



**The Hermitage Museum in Leningrad w/ 327  
illustrations and 127 in full color; by Pierre  
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# The Hermitage Museum in Leningrad w/ 327 illustrations and 127 in full color; by Pierre Descargues

## **The Hermitage Museum in Leningrad w/ 327 illustrations and 127 in full color; by Pierre Descargues**

In something less than two centuries, the Russians have made of the Hermitage one of the greatest collections of art in the world. The story begins when Peter the Great audaciously built St. Petersburg in the midst of uninhabited marshland. Later, a succession of czars and aristocratic and bourgeois collectors snatched treasures from under the covetous eyes of European collectors; and one of the most colorful figures, Catherine the Great, retained a small army of agents to add to the royal collections. In more recent times, wealthy private collectors like Serge Stchoukine of Moscow, collected and encouraged modern painters, and this is why Russia today owns some of the prime works of early twentieth century art. The Revolution did not interrupt the growth of the Hermitage but, rather, continued to add to what the czars, princes and merchants had begun. A kind of irresistible force seems to have carried the Hermitage to its destiny of greatness despite varying tastes, social forms, and radically different political philosophies. As this book shows, the painting collections house some of the greatest achievements of the major European schools- Italian, Dutch, Flemish, German, Spanish, British, and above all, French. No group of French Paintings outside the great Parisian museums can compare. The wealth of the Heritage will come as a revelation to most readers.

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