



The Visual Dominant in Eighteenth-Century Russia

Marcus C. Levitt

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The Enlightenment privileged vision as the principle means of understanding the world, but the eighteenth-century Russian preoccupation with sight was not merely a Western import. In his masterful study, Levitt shows the visual to have had deep indigenous roots in Russian Orthodox culture and theology, arguing that the visual played a crucial role in the formation of early modern Russian culture and identity. Levitt traces the early modern Russian quest for visibility from jubilant self-discovery, to serious reflexivity, to anxiety and crisis. The book examines verbal constructs of sight—in poetry, drama, philosophy, theology, essay, memoir—that provide evidence for understanding the special character of vision of the epoch. Levitt's groundbreaking work represents both a new reading of various central and lesser known texts and a broader revisualization of Russian eighteenth-century culture.

Works that have considered the intersections of Russian literature and the visual in recent years have dealt almost exclusively with the modern period or with icons. *The Visual Dominant in Eighteenth-Century Russia* is an important addition to the scholarship and will be of major interest to scholars and students of Russian literature, culture, and religion, and specialists on the Enlightenment.

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