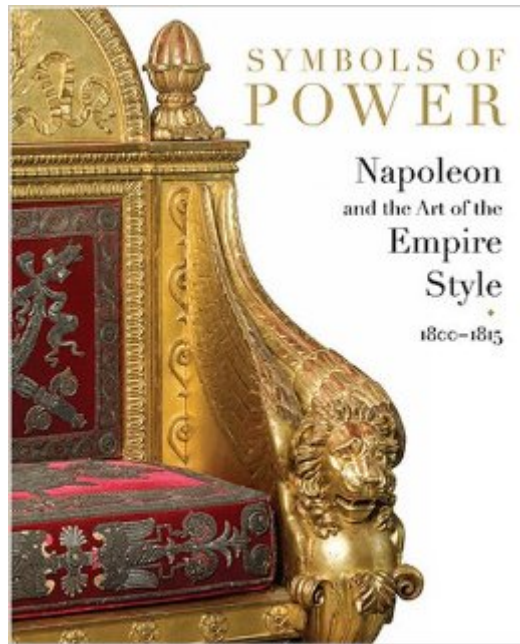


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Symbols Of Power: Napoleon And The Art Of The Empire Style, 1800-1815



Synopsis

A landmark in the history of the decorative arts and an essential reference, *Symbols of Power* is a comprehensive look at Napoleon's majestic Empire Style. No ruler in the history of the world has been more aware of the capacity of symbolism to propagate power than Napoleon I; and to support his new vision he sponsored a program of arts that proclaimed France the New Rome. Superb photographs, many taken expressly for this volume, exhibit gorgeous objects decorated with a wealth of antique motifs—columns, arches, laurel wreaths, acanthus leaves, eagles, Egyptian hieroglyphs—created by master French furniture-makers, silversmiths, jewelers, and porcelain and textile manufacturers. Figures of Fame and Victory abound, and furniture, vases, porcelains, and even silverware display an antique style that projects the aura of imperial majesty.

Book Information

Hardcover: 352 pages

Publisher: Harry N. Abrams (July 1, 2007)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0810992957

ISBN-13: 978-0810992955

Product Dimensions: 9.8 x 1.1 x 12 inches

Shipping Weight: 4.3 pounds

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (2 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #686,856 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #212 in [Books > Arts &](#)

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Customer Reviews

Oversized book, printed in full color, many images printed full page. Given the (wildly excessive?) ornamentation style of the period, one cannot fully appreciate the level of craftsmanship and detail short of seeing them in person. I've barely been able to do more than skim the essays because I keep getting distracted by the mind-boggling opulence of the clothing, furniture, tableware, and various objects d'art pictured. I have read books covering the history of the period, the major personalities, events, and so forth, but never really pursued information regarding the trappings that the upper class lived with on a daily basis. This book is overflowing with these "symbols of power", massive expense for trivial objects and conspicuous consumption on a level that I can barely wrap

my mind around. Yes, one can see the paintings from Bonaparte's coronation, the finery of clothing and ornament worn and carried by all present--what might be thought of as merely the overwrought work of an official propagandists--but to actually see these surviving relics of the Napoleonic Empire changed my perspective. I have a better appreciation of the appeal Marxism/collectivism had for the lower classes of the era (and some of the fury those revolutions inspired), why America of the 19th century was itself nearly incomprehensible to the upper classes of Imperial Europe (yes, we had our own ultra-wealthy with expensive tastes, but none of them seem to have been competitively indulgent individually, or on this scale as a group), and why design and artistic movements that emphasized minimalism that arose in later generations were considered so radical. Very happy to have this book, and I hope that someday I'll actually be able to read it instead of getting lost in the visuals.

Content is fairly scholarly. This is not just a collection of pretty photographs. Chevalier's Empire Splendor is a nice accompaniment as it has additional photographs for reference. However, Symbols of Power is superior by way of its written text.

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