

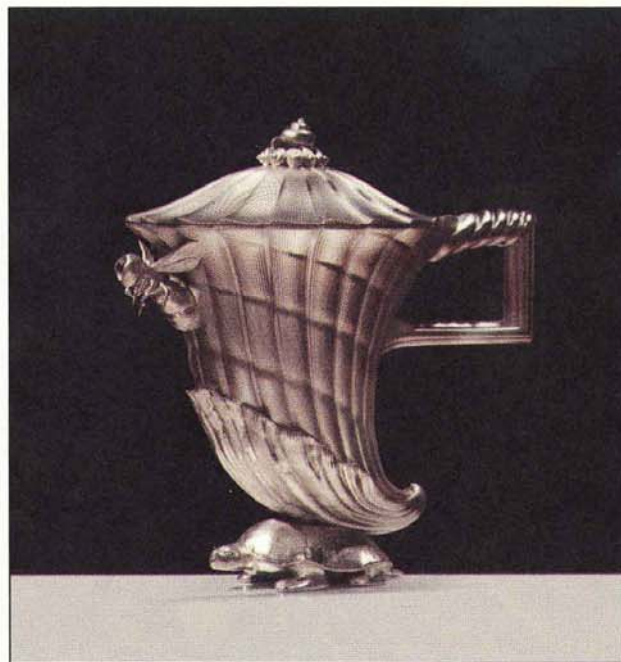
DESIGN

London. Like most relationships, that of Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720-78) and John Soane (1753-1837) was complicated. It is thought that shortly before his death, Piranesi encouraged the young Soane to visit the ancient temples at Paestum, a trip that would eventually have a marked effect on the British architect's designs. But Soane also realised that Piranesi's purported reconstructions of antique buildings bore little relation to reality.

"There's a tension between Soane and Piranesi," says Jerzy Kierkuc-Bielinski, a curator at the Sir John Soane's Museum. "As much as Soane takes [certain aspects from Piranesi], he realised that he isn't archaeologically correct all the time. In Soane's lectures to his students he actually told them to approach Piranesi with caution."

Approach with caution

Nevertheless, Piranesi's loose handling of the truth had an indelible effect on Soane's architecture. "Diverse Maniere: Piranesi, Fantasy and Excess", which opens at the Sir John Soane's Museum this month, explores this link between the architects through two of Piranesi's publications, *Diversi Manieri*, 1769, and *Vasi, Candelabri, Cippi, Sarcofagi*, 1778, and 3D prints of designs from these publications that were never realised in Piranesi's lifetime. (The Sir John Soane's Museum, formerly the architect's home, holds the UK's largest collection of Piranesi's graphic work, including 15 drawings from his last cycle on the ancient site of Paestum.) Kierkuc-Bielinski says: "What Soane learns from Piranesi



A print of a print

The influence of Piranesi's idea of fantasy on John Soane's designs

is to use Classical architecture as a launchpad and to create a dramatic contrast between light and shadow." Within the museum, the dome area and sepulchral crypt are "directly analogous" to Piranesi's celebrated *Carceri* etchings of fantasy prisons from 1745. "Here, Soane has created a similar, well-like space articulated by arches in which he really manipulates, to its

fullest extent, the possibilities of dramatic chiaroscuro. The whole space is adorned with casts after antique fragments, including a small number that we can identify as coming from the workshop of Piranesi, where he restored antiquities for the Grand Tour market."

The eight 3D-printed objects in the show were created by Madrid-based Factum Arte for an exceptional exhibi-

tion at the Fondazione Giorgio Cini in 2011. Highlights include a coffee pot cast in silver, for which a live tortoise was scanned (but not harmed) and a bronze helix tripod. The pieces are shown with a Factum Arte film that brings Piranesi's *Carceri* to life. "By placing these extraordinary objects within Soane's historic interiors and alongside his arrangements of sculptural fragments, which owe so much to Piranesi, I hope the link forged by the idea of not emulating the antique past but using it in an imaginative way to create something vibrant and contemporary will be made evident to visitors to the show," Kierkuc-Bielinski says.

Julia Michalska

• *Diverse Maniere: Piranesi, Fantasy and Excess*, Sir John Soane's Museum, London, 7 March-31 May

Kwang Young Chun

New Work

A coffee pot depicted in a print by Piranesi is recreated in three dimensions by Factum Arte using STL digital technology