N A P O L I
tra i Borbone e la Belle Époque

Arte e impresa,
nascita di
una capitale
moderna

Naples from the Bourbons to the Belle Époque
Art and Entrepreneurship: The Birth of a Modern Capital

Museo e Real Bosco di Capodimonte · Causa Hall

November 12, 2026 – February 28, 2027

Curated by Rosario Caputo and Isabella Valente

A project organized by the Fondazione Mezzogiorno
and developed with the Museo e Real Bosco di Capodimonte **for Neapolis 2500**

Nearly 150 works by 77 artists illustrate how creativity, enterprise, and patronage contributed to the birth of modern Naples

Nearly 150 paintings and sculptures by 77 artists chronicle the extraordinary era of Neapolitan art from the Enlightenment to the eve of World War I. From November 12, 2026 through February 28, 2027, **Naples from the Bourbons to the Belle Époque. Art and Entrepreneurship: The Birth of a Modern Capital* will be on view in Sala Causa and Galleries 21–22 on the first floor of the Palace of Capodimonte. The exhibition spans over one century of artistic and social transformations, linking the flourishing of the arts with the rise of an entrepreneurial, financial, commercial, and manufacturing bourgeoisie. Through works of art and the history of collecting, the exhibition highlights the contribution of those who, alongside the artists, supported creativity, fueled the art market, and strengthened the city's international profile.

Organized by the **Fondazione Mezzogiorno and the Museo e Real Bosco di Capodimonte**, **this initiative is part of Neapolis 2500**, a project supported by the Neapolis 2500 National Committee to celebrate the city's 2,500-year history and strengthen its international profile through initiatives focused on culture, business, diplomacy, and globality. The relationship between cultural heritage and development is linked to the "growth diplomacy" strategy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation: a vision in which the soft power of culture helps build relationships, attract interest, and open opportunities for the Italian economy.

ART THAT REINVENTS ITSELF IN A CHANGING CITY

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From landscape painting to the pursuit of truth, from historical romanticism to novel depictions of daily life and the refined expressions of the *Belle Époque*, the exhibition unfolds through works of exceptional quality, among the finest creations of their respective artists. Painting and sculpture become tools for interpreting a city in flux, from Bourbon institutions to post-Unification society, great artistic traditions to the emergence of modernism.

Exhibition highlights include many unpublished works and novel juxtapositions of paintings and sculptures curated to reveal under-explored connections between artists, genres, and style. The exhibition also offers various opportunities for discovery and critical reinterpretation through a selection of masterpieces, including Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot's **The Bay of Naples with Castel dell'Ovo**, recently acquired by the State and added to the Capodimonte collections. This work represents the exchange of perspectives between Naples and foreign artists and demonstrates, with the power of a great landscape painting, how these leading artists were drawn to the city.

THE PRODUCTIVE BOURGEOISIE AND THE RENEWAL OF THE ARTS

A distinctive feature of the project is the perspective that links artistic production to the growth of an entrepreneurial, financial, commercial, and manufacturing class composed of Neapolitans and foreigners. Alongside traditional dynastic and aristocratic patrons, this new social class supported artists, fueled the market, and contributed — through their purchases and cultural choices—to the formation of diverse tastes. Rather than isolating private collections, this section introduces an interpretive framework that runs throughout the entire exhibition: from analysis of the subjects and styles of the period's paintings and sculptures emerges a dialogue between art, enterprise, and society.

Among the leading figures of this cosmopolitan collecting scene—representing an increasingly influential entrepreneurial and wealthy bourgeoisie—are the Rothschilds, the Aselmeyers, the Meuricoffres, and Giovanni Vonwiller; the history of these collections intertwines with the evolving Neapolitan society and economy. In the choice of subjects and the evolution of artistic styles, we see a society expanding its self-representation, as genre scenes of bourgeois life became as prominent as paintings of religious or aristocratic subjects. Settings for paintings also change; streets, squares, buildings, and landscapes reflect urban transformations and new ways of inhabiting and experiencing Naples.

"This exhibition," declares the Prefect of Naples and President of the Neapolis 2500 National Committee Michele di Bari, *"tell the story of a Naples that, for centuries, has been essential to European culture, a city that attracted artists, entrepreneurs, and intellectuals and forged relationships beyond its borders. It is a story that speaks to our present and fully represents the spirit of Naples as a Global City: promoting an extraordinary cultural heritage not only celebrated for its grandeur, but for its ability to foster dialogue, collaborations, and opportunities for development. With*

Neapolis 2500, we continue to strengthen the globality of Naples, making its story and cultural identity a resource for the future."

"The artistic flourishing of Naples during the nineteenth century cannot be recounted without recognizing the contributions of enterprise, industry, and manufacture," states President of the Fondazione Mezzogiorno Antonio D'Amato. *"Businessman-patrons supported artists, encouraged creativity, and transformed a great portion of their wealth into cultural heritage. The exhibition draws attention to these protagonists and the symbiotic bond that united art and enterprise, diverse but complementary expressions of innovation and creativity, which in this extraordinary period of the city's history, became a broader vision of progress."*

"Capodimonte," explains Director of the Museo e Real Bosco di Capodimonte Eike Schmidt, *"is historically considered a museum of nineteenth-century art. The Bourbons acquired works of art from prestigious exhibitions that were destined for Capodimonte, defined in the period as a modern museum – an ideal repository for what was then considered contemporary art, a calling that would mark Capodimonte forever. Naples was a known hub for Italian art throughout the nineteenth-century. Shortly after the Unification of Italy in 1861, Vittorio Emanuele of Savoy commissioned from Altamura, Gigante, and Palizzi three works for Capodimonte that celebrate the new Italian spirit. In 1877, artists were called to Capodimonte for a historic national exhibition of Italian art, for which Naples had been chosen as the host city. This extraordinarily rich exhibition, with its original perspective, expanded the artistic canon to include a social and economic vision of a city that has always remained a European 'capital'—a city that, during the nineteenth century, reinforced and codified its own myth."*

SCHOOLS, ARTISTIC STYLES, AND EUROPEAN EXCHANGES

During the Murat decade, the presence of French artists fostered a dialogue between the classical landscape tradition and new approaches to observing nature. After the Restoration, Northern European and Neapolitan painters modernized representations of Naples through attention to its landscape, history, and contemporary life. As the Unification of Italy drew near, Neapolitan painting gradually embraced the demands of Realism; this pursuit of truth—championed above all by the Palizzi brothers—introduced a new relationship with nature and daily life. At the same time, Domenico Morelli revolutionized history painting, freeing it from academic conventions and directing it towards a more expressive interpretation of the human experience.

In the years following Unification, the School of Resina's pictorial experiments contributed to a freer observation of light and landscape and, through depictions of the working classes and societal

contradictions, fueled the development of Verism – an artistic movement that would also find expression in sculpture. At the end of the century, Symbolism and interest in popular traditions led to the creation of new genres and styles of portraiture and scenes of aristocratic life that catered to the tastes of a rising bourgeoisie. Engaged in dialogue with major European centers, Neapolitan artists, collectors, and patrons participated in the international culture of the *Belle Époque*.

Equally significant is the globality of Naples. Ancient ruins and natural landmarks like the Gulf and Vesuvius drew European artists and travelers to Naples, which became a site of experimentation and exchange. Foreign and Neapolitan artists exchanged ideas through exhibitions, commissions, and markets in Italy and abroad, making the city a vital protagonist in nineteenth-century visual culture. The enthusiastic combination of creativity, capital, and knowledge – a central theme of the exhibition – is essential to understanding modern Naples.

The exhibition is organized into three thematic sections, ranging from the rise of landscape painting and classicism to Realism and Verism, from a post-Unification society in flux to the *Belle Époque*. Together, the paintings and sculptures offer a multifaceted portrait of Neapolitan modernity: landscape and history, the aspirations of the bourgeoisie and lives of the working classes, portraiture, labor, traditions, and the new venues for social interaction and consumption.

Organized by **the Fondazione Mezzogiorno** and developed with the Museo e Real Bosco di Capodimonte, the exhibition was curated by Rosario Caputo and Isabella Valente. A catalogue featuring original scholarship will accompany the exhibition to explore the cultural and economic networks that shaped the success of artists and their works.

Nearly thirty years after the historic exhibition **Civiltà dell'Ottocento**, Capodimonte once again celebrates one of the most vibrant periods in Neapolitan art: a century in which the city embraced diverse influences and contributed, through artistic originality, to the development of European modernity.

Presented in September within the scope of Neapolis 2500, **Napoli Città Mondo** (Naples, Global City) celebrates the 2,500-year-old city's founding through celebration and development of its globality – a strategy that connects culture, diplomacy, research, academia, and the business sector. These initiatives are not merely a calendar of events, but complementary components of a unified, cohesive program designed to foster collaborations, supply chains, and enduring relationships. The Comitato Nazionale Neapolis 2500 is composed of **Michele di Bari**, Prefect of Naples, who serves as President, **Filippo La Rosa**, from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperations (MAECI), and **Marilù Faraone Mennella**, entrepreneur.

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THREE MAJOR SECTIONS

SECTION I
THE PROMOTION OF THE ARTS BETWEEN THE FIRST AND SECOND BOURBON RESTORATIONS

SECTION I.1
LANDSCAPE PAINTING FROM THE LATE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY TO THE EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY

SECTION I.2
THE FIRST COSMOPOLITAN EPISODE OF PAINTING *EN PLEIN AIR* IN EUROPE: THE SCHOOL OF POSILLIPO

SECTION I.3
CLASSICAL TASTE IN SCULPTURE DURING THE FIRST HALF OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

SECTION II
VERISM AND REALISM

SECTION II.1
THE PALIZZI AND THE PURSUIT OF TRUTH

SECTION II.2
DOMENICO MORELLI'S HISTORICAL VERISM

SECTION II.3
ORIENTALIST CHARM AND POMPEIIAN FANTASIES

SECTION II.4
THE EVOLUTION OF LANDSCAPE PAINTING AND THE SYNTHESIS OF REALITY: THE SCHOOL OF RESINA

SECTION III
FROM UNIFICATION TO THE MYTH OF THE *BELLE ÉPOQUE*

SECTION III.1
REALISM AND SOCIAL REALITIES

SECTION III.2

SYMBOLIST INFLUENCES AND ANTHROPOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS

SECTION III.3
THE BOURGEOISIE IN THE MIRROR: FROM *JOIE DE VIVRE* TO *FIN-DE-SIÈCLE* TASTE

FEATURED ARTISTS

01. Francesco Saverio Altamura
02. Giovan Battista Amendola
03. Tito Angelini
04. Costantino Barbella
05. Raffaele Belliazzi
06. Giuseppe Boschetto
07. Carlo Brancaccio
08. Vincenzo Busciolano
09. Michele Cammarano
10. Alceste Campriani
11. Gaetano Capone
12. Vincenzo Caprile
13. Ulisse Caputo
14. Gonsalvo Carelli
15. Adriano Cecioni
16. Bernardo Celentano
17. Filippo Cifariello
18. Jean-Baptiste Camille Corot
19. Johan Christian Claussen Dahl
20. Edoardo Dalbono
21. Marco De Gregorio
22. Luigi de Luca
23. Giuseppe De Nittis
24. Giuseppe De Sanctis

25. Saverio Della Gatta
26. Simon-Joseph-Alexandre-Clément Denis
27. Giacomo Di Chirico
28. Teodoro Duclère
29. Abraham-Louis-Rodolphe Ducros
30. Achille d'Orsi
31. Gaetano Esposito
32. Thomas Fearnley
33. Alessandro Fergola
34. Salvatore Fergola
35. Emilio Franceschi
36. Enrico Gaeta
37. Vincenzo Gemito
38. Giacinto Gigante
39. Ernesto Giroux
40. Carl Wilhelm Götzloff
41. Salvatore Irdi
42. Vincenzo Irolli
43. Francesco Jerace
44. Antonio Joli
45. Antonino Leto
46. Federico Maldarelli
47. Francesco Lord Mancini
48. Antonio Mancini
49. Pasquale Mattej
50. Francesco Paolo Michetti
51. Vincenzo Migliaro
52. Camillo Miola
53. Domenico Morelli
54. Francesco Netti
55. Filippo Palizzi
56. Francesco Paolo Palizzi
57. Giuseppe Palizzi
58. Nicola Palizzi
59. Teofilo Patini

60. Attilio Pratella
61. Raffaele Ragione
62. Joseph Rebell
63. Giuseppe Renda
64. Federico Rossano
65. Rubens Santoro
66. Sil'vestr Feodosievič Ščedrin
67. Giuseppe Sciuti
68. Pietro Scoppetta
69. Gabriele Smargiassi
70. Anton Sminck van Pitloo
71. Tommaso Solari
72. Michele Tedesco
73. Bertel Thorvaldsen
74. Edoardo Tofano
75. Gioacchino Toma
76. Frans Vervloet
77. Pierre-Jacques Volaire

TRE MACROSEZIONI

SEZIONE I

LA PROMOZIONE DELLE ARTI TRA PRIMA E SECONDA RESTAURAZIONE BORBONICA

SEZIONE I.1

LA VEDUTA TRA LA FINE DEL SETTECENTO E IL PRIMO OTTOCENTO

SEZIONE I.2

UN LABORATORIO COSMOPOLITA DELLA PITTURA *EN PLEIN AIR*: LA SCUOLA DI POSILLIPO

SEZIONE I.3

IL GUSTO CLASSICO NELLA SCULTURA DELLA PRIMA METÀ DEL SECOLO

SEZIONE II

VERISMO E REALISMO

SEZIONE II.1

I PALIZZI E LA QUESTIONE DEL VERO

SEZIONE II.2

IL VERISMO STORICO DI DOMENICO MORELLI

SEZIONE II.3

FASCINO ORIENTALISTA E FANTASIE POMPEIANE

SEZIONE II.4

L'EVOLUZIONE DEL PAESAGGIO E LA SINTESI DEL VERO: LA SCUOLA DI RESINA

SEZIONE III

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DALL'UNITÀ AL MITO DELLA *BELLE ÉPOQUE*

SEZIONE III.1

REALISMO E VERO SOCIALE

SEZIONE III.2

SUGGESTIONI SIMBOLISTE E INDAGINI ANTROPOLOGICHE

SEZIONE III.3

LA BORGHESIA ALLO SPECCHIO, TRA *JOIE DE VIVRE* E GUSTO *FIN DE SIÈCLE*

ARTISTI PRESENTI

01. Francesco Saverio Altamura
02. Giovan Battista Amendola
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27. Giacomo Di Chirico
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29. Abraham-Louis-Rodolphe Ducros
30. Achille D'Orsi
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Ministero degli Affari Esteri e della Cooperazione Internazionale
MINISTERO DELLA CULTURA
DIPARTIMENTO PER LA VALORIZZAZIONE CULTURALE
MUSEO E REAL BOSCO DI CAPODIMONTE
NAPOLI MUSA
NAPOLI CITTÀ MONDO
FONDAZIONE MEZZOGIORNO FONDAZIONE MEZZOGIORNO ETS
main partner INTESA SANPAOLO

Progetto realizzato nell'ambito delle iniziative promosse dal Comitato Neapolis 2500