

# Petzel

Information Courtesy of DYS 44 Lampronti Gallery

## **GIOVANNI PAOLO PANINI**

Born in Piacenza, Italy, 1691

Died in Rome, Italy, 1765

*Architectural Capriccio with Saint Peter preaching*

Oil on canvas, 98 x 135 cm

Signed on the lower left *J. P. Panini*

## **LITERATURE**

Arisi, Ferdinando. *Gian Paolo Panini e i fasti della Roma del 700*. Rome: Ugo Bozzi Editore, 1986, p. 411, no. 360.

Caretto, G. *Vedutisti e paesaggisti del XVIII secolo*. Turin, 1971, p. 17.

Panini started his apprenticeship with Giuseppe Natali (1652-1722) and Andrea Galluzzi (1689-1735), and later worked with the scenographer and quadraturist Francesco Galli Bibiena (1659-1739). In 1711 the young Panini moved to Rome, where he studied with Benedetto Luti (1666-1724) until 1718, becoming well known as a painter of frescoes with strong decorative character. In 1719 he became a member of the 'Accademia di San Luca' and of the 'Congregazione dei Virtuosi del Pantheon' and established strong links with the Academy of France in Rome, into which he was admitted in 1732. While in Rome, Panini painted landscapes influenced by the work of Gaspar van Wittel (1653-1735) and capriccios, following the examples of Giovanni Ghisolfi (1623-1683) and Viviano Codazzi (1604-1670). Among his patrons were prominent members of the papal court such as the Cardinals Albani, de Carolis and Alberoni, and pope Innocent XIII, from whom he received his first important commission: the frescoing of the Quirinale Palace.

In the wonderful architectural capriccio of the Lampronti collection, in a completely fictional scenery, there are some clearly recognizable elements based on archeological sites and monuments. For instance, the Piramide Cestia is in the background and the Louvre statue of the river Tiber, seen from behind. This statue is visible frontally in the Guidi painting (Arisi, cat 276) of 1739. This work is among the most remarkable and harmonious examples of capriccios ever accomplished by Panini: everything is well balanced and finely painted in the landscape. On the right and on the left-hand side the remains of ancient temples form a majestic theatre coulisse for the composition. In the foreground various ancient roman remains can be noted: fragments of sarcophagi, vases, majestic column basements, reflected on a stream of water. The figures live their daily lives in a space that recalls the imponent memory of a grandiose past. A young man sitting with his back turned looks behind towards the spectator, other men are gathered around Saint Peter, listening to him preaching as the landscape opens in the center over a sky crossed by light clouds. The temples are decorated by fragments of bas-relief with vegetable decorations or with scenes that are part of decoration cycles. Every element, every column capital, every detail is carefully described and defined by a skilled play of lights and shadows.