



NIEDERSÄCHSISCHE STAATS- UND UNIVERSITÄTSBIBLIOTHEK, GÖTTINGEN

Piranesi

The Complete Etchings

By Luigi Ficacci

792 pages. Taschen. \$59.99.

PIRANESI PRISON BLUES The architectural artist Giovanni Battista Piranesi was one of the great copper engravers of the 18th century, and his romantic renderings of Roman ruins helped fix the grandeur of ancient Rome. Those dreamscapes of imperial decay, etched in his painstaking line, take on the texture of memory and imagination. But what's most haunting is the sequence "Fanciful Images of Prisons." In these works Piranesi revels in an architecture of nightmare, phantasmagorias that yoke the viewer to the rack of his dark vision, as defined by engines of torture and stairs and bridges that lead nowhere. No wonder "Prisons" beguiled both Kafka and Borges.