

WORLD-FAMOUS PICTURE GALLERIES
THE ERMITAGE IN LENINGRAD

Colour slides 1-50

Hungarian DIAFILM Company, Budapest

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The State Ermitage of Leningrad is one of the world's most famous museums. Founded in the second half of the 18th century, it originally housed the private collection of Czarina Catherine. The museum was named Ermitage after the building adjoining the Winter Palace. Following the foundation of the picture gallery in 1764 the collection was extremely rapidly increased, but the masterpieces of fabulous value were accessible only to the select. In the 19th century the progressive democratic forces induced the imperial court to open the museum established in the new building of the Ermitage to the general public.

The Great October Socialist Revolution brought radical changes also in respect of the Ermitage: from that time on its treasures became public property.

1. The Winter Palace, the greater part of which was turned over to the Museum in the first years of Soviet rule. In forty years the collection of the Ermitage grew to more than the threefold of its original size.

2. View of the Ermitage from the river Neva. The Museum is visited by about 1,5 million people a year. The inspection of the whole material on view takes at least three weeks.

3. In addition to the masterpieces of the greatest foreign painters, the Ermitage houses collections of classic sculpture, relics of pottery, Egyptian antiquities, numismatic collections, drawings and engravings. The number of objects preserved in the Museum runs to 2.000.000.

4. In this series we present from the treasures of the Ermitage pictures of different ages, nationalities and schools of art. The development of Italian painting can be traced in the museum almost in its whole, through many centuries. From the point of view of artistic value the most notable 14th century work is the "Madonna" by Simone Martini (about 1238-1344), one of the greatest masters of the Sienese school.

5. One of the most important relics of the early Renaissance is the work of the Venetian painter, Cima da Conegliano (1459–1517), entitled "Annunciation".

6. Renaissance art reached its peak in the paintings of Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519), one of the greatest geniuses of humanity. In his "Madonna Litta" he fixes the dreamy expression, gentleness and happy pride of the young mother with captivating art.

7. Another genius of the Italian Renaissance, Raffaello Santi (1483–1520) is represented in our series by his "Madonna Connestabile". The serene beauty of the main figure is set off by the surrounding calm landscape.

8. Raffaello's "Holy Family" (the Madonna with a beardless Joseph) is also preserved in the Ermitage. Note the secular character of the representation of the figures, clothes, and background.

9. Giorgione da Castelfranco (1477/78–1510) is an outstanding figure of Venetian painting. In his picture entitled "Judith" finely shaded colours, and somewhat melancholic features may be observed.

10. From the greatest master of the Venetian school, Tiziano Vecellio (1488/90–1576), the Ermitage holds nine works. Renaissance painting developed and reached its peak through the different periods of the artist. – His picture entitled "Danae".

11. "St. Sebastian" belongs to Titian's later, especially valuable period of creative work.

12. Renaissance art in Venice was crowned by the work of Paolo Veronese (1528–1588). From his oeuvre we present "The lamentation of Christ" which is a perfect example of the master's marvellous world of colour.

13. The works of the Renaissance painter, Jacopo Tintoretto (1518–1594), are characterized by powerful and brilliant colours. His highly animated compositions repre-

sent a transition from the calm harmony of the Renaissance into the more turbulent Baroque style. "The birth of John the Baptist".

14. "The lute-player", a famous picture by Michelangelo da Caravaggio (1573–1610), the highly gifted representative of the realistic trend, shows clear delicate drawing and a sharp contrast between light and shade.

15. The works of the Venetian masters stand out among those of 18th century Italian art. "Mæcenas presents the arts to Augustus" is by Giovanni Battista Tiepolo (1696–1770), the master famous for his decorative paintings.

16. "Peter and Paul" by Domenico Theotokopuli (1541–1614), known as El Greco (The Greek) occupies the first place among the pictures produced in the 16th century. El Greco came from Crete; he was a master of profound intellect who painted men of a rich inner life with great reality.

17. The picture entitled "At breakfast" is the work of Diego Velazquez (1599–1660), the greatest Spanish master of the 17th century. Realism, characteristic of the master's art, radiates from the picture. Every line, but especially the representation of the objects lying on the table, is wonderfully true to life.

18. Velazquez's art of character-painting can be judged from his picture entitled "The Portrait of Count Olivarez" showing the power-greedy, sly, intriguing Minister of Philip IV.

19. The picture entitled "Boy with dog" is the work of Bartolomé Esteban Murillo (1618–1682), the last of the great Spanish masters of the 17th century.

20. In the 15th century Italian and Netherlands painting took the leading role in European art. "Luke, the Evangelist painting a Madonna" is the work of Rogier van der Weyden (1400–1464).

21. Contrary to the bold composition and forms seen in Italian art, the Netherlands painters aimed at the life-like

elaboration of minute details. One of the most famous relics of Netherlands painting is "The healing of a blind in Jericho" by Lucas van Leyden (1494–1533).

22. The oeuvre of the Flemish painter, Anthonius van Dyck (1599–1641), one of the most outstanding masters in the history of art, is represented by 27 works in the Ermitage. Van Dyck was a keen observer and excelled in portraying character. – "Self-portrait".

23. From the works of the outstanding Flemish master, Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640), forty are preserved in the Ermitage. One of his most splendid large-size decorative allegorical pictures, "The alliance between Earth and Water" glorifies the life-giving forces of nature personified in the picture by Cybele, the Goddess of Earth, and Neptune, the God of the seas.

24. Rubens's "Perseus and Andromeda". The master approaches the mythological subject with full freedom. He does not imitate the antique statue, but sets his figures in a freely invented story.

25. "The Bean-King" by Jacob Jordaens (1593–1678) shows a gay scene from a public gathering.

26. The initiation of a national trend of realistic landscape-painting was an important result in this field of Dutch art. The typical features of the Dutch landscape appear especially in Jan van Goyen's (1596–1656) works. "The river Maas near Dordrecht".

27. The collection of works by the greatest Dutch painter, Rembrandt van Rijn (1606–1669) belongs to the most valuable treasures of the Ermitage. The portraits painted with wonderful psychological insight during the last decade of his life, are considered as the most beautiful pieces of the legacy Rembrandt had left to posterity. Most of them show simple people with a long struggleful life behind them. The "Portrait of an old-woman" (1654).

28. Rembrandt's biblical scenes are painted in the spirit of the Reformation; they are set in humble surroundings

and are filled with profound human truth. In his "Holy Family" he represents the Madonna as a simple Dutch woman.

29. The life and habits of the various classes of Dutch people were depicted most fully by Jan van Steen (1626–1679), a sharp-eyed observer of life, blessed with a keen humour. He painted the "Carousers" in 1660.

30. From the masterpieces of 15th and 16th century German painters we present two pictures. The "Madonna and Child" by Lucas Cranach (1472–1553), one of the outstanding masters of German Renaissance painting. The picture is of a secular character, imbued with the love of life.

31. The other: the portrait of a rich young man of a patrician family is the work of Ambrosius Holbein (1495–about 1520) and also represents a characteristic relic of the German Renaissance.

32. From the 18th and 19th century British school the Ermitage preserves some of the finest pieces of portrait-painting, – the branch of art most practised in that period. The picture representing "The Duchess of Beaufort" is by Gainsborough (1727–1788), the most prominent among the many British portrait painters of renown.

33. The French collection of the Ermitage gives a full picture of the development of French art. There were two trends running parallel: the aristocratic and the popular. "The dairy woman's family" by Louis Le Nain (1593–1648) is a product of the latter.

34. From the oeuvre of Nicolas Poussin (1593–1665), the greatest French master of the 17th century, fifteen pictures found their way to the Ermitage. Antique mythological scenes presented in a classicistic composition are characteristic of his work. His picture entitled "Tancred and Erminia".

35. The other master of French classicism, Claude Lorrain (1600–1682), was the founder of the "idealistic landscape".

Contrary to the Dutch landscapes, his works represent ideal and not true sceneries. — His work entitled "Midday".

36. "Returning after the ball" by Antoine Watteau (1684–1721). In this picture showing a company returning from a ball Watteau captures in the faces the reappearance of the sensitive, melancholic human soul after the removal of the gay masks.

37. Jean Baptiste Siméon Chardin (1699–1779) who followed the realistic trend, was the painter of the ambitious middle classes. He depicted simple scenes true to life. — "The washerwoman".

38. Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863) was one of the leading figures in romantic painting. His travels in Algeria started a new period of art. He discovered exotic pictorial subjects which he painted with a sweeping brush and the application of the laws of colour. One of the representative pictures of this period of the artist is the "Moroccan saddling his horse".

39. Under the effect of the democratic-social ideals of the 19th century, the painters' attention was turned increasingly to the prevailing social problems. Jean François Millet (1814–1878), who came from a peasant family, devoted his art to the painting of French village life. The figures in his "Women carrying brushwood" are represented with profound feeling and great force.

40. The French impressionists wanted to capture the sight of the landscape and the effects of light and form as they appeared at a given single moment Claude Monet (1840–1926) also sought his way in this direction. His picture entitled "The Haystack" is a good example of his attempts made in the impressionist spirit.

41. It was with the advent of the impressionist trend that the everyday life of the cities, the street scene, was adopted as a favourite subject in painting. "The Boulevard Montmartre in Paris" by Camille Pissarro (1830–1903) presents a masterful picture of the bustling life of the metropolis.

42. Edgar Degas (1837–1917), the outstanding French impressionist master, often painted ballet-dancers and nudes. With his fine technique in chalk and the simplicity of his compositions he helped to prepare the ground for the new style that was to follow. – "Woman doing her hair".

43. At one time Pierre Auguste Renoir (1841–1919) earned his living by painting fans. His art is characterized by light strokes of the brush and transparent colours. His "Young girl with fan" has a captivating naïve charm.

44. Paul Cézanne (1839–1906), the father of the new style, strove to create a solid and lasting art like that of the Renaissance or other great classic ages, as against the instantaneity of the impressionist pictures. The carefully considered composition of his "Shrove Tuesday" leaves no room for fleeting impressions.

45. Rhythmically arranged forms, forced within circular or cylindrical outlines, are characteristic of Cézanne's art. – "Still life with hangings".

46. Paul Gauguin (1848–1903) escaped from the intricate shackles of bourgeois-social conventions to live among the primitive people of the South Sea Islands. In his pictures he shows their native exotic beauty in glowing colours under the southern sunshine; his forms are condensed and decoratively arranged.

47. Vincent van Gogh (1853–1890), the famous Dutch painter of tragic fate, intent on revealing the depths of human lot, leads us this time among prisoners deprived of their dignity. His feelings are expressed by the violent strokes of his brush and the sharp colours used. – "The walk of the prisoners".

48. Henri Matisse (1869–1954) was the painter of beauty and delight in life. In his pictures – whether they showed still lifes, landscapes or human figures – the colours arranged in decorative patches formed a bright and well balanced composition. – "Still life".

49. Pablo Picasso (1881-) is a living painter, one of the greatest artists of our times. In his earlier pictures he depicted the world of the miserable and the outcasts with great human sympathy, using expressive of forms and colours. - "The old Jew".

50. This picture of artistes is a later work of Picasso. The circus: the clown and the acrobat whose human world he tried to show in contrast to hypocritic bourgeois morality, was the master's favourite subject for a long time. - "Young girl on the ball".

Our series of slides can only show a small fraction of the works preserved at the Leningrad State Ermitage, yet it is hoped that the paintings presented have afforded an elevating artistic experience.

The End

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