

Engraved panoramic view, on four joined sheets, with letterpress text below, loss and repairs to letterpress lower right, old folds strengthened on verso.

THE CITY THAT KEEPS VIRGIL’S GOLDEN EGG?

Naples. 1699. Nouvelle et exacte description de la tres-celebre & ancienne Ville de Naples.

Author
JAILLOT, Alex Hubert

Publication date
1699.

Publisher
a chez H. Jaillot,

Publication place
Paris,

Physical description
Engraved panoramic view, on four joined sheets, with letterpress text below, loss and repairs to letterpress lower right, old folds strengthened on verso.

Dimensions
563 by 1040mm (22.25 by 41 inches).

Notes
Legend has it that the Roman poet Virgil, who over the course of history had assumed the mantle of sorcerer, placed a precious golden egg, in a crystal case, inside an iron cage, within the foundations of the Castel dell’Ovo (Chateau de l’oeuf). The talisman’s power was so strong that so long as the

egg remained, so would Naples flourish,… And so it did, as this magnificent panorama of the city, shown at the end of the seventeenth century, is clear testament to.

Sailing vessels from all over the world fill the turbulent seas, and find refuge in the safe fortified harbour, protected by the Chateau de l'oeuf, signalling Naples as a powerful centre for international trade. The numerous docks teem with commercial activity, and the ruling classes promenade at leisure. Watching over all is the towering Castel Sant'Elmo (Soc de Charue), and at the centre of the scene, the Royal Palace (Palais du Viceroy). Below the view is text celebrating Naples's history, and explaining its geography.

However, the year after this superb panorama was published, and nearly two centuries of Habsburg Rule, the death of Charles II (1665-1700) threw Europe into the all-consuming chaos of the War of Spanish Succession. In 1714, as a result of the Treaty of Rastatt, Naples would fall under the Austrian rule of Charles VI, Holy Roman Emperor,… but not for long,…

The Frenchman Alexis-Hubert Jaillot (1632-1712) was born in the small hamlet of Avignon in Franche Comte. In 1657 he travelled to Paris with his brother Simon and found employment as a sculptor. He was fortunate to meet the Flemish engraver Nicolas Berey, the publisher and mapmaker to the Queen. His subsequent marriage to Jeanne Berey resulted in Jaillot joining his father-in-law in trade. Much of Jaillot's work depended on the maps of his predecessor, Nicolas Sanson d'Abberville (1600-1667), the greatest French map-maker of his generation and the founder of the French School of Geography. The great fire of 1672 destroyed the Blaeu mapmaking empire in Holland and Jaillot quickly acted to fill the gap now left in the market. Near 1670, Sanson's sons entered into collaboration with Jaillot to produce the monumental 'Atlas Nouveau', which included enlarged and embellished renderings of Sanson's magnificent maps. Jaillot's efforts awarded him the title of Royal Geographer by Louis XIV.

Bibliography

Provenance

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