McQueen, Alison. *Empress Eugénie and the arts: politics and visual culture in the nineteenth century*. Ashgate, 2011. 348P bibl index afp ISBN 9781409405856, $124.95

This study by McQueen (McMaster Univ., Ontario) of the Spanish aristocrat Eugénie (1826-1920), married to French emperor Napoléon III, is the first to be both critical and sympathetic. It will overturn longstanding perceptions of Eugénie. Much maligned after 1870, the empress actually enjoyed public favor before then, having produced an heir and sponsored many benevolent projects. This book examines Eugénie's involvement with the fine arts, from architecture to painting to lace, and her public and private representation. McQueen harnesses an impressive array of primary and secondary sources to correct basic facts and complicate received ideas in the literature on Eugénie. To understand why the empress appeared in certain roles and activities and not others, McQueen skilfully explores Eugénie's power and Western perspective as well as her dependence and vulnerability as imperial consort and foreigner. She delineates the empress's agency in her patronage and public persona. Readers will discover many unfamiliar 19th-century works of art that McQueen masterfully analyzes and incorporates into her argument. Chapters address Eugénie's engagement with children's health and education, her art collecting, the intersection of her patronage with French international affairs, and her commemoration of her husband and son. **Summing Up:** Recommended. Upper-division undergraduates through faculty. -- *A. Luxenberg, University of Georgia*