



# Windows to Heaven

Treasures from the Museum of Russian Icons



# Windows to Heaven

Ida Sinkević

The exhibition, *Windows to Heaven: Treasures from the Museum of Russian Icons*, features over sixty icons from the collection of Mr. Gordon Lankton, an engineer, entrepreneur, industrialist, and art collector. The museum, founded by Mr. Lankton and located in Clinton, Massachusetts, currently houses over 800 icons ranging in date from the fifteenth to twenty-first century. As the only museum in the United States dedicated solely to Russian icons, it also contains the largest private collection of Russian icons outside of Russia. The quality of the collection reveals the distinguished artistic taste of its patron as well as his interest in icon as an art form that transcends time and geography and retains its esthetic and spiritual appeal with diverse audiences and in different environments.

The word icon derives from the Greek term *eikon* that simply means an image. Within the tradition of the Christian Orthodox Church, icons represent religious figures, such as Christ, the Virgin, saints, as well as the events from their lives. Icons are most commonly understood as panel paintings written with golden leaf and egg-yolk tempera; however, virtually any artistic media, such as mosaic, wall painting, or metalwork could represent an icon. For the faithful, icon is defined by its function, rather than by esthetic appeal or

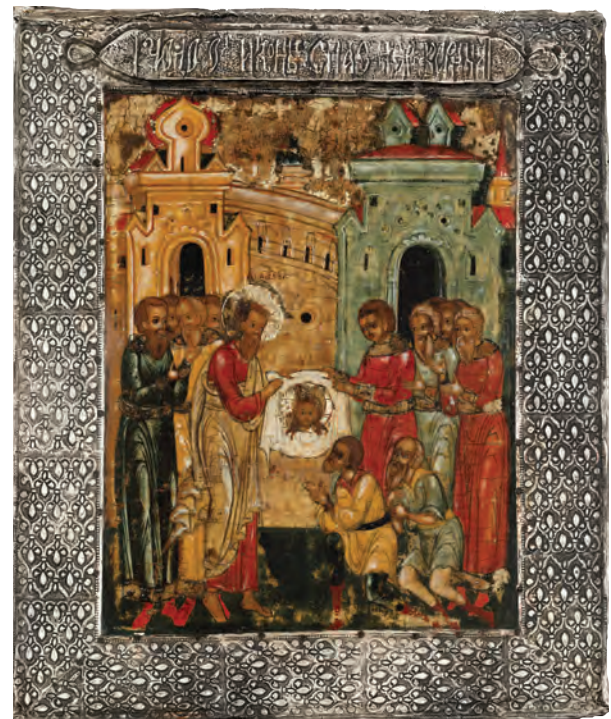
the material of which it was made. Thus, an icon is more than just an image, it is an object of devotion and a vehicle through which one can access the divine. The power of Orthodox icons to enable transcendence from the terrestrial to the heavenly sphere is based on their miraculous creation. For example, according to the teaching of the Christian Orthodox Church, it is believed that the first icon of Christ was created when he left an imprint of his face on the Holy Towel also known as the Mandyllion.

According to a version of a Christian legend, King Abgar of Edessa, who ruled in the first century CE, got very ill and believed that only Christ could heal him. Instead of visiting King Abgar, Christ pressed his face against a towel and sent it to the ailing king. The towel retained the impression of Christ's features and cured the king. That image of the authentic imprint of the face of Christ on the Towel served as the model or prototype for all subsequent images of Christ. Closely resembling the concept of the Veronica and the Holy Shroud, the Mandyllion is a precious *acheiropoietos*, an image not created by human hands. Icons of the Mandyllion usually show Christ's face and a cloth behind it.

The first image of the Virgin was also believed to have been created by her own volition when she appeared to



Mandyllion (Not Made by Human Hands), R2007.14



The Story of the Mandyllion, R2010.50

Saint Luke in person and asked him to paint an image in her likeness. Thus it represents another prototype that has been continuously replicated in Christian icons. Theological teachings about icons developed in the Byzantine Empire (313-1453), a Christian, East Roman Empire, with the capital in Constantinople (now Istanbul, Turkey). With Christianization of Russian and East European lands, icons became important vehicles of faith throughout the Christian Orthodox world. Moreover, following the collapse of the Byzantine Empire in 1453, Russia saw itself as the “Third Rome” and the guardian of the Christian Orthodox faith. While the icons produced in Russia and the orbit of its influence were theologically based on Byzantine icons, they nonetheless exhibited many novel features both in their style and in their subject matter.

This exhibition intends to represent the esthetic and spiritual power of icons. It is divided into four sections: Christ, Christian saints, the Virgin, and Church holidays, the major religious events celebrated in the services of the Orthodox Church such as Easter, Christmas, and Epiphany. The exhibition opens with a series of icons representing different images of Christ: the Pantokrator, Christ of the Wrathful Eye, and the Mandylyon. While primarily intended to introduce the viewer to a variety of representational types of Christ, the installation of six almost identical icons, small rectangles filled with gold upon which floats an image of the Holy Savior, also conceptualizes the spirituality of icons. The potency of the infinite, meditative space of an icon, regardless of its religious content, has served as artistic inspiration for many abstract artists of the modern era, especially members of the Russian avant-garde, such as Kazimir Malevich (1878-1935).

The unique character of Russian and East European icons is most evident in the images of saints and the Virgin. In addition to the types of the Mother of God inherited from the Byzantine tradition, such as the Virgin of Tenderness (*Umilnaya*) and *Hodigitria* (she who points the way), the icons of the Virgin often acquired names of the geographic locations relevant to their history and their miraculous deeds, such as the Mother of God Smolenskaya (R1997.9) and the Mother of God (R2010.5) Kazanskaya.



Mother of God Smolenskaya, R1997.9



Mother of God Kazanskaya, R2010.5

Images of individual saints also reveal both international Christian protagonists, such as Saint George and Saint John the Baptist, and indigenous Russian saints, such as Saint Nil of Stolbensky and Saint Alexander of Svir who both lived in the sixteenth century. In addition, an interesting hybrid of different traditions is revealed in the icon of Saint Nicholas of Mozhaisk. A fourth-century Bishop of Myra in Asia Minor (now Demre, Turkey), Saint Nicholas is one of the most popular saints in both Eastern and Western Christendom, and he is especially venerated in Russia. Known as the Miracle Worker, he is celebrated as the protector of the weak and poor and as a gift-giver. The image of Saint Nicholas of Mozhaisk apparently reflects the saint’s miraculous appearance above the city’s cathedral that was named after him (R2006.10). It is believed that during the fourteenth-century Mongol siege of the city, Saint Nicholas emerged as a huge figure holding a sword in his right hand and the city of Mozhaisk in the left. According to one version of the event, the townspeople were emboldened by the vision of a powerful saint and defeated the enemy; in another version, having seen the vision, the enemy fled in terror. In gratitude, the citizens carved a statue of the saint’s miraculous appearance, and this image was copied numerous times in reliefs and in



St. Nicholas of Mozhaisk, R2006.10

icons. The sixteenth-century icon at this exhibition displays an image of the saint in the center and events from his life at the borders. While the central figure of Saint Nicholas is represented according to a Russian legend, with a sword in his right hand and a model of the city of Mozhaisk in the left, the border scenes ignore his exploits in Mozhaisk and reveal events that are traditionally represented in both eastern and western portrayals of the life of the saint.

In addition to representing major religious themes and images, the exhibition also aims at providing an avenue for understanding the function of icons in a domestic setting. For example, the beautiful corner and miniature iconostasis represent the ways in which icons created sacred space and were displayed and enjoyed in Russian households. An iconostasis (icon stand) is a wall or screen of icons that creates a boundary between the nave and the sanctuary of a church. It can be as simple as two icons featuring Christ and the Virgin, or more complex with dozens of icons organized into different tiers.

A folding iconostasis (R2005.19) is designed to be portable so that a traveling priest could set up a temporary church in remote areas such as, for example, to celebrate the Divine Liturgy near battlefields. Travelers also used them to create a Beautiful Corner or holy space in any location where they were spending the night. Beautiful Corner was a standard feature in Russian houses. It was customary to place an arrangement of icons that included Christ, the Virgin, and the patron saint of the family on the wall opposite the entrance door; upon entering the house, the visitor would first greet the icons by making a sign of the cross before the Beautiful Corner and then say hello to the hosts. Beautiful Corner is often depicted in art and is installed in this exhibition too.

The theme of holy women also resonates throughout the gallery. From images of the Virgin to female saints, such as Saint Paraskeva-Pyatnitsa, Saint Katherine, and Saint Anastasia, this exhibition aims at underscoring the presence and impact that women had within the world of Orthodox icons (R2009.2). It is well known that women's space in Orthodox churches has been traditionally restricted. In early Christianity, they were relegated to the outskirts of



St. Anastasia with Scenes from her life, R2009.2

the churches, such as the entrance (narthex) and galleries. Up to the present time, women are not allowed to enter the sanctuary of Orthodox churches. Not to mention that no female representative, except for the Virgin, is allowed to ever step foot in the strictly male community on Mount Athos in Greece. Within the world of icons, however, female worship has been unlimited and unrestricted. Women possessed icons, they were represented on icons, and they could wear, carry, keep, and worship icons in their houses, rooms, and chapels, both publicly and privately, without any limitations. The prominence given to female saints and the Virgin in this exhibition is intended to emphasize the freedom that women enjoyed within the framework of icon worship.

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Folding Iconostasis, R2005.19



## What Is an Icon?

The term *icon* comes from the Greek *eikon*, meaning image, and is used to describe religious imagery venerated by the Christian Orthodox Church. Icons are most commonly created with tempera paint on wood panels, but they are also created in a variety of art forms such as metal castings, mosaics, textile works, and frescos.



### R2005.3 Minyeia

c. 1860, Russia, Egg Tempera on Wood

The Minyeia is a calendar icon displaying feast days and saints in chronological order beginning on September 1, the first day of the year according to the Orthodox Church. Feasts days and saints are arranged by date and month and have their names inscribed above. Several saints and feasts can be featured on each day, a typical day commemorating five or more saints.



### R2012.53 Miniature Iconostasis

Late 18th Century, Russia, Egg Tempera on Wood

An iconostasis, a wall or screen of icons, creates a boundary between the nave and the sanctuary in a church. It can be as simple as two icons featuring Christ and the Mother of God,

or more complex with dozens of icons organized into different tiers. A miniature iconostasis, such as this, would be hung in a Beautiful Corner, an area dedicated exclusively to icons in a Russian home. This iconostasis is organized into five tiers topped with seven arched images and surmounted by domes and crosses that imitate a Russian church.



**R2005.19**  
**Miniature Folding Iconostasis**  
 c. 1820, Russia, Egg Tempera on Wood

An iconostasis is a wall or screen of icons that creates a boundary between the nave and the sanctuary in a church. It can be as simple as two icons featuring Christ and the Mother of God, or more complex with dozens of icons organized into different tiers.

A folding Iconostasis (portable icon stand) is designed to be easily moved so that a traveling priest could set up a temporary

church in remote areas such as, for example, to celebrate the Divine Liturgy near battlefields. They were also used by travelers to create a Beautiful Corner or holy space in any place where they were spending the night.



**R2008.35**  
**Triptych with the Deesis**  
 c. 1650, Russia, Egg Tempera on Wood

**R2004.6, R2004.7, R2004.8,**  
**Three Icons from a Deesis Tier**

c. 1780, Russia,  
 Egg Tempera on Wood

The most important row of an Iconostasis is the Deesis or prayer row, which depicts Christ at the center with the Mother of God and John the Baptist on either side turning to face him in prayer. These essential figures are generally shown with other figures such as the archangels and the apostles.



**R2008.8**  
**Two-Sided Icon: Mother of God Hodegetria and the Raising of Lazarus**  
 c. 1550, Russia, Egg Tempera on Wood

Two-sided icons were often carried both within and outside of the church in numerous religious and civic processions.



# FEASTS



**R2014.5.4**  
**Resurrection and Descent**  
 (the Harrowing of Hell or Anastasis) **with Feasts**  
 c. 1600, Russia, Egg Tempera on Wood

A series of feasts and holy days gives texture and meaning to the annual calendar of the Orthodox Church. While churches hold many feasts that celebrate saints and events of local importance, the icons in this exhibition correspond to the principal feasts recognized by all Orthodox Christians.

Chief among them is Pascha, or Easter, which celebrates the Resurrection of Christ. According to the Gospels, Christ was laid to rest in a sarcophagus after his crucifixion, but was resurrected three days later. The faithful believe he then descended into Hell, where he released righteous people who died before his arrival, leading them to Heaven. His resurrection and liberation of the dead sets forth the most fundamental Christian belief: eternal salvation through Christ.

This icon of the Resurrection and the Descent has twenty feasts represented along the border. They are to be read from left to right and top to bottom:

1. The Old Testament Trinity
2. Annunciation
3. Nativity of Christ
4. Presentation of Christ
5. Baptism of Christ
6. Raising of Lazarus
7. Entry into Jerusalem
8. Transfiguration
9. Crucifixion
10. Christ in the Temple
11. Ascension
12. Dormition
13. Procession of the Cross
14. Three Marys at the Sepulcher
15. Nativity of the Mother of God
16. Presentation of Mary
17. Virgin of Pokrov
18. Deposition of the Robe
19. Raising of the Cross
20. Nativity of John the Baptist



**R2008.40**  
**Nativity of the Virgin**  
 c. 1650, Russia, Egg Tempera on Wood

The story about the birth of the Virgin reveals that both Anna and Joachim had a vision of an angel, who gave them tidings of the birth of a daughter who would bring great joy to the world.

The Nativity of the Virgin in Russian icons usually includes several scenes surrounding the main protagonist, Anna, who is portrayed reclining on the bed. Other scenes include the bathing of the baby Virgin; Joachim waiting to hear news of the birth; and the couple embracing with their child.



**R2010.52**  
**Annunciation**

c. 1600, Northern Russia, Egg Tempera on Wood

The Annunciation displays archangel Gabriel who reveals to the Virgin Mary that she is destined to conceive a child who will be born the Son of God. It thus exalts the divine motherhood of Mary and defines her as the *Theotokos* (the mother of God).



**R2008.15**  
**Nativity of Christ**

c. 1725, Russia, Egg Tempera on Wood

The Nativity of Christ, also known as Christmas, celebrates the birth of Christ. This rendition is a characteristic example of Russian multiple icons consisting of overlapping scenes that are connected to the Nativity. The basic composition of this icon features several scenes of the Nativity story. The

Virgin reclines at the center. Beside her, in a cave, is the infant Christ wrapped in swaddling clothes and placed in a manger. The cave, manger, and swaddling clothes show us not only the beginning of the life of Christ but also the end; they symbolize the cave of Christ's burial, the casket, and the burial clothes. Joseph is shown below the images of the Virgin and Christ and is tempted with doubts by an older man. The icon also displays the Three Magi as travelling (upper left) and presenting their gifts (lower left). Angels appear, announcing the news to shepherds. Underneath, the Child is shown as being washed by a midwife, symbolizing the humanity of Christ. The Flight into Egypt, represented in the lower right corner, completes this complex icon.



**R2007.9**  
**Presentation of Christ in the Temple**

c. 1650, Russia, Egg Tempera on Wood

According to the Law of Moses, forty days after giving birth, the mother would come to the Temple to offer a purification and sacrifice to God. The icon shows the Virgin and Joseph bringing the infant Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem. The priest Simeon, shown holding the baby Jesus, recognized His divinity; the event is witnessed by the prophetess Anna. Joseph holds a dove, which was traditionally sacrificed upon a mother's reentry to the Temple.



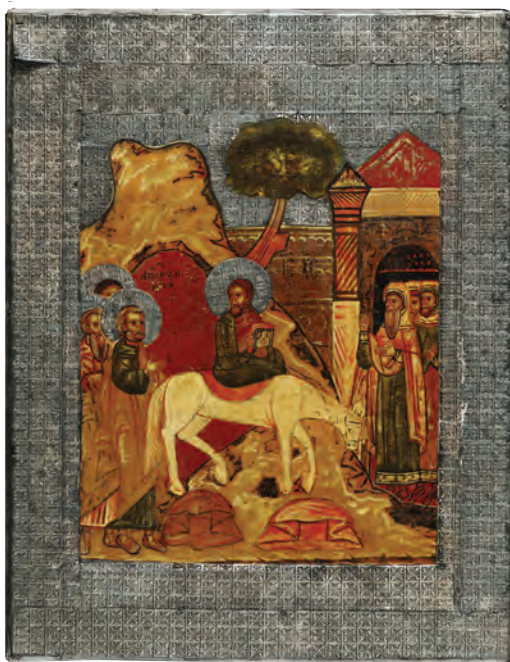
**R2013.63a**  
**Baptism of Christ**  
 17th Century, Russia, Egg Tempera on Wood

According to the Bible, Christ was baptized by Saint John the Baptist in the River Jordan. Icons of this feast show Christ standing in the narrow river, with John the Baptist's hand resting on His head. Sometimes angels are shown watching the scene on the other bank. At the top of the frame the Holy Spirit descends toward Christ as a dove and a ray of light. The Orthodox faith emphasizes that this is the first revelation of the divinity of Christ, when the Father spoke from above, saying, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."



**R2007.37**  
**Transfiguration**  
 c. 1550

Russia, Egg Tempera on Wood  
 Flanked by the prophets Elijah and Moses, Christ is shown as transformed from his physical body into a dazzling vision or his spiritual form on Mount Tabor in Galilee before his disciples: Peter, James, and John the Evangelist.



**R2007.21**  
**Entry into Jerusalem**  
 c. 1650, Russia, Egg Tempera on Wood,  
 metal basma

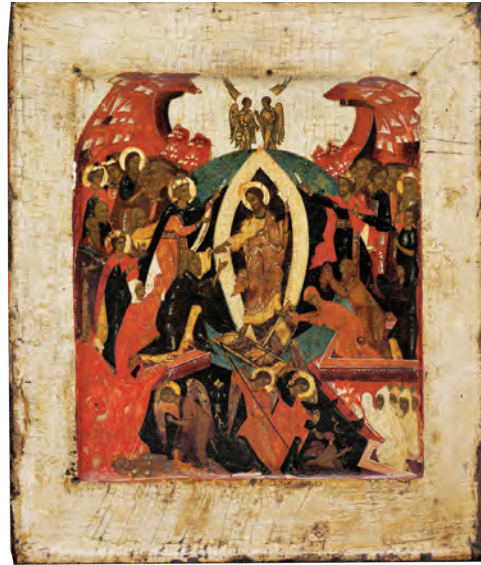
The celebration of the triumphant entry of Christ into Jerusalem occurs on the Sunday before Easter, commonly referred to as Palm Sunday.

The icon captures the festive and triumphal atmosphere of Christ's entry into Jerusalem with bright colors and colorful garments spread along the way — an act normally reserved only for kings. In Russian art, Christ usually rides a white colt, not a donkey. The icon is overlaid with a metal basma, pieces of thin metal sheets with ornamental patterns made in repoussé technique.



**R2003.12**  
**Crucifixion and Deposition**  
 c. 1880, Russia, Egg Tempera on Wood, Bronze

Cast metal icons and crosses were particularly popular in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Many sizes and types of metal icons were created. Metal icons had three virtues: affordability, durability, and portability. They could be conveniently folded, placed in a pocket, and taken along on a journey. They survived the rigors of use that would have quickly damaged a painted icon and were often handed down through generations of the same family. Occasionally, a wooden icon would be commissioned with a space carved out for the metal icon or cross, as is the case with this icon. The Virgin and the Holy Women stand to the right of the cross; to the left of the cross are Saint John the Apostle and Saint Longinus the Centurion. The thieves crucified with Jesus are shown behind Him, and the scene of the Deposition and the Lamentation are in the top corners.



**R2013.15**  
**The Descent**  
 (the Harrowing of Hell or the Anastasis)  
 Early 16th Century, Moscow, Russia  
 Egg Tempera on Wood

The scene represents Christ who, having broken and unhinged the doors to hell, descends to save Adam and Eve and all the righteous of the Old Testament. Thus, the event is ultimately connected with the Redemption. Christ is shown surrounded by a mandorla and standing atop the destroyed gates of Hell. He raises Adam out of a tomb, an action that symbolizes Christ freeing the righteous souls of those who died before Him. The icon is also known as Easter icon, since it prefigures the forthcoming celebration of the Resurrection of Christ.



**R2003.29**  
**Dormition of the Mother of God**  
 c. 1600  
 Russia  
 Egg Tempera on Wood

The Orthodox Christian church refers to the death of the Mother of God as Dormition (sleeping). The Mother of God is on her death-bed with the Apostles gathered around. Christ stands at the very center of the icon and holds the soul of His mother, symbolically represented as a baby in swaddling clothes.

In the foreground, a non-believer Jephonias shows his disrespect for the Mother of God by trying to overturn the bed. According to a story, his hands were cut off and subsequently miraculously reattached after he acknowledged Christianity and converted.



**R2010.35**  
**Last Judgment**  
 c. 1750, Russia, Egg Tempera on Wood

This icon depicts the Last Judgment, when Jesus returns to the world at the end of time to judge the living and the dead. Because this story is central to the Christian faith, many Russian Orthodox churches included this icon in their visual repertory. The Last Judgment icons are inevitably complex and rich in detail, and this version is no exception. At the center, Christ sits upon the Throne of Glory to judge humankind. The Mother of God and John the Baptist stand beside him, while Adam and Eve, representing original sin, are at his feet. The apostles and angels, sitting on either side of Christ, join the other figures in prayer for the souls of humanity.



**R2008.11**  
**Three Women at the Sepulchre**  
 c. 1480  
 Russia, Egg Tempera on Wood

On the third day after Christ was buried, the Myrophorae, or myrrh-bearing women went to the tomb where the body of Jesus had been laid out and discovered

the tomb was empty; an angel is said to have arrived to tell the women that Christ had risen from the dead.

## IMAGES OF CHRIST



**R2003.23**  
**Christ Pantokrator**  
 c. 1680, Russia, Egg Tempera on Wood

The word Pantokrator means “all-sovereign” or “all-ruler,” and it stands for one of the most commonly represented types of Christ. Christ Pantokrator Icons display Christ as blessing with His right hand while holding a scroll or the Bible in His left. In Orthodox Churches, an image of the Pantokrator often adorns the central dome.



**R2002.14**  
**Christ Pantokrator**  
 c. 1650, Russia  
 Egg Tempera on Wood, Silver Oklad with Gemstones



**R2001.13**  
**Christ Pantokrator**  
 c. 1600, Russia, Egg Tempera on Wood



**R2007.14**  
**Mandylyon**  
 (Image Not Made by Hands)  
 c. 1750, Russia, Egg Tempera on Wood



**R2014.3.2**  
**Christ of the Stern Eye**  
 c. 1700  
 Russia  
 Egg Tempera on Wood, Silver Oklad with Gemstones

Mandylyon, or the Holy Towel, is an image that was believed to have been created by Christ himself and is thus *acheiropoietos* (not made by human hands). According to one version of a Christian legend, King Abgar of Edessa who ruled in the first century CE was very ill and believed that only Christ could heal him. Instead of visiting King Abgar, Christ pressed His face against a towel and sent it to the ailing King. The towel retained the impression of Christ's features and cured the King.

Another version of the legend narrates that King Abgar sent his icon painter to paint a picture of Christ. When the icon-painter approached Christ he was told he did not need to paint Christ's picture. Instead, Christ asked the icon painter for a cloth, put the cloth to his face, and when he took it away there was a perfect image of his face not made by hands.

Icons of the Mandylyon usually show Christ's face and a cloth behind it. This icon also shows two angels holding the cloth.



**R2011.34**  
**Mandylyon**  
 (Image Not Made by Hands)  
 17th century  
 Russia  
 Egg Tempera on Wood, metal base



**R2010.50**  
**Story of the Mandylion**  
 (Image Not Made by Hands)  
 c. 1750, Russia, Egg Tempera on Wood

This icon apparently depicts a story of the Mandylion, showing Ananias (the court painter/messenger) and Thaddeus (a disciple of Christ) outside the city gates of the Syrian city of Edessa. Those looking on from the ramparts and gate must represent the Royal Court and, perhaps, King Abgar himself.



**R2011.80**  
**Sophia, Wisdom of God**  
 c. 1580  
 Novgorod, Russia  
 Egg Tempera on Wood

Hagia Sophia, Holy Wisdom, or the Wisdom of God is depicted in the center, seated upon a seven-pillared throne symbolizing Christ, with the Mother of God and John the Baptist on either side resembling the Deesis row of

an iconostasis. Sophia has red skin and clothing, which represents the “fire of the Spirit,” as Wisdom is sometimes interpreted. She wears a crown, demonstrating humility, and wings to further illustrate her divine qualities. In her left hand, Sophia holds a scroll, depicting the Word and symbolizing Christ. The background has ranks of angels and Christ of the Ancient Days. The angels are rolling up the heavens like a carpet and preparing the throne on which Christ will sit in judgment.

## MOTHER OF GOD



**R1997.9**  
**Mother of God Smolenskaya**  
 c. 1750, Russia, Egg Tempera on Wood

The icon of the Mother of God Smolenskaya is based on the famous Byzantine icon of the Virgin, the Hodegetria (she who points the way). According to tradition, Saint Luke the Evangelist painted the Mother of God from life as she requested. The icon depicts Mary looking directly at the viewer while gesturing toward her son, the Christ-Child — literally guiding the faithful toward salvation. A powerful reminder of God’s human incarnation, the subject also serves as a metaphor for the ability of icons to make the divine present on earth.

It is believed that the original icon was brought from Byzantium to Russia by Byzantine Princess Anna who married Prince Vsevolod of Chernigov in 1046. In 1101, Prince Vladimir Monomakh installed the icon in the cathedral of the city of Smolensk. Like the Mother of God of Kazan, Smolenskaya was also credited for many miracles including the defeat of Napoleon at Borodino in 1812.



R2014.3.12  
**Mother of God Smolenskaya**  
18th Century  
Russia



R2010.5  
**Mother of God Kazanskaya**  
c. 1650, Russia, Egg Tempera on Wood

It is one of the most popular icon-types of the Virgin in Russia. According to legend, in 1579, fire destroyed the home of a soldier in the city of Kazan. When the soldier contemplated rebuilding his home on the same site, the Mother of God appeared to his 9-year-old daughter and told her that her Icon was buried in the ground where the house once stood. It had been hidden there by the Christians during the Mongol invasion. After several attempts to have the church officials dig for the icon, the girl and her mother finally uncovered it themselves. It was wrapped in a dark red garment, and neither the panel nor the paintwork had any traces of damage. The newly excavated icon became well known through the miracles it performed. The Kazan icon was credited with the liberation of Moscow from the Poles on October 22, 1612; and, together with the icon of Smolensk, it is believed to have aided the Russian army in 1812



R1999.8  
**Three-Handed Mother of God**  
c. 1890, Russia, Egg Tempera on Wood

The Three-Handed Mother of God (Russian Troeruchitsa) is a famous icon still kept at the Serbian Monastery of Hilandar on Mount Athos. The origin of this miracle-working icon is related to Saint John of Damascus, a noted theologian and writer. In 717, Byzantine Emperor Leo the Isaurian falsely accused Saint John of treachery and his hand was cut off as punishment. Upon praying in front of an icon of the Virgin, his hand was miraculously restored. As a token of gratitude for this miracle, Saint John made a silver votive hand and attached it to the icon. Thus, this type of icon is often shown with three hands.



R2013.13  
**Mother of God Umilinya with Saints**  
17th Century, Russia  
Egg Tempera on Wood, Silver Basma



The Umilinya, or the Virgin of Tenderness, better known as the Eleusa type, is an image of loving kindness and tenderness between the Virgin and her Son. The emphasis upon human sentiments and the spontaneity of gentle embrace underscore the humanity of Christ. The most famous version of the Eleusa type in Russia is the icon of the Virgin of Vladimir. The Vladimir Virgin, however, is always shown as holding her son in the right arm while bending her head and pointing her left hand toward the Christ Child. The Child is depicted with His left foot tucked in with only a sole showing (see R2010.37 in this exhibition).

This icon was likely commissioned as a family icon, and the six saints featured on the border would have been the name saints or patron saints of family members. The saints, from top to bottom and from left to right, are: the Prophet David, Saint Daniel the Stylite, Saint George, Saint Menas, Saint Gregory, and Saint Zenobia.

This icon is decorated with thin strips of repoussé silver commonly known as basma. Dating back to the twelfth century, basma precedes riza or okhlads, which covered icons with a single sheet of metal pierced only to reveal heads and hands during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.



**R2010.37**  
**Mother of God Vladimirskaya**  
 (The Vladimir Virgin)  
 c. 1600, Russia  
 Egg Tempera on Wood, Silver Basma with Gems

The image of the Mother of God embraced tenderly by her son Jesus is particularly important in the eastern European tradition and in Russia. The composition emulates the great icon painted in Constantinople in the eleventh century and brought to Kiev shortly afterwards. The first icon of the Virgin of Vladimir was brought to Kiev from Constantinople

around 1130 as a gift to Prince Yury Dolgoruky. His son, Prince Andrei Bogolyupsky, removed it from Kiev to place it in the Cathedral of the Dormition in Vladimir in 1155. Since that time, it has been referred to as the Vladimir Virgin and considered the most sacred icon of the Russian state.

This delicate image shows the wistful, sad and, at the same time, tender expression of the Mother of God. Her downturned eyes seem to convey a sense of anticipated sorrow at losing her Son. The Vladimir Virgin is always shown as holding her Son in the right arm while bending her head and pointing her hand toward Him. The Child is depicted with His left foot tucked in with only a sole showing.

The icon is believed to have saved Moscow during the invasion by the Polish Army in 1612 and also during the burning of the city by Napoleon in the War of 1812. There are even rumors that Stalin had it removed from the Tretyakov Gallery and flown thrice around Moscow when the Germans approached in 1941.

This icon of the Mother of God Vladimirskaya has four saints on the border. It was common in the Russian tradition for the patron or name saints of all family members to be added in this way. It was a way to personalize the icon and to also commemorate those saints who were especially important to the owners.



**R1999.19**  
**Mother of God of the Sign**  
 c. 1880  
 Russia  
 Egg Tempera on Wood, Metal Biza with Gems,  
 Pearls, and Glass Beads

This icon shows the Mother of God in an orans pose (gesture of prayer with uplifted hands), and the image of Christ, at her bosom, surrounded by a circular mandorla, which represents the light and the glory of God. The term Virgin of the Sign or Our Lady of the Sign is a reference to Isaiah 7:14: "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall

conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel.”

This icon is adorned with a beaded covering called a biza. These were created by sewing beads to fabric or a thin metal sheet. The purpose of the covering was to both protect the icon underneath and to venerate or honor it.



**R2012.9**  
**Deposition of the Robe of the Mother of God at Blachernae**

c. 1700, Russia  
Egg Tempera on Wood, Gilt Silver Biza

The Church of Saint Mary of Blachernae housed some of the most important relics of the Virgin including her belt and her mantle. The mantle (maphorion) was brought to Constantinople during the reign of the Byzantine emperor Leo I the Great (ruled 457-474). Apparently, the need to house this precious relic initiated the construction of the church at Blachernae, and a great ceremony was held as it was placed in a reliquary (the container of the relic) on the altar. Thereafter the robe was believed to have protected the city from many attempted invasions. In 860 the fleet of the Russian Prince Askold came to Constantinople and threatened the city. The Byzantine emperor Michael III (ruled 842-867) prayed in the church of the Mother of God at Blachernae with his people. It was decided that the robe should be transferred to Hagia Sophia in Constantinople where it would be safe. The intervention of the holy relic, the mantle of the Virgin, was credited with the ensuing peace agreement, amicable departure of the otherwise dangerous Russians, and opening of trade between Russia and the Byzantine Empire. This event was also believed to have marked the beginning of Orthodox Christianity spreading into Russia.



**R2012.79**  
**Icon with the Virgin of the Sign; Virgin of Pokrov (veil or protection in Russian); Descent (Harrowing of Hell or Anastasis); and the Fiery Ascent of the Prophet Elijah**

c. 1550, Pskov, Russia, Egg Tempera on Wood

The lower register displays the Virgin holding a medallion of Christ and surrounded by holy bishops and saints.

Virgin of Pokrov commemorates her miraculous appearance to Saint Andrew the Fool in the 10th century in the Church of the Virgin of Blachernae in Constantinople. According to Saint Andrew, the Virgin prayed for the salvation of humankind and spread her veil so that it enveloped and sheltered the entire congregation. Although the event took place in Byzantium, the icon and the festival of Pokrov is celebrated almost exclusively in Russia and its borderlands.

Descent (Harrowing of Hell) displays Christ who, having broken and unhinged the doors to hell, descends to save Adam and Eve and all the righteous of the Old Testament.

Fiery Ascent of the Prophet Elijah is a very popular icon, and it represents this awe-inspiring and powerful prophet fed by an angel (lower left corner); accompanied by Elisha who holds his mantle and will move the waters of the Jordan, which will open under his feet (lower right); standing on the chariots in the bright red circle, reaching his hand toward the blessing hand of God represented in the upper left corner.



## BEAUTIFUL CORNER

In the early Christian church people would gather for prayer and worship in the homes of believers. When Christianity was legalized in Rome it was much more common to gather in a church, however the practice of creating a holy space in the home was carried on in many Christian traditions.

Every home in the Orthodox tradition is considered to be a microcosm of the church, and so each has what is called a beautiful corner, or special sacred space. Traditionally icons were hung in a corner that was visible from the front door; visitors would go first to the corner and pray before greeting their hosts.

A standard Beautiful Corner has at least three icons: one of Christ, the Virgin, and the family's patron saint. It also has a cross, prayer book, copy of the Bible, a censer with incense, and a lampada (vigil lamp). In Russian homes the corner would also be decorated with silks and flowers.

The following are included in the Beautiful Corner

**R2006.19**  
**Saint Nicholas**

c. 1760  
Russia  
Egg Tempera on Wood, Silver  
Oklad

**R2007.20**  
**Saint John the Baptist from a Deesis Tier**

c. 1580  
Russia  
Egg Tempera on Wood

**R2011.2**  
**Saint Nil of Stolbensky with Saints Nicholas and Ephram**

19th Century  
Russia  
Egg Tempera on Wood

**R2012.53**  
**Miniature Iconostasis**

Late 18th Century  
Russia  
Egg Tempera on Wood

**R2013.13**  
**Mother of God Umilinya with Saints**

17th Century  
Russia  
Egg Tempera on Wood, Silver  
Basma

**R2013.32**  
**Crucifix with Feasts**

18th Century  
Russia  
Brass

**R2013.56**  
**Saint Simeon Stylites**

19th Century  
Russia  
Egg Tempera on Wood

**R2013.62**  
**Saint Peter and Saint Paul**

17th Century  
Central Russia  
Egg Tempera on Wood

**R2014.5.1**  
**Lampada**

19th Century  
Russia  
Silver

## SAINTS



**R2007.20**  
**Saint John  
the Baptist  
from a Deesis Tier**

c. 1580, Russia, Egg Tempera on Wood

This icon was once part of a Deesis tier of an iconostasis and would be hung to the right of an icon of Christ in Majesty. Saint John is depicted as praying for the souls of humanity.



**R2009.4**  
**Beheading of Saint John  
the Baptist**

c. 1580, Russia, Egg Tempera on Wood

This icon was possibly part of a set of icons on the Life of John the Baptist. It shows the beheading of John the Baptist and, in the same frame, the burial of the head while still on the silver platter.



**R2014.3.4**  
**Saint Paraskeva (Pyatnitsa)**

16th Century, Russia, Egg Tempera on Wood

Saint Paraskeva, a great martyr of Asia Minor, was born to Christian parents during the reign of the Roman emperor Hadrian (117-138). She was given the name Paraskeva (Greek for Friday) after the day she was born and to commemorate the Crucifixion, which also took place on a Friday. Known in Russia as Pyatnitsa (Russian for Friday), she was particularly venerated in the city of Novgorod where she became the protector of merchants since their market day was on Friday. Apparently, Paraskeva was arrested under the reign of Antoninus Pius (138-161) for preaching Christianity. Antoninus offered her many gifts and great wealth if she would renounce her faith including offering to marry her and give her half his kingdom. When Paraskeva continued to refuse him, Antoninus Pius had her subjected to many tortures but she kept healing and showing no sign of pain. Finally, the emperor had her placed in boiling oil but she did not shriek in pain. When he asked if she had used magic to cool the oil, she responded by scooping up some of the hot liquid and tossing it toward him. The emperor was blinded. He began to ask her for help, and Saint Paraskeva healed him with cool water from a nearby stream. Antoninus Pius converted, set her free, and stopped persecuting Christians.



**R2003.20**  
**Saint Katherine**  
c. 1820, Russia, Egg Tempera on Wood

Born to a wealthy aristocratic family in Alexandria (Egypt), Saint Katherine was renowned for her superior intellect and education. When summoned by the Roman Emperor Maxentius (ruled 306-312), she eloquently countered all of the arguments for paganism presented by fifty major pagan philosophers in Alexandria and was so convincing that many requested baptism. The emperor was furious and condemned Katherine to be tortured and thrown into prison. He intended for her to be killed upon a spiked wheel but, according to one of many legends, at her touch, the wheel shattered. Subsequently, Maxentius ordered her decapitation. Instead of blood, however, milk gushed from her wound and angels carried her body to the monastery founded at the site of the Burning Bush on Mount Sinai that was later named after her.



**R2006.19**  
**Saint Nicholas**  
c. 1760,  
Russia, Egg  
Tempera on  
Wood,  
Silver Oklad



**R2010.22**  
**Saint Nicholas of Mozhaisk  
with Saints and Feasts**  
c. 1600, Russia  
Egg Tempera on Wood, Gems, Glass Beads, Metal

Saint Nicholas, a fourth-century Bishop of Myra in Asia Minor (now Demre, Turkey), is one of the most popular saints in Christendom and especially venerated in Russia. Known as the wonderworker, he is celebrated as the protector of the weak and poor and as a gift-giver. The image of Saint Nicholas of Mozhaisk apparently reflects the saint's miraculous appearance above the city's cathedral that was named after him. It is believed that during the fourteenth-century Mongol siege of the city, Saint Nicholas emerged as a huge figure holding a sword in the right hand and the city of Mozhaisk in the left. According to one version of the event, the townspeople were emboldened by the vision of a powerful saint and defeated the enemy; in another version, having seen the vision, the enemy fled in terror and, in gratitude, the citizens carved a statue of the saint's miraculous appearance. Although three-dimensional representations of the holy figures were not commonly allowed by the Orthodox Church, the images of Saint Nicholas of Mozhaisk were accepted because they were returning to the original relief, the prototype, made by the grateful citizens in commemoration of this important event.

In this icon a full-length statue of Saint Nicholas is set in a kiot, the box in which an icon is displayed. In Russian, kiot (casing) refers to a box or a frame in which an icon is placed. Images of Christ and the Mother of God, represented on panels nailed to the back of the kiot, are flanking Saint Nicholas' shoulders. He holds a sword in his right arm and a church, instead of a town, in his left; this is meant to depict him as a protector of the church. The Holy Trinity is on the top panel while the doors show important feast days, the Annunciation and the Nativity, and select saints.



**R2006.10**  
**Saint Nicholas of Mozhaisk with Scenes from His Life**  
 c. 1600, Russia, Egg Tempera on Wood

Saint Nicholas, a fourth-century Bishop of Myra in Asia Minor (now Demre, Turkey), is one of the most popular saints in Christendom and especially venerated in Russia. Known as the wonderworker, he is celebrated as the protector of the weak and poor and as a gift-giver. The image of Saint Nicholas of Mozhaisk apparently reflects the saint's miraculous appearance above the city's cathedral that was named after him. It is believed that during the fourteenth-century Mongol siege of the city, Saint Nicholas emerged as a huge figure holding a sword in the right hand and the city of Mozhaisk in the left. According to one version of the event, the townspeople were emboldened by the vision of a powerful saint and defeated the enemy; in another version, having seen the vision, the enemy fled in terror and, in gratitude, the citizens carved a statue of the saint's miraculous appearance. This image was copied numerous times both in reliefs and icons.

The scenes are meant to be read from left to right and top to bottom. They are:

1. Birth of Saint Nicholas
2. Baptism of Saint Nicholas
3. Saint Nicholas heals a woman with a shriveled hand
4. Saint Nicholas brought by his uncle, an abbot, to school
5. Saint Nicholas ordained as a deacon

6. Saint Nicholas ordained as a bishop
7. Saint Nicholas appears in a dream to Emperor Constantine
8. Saint Nicholas rescues three generals from prison
9. Miracle of Saint Nicholas and the carpet
10. Saint Nicholas returns a kidnapped boy to his parents
11. Death of Saint Nicholas
12. Relics of Saint Nicholas moved to Bari



**R2007.39**  
**Saint George and the Dragon**  
 c. 1590, Russia, Egg Tempera on Wood

**R2007.47**  
**Saint George and the Dragon**  
 c. 1750, Russia  
 Egg Tempera on Wood



**R2011.7**  
**Saint Nil of Stolbensky**  
 19th Century, Russia  
 Egg Tempera on Wood



Saint Nil was a monk who lived in Kryptetsk Monastery near Pskov in northern Russia. After ten years at the monastery, he asked God to lead him to a quieter place where his prayers would not be constantly interrupted. In 1528, he moved to Stolbensk Island in Lake Seliger and lived in a small cave. When a band of thieves came to the island, Saint Nil told them that all of his treasures were in the corner of his cave. They searched the cave and found only an icon of the Mother of God. Saint Nil lived a life devoted to prayer and asceticism. He slept upright, supported by two crutches, to continue praying at night. After his death, a

church was constructed on the island. Small statues of Saint Nil were popular in the nineteenth century and were placed in Beautiful Corners to symbolize Saint Nil praying for the family and perhaps as a reminder of the importance of prayer.

**R2011.2**  
**Saint Nil of Stolbensky with Saints Nicholas and Ephram**

19th Century  
 Russia  
 Egg Tempera on Wood



**R2008.33**  
**Saint Alexis with Scenes from His Life**

c. 1650  
 Russia  
 Egg Tempera on Wood

Saint Alexis was born in Rome in the fourth century to pious parents who had prayed for a child for many years. At the age of 6 he read the Holy Scriptures and began fasting and distributing alms to the poor. After his marriage

he secretly left his home in Rome and went to Edessa where he gave everything he had to the poor. His wife and parents searched everywhere for him including Edessa where he was a beggar for seventeen years but he could not be found. Alexis then secretly boarded a ship for Celicia but a storm forced the ship to land in Rome. He continued to live a pious life near the home of his parents and his wife but they did not recognize him. For seventeen years he saw his parents every day and heard the crying of his lonely wife. When he died in 411 he wrote them a note asking forgiveness for the pain he had caused them. When informed of Alexis' death the archbishop proclaimed Alexis to be a saint, and his body was carried to the center of Rome where it was placed in a marble crypt and honored for a whole week by the entire community.

The scenes are meant to be read from left to right and top to bottom. They are:

1. Alexis born to parents who had prayed for a child
2. Baptism of Alexis
3. Alexis taken to the church at an early age
4. Alexis fasted strictly, distributed alms, and secretly wore a hair shirt
5. Alexis' marriage arranged by his parents
6. Another scene from Alexis' wedding
7. On their wedding night Alexis tells his bride: "May the Lord be with us until his grace provides us with something better."
8. Alexis secretly leaves his home and boards a ship for Mesopotamia
9. Alexis arrives in the city of Edessa where he sells everything he owns
10. Alexis distributes money, bread, and water to the poor
11. Servants sent by his parents to find Alexis do not recognize him
12. Mother of God speaks to the head of the church: "Lead into My church that Man of God, worthy of the Kingdom of Heaven."
13. Head of the church searches but cannot find him
14. Praying to the Mother of God, he is told there is a beggar outside named Alexis
15. Death of Alexis
16. Burial of Alexis



**R2013.56**  
**Saint Simeon Stylites**

19th Century, Russia, Egg Tempera on Wood

Saint Simeon the Stylite was a monk in the fifth century known for practicing extreme asceticism, fasting, and self-denial. Simeon was the first saint to live atop a pillar, which he continued to build over the course of 47 years descending only on occasion. The tower was reputed to be 80 feet tall by the time of his death and had become a pilgrimage site for Christians seeking guidance and inspiration from the monk. Simeon is typically shown on top of a column or pillar, as he is here. The name Stylites comes from the Greek word for column, *stylos*.



**R2011.88**  
**Saint Theodore and Sons**  
 c. 1650, Yaroslavl, Russia, Egg Tempera on Wood

Saint Theodore (c. 1240–1299) was the son of the prince of Smolensk and married into the principedom of Yaroslavl, where he became a renowned warrior. Impressed with his military skill, the Khan Mengu-Temir asked him to marry his daughter, establishing an unprecedented alliance and lineage when Theodore fathered David and Konstantin. As suggested by this icon, Russians began venerating Theodore and his sons as miracle workers when their remains were found undamaged in 1463.



**R2007.10**  
**Saint Blaise and Saint Modestus I Patriarch of Jerusalem**  
 c. 1750, Russia, Egg Tempera on Wood

Saint Blaise was a bishop of Sebaste martyred for his faith in the early fourth century. Legends say that Saint Blaise received a message from God telling him to escape religious persecution by fleeing to the hills. There he cured wild animals of illnesses, until hunters recognized him as a Christian and captured him. On his way to prison, he convinced a wolf to release a pig that belonged to a poor woman. She in turn brought him food when he was sentenced to death by starvation. Ultimately martyred, Blaise became known as the patron saint of animals.

Saint Modestus was sold into slavery in Egypt where he converted his pagan master to Christianity and was set free, making his way to a monastery in Palestine. In 614, when invaders slaughtered Christians living in Jerusalem, Modestus set out for Greece to get help and was nearly captured. With help from Greece, he buried the slaughtered, rebuilt the city's churches and monasteries, and became the Christian leader of Jerusalem.



**R2008.4**  
**Saint Anna of Kashin and Saint Tatiana**  
 c. 1800, Russia  
 Egg Tempera on Wood

**R2009.2**  
**Saint Anastasia with Scenes from Her Life**  
 c. 1580, Russia,  
 Egg Tempera on Wood

Saint Anastasia is celebrated in the Orthodox Church as the Great Martyr and is known for her healing deeds. Often referred to as Saint Anastasia of Sirmium (now in Serbia), after the town where she died, or the “deliverer from potion” because of her healing powers, Anastasia was born in the third century to a Christian mother and a pagan father. According to a popular legend, Anastasia’s mother secretly





raised her as a Christian but she had to marry Publius, a pagan from a noble family who treated her cruelly with the excuse that he was punishing her for her faith. When Publius died, Anastasia became an advocate for Christian prisoners. She was eventually arrested, tortured, and killed under the rule of Emperor Diocletian (ruled 284-305).

The scenes are meant to be read from left to right and top to bottom. They are:

1. Anastasia's mother instructs her in the Christian faith
2. Anastasia and her mother go to Saint Chrysogonus
3. Anastasia learning from Saint Chrysogonus
4. Anastasia married to Publius
5. Anastasia tells Publius that she is a Christian
6. Anastasia visits Saint Chrysogonus
7. Anastasia helping and healing
8. She visits Christian prisoners
9. Publius drowns while sailing to Persia
10. She does works of charity for Christians
11. Anastasia comforts a persecuted woman
12. Anastasia in front of Emperor Diocletian
13. Prelate Upain attacks her and is struck blind
14. Anastasia cannot be starved or drowned
15. Anastasia cannot be beheaded
16. Anastasia is burned to death



**R2013.62**  
**Saint Peter and Saint Paul**  
 17th Century  
 Central Russia  
 Egg Tempera on Wood

Saint Peter and Saint Paul were two influential leaders of the early church. Saint Peter is pictured on the left holding the keys to Heaven and a scroll; Saint Paul is on the right holding a book. Both are being blessed by Christ who is shown at the top.

## Metal Icons and Crosses

### Crosses and Reliquaries

The cross, the most widespread symbol of Christianity, is primarily used to recall Christ's sacrifice. Variation in the shape connotes specific meanings. The Greek cross has bars of equal length and may refer to God's sovereignty over the earth. Russian crucifixes have a long vertical bar with three shorter crossbars that refer to the story of Christ's crucifixion. The top bar represents the sign that hung above Christ's head identifying him as "king of the Jews," and the lower bar represents the footrest believed to be part of the cross. The tilt of the lower bar refers to the two thieves who were crucified with Christ, only one of which accepted Christ as the savior. The beam is tilted to signify his conversion and entry into paradise.

Crosses may be worn, carried, or used to adorn architecture as a statement of faith. In Byzantium and Russia, they were also formed into reliquaries, as seen in this case. Reliquaries are boxes that contain sacred relics—remains of saints such as bones, clothing, or personal effects. Widely popular in Russia, relics received special veneration as sacred objects capable of protecting the devout.

### Enamel

Enamel is a form of powdered glass that is heated until it liquefies. Greek goldsmiths began using the material as early as the 500s, and they exported enameled work to customers as far away as southern Russia. Enamel's jewel-like qualities made it widely appealing, and it was soon being used to adorn icons, housewares, and jewelry throughout Russia. By the late 1600s artists at the Kremlin in Moscow were recognized as masters of enameling techniques, and the famous House of Fabergé jewelers began using enamel after the firm was founded in 1842. By 1851, enamel was so closely identified with Russian culture that the Imperial Russian Archeological Society commissioned a study of Russian enamels from the pre-Mongolian period (c. 900–1100) to the 1600s.



**R2012.43**  
**Pendant with the Mother of God**  
 13th–14th Century  
 Russia, Bronze

**R2011.61**  
**Pendant with Saint Boris and Saint Gleb**  
 18th Century, Russia,  
 Bronze





**R2010.31**  
**Cross**  
 6th–9th Century  
 Byzantium, Gold



**R2011.40**  
**Mold for Cross Pendant**  
 9th–12th Century  
 Byzantium, Stone

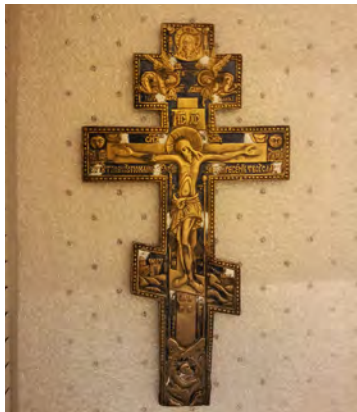
This small rectangular stone with a cross carved into one side was once used for creating cross pendants.



**R2013.32**  
**Crucifix with Feasts**  
 18th Century, Russia, Brass



**R2008.29**  
**Cross**  
 6th–7th Century  
 Byzantium, Metal



**R2013.31**  
**Crucifix**  
 19th Century, Russia  
 Brass, Enamel



**R2012.32**  
**Crucifix with Feasts**  
 16th Century, Russia, Bronze



**R2013.21.1 and R2013.21.2**  
**Reliquary Crucifix**  
 12th Century  
 Russia  
 Bronze with Niello  
 (black metallic alloy)  
 Bronze Back



**R2014.5.1**  
**Lampada**  
 19th Century  
 Russia  
 Silver

The term *lampada*, meaning lamp, is used in the Orthodox Church to designate the lamps (usually oil burning) that hang in front of icons. They have a practical function, illumination, which has taken on spiritual significance. Typical lampadas found in Russian churches are made of silver, although they can be made of brass and other materials as well. It is probable that this example once hung in the Beautiful Corner of a home.

With many thanks to the Museum of Russian Icons. This exhibition would not have been possible without the generous cooperation of founder Gordon Lankton and the museum's registrar, Laura Garrity-Arquitt.

The exhibition and related programs are made possible by generous support from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation; the Departments of Art, History, Religion, Russian and East European Studies, and Music; and the Lafayette Art Galleries.

The Zingaresca Duo residency is made possible by the generosity of the R.K. Laros Foundation, established by Mr. Russel K. (LC 1915) and Mrs. Helen K. Laros to support community non-profit organizations.

Lafayette Art Galleries and EPI receive state arts funding support through a grant from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts—a state agency funded by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency.



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FRONT COVER: **R2010.5, Mother of God Kazanskaya**,  
c. 1650, Russia, Egg Tempera on Wood. Courtesy of the  
Museum of Russian Icons, Clinton, Massachusetts.

## Windows to **Heaven**

Treasures from the  
**Museum of Russian Icons**

February 5 – March 25, 2017

## How to “Read” an Icon

An icon appears to be simple at first glance but is, in fact, a complex interwoven set of symbols that have evolved over centuries to form a refined and sophisticated visual language. The lack of traditional perspective, for example, is deliberate. By abandoning traditional perspective the icon painter is free to use the entire surface of the panel to depict numerous and different stories on a single plane. No shadows are depicted in icons as the illusion of an all-illuminating sacred light would be lost if a “realistic” single source of light were depicted.

Russian icons are often narrative and rich in storytelling. Hagiographical icons, in which the life of a saint is depicted in multiple frames that surround a central image, are highly developed in the Russian Orthodox tradition. These, like most icons, are read from left to right. Single pane narrative icons are more difficult to read; often multiple scenes are crowded within the frame. In these, the images are organized by size with larger images being the most important.

The artistic language of icon painting directly embodies spiritual phenomena and relies on abstract forms and complex symbolism to convey meaning. Here are some of the common symbols and their meanings:

**Book or Scroll**—the Word (as in Christ), the Bible

**Halo**—circular shape around head that distinguishes one who is deemed Holy and resides in Heaven

**Mandorla** (almond-shaped aura around full figure of Christ)—Eternal Life

**Crown**—given to a Martyr to signify that they are glorified in Heaven

**Sword, spear, or other weapon**—given to a defender of the Faith such as a Warrior Saint

**High Forehead and Sunken Eyes**—great or divine wisdom

**Dragon or Serpent**—Evil

**Colors**—White: Purity; Black: Hell; Red: Martyr; Gold: Heaven

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