

BALTIC CRUISE LECTURES

NADFAS

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Lecture 1: Imperial Patronage: The Art Collection of Catherine the Great

This lecture discusses the recent exhibition of *Houghton Revisited* in Norfolk. The magnificent art collection of Great Britain's first Prime Minister, Sir Robert Walpole, was sold to Catherine the Great, and has become one of the highlights of the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg. This major exhibition in the UK reassembles the collection in its spectacular original setting at Houghton Hall for the first time. The paintings in the Houghton Revisited exhibition will be hung in their original positions in the State Rooms, bringing them back to the splendour of more than two centuries ago.

She was born in Germany but went on to become Empress of Russia ruling the country for over 30 years. So how did a minor German princess become Catherine the Great, the most powerful ruler in Europe? This lecture focuses on her life and her collection allowing us to understand Catherine's personal and political life. The objects examined demonstrate her role as a keen promoter of intellectual and cultural life in Russia and demonstrate her importance as a collector and patron

We will consider Catherine the Great, Empress of Russia, as an art collector and this famous collection of eighteenth-century European art. Works discussed include paintings from the English, French, Italian, Flemish and Spanish schools, with masterpieces by Van Dyck, Poussin, Albani, Rubens, Rembrandt, Velazquez and Murillo.

