**British school**

The Hermitage is one of the very few on the Continent which contains a special section for English pictures.

Portraiture, landscape painting and satire art in which England excelled , are represented by a number of first-class paintings and prints executed by the most outstanding artists of British School, mainly of the 18th century. A number of 17th-19th century works are on show too. There are also some notable specimens of applied art, among which is a fine group of objects in silver and Wedgwood potteryware . English paintings of the 17th century are extremely rare outside England.The Hermitage possesses several works of this period. These are: the Portrait of Oliver Cromwell by Robert Walker, two portraits by Peter Lely, of which the «Portrait of a Woman» reveals the artist’s sense of colour to great advantage; also the «Portrait of Grinling Gibbons» by Godfrey Kneller, to name only the most outstanding canvases.

The collection has no paintings by William Hogarth, but some of his prints selected from a large and representative collection possessed by the Museum are usually on show.

Joshua Reynolds is represented by four canvases all painted in the 1780-s.

An interesting example of his late work is the «Infant Hercules strangling the Serpents», which is an allegory of the youthful Russia vanquishing her enemies. The picture was commissioned from Reynolds by Catherine II, and was brought to Russia

in 1789. In 1891 two other canvases were sent by Reynolds to Russia. One was the «Continence of Scepic Africanus» , which , as well as the «Infant Hercules», reveals Reynolds’s conception of the grand style in art. The other was «Venus and Cupid»; presumably representing Lady Hamilton .This is one of the versions of the piсture entitled «The Snake in the Grass», owned by the National Gallery, London

Reynolds’s «Girl at a window» is a copy with slight modifications, from Rembrandt’s canvas bearing the same title, and owned by the Dulwich Gallery. It may be regarded as an example of Reynolds’s study of the «old masters’» works.

A fair idea of the British artists’ achievements in the field of portrait painting can be gained from the canvases by George Romney Thomas Gainsborough, John Opie, Henry Rdeburn, John Hoppner and John Russell, all marked by a vividness of expression and brilliance of execution typical of the British School of portrait painting in the days when it had achieved a national tradition. Highly important is Gainsborough’s superb «Portrait of the Duchess of Beaufort» painted in a loose and most effective manner characteristic of his art in the late 1770’s. For charm of expression and brilliance of execution, it ranks among the masterpieces of the Museum.The «Tron Forge» by Joseph Wright of Derby is an interesting example of a new subject in English18th century art: the theme of labour and industry, which merged in the days of the Industrial Revolution.

The few paintings of importance belonging to the British school of the 19th century include a landscape ascribed to John Constable; the «Boats at a shore» by Richard Parkers Bonington; the «Portrait of an old woman» by David Wilki, three portraits by Thomas Lawrence and portraits by George Daive, of which the unfinished «Portrait of the Admiral Shishkov» is the most impressive.

The collection was largely formed at the beginning of the 20th century, a great part of it deriving from the Khitrovo collection bequeathed to the Museum in 1916.