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CHECKLIST

Andrea Palladio, Italian, 1508–1580
I Quattro Libri dell' Architettura (The Four Books of Architecture),
1570, woodcut
Rauner Special Collections Library: NA2515.P25.1570

Richard Earlom, British, 1743–1822, after Claude Lorrain,
French, 1604–1682
*Liber Veritatis, or a Collection of Prints after the Original Designs of
Claude Le Lorrain*, vol. 1 (open to plate 7), 1774–77, aquatint
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Adolph Weil Jr., Class of 1935; MIS.989.26B

Tomasso Cuccioni, Italian, 1790–1864
Temple of Tivoli, 1858, albumen print from wet-plate negative
*Purchased through the Barbara Dau Southwell '78 and David P. Southwell
T'88 Fund for European Art; 2012.13*

William Stanley Haseltine, American, 1835–1900
Tivoli, Temple of Sibyl, 1858, watercolor, pen and ink,
and graphite on wove paper
Gift of Mrs. Roger H. Plowden; W:952.8

William Louis Sonntag, American, 1822–1900
Italian Lake with Classical Ruins, 1858, oil on canvas
*Bequest of Annie B. Dore in memory of her husband, John Clark Dore,
Class of 1847; P:917.3*

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William Louis Sonntag, *Italian Lake with Classical Ruins*, 1858, oil on canvas.
Bequest of Annie B. Dore in memory of her husband, John Clark Dore, Class of 1847; P:917.3

THE ALLURE OF RUINS

Views of the Temple of Sibyl at Tivoli across Time



Tomasso Cuccioni, *Temple of Tivoli*, 1858, albumen print from wet-plate negative. Purchased through the Barbara Dau Southwell '78 and David P. Southwell T'88 Fund for European Art; 2012.13.

Views of ancient Roman ruins and the Italian countryside have inspired artists for centuries. At times they have sought to learn from the past; at times they have seen their every romantic notion embodied in those stirring places. Regarding Tivoli in particular, Thomas Cole, who “introduced” these ancient ruins to American landscape painters, proclaimed in 1831:

I have not seen any place that combines so much a landscape painter can make use of as Tivoli. There is a great ravine with the old picturesque town overlooking it, and [it has] its one beautiful relic of classical times, the Sibyl's temple. (Stebbins, 44)

Tivoli, a hill town just over twenty miles outside of Rome, is the site of the structure generally identified as the Temple of (the legendary Tiburtine) Sibyl, which dates to the first century BCE. The actual dedication of the building is unknown. The rare round form of the temple has compelled artists and architects to study it for centuries and caused at least one observer to declare that “it is impossible to conceive of anything more picturesque” (Hare and Baddeley, 669). The present installation brings together European and American works of art from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries that show how attitudes toward the classical past and their corresponding aesthetic approaches have changed even as the allure of ruins such as the Temple of Sibyl at Tivoli has persisted.

As an architect, Andrea Palladio was less interested in the setting of the temple at Tivoli than the artists included here. He was fascinated by the structure itself. Circular in plan and originally surrounded by a peristyle composed of eighteen Corinthian columns, this relatively rare ancient structure moved him to reproduce it in great detail in his *Quattro Libri*, or *Four Books on Architecture*, of 1570, which was itself inspired by the treatise of the ancient architect Vitruvius of the first century BCE. Palladio wrote this book for his fellow architects and potential patrons, and hence he recorded such minute details as the spacing between columns and the relief sculpture on the entablature in order to best display his understanding of the ancient architectural principles that had guided the creation of this perfectly cylindrical temple.

The seventeenth-century French painter Claude Lorrain, the father of romanticized classicism in landscape painting, took an opposite approach to the temple at Tivoli. Early in his career, Claude often combined fantastic natural settings with familiar architectural elements to evoke both pastoral and classical themes. The presence of the Temple of Sibyl in his painting is not supposed to mark this landscape as a real place; instead, Claude uses the temple as a sort of prop to evoke the feeling of a bucolic ideal. Claude did not want to portray moralizing landscapes, like his Dutch contemporaries, but focused on creating dreamy views of Arcadia, in the process elevating the status of landscape painting within the French tradition. His works were so popular that they began to be copied and forged even while he was still alive, which led him to create the *Liber Veritatis*, or “Book of Truth,” as a means of recording his own pieces in his own hand and thereby helping collectors to identify imitations. A volume of the *Liber Veritatis* is included in this exhibition, opened to a print that reproduces one of Claude's paintings in the Hood's collection, *Landscape with Shepherd and Shepherdess* (1636).

Many artists traveled to Italy in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, both to create souvenirs in the form of prints, paintings, photographs, and sculptures and to study from Renaissance and Baroque masters such as Claude. Although critics sometimes dismiss his landscapes because of their lack of didactic content, they profoundly influenced many later painters. In the work of nineteenth-century American painters, for example, various compositional techniques of his appear, including dramatic horizon lines, the inclusion of a path or stream to lead the viewer's eye through the composition, and a limited human presence. All of these devices function together in Claude's compositions to create the idealized landscapes for which he was known.

In the mid-nineteenth century, travel to Italy became more accessible to the American middle class in general, and to artists eager to paint its

scenery and learn from its rich artistic traditions in particular. The Temple of Sibyl inspired the compositions of two American painters represented in this installation, William Louis Sonntag and William Stanley Haseltine, both of whom depicted the structure in the same year using markedly different approaches. Sonntag favors the romantic style of the American landscape painters who had been heavily influenced by Claude. Compared to both Haseltine's watercolor sketch and Tomasso Cuccioni's contemporaneous photograph, Sonntag's painting of the Temple of Sibyl—which was based on studies from an earlier visit—represents a generalized composite view that speaks more to how tourists wished to remember the *campagna*, or countryside, than to its modern appearance, which one tourist described as follows: “A very dirty village, a dirtier hotel, and a *cicerone* [guide] all rags and ruffianism, are somewhat dampers to anticipation” (Eldredge, n.p.).

Haseltine, on the other hand, creates with his exacting watercolor of Tivoli and its temple the sense of a faithful transcription painted on the spot. He even suggests an element of poverty in his prominent inclusion in the foreground of a dilapidated thatched-roof hut and crumbling wall. Despite the comparatively small size of the Temple of Sibyl in this composition, the precision with which he renders it suggests its significance to the artist. While Sonntag's polish indicates that his painting was intended for sale, Haseltine's varied brushstrokes, unfinished background, and somewhat arbitrary use of color suggest that he intended this work as a study or for his personal use.

For both American and European artists, ruins such as those at Tivoli have always possessed a seemingly universal and timeless quality. The Temple of Sibyl's compelling natural backdrop, its beautiful and rare form, and the technical challenges it posed to both architects and artists all led to its prominence in archetypal scenes of the Italian countryside. Each of the artists who chose to depict this site appears to have sought to add a new layer of interpretation to this two-thousand-year-old temple and the landscape that contains it.

Francie Middleton '12,
Homma Family Intern

William Stanley Haseltine, *Tivoli, Temple of Sibyl*, 1858, watercolor, pen and ink, and graphite on wove paper. Gift of Mrs. Roger H. Plowden; W.952.8.

