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After the Revolution: Antoine-Jean Gros, Painting and Propaganda Under Napoleon

David O'Brien

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After the Revolution: Antoine-Jean Gros, Painting and Propaganda Under Napoleon David O'Brien Napoleon and Antoine-Jean Gros first met in 1796 in Italy where the young French painter was working as a portraitist and attempting to recover from the upheavals of the French Revolution. The meeting changed Gros's life. Soon thereafter, he was making paintings ---Napoleon Visiting the Battlefield of Eylau, Napoleon Visiting the Plague-Stricken in Jaffa, among others---that commemorated 'the Corsican upstart' great deeds and have come to be regarded as masterpieces of both art and propaganda. After the Revolution by David O'Brien is the first account in over a century to trace Gros's meteoric career, from its beginnings in Paris in David's studio to its Napoleonic successes and end in a mysterious suicide. Drawing on letters from the artist to his mother, many of which O'Brien discovered, this book gives the reader a compelling account of the opportunities and conflicts faced by a brilliant, sensitive artist working for an increasingly autocratic regime. Highly original, O'Brien's book weaves a comprehensive biography of Gros together with a history of the institutional machinery through which Napoleon both encouraged and regulated the arts. Here again, O'Brien introduces the reader to new documents, this time records from the Archives Nationales that illuminate the personalities and policies directing the representation of Napoleon and his era. The many color illustrations in After the Revolution enable the reader to follow O'Brien's informative analysis of the mixing of fact and fiction in such famed paintings as the Battlefield of Eylau. Written in a clear, engaging style, this book will be of great interest to art historians, students of political and military historians, and all those fascinated by Napoleon.

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