



The Eagle in Splendour: Inside the Court of Napoleon

Philip Mansel

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The court of Napoleon I, in its grandeur and extravagance, surpassed even that of that the Sun King. Napoleon's palaces at Saint-Cloud and the Tuileries were the centres of his power, the dazzling reflection of the greatest empire in modern European history.

Napoleon's military conquests changed the world and dominate most portraits of him, but it was through the splendour of his court - a world fashioned beyond the battlefield - that Napoleon governed his empire. Using the unpublished papers of the Emperor's leading courtiers, and his second Empress Marie Louise, Philip Mansel brings to life the intoxicated world of a court 'devoured by ambition' as Stendhal called it : its visual magnificence and rigid hierarchy; mistresses, artists and manipulators. The life of the court illuminates the life of Napoleon himself and the nature of a personality that conquered half the world yet, in the end, was abandoned by his dynasty and his courtiers, his past glories fading into lonely and ignominious exile.

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