



## **Art and architecture**

*English Philistines, French Sophisticates*

### **Tim Benton**

Now here's a puzzle, when we the British cut off the head of our King, Charles I, he had the finest collection of paintings in Europe, but Oliver Cromwell sold them off. And pretty soon most of them found their way through the dealer network, into the collection of Louis XIV. So most of these paintings are not in a British museum, but in the Louvre. But when the French put their King, Louis XVI to the Guillotine in 1793, they decided to form a national art museum out of the royal collection. Why? Well it's a complicated story. The revolutionaries knew that there had to be a complete break with the age of royal tyranny. On the other hand, they considered it the right of free men and women of France to have access to the great works of art of the past.