. The chapter’s conclusion circles back to the introduction to add deeper meaning to the title of the book, *The Divine Nature of Power*. At this site, the water and the woods together with the architecture and the allied arts formed a sacred environment, identified as the sacred spirit of Jin, which both governs and serves the Jin region.

The appendices are notable for their rich contents. Among the identified structures, Miller redates the Sage Mother Hall to 1038–87, some twenty years later than the estimates of other scholars as well as the “official” published date given by the state authority. This redating has the significant effect of removing the structure from the “Tian-sheng” period (1023–1032).

The high quality of the book puts it at the forefront of Chinese architectural studies. Small size booklets and tourist guides on Jinzi have been in print for years, and journal articles deal with the art, architecture, and local history as separate issues. It was only in 2005, when Li Gang and Dong Xiaoyang published *Zhongguo Jinzi* (Jinzi of China), that a full-scale scholarly Chinese language book on the subject appeared. Although *Zhongguo Jinzi* contains similarly comprehensive research on the topics that Miller addresses, her book is not simply an English version of Chinese sources. Miller adds further research along with new arguments and interpretations. Her extensive quotations from the classical documents, presented in dual-language format, enhance the depth of the scholarship. Readers with Chinese linguistic background will benefit especially from this format, and English readers need not fear that they are missing any major sources. The bilingual glossary of terminology will also be a great help to readers. Terms are listed in phonetic order in both Chinese and English, as half of the terms are highly specific, even for native professionals.

Miller’s book seems to point to new trends in the study of Chinese art and architecture and exemplifies the closely linked academic cooperation among scholars that is leading to more synthetic work and deeper insights. If Alexander Soper represents the first generation of scholars in the field who introduced this country to the field through great surveys, and Nancy Steinhardt represents the second generation who firmly established the topic with her studies of style and dynasty in Chinese architecture, then Miller, who worked with Steinhardt, represents the third generation. She adds new dimensions to the field by investigating the Jinzi site in great detail, incorporating the work of Chinese scholars, and carefully managing and presenting the original documents.

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Mario Bevilacqua, Heather Hyde Minor, and Fabio Barry, editors

*The Serpent and the Stylus: Essays on G. B. Piranesi*  
Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome, Supplementary Volume IV  

Sarah E. Lawrence, editor  
*Piranesi as Designer*  
New York: Smithsonian Institution, 2007, 359 pp., 96 color and 149 b/w illus. $60, ISBN 0910503958

If there were any doubts, these two books demonstrate that Giovanni Battista Piranesi’s fertile imagination and graphic virtuosity continue to engage scholars and architects alike. But the books approach the eighteenth-century Italian architect and graphic artist from different perspectives: *The Serpent and the Stylus* gathers papers presented at a scholarly conference held in Rome in 2001, while *Piranesi as Designer* accompanied an exhibition at the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum in New York in 2007–8.

The essays comprising *The Serpent and the Stylus* offer a fresh view of Piranesi, one that not only captures an ephemeral “state of the question” but also serves to redirect subsequent research in new and productive channels. As noted in its introduction, the book is aimed more toward opening up new avenues of research and presenting new evidence than toward achieving a synthetic view of Piranesi. As an exhibition catalog, *Piranesi as Designer* is at once more focused and more diffuse. John Wilton-Ely provides a masterful overview of Piranesi’s multifaceted career structured around the objects on display in the exhibition as well as others brought in for purposes of comparison. Unlike most exhibition catalogs, however, the objects are not treated in separate entries, but in the discursive and thematic essays comprising the volume. Sarah E. Lawrence, for example, drawing on Piranesi’s theoretical writings, treats Piranesi’s “aesthetics of eclecticism”; Alice Jarrard explores connections between Piranesi’s scenographic compositions and the theater; and Peter Eisenman considers the relevance of Piranesi’s reconstruction of the ancient Campus Martius for postmodern architects and urban planners.

In spite of their very different genesis and assumptions concerning their intended audiences, both books are essentially collections of essays, which, considered together, serve to illuminate five major issues and themes in Piranesi’s art.

Piranesi’s Formation
Three essays in *The Serpent and the Stylus* illuminate Piranesi’s formative years. Mario Bevilacqua’s “The Young Piranesi: The Itineraries of his Formation” questions prevailing assumptions about Piranesi’s early career and advances orig-
inal interpretations convincingly based on documentary evidence, much of it new. Bevilacqua offers a critical reassessment of Piranesi’s early biographies and clarifies Piranesi’s debt to his native Venice, particularly his relation to Palladio. Moreover, his essay sheds important new light on Piranesi’s early patrons and collaborators. As a result, our awareness of the broad intellectual context for Piranesi’s work, viewed here as a synthesis of science and historical erudition, is greatly expanded.

Myra Nan Rosenfeld uses a different body of evidence to query the reliability of Piranesi’s early biographers. The evidence in question is a group of copper plates relating to Giuseppe Vasi’s Della Magnificenza di Roma, inscribed with both Vasi’s and Piranesi’s names. In Rosenfeld’s view, the plates contradict the early biographers’ accounts that Piranesi was Vasi’s student: rather, the plates demonstrate that Piranesi was already a skilled printmaker before entering Vasi’s studio in 1740–41.

Piranesi’s series of 135 views representing Roman monuments known as the Vedute di Roma has long preoccupied connoisseurs seeking to establish a precise chronology. The first prints in the series are generally thought to have been issued after Piranesi’s return to Rome from Venice in the fall of 1747. Roberta Battaglia’s publication of a recently discovered compilation of the Vedute in the Vatican Library, some of them trial proofs, suggests that the first images in the series may have been etched a year or more earlier than has been thought. This shift has important implications for our understanding of the chronology of Piranesi’s early work and the intersection of Venetian and Roman influences in his artistic formation.

Polemic and Archaeology

Piranesi wrote that the ancient ruins spoke to him, and one of his early biographers characterized him as the “Rembrandt of ruins.” Piranesi’s reputation as an inspired interpreter of ancient architecture has long been acknowledged and his contributions to the roiling debate over the primacy of Greek or Roman forms continue to be disputed. Three essays in The Serpent and the Stylus examine Piranesi’s polemical engagement with ancient architecture.

Heather Hyde Minor’s essay illuminates one of Piranesi’s most pyrotechnical polemical acts, the artist’s dispute with Lord Charlemont over the Irish aristocrat’s withdrawal of his promised support for the publication of the Antichità Romane. Through a close reading of variant versions of the first edition of Piranesi’s Lettere di Giustificazione, Minor provides a richly nuanced reconstruction of Piranesi’s highly innovative strategy in this dispute. She also elucidates the illustrations accompanying the Lettere, offering a full, entirely convincing, and entertaining account of these mordantly satirical prints.

Lola Kantor-Kazovsky’s essay revisits the Greco-Roman controversy, which pitted Piranesi’s exaltation of Roman invention against the “beautiful and noble simplicity” of Greek art, questioning a number of prevailing assumptions about the controversy. One of these concerns the role played by Johann Joachim Winckelmann, usually considered to be a central figure in the debate. Kantor-Kazovsky demonstrates that Winckelmann’s contributions came only after the controversy was over and argues instead for Pierre Jean Mariette’s primacy in presenting the philhellenist case. Her conclusion, that the debate was not about a movement from “classicism” to “romanticism,” but rather a conflict between Enlightenment and traditional humanist ways of learning and artistic education, is salutary for Piranesi studies.

Susanna Pasquali’s essay makes use of new evidence, much of it from an unpublished manuscript covering the years 1762–73, to examine Piranesi’s presumed candidacy for the position of superintendent of Antiquities. Pasquali suggests that three of Piranesi’s publications from this period may have been part of his unsuccessful strategy to be appointed Commissario. Her essay also clarifies the role of the circle of antiquarians and literati who may have collaborated with Piranesi on his archaeological publications.

Peter Miller’s essay in Piranesi as Designer examines the role of the imagination in Piranesi’s antiquarian studies. One of the questions Miller poses, whether a visual intelligence is inherently less scholarly than a textual one, was as central to critical assessments of Piranesi’s work in his own day as it is in our own. For Piranesi the imagination was a powerful tool, especially when coupled with erudition. The combination of positivist rigor and the passions unleashed by Piranesi’s imagination proved to be a potent combination, one fraught with implications for the subsequent development of archaeology, architecture, and historic preservation.

Piranesi as Architect and Designer

With the accession to the papacy of Pope Clement XIII of his fellow Venetian, Carlo Rezzonico in 1758, Piranesi finally had reason to hope that he might be able to translate his visionary designs into real buildings. Piranesi succeeded in renovating the modest church of Santa Maria del Priorato, but his far more ambitious designs for the tribune of the Lateran basilica remained on paper. Brent Sørensen’s essay in Piranesi as Designer presents a new reading of the spectacular series of presentation drawings, twenty-three of which are in the collection of the Avery Library. Noting what he considers to be serious flaws in all of the variant proposals, Sørensen reasons that the drawings are better seen as works in progress and do not represent the final stages of Piranesi’s thinking.

Gian Paolo Consoli’s essay in The Serpent and the Stylus examines the influence—or lack thereof—exerted on Piranesi by the philosopher Giovambattista Vico and the architectural theorist Carlo Lodoli. Consoli sensibly charts a middle course between the extravagant claims made by partisans of one or the other, showing instead ways in which Piranesi’s debts to both are evident, as well as ways in which his work contradicts their precepts. For example, he notes the Lodolian character of certain
compositions in the Carceri series, but also identifies the contrast between Piranesi’s view of architectural invention, coming from the study of nature and ancient monuments, and Lodoli’s rationalist view.

Alvar González-Palacios’s essay in Piranesi as Designer provides a valuable overview of Piranesi’s accomplishments and influence in the field of furniture and decorative design. González-Palacios examines the furniture Piranesi designed for the Quirinal apartment of one of Clement XIII’s nephews, Giovanni Battista Rezzonico. Two spectacular side tables from this suite survive, the chimerical monopod supports of which may reflect discoveries made in Pompeii and Herculaneum. González-Palacios also has valuable observations to make about Piranesi’s legacy as a decorative designer, comparing his “furious and fantastic” schemes to Robert Adam’s more refined and measured ensembles, and noting the presence of Piranesian candelabra in the work of Jacques-Louis David and Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres.

Piranesi as Draftsman

Two essays in Piranesi as Designer examine Piranesi’s skill as a draftsman. In an incisive contribution, David Rosand examines what he considers to be Piranesi’s fundamentally graphic imagination, stressing the degree to which for him thinking and drawing were extensions of one another. Rosand argues that Piranesi’s aesthetic of the sketch, and in particular his use of drawing to generate new inventions, recalls Leonardo, who first applied the word “sketch” to the rapid notations of a draftsman. Piranesi’s own pithy formulation of this aesthetic, in the form of a motto lightly etched on to the frontispiece of a series of reproductive prints, is “col sparcar si trova” (messing about, one finds).

Michael Graves provides an entirely different approach to Piranesi as a draftsman in his essay entitled “Drawing from Piranesi.” Through a series of apt comparisons between Piranesi’s prints and his own drawings, Graves provides revealing insights into Piranesi’s compositional strategies and architectonic vision. Graves pays particular attention to Piranesi’s definition of viewpoint, framing, emphasis (“what to draw or not to draw”), and the use of drawing to reveal underlying structure.

Piranesi’s Legacy

Both books under review illuminate Piranesi’s powerful influence on architecture and the design arts in his own day, as well as on later epochs, including our own. Wilton-Ely’s contribution to The Serpent and the Stylus explores the implications of Piranesi’s interaction in Rome with Robert Adam, and—a few years later—his brother James. By any standard, these encounters were a crucial moment in the history of Western architecture and led to important developments in Piranesi’s critical reception. Wilton-Ely reveals the ways in which both Robert Adam and Piranesi were consciously advancing their own agendas through their acquaintance. Wilton-Ely’s essay is particularly illuminating in its assessment of why Adam was so receptive to Piranesi’s genius and its exposition of the ways in which Piranesi’s influence continued to manifest itself in Adam’s work following his return to England.

Ronald De Leeuw examines Piranesi’s reception in Holland in an essay in Piranesi as Designer. The important role played by Dutch travelers in fostering exchange is evident in the handsome drawings Piranesi presented to Aernout Vosmaer for his album amicorum. Perhaps the most striking examples of how Piranesi’s portable distillations of Roman monuments found new currency north of the Alps are the remarkable stucco reliefs inspired by his Vedute di Roma, eight of which adorn the great hall of Biljoen Castle in the Netherlands.

Terry Kirk’s essay in The Serpent and the Stylus examines an understudied aspect of Piranesi’s architectural legacy, his influence on Italian architects of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, most of whom do not usually figure in the mainstream narrative of modernism. In light of this, the author’s reconstruction of a continuous thread of architectural response to Piranesi is all the more significant and illuminates the distinctive character of Italian architecture. Buildings such as Guglielmo Calderini’s Ministry of Justice and the work of architects such as Armando Brasini exhibit the rich diversity and range of Piranesi’s influence.

Piranesi’s vital legacy extends into our own day. He has repeatedly been viewed as a forerunner of modern and postmodern attitudes toward artistic license and resistance to the orthodoxy of canonical authority. The concluding portion of Piranesi as Designer is devoted to a series of five images by contemporary architects (Michael Graves, Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, Robert A. M. Stern, Daniel Libeskind, and Peter Eisenman) accompanied by short commentaries on the relevance of Piranesi to their work. The images speak more directly than the architects’ words, but together they confirm Piranesi’s currency, which is particularly evident in three broad areas: the exaltation of the fragment, the virtues of complexity and contradiction, and an emphasis on the expressive dimension of design. To quote Venturi and Scott Brown, “Viva Piranesi!”

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Costanza Caraffa
Gaetano Chiaveri (1689–1770). Architetto romano della Hofkirche di Dresda
Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 2006, 332 pp., 90 b/w illus. €70, ISBN 8836606733

In February 1733 news spread through Saxony that Augustus the Strong had died. His son, Frederick Augustus II, would become the new elector, and in 1734 he would succeed his father as King of Poland. But in the winter of 1733 the royal title still lay in the future, and Saxons had more questions than certainties. Would their new lord continue to assert the power and place of the electorate within the shifting borders of Central Europe? Would he lavish the same...