

The French Empire Style and Its Influence in the American South

Madeleine Deschamps

*Adjunct Instructor, New York University School
of Continuing and Professional Studies*

The Empire style, under Napoleon's political and aesthetic sponsorship, spread across the Continent to embody the grandeur of the French Empire. Napoleon's hegemony lasted but 15 years, yet this period witnessed a remarkable development of the decorative arts, as he restored and refurbished châteaux and palaces and patronized the major *manufactures*. The fall of Napoleon's colossal empire inspired dreams of glory that resonated across the world and influenced the arts as far away as the American South. This talk will also address the political and intellectual contributions of talented women in Napoleon's France. Some, like Madame de Staël, presided over influential salons. Others, like Empress Joséphine, Juliette Récamier, and Caroline Murat, promoted the luxury industries with their innumerable commissions. Their influence, too, was felt in the American South.