

Joanna I of Anjou (1343–1382)

Subjects: [Art](#)

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Joanna I of Anjou (1325–1382), countess of Provence and the fourth sovereign of the Angevin dynasty in south Italy (since 1343), became the heir to the throne of the Kingdom of Sicily, succeeding her grandfather King Robert “the Wise” (1277–1343). The public and official images of the queen and the “symbolic” representations of her power, commissioned by her or by her entourage, contributed to create a new standard in the cultural references of the Angevin iconographic tradition aiming to assimilate models shared by the European ruling class. In particular, the following works of art and architecture will be analyzed: the queen’s portraits carved on the front slabs of royal sepulchers (namely those of her mother Mary of Valois and of Robert of Anjou) and on the liturgical furnishings in the church of Santa Chiara in Naples; the images painted in numerous illuminated manuscripts, in the chapter house of the friars in the Franciscan convent of Santa Chiara in Naples, in the lunette of the church in the Charterhouse of Capri. The church of the Incoronata in Naples does not show, at the present time, any portrait of the queen or explicit reference to Joanna as a patron. However, it is considered the highest symbolic image of her queenship.

Angevin dynasty

Kingdom of Sicily

Naples

Joanna of Anjou

royal iconography

dynastic celebration

Joanna I of Anjou (1325–1382), countess of Provence and the fourth sovereign of the Angevin dynasty in south Italy (since 1343), was the eldest daughter of Charles duke of Calabria (1298–1328) and Mary of Valois (1309–1331). She became the heir to the throne of the Kingdom of Sicily upon the death of her father in 1328, succeeding her grandfather King Robert “the Wise” (1277–1343). In 1333, she married her cousin Andrew of Hungary, the brother of King Louis, with the aim to prevent the claims to the throne of Sicily from the Hungarian family branch. Joanna’s investiture as sole queen intensified the tensions between the Neapolitan and the Hungarian courts, which lead to the invasion of the Kingdom after Andrew’s assassination (18 September 1345). Joanna, accused to be involved in the murder, married her cousin Louis, Prince of Taranto, and together they reached the Papal court in Avignon to ask for political and diplomatic support. She sold Avignon to Pope Clement VI to fund the military campaign and returned to Naples in 1352. After Louis of Taranto’s death in 1362, she married James IV, King of Maiorca (1336–1375), and, after his death, the military adventurer Otto of Brunswick. In 1372, she ended the ancient dispute between the Angevins and the Aragonese for the rule of the isle of Sicily. During the Western Schism, she supported Clement VII against Urban VI. The death of all her children prompted her to adopt and appoint as her heir first the nephew, Charles of Durazzo, and then Louis of Anjou (brother of the French king Charles V). Supported by Urban VI, Charles waged war against Joanna. The queen was imprisoned in the castle of Muro and strangled upon Charles’s order on 22 May 1382 ^[1]^[2]^[3]^[4], ^[5] (pp. 152–198).

The difficult conjunctures of Joanna's succession to the throne, the complex military and political events and the struggles for the power inside the Angevin court that have troubled the almost forty years of her reign have led scholars to describe her age as characterized by political decline and obfuscation of the prestige of the royal authority. Such context did not seem to encourage the artistic patronage, in particular on the monumental scale. On the other hand, the demand for sumptuous objects, such as illuminated manuscripts and goldsmiths, remained on a very high level ^[6] (pp. 374–407), ^{[7][8][9][10][11][12]}. The promotion of religious and charitable institutions, with a preference for those established by Joanna's predecessors (in particular, Charles I, Robert and Charles of Calabria), also reflected on the elements of the artistic and architectural patronage and contributing to the creation of the queen's public image.

Portraits of the queen or symbolic representations of her royal image, commissioned directly by her or her entourage with the aim to legitimize the queen's succession to the throne and her political authority, refer not only to the Angevin prestigious family and dynastic tradition, but also to the models of royal representation in vogue among the main European ruling dynasties. The representation of Joanna's image thus gained a broad and widely shared cultural and symbolic horizon.

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