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### Front Cover Illustration

Since Volume 35, Number 1, the front cover of *Parergon* has featured medieval or early modern objects held in New Zealand and Australian collections.

***Three Soldiers and a Boy*, Giambattista Tiepolo (early 1740s), published 1785, etching, 14.2 × 17.6 cm (plate), 23.4 × 30.8 cm (sheet), from the *Vari Capricci* series, 3rd edn, published 1785 by Giandomenico Tiepolo. National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, purchased with funds donated by the National Gallery Women's Association, 1996. Accession number 1996.569.3. This digital record has been made available on NGV Collection Online through the generous support of the Joe White Bequest.**

Giovanni Battista Tiepolo of Venice (1696–1770), also known as Giambattista (or Gianbattista) Tiepolo, was a prolific Italian painter and printmaker, who worked in Germany and Spain as well as Italy. This etching is one of ten *Capricci* (caprices) in horizontal format produced in the 1740s as a prelude to twenty-three *Scherzi di Fantasia* (tricks of fantasy) completed around 1758 and posthumously published by his son. Here a youth relaxes on his abdomen in a posture of observation close to the trio of soldiers who enthral him. They rest on high ground, sparsely littered with trees, antiquities, and an unread scroll, where the cast of the *Capricci* series always meet. The pyramid of soldiers is fixed by a standing figure holding a banner whose peak, beside another pole, is echoed by two cypress trees receding in diminishing perspective towards a ramshackle town and mountains below a billowing cumulus sky. The standing figure is certainly a soldier, because he wears fitted armour, but there is a quality of make-believe about the cloths wrapped around his head and the makeshift banner, especially since his face looks younger than the recumbent onlooker, who sports what might be the hint of a moustache and sideburn as if he were almost ready to join the patriotic cause of the soldiers resting in an interlude of some timeless, dynastic war—a classical inversion of the Flight into Egypt. Despite the apparent bald patch on the crown of the onlooker's head—probably awkward line work intended to convey sunlight reflected from his hair, like other empty highlights on his body—there is no doubt he is a youth, because he already appeared naked in the same posture in the foreground of *Apollo and the Continents* on the ceiling of the Palazzo Clerici at Milan (1739), and because his lively undulating body contrasts sharply with the brawny musculature of the nearest soldier, whose back curves against us in apparent exhaustion or despondency as he sits gazing with another adult companion at a shield. No one knows the meaning of Tiepolo's etchings, the only body of privately produced work in his *oeuvre*. They are like episodes in a plotless novel whose spontaneous sophistication Pierre-Jean Mariette, a contemporary connoisseur, applauded as 'dreams that passed through his head'. Here, however, we might surmise that the discrepancy between the naïve enthusiasm of the onlooker and the enigmatic gaze (shifted to the left but still seeming to hail us) of the standing 'child-soldier' signifies the difference between those who know (whether real or otherwise, and of whatever age) and those who are ignorant of what they wish for. Heralding victory over time, the artist's signature appears on the cracked surface of an obelisk on the left, from which spinous vegetation sprouts to affirm a series of horizontals that counteract plunging depth and diagonal gazing.