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NOBLESSE OBLIGE!

LA VITA IN UN CASTELLO NEL 18° SECOLO

Helen Bieri-Thomson

The aim of this book, which was published to coincide with the opening of the permanent exhibition at Château de Prangins, is to evoke the atmosphere of a bygone age.

Built at the beginning of the Age of Enlightenment, Château de Prangins has had a colourful history, during which it became the residence of Voltaire and Joseph Bonaparte. However, its best-documented period was when it was the home of Baron Louis-François Guiguer.

The decorations and furnishings of the reception rooms in the country villa – dining room, reception hall, library, and marble entrance hall – have been faithfully restored to their original appearance thanks to the journal the Baron kept, in which he meticulously recorded his activities and preoccupations as an enlightened nobleman and head of a family, complemented by the full inventory of his belongings made after his death. The original colour of the wood panelling, the wall hangings, and period furniture all help to restore these rooms to their past splendour.

Guided by the journal and illustrated with beautiful photographs of the restored rooms, as well as a selection of paintings and objets d'art from the collections of the Swiss National Museum, the catalogue confidently addresses topics such as family life, the art of entertaining guests, sociability, domesticity, and the enjoyment of reading and writing in the eighteenth century.

Helen Bieri-Thomson is an art historian and was Director of the Neumann Foundation at Gingins (VD) until 2004. Since 2005, she has worked as a curator at the Swiss National Museum – Château de Prangins and was appointed head of the Wallpaper Department of the Swiss National Museum in 2010.