The Disegni intagliati: A forgotten book illustrating the first discoveries at Herculaneum

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Abstract

Published in 1746, the Disegni Intagliati di Pitture Antiche comprise ninety
engravings reproducing marbles, bronzes and paintings found in the excavations of Herculaneum. Only three copies of this work have survived and seem to have been forgotten until a recent discovery in the Royal Library in Madrid. They were most likely published for the King of Naples, but only a limited number of copies were produced and soon thereafter the project was abandoned in favour of a publication describing the discoveries of Herculaneum by Ottavio Bayardi, librarian of the Royal Library in Naples. By reconstructing the history of the Disegni, this article aims to provide fresh insights into the early excavations at Herculaneum and their political context.

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