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Napoléon
EN SEINE-ET-MARNE

2021 THE YEAR OF NAPOLEON

RESTORATION OF THE EMPEROR'S LIBRARY



© Château de Fontainebleau

The Emperor's famous library, located in the Petits Appartements of the Château de Fontainebleau, has been undergoing restoration work since October 2020. It is scheduled to reopen to the public on 7th May 2021.

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A private library of 5,000 books



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As part of the restoration work on the château launched by Napoleon in 1804, he asked cabinetmaker Jacob De smalter to build a private library that would house nearly 5,000 works. The Emperor was extremely keen on hist ory, geography and military art, as shown by his extensive collection of works in these three disciplines.

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Although Napoleon used his library primarily as a working tool, he was also an avid reader, keen on literature, th eatre, ancient and classical authors and philosophy. He kept up with French and European intellectual life and e xpected his librarian to provide him with the latest releases.

The inventory carried out in 1810 tells us the library has been very well preserved, since the works of today are t he same as those referenced 210 years ago. In spite of this, the furniture and works have deteriorated over tim e. It was necessary to carry out restoration work.

Restoration work

Before starting the restoration of the site, it was essential to remove the 5,000 books from the library for protect ion and treatment. The panelling and the ceiling were repainted, taking care to preserve and clean the old existi ng paint, which was very subtle in its light grey, slightly bluish, off-white and slightly more intense grey colours.

Then, workers and craftsmen restored the mahogany wood of the spiral staircase, the Red Griotte marble of the mantelpiece and the Versailles-style panelled parquet flooring. Ormolu bronze items were sent to the workshop and all the locksmithing items - espagnolettes, lock rods, catches, bolts... - dating from the end of the 18th cent ury and the beginning of the 19th, were completely cleaned.

LET'S TAKE A LOOK

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Visitors will soon be able to appreciate the Emperor's restored library in a guided tour of the Petits Appar tements of the Emperor and Empresses Josephine and Marie-Louise. More information on this event in t he programme.

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