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"*Le Pitture d'Ercolano* and the *Servizio Ercolanese* in the Service and Disservice of Herculanean Archaeology"

In this paper I argue that eighteenth century Bourbon reproductions of wall paintings from Herculaneum benefited but also impeded the archaeology of the ancient town. The reproductions on paper and porcelain have proved invaluable in ascertaining the iconography of now lost or faded ancient images; but they also helped push the study of Campanian wall painting into a restrictive and non-contextual approach by encouraging eighteenth century scholars, travelers, and collectors to view the painted fragments as individual, "frameable" works of art, devoid of any context.

My case study is the great Porticus in the northeast corner of the existing town. Also known as the Basilica, the Porticus was one of the first buildings to be explored by the Bourbon engineers when they began their underground excavations of Herculaneum in 1739. The structure yielded a rich treasure of marble and bronze sculpture and especially of painted wall fragments. Ignoring the surrounding framework and the context of the painted images, even destroying those not deemed beautiful enough to present to the king, the excavators cut individual images out of the wall and inserted them into wooden frames. Carlos III, King of Naples and Sicily, who instigated the excavations, delighted in the ancient images of Theseus, Achilles, and Hercules that soon decorated the walls of his palace in nearby Portici. He had the images engraved in his publication of the antiquities from Herculaneum, *Le Pitture d'Ercolano*, and when his son Ferdinand took over the kingdom and built the Royal Porcelain Factory towards the end of the eighteenth century, one of the first creations to emerge from the factory was the *Servizio Ercolanese*, a dinner service whose cups and plates featured random images from the Porticus.

I shall demonstrate how the eighteenth century reproductions have on occasion helped me in my own recreations of the painted programs in the Porticus. I shall also suggest, however, that the engravings of *Le Pitture* and the products of the Porcelain Factory are visual expressions of the Bourbon excavation methods with their emphasis on procuring individual, easily "frameable," images. They thus influenced and helped shape the study of Roman wall painting, which focused entirely on the esthetics of the individual images throughout most of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. The disregard of the original, painted framework and of the context in which the ancient images once existed, as expressed by these eighteenth century reproductions, is one of the greatest losses to the archaeology of Herculaneum, Pompeii, and Stabiae.