

ABSTRACT INGLESE TESI DI DOTTORATO

Committenza, collezionismo ed esportazioni di opere d'arte nella Napoli degli Asburgo d'Austria (1707-1734)

At the dawn of the eighteenth century, following the death without heirs of the king of Spain Charles II of Habsburg, Europe was shaken by an internal struggle between two superpowers (France and the Empire) which upset the already precarious social and political equilibrium. This race towards territorial and commercial expansion also overwhelmed the Kingdom of Naples, which, from being a flourishing satellite of the crown of Spain, passed under the aegis of the Habsburgs of Austria. For the cadet son of Emperor Leopold I, Archduke Charles III of Habsburg (crowned emperor of the Holy Roman Empire in 1711), the conquest of Naples meant direct access to the immense artistic heritage of a city that had been a privileged square for Spanish patronage since the early seventeenth century and thus rivalled the coveted court of Madrid. Under the sign of dynastic continuity with the glorious Iberian predecessors, Charles kept the Spanish ceremonial, the viceregal office and all the pre-existing iconographic and cultural baggage, sending eleven viceroys to the capital of the kingdom, nobles of different nationalities and skilled diplomats, who boasted past experience at one of the most refined and feared Italian courts: Rome.

The historiographical emptiness, due to the still approximate state of the documentary investigations and the fragmentation of the studies, had not yet allowed us to outline an overall picture of the story of the Austrian viceroys of Naples, seen through a perspective of particular importance: the patronage and the relationship with the active artists in the city.

These are the years in which Neapolitan art will be characterized by a great liveliness and international openness: we are witnessing the consecration of an intelligent and refined artist like Francesco Solimena, who, starting from the lesson of Luca Giordano, will arrive towards solutions of elegant classicism to respond to the requests of the new aristocratic and imperial clientele. Another appreciated artist, in relations of commission with the Austrian viceroys until his death in 1728, will be Paolo de Matteis, author of ambitious political allegories such as the fresco with the equestrian triumph of Emperor Charles VI of Habsburg for the Hall of the Viceroys of the Royal Palace, nowadays lost, which was possible to identify the iconography and circumscribe the dating thanks to the discovery of a drawing and the aid of unpublished documentary sources. Appreciated as court portraitist, it was also possible to attribute to De Matteis a valuable portrait of Count Charles IV Borromeo Arese made by the end of the latter's Neapolitan mandate (1713) and today preserved in the Palazzo Borromeo of Isola Bella.

A wide part of the discussion was also dedicated to the importance of the festivals and celebrations that involved the viceroys, enthusiastic spectators and patrons of theatrical performances with internationally renowned musicians. The role of viceroy Vincenzo Grimani is still recognized today for having favored the return of the composer Alessandro Scarlatti to Naples, who in 1708 was reinstated in the role of master of the Royal Chapel, while, at the invitation of the viceroy Marcantonio Borghese, the refined poet Pietro Metastasio composed the musical drama *Gli Orti Esperidi*, whose staging was one of the highlights of the celebrations for the birthday of Empress Elisabetta Cristina on 28th August 1721. For the success of the events, organized

within the urban and sacred space of the city and the architectural one of Palazzo Reale, the Royal Court made use of the work of the talented major engineer Cristoforo Schor, who first distinguished himself in Rome for his personal approach to ephemeral architecture, and supported in the city by a team of local artisans known as «partitarij». The stay in Naples was for many of the viceroys the propitious occasion to purchase works for their private collections and to commission the most celebrated artists of that time large canvases to adorn the rich residences owned in their homeland; some of them also acted as exceptional agents and intermediaries in favor of the imperial court, or of family and relatives.

The research I conducted in the inventories and the works of art exported outside Naples have made it possible to shed light on the reasons for the dispersion and, in some cases, led to the identification of the works themselves, allowing to update the discourse linked to personalities less known as Georg Adam von Martinitz, Vincenzo Grimani, Carlo Borromeo Arese or to identify the entire corpus of paintings that the viceroy Michael Friedrich Althann commissioned to the roman Girolamo Maria Pesci in order to send them to Hungary where, even today, they are a precious palimpsest of the strong religious devotion of the prelate.