

COLNAGHI

Est. 1760



Antonio Joli

(Modena c. 1700 – 1777 Naples)

Naples, A Festival with a Cuccagna at the Largo di Palazzo

oil on canvas

48.5 x 77 cm.; 19 1/8 x 30 1/4 in.

inscribed on the reverse: *Palazzo Reale con la cuccagna a S.Spirito. p. Milord Brudenell. Jolli fe. 17--*

Provenance

John Montagu, Lord Brudenell, Marquis of Monthermer (1735 - 1770);
His sister Lady Elizabeth Montagu, 3rd Duchess of Buccleuch and Queensbury;
By descent to the present Lord Montagu of Beaulieu.

Literature

F. Bologna, G. Doria & F. Pannain, *Settecento Napolitano*, Turin 1962, pp. 16-19;
G. Jackson Stops (ed.), *Treasure Houses of Britain. Five Hundred Years of Private Patronage and Art Collecting*, exh. cat., Washington 1985, p. 256, no. 175;
N. Spinosa, *Pittura napoletana del Settecento. Dal Rococò al Classicismo*, Naples 1987, p. 159, no. 287;
N. Spinosa & L. Di Mauro, *Vedute napoletane del Settecento*, Naples 1989, p. 193, no. 71;
S. Cassani (ed.), *All' ombra del Vesuvio, Napoli nella veduta dal Quattrocento all'Ottocento*, exh. cat., Naples 1990, pp. 399 - 400, reproduced p. 196;
S. Cassani (ed.), *In the shadow of Vesuvius, Views of Naples from Baroque to Romanticism*, exh. cat., Naples 1990, p. 125, reproduced p. 44;
C. De Seta, *Napoli fra Rinascimento e Illuminismo*, Naples 1991, p. 242, ill. 32;
L. Salerno, *I pittore di vedute in Italia 1580-1830*, Rome 1991, p. 255;
N. Spinosa and L. Di Mauro, *Vedute napoletane del Settecento*, 2nd edition, Naples 1993, no. 71;
R. Middione, *Antonio Joli*, Soncino 1995, p. 86, under cat. no. 21, fig. 39 (comparative illustration);
S. Cassani (ed.), *Capolavori in Festa. Effimero Barocco a Largo di Palazzo (1683-1759)*, exh. cat., Naples 1997, no. 1.19.

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Exhibited

Washington, National Gallery of Art, *Treasure Houses of Britain. Five Hundred Years of Private Patronage and Art Collecting*, 3 November 1985 - 16 March 1986;

Naples, Castel Sant'Elmo, *All'ombra del Vesuvio, Napoli nella veduta dal Quattrocento all'Ottocento*, 12 May - 29 July 1990;

London, Accademia Italiana delle Arti e delle Arti Applicate, *In the Shadow of Vesuvius, Views of Naples from Baroque to Romanticism*, 27 October - 27 November 1990;

Naples, Palazzo Reale, *Capolavori in Festa. Effimero Barocco a Largo di Palazzo (1683-1759)*, 20 December 1997 - 15 March 1998.

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Lent by Lord Montagu of Beaulieu

This wonderfully evocative painting, together with its companion work *The Palazzo Reale and Castel Nuovo* which depicts a view of the Palazzo Reale taken from the other side of the palace, also on loan from Lord Montagu to the current exhibition, is part of a series of views of Naples and its environs, which were commissioned by the present Lord Montagu's ancestor, John Montagu (1735-1770), during his stay in the city on his unusually extensive nine-year Grand Tour of Europe. This included three years spent in France and six years in Italy, two years of which (1756 - 1758) were spent in Naples touring southern Italy and the island of Sicily, while commissioning views from Joli of some of the sites that he visited. Unusually, Lord Brudenell seems to have spent relatively short periods of time in Rome, evidently preferring - perhaps partly for reasons of health as he suffered from tuberculosis - to spend time in Naples. During the course of his two-year sojourn in the city, he visited many of the sites such as the Greek Temples at Paestum and those at Agrigento in Sicily, which were not on the usual grand tourists' route. Joli's views of the Greek temples at Paestum that were to prove seminal in the Greek Revival and later inspired writers like Goethe and artists such as J. R. Cozens, were the earliest visual records of these rediscovered sites of antiquity. His views of Naples also broke new ground in providing vivid portraits of its architecture and inhabitants from within the city itself, bringing to the task an eye for carefully composed compositions including telling realistic details which partly evidence the influence of Canaletto, but also reflect Joli's training as a scenographer.

Joli was born in Modena and had a peripatetic career as a painter of decorative frescoes and theatre scenery, *capricci* and *vedute*. He worked in London from 1744 – 1748 where he executed schemes for both Chesterfield House and Richmond House adjoining Montagu House on the Thames, which Brudenell's brother inherited in the 1750s. One of Canaletto's greatest English paintings, now at Goodwood, shows a view from the windows of Richmond House and a detail of the remarkable Chinese pagoda now at Boughton, which stood outside Montagu House on the Thames. It may have been during this period in the 1740s, before setting out on his Grand Tour, that the young Lord Brudenell made an acquaintance of Joli, who was to provide such a vivid series of visual records of the young milord's travels.

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After a visit to Naples, he was in Venice in 1759 and again in 1760, and his paintings show an evident debt to Canaletto. Like his Dutch predecessor Caspar van Wittel (Vanvitelli) who was the real initiator, around 1700, of the Neapolitan tradition of the *veduta*, Joli was more widely travelled than most Italian view painters and was able to supply views of Naples and many of the other towns that Lord Brudenell visited. Of the sixteen horizontal format paintings now at Beaulieu, eight are of Naples and two of Messina, and there are also views of Agrigento, Palermo, Malta, Florence, Tarascon and Avignon which Brudenell no doubt visited en route to Genoa in 1754, although the paintings themselves were probably executed later. Other views commissioned by Brudenell from Joli include a series of eleven views sold at Christies in 1958 of San Remy, Naples from Ischia, Messina, Marsala, Catania, Syracuse, Trapani, Venice and Stra,¹ and three views of Agrigento, Palermo and Messina which appeared at auction in 1975.² Together, this comprised one of the most wide-ranging series of view paintings commissioned on the grand tour.

To the left the present view shows the Palazzo Reale, which was begun in 1600 - 1602 by Domenico Fontana. Intended to house King Phillip III of Spain on a visit - which never took place - to this part of his kingdom, instead it initially accommodated the Viceroy Fernando Ruiz de Castro, Count of Lemos, and it remained the Viceregal palace until the arrival in the 1730s of the Bourbons as Kings of Naples and Sicily (the so-called Kingdom of the Two Sicilies). By 1616, the facade had been completed, and by 1620, the interior was frescoed by Battistello Carracciolo, Giovanni Balducci and Belisario Corenzio. In 1734, with the arrival of Charles III of Spain to Naples, the palace became the royal residence of the Bourbons and on the occasion of his marriage to Maria Amalia of Saxony in 1738, the interiors were extensively remodeled by Francesco de Mura and Domenico Vaccaro. Further modernization took place under Ferdinand I of the Two Sicilies and, in 1768, the great hall and the court theatre were added. Antonio Joli, who officially became scenographer at the San Carlo Theatre in 1762 on Charles de Bourbon's orders, received a large number of commissions to design and paint scenery for court productions both in Naples and at the Royal Palace of Caserta, which was to become in the later eighteenth century the principal royal residence of the Bourbon kings of Naples.

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Part of Joli's duties as a scenographer were to provide designs for the ephemeral structures for the festivals which were so much a part of Neapolitan culture in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In 1762, for example, he designed the festival "machines" for the great *fiera* of 1763 set up on the Largo di Palazzo in front of the Royal Palace. The present view shows, to the right of the square, a remarkable artificial mound surmounted by a classical rotunda, which Joli may also have had a hand in designing. This is what was known as a "*cuccagna*", deriving from the Neapolitan dialect word for a kitchen (*cucina*), but also etymologically linked to the land of "Cockayne", which was part of the annual festivities that took place during the Neapolitan carnival. The most elaborate *cuccagna* festivals in Italy were held in Naples. Initially, during the seventeenth century, these were more in the nature of parade floats, but by the eighteenth century they had become structures of increasing elaboration which were in situ in the public spaces for the duration of the Carnival. In 1722 a massive stage-like *cuccagna* was built for the name day of the Holy Roman Empress Elizabeth Christina, with statues of gods and angels adorning each plinth. Studding every wall and columns were "breads, pastries, swags of fruit and vegetables, livestock and fowl" (fig. 1). In 1747, a *cuccagna* was held to celebrate the birth of Prince Philip, son of Charles VII, king of Naples, which featured a fabulous building on a hill in front of the royal palace (fig. 2). The building's balustrades and the paths up the hill were made of cheese, cows and goats roamed about and fountains burbled with wine. Two greased *cuccagna* trees had suits of fine clothing attached to the top. In 1768, there was an extremely grand *cuccagna* held in honour of the marriage of the Austrian princess Maria Carolina to Ferdinand King of Naples, where a magnificent fake fortress was built in front of the Neapolitan royal palace and decorated with delicious food. Every Sunday during the Carnival, there was a festival known as the looting of the *cuccagna* held in the square outside the Castel Nuovo when, on a given signal provided by the firing of a cannon, the starving poor of the city sprinted towards the *cuccagna* and grabbed all of the food that they could come away with to the amusement of the crowds and courtiers (fig. 3).

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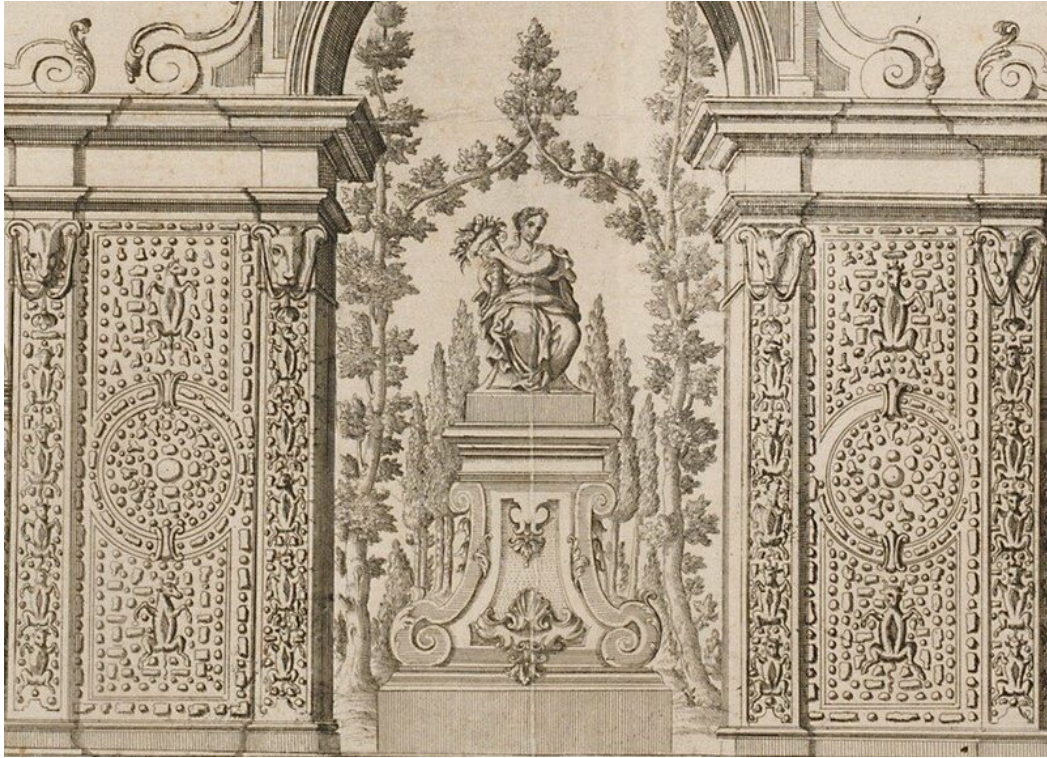


Figure 1. Engraving showing the edible pastries used to decorate the walls of a *cuccagna* in 1722

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Figure 2. An engraving of the *cuccagna* held in the square in front of the royal palace in 1747 to mark the birth of Prince Philip, son of Charles VII, King of Naples

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Figure 3. Louis-Jean Deprez, *View of the Looting of the cuccagna in the Largo di Castello, Naples, in 1778-9*, watercolour. Waddesdon Manor, Buckinghamshire

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Footnotes

¹ Christie's, London, 7 May 1958, lots 42-51.

² Christie's, London, 11 April 1975, lots 60-62.