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*Picturing Mobility: Late Medieval and Renaissance Naples at the Threshold of the Mediterranean*

My dissertation, “Picturing Mobility: Late Medieval and Renaissance Naples at the Threshold of the Mediterranean,” investigates relationships between power, place, and identity in Naples during the French Angevin and Spanish Aragonese regimes (1266–1442 and 1442–1495, respectively). I consider objects collected, commissioned, and circulated by these regimes, and explore how they constructed and depicted transcontinental ties that extended beyond the Italian peninsula, connecting Naples to France, the Iberian Peninsula, North Africa, and the Holy Land. These artworks are both monumental and portable, encompassing frescoes, sculptures, panel paintings, manuscripts, textiles, and gemstones. I argue that they are crucial not only as representations of cultural, intellectual, and political interactions between Naples and other Mediterranean port cities, but also as objects fundamental to the formation and maintenance of these constantly negotiated encounters.

By focusing on mobility and exchange, my dissertation upends conventions of Italian Renaissance historiography that prioritize well-studied centers of artistic production with nativist governments and famous local artists. In my dissertation, questions of place supplant traditional lines of inquiry based on periodization that sharply delineate between medieval and Renaissance art. I explore the ways in which the Angevin and Aragonese dynasties responded not only to the maritime geography of their capital city and larger kingdoms, but also to the imperial precedent set by the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II (1194–1250). His cosmopolitan, transcontinental court, and reign over Naples and the Kingdom of Sicily, Jerusalem, and swaths of northern Europe, served as an inspiring point of reference for the later Neapolitan courts.

My project therefore positions Naples within a Mediterranean geography in a new way, conceptualized according to Angevin and Aragonese priorities, political and familial ties, and expansionist motivations. Additionally, my project bridges disciplinary boundaries that divide European and Islamic art historiographies, taking a multiperspectival approach to relationships cultivated between Neapolitan rulers and their overseas counterparts. In deploying mobility among port cities—of artworks, artists, or audiences—as a key interpretive framework, my project expands the field of Italian Renaissance art by situating the Angevin and Aragonese courts of Naples at the nexus of transcontinental systems of artistic and cultural exchange. Such positioning rests on a Neapolitan geographic imagination with the city not at the edge of the Italian sphere of influence, but at the very center of the Mediterranean.