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SENSING NAPLES

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SENSING NAPLES

Vedi Napoli e poi muori 'See Naples and die'

The drama and beauty of Naples has long fascinated travellers. Built around a natural bay, in the shadow of a volcano, Naples is a high point on any Italian trip. Once the third largest city in Europe after Paris and London, from 1650 onwards Naples became a popular stop on the 'Grand Tour' - a journey undertaken by young English aristocrats around the Continent. Many works in this collection were made as souvenirs for visitors, who wanted to capture their experiences in the city and surrounding countryside - from sea bathing to enjoying local music, sights, food and dancing.

We invite you to join us for a tour of Naples that will engage all of your senses. In these galleries you will find prompts to look, listen, smell and feel your way around the historic city, but as no sensory experience is objective, everyone's perceptions will be different. Throughout the display specific aromas - of flowers, the sea, sulphur, tobacco smoke and perfumed gloves - have been paired with paintings, to stimulate your imagination.

Arriving in the city several hundreds of years ago, visitors were overwhelmed by visual stimuli. This gallery focuses on the sense of sight, which between 1600 and 1800 was fed by picturesque vistas of the glittering sea and monumental ancient ruins that were being unearthed at nearby Paestum, Herculaneum (excavated in 1738) and Pompeii (discovered in 1748). Most spectacular of all was Vesuvius, which erupted six times during the eighteenth century and captivated artists. In Naples sublime

beauty combined with ever-present danger, giving rise to the ancient phrase: 'See Naples and die'.

'The whole of the mountain above Terracina is covered with orange and lemon trees, that delicately embalm the air. Nothing in our own climes resemble the effect of this perfume: it is like that of some exquisite melody, exciting and inebriating talent into poetry.'

Germaine de Staël, *Corinne ou L'Italie*, 1807

Gaspar van Wittel, known as Gaspare Vanvitelli (1652/3–1736)

Posillipo with the Palazzo Donn'Anna

About 1700–1702

Oil on canvas

This *veduta*, or view, was taken from the water's edge of Posillipo, north of Naples, close to Palazzo Donn'Anna, which can be seen in the left foreground. It records many of the city's famous sights, including the wide bay, churches and Vesuvius. Magnificent gondolas float on the blue sea, while on the beach people are fishing and eating. The view is one of many painted for the Spanish Viceroy of Naples, Luis de la Cerda, Duke of Medinaceli (1660-1711), by the Dutch artist Gaspar van Wittel, who was known in Italy as Gaspare Vanvitelli.

The Bay of Naples This scent is based on a formula from the 18th century, the typical fresh scent of Eau de Cologne. It is composed only of natural ingredients, including lemon, bergamot, orange and orange flower, to create an authentic feel of the time and evoke the bay of Naples.

Giuseppe Bonito (1707–1789)

Portrait of a Gentleman

About 1740

Oil on canvas

A gentleman glances at us with a composed and almost amused expression. He is dressed in an elegant silk jacket decorated with abstract floral motifs. He holds a design for his tomb monument, which includes an oval miniature of the portrait itself, inscribed with the emblematic words: *DALLA CULLA ALLA TOMBA / UN BREVE PASSO*, 'from the cradle to the grave – a short step'. Beneath the drawing lies a map, possibly of the coast of Naples, and a compass, suggesting the need to navigate a course through life.

Gaspar van Wittel, known as Gaspare Vanvitelli (1652/3--1736)

The Grotto of Pozzuoli, with Virgil's Tomb

Signed and date 1702

Oil on canvas

This view shows the *Grotta di Pozzuoli*. Still visible today in the bay of Naples, it was a sight that fascinated artists and Grand Tourists during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It was not a natural cavity, but a 700m long tunnel excavated through the soft volcanic rock by the Roman emperor Augustus (63BC–14AD) to provide a link between Naples and Pozzuoli. At the top left is an ancient monument identified as the tomb of the Latin poet Virgil. The monument in the left foreground commemorates Alfonso of Aragon (1481-1500), who paved the Grotto and enlarged its entrance.

Tommaso Ruiz (active in Naples about 1740)

The Bay of Naples seen from Posillipo

About 1740

Oil on copper

This small painting of the bay of Naples depicts a typical view collected as a souvenir by Grand Tourists. Painted on copper, allowing for the use of a very fine brush, details include the ships and buildings along the coast. Recognisable landmarks are Castel Sant'Elmo on top of the hill and Castel dell'Ovo in the sea.

David Allan (1744–1796)

Portrait of Sir William Hamilton and Lady Hamilton

Signed and dated 1770

Oil on copper

Described by travellers as 'a man of exquisite taste' Sir William Hamilton (1730-1803) was British Envoy to Naples from 1764 to 1798 and a key figure in the life of the city. Here he listens to his first wife, Catherine Barlow, play the table piano. During his time in Naples Hamilton played host to many visitors, studied Vesuvius intently, and built up a large collection of art and antiquities, some of which are shown here. His diplomatic connections enabled him to acquire and export antiquities to Britain, even though this was illegal and against the instructions of the King of Naples.

Pietro Fabris (active between 1756–57 and 1804)

The Temple of Hera at Paestum

Late 1770s

Oil on canvas

The Temple of Hera is one of three ruins that survives at Paestum, south of Naples. This view captures the enduring appeal of Paestum as a tourist attraction: bathed in golden light, the ruin is visited by local people and Grand Tourists. British architects travelling through Italy in the eighteenth century were particularly struck by the grandeur, scale and elegance of the Classical architecture they encountered. Ruins such as this informed the designs of the architect Sir John Soane (1753-1837), among others.

Trapani manufacturing

Frame

1700-1725

Golden copper, silver, coral, mother-of-pearl

Red Mediterranean coral grew in abundance off the Italian coast and Trapani in Sicily became a leading centre of coral craftsmanship from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century. According to the Christian tradition coral symbolised the blood of Christ and was believed to ward off evil, with coral bracelets, talismans and decorative items becoming popular souvenirs. In this example orange-red coral has been combined with mother-of-pearl to decorate an octagonal frame. The contrast in the different colours of the coral suggests a date of the early eighteenth century.

Aaron McPeake

Sensing Vesuvius (lava and bell-bronze)

2023

Bronze, Vesuvius lava

In 2002, Aaron McPeake had to abandon a long career in stage lighting design due to the loss of most of his eyesight. His sculptures and installations invite us to engage and imagine using our senses. The rock used in this work is Vesuvius lava, probably formed during an eruption in the nineteenth century. Suspended above it, the bronze bells can be gently rung.

You are welcome to touch this work.

The sound piece *Sensing Naples and Vesuvius*, composed by Aaron McPeake, can be accessed via our Bloomberg Connects app.

The artist would like to thank the following people for their help: Katy Marshall, Stuart Wilding, Sarah Meantime, Corrado Morgana, Dora Filovic and Emanuele Leone Emblemata.

Vesuvius Lava Souvenirs

Visitors to Naples were drawn to Vesuvius, often climbing to the edge of the volcano's crater accompanied by a guide. A unique industry sprang up each time the volcano erupted, with medals cast directly from the flowing lava by Neapolitan craftsmen. Subjects were varied and included religious scenes, landscapes, popes, kings and local celebrities like Salvatore Madonna, one of the most famous guides of the 1830s [2]. Sometimes guides and

tourists made their own lava souvenirs by pressing coins, stones, or buttons into pieces of lava [6, 7].

The small box containing twelve Vesuvian minerals [3] was probably sold to an English traveller on his Grand Tour. Dated 1871, the inscription inside the lid names the seller, located in Naples, and the names of the minerals, most of which are now obsolete. Part souvenir, part scientific specimen, such items show an increased interest in the volcano.

Vesuvius Lava Souvenirs

1. Piece of Vesuvius lava
2. Rectangular lava medal stamped with 'Salvatore Madonna' (reverse: '1832'), 1832
3. Collection of Vesuvian minerals consisting of 12 pieces that can be found for sale by Matteo Toledo in Naples, with storage at the 1st Funicular of Vesuvius, 1871 (*Collezione di Minerali Vesuviani composta di 12 pezzi che trovansi vendibili presso Matteo Toledo in Napoli, con deposito alla 1a Funicolare del Vesuvio, 1871*): 1. Lava Rigata; 2. Idocrasia; 3. Apatite; 4. Zolfo; 5. Periclasia; 6. Cloruro di Ferro; 7. Granana; 8. Calce cristallizzata; 9. Anortite; 10. Mica; 11. Nefelina; 12. Lava
4. Round lava medal stamped with scene of *The Flight into Egypt* (reverse: 'La fuga in Egitto'), 1871
5. Piece of Vesuvius lava
6. Volcanic lava containing copper ducat from the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, 1819

7. Volcanic lava containing silver ducat from the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, 1855
8. Round lava medal stamped with an image of Vesuvius (reverse: profile of an unidentified man), 1891

Warwickshire Museums

'As soon as it was dark, the Musical entertainment was mixed with the sight and observation of Mount Vesuvius, then very busy. Mr Hamilton had glasses of all sorts...The sight was awful and magnificent, resembling on a great scale the most ingenious and splendid fireworks I ever saw...'

Musicologist Charles Burney, October 1770

Charles-Francois Grenier de Lacroix, known as Lacroix

Marseille (1730?– after 1782)

Vesuvius Erupting at Night

Signed and dated 1761

Oil on canvas

This nocturnal view depicts the drama of Neapolitan life during an eruption of Vesuvius. In the foreground fishermen load baskets onto mules, while others point at the massive eruption, which on this occasion lasted for 13 days, from 23 December 1760 to 5 January 1761. An earthquake was followed by the emission of fumes and rocks from the main crater, then by 'fire fountaining', whereby lava was shot tens of metres into the sky. The fire fountains built smaller cones, and during the following days at least seven cones appeared – all visible in this painting.

Such spectacular eruptions provided evening entertainment for wealthy tourists, but devastated the local agriculture, as demonstrated by the lava flows that snake their way through the land on the southern slopes.

Pierre-Jacques Volaire (1729–about 1792)

An Eruption of Vesuvius by Moonlight

1774

Oil on canvas

The eruptions of Vesuvius were among the greatest spectacles of the eighteenth century and fired the imagination of artists throughout Europe. The gentleman with a rolled map and crossed legs on the left could be William Hamilton or perhaps the artist himself. Volaire is documented as visiting Vesuvius in 1774, and an inscription on the reverse of this canvas records that it was painted *sur le lieu* (on the spot). Given the size of the painting this is probably not true, but it conveys the important role that artists played in recording such sights before the invention of the camera.

Vesuvius Erupting. An explosion of smoke and fire, hot lava and burned wood: this scent provides a new dimension to Volaire's scene, as you witness the destruction of the volcanic eruption.

Carlo Bonavia (1751–1788)

A Storm off a Rocky Coast

Signed and dated 1757

Oil on canvas

Although this is almost certainly not an exact topographical view, it recalls the rocky coastline near Naples. We see a shipwreck, and the address on the trunk pulled ashore bears the name of the original destination: Naples, the largest port on the Mediterranean. Some members of the crew swim for shore, while others pull survivors from the sea. Bonavia may have been of Roman origin, but his career was spent entirely in Naples, where he enjoyed success with both foreign visitors and local collectors. With its stormy atmosphere and impressive scale, this is one of his finest works.

NAPLES 2

Wall Text 2:

THE SOUND OF NAPLES

From 1700 Naples was ruled by a succession of viceroys. These figures represented other powers; first the Austrian Habsburgs and then, from 1734, the Spanish Bourbons. Both regimes supported a diverse artistic climate and patronage extended not just to the visual arts, but also to music, dance and the theatre - so much so that in 1792 French artist Élisabeth Vigée Le Brun (1755-1842) noted that past nine o' clock in the evening 'almost all of Naples is at the theatre'.

Music in Naples permeated every level of society, from the 'conservatories', where students studied music at the highest level, to the street musicians pictured by Pietro Fabris. In Fabris's paintings they are shown playing instruments and dancing the tarantella, a traditional, fast Italian courtship dance.

Pietro Fabris (active between 1756–57 and 1804)

The Bay of Naples from Posillipo

About 1770

Oil on canvas

What might the iconic bay of Naples have smelled like in the eighteenth century? Certainly the heady, metallic smell of fish would have drifted on the air. In this lively scene a small child in tattered clothes holds up a fish, recalling renowned German poet Goethe's description of how Neapolitan children would opportunistically transport fish from the harbour into town: *'the tiniest brats themselves are not without their many bits of business. A large fraction carry fish from Santa Lucia to sell in the town...'*
Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Neapolitan Journey*, May 28 1787

Bay with Fish. This scent is recreating the atmosphere at the harbour: the smell of fish and sea food at the fish markets, the airy sea breeze and the salty smell of seaweed.

Gabriele Ricciardelli (active from 1740 and 1780)

Posillipo from the Riviera di Chiaia

About 1764

Oil on canvas

This is one of the views of the hill of Posillipo depicted from the Riviera di Chiaia, by the Neapolitan promenade. From the eighteenth century onwards travellers' accounts report the pleasantness of the *Real Passeggio di Chiaia* (or Royal Chiaia Walk), which offered a perfect setting for admiring the landscape and city life while remaining close to the sea. With the increasing

popularity of sea bathing and the desire to escape from the heat and noise of the city, Posillipo, along the northern coast of the bay of Naples, soon became a retreat for the very wealthy, who built summer villas there.

Pietro Fabris (active between 1756–57 and 1804)

Naples from the West, with Peasants Gaming

About 1765

Oil on canvas

In this scene the Bay of Naples with Castel dell'Ovo can be glimpsed through the mouth of a grotto, but the focus is on the peasant life taking place under cover. A finely dressed woman has her fortune read by two local men with tarot cards, figures gather around a picnic to talk, share wine, and feed their children and musicians play. Such scenes of daily life were typical of Pietro Fabris's early production and were popular with foreign patrons because they blended the idyllic beauty and warmth of the city with engaging real-life elements.

Pietro Fabris (active between 1756–57 and 1804)

The Festival of the Madonna dell'Arco

1777

Oil on canvas

It is *Pasquetta* (Easter Monday) in the Neapolitan countryside and crowds gather to celebrate at the sanctuary of the Madonna dell'Arco, on the slopes of Vesuvius. In the foreground a group of girls dance the tarantella, while a musician plays a

triccheballacche, a traditional percussive instrument with three hammers. Commissioned by William Hamilton, this painting was originally among the treasures displayed at Palazzo Sessa, one of the four Hamilton's residences in Naples. Both patron and artist shared a love of Neapolitan customs - in 1773 Fabris had produced a book of prints depicting costumes of Naples, dedicated to Hamilton.

Pietro Fabris (active between 1756–57 and 1804)

Peasants Merry-making on the Shore at Posillipo

Signed and dated 1777

Oil on canvas

In this lively painting peasants dance and play music to celebrate a wedding on the beach at Marechiaro (Posillipo). Higher up, onlookers watch the dancing couple, and a woman hangs a white cloth to dry in the sun. It is possible that the young couple are dancing to a famous tarantella which was composed by an unknown author in the early seventeenth century. Known as 'O *Guarracino*, this Neapolitan song tells the story of a love affair and quarrels between fish. Even today, this tarantella remains widely recognized and frequently performed in song and dance.

Anonymous, 'O *Guarracino*, early 1700

Gennaro Basile (1722-1782)

Self Portrait

About 1752–1755 (?)

Oil on canvas

Gennaro Basile was born in Naples, but little is known about his early training, and he only found fame after moving to the Habsburg Empire in 1752. In this intriguing self-portrait Basile glances at us over his shoulder, brush in hand, as if we have just interrupted him at work. The identity of the lady he is painting is unknown, but she resembles the young Habsburg ruler Maria Theresa (1717-80), whom Basile might have met during his first stay in Hungary. The enigmatic mask squeezed in the right corner is probably an allegory of art.

Giuseppe Bonito (1707–1789)

The Poet

1738–1739

Oil on canvas

In this painting, a pendant to *The Music Lesson* shown on the right, a grinning poet is surrounded by admiring figures, including a clergyman, and a young pupil. The number of figures present and the clutter of objects on the table conveys a relaxed and festive atmosphere. These lively paintings were originally part of a set of four and are now attributed to Giuseppe Bonito, who became court painter to the King of Naples in 1751, and Head of the Academy of Drawing in Naples in 1755.

Giuseppe Bonito (1707–1789)

The Music Lesson

1738–1739

Oil on canvas

A young musician plays the harpsichord, while the elegantly dressed young man may be singing in harmony. Behind them are an elderly music teacher, and several more figures, including a Black servant with a tea cup. The young musician would have undoubtedly been familiar with the music of Domenico Scarlatti (1685–1757), a renowned Baroque composer and harpsichordist from Naples. Perhaps she is even playing one of his 555 keyboard sonatas.

Domenico Scarlatti (1685-1757), *Sonata in E Major*

Giuseppe Bonito (1707–1789)

Portrait of a Man Smoking a Pipe

About 1730

Oil on canvas

The use of pipes to smoke the shredded leaves of the plant known as *Nicotiana* (or flowering tobacco) had gained popularity throughout the sixteenth century. *Nicotiana*'s highly fragrant and vividly coloured leaves added to its appeal, making it a desirable commodity among all sections of society for both its medicinal and pleasurable properties. By the mid-seventeenth century, smoking had become commonplace across Europe, and many of the paintings in this collection include figures smoking. The rise in tobacco's popularity also led to fiscal restrictions, with the first such regulations introduced in the Kingdom of Naples as early as 1627.

Man Smoking a Pipe. The smell of pipe tobacco has been created by capturing the molecules of real sweet tobacco. It reflects the mild aromatic notes and sweet honey-like elements of this scent.

Neapolitan or Sicilian manufacturing (?)

Cabinet

About 1610

Ivory, mother-of-pearl, and hardwood inlay

Hunting was a popular pastime in Naples, which perhaps explains the decoration of this elaborate cabinet, which is covered in mother-of-pearl patterns of foliage, birds, and hunting figures. The ivory interior features a columned façade surrounded by small drawers depicting scenes are from the Old Testament Book of Esther. The cabinet was probably made in either Naples or Sicily. At this time the import of materials such as ebony and ivory was controlled by the viceroyalty of Spain, which ruled Naples, and also controlled the Indo-Portuguese colonies from where these materials came.

South of Italy, or Trapani, Sicily

Casket

About 1700–50

Coral and mother-of-pearl inlay with semi-precious stones (jasper, moss agate, lapis lazuli)

Materials from the sea were often used by Southern Italian craftsmen: this precious casket is decorated with leaves carved from mother-of-pearl and coral and its edges are veneered with tortoiseshell. The lid is decorated with brightly-coloured semi-precious stones, and conceals a lockable secret compartment. The casket may have been used to store important letters, or jewels. Although rare, it is still possible to find similar examples in European royal collections.

TASTING NAPLES

What flavours did visitors to Naples encounter? In Southern Italy poor harvests could lead to famines, but still life paintings conjure up the dream of *cuccagna* – a mythical land of plenty. Volcanic activity made the soil around Naples rich, and, combined with hot sun, often produced an ideal climate for growing fruit, vegetables and grape vines.

Neapolitan artists excelled at painting still lives, and following conventions similar to those found in Spanish *bodegón* paintings, tended to picture simple, uncooked and home-grown food. These humble scenes enabled artists to demonstrate their ability in painting the curl of a leaf or the bloom on a fig: dramatically lit and sumptuously textured, they show a taste for opulence and sumptuousness that characterises all Neapolitan art.

Giovan Battista Ruoppolo (1629-1693)

Still Life of Watermelons, Plums, Cherries, Figs, Pears, and a Monkey

About 1685

Oil on canvas

This is one of a pair of fruit still-lives was probably designed to be hung over interior doors in an aristocratic *palazzo* (palace) in Naples, and for this reason are also called overdoors, or *sovrapporte*. Here Ruoppolo depicts black and white prunes, a watermelon, and Sicilian specialities such as small round pears and the long thin *zucca serpente* (snake squash).

Luca Forte (about 1600/1605–before 1670)

Still Life with Apples, Grapes, and a Dragonfly

Signed, before 1640-1650

Oil on copper

The fruit displayed here includes three apples and two types of grapes from the Vesuvius area – *fragola* or 'strawberry' grapes and an elongated variety known as *cornicella*. Small still-life paintings were typical of Luca Forte's production, but unusually this work is painted on copper, the smooth surface of which enhances the shining surfaces of the apples. Forte concentrates on painting the fruit's imperfections and solidity, and on rendering the tiny dragonfly, all of which suggest close observation from nature.

The Metropolitan Master (active in Naples between 1660 and 1690)

Still Life with Melon, Peaches, Figs, Mulberries, Plums, and Carnations

About 1676–1700

Oil on canvas

Peaches, plums, figs, and mulberries are arranged against a dark background. These fruits represent the produce of Southern Italy; in addition to providing berries, mulberry trees also provided an income for Italian peasant farmers, who sold their leaves as food for silk worms. In a shiny vase on the left are a handful of carnations; on the right, a melon is cut into three parts. This still-life has been attributed to the 'Master of Metropolitan Still Life', identified by recent scholarship as the Roman painter Michele Pace del Campidoglio (1625-1669), who was influenced by Flemish and Neapolitan still-life painters.

Giovanni Battista Recco (about 1615–1660)

Still Life with Apples, Cabbage, Parsnip, and Lettuce

About 1650–1660 (?)

Oil on canvas

The half-open lid of a wicker basket reveals an abundance of apples, some of which appear overripe. Lying in the centre on the table is a parsnip and a solitary mature apple, while on either side is a cabbage and a ruffled lettuce still stained with soil. Recco was one of the leading still-life painters in Naples. His paintings recall the kind of naturalism common in Spanish art such as that of the young Diego Velázquez (1599-1660).

Paolo Porpora (1617-1675)

Still Life with Flowers in an Urn, Butterflies, and a Snake

About 1650s

Oil on canvas

Paolo Porpora, nicknamed 'Paoluccio dei Fiori' (Paoluccio of Flowers), was influenced by Dutch flower painters that he met in Rome in the 1650s. This bouquet astonishes for its bright colours and variety of blooms: can you spot the dahlias, irises, campanulas, narcissus, calendulas, chrysanthemums, peonies, and tulips? The painting has a dark underside, with danger and decay suggested by the snake darting out from the urn and the dry leaves, which are just beginning to curl.

Still Life with Flowers. This scent is inspired by the roses, carnations and tuberose in the painting, combined with dry, heavier notes of warm musks and spices like clove.

Giovan Battista Ruoppolo (1629-1693)

Still Life of Figs, Cherries, Plums and other Fruit, with two Guinea Pigs

About 1685

Oil on canvas

One of the most sought-after painters in Naples, Giovan Battista Ruoppolo was a pupil of Paolo Porpora and the uncle of Giuseppe Ruoppolo. This painting is a pendant (partner) to the painting hung on the left of the door, and includes two guinea pigs happily feeding on cherries and plums.

Giuseppe Ruoppolo (1631?–1710)
Still Life with Fruit and Mushrooms
Signed, about 1700 (?)
Oil on canvas

The bounty shown here includes heavy bunches of white *cornicella* grapes, black rounded grapes, apples, pears, peaches, nectarines, and jasmine flowers, all of which would all have thrived in the fertile soil and warm climate surrounding Naples. The rich, luminous quality and attention to accurately depicting the fruit and vegetables is a hallmark of Baroque Neapolitan still-life painters like Giuseppe Ruoppolo, who signed this work.

Neapolitan manufacturing (?)

Basin

1725–1750

Tortoiseshell, mother-of-pearl, and gold inlay

We do not know if this basin was purely decorative or if it had a practical function, such as ceremonial hand washing or bearing fruit. The decorative scene at the centre would have been created by heating the tortoiseshell to make it malleable, then inlaying precious decorative elements into the soft material. The design derives from engravings by the French artist Jean Bérain (1637–1711) and features a woman sitting under a parasol with a curious little dog by her side. A male figure kneels presenting her gifts and, on the right, a soldier in oriental armour holds a lance.

Spanish (or Neapolitan) manufacturing

Console

About 1750s

Painted, gilded wood, with green-granite top

The gold, green, pink, and white colours and refined carving seen on this console table is reminiscent of the porcelain produced by the famous Capodimonte porcelain factory, which was built up in Naples by king Charles of Bourbon (1716–1788).

NAPLES 3

TOUCH

Touch is often the most restricted sense in an art gallery, but it is everywhere in paintings. This is particularly true of religious and mythological paintings, where touch is closely linked to stories of faith, belief, healing and care. Gestures of touch unite many of the figures in the scenes in this room - from the Virgin Mary lovingly cradling Jesus on her lap to the adult Christ inviting his disciple Thomas to touch his wound.

As a Catholic country, Naples remains rich in tactile religious rituals that focus on the body. On entering a church, Catholic Christians dip their fingers in holy water and make the sign of a cross on their heads; during Holy Communion they receive the Eucharist on their hands or their tongues. The legend of the blood of San Gennaro, patron Saint of Naples, highlights the importance of ritual to Neapolitan society – every year, three times a year, a relic of the Saint's blood is believed to transform from solid to liquid, the event witnessed by crowds of onlookers.

Giacinto Diana (1731–1804)

The Reception of Saint John of God into Heaven

About 1764

Oil on canvas

This painting is a sketch, or *modello*, for a larger commission realised in the Ospedale della Pace (Hospital of Peace) in Naples, in 1764. It shows Saint John of God ascending to Heaven on rose-coloured solid clouds. The foreground is populated by contemporary figures, including a dying man lying naked on the steps. Saint John dedicated his life to the poor and the sick, and this is probably an allusion to the story of when John, assisted by an angel, carried a dying beggar to hospital.

Bernardo Cavallino (1616–1656)

The Flight into Egypt

About 1640–50

Oil on canvas

Warned by an angel that King Herod had ordered all infants in Bethlehem to be killed, Joseph 'rose and took the child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt.' Following the biblical account, here the Holy Family make their way through a dark forest. While the donkey and the figure of Joseph are lost in the shadows, Cavallino uses a shaft of cool moonlight to illuminate the tender interaction between Mary and Jesus. Together they hold up a bunch of grapes, symbolic of Christ's ultimate fate.

Luca Giordano (1634–1705)
Holy Family with Infant Baptist
About 1682–1686
Oil on canvas

Touch binds together the figures in this religious scene, which was likely painted while Giordano was in Florence. Dressed in a rich blue mantle, the Virgin Mary holds the naked Christ Child on her lap, her fingers touching his bare flesh. He in turn reaches for the small cross held by his cousin, the infant John the Baptist. The Baptist's tanned skin and animal fur reference the time he spent in the desert. The goldfinches are symbolic; according to legend the bird's red spot was acquired when it removed a thorn from Christ's head and was splashed with blood.

Lorenzo Vaccaro (1655-1706)
The Four Continents: Europe, Africa, Asia, America
About 1690
Marble

Vaccaro's life-size marble busts depict the four continents as female figures, with distinct attributes taken from a famous early emblem and symbol book known as the *Iconologia* (1593). Europe is represented by a young woman wearing a helmet and antique breastplate, claiming cultural and military supremacy. Africa is portrayed with a turban and ears of grain on her head, symbolising the continent's fertility. Asia is depicted wearing hemmed fabrics and a floral headdress, with a chain bearing a dromedary camel, and America has a feathered crown and an angry expression reflecting prejudices of the time. They were likely commissioned from Lorenzo Vaccaro by a secular patron.

Mattia Preti (1613–1699)

The Incredulity of Saint Thomas

About 1670s

Oil on canvas,

Christ and Saint Thomas are depicted in a dramatic moment of revelation, as Jesus invites Thomas to touch his wounds and witness his resurrection with the words: '*reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.*' The use of light emphasizes the symbolic importance of the scene. Time is suspended and the space is silent, as if we are holding our breath waiting for Thomas's realisation. This painting is one of five by Mattia Preti on the same subject.

Francesco Solimena (1657–1747)

Portrait of a Neapolitan aristocrat

1734–1735

Oil on canvas

Although the identity of this man is not known, Solimena's sharp perception of his character and the refinement of his precious clothing emphasise his rank. He wears an elegant ceremonial dress consisting of a long jacket, known in Italian as *giamberga*. One hand rests proudly on his hip, while the other holds his cream-coloured leather glove, which would probably have been saturated with perfume to overpower the strong smell of the solutions used to preserve leather.

Perfumed Gloves. Catherine de' Medici (1519-1589) began the fashion for perfumed gloves at the French Court, introducing techniques that were later used in Italy. To recreate the smell of

perfumed gloves fragrant flowers like jasmine, rose and lavender have been combined with animalic notes like musk, ambergris, civette and castoreum.

Francesco Solimena (1657–1747)

Venus with Iapyx tending the Wounded Aeneas

1690–1692

Oil on canvas

This impressive canvas was possibly commissioned to decorate a great Neapolitan *salone* (hall), together with a pendant, which is now lost. Sketches for both canvases are displayed nearby. This scene is from Virgil's poem the *Aeneid* and shows the wounded Aeneas being tended by the bearded physician Iapyx. Aeneas' mother, Venus, descends on a cloud and sprinkles medicinal herbs into the silver basin held by one of the soldiers. The heavenly potion proved successful, and Aeneas was able to return to battle with his son Ascanius.

Trapani manufacturing

Nativity scene

Early seventeenth century

Coral, silver, gilt-copper, enamel

This delicate Nativity scene is housed within a ruined architecture covered with vegetation and enamel copper plants. The Holy Family, the shepherds, the piper, and the woman carrying the basket are made of coral fragments assembled with wax-lacquer, while the golden bronze donkey also offers coral

fruits. The figure of the baby Jesus is removable and would probably have been placed into the crib on Christmas Eve. The custom of the Nativity reached its peak in the eighteenth century with the large, three-dimensional Neapolitan nativity scenes known as *presepio*.

Francesco Solimena (1657–1747)

Venus with Iapyx tending the Wounded Aeneas

Priam, King of Troy, begging Achilles for the Body of Hector

1690–1692

Oil on canvas

These are two sketches for larger canvases which are considered a pair. One of these larger canvases is displayed nearby, and shows Venus descend on a cloud to rescue her son Aeneas. The second (lower) sketch shows Priam, King of Troy, begging Achilles to accept a ransom for the body of his son Hector, a subject taken from Homer's *Iliad*. There is no trace of the large painting related to this sketch.

DYSPLA

4 Tactile Poetic Digital Sculptures depicting Data Colonialism **2023**

Inspired by Lorenzo Vaccaro's busts, neurodivergent-led arts studio DYSPLA has created four performative digital sculptures featuring descendants of colonised Nigeria, Singapore, Brazil, and Cyprus. Addressing the abuse of colonial power and the effects this has on identity, the artwork also plays with the idea that our data is captured and manipulated beyond our control for economic gain.

To access this digital artwork please take a sheet or scan the QR code and follow the instructions. Limited edition of 7,000 sheets.

Luca Giordano (1634–1705)

The Judgement of Solomon

The Brazen Serpent

About 1690

Oil on canvas

These two paintings are considered a pair and depict two stories from the Old Testament. The first shows King Solomon on his throne: asked to determine the true mother of a baby he announced that the child should be cut in two, so that each woman should have half, and was able to identify the real mother when she leapt to save the child. The second painting illustrates the episode of the Brazen Serpent, in which God punished the Israelites by sending poisonous snakes into their camp. Repentant, they begged Moses to save them. He cast a bronze snake and fastened it to a wooden pole - whoever fixed their eyes on it would be saved from the snake's bite.

Lorenzo Vaccaro (1655–1706)

Saint Michael

About 1700

Silver and gilt bronze

This precious statue depicts the Archangel Michael in Roman centurion armour. He is in a dynamic pose, standing on one leg and raising his spear and his shield, which is inscribed in Latin *Quis ut Deus* (Who would think himself to be as God). He is attacking the devil, represented by the small figure at his feet, surrounded by snakes. The statue is modelled in silver and bronze with gold accents and attributed to Lorenzo Vaccaro due to its exceptional quality.

Pendant of the Immaculate Conception

Spanish manufacturing

After 1660

Pendant of the Immaculate Conception

Andalusia (?)

About 1630

Brass, gold, black, white, and blue enamel, and green paste

These two gold enamelled pendants represent the Virgin Mary surrounded by the rays of the sun. The openwork pendant above dates from about 1630 and features the Virgin standing on the horns of the moon, framed by the inscription: *CONCEIBIDIA SIIIN PIECIADO OIRIIGINAL* (conceived without original sin). The pendant below dates from after 1660 and shows the influence of the Spanish painter Murillo both in the pose and expression of

the figure. These pendants reflect the popular support for the belief in the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary in seventeenth-century Spain and Naples, and would likely have been worn for religious ceremonies and special events.

THANKS

The works on display in these three galleries represent one of the largest collections of Neapolitan art in the UK. They were all acquired by Compton Verney's founder, the philanthropist Sir Peter Moores (1932-2016), who wanted to share his love of Italy widely.

Research has been undertaken with support from with the Center for the Art and Architectural History of Port Cities, Naples, with curatorial assistance from Alessia Attanasio, Clara Baudet and Eleanor Townsend.

The contemporary commissions have been developed in partnership with Unlimited and the scents created thanks to the sponsorship and collaboration of IFF.

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