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*Printmaking in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies (1734–1799)*

In 1734, after almost two centuries under Spanish dominion, the two Sicilies became an independent nation. The new king, Charles of Bourbon, understood the potential of printmaking for transforming Naples into a modern European capital. He founded a royal publishing house, the Stamperia Reale, and invited international artists and craftsmen to the city. My project investigates why printmaking was understood as central for the making of a modern state, trying to complicate and expand dominant narratives on the subject.

In those years, discoveries such as the unearthing of Herculaneum and Pompeii and events such as the eruptions of Vesuvius and the earthquakes in Calabria and Sicily brought Southern Italy to the centre of international attention. Challenging traditional narratives, I suggest that in those cases the peripheral and politically un-influential Naples was the place of the original, whereas capitals such as Paris or London had to do with faint, and often inadequate reproductions. As an interface between Naples and the international community, prints more than paintings thus became an important site for the articulation and projection of a National identity. This is why my project focuses on prints. Prints and printmaking offer a particularly productive case study to think about images made under pressure, in contact and through temporal deferral, of copy, multiplication, communication and misalignment.

Case studies will include prints reproducing archaeological findings (e.g. the aforementioned *Antichità di Ercolano Esposte*), plates accompanying volcanological treatises (including but not limited to William Hamilton's *Campi Phlegraei* of 1776), and publications trying to interpret foreign systems of communication, from Andean *quipus* (Raimondo di Sango's *Lettera Apologetica* of 1751) to Arabic script (Giuseppe Vella's *Libro del Consiglio d'Egitto* of 1793).

The aim of my project is to show how in eighteenth-century Naples prints, and printed matter more generally, were used to close the perceived cultural and temporal gap between Naples and other European nations. They were part of a general effort to both project the city as modern, through a synchronisation of the printed image, and actually make it so, through the organisation and consolidation of the institutional and commercial structure that allowed the image to be printed.