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A Constructive and Speculative Case of Bullshit Art: the Etchings of G.B. Piranesi

Abstract

This article analyzes the constructive and speculative forms of bullshitting in the art field through the etchings of G. B. Piranesi. In reviewing the historical context and the allegorical and technical aspects of his etchings compared to H. Frankfurt's definition of bullshit, the study contends these artworks' propositional and unique rhetorical languages. Consequently, it explores a potential form of bullshit art that is manipulative and fictional but also constructively critical.

Introduction

Art can be ignorant, deceptive, and even manipulative at times. Even so, it can use these qualities for good, expressing ideas in unique ways that other disciplines cannot. In search of that, this article reassesses the artworks of Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720–1778) to discuss an alternative path of research for bullshit art studies, revealing a speculative approach to truthfulness as an ideal itself. This 18th-century artist's etchings are analogous to bullshit art as they deliberately deny correspondence to truth to express the artist's ideology. Not only that, these artworks broaden current bullshit art studies by becoming idiosyncratic rhetorical devices. Piranesi references age-old themes in the arts, such as fiction, imitation, representation, meaning, and some of the fundamental anxieties of philosophy, such as under-

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standing truth, knowledge, and objectivity. Consequently, he provides a reference point for further discussion on the possibility of an art that is unconcerned with the truth yet still meaningful.

Art, architecture, and all other fields linked with aesthetics have always been on the verge of meaninglessness, in which Piranesi's etchings are an excellent example. Many great scholars have taken an interest in his works of art—Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717–1768), Julien-David Le Roy (1724–1803), John Wilton-Ely (1937–), or Manfredo Tafuri (1935–1994), to name a few. But at the same time, these artworks were commonly considered fantasies, irrational and romantic representations. After Rudolf Wittkower (1901–1971), Piranesi ceased to be discussed as a romantic and irrational illustrator of Rome (van Eck 2015, para. 1), and scholarly interest gained new momentum. More recently, Piranesi's etchings have again found their place in the architectural debates with Pier Vittorio Aureli's writings. He shed light on the ideological motifs of the works that led Piranesi to develop such a rhetorical use of aesthetic language, and even more importantly, argues that these etchings open up new possibilities for disciplinary progress. Accordingly, his inquiry is part of the larger framework in which bullshit thinking, with utopian, visionary, metaphorical, and allegorical methods, is the essence of progressive culture in the aesthetic disciplines.

On the other hand, despite its natural incorporation with aesthetic disciplines, the bullshit notion grew into an established field of research after Harry Frankfurt's canonical 1986 essay, "On Bullshit," and later diverged into various research paths. The original motive of Frankfurt's essay was to initiate a theory of bullshit, find a pattern in its use in everyday life, and clarify its difference from lying. Frankfurt defines the term bullshit in its briefest form, which stands for speech careless about truthfulness and is concerned only about creating an image of the speaker in the recipient's mind. He writes that "bullshit is a greater enemy of the truth than lies are" (2005, 61). Although Frankfurt's study remained an essential reference point in the field, Cohen opposed Frankfurt's ideas of bullshit as a study of everyday life by calling his approach a study of academic works (2002, 9). Parallel to Cohen, a noticeable amount of people research bullshit in the context of bias, fakery, and misinformation in academic writing, such as the work of Eubanks and Schaeffer (2008). Furthermore, apart from Cohen, when discussing within the domains of other disciplines, David Graeber utilized bullshit not as the object of concern but a borrowed term to discuss what he calls bullshit jobs with an economic and political viewpoint (Graeber 2013). Overall, bullshit appears as a strongly variant concept, even adaptable to fit into the contexts of other disciplines.

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The bullshit art theory is similarly a very diverse yet still underdeveloped field of study in which a particular approach seems to be the most promising: the pseudo-profound bullshit art. The 2019 essay, "Bullshit makes art grow profounder," (Turpin et al. 2019), as well as Vladimir Alexeev's writings (2020), tackle the pseudo-profound bullshit art disguised as a meaningful garment. Furthermore, despite its resemblance to deception and trickery, the concept is not necessarily a negative occurrence (Turpin et al. 2019, 659). If an artwork bullshits for a reason other than deception or misinformation, it could have positive implications. Similarly, bullshitting is one of the pillars of art, allowing it to push the limits of truthfulness and authenticity, and as a result, grow into a more sophisticated discipline.

From that standpoint, this article aims to review the bullshitting phenomenon in Piranesi's etchings which express his ideology against 18th-century Rome's aesthetic and historical debates. The study reviews the historical context that gave birth to Piranesi's etchings and then discusses why and how these artworks negotiate real and fictional, objective and subjective, scientific and ideological, and lastly, truthful and deceptive. Thereupon, it scrutinizes these artworks' main correspondences and contradictions with Frankfurt's inspirational approach to truth. Finally, it arrives at a discussion on the possibility of a bullshit art that is capable of being constructive, and at the same time, critical of the established norms on the concepts of truth, objectivity, and knowledge.

1. Bullshit as a Distinct Rhetorical Approach in Arts

Bullshit brings to art not its deception but its great apprehension of somehow becoming involved with reality. Conventionally, art is not supposed to be authentic or accurate; these are not criteria that define the quality of artworks (Bertinetto 2020, 1). Bullshit, on the other hand, aims not to lose contact with reality so that it can be critical about it. Therefore, it appears as a constructive activity that is assertive and interpretative in unique ways yet non-deceptive.

This constructiveness and non-deception often distinguish the concept of bullshit from other rhetorical methods, particularly the closest one, allegory. While an allegorical artwork would aim to refer to a hidden another, bullshit artworks, as in Piranesi, are always concerned with the existent. They often use allegories to strengthen the rhetoric function, but also they seek to reach back to the real with a particular mode of criticality, fundamentally differing from those of allegorical works. The bullshit phenomenon explains this

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mode of oscillation between the existent and the other, truth and lie, mean-ingful and nonsense, expressive and deceptive, to achieve a certain degree of criticality that does not exist in other types of rhetoric.

This category of rhetoric may be explored more specifically, in light of Frankfurt's definitions (2005), based on its underlying motives and attitude towards truth. First of all, the motivation for bullshitting is not to give a false picture about the object of speech but rather to convey an impression about the subject's viewpoint. As a result, it is entirely subjective and makes no claims of truthfulness. Moreover, the speaker can bullshit about a thing or a topic without grasping or knowing its truth. Indeed, not caring about the truth is another crucial characteristic of bullshitting. Accordingly, the overall act of bullshitting can be summed as being subject-oriented, pretentious, non-deceptive, and disinterested in the truth.

The link between Piranesi's artworks and bullshit art is precisely in this subject-oriented, disinterestedness in the truth, as well as the distinctive approach to authenticity that these aspects provide. The bullshitting act is never separated from reality but instead constructs an argument on that, where the foundation of speech is entrenched on the real, but the output is speculative. Due to its position in-between the real and unreal, these art-works can be referred to as surreal suggestively.[1] For instance, *Piranesi's works* are commented on by Jennifer Bloomer to recall the surrealist Andre Bréton's poem-object, as they "juxtapose real and unreal, remembered known and imagined unknown, in an irritating, provocative manner" (1993, 71). In Piranesi's etchings, there is a certain level of engagement with the context of 18th-century Rome, a search for authenticity, followed by a propo-sitional language, which is the basis for identifying the relationship between Piranesi's artworks and the bullshit concept.

2. Piranesi and the Context of 18th-Century Rome

The artistic language of Piranesi evolved in response to the context of 18th-century Rome to criticize and propose alternatives. More particularly, his vision matured with the emerging sciences, their contradiction with the antiquarian practice of Humanism, and its socio-political consequences. The

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[1] Surreal in this context is used without reference to the historical movement of surre-alism. It is used in the etymological sense, where "sur-" stands for "super-" (Onions 1966, 888), to emphasize that Piranesi's artworks do not just create imaginary settings, but rather scenes that transcend reality while remaining in some manner connected to it. In short, surreal refers to an in-between state.

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Roman ruins were at the height of their political popularity, and archeology was among the most influential and new practices. In the first decades of the 18th century, there were ongoing excavations of antiquity, namely Pompeii and Herculaneum (Moorman 2018, 1). Various partisans politicized these rediscoveries of Roman ruins to justify their ideological viewpoints on the Roman Empire and their capital city. Shortly after the turn of the century, the remains were no longer "old-fashioned elements of the landscape" but "specific and autonomous entities in their own right, characterised by a powerful and evocative potential" (Lo Conte 2015, 80). Accordingly, Piranesi's attitude was motivated not only through the urban concerns of the ruins but also their utilization by people for the justification of ideologies.

Many people from different backgrounds were involved in the debates about the ruins. Artists were joined by archeologists, scientists, politicians, and other professions. Architect F. Juvarra, archeologist F. Nardini, philosopher F. Bianchini, and engraver G. Vasi are exemplary figures from the interdisciplinary society in which Piranesi was involved. Through this diversity, the ruins' visual representation went far beyond the self-contained discipline of the arts. The ruins' representation gained meanings and functions other than documentation. They became forms of reminiscing and commemorating the past with political motives behind them.

Pier Aureli comprehensively examines Piranesi's works' historical and political context (2011, 85-140). He notes that when Piranesi arrived in Rome at a young age in 1740, he encountered a city that had experienced years of instability since the fall of the Roman Empire. The excavations of the ruins were one of the many layers of chaos. It was as much about symbolic retrieval as the archeological recovery of the Roman Empire. On one side, the papal authorities viewed the image of the Romans as a foundation upon which they could build their monarchy; on the other side, the ruins were also crucial for representing a secular governmental structure. The longer the ruins were the focus of attention, the more they became politicized by various ideological groups.

The political implications of the Roman Empire's legacy reached their climax in the 18th century, but the debates originated earlier. The appreciation of antiquities emerged along with Renaissance humanism in the 14th and 15th centuries (Lo Conte 2015, 81). Aureli writes that Rome continually depopulated enough to leave most of the ruins scattered in open, empty spaces in this period (2011, 85-140). As this shows, the political upheaval and the city were inseparable. Aureli observes that only after the triumph of the ecclesiastical authorities over the feudal powers did the upheaval and

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urban shrinkage period end. By the 16th century, the emerging Baroque Rome had gained a denser urban fabric. However, the peace was short-lived, and the Thirty Years War weakened the church authorities and retriggered a decline. The ruins standing in rural landscapes remained as a critical reference for the possibility of reconstructing the Roman legacy.

Piranesi developed his artistic language as part of this historical discourse on antiquity, and his city portraits were no less political than other contemporary works. On the other hand, they also stand out from the rest because he criticizes both the antiquarian and scientific knowledge of the 18th century. The Renaissance antiquarian practice was based on second-hand knowledge from ancient sources and remains. As Aureli observes, they included myths and legends (2011, 104). As a response, the enlightenment mentality proposed systematic and scientific reconstructions of the city free of symbolism and allegory. Piranesi did not rely on either side but combined the practical experience of the city with its antiquarian images. He remained skeptical of the search for objective knowledge free of ideological bias. He achieved an aesthetic language that politicized Roman ruins to engage with the socio-cultural conditions of the city uniquely.

In short, Piranesi's etchings exclusively represented an ideological stance toward the existing atmosphere of the city. Although the antiquarian and Enlightenment practices were opposing philosophies, both intended to induce a totalitarian approach to the city. Aureli notes that the 18th-century progressive culture only substituted ancient myth with another myth, namely "the idea of producing knowledge via a rigorous empirical method liberated from ideological preconceptions" (2011, 104). As 18th-century thought failed to produce pure objectivity, it also attempted to change the chaotic state of a city in favor of subjective ideas. Aware of this, Piranesi's etchings remain speculative and critical. Each of his etchings adds to a larger discourse on the city's potential but never claims to objectively reproduce the existing. As a result, he transforms representations into propositions on the city.

3. The Propositional Etchings of Piranesi

Piranesi's etchings create collages of the 18th century and ancient Rome, which become propositions about the city, politics, and philosophy. Despite the widespread belief that his etchings are fantasy spaces with no embedded meaning, they are being discussed more and more as propositions about the image of Rome. An early example of Piranesi's association with fantasy and

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irrationality is seen in 1822 when the Italian bibliographer Bartolomeo Gamba (1766–1841) comments on the artist's scholarship with suspicion, relating his public esteem to the "picturesque impact" and "optical illusion" of the etchings (Kirk 2006, 251). Shortly after, Filippo De Boni (1816–1870) speaks plaintively of the negative criticisms: "He has been faulted for having sometimes substituted the dreams of his imagination in the restoration of ancient things" (Kirk 2006, 252).

Nevertheless, Piranesi's artworks began finding a more stable ground in academia with the contributions of Winckelmann and Le Roy in the 18th century and significantly with Wittkower's writings in the 20th century. Consequently, the studies in recent years tend not to examine the etchings as irrational fantasies but rather as allegories, texts, interpretations, responses, and other similar terms. The etchings are studied more for their assertive, or to say, propositional qualities toward the aesthetic and historical disputes of the 18th century.

In recent scholarship, Jennifer Bloomer examines the underlying meaning of Piranesi's works, likening them to "texts" comprehensible without any prior knowledge of the artist's background, context, or other external references—they are "stripped of the conventional contextual supports of 'truth'" (1993, 7). In her view, similar to a text, Piranesi weaves fragments from reality and history, and he produces narratives whose meaning should be sought in them, not in their contextuality. For instance, Piranesi's systematic collaging is apparent in the etching *Il Campo Marzio dell' Antica Roma*, which, according to Bloomer, "anticipates the poem-object of Andre Bréton, which juxtapose real and unreal, remembered known and imagined unknown, in an irritating, provocative manner" (1993, 71). Here, Piranesi shatters the unity of Rome in terms of its "history and geography, time and place," and consequently, provokes a debate on Rome's real potential, its form, and origin (Bloomer 1993, 70). Therefore, the etchings become carefully woven self-contained texts with embedded ideological messages.

With a parallel approach to Bloomer, Aureli puts the drawing *Il Campo Marzio* under the microscope by a comparative analysis with Giambattista Nolli's map *Nuova Pianta di Roma* (2011). Nolli constitutes an excellent example of the Enlightenment mentality and archeology with the map *Nuova Pianta di Roma*, trying to turn mapping into science by freeing it from symbolism (Aureli 2011, 105). However, the map was still subject to the political ambitions of the authorities as a means of countering the city's ongoing upheaval. Nolli's comprehensive plan drawing was associated with the development of a central authority in Rome that aims to end the chaos. The map

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was representing a totalized and fixed image of the city in a single in-depth drawing. It was not to be more critical and speculative about the city. At this point, Piranesi's map refutes Nolli's political and aesthetic ambitions as he draws layers of figures not to infer a stable form of the city but to create a collision that triggers further actions to rethink the city's potential. He embodies no claim to objectivity or formalism but builds an "ideological" reading of the city (Aureli 2011, 114). Piranesi does not undertake the drawing as a scientific representation based on a direct correspondence with facts and evidence. Instead, he transforms Nolli's reliance on facts into the provocative language of "conjectures, assertions, decisions" (Aureli 2011, 115).

After all, Bloomer and Aureli agree on the propositional character of Piranesi's *Il Campo Marzio* etching. His artworks were ideological narratives against the specific climate of 18th-century Rome. Its rhetorical language develops narratives fusing the real and the fictional, the scientific and the ideological, and thus, the objective with the subjective. Far from irrationality, Piranesi creates surreal scenes woven with speculative and critical glasses against the period's prevailing ideologies, their politicization of Rome, and their reasoning mechanisms.

4. The Technical Method of Propositional Art

Given the historical setting and underlying motivations, the etchings are allegorical representations of the city but are also supported by a unique technical process. It is not easy even to consider the relationship between the technical and allegorical aspects of representation separately. Even if this study focuses on the allegorical meanings of the engraving, opposing the reduction of the works to mere technical manipulations, it is still not easy to consider the allegorical aspects of representation separately from the technical. Accordingly, although Teresa Stoppani's response to the doubters of the etchings is of great importance—"Piranesi's documentation of monuments, ruins and details is never merely technical, visual and graphic, but always offers a critical commentary on the given context" (2013, para. 2); it is equally important to note that the technique is what constitutes the allegorical. Thus, Piranesi uses a unique technique of perspective along with various other supporting elements to create tension between the existing and the represented, to create a "critical commentary." The digital superimpositions of the Vedutes with actual photographs show the spatial and proportional manipulations of Piranesi. Langenbach demonstrates these deflections on the etchings of *The Augustinian Firewall* (2008, 7) and *The Terme*

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Grande in Hadrian's Villa (2008, 3). Piranesi intentionally embodies such a perspectival play to advance the rhetorical success of his etchings because he is concerned with producing rhetorical artworks, not alternative realities. Accordingly, he undertakes a systematic creative process consisting of technical manipulative procedures harmonious with allegorical interpretations.

Perspective is an age-old technique of expressing ideologies through art, and Piranesi's artworks maintain this condition. He learned the perspective method from Carlo Zucchi and trained with the Valeriani family of stage designers (Rapp 2008, 705). Nevertheless, even though he adopts the perspectival technique, he breaks down certain aspects of perspective to develop his unique technique. Although linear perspective was allegedly developed as a mathematical and objective reconstruction of space, Piranesi used it to express his subjective and ideological representations of the city, establishing a rhetorical language. According to Langenbach (2008) and Rapp's (2008) deconstructions of the etchings, Piranesi depicts spaces and masses with multiple vanishing points merging into a single pictorial body. The scenes can be reconstructed, or rather imitated, by digitally assembling several photographs. For example, Langenbach reproduces the etching of Hadrian's Villa by digitally superimposing six individual images taken with a 19 mm wide-angle lens (2008, 3). With these scenes, which he weaves together rationally, Piranesi emphasizes the act of narration, not how things look like in everyday life, inviting the audience to perceive the ancient remains differently, "as a memory of their own history and not an outcome of an idealized dream" (Lo Conte 2015, 85).

To elaborate the manipulative process and bring his vision to life, Piranesi plays with the actual city "with the clinical precision of a surgeon" (Lo Conte 2015, 90). Teresa Stoppani refers to these as "erasures' (2013), and they can even be discussed as critical visual filters. The ruins in his etchings show signs of decadence and stand out from the urban texture by material, texture, size, proportion. The decaying exposes their structural parts, plants blend in with the artificial structures, and the rough surfaces contrast sharply with the smooth surfaces of the new structures. He then finishes these touches by removing any unauthentic markings on the ruins. Compared to the other paintings from Baroque Rome, the ruins do not blend in the landscape as in Claude Lorrain's depictions, nor appear in good shape as in the works of the 18th-century archeologists, but stand out as deteriorated traces of the past.

To sum up, Piranesi interweaves technical and allegorical processes with a subtle criticality. The multi-perspective technique allows him to highlight the subjectivity of the spatial representations in accompaniment with

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his surgical moves. In discussing the meaning and purpose of the etchings, the technical aspects are not any less important than the allegories themselves; indeed, they are indivisible. Through his masterful use of techniques, Piranesi ultimately establishes the interpretative function of the artworks and constructs his statements about the socio-cultural state of the city.

5. Comparison to Frankfurt's Theory: An Alternative Case of Bullshitting

Piranesi's use of arts and aesthetics can exemplify and elucidate the bullshit concept and future discourses on truth, fiction, and subjectivity. In certain aspects, his artworks align with Frankfurt's theory but also contrast his inquiry's overall negative mood. The first parallelity is that the etchings are not meant to express the truth or tell a lie but to convey Piranesi's ideology, regardless of its veracity, fitting into Frankfurt's perspective. Furthermore, they relate to the more societal, everyday context usage of bullshit as a mode of speech than the context of the literary production of knowledge. However, they also contradict Frankfurt regarding the classification of bullshit as a negative term. Piranesi's etchings are not necessarily harmful or deceptive. Hence, a brief comparison and contrast to the theory of Frankfurt show the critical position and the potential of artworks in the bullshit debates, considering Aureli and Bloomer's analyses.

The principal symmetry in-between is how the artworks convey Piranesi's ideology without worrying about its veracity and correspondence to the city's reality. Jennifer Bloomer writes that the etchings are "isolatable entities stripped of conventional contextual supports of 'truth'" (Bloomer 1993, p.7). Thus, she addresses the readability of the etchings without foreknowledge. The etchings are stripped of such external bearers of truth; otherwise, the artworks would be only meaningful for a limited audience familiar with the city's history. By becoming independent of Rome, its ruins, and its socio-political problems, which are the potential contextual supports, Piranesi produces rhetorical artworks reaching any audience and resisting time. Thus, Piranesi himself says that he wants to preserve the ruins forever through his etchings (Langenbach 2008, 2). By archiving his ideological readings of the city through the etchings, he deliberately breaks off any reciprocity in-between. Piranesi never claims to represent the proper form of the city but gets influenced. As a result, he develops narratives that deliberately break away from the actuality of the city to be self-sufficient and assert themselves as more efficient rhetorical devices.

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Piranesi's strategy is also compatible with another definition of bullshitting: talking about something one does not truly grasp and not even caring to do so. This form of speech operates with the sole intention of expressing the speaker's primary intent. Frankfurt discusses this with an example, "I feel just like a dog that has been run over" (2005, 24). Here, the speaker does not emphasize how a dog particularly feels during such an event but only wants to indicate a painful feeling. If the speaker had a positive feeling but gave that answer, this would be lying. Piranesi's etchings are similar to this example, and Frankfurt's critical distinction between bullshit and lies helps to understand the position of Piranesi's etchings regarding truth. Piranesi is not worried about the truthfulness of his depictions—instead, he devises Rome as a symbolic reference to express his thoughts. Thus, there is no truth, no lie, only a proposition.

Furthermore, Frankfurt's discussion of bullshit emphasizes the speaker-listener relationship rather than the speech object. He explains that bullshit creates an "impression" of oneself (2005, 18). Likewise, Piranesi does not intend to misrepresent the existing Rome or create a false image in the minds of the perceivers. His only goal is to leave an "impression" of his attitude toward the debates on ruins, as he demonstrates his ideological viewpoints. Accordingly, Piranesi does not depict the ruins in his etchings to preserve them objectively; it was the ambition of other archeologists and artists who produced detailed representations in documentary forms to depict the real, but he produced a series of artworks to communicate with the perceivers and develop an impression. None of his artworks stand out as a masterpiece; instead, all of them are stepping stones for delivering Piranesi's ideology. By doing so, the etchings lose their individuality and transform into rhetorical devices for expressing Piranesi's ideas.

Additionally, in defining bullshit, Frankfurt speaks of a lack of correspondence between the objects of speech and reality (2005). Due to its irrelevance to truth, a bullshit does not necessarily create fiction or tell the truth but is in-between. In the same way, the etchings violate the conventional reciprocity with the represented city. They make references to ancient and 18th-century Rome but always end up in a surreal sphere. The city serves only as a point of reference and plays no role in the works' rhetoric. Therefore, the artworks do not intervene with or have no efficacy goals on the actual city.

In contrast to the parallelism in between, the etchings also contradict Frankfurt's approach because they are not negative occurrences but positive. In fact, as in the definition of pseudo-bullshit art, the etchings could be

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considered as positive implications of bullshit into everyday life, as they do not intend to deceive people but aim to benefit the whole through triggering a re-evaluation of the Roman ruins and the Roman legacy, their importance, and relevance to the present. Accordingly, bullshitting is a tool for Piranesi to achieve his goals, not to deceive people. He also presents his skepticism about the objectivity claims of Enlightenment thought and provides an implicit critique of the production of knowledge and treatment of truth.

This constructive yet speculative use of the etchings relates to bullshit studies and recalls further philosophical discussions on truth. Piranesi's speculation is never on the truthfulness of the city. His indifference to the truth of the city and history is the source of his association with bullshitting. Instead, he questions truth's feasibility. To challenge truth's conventional conception, Piranesi fuses the real with the fictive. It is worth recalling that: "Nietzsche does not criticize false claims to truth but truth in itself and as an ideal" (Deleuze 1983, 95). In the same way, as Nietzsche's philosophy does to truth, Piranesi turns the city, its ruins, and its origin into discursive objects. Spuybroek concludes on Piranesi's treatment of truth by saying: "Piranesi's archaeology has often been ridiculed as fantasy, but his quest was never one aimed at excavating or uncovering a hidden truth; on the contrary, it was a project of bringing things into the sunlight" (Spuybroek 2015, para. 12). Rethinking Nietzsche and Spuybroek's words from Frankfurt's perspective, Piranesi's approach is analogous to bullshit as it is unconcerned about revealing or hiding the truth but speculates by "bringing things into the sunlight."

On the whole, Piranesi develops a narrative process that utilizes the bullshitting phenomenon in parallel to Frankfurt's approach, except for its negativity. The contextual analysis of his works proves how much his works are embedded in their context. On the other hand, the reviews debating the meaning and purpose of the etchings, as Bloomer and Aureli, also prove how detached the works are from reality and how manipulative and ideological they are. The etchings are examples of bullshit primarily because they focus only on creating an impression of Piranesi in the audience and conveying his message, not emphasizing truthfulness. In conclusion, this makes Piranesi one of the early and notable bullshit artists in history with such positive effectiveness.

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Concluding Remarks on Bullshit Art

Piranesi's artworks illustrate the effective use of bullshit in arts. His etchings show that a lack of concern with truth is not necessarily harmful but may become a delicate reassessment of the established norms on truthfulness. Piranesi stands out from the overall 18th-century art scene due to his cynicism on truth and objectivity, and in doing so, he achieves devising his artworks for expressing his viewpoint, ultimately turning his art into a unique rhetorical tool. As a result, his works never become totally fictitious portrayals constructed upon allegories, but always embrace a type of rhetoric that only refers to the unreal to challenge the existent more critically. Consequently, he blurs the threshold of the truthful and fictional; and contributes extensively to the progressive cultures of the discipline and everyday life.

In more detail, Piranesi challenges the possibility of knowledge that is free of ideology and produces his own allegorical and propositional language. Piranesi does not depict truth but speculates on the city, its ruins, and its origin. Furthermore, his artworks do not seek an external support of truth and correspondence to reality. He realizes that speaking of truth is like creating a narration in which the artistic anxiety does not stem from misrepresenting the city but from failing to convey his ideology to the audience. In doing so, Piranesi privileges his audience, his message, and himself rather than the represented objects and the artwork itself. The aesthetics of Piranesi is no longer an engagement with reality but a medium for people to exchange opinions, beliefs, and ideologies. He masters copper-plate etchings to express his mindset and viewpoints to the audience and affect their perception of the city and its ruins. In consequence, his art consciously becomes the interplay of reality and his thoughts.

Piranesi's surreal approach fascinated scholars, although, for some people, the resultant artworks were simple fantasies. At first, he was approached cynically by academic authorities in the 18th and 19th centuries as Gamba and De Boni's writings document. Nevertheless, following significant contributions of various scholars, most lately Aureli's writings, highlighted the underlying motives and the significant outcomes of Piranesi's works concerning the artist's contributions into the disciplines of art, architecture, and their reflections on everyday life. Moreover, Bloomer's more conceptual analysis shows the allegorical and text-like structure behind the etchings. Together their works create a framework to understand how Piranesi, who is discussed as one of the earliest modern artists, masters a nonsense art, following his architectural and political ambitions. He uses the dimension of

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fictionality in companion with realism to speculate on the real essence of the city, its past, and most importantly, its future. In doing so, Piranesi still bridges many scholars from different fields of study, from architecture, arts, archaeology, and philosophy, as he masterfully fused all these disciplines in the development of his unique aesthetic language, not only problematizing the city and its politics but also stressing philosophy on truth and objectivity.

After all the discussions in this paper, there is still a lot to be asked on whether Piranesi's artworks constitute a positive case of bullshit, or could bullshit art have meanings other than nonsense and deception. The nonsense phenomena have been an integral part of the discipline of arts, which indeed found its latest place in the pseudo-profound bullshit art discussions. Nevertheless, the debates are open to further elaboration, considering the position of bullshit in relation to the other types of rhetoric within the art domain.

Piranesi's artworks carve a new path in understanding bullshit art, integrating more constructive implications into the debate. Bullshitting is a vital advancement element in aesthetic fields like art, opening new opportunities, generating new speculations, and rethinking the conventional. Particularly in Piranesi's artworks, the bullshitting dominates the truth concerns, and as a result, the expressiveness grows more freely. Its desire for efficacy and engagement with the real results in a search for authenticity, an usual requirement in arts. Further, with his rejection of objectivity, this particular rhetoric not only remains a persuasive tool but also becomes a reassessment of the production of knowledge. All in all, Piranesi's etchings prove the real potential of bullshitting in arts by becoming surreal only to become more real; disregarding truth only to become more truthful; and thus, becoming bullshit only to make more sense than any other artwork has made.

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