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Material Lines: Apocalypse, Capricci, War and Other Disasters

Abstract. Albrecht Dürer's woodcuts *Apocalypsis cum figuris* (c.1498) present images in which space is almost entirely defined and structured by human bodies. In the engraved *Capricci* by Giovanni Battista Piranesi (c.1744-47) and by Giovanni Battista Tiepolo (c.1740-2) the proliferation in space of architectural debris and the figures that coexist with them collaborate in the definition of space as a seamless clump of matter. Architecture has altogether disappeared from Francisco Goya's *The Disasters of War* (1810-20), where an incommensurable space is at once shallow and endlessly deep – matter solidified by horror. In Jake and Dinos Chapman's reworkings of Goya's *Disasters of War* (1999-2005) figures re-emerge from this solid space and are returned to the foreground, ready to spring out of the image. Through these and other examples, this essay explores forms of representation that challenge the integrity of the body, both architectural and human, in an explosive crescendo in which the technical materiality of the drawn line gradually dissolves to return to three-dimensional space. It argues that violence here is not only pertinent to the contents of the images – apocalypse, destruction, war, disaster, martyrdom – but is intrinsic to the technical medium of the representation.

Introduction

Before Bernard Tschumi's 1970s drawings of architecture used suicide, murder, mutiny, and violent acts in general to explore the limits (and the limitations) of the conventions of architectural representation, other representations of events had altogether dispensed with architecture, or had shown it in tatters, as a broken object no longer able to define space. These images had shown that solid walls are not needed to define space, and architecture can be designed by spatial relations and positions identified by bodies, objects and fragments.

The violence that is portrayed or recreated in the images and installations examined in this text, both highlights and exaggerates those extreme conditions in which the conventions of representation conflict with the represented object – itself indeed not a defined form or a static object, but a performance of change. Sudden and violent – in Dürer's *Apocalypse*, Piranesi's *Carceri*, Goya's and the Chapman's *Disasters*, and Landy's

Saints – or slow and destructive – in Tiepolo's and Piranesi's *Capricci* and Hausmann's collages – the actions represented here offer a paroxysmal expression of the state of tension in which the architectural form (both design and edifice) operates, a tension that remains usually understated, embedded in acts of architecture (and the drawing of its lines) that are only apparently innocent.

Albrecht Dürer's woodcuts *Apocalypsis cum figuris* (c.1498) present images in which space is almost entirely defined and structured by human bodies. In the engraved *Capricci* by Giovanni Battista Piranesi (c.1744-47) and by Giovanni Battista Tiepolo (c.1740-2) the proliferation in space of architectural debris and the figures that coexist with them collaborate in the definition of space as a seamless clump of matter. Architecture has altogether disappeared from Francisco Goya's *The Disasters of War* (1810-20), where an incommensurable space is at once both shallow and endlessly deep – matter solidified by horror. In Jake and Dinos Chapman's reworkings of Goya's *Disasters of War* (1999-2005), figures re-emerge from this solid space and are returned to the foreground, ready to spring out of the image.

These and the other examples considered here experiment with forms of representation that challenge the integrity of the body, both architectural and human, in an explosive crescendo where the technical materiality of the drawn line gradually dissolves to return to three-dimensional space, and ultimately to movement. Violence here is not only pertinent to the contents of the images – apocalypse, destruction, war, disaster, martyrdom – but is intrinsic to the technical medium of the representation.

Dissolving architecture or reducing to its traces, these works enact the disappearance of architecture as a closed container. They suggest, in different ways, the possibility of a relational architecture: an architecture that is not defined by enclosure and is not necessarily made by inanimate substance and bodies. They imply the dissolution of the *tekton* of a solid architecture, indirectly suggesting the possibility of a different *tekton*, one which the discipline of architecture is still coming to terms with, but is in fact already both made possible and realized by new technologies of digital fabrication and organic growth.

Material lines

Material lines are internal to representation. Instruments of representation, they are the marks (the traces of the work) made by the hand or by a tool on the surface of the representation – drawn, incised, smudged. Besides the conventions that both constitute representation and are employed by it, material lines also have a physical presence. They possess specific spatial

connotations and physical limitations that are connected to their medium and to the techniques of representation. Lines conventionally stand for something other than themselves – the shape, contours and textures of an object, the effects of light – or are the record of a gesture, a passion, an emotion, a construction. Material lines also are (they have a presence) both in and on the image that they produce. Yet the twofold nature of the line – the line that re-presents and the line that is present (materially present) – remains internal to representation.

Material lines respond also to the demands of the objects of the representation, in terms of the subjects that the lines both define and represent. This occurs beyond the description of a defined object (given or imagined) – that is, it occurs beyond the work of the lines in figuration. Material lines are always and inevitably culturally, temporally, socially, politically placed.¹ It is in relation to this that the line performs, its functionality linked to the specifics of the techniques of representation (its interior function) but also to the message it conveys (its exterior function). The material line is always the line of collaboration between the conventions and the possibilities of the techniques of representation, and the subject of representation (beyond the object). Beyond the conventions of representation, the material line is compromised not only with the material making of its medium, but also with the issues that representation addresses. In this sense the line is always material, never neutral and always already compromised. It is, also, critical, as each of its enactments addresses the nature of representation itself.

An analysis of extreme human, social and political situations can support an exploration of the nature of the material line across time and cultures (although this text remains within the tradition of Western European art). Apocalypse, ruination, imprisonment and torture, war, disaster and martyrdom mark in different ways the crisis of established orders and structured systems. Never indifferent, the production of images that render these situations responds to them with a critical questioning that, in its denunciation, addresses also the very nature of representation. In these moments, the material and the critical, when most effective, coincide. The line here, both physical and representational, questions and experiments on itself while operating as an incisive critical instrument on the religious, the architectural, the political, the social.

A synchronic investigation of a series of provocative works by Albrecht Dürer, Giovanni Battista Piranesi, Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, Francisco Goya, Jake and Dinos Chapman and Michael Landy which address extreme violent situations, reveals how the graphic line can be used in innovative ways, to challenge the integrity of the body – both architectural and human – and to question the nature of space in an explosive crescendo in which

the technical bi-dimensional materiality of the line – which is traced, carved, etched, engraved, coloured, smeared – is gradually returned to three-dimensional space and ultimately to movement. Violence here is not only pertinent to the contents of the images that the line describes – apocalypse, destruction, torture, war, disaster – but intrinsic to the representation, and these works perform in fact a critique of their medium.

Apocalypse: the undoing of architecture

Albrecht Dürer's woodcuts *Apocalypsis cum figuris* (c. 1498) reinvent the medieval tradition of the illustrated book of John's *Apocalypse*, proposing a new iconography and construction of the plates, as well as a new overall layout and pagination of the work.² Dürer's innovation is not only stylistic and technical-graphical, but essentially spatial, in the way the book is structured and each of its images is laid out. In the medieval tradition, the illustrated books of the *Apocalypse* combined the biblical text with descriptive or suggestive images, which supported the words in rendering the message of the story. Dürer's *Apocalypse* innovatively separates the written text from the illustrations, giving to each separate pages, with the text occupying the verso of the woodcut prints.³ The image becomes independent from the text, telling a story that is autonomous from the written narration.⁴

Figure 1. Albrecht Dürer, The Revelation of St John: The Four Riders of the Apocalypse, 1497–98. (source: Staatliche Kunsthalle, Karlsruhe; Wikimedia commons - http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:Durer_Revelation_Four_Riders.jpg, accessed 02/02/11).



At the level of the single image, Dürer condenses the biblical narration of John's *Apocalypse* in a synoptic narrative. For

instance, his visual version has the Apocalypse's Four Horsemen riding and arriving all together at once, in one dense scene of dramatic concentration of space and time, which is entirely taken over by bodies and their movement. The whole *Apocalypsis cum figuris* in fact presents a space that is almost entirely made and defined – that is, produced rather than occupied – by human bodies. Bodies, and in most cases their accumulation and congestion, become the structural elements that support the construction of the image. Dürer all but does away with architecture as a structural frame for the image. Pushed to the background as a remote landscape with cities and castles, or to the front as a small material detail, architecture – whole city or fragment of building – is reduced to an object amongst many, and does not 'make' space.

Dürer's carves in these woodcuts a moving line that is able to sharply separate but also to blur and con-fuse boundaries, as well as to suggest fast movement and sudden action (Erwin Panofsky has observed the "dematerializing" power' of these lines).⁵ From still and hieratical to horrified and fast, bodies here define space – they construct, support and organize it. Dürer's *Apocalypse* thus becomes more than a narration 'cum figuris' that combines text and images, and constructs instead a new form in which the narration is emancipated from the text, and the space from the architectural framing. Both are instead performed, enacted and activated by the moving bodies.

***Capricci* and *Scherzi*: light undoing matter**

Giovanni Battista Tiepolo's etching series of ten *Capricci* (1743) and twenty-three *Scherzi* (1757) constitute an exception in his body of work, otherwise devoted to painting – his famous unlimited skies that break through walls, ceilings and domes. Freed from the constraints of the architectural frame and destined for the page, the *Capricci* and the *Scherzi* are 'drawn' directly on the copper plate with a fast yet precise line that carves the material to distil, without paint and colour, the essence of Tiepolo's works: light and the undoing of matter. Gone here are the celebrations of patrons, the religious or mythological triumphs and the narratives of occasion; gone also are the chariots and the clouds that support them from below, and the azure skies that draw them upwards. The *Capricci* and the *Scherzi* portray the secondary characters of Tiepolo's paintings, those supporting actors that usually provide also the structural support of the painted image we behold from below. In the etchings these characters pause in front of us, as if caught off stage in a moment when they are not 'playing' a part.⁶ We can

scrutinize them in detail as they float in the whiteness of the printed page, but, as they are now deprived of a given script, we are not able to understand them. Out of time, out of a narrative structure, out of role, the characters here lose the tension that in the paintings thrusts them to pierce the architectural envelopes. Without a given spatial enclosure to break, they make their own space, reconfiguring in groups as clumps of matter (divine, human, animal and inorganic alike) in an otherwise unlimited and vacuum space. They are epebes, satyrs and satyresses, Death, bucraniums, skulls and bones, folios, scrolls, ancient bas-reliefs, sacrificial stones, altars, soldiers, sheep, horses, monkeys, trumpets, axes, spears, owls, flames and ashes, hourglasses and serpents – recombined in different arrangements as they silently witness or observe the aftermath of (but never perform) rituals of death and sacrifice.

Figure 2. Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, 'Pulcinella gives counsel', *Scherzi di Fantasia*, c. 1743–57. (source: Art Gallery of South Australia; Wikimedia commons - http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Giambattista_Tiepolo_-_Punchinello_gives_counsel_-_from_the_series_%27Scherzi_di_Fantasia%27_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg, accessed 02/02/11).



Both timeless and simultaneous⁷ these beings and objects do not allow chronological unfoldings: there is no linear narrative here, but a circular recombination that refuses a resolution. Like the rest, the remnants of ancient sacred architectures included in these jumbles are dissolved and re-combinable – available to enact a new (or another) kind of proximity, in a space that blurs the distinction of form and matter. The vast brightness of these images – that excess of light that blinds any understanding – surrounds the groups of the *Scherzi*, ephemeral clumps of matter, gathered in an unlimited space that they cannot control. That which cannot be seen in the blinding light (death? divinity? the infinite? an incomprehensible idea of space?) is that which is not

in the image because the glimpse of its transient presence cannot etch the copper plate (like fast moving objects on a photosensitive plate). The strong light that ‘burns’ the plate obliterates measurable space, and with it also time, and any possibility of linear chronological sequencing. The iterative combination of recurring elements is then an attempt to conceptually access this space: the time of these etchings is circular and recursive, theirs is a piecemeal construction achieved through physical contiguity and condensation (the clotting of the heterogeneous in clumps).

Roberto Calasso has observed that a Tiepolo’s capriccio is a closed and isolated game. ‘What appears in a *Capriccio* will never be a random view, but one of the numerous sequences in which a pack of cards can recombine. [...] Each of Tiepolo’s twenty-three *Scherzi* is a configuration of the game [...] of a periodical and circular nature [...].’⁸

The capriccio is therefore to be intended as a repetitive inward process, that ultimately stifles any possibility of escape or reinvention. Walls and vaulted ceilings had provided a safe container for Tiepolo’s painterly images; in his etchings the idea of an ‘other’ space that remains unmeasurable and uncontrollable is both suggested and avoided, as it cannot be represented. The agoraphobia of these images produces an attempt to devise a way to occupy a new space that cannot be known, measured, controlled.

Capricci or Grotteschi: fragment undoing history

While Tiepolo’s capricci are mainly made of bodies and props, architecture is visibly present in Giovanni Battista Piranesi’s four engravings of the *Capricci* (c. 1744-47, also known as *Grotteschi*). Here architecture is pulverized, fragmented beyond recognition, or reduced to a fading background more likely to be a theatrical backdrop than an actual ruin. The proliferation in space of architectural debris, broken statuary and rotting life blurs figures, breaks the definition of objects, and eliminates the difference between the organic and the inorganic. The freedom allowed by the genre and the labelling of ‘fantastic’ that is generally associated with the capriccio allow Piranesi to release these fragments from the restrictions of architectural grammars, orders and typologies, similarly to what he will later accomplish at the architectural level with the *Pianta di ampio magnifico collegio* (1760), and at the urban scale with the congestion of *Il Campo Marzio dell’Antica Roma* (1762). If in other works Piranesi’s line is a precise tool for the documentation of the remains of an infrastructural and functional antiquity, in the

Capricci the agility and the lightness of a dynamic line blurs disciplinary and material divisions, questioning not only the validity of established architectural languages (by then already obsolete), but the very meaning of their words. Architecture, presented in broken pieces and scattered fragments, has lost the syntax of its composition. Also the definition of a vocabulary of architectural propriety⁹ is questioned: ancient tombs, ruins and pieces of cornices and mouldings are mixed with sculptural fragments (or body parts?), skeletons, bones and skulls, small figures of unknown nature (are they bodies or sculptures? flesh or stone?), fauns, serpents, ancient tombs, a painter's palette, a syrx, a club, an incense burner, a sandglass. A confusion of most oddly assorted objects – ‘disparatissimi oggetti alla rinfusa’ – they are presented against faint backgrounds that combine triumphal arches, palm trees, vaults and clouds, resembling a painter's *mise en scène*.¹⁰

Figure 3. Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Capricci or Grotteschi*, 1744–47; *Opere Varie*, 1750, second edition (source: University of Tokyo; http://www.picture.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp:8080/e_piranesi.html, accessed 02/02/11).



Already invaded, contaminated and occupied by other bodies, this is what remains of ancient architectures. The ensembles of Piranesi's *Capricci*, congested with vestiges of the past and heterogeneous records of their inevitable transformation, prepare the ground for a freedom of architectural and spatial experimentation.¹¹ Rather than the documentation of the ruins of the past, here we have the reinvention of a fantastic antiquity through the reuse of its fragments. Rather than the fragment as a trace of the past, here we have the present of the fragment and the fragment in the present, amnesiac and available in real time, so that ‘[w]e can only see these things as they are’ (Argan), and their representation – combining of necessity documentation and imagination, performs a re-signification.

Through the freedom, the lightness, the velocity of their lines, these unusual combinations of the organic and the inorganic, the living and the dead, the ephemeral and the lasting, question the nature of architecture (what belongs to it; what it is not). What is gone from the composition of the image as well as from

architecture is the definition of a form. The incompleteness of the architectural ruins and fragments and the no longer unequivocally human presences that inhabit them collaborate symbiotically in the redefinition of space as a seamless clump of matter. Piranesi's nervous lines blend instead of dividing, they fade and shade the mineral, the vegetal, the animal and the human, incorporating¹² in the architecture of the ruin figures (perhaps human beings?) that seem alive. Nature beyond the animal, in a pre-animal state, part human part stone, these beings (things?) are part of an architecture that comes alive – both dynamic and transformative.¹³ The ruination of architecture here is not considered for its loss of form and wholeness, but, more importantly, because it unleashes the expression of its materiality and its transformative potential.

A few years after Piranesi publishes the *Capricci*, Canaletto (Antonio Canal, another venetian) paints fictional urban scenes by combining views of existing buildings with unrealized projects. Canaletto 'cuts out' images from the city (usually Venice) both real and unbuilt, and recombines them in static montages of urban spaces that in most cases reproduce existing spatial relations and urban connectivity. Buildings, or rather their images, are treated as absolute objects, and, left intact, become elements of an urban scenography that remains in the realm of the visual, failing to question the complex dynamics of urban space. Pictorial frames of absolute architectures rather than new spatial projects, Canaletto's *Capricci* freeze the becoming of the city in a discontinuity of finished elements that lack connective tissue, without even attempting to question the nature of its components.¹⁴ Space, what seems to be missing in Piranesi's *Capricci*, is in fact more present than ever in them, generated as it is by the tension between objects and by their incompleteness and possible superpositions and interpenetrations, be it in the 'clumps of matter' of the *Capricci* or in the unbounded depths of the *Carceri* (1749-50). Celebrating the undoing of matter and time and the expansion of an uncontrollable space, and characterized by an ambiguity that often touches on the disturbing, Piranesi's 'grotesque' (*Grotteschi* is the other known title of the *Capricci*) and fanciful inventions (*Invenzioni Capricciose di Carceri*, 1749-50) use the medium of the etching and the 'capricious' combination of broken elements to produce a critique of the space of architecture (*Capricci*) and of the city (*Carceri*).

***Carceri*: fragment undoing space**

Piranesi's views of Rome and of Roman antiquities offer the most famous description and interpretation of the city and its

times. In these etchings the documentation of monuments, ruins and details is never separate from a project that, technical, visual, and graphic, offers also a commentary on the given, preparing it for a project of the present. Rome's times, past and present, coexist in these plates, where the magnificence of the past, rather than celebrated in a frozen reconstruction, is witnessed in its crumbling present state and in its decaying social context. More than his conventional views of Rome, Piranesi's etchings of the *Carceri – Invenzioni Capricciose di Carceri* (Fanciful inventions of prisons, 1749-50) and *Carceri d'invenzione* (Imaginary prisons, 1760) – offer a clear project for an architecture of the past that continues to change (trans-form) under the action of time and man. Here Piranesi uses elements of ancient architecture whose massiveness and structural quality overwhelm orders and ornaments (they are substructures, water ducts, underground vaults, or indeed prisons), and reworks them in a project of new relations where interiors and exteriors blend in a spatial continuum. These prisons may be sites of punishments and torture, but they are clearly not sealed spaces of detention – and while the titling 'prison' provides a pseudo-functional infrastructural justification that enables the spatial and graphic experimentation, punishment here is inflicted to prisoners, visitors and viewers alike by disorientation. In these images perspective is fragmented and many partial views are collaged to represent an impossible combination of urban 'interiors', whose incongruent multiplicity is not only spatial but also temporal. While these works operate within the boundaries of two-dimensional architectural representation, their effect on architecture and its definition of space go well beyond representation itself. Piranesi's images literally (visually) construct, a new idea of space – open, infinite, changing, smooth, dynamic – and they do so through an accumulation of swift light lines that are able to blend human bodies with the materials of architecture, as they both rot, crumble, de-compose and adapt to each other and their environment.

When Piranesi reworks the plates of the *Carceri* to produce a second edition of prints (*Carceri d'invenzione*, 1761), his lines multiply and condense, darkening the images and filling the cavernous spaces with architectural fixtures, machines, instruments of torture and prisoners. They also add a new form of dynamic reading: in these second states the observers inside the *Carceri* are multiplied. Small, faint, transparent at times and always in motion, these visitors (clearly neither prisoners nor guards) are both part of the image and inserted view-points that remain incapable to grasp and measure the totality of these spaces, never closed, enclosed or complete. Lines here open up space and make it available, and reinvent the 'materials' of architecture for new compositions yet to come.

In the *Capricci* first and then in the *Carceri*, Piranesi exploits to the full the possibilities of the material line of the etching in its physical presence. No longer a tool of representation, here the line becomes a tool of design that questions not only the validity of by then obsolete architectural languages but also the very nature of the ‘architectural’ materials, producing unusual combinations of the organic and the inorganic, flesh and stone. Always precise and intentional, always part of a *disegno* (project) the lines of the *Capricci* and the *Carceri* blur distinctions between the properly and the improperly architectural, shifting the emphasis from a language of forms to the performance of architecture’s materials in a seamless space.

Figure 4. Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Carceri d’Invenzione*, Plate VI, 1761 (source: Los Angeles County Museum; Wikimedia commons - http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Smoking_Fire_LACMA_46.27.6.jpg, accessed 02/02/11).

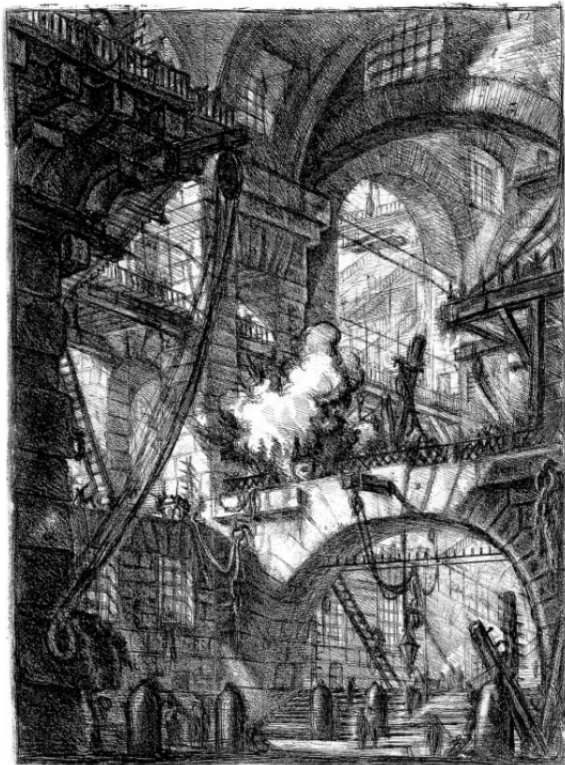


Fig. 12 G. B. Piranesi, *Carceri d’Invenzione* Tavola VI

The ground is ready for the expansion of the etched line into a surface, through the technique of the aquatint. The occasion is once again predicated by the representation of destruction, violence and pain, this time in relation to the horrors of war. The hybrid technique of etching and aquatint offers an analytical tool that focuses on the detail (the line) while obfuscating its context (surface) to both obliterate it and universalize it.

War: the silence of space

Francisco Goya's eighty-two etchings of *Los desastres de la guerra* (The Disasters of War, 1810-20) portray the popular uprisings, the war and the ensuing famine that he witnessed during the military campaign of the French imperial army in Spain. Architecture here has altogether disappeared from a wasteland of horror and pain which is inhabited only by bodies (and a few sparse props that could occupy a Beckett stage). Contorted, amassed, dismembered, human bodies are all that is left here, wrapped and absorbed in the aquatint veil with which Goya experiments in this series. Around the clear-cut figures in the foreground, fuzzy engraved lines and the fluidity of the acid combine on the plate to produce a palpable and incommensurable space that is at the same time shallow and endlessly deep. Liquid that solidifies into matter, the aquatint technique allows Goya to produce a distance that is not only graphic and spatial but also a process of moral distancing and social critique.

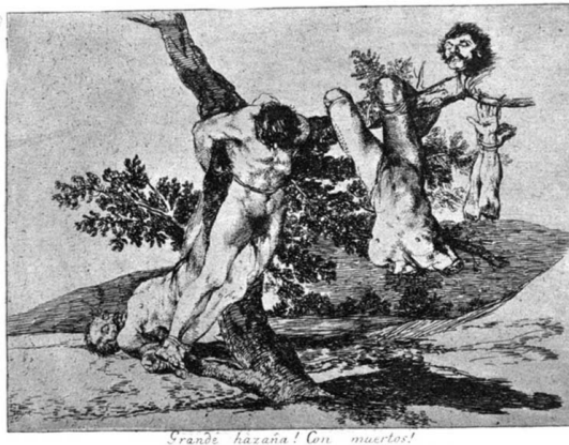
In *Los fusilamientos* (1808), Goya's famous painting that represents the mass executions of the Spanish rebels of May 3rd 1808, 'the massacre takes place within the yellow halo of a huge cubic lantern [...] "the light of history" [...] in the meantime the city lies asleep'¹⁵ in the background. There is no architecture, no city, no background, no space, not even history in *The Disasters of War*. Goya here is a direct witness, a somehow myopic reporter of the atrocities, but also a selective observer, who removes historical connotations and the specificity of the occasion¹⁶ and uses his medium – the tone of the aquatint combined with the sharp line of the etching – to construct a critical distance from the events and produce a universal condemnation of violence and suffering.¹⁷ Clothes, uniforms and weapons offer clues as to the geographical and historical collocation of the portrayed facts, but their horror, unfolding between the accurate documentation and the viewer's emotional reaction is universal. The meticulous rendering of the details, achieved by a sharp line focused on both documenting and denouncing the violence, is given regardless of the political position of the perpetrators – Spanish revolutionaries or French soldiers. While the surgical precision of the representation leaves us speechless, Goya pairs each of his images with a title, a laconic commentary that is at once both tautological and necessary, for the way in which it complements the image. Itself a line (of text), as sharp a highlight as the aquatint is an obliterating veil, the caption refrains from specific historical connotations and offers these images to the universal.¹⁸

What Goya presents here is a vocabulary of timeless horrors that, as such, could be (and are) forever repeated, to the end of language, of civilization, of mankind. Surgically – through

precise details of rituals of torture, of facial expressions of cruelty and fear, of bodily contortions of pain, of dissected limbs – in a long taxonomy of variations on horror, through a repetition in front of which nausea and indifference dangerously blur, this work warns us that violence and the disasters of war are part of human nature, of civilization and history.

The line that surgically inscribes and the word that absolutely describes work together with the veiling acid and the darkening

Figure 5. Francisco Goya, *Los Desastres de la Guerra*, Plate 39, 'Great deeds! Against the dead!', 1810–20 (source: Arno Schmidt Reference Library; Wikimedia commons - [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Goya-Guerra_\(39\).jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Goya-Guerra_(39).jpg), accessed 02/02/11).



etched line to obliterate time and space. Goya's aquatint creates fields of textures that layer in flattened depth around and through the groups of bodies, and 'the drama and intensity of the scenes become perfectly integrated with the expressive possibilities of his technical means.'¹⁹ Space here is only in the action of the bodies; the rest of the image remains an opaque depthless field, apparently even and neutral, but in fact concealing further disasters. Each of the episodes, disconnected from the others, becomes an absolute island of universal horror, threatened to disappear into the sameness of indifference.²⁰

In Plate 1, which opens the series but is in fact one of the last images that Goya produced, 'Dire Forebodings of What is to Come', a desperate man caught between struggle and resignation strives to emerge from a black etched background. Already half-eaten by darkness, he announces the night of reason about to be illustrated in the images that follow. In Plate 69, 'Nothing. Time Will Tell' (but Goya's title is, in Spanish, *Nada. Ello dirà*, 'Nothing. He will tell') man – already a universal man – is a corpse, already almost a skeleton eaten by the background. No longer an individual, no longer alive and already turned into matter, this 'nothing' is a member of a crowd of 'alreadys' dissolved and entirely absorbed by the darkness that awaits him. Watered by the aquatint and flattened on the plate, or engulfed in etched lines, space is no more, as if erased by horror. This is not the silence of a disaster that cannot be written or even named,²¹

but a self-imposed near-sightedness which both highlights the detail of the horror and erases its circumstances, to render it (literally – to both make it and express it as) universal.

Other *Disasters*: the explosion of bodies

In Jake and Dinos Chapman's reworking of the *Disasters of War* (1999-2005) Goya's figures – altered, disfigured, colourfully masked – re-emerge from their obscured solid background and are returned to the fore, redefined, brought into the present and ready to spring out of the image. The colourful and irreverent clownesque masks that the Chapmans apply to the characters of the *Disasters*, victims and perpetrators alike, confer fictitious identities and fictional smiles that highlight their pain, instead of hiding it. The bright pastel colours childishly spread on Goya's prints return both dying and killing figures to the observer, as individuals. By colourfully hiding or reinventing faces these smeared masks remind us that behind these broken 'things' and limbs are (or were) human beings.

Figure 6. Francisco Goya, *Los Desastres de la Guerra*, Plate 1, 'Dire Forebodings of What is to Come', 1810–20 (source: Museo del Prado; Wikimedia commons - http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Prado_-_Los_Desastres_de_la_Guerra_-_No._01_-_Tristes_presentimientos_de_lo_que_ha_de_acontecer.jpg, accessed 02/02/11).



Starting from Goya's prints, the Chapmans' works take on their own life, and a further series of references. From the marking and the effacement of given images – like the graffiti of a swastika sign on Goya's Plate 39, 'What a Feat! With Dead Men!' – to their reworking of other *Disasters* with additions that the Chapmans call 'improvements', to the construction of sculptural compositions that reproduce Goya's images (*Great Deeds Against the Dead*, 1994) or reinterpret them in scenes of nauseating decomposition (*Sex I*, 2003), in different ways the Chapmans take Goya's works out of the timeless and universal realm of art, and reactivate them (in this sense they are 'improvements'), not only by bringing selected elements and faces (and therefore identities) to the fore of the images and to the

observer's attention, but also by thrusting them into the present and the recent past, with explicit updated political and social references that range from Nazism to consumerism and globalization. From there the Chapmans' work develops in new directions, with a new series of drawings – no longer reworkings of the *Disasters of War* but cartoonish childish additions to them – and different sculptural pieces.

The line here becomes more and more literally material, from the colour of the pigment to the cast plastic, to the cast bronze painted to look like plastic (the equivalent of the masks smeared on the original Goyas), to the exposed bronze. Cruelly mocking but far from desecrating, and in fact updating and amplifying Goya's intentions, the Chapmans' 'improvements' to the aquatints prepare the transition to space and the simultaneous explosion of both the image (and its bi-dimensional construction) and the body (and its integrity) in their installation *When Humans Walked the Earth* (2006), in which human body-parts are dismembered, reassembled and incorporated in the bronze patina of machines that will never work.

All had already been anticipated in an installation of 1993 based on *The Disasters of War*, an archipelago of toy-soldier-like mini-sculptures that reproduced Goya's scenes on patches of green plastic. These islands, unable to communicate or interconnect in any form of relation, but inhabited by re-assemblable acts of violence, predispose a vocabulary of horrors for later works. If Goya's images portrayed a series of screams, cries, mute horror or the silence of death, the Chapmans' installation of the *Disasters of War*, by assembling them all synesthetically, produces a cacophony not unlike the buzz of human life, represented in its most terrible forms. Goya's impenetrable background is translated here into a series of 'disjointed' islands of horror, whose only possible narrative is a repetitive recombination. Together, this work takes on Goya's critical distance and exaggerates it into the remove of a mock-up bird's eye view; but unlike such views in seventeenth century prints, this one never attempts to offer any understanding, comprehension or control.

After the graphic re-elaborations of the *Disasters*, the additions to them, and their three-dimensional renditions and reinterpretations, the Chapmans' installation *When Humans Walked the Earth* completes the undoing of matter, the blurring of boundaries between life and death, the human and the mineral,²² the organic and the machinic that Goya had begun by combining the sharp line of the burin with the liquid aquatint in his prints. Here the patina of the bronze – line become surface

become body – covers all and takes these contraptions (beyond-machines and beyond-bodies) beyond use.

The unfolding of the Chapmans' works on Goya's *Disasters* and their gradual departure from them marks a progression from the two- to the three-dimensional interpretation of violence, as if the flat space of the etching were insufficient to convey the horror of its content. Contained at first in the green islands of the *Disasters of War* installation (1993), the performance of violence and body dismemberment is then exploded in the figures of *When Humans Walked the Earth* (2006). Here even the coherence (if any) of the violent act loses the possibility of the reconstruction of its dynamics, and body parts mix with fragments of objects and of the very machines of torture. Lost here is not only the integrity of the body (human or thing) but also the very possibility of cohesion of the action. The 'humans' that walk the earth in this installation have lost their ground and are scattered without apparent relation on the gallery floor. In the works examined thus far the representation of violence dispenses with architectural backgrounds and envelopes, bodies and objects and their relations defining space, almost coagulating it around their actions. Here even the relational tension is dissolved, and the fragments of the work suggest an aimless and directionless perambulation. It is at this point that the 'need' for architecture as both a background and a container of human actions is both dissolved and re-established, as the only elements that frame this work, hold it together and preserve the possibility of reinvented relations are the gallery floor and the envelope of its white cube.

Saints Alive: the impossible collage

The reverse process seems to occur in Michael Landy's recent work at the National Gallery in London, *Saints Alive*, where the materialization of the line from painting and drawing to four-dimensional installation ultimately finds its best synthesis in the return to the complex bi-dimensionality of collage, a technique that architecture has long employed to overcome object-bound limitations and define its role in urban space.

Landy became the National Gallery's artist in residence in 2010. This was a strange choice: Landy, who was associated with the Young British Artists Group in the late 1980s, does not paint, and is best known for the performance *Break Down* (2001), in which he systematically catalogued and destroyed all his possessions. He is also the artist who, in the *Nourishment* series (2002) had drawn, directly on the etching plates and with systematic precision a series of weeds that he had collected near his London studio.

At the National Gallery, Landy focuses on the saint martyrs of the early Christian tradition that are represented in the Renaissance paintings of the collection. Often short lives, ended violently (often with the mutilation or dismemberment of the body) for their profession of faith, the stories of the saint martyrs combine historical fact and religious mythology in a narrative that is always already woven with the inexplicable and its discontinuities. In the Renaissance paintings these saints are often portrayed as part of groups, where they are identified by the implements that symbolically link them to their torture (and therefore confer them sanctity). They are also represented within the Gallery in a repetitive way, painted after the same iconography by different painters and schools, as well as in a fragmented way (many Renaissance paintings in the collection are parts of dismembered altarpieces, now reframed and rearranged out of their devotional context).²³

Figure 7. Michael Landy, *Saints Alive. Multi-Saint*, 2013 (source: the Artist; courtesy of the Artist and Thomas Dane Gallery, London).



The result of Landy's work on the paintings of the saint martyrs continues some of the themes of his previous works: the catalogue and the destruction, the ephemeral and the violent. For the National Gallery he produced a series of larger than life Tinguely-esque interactive kinetic sculptures that combine fragments of the saints and their attributes drawn from many different paintings in the collection.²⁴ These machines perpetuate with their repetitive motion the moment of violence, torture or attack that has elevated the victim to sanctity: Apollonia plucks her eyes; Thomas points his finger at Christ's chest so violently that his headless torso swings like a punching ball; Catherine's gigantic wheel can be spun by gallery visitors; Francis dispenses t-shirts like an amusement park's 'fish-the-plush-toy' attraction; Jerome beats his chest with a stone to self-destruction, in order to keep at bay his impure thoughts.²⁵ Most interesting of them all is *Multi-Saint* (2013), a hybrid construction made of a pair of Satan-

tramping Saint Michael's legs, a Tinguely-derived²⁶ 'meta-mechanical' torso, and a sword-slit Saint Peter Martyr's head, as well as other pieces. What is interesting here is that with the combination of pieces the single identities are broken apart and ultimately erased, while a new one emerges from the composition, although it remains both nameless and incomplete – and as such limitless. What holds together this four-dimensional collage are the memory and the re-enactment of the violence of the martyrdom – this is the force that springs the springs, spins the wheels and ultimately activates the machines. Having emptied the symbols, even if their recognizable traces remain, it is through movement and reiteration of the violence of the dismemberment that these pieces become coherent: these machines can hold themselves together and 'work' only if they are operational, attacking, damaging, breaking, self-flagellating, etcetera.

Figure 8. Michael Landy, Saints Alive. Penitence Machine (Saint Jerome), 2012 (source: the Artist; courtesy of the Artist and Thomas Dane Gallery, London).



The key to an understanding of these torture-iterating machines lies in their preparatory work: the drawings of the parts, the cut up pieces of the paintings' images, and their collages, which are in turn redrawn in a self-feeding process. More than a documentation of the working process, these drawings and collages are the long lasting pieces of this composite work. In them Landy studies and redraws a selection of paintings from the National Gallery collection, choosing as he redraws the key elements of each painting, and of each saint in each painting. At first architectural and natural backgrounds are removed, as well as the ground, and the characters float in the black ink of the drawing, as if on a contemporary theatre stage. Liberated from all

forms of background, the bodies are freed, ready to fly and dissolve the group in which they are portrayed, and ultimately to be dismembered themselves.²⁷

It is indeed in the drawings that the selections, the cuts, the exclusions, and the fragmentations that produce the project already take place. After the drawings Landy works directly on photographic print enlargements of the paintings, his cuttings following the lines already decided in the drawings. The bodies that are dismembered here are the images (reproductions of images) that Landy cuts apart – representations that are also removed from the blood and the pain of the body, as are in a way the dissolved bodies and the bones of the saints preserved in Christian reliquaries. Landy thus performs the re-enactment of the re-enactment of the dismemberment of martyrdom. As he cuts up an image, he shifts the project from the representation (or evocation) of violence to the violence of the representation. The violence here is removed from the body and from the narrative of the saints' lives, and placed instead within the representation, performed in and by the image, its undoing (of the painting) and its making (of the collage). The process shows us that the two cannot coexist, that one is the destruction of the other, thus summarizing in a few gestures a paradigm shift in visual representation. Having virtually cannibalized the painting, the collage produces another space that is non narrative, discontinuous, non-documentary, visually sparse but symbolically dense, and ultimately productive of other relations and therefore other realities: it is montage-able, in the sense that the discontinuities within it suggest other possible constructions that are not a composition or a re-composition. Floating, the figures of this collage introduce a new relation with the background, seen now as a deep field of possibility from which anything could emerge at any time.

If the graphic elements can be dismembered without pain (other than the loss of their order), in the end Landy's 'machines' return the process to the body and to physical violence, with the startling and loud movements of the kinetic sculptures that he derives from his collages. In this process of translations, it is again the drawing that, once the collage of the selected fragments has been prepared, dynamically re-joins the pieces, reinventing connections and diagramming actions; it is the drawing that anticipates the instructions for the machines of the gallery installation; it is once again the drawing that reconnects the new whole, producing a new image where links, body parts, objects and machine parts are reduced to a new multiple one (as best exemplified by *Multi-Saint*).²⁸

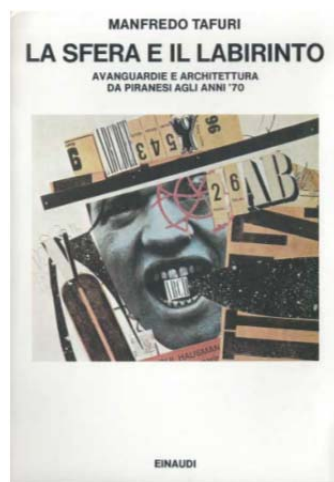
The cuttings, performed by the drawings at first and then repeated in the dismemberment of the (copies of the) paintings, liberate the

parts by making them both autonomous from their previous composition (as much as the previous composition of the altarpiece had already been dismembered to enter world galleries) and universal. Only then can they be returned to a third (and fourth) dimension, and to a new form of interaction with the gallery visitors, out of their history and symbolism. In this process the relational moment, the bearer of potential relations and dynamic possibilities of both repetition and change, is the moment of the collage, both as a set of instructions and as a field of experimentation of possible relations, only some of which can be enacted by the mechanical sculptures. Beyond the clamour and clangour of the *Saints* machines, what brings the martyrs back to life, that is, what enables the two-dimensional representation to render the violence of their martyrdom, is the selective process of collage making. It is the collage with its overlaps, juxtapositions and hiatuses that gives these images a new possible life, removed from both linear narrative and the isolation of the fragment, in a relational space where figure, ground and movement can coexist and coalesce after dismemberment.

Critical lines: reinventing the medium²⁹

In 1980 architecture historian Manfredo Tafuri published *La Sfera e il Labirinto* (The Sphere and the Labyrinth),³⁰ which, subtitled *Avant-Gardes and Architecture from Piranesi to the 1970s*, proposed a long modernity of architecture, extended to its revisions and crisis in the present (1970s), but finding its harbingers in a selection of works from the mid-18th century. It is here that Tafuri discusses the innovative and critically disruptive force of Piranesi's work, suggesting a continuity between the experimentation of his etchings and the definition of the stylistic and iconographic programme of one of his few built works, the church of Santa Maria del Priorato in Rome.³¹

Figure 9. Manfredo Tafuri, *La sfera e il labirinto. Avanguardie e architettura da Piranesi agli anni '70* (Turin, Einaudi, 1980) : book jacket (source: the Author, courtesy of Einaudi Editore, Turin).



To illustrate the connection between early and contemporary avant-gardes and emphasize Tafuri's argument the cover of the book chooses a pivotal moment in the definition of the architectural avant-gardes: the explosion of the historical city and the development of the metropolis, and its conceptual theorizations and visual representations. The cover illustration focuses on the dynamic relation between the body and representation at the time of the explosion of media in the metropolis. Raul Hausmann's collage *ABCD (Self-portrait)* (1923–24), far from portraying the individual in his integrity and isolation, combines a fragment of the screaming artist's photographic portrait with a confusion of modern attributes: printed letters, fragments of newspapers and advertisements, space (as if exhaled or laughed out by the subject), as well as a banknote.

This is the new metropolitan being, and his portrait can only be a screamed representation of his 'anguish', of the 'conflicts, contradictions, and lacerations that generate this anguish', and of the 'tragic confrontation' with 'the shock derived from the experience of the metropolis'.³² In *Architecture and Utopia* (1973) Tafuri had made explicit reference to Edvard Munch's *Scream* (1893-1910) as an expression of 'the necessity of a bridge between the absolute emptiness of the individual, capable of expressing himself only by a contracted phoneme, and the passivity of collective behaviour.'³³ Here it is Raul Hausmann's laughter that represents the fractured individual's response not only to the modern metropolis but also to its media invasion and proliferation. Hausmann, whose position within the Berlin Dada group Tafuri discusses in the book, was – significantly – the author of the manifesto *The New Material In Painting* (1918). The new material of painting that Hausmann proposes is the collage, with its heterogeneous components which include letters, numbers, images, as well as the author himself, not only as the agent of the visual assemblage but also as one of its elements. In *ABCD (Self-portrait)* the author is represented both in form of text (his name) and with the photo-portrait of his screaming face. What is this scream though, in the metropolis and at the metropolis and its media? Hausmann's work is realised also as sound. His poems ("phonemes") and poster poems, produced by the chance typographic lining up of letters, or by reversing chopping up and rearranging words, combined texts images and sounds and were then performed in a true dynamic enactment. In his book Tafuri observes that Hausmann's collage is an 'immersion [...] in the sea of the scrambled alphabets of the metropolis', but also that it is an immersion that dominates such sea, and "holds it together", and that collage is an 'interiorization, or an exteriorization of the impulses generated by the "new

Babylon””, and a technique to absorb the subjective alienation provoked by it.

The violence to which the image reacts here is not an event, but the novelty of daily life in the modern city. Tafuri’s attention to the use of collage in Hausmann’s work as a visual means to both understand and cope with the continuously shifting present of the metropolis links it to the anxiety present in Piranesi’s work, where the revolutions of the graphic line morphs into a built line that erases itself and anticipates direct transformations of architecture.

At the end of the fifteenth century Dürer’s woodcuts of the *Apocalypse* had emancipated the visual representation from the text, establishing a narrative autonomy of the image in which the dynamics of the line construct the action, and space itself is defined by bodies in motion rather than framed by architectural or perspectival constructions.

In Tiepolo’s *Scherzi* the characters of his paintings, now freed from their architectural frame, seem to have lost their purpose, and float, deflated, in a space with which they cannot interact, as it is in fact already dissolved.

Having pulverized architecture beyond recognition and language (*Capricci*) and multiplied its space in a series of endless reflections (*Carceri*), Piranesi’s nervous lines directly address architecture, blurring distinctions between the properly and the improperly architectural, and shifting the emphasis from a language of forms to the performance of architecture’s materials in a seamless space.

In Goya’s *Disasters of War* the aquatint produces an opaque, liquid, flattened space of fear and erases historical and geographical connotations, defining a universal field that is activated and inhabited only by disjointed but all-equal acts of violence and pain.

When the Chapman brothers graffiti, colour over, reconstruct and explode Goya’s *Disasters*, their lines do not adorn, efface or deface, but re-signify the image, literally bringing them to the fore, that is, back to the attention of our time, culture and society. Michael Landy’s re-enactments of stories of martyrdom produce a critique of representation in its making, as they perform selections and translations from medium to medium. It is in the passages of its process that the possibilities of collage are jolted out of the bi-dimensional and violently enacted by sudden movements in space, but it is the collage itself that both represents and creates the conditions for the project, defining the tension that will then spring the *Saints* machines into action.

The violence performed in Hausmann’s self portrait is not that of the city on the individual, but the screamed reaction to it of the fragmented metropolitan being, who is both vomiting and eaten

up by the loud alphabet of modern media. Space is no longer defined by bodies, or indeed by images or texts, but occupied by their fragments.

Across time and techniques, what crucially characterizes these works is that it becomes impossible in them to separate the medium from the content. The intrinsic criticality of the medium is rendered explicit by the violence of the content – those crucial moments of extreme behaviours, horror, destruction and pain. Having to cope with decisions on what and how can be represented, the production of the image of acts of violence pushes representation to its very limits and beyond, in fact reinventing the medium. Representing the unrepresentable, and finding ways to do it, becomes an interrogation of the nature and the possibilities of representation that instigates its reinvention.

What emerges from these paroxysmal examples is the need to redefine the medium in response to the changes of its subject. The representation of violence reveals both the insufficiency of established media and the violence that representation performs, each time, on itself and on its object.

In architecture this means that a representation of architecture can never be a representation of ‘only’ architecture, and must always include its relations or the possibility thereof. In other words, a drawing of architecture can never be ‘only’ a drawing. It is the drawing reconsidered and reinvented as a complex palimpsest for three- and four-dimensional developments and for sets of relations beyond the limits of the architectural object that can convey the spatiality and the experience of architecture.

The examples considered here experiment with forms of representation that challenge the integrity of the body, both architectural and human, in a progression where the technical materiality of the drawn line gradually dissolves to access three-dimensional space and movement, to eventually return to a bi-dimensional form that uses but also breaks apart the relationality of collage. Violence, they show, is intrinsic to the techniques of representation and needs to be enacted – performed, rather than represented – by the medium, in a dynamic process of self-reinvention.³⁴ It is in these cases that the material line becomes also critical.

Figures

Fig. 1. Albrecht Dürer. The Revelation of St John: The Four Riders of the Apocalypse, 1497-98.

(Source: Staatliche Kunsthalle, Karlsruhe. Wikimedia commons. http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:Durer_Revelation_Fo ur_Riders.jpg. Accessed 02.02.2011)

Fig. 2. Giovanni Battista Tiepolo. 'Pulcinella gives counsel', Scherzi di Fantasia, c. 1743-57.

(Source: Art Gallery of South Australia. Wikimedia commons. http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Giambattista_Tiepolo_-_Punchinello_gives_counsel_-_from_the_series_%27Scherzi_di_Fantasia%27_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg. Accessed 02.02.2011)

Fig. 3. Giovanni Battista Piranesi. Capricci or Grotteschi, 1744-47. Opere Varie, 1750 (second edition).

(Source: University of Tokyo. http://www.picture.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp:8080/e_piranesi.html. Accessed 02.02.2011)

Fig. 4. Giovanni Battista Piranesi. Carceri d'Invenzione, 1761. Plate VI.

(Source: Los Angeles County Museum. Wikimedia commons. http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Smoking_Fire_LA_CMA_46.27.6.jpg. Accessed 02.02.2011)

Fig. 5. Francisco Goya, Los Desastres de la Guerra, 1810-20. Plate 39, 'Great deeds! Against the dead!'

(Source: Arno Schmidt Reference Library. Wikimedia commons. [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Goya-Guerra_\(39\).jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Goya-Guerra_(39).jpg). Accessed 02.02.2011)

Fig. 6. Francisco Goya, Los Desastres de la Guerra, 1810-20. Plate 1, 'Dire Forebodings of What is to Come'.

(Source: Museo del Prado. Wikimedia commons. http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Prado_-_Los_Desastres_de_la_Guerra_-_No._01_-_Tristes_presentimientos_de_lo_que_ha_de_acontecer.jpg. Accessed 02.02.2011)

Fig. 7. Michael Landy, Saints Alive. Multi-Saint, 2013.

(Source: the artist and Thomas Dane Gallery, London)

Fig. 8. Michael Landy, Saints Alive. Penitence Machine (Saint Jerome), 2012.

(Source: the artist and Thomas Dane Gallery, London)

Fig. 9. Manfredo Tafuri, *La sfera e il labirinto*. Avanguardie e architettura da Piranesi agli anni '70, Turin: Einaudi, 1980. Book jacket.

(Source: the author, courtesy of Einaudi Editore, Turin)

¹ I have performed a systematic analysis of this in Teresa Stoppani, 'Material and Critical: Piranesi's Erasures', in

Ivana Wingham (ed.), *Mobility of the Line. Art, Architecture, Design*, Basel: Birkhäuser, pp. 234-246.

² This is explained by Erwin Panofsky in his book *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer* [1943] (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005). On the *Apocalypse* see pages 51-59.

³ Dürer 'wanted to bring out a book containing the complete text and, at the same time, a continuous yet brief series of pictures neither interrupted by text, nor inserted in the text, nor, of course, interspersed with text. He therefore reserved the front of his huge pages for woodcuts free from inscriptions and printed the text on the back.' Panofsky, *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer*, 51.

⁴ Dürer wanted the reader to 'absorb the whole text and the whole sequence of pictures as two self-contained and continuous versions of the same narrative. To achieve this end, Dürer applied two principles: concentration and dramatization.' Panofsky, *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer*, 52.

⁵ Panofsky, *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer*, 58.

⁶ '[...] un'opera dove riappaiono figure che già abbiamo incontrato in quadri e affreschi, ma ora finalmente si ritrovano da sole, senza funzionalità cerimoniali e d'apparato: così nacquero gli *Scherzi*. In tutta la sua pittura, Tiepolo si faceva scortare da quella compagnia orientale ed extratemporale, pronta ad assumere tutti i ruoli, dall'antichità biblica e romana alla favola tassesca. Ma soltanto negli *Scherzi* quella compagnia è in libertà. Soltanto qui i personaggi ci lasciano spiare che cosa fanno quando stanno da soli.' Roberto Calasso, *Il rosa Tiepolo*, Milan: Adelphi, 2006, pp.107-8.

⁷ 'i *Capricci e gli Scherzi* di Tiepolo presupponevano che la successione temporale si fosse momentaneamente dissolta in una convivenza nella simultaneità.' Calasso, p. 110.

⁸ 'Come un *Capriccio* nel senso del Bellotto non è un luogo ma un convegno di luoghi, così un *Capriccio* nel senso di Tiepolo è un convegno di personaggi, portatori ciascuno di un'essenza ben distinta, che si combina e varia in pose e scene esemplari. Il gioco è chiuso e isolato fin dall'inizio. Ciò che appare in un *Capriccio* non sarà mai uno scorcio casuale ma una delle innumerevoli sequenze in cui può presentarsi un mazzo di carte. Quanto più precisamente individuato è un personaggio (o un luogo), tanto più siamo certi che può esistere soltanto all'interno del gioco. Ciascuno dei ventitré *Scherzi* di Tiepolo è una configurazione del gioco. Non sappiamo quante altre si sarebbero dovute aggiungere per tornare alla prima. Eppure è netta la sensazione della periodicità e circolarità della sequenza.' Calasso, p. 109, my translation.

⁹ The notion of the *proper* in architecture is discussed by Catherine Ingraham in her book *Architecture and the Burdens of Linearity*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998.

¹⁰ Roberto Calasso reads in Piranesi's *Capricci* an echo of the older Venetian master Tiepolo, whose works Piranesi knew well. For Calasso Piranesi's *Grotteschi* (the other title for his *Capricci*) are 'una versione dilatata, infoltita, rigoglio amazzonico di vegetazione e rottami antichi' (an enlarged, thickened version [of Tiepolo's], an Amazonian luxuriance of vegetation and ancient wreckage), Calasso, p. 102, my translation.

¹¹ Giulio Carlo Argan has observed that for Piranesi 'the straightforward functionality of ancient buildings, the structural purity of the Greek temples [are] mere conjectures, and the functions and the life of the past are lost forever. Antiquity is what we see in the ruins, in the weathered fragments, in the capitals, in the surviving friezes. They move us because they are the traces of a history that has completed its cycle and is now over: by enveloping them with creepers or by crumbling them with sun and water, nature has claimed them back and assimilated them. We can only see these things as they are, ruined and faintly reanimated by the light. Antiquity can regain meaning not through theory, but through the visual documentation and through imagination [...] history can be re-lived only through imagination.' Giulio Carlo Argan, *Storia dell'arte italiana, Volume 3, Il Cinquecento, il Seicento e il Settecento, dal Neoclassicismo al Futurismo*, Florence: Sansoni, 1970, pp. 450-51. My translation.

¹² I have discussed the idea of *incorporation* in Piranesi's *Carceri* in Teresa Stoppani, 'Voyaging in Piranesi's Space. A contemporary re-reading of the beginnings of modernity, *Haecceity Papers*, Vol. 1 No. 2, 2006 'What Now Architecture?', Sydney: Haecceity Inc. and Sydney University Press.

¹³ The beings that inhabit the *Capricci* 'are a fantastic return of architecture to nature: not in the form of a taking over by vegetation, nor in form of the appropriation of the spaces by new improper or unplanned uses, but as a reversal of architecture to the essence of its pre-formed matter.' [...] The presence of these creatures allows for a reading of the "architecture of the ruin" as an architecture of becoming: an architecture in which and of which the form is not finally defined, an architecture that not only tolerates change but operates with change, and is able to function beyond form, working on its materiality, on the properties – both potentials and failures – of its

materials.’ This ‘is at the basis of Piranesi’s dynamic and critical relationship with the language of classical architecture: the incompleteness or the failing of the ruin is not simply the witness of a past that must undergo antiquarian restoration, intended as reconstitution of a broken whole; nor is the fragment a relic to be isolated, recontextualized and venerated as new whole. The broken piece, the fragment, the incompleteness of the ruin [...] suggests [...] a new project of architecture that, having rejected the uniqueness and singularity of its origin, is by definition multiple and open.’ Stoppani, ‘Voyaging in Piranesi’s Space’, 48-50.

¹⁴ I have discussed Canaletto’s representation of Venice in the *capricci* in relation to the dynamic and material making of Venice in Teresa Stoppani, *Paradigm Islands: Manhattan and Venice. Discourses on Architecture and the City*, Abingdon, Oxford: Routledge, 2010, pp. 92-96 and 190-192.

¹⁵ ‘L’eccidio si compie nell’alone giallo di un’enorme lanterna cubica [...] “la luce della storia” [...] Tra un istante quegli uomini vivi saranno morti come gli altri, caduti un istante prima e già disfatti nell’orrenda poltiglia di fango e di sangue. Intanto la città dorme.’ Giulio Carlo Argan, *L’Arte Moderna 1770/1970*, Florence: Sansoni, 1970, p. 36, my translation.

¹⁶ Goya changed the title of the series from the original *Fatal consequences of the bloody war in Spain with Bonaparte* to the later *The Disasters of War*, thus reframing his work as a universal message.

¹⁷ The images produce a distance from the specifics of the events, obliterating geographical and architectural backgrounds through the technique of the aquatint. Goya measures the different times and paces of the events he portrays, in an episodic chronicle of pain that includes not only the sudden explosions of violence, rape and murder, but also the documentation of the dire consequences and of the slow death produced by the after-war period.

¹⁸ The captions are laconic remarks that echo and reinforce what the images already say. Direct and effective, for Juliet Wilson-Bareau they are ‘the sort of outraged, despairing, or ironic comments that the artist might have made as he watched a friend turn the pages of his prints.’ J. Wilson-Bareau, ‘Goya: The Disasters of War’. In: *Disasters of War. Callot, Goya, Dix*, London and Manchester: The South Bank Centre and Cornerhouse Publications, 1998, p. 37.

¹⁹ J. Wilson-Bareau, 29.

²⁰ For example, in Plate 7, ‘What Courage!’ (*Que valor!*) the white field of the woman’s dress thrusts her to the fore of the image in a spark of sudden action - an attempt to gain control over fate?

²¹ See Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1995.

²² In Goya’s images ‘naked torsos and limbs that evoke antique marble fragments [...] are combined with blasted trees’, J. Wilson-Bareau, ‘Goya: The Disasters of War’, 37.

²³ In the *Saints Alive* catalogue interview Landy observes that in the National Gallery collection ‘quite a number of things I’m working with are fragments of other things anyway, and I’ve kind of fragmented the collection for my own ends, really’. Michael Landy, *Saints Alive*, London: National Gallery Company, 2013, p. 36.

²⁴ *Michael Landy: Saints Alive*, exhibition at the National Gallery, London, 23 May – 24 November 2013.

²⁵ The works referred to are, in order: *Saint Apollonia* (2013); *Doubting Thomas* (2013); *Spin the Saint Catherine wheel and win the crown of martyrdom* (2013); *Saint Francis lucky dip* (2013); *Saint Jerome* (2012).

²⁶ Michael Landy is fascinated by the kinetic art of Swiss painter and sculptor Jean Tinguely (1925-1991). ‘Tinguely’s machines – funny, subversive and cobbled together from junk – were deliberately dysfunctional, with a subtle social critique underlying their apparent whimsicality. His most celebrated productions included [...] an auto-destructive machine called *Homage to New York*, made at MoMA in New York in 1960, that failed to destroy itself as planned and then burst into flames before being extinguished by the New York Fire Department.’ Colin Wiggins, *Saints Alive. Michael Landy in the National Gallery*, in Michael Landy, *Saints Alive*, London: National Gallery Company, 2013, pp. 15-34; quote from p. 27.

²⁷ For instance, in *Christ driving the traders from the Temple (after El Greco)* (2010), and in *Lamentation over the body of Christ (after Dosso Dossi)* (2011).

²⁸ ‘This [the drawings] is where all the ideas for the sculptures originated from really. I suppose what I’m really doing – taking body parts from the paintings in the Gallery and kind of putting them back together again – is not unlike what happened to saints’ bodies in the past.’ Michael Landy in conversation with Richard Cork, in *Saints Alive*, pp. 36-52; quote from p. 52.

²⁹ ‘Medium’ is intended here not as the specificity of a physical substance or material support, but, as suggested by Rosalind Krauss, as a set of contextualized ‘rules of the guilds’ (p. 7), a Foucauldian ‘discursive unity’ (p. 16), ‘a logic rather than a form of matter’ (p. 17), a “technical support” (p. 16) rather than a material support. (Rosalind E. Krauss, *Under Blue Cup*, Cambridge MA and London: The MIT Press, 2011.) In *Under Blue Cup* Krauss opposes the notion of the ‘post-medium condition’ in contemporary art, defending the specificity of the medium as a technical support and a set of rules whose specificity and recursivity activate memory, that is, ‘the power of the medium to hold the efforts of the forebears of a specific genre in reserve for the present.’ (p. 127).

³⁰ Manfredo Tafuri, *The Sphere and the Labyrinth. Avant-Gardes and Architecture from Piranesi to the 1970s*, Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1987.

³¹ Tafuri concentrates on Piranesi's most experimental works, those of formal and spatial research, such as the *Carceri* (1749-50 and 1761), the *Ampio e Magnifico Collegio* (1752?), and the *Campo Marzio dell'Antica Roma* (1762), which opens a dangerous door into the unknown of an architecture without rules and the dissolution of the city into a space of unprecedented fragmentation and congestion.

³² This is the incipit of Tafuri's seminal book *Architecture and Utopia. Design and Capitalist Development* (1973) (Cambridge MA and London: The MIT Press, 1976), which defined and anticipated many of the themes then developed in *The Sphere and the Labyrinth* (1980). 'To ward off anguish by understanding and absorbing its causes would seem to be one of the principal ethical exigencies of bourgeois art. It matters little if the conflict, contradictions, and lacerations that generate this anguish are temporarily reconciled by means of a complex mechanism, or if, through contemplative sublimation, catharsis is achieved. [...] In this tragic confrontation it is impossible not to perpetuate the experience of shock. The shock derived from the experience of the metropolis [...] is in itself a way of rendering anguish "active".' (p.1)

³³ Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia*, p. 1.

³⁴ Krauss's *Under Blue Cup* explores the works of contemporary artists 'who discover the conventions of a new technical support' and are therefore "'inventing" their medium' (p. 19). The examples that I consider here, stretching back in time to the 15th century and reaching the present, show that, even before the modern definition of the specificity and recursivity of the medium and the its contemporary dismissal, artists had been exploring the possibility of their medium as a technical support and a set of rules beyond material definitions, triggered and technically and intellectually provoked by the extreme nature of their subject. It is in these cases that the material line is also critical.