

ARCHITECTURE IN PRINTS:
PIRANESI, MERYON, AND HOPPER

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PREFACE

While there are many printmakers who have used architecture in their imagery*, I have chosen three on which to concentrate my discussion: Piranesi, Meryon, and Hopper. My choice is based on those whose work has most affected mine. Central to the imagery of each is an attention to space and light and a predominance of shadow area, as well as a pervasive mood and emotional effect, each of which is also a component in my work.

From this project I hope to gain an understanding of the working methods, techniques, and process employed by each. I also seek to analyze the visual tools used to create the effects of light, space, and mood which I find so compelling in works by these artists. I hope to increase my body of knowledge about the historical tradition from which my work moves, and increase the tools at my disposal to create my own work.

I would like to thank Kristen Collins at the Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Massachusetts, and Rob Lansfield at the Davison Art Center, Wesleyan University, Middletown, Connecticut, for helping me view the works in this discussion in July, 1996.

* Other artists utilizing architecture in their prints include: Whistler, Feininger, Davis, Canaletto, Tiepolo, Morandi, Sloan, and Thiebaud.

PIRANESI

“The edifice is sufficient in itself...”

— Marguerite Yourcenar on Piranesi

Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720-1778) spent his life making etchings based on Rome, the city where he lived from the time he was a young man. He worked solely in the medium of etching, and was hugely prolific, producing 1000 plates in his lifetime. Successful and well-known, Piranesi earned papal commissions and enjoyed social status. His study of stage design when young played a part in his ability to create space, and he was a self-taught architectural historian and archeologist. Passionately chauvinistic, he published polemical writings championing Etruscan civilization as the origin of Greek, in opposition to the increasing evidence during his lifetime to the contrary. He visited excavations of Herculaneum and Pompeii, though he never traveled outside Italy. During the 1700s, ancient remains were scattered throughout the city of Rome, and source material abounded in the cellars and cisterns, stair systems, and subterranean vaults that surrounded him.

Piranesi created several series of images, some more commercial, others more personal. As a whole, they exhibit his abiding fascination with the expressive potential of architecture. There are three categories of images that make up Piranesi's work: *vedute*, views of monuments, some with romantic or combined elements; *capricci*, ruins of architecture; and *carceri*, prisons. While the *vedute* and *capricci* share many elements with the *carceri*, it is the *carceri* series that most interest me in this discussion. The “inspired unreality [of the *carceri*] contrasts with the descriptive truth of [his] other works.”¹

¹ Roseline Bacou, Piranesi: Etchings and Engravings (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1975), p. 11.

The *carceri* were published as a set of 14 in 1744, then reworked and republished as a set of 16 in 1760. It is an interesting exercise to try to contextualize the *carceri* in the period when they were made. The *carceri* exhibit a marked absence of “formal polite architecture”² that had heretofore described 18th century works. Most artists studied Vitruvius’ rules of proportion and were interested in symbolism, propriety, and decorum. The *carceri*, in contrast, depict a complicated imaginary world of immense, impossible, often terrifying interiors. Piranesi’s exceptional personal vision found expression in the *carceri*.

Piranesi differed from his contemporaries not only in his subject matter, but in his approach to the drawing and the plate. Though his finished plates were often precise and exact, with extreme attention to detail, his preparatory sketches were quite the opposite. Piranesi drew on site using a loose, fast mark with wash and line (fig. 1). He often executed many studies of a single site directly from observation, and returned to his subject under different atmospheric and light conditions. His contemporaries viewed these drawings as cursory and purposeless. He never made finished drawings or detailed analyses on site, but sketched in order to record an overall composition. He reduced his subject to essential areas of light and shadow. He later worked his plates in the studio from these sketches, as well as from memory and imagination.³

Piranesi also exhibited a “carefree recklessness”⁴ in his approach to plates. He had confidence in his ability to resolve any drawing. He reworked each plate many times, and lines were bitten so deeply that plates became “ravaged and devastated.” Only an expert printer could make each image legible.⁵ After the original *carceri* did not sell, Piranesi revised the images, adding arches, ladders, people, details, and republished the set. He

² William McDonald, *Piranesi's Carceri: Sources of Invention* (Northampton, Mass.: Smith College, 1979), p. 16.

³ Bacou, *Piranesi: Etchings and Engravings*, pp. 14-15.

⁴ Michel Melot, Antony Griffiths, Richard S. Field, and André Béguin, *History of an Art: Prints* (New York: Rizzoli, 1981), p. 169.

⁵ Melot, Griffiths, Field, and Béguin, *History of an Art: Prints*, p. 169.

subsequently reworked the plates as suited his fancy and capriciousness.⁶ An example of the radical revisions he made to *Carceri XVI* appears in figures 2 and 3.

I was able to view *Carceri XVI* in the collection of the Davison Art Center, Wesleyan University, Middletown, Connecticut, on July 31, 1996. Most striking is the scale of Piranesi's etchings. The *carceri* measure 16 x 21", and are markedly bigger and messier than they appear in reproduction. There is a notable directness and speed of drawing onto the plate. Piranesi mainly uses hard-ground line etch executed in a scribbly, loose, fast cross-hatch. Some areas include little dots, squiggles and loops, and there is evidence of false biting.

There are few carefully defined or clean edges, but instead sketchy and shifting boundaries between areas of value. Stray marks of loose cross-hatch extend beyond loosely drawn borders between objects. Piranesi seems to use a fast, direct, loose initial drawing onto the plate, then refines it with a succession of variable bites, then adds delicate, intricate detail later. In the earlier states detail is minimized, and for this reason I find them more compelling than the later, more Baroque, overwrought states. Staircases are generalized into ramps, there are few figures and very little prison paraphernalia. To me, additions of chains, bars, and swooning, tortured souls in the reworkings are extraneous and distracting. Loose drawing and minimal attention to detail in the early states creates a mood, an atmosphere, and a feeling of stone, light, and space.

In *Carceri XVI* Piranesi utilizes his most common compositional device: a series of zig-zagging diagonals to pull the viewer back through space. The foreground objects and architecture are very deeply etched and very dark, drawn with a loose, energetic line. The foreground is assembled on the edges of the composition. Diagonals and recessionary lines in the complicated architecture move the viewer to the center of the composition and back through space. The most distant background can be glimpsed between arches and behind staircases. Middle ground is described with mid-tones and leads to a very

⁶ McDonald, *Piranesi's Carceri: Sources of Invention*, p. 13.

delicate, lightly etched, carefully drawn, pale distance. The striking contrast between the dark, heavy foreground and the pale, luminous background is re-emphasized by the extreme shift in scale from the foreground to the back. A distant figure is less than the size of a link in a chain in the foreground.

Compositional techniques, value and scale shifts combine to create a feeling of vast space. This sense of space is accompanied by the simultaneous overwhelming feeling of oppression and entrapment created by the heavy, huge foreground shapes. Piranesi sets up his perspectival grid with a low horizon line that is only a few inches from the bottom edge of the image; as a result, the architecture seems to loom above. Rather than create boundaries, Piranesi's prisons "manufacture infinity."⁷ We are confined, but in an almost limitless interior space.

In some prints, Piranesi intentionally subverts the perspectival grid he sets up and creates a "deeply disorganized visual space."⁸ Space collapses when pillars and piers fail to line up spatially as expected. The central pier and its arches are linked impossibly in *Carceri XIV* (fig. 4) and this disjunction causes space and mass to disintegrate, causing further disorientation. "The edifice is sufficient in itself..."⁹ to create a psychological and emotional effect of oppression and entrapment, a feeling that the viewer is tiny and insignificant in a chaotic, looming, whirling interior.

⁷ Erika Naginski, Piranesi and the Image of Infinite Confinement (Paper presented at College Art Association conference, Toronto, February 27, 1998).

⁸ Naginski, Piranesi and the Image of Infinite Confinement.

⁹ Marguerite Yourcenar quoted in Bacou, Piranesi: Etchings and Engravings, p. 19.

MERYON

“...more than pictures — visions.”

— Victor Hugo on Charles Meryon

While Piranesi enjoyed fame and status, Charles Meryon (1821-1868) led the life of the quintessential tortured artist. He was the illegitimate child of a dancer and a visiting Brit whom he never met. He lived in Paris his entire life, excepting the time in youth and young adulthood when, after his mother's death when he was 16, he entered the Navy and traveled extensively. It was during this time that he began to draw. At age 27 he entered the studio of a master etcher, Eugène Bléry, where he learned the technical aspects of his craft. He was frequently hungry and destitute, and was driven by a singular passion to create etchings of his native Paris. He inherited mental illness from his mother which ultimately sent him to an asylum where he died of self-imposed starvation, suffering from “melancholy madness complicated by delusions.”¹⁰ He was influenced by the writings of Poe, who he felt was writing about “my misfortunes.”¹¹ His admirers include Victor Hugo and Baudelaire, as well as minor artists Bracquemond and Haden.¹²

Meryon worked exclusively in the medium of etching. During the mid 1800s, etching had been denigrated to the status of a copy technique for commercial sales and tabloid production. Meryon's work fit into the definition of etchings of the period in its small scale and great precision. However, he is a notable exception in that his etchings are not copies from a master painter, but original visions in the medium. His works

¹⁰ Hugh Stokes, The Great Etchers: Etchings of Charles Méryon (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906), p. 19.

¹¹ Letter to his publisher as quoted in Deborah Menaker Rothschild, Views of Paris and Other Scenes: Prints by Charles Meryon, exh. cat. (Williamstown, Mass.: Williams College Museum of Art, 1994), p. 4.

¹² Stokes, The Great Etchers: Etchings of Charles Méryon, p. 18.

predate Millet and Whistler who are generally recognized as pioneers in the 19th century renaissance in fine art etching.

The central work of Meryon's career was a series of etchings entitled *Eaux-Fortes sur Paris* (1850-54). He set out to record the old Paris of winding streets and sordid dinginess which was being destroyed in Napoleon's program of modernization.¹³ However, rather than recording the individual building or monument, Meryon sought to capture the urban mass and mood. In the context of the Romantic painters working at the same time, whose interest was in the picturesque and bucolic, Meryon stands in stark contrast. "In his prints Paris is a brooding monster, the pitiless spectator of human misery and madness."¹⁴

Like his final etchings, Meryon's preparatory drawings show a laborious attention to detail. However, rather than analyzing light as in his finished etchings, in his drawings he analyzes volumes and uses edges to define planes (fig. 5). He did reams of preparatory drawings for every plate. Detailed studies of small sections of the buildings or scene were completed on separate visits at the same time of day, then reassembled later from these scraps. Despite the detail and accuracy of these preparatory sketches, they are pieced together into a "lively composite rather than a cold photographic likeness."¹⁵

In light of Meryon's exacting, meticulous style, it is important to consider the influence on his work of photography, which was gaining prominence during his lifetime. He sometimes used the camera lucida for preliminary sketches, but seems to have relied mainly on his own studies (figs. 6 and 7). When necessary, he violated the rules of perspective and exaggerated for effect, for example, he heightened the tower of Notre Dame to make it visible above the buildings in *La Pompe Notre Dame* (fig. 8), though in actuality the tower cannot be seen from the spot where he was drawing. Meryon said, "I consider these licenses permissible since it is, so to speak, in this way that the mind

¹³ Rothschild, *Views of Paris and Other Scenes: Prints by Charles Meryon*, p. 3.

¹⁴ Rothschild, *Views of Paris and Other Scenes: Prints by Charles Meryon*, p. 3.

¹⁵ Rothschild, *Views of Paris and Other Scenes: Prints by Charles Meryon*, p. 3.

works as soon as the actual objects which have arrested its attention have disappeared from sight.”¹⁶ He recognizes the importance of memory and a remembered feeling of a place, in contrast to the visual accuracy of photography.

I was able to see six of the final images plus several states from *Eaux-Fortes sur Paris* at the Clark Art Institute in Williamstown, Massachusetts, in July, 1996.

Meryon's analysis of and use of space falls into two general categories. One set of images depicts vast, expansive, wide-open, deep space, featuring bridges and large areas of sky, such as *Le Pont-au-Change* (fig. 9). Far more frequently, Meryon depicts compressed and enclosed spaces. *La Morgue* (fig. 10) is the best example of Meryon's flattened space. Buildings are turned flat to the picture plane, and stacked vertically. There are very few recessional lines in the single point perspective; the viewer is up against a wall. Even the smoke from the smoke stacks moves in perfect verticals and horizontals. The water in the foreground is full of boats and offers no escape. A diagonal shadow in the lower left creates a feeling of a close building just off the edge of the image, and further entraps the viewer.

Meryon made changes to his plates in attempt to orchestrate the kind of space he was seeking. For example, *Le Pont Neuf* preliminary drawings and early states show the most distant row of buildings beyond the bridge as flat to the picture plane, and fairly tall and close (fig. 11). In the later states, this group of buildings has been scaled down and set along a recessional line which continues the recessional line of the main bridge horizontal (fig. 12). The space at the top of the image changes from enclosed to more expansive, and the eye easily follows this row of buildings into the deep space created. This change serves to reemphasize the foreground compression by contrasting it with the deep space in the background. And again, the actual site as depicted in the preliminary drawings is changed in favor of the feeling he attempts to create.

¹⁶ Letter quoted in Rothschild, *Views of Paris and Other Scenes: Prints by Charles Meryon*, p. 3.

While his primary interest is architecture and space, Meryon also peoples his images with figures engaged in human dramas. In some images these figures function more effectively than in others. At their worst, the figures are exaggerated beyond Mannerism and are often maudlin and poorly-drawn. A possibly apocryphal story is that he drew them from their feet up, as buildings are built. In *La Morgue*, the grieving widow executing impossible spine-bending maneuvers and the limp, sagging body of her husband are both overdone and distracting. In contrast, in *Le Pont-au-Change* the narrative implied by the figure struggling toward the boat while its occupants ignore him, more interested in the sky, adds an interesting level to the reading of the image.

My initial impression was that Meryon presented a feeling of architecture as blank and impassive, indifferent to the dramas of the humans moving in and through these scenes. But upon further looking, I see the architecture as a living entity, suffering similar ravages of time, crumbling, cracking, dripping, breaking down, decaying, much as the human lives around it. In *La Morgue*, structures are enmeshed, intertwined, inseparable from the lives that surround it. There is chaos in the small details of the architecture, streaks and stains, pollution, fraying ropes, rusting chains, and hanging laundry. The bridges and buildings seem complicit in the human dramas.

La Pompe de Notre Dame, a structure which appears in several of Meryon's images, embodies the contrasts between an immovable built structure and its simultaneous mutability. The sturdy, smooth, heavy stone edifice is held up by a snarl of timbers and feeble looking toothpick supports. These supports, though always drawn in a tight and descriptive manner, tend to break down spatially and appear confused and collapsed. This is the contrast inherent in all of Meryon's work: the built structure is threatened with, poised against, its own demise.

HOPPER

“Hopper’s silences are tense...and suggest little of calmness, tranquillity, or placidity... “

— J.A. Ward

While Piranesi and Meryon devoted their entire careers to making etchings, Edward Hopper (1882-1967) is known primarily as a painter. However, the etchings he made were both critical to his artistic development and important contributions to American art. Hopper lived in the New York city area and worked and studied with other realists including John Sloan and Robert Henri. He began his career as an illustrator and supported himself with commissions for many years before he found success as a fine artist. Though he spent time in Paris between 1906 and 1909, he was unaffected by early modernism. Throughout his career Hopper used a tight, representational style, and was resolutely outside the artistic mainstream. He became intrigued with etching between 1915 and 1923, during the time he was supporting himself by illustrating, and as a result his etchings were a very important, very personal expression. Many art historians feel that Hopper reached his mature style in prints first, evidenced by the use of dramatic, dynamic compositions. In the 1920s he started showing his work successfully, his paintings took precedence, and he stopped making prints.

Hopper was responsible for a reinterpretation of the landscape in American art. Landscape artists previously had ignored the city, favoring the wide-open natural landscape painted by the Hudson River School, or the misty expressive Romantic landscape exemplified by Inness, Ryder, and Homer. Hopper has been connected to the Ash Can School, and The Eight, whose harsh realism and emphasis on the city were featured in a 1908 show, but he disassociated himself from these schools, and disavowed

any social implications in his imagery.¹⁷ His work, like that of the Ash Can School, was interpreted as satire, due to its harshly “honest” portrait of the American city and town. His use of vernacular architecture was notable, in that his interest was the common and everyday landscape, as opposed to the grandiose or idealized. His themes seem to be isolation and alienation, the dark side of American growth and economic success, though, again, he determinedly disavows any such subject or message.¹⁸

Hopper’s working methods for his etchings differed from that of his earlier paintings, and represented an important change. While most of his early paintings were completed directly from observation, many etchings were from memory, including a series based on his experiences in France, and his abilities as an illustrator helped him express himself without relying on observation. Increasingly during his etching period, Hopper began to plan his images and use preparatory sketches. He began to incorporate composites, collage, synthesis and reconstruction. He even used cardboard models at times. In effect, he stopped being limited to observation and began to mold his compositions intentionally. Though Hopper’s prints went through sometimes as many as seven states, the result was the cumulative effect of small changes, rather than extensive overhauls or major changes.¹⁹ He seems to have solved most of his compositions through planning and sketches before embarking on the plate, as seen in the preliminary drawing and almost identical final etching for *American Landscape* (figs. 13 and 14).

During his etching period, Hopper also seemed to order his visual concerns. Interest in composition and its value as an expressive element became an overriding concern. “There need be no conflict between representation and the creation of design,” he said.²⁰ To his interest in plastic shapes, three dimensional forms in space defined by light, Hopper brought a newfound concern for formal elements and arrangements of

¹⁷ Sherry Marker, *Edward Hopper* (New York: Crown Publishers, Brompton Books Corp., 1990), p. 24.

¹⁸ Lloyd Goodrich, *Edward Hopper* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1976), p. 15.

¹⁹ Gail Levin, *Edward Hopper: The Complete Prints* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., in assoc. with the Whitney Museum of American Art, 1979), p. 12.

²⁰ Goodrich, *Edward Hopper*, p. 22.

shapes. "After I took up etching, my painting seemed to crystallize," Hopper noted.²¹ With his etchings, he employed memory, imagination, and improvisation, which led to stronger images. In turn, he applied these methods to his paintings. Involvement in etching changed Hopper's working process in both media.

I had the opportunity to see *Night Shadows* (fig. 15) at Wesleyan. I was surprised by the looseness of the drawing, which does not communicate in reproduction. There are many light, scratchy lines especially in the highlight on the ground plane. Hopper uses contour and cross-contour, but more often prefers dense cross-hatch, which angles violently, every which way, especially in the darkest areas. Despite the looseness of the markings, they are very descriptive, for instance, several squiggly lines effectively communicate a feeling for the shop window and architectural detailing. The overall effect is that of energy and directness, somehow reigned in with great skill and control.

Hopper's etchings are fairly small, executed in line etch with some drypoint. He generally used copper for etchings, and zinc for drypoints.²² His plates are very deeply bitten and printed cleanly, without much plate tone. He ordered an intense black ink from Kimber in London, and used an Umbria paper for its whiteness, and thus had very high-contrast images.²³ His drawing method was a dense cross-hatch of surprisingly loose lines which belie the tight, controlled effect they create.

Hopper's compositions are bold and striking. In many works, Hopper uses strong diagonals and recessional lines. In others, the emphasis is on strong horizontals and verticals. One common device is the use of a stark foreground horizontal, used in *American Landscape* (fig. 14), such as a curb or a railroad embankment, which acts as a base, or the "edge of the stage beyond which drama unfolds."²⁴ While *Night Shadows* uses a series of diagonals rather than the horizontal "stage" composition, Hopper creates

²¹ Suzanne Burrey, "Edward Hopper: The Emptying Spaces," *Arts Digest* (1 April 1955): p. 10.

²² Levin, *Edward Hopper: The Complete Prints*, p. 10.

²³ Marker, *Edward Hopper*, p. 28.

²⁴ Goodrich, *Edward Hopper*, p. 22.

a similar effect of looking down at a stage set from a box seat. This image features a lone figure seen from above, moving across a deserted street and sidewalk, past the diagonal shadow of a lamppost that rakes across the composition.

Hopper's choices in framing and cropping provide an unusual perspective. The building looms above the man, and the shadow dwarfs him. The composition is strongly graphic and dynamic, yet strangely still. The top half of the composition is almost black, the bottom half almost white. The figure is moving from his place within the light shape toward the dark empty corner beyond the building.

The sense of a drama unfolding is heightened by Hopper's use of human figures among his architecture. Hopper's prints have a voyeuristic quality. Figures are caught in private moments, and seem unconscious of being watched. The viewer is allowed a glimpse into someone's private life. This feeling is emphasized by Hopper's unusual cropping and choice of vantage point; we feel as though we're glancing out a window at an odd, narrow corner we've never noticed before. While Hopper very masterfully imagines and fabricates believable light, space, and architecture, his work suffers when he draws figures from memory. Many seem strangely wooden and false. However, when executed successfully, Hopper's figures are critical to the mood and effect of his work.

RELEVANCE TO MY WORK

Like Piranesi, Meryon, and Hopper, I use the built landscape as a large part of the subject matter of my etchings. The landscape that surrounds me in the suburbs and the city is constructed and controlled by human hands: highways, underpasses, houses, sheds, rooftops, and waterways (figs. 16, 17, and 18).

In my prints I seek to use the tradition of images of architecture as presented by Piranesi, Meryon, and Hopper to explore the time and place in which I live, as well as the internal psychological landscape that I inhabit. I am interested in the expressive potential of the built landscape. My images convey feelings of isolation, a sense of mystery in the commonplace, and a tense stillness that is anything but tranquil. I hope the viewer will question what's in the shadows. I hope to show the everyday, vernacular landscape in an unusual way. I favor a strong light source, and a predominance of shadow area. I also attempt to convey a sense of space, movement through space, and enclosure in a space.

I try to use formal elements in service to my expressive intent. Shapes are arranged to create pressures and tensions within the composition. Markings range from very quiet to aggressive, and sometimes create a tension by denying the space created elsewhere.

Piranesi, Meryon, and Hopper have each affected my work greatly. In analyzing their imagery and working methods, I find that each has presented new ideas for me to bring to my work.

The mood Piranesi creates is defined by the architecture and the play of light, rather than by the details he brings in. In his early states of the *carceri* Piranesi uses an economy of means; the strength of these simplified images shows that excessive detail can be counter-productive. I would like to employ his methods of speed and directness of drawing, and I'm reminded that excessive tightness can hinder the expressive qualities.

By using quick preparatory drawings, and a swift approach to drawing on plates, one can explore space, composition, and light without overemphasis on detail or particulars. Additionally, Piranesi shows the expressive potential of interior spaces, a subject I have yet to explore.

What I've learned from Meryon qualifies what Piranesi teaches me; in Meryon's work, details of architecture can be very successful and expressive. While Piranesi uses overt prison paraphernalia, Meryon uses more subtle evidence of decay and dissolution. I would like to build on the use of subtle architectural detail in my attempt to make the built environment expressive of a mood and a place. Meryon's work also underlines the point I made about Piranesi that "the edifice itself is sufficient," figures are largely extraneous and distracting.

Also in contrast to Piranesi, Meryon legitimizes detailed studies and composites, allowing for creative license to move, exaggerate, and expand. I think both methods of preparation could be more useful to me as I attempt to synthesize and generate my images, rather than happen upon something that strikes me.

While much of Hopper's work with figures reinforces my feeling that they are extraneous, I am struck by those images in which the figure serves in combination with architecture and landscape elements to crystallize Hopper's ideas about mood and emotional effect. While I am similarly concerned with the vernacular landscape as a vehicle for expression, my prints have never combined figures in any way. I am interested in building on my ideas by seeking a way to allow figures to creep into my compositions.

Looking at Hopper reinforces my interest in dynamic compositions and unusual cropping. By presenting an unusual angle or view, a possibly mundane subject assumes enormous interest and importance. Similarly, strong light and shadow animate the subject and shift the image into the realm of the moody and expressive. The use of light and shadow also provides strong graphic shapes to arrange in the composition.

Piranesi, Meryon, and Hopper provide me with many new ideas with which to approach my imagery and my working methods, and continue to be relevant and influential as I work with architecture in my prints.

CONCLUSION

“The beginning and end of all literary activity is the reproduction of the world that surrounds me by means of the world that is in me.”

— Goethe

One can extrapolate Goethe's meaning into any creative art. We continue to ask the perennial question, is an artist's subject primarily a mirror of the literal and societal space in which he lives or a mirror of his psychological or internal landscape? Are these places separable? According to Goethe, one uses both.

Piranesi, Meryon, and Hopper each interpreted the built landscape of their time in a way that has represented that period to later generations. Yet each has given the landscape and time period their own particular interpretation, as a whirling looming confining prison, as a sordid city rife with human drama, or as a lonely and isolated street corner. While their bodies of work stand as records of a place and time, each freely invented, exaggerated, pieced and spliced in service of the psychological or emotional effect they were seeking.

Each has used architecture as a backdrop for human drama or events, but additionally the very structures in their images are imbued with their own power, presence and drama.

The edifice is sufficient in itself; it is at once the drama and the background to the drama, the setting of the dialogue between the human will yet inscribed on the massive stonework, the inert mineral energy, and irrevocable Time.²⁵

Piranesi, Meryon, and Hopper each seem to recognize the tension, the paradox, and possibly the futility of human will and its creations.

²⁵ Marguerite Yourcenar, preface to *Carceri d'Invenzion: Les Prisons Imaginaire de Piranesi*, quoted in Bacou, *Piranesi: Etchings and Engravings*, p. 19.

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Fig. 1, Giovanni Battista Piranesi, preliminary drawing for *Carceri VIII*, c. 1750.

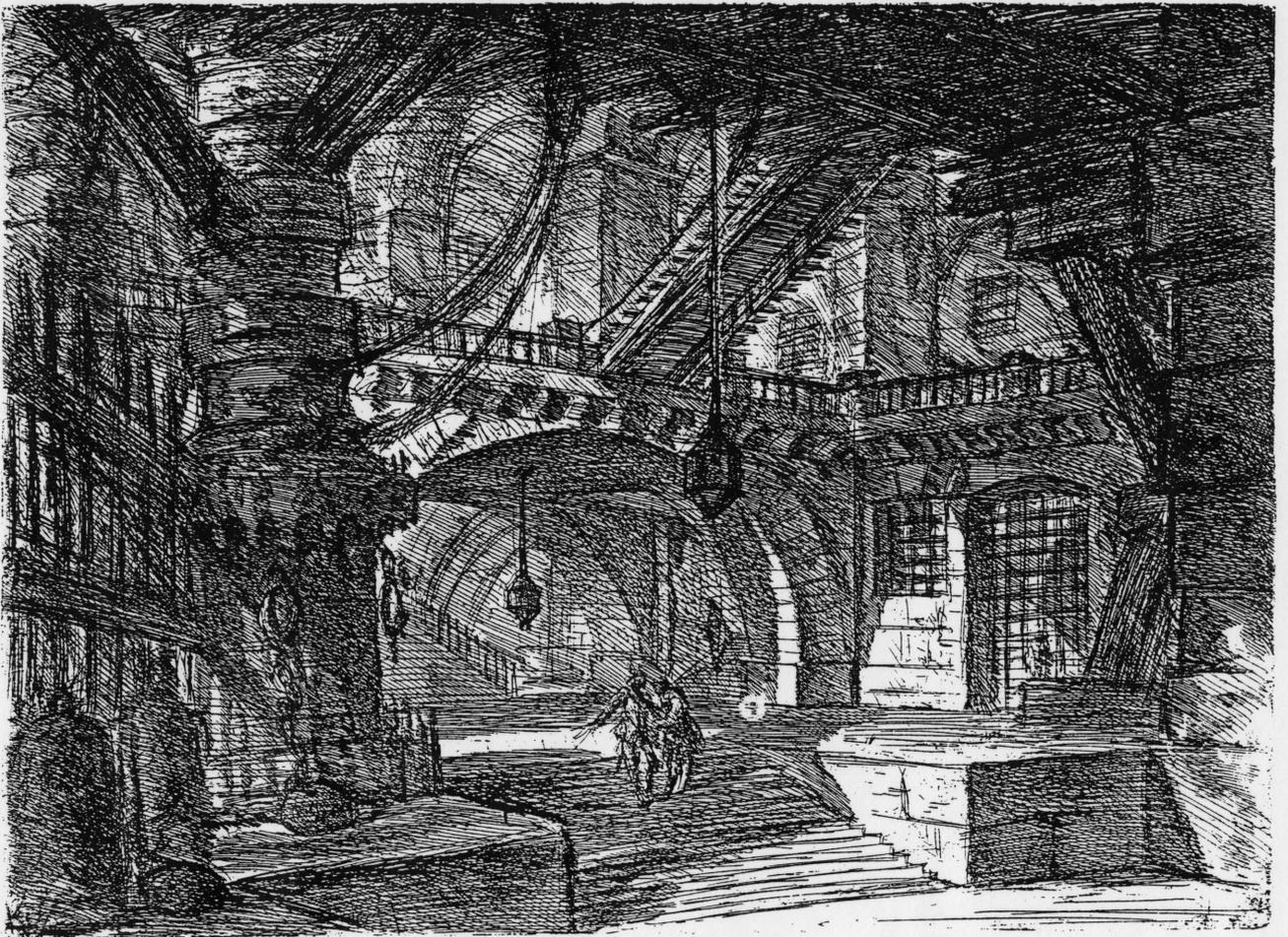


Fig. 2, Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Carceri XVI*, etching, first state, c. 1750.

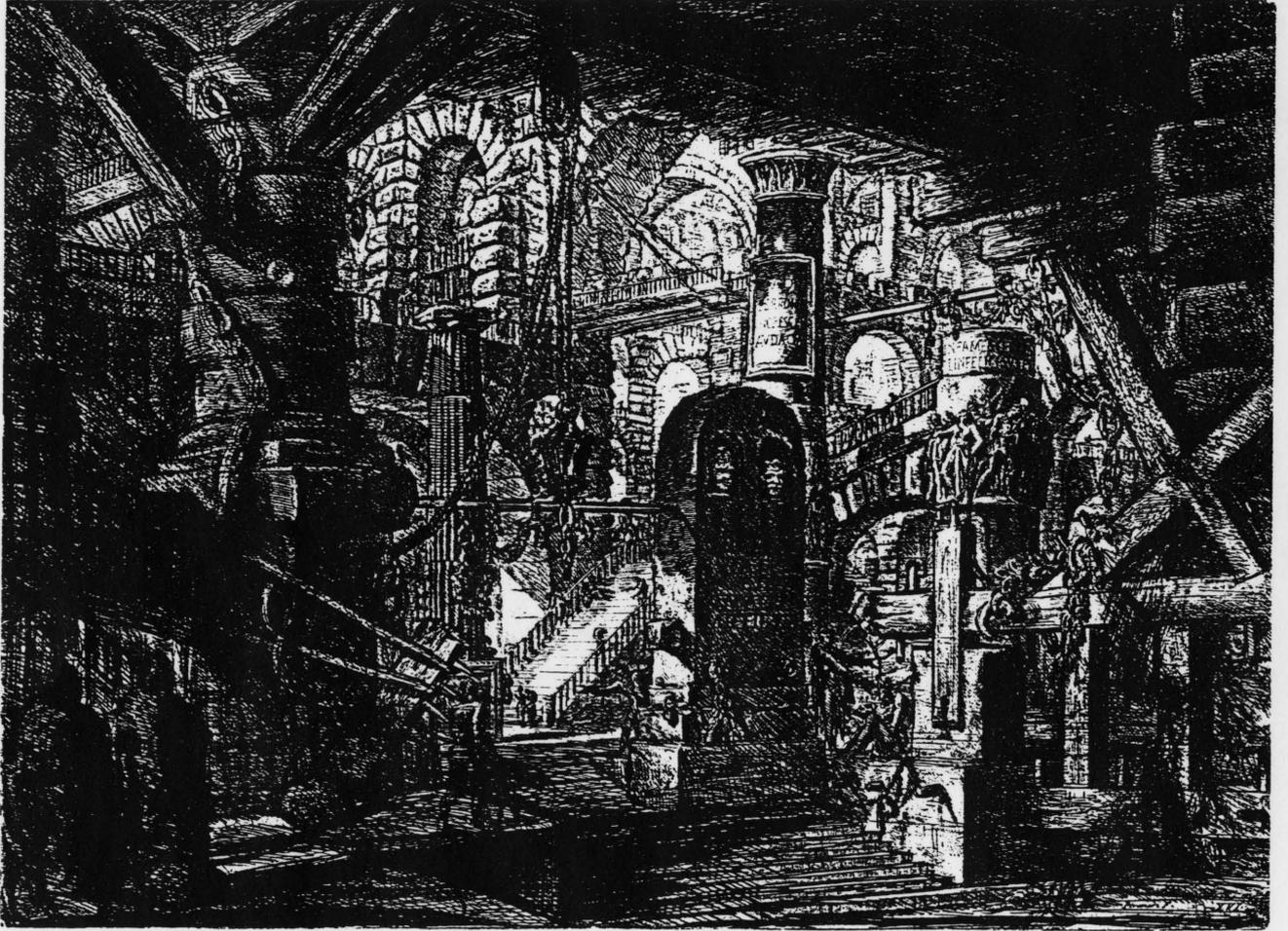


Fig. 3, Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Carceri XVI*, etching, second state, c. 1750.

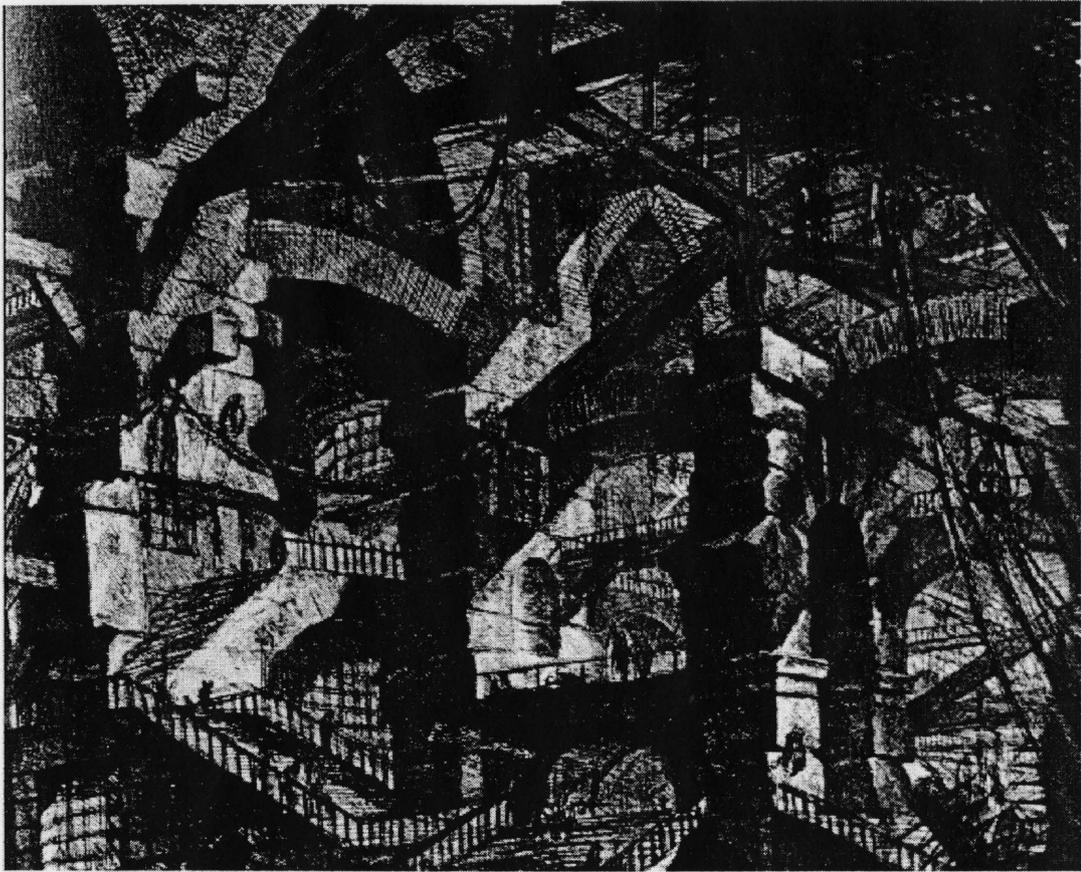


Fig. 4, Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Carceri XIV*, etching, c. 1750.

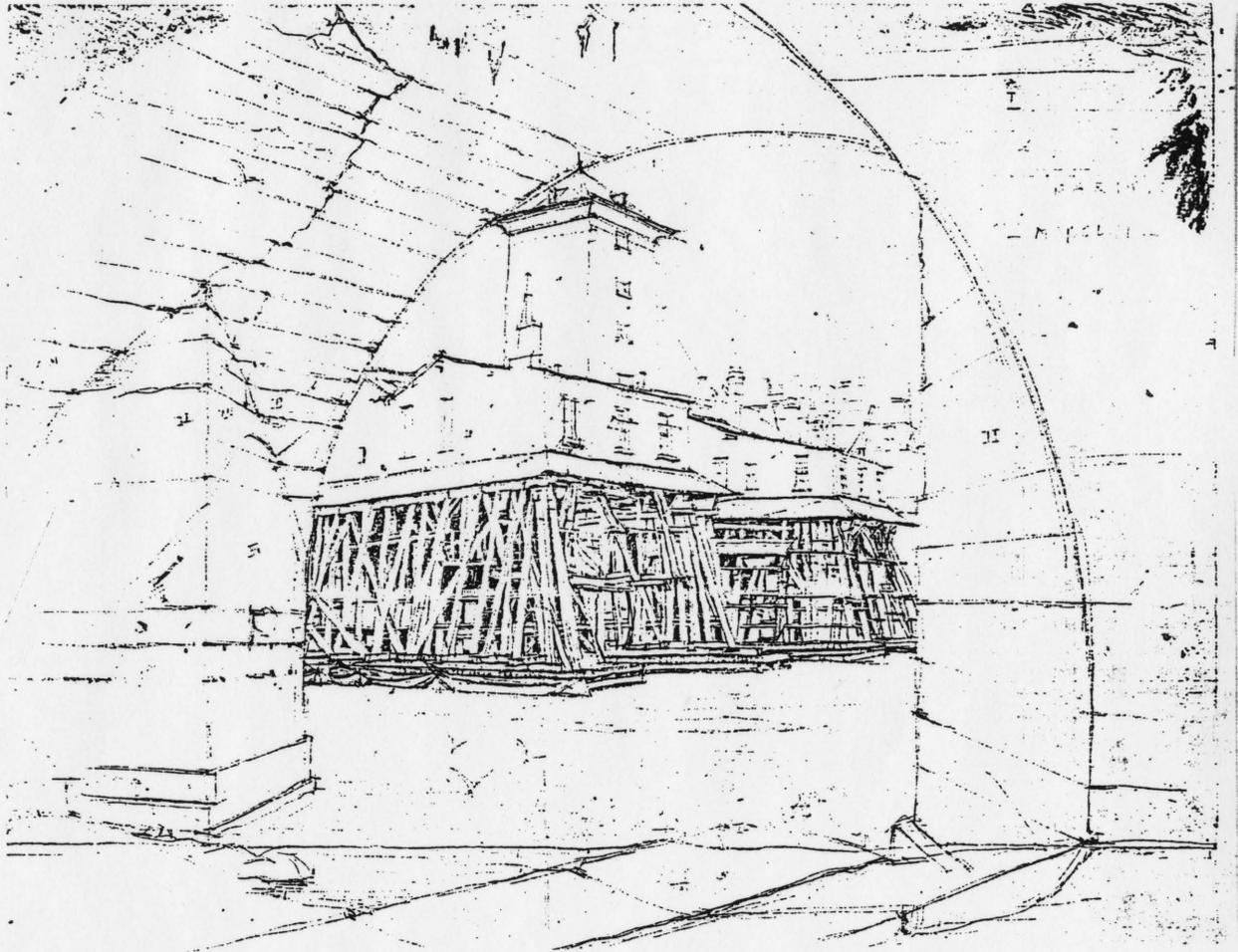


Fig. 5, Charles Meryon, preliminary pencil study for *La Pompe Notre-Dame*, c. 1850.

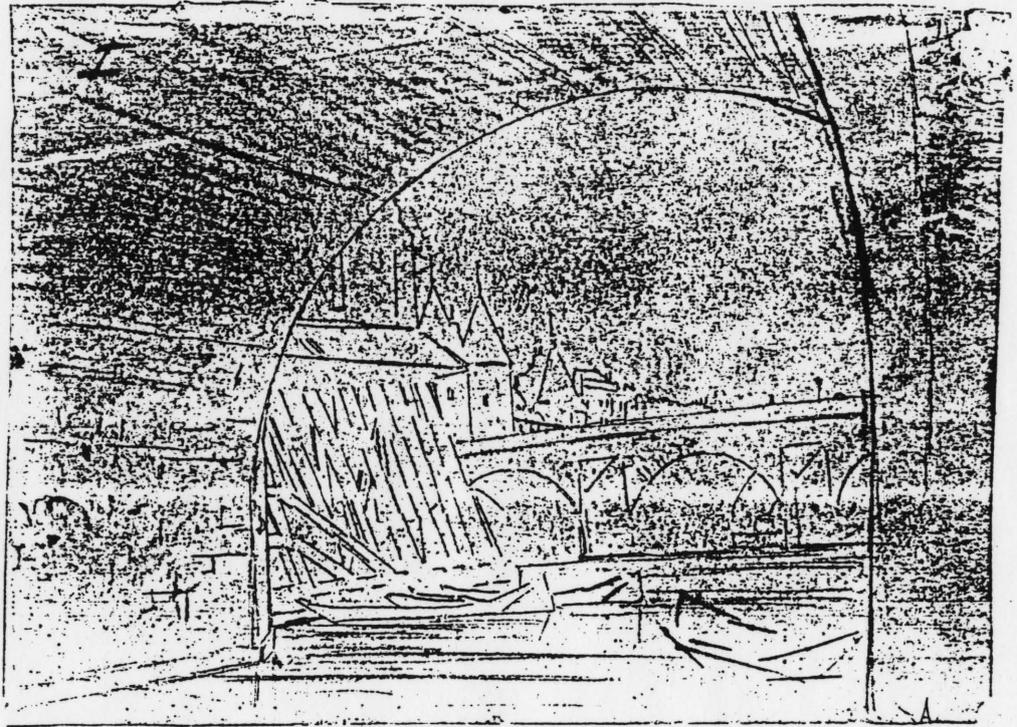


Fig. 6, Charles Meryon, first study, made with a 'camera lucida,' *L'Arche du Pont Notre-Dame*, c. 1850.

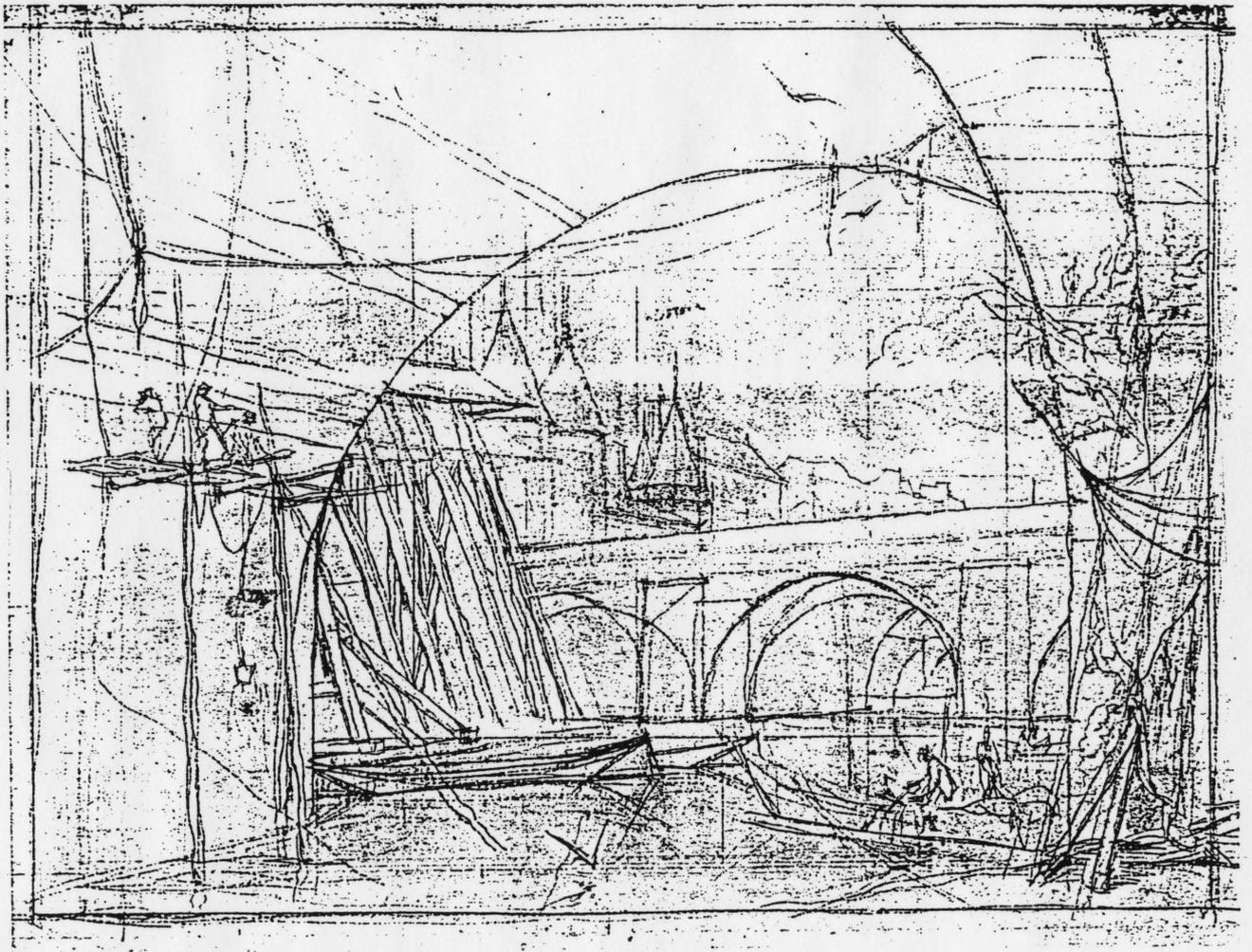
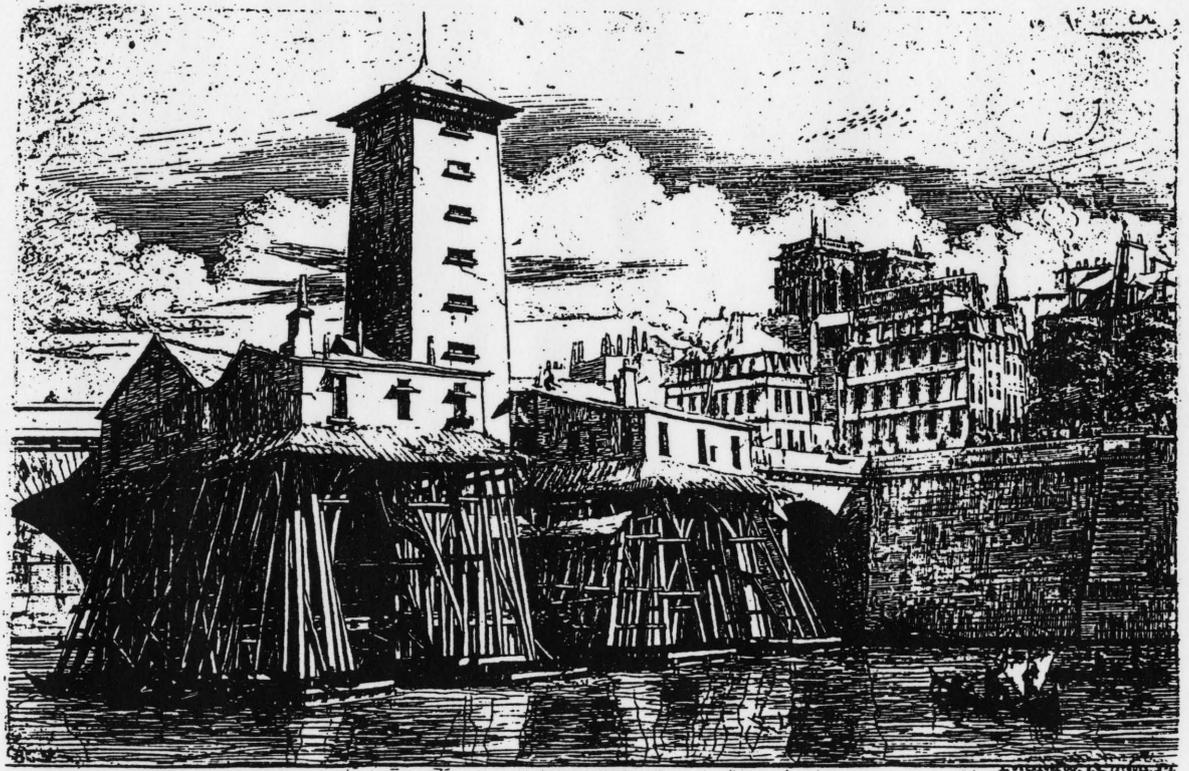


Fig. 7, Charles Meryon, preliminary pencil study for *L'Arche du Pont Notre-Dame*, c. 1850.



LA POMPE NOTRE-DAME
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Fig. 8, Charles Meryon, *La Pompe Notre-Dame*, etching, c. 1850.



Fig. 9, Charles Meryon, *Le Pont-au-Change*, etching, ninth state, c. 1850.

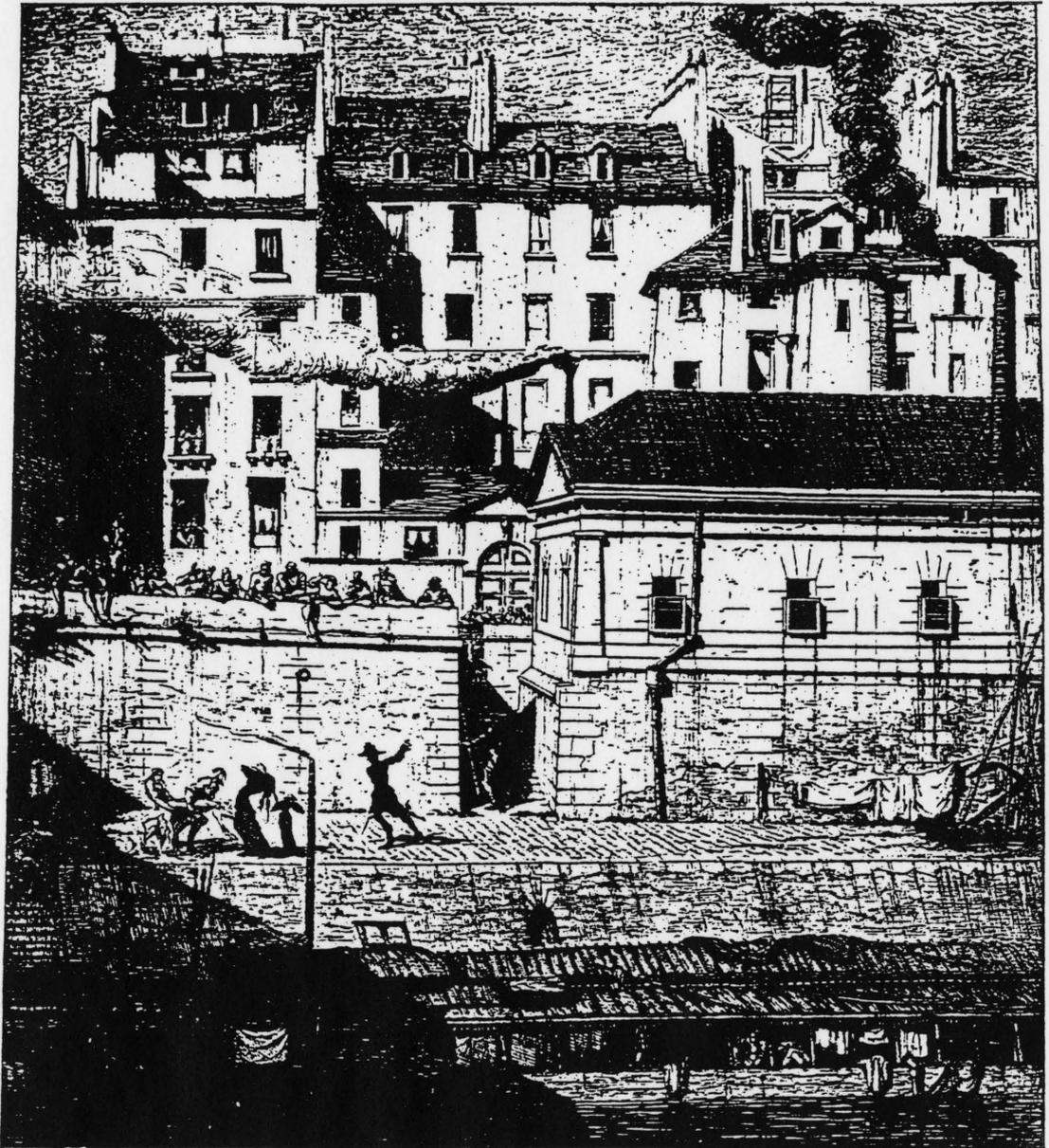


Fig. 10, Charles Meryon, *La Morgue*, etching, c. 1850.

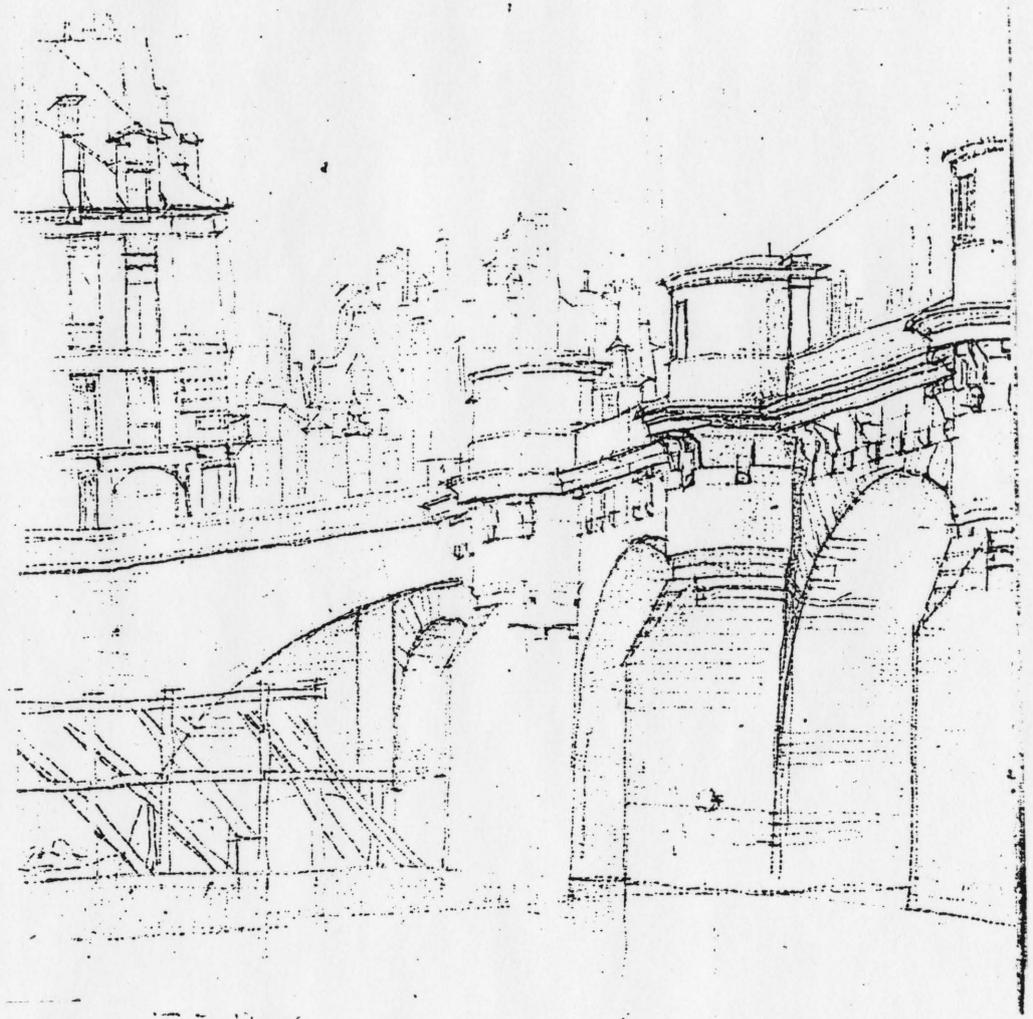


Fig. 11, Charles Meryon, preliminary pencil study for *Le Pont Neuf*, c. 1850.



LE PONT-NEUF.

Fig. 12, Charles Meryon, *Le Pont Neuf*, etching, c. 1850.



Fig. 13, Edward Hopper, preliminary drawing for *American Landscape*, 1920.

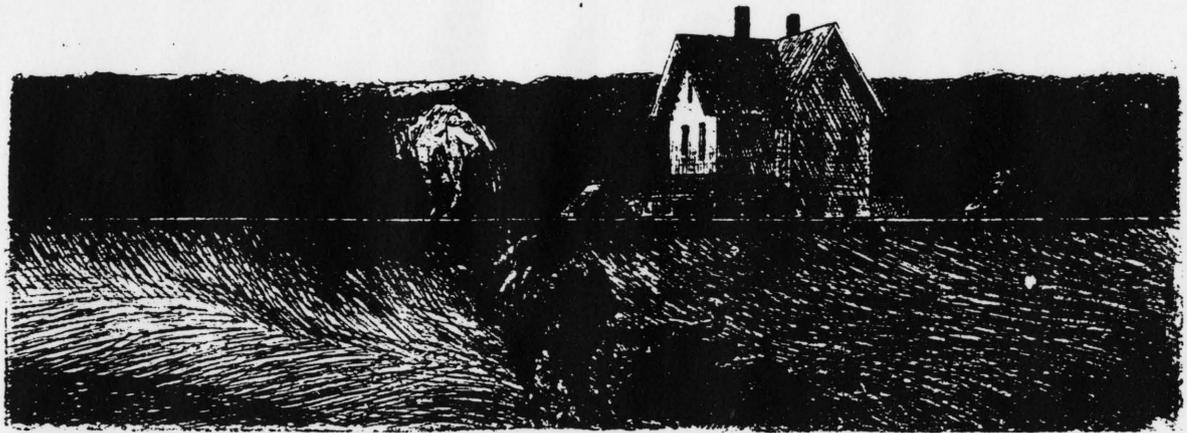


Fig. 14, Edward Hopper, *American Landscape*, etching, 1920.



Fig. 15, Edward Hopper, *Night Shadows*, etching, 1921.

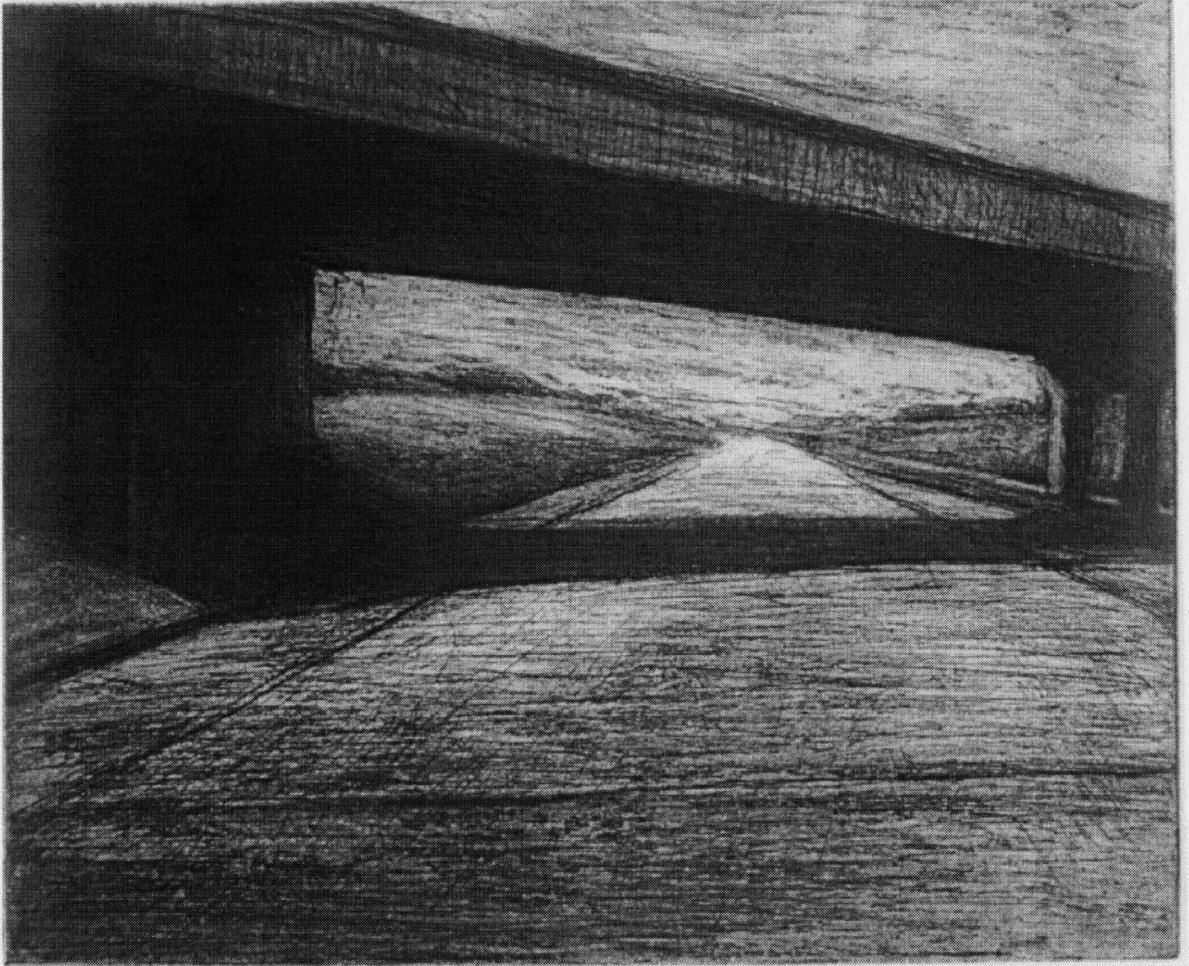


Fig. 16, Karin Stack, *Bridge, Route 88*, etching, 1995.

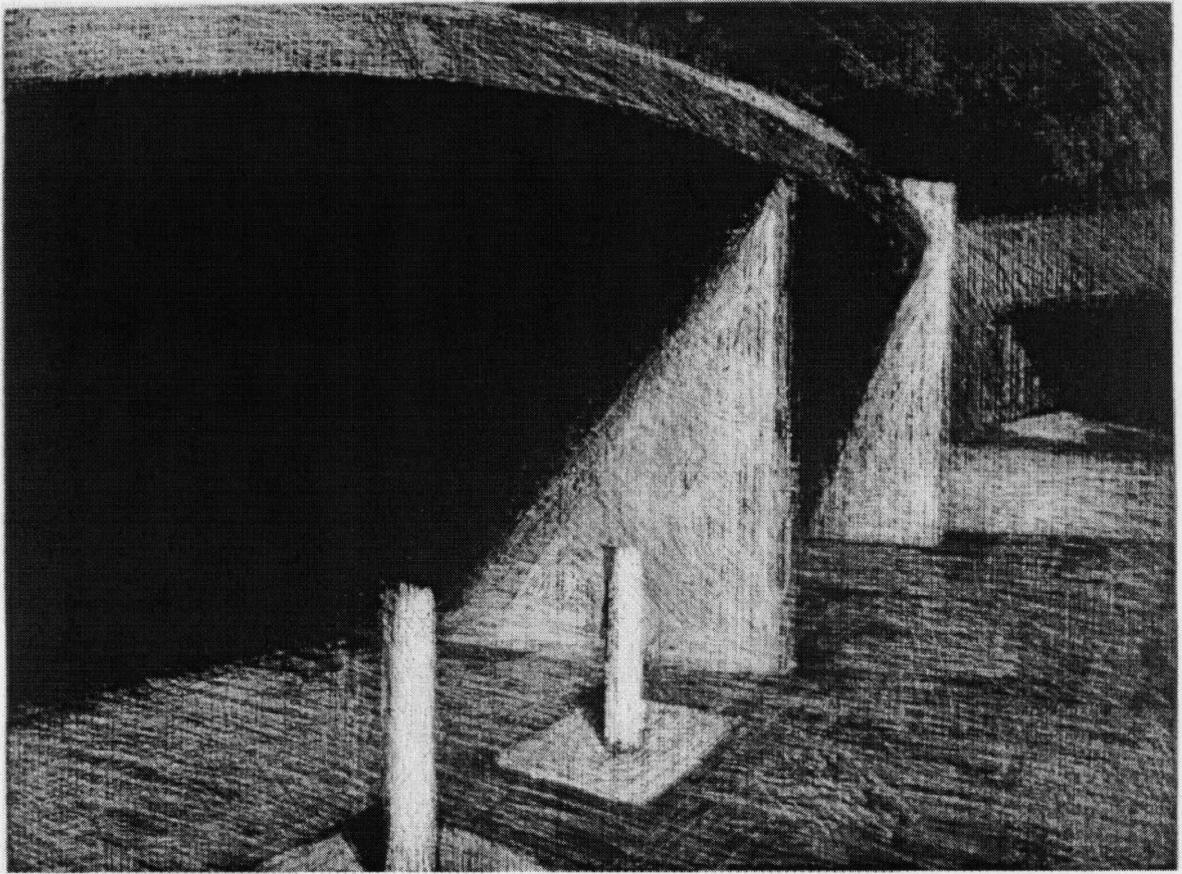


Fig. 17, Karin Stack, *Bridge with Bollards*, etching, 1996.

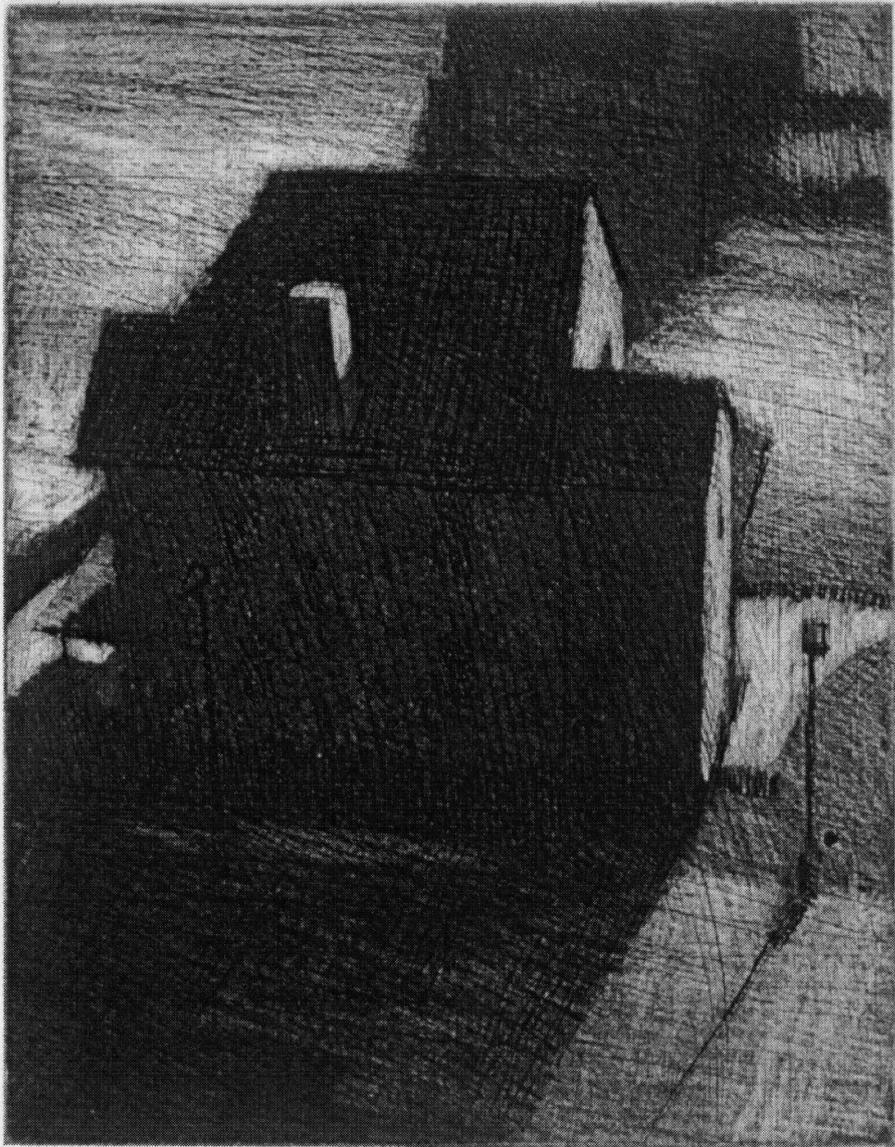


Fig. 18, Karin Stack, *House from Above*, etching, 1995.