

# *Marcus Tuscher's Etchings*

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The story of the Egyptian journey may be likened to a sacred torch which was set aflame in 1737 when the 29-year old First Lieutenant FREDERIK LUDVIG NORDEN embarked at Leghorn and crossed the Mediterranean in order to follow the course of the Nile through Egypt. On his return trip he stopped in London where the torch in 1742 was handed over to others and culminated in Copenhagen in 1755 in the birth of the *magnum opus*.

The man who received the torch directly from the hands of Norden and who was to bear the main responsibility for the artistic quality of the work was CARL MARCUS TUSCHER (1705-1751) of Nuremberg. He had received his first training as an artist in his home town from the painter and copper engraver JOHANN DANIEL PREISLER during the years 1718-1728. He always remained in close contact with this man and his family. Thereafter he spent 12 years in Italy, from 1728 to 1740.

The first chapter mentioned Baron PHILIPPE DE STOSCH, a legendary figure, secret agent in British service, archaeologist and collector. His role as activator of the entire Norden travel project must not be underestimated and was acknowledged in Copenhagen when, after the printing of the *Voyage d'Egypte* had finally been completed, he was given a copy as a gift to which was added an extra complete set of all prints in order that he might include these prints in his collection of topographical sheets without having to "cannibalise" the work he

50 had received.<sup>1</sup> For several years the eldest of Johann Daniel Preisler's sons, JOHANN JUSTIN PREISLER, was employed by Stosch as artistic assistant and Marcus Tuscher was also to enter into his service. The latter was to be occupied mainly with copying antique gems and medals which were the nucleus of the Baron's collections.

In the Stosch house Tuscher had occasion to meet many outstanding artists and scientists and to study the contemporary Italian art of copper engraving in the Baron's well-stocked, methodically arranged portfolios containing graphic art.<sup>2</sup> While working for Stosch, Tuscher learned to copy his subjects with something close to scientific precision. By associating with him and his friends he became acquainted with antique art and was admitted to the Accademia Etrusca in Cortona, a distinction he obviously appreciated highly.<sup>3</sup>



Lorenz Natter: Philippe de Stosch. C. 1738-39, signed in greek letters. Intaglio, cut in an emerald, 25 mm h. The Ermitage, Leningrad (from the collection of Catherine II).

Stosch was a member of the same society, and Tuscher became particularly interested in Egyptian art of which Stosch was a great connoisseur. This is where he picked up the light, bright etching technique which was particular to contemporary Venetian artists, expressed in Marco Ricci's and Canaletto's graphical works.<sup>4</sup> This is also where he first met F. L. Norden; as far as is known they were both in Leghorn in 1737, when Norden set out on the Egyptian journey from this port city.

Tuscher was to remain in Italy for some years to come. In 1740 he was in Florence from where he proceeded by way of France and Holland to London. As an agent for England Stosch maintained close contact both there and in Holland,<sup>5</sup> and he may well have provided Tuscher with useful addresses and contacts. In any event he quickly won friends among newly arrived artists, among them two he already knew from the house of Baron Stosch. One of them was the medallist and cutter of precious stones LORENZ NATTER (1705-63), who in the late 1730's had arrived in London straight from Italy;<sup>6</sup> he was able to serve as a guide in the foreign city. The other was F. L. Norden, who did not, however, arrive in London until autumn 1741 after an extended expedition to the West Indies. They must have met soon after.

As described in some detail in the first chapter Norden had been admitted as a member of the Royal Society. In appreciation of this honour he issued a small 16-page pamphlet entitled *Drawings of some Ruins and Colossal Statues at Thebes in Egypt with an Account of the same in a Letter to the Royal Society 1741*. The preface is dated 7th of January 1741. Since the English calendar at the time was different from that of the Continent the dating of the preface must be adjusted to 7 or 18 January 1742 and the year of publication for the book to 1742.

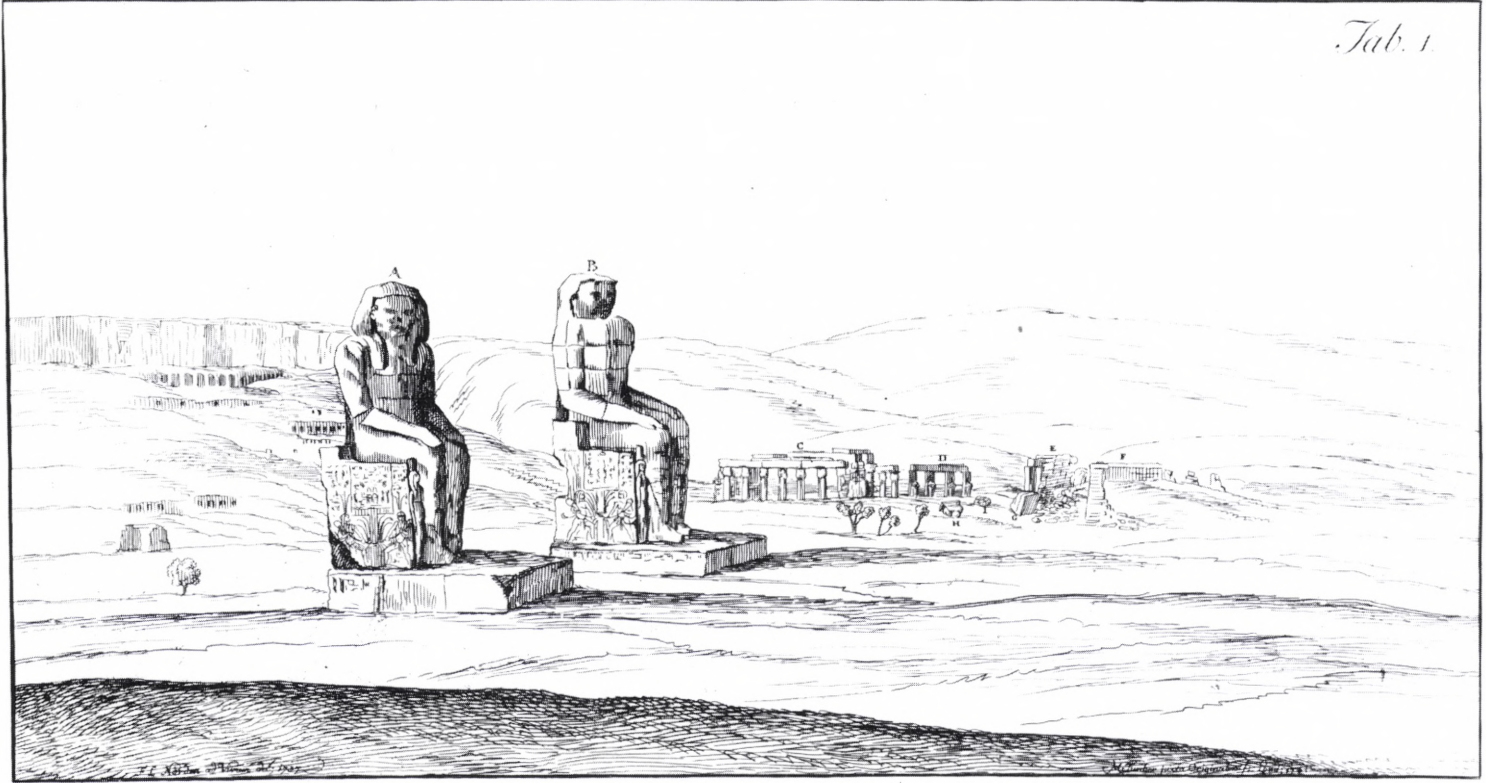
Norden, who was not only a deft draftsman but had also taught himself how to etch, did one of the four plates for the pamphlet



52 himself, with the signature *F. L. Norden del: fec:*, which shows what he calls the Memnon Palace. He asked the wellknown English copper engraver and art historian GEORGE VERTUE to do one of the other plates which shows the layout of the Memnon Palace and the two Colossal Statues nearby; this plate is signed *F. L. Norden delin. Vertue fecit*. The remaining two plates with the two Colossal Statues and the base with the hieroglyphical inscriptions for one of them were etched by Tuscher and designated *F. L. Norden ad vivum del. 1737 M. Tuscher juxta Originalem f: Lond. 1741*. Strangely, and contrary to custom, the prints were not done in black but in red or green. In his pamphlet Norden states that Vertue's plan was the result of notes and measurements made by Norden while he was in Thebes and that the three other plates "were executed upon the place just as you see them: I have not since been willing so much as to finish them; much less would I have ventured to add any thing by way of ornament or embellishment". These words serve as a guideline for the way he wishes the illustrations done in the definitive work; not a travelogue with a touch of the romantic but rather "the report of a faithful traveller, and of one who pretends to no more, than having seen with some care, and related honestly what he has seen".

This pamphlet marked the beginning of the collaboration between Norden and Tuscher but it was still at the incipient, testing stage. But at this time it must already have been clear to Norden that if he were to choose between George Vertue or some other English copper engraver and Tuscher the latter would be at an advantage in his choice of collaborator in a future work. This decision would have been reaffirmed by Baron Stosch who received the pamphlet immediately upon its presentation.<sup>7</sup>

Marcus Tuscher from a Drawing by Norden: »The Palace of Memnon«, plate I in *Drawings of some Ruins and colossal Statues ... 1741*. The plate of this etching was approved by Norden. It was used again in *Voyage*, plate CX (cf. p. 22), but revised by Tuscher: The growth to the right and left in the foreground was added as well as the landscape was peopled with soldiers and civilians, and the signature "F. L. Norden ad vivum del. 1737 M. Tuscher juxta Originalem f. Lond. 1741" was deleted.



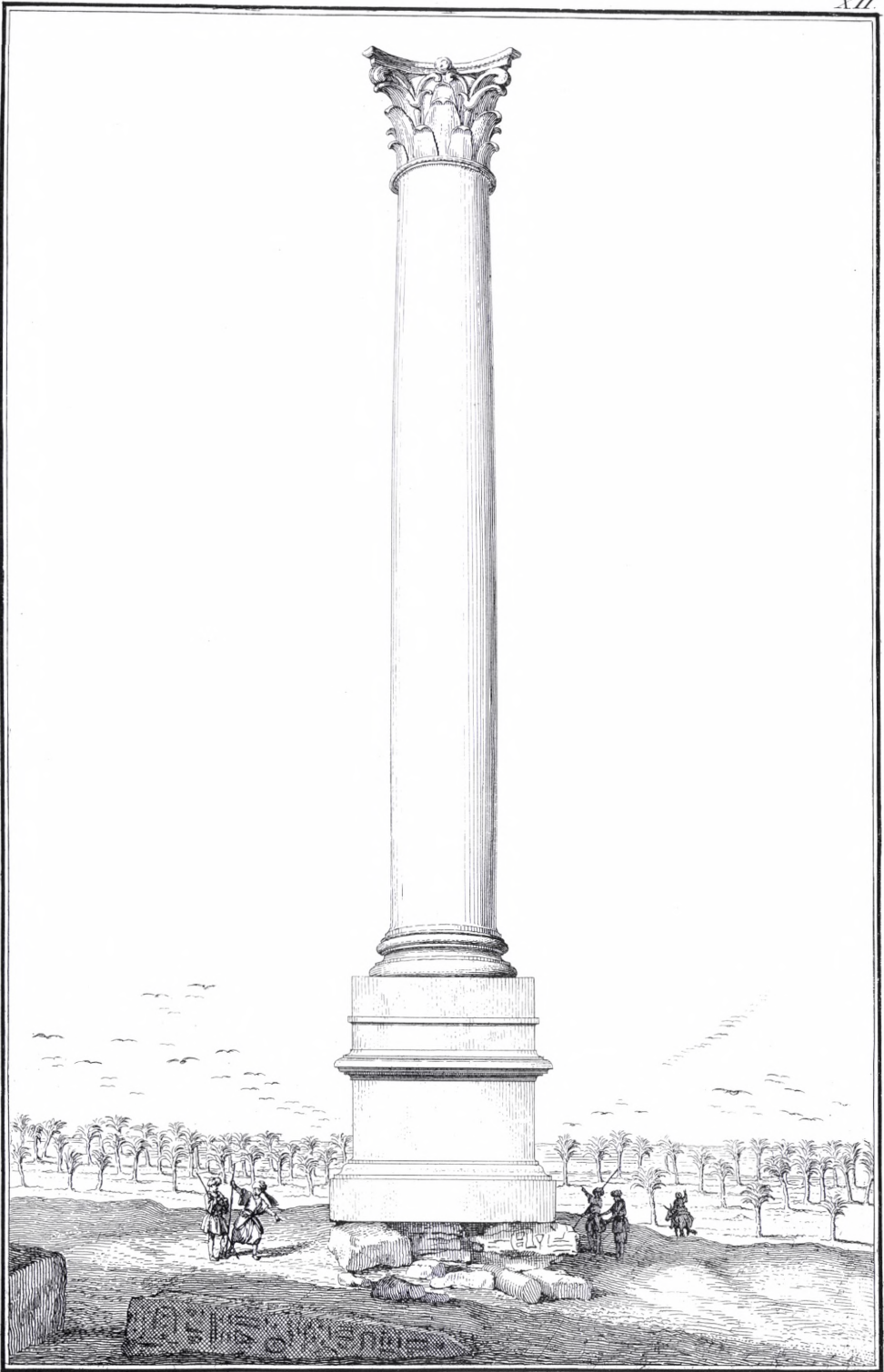
54      During the period from February into the summer of 1742 the friendship and mutual trust between Norden and Tuscher must have developed, bolstered by their common interests in art and antiquity, and at the same time Norden's health constantly deteriorated until in the course of the summer he decided to go to France in the hope of regaining his health in a friendlier climate. A Royal Decree dated 5 May 1747 concerning the work of Norden states that Tuscher has consulted Norden on every single drawing and that he knows his intentions for each drawing as well as Norden himself.<sup>8</sup> And the prologue of the completed work mentions the meeting of Norden and Tuscher in London "where the voyage of Egypt was the ordinary subject of their conversations. Sieur TUSCHER had seized the ideas of his friend, and the *designs* of the voyage into Egypt were almost as familiar to him, as to the author himself". (English ed. 1777).

As stated in the first chapter, Norden on his death-bed made the explicit wish that Tuscher was to complete the planned work. Already one year later, by 1 October 1743, he had received an offer from the Danish King Christian VI to go to Copenhagen for this very purpose. His honorarium was fixed at 800 Rigsdaler annually and 10 Rigsdaler for each engraved plate.

Meanwhile the entire Egyptian material disappeared. After Norden had died in Paris on 22 September 1742 the boxes with his manuscripts and drawings were dispatched from France to England by an English ship. In the Channel it was captured by a Spanish privateer, and the cargo, including the boxes of Norden, were taken in storage. The Spanish ship was traced and found, and long-winded negotiations on the release of the manuscripts to Denmark were opened. Eventually, in summer 1743, efforts to have them transported to England were successful and they were then to be dispatched to Denmark.<sup>9</sup>

Marcus Tuscher from a Drawing by Norden: "The Column of Pompey". *Voyage*: Plate XII. Compared to Norden's sketch (p. 10) the plate illustrates how the distorted perspective was corrected in the etching. The proportions of the column were improved by making the shaft higher and gracefully thinner, and through the introduction of the human figures at the base of the column Tuscher notably accentuated the dimensions.





Meunier del. 1737. Turcher. Sc. 1744.

Colonne, dite de Pompée, à Alexandrie.

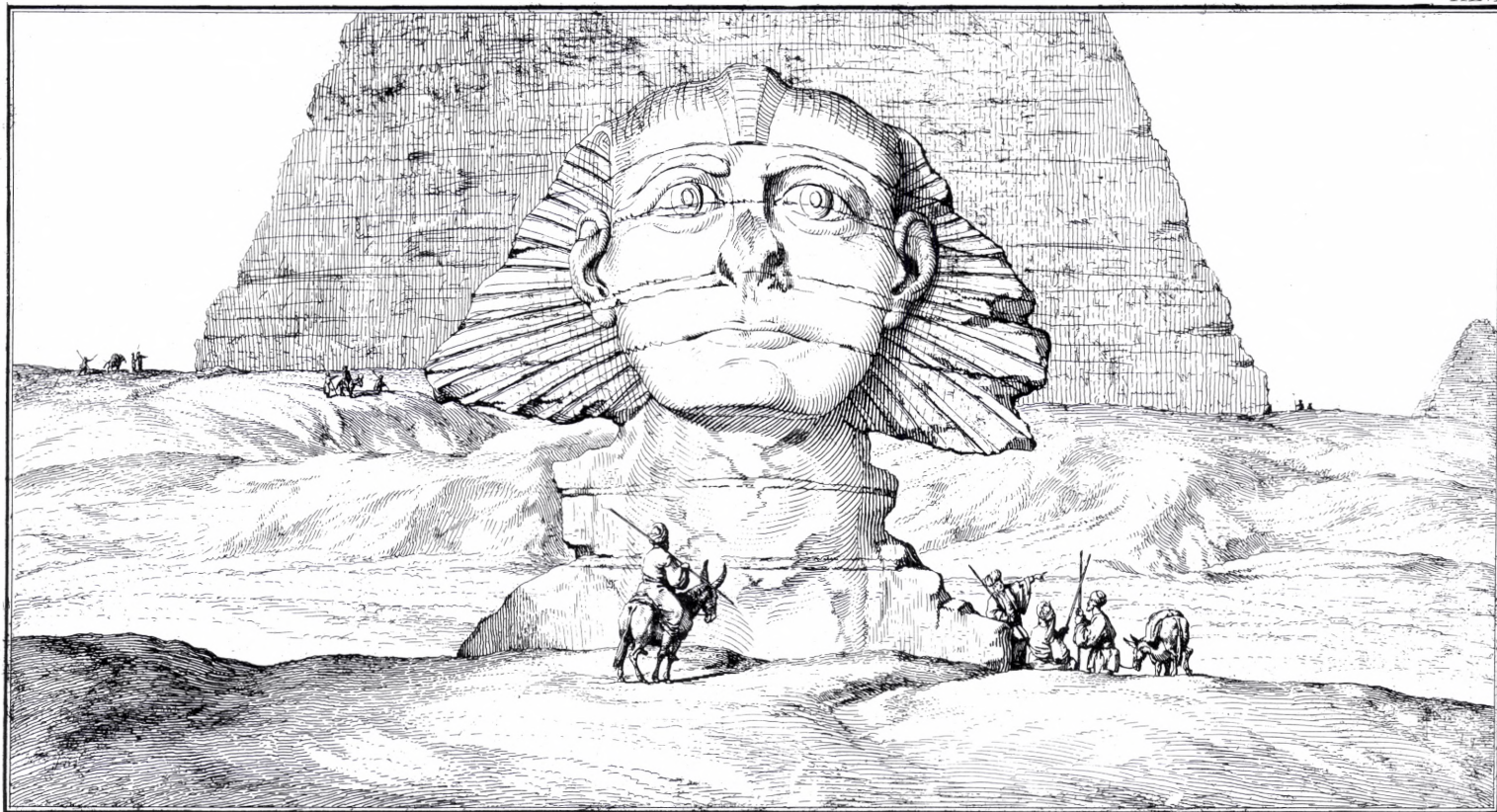
56 Tuscher left London early in October in the company of two other artists who were going to Denmark to try their luck there. One was the cutter of precious stones Lorenz Natter, the other the turner of ivory LORENZ SPENGLER who had only lived in London a short while. They arrived in Copenhagen after sixteen days of stormy weather towards the end of October on a corvette bound for Denmark.<sup>10</sup> There is ample reason to believe that Norden's manuscripts and drawings were carried to Denmark on the same voyage.<sup>11</sup>

Marcus Tuscher was more than a draftsman and graphic artist. He was an unusually versatile artistic talent. In Italy he had also worked as an architect and a painter, and in the latter field both as a painter of history and portraits. In Denmark he continued his activities in all these fields and was appointed painter to the Royal Court in 1745. From 1748 and on he held the position of Professor at the recently established Royal Danish Academy of the Fine Arts. Despite this versatility he did not neglect the work of Norden. By 1746 he had executed half of the full-page etchings. That year was marked by the death of King CHRISTIAN VI, who had with such great interest and generosity watched the genesis of the book. FREDERIK V wished the work to be continued but did not himself want to contribute any funds to this end except that Tuscher's work, as in the past, would be paid for by the King. Early in 1747 Tuscher had to put the work aside for a while as he was unable to get hold of copper for new plates. But when Tuscher died on 6 January 1751 at the age of 45, only one plate remained unfinished.

The two volumes in folio which constitute F. L. Norden's *Voyage d'Egypte et de Nubie* contain altogether 159 plates, 156 of which were etched by Tuscher. All 159 plates were executed from the drawings of Norden himself. For four of these plates the copper plates from Norden's pamphlet *Drawings of some Ruins* from 1742 have been re-

Marcus Tuscher from a Drawing by Norden: The Sphinx of Chefren. *Voyage*: Plate XLVI. The etching depicts the head of the Sphinx in strict accuracy corresponding exactly to the prototype (p. 18). The surrounding landscape, however, is freely composed. Based on the somewhat dry and prosaic drawing of Norden's, Tuscher has created an etching of a highly dramatic effect.





*Tête colossale du Sphynx, vue en face. Elle est au devant de la seconde Pyramide de Memphis.*

58 used. They are the plates numbered CX-CXIII of which the first two were engraved by Tuscher while the last two were done by Norden himself and by George Vertue respectively. For the reproduction in the definitive edition the signatures have been erased and certain parts of the etchings have been re-engraved, probably in order to match the other plates more suitably. Plate CLIX which Tuscher had not completed before his death shows a prospect from Derri. It was engraved by ODOARD HELMONT DE LODE in the style of Tuscher but artistically it does not live up to its model.

The work also includes two full-page etchings done after drawings by Tuscher (se p. 2 and front cover). One, the frontispiece, is signed *Inventé et gravé par M. Tuscher, Academie Etrusque*. It is a spectacular Baroque composition representing Science which shows the antique treasures of Egypt while Fama trumpets the reputation of the country and science, and the God of the Nile in the foreground watches. The other full-page etching shows F. L. Norden with front and reverse of a memorial medal – never executed, incidentally<sup>12</sup> – bearing his picture in profile. Tuscher may have come upon the idea for this composition from an engraving showing Tuscher's own face: on top, in an oval frame, his bust; at the bottom, the front and reverse of a medal executed by MARCUS MEYRS, a Dutch artist he probably met in Rome 1729-30 (se back cover). The portrait of Norden had not been completed at the death of Tuscher. It was finished by JOHAN MARTIN PREISLER. This artist, who had been summoned to Denmark in 1744, was a younger brother of Tuscher's friend from his Roman period, Johann Justin Preisler.

It is stated in the previous chapter that dedication and prologue were not issued concurrently with the other part of volume one. This part, the printing of which had been completed by the end of 1750, contains eight etched vignettes for the dedication and prologue and

Marcus Tuscher: Sketch of a frontispiece. Drawing in Indian ink in The Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters, Copenhagen. Fama trumpets forth the renown of Science. Pallas Athene unveils the treasures of Egypt and the God of the Nile looks on undisturbedly, whilst Nature unconcerned continues her own life; an ibis and a crocodile snap up their dinner.







60 four initials by Tuscher. He never got as far as the vinettes to Volume II. For these parts of the work which were published as an entity in 1755 JONAS HAAS supplied copper-engraved initials, while PETER CRAMER drew the vignettes: one was etched by Cramer himself, the others by Jonas Haas. The vignette in front of the prologue was, however, done by Haas in 1753 from a drawing by Johan Martin Preisler.

Thus many forces were united in order to realise the final work and bring it up to a standard which would provide foreigners with an interest in books and research—a favourable idea not only of the culture in ancient Egypt but also in the country responsible for the production of the book.

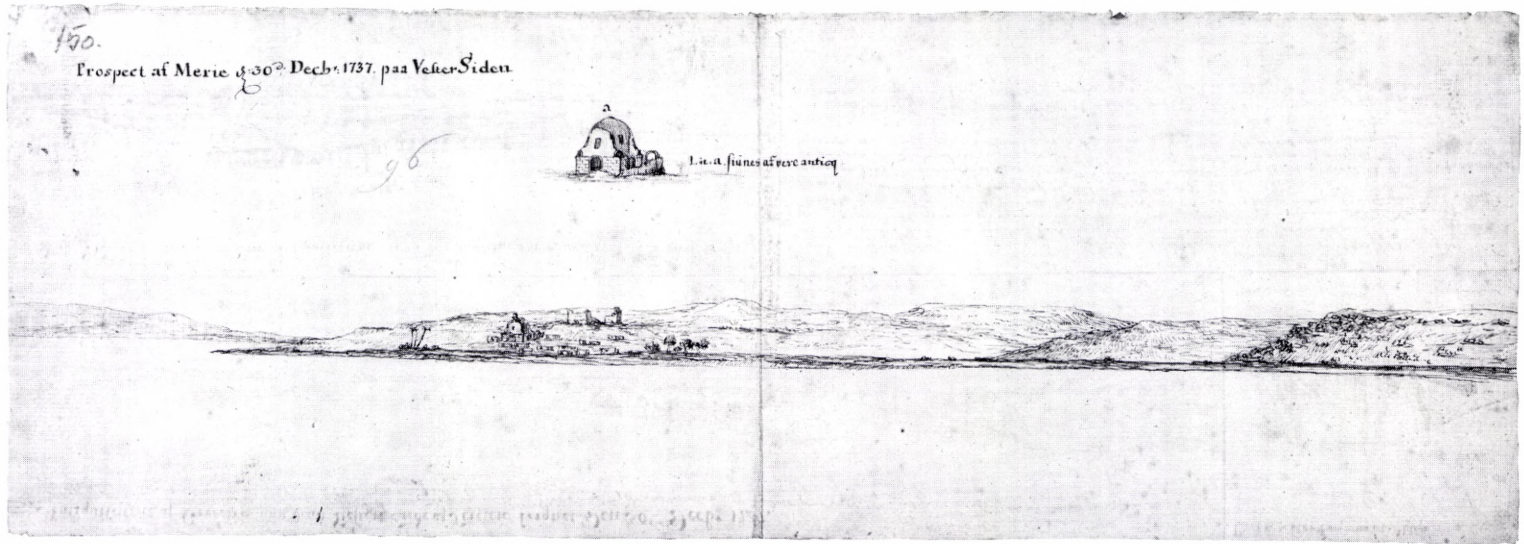
Next to Norden Tuscher is the one who has made the greatest mark on the work and he was eminently suited to tackle this assignment. First of all because he knew the intentions of Norden. Second because of his personal relationship with Norden. Undoubtedly, he has through his collaboration wished to make a sacrifice on the altar of friendship. Already in the first picture of the book, the portrait of Norden, one discerns the personal bonds between the two: Outwards a young elegant officer as everybody else, iron-clad and garbed in furs. But upon closer view, one should note the consciously unorthodox position of the portrait in the oval of the picture and the sensitivity rendering a portrait of a much more intimate character than most. It is a picture of a friend. In all the plates of the work Tuscher has sought loyally to convey the thoughts and sketches of Norden.

Tuscher's manifold interests and versatile artistic abilities also helped to make him especially suited to solve precisely this problem. He was something of a polyhistor and much of his knowledge has been to the advantage of the work: His great language facilities,

which included also the classical languages, his solid knowledge of archaeology and history. He possessed the scientist's sense of accuracy in the detail and the artist's perception of the whole. It is characteristic that he followed the model presented to him with great precision as long as the task was to follow Norden in a detailed representation of a building, an antique relief or an inscription. He would tactfully correct a misunderstood perspective in the model but he would not change a dot or a line of a hieroglyph. After having paid due respect to the scientific aspect, to an archaeological memorial or the peculiarities of a topographical prospect he liked to add a detail which would bring life to the situation, he would round off the composition and make the picture into a work of art. It might be a group of people, a couple of sailing ships or some palm trees.

Tuscher was an architect, a painter and an excellent draftsman. In all these fields his ability as an illustrator come to their full right in the work of Norden. But he was also a talented graphic artist who understood how to make the best of the effects of the engraving pen and the etching needle; he knew how to translate the colourful play of light and shade into black and white. He caught the sun of Egypt and reproduced the ripples of the glittering river Nile which, passing by forever, follows the reader throughout the work.

*Voyage d'Égypte et de Nubie* occupies, as we have seen, a major part of the scientific literature whose purpose is to explore Egypt's history of art and culture. Without the dedicated interest of Norden, his perseverance and precise observations the high standard would not have been attained. But thanks to Tuscher the work also holds a special place in Danish art history. The two volumes represent one of the most handsome publications put out in Denmark and their illustrations are one of the highlights of Danish graphic art in the 18th century.



F. L. Norden: Prospect of the village Garbe Merie. Drawing in the Royal Academy of Sciences and Letters, Copenhagen.

Marcus Tuscher from the Drawing by Norden, reproduced above: Prospect of the village Garbe Merie. *Voyage*: Plate CL. In this etching Tuscher, with Norden's drawing as the starting point, has created one of the most beautiful illustrations of the work. The river banks are rendered with painstaking exactitude, particularly notable in the edifice, the centre of interest for Norden. It is repeated at the top on an enlarged scale: The ruins of an antique building. With a view to bringing about a wholeness and concentration of the composition Tuscher has added a group of three palm trees.





*Prospect du Village Garbe Merie, dans la Nubie.*  
*a. Ruines d'un temple antique.*

1. Lomholt III, 1960, p. 195.
2. Christian Elling: *Paraden*, h. 1958 p. 127.
3. L. Spengler in: *Nye danske Magasin* 1823 p. 147.
4. Jørgen Sthyr: *Dansk Grafik 1500-1800*, Cph. 1943 p. 147 ff.
5. F. H. Kjølsten in: *Jyske Samlinger*, New Series VIII 1968-70 p. 340 ff.
6. Elisabeth Nau: *Lorenz Natter*, Biberach 1966 pp. 32-37.
7. Kjølsten, *op.cit.* p. 350 f.
8. Lomholt III p. 78.
9. Kjølsten, *op.cit.* pp. 354-57.
10. C. H. Vogler in: *Neujahrsblatt des Kunstvereins ... zu Schaffhausen*, 1898 p. 9 ff.
11. Kjølsten, *op.cit.* p. 357.
12. Georg Galster: *Danske og norske Medailler og Jetons*, Cph. 1936 p. 278.

Front cover, frontispiece and back cover, cf. pp. 58 and 60.

Marcus Tuscher: Portrait of F. L. Norden. Etching. At the foot the obverse and reverse of a – never executed – medal with a portrait of Norden and a pyramid. The etching was not completed when Tuscher died; it was finished by J. M. Preisler in 1751. Presumably the ribbon in the field above the oval portrait is his work.

Marcus Tuscher: Frontispiece for *Voyage d'Egypte*. Etching. The allegory represents Danish Science personified in Pallas Athene, carrying the Greek XP-sign for Christ, accompanied by a lion holding the Danish national coat of arms. She points out the treasures of Egypt including several items directly related to the plates of the work, e.g. in the background, left, The Memnon statues (p. 22) and in the foreground, right, The Canopic jar (p. 35).

Marcus Meyers: Portrait of Marcus Tuscher. Etching. At the foot the obverse and reverse of an – existing – medal with Tuscher's portrait and the genius of the art of painting. Inscriptions in Greek conveying the signature of the artist and the name of the portrayed person.