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**Lectures**

**Phillip II of Spain and Titian**

Philip II's reign heralded Spain's Golden Age in literature and he became the first large-scale collector of paintings (including works by van der Weyden and Bosch) among the Habsburgs. He also collected jewels, musical instruments, medals, and tapestries. Highly religious, he oversaw the building and decoration of the Royal monastery El Escorial which he furnished with 1150 paintings. But one of his greatest collaborations was with Titian who created the *Poesie* for him – a stunning set of mythological paintings including ‘Diana and Actaeon’ and ‘Diana and Callisto.’

**Rubens and the Marie de Medici cycle**

Growing up in the Pitti Palace amid the Medici's great art collection, Marie went on to be a patron in her own right of the theatre, ballet, music, fine arts, and architectural projects. When her role as Regent ended, she commissioned Rubens' famous series of scenes of her life to decorate the Palais du Luxembourg**.** Discover the intricate messages concealed in these works and why their commissioner’s ambitions were unfulfilled.

**Jahangir: Art and the Mughal Empire**

After the establishment of the Dutch East India company, European visitors to the Mughal court brought art with them as gifts. As well as commissioning literary works, Jahangir ordered stunning albums of paintings and calligraphy samples, bound in lacquered leather. Learn how his penchant for realism in portraiture and for European subject matter changed the character of art.

**The King who created Versailles**

"Le Roi Soleil" was a patron of Molière, Racine, Jean de La Fontaine, and Charles Le Brun. He founded the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture, established the Gobelins manufactory, commissioned the stunning palace of Versailles – the envy of Europe – and amassed the most comprehensive collection of precious and semi precious stones among any Western ruler since the Middle Ages.

**Peter the Great of Russia: Building St. Petersburg**

In a bid to change Russia’s reputation from primitive to sophisticated, Peter I toured Europe, returning with 260 chests of weapons, scientific instruments, tools, and a stuffed crocodile. But perhaps his greatest legacy was his art patronage, amassing a collection that included Russia’s first Rembrandt. He both invited European artists like Jean-Marc Nattier and Bartolomeo Rastrelli to train locals and sponsored Russian artists’ trips to Europe and, of course, built St. Petersburg, a magnificent city inspired by Amsterdam.

**Mistress of Re-invention: Madame de Pompadour, patron and model**

As Official Mistress to Louis XV, Madame de Pompadour became one of the major patrons of her age, commissioning some of France's best artists including Boucher, van der Loo, and Drouais. Constantly re-positioning herself in relation to Queen Marie Leszczynska of France, La Pompadour was something of a chameleon. Find out how art became both her seduction strategy and a political tool at the royal court.

**Richer than the Romanovs: the art of Prince Nikolai Borisovich Yusopov**

Statesman, diplomat, art patron and connoisseur, the Prince was the director of the Hermitage. Buying his first books, drawings and paintings in the Netherlands, he soon amassed one of the most comprehensive collections of paintings as well as of snuff boxes, walking sticks, art from the Far East, tapestries, carved ivories, and gems. Richer than royalty, discover the man and his legacy.

**More Russian than the Russians: Catherine the Great**

Intent on modernising Russia, Catherine the Great built the Hermitage of which she wrote "[it] contains 38,000 books; there are four rooms filled with books and prints, 10,000 engraved gems (and another 34,000 casts and pastes), roughly 10,000 drawings and a natural history collection that fills two large galleries." She also commissioned buildings, statuary, and gardens, founded academies and journals, and libraries, bought Diderot's library, wrote librettos for operas and satirical plays. Learn how she won Russian hearts and succeeded in forging a new identity for herself.

**Marie-Antoinette and Elisabeth Vigée LeBrun**

Louis XVI’s Queen acted as a patron to Elisabeth Vigée Lebrun, one of France’s most famous female artists (and one whose husband gambled away her hard-earned fortune). Both women shared a dress designer in the innovative rags-to-riches Rose Bertin. It was Bertin’s fashions and Vigée LeBrun’s naturalistic style of portraiture that created Marie-Antoinette’s image and attempted to defuse ‘the Austrian’s’ unpopularity. Explore their creative collaborations and learn what became of these remarkable women during the French Revolution.

**Fabergé and the Russian Royal Family**

The newly openedFabergé museum in St. Petersburg gives some insight into this fascinating man, Peter Carl Gustavovich Fabergé (1846, St. Petersburg —1920, Lausanne) and his family business. Discover the history behind some of the most famous eggs and other pieces of jewellery from their origins as Russian royal family gifts to their subsequent fates.

**The Bed in Art: from Titian to Emin**

The bed has been the site of multiple encounters in art from Titian’s stunning mythologies through Manet’s *Olympia*, Picasso’s nudes, and the abject of Tracey Emin’s infamous ‘My Bed.’ But if the bed has been linked to passion, it has also been linked to death and this lecture explores its manifestations in the art of Caravaggio, Munch, Klimt, and others.

**Art and the Russian Revolution**

Amid the turmoil of the Russian Revolution, a new avant-garde art was developing and artistic battle lines were drawn - Chagall versus Malevich, expressionism versus Constructivism – and new collaborations emerged. From the Black Square to Tatlin’s ‘monument without a beard,’ to Soviet Socialist realism under Stalin, discover what made this period so fascinating and vital.