

## THE DAVIS MUSEUM AT WELLESLEY COLLEGE PRESENTS ROMAN MONUMENTS THROUGH THE DRAMATIC ETCHINGS OF GIOVANNI PIRANESI



WELLESLEY, Mass. – The Davis Museum at Wellesley College will present ***Reframing the Past: Piranesi’s Vedute di Roma***, an exhibition that includes approximately 30 of Giovanni Battista Piranesi’s views of the city of Rome. Perhaps the artist’s best-known work, the *Vedute di Roma* print series was completed over the course of more than three decades, from 1747 until 1778. The exhibition will be on view in the Morelle Lasky Levine ’56 Works on Paper Gallery from February 10 through July 9, 2017.

Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Temple of Saturn*, from the series “*Vedute di Roma*,” Etching and Engraving, 1774.

“Piranesi’s *Vedute* are related to the cultural phenomenon of the Grand Tour,” Meredith Fluke, Kemper Curator of Academic Programs, and exhibition co-curator. “The prints were produced for visitors to the city, as souvenirs of their travels. The views are a reflection of the monuments that visitors encounter, combined with Piranesi’s romanticized take which made them a highly popular endeavor.”

said

Giovanni Battista Piranesi, considered one of the greatest printmakers of the 18<sup>th</sup>-century, was the son of a stonemason and master builder, and received practical training in structural and hydraulic engineering from his uncle who was employed by the Venetian waterworks. These experiences, as well as Piranesi’s background in perspective construction and stage design, all contributed to his fame as an artist of architectural etchings. The exhibition is drawn from the Davis collections, including 8 newly-acquired prints, six of which were part of the earliest *Vedute* series, known as *Le Magnificenza*. *Reframing the Past* follows an itinerary through the city, positioning Piranesi’s work alongside the work of his contemporaries.

***Reframing the Past*** focuses on Piranesi’s views of Roman memorial monuments and on 18<sup>th</sup>-century approaches to antiquity, along with his contributions to the scholarly advancement of Roman architecture in the nascent field of art history. It also orients Piranesi’s Roman *Vedute* within the context of print culture and in relation to the “Grand Tour” custom from the mid-17<sup>th</sup> through the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.

Meredith Fluke co-curated exhibition in collaboration with Kimberly Cassibry, Assistant Professor of Art at Wellesley College. Professor Cassibry’s students of Roman Art will create a separate Cuseum app tour on the exhibition, which will provide additional context on each of the monuments represented in the exhibition.

## RELATED PUBLIC PROGRAMS

### **Opening Celebration and Keynote Lecture**

Collins Cinema, Davis Lobby and Galleries

Thursday, February 9, 2017

6:30 - 7:30 p.m. - Keynote Lecture

7:30 – 9 p.m. - Reception and Gallery Viewing

Join the Davis to celebrate the opening of our spring 2017 special exhibitions, *The Medici's Painter: Carlo Dolci and 17th-Century Florence*, *Reframing the Past: Piranesi's Vedute di Roma*, *On Distant Shores: Landscapes by Constable and Kensett*, *The Fine Print: Selections from the Collection Bequest of Ann Kirk Warren '50*, and *Daphne Wright: Prayer Project*. The evening kicks off with a Keynote Lecture offered by Dr. Francesca Baldassari, generously supported by the Samuel H. Kress Foundation. A festive reception follows.

### **Curatorial Gallery Talk: *Piranesi's Vedute di Roma***

Morelle Lasky Levine '56 Works on Paper Gallery

Tuesday, February 28, 2017

4 – 5 p.m.

Co-curator Meredith Fluke and Kimberly Cassibry discuss Giovanni Battista Piranesi's Roman *Vedute* in the context of 18th-century travel and print culture, as well as within the prevalent approaches to antiquity found in the circles of philosophers, antiquarians, philologists, archaeologists, and architects that Piranesi inhabited.

### **Film Series: A Grand Tour**

Screenings in Collins Cinema at 6:30 p.m.

The Davis spring film series considers the “Grand Tour”—a rite of passage for young aristocrats (men, and some women) coming of cultural age from the mid-17<sup>th</sup> through the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. The Grand Tour itinerary linked passion for touristic adventure to the cultural legacies of classical antiquity and the Renaissance, informed tastes in art and collecting, and reinforced notions of class status and empire. These four films vary in source material, genre, and time period, from modern psychological horror to classic romantic comedy, yet have one thing in common—a life-changing visit to Italy, though perhaps not as “grand” as expected. This film series is generously supported by the Davis Museum Film Program Gift.

#### **Death in Venice (Dir., Luchino Visconti, 1971)**

Thursday, February 23, 2017

Seeking respite and recovery from illness, Gustav von Aschenbach alights in Venice. Unexpectedly, he finds relief and hope in the beauty of a teenaged boy named Tadzio with whom he becomes enamored. After an outbreak of cholera, Aschenbach's condition quickly worsens—but he feels the most alive he ever has, even in the city that eventually kills him.

#### **Roman Holiday (Dir., William Wyler, 1953)**

Thursday, March 16, 2017

In this romantic comedy, a young Princess Ann escapes her dull political duties for a day of sightseeing in Rome with an American journalist who hides his real agenda. Transformed by the city and his company, she faces uncertainty about the confines of her royal role. Starring Audrey Hepburn and Gregory Peck.

**A Room with a View (Dir. James Ivory, 1985)**

Thursday, April 6, 2017

Based on the novel by E.M. Forster, this sweeping romantic drama finds young Lucy Honeychurch and her chaperone on holiday in Florence, ensconced at a small pension amidst free-thinking fellow travellers. Back at home, Lucy is wooed by an affluent and cultured suitor, and must decide whether to abide the conventions of Edwardian England or follow her heart.

**The Talented Mr. Ripley (Dir., Anthony Minghella, 1999)**

Thursday, May 11, 2017

An impulsive young “nobody” is enlisted to convince the scion of a wealthy family to return to America. Thus begins a chain of deception with dire consequences. Based on the novel by Patricia Highsmith, this psychological thriller matches Tom Ripley’s passions to the dramatic landscapes of Italy’s great tourist destinations.

**Family Day: A Grand Tour of Italy**

Davis Lobby, Plaza, and Galleries

Saturday, April 29, 2017

11 a.m. – 3 p.m.

The Davis welcomes visitors of all ages to participate in a day of activities inspired by Italian art and culture. This free event features a treasure hunt in the galleries, art making, and performances that will entertain the whole family. Family Day is generously supported by the Palley Endowment Fund for Davis Museum Outreach Programs.

Generously supported by the Wellesley College Friends of Art at the Davis Museum, Davis World Cultures Fund, E. Franklin Robbins Art Museum Fund, National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts Museum Program Fund, Anonymous '70 Endowed Davis Museum Program Fund, The Judith Blough Wentz '57 Museum Programs Fund, the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, the Robert Lehman Foundation, Inc., and the Office of the Provost and Dean of Wellesley College. Grants were received from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, and the Robert Lehman Foundation, Inc.

***Reframing the Past: Piranesi’s Vedute di Roma*** is generously supported by the Mary Tebbetts Wolfe '54 Davis Museum Program Fund.

**ABOUT THE DAVIS MUSEUM**

One of the oldest and most acclaimed academic fine arts museums in the United States, the Davis Museum is a vital force in the intellectual, pedagogical and social life of Wellesley College. It seeks to create an environment that encourages visual literacy, inspires new ideas,

and fosters involvement with the arts both within the College and the larger community.

### **ABOUT WELLESLEY COLLEGE AND THE ARTS**

The Wellesley College arts curriculum and the highly acclaimed Davis Museum are integral components of the College's liberal arts education. Departments and programs from across the campus enliven the community with world-class programming— classical and popular music, visual arts, theatre, dance, author readings, symposia, and lectures by some of today's leading artists and creative thinkers—most of which are free and open to the public.

Since 1875, Wellesley College has been the preeminent liberal arts college for women. Known for its intellectual rigor and its remarkable track record for the cultivation of women leaders in every arena, Wellesley—only 12 miles from Boston—is home to some 2,400 undergraduates from 49 states and 58 countries.

###

Media Contact: Mary Agnew  
617-512-7489, [Magnew@wellesley.edu](mailto:Magnew@wellesley.edu)  
*High-resolution images and interviews available upon request*