

Imperial Saint Petersburg, from Peter the Great to Catherine II
17 July – 12 September 2004
Grimaldi Forum Monaco – Espace Ravel

The exhibition Imperial Saint Petersburg, from Peter the Great to Catherine II is produced by the Grimaldi Forum Monaco with the support of ABN AMRO Bank and of Amico Società di Navigazione SpA.

Curator: Brigitte de Montclos, curator-in-chief of Heritage

Display design: François Payet

Around the exhibition...

Swan Lake by the Kirov Ballet: 16, 17 and 18 July 2004 – Salle des Princes; the entire company (orchestra and dancers) totalling 200 performers.

Free Russian electro-pop and rock concerts: every Thursday at 11pm from 22 July to 19 August 2004. Including Frau Muller, Messer Chups and Lydia Kavina – Alexandroid (RFI 2003 prize) – DJ Vadim and the Russian Percussions – The Ukrainians – O.L.F. Olga Joestvenskaya and Moscow Grooves Institute.
And the Saturday September 11st – Ozone cocktail.

Practical information

Grimaldi Forum: 10 avenue Princesse Grace, Monaco – Espace Ravel.

Opening hours: Daily from 10am to 8pm, late opening Thursdays 10am to 10pm and the Tuesdays July 20th, August 10th, August 17th and Wednesday 28th July.

Grimaldi Forum Ticket Office: Tel. +377 99 99 30 00 - Fax +377 99 99 30 01, and FNAC ticket outlets.

Website: www.grimaldiformum.mc

Email: ticket@grimaldiformum.mc

Admission: Full price: €10. Reduced price for groups (over 10 people): €8.
Students (under 25) with student card: €8. Children up to age 11: free.

Exhibition Communication:

PARIS: Micheline Bourgoïn – Tel. +33 (0)6 07 57 78 24

MONACO: Hervé Zorgniotti - Nathalie Pinto – Tel. +377 99 99 25 03

Saint Petersburg's tricentenary celebrations are over. With regrets, in some cases, at not having been there. This city knows better than anyone how to nourish the wildest dreams and, a rarer and virtually unique gift, is just as successful at turning those dreams into reality. The Grimaldi Forum Monaco is now taking up a challenge: to bring the myths and legends of Saint Petersburg to life on the shores of the Mediterranean for one summer. It's the safest of bets that "Northern Palmyre" will rise to this occasion; do we need to point out that it will be an exceptional event?

The exhibition Imperial Saint Petersburg, from Peter the Great to Catherine II tells the story of the city's first century in existence, from Peter I's decision to build a port on the inhospitable shores of the Neva in 1703 to the death of Catherine II in 1796.

Six hundred seventy four items and works of art – religious art, paintings, tapestries, coaches, furniture, ceremonial regalia, goldsmiths' creations, tableware – from the prestigious collections in the Hermitage Museum and the Saint Petersburg Academy of Fine Arts will be displayed in a 4000m² exhibition space.

The exhibition focuses on four major themes to allow visitors to get the measure of a city that arose out of nothing to become, thanks to the determination of Peter, Tsar of all Russia, imperial.

Holy Mother Russia

This historical fresco opens by focusing on the religious context into which Peter I was born. The vitality of the Orthodox faith was still one of the keys to the Russian character, with the Church dominating not only spiritual life but also a considerable part of the Empire's intellectual and artistic life too. The chanting, the incense, the mystery generated by the iconostases with their holy doors, such as those on display from the Simonov Monastery, along with the extraordinarily rich ecclesiastical vestments and the gold utensils used in worship filled the dark church interiors with a strange light.

Peter the Great, man of science

Peter the Great (1682-1725) is known to laymen and historians alike as the Reformer. Curious about everything, avid for knowledge, self-taught, he spent most of his time in Moscow's "Foreigners District" before later travelling throughout Europe. The exhibition has chosen to display his work study, for it was he who introduced into Russia a large number of scientific instruments: astrolabe, armillary sphere, compass, globe, drawing materials, and even a field pharmacy and surgical instruments which he himself used to treat his comrades. From his visit to France in 1717 he brought back tapestries woven by the Gobelins manufactory using cartoons by Jouvenet, a gift from the very young King Louis XV; these are displayed with the furniture from Peter the Great's stateroom.

Saint Petersburg

Having founded a town that was to be just a port, Peter transformed it into his capital, regulating its construction and planning, choosing his architects from abroad. Plans, models, sketches, drawings, engravings and paintings tell the story of this masterly creation which Europe flocked to visit. Everyone wanted to see this prodigious achievement. Peter I overcame a hostile nature to bring an incredible city, an emblem of the Age of Enlightenment, soaring up out of immense swamps. When his daughter Elizabeth took power in 1741 she continued her father's work, filling Saint Petersburg with palaces – the Winter Palace, the Stroganov Palace, the Vorontsov Palace – but also with opulently beautiful churches such as the Smolny Monastery, built by the architect Rastrelli.

Catherine II , woman of the Enlightenment

In 1762 Catherine II came to the throne. This admirer of the French philosophers, a correspondent of Voltaire, d'Alembert and Diderot, completed her predecessors' work and built granite quays on the royal thoroughfare that was the Neva. Paintings, engravings and watercolours in luminescent shades illustrate the final transformations of Saint Petersburg during her reign. To her favourites the Empress gave palaces on a par with her passions – the Marble Palace, the Tauride Palace – and she had an Academy of Fine Arts built on the French model. This same Academy of Fine Arts has agreed to loan the 18th-century models, spectacular in size, the Smolny Monastery by Rastrelli, Saint Isaac's Church by Rinaldi and Saint Michael's Castle by Vincenzo Brenna.

The splendour of Saint Petersburg was also that of life at court, and this is evoked through a gallery of portraits of the most eminent figures that surrounded Catherine II. The Empress was as fond of the intimate as she was of the grandiose, so the exhibition recreates her own private world, what she called her "hermitage", in the Winter Palace, where she liked to receive her friends and admirers of her collections informally. Sèvres porcelain for the famous Cameo Service, Tula steel furniture, goldsmiths' creations... all masterpieces adored by Catherine and testifying to the unequalled artistic influence of her court.

Catherine II had a taste for the frivolous and spectacular but above all a taste for beauty, and her art collection reveals her to have been an enlightened connoisseur. Her penchant for Dutch, French and Italian painting is illustrated by some exceptional loans: Van Dyck, Veronese, Titian, Watteau, Le Lorrain, Poussin bring the exhibition to its climax.