



Letter and Report on the Discoveries at Herculaneum

Johann Winckelmann

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This new translation brings to light the early days of scientific archaeology and the unearthing and study of Herculaneum and Pompeii as observed by the erudite and acerbic art historian Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717–1768). His *Letter*, published in German in 1762, displays his extensive knowledge of geology, ancient literature, and art while offering a scathing critique of the Spanish Bourbon excavations around the Bay of Naples and of the officials involved. He further discusses these topics in his equally controversial *Report* of 1764.

The introduction describes the context in which these texts were written, identifies various politicians, academics, and collectors, and elucidates topics of particular interest to Winckelmann, from artifacts to local customs to the contents of ancient papyri. The illustrations, particularly those from the Bourbon publication—*Le Antichità di Ercolano* (1757–92)—illuminate how these monuments influenced contemporary perception of the ancient world.

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