A FOOD CHAIN OF OBJECTS

THE SELECTION AND USE OF EGYPTIAN ANTIQUITIES IN PIRANESI'S »DIVERSE MANIERE«

Anne Haslund Hansen

When, in 1769, the Venetian artist Giambattista Piranesi (1720–1778) published his book on designs for chimneypieces »taken from Egyptian, Tuscan and Greek Architecture«, entitled *Diverse maniere d'adornare i cammini ed ogni altra parte degli edifizi desunte dall'architettura egizia, etrusca, e greca*, he drew on several antiquarian sources, most significantly on the Egyptian images supplied by Comte de Caylus' *Recueil d'Antiquités*.[1]

Diverse maniere along with Piranesi's other written works reflects Piranesi's intellectual development and his understanding of Antiquity. In the present contribution, however, I wish to approach *Diverse maniere* from the perspective of the use of, and approaches to, ancient Egyptian antiquities in the 18th century.[2] In what way did Piranesi make use of objects in this particular volume? What sources did he use, why and how? And what role did Egyptian culture play in the arguments set forth in *Diverse maniere*? The article offers an analysis of the construction of the *Diverse maniere* and its building blocks, ie. the ancient objects themselves, and how these were first selected, and then modified and what this might tell us about Piranesi's understanding of ancient Egypt and how this understanding corresponds to more general views on Egypt and its antiquities, in particular in relation to the Classical cultures.

In the 18th century, a new type of antiquarian presentation had emerged: illustrated compilations of ancient artefacts. Here Egyptian antiquities were displayed alongside Greek and Roman antiquities. These works served as a repository of knowledge and testify to an impetus to not only write about things Egyptian but also to visualize them. The most substantial and well-known examples are the works by Bernard de Montfaucon and Comte de Caylus.[3] As part of a printed medium, the illustrated volumes provided easy access to ob-

jects for the learned community to discuss and compare their visual appearance. In this respect, these printed images were far more important for the dissemination and visualization of Egyptian material culture than the actual artefacts themselves. The antiquarian works also served as inspiration for contemporary artists. One such artist was Piranesi.

Piranesi's Egyptian designs have long been recognized as important contributions to the dissemination of Egyptian style and motifs and favoured examples of interest in Egyptian culture in the 18th century.[4] While it was not the first time that Piranesi had shown interest in Egypt, *Diverse maniere* was his most extensive treatment of the subject. The designs do not stand alone but are accompanied by a text entitled »An Apologetical Essay in Defense of Egyptian and Tuscan Architecture«.

Immediately in the first sentences of the »Apologetical Essay«, Piranesi clarifies that his designs were not based on ancient examples, as chimneypieces were not known to have existed in Antiquity.[5] It is therefore also evident that the designs in *Maniere* were not of the same nature as the documentation presented in the authoritative antiquarian publications. However, as we shall see later on, there are some indications that they were understood in this way, namely as antiquarian images.

Diverse maniere was Piranesi's final publication. The subject of Piranesi as author has been explored by John Wilton-Ely and more recently by Heather Hyde Minor. *Diverse maniere* belongs to a group of four works by Piranesi referred to by Wilton-Ely as »The polemical works«.[6] In *Piranesi's lost words* from 2015, Heather Hyde Minor, calls *Diverse maniere* »a culmination of [Piranesi's] explorations of antiquity«. Furthermore, Hyde Minor argues that the publication should not be primarily approached, as has often been the case, as a pattern book but also as a critical essay, written even perhaps by several authors: »While the precise genesis of the text remains unknown, several aspects of it point to the involvement of other learned men and to the likelihood that it was a collaborative effort.«[7]

The title of *Diverse maniere* mentions three cultures, yet only two of them are included and advocated in the apologetical essay. By promoting the Egyptian and Etruscan style, Piranesi was concomitantly criticising his contemporaries, whom he found to be conservative and lacking in artistic innovation. »The law which some people would impose upon us of doing nothing but what is Grecian, is indeed very unjust.«[8] The necessity of his defense, Piranesi claims, is caused by the »common opinion« (»il comun pensare«).[9]

Piranesi was against the glorification of Greek art fuelled by the theoretical works of Caylus and Winckelmann, and by works documenting monuments in Greece, such as Julien-David le Roy's *Les Ruines des plus Beaux Monuments de la Grèce,* 1758, and James Stuart and Nicholas Revett's work, *The Antiquities of Athens*, 1762. Piranesi had already touched upon this subject in his earlier works. His arguments formed part of a larger controversy revolving around the supremacy of the art of the ancients.[10]

In the following, the *Diverse maniere* itself will be briefly described, with particular attention to its components and structure. Secondly, I will offer an introduction to the perception of ancient Egypt in the 18th century, coupled with that of Piranesi – questioning in

part the originality of some of his views. The following four sections deals more closely with specific aspects of Piranesi's adaptation of Egyptian artefacts for the *Diverse maniere* and how these correlate with his introductory text. In the final section, the publication is discussed in relation to the recirculation of images, and what this might say about the selection and codification of objects in the 18th century.

THE BOOK

Diverse maniere is a large folio. It begins with a dedicatory plate and a short text, addressed to Cardinal Giovanni Battista Rezzonico, Piranesi's Venetian patron at the papal court. The essay that follows immediately runs 35 pages, including three illustrations. It is provided in three languages placed alongside each other on the page.

The remainder of the work is taken up by the designs. These are individually numbered from 1 to 66.[11] As indicated in the title, they focus on *cammini,* chimneypieces. The designs are large and executed in detail, with only one or two pieces per folio page, see plates 30 to 33. The layout of the Egyptian plates, thirteen in total, is homogenous and only one design is presented per page throughout. Eleven of these are chimney designs, while the remaining two are wall decorations from the Caffé degli Inglesi, a coffee house in Rome, also designed by Piranesi.[12] The final plates of the volume are dedicated to other types of interior design, such as furniture, candle sticks and clocks. None of these are presented in the Egyptian style.[13]

»I have not only given that of the chimney, likewise of the ornaments of the walls against which it is placed«, which »may be executed in painting« Piranesi explains.[14] This is especially true of the Egyptian designs. The actual fireplace and surrounding frame takes up only about a sixth of the entire composition. The Egyptian chimneypieces are in fact entire murals, like those of the Caffé degli Inglesi (and as such not easily inserted into an already existing interior).

The Egyptian plates are numbers 5, 10, 14, 18, 21, 24, 26, 28, 32, 36, 45 and 46 (Caffé degli Inglesi) and finally number 50. In addition, there are three designs that incorporate minor Egyptian details, namely numbers 23, 49 and 52. The sequence of plates has some importance from a reader's perspective, as the Egyptian designs are evenly distributed throughout the book, contrary to the custom in antiquarian works to keep each culture rigidly to itself. The modern, complete editions of Piranesi's engravings disregard the numbering of the plates and the Egyptian designs are grouped as an ensemble.[15]

Looking at *Diverse maniere*, the connection between the essay and the designs is far from fluent. Despite their numbering, the plates are published without legends, hence they are not individually explained. Also, the essay doesn't carry any direct references to the designs. Some prints were already in circulation in the years before the book was published.[16] These aspects should be taken into consideration when approaching the work.

Diverse maniere does not present itself as a coherent work where text and illustrations are closely connected and meant to elucidate each other, but rather as the bringing together of two kindred statements, one in visual form and the other in writing. *Diverse maniere* is part design, and part historical examination, and the two components of the book both touch on these subjects, each in their own way.

EGYPT COMPARED

In the 18th century, Egypt was almost invariably treated in a multi-cultural, comparative context – most often in connection with Greece and Rome. This is the case of numerous printed works known from the period, dealing with the ancient cultures and their monuments, history, culture and religion. In these collective presentations the ancient cultures were placed in a particular sequence and each was treated by means of a certain quantity of subject matter. This structure created an entirety, a sort of catalogue of cultures, which gave the reader some indication of the specifics and importance of each culture. In *Recueil,* Caylus created a such »ordre« by sorting the objects into »classes générales, relatives aux pays qui les ont produits«.[17]

In the presentations, Greece and Rome held the dominant positions while Egypt took on the role of a prerequisite yet subordinate entity. Egypt was hardly ever dominant or central: to a large degree it was complementary. In the antiquarian illustrated works this was expressed by a careful quantitative distribution of the artefacts ensuring that Greece and Rome always had the most extensive presence. In his preface to his sixth volume from 1764, Caylus states that the antiquarians tend to not give as much attention to Egypt as to »des autre pays«.[18] The seven volumes of *Recueil d'Antiquités Égyptiennes, Étrusques, Grecques et Romaines*, published from 1752 to 1767, continuously repeat the same chronological sequence volume by volume and the Egyptians (and Etruscans) form a smaller separate category in each. This pattern proved rather consistent throughout the second half of the century. In James Tassie's *Descriptive Catalogue of a general Collection of Ancient and Modern engraved Gems,* published in 1791, the non-Classical objects are all treated first (numbers 1–7), culture by culture. They are presented in the following order: *Egyptiennes*, *Gnostiques*, *Persepolitaines, Parthes, Mithraiques, Indiennes, Arabes & Persanes*.[19] The rest of the catalogue is devoted to Greek and Romans gems, which are treated as a collective, albeit sorted into themes.

One purpose of this comparative approach was cultural distinction. In his influential *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums*, from 1764, Winckelmann had set out, by means of dating criteria, to understand and demonstrate how and why the arts differed among the ancient cultures – the »Ursachen ihrer Verschiedenheit«.[20] However, as much as artists and antiquarians wished to discern the Greek from the Roman, it proved difficult to do so in practice.

Commenting on Tuscany, Greece, and Rome, Piranesi states: »it is not easy to assign the distinctive character of each as clearly as the Egyptian architecture is distinguished from all the rest«.[21] The stylistic similarities among Tuscan, Greek, and Roman art enabled Piranesi to combine their elements homogenously in his design. It seems, from this reasoning, that the distinctiveness of the Egyptian style was also what hindered its ability to interact: Egypt formed a separate category. In those chimneys, »which are not after the Egyptian manner«, Piranesi says, he had labored to unify the Tuscan, Greek, and Roman styles together, yet a true »connoisseur« would easily be able to distinguish between them.[22]

How was the Tuscan style to be distinguished, if it was, indeed, so closely related to the Roman and the Greek cultures? This question became pivotal for Piranesi's defense of the Tuscans. Piranesi speaks of ancient gems that were so perfect that, had they not been embellished with »Tuscan characters«, anyone would have thought them to be Greek.[23] Piranesi criticized that his contemporaries believed the painted vases found in Etruscan (Tuscan) graves to be Greek – simply because they were too beautiful to have been manufactured locally. Yet, some of the vases Piranesi had studied »seem entirely similar to those of the Greeks, in beauty, grace and perfection«.[24] Seeing a collection of sea shells had made this evident to Piranesi: »I had scarcely cast my eyes upon them, when I thought I perceived in these works of Nature all the forms [...] which I have seen on the Hetruscan vases.«[25]

Egyptian art was of a different nature. Piranesi writes: »One must be blind not to see in those [artworks] of the Egyptians a shocking hardness; arms glued to the body, legs joined close together, neither motion, nor sentiment«. According to Piranesi, Egyptian art was closely related to the architecture in which it was used. It held all the characteristics of a building. It was monumental, rigid, solid and strong. Egyptian art was modified nature.[26] In sum, Egypt possessed a natural beauty but one that differed from that of the Classical. Tuscan art was not different from Greek art. Rather, the difference between the two was so minute that it was indiscernible.

Piranesi's wish for a pluralistic use of the ancient cultures has historically been read as both refreshing and progressive. Yet, at the same time, this has perhaps obscured the traditional hierarchy, that is also present in his text. Piranesi argues that a room in the Egyptian or Tuscan style would be less out of the ordinary than a room in »the Chinese manner«, since the Chinese is »far distant from the Grecian, and perhaps more so than the Egyptian and the Tuscan«.[27] Even to Piranesi, Greece is the standard by which all other cultures are defined.

Piranesi is indispensable for narrations of the 18th century perception of Egypt, but he is also a dangerous example. His enthusiastic presentation of the Egyptian style constituted a singular voice that spoke up and confronted the common opinion prevalent at the time. Furthermore, Piranesi assigned somewhat traditional roles for the ancient cultures in his defense: although Egypt is promoted in its own right, Egypt also functioned as a cultural parallel that helped to bring forth the Classical nature of Tuscan art.

THE ARCHITECTURE OF »KLEINKUNST«

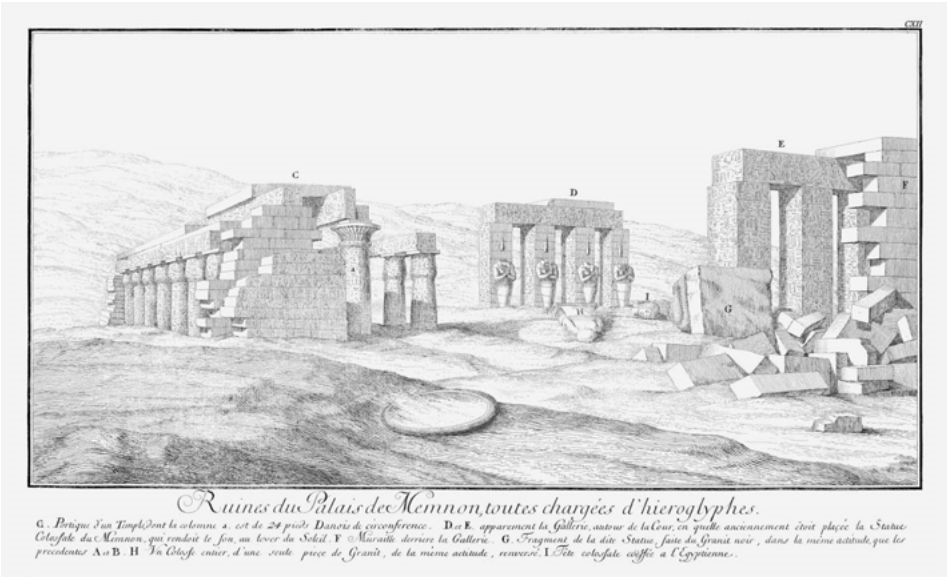
The Egyptian plates in *Diverse maniere* at first appear somewhat repetitive. However, on closer inspection there is little reuse from plate to plate. Piranesi selected and reproduced the antiquarian images from the scholarly literature with care and with a keen eye for variation. The designs are always symmetrical, with a central design flanked by identical compositions on either side. Many figures are simply reduplicated, although some smaller variations occur.

According to the title, Piranesi drew his components from »architecture«. However, most of the elements by which he created these Egyptian chimneypieces have little to do with building structures. This was a deliberate choice by Piranesi, due to, as he explains, the poor preservation of monuments in Egypt: »according to travelers [...] no ornaments are seen on them but hieroglyphics [...] to decide of the taste of that nation it would be necessary to have seen them in their primitive state before they had suffered the devastations of time and men«.[28]

One source for Piranesi's Egyptian designs was the Danish traveller Frederik Ludvig Norden and his renderings of the Memnon Colossi.[29] Although not a direct inspiration for the images of *Diverse maniere* otherwise, the richly illustrated *Voyage d'Egypte et de Nubie* from 1755, is likely to have shaped Piranesi's idea of how Egyptian architecture appeared (in its later ruinous state). In Norden's depictions of the Ramesseum, entitled »Ruines du Palais de Memnon, toutes charges d'hieroglyphes«, concerning Medinet Habu, »plein de Hiéroglyphs«, or the temple of Esna, the structures are literally covered in hieroglyphic inscriptions (fig. 1).[30] Regarding the Ramesseum, Norden facilitates his readers with details on the shapes of the hieroglyphs and their vividly preserved colors.[31] There is little evidence that Norden attempted to systematically convey the actual images and texts carved on the surface of the monuments. Norden's sketches and preparatory drawings, some of which are still preserved, show much variation. What seems to be a first sketch of the Ramesseum, has only a few indications of the hieroglyphic decoration. Another, more detailed drawing, in line with the final plate, shows hieroglyphs on surface areas that would not have been decorated. The reason for this obvious embellishment by Norden is unexplained, but may have been a way for him to further Egyptianize the monuments.[32]

Piranesi rejected the image of Egyptian ruins, that he found in the travel accounts. As argued often, recently by John A. Pinto, seeing and studying ruins were pivotal to Piranesi's art and his approach to Antiquity. Pinto's work *Speaking Ruins* takes its title from a quote by Piranesi: »These speaking ruins have filled my spirit with images that accurate drawings, even such as those of the immortal Palladio, could never have succeeded in conveying, though I always kept them before my eyes.«[33] Here, Piranesi indicates that the direct observation of ancient remains was more inspirational than something only seen by means of the printed media.

In Rome, Piranesi had direct access to Egyptian and Egyptianizing monuments. In the »Apologetical Essay«, he states that the true art of Egypt – which fully reveals »the genius of that nation« – is best observed in »statues, which yet remain, and those capitals, those obe-



1 Frederik Ludvig Norden, *Voyage d'Egypte et de Nubie*, Copenhague, 1755, volume II, pl. CXII

lisks, and bases, those lions and sphinxes which have brought from Egypt to Rome«, and »the Bembine table, and the ornaments found in the villa of Adrian and other places«.[34] The »Bembine table«, also known as Mensa Isiaca, was a highly praised and well-known bronze tablet, believed to be Egyptian, but today considered an Egyptianizing Roman artwork from the first century A.D.[35] The latter most likely included a number of the Egyptianizing sculptures, including those of Antinous now in the Vatican Museum.[36]

Obelisks, reclining animals and sphinxes do occur in some plates, features from the Mensa Isiaca are perhaps discernible in plate 10 (central panel, upper section), and a number of Egyptian plates display some form of the »Antinous«, if loosely defined as a male with a bare upper body, wearing a *nemes* headdress and loincloth. Nevertheless, the objects from the volumes of Comte de Caylus play a decisive role in the compositions of *Diverse maniere*. Hence, in essence, for his Egyptian designs Piranesi primarily chose objects that had *not* been »brought from Egypt to Rome« but rather brought from Egypt to France by European travellers and merchants.

In his discussion on the sources used by Piranesi, Dirk Syndram suggests that Piranesi deliberately declined to use »die in Rom befindlichen Ægyptiaca« because Caylus offered him a fresh scholarly interpretation to go along with the images.[37] We might add to this that the objects in Caylus' volumes were themselves also fresh and hitherto unseen, as most of them were published for the first time. This would of course support what Piranesi was eager to convey, namely a novel impression of ancient Egyptian style.

Calling to mind the overgrown ruins, those vast and mysterious structures that are so typical of Piranesi's rendering of the monuments of Rome, the designs of *Diverse maniere* take on a rather different appearance. By means of ancient artefacts, all rendered as if in pristine condition, symbiotically integrated and reduplicated, Piranesi created a contemporary design.[38] Yet, he also offered a reconstructed Egyptian architecture, which was otherwise lost and no longer to be observed – and which was composed, for the most part, from of minute objects printed in books.

SELECTING AND REPRODUCING OBJECTS

The figures that Piranesi took from Caylus' volumes often have new added details, such as dress patterns. Individual figures are also very often set into new compositions. Shapes and compositions from his work on the Aventine Hill, the Santa Maria del Priorato 1764–1766, are resurfacing in the plates, see for instance plate 50 (see plate 30).[39] The result, albeit imaginative and different from the printed images he copied, retains one unmissable antiquarian trait, that makes the result appear somewhat rigid and collage-like: in print, an object is habitually rendered directly from the front, or from the side, while rarely from both sides or the back.

In his reading of Egyptian iconography, Piranesi argues that, rather than conveying mysteries and »symbols«, the Egyptian artists simply wanted to delight »the eye with ornaments« and create »caprices«.[40] By contrast, in Winckelmann's view, the Egyptians were hindered by their religious beliefs and were aesthetically crippled by their coarse natural surroundings: They were »ein Volk, welches zur Lust und Freude nicht erschaffen schien«; they were melancholic by nature and alien to music and poetry: »Ihr Denken ging das Natürliche vorbei und beschäftigte sich mit dem Geheimnisvollen.«[41]

Battaglia has documented from where Piranesi handpicked the images in the volumes of Caylus. Images from volumes IV (1761), V (1762) and VI (1764) are most frequent, supplying also some chronological frame for the time of production.[42] Figures are most prevalent. Piranesi's own distinction of iconography seems based on outer appearance rather than on symbolic meaning, operating with three types: »human«, »brutes« and »monsters« (the latter most likely referring to a combined human and animal form) in »the act of sustaining different things«. These figures are ornamented with »eggs«, »pearls« or »flowers, plants, or herbs of various sorts«.[43] These readings and choices of words emphasize nature and may ultimately point towards notions of regeneration and fertility. Norbert Miller has described the designs and their repetitive variations of figures as belonging to »das Thema der Figur in der Figur und das Thema des Gestaltentausches in der Figur«.[44]

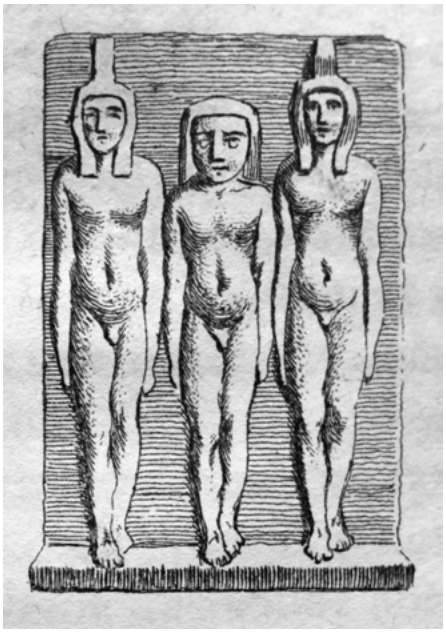
If Piranesi had taken any notice of how Caylus understood the objects, a far more uniform picture would have emerged. The majority of figures are understood as deities or priests serving these deities. The latter were mostly Isis and Osiris, known from the Classi-

2 Amulet. Médailles et Antiques de la Bibliothèque nationale de France, inv.no. 53.1672. Height 3,9 cm

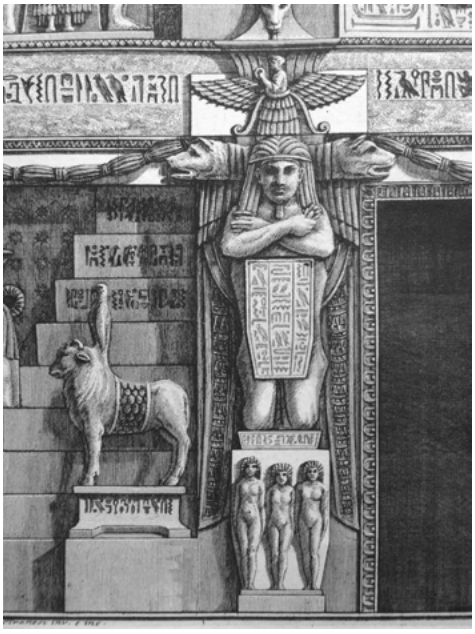
cal sources. For instance, one object taken from Caylus was a small amulet with what is now known to be a depiction of the triad of Isis, Horus, and Nephthys (fig. 2). The group is described as »trois Figures absolument nues«, most likely representing »Prêtres«.[45] A rare example of a statue group depicting an embracing man and his wife inspired Caylus to suggest a semi-private context, namely that the group represented a priest and his wife or daughter. He concluded: »les Monumens Egyptiens, que ne tiennent point au culte, sont très-rares«.[46] The palette of interpretations was obviously limited.

Piranesi's Egyptian designs incorporated objects known not to be Egyptian, such as the Corsini Throne (see plate 31), with added hieroglyphs, based on a depiction from Gori's *Museum Etruscum* and a Persian gem from Caylus.[47] The Egyptian sections of the *Recueil* contain a large number of objects that were not Egyptian. Some were either mistaken by Caylus for Egyptian or perceived as Persian, Arabian, Asian, Indian or other. In fact, the Egyptian sections in *Recueil* often took on a non-Classical role, rather than an actual Egyptian one.[48] For the most part, Piranesi steered impressively clear of these objects, and this testifies to his stylistic and iconographical sense of what was essentially Egyptian.

The process of reproducing objects can tell us something about how the artefacts were interpreted and subsequently inserted into a larger context that had to appear well-presented and harmonious. This can be illustrated by taking a closer look at the small triad and how



3 The amulet depicted in Caylus, *Recueil*, 1762, vol. V, p. 68, plate XXII.iv



4 Detail with amulet. Giambattista Piranesi: *Diverse maniere d'adornare i cammini*, 1769, plate 36

the actual object looked in Caylus' version and finally in Piranesi's rendering (figs. 3–4).[49] It displays a number of modifications. In *Recueil*, the angular, slightly crude figures appear more rounded and naturalistic, while the reversed legs seem to be a plain hiccup. In Piranesi's depiction, the figures retain none of their individual Egyptian iconography, as they now feature harmonised headgear, which seems more Egyptianizing than Egyptian. The position of the legs appears varied, perhaps evoking the three graces. Some quintessential Egyptian traits remain, namely, the frontal position of the head and torso and the symmetrically placed arms. If observed in isolation, Piranesi's triad has the appearance of something Egyptian and specialists may even recognise the particular object type in question. Nevertheless, the twofold process gives way to some important clues concerning the rendering of Egyptian artworks in 18th century antiquarian works, including standardisation and adaptations to an Egyptianizing or classical format.

THE MEANING OF HIEROGLYPHS

Piranesi copied and applied Egyptian artefacts and iconographical details into his chimneypiece designs in often meticulous detail, yet he seems to have had a markedly different

attitude towards hieroglyphic inscriptions. First and foremost, such inscriptions were clearly an integral part of the compositions, as they feature prominently in all thirteen of the Egyptian designs. Conversely, there is no use of script or wording in the non-Egyptian designs. A number of additional traits are discernible regarding the use of hieroglyphs in these plates, see for instance (see plate 33). In this design, the upper section has a horizontal panel with a rendering of a priestly procession, based on depictions by Montfaucon and Caylus, combined.[50] In Piranesi's version, the six main figures have been repositioned, but their shape and iconography are rather accurately reproduced. However, in between the figures two vertical hieroglyphic bands are added, which are not present in the originals. On either side of this element are two rectangular panels with a scene, that is taken from the base of one of the Colossi of Memnon.[51] Although the scene is identical on both sides, the inscriptions are not.[52] The same is true for the two Apis bulls in the lower section of the image. Here Piranesi has reproduced the animal in some detail, this time based on a depiction from one of Caylus' volumes. A large inscription in three lines, as seen on the body of the bulls, is added onto the animal, thus changing its appearance markedly.[53] These inscriptions are also not identical.

When looking more closely at the Egyptian plates, a similar pattern emerges. Another plate (number 14) displays a widespread use of hieroglyphic decorations (see plate 31). Here, centrally placed, we find a pyramidal field, its shape loosely based on a hieroglyphic inscription in the same format, taken from Caylus.[54] Only a few signs or groups of signs seem to be identical, while the remainder of the »text« is fabrication, carefully filling out the space. The same is true for the rest of the hieroglyphic bands on this plate. There are plenty of cartouches, always placed symmetrically two by two, yet in no instance are the signs within the ovals the same.

Piranesi's command of these invented hieroglyphic texts clearly varied along with the models he was emulating. A »lintel«, on Egyptian plate 32, located below the panel with the priestly procession, is unmistakably based on a line of inscription from Caylus (see plate 33).[55] Although not an exact copy, Piranesi's signs feature the same sketchy and sloping outlines as the image in *Recueil*. However, these rather poorly understood shapes stand in contrast to the majority of Piranesi's hieroglyphs. Returning to Egyptian plate 14 and the rectangular panels on each side, it is obvious that these hieroglyphic compositions draw on monumental inscriptions from obelisks, using the large-scale Horus figure, square *serekh*, and oval cartouche (see plate 31). Albeit differently arranged, the reproduction of the shapes comes quite close to the originals.

The Vatican »Stanza dei Papiri«, c. 1771 by Raphael Mengs is conceptually and chronologically linked to Piranesi and *Diverse maniere*.[56] The room was furbished to house a number of Christian papyri held in the Bibliotheca Vaticana. The decorations combine allegorical, Biblical, and Egyptian motifs. The latter was used in order to create architectural framings around the pictorial components. While the decoration of the room does not draw directly from Piranesi's design, some similarities do exist as to their use and application of

hieroglyphs. Four Antinous figures and flaking lions or sphinxes are decorated with hieroglyphs inscriptions. Mengs made use of carefully placed and individually composed inscriptions. Through this, the sculptures (and the inscriptions) take on an antiquarian dimension. They appear both more authentic, personalized, and of course, Egyptianized. An entirely different solution was used in the Sala Egizia in the Villa Borghese (c. 1778–1782, by Tommaso Conca and Antonio Asprucci). Here the inscriptions are applied as monumental bands, comprised of symmetrically arranged, identical sequences of signs. At least five different sequences of signs are used. The result is very ornamental and stiff, and the signs and their organisation are also more fanciful and disorganised.

By looking at Piranesi's work on hieroglyphs, we can get an isolated, yet potent impression of his talent for observation. His understanding of how and where to place the inscriptions in relation to larger figures is masterful, and even more so is his insight into the signs themselves: their relative size, their spacing, how they were organised in groups, and finally, how the texts functioned both horizontally and vertically. Piranesi also seems to have understood that the writing was a »mixture« of figurative signs, such as humans and birds, and more abstract forms, and to some degree also how they would typically have alternated. Piranesi's acute perception of the nature of the Egyptian style is perhaps better understood if we also consider how he made use of hieroglyphs.

Piranesi was uninterested in conveying those inscriptions that he superimposed on his designs with any exactness, but even so, he came much closer to understanding the spatiality and appearance of the script than many contemporary antiquarians and travellers. Piranesi's remark on Egyptian monuments, »no ornaments are seen on them but hieroglyphics«, seems to indicate that he was aware that some Egyptian decorations were of a figurative nature, while some were scriptural. This seem perhaps self-evident today, yet in the 18th century this distinction was only beginning to emerge. In Erik Iversen's survey of the decipherment, traveler Carsten Niebuhr is said to »be the first to draw a clear distinction between ordinary pictures and graphic hieroglyphs« and »he also made the observation that the signs could be written in either direction«.[57] Niebuhr's account was published in 1774. Iversen then continues to offer an analysis of Piranesi's *Diverse maniere* without any mention of his use of hieroglyphs.

Piranesi could, of course, not read hieroglyphs. Attempts to decipher the hieroglyphs had, by the 18th century, reached its final unsuccessful century. Some decipherment work was going on, but the century was also marked by an attitude of scepticism whether if it was really worth the effort. In the words of Erik Iversen »hardly one single serious attempt« was made in the realm of hieroglyphic studies during the 18th century.[58] Upon the discovery of the Rosetta Stone in 1799, a renewed direction in hieroglyphic studies was taken. Judging from the »Apologetical Essay«, Piranesi had little to say about hieroglyphs except that they were found on buildings, and he had nothing to say about decipherment.

Decipherment or not, hieroglyphs constituted a cultural marker that unambiguously connoted ancient Egypt, but in which way? Ephraim Chambers' definition is a textbook

formulation and symptomatic for the period: »Hieroglyphics, a Symbol, or Mystic Figure, used among the antient Egyptians, to cover or conceal the Secrets of their Theology«.[59] The same ideas are present in many other sources from the period, understanding the hieroglyphs as something which *per se* radiated a lost and mysterious past.[60] Piranesi's wish for ornaments other than »hieroglyphics« and his preference for »caprices« rather than »mysteries« is contrary to his extensive use of hieroglyphs.[61] Even if he did consider hieroglyphs mere ornaments, they still connoted Egyptianess and in this way they aided in making the images even more Egyptian.

MERGING CULTURES

Solid reference to Antinous is found on the three plates which feature only minor Egyptian stylistic elements (numbers 23, 49 and 52). The Egyptian component is the same in all three designs: two males, standing back to back, separated by a narrow band or pillar. The figures are in a striding pose and crowned with a lotus flower, suggesting the Antinous Telamon as the main sources of inspiration. In two of the designs, the figures are holding a staff. This feature occurs in the Mensa Isiaca, yet it could also be a nod to the Antinous Casali.[62]

»Each nation has its own, from which it is not lawful to deviate«, Piranesi writes.[63] These particular plates were an attempt to combine stylistic elements from different cultures, rather than to separate and distinguish between them.[64] However, it should not escape us, which Egyptian elements were considered most applicable for such a cultural blending. Piranesi's choice of Antinous is very consistent with the prevailing taste of his time. Egyptianizing statues of Antinous were highly coveted as models for recreations in the »Egyptian style«. Examples are abundant, beginning from the Renaissance onwards and blooming in particular in the late 18th century. Winckelmann described the *griechische Stil* of these Antinous statues and considered it to be *eine Nachahmung der Ägypter*.[65] The figure had all the potential of cultural intermediacy.[66] The third volume of Caylus' *Recueil*, from 1759, displays an allegorical frontispiece of the revealing of a statue modelled on Antinous, its appearance being »sous la forme d'une Figure Egyptienne« (fig. 5).[67] Antinous was the quintessential representative for Egypt, one of aesthetically appealing qualities, complete with its combination of Egyptian iconography and pose and Classical style and grace. The figure employs the full human form and has little to do with the »brutes, and monsters«, i.e. animals and anthropomorphic hybrids that otherwise adorn the Egyptian designs of *Diverse maniere*.[68] As was so often the case in the reinterpretation of Egyptian art, 18th century artists preferred Egyptian iconography to Egyptian style, and Egyptianizing was preferred to Egyptian. The use of Antinous, known in the period to be Egyptianizing and not Egyptian, was a way of adapting to a classical format.

5 Frontispiece from Caylus, *Recueil*, 1759, vol. III

A FOOD CHAIN OF OBJECTS – SELECTION AND CODIFICATION

The antiquarian image serves to offer a first distinction, namely that of authenticity. Every object in an antiquarian publication should (in theory at least) be an actual ancient object. The authentic »Egyptianess« that Piranesi borrowed from Caylus and others ensured a scholarly solidity to his own work – his novel recreations were borne out of a »great and serious study« of the »remains of ancient monuments«, as he states.[69]

Outside the original context of *Diverse maniere*, the distinction between ancient and modern might be less easily observed. In *Monumens Egyptiens consistant en obelisques, pyramides, chambres sepulcrales, statues d'idoles et de pretres, en momies, en grand nombre de divinités de cette nation, en bas-reliefs, en sacrifices, en animaux qu'elle adorait* from 1791, Piranesi's Egyptian designs resurfaced.[70] Publishers were Jean Bouchard and Joseph Gravier,

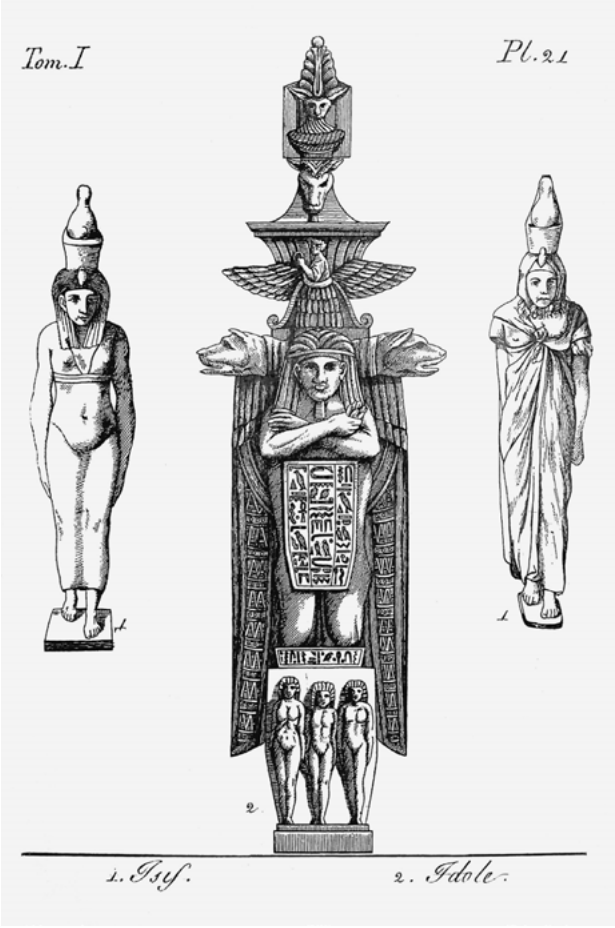
two highly productive French printers based in Rome, where their shop functioned as a meeting place for Grand Tour travelers. Today, Bouchard et Gravier, are primarily known as the printers of Piranesi's etchings in the early years of his production.[71]

Monumens Egyptiens is a two-volume folio, equipped with 200 plates and an accompanying text. Both volumes are fully dedicated to the subject of Egyptian antiquities. The reader of *Monumens Egyptiens* is informed on the title page that the publication contains »deux cens planches avec leurs explications historiques«. The mention of «historical explanations« signals an antiquarian volume with the requisite apparatus. Even though each one of the plates is individually numbered and customized for the publication, they do look strangely familiar. The plain and simple answer to this is: *Monumens Egyptiens* is a scrapbook, entirely made up of images copied from earlier prints.

The visual selection offered in the compilation delineates a complex landscape, with images copied from various genres – spanning over two centuries. The earliest works range from Egyptian monuments taken from Athanasius Kircher's mid-17th century publications to a catalogue of statues from Roman collections, *Raccolta di statue antiche e moderne*, from 1704, by Domenico de Rossi, and also includes plates from the imaginative architect, Fischer von Erlach's *Entwurf einer Historischen Architektur*, 1721. The Egyptianizing designs from Piranesi's *Diverse maniere*, are among some of the latest sources used for the compilation. Less surprising, *Monumens Egyptiens* also contains a substantial number of images taken from the works of Bernard de Montfaucon, Comte de Caylus and Johann Joachim Winckelmann.

Mapping the sources of *Monumens Egyptiens* can shed light on the circulation of antiquarian visual sources in the late 18th century. Most perplexing perhaps, is the use of the Egyptian designs from *Diverse maniere*, which are now revived, in the form of clippings, showing only selected fragments of the original compositions. There are ten such clippings.[72] In the first occurrence, there is no mention of Piranesi in the accompanying caption, although in the next instance, we are told: »C'est dans Piranesi qu'on trouve cette belle composition, mais sans aucune explication.«[73] It can be deduced from the captions that the designs are, on the one hand, understood as »compositions« made by Piranesi but, on the other hand, that they are also ancient artefacts subject to classification. In *Diverse maniere*, Piranesi created an Egyptianizing style by combining ancient Egyptian artefacts. In *Monumens*, these designs were once again turned into Egyptian monuments – in this particular case, the small triad was reproduced for the third time (fig. 6). Considering the poor quality of the volumes themselves and the amount of publications coming from the print shop of Bouchard et Gravier we may not give too much weight to this peculiar reuse of Piranesi's compositions. Nevertheless, it points to the antiquarian quality embedded in *Diverse maniere*. It may also raise the question as to how Piranesi's designs were understood. Due to the limited knowledge about Egyptian art in the 18th century, the general reader was probably not equipped to decipher what was Ancient Egyptian and what was Piranesi.

What was represented in Piranesi's *Diverse maniere*, and recycled in *Monumens* in fact stood at the end of a much longer food chain. Piranesi chose his objects especially from



6 Design from Piranesi's *Cammini* reproduced in *Monumens Egyptiens,* 1791, vol.I, plate 21

Caylus' volumes. The objects published by Caylus, mostly stemming from his own private collection, must also have been the result of a selection process based on whatever pieces were made available to him.[74] The material accessible to Caylus was again determined by which objects had filtered into Europe during the 17th and 18th centuries or earlier. This, once more, again depended on what was found (or not found) by locals in Egypt and subsequently sold off to traders and travelers. To this can be added the Egyptian objects found in Roman contexts outside Egypt.

These selection processes logically had an impact on the visual presence of Egypt in Europe. The mechanisms behind this process are not easily traced, but they obviously combined long-established behavior patterns with projected ideas about what was quintessentially Egyptian and, in the end, the sheer availability of objects at various archaeological

sites. This selection process clearly played an important part in the creation of a codified image of Egypt, where particular objects were preferred over others and particular traits were considered more Egyptian than others.[75]

In this period, most travelers still only visited Lower Egypt. The majority of objects acquired therefore came from this northern region, Saqqara in particular. A case in point could be the Royal Danish Expedition to Arabia, 1761–1767. This group of travelers spent close to a year in Egypt, engaging with Antiquity and antiquities in a number of ways. Monuments were seen and studied in the streets of Cairo, while mummies, reliefs, and other items were purchased directly from local peasants in Saqqara. In Alexandria and Cairo, European representatives played a key part in procuring and displaying antiquities to other Europeans. The local Egyptians knew that ancient artefacts could be used as tools of communication. The expedition's cartographer and sole survivor, Carsten Niebuhr (died 1815), received a fine scarab as gift from a local sheik in the Delta. Finally: objects encountered in Egypt were believed to be Egyptian or at least ancient. For that reason, Niebuhr brought home six small antiquities, two of which are now known to be European productions from the Middle Ages and Renaissance respectively.[76]

All of these objects were part of a negotiation process, whereby items were defined and presented by someone and subsequently selected for purchase. The Danish expedition had a limited budget and no formal assignment to acquire particular antiquities, a factor which must also be considered as being central to the selection process. Quality and price were intimately linked.

Portable, figurative objects, such as shabtis (often referred to as »idols«) and bronze deities, were popular. Last but not least, an object's physical ability to survive also played a part. Organic and fragile objects were probably less likely to be selected or, if so, they would perhaps disintegrate, while objects in Egyptian faience, metal and stone fared better. All of these factors are discernable from the artefacts presented in Caylus' volumes.

Frederik Ludvig Norden and the English traveler Richard Pococke were among the few travelers that ventured south of Cairo. While Norden is known to have brought home only a single antiquity, a canopic jar, now in the National Museum of Denmark[77], Pococke acquired objects in several places. Some sculptures came from an »Italian Merchant« in Cairo, while a group of small terracottas originated from Coptos, north of Luxor. Items were »found« and »bought« at this location, seemingly as part of a presentation offered to Pococke by locals.[78]

CONCLUSION

In the apologetical essay of *Diverse maniere*, Piranesi demonstrates the visual impact of Egyptian art, that which is »distinguished from all the rest«. The defence was intended to speak up against the common opinion and the idea that Egyptian and Tuscan art was infe-

rior to Greek art. Piranesi's perception of, and promotion of Egyptian art was unusually positive and nuanced. However, the Egyptian style plays a crucial part in the argumentation, especially to underline how Tuscan art was much closer to Greek art than had been previously acknowledged. Egyptian art, also in the view of Piranesi, was singular, unique and easily differentiated. Its habitual role as »the other« was thus confirmed.

The *Diverse maniere* drew on antiquarian sources, in the case of the Egyptian plates almost exclusively on Caylus' *Recueil*. Although the aim of *Diverse maniere* was not to present antiquities, it does draw on similar principles and in at least one instance the publication was used to provide source material for a new antiquarian compilation.

Piranesi's close dependency on Caylus led to the creation of a series on unusual designs, which broke new ground. To a large degree, the designs do not display a fancied or imagined Egypt, but something created from original monuments. The result was so convincing and the creational process behind it seemingly so simple (copy and paste), that scholars have tended to overlook the choices and alterations that likewise took place. A key choice was the use of the Antinous figure as intermediator between the Egyptian and Classical style. Furthermore, objects were not only copied and reduplicated, but also submitted to alterations that made them either more »Egyptian« or »Classical«.

Piranesi's selection of objects, keeping Caylus' somewhat more »fluffy« classifications in mind, was diligently done, as was his use of fabricated hieroglyphs. Both aspects demonstrate Piranesi's acute sense of the nature of the Egyptian style and in this he surpassed many of his contemporaries. The hieroglyphs were deciphered less than a century after Piranesi published his *Diverse maniere.* From then onwards the study of Egypt was anchored in philology.

The processes regarding the selection of objects and their subsequent codification have been briefly touched upon in this contribution. It is obvious that the objects (and their visual representation) constituted a smaller fraction of the typological and chronological palette that would be available to scholars and artist in the 19th century. The material available to Piranesi was, in turn, much more extensive than that of the 17th century.

Many factors governed the assemblages of the 18th century as well as how they were interpreted, and most of which revolved around circulating ideas of the Egyptians as cult-ridden and esoteric. Piranesi spoke against these presumptions and tried to create mere »caprices«. The rule of the capriccio is to make the familiar appear strange and new. From this perspective the Egyptian designs of *Diverse maniere* are not Egyptomania, but merely a stylistic expression alongside others. An expression which was not justified by its ability to please. In the defence Piranesi also advocates the idea to embrace and apply styles that are not only »graceful« and »delicate«. »Even the grotesk has its beauty«, he argues.[79] Through this, the Egyptian culture could be presented alongside the Classical cultures from which it so obviously differed.