

# Il Piccolo Principe

Giuseppe Sanmartino alla Reggia di Caserta

27 maggio | 11 settembre 2022 - Cappella Palatina

## Exhibition guide



# *Welcome!*

We invite you to travel back in time with us, to imagine being a guest of a grand court in a royal residence. The prince heir to the throne of the Kingdom is about to be born. There is great excitement at the Palace. Royal births require a complex ceremonial to be organized quickly, but with extreme care. After the public birth of the child, in the presence of ministers, ambassadors and elected people, the blessed event must be announced to the people with cannon shots and the lighting of the places of power for three evenings. This is followed by the performance of the *Te Deum* in the Chapel; the official baptism; the royal procession for the presentation of the Prince to the people; the kissing at court; the first public release of the Royal Child for the solemn mass in the Cathedral. It is also necessary to organize dance parties, theatrical performances and cockaignes, to celebrate the power of the ruling dynasty, to strengthen the consensus of the people and impress other European courts.

This ritual is also described in the documents that tell the long-awaited birth of the Crown Prince Carlo Tito di Borbone, particularly significant for the political history of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, because it consolidated the continuity of the Bourbon dynasty on the throne of Naples. Firstborn male of Ferdinand IV and Maria Carolina of Austria, the little prince had come into the world on a cold winter day on January 4, 1775 in the Reggia di Caserta.





In the section of the exhibition dedicated to the 'Portraits of the Royal Family', two young spouses welcome you: King Ferdinand IV of Bourbon and Queen Maria Carolina of Austria, who had the task of building a fruitful and hopeful kingdom. The portraits, by an unknown artist close to Francesco Liani, are contemporary copies of those painted by Anton Raphael Mengs. As in a photo album, the series of portraits preserved between the royal residences in Vienna and the Cerralbo Museum in Madrid - reproduced here in digital format - is the story in images of a family history that year after year grows with new children, brought into the world to consolidate the Bourbon dynasty on the throne of Naples.

Written and musical celebrations, theatrical performances and fireworks, charity and cockaignes were also organized for little Tito, whose birth was accompanied by pardons and a particularly rich festive cycle, which took place throughout the year and in particular in June 1775. The calendar of celebrations was prepared in Caserta by Minister Tanucci: serenades and dance parties in the Royal Palace, operas in the San Carlo theater, cockaignes off the Palazzo, horse races in Via Toledo and in the street of Chiaja.

Carlo Vanvitelli, Royal architect, heir of his father Luigi in the management of the huge building site of the Royal Palace of Caserta, was entrusted with the task of designing the layout of the room destined to host the magnificent party, given on July 30 in Naples by the officers of the Battalion Real Ferdinando to solemnize the birth of the Royal Crown Prince of the Kingdoms of the Sicilies. The precious volume is exhibited on display with the related loose tables.



To kick off the solemn celebrations was the representation in the San Carlo Theater of the *Natal di Apollo*, written by Saverio Mattei and set to music by the Master of the Chamber Paquale Cafaro, of which we display the edition of the printed libretto, with the outlined figured anteporta by Fedele Fischetti, and an eighteenth-century copy of the score.

IL NATAL  
D' A P O L L O  
COMPONIMENTO DRAMMATICO  
Per Festeggiare la NASCITA

For the occasion of the royal birth, celebratory medals were also made. Both cast in bronze, the two specimens on display were made one by a famous medalist of the time, the German Bernhard Perger, the other designed by Tommaso Solari, a pupil of Sanmartino and author of several sculptures for the Reggia di Caserta. like the *Maestà Regia* on the Grand Staircase.



The celebrations also included the exaltation of the virtues that a prince must possess. The *Allegories of the Virtues of the Princes* created by Francesco Celebrano and Giacinto Diano, exhibited here, are preparatory sketches for ceilings in noble Neapolitan residences.







The sources do not report the name of the architect who had designed the complex and gigantic system of the party machine located off the castle to celebrate the birth of Prince Carlo Tito, but an idea of how it should have appeared to the amazed eyes of the people and of the whole court we can borrow it from the painting exhibited here by Tommaso Ruiz, depicting the *Feste e cuccagnia fatte in Napoli il dì 19.9bre.1740. Per il Battesimo dell'Infante. Vista di notte*, painted to document the rich celebrations for Infanta Maria Isabella, daughter of Carlo and Maria Amalia.

A real visual document is the painting by Antonio Joli, of unknown location and reproduced here in digital, depicting the *Corteo Reale a Via Foria* (Naples), with Queen Maria Carolina of Austria on board the royal carriage, with the newborn Prince Carlo Tito di Borbone in his arms, and another carriage in tow on which are the first two daughters, Maria Teresa and Luisa Maria Amalia. The procession, according to what the documents tell us, took place on February 14, 1775, when the royal family returned to Naples from the royal residence in Caserta.



Among the practices connected to the celebrations of real births there was that of the official portrait of the Infant. The specimens exhibited here, like many others, were probably made so that the effigy of the royal Infants could be sent to related European courts, with the same function today as a photograph sent to relatives to present the new born. For the execution of the official portrait of Carlo Tito in a military suit, the king had entrusted himself to the Chamber Painter Francesco Liani, of whom the portrait of *Prince Filippo Pasquale*, brother of Ferdinand IV, is here displayed.



Queen Maria Carolina, on the other hand, due to the importance it must have represented for her having fulfilled the duty of guaranteeing the continuity of the Kingdom by generating the male heir, immediately after her birth she had wanted to consecrate to San Francesco di Paola, to whom she was particularly devoted, the effigy of the Crown Prince, entrusting the execution of the portrait to Giuseppe Sanmartino, the first sculptor of the Kingdom of Naples, well-known author of the Veiled Christ in the Sansevero Chapel. The life-size portrait was later translated into silver. Having lost the ex voto, the studies on Sanmartino, while recording its existence, have also considered the original portrait lost. The sculpture is present in the collections of the Royal Palace of Caserta at least since 1879, noted in the Inventories as a Sleeping Putto attributed to Giuseppe Sanmartino.



The absence, in the representation of the child, of the typical attributes of the putto / eros - the wings and the quiver with arrows - leads to the exclusion of this identification, just as it is impossible to assimilate the subject to a sleeping Baby Jesus, usually recognizable by the presence of attributes such as the cross-bed, the halo, the cartouche "Ego dormio, et cor meum vigilat", precognition of the Passion, or due to the presence of the Virgin. Instead, it is the sweet portrait of a chubby newborn, caught during a deep and peaceful rest in his cozy bed, on the model of the classic tradition iconography of the *Sleep of Innocence*.

A clue that strengthens the hypothesis of the identification of the marble infant preserved in the Bourbon collections of the Royal Palace of Caserta with the little prince Carlo Tito is suggested by the comparison with the figured front door of the printed booklet of the dramatic composition *Natal d'Apollo*. In the anteroom, the newborn Apollo (Carlo Tito), lying on a cloth on a base at the foot of a circular temple, is presented by the goddess Latona (Maria Carolina) in the presence of the colossal statue of the divine Jupiter: «Regius hic puer est» Proclaims the heading in the margin of the engraved table. The way in which Fischetti represents the Real Infante, a naked newborn resting on a white cloth, is identical to the classic solution adopted by Sanmartino.

The attribution of the sculpture to Giuseppe Sanmartino finds confirmation in the comparison with other works by the artist, such as the angels supporting the curtain of the *Monumento funebre di Filippo di Borbone* in Santa Chiara or those that appear next to *Cardinal Agostino Sersale* in his dedicatory monument in the Cathedral of Naples. - made in that span of years. That these angels are more corpulent relatives of the sleeping infant is evident if put near the series of cherubs created by Sanmartino for numerous Neapolitan churches - reproduced here in high definition in the multimedia section - some of these now for the first time returned to him precisely following the discovery of the *Portrait of the Real Infante* in the deposits of the museum.





The iconographic theme of the "sleeping doll", inspired by the classic Sleep of Innocence, had great success in the nineteenth century, as confirmed by the Putto - this one with wings and quiver - by the sculptor Francesco Saverio Citarelli, whose first teacher was a pupil of Sanmartino. The work was purchased in 1843 by King Ferdinand II, who had originally had it placed in the Gallery of H.M. in the Reggia di Caserta.

The two busts on display, made by Sanmartino in years not far from *Carlo Tito*, are considered among the top of portraiture in Naples in the eighteenth century and in the production of this kind by the same sculptor. In the terracotta portrait of *Father Gregorio Maria Rocco*, the modeling is of rare expressive strength and shows us the face of a man known for his activism towards the poor, but also for his wrathful character. In the marble portrait of *Livia Doria Carafa*, the perfect execution of every detail of the hairstyle and dress surround the search in the face of an acute investigation of the character of the princess of Roccella, who hints at a sad smile.





Carlo Tito, the little prince who had been entrusted with the hopes of the Kingdom, unfortunately had a very short life. The heir to the Kingdom died in 1778, just 4 years old, right in Caserta, in the Casino Vecchio di San Leucio. To commemorate his death and that of the youngest princess Marianna, Queen Maria Carolina, the "inconsolable mother", commissioned one of the most famous and sought-after artists of the eighteenth century, Girolamo Pompeo Batoni, the *Allegory of the death of the two sons of Ferdinand IV and Maria Carolina*. In the refined allegory, full of quotations from Raphael to Correggio, the delicate princess is represented while she, supported by an angel, reaches her brother Carlo Tito in heaven. Against the backdrop of the Gulf of Naples, with Vesuvius erupting, the girl is in vain held by the Earth, while the personification of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies mourns her loss.



At the end of the itinerary, in the multimedia room, discover the diagnostic analysis techniques conducted on the small marble statue of Sanmartino by the Departments of Earth Sciences, Environment and Resources, of Chemical Sciences and Biology of the Federico II University of Naples and those conservative restoration carried out in the workshops of the Royal Palace of Caserta. For a tactile as well as visual experience, touch the 1:1 scale 3d printed reproduction of the sculpture, created by CeSMA - "Center for Metrological and Technological Advanced Services" of the Federico II University with the contribution of Facto 3D, for a wider accessibility to art even for a visually impaired audience.

**Have a good visit!**

**REGGIA  
DI CASERTA**



MINISTERO  
DELLA  
CULTURA



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