

MELBOURNE WINTER MASTERPIECES

# Napoleon

## Revolution to Empire

ngv  
National  
Gallery of  
Victoria



**DESTINY**

**POWER**

**PASSION**

**THE EXHIBITION  
REVEALED**

***Napoleon: Revolution to Empire*** traces the extraordinary career of Napoleon Bonaparte as he created a wide reaching Empire that stretched across much of Europe.

This panoramic exhibition features nearly 300 works, examining French art, culture and life from the 1770s to the 1820s, bringing to Australia for the first time hundreds of objects of breathtaking opulence and luxury – paintings, drawings, engravings, sculpture, furniture, militaria, textiles, porcelain, gold and silver, fashion and jewellery.

Sections of the exhibition are devoted to Napoleons Egyptian Campaign, his subsequent victory at the Battle of Marengo, his coronation as Emperor of France, reorganisation of the Musée du Louvre as the Musée Napoleon and exile to St Helena following the final defeat at the Battle of Waterloo.

The Imperial style and regalia on the many objects and finery belonging to the new Imperial family are also on display. These exquisite works showcase the opulent and regal designs favoured by both Emperor Napoleon and Empress Josephine.

The exhibition also explores the enormous cultural and scientific contact between Australia and France from the 1770s to the 1820s: a story that is rarely told.

To accompany this extraordinary exhibition a comprehensive catalogue is available at NGV Shop for \$79.95 AUD (hardback); \$49.95 AUD (paperback).

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### FRENCH REVOLUTION

*Napoleon: Revolution to Empire* opens at the pivotal moment in French history when the *ancien regime* was on the cusp of being overthrown.

The storming of the Bastille on 14 July 1789, a national day still acknowledged today, marked the first decisive intervention of ordinary people against the *ancien regime*.

World-renowned portraits of some of history's most recognised figures are on display alongside revolutionary battle scenes and events of the Reign of Terror depicting the radical social and political changes occurring.

Such portraits include Marie Antoinette (pictured) and Louis XVI as well as depictions of Revolutionary figures, Joseph Cange, Jean-Francois Sablet and celebrated Revolutionary martyr Jean-Paul Marat.



### THE EMPEROR: THE CORONATION AND THE IMPERIAL FAMILY



In 1804, Napoleon was crowned Emperor of France. As the Empire extended across Europe, Napoleon appointed members from his extensive family to govern in his stead in diverse quarters.

The coronation required the creation of a new, Imperial regalia. As the founder of a new dynasty Napoleon required emblems and symbols distinct from those of the *ancien regime*.

The Empire was synonymous with prosperity and splendour, and its style mirrored this image. After the fluid grace and elegance of the Consular style, lines grew more taut, volumes became more geometrical and massive, and the overall effect tended to be heavier and more richly ostentatious.

Some of the more iconic symbols include the bees, the eagle and the letter 'N'. Many of the portraits, objects and furniture on display in the exhibition, feature the regalia designed for the new Empire.

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### JOSEPHINE AND MALMAISON

In 1799, Josephine Bonaparte acquired the Malmaison estate located on the outskirts of Paris. Malmaison became home for the couple, an unofficial meeting place for government and an expression of their individual style.

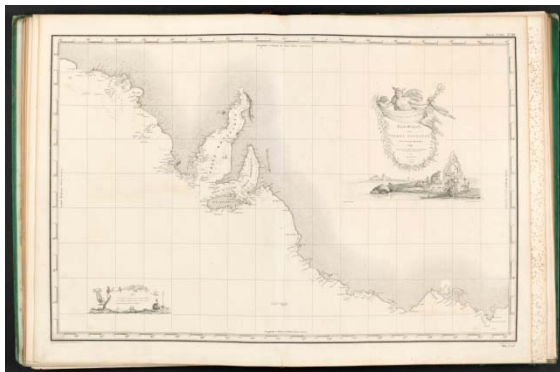
This exquisite estate was transformed to reflect the power of Napoleon's Empire, the extravagant style of Josephine and the riches of their collections – in particular Australian flora and fauna which was brought back to France via *Terres Australes* expeditions supported by Napoleon.



When Napoleon and Josephine divorced in 1809, Josephine was granted the estate and remained at Malmaison until her death by pneumonia in 1814.

Many of the opulent objects and intricate drawings of Australian wildlife at Malmaison are beautifully displayed in this exhibition.

### NAPOLEON AND AUSTRALIA



*Napoleon: Revolution to Empire* tells the story of Napoleon and Josephine's fascination with Australia.

In 1800, the coastline of New Holland (Australia) was still not entirely mapped, the south-eastern part of the island continent largely remaining a mystery. The most recent French expeditions to the Pacific had been undertaken by Louis Antoine de Bougainville (1766-69), Jean-François de Galaup, Comte de La Perouse (1785-88) and Joseph

Antoine Bruny d'Entrecasteaux (1791-94).

The Institut de France and seafarer Nicolas Baudin put before First Consul Bonaparte his proposal to send a new expedition to the *Terre Australes*, or Southern Lands. Bonaparte approved the proposition, whose principle aims were the geographical exploration of south-east Australia and the collecting of natural history specimens.

The names of Baudin's ships embodied these two missions: *Le Géographé* and *Le Naturaliste*.

For the first time in French history, Baudin was charged with observing the human inhabitants. He was accompanied by almost 20 scholars representing scientific disciplines including botany, zoology and mineralogy, as well as three expert draughtsmen.



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Many visitors will enjoy discovering the rich illustrations of flora, fauna, indigenous portraits and coastline drawings and etchings, which reflect that the Victorian coastline was first drafted by the French. The map featured also indicates that for a brief period in history, Victoria was named Terre Napoleon (Napoleon Land).

This will be the first time many of these detailed works will be on display together.

### OPULENCE: LAVISH OBJECTS OF THE EMPIRE

Following the coronation in 1804, the re-establishment of a court accustomed to an opulent lifestyle favoured a golden age for decorative arts.

The attention Napoleon and Josephine paid to the decorative arts in particular was part of a wider plan to revive the country's economy, and their flourishing under the Consulate and the Empire was linked closely to the emergence of a new society.



Josephine's cameo diadem (pictured above) is a spectacular example of the lavish Imperial taste. Gifted to the Empress by her brother-in-law Joachim Murat, it is made using the finest of materials shell, mother-of-pearl, pearls, precious and semi-precious stones.



Another important work on display is the luxurious dress (pictured) worn by Claudine Elisabeth Bérenger at the coronation ceremony in 1804. Still in the possession of the Bérenger family, it is the only woman's outfit worn on that memorable day that has survived to the present time. Madame Bérenger's dress is particularly representative of fashion at the start of the nineteenth century.

This exhibition showcases extravagant gold and silverware, furniture and jewellery design, personal belongings of the period and decorative weaponry.

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### THE ART OF WAR: ICONOGRAPHY AND PROPAGANDA



Alongside its biographical trajectory of Napoleon's life, *Napoleon: Revolution to Empire* is a full examination of the remarkable changes in iconography and visual expression that occurred in the fine and decorative arts in France from 1789 to 1815.

Mass-produced commodities such as posters, Revolutionary playing cards and ceramics were effortlessly integrated into everyday life and objects. Similarly the cockade and liberty cap were distilled into easily recognisable emblems.

The Revolutionary era saw the elegant decoration of the age of Louis XVI replaced with symbols of liberation and political commitment. The Consular style shed these Revolutionary symbols, adopting a taste for more lavish classical ornament.

The Empire style, recognised as beginning with Napoleon's proclamation of himself as Emperor in mid 1804, continued to combine references drawn from the ancient cultures of Greece and Rome with newly fashionable ancient Egyptian imagery.

### NAPOLEON'S EXILE TO ST HELENA

Following his defeat at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815, Napoleon was exiled to St Helena, a small isolated British island in the Atlantic Ocean.

This island became the focus of world attention as passing ships would dock to restock supplies, and possibly catch a glimpse of the fallen Emperor.



St Helena has a strong connection with Australia. The willow trees pictured in this eloquent watercolour have been known to grow in South Australia, immigrants having stopped at St Helena and collected cuttings from the island on their sea voyage to Australia.

Another fascinating link to Australia is more personal. Napoleon's intended residence at St Helena underwent repair for the first two months of his arrival. During this period, Napoleon lodged at The Briars estate, residence of William Balcombe. Balcombe's fourteen year old daughter, Elizabeth Balcombe, was the only French speaker in that household and acted as translator for Napoleon. Through necessity the two developed a warm relationship.

The Governor of St Helena, Hudson Lowe, grew suspicious of the relationship the Balcombes developed with Napoleon and this led to the Balcombes returning to Britain briefly before William Balcombe was appointed as Colonial Treasurer of New South Wales in 1824. Balcombe's son, Alexander Beatson Balcombe later moved to the Mornington Peninsula, Victoria after purchasing an estate he named, The Briars.

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### PREMIER'S MESSAGE

More than two hundred years in the making, *Napoleon* finally arrives in Melbourne.

A soldier, General, Emperor and avid art collector, Napoleon was one of history's most extraordinary and complex figures, and he transformed Europe, politically and culturally, in ways that still resonate today.

*Napoleon: Revolution to Empire* invites visitors to immerse themselves in the power and passion of one of the world's most influential leaders. It brings to Australia for the first time nearly three hundred works of art and objects, many of great opulence and luxury, that examine French art, culture and life from the 1770s to the 1820s.

The deep personal interest that both Napoleon and Josephine took in the South Pacific and the newly discovered Australia is a major, fascinating theme of the exhibition.

Since the inaugural Melbourne Winter Masterpieces exhibition in 2004, the series has taken NGV audiences on a journey through many of the great art collections of the world. This year is no exception, with the opportunity to view remarkable works from some of the world's leading institutions.

We are particularly grateful to our partner, Paris's Fondation Napoléon, and to all the institutions that have been so generous in lending their priceless items, especially the Château de Malmaison, the Château de Versailles, the Musée du Louvre, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Musée Carnavalet and the Musée de l'Armée.

The Victorian Government is proud to support *Napoleon: Revolution to Empire*, another groundbreaking Melbourne Winter Masterpieces exhibition exclusive to Melbourne.

**Ted Baillieu MLA**  
**Premier and Minister for the Arts**

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### FONDATION NAPOLEON

The Fondation Napoléon is dedicated to the history of the First and Second Empires and its mission is to provide information, to facilitate access to documentation and to encourage research. It supports initiatives which promote a better understanding of these periods and works to highlight the importance of the Napoleonic heritage.

The Fondation addresses all publics, from those with a general interest, through collectors, enthusiasts, scholars, academics, journalists right down to the simply curious.

As well as producing publications, a website and other activities, the Fondation Napoléon also has a collection of objects, works of art, photographs, etc., to which it is constantly adding. The aim is to put these on show to the public in future years.

The Fondation Napoléon draws its resources for these projects from gifts and bequests, in the forefront of which is the legacy left by Martial Lapeyre. The Fondation was given the status of 'reconnue d'utilité publique' (registered charity) by a decree of 12 November 1987.

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### PRINCIPLE PARTNER MESSAGE

At Mercedes-Benz we encourage great adventures. Napoleon Bonaparte was involved in many adventures including the first French voyages of discovery to Australia.

2012 is the sixth consecutive year in which Mercedes-Benz is the Principal Partner for the National Gallery of Victoria's Melbourne Winter Masterpieces exhibition, this year showcasing *Napoleon: Revolution to Empire*.

We are again thrilled to be the Principal Partner and to collaborate with the National Gallery of Victoria in bringing some of the world's most important historic works of art to Melbourne for the Australian public to see.

This exceptional exhibition presents objects of breathtaking opulence and luxury, from prestigious collections including Fondation Napoléon, Château de Versailles and Château de Malmaison.

Visitors to the NGV will be able to examine paintings, drawings, sculpture, furniture, textiles, porcelain, jewellery and armour from a turbulent political time during the late eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries.

The NGV will proudly exhibit these objects as well as tell the story of Napoleon and Josephine, a couple who had a remarkable passion for the arts, sciences, literature and a special interest in Australia.

It is with great honour that we partner together on this tremendous international exhibition – the first of its kind to be held in Australia.

We trust you and your family will enjoy *Napoleon: Revolution to Empire*.

**Horst von Sanden**  
**Managing Director**  
**Mercedes-Benz Cars**



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### CAPTIONS

- 1. Antoine-Jean GROS** French 1771–1835 *General Bonaparte at the Bridge of Arcole on 17 November 1796* 1796 oil on canvas 130.0 x 94.0 cm Napoleonmuseum Thurgau, Schloss und Park Arenenberg, Salenstein Collection of Queen Hortense
- 2. PAINTERS OF THE CABINET DU ROI** Élisabeth Louise VIGÉE-LE BRUN (after) *Queen Marie-Antoinette (1755–1793) in a hoop skirt dress after 1778* oil on canvas 223.0 x 158.0 cm Versailles, musée national du château (MV 3892) © RMN (Château de Versailles) / Gérard Blot
- 3. Anne-Louis GIRODET-TRIOSON** (studio of) *Napoleon in Imperial robes* c.1812 oil on canvas 248.0 x 178.0 cm Musée de l'Empéri, Salon de Provence Gift of Charles Pasqua, French Minister of the Interior, 1987 (inv. 1987.1)
- 4. Jacques Louis PERÉE** (engraver) French 1769–1824 **Jean PIRON** (after) *Black swan of Cape Diemen (Cigne noir du Cap de Diemen)* 1800 plate no. 9 in *Atlas pour servir à la Relation du voyage à la recherche de La Pérouse: fait par l'ordre de l'Assemblée Constituante pendant les années 1791, 1792 et pendant la 1ère et la 2de année de la République française / par le Cen. Labillardière (Atlas accompanying the Account of the Voyage in search of La Pérouse, performed by order of the Constituent Assembly, during the years 1791, 1792, 1793, and 1794)* by , published by H. J. Jansen, Paris engraving 56.5 x 42.4 cm (page) Rare Books Collection, State Library of Victoria, Melbourne (RARELTBEF 910.41 L11, Atlas)
- 5. Louis-Claude de Desaulles FREYCINET** French 1779–1842 *General map of Terre Napoléon (In New Holland)* 1812 plate no. 10 in *Voyage de découvertes aux terres australes exécuté par ordre de S. M. L'Empereur et Roi. Atlas: Partie Navigation et Géographie (Voyage of discovery to the southern lands undertaken by order of His Majesty the Emperor and King. Atlas: Navigation and Geographie Section)* published by L'Imprimerie impériale, Paris engraving 57.0 x 43.0 cm (page) Rare Books Collection, State Library of Victoria, Melbourne (RARELTBF 919.4 F89V, Atlas)
- 6. FRANCE** *Empress Josephine's shell cameo diadem, presented to her by her brother-in-law Joachim Murat* Empire period 1804–15 gold, shell, mother-of-pearl, cameos, pearls, precious and semi-precious stones 6.7 x 17.0 x 20.0 cm Musée Masséna, Nice (inv. CHAP.1360)
- 7. FRANCE** *Court dress and train of Mme Bérenger, worn on the day of Napoleon's coronation* 1804 velvet, gold-embroidered silk tulle, satin Collection of Pierre Patrick Kaltenbach (Direct descendent of Mme Bérenger, who was the daughter-in-law of a Protestant Desert Father, Jean Bérenger, The Dove) © Fondation Napoléon / Patrice Maurin Berthier
- 8. MANUFACTURE DE SÈVRES** (manufacturer) France est. 1756 **Pierre-Philippe THOMIRE** (goldsmith) French 1751–1843 *The Emperor in coronation robes, after Gérard, tapered spindle vase, 2nd size* 1812 porcelain (hard-paste), gilt bronze 54.5 cm height Fondation Napoléon, Paris Acquisition 2002 (inv. 1165) © Fondation Napoléon / Patrice Maurin Berthier
- 9. Augustus EARLE** English 1793–1838, worked in Australia 1825–28 *Napoleon's tomb on the island of Saint Helena* c.1829 watercolour 26.7 x 42.9 cm National Library of Australia, Canberra Rex Nan Kivell Collection (NK12/142.)

### MEDIA CONTACTS

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