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# The soft entrance of photography into the serious world of science at the Naples Station

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## Abstract

The Naples Station was built as a laboratory for marine biology, open to the international scientific community. This facility had two inbuilt structures that needed a different kind of care and attention than the one requested by the laboratory. The first structure, though planned by Dohrn, was the public Aquarium which was supposed to make the money the scientists needed for their research. The second one, almost imposed on Dohrn, were the wall paintings in the room he had set apart for music. In order to attract visitors, the Aquarium needed publicity which was achieved through print media. The Fresco room, on the contrary, had to fight for its visibility because Dohrn hesitated to disturb the privacy of his guest investigators. In this paper the use of images to achieve public recognition for the three facilities (research, fresco room, aquarium) will be investigated. Since the early 1880s, preference was given to coloured and black and white illustrations of the inhabitants of the aquarium, whereas photographs were used for artefacts and tameable nature, including people. As an outreach, Dohrn used photographs to document the scientific activity of the Naples Station, the buildings, the labs and the equipment. They were intended as diplomatic tools to document his achievements for his patrons in public and political life. At the same time, there also was an increasing input of pictures taken by professional photographers, scientists and collaborators that slowly added to the pictorial history of the Naples Station.

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