

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

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UNPRECEDENTED HERMITAGE SHOW FROM ALL DEPARTMENTS
TO TOUR U.S. IN 1980/82

WASHINGTON, D. C. July 11, 1979. An exhibition of treasures from all departments of The Hermitage in Leningrad will open at the National Gallery of Art in the spring of 1980 and tour the country through 1982. It will be the first such exhibition ever to leave the Soviet Union.

The more than 400 objects in the show, entitled The Hermitage of Leningrad: Doorway to World Art, will represent some forty thousand years of art history, including prehistoric, Assyrian, ancient Greek, Roman, Chinese, Japanese, Indian, Islamic, Russian and western European art.

Among the works of art in the exhibition will be silver and gold objects, including important pieces of Scythian gold never before shown in the United States; terracottas, cameos, intaglios, and rare medals and coins; icons, miniatures, watercolors, engravings and paintings from the Russian Department; textiles, tapestries, and glass; objects of marble and silver gilt; furniture from the Winter Palace; and the 18-foot-tall doors of The Hermitage's malachite room. Of particular interest will be articles discovered during twentieth-century archaeological excavations in the Russian mountain valley of Pazyryk. Five stone mounds (500-300 B.C.) yielded objects miraculously preserved in the permafrost, decorated

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articles of ivory, wood, metal, fabrics, leather and rugs. Western European painting, sculpture and drawings will be represented with important examples by Rembrandt, Rubens, Van Dyck, Delacroix, Giambologna, Tintoretto, Veronese, Tiepolo and Dürer.

The exhibition is being organized by The Minneapolis Institute of Arts with the cooperation of the National Gallery of Art, The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, the Brooklyn Museum with the Henry Street Settlement, and The Detroit Institute of Arts.

In Moscow today an agreement was announced between the Soviet Ministry of Culture and Control Data Corporation, a Minneapolis-based computer and financial services company which is making possible the exhibition.

The Hermitage, home of the items to be displayed, consists of five exhibit buildings, the largest of which is the former Winter Palace designed as the main residence of the royal family by Bartolomeo Francesco Rastrelli, and completed in 1762, at the end of the reign of Empress Elizabeth. Some 700 feet long, the three-story baroque façade with its hundreds of glistening windows is recognized as one of the architectural masterpieces of the world. Some objects in the show will go back to the collecting of Peter the Great, who founded Leningrad, then known as St. Petersburg, at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Catherine the Great, who assumed the throne after Elizabeth in 1762, is generally credited with providing the real impetus of the Hermitage collection. Many private collections came to the market during her reign, and at her death in 1796, the Hermitage collection had grown in a variety of media, and included an estimated 3,926 paintings representing

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some of the greatest masters of the world. The collections, which now encompass representations of virtually all of the world's art, have since grown to more than two-and-a-half million items.

To house the growing collections, three buildings were added to the Winter Palace in the eighteenth century--the Little Hermitage, the Old Hermitage and the Hermitage Theatre. The New Hermitage was added in the nineteenth century. The Winter Palace was the site on October 25, 1917, of the overthrow of the regime of Tsar Nicholas II.

The Hermitage Museum, which now includes the former palace and its four satellite buildings, encompasses 1300 rooms and 300 halls that would require a seven-mile walk in order to view all of the exhibits. The buildings have been restored to much of their former grandeur and re-opened as a public museum.

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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION or photographs contact Katherine Warwick, Assistant to the Director, or Mary Dyer, Information Office, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C. 20565, area code 202, 737-4215, ext. 511.