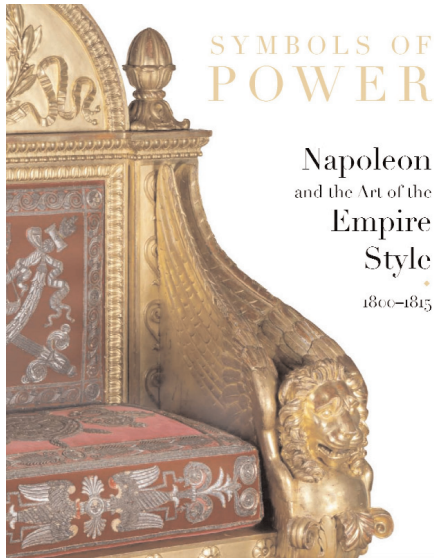


# SYMBOLS OF POWER NAPOLEON

AND THE ART OF THE EMPIRE STYLE, 1800–1815

## Catalogue



*Symbols of Power: Napoleon and the Art of the Empire Style, 1800-1815*

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When Napoleon I first came to power in 1799 as First Consul of France, he modeled his new regime on ancient Rome. No ruler in the history of the world has been more aware of the capacity of symbolism to propagate power. On state occasions, Napoleon wore regalia copied after that of the Roman emperors, he sat on a throne inspired by a Roman model and he rewrote the laws of France as the *Code Napoléon*, based on Roman law. But despite his titanic military and political prowess, one of his most long-lasting and influential achievements was in the decorative arts.

Napoleon entrusted the glorification of the regime to Percier and Fontaine, the official architects of the Empire, under whose direction French furniture-makers, silversmiths, jewelers, and porcelain and textile manufacturers crafted objects decorated with a wealth of antique motifs such as columns, arches, laurel wreathes, acanthus leaves, eagles and Egyptian hieroglyphs. Furniture, vases, porcelains and even silverware were produced in antique styles intended to project an aura of imperial majesty, featuring a rare combination of austere forms and opulent materials.

In contrast to this political and military iconography, other themes developed, conveying a world of seduction and sensuality. The ancient myths of Apollo or Psyche, and their translation into the decorative arts using flower, butterfly or swan motifs, reflects the other, more intimate, side of the imperial era.

This remarkable book is a comprehensive compendium of the Empire Style in all its glory. Lavishly illustrated with superb photographs, many taken expressly for this book, it will be a landmark in the library of the history of the decorative arts and an essential reference for lovers of wonderful objects everywhere.