THE ICON MUSEUM AND STUDY CENTER

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Wendy Salmond and Justin Willson, Editors

THE ICON MUSEUM AND STUDY CENTER

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Cover: Mariam Otkhmezuri Charlton's Partial Reconstruction of the Archangel Gabriel Icon from Jumati Monastery. Showing: two enamel quatrefoils and the archangel's face (State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg); silver-gilt panels from the icon's frame (State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg; formerly part of the M. Botkin collection); the nimbus and medallion with St. Theodore (National Museum of Art of Georgia, Tbilisi); medallion with St. Demetrius (Louvre); and nine additional medallions (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York).

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INTRODUCTION

The following papers stem from the virtual international conference Collecting Orthodox Art in the West: A History and Look Towards the Future held at the Icon Museum and Study Center in June 2021. The conference examined the motivation and means of icon collecting, and inquired into systems of classification and customs of display in North America and Europe. With the fall of the Soviet Union, the globalization of the world's economy, and the digital revolution of the last few decades, the focus, reach, and habits of collectors have been radically transformed, but exactly how the situation today compares with that of past generations of collectors of Orthodox art has only begun to be explored. A conference addressing major collectors of icons in the last few centuries therefore seemed timely.

The collectors and collections highlighted by the volume's contributors reveal some enduring themes and many surprises. Like collectors in other realms, icon collectors were fascinated by a variety of aspects of the wider cultures they pursued. Whether Orthodox religion, a nebulous "Greek" past, or the hidden world of "Russia," wide swaths of premodern history were perceived within the makeup of iconography. Workshop skill, glimpsed in the fashioning of materials such as enamel, and rituals, such as the liturgy, as well as family connections to places reminiscent of the Old World captivated the imaginations of collectors over the eighteenth to twentieth centuries.

Collectors played a central role in the establishment of Byzantine Studies as a discipline in Europe, the United Kingdom, and North America. They also laid the framework for the study of post-Byzantine art, which has long lay at the fringe of academic research on icons. In the mid-twentieth century Richard Hare, a Cambridge professor, formed possibly the first icon collection in the UK, publishing a book that integrated the icon into Slavonic Studies; in eighteenth-century Rome Agostino Mariotti, a member of the Italian Academy of Arcadia, collected icons as examples of the Byzantine liturgical rite; in the 1930s, Joseph Davies, a diplomat to the Soviet Union, collected icons to donate to his alma mater, the University of Wisconsin–Madison; while for Amy Putnam icons remained mostly a private obsession, even as she and her sister sought to strengthen southern Californian culture with the donation to local museums of Old Master painting. In a sense, the Putnam sisters' collecting efforts were diametrically opposed to those of Alexander Zvenigorodsky, the late- nineteenth-century

Russian aristocrat. He published his collection of "Byzantine" enamels in a limited-run edition illustrated with sumptuous chromolithographs; the volume was in production for almost a decade. This is a distant time-scale to the hastily produced catalogue of Davies' collection, which was built, transported from Moscow, and installed in Madison all within the course of a single year. Collecting has divergent temporalities as well, and the contributions to this issue of the Journal of Icon Studies illuminate those micro time-scales.

The plurality of perspectives offered in this volume reflects the historical vagaries inherent in the history of collecting and display. In hindsight it is easy to see patterns and through-lines, if not developmental narratives and teleologies. Yet, each contribution reveals the often random or accidental paths by which works wind up together as parts of collections; only later do scholars project order onto the chaos, making sense out of vicissitude. A second disconcerting theme is that collecting can be a surprisingly destructive activity, breaking up and dispersing the very objects it seeks to elevate and preserve. Wholes are sacrificed for the sake of owning a part, and in the quest to possess, singular artifacts are often fragmented and scattered. Similarly, collections lovingly compiled over a lifetime can be swiftly dispersed on the collector's death, destroying the perception of aesthetic coherence and historical importance. While the essays in this volume reveal a range of motivations, across a broad geography–spanning Italy, Russia, the UK, and, within the US, the East Coast, Midwest, and West Coast–there is a surprising amount of interconnectivity and awareness between collectors, dealers, and scholars. The world of icon collecting is, to be sure, relatively self-contained, but the ambition of its collectors contradicts any notion that they are isolated from dominant art historical narratives.

Each of the following studies can be conceived as contributing to a sort of atlas of visual perceptions–an evolving record of past efforts in collecting icons and related artifacts across a diffuse geography. The contributions are all historiographic in nature: the authors are least of all interested in going "behind" the collector to correct or update their attributions and evaluations from a scientific, conservation based approach, or by using an updated rubric. Rather the volume, as a whole, seeks to contextualize the assumptions and tastes of collectors which led to their focus on a very special type of object–the icon, which intersects with domains of learning and art movements in exciting ways: from Classics, to Modernism, to Religion, to a renewed focus on, and appreciation of, the Decorative Arts in the nineteenth century.

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From Forges to Fiery Furnaces: Amy Putnam, Russian Icon Collector

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Derrick R. Cartwright

From Forges to Fiery Furnaces: Amy Putnam, Russian Icon Collector

Abstract

The Timken Museum of Art is renowned for its collection of European and American paintings. The museum also possesses a group of Russian icons dating from the 15th to 19th centuries. While numerous, these icons are somewhat less well celebrated. The devotional images have been shown in a dedicated space since the museum first opened in 1965. The icons represent the personal collecting passion of one of the museum's founders: Amy Putnam. With her two sisters, Anne and Irene, Putnam relocated to San Diego, California, in 1913 from the family home in Bennington, Vermont. She later studied Russian language and literature at Stanford University. After becoming enamored of Russian culture, and after inheriting the family fortune, in 1938 Putnam's personal collecting interests expanded beyond the "Old Masters" that she frequently donated to museums. At the time of her death, Putnam owned more than 300 Russian icons. These were kept in her private rooms within the mansion that she and her older sister, Anne, shared at Fourth and Walnut Streets in San Diego's prosperous Banker's Hill neighborhood. This paper speculates about the goals behind Putnam's drive to surround herself with these remarkable works.

Keywords: Timken Museum, Fiery Furnace, art collecting, Russian icons, Amy Putnam, philanthropy, San Diego, museum founders.

> My employer has about 350 icons, some of which are peeling and need attention . . . I know it is a great distance out here [but] perhaps we could get your advice on what to do about these icons and . . . we could make it attractive enough for you to come out and work on them.[1]

Reasonable people reading a quote like the one in this epigraph might react: "that's not a promising start to assessing any great collection of Russian icons." Hundreds of devotional objects in dire condition, consigned to the hinterlands, sounds dismaying. My contention in what follows is that a certain incredulity, and some wonder, necessarily surround ambitious collecting enterprises in peripheral contexts. These qualities are signaled in the above letter by the writer's repeated regret for being "out here," as well as by the plea to just "come out" with the promise of making the venture "attractive enough" for the recipient to perform urgent services. Such an assignment cannot help but sound more like punishment than sweet reward when framed in these terms. In this case, however, we are talking about Southern California in the mid-twentieth century, a place that might have seemed remote to some at the time, but which was well on its way to becoming a major cultural destination. The motivations informing private collecting habits ought to be interrogated in light of their unlikely conditions, even—or especially—when they appear to border on undisciplined mania.[2] What follows might be interpreted as an investigation, and hopeful reconsideration, of such tough judgments.

The quote that opens this paper is extracted from a slightly longer letter destined for Jere Abbott. Abbott was formerly the Director of the Smith College Museum of Art in Northampton, Massachusetts. Before that, he served as Associate Director of the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. By the time this slightly desperate correspondence reached Abbott he was living in Manhattan, mostly retired from the art world but evidently considered a candidate for part-time duties as an art restorer, or at the very least an expert who might provide some profitable help with Russian art. Except for accompanying Alfred H. Barr, Jr. on a visit to Moscow early in his MoMA days, Abbott possessed only passing interest in icons, a fact amply revealed by a listing of the museum publications he wrote, the vast majority of which were devoted to canonical Modernist painters.[3] He explained as much in his curt reply to Frederick S. Parker, the letter's author.[4] For his part, Parker should not be faulted for trying. He was not trained as an art scholar; he was hardly even a qualified amateur. Rather, his connection to the Putnam sisters stemmed from his role as former vice president of Guaranty Trust Bank in New York, as well as the president of a recently-formed legal entity in San Diego called the Putnam Foundation. That non-profit was the brainchild of a San Diego attorney named Walter Ames, created on behalf of two of his wealthiest clients, Amy and Anne Putnam. Amy Putnam (fig. 1) was the "employer"/collector invoked in the letter. Together with her sister, Anne, she had earned a reputation as a generous, and serious, art lover in her adopted city. Their middle sibling, Irene, passed away in 1935 and was

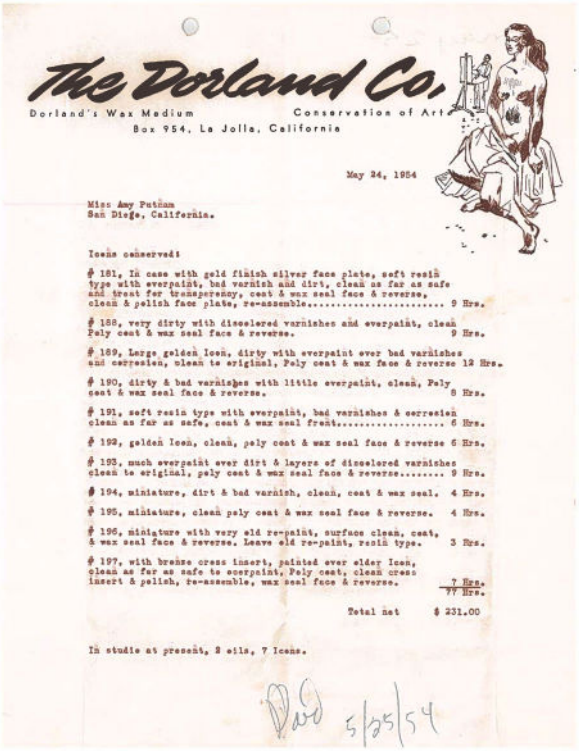
Fig. 1 Unknown photographer, *Amy Putnam*, c. 1930 (Timken Museum of Art Archives).

not directly involved in the growing prestige of their art collections. Indeed, the two Putnam sisters still rank high among the most generous philanthropists that the city has ever seen, acting as primary benefactors for European art collections first at the San Diego Fine Arts Gallery (now the San Diego Museum of Art) and, slightly later, at the Timken Art Gallery (now the Timken Museum of Art).

Parker's effort to engage Abbott, though failed, is noteworthy for at least two reasons: it provided an estimate of the number of Russian icons that Amy Putnam had in her possession by the early 1950s, and it conveyed a candid assessment of their condition which was, generally speaking, not especially good. The sheer number of icons compares favorably with other contemporaneous private icon collections, such as the George Hann Collection which was first published around the same time.[5] The San Diego icons' poor state, while regrettable, was concerning to their then 79-year-old owner, a care that is emblematic of her stewardship. When Parker finally identified someone to assist with the conservation of his client's still-growing collection, that professional was found in the nearby beach community of La Jolla. Frank N. Dorland, Jr. received the job. Starting in Spring 1953, Dorland dedicated the next four-and-a-half years to "restoring" the icons and other Russian objects collected by Putnam. His invoices reveal that he habitually spent between three and eighteen hours on each object, for which he received an hourly rate of $3, not including associated costs (fig. 2).

A typical description of the work performed can be found on a conservation bill dated May 24, 1954:

> *Large golden icon, dirty with overpaint over bad varnishes and corrosion, clean to original, poly coat & wax face & reverse. 12 hours.*[6]



The Dorland Co.

Dorland's Wax Medium — Conservation of Art

Box 954, La Jolla, California

May 24, 1954

Miss Amy Putnam
San Diego, California.

Icons conserved:

181, In case with gold finish silver face plate, soft resin type with overpaint, bad varnish and dirt, clean as far as safe and treat for transparency, coat & wax seal face & reverse, clean & polish face plate, re-assemble..... 9 Hrs.

188, very dirty with discolored varnishes and overpaint, clean Poly coat & wax seal face & reverse. 9 Hrs.

189, Large golden Icon, dirty with overpaint over bad varnishes and corrosion, clean to original, Poly coat & wax face & reverse 12 Hrs.

190, dirty & bad varnishes with little overpaint, clean, Poly coat & wax seal face & reverse. 8 Hrs.

191, soft resin type with overpaint, bad varnishes & corrosion clean as far as safe, coat & wax seal front..... 6 Hrs.

192, golden Icon, clean, poly coat & wax seal face & reverse 6 Hrs.

193, much overpaint over dirt & layers of discolored varnishes clean to original, poly coat & wax seal face & reverse..... 9 Hrs.

194, miniature, dirt & bad varnish, clean, coat & wax seal. 4 Hrs.

195, miniature, clean poly coat & wax seal face & reverse. 4 Hrs.

196, miniature with very old re-paint, surface clean, coat, & wax seal face & reverse. Leave old re-paint, resin type. 3 Hrs.

197, with bronze cross insert, painted over older Icon, clean as far as safe to overpaint, Poly coat, clean cross insert & polish, re-assemble, wax seal face & reverse. 7 Hrs.
77 Hrs.

Total Net $ 231.00

In studio at present, 2 oils, 7 Icons.

5/25/54

Fig. 2 Invoice for conservation services from The Dorland, Co., La Jolla, California, May 24, 1954, The Dorland Company File, (Timken Museum of Art Archives).

HALF-MILLION DOLLAR TREASURE—Mill Valley Police Officer John Castellani and Mr. and Mrs. Frank Dorland deliver famed "Virgin of Kazan," one of three Russian "miracle icons," to Crocker-Citizens National Bank after it had been kept in Mill Valley police vault. Secret location of icon was disclosed by British Broadcasting Co.

Fig. 3 *Frank N. Dorland, Jr. with the "Virgin of Kazan,"* Independent Journal (Marin County), 18 Nov. 1973, page 1.

Working quickly and reliably, Dorland became a trusted confidant. He sourced works for Putnam and occasionally performed icon-scouting missions on his own, traveling to Los Angeles or Santa Barbara in search of quality works rumored to be up the coast. Somewhat later, and not without notoriety, he became the custodian of valuable Orthodox works such as the so-called "Our Lady of Kazan" icon which he safeguarded on behalf of its English owners before it was put on display at the New York World's Fair, in 1964.[7] (fig. 3) For her part, Amy herself reviewed and paid no fewer than 57 of Dorland's invoices. These arrived in her mailbox with machine-like regularity, often multiple times per month. The last bills arrived in February of 1958, a few months before the collector's death. Beyond providing a glimpse into the more or less systematic approach the owner took when it came to preserving these objects, the conservation records provide insights into the icons' configuration within the Putnam household: in

addition to being marked "paid" in Amy's looping cursive penmanship, Dorland's bills were also annotated with locations: "10 icons from the library," and so on.

Fig. 4 H.L. Robbins, ***Elbert Putnam House***, 328 Walnut Street, San Diego, California (Timken Museum of Art Archives).

This sprawling domestic collection grew alongside, but was distinct from, the "old masters" that for almost two decades Amy and Anne busied themselves acquiring for West Coast museums on a mostly anonymous basis. The impulse to purchase important collections can be associated with the sisters' expressed goals of strengthening Southern California culture, while their insistence upon donating without fanfare might be seen as a reflection of their modest, New England roots. In any case, the often-expensive paintings they sponsored at the request of local museum directors, like Reginald Poland at the Fine Arts Gallery, were almost never displayed in their home, even for brief periods of time. Instead, by the early 1950s, the Putnams donated outright a steady stream of works by Giotto, Giorgione, El Greco, Francisco de Goya, and dozens of other painters, which were shipped directly to San Diego's main museum. They also donated works by Adriaen van Ostade and Alessandro Magnasco to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art where the director, Wilhelm (William) R. Valentiner, served as another occasional adviser. While oil paintings by Pieter Brueghel the Elder, Rembrandt van Rijn, Jacques-Louis David, among others, were discretely purchased and immediately placed on loan to major museums—such as the National Gallery of Art, the Fogg Art Museum at Harvard, Metropolitan Museum of Art—far from their legal owners' residence, those acquisitions were merely awaiting the construction of a new, independent, Putnam-financed gallery in San Diego. The Timken Museum of Art, a modernist cube, did not yet exist except as whispered dreams between Amy, Anne, and their attorney, Ames. Meanwhile, icons proliferated throughout private rooms of the mansion that the sisters shared at 328 Walnut Street in San Diego's Banker's Hill neighborhood (fig. 4).

Outside of the Putnam family, only a select few individuals ever experienced the inside of that stately but wholly private residence.[8] Exaggerated descriptions of the interior's general disorder exist in scattered accounts. For example, a former employee of the sisters later described the house as being "dark, crepuscular, and gloomy."[9] Few photographs of the living spaces have survived to the present, but one undated image shows an orderly, if somewhat tightly grouped, display of more than 40 icons

Fig. 5 Unknown photographer, *Interior of the Putnam Residence*, San Diego?, c. 1950 (Timken Museum of Art Archives).

in what may have been one of Amy Putnam's personal living spaces (fig. 5). The icons were consigned to an uncertain future after Amy's death. When Anne—the only surviving Putnam in California who was largely incapacitated during her last decade—died four years later, fewer than a dozen people (most of them longtime employees) attended the 94-year old's funeral. This is itself, perhaps, surprising since the memorial service was announced prominently in San Diego's main newspaper in an article that valorized both sisters as prominent patrons of numerous local cultural and charitable organizations.[10] Today, it would be hard to minimize the Putnams' lasting public impact, even if their private lives went mostly unwitnessed, and uncelebrated, especially at the end.

By the mid-1950s, Parker estimated that the sisters' spending on works of art destined for museums alone—hence, not including the icons—had been not less than $2 million.[11] (Adjusted for inflation that equates to about $20 million today.) As their highly-involved banker, Parker was in a position to know. He once boasted to an assembled group that the Putnams would ultimately be judged as having created the finest art collection west of the Mississippi. Setting aside the question of whether Parker was overstating the case, let's consider what is left out of the public assessments of these women's collecting efforts, for which help from Abbott, Dorland, and others was sought: the Russian icons.

Amy Putnam loved the icons dearly and kept them close during her somewhat isolated, final years. Existing records are scattered and likely incomplete. A notebook written in Amy's hand kept at the Timken Museum of Art records no fewer than 339 individual purchases of Russian artworks. Beginning in 1942, these acquisitions included paintings, drawings, and prints, all of which she would continue to collect until at least 1957.[12] Coinciding with this period, Putnam also acquired a significant research library of books about Russian art, especially icons, from Brentano's Bookstore in New York City.[13] Together with books on Russian church architecture and history, these records survive as ample proof of the breadth, and depth, of her personal collecting passions. While accounts suggest that Amy took time to burn a large part of her personal correspondence in the last months of her life, from the few letters that survive, we can surmise that icon-collecting consumed a large part of her daily thoughts. These documents—including a text written in Cyrillic script—reveal no signs of conventional religiosity on her part. Neither Amy nor her sisters were practitioners of Orthodox

faith. This curious fact marks her collecting impulse as different from, say, the ideas that motivated other great icon collectors of the twentieth century, such as Dominique de Menil, whose religious conviction indisputably played a role in her accumulation of Byzantine representations.[14] If these works were not destined for worship or aesthetic appreciation by the public during her lifetime, we should ask how one might make sense of these objects in relation to Putnam's other, more visible art collecting pursuits.

Fig. 6 Charles DeForest Frederick (Studio), *Thetis Putnam*, c. after 1875 (Timken Museum of Art Archives).

Before turning to that question, some brief background about how the Putnam sisters ended up in San Diego is necessary. The women traced their roots back to the Revolutionary War era on both sides of their family. New York's Essex County, deep in the Adirondacks, was a hub of their forebears' settlement, a fact I will have reason to return to in my conclusion. Thetis Bishop, their mother, was a formidable matriarch. (fig. 6) She took pride in her role as a duly elected member of the Colonial Dames in Connecticut and as one of the Daughters of the American Revolution, a status which she aspired to pass on to her own three children. Bishop married Elbert Putnam in 1866. Elbert had an older brother named Henry with whom he went into business. The two men created a significant fortune together before moving to Bennington, Vermont. Time has judged Henry the more successful of the two brothers. He participated in the California Gold Rush as a young man and became a relentless inventor of gadgets: bottle caps, roofing nails, indoor washing machines, and other items. Henry's philanthropic instincts also established the model for his relatives' later exceptional generosity. Indeed, profits from Putnam's many patents paid for a local hospital, opera house, public water system, library, and the largest commercial office block anchoring a public square that still bears the family name in central Bennington. Not unlike legendary philanthropists Henry Huntington and Ellen Browning Scripps before him, in 1899, Henry booked an exploratory trip to California in search of better climate.[15] He traveled to San Diego with his two youngest nieces—Amy and Irene—and afterwards purchased parcels of land along Fourth Avenue, announcing plans to build a grand home for himself overlooking the Pacific Ocean. Elbert followed his brother to California in early 1913. In April, he purchased two lots for himself with the expressed goal of setting up his own household a few blocks away from his brother. When Henry died in 1915, Elbert ably managed his share of the family resources until his own death in 1927.

Shortly thereafter, Henry's only son and his primary heir, Will Putnam, passed away in Florida. In 1936, he left his bright, independent, female cousins an estate valued at more than $5 million in the midst of the Great Depression, roughly the equivalent of $95 million today.

Fig. 7 Unknown photographer, *Amy, Irene, and Anne Putnam*, c. 1880 (Timken Museum of Art Archives).

A tintype photograph shows the three young daughters of Elbert and Thetis Putnam in Vermont, playing with dolls in the open air (fig. 7). Some fifty years on, by the time they came into their fortune, they were three middle-aged, well-educated, and culturally savvy women who ultimately spent most of their time indoors. They were all single. Irene, who had studied at Smith College and published her own poetry, died relatively young, in 1935. Anne was the oldest and lived the longest of the three, although she was bedridden for much of the last decade of her life. She spoke fluent French, read Latin, and was well informed about contemporary politics and literature. She was Amy's partner in the majority of decisions they made about collecting historical European art. Amy was perhaps the most intellectual, and most independent of the three women. One of roughly 140 "co-eds" admitted to Stanford University in 1926, she studied Russian literature beginning in the summer session. Amy's arrival in Palo Alto seems to have coincided with the appointment of a charismatic, if perhaps morally suspect professor of Russian by the name of Henry Lanz.[16] It seems possible that Putnam took her first courses in the fledgling Slavic language program that Lanz founded. Putnam learned to read and write in Russian while at Stanford. Letters, newspaper clippings, and the library she amassed demonstrate that she kept up her language skills for the rest of her life—in other words, another 32 years. Shortly after completing her course of study, Amy traveled extensively, visiting England, France, and Switzerland between April 1928 and July 1929. She went abroad again less than a year later, this time visiting Italy, Prague, Warsaw, and other Eastern European capitals. In extensive journals that record these experiences, she comes across as a curious, unhesitant, and tireless tourist.[17] It is somewhat surprising that she did not consider crossing into Russia on this extended sojourn since she possessed fluency in the language.[18] Nonetheless, her interest in Russian culture continued to evolve over the next three decades, the majority of which she spent closer to home, in San Diego.

Fig. 8 Karl Bryullov, *Portrait of Countess Julia Samoilova*, c. 1832, photograph in the Timken Museum of Art Archives (Hillwood Estate, Museum and Gardens, Washington, DC).

In addition to the books she acquired, other archival documents at the Timken Museum of Art further underscore Amy's interest in Russian culture following her intensive language study. She became a devotee of Russian dance and music while reading Tolstoy without the distraction of translation.[19] As noted above, she purchased numerous Russian paintings, not all of which were icons. These included a large-scale portrait of the Countess Samoilova by the historical painter, Karl Bryullov, [fig. 8][20] and multiple works by the late-nineteenth century realist, Ilya Repin, as well as watercolors and heroic sculptures by a number of Repin's Russian-speaking contemporaries. Indeed, Putnam knew Repin's oeuvre well enough to identify the pictorial source for an untitled drawing she received as a gift from an advisor.[21] While her collecting spree began in the mid-1930s, roughly coinciding with the moment she gained access to her inheritance, Putnam never collected work by any vanguard Russian artists of the Revolutionary period although it seems likely that she knew about them. The fullest proof of her growing fascination with icons appears a half-decade later in a key letter.

The date of this correspondence, early 1942, is significant because it memorializes a visit to the Putnams' house by an art dealer, Jacob Heimann. Heimann would go on to sell the sisters dozens of Old Master paintings which they subsequently donated to museums.[22] Having been granted rare access to the interior of the Putnams' Mediterranean-style villa, Heimann sent an excited and detailed report about what he had seen to his "cousin," Leon Grinberg. Grinberg, together with Jacques Zolotnitzky, ran A La Vieille Russie, Inc., the artfully-staged shop dealing in Imperial Russian luxury items and antiques on Manhattan's Upper East Side. In April of 1942, Grinberg hardly needed urging from Heimann to begin actively soliciting Putnam. Acknowledging that she already possessed a sizable collection of Russian icons, he wrote to her, "Am I to understand that you have about 300 such?" He then went on to wonder if his "modest knowledge in this field can ever be of help to you?"[23] For the next 15 years, Amy Putnam acquired multiple Russian icons from the deep inventory of A la Vieille Russie, including major works such as *Our Lady of Jerusalem*, for which, after extensive negotiations, she paid $3,500 in 1956.[24] (fig. 9)

The acquisition of larger icons, such as *Our Lady of Jerusalem*, marked the acceleration of Amy Putnam's collecting, a period that would peak in the mid 1950s. It is clear from

Fig. 9 *Our Lady of Jerusalem (Georgian Mother of God)*, 17th c. (Putnam Foundation, Timken Museum of Art, 1963.004).

her correspondence with a variety of dealers from this time that Putnam was not only pleased with her success at having obtained a few major devotional works, but that she was intent upon collecting other imposing icons which would eventually find their home in a museum context. Central to this pursuit was the acquisition of an authentic iconostasis ensemble. The lower register of an iconostasis might logically include a central image, such as the *Mother of God*, with Mary directing attention toward the seated Christ child in the manner of the traditional *Hodigitria* (She who Shows the Way). Securing such an image was a priority for the collector as she ably negotiated with dealers. Reading through her correspondence from this time, one observes Putnam's motivations becoming increasingly competitive, driven by the need to secure works in a marketplace that she perceived to be inflected by scarcity as well as by rival collecting interests. The loftier prices that Putnam paid for her later acquisitions stand in contrast to the costs of many of the earlier Russian works that she bought, most of which were small in scale and were intended for personal, domestic display only. Putnam's focus on making the Russian icons a substantial part of her museum-building enterprise ultimately came to resemble her pursuit of old master works by Peter Paul Rubens, Paolo Veronese, and others, for which multiple big city museum directors vied for consideration as final recipients.[25] In early 1957, Putnam was offered a set of Deesis icons from a large iconostasis for a price of $8,000, which represented the single most significant purchase of Russian Orthodox images to date in her sprawling collection. Although she lived for only little more than a year after making the decision to acquire the work, the rare iconostasis, one that "would greatly enhance [her] already important icon collection," marked a culmination of sorts in this decades-long collecting effort.[26]

It is difficult to say exactly what happened to the 350 or so devotional objects that were in Amy Putnam's home at the time of her death. Sixty-eight of Putnam's icons were formally accessioned into the Timken's permanent collection when the sisters' estate finally settled in 1963. Plans for a free museum funded by the Putnam Foundation had gathered unstoppable momentum by that time. Russian works were destined to play a role, albeit not the lead one, in the project. Nevertheless, since the museum opened its doors in 1965, a group of icons has been displayed at the Timken, more or less without interruption. A dedicated gallery decorated with custom-made, Italian, flocked, green

Fig. 10 John Waggaman, *View of Russian Icon Gallery*, c. 1965 (Timken Museum of Art).

wallpaper, said to have been chosen by Amy herself, was outfitted for this purpose (fig. 10). At least 130 Russian objects, including many icons, were soon after shipped in batches to various galleries and dealers in New York. From 1966 until the early 1970s these were sold intermittently. The documentation surrounding these sales is spotty which, while regrettable, evidently reflected the attitude of the museum's stewards at the time. According to Walter Ames, who became the first director of the Timken upon its opening, the icons were imagined to be "of little value." Ames went on to tell vendors that "doubtless you can find some way of disposing of them." A large number of the Putnam icons were shipped back to their commercial source, A La Vieille Russie, under long-term consignment agreements with the gallery.[27] Some, but not all, were sold to private collections. Another 14 icons were deaccessioned formally and sent to Sotheby's for auction in June, 1980.

In 1967, a prospective icon buyer inquired about provenance information related to the California collector of these works of art. In response to this request Ames offered the following sentences:

> Miss Amy Putnam was born in New York State on May 27th, 1874 and died in San Diego on July 23rd, 1958. . . As a young lady she went to Palo Alto and took special instruction in Russian literature under a Russian Professor at Stanford. She had limited ability to speak the language and read it with ease. This resulted in her interest in Russian culture prior to the Revolution. She was entirely out of sympathy with communism and all it represented.

In addition to getting Amy's birthplace wrong,[28] Ames's truncated biography misses a lot. This is surprising since for several decades he interacted on an almost daily basis with her, arguably his most important client. His letter seems especially keen to emphasize the patriotic motivations surrounding this collection, something that begs to be understood in light of Cold War attitudes. We might surmise, however, that this brief

portrait of Amy represents Ames's worldview more accurately than it portrays hers.[29] In any case, the assertion that Amy's outsized interest in Russian things derived solely from her Stanford experience merits additional scrutiny.

As unmarried, wealthy women of advancing age, living far from their Eastern roots, the sisters often received letters from distant "relatives" and other associates seeking news about their health and expressing interest in receiving "mementoes" (preferably in the form of bequests). Coming from unacknowledged, or at the very least, forgotten members of the family, those letters mostly went unanswered. At least one of these received a response, and I want to turn to it as a form of conclusion, since it provides a clue to the icons' personal allure.

Fig. 11 Attributed to Bainbridge Bishop, *The Putnam Forge*, c. 1870 (Timken Museum of Art).

In the correspondence in question, a Putnam cousin asks innocently if Amy and Anne still possess a picture of the "family forge" and hopes that it brings them joy. The passing comment can be connected to a small, unsigned, and unframed painting that has presented a puzzle ever since it was encountered in the Timken Museum's object storage area in 2016 (fig. 11). Further research has since clinched the image's association with published descriptions of "a forge managed by Messers Elbert and Henry Putnam containing four fires and a wooden hammer of about 1800 pounds." The name of said enterprise is The New Russia Forge. New Russia is a place of tremendous significance to the Putnam family. It appears often on birth certificates and deeds to property. Elbert Putnam made a claim related to the discovery of gold in New Russia, and title documents show that Thetis Putnam transferred property she still owned in New Russia to her daughters as late as 1916, that is, several years after the sisters had

relocated to San Diego. The diminutive picture—about the size of a personal icon—must have been one of the artworks that the Putnams brought with them from Vermont to California, which Dorland dutifully cleaned and restored for Amy Putnam in March 1955, together with portraits of several ancestors, before rehanging all of them on walls in her house.

New research suggests that this modest painting is likely the work of Bainbridge Bishop, Thetis's brother, who was an artist of some reputation and who may have conceived the work as a companion piece to another interior depiction of his two sisters—Thetis and Amy—weaving blankets as part of an effort to support Union troops during the Civil War.[30] While he was recognized during his lifetime as a painter and photographer of some talent, Bishop is best known today for his invention of the "color organ," a device that used a keyboard to translate acoustic pitches into beams of projected light, which he patented in 1877.[31] This small genre scene was, in short, freighted with familial and geographic importance for the Putnam women.

Fig. 12 Unknown photographer, *Irene, Amy, and Anne Putnam*, c. 1900 (Timken Museum of Art Archives).

Any speculation about Amy's lifelong identification with Russia, whether new or old, should be plotted alongside Ames's limited explanation of Amy's cultural attraction to that place. Still, I am reminded of several tintype photographs, dating to around 1890, found among the family papers; they show the three Putnam sisters gazing at the landscape beyond Bennington (fig. 12). Even then, the women surely understood that the source of their prosperity was to be found not in Bennington but in nearby Essex County, New York. New Russia, in other words, occupied an enduring place in their imaginations, and the town provided accompanying senses of identity and self-worth. We can posit that the entrepreneurial fires that the Putnam brothers once stoked in New Russia continued to warm the Putnam sisters' prosperous home in California, along with their audacious dreams of museum founding.

Perhaps nowhere is this suggestion expressed more clearly than in the icons themselves, where forge imagery kept special resonance. Take for example, a two-sided tabletka, a work subsequently acquired by the Timken Museum of Art [fig. 13]. This small devotional object depicts twin, opposing miracles: one by fire the other by cold. One face of the wafer-thin *tabletka* depicts a scene from the Book of Daniel, which is often referred to as three Hebrew boys in a fiery furnace. The religious narrative tells us that Nebuchadnezzar, influenced by faithless advisors, sentenced the three righteous youths to punishment in a flaming pit, or furnace. Instead of perishing, however, they began to dance, and soon they were joined by another figure, alternately identified as the Lord or an angel. It is an image of transcendence, of hard-won independence, as well as of triumph over trials by fire. The same could be said of the modest genre painting by their uncle, a work that remained close to the Putnam sisters as they transitioned from schoolgirls to heiresses to influential philanthropists in their west coast community. A letter sent to Amy Putnam by the famed British-American adventurer, Frederick Albert Mitchell-Hedges in the year preceding her death signals how far she had traveled in her quest to forge her reputation as a globally recognized collector:

Fig. 13 Novgorod School, Tabletka: *Four Men in a Fiery Furnace*, 15th c. (Putnam Foundation, Timken Museum of Art, 1979.001).

> On one or two occasions in writing to me, Mr. Francis E. Fowler . . . has told me of your remarkable collection of Ikons which I believe is the finest in existence. . . I have just received a letter from Mr. Frank N. Dorland and knowing your Ikons, he has suggested to me that I send you a copy of last month's issue of "Antique Dealer and Collector's Guide" where you will see the illustration on the front cover of the "Black Virgin of Kazan," the miracle icon of Russia. This is acknowledged to be the finest in the world and has been fully authenticated in every way.[32]

By 1957, Amy Putnam was accustomed to receiving such acknowledgments and associated offers to acquire new works of art. She had succeeded in creating a collection of icons that was judged, at least by some, among the best in private hands, and was thought to be without peer on the West Coast. At the same time, the sheer quantity of works that surrounded her in her private space had become a burden of sorts. The answer to the question "why so

many icons?" remains an enduring puzzle, a compulsion without any clear explanation. By exploring possible motivations, however, we can begin to appreciate why Amy Putnam kept at least two kinds of meaningful representations close to her in Southern California: family snapshots that recollected her youth, and the devotional icons that framed her present. While conspicuously different, both categories of image suggest an inspired, metonymic relation to identity, a Putnam legacy remade into something new and vitally Russian.

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The author wishes to thank Wendy Salmond and Justin Willson for their editorial advice and encouragement throughout the process of writing this essay.

About the Author

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Notes

1 Frederick S. Parker to Jere Abbott, typed copy of letter dated 9 Jan. 1953, Parker Correspondence, 1953–54 (file 3.4-1) Timken Museum of Art Archives. Parker sent similarly imploring letters to other scholars around this time. For example, a letter in the same archive, dated 16 March 1953 was addressed to Professor Eugen Neuhaus at UC Berkeley explained that Putnam owned "approximately 350 icons of various size [sic] from the little two by four to large ones that are three by four feet." Neuhaus was, like Abbott, not a specialist in Russian art. He was an artist and self-trained art historian and did not accept the invitation to consult with Parker about these works.

2 This paper does not go far in offering psychological explanations for collecting impulses, but for those interested in theoretical approaches to this topic, I recommend Jean Baudrillard, *Le systéme des objets* (Paris: Gallimard, 1968), especially the section entitled "A Marginal System: Collecting," or Walter Benjamin, "Unpacking My Library: A Talk about Book Collecting," in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings*, 1927-1934 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 486–93.

3 Among his many publications, Abbott contributed essays to catalogues and journals devoted to Wilhelm Lehmbruck and Aristide Maillol (1930), Diego Rivera (1931), Henri Toulouse-Lautrec and Odilon Redon (1931), Giorgio de Chirico (1941), El Greco (1927), and The Smith College Museum of Art's Italian drawing collection (1937), but not, so far as I can tell, Russian icons. Abbott's travels with Alfred Barr, Jr. to Russia, mostly to study theatrical performances and view modern art, are recorded in his diary, usefully republished as "Russian Diary, 1927-28" in *October* 145 (Summer 2013): 135–223. On Friday, Jan. 13, Jan. 21, and Feb. 10, 1928, Abbott records visits to the "Museum of Iconography" which included about sixty traditional icons as well as to the "State Historical Museum" where he described works as "superb" (182, 196, 222).

4 Abbott's reply, dated 22 Jan. 1953, reads, in full: "Dear Mr. Parker, Your letter of January 9th reached me here. I have not been the Director of the Smith College Museum for some time. I regret to say I am not a technician. My interest in icons is of their artistic and stylistic side. I would suggest you the restorer at the San Diego Museum to look at their condition and suggest repairs. Sincerely, Jere Abbott." Parker Correspondence, 1953–54 (file 3.4-1), Timken Museum of Art Archives. Abbott served as director of Smith College Museum of Art from 1932 to 1946.

5 See *Russian Icons: The Collection of George R. Hann* (Columbus: The Columbus Museum of Art, 1945). The Hann Collection was later sold at Christie's in 1980. The collection formed by Ambassador Joseph E. Davies and Marjorie Merriweather Post, now at the Hillwood Museum in Washington, D.C., is another example of ambitious

Russian icon collecting from the late 1930s through the 1950s. See Wendy Salmond, *Russian Icons at Hillwood* (Washington, DC: Hillwood Museum, Estate and Gardens, 2006); Anna Ivannikova, "The Path of the Russian Icon to America," blogpost, Museum of the Russian Icon (12 Dec. 2021): https://russianicon.com/the-path-of-the-russian-icon-to-america-the-collection-of-oleg-kushnirskiy/ .

6 Invoice in the curatorial files of the Timken Museum of Art. See "Lyons-The Dorland Company, Restorers." Such invoices addressed to Miss Amy Putnam from Dorland appeared usually twice a month starting in May 1953 and ending in September 1956. Dorland moved to Mill Valley in Northern California in the 1960s.

7 Letter from Frank Dorland to A. J. Sutherland, 19 December 1963, requesting loans from the Putnam collection to the New York World's Fair, Timken Curatorial Files, "Lyons-Dorland Company Restorers". See also "Fairgoers Moved to Tears by Icon: Russian Orthodox Painting on Display in Chapel," *The New York Times*, Sept. 4, 1964: 27.

8 A fawning, yet likely exaggerated, account of the sisters' lifestyle appears as a typescript to a talk delivered by Julie G. Andrews at the Wednesday Club on Nov. 2, 1966. In her talk about the Putnam home Andrews passingly mentions the icons several times but also notes specifically that the sisters often entertained "natives of old Russia" and that "Miss Amy's [Russian] collection suggests that she had in mind the acquisition of all the works essential to the iconostasis, or icon screen, which separate the Sanctuary from the nave in the orthodox church" (p. 6). A copy of the typescript is in the Timken Curatorial Files.

9 See J. Moore, "The Mystery of Timken Gallery's Putnam Sisters," *San Diego Reader* (31 Jan. 1985): https://www.sandiegoreader.com/news/1985/jan/31/mystery-putnam-sisters/ .

10 See "Anne Putnam, 94, Funeral Today, Art Patron," *San Diego Union* (20 March 1962): A-15. The funeral took place two days after Putnam's death. Anne was interred next to her sisters and parents in a plot secured long before in Greenwood Memorial Park in San Diego.

11 Typescript of "Talk before a group of 24 people at dinner at my house," by Frederick Parker, dated 1 June 1956, Parker Papers (file 3.3), Timken Museum of Art Archives.

12 Acquisitions were numbered, beginning with "1. St. Nicholas, XVI Century. . . Purchased by S&G Gump Co. [San Francisco] from a Collection in Constantinople" up to "339 Virgin of Jerusalem (Church icon)". Religious icons represent the majority of works in this inventory, although other Russian works such as portraits and landscapes appear. Interestingly, the notebook also includes records of two Santos presumably

purchased by Putnam near the very end of this period: "Virgin of Guadalupe/Our Lady of Guadalupe, purchased in N. Mexico and 2 Santa Rita." Untitled notebook, Amy Putnam Papers, Timken Museum of Art Archives. We also know that Putnam continued to purchase Russian works of non-religious nature at least until 1956. An invoice from Wildenstein & Co. records the sale of an oil painting by Ilya Repin, *Portrait of a Russian Peasant*, 1889, on 3 March 1956. An undated inventory list that includes this particular work, along with 41 other Russian paintings and drawings (not icons) can be found in two files. See "3.11.2. Misc. Icon Papers, 1956–68," and "3.11.4. Russian Paintings," Timken Museum of Art Archives.

13 Four pages of titles offered by Brentano's appear on an invoice and were purchased by Putnam in early 1943. See "Putnam Personal Documents and Papers," file 1.2, Timken Museum Archives.

14 On the relationship between Menil's collecting inspirations and her progressive Catholic sensibilities, see Pamela G. Smart, *Sacred Modern: Faith, Activism, and Aesthetics in the Menil Collection* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010), especially 135–38.

15 Huntington's first trip to Southern California from New York in 1892 took place before the Putnams' arrival. He did not permanently settle in San Marino until 1903, however. Similarly, Ellen Browning Scripps came with her half-brother, E.W., from the Midwest to San Diego in 1896. For an insightful account of a formidable woman's business and philanthropic life in turn-of-the-century San Diego, comparable in some ways to the Putnams, see Molly McClain, E*llen Browning Scripps: New Money and American Philanthropy* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2017).

16 It has been suggested that Lanz served as the real-life model for Humbert Humbert, the fictional narrator in Vladimir Nabokov's 1955 novel, Lolita. Elements of Lanz's biography support the identification. See Cynthia Haven, "The Lolita Question," *Stanford Magazine (*May/June 2006): https://stanfordmag.org/contents/the-lolita-question

17 These travel dates are deduced from the stamps in two of Putnam's passports. Those documents, together with four of her handwritten travel diaries are today preserved at the Timken Museum of Art. See "A Finding Aid to Amy Putnam's Travel Diaries," Timken Museum of Art Archives.

18 Indeed, Putnam accurately translated letters written to her in Russian well into the 1950s.

19 For instance, a file of Russian newspaper clippings discussing the life of Leo Tolstoy

is preserved among Putnam's papers. See "Leo Tolstoy Clippings, 1928–29" in "Putnam Personal Documents & Papers," file 1.2, Timken Museum of Art Archives.

20 That portrait was one of the most expensive Russian acquisitions made during Putnam's final years. She purchased the painting in 1954 on the advice of Alfred M. Frankfurter, who served as an occasional art advisor to both sisters. Amy's lawyer, Ames, resold the work after her death through A La Vielle Russie, in 1965. It was subsequently acquired by Marjorie Meriweather Post and given to the Hillwood Museum in Washington, DC, in 1973.

21 Putnam was still demonstrating the breadth of her knowledge of things Russian late in late. Just two years before her death, she wrote: "Thank you for the pencil sketch by Repin. . . Repin's drawings always interest me for he expresses so much in a few lines. . . These two heads are from his well-known picture, *Za porozhian* [*The Reply of the Zaporozhian Cossacks*, State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg] and are tribesmen." Letter of Amy Putnam to Alfred Frankfurter, 5 May 1956, "Amy Putnam Letters," Timken Museum Archives.

22 On Heimann's questionable advising role vis-à-vis the Putnams, see John Marciari, "The Donors, The Director, the Dealer: Acquiring Old Masters at the San Diego Museum of Art," in I*talian, Spanish & French Paintings before 1850 in the San Diego Museum of Art* (San Diego: San Diego Museum of Art, 2015), 13–27.

23 Letter dated 6 April 1942 from Grinberg to Amy Putnam in "A La Vielle Russie" Curatorial File, Timken Museum of Art.

24 Alexander Schaffer of A La Vieille Russie wrote a letter to Amy, dated 28 January 1957, dealing with this acquisition. It reads, in part: "I am delighted to know that you are pleased with the Virgin of Jerusalem [sic]. It is, indeed, a wonderful icon. I am sending you, under separate cover, a book on icons which was recently published in Switzerland, in which there is illustrated opposite page 60, a remarkable iconostasis of the sixteenth-century, which we own. . . Icons of this importance and quality are no longer available, as the Bolsheviks will not let any icon out of Russia. I feel this icon would greatly enhance your already important icon collection and, in order to tempt you, I will give you a very low price of $8,000." Amy Putnam Personal Correspondence file 1.1, Timken Museum of Art Archives.

25 The fulfillment of this ambition roughly coincided with the opening of the Timken Art Gallery to the public, in 1965. Writing for the institution's first handbook to its permanent collection, Agnes Mongan explained, "[The] remarkable collection of icons made by the Misses [sic] Putnam . . . will be catalogued later." Indeed, a small, 8-page

pamphlet dedicated to the Russian icons was soon authored by Dean McKenzie. *See Putnam Foundation: Icon Collection* (San Diego, The Timken Art Gallery, 1967).

26 Letter from Alexander Schaffer [A la Vieille Russie] to Amy Putnam, 28 January 1957, Personal Correspondence, file 1.1, Timken Museum of Art Archives.

27 Ames' letter to Alexander Schaffer, 24 June 1966 describes "upwards of 200 icons in our unused gallery along with some 30–40 oil paintings attributed to Russian artists." Ames went on to say, "I know that many of the icons are of small value. . . The names on the Russian paintings are for the most part unknown to us." A total of 42 icons were consigned to A La Vieille Russie in September of 1966 for which the museum received a check for $2,750 on October 7 of that year. See the correspondence in "Misc. Icon Papers, 1955–68," file 3.11.2, Timken Museum of Art Archives.

28 Putnam's passports, now kept in the archives at the Timken, record her birthplace as Bennington, Vermont.

29 Typescript of a letter written by Walter Ames, in response to a letter from Alexander Schaffer, dated 24 Nov. 1967, *ibid*. Amy Putnam does not appear to have been as resolutely opposed to Soviet culture as Ames suggests in his correspondence with Schaffer. She made substantial annual donations to Soviet charities during the 1940s, lasting through the conclusion of WWII. Acknowledgement letters dated December 1942, 1943, and 1944, now in the Timken Museum of Art Archives, document $3000 cash gifts to the Red Cross as received by the Embassy of the USSR.

30 A letter from Frederick Parker to the leadership of the Historical Museum in Ticonderoga New York written 3 December 1954 confirms this identification: "One other picture [belonging to the sisters] is the Old Putnam Forge, which was at New Russia, and there is quite a history connected with this forge, as it was active during the Civil War, and it is rumored, although without proof or knowledge from us, that it did manufacture the plates for 'the Monitor'." Frederick S. Parker Papers, Timken Museum of Art Archives.

31 See Bainbridge Bishop, *A Souvenir of the Color Organ with Some Suggestions in Regard to the Soul of the Rainbow and the Harmony of Light* (New Russia, NY: The De Vinne Press, 1893).

32 Letter from F. A. Mitchell-Hedges to Amy Putnam, August 22, 1957, Personal Correspondence, file 1.1, Timken Museum of Art Archives. Mitchell-Hedges has been described by some as the model for the fictional movie character, Indiana Jones, because of his pursuit of exotic artifacts. Frances Fowler, like Mitchell-Hedges, was also a collector of fine silver. The correspondence between Mitchell-Hedges and

Putnam stands as evidence of her visible recognition among private collectors of note in the mid-twentieth century. Frank Dorland, Jr., who published extensively on Mitchell-Hedges' "miraculous" artifacts, evidently played the connecting role in this correspondence.

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The Long Journey of the Jumati Medallions

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Mariam Otkhmezuri Charlton

The Long Journey of the Jumati Medallions

Abstract

Nine medallions in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, known as the "Jumati medallions," once decorated a silver icon frame of the archangel Gabriel in the Georgian monastery of Jumati. Dated to around 1100 the busts depicting various saints are finely worked cloisonné enamels, composed on a gold ground, and are considered to exemplify the highest echelon of Byzantine craftsmanship. This paper examines the Jumati medallions from the standpoint of provenance, retracing their journey to their present location. The investigation tells a complicated story in which colonial practices of acquisition are intermingled with the formation of private collections and the development of Byzantine Studies.

Keywords: Enamel, Jumati Monastery, Nikodim Kondakov, Byzantine Art, Alexandr Zwenigorodskoi.

Nine medallions from an icon frame in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, are considered some of the finest extant examples of Byzantine enamel and have garnered significant scholarly attention since the late nineteenth century (fig. 1).[1] The medallions depict Christ, the Virgin, John the Baptist, and other Christian saints. They were originally part of a larger set, surrounding a now-lost icon of the Archangel Gabriel, held at the Jumati Monastery in Georgia.[2] While much has been written about the Jumati medallions' art-historical significance, this paper centers on the objects' movement from a remote monastery to a museum collection. Drawing on archival documents and non-English publications, my research reveals the complex and often

Fig. 1 Medallions from an Icon Frame, gold, cloisonné enamel, c. 1100, Constantinople. From the Jumati Monastery, Republic of Georgia. Each 8.3 cm (diam.). Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917.The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Inv. Nos. 17.190.670-.678.

problematic ways in which the medallions changed hands. I highlight the intertwined issues of fraudulent art-acquisition practices, the formation of private art collections, and the development of Byzantine art scholarship in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Description

The medallions are displayed in the Apse Gallery of the Metropolitan Museum, which features Byzantine icons and objects of devotion (fig.2). Each roundel measures 3 1/4 inches (8.3 cm) in diameter and features colorful cloisonné enamel set in gold.[3] Each depicts a half-length holy figure that can be seen as a small individual icon. Greek inscriptions in black enamel on either side of the heads identify the figures.

In their original setting, the medallion featuring Christ Pantokrator (Ruler of All) with a cruciform halo would have been flanked by those showing the Virgin Mary and Saint John the Baptist, who both turn toward Christ in prayer, forming a traditional triad known as the Deesis. Mary's and John's similar three-quarter poses as they raise their hands in prayer toward Jesus contribute to the harmonious composition. The other medallions of various saints create a sense of spiritual unity and connection, so that the central figures' intercessory prayers are supported by the ranks of apostles, evangelists, and theologians, and the military saints in the order they are invoked during the Divine Liturgy.[4]

Striking are the figures' peculiar side glances. Christ's gaze is directed toward John, who would have been placed to his left, denoting his acknowledgment of the Baptist's petition. In the hierarchic order in which the saints are currently arranged, which likely echoes their original placement around the icon frame, their eyes are turned toward the now-missing central image. These glances highlight the ability of saints to communicate with the divine and to receive and transmit viewers' prayers—the primary feature of the Byzantine icon.

The gold cloisons (dividing strips) that articulate the figures indicate volume as well as providing outlines. They are laid in repeated parallel lines, curves, and herringbone designs to indicate folds of fabric. The enamels feature a wide range of colors: dark

Fig. 2 Display of the Medallions from an Icon Frame in the "Apse Gallery" (Gallery 303). Mary and Michael Jaharis Galleries for Byzantine Art, Metropolitan Museum of Art. Photo by the author.

blue, light blue, green, golden yellow, red, white, and black, with the faces and hands rendered in a brownish-pink flesh tone. The figures' halos also are all outlined in red, but their fill colors range from emerald green to blue-green and sapphire blue, and they are patterned with small crosses and dots.

The saints, including Peter, Paul, John the Evangelist, Matthew, and Luke, are dressed similarly in blue-gray tunics with vertical bejeweled stripes (or stoles) and dark blue mantles; this uniformity in dress symbolizes their collective mission to spread the Gospel. Fittingly, all the saints (except for the Baptist and Peter, who holds a staff with a cross on top) are depicted holding Gospel books or related attributes, rendered in perspective, with each book bearing a unique cover design. John the Evangelist and Matthew look alike and are shown with more mature features. One can even make out wrinkles on the elderly saints' foreheads. Some of the white color of their hair and beards has a wonderful blue tint. In contrast, Saint George is depicted as a beardless youth holding a cross as a symbol of his martyrdom. Moreover, Saint George's attire further distinguishes him from the other saints: he wears a red mantle with a festive pattern of ivy leaves or inverted hearts.

Much has been written about the exceptional skills of Byzantine artists working with cloisonné enamel. According to the pre-Revolutionary Byzantinist Nikodim Kondakov (1844–1925), the technique of enameling was probably kept a secret, passed from one goldsmith to another.[5] A skilled enameller was a combination of a goldsmith who could articulate forms with tiny gold cloisons, an artist who could create a design,

and a chemist or alchemist who could achieve the desired colors by mixing different ingredients at the right temperatures. However, these masters are anonymous today; no list of royal workshops with the names of enamellers has been found.[6] Some of the best examples of this elaborate practice are from the middle Byzantine period (843–1204), when icon making flourished again after the resolution of the prolonged disputes concerning the permissibility of devotional images during Iconoclasm.

The Orthodox faithful viewed icons as sacred objects that held a divine imprint, with their medium often enhancing their spiritual significance.[7] Icons could be made with various techniques, including painting, ivory and gemstone carving, mosaic, and metalwork, with cloisonné enameling considered one of the most challenging and prestigious methods. When executed successfully, cloisonné enamel produced jewellike treasures. Art historian Bissera Pentcheva suggests that enameled icons ideally embody the concept of the icon as an imprint of the divine. She explains that the use of enamel, which involves the imprinting of fire on material, aligns with the idea of the icon as a physical manifestation of divine presence, especially after the articulations of icons' proper role post Iconoclasm.[8]

As mentioned earlier, the identities of Byzantine enamellers and the production dates or locations of their workshops are typically undocumented. Nineteenth-century scholars, especially Kondakov, associated the Jumati medallions with the early eleventh century, a period considered the peak of Byzantine enamel artistry.[9] Later scholarship has revised this dating; the Metropolitan Museum now attributes them to the twelfth century. Art historian Margaret Frazer had proposed a more specific date range, placing the medallions at the end of the first quarter or beginning of the second quarter of the twelfth century. She notes similarities in the patterning of the cloisons on the Jumati medallions to those seen in the fragmentary feast cycle of the Pala d'Oro in Venice, suggesting they date to the same period. Additionally, Frazer observes resemblances between the treatment of faces on the medallions and the imperial portraits of John II, Irene, and Alexius in the mosaics of the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, dated to around 1118–22.[10]

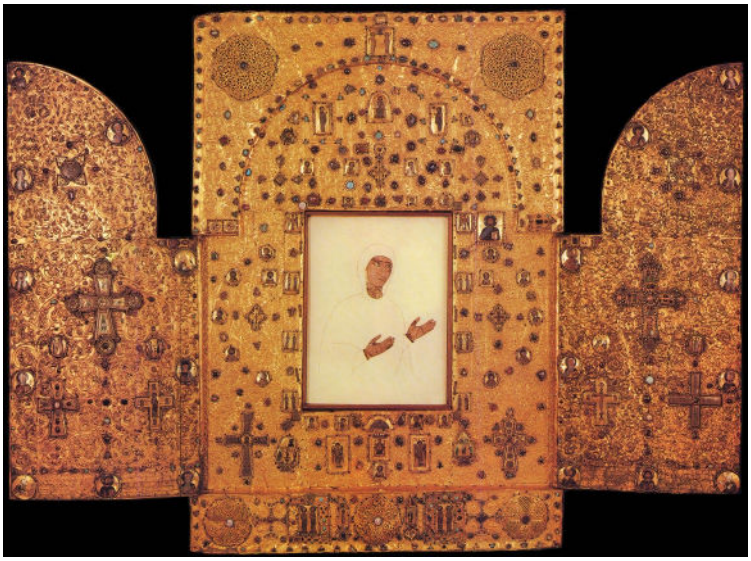
Most scholars believe that the Jumati medallions, due to their high quality, were produced in the royal workshop in Constantinople and that they may have been sent to Georgia as a gift in connection with an imperial marriage.[11] An example of a similar gift may be the cloisonné enamel plaque representing Emperor Michael VII Ducas (r. 1071–78) and his wife, Maria, a Georgian-born royal princess (fig. 3). The plaque is part of a decorative ensemble of cloisonné enamels of the icon of the Virgin of Khakhuli (the Khakhuli Triptych), which includes a large number of enamels of both Georgian and Byzantine origin (fig. 4a). The possibility that the Jumati medallions were sent from Constantinople to Georgia, either as part of a royal marriage exchange or as

Fig. 3 Plaque with Emperor Michael VII Ducas and Empress Maria (from the Icon of the Virgin of Khakuli), 11th Century. 7. 2 x 7 cm. Tbilisi, National Museum of Georgia.

diplomatic gifts, underscores the close political and cultural relationships between the Georgian Bagrationi dynasty and the Byzantine Comnenus family during the twelfth century.[12]

Supporting the likelihood of their Byzantine origin is the exceptional quality and formal rigor of the design and the fact that the inscriptions are in Greek. However, the carefully enameled elegant script does include some errors and nonstandard spelling. For example, the inscription identifying Paul is missing the upsilon *v* from his name (it read as PALOS, instead of PAVLOS); the letter alpha *a* is missing from ÁGIOS (saint) on Luke's medallion; Matthew's name is misspelled as MANTHEOS instead of ΜΑΤΘΑΪΟΣ, and in George's name, the letter omicron *o* is used instead of the omega ω, so it appears as ΓΕΟΡΓΙΟΣ and not ΓΕΩΡΓΙΟΣ. Christ's medallion, inscribed with the traditional Christogram IC XC —an abbreviation of the Greek words Ἰησοῦς Χριστός—and uses the lunate sigma (C). On other medallions, however, the shape of the final "S" in the saints' names takes on an unusual form: it resembles the *titlo*, a curved abbreviation mark, seen above ΘV in the inscription MP ΘV on the Virgin's medallion. The enameller may have adapted this form to make the script appear more visually harmonious. Georgian scholars believe that the medallions might be the work of a pro-Byzantine Georgian enameller.[13] Greek inscriptions are not uncommon on wall paintings in Georgian medieval churches or manuscripts, likely reflecting the artists' Byzantine training or Greek origin. Sometimes, both Greek and Georgian inscriptions appear on the same cloisonné enamel panels, suggesting the enameller's proficiency in both languages (fig. 4b).[14] In addition to the unusual spelling of the Jumati medallions, there is another notable peculiarity in the enamel depiction of Christ Pantocrator—the hand holding the Gospels is veiled by drapery (fig. 5). As Byzantine enamel scholar David Buckton observes, a draped hand grasping the Scriptures was a common visual device used to symbolize their inviolability. However, in the case of Christ, Buckton argues, this is both "theological and iconographic nonsense," since it contradicts the notion that Christ, as the Word incarnate, should not be obscured in such a manner.[15] This detail could either be an honest mistake on the part of the enameller or the result of reliance on an iconographic source that remains unknown to us.[16]

The physical condition of the enamels is generally very good. While some of the inscriptions have faded over time, and the staff with a cross that Saint Peter is holding



a

b

Fig. 4 (a) Icon of the Virgin of Khakhuli, aka Khakuli Triptych, (c. 1125-1156). Gold, silver, cloisonné enamel, pearls, and stones. 1.47 m (Height) x 2.02 (Width with doors open). Tbilisi, National Museum of Georgia., (b) Cross from the Khakhuli Virgin Icon, aka "Kvirike's Cross" with John the Baptist flanked by Peter, Paul, Mark, and Luke. Features both Greek and Georgian inscriptions. Gold and cloisonné enamel. 13 x 9 cm. Tbilisi, National Museum of Georgia.

Fig. 5 Medallion of Christ from Icon Frame, Gold, silver, and cloisonné enamel, c. 1100. 8.3 cm (diam.). The Metropolitan Museum of Art. https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/464551.

is missing some color, the enamels themselves remain intact, attesting to the durability of the medium. However, there is visible damage to the rim of Christ's medallion, likely occurring when it was removed from a frame. Additionally, the notched borders of each medallion feature asymmetric pinholes—sometimes up to eight—which suggests they may have been attached to another object, possibly more than once, before being removed.

Jumati Monastery

Dimitri Bakradze (1826–1890), a Georgian historian, ethnographer, and archaeologist, was the first scholar to identify the Jumati medallions in the frame of the icon of Archangel Gabriel during his visit to the Jumati Monastery in 1874. In his study "An Archaeological Journey in Guria and Adjara," published by the Russian Imperial Academy of Science in 1878, Bakradze provided a detailed account of the monastery's history, architecture, and possessions. He began by underscoring the natural beauty and grandeur of its difficult-to-reach location on Jumati mountain. Upon reaching

the peak, Bakradze was struck by the breathtaking, expansive views of sea and mountain range, remarking that it offered one of the widest vistas he had encountered throughout the Caucasus region.[17]

By the time of the scholar's visit, the monastery was in decline. Its main church, dedicated to Archangels Michael and Gabriel, is a simple basilica with a semicircular apse (figs. 6.a–b).[18] The church is surrounded by a stone wall, and the entrance to the yard is through the bell tower. The church's age is uncertain, but it likely predates the formation of the Jumati diocese, which is thought to have occurred in the fifteenth century when Guria became an independent fiefdom. The diocese had once been wealthy, supported by local princely families and villagers and known for its valuable icon and relic collection. However, Jumati's status diminished over the centuries, and in 1827 the diocese was abolished during the Exarchate period (1817–1917), when the Georgian Orthodox Church lost its independence under Russian rule. Despite this, the monastery remained the summer residence of the bishop of Guria until 1886. The murals inside the church have survived in fragments, dating from different time periods; in the nineteenth century, the upper part of the interior was whitewashed (figs. 7a–c).

a

b

Fig. 6 (a) Church of the Archangels, Jumati Monastery, Georgia. Photo by Paata Vardanashvili., (b) Aerial view of the Jumati Monastery, Georgia. Photo provided by the Jumati Monastery.

According to a local legend, the founding of Jumati Monastery was connected to a devastating flood of the Paliastomi Lake.[19] A sudden deluge of water is said to have engulfed the village, drowning everyone except for a single deacon, who snatched an icon of an archangel from the local church and carried it up Jumati mountain, which lies about an hour's drive from the lake. As the Georgian writer Egnate Ninoshvili recounts in his 1891 short story, "Paliastomi Lake," the Jumati Church was built in honor of this miraculous icon. The deacon, whose last name is reported to be Darchia (translated from Georgian as "the one who remained"), became the priest of the church.[20] Not surprisingly, over the centuries many priests at Jumati have had the last name Darchia.

a b c

Fig. 7(a) Interior of the Jumati Church. Photo by the author (2018), (b) Interior of the Jumati Church. Photo by Richard Charlton (2018), and (c) Wall painting of Archangel Michael, Jumati Church. Photo by the author (2018).

The legend does not specify which icon of the archangel was considered miraculous, but Bakradze's account indicates that the church had several valuable icons of archangels.[21] Among them, he believed that a large silver gilt icon of Michael, adorned with ten cloisonné enamel medallions bearing Georgian inscriptions, and a large silver-gilt icon of Gabriel, featuring ten cloisonné enamel medallions with Greek inscriptions (the ones that interest us here), were likely made as a matching pair.[22] These icons were both significantly damaged. The Gabriel icon (105 × 35 cm) was split down the middle, while the Michael icon (106 × 71 cm) had "broken pieces hanging from it."[23]

Fortuitously, we have contemporaneous photographs of these icons taken by Dimitri Ermakov, a renowned photographer from Tbilisi who visited Jumati in the 1870s (fig. 8a).[24] These provide crucial visual evidence that would otherwise be difficult to reconstruct based solely on textual descriptions. In the surviving image of Gabriel's icon, we can clearly see the archangel depicted full length, winged, and dressed in imperial vestments; he wears the *loros*, a long, jewel-studded scarf wrapped around his body and draped over his left hand, and also holds an orb marked with a cross and a scepter with a square finial.[25] The archangel's head, ringed with a halo, is slightly tilted. A small fragment of his face survives and is in the collection of the State Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg (fig. 9a).[26] His smooth face with stylized features, particularly the large linear eyes and nose, contrasts with the detailed rendering of his hair and wings and the intricate floral and geometric ornamentation of the background. Gabriel stands on a footstool, though this is barely visible. The background features two four-leaf enamel

a b

Fig. 8 (a) Icon of Archangel Gabriel in Jumati, reproduced as a chromolithograph in N. P. Kondakov, *Istoriia i pamiatniki Vizantiiskoi emali: iz sobraniia A.V. Zvenigorodskogo* (Saint Petersburg: A. Zvenigorodskoi, 1892), 256., (b) Icon of Archangel Michael in Jumati Church, reproduced as photograph in N. P. Kondakov and D. Bakradze, *Opis' pamiatnikov drevnosti v nekotorykh khramakh i monastyriakh Gruzii* (Saint Petersburg: Tipografiia Ministerstva putei -va put. soobshcheniia, 1890), 103.

quatrefoil plaques (to which I will return) with abbreviated inscriptions in Georgian *asomtavruli* script: "Saint Gabriel" and "Chief Commander of Power" (9b–c). On the top of the frame is the *Deesis*, and on its left-hand side are Saints Peter and Paul, with John and Matthew on the right.[27] The medallion depicting Luke is located between the broken fragments of Gabriel's vestments, and Saint Mark appears to have been lost. At the bottom of the icon are placed three medallions with military saints, Theodore, George, and Demetrius. These saints are also honored in the church decoration, where one mural portrays them as young formidable figures, fully armored, standing together to emphasize the amity and unity among soldiers (fig. 10).

The icon of Archangel Michael highlights the theme of the heavenly army, with Michael depicted as the leader of the Heavenly Host (fig. 8.b). In the photograph of the badly damaged relief, he is shown in armor, holding a sword in his right hand and a sheath in his left. The inscriptions on the enameled quatrefoils above his wings, which Bakradze reads as "Holy Archangel Michael" and "Ieso Navesdze" (Joshua, son of Nun), link the icon to a specific biblical scene, suggesting it portrays the moment when the angel appears to Joshua; it is possible the icon may have included an image of Joshua at Michael's feet.[28] This occurrence marked a pivotal moment where divine leadership and military power are manifested to Joshua, providing him with the strength and

a

b

c

Fig. 9 (a) Fragments of the Archangel Gabriel Icon, gilded embossed silver, c. 14th century. 10.5 x 6.5 cm. St. Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum, Inv. No. Гру-14., (b) Quatrefolium 1. Fragment of the Icon of the Archangel Gabriel, gold, cloisonné enamel, 12th century, Georgia. 4.7 x 4.7 cm. St. Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum. Inv. No. Гру-109. https://digital.hermitagemuseum.org/wps/portal/hermitage/digital-collection/08.+applied+arts/109822, (c) Quatrefolium 2. Fragment of the Icon of the Archangel Gabriel, gold, cloisonné enamel. 12th century, Georgia. 4.3 x 3.1 cm. St. Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum, Inv. No. Гру-110. https://digital.hermitagemuseum.org/wps/portal/hermitage/digital-collection/08.+applied+arts/109823.

confidence to win future battles. The icon's borders were adorned with ten enamel medallions, each inscribed in Georgian.[29] The archangel's nimbus was highlighted by three large gems: one turquoise and two pearls.[30] Additionally, the church walls feature two more depictions of the warrior archangel, emphasizing his role as a protector and guide in military conflict.

Bakradze was able to decipher partially missing embossed inscriptions on the icons. On the bottom of Gabriel's frame, according to his account, were the words: "*Eristav* (duke) of Svaneti and *mandaturukhutesi* (court official) Ioane, had this image covered with metal . . . in hope. May God forgive the priest Darchia." On the back of the icon, there is another lengthy inscription that provides further context: "Archangel of the Heavenly Powers Gabriel, who announced to the Virgin Mary the Incarnation of the Holy Lord, be the intercessor in this life and in the future for lords *eristav* of *erisavs* (duke of dukes) Dadiani Giorgi and his spouse, Rusudani, and their sons *mandaturtukhutsi*, Vamek and Gurieli Kakhaber, at whose order the image of your incorporeal spirit this holy icon of Gabriel was struck in metal, and be the protector and intercessor for now and ever, amen."[31] The icon of Michael also has inscriptions that mention the *eristavi* (duke) of Svaneti Giorgi Gurieli (Lomkatsa) and his spouse.[32]

Although the exact identities of these individuals remain unknown, similar inscriptions found on other objects enabled Bakradze to date the icon to the fourteenth century.

During this period in Georgian history, the centralized power of the Georgian king had been significantly weakened by the Mongol invasions, and regional princely families, such as the Gurieli and Dadiani, were rising in prominence. Bakradze highlights the theory that the Gurieli and Dadiani families originated from the Vardanidzes, who ruled over Svaneti.[33] This connection is further supported by the strong resemblance of the Jumati icons and church architecture with examples in Svaneti. The cult of the archangels had also been particularly strong in Svaneti since the eleventh century, and the remote region often served as a royal hideout where valuable items, including money and sacred objects, were kept safe during invasions.

Fig. 10 Wall Painting of Sts. George, Theodore, and Demetrius, Jumati Church. Photo by the author (2018).

We can speculate that the Gurielis, having come from Svaneti, brought with them medallions, —possibly once attached to a similar icon—along with other valuable items and embraced the local devotion to the archangels. They likely commissioned the creation of important icons for Jumati Church, reflecting both their heritage and religious practices.

Afterlife

The precise timing of the disappearance of the precious icons from the Jumati Monastery remains unknown, but it is widely believed to have occurred in the early 1880s.[34] This event is linked to a photographer from Saint Petersburg, Stephan Sabin-Gus, who somehow obtained permission from the exarchate authorities to supposedly restore or replace old icons in the ancient monasteries of western Georgia.[35] While the details of how he obtained the Jumati icons are unknown (at some point Sabin-Gus had to flee on horseback as priests ran after him in Shemokmedi),[36] a considerable

number of objects were lifted from the monasteries of Shemokmedi, Jumati, Martvili, Khobi, and others. According to the Georgian historian Ekvtime Takaishvili (1862–1953), several years passed without Sabin-Gus returning any of the items. In response to the abbots' repeated requests and complaints, he claimed that the objects were undergoing restoration, which was delayed due to a lack of skilled artisans. Eventually, a few monasteries received back a small portion of the removed items, but apparently their condition shocked those who saw them.[37] Sabin-Gus' illicit activities ultimately led to the loss of a significant number of irreplaceable artifacts, many of which were either sold or disappeared.

The stolen enamels from the Archangel Gabriel icon became a central part of the collection of Russian art enthusiast Alexander Zwenigorodskoi (1837–1903).[38] By the end of the nineteenth century, his private collection included forty-three rare early Byzantine, Georgian, and Kievan enamels. Despite the questionable circumstances surrounding their acquisition, Zwenigorodskoi displayed these pieces widely, building his reputation as a distinguished collector. He was particularly focused on popularizing his collection through publications, as I will discuss below.

Yury Pyatnitsky, a Senior Researcher at the State Hermitage Museum, has criticized the idealized image of Zwenigorodskoi as a meticulous collector, highlighting several inconsistencies in his claims. Zwenigorodskoi reported acquiring only four medallions from the Jumati group in Tiflis between November 1881 and December 1882. However, Pyatnitsky questions the accuracy of this account, suggesting that it is unclear how the acquisition actually occurred. He speculates that Zwenigorodskoi might have bought all eleven medallions at once or, if he acquired them in parts, there may have been an agreement with the seller to prevent other collectors from purchasing them. Pyatnitsky writes, "In any case, there is no doubt that the enamels purchased by Zvenigorodskii did not come from 'private hands in Tiflis,' as he delicately stated, but rather from the robber and rogue Sabin-Gus."[39]

Zwenigorodskoi first publicly displayed the Jumati enamels in 1882 at the Suermond Museum in Aachen, Germany, showcasing only the medallions of Christ and Saint Luke.[40] By 1884, he exhibited ten medallions in Aachen, along with additional items from his collection. Zwenigorodskoi also commissioned German scholar Johan Schulz to create a catalogue of the enamels, which was published with illustrations.[41] In 1886, he announced another ambitious project: a lavish album of chromolithographic reproductions of his Byzantine enamels. The album featured contributions from prominent Byzantinist N. P. Kondakov.[42]

In the late 1880s, illegal sales of enamels from Georgian churches had attracted the attention of Kondakov, while he was still working on Zwenigorodskoi's commission.

He learned that new enamels had arrived in Saint Petersburg from a "Jew from Tiflis," and upon reviewing them, he recognized some from Ermakov's photographs, including the quatrefoil medallions from the Archangel Gabriel icon.[43] With influential support, Kondakov informed Emperor Alexander III, resulting in the shutdown of Sabin-Gus's enterprise.[44] Despite a court order, Sabin-Gus was not prosecuted, likely due to the influence of powerful patrons who were concerned about implicating the exarchs of Georgia and feared sparking public unrest among the Georgian population.[45] In 1891, Sabin-Gus opened a photo studio in Saint Petersburg.[46] Apparently having ceased robbing Georgian churches, he became involved in the clandestine production of counterfeit enamels, primarily supplying them to the collector Mikhail Botkin.[47] As a result, Botkin's collection of cloisonné enamel grew significantly, from 7 items in 1892 to at least 160 pieces by 1911.[48]

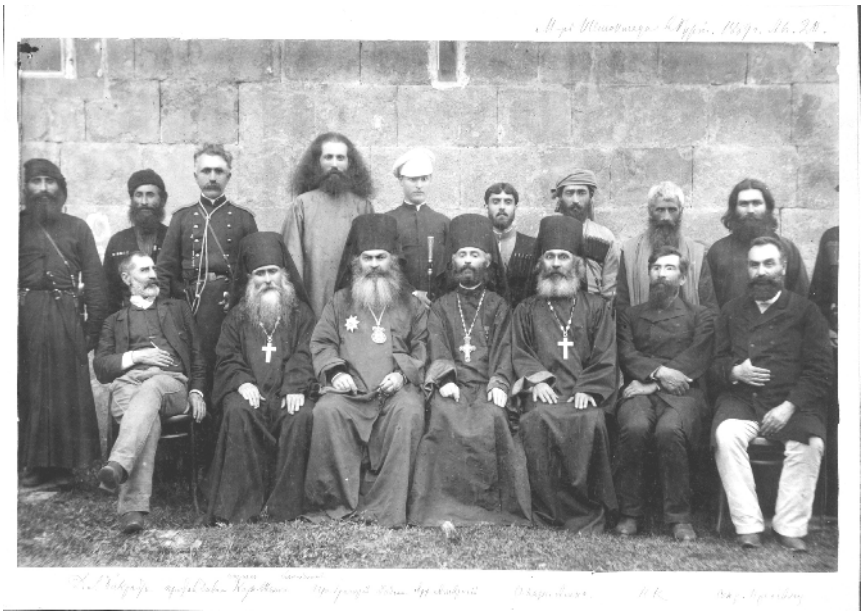


Fig. 11 Photograph of Nikodim Kondakov, seated second from right, and Dimitri Bakradze, seated first from left, at the Monastery of the Creator (*Shemokmedi*) near Ozurgeti. 1889. Photo in the Archives of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Fund 115/5/2. Photo by Nikolaevich.

Kondakov, in addition to alerting the authorities, initiated an important expedition to Georgia to document the antiquities of key churches and monasteries, aiming to prevent future thefts.[49] The findings of this expedition were published in 1890 under the title *Opis' pamiatnikov drevnosti v nekotorykh khramakh i monastyriakh Gruzii* (Inventory of Monuments of Antiquity in Some Churches and Monasteries of Georgia) (fig. 11).[50] In the book, Kondakov emphasizes the uniqueness of the pair of archangel icons and confirmed that they had been taken from Jumati Monastery in the 1880s and then likely disassembled or even melted down.[51] He notes that the enamel medallions were sold to various collections, but he does not name the individuals involved directly.

It is also noteworthy that, although parts of the icons may have been melted down, some fragments have survived and are now housed in different collections—a point to which I will return.

After nearly a decade of work, the lavish catalogue *Byzantine Enamels: Zwenigorodskoi Collection* was published in Russian, German, and French, consisting of six hundred printed books, with two hundred copies in each language (fig. 12).[52] Dedicated to Emperor Alexander III, this bibliophile masterpiece was not intended for sale; instead, it was meant for a select group of dignitaries, cultural figures, diplomats, and institutions chosen by the collector himself.[53] The impressive size, high-quality illustrations, and decorative features like silk bookmarks made receiving this book a privilege for its recipients. Historian Elena Boeck describes it as a "marvel of bibliophile luxury," aimed at shifting the discourse on Byzantine art.[54] The main essay, Kondakov's "The History and Monuments of Byzantine Enamelwork from the Collection of A. V. Zwenigorodskoi," was the first comprehensive study of Byzantine enamels. While showcasing Zwenigorodskoi's personal collection, the book also served to assert Russia's rightful claim as a cultural heir to the Byzantine legacy. Zwenigorodskoi himself stressed that the study of Byzantine art belonged particularly to Russia, which was deeply connected to its artistic traditions.[55] He emphasized Russia's role as a cultural heir to the Byzantine legacy, despite the fact that much of his collection originated from Georgian and Kyivan Rus before they were part of the Russian realm.

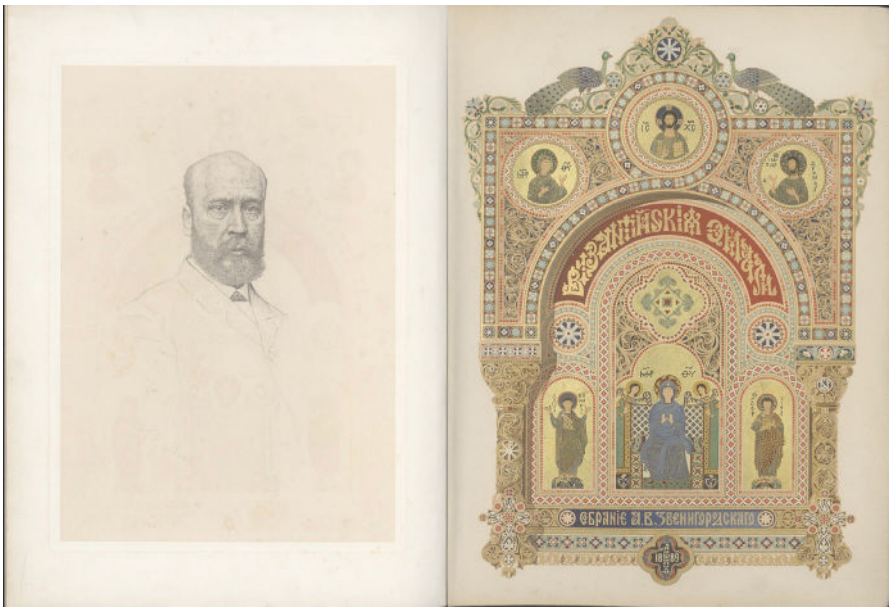


Fig. 12 Title Page of *Les Émaux Byzantins*, with a portrait of the collector Zwenigorodskoi. The frontispiece illustrates the three Jumati medallions at the top.

After Zwenigorodskoi's death in 1903, a dispute over his inheritance emerged among his family.[56] His sister, Nadezhda Myasoedova-Ivanova, eventually acquired

his unique collection of cloisonné enamels that had been deposited with antiquities dealer Jacques Seligman in London, and in 1909, she approached the Minister of the Imperial Court to sell the collection to a Russian museum for 400,000 rubles.[57] She emphasized that Zwenigorodskoi had previously been offered double this amount to sell the collection abroad but had declined. She presented her lower price to ensure the significant collection would find a permanent home in Russia. This was not the first offer to the state; Zwenigorodskoi had previously proposed a similar sale, which had been rejected.[58]

A special commission of Byzantine enamel experts, which included Kondakov and Botkin, was formed to evaluate the government's potential purchase of the collection.[59] During their meetings, members deemed the asking price excessive.[60] Kondakov even highlighted a key issue in valuing the objects: many were stolen and should be returned to their rightful owners, specifically Caucasian churches and monasteries. The scholar criticized local clergy for permitting Sabin-Gus to restore and replace ancient icons, deeming it a reprehensible practice. Furthermore, he noted that his report to the Imperial Court lacked official documentation from the Exarch of Georgia, which would have clarified the scope of the photographer's authority. Kondakov firmly opposed the sale of Zwenigorodskoi's collection abroad, regarding it as an essential part of the nation's cultural heritage. He pledged to expose the illicit means by which the artifacts were obtained if any attempt was made to sell the collection internationally.[61] Botkin, on the other hand, defended Sabin-Gus, arguing that the removal of icons was done in the presence of witnesses and that previous custodians lacked an understanding of their value. Ultimately, the commission concluded that acquiring Zwenigorodskoi's collection would be beneficial for the state and emphasized the need to negotiate a lower price, closer to 150,000 rubles.[62] However, despite their discussions, no concrete actions were taken by the government to pursue the acquisition.

It is unclear when J. P. Morgan (1837–1913), one of the wealthiest collectors in America, became interested in the Zwenigorodskoi collection. During the Special Commission meetings, Botkin claimed that the 800,000 rubles mentioned by Myasoedova-Ivanova had been specifically offered to Zwenigorodskoi by Morgan. However, this statement is likely inaccurate. For instance, Belle da Costa Greene, Morgan's personal librarian, inquired whether the New York Public Library had Kondakov's book on Byzantine enamels in 1907,[63] four years after Zwenigorodskoi's death. This query suggests that Morgan may not have seen the book before and was likely unfamiliar with the collection. In a letter dated February 15, 1908, Charles Hercules Read, a keeper at the British Museum and one of Morgan's advisers on art acquisitions, informed Morgan that the Zwenigorodskoi family was looking to sell the collection in England through a Russian gentleman named Raffolovich (possibly George Raffalovich [1880-1958]), for 275,000 rubles (or 25,000 pounds).[64] It remains unclear whether Morgan acted on this

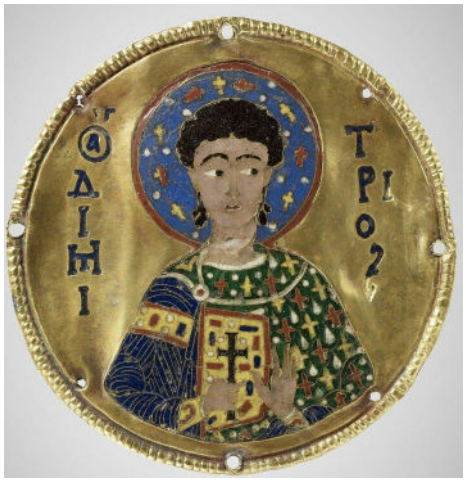


Fig. 13 Medallion with St. Demetrius, Musée du Louvre. Distributed by RMN / Thierry Ollivier. http://cartelfr.louvre.fr/cartelfr/visite?srv=car_not_frame&idNotice=6520.

proposal or what the reasons were behind the sale's failure.

In the meantime, Jacques Seligmann, who had previously held the Zwenigorodskoi collection as collateral for a loan to Zwenigorodskoi's descendants, was working behind the scenes to acquire it for Morgan. In a letter to Morgan from January 10, 1910, Seligmann notes that although the current owner claimed the Russian government intended to buy the collection, he was skeptical due to opposing interests from members on the commission. The head of the government had indicated that the collection was too expensive and that funds were unavailable.[65]

Ultimately, Seligman successfully purchased the Zwenigorodskoi collection for Morgan in 1910. Germain Seligman, Jacques's son, recounted his role in the negotiations.[66] At just age eighteen, he was sent to Saint Petersburg by his father, posing as an incognito nobleman interested in the purchase. During this visit, he was able to secure a firm price from Botkin. Jacques then traveled to Saint Petersburg to finalize the purchase of the collection for 296,000 rubles.[67] Germain was tasked with transporting the enamels out of the country, boarding a train to Paris while feigning illness to avoid drawing attention. Upon arrival, the enamels were placed in a bank safe for safekeeping.[68]

Morgan decided to donate the medallion featuring Saint Demetrios to the Louvre as a tribute to the city where the collection of enamels was first presented to him (fig. 13).[69] The depiction of Demetrios stylistically mirrors that of Saint George: both appear as beardless youths, one hand holding a cross, the other raised in blessing. Yet, in contrast to George, Demetrios is clad in a green mantle richly with adorned red and yellow crosses along with white teardrops and dots. The inscription on the saint's name on this medallion is also noteworthy as ΔΙΜΙΤΡΙΟΣ deviates from the standard Byzantine Greek spelling of Δημήτριος. Interestingly, the same nonstandard spelling is also found on the relief icon of Saint Demetiros on horseback from the Guelph Treasure, where the two-part Greek inscription reads Ὁ Ἅ[γιος] ΔΙΜΙ/ΤΡΙΟς.[70]

The Payne-Aldrich Tariff Act, passed in 1909, lifted heavy tariffs on imported works of art, enabling Morgan to transport his vast collection from Europe to the United States.[71] It took nearly a year to ship 551 boxes, which included the nine remarkable Jumati enamels. The collection was displayed at the Metropolitan Museum in 1914, after Morgan had already passed away. The enamels became part of the museum's

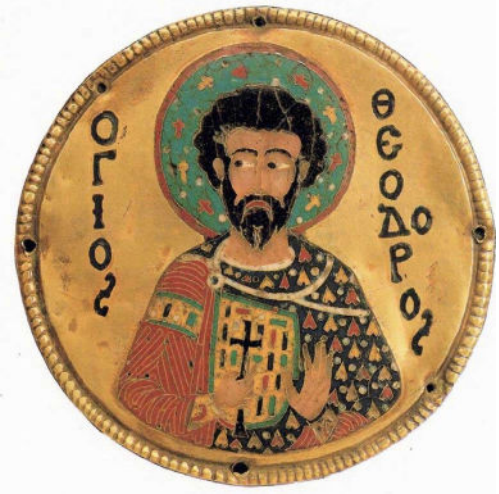


Fig. 14 Medallion with St. Theodore. Tbilisi, National Museum of Georgia.

permanent collection in 1917, when J. P. Morgan, Jr., gifted them to the institution.[72]

Following the 1917 Russian Revolution, Botkin's collection was nationalized, and in 1923, representatives from Georgian museums retrieved some enamels from that group.[73] The medallion featuring Saint Theodore was among the items and has since been part of the collection at the National Museum of Georgia in Tbilisi (fig. 14).[74] Some fragments from the Archangel Gabriel icon from Botkin's collection ended up in the State Russian Museum in Saint Petersburg and the face of the archangel at the State Hermitage.[75] The two enamel quatrefoils, once owned by A. A. Bobrinskii, were transferred to the Baron Stieglitz Museum of Decorative and Applied Arts in Saint Petersburg in 1915 and later became part of the State Hermitage Museum's collection in 1924.[76]

Fig. 15a Fragment of a nimbus, cloisonné enamel. Reproduced as a chromolithograph in N. P. Kondakov, *Istoriia i pamiatniki Vizantiiskoi emali: iz sobraniia A.V. Zvenigorodskogo* (Saint Petersburg: A. Zvenigorodskoi, 1892), Plate 20.

An overlooked detail of the icon is Gabriel's halo. Bakradze did not provide information about it, only mentioning Michael's gilded repoussé nimbus, which was adorned with precious stones. In his catalogue of the Zwenigorodskoi collection, Schulz included an image of two nimbus fragments, each with an outer circumference of 163 millimeters. He speculated that, when intact, the nimbus might have featured five precious stones.[77] Kondakov also included these fragments with a chromolithographic illustration in "The History and Monuments of Byzantine Enamels," despite them no longer being part of the Zwenigorodskoi collection, since they had moved to Botkin's collection at that time (figs. 15a-b). He suggested that these enamels were of Georgian origin due to their crude patterning and that they were influenced by both Persian and Byzantine art, with a date of likely no later than the twelfth century.[78] However, neither Schulz nor Kondakov could identify the specific icon to which the fragments might have

belonged. Although, Ermakov's photograph is too unclear to definitely confirm whether the enamels belonged to Gabriel's nimbus – particularly since it shows only a single fragment – the shape of the nimbus and the recurring motif of three rosettes distributed between pairs of stone settings suggest this possibility. The two nimbus fragments in the collection of the National Museum (originally from the Botkin collection) feature a dark blue ground with leaf motifs outlined in turquoise blue and the white core encircled with a brick-red border. A direct side-by-side comparison with the facial fragment and the quatrefoil enamels from the State Hermitage Museum would be necessary to support this hypothesis.

Fig. 15b Two fragments of a Nimbus. Cloisonné enamel, gold, sardius stone. 14 x 3.5 cm. Tbilisi, National Museum of Georgia.

The Met medallions drew the attention of Vasili Dumbadze (1882 – 1943), the U.S.-based diplomatic agent for the exiled Republics of Georgia and Azerbaijan. Following Georgia's brief independence (1918–1921) and the Soviet takeover, the Georgian government relocated to Paris. In 1925 Dumbadze contacted Edward Dean Adams, an American businessman and trustee of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and, through him reached out to John P. Morgan Jr., informing them of the medallions' origins and their controversial acquisition.[79] He proposed that the Georgian government officially gift the medallions to the Met as a gesture of cultural diplomacy, hoping to gain U.S. support for Georgian independence and to attract American investment, particularly in mining. In 1926 he testified before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs (the medallions were briefly mentioned in his submitted report as evidence of Georgia's rich cultural legacy).[80] Dumbadze was subsequently recognized as Georgia's diplomatic representative. However, the U.S. recognition of the Soviet Union in 1933 ended any prospects for official support.

Conclusion

For many years, the acquisition of rare objects—especially those taken under questionable or exploitative circumstances—went largely unchallenged. Often acquired during the height of colonial expansion, these artifacts were funneled into private collections, art markets, and encyclopedic museums. The colonial project, after all, was not only about economic domination but also about the appropriation and recontextualization of cultural heritage, frequently at the expense of the communities to whom these objects originally belonged. The Zwenigorodskoi collection was once as renowned for its catalog as it was for its rare enamels. This catalog set a new benchmark in how collectors presented and promoted recently acquired treasures, helping to shape the public image of private collections. Central to this effort was Kondakov's essay—an encyclopedic and unparalleled study of Byzantine enamels—which also served a broader ideological purpose: to position Russia as the rightful heir to the Byzantine legacy. This expression of romantic nationalism was not limited to Russia; it intersected with Western efforts to collect, study, and display such works, especially when it came to medieval artifacts.

Morgan's generous gift of the Jumati medallions to the Metropolitan Museum and the Louvre has undoubtedly enriched scholarship on cloisonné enamels and the broader context of Byzantine art. Generations of scholars and the public have had the opportunity to appreciate the medallions in person. However, this fortunate outcome does not excuse the original theft of the objects from Jumati Monastery, allegedly committed by Sabin-Gus. Much was lost in their removal and disassembly.

Today, viewers have to mentally piece the medallions back together and imagine them in their original context. We also have to mentally assemble the surviving fragments of the Archangel Gabriel icon (fig. 16). The hammered silver-gilt repoussé surface of the icon would have shimmered with a variety of textures, surrounded by the gleaming enamels in their rich array of colors and brilliance. If we further imagine the intact icon in its original medieval setting, we can envision how, in the dim light of a church, the flickering candles and oil lamps would have animated the intense incised eyes of the archangel at center and the sideways glances of the holy figures in the medallions in the surrounding frame. Coupled with the rising scent of incense and the sound of prayers and polyphonic singing, the original viewer would have experienced, as Pentcheva describes, how "the icon thus goes through a process of becoming, changing, and performing before the faithful."[81]

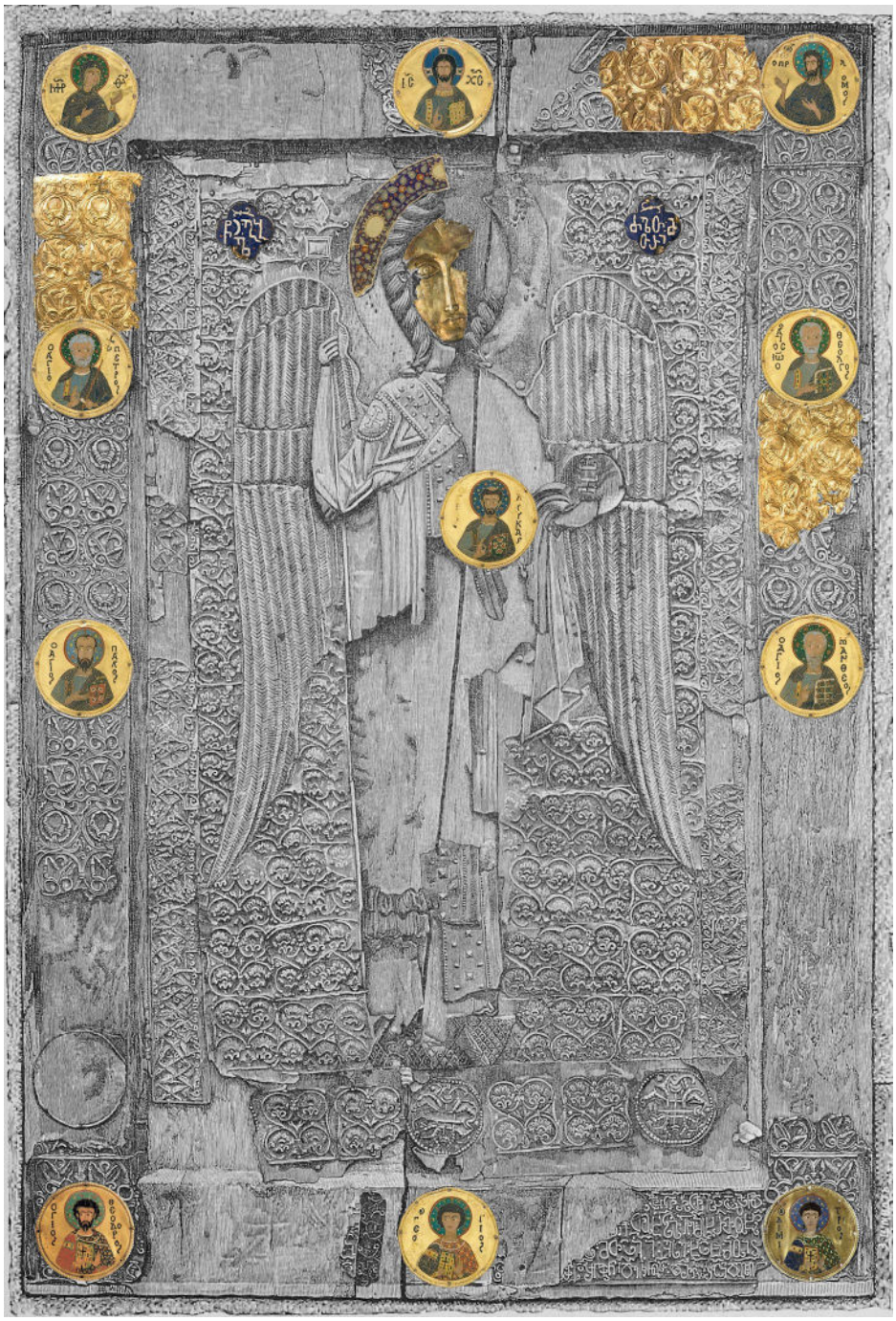


Fig. 16 Author's Partial Reconstruction of the Archangel Gabriel Icon from Jumati Monastery. Showing: two enamel quatrefoils and the archangel's face (State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg); silver-gilt panels from the icon's frame (State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg; formerly part of the M. Botkin collection); the nimbus and medallion with St. Theodore (National Museum of Art of Georgia, Tbilisi); medallion with St. Demetrius (Louvre); and nine additional medallions (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York).

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Mariam Otkhmezuri Charlton is a MA student in Art History at Hunter College, City University of New York. Originally from Tbilisi, Georgia, she earned her BA in History from Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, where she focused on Russia–Georgia relations. Her research takes an interdisciplinary approach to understanding artworks within broader social, historical, and political contexts. She is particularly interested in the histories of collecting, exhibitions, and museums, as well as cross-cultural artistic exchange.

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1 Inv. nos. 17.190. 670–.678. Publications that mention these objects include D. Bakradze, *Arkheologicheskoe puteshestvie po Gruzii i Adchare* (Saint Petersburg: Izdat'el'stvo Akademii nauk, 1878), 262; Johann Schulz, *Die byzantinischen Zellen-Emails der Sammlung Swenigorodckoi: Ausgestellt im Städtischen Suermondt–Museum in Aachen* (Aachen, 1884), 102–10; also published as *Histoire et monuments des émaux byzantins: Emaux byzantins: collection Zwenigorodskoi* (Frankfurt am Main, 1892); *Geschichte und Denkmaler des byzantinischen Emails: Sammlung A. W. Swenigorodskoi*, trans. E. Kretschmann (Frankfurt, 1892); N. P. Kondakov, *Istoriia i pamiatniki Vizantiiskoi emali: iz sobraniia A.V. Zvenigorodskogo* (Saint Petersburg: A. Zvenigorodskoi, 1892). O. M. Dalton, "Byzantine Enamels in Mr. Pierpont Morgan's Collection," *Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 21, no. 110 (1912): 66–69; L. L. Maculevič, "Monuments disparus de Džumati," *Byzantion* 2 (1925): 77–108; Margaret English Frazer, "The Djumati Enamels: A Twelfth-Century Litany of Saints," *Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 6 (February 1970): 240–51; Leila Khuskivadze, *Medieval Cloisonné Enamels at the Georgian State Museum of Fine Arts* (Tbilisi: Khelovneba, 1980), 96; David Buckton, "Bogus Byzantine Enamels in Baltimore and Washington, D.C.," *Journal of the Walters Art Gallery* 46 (1988): 11–24. Tavberidze I., "Antiquities of Jumati Monastery," Tbilisi: Sakartvelos Sapatriarkos Gamoncemloba, 2005.

2 The Metropolitan Museum medallions are of Christ, the Virgin, John the Baptist, Saints Peter, Paul, Matthew, Luke, John the Theologian, and George. The original set also included medallions of Saints Theodore and Demetrius and probably of Mark. These enamels are known as the Jumati medallions or Jumati enamels. In this paper we use the spelling of "Jumati" (ჯუმათი in Georgian). Other spellings "Dzhumati" or "Djumati" (as is used by the Metropolitan Museum) represents a transliteration from Russian (Джумати).

3 Cloisonné enameling is an ancient technique for decorating metalwork. The term "cloisonné" comes from the French word *cloison*, meaning partition, and refers to the process of creating cells or compartments on a metal surface using thin metal strips. These cells are then filled with finely powdered colored glass. The object is heated at high temperatures, melting the glass into a smooth enamel surface. The process continues with repeated layering and firing to achieve the depth of the desired enamel color. After the final firing, the object is polished to create a smooth, shiny finish that enhances the vibrant colors and gives the piece a luminous quality. On cloisonné enameling technique, see Theophilus Presbyter, *On Divers Arts; The Treatise of Theophilus*, trans. John G. Hawthorne and Cyril Stanley Smith (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963).

4 Frazer, "Djumati Enamels," 241.

5 Kondakov, *Istoriia i pamiatniki*, 90.

6 Kondakov, *Istoriia i pamiatniki*, 86.

7 The byzantine patriarch Nikephoros (ca. 750–828 CE), a staunch defender of icons, defined the icon as the imprint (*typos*) of the visible characteristics of Christ on matter, or appearance imprinted on matter: "Painting represents the corporeal form of the one depicted, impressing its appearance [*schema*] and its shape [*morphe*] and its likeness [*empheria*]." Patriarch Nikephoros, *Antirrheticus* II, cited in Bissera V. Pentcheva, "The Performative Icon," *Art Bulletin* 88, no. 4 (2006): 633.

8 Pentcheva, "Performative Icon," 639. See also Bissera V. Pentcheva, *The Sensual Icon: Space, Ritual, and the Senses in Byzantium* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010).

9 Kondakov emphasizes the medallions' significance, noting that their iconographic perfection placed them among the finest examples of Byzantine enameling and dating them to the early eleventh century (*Istoriia i pamiatniki*, 255).

10 Frazer, "Djumati Enamels," 245.

11 Helen C. Evans, "Medallions from an Icon Frame," in *The Glory of Byzantium: Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era*, A.D. 843–1261, ed. Helen C. Evans and William D. Wixom (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1997), 346.

12 Another significant dynastic alliance occurred in 1116, when Princess Kata, daughter of King David IV of Georgia, married a Byzantine imperial prince. For further details, see Marie-Félicité Brosset, *Histoire de la Géorgie depuis l'antiquité jusqu'au XIXe siècle* (Saint Petersburg: Imperial Academy of Sciences, 1849), 1:360. Byzantine scholar Alexander A. Vasiliev emphasized these connections, particularly after the death of Emperor Andronikos I Komnenos in 1185, when his grandsons, Alexius and David, sought refuge in Georgia. Welcomed by their relative Queen Tamar, they were likely raised at her court. With her military support, they later founded the Empire of Trebizond in 1204, continuing the Komnenos dynasty's influence after the fall of the Byzantine Empire. See A. A. Vasiliev, "The Foundation of the Empire of Trebizond (1204-1222)," Speculum 11, no. 1 (1936): 3–37.

13 Khuskivadze, *Medieval Cloisonné Enamels*, 96.

14 Examples of Greek and Georgian inscriptions on the same object include a gold

quadrifolium with a crucifixion scene in cloisonné enamel, bearing an inscription of Abkhaz King George (r. 922–957); see Nana Burchuladze, *Treasures of Medieval Christian Art in Georgia* (in Georgian), National Museum of Georgia, Tbilisi, 2021–2023, p. 360. Also noteworthy is an intertwined bilingual inscription on the cloisonné enamel panel of the Bocorma icon of Saint George; see Burchuladze, pp. 125–129, and also *Warrior Saints in Medieval Georgian Art*, ed. Nikoloz Aleksidze and Ekaterine Gedevanishvili, Giorgi Chubinashvili Research Centre for Georgian Art History and Heritage Preservation, Tbilisi, 2025.

15 Buckton, "Bogus Byzantine Enamels," 15.

16 Though rare, some Byzantine icons depict Christ holding the Gospels with a veiled arm. For example, *Ivory Icon with Christ Pantokrator* (The Metropolitan Museum of Art 17.190.66) https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/464531 also, *Jasper cameo with Christ Pantokrator* (University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archeology and Anthropology29-128-575).

17 D. Bakradze, *Arkheologicheskoe puteshestvie po Gurii i Adchare* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia Imperatorskoi Akademii Nauk, 1878), 262

18 The Annunciation chapel on the south was added around 1846 when the church underwent a renovation; in 1904 a porch with columns was added on the west side, probably to house the bell tower. This addition is noted on a stone inscribed in Georgian: "1904: The work is done by Ivane Menabde and archimandrite Gerasime Darchia."

19 There is more than one story involving an icon connected to the flooding of the Paliastomi Lake. Supposedly an icon of the Virgin originally brought by Andrew the Apostle was saved by a local man and brought to the Shemokmedi Church, and the icon of the Virgin of Paliastomi at the Kutaisi Museum also was saved during the flood.

20 Egnate Ninoshvili, *Paliastomi Lake* (in Georgian) (Tbilisi: Shroma, 1909), 7.

21 Other icons that Bakradze highlights include a gold icon of Gabriel and Michael decorated with pearls and stones; a folding icon in gold relief of Michael with donor figures; and a small gilded icon of Christ with Michael and Gabriel, whose halos included seven precious stones and twelve pearls. There was also a spectacular gilded icon of Saint George and a processional cross with a base in the shape of a church.

22 Bakradze reported ten medallions in the group now at the Metropolitan Museum, but he either miscounted the eleven medallions known today, or one medallion was missing at the time. In Ermakov's photograph of the icon, the medallion with Saint Luke

was not attached to the frame but was tucked into the archangel's robe.

23 Bakradze, *Arkheologicheskoe puteshestvie*, 262.

24 This was probably during the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–78. The photograph of the Archangel Michael's icon is held at the National Parliamentary Library of Georgia, collection Of the National Photo Archive, http://dspace.nplg.gov.ge. the location of the original photograph of Archangel Gabriel's icon is unknown.

25 Ermakov's photograph of the icon of Archangel Gabriel from the Jumati Monastery was reproduced as a chromolithograph in Kondakov's *Istoriia i pamiatniki*, p. 256.

26 Inv. nos. Гру-14, Гру-109.

27 Note that this arrangement of the medallions differs from the Metropolitan Museum's arrangement.

28 In the Book of Joshua, there is a moment when Joshua encounters a mysterious figure, described as the "commander of the Lord's army" (5:13–15). This figure is often identified with an appearance of the archangel Michael leading the heavenly army in the divine conquest of the promised land. The pictorial representation of the figures of Joshua and Michael together can be found on a mural at Hosios Loukas (ca. tenth century), underlining the contemporary association with military victory. See Carolyn Loessel Connor, "Hosios Loukas as a Victory Church," *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 33 (1992): 293–308. The subject of Michael's appearance to Joshua was popular in Georgia as well; for example, there is a mural of the archangel warrior in Iprari Archangels' Church (Upper Svaneti), dated 1096.

29 Following the removal of the Archangel Michael icon from Jumati Monastery, the ten enamel medallions from its frame were dispersed. See Fig. 16 below for their present location and a partial reconstruction.

30 Bakradze, *Arkheologicheskoe puteshestvie*, 261–62.

31 Alvida Mirzoyan, *Medieval Georgian Toreutics in the Hermitage Museum Collection: Investigations and Attributions*, edited by Mikhail Piotrovsky (Saint Petersburg: State Hermitage Museum, 2016), 127.

32 Bakradze, *Arkheologicheskoe puteshestvie*, 262.

33 Bakradze writes that the Vardanidze dynasty ruled over Svaneti and was especially prominent during the reign of Queen Tamar (1160–1213). After some time the

Vardzanidzes lost Svaneti, and King George V "Magnificent" (1286–1346) gave them Guria as their fiefdom and gave Svaneti to the Gelovanis. The offspring of Vardanisdze who settled in Guria became the Gurielis. Bakradze, *Arkheologicheskoe puteshestvie*, 264.

34 L. Maculevič, "Monuments disparus de Džumati," 77–108.

35 Shalva Amiranashvili was a prominent scholar on Georgian art who, in 1923, led the effort to repatriate Georgian treasures from Russian museums and libraries. He detailed the stories in his works Sh. Ia. Amiranashvili, *Istoriia gruzinskogo iskusstva* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1950); and შალვა ამირანაშვილი, საქართველოდან სხვადასხვა დროს გატანილი სამუზეუმო განძეულობა და მისი დაბრუნება. თსუ-ს გამომცემლობა, თბილისი, 1968. გვ. 4 [Shalva Amiranashvili, *sakartvelodan skhvadaskhva dros gat'anili samuzeumo gandzeuloba da misi dabruneba* (Tbilisi: Tbilisi State University Press, 1968).]

36 Yurii Piatnitskii, "Peregorodchatye emali iz sobraniia A.V. Zvenigorodskogo i issledovanie L. Pekarskoi [Jewellery of Princely Kiev: The Kiev Hoards in the British Museum and the Metropolitan Museum of Art and Related Material]," *Tyragetia* 9 (24), no. 2 (2015): 307.

37 Ekvtime Takaishvili to Vasili Dumbadze, December 30, 1925. Curatorial file for 17.190.670– 6.78. Department of Medieval Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

38 Also known as Aleksandr Viktorovich Zvenigorodskii or Aaron Zvenigorodski. His last name is also spelled Swenigorodskoi. For more on his biography, see V. V. Stasov, "Aleksandr Viktorovich Zvenigorodskii. Nekrolog," in *Stat'i i zametki, publikovavshiesia v gazetakh i ne voshedshie v knizhnye izdaniia* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii khudozhestv SSSR, 1952), 1:192–93.

39 Piatnitskii, "Peregorodchatye emali," 300.

40 Johann Schulz, *Die byzantinischen Zellen-Emails der Sammlung Swenigorodckoi, ausgestellt im Städtischen Suermondt-Museum in Aachen* (Aachen: Verlag von Rudolf Barth, 1884), 15.

41 Schulz, *Die byzantinischen Zellen-Emails*, 15.

42 A. I. Somova, ed., Khudozhestvennye novosti 4, No. 16 (St. Petersburg, 1886), 458.

43 Piatnitskii, "Peregorodchatye emali," 297.

44 L. Maculevič, "Monuments disparus de Džumati," 77.

45 According to the report of the Minister of the Imperial Court, dated October 26, 1889, due to emerging facts of theft in the church treasures of Georgia, the Supreme Order was given to prosecute Sabin-Gus. However, this order remained unfulfilled and "beyond the deadline prescription." On January 12, 1894, the Minister of the Court ordered "not to initiate prosecution." Piatnitskii, "Peregorodchatye emali," 302. The state of Georgian heritage was dire, with a report from the Exarchate of Georgia noting the looting of seventy-five churches between 1884 and 1886. File concerning measures for the protection of the churches of the Exarchate of Georgia, fund 796, register 167, no. 2610 (1886), fol. 1v, Russian State Historical Archive, Saint Petersburg. Cited in Aglaé Achechova, "De la meilleure façon de constituer une collection: Le cas des émaux 'byzantins' de Mikhaïl Botkine," *Cahiers de l'École du Louvre* 4 (2014): 39. In 1886, Archbishop Pavel, Exarch of Georgia (1882–1888), had already provoked public outrage when he was rumored to have anathematized the Georgian people during the funeral of Chudetsky, the rector of the Tiflis Seminary, who had been killed by a seminarian. This prompted a protest letter from Dimitri Kipiani, Marshal of the Georgian Nobility, who was subsequently dismissed, exiled to Russia, and later assassinated. His funeral in Tiflis became a major anti-Russian demonstration. To avoid further unrest, the authorities likely suppressed news of Sabin-Gus's thefts, especially given the apparent involvement of the exarchate.

46 List of Petersburg photographers—Sabin-Gus, Stepan Yurevich, https://stereoscop.ru/photograph/sabin-gus-stepan-yurevich/, accessed on August, 5, 2024.

47 Sabin-Gus organized production between 1891 and1907 of faked Byzantine enamels, with the help of enamel artist Popov from the Fabergé company. These fakes were included in Botkin's collection, which was discovered in 1916 by the chief master of the Fabergé company, F. P. Birbaum. Counterfeits from Sabin-Gus are still found on the antique market today. Achechova, "De la meilleure façon," 42.

48 See *Collection M. P. Botkine* (Saint Petersburg: Tovarish c hestvo R. Golike i A. Vil'borg 1911). On the problem of fakes in the history of Byzantine enamel, see David Buckton, "Byzantine Enamels in the Twentieth Century," in *Byzantine Style, Religion, and Civilisation: In Honor of Sir Steven Runciman*, ed. Elizabeth Jeffreys (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 25–37; Constance Stromberg, "A Technical Study of Three Cloisonné Enamels from the Botkine Collection," *Journal of the Art Gallery* 46 (1988): 25–36; N. Beruchashvili, "Ob istorii peregorodchatykh emalei iz kollektsii M.P. Botkina v Gosudarstvennom muzee iskusstv Gruzii," in *Iuvelirnoe iskusstvo i materlial'naia kul'tura* (Saint Petersburg: GE, 2001), 218–33.

49 L. Maculevič, "Monuments disparus de Džumati," 77.

50 N. P. Kondakov and D. Bakradze, *Opis' pamiatnikov drevnosti v nekotorykh khramakh i monastyriakh Gruzii* (Saint Petersburg: Tipografiia Ministerstva putei soobshcheniia, 1890), 102.

51 Kondakov and Bakradze, Opis' *pamiatnikov*, 102.

52 Although the publication is dated 1892, the books in all three languages were not ready to be sent as gifts until 1895. Zwenigorodskoi invested over 120,000 rubles in the publication, an extraordinary sum for that time. The book became an international sensation, leading Zwenigorodskoi to commission another book. V. V. Stasov, *Istoriia knigi "Vizantiiskie emali" A. V. Zvenigorodskogo* (Saint Petersburg: [Publisher not given], 1898).

53 Stasov, *Istoriia knigi*, 4.

54 Elena Boek, "Internationalizing Russia's Byzantine Heritage: Medieval Enamels and Chromolithographic Geopolitics," in *The Eloquence of Art: Essays in Honour of Henry Maguire*, edited by Andrea Olsen Lam and Rossitza Schroeder (New York: Routledge 2020), 36.

55 Zwenigorodskoi himself explained his motivation for creating the book: "It always seemed to me that the study and publication of the creations of Byzantine art belong, more than others, to a Russian person; it is he, who from earliest youth is surrounded by the traditions and the heritage of Byzantium; the one who, by the very historical fate of his fatherland, is able to sympathize particularly strongly with the high artistic and truly creative sides of Byzantium." A. Zvenigorodskoi, preface to *Istoriia i pamiatniki*, viii.

56 Piatnitskii, "Peregorodchatye emali," 302.

57 A certified copy of this petition is preserved in the State Hermitage Archives, see Piatnitskii, "Peregorodchatye emali," 303. In the petition, Myasoedova-Ivanova indicated that she acquired the collection while incurring considerable debt. At that time, the collection was kept in Berlin for safekeeping.

58 Correspondence in file marked Edward D. Adams on the Swenigorodskoi enamels, archive of the Department of Medieval Art, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

59 The "Special Commission" on the issue of purchasing the collection of A.V. Zvenigorodskoi was headed by Count A. A. Bobrinsky, chairman of the Imperial Archaeological Commission, and included painting scholar M. P. Botkin; member of

the Imperial Academy of Sciences N. P. Kondakov; the director of the Saint Petersburg Archaeological Institute, N. V. Pokrovskii; the keeper of the Imperial Hermitage, Ia. I. Smirnov; member of the Imperial Archaeological Commission B. V. Farmakovskii; and ex-officio member of the Imperial Archaeological Commission and State Council B. I. Khanenko. For the full report of the commission, see V. Skurlov, "O nesostoiavshemsia priobretenii kollektsii emalei Zvenigorodskogo: 1909 g.," in *Iuvelnirnoe iskusstvo i material'naia kul'tura: Tezisy dokladov uchastnikov piatnadtsatogo kollokviuma (10–16 aprelia 2006 goda)* (Saint Petersburg: State Hermitage Museum, 2006), 82–85.

60 According to Botkin, Zwenigorodskoi had informed him that each piece cost between 1,500 and 2,000 rubles.

61 Skurlov, "O nesostoiavshemsia priobretenii," 83.

62 Skurlov, "O nesostoiavshemsia priobretenii," 83.

63 Letter signed "Lydenberg" to Belle da Costa Greene, March 4, 1907, private archive of J. P. Morgan, Morgan Collections Correspondence 1887–1948, New York Public Library, Morgan Library and Museum, New York.

64 File "C.H. Read," February 15, 1908, private archive of J. P. Morgan, Morgan Library and Museum, New York.

65 Seligmann to Morgan, January 11, 1910, private archive of J. P. Morgan, file "Seligmann I, 1900–1911," Morgan Library and Museum, New York.

66 Germain Seligman, *Merchants of Art: 1880–1960, Eighty Years of Professional Collecting* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1961), 67.

67 Receipt of a bill for Swenigorodskoi collection and commission, December 27, 1910, private archive of J. P. Morgan, file "Seligmann I, 1900–1911," Morgan Library and Museum, New York.

68 Seligman, *Merchants of Art*, 68.

69 "Médaillon d'émail cloisonné byzantine: Donné au Louvre par M. Pierpont Morgan," *Les Musées de France: Bulletin publié sous le patronage de la Direction des musées nationaux et de la Société des amis du Louvre* (January 1911), 53.

70 The relief icon of Saint Demetrios on horseback from the Guelph Treasure is a rare surviving example of a relief enamel icon; the best-known of this type is the Archangel Michael in San Marco, Venice. State Museums of Berlin, Museum of Decorative Arts.

Object no: W3.

71 "Tariff-free Art Pleases Art Lovers," *New York Times*, March 19, 1909.

72 Inv. nos. 17.190.670–.678.

73 Buckton, "Bogus Byzantine Enamels," 13.

74 Amiranashvili, Istoriia gruzinskogo iskusstva 6.

75 Iu. A. Piatnitskii, "Vizantiiskie i gruzinskie emali v sobranii grafa A.A. Bobrinskogo v Sankt-Peterburge," *Khristianskii Vostok* 8, no. 14 (Saint Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo Gosudarstvennogo Ermitazha, GE, 2017), 493.

76 Piatnitskii, "Vizantiiskie i gruzinskie emali," 489.

77 Schultz thought that these fragments formed two ends of a halo, not necessarily from the same icon but made by the same artist (*Die byzantinischen Zellen-Emails*, 13).

78 Kondakov, I*storiia i pamiatniki*, 302.

79 Vasili Dumbadze to Eward Dean Adams, November and December of 1925. Curatorial file for 17.190.670–6.78. Department of Medieval Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

80 Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, sixty-ninth congress, first session on H. J. Res. 195: Providing for the appointment of a diplomatic representative to the National Republic of Georgia: April 1 and 2, 1926. Statements of Mr. John A. Stewart, New York City; Mr. Vasili D. Dumbadze, New York City; Maj. Henry G. Opdycke, New York City / National Republic of Georgia. [Stephen G. Porter, Pennsylvania, Chairman] https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015081011788&seq=3

81 Pentcheva, "Performative Icon," 651.

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Richard Hare's Russian Icon Collection and the Persistent Lure of Byzantium in Anglo-Soviet Artistic Relations

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Richard Hare's Russian Icon Collection and the Persistent Lure of Byzantium in Anglo-Soviet Artistic Relations

Abstract

This article concentrates on the activities of Richard Hare, whose interest in icons sheds new light on the history of British and western collecting of and scholarship on Russian art in the twentieth century. For British audiences, as elsewhere in the west, Russian icons, their historical origins, and cultural significance were little understood beyond specialist circles. But, for a few decades in the mid twentieth century, they gained new visibility in the British art world. Despite this, probably for political reasons, state-owned museums did not extend their holdings and the gap was filled by a private collector: Hare, this article argues, was the first British collector of icons in significant numbers. He is a valuable case study of a western collector of Russian art, but his particular attention to icons illustrates an important leitmotif in the under-researched picture of Anglo-Soviet artistic relations, namely, the persistence of Byzantinism in British responses to Russian art.

Keywords: Richard Hare, Russian Icons, Dorich House, Russian Studies, Soviet Union.

Museum collections of Russian icons in are rare in Britain, the three main examples being those of the British Museum, the Victoria and Albert Museum, and Dorich House Museum (part of Kingston University, London).[1] All are relatively small, but the latter is arguably the most historically significant, for it was formed in the mid-twentieth century as part of a larger collection of Russian art assembled by Richard Hare (1907–1966), a professor of Russian literature at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, with

Fig. 1 Richard Hare and Dora Gordine in the dining room at Dorich House, photograph, mid twentieth century. Source: Historic England Archive.

support from his Latvian-born émigré wife, the sculptor Dora Gordine (formerly Gordin, 1895–1991) (fig. 1). This article concentrates on the activities of Hare, whose interest in icons sheds new light on the history of British and Western collecting of and scholarship on Russian art in the twentieth century. For British audiences, as elsewhere in the West, the historical origins and cultural significance of Russian icons were little understood outside specialist circles. But, for a few decades in the mid-twentieth century, they gained new visibility in the British art world. Despite this, probably for political reasons, state-owned museums did not extend their holdings, and the gap was filled by a private collector: Hare, this article argues, was the first significant British collector of icons. He is a valuable case study of a Western collector of Russian art, but his particular attention to icons illustrates an important leitmotif in the under-researched picture of Anglo-Soviet artistic relations, namely, the persistence of Byzantinism in British responses to Russian art.[2]

Over his lifetime, Hare accumulated hundreds of works of imperial Russian fine, decorative, and religious art, mostly dating from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Within this larger pattern of collecting, he was drawn to icons, his awareness of their importance perhaps reflecting his wider interests in Russian history. Hare and Gordine had hoped that the larger collection ultimately would become Britain's first Russian art museum, but Hare's untimely death due to a heart attack in 1966, when he was fifty-nine, made this prospect less straightforward. Gordine lived into her nineties and died in 1991. A period of uncertainty for the house followed, and the art collection was significantly reduced in size through a series of sales at auction. Some works had already been lost after a burglary during Gordine's later years.[3] As a consequence, Hare's original collection of around sixty icons was reduced to twenty. Including the icons, around two hundred objects remain at what is now Dorich House Museum at Kingston University.[4]

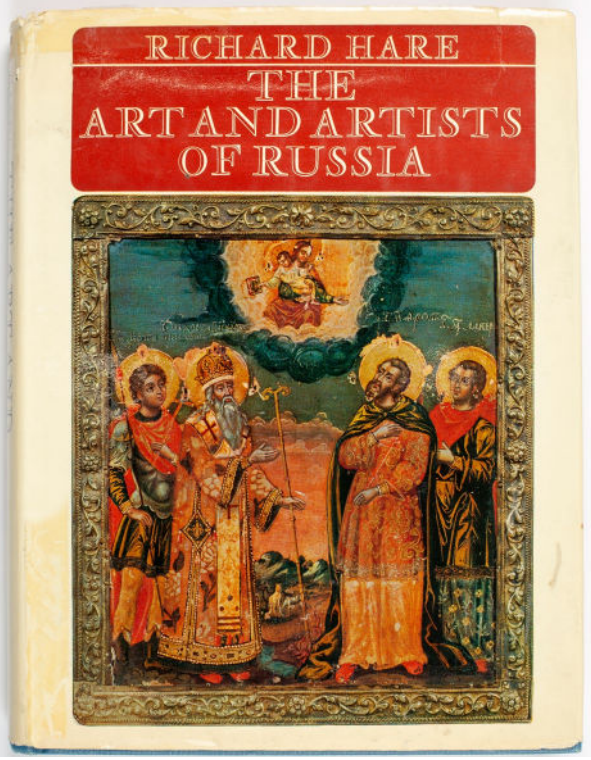


Fig. 2 Cover image for Richard Hare, The Art and Artists of Russia (London: Methuen & Co., 1965). © 2025 Dorich House Museum, London.

This article adopts several approaches to assess Hare's icon collecting. After summarizing what is known about Hare, the objects, and his collecting activity, I examine Hare's scholarship on Russian icons and their treatment in his monograph, *The Art and Artists of Russia*, published in 1965 (fig. 2).[5] This book was heavily informed by the collection, with many of its objects used as illustrations. Next, I consider the connections that Hare may have forged with other Western collectors of icons. Lastly, I examine Hare's activities in the context of the history of British appreciation and study of Byzantine art. This approach reflects the fact that Hare's collecting began after Byzantine studies had emerged as an academic discipline in Britain (namely, in the mid- to late nineteenth century) but before Russian art studies appeared around a century later.[6] Hare, I contend, was one of a new cohort of Western writers, museum specialists, and art historians who were becoming interested in all kinds of Orthodox icons, including Russian, and regarded Russian culture through the lens of Eastern Christianity.

Richard Hare: Diplomat, Scholar, Collector

Richard Hare, born Gilbert Richard Hare, was from an aristocratic British family and, as the second son of Richard Granville Hare (1866–1931), Fourth Earl of Listowel, was entitled to call himself "The Honourable Richard Hare."[7] The dynasty belonged to the former Anglo-Irish ruling class known as the "Protestant Ascendancy," and Hare's privileged position within the upper ranks of the British class system facilitated his career within the establishment.[8] After a boarding-school education at Rugby School, he went on to study Politics, Philosophy, and Economics ("PPE") at the University of Oxford in 1925. He continued his academic studies in Paris and Berlin. It was while he was at Oxford that Hare first met Gordine through mutual friends, including several who would go on to have stellar careers: the renowned physician and academic Janet Vaughan, the art critic and Bloomsbury scion Roger Fry, and the poet and Russia missionary George Simons. The meeting of Gordine and Hare strengthened his connections to Russia; he had begun learning Russian at school, and Gordine, who had

grown up in Latvia and Estonia, then part of the Russian Empire, perhaps helped him with his studies.[9] However, the Hares did not marry until around a decade later, in 1936. They were a well-matched couple, Hare's quiet studiousness complementing Gordine's extroversion and creative flair. Each supported the other in the pursuit of their interests, a symbiosis reflected in the name for the building that Gordine designed as studio, display space, and home: "Dorich," linking "Dora" and "Richard."

When his father died in 1931, Hare joined the diplomatic service and took up a post as third secretary to the British embassy in Paris. With the coming of the Second World War, his knowledge of Russian was likely a factor in Hare's appointment as "Senior Assistant Specialist" in the Anglo-Soviet Relations division of the Ministry of Information, part of the Foreign Office. This was in March 1942, and within a few years, he became deputy head and then divisional head.[10] His time at the division included a posting in Moscow from March to August 1945.[11] Little is known of Hare's activities, whether political or cultural, during his stint. Notably, his superior in the division, Peter Smollett (an alias for Peter Smolka), was later uncovered as a Soviet agent working for the NKVD (*Narodnyi komissariat vnutrennikh del*, People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs).[12] However, no evidence has emerged to suggest that Hare, too, was a spy. At the end of the war, the Ministry was wound up, and, in 1946, Hare started an academic career. In autumn 1947, the couple moved to California, where Hare held a year-long Rockefeller Foundation fellowship to research Russian literary archives at Stanford University.[13] Upon their return to England, Hare gained a post as lecturer in Russian literature at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, London. He worked his way up to Head of Department and held this role until his death.[14] During his career, Hare published widely on Russian literature and culture, including books on Maxim Gorky and a series of essays on Russian literature and Russian thought.[15] He also translated stories by Turgenev, Bunin, and others.[16]

It is unclear for exactly how many years Hare and Gordine collected art. The works they acquired are mainly decorative art dating from the late eighteenth century to 1917. The Russian holdings formed the larger part of the collection, but pieces from elsewhere were included, for example, Chinese and South-East Asian art accumulated by Gordine when she lived in Johor, Malaysia, and Singapore and traveled widely in the region during her second marriage.[17] Besides icons, the Russian art works and objects included porcelain, silver, metalware, glassware, textiles, carved wood objects, furniture, paintings, prints, and other miscellaneous items. Some surviving publications in the collection point to an interest in Russian elite culture, such as several volumes of the late imperial-era art journals *Stolitsa i usad'ba* (The Capital and the Mansion) and *Khudozhestvennye sokrovishcha Rossii* (Art Treasures of Russia).[18] Hare's interest in imperial art works, many undoubtedly sold by displaced émigrés, perhaps reflected sympathy for the fate of the noble classes after the Revolution and the need for a

museum to preserve at-risk treasures. Art collecting was common practice for the British upper classes, as was a desire for public service. Hare's financial position is not known, but his wish for a museum reflects the rise in elite philanthropy over the preceding century. More importantly , Hare and Gordine believed that a museum was needed for a nation's art that had rarely been displayed outside the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. Indeed, Hare can be considered an early British advocate for Russian art, at a time when few of his peer group shared his quest to make the subject better known in the West.[19]

During the auctions of the larger collection, all the icons put up for sale were sold. Although the precise history of the sales has yet to be researched, it seems that one factor influencing the decision as to which icons to keep was whether Hare had discussed them in *The Art and Artists of Russia*. For example, the late eighteenth-century icon of Saints Florus and Laurus featured on the book's cover image was retained, as were the three icons that are visible in a surviving photograph of Hare's desk. This photograph shows nine icons hanging on a batik textile and another positioned across the corner of the room in the traditional Orthodox manner (fig. 3).[20] The other six works seen in this image are presumed sold or lost. Notably, many of this group have an *oklad* or *basma* (decorative and protective metal sheathing), hinting that for Hare their adornments were as valued as the icons beneath. But speculating as to Hare's intentions is fraught with difficulty . With virtually no historical records of the purchases, assessing motives is as problematic as interpreting the works' provenance.

Fig. 3 Richard Hare's desk with display of icons at Dorich House, photograph, date unknown. Source: Historic Enaland Archive.

And there is another issue: these acquisitions happened in a limited marketplace. Many icons available in the West at the time Hare was collecting were considered then to be of low value and lacking aesthetic quality, and some of his icons fell into this bracket.

Nevertheless, the supply was there. Scholars have documented the history of the widespread removal and destruction of icons and the desecration of churches under first Bolshevik and then Soviet rule, beginning in the early 1920s and reaching a peak in the 1930s. Many looted objects ended up on the foreign marketplace. In February 1922, the Sovnarkom (Council of People's Commissars) issued a decree, "On the confiscation of property without museum significance located in churches and monasteries," which created a distinction between works that the Soviet authorities wished to keep and those they were willing to sell. Although rules were not strictly followed, the decree did make it far less likely that a Western collector could acquire the oldest and rarest icons.[21] (Incidentally, this largely explains why, despite the official Soviet policy of atheism, some of the major Russian museums today have such extensive holdings of icons by the likes of Andrei Rublev, Theophanes the Greek, and other revered painters, while foreign museums do not.)

Waltraud Bayer describes how the Soviet art sales to the West began. Initially, most transactions went through dealers in Germany and Austria, who enjoyed connections to the two main Soviet trading entities, Antikvariat and Gostorg. Early exports were mostly of Western European art and rarely included icons, because "the authorities feared negligible public and, consequently market interest, because such goods had no market value in the west."[22] At this time, Hare was still at university and presumably not yet collecting. From 1928, when Antikvariat gained a monopoly on art exports, icons began to be sold in greater number. Several exhibitions were held in the West aimed at making icons more visible to potential buyers.[23] As Wendy Salmond writes, icon collecting in the West thus emerged as a direct consequence of the Soviet policy to dispose of ecclesiastical treasures to an increasingly receptive market.[24] And, she further describes how pioneering collectors, such as the Americans George Hann and Joseph E. Davies, benefited from the sale of high-quality collections specially arranged for them by Antikvariat.[25] Such arrangements were an exception to the decision to keep icons that were deemed treasured antiquities in Russia. Most often, the icons that appeared for sale in the West were newer works, frequently of lower value. But pieces with metalwork crafted by luxury makers, such as the Fabergé and Co. workshops, were available. Astute Western dealers like Armand and Victor Hammer obtained many expensive late nineteenth-century icons with imperial provenance and sold them at a profit. Another source for dealers and collectors was the sale of assets by "white Russian" émigrés who had escaped to Europe and often joined the social world of the Western elite. They included notable Byzantinists, such as Dmitry Obolensky and Nikolai Andreyev. If Gordine, herself an émigré from the Russian Empire, and Hare, a Russia

specialist, mixed with this group, the evidence has yet to come to light. However, the possibility cannot be ruled out.

For the above reasons, it is hard to know precisely how Hare's collecting fit into this broader picture. But some comparisons can be drawn between his activity and that of two twentieth-century American collectors: firstly, Davies's divorced wife, Marjorie Merriweather Post, whose collection is now at the Hillwood Estate, Museum, and Gardens in Washington, DC, and secondly, Amy Putnam, whose collection is at the Timken Museum in San Diego.[26] Like Hare's collection, Post's includes a wider selection of Russian decorative art. Hillwood currently holds eighty-four icons, a comparable number to Hare's original collection. But the Washington-based museum has many more valuable icons and Post's earlier acquisitions were supplemented by a gift of thirty-one icons in the late 1960s.[27] By contrast, Hare's collection was entirely his own personal selection.

Hare was more similar to Putnam, whose interest in collecting seems to have also stemmed from a broader interest in Russian literature and culture.[28] Unlike Post and her husband, whose collecting began during his assignment to Moscow, no evidence has emerged to confirm whether Hare acquired artworks while he was in Russia; however, his visit might have been a starting point for his interest.[29] It is possible that he bought from official Soviet trade organizations when he was in the USSR, from the Hammers, or from other well-known Western dealers (for example, Alexander Schaffer's New York store, A la Vieille Russie). Some of Hare's icons have labels for Western auction houses on the back; one has a label in Cyrillic: "Mosgostorg. Antikvarno-Khudozhestvennyi Otdel."[30] Supply was limited in the interwar years, so it is more likely that he began collecting after the war, on the secondary market. The dating of objects in the collection—mostly nineteenth-century works—supports this theory.[31] There are no obvious links to museum collections in Russia, unlike those for some icons bought by Davies, Hann, and Post. There are no treasures from the Novgorod School (thirteenth to sixteenth centuries), nor from before the schism in the third quarter of the seventeenth century, when the Russian Orthodox Church split into two camps (namely, those who accepted the reforms spearheaded by Patriarch Nikon and those who rejected them, the so-called Old Believers).

By the mid-twentieth century, icons were available through a network of dealers and shops in the West. Oral testimony in the Dorich House Museum archives provides a few hints as to sources. A former acquaintance of theirs stated that the couple had scoured Europe, perusing fairs, flea markets, and antique shops, returning with a "car full of objects."[32] Other purchases were made closer to home, such as the Russian art dealership The Winter Palace, set up by Nicholas Hill and located in Kensington Church Street. Margot Tracey, joint owner, recounted that she had been introduced to the Hares

at a party around 1946; some objects in the collection have been linked to the shop, although to date none of the icons.[33] Tracey also recalled that the Hares bought Russian art from a Mrs. Eckstein, a dealer based in Jermyn Street in the fashionable St. James's district of London.

Patchy Provenance: A Lost History

The dispersal at auction of most of the Hare collection heavily affected the icons. The loss was compounded by the absence of records, which likely were lost or destroyed during a period of dereliction. This creates problems with analyzing the collection today, both past and present.

The relatively small size of the original collection at less than one hundred icons is nevertheless comparable to that of other twentieth-century Western collections. The twenty icons present today represent around a quarter of the original tally of icons and other ecclesiastical objects, such as *panagiaria* and metal crosses (fig. 4). They demonstrate craftsmanship in a range of methods and mediums (tempera on wood, metalwork, embroidery, and enamel) and a variety of iconographic types.[34] There are two icons of the Anastasis, one of which is of the *polnitsy* (full-cycle) type, showing the four Evangelists and the sixteen festivals of the Church. Two other icons are portable: a *Deesis* triptych icon with a metal *oklad* and an enamel oval icon depicting Rostov miracle workers. There are two crucifix icons: a seventeenth-century wooden cross,

Fig. 4 Icon display cabinets at Dorich House Museum, photograph, twenty-first century. Image © 2025 Dorich House Museum.

which was one of the oldest objects in the collection, and a nineteenth-century brass crucifix set in wood (one of the very popular staurotheke icons made by Old Believers).[35]

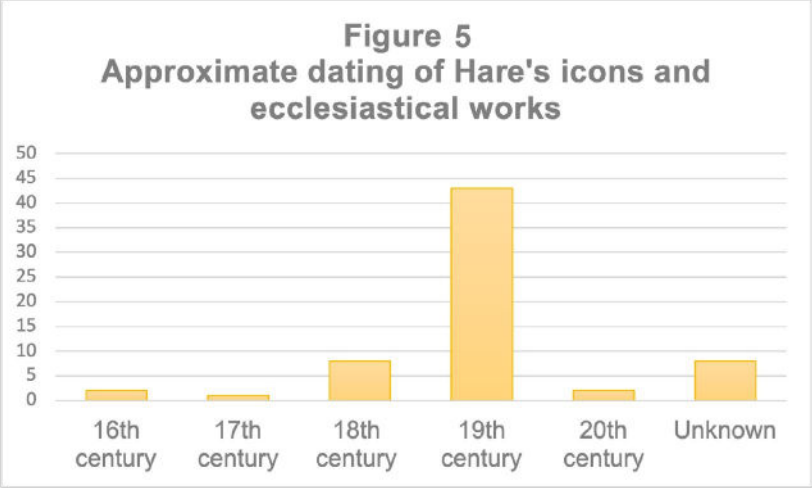
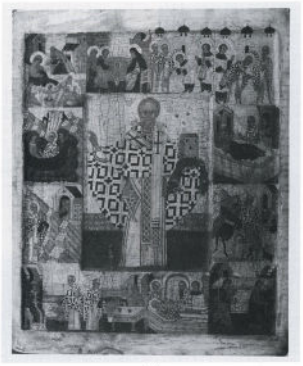


Fig. 5 A chart showing the estimated ages of the icons and ecclesiastical works previously in Hare's collection and sold at auction in 1994.

As well as the lack of provenance, other problems arise when trying to assess the sold works. These objects were a tiny proportion of the grand total of around 2,400 art works that were listed at some fifty-four auctions, most of them open to the public and including works not limited to Gordine and Hare's possessions.[36] However, sixty icons are listed in the catalogue of the largest exclusive sale, restricted to items from Hare's collection, which was held at Phillips, London, in November 1994. Data from the catalogue enables the sold icons to be sorted by age, price, and type (fig. 5).[37] Most valuable by far was a sixteenth-century Russian vita icon of Saint Nicholas of Zaraisk (fig. 6), priced at £14,000–18,000. Other works of higher value than the collection average included a Petrovskaia *Mother of God* (fig. 7), valued at £2000–3000, and a pair of large *Deesis* icons that unfortunately were not photographed.[38] Some works were not Russian, including a large Cretan *Entombment of Christ and a Saint George and Dragon* from the Greek Islands, both dated as seventeenth century. But these were exceptions. Most icons at the auction were judged by the appraisers to be of mediocre quality and priced at a few hundred pounds or less. Some ecclesiastical crosses and pendants were listed with metalware (virtually all of which was sold). A rare sixteenth-century reliquary cross, said to still hold relics, was one of the highest valued items at £1,500–2,000.[39] The chart in figure 5 confirms that most icons dated to the nineteenth century. One such icon was *Saint Antipii and Saint Michael*, encased in a parcel gilt and enameled *oklad*. This was priced at £400–600 in 1994, which would be £750–1100 today.[40]



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340 A Biographical Icon of Saint Nicholas of Zaraisk, 16th Century, the central recessed area with a full-length image of the Saint holding the closed Gospels, his phelion decorated with geometric crosses; bordered with eight scenes depicting incidents of his life: the birth of the Saint; he is taken to school; his ordination as a deacon; his ordination as a bishop; he saves a ship by calming a raging storm; he appears to the Emperor Constantine in a dream; he stays the execution of three just men; he restores a kidnapped youth to his parents; the death of the Saint; the transferring of his relics from Myra to Bari in Italy, 48cm. x 39cm. £14,000-18,000

(See Inside Cover Illustration)

END OF SALE

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Fig. 6 Vita icon of Saint Nicholas of Zaraisk, 16th century, 48 cm x 39 cm, private collection. Reproduced in A Collection of Russian Works of Art. Tuesday 15 November 1994 at 11 am (London: Phillips, 1994). Auction catalogue. Image © 1994 Phillips Auctioneers.

Fig. 7 The Petrovskaia Mother of God, late 16th century, 31.5 cm x 27 cm, private collection. Reproduced in A Collection of Russian Works of Art. Tuesday 15 November 1994 at 11 am (London: Phillips, 1994). Auction catalogue. Image © 1994 Phillips Auctioneers.

Hare's decision to collect a wide array of imperial Russian art and icons was, it seems, without precedent in Britain. Indeed, the catalogue for one of the early Russian art shows in London in the Soviet period, the *Exhibition of Russian Art* of 1935, suggests that before World War II, British collecting of any kind of Russian art, let alone icons, was in its infancy.[41] As Anthony Cross notes, the organizers of this exhibition relied entirely on loans from private British or European collectors.[42] Many of the latter were Russian émigrés, and the catalogue reveals some key names and their collecting interests. According to the catalogue, the icons on display seem to have been primarily owned by Emlyn Reynolds.[43] Reynolds lent ten ecclesiastical art objects, including icons. Eight were listed in the "Enamels" section (two icons, a cross, two plaques, medallions of Christ and of the Virgin, and a reliquary) and two in "Jewellery" (a silver-gilt icon of Christ and an icon cover in beads and seed pearls). The fact that Reynolds's name has vanished from the historical record suggests that this probably was the full extent of his collection.[44] Other icon exhibits came from dealers, such as Wartski and A la Vieille Russie, and émigrés, many of them Paris-based.

Another hint that Hare had no rivals is that Cyril G. E. Bunt made no mention of British collections when he published his 1946 book, *Russian Art from Scyths to Soviets*. For

icons, Bunt illustrated works from the Hann and Lanza collections, along with a few older icons from Russian museums.[45] And in 1938, when British Byzantine-art specialist David Talbot Rice gave a public lecture on Russian icons, he relied on illustrations from Soviet publications.[46] Although such a conclusion is necessarily speculative, it seems reasonable to infer that Hare was the first British collector of significance.

Byzantine Studies in Early Twentieth-Century Britain: The 1929 Exhibition of Russian Icons in London

Although unusual, Hare's interest in icons arguably reflects prevailing British attitudes to Russian art in the mid-twentieth century. British scholars and critics were certainly aware of Russian art, but more often this meant that of pre-Revolutionary Russia and not contemporary Soviet art, as would remain the case for much of the twentieth century. But icons were already in a somewhat different category to other kinds of Russian art due to their connection with Byzantine culture. The reception of Russian icons can thus be positioned within the broader Byzantine revival that had begun in Western Europe in the nineteenth century, which meant that some devotees of Byzantine art also extended their interests to Russian religious art.[47]

As Richard Marks observes, British views of Russian icons in the nineteenth century ranged from positive to hostile.[48] From around 1880, concomitant with new discoveries of antiquities in Central Asia and the Near East, museum communities and art writers began to take an interest in icons and ecclesiastical art.[49] A handful of Russian icons entered museum collections at this time; indeed, the British Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum have several examples that arrived from larger private collections of Byzantine art or as single donations.[50] The first British monograph on Russian art, *Russian Art and Art Objects in Russia*, written by Alfred Maskell for the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1884, has two chapters on religious art that consider church architecture, metalwork, and other devotional objects including icons—the latter described by Maskell as "the chief source of the religious instruction of the Russian peasant."[51] Subsequent British accounts were few. They include essays on icons by historian Robert Steele for two wartime publications: *The Soul of Russia* (1916), an interdisciplinary anthology issued to gain public support for the wartime alliance, and the catalogue for the first wide-ranging exhibition of Russian art in London, held in 1918.[52] This exhibition was notable for the inclusion of 120 icons. Echoing Maskell's description, they were displayed in the "Peasant Art" section, thereby reflecting his perception of them as curios rather than fine art.

In the early twentieth century, interest in the art traditions of Byzantium and how these were manifested in Russian culture continued to rise.[53] A nexus with modernist circles developed as early as 1908. Two British critics, Frank Rutter and Roger Fry, presented

Fig. 8 An enamelled ornamental chest in neo-Byzantine style, designed and made by Mariia Tenisheva, c. 1907, dimensions unknown. Reproduced in Denis Roche, Les émaux champlevés de la princesse Marie Ténichév (Paris, 1907). Public domain.

displays of Russian art in modern art exhibitions that foregrounded ancient art and its recent revival in the avant-garde and Arts and Crafts movements. At this time, Russian painting in the academic, secular, and Westernized tradition promulgated by Empress Catherine II was largely ignored in British art circles. In autumn 1908, Rutter invited the Arts and Crafts patron Princess Maria Tenisheva to present a Russian section for his London Salon , which he had billed as showcasing the latest developments in modern art. The works selected by Tenisheva were revivalist, such as her own craft enamels modeled on Byzantine precedents (fig. 8).[54] Four years later, when Fry decided to include Russian art in his Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition of 1912, he turned to Russian émigré Boris Anrep, an artist whose retrospectively styled mosaic work again drew inspiration from Byzantium.[55] For Fry, Anrep foregrounded the Byzantine in his curatorial choices for Russian modern art. For example, for the avant-gardist Natalia Goncharova, Anrep chose her icon-inspired panels of the four Evangelists.

Such examples of neo-Byzantinism represented the Russian icon tradition at a distance once removed, for icons themselves had hardly been seen at exhibitions, even in Russia. This changed in 1913, when they were exhibited in Saint Petersburg and Moscow to celebrate the Romanov tercentenary. Many years later, Hare would acquire a copy of the catalogue for the Delovoi Dvor exhibition in Moscow, showing his knowledge of the importance of this landmark event in the acceptance of icons as art. In the ensuing decades, developments in Byzantine and Russo-Byzantine studies were reported in publications in the West, for example, in the work of the scholars Franz Bock and Louis Réau.[56] Critics like Fry took note; in the same year that he curated the *Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition*, Fry wrote an essay for *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* on John Pierpont Morgan's acquisition of Russo-Byzantine art—examples of twelfth-century enamels from the collection of Alexander von Zwenigorodskoi (fig. 9).[57] (Morgan's acquisition is contextualized in the essay by Mariam Charlton in the present volume.) As well as being discussed by Bock, the Zwenigorodskoi enamels had been featured in articles by Ormonde M. Dalton in recent issues, and Fry was writing in response.[58] His comments indicate the coming shift in taste: what had previously been solely of archaeological interest could now be regarded as art. Even if the attitudes

of Fry and Hare differed in many ways, this was an observation that foretold the next generation's interest in icons.

Fig. 9 Byzantine medallions of St Matthew, Christ, St George, and St Peter, from a set of twelve on an icon frame, c. 1100, gold, silver, and cloisonné enamel, 8.3 cm (diameter of each medallion). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917. Images: Creative Commons CC0 / Public domain. The objects were reproduced in this format in O. M. Dalton, "Byzantine Enamels in Mr. Pierpont Morgan's Collection," The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs 21, no. 110 (May 1912): 64–73 (facing p. 65).

Fry distinguishes collecting for its own sake from collecting for aesthetic reasons: "The aesthete (if one may use once more a word that ought by now to have lost its unfortunate associations) looks with suspicion upon collections as such. This suspicion is natural, for the aesthete and the collector have different methods of valuation."[59] But Fry notices how such Byzantine works as the enamels were once overlooked as "curiosities and bibelots:"

> It is doubtful whether, while we were still hypnotized by the belief in the unique supremacy of Hellenistic beauty, anyone would have given prolonged attention to the Swenigorodskoi [sic] enamels, except as curiosities and bibelots. The first approach to such an art must have been for us through their obvious fitness for

> collection. They have indeed the quaintness, the exotic flavour, the richness and weight of material which make a strong appeal to the possessive instinct. No wonder, then, that Byzantine enamels were collected, classified, and studied by archaeologists before they were admired and understood for their intrinsic aesthetic value. Now at last our attention has been fixed on them long enough to reveal their qualities as pure works of art.[60]

For Fry, the images of saints "are fixed in lines of unrelenting certainty and by an art of drawing which the greatest of modern masters might envy." But whereas Fry seemed to share the viewpoint of modern Russian painters, finding Byzantine art important for its formal qualities, Hare's interest in icons seemed to tread a middle path. The range of icons in his collection suggests that he appreciated them both as "bibelot" and for their "intrinsic aesthetic value." The difference between the approaches of Hare and Fry is further revealed by the telling fact that Hare was uninterested in collecting twentieth-century art.[61] Perhaps Hare's interests aligned with émigré "white Russian" taste, which was, in many respects, conservative.

Fry never traveled to Russia. But another of Hare's precursors who took an interest in Russian icons, the renowned art historian Martin Conway, visited in the early 1920s. After the formation of the Soviet Union in 1922, the British art world had maintained contact, if sporadically, and Conway visited in 1924 at the invitation of the Soviet government. On his trip, he went to Moscow, Saint Petersburg, Sergiev Posad, and a few other key sites. In *Art Treasures of Soviet Russia*, a book published on his return that was both travelogue and art history, Conway described the current situation regarding icons under the Bolshevik regime, hinting at the system of classification differentiating museum-quality works from those "earmarked for sale" that soon would create the new market for Western collectors like Hare. He writes:

> Those icons that fell into a middle ground between . . . two extremes—of reverent care and wanton destruction – went into the Gosmuzeifond (State Museum Reserve) . . . Throughout the 1920s the depositories of the Gosmuzeifond acted as transit camps for all the major private icon collections formed before the revolution. Here they were inventoried, classified, and either redeployed to one of the new Soviet museums, earmarked for sale, or simply kept in reserve.[62]

Conway, who at the time was director of the Victoria and Albert Museum, and Fry continued to show an interest in Russian icons during the 1920s and early 1930s. Both were involved in the first project to stage a museum display of icons in London, a touring exhibition of Western capitals masterminded by the artist and Soviet arts bureaucrat Igor Grabar.[63] This major loan of icons owned by the Soviet government took place at the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1929 (fig. 10). It was a complex Anglo-Soviet

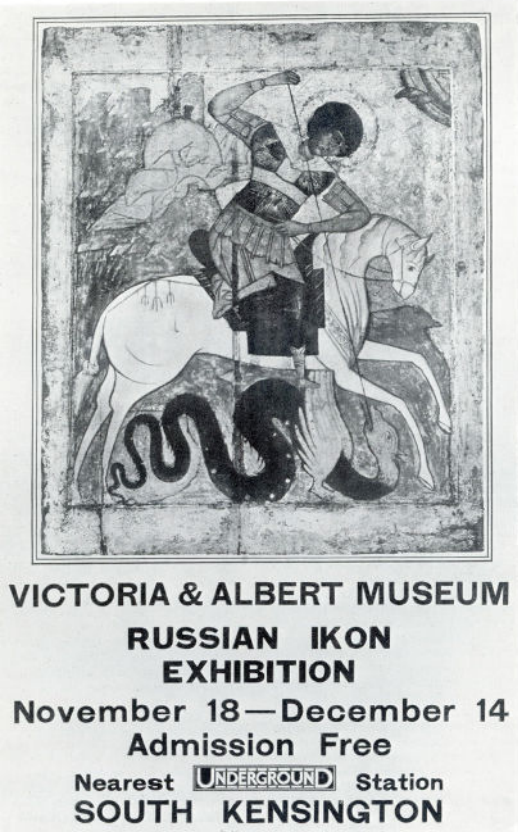

Fig. 10 Poster for the "Russian Ikon Exhibition" at the Victoria and Albert Museum, November 18 – December 14, 1929. Reproduced in Martin Conway, ed., Masterpieces of Russian Painting (London: Europa Publications, 1930). Image courtesy of Wendy Salmond.

project, and in addition to Conway and Fry, the organizing committee comprised a golden cast of names from the art world, academia, and Russian émigré circles. According to Salmond, it was Fry who had suggested that the Victoria and Albert Museum host the exhibition.[64] Again testifying to their scholarship on Russian icons, both he and Conway wrote essays for the catalogue. Evidently, this was a major event in the London art world, its staging in no way hindered by difficult memories of the Russian Revolution or civil war.

Hare had moved to Paris at some point in 1929, and there is no record of whether he saw Fry and Conway's exhibition. What he did see, though, was the associated book, *Masterpieces of Russian Painting*, published around the same time, as he cites it in his scholarship.[65] Leading up to the exhibition, there had been some interest in British art circles in publishing a book on Russian art. According to Galya Diment, this effort was supported by Fry, who had introduced the émigré writer Samuel Koteliansky to an editor at Chatto and Windus so that they could discuss plans for "a history of Russian art in English."[66] The publication did not materialize, but both Fry and Conway were involved in the project by Koteliansky's friend Mikhail Farbman to produce *Masterpieces*—a more narrowly scoped book. Continuing their earlier teamwork, Conway took on the role of editor.

The exhibition and *Masterpieces of Russian Painting* were, as Marks comments, "a seminal moment in British experience of icon-painting."[67] They provided a foundation for later scholarship of Russian and Byzantine art and may have catalyzed Hare's interests both as collector and writer. The post-Revolutionary years saw the appearance in the West of several books on Russian art, from Réau's *L'Art russe des origines à Pierre le grand* (Russian Art from its Origins to Peter the Great, 1921) to Georgi Loukomski's *L'Art décoratif russe* (Russian Decorative Arts, 1928).[68] With his multilingual skills, Hare thus had plenty of material for his own research. There was also Russian scholar Nikodim Kondakov's foundational book, *The Russian Icon*, which had recently been translated into English by the historian Ellis Hovel Minns, a professor at the University of

Cambridge.[69] An eminent scholar of Scythian and nomadic archaeology, Minns had also been involved in the Victoria and Albert Museum exhibition as a committee member.

"Remote Beauty" or "Historical Interest"? Icons in The Art and Artists of Russia

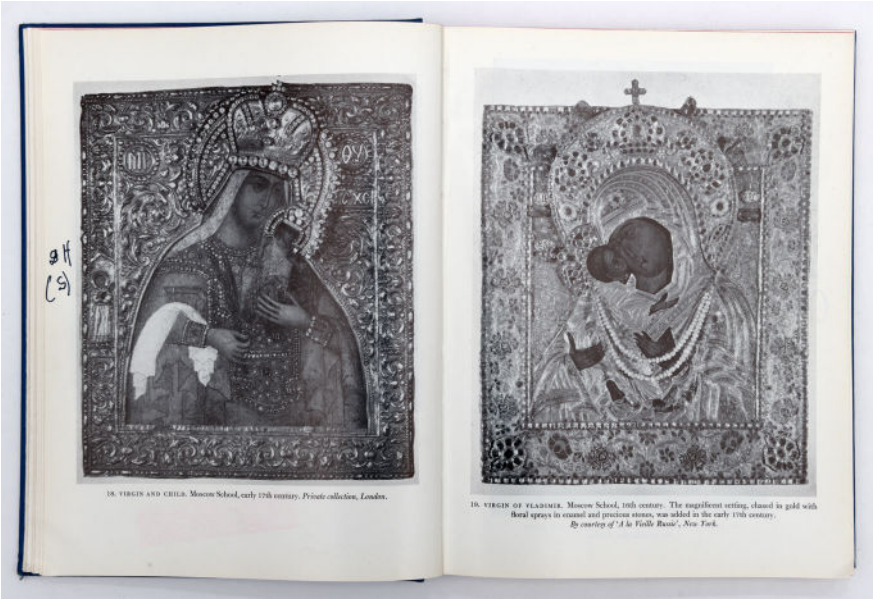

Fig. 11 Virgin and Child in the collection of Richard Hare. 17th century (?) and Virgin of Vladimir, 18th century, "By courtesy of À la vieille Russie." Illustrated in The Art and Artists of Russia [Plates 18 and 19]. Image © 2025 Dorich House Museum, London.

Around three decades after the publication of *Masterpieces of Russian Painting*, Hare published his own book on Russian art, including icons: The Art and Artists of Russia (1965). For reasons which are unclear, the book was first published in a German translation, with the title *Tausend Jahre Russische Kunst* [A Thousand Years of Russian Art] and the English version appeared the following year. Important for the present account is the fact that the book's opening chapter is one of the earliest British scholarly accounts of the history of Russian icons. Hare's book came out shortly before his sudden death in 1966; when he was working on it, he could hardly have expected that it would be his last word on the topic. Hare stated that his motive was to fill a gap in British knowledge of Russian culture. The project also enabled him to integrate his own collection into the historiography: he used some of his own objects as illustrations and discussed them in the text . For example, his Mol'chenskaia *Mother of God* icon appears beside a *Mother of God* from A la Vieille Russie to emphasize the beauty of their *oklads* (fig. 11).[70] These *oklads* he described as representing "the majestic court art of the metropolis," produced at the State Armory. Contrasting town and country work, Hare pictured one of his crucifixes, noting the existence of "pious and authentic

but far simpler schools closer to the late Novgorod style and . . . composition [emphasis added]" (34).[71] Hare's placing of simpler pieces alongside renowned treasures was a forward-thinking, inclusive approach to art history that was unusual for its time, and it may have developed from his training as a cultural historian as well as his experience as an art connoisseur.

Indeed, a more comprehensive understanding of Hare's scholarship, methodologies, and approaches would require extensive biographical research that is beyond the scope of this article. For example, the bibliography in *The Art and Artists* includes several Russian books that may not necessarily have come from British library holdings; some of the rare books from his personal library were included in auction sales. Despite the wide-ranging sources Hare consulted for his book, he was not a specialist when it came to icons. He thanks Nikolai Andreyev for his expertise in the acknowledgments, hinting that he likely took advice from Russian scholars. Between 1938 and 1945, Andreyev was director of the Seminarium Kondakovianum in Prague, the institute founded by supporters of Kondakov in 1925, before his imprisonment by the Soviets. After escaping to Britain, Andreyev had joined the Faculty of Slavonic Studies at the University of Cambridge in 1948.[72] It is unlikely that the two men had a close connection, as Hare is not mentioned in Andreyev's memoirs, but the Russian scholar would have been a useful local source to scholarly information on this complex topic.[73] The relationship may explain why Hare was so effusive in his praise for Kondakov in *The Art and Artists of Russia*, calling him "the greatest Russian art historian" (23). Although the statement seems bold, Kondakov's work was respected among Byzantinists in the West, and the Seminarium Kondakovianum was a leading center of scholarship.

Hare's own strong opinions abound in his chronological summary of Eastern history, even if he relied heavily on help from others. For example, he writes that the Orthodox believer eschews "the self-centered modern craving for artistic 'originality' and petty individual self-assertion," (24) and he claims that figures by Dionysius, a late fifteenth-century master, are "attenuated, limp and sprawling" and display "anaemic detachment" (30). But Hare expresses approval for the seventeenth-century court painter Simon Ushakov, whom he describes as "profoundly gifted and independent-minded" (36). If it is a moot point as to why Ushakov's independent minded approach might not have led to the despised "individual self-assertion," Hare's comments nevertheless reveal a dislike of experimentation. Here, the clash between Hare's and Fry's preferences becomes obvious. Hare was clear-sighted about the icon's duality as both religious artifact and work of art, writing: "The icon somehow grew into the chief visible manifestation of Russian religious thought and feeling, which has survived ever since the Middle Ages. This factor alone, apart from their remote beauty, should impart to icons a unique historical interest" (25). He knew well that treating icons as art was a recent development. It had, he notes, brought a "gradual recognition of the bewildering

variety, startling artistic inequality, but occasionally very high aesthetic value, of Russian religious painting" (25). The new "Russian connoisseurs " had "recognized in their subject a far-reaching and unexplored complexity" (26). Here he referenced Nikolai Likhachev and Fedor Buslaev ("Professor T. Buslaev"), probably due to his reliance on Kondakov's text or Minns's version of it.

Predictably, the "remote beauty" that captured Hare's attention was the work of Andrei Rublev, which garnered his highest praise and features strikingly as the book's frontispiece (fig. 12). (It should be mentioned that the attribution of this particular icon to Rublev has recently been questioned.[74]) In the early fifteenth century, Hare writes, Russian religious painting "moved towards an arabesque of gentle colour harmonies, reflecting the rhythms of a mystic contemplative style, increasingly remote from hard realities and nature."[75] Rublev, he asserts, had imbued the "Greek forms" he had inherited with "diaphanous purity and graceful inner rhythm, enhanced by an exquisite sense of colour."[76] These poetic turns of phrase seem to reflect Hare's knowledge of the scholarship of Pavel Muratov, another Russian scholar whose name appears in the bibliography.[77]

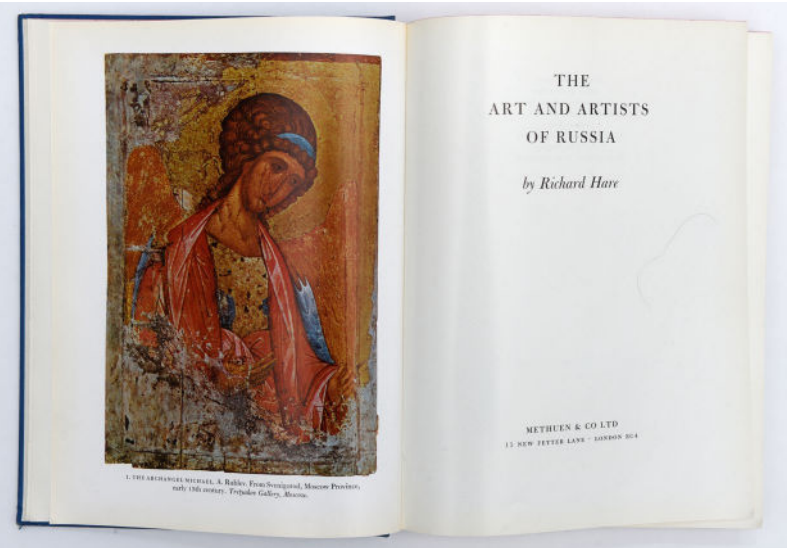

Fig. 12 The Archangel Michael, Andrei Rublev, early 15th century, Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow. Illustrated as Frontispiece in The Art and Artists of Russia, Colour Plate I.

Hare illustrates works from the Russian Museum, the Tretyakov Gallery, the [Cathedral of the Novodevichy Convent, and Trinity-Sergius Lavra, along with icons from the former Riabushinsky, Likhachev, and Grigory and Mikhail Chirikov private collections. There are grainy images of murals, including wall paintings by Dionysius in the Ferapontov Monastery and details from the Annunciation Cathedral in the Moscow Kremlin, the Cathedral of St. Sophia in Novgorod, the Cathedral of St. Dmitry in Vladimir. An image

of the well-known Stroganov icon, *Saint John the Warrior*, by Prokopii Chirin, was probably from Hare's copy of the abovementioned catalogue for the 1913 exhibition.[78]

There are several illustrations of works in Western collections. For example, Hare thanks "Marjorie Merriweather Post May" for photographs.[79] These included the attractive icons of the Mother of God "Pledge to Sufferers" (1795) and a seventeenth-century icon with scenes from the life of the Mother of God (fig. 13).[80] Other works from Western collections include a seventeenth-century *Trinity* icon from the Walters Art Gallery, shown as an example of "elaborately decorative" work of the Yaroslavl school.[81] Besides the icons in Chapter 1, other sections of the book include ecclesiastical art. For example, the chapter on silver includes discussion of a sixteenth-century Gospel cover in the Kirill-Beloozerskii monastery. Although the extent of Hare's on-site research in Russia remains unclear, the images of works in situ suggest he had a wide knowledge of key sites and icon chronology. In sum, Hare's skillful interweaving of sources from East and West with pieces from his own collection and his selection of illustrations to support his mainly chronological approach show a firm grounding in the topic.

Fig. 13 Two icons from the collection of Marjorie Merriweather Post, illustrated in The Art and Artists of Russia, Plate 26. Image © 2025 Dorich House Museum, London.

Hare's book seems to have been well received in British art circles. Highlighting the rise of interest in Russian icons, art historian Mary Chamot claimed, in 1967, that "post-war interest in the arts of Russia has been confined mainly to icon painting."[82] Chamot remarked that the recent opening of museums dedicated to icons in Recklinghausen, Germany, and Kölliken, Switzerland, bore witness to this trend, and she emphasized a lack of literature on icons in English: "A new book, lavishly got up, is to be welcomed."[83] She added: "Hare writes . . . with an understanding of [the icon's] purpose 'to represent what belonged to a separate spiritual world' without 'renouncing the basic physical and natural forms of life . . . The latter were deliberately stylized or adapted, to fulfil

strict ecclesiastical requirements, and make the physical elements serve as a proper vehicle for conveying pure religious feelings.'" But she noticed a bias towards illustrating "later, more realistic icons." (405). She thus recognized Hare's approach of tackling icon history as a linear chronology that ran from Byzantium to nineteenth-century realism, a strategy that also had the benefit of positioning his own collection of mainly late icons in a positive light. Additionally, Chamot criticized Hare's failure to mention the work of the State Restoration Workshops in Moscow or the recent exhibitions of restored icons in Russian museums: "Unfortunately some of the plates are reproduced from old photographs, before cleaning, and the present location of later paintings is not always correctly indicated." (405).

Chamot thought that "by far the most original and useful chapters" were those on the decorative arts (406). As this praise suggests, Hare's approach perpetuated a long-held British bias towards interpreting Russian art through the lens of the decorative arts that had begun with Maskell's *Russian Art and Art Objects*. With the émigré marketplace for Russian art and antiques flourishing in the mid-twentieth century, this was another area rich for contemporary collectors. For Hare personally, Russian silver was another key area of interest. Silverware formed a large section of his collection, and he published on this topic too.[84] Thus, it was likely not mere coincidence that many of his icons bore decorative *rizas* and *oklads* (see fig. 3).

Unlike Chamot, Hare was not a trained art historian, but he had researched both Western and Russian sources. Few were Soviet: most of the scholars Hare cites are Russian and from pre-Revolutionary and émigré circles; they include Aleksandr Anisimov, Nikodim Kondakov, Nikolai Likhachev, Pavel Muratov, Aleksandr I. Uspensky, Vladimir Lossky, and Leonid Uspensky. He names several scholars based in Germany too: Konrad Onasch, Vladimir ["W."] Weidle [a Russian émigré], and Oskar Wulff. As to Western sources, Hare references British art historian David Talbot Rice's short, forty-page primer, *Russian Icons* (fig. 14), published by Penguin in 1947. But he omits the more comprehensive text by Tamara Talbot Rice, *Russian Icons*, as well as her *A Concise History of Russian Art and Russian Art*, all of which came out in 1963, two years before his book.[85] Perhaps he viewed them as competition or perhaps his research was executed piecemeal. Other important works of twentieth-century Western scholarship are missing too, such

Fig. 14 Cover of David Talbot Rice, Russian Icons (King Penguin series) (London: Penguin, 1947), designed by Enid Marx. Photograph © 2025 Louise Hardiman.

as Fannina Halle's *Altrussische Kunst* (Old Russian Art, 1920) and *Réau's L'art russe* (Russian Art, 1921).[86]

Hare's Connections with Other Western Collectors and Scholars

Records of Hare's contacts and travels are practically nonexistent, and the suggestions that follow are speculative. For instance, might he have traveled to Prague to visit the Seminarium Kondakovianum?[87] It is possible, but Hare probably met Andreyev in Cambridge, since the exiled scholar was already there by 1948. Did Hare know Minns, also at Cambridge? While a Prague connection is impossible to confirm, it seems almost certain that Hare knew collectors in Germany, Switzerland, and the United States, either personally or indirectly. His articles on icons for *The Connoisseur* indicate his knowledge of the collections of Siegfried Amberg-Herzog (1924–2002) at Kölliken and Martin Winkler (1893–1982) and Heinrich Wendt (1901–56) at Recklinghausen.[88] Hare's research and contacts show gaps, however. Some important mid-twentieth-century collections that he does not mention are: the Olof Aschberg collection of 245 icons, which the National Museum of Sweden in Stockholm purchased in 1933; the much smaller Allen collection at the National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin, which was purchased in 1968 but assembled earlier; and the collection of the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.[89] Such projects bear comparison with Hare's own, so the omissions are surprising and especially so in the case of Allen, given Hare's personal connections to Ireland.

Perhaps the most interesting link with other collectors is the fact that the German version of Hare's book was published by the Aurel Bongers Press in Recklinghausen. Apart from slight alterations to design, this publication was no different from the English version, and it is unclear why it came out a year earlier.[90] What is intriguing is that the press had a strong relationship with the Recklinghausen Museum of Icons. When the latter was founded in 1956, its home was the building used by the publisher, which began to produce art books on icons in collaboration with the museum.[91] Hare evidently knew people there, and perhaps his book was linked to a museum exhibition, or he had heard of the new collaboration when looking for a publisher. The museum was founded by the director of the Kunsthalle Recklinghausen, the painter Thomas Grochowiak (1914–2012), after a successful exhibition of icons at the Kunsthalle.[92] It assembled for permanent display seventy-three icons from the collections of Winkler and Wendt, who were the most significant collectors of icons in Germany at the time.[93]

Hare's collection was comparable in size to the founding collection at Recklinghausen, and although he may not have known the donors themselves, he likely did know the museum's director, Heinz Skrobucha. In the 1964 issue of *The Connoisseur*, Hare reviewed Skrobucha's *Meisterwerke der Ikonenmalerei* (Masterpieces of Icon Painting),

also published by Aurel Bongers, praising this "much-needed short survey of the complicated history of icon painting."[94] He noted that Skrobucha had reproduced, for the first time, icons from the collections of Amberg, George Hann, and "Professor Martin Winkler in Munich." The comment reveals Hare's awareness of some key players in the icon community. There was, it seems, an international group of connoisseurs who wished to raise the status of icon scholarship and collecting. Also in 1964, Hare reviewed Konrad Onasch's *Ikonen* (1963), enthusing about this "most welcome addition to the very scanty literature in English devoted to the study of Russian icons."[95] He congratulated the author for including several illustrations of work by Ushakov, whom "purists could never forgive for his departure from the old theological canons," as well as some later eighteenth-century icons.[96] But he criticized Onasch's separation of the text from the illustrations, the lack of captions, and the failure to tackle key issues, such as the retouching of original icons during restoration.

Hare's status as one of the very few British writers on Russian art during Soviet times must surely also have led to contact with Byzantine art specialists and enthusiasts within the scholarly and museum communities. It is helpful to compare his writing to that of two scholars whose work in promoting the cause of Russian art in twentieth-century Britain remains under-researched: the Byzantine art specialists David Talbot Rice (1903–1972) and his wife, Tamara Talbot Rice (née Elena Abelson, 1904–1993).[97]

Born in Gloucestershire in 1903, David Talbot Rice, like Hare, had a conventional upper-class education, in this case at Eton College followed by Oxford University. He had a somewhat similar role to Hare during the Second World War, working with the Intelligence Directorate of the War Office, ultimately becoming head of its Near East section. Talbot Rice then became a renowned specialist on Byzantium and wrote many works on Byzantine and Islamic art.[98] This interest was fostered by extensive travel in the Near East, and in 1932, Talbot Rice was appointed lecturer in Byzantine and Near Eastern Art at the recently founded Courtauld Institute of Art in London. After two years, he gained a professorship at Edinburgh University, which he held for most of his career.

Besides his book Russian Icons, published in 1947 for the King Penguin series, Talbot Rice's publications on Byzantine art occasionally featured Russian work.[99] Although there is no discussion of icons made in Russia, *Art of the Byzantine Era* mentions Byzantine art objects and icons located at the Pushkin Museum, the State Hermitage Museum, and the State Tretyakov Gallery. Clearly, Talbot Rice was well versed with the contents of Soviet museums.[100] Churches and frescos in Georgia and Armenia are also discussed. Additionally, Talbot Rice had been involved in Russian icon projects in Britain: he was a member of the Executive Committee for the Russian Art Exhibition of 1935, and, within this, was part of a more narrowly constituted selection committee . Around the time of the exhibition, he wrote an essay for *The Burlington Magazine* in which he

questioned Anisimov's view on the origins of Russian icon painting; he wished to stress that there were ongoing relations between Constantinople and Kyiv.[101] Also, in autumn 1937, Talbot Rice gave an invited lecture on the beginnings of Russian icon painting as part of the prestigious series of Ilchester lectures on Polish and Slavonic history and culture at Oxford University's Taylor Institution.[102]

Another interesting commonality was that both Hare and Talbot Rice married women who were émigrés from the Russian Empire. It is possible that their wives might have nudged their interests in the direction of Russian cultural history; both their respective spouses may have assisted in their research, too, despite having careers of their own. Talbot Rice married Tamara Abelson in 1927 after meeting her at university. But unlike the artist and sculptor Gordine, Abelson pursued a career as an academic and author. Although she had trained as a Byzantine specialist, she leaned toward writing works for the general reader and published a long list of books under her married name, many of them on Russian history. Her *Russian Icons*, first published in 1957, was so successful that it went to several reprints.[103] And her interests in Russia ranged more widely than those of her husband, including the Scythians, Empress Elizabeth, and the events of the twentieth century.[104] Tamara Talbot Rice's *A Concise History of Russian Art* remains a rare introduction to the subject that, although its approaches would be questioned by contemporary scholars, has not been superseded by later publications.[105] The Talbot Rices also collaborated on many projects, including the 1935 *Russian Art Exhibition*, an exhibition and catalogue of the Allen collection, and a book on icon dating.[106]

By comparison with the Talbot Rices, then, whose scholarship on the Russian icon was informed by a far broader engagement with Byzantine art, Hare's publications seem almost to be the result of a connoisseurly enthusiasm that had developed into an academic sideline. And in terms of Russian art historiography, his modest output hardly bears comparison with the long list of publications by Tamara Talbot Rice. But, whatever differences one might draw between them in terms of their contributions to scholarship, this trio of writers created a body of new British art writing on Russian icons, and Russian art more generally, which greatly influenced the next generation of historians. In the work of all three, it is possible to trace a line back to the interests and scholarship of Maskell, Fry, Conway, and others.

Circles of Influence: Looking beyond Hare

The purpose of this essay has been not only to assess Hare's own collecting activity as it concerned Russian icons but also to position his interest within a broader context of British interest in Russian art in the twentieth century—a topic that is ripe for further scholarly investigation. Although, as noted, much of the primary evidence of Hare's work is lost, I have argued that Hare's engagement with Russian icons should be seen as

consistent with the rise of interest in Byzantine art in the West during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A growing British awareness of Russian art more broadly was linked with these developments, as revealed by a brief comparison with the work of the Talbot Rices. The publications of the Talbot Rices and Hare can be credited with making Russian art more widely known in Britain. For Hare specifically, writing a survey text on this topic was also entirely consistent with his wish that his and Gordine's own collection would become the starting point for a Russian art museum in Britain . Hare can be seen as a pioneer who broke out on his own with assembling his collection, since his decision to acquire later icons went against the main voices of the twentieth-century art world, including critics like Fry and historians like the Talbot Rices. With his combined collecting and writing, notably transcending the academic setting, Hare was able to support emerging Western connoisseurship as well as wider public interest in Russian artistic culture. As a mediator, then, he can also be compared with the English musicologist Rosa Newmarch, whose books *The Russian Opera* (1914) and *The Russian Arts* (1916) were early examples of introductory primers on Russia for British readers.[107] Like Newmarch, Hare fits best in the role of cultural educator. To conclude, regardless of the quality of his own icon collection or his scholarship, Hare's pioneering work bears witness to a new Western perception of icons as art during the Soviet period. Accordingly, while the remaining collection in the Dorich House Museum is small, bound with its history lies a larger untold story of Anglo-Soviet cultural relations that brings fresh insights into the long history of British-Russian artistic exchange.

About the Author

Louise Hardiman, Ph.D., is an independent art historian based in Guildford, U.K., whose career spans teaching, writing, and consultancy. Her current research projects examine women and the arts in imperial Russia, northern landscape painting, and the history of British-Russian cultural exchange; her recent teaching includes the development of new courses on Russian art and Ukrainian art for University of Cambridge Professional and Continuing Education.

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Notes

1 This article is an extended version of a paper presented at the 2021 Virtual Conference of the Museum of Russian Icons, "Collecting Orthodox Art in the West: A History and Look Towards the Future." I thank the attendees for their helpful observations, and the journal editors and Brenda Martin, Fran Lloyd, and Dorich House Museum curator Fiona Fisher for their comments on earlier drafts of this article.

For a catalogue of icons held by the British Museum, of which the Russian works are a subcategory, see note 53 below. No similarly comprehensive catalogue exists for icons in the Victoria and Albert Museum collection, but a non-comprehensive list of works held can be viewed by entering the keyword "Russian" and selecting the object type "icon" at https://collections.vam.ac.uk/search/. Likewise, icons at Dorich House Museum are not fully catalogued, but photographs can be viewed at https://www.dorichhousemuseum.org.uk/collections/russian-collections/.

2 There is scant literature on Anglo-Soviet artistic relations. Exceptions include Anthony Cross, "Two Exhibitions: Exhibiting Russia: The Two London Russian Exhibitions of 1917 and 1935," *Slavonica* 16, no. 1 (2010): 29–39;Verity Clarkson, "'Sputniks and Sideboards': Exhibiting the Soviet 'Way of Life' in Cold War Britain," in *A People Passing Rude: British Responses to Russian Culture*, ed. Anthony Cross (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2012), 285–300, https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0022; and Galina Mardilovich, "An Unusual Gift of Russian Prints to the British Museum in 1926," *The Burlington Magazine* 159, no. 1371 (June 2017): 453–59.

3 Dorich House was burgled on January 21, 1988, while Gordine was at home, and many Russian objects from the couple's collection were stolen. See Tim Harrison, "Sadness for Stolen Russian Treasures," *Surrey Comet*, February 5, 1988, 8–9.

4 Dorich House was in poor repair at the time of Gordine's death in 1991. Squatters briefly occupied the house, and it was subsequently used as a film set by the BBC. In 1994, Dorich House was acquired by Kingston University. A decision was made to reduce the art collection to support a full historic renovation of the building. This disruptive phase immediately after Gordine's death had another major consequence—few of Hare's papers have survived. Hare's life has yet to be researched fully, and there has been little detailed research on the icon collection, so dates from museum records quoted here may be unreliable.

5 Richard Hare, *The Art and Artists of Russia* (London: Methuen, 1965).

6 On British responses to Byzantium, see: Robin Cormack and Elizabeth Jeffreys, eds., *Through the looking glass: Byzantium through British eyes. Papers from the Twenty-*

Ninth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, King's College, London, March 1995 (Aldershot: Ashgate/Variorum, 2000).

7 The Earls of Listowel also held the title Viscount (or Lord) Ennismore; many served as members of Parliament and later as Whigs (the Liberal Party). Among them was Hare's great-grandfather, William Hare, Third Earl of Listowel (1833–1924), who fought in the Crimean War. The family properties in Ireland, Listowel Castle and Convamore Castle, both fell into ruin, the latter destroyed by the Irish Republican Army in the Irish War of Independence. Richard Hare's older brother, William Francis Hare (1906–97), Fifth Earl of Listowel, turned to Labour politics and dropped his title, becoming known as "Billy Listowel."

8 The family earldom was named for Listowel, a town in County Kerry, Ireland.

9 Gordine was Jewish and born in Latvia. She lived in Estonia as a young woman and became an Estonian citizen after the country's declaration of independence in 1918. (Estonia was part of the Russian Empire between 1710 and 1917.) On Gordine, see Jonathan Black and Brenda Martin, *Dora Gordine: Sculptor, Artist, Designer* (London: Philip Wilson, 2007); and Jonathan Black, "Collecting Connoisseurs and Building to House a Collection: The Intriguing Case of Dora Gordine (1895–1991)," J*ournal of the History of Collections* 21, no. 2 (October 2009): 253–61.

10 Black and Martin, *Dora Gordine*, 56–57.

11 Black and Martin, *Dora Gordine*, 56–57. See also Bertha Malnick, "Richard Gilbert Hare, 1907–1966," *Slavonic and East European Review* 45, no. 105 (July 1967): 271–72.

12 Jonathan Black and Fran Lloyd, *Subtlety and Strength: The Drawings of Dora Gordine* (London: Philip Wilson, 2009), 34.

13 Black and Lloyd, *Subtlety and Strength*, 62–63.

14 Originally part of Kings College London, the institution is now part of University College London (UCL).

15 Richard Hare, *Maxim Gorky: Romantic Realist and Conservative Revolutionary* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962); and Richard Hare, *Russian Literature from Pushkin to the Present Day: Portraits of Russian Personalities between Reform and Revolution* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962).

16 See, for example, Ivan Turgenev, *Fathers and Children, and Rudin*, translated by Richard Hare (London: Hutchinson International Authors, 1947); and Ivan Bunin, *Dark*

Avenues, and Other Stories, translated by Richard Hare (London: John Lehman, 1949). A complete bibliography would be too long to include here.

17 "Russian" may still include some objects whose origin should correctly be attributed to colonized and occupied lands that were formerly within the Russian Empire or under its control (for example, Ukraine, Poland, and the Baltic States); the museum's efforts to research and catalogue the collection are ongoing.

18 *Stolitsa i usad'ba: Zhurnal "Krasivoi zhizni"* (Petrograd: 1913–17); *Khudozhestvennye sokrovishcha Rossii: Ezhemesiachnyi sbornik izdavaemyi Imperatorskim obshchestvom pooshchreniia khudozhestv*, ed. Alexandre Benois (1901–3, nos. 2/3) and Adrian Prakhov (1903, no. 4–1907, no. 120), 7 vols. (Saint Petersburg: Izd. Imperatorskago obshchestva pooshchreniia khudozhestv, 1901–7); for a digitized version, see the New York Public Library Digital Collections, https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/collections/khudozhestvennyia-sokrovishcha-rossii#/?tab=about, accessed October 27, 2021.

19 The other notable private collections of Imperial Russian and Soviet art in Britain at the time were those of émigrés: that of Ukrainian diplomat Mikhail Braikevitch was bequeathed to the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, in 1940, and that of Zia Wernher, would eventually reside in Ranger's House (now owned by English Heritage).

20 Maren Friedman to Brenda Martin, February 5, 1995. Dorich House Museum Archive. In the Russian tradition, icons are traditionally displayed hung across the corner of a room, whether in a peasant hut or a tsar's bedchamber; this corner is known as the *krasnyi ugol* (red or beautiful corner).

21 See Anne Odom and Wendy R. Salmond, "Introduction: From Preservation to the Export of Russia's Cultural Patrimony," in *Treasures into Tractors: The Selling of Russia's Cultural Heritage*, 1918–1938, ed. Anne Odom and Wendy R. Salmond (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009), 11–12.

22 Waltraud Bayer, "Soviet Art Sales to Europe, 1919–1936," in Odom and Salmond, *Treasures into Tractors*, 185–213, at 197.

23 Wendy Salmond, "Russian Icons and American Money, 1928–1938," *Canadian–American Slavic Studies*, 43, nos. 1–4 (2009): 273–304, reprinted in Odom and Salmond, *Treasure into Tractors*, 237–63, at 242–43. See also E. A. Osokina, *Nebesnaia golubizna angel'skikh odezhd: Sud'ba proizvedenii drevnerusskoi zhivopisi*, 1920–1930-e gody (Moscow: O.O.O. "Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie," 2018).

24 Salmond, "Russian Icons and American Money."

25 Salmond, "Russian Icons and American Money," 251–57. On the Hann collection, see also George R. Hann and Andrey Avinoff, *Russian Icons and Objects of Ecclesiastical and Decorative Arts from the Collection of George R. Hann*, exh. cat. (Pittsburgh: Carnegie Institute Press, 1944).

26 Post's collection included not only Davies's icons but her own later acquisitions of Russian art and icons. See Wendy Salmond, *Russian Icons at Hillwood* (Washington, DC: Hillwood Museum and Gardens, 1998). On Putnam, see https://www.timkenmuseum.org, accessed August 16, 2022. The Hillwood Museum was established after Post's death, supported for posterity by the family trust.

27 Salmond, *Russian Icons at Hillwood*, 16.

28 See Derrick Cartwright's article "From Forges to Fiery Furnaces: Amy Putnam and the Timken Museum's Russian Icon Collection" in this issue.

29 Salmond, *Russian Icons at Hillwood*, 12.

30 This label indicates that the icon was originally sold through one of the Soviet retail outlets in the 1930s, but that it could have reached the Western market through a variety of avenues (thus, Hare may have purchased it in the USSR or in the West). The author is grateful to Wendy Salmond for this information.

31 Wendy Salmond, "How America Discovered Russian Icons: The Soviet Loan Exhibition of 1930–32," in *Alter Icons: The Russian Icon and Modernity*, edited by Douglas Greenfield and Jefferson Gatrall (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010), 128–43.

32 Interviews file, DGH/9/1, Dorich House Museum Archive.

33 Interviews file, DGH/9/1, Dorich House Museum Archive.

34 They comprise: three icons of Christ with the Mother of God, some with accompanying figures; two icons of the Mother of God ("Molchensky," "Kazan," and "Virgin of the Sign" types); two of angels (Archangel Gabriel and an Old Testament Trinity); and five of saints (John the Baptist, two of Nicholas [one in very poor condition], Florus and Lavrus, and Dymytrii Tuptalo [Dimitry of Rostov]).

35 In addition, there is one Greek icon in the collection, a seventeenth-century *Presentation of the Virgin*.

36 See Alison McGregor, "Stars at Auction: Exploring the Sales of Dora Gordine

and Richard Hare's Private Art Collection," in T*he Squatter Years: Recovering Dorich House Museum's Recent Past* (London: Dorich House Museum, 2021). https: // dorichhousemuseum.org.uk/2021/01/21/stars-at-auction-exploring-the-sales-of-dora-gordine-and-richard-hares-private-art-collection/. McGregor's research concluded that the first auction took place on August 15, 1994 and the final ones were held on May 8 and 9, 1997.

37 The definitions of type are less exact, as many of the auction catalogue entries were vague. Around half of the offered lots were illustrated in black and white, and there were a few further images on the front and back cover.

38 *A Collection of Russian Works of Art. Tuesday 15 November 1994 at 11 am* (London: Phillips, 1994), no. 330, sale cat., November 15, 1994.

39 The inscription describing the relics is unfortunately not recorded in the catalogue, which contains a photograph of the front of the cross but not the reverse.

40 Calculated according to prevailing exchange rates on September 16, 2022.

41 *Catalogue of the Exhibition of Russian Art: 1 Belgrave Square, London S.W. 1, 4th June to 13th July, 1935*, exh. cat. (London: Oliver Burridge, 1935), https://archive.org/details/RussianArt/mode/2up.

42 Cross, "Two Exhibitions." 36

43 Icons had a separate section in the exhibition, but some icons with features that overlapped with another section, such as jewelry, were placed elsewhere.

44 My brief research has yielded no information about Reynolds, but historical auction house records might prove fruitful.

45 Cyril G. E. Bunt, *Russian Art from Scyths to Soviets* (London: The Studio, 1946), 81–122, esp. 87–89, 115–21, for illustrated works from private collections. I have not been able to identify the "Lanza" collection.

46 David Talbot Rice, *The Beginnings of Russian Icon Painting: Being the Ilchester Lecture Delivered in the Taylor Institution, Oxford, on 19 November 1937* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1938).

47 On the revival, see Richard Bullen, *Byzantium Rediscovered: The Byzantine Revival in Europe and America* (London: Phaidon, 2006).

48 Richard Marks, "Russian Icons through British Eyes, 1830–1930," in Cross, *A People Passing Rude*, 69–68, https://books.openbookpublishers.com/10.11647/obp.0022/chap04.html.

49 On the rise of interest in Russian art at the South Kensington Museum (now the Victoria and Albert Museum), see Louise Hardiman, "The 'Martinoff Drawings': A Quest for Russian Art at the South Kensington Museum," *The Burlington Magazine* 160, no. 1389 (2018): 1006–15.

50 Robin Cormack, Maria Vassilaki and Eleni Dimitriadou, eds., "A Catalogue of the Byzantine and Greek Icons in the British Museum," The Icon Museum and Study Center, https://www.iconmuseum.org/british-museum-catalogue/ accessed March 27, 2025.

51 Alfred Maskell, *Russian Art and Art Objects in Russia: A Handbook to the Reproductions of Goldsmiths' Work and other Art Treasures from That Country in the South Kensington Museum*, 2 vols. (London: Chapman & Hall, 1884), 2:149–183, 184–207, at 165.

52 The Triple Entente in opposition to Germany and its alliance comprised France, Britain, and Russia, with other countries joining later. Cross, "Two Exhibitions," 29–39.

53 A key British publication of the period was Ormonde M. Dalton, *Byzantine Art and Archaeology* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1911).

54 On the Russian art displayed at the 1908 exhibition, see Louise Hardiman, "'Infantine Smudges of Paint . . . Infantine Rudeness of Soul': British Reception of Russian Art at the Exhibitions of the Allied Artists' Association, 1908–1911," in Cross, *A People Passing Rude*, 133–47, https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0022. On Fry's exhibition, see Caroline MacLean, *The Vogue for Russia: Modernism and the Unseen in Britain, 1900–1930* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 34–45.

55 Roger Fry, ed. *Grafton Galleries. Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition. British, French and Russian Artists. Oct 5 - Dec 31 1912*, exh. cat. (London: Grafton Galleries, 1912).

56 Franz Bock, *Die byzantinischen Zellenschmelze der Sammlung Dr. Alex. von Swenigorodskoï und das darüber veröffentlichte Prachtwerk* (Aachen, Germany: La Ruelle'sche Accidenzdruckerei, 1896); and Louis Réau, *L'art russe des origines à Pierre le Grand* (Paris: H. Laurens, 1921).

57 Roger Fry, "An Appreciation of the Swenigorodskoi Enamels," *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 21, no. 113 (1912): 290–94. Alexander W. von

Swenigorodskoi was an early collector of Byzantine cloisonné enamels, whose treasures, along with enamels acquired by Mikhail P. Botkin (1839–1914), proved attractive to Western collectors in the early twentieth century and later ended up at major museums through donation. Many years later, the bulk of the Botkin collection was uncovered as forgeries. See Ella S. Siple, "Byzantine Enamels in Detroit, Worcester and Boston," *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 53, no. 307 (1928): 197–99; and David Buckton, "Bogus Byzantine Enamels in Baltimore and Washington, D.C.," *Journal of the Walters Art Gallery* 46 (1988): 11–24.

58 Bock, *Byzantinischen Zellenschmelze*; and Ormande M. Dalton, "Byzantine Enamels in Mr. Pierpont Morgan's Collection," *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 21, no. 109 (1912): 2–5, 8–10.

59 Fry, "Appreciation of the Swenigorodskoi Enamels," 293.

60 Fry, "Appreciation of the Swenigorodskoi Enamels," 293.

61 Notably, though, Hare had provided the financial support for the building of Dorich House with designs by Gordine, which were distinctively modernist. Her approach as a sculptor was more figurative than abstract tradition, in this sense, the couple may have shared a taste for the less radical. There is, however, some evidence that they had links to British modernist circles, as Gordine knew some members of the Bloomsbury Group.

62 Sir Martin Conway, *Art Treasures in Soviet Russia* (London: Edward Arnold, 1925), 32.

63 Ellis H. Minns, ed., *Ancient Russian Icons from the XIIth to the XIXth centuries, Lent by the Government of the U.S.S.R. to a British Committee and Exhibited by Permission at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London* (18 November–14 December 1929), exh. cat. (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1929). The exhibition also toured Berlin, Frankfurt, Paris, Vienna, New York, and other cities. See, for example, *Denkmäler altrussischer Malerei: Russische Ikonen vom 12.–18. Jahrhundert: Austellung des Volksbildungskommissariats der RSFSR und der Deutschen Gesellschaft zum Studium Osteuropas in Berlin, Köln, Hamburg, Frankfurt a. M., München, Februar/Mai 1929*, exh. cat. (Berlin: Ost-Europa, 1929); Aleksandr Anisimov, Erforschung der Ikonenmalerei: Begleittext zur Ausstellung *"Denkmäler altrussischer Malerei" in Deutschland* 1929, ed. Erika Voigt (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2011); Anastasia Lishnevskaya, "Russian Icons in Germany: The Exhibitions of 1929," in "Germany—Russia: On the Crossroads of Cultures," special issue, *Tretyakov Gallery Magazine* 70, no. 1 (2021), https://www.tretyakovgallerymagazine.com/articles/1-2021-70/russian-icons-germany-exhibition.

64 Roger Fry to E. R. D. MacLaghlan, May 21, 1929, Victoria and Albert Museum

archives, VX.1929–006, cited in Salmond, "Russian Icons and American Money," 141n18. On the London exhibition, see also Marks, "Russian Icons"; and V. Veidle [Wladimir Weidlé], "Russkie ikony v Londone," *Vozrozhdenie*, December 14, 1929, cited in Salmond, "Russian Icons and American Money," 141n16.

65 Michael Farbman, ed., *Masterpieces of Russian Painting* (London: Europa, 1930).

66 Galya Diment, *A Russian Jew of Bloomsbury: The Life and Times of Samuel Koteliansky* (Montreal: McGill Queens University Press, 2011), 122n2.

67 Marks, "Russian Icons through British Eyes."

68 Réau, *Art russe*; Georgi Loukomski [Georgii Lukomskii], *L'art décoratif russe* (Paris: Vincent, Fréal & cie, 1928).

69 The story of Minns's painstaking efforts to adapt Kondakov's book for a Western audience, taking account of the most recent developments in cleaning, restoration, and interpretation of icons in Russia, is recounted in Wendy Salmond, "Ellis H. Minns and Nikodim Kondakov's *The Russian Icon* (1927)," in *Modernism and the Spiritual in Russian Art: New Perspectives*, ed. Louise Hardiman and Nicola Kozicharow (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2017), 165–94, https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0115.08.

70 This mention may also provide a clue as to one of Hare's contacts in the Western marketplace for icons.

71 Parenthetical citations are to Hare, *Art and Artists of Russia*.

72 See Francesco Lovino, *"Communism versus Seminarium Kondakovianum," Convivium: Exchanges and Interactions in the Arts of Medieval Europe, Byzantium, and the Mediterreanean* 4, no. 1 (2017): 142–57, at 153; Laurens Hamilton Rhinelander, "Exiled Russian Scholars in Prague: The Kondakov Seminar and Institute," *Canadian Slavonic Papers / Revue Canadienne des Slavistes* 16, no. 3 (1974), 331–52. Rhinelander describes Andreyev as an "acting" director (340).

73 Nikolai Andreyev, *A Moth on the Fence: Memoirs of Russia, Estonia, Czechoslovakia, and Western Europe*, trans. Patrick Miles (London: Hodgson, 2009).

74 Robin Milner-Gulland, *Andrei Rublev: The Artist and His World* (London: Reaktion Books, 2023).

75 Hare, *Art and Artists of Russia*, 29.

76 Hare, *Art and Artists of Russia*, 30.

77 I thank Wendy Salmond for this observation.

78 Dorich House Museum Archives.

79 Merriweather Post took the surname of her fourth husband, Herbert A. May, until their divorce in 1964.

80 For a color image, see Salmond, *Russian Icons at Hillwood*, 51

81 Hare, *Art and Artists of Russia*, 31, 51, pl. 11. Now named the Walters Art Museum, the gallery was founded with a bequest in 1931 by Henry Walters of his, and his father William's, broad-ranging art collection, with notable holdings in Byzantine and Russo-Byzantine art. The Walters' icons thus were acquired well before those of Hare.

82 Mary Chamot, review of *The Art and Artists of Russia*, by Richard Hare, J*ournal of the Royal Society of Arts* 115, no. 5129 (1967): 405–6. Parenthetical citations below are to this article.

83 Chamot, review of *The Art and Artists of Russia*, 405.

84 "Russian Silver by R. G. Hare," in *The Connoisseur Complete Encyclopedia of Antiques*, ed. Leonard G. G. Ramsay (New York: Hawthorne, 1962), 60–65.

85 Tamara Talbot Rice, *A Concise History of Russian Art* (New York: Frederick A Praeger, 1963); Tamara Talbot Rice, *Russian Art* (London: Pelican, 1963); and Tamara Talbot Rice, *Russian Icons* (London: Spring Books, 1963).

86 Fannina Halle, *Altrussische Kunst* (Berlin: Ernst Wasmuth, 1920); Louis Réau, Art russe.

87 Hamilton Rhinelander, "Exiled Russian Scholars," 331.

88 Richard Hare, "The Icon Museum at Recklinghausen," *The Connoisseur* (October 1963): 104–8; and Richard Hare, "Dr Siegfried Amberg's Collection of Icons," *The Connoisseur* (January 1966): 7–11. Amberg (1885–1959) was based in Kölliken, Switzerland, and it is thought that the collection remains in private hands. Amberg's collection was exhibited at the Recklinghausen Museum in 1963. See *Ikonen: Sammlung Amberg*, exh. cat. (Recklinghausen, Germany: Städtische Kunsthalle, 1963).

89 Robin Cormack, "The Icon: Past, Present, and Future," in *Gates of Mystery: The Art of*

Holy Russia, ed. Roderick Grierson, exh. cat. (Cambridge: Lutterworth, 1994), 324. The Allen collection comprised twenty-four icons purchased by W. E. D. Allen and donated to the gallery in the name of his wife, Natasha Allen. It was catalogued by David and Tamara Talbot Rice, who published their findings as *Icons: The National Gallery of Ireland (The Natasha Allen Collection)* (Dublin: National Gallery of Ireland, 1968). A cursory examination of the gallery's online catalogue indicates that ten of these were Russian. See https://www.nationalgallery.ie, accessed October 24, 2021. On the Aschberg collection, see Olof Aschberg and Helge Kjellin, *Icones Russes: Collection Olof Aschberg; Donation faite au Musée Nationale*, Catalogues d'expositions du Museé National 45 (Stockholm: Nationalmuseum, 1933). On Vienna, see Karoline Kreidl-Papadopoulos, "Die Ikonen im Kunsthistorischen Museum in Wien," *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen in Wien* 66, n.s., 30 (1970): 49–134.

90 Full-page illustrations are more plentiful in the German edition, and Hare credits the publisher for the preparation and printing of the colorplates used in the British edition.

91 E. Henze, "Bongers, Aurel," in L*exikon des gesamten Buchwesens Online* (Leiden: Brill, 2014; first published online 2017). After its books on icons, the press turned to new topics, such as art and history of Southeastern Europe, French illuminated manuscripts, and twentieth-century painting.

92 See "Gründung," Ikonen-Museum Recklinghausen, https://ikonen-museum.com/ikonen-museum/gruendung, accessed September 22, 2021.

93 "Gründung," Ikonen-Museum Recklinghausen. My inquiry in 2021 to the Recklinghausen Museum, which still exists, did not elicit any evidence about past relationships with Hare.

94 Richard Hare, review of *Meisterwerke der Ikonenmalerei*, by Heinz Skrobucha, *The Connoisseur* 154 (April 1963): 125.

95 Richard Hare, review of *Icons*, by Konrad Onasch, *The Connoisseur* 154 (1963): 190–92.

96 Hare, review of *Icons*.

97 On David Talbot Rice, see "Talbot-Rice, David," in *Who's Who, 1968–1969: An Annual Biographical Dictionary* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1968), 2567, https://archive.org/details/whoswho19681969a00newy. On Tamara Talbot Rice, see Dictionary of Art Historians, Duke University, https://arthistorians.info/ricet, accessed November 30, 2021; Olga Morgunova Petrunko, "Mezhdu trekh imperii: Tamara Tolbot-Rais. Zhizn' i rabota," https://www.scotland-russia.llc.ed.ac.uk/wp-content/

uploads/2019/02/Tamara-Talbot-Rice-in-Russian-Language-Abroad.pdf, accessed September 13, 2022; and Tamara Talbot Rice, *Tamara: Memoirs of St Petersburg, Oxford, and Byzantium*, ed. Elizabeth Talbot Rice (London: John Murray, 1996).

98 Rice also organized several important exhibitions of Byzantine art, including a major display in 1958 for the Edinburgh International Festival (later transferred to London).

99 For example, *Byzantine Art* (1935), *Byzantine Painting and Developments in the West before A.D. 1200* (1948), Art of the Byzantine Era (1963), and *Byzantine Art, the Last Phase* (1968).

100 David Talbot Rice, *The Art of the Byzantine Era* (Oxford: Thames and Hudson, 1963), 41, 64, 126–27, 238–45.

101 David Talbot Rice, "The Origins of Russian Icon Painting," *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 67, no. 388 (July 1935): 36–37, 41, at 36. The Anisimov source was the historian's essay for *Masterpieces of Russian Painting*.

102 David Talbot Rice, *The Beginnings of Russian Icon Painting: Being the Ilchester Lecture Delivered in the Taylor Institution, Oxford, on 19 November 1937* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1938).

103 Tamara Talbot Rice, *Russian Icons*; Tamara Talbot Rice, *Icons* (London: Batchworth, 1959, 1960, 1962).

104 Along with *A Concise History of Russian Art*, a brief bibliography of works by Tamara Talbot Rice includes *The Scythians* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1957); *Russian Icons*; Tamara Talbot Rice, *The Seljuks in Asia Minor*, Ancient Peoples and Places 20 (London: Thames and Hudson, 1961); *Ancient Arts of Central Asia* (New York: Praeger, 1965); *Everyday Life in Byzantium* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1994, 1967); and *Elizabeth, Empress of Russia* (New York: Praeger, 1970). Her books for children include *Finding Out About the Early Russians* (New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 1964); and, with Margaret Scott, *Byzantium* (New York: John Day, 1970). Many of Talbot Rice's books were translated into other languages.

105 Tamara Talbot Rice, *A Concise History of Russian Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1963).

106 David Talbot Rice and Tamara Talbot Rice, *Icons and Their Dating* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1974). On the 1935 exhibition, see Rice, *Tamara: Memoirs of St Petersburg*, 205. The Talbot Rices also worked together on a catalogue for the Natasha Allen collection (see note 95).

107 Rosa Newmarch, *The Russian Arts* (London: H. Jenkins, 1916).

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Collecting Orthodoxy in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Rome: From the Collection of Agostino Mariotti (1724–1806) to the Vatican Museums (1820–Present)

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Collecting Orthodoxy in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Rome: From the Collection of Agostino Mariotti (1724–1806) to the Vatican Museums (1820–Present)

Abstract

During the 18th century, the abbot and lawyer Agostino Mariotti (1724-1806) formed an extensive art collection in Rome. Of the 198 paintings that made up the Mariotti collection, 35 were works of what was then understood as the Byzantine style. Mariotti, an important scholar of ancient Greek, collected these panels with a dual purpose: as testimonies of rites of the Orthodox Church in juxtaposition to those of the Western Church, and as reflecting the influence that the school of "Greek" art exerted on Latin schools throughout the Middle Ages. After the death of Mariotti (1806), many of these objects, including Byzantine icons, were purchased in 1820 by the Vatican Museums, where they are still preserved today.

Keywords: Agostino Mariotti, Vatican Museums, Greek Icons, Ecclesiastical History.

Introduction

Objects from the Byzantine or Greek Eastern territories have long been present in Roman collections. However, until at least the seventeenth century, very few objects of this type are mentioned in private inventories. It is only starting in the eighteenth century that we find more objects and more frequent mentions of Eastern art in the collections of important churchmen or scholars; often the works are designated in

the inventories as "Greek" or "Greek-Russian." This change in taste is echoed in the writings of scholars and art lovers who began to look at the history of painting with a focus on early painting and medieval art with a renewed interest. After recounting the Roman situation in the seventeenth century, this paper will investigate the presence of Byzantine art in Rome between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and explore the reasons why it was collected. I will focus in particular on the collection of Agostino Mariotti (1724–1806), who was a lawyer of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, an antiquarian, and a Greek scholar well known in eighteenth-century Rome.[1] By studying his motivations for amassing his rich collection and tracing its placement in the nineteenth century, we can better understand the growing interest in Byzantine art during this period.[2]

Roman Collections in the Seventeenth Century

In the seventeenth century, there were already objects recognized as "Greek" or "Byzantine" in some Roman collections, although these were rare exceptions, and their identifications were sometimes false, indicating style rather than origin. These works interested collectors mainly because they were considered tangible connections to the first centuries of Christianity and appealed to scholars who appreciated this era.

An example of such interest is the circle around Cardinal Francesco Barberini (1597–1679), nephew of Pope Urban VIII Barberini, which included his librarian, the scholar Leo Allatius (ca. 1586–1669), the collector Nicolas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc (1580–1637), and the artist Cassiano dal Pozzo (1588–1657). Allatius, born in Chio, Greece, was a member of an Eastern Orthodox church in communion with the papacy, that is, a Greco-Catholic Church; and he also was an ardent student of the history of the Church and its rites.[3] He used images and artistic demonstrations to compare the rites of the Eastern Church to those of the Western Church,[4] and he authored a book about Byzantine architecture titled *De templis graecorum* (On Greek Temples), published in 1645, which focused on the church of Saint Athanasius in Rome.[5] His interests certainly influenced Barberini's taste for artwork that originated in the East.

In fact, Barberini's collection included two famous Byzantine ivories, both published several times over the centuries. The first is the so-called Barberini ivory, a gift from Nicolas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc to the cardinal, today on display at the Musée du Louvre in Paris.[6] The second is the triptych now in the Palazzo Venezia Museum in Rome.[7] In the eighteenth century, an engraving of the Barberini ivory was published in the second volume of the book *Thesaurus veterum diptychorum* (Treasury of Ancient Diptychs) by Antonio Francesco Gori (1691–1757), issued posthumously by his friend Giovanni Battista Passeri (1694–1780) in 1759.[8] The French scholar Jean-Baptiste-Louis-Georges Seroux d'Agincourt (1730–1814) also commissioned an engraving of this

ivory, which was published posthumously in 1823 in his famous six-volume *Histoire de l'art par les monumens*. (History of Art through Monuments).[9]

The second ivory is an equally famous masterpiece that was reproduced by Cassiano dal Pozzo in a drawing included in his *Museo cartaceo* (Paper Museum), which consists of different albums of drawings and watercolors of artworks, now in the Royal Library in Windsor.[10] Dal Pozzo was also the cupbearer of Francesco Barberini, a role that allowed him privileged access to the Barberini collection.

Another important Roman family of the time, the Giustiniani, also collected Byzantine works of art. The family had come into possession of frescoes and mosaics from the portico of the Old Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome. These comprised two fragments depicting Saints Peter and Paul and three mosaics of different ages and styles: a *Saint Joseph* (705–7 CE), a *Deesis* from the façade (1227–41) and a *Christ Child* (1294–1303). The fragments were probably collected to preserve "a small relic of various parts of the ancient basilica."[11] In their inventories, the family recorded these frescoes and mosaics as being of Byzantine origin, aligning their family lineage with the Byzantine emperor Justinian the Great (482–565 CE), to whom the family name also nods. In reality, these fragments all belonged to the Roman artistic sphere, with the exception of the *Saint Joseph*, the only work that has a true Eastern origin.[12]

These collections were part a strand of renewed interest in the Christian Middle Ages, inaugurated primarily by Ludovico Antonio Muratori's (1665–1736) *Antiquitates italicae medii aevi* (Italian Antiquities of the Middle Ages), published between 1738 and 1743.[13] This book's six volumes present artwork as historical evidence for the first centuries of Christendom. Previous books by Antonio Bosio (1575–1629),[14] Marcantonio Boldetti (1663–1749),[15] Giovanni Gaetano Bottari (1689–1775),[16] Francesco Bianchini (1662–1729), and Giuseppe Bianchini (1704–1764) had dealt with Christian history and consequently touched on medieval works of art. Francesco Bianchini, in particular, advocated for a museum entirely devoted to early Christian works within the papal collections: the Ecclesiastical Museum intended for Pope Clement XI Albani (r. 1700–1721).[17] This project never materialized, but it soon became very famous, especially in Rome, thanks to the publication of the four volumes of the *Demonstratio historiae ecclesiasticae quadripartitae* (A Demonstration of Ecclesiastical History in Four Parts), conceived by Francesco Bianchini and published by his nephew Giuseppe between 1752 and 1754. The goal of the Bianchinis was to compare "Christian" art and that of ancient Rome by using art as testimony to the growing greatness of the Church.[18]

The Collection of Agostino Mariotti

In addition to these collections, there were others in Rome, assembled with the intent

of documenting the past of the Roman Church. This interest grew during the eighteenth century, when private collections possessing many Byzantine—or purportedly Eastern—objects begin to appear. Worth mentioning are those of the cardinals Francesco Saverio de Zelada (1717–1801)[19] and Stefano Borgia (1731–1804),[20] and those of Giuseppe Simone Assemani (1687–1768)[21] and Francesco Vettori (1692–1770),[22] respectively custodian of the Vatican Library and *primo custode* of the Museo Sacro in the Vatican.

Among these prominent collectors, we also find the intriguing figure of the lawyer Agostino Mariotti. He was the owner of a collection created over a span of more than fifty years and consisting of different categories of objects, including numerous Byzantine icons. To understand what drove Mariotti's interest in the Orthodox world, it is necessary to briefly introduce Mariotti and explain his connection with Greek culture.

Born in a modest family, Mariotti became an abbot and a well-known lawyer in Rome. Like most of the ecclesiastics of his time, he was first and foremost a scholar, specifically a bibliophile, numismatist, member of the Italian literary Academy of Arcadia, expert in antiquities, and collector. He was also known in Rome for his deep knowledge of ancient philology and especially Classical Greek. He studied languages from the age of fourteen with Raffaele Vernazza (d. 1780), an expert of Greek at the Vatican Library, teacher at the Congregazione di Propaganda Fide, and great connoisseur of the Greek scholar and theologian Leo Allatius, mentioned above. Mariotti became so close with his teacher that Vernazza designated him as his heir, and a pair of portraits of Vernazza and Allatius were displayed in Mariotti's residence as a reminder of his respect and admiration. The two paintings were donated by the lawyer in 1803 to the Vallicelliana Library, together with all the manuscripts of Allatius and Vernazza that Mariotti held in his personal library.[23] In addition, I discovered an autograph letter in the archives of the Vatican Library in which Agostino wrote to Seroux d'Agincourt to explain the Greek inscriptions on a "bassissimo tempo" (very ancient) painting representing a Madonna and Child of the Greek school in the collection of the French nobleman.[24]

The Roman lawyer's passion for the Greek language also translated into a genuine interest in "Greek" and, more generally, Byzantine works. The Mariotti collection was divided into three broad sections: the Sacred Museum, the Profane Museum, and the *Naturalia*. The objects of Byzantine origin, due to their intrinsic religious connotation, were entirely included in the Sacred Museum. These works were collected for various reasons, including the need to cover all the centuries of Christian history, which was one of Mariotti's primary aims. He explained the reason for this vast chronological period:

> Because of the natural inclination for the fine arts that I had since early adolescence, I was able to gather a series of paintings, in which some

> of them, dated from the coming of the Lord up to Michelangelo, proved the truth of Religion and Ecclesiastical History, while the others, from Michelangelo up to nowadays, testified to the perfection of the drawing.[25]

In this explanation, Mariotti focused on the paintings, but the same approach can be easily extended to all the objects that made up his collection. As with medieval works, those referred to as "Greek" also fall into the typology of objects that bear witness to the Christian Church. Mariotti's holdings include paintings, ivory diptychs, wooden objects, and even an ancient manuscript.

Let us start with the paintings. Mariotti's museum contained 198 paintings of which 35 were Greek, testifying to his avid interest for this kind of art. In Mariotti's inventories, the icons were accompanied by the qualifying word and phrases: "greco" (Greek), "greco-mosco" (Greco-Muscovite), or "opera latina, Scolari dei Greci" (Latin work, [made by] pupils of the Greeks).[26]

The motivation for Mariotti's interest was twofold: on the one hand, he wanted to investigate, like many other scholars, the influence of the Greek school on the Latins throughout the Middle Ages; on the other hand, he wanted to study Greek images as testimonies of the Orthodox rites.[27] An example of one of his objects that served these purposes is the *Dormition of the Virgin (Dormitio Virginis*) painted by Ioannis Moskos (1635/44–1721).[28] Archival documents indicate that this icon depicts the *Dormitio Virginis* alongside the scene of the Holy Belt. The Holy Belt (Sacra Cintola), regarded as the most significant relic of the city of Prato (Italy), is traditionally believed to be the belt of the Virgin Mary, which she is said to have given to the Apostle Thomas as tangible proof of her Assumption into Heaven. The iconography of this specific icon includes two principal scenes: the Assumption of the Virgin, in which she hands the belt to Saint Thomas, and the *Dormitio Virginis*, depicting the apostles gathered around the Virgin's lifeless body. This very rare image was analyzed in the book *Specimen ecclesiæ Ruthenicæ* (A Model of the Ruthenian Church) by Ignatium Kulczynski (1694–1747).[29] Mariotti likely prized this icon due to its inclusion of this specific iconographic detail, which provided evidence of the Orthodox rites. His knowledge of and passion for the Greek language and culture surely contributed as well to his preference for this type of painting, as testified by his translation and analysis of the inscriptions present on the icons that Mariotti reproduced in his manuscripts.

However, even if the interest in the rites of the Orthodox Church drove Mariotti's collection of Greek icons and paintings, he was also increasingly drawn to the aesthetics of Eastern art. During the eighteenth century, in Italy as well as in other countries, there was a growing fascination with the works of the Middle Ages, including those of the Greek style. This revaluation was also motivated by authors such as Luigi Lanzi (1732–

1810) and Guglielmo Della Valle (1746–1805). They were both interested in Byzantine art because they wanted to reconstruct the genesis of Italy's pictorial history, starting from the influences of the Greek school and demonstrating how Italian art evolved to achieve different pictorial results. It is no coincidence that these authors both knew Mariotti's collection, as they visited his apartment for study on different occasions. Indeed, in 1792, in his *Lettere Sanesi sopra le belle arti* (Sanesi Letters on the Fine Arts) (fig. 1), Della Valle said of Mariotti's collection, "Greek paintings differ from Latin ones not only for the different Greek or Latin letters affixed to them, but also for the totally different way [of being painted]."[30] Lanzi, in his *Taccuini* (Notebooks) of 1794, focused on Christian objects, and specifically on the icons in Mariotti's collection. He described a triptych representing the Baptism of Christ, the Crucifixion, and the Saints John the Baptist, Mark, and Nicholas as

> very beautiful with preserved folds [of the drapery], very reasonable faces and nudes, but with ugly hands and too thin feet. In the Baptism of Our Lord represented as in certain mosaics and bas-reliefs, the water is represented by parallel lines, one above the other, Saint John with camel clothes, the angel who holds the garments. . . . They are believed to be works of Italians, disciples of the Greeks.[31]


LETTERE SENESI

Di un socio dell'Accademia di Fossano

SOPRA LE BELLE ARTI

TOMO I.

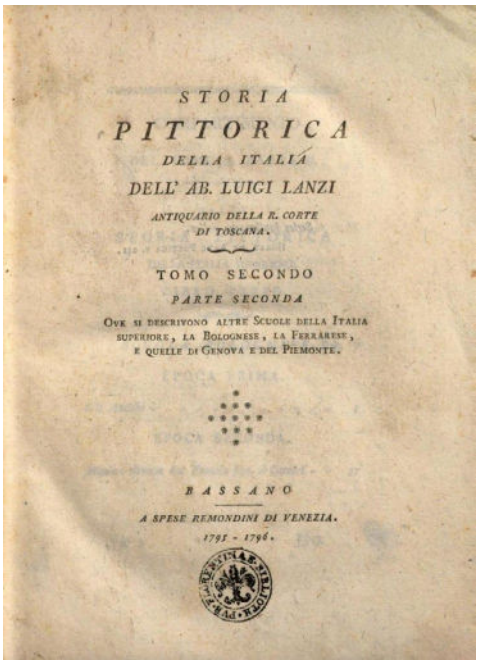
IN VENEZIA,

PRESSO GIOVAMBATISTA PASQUALI.

M. DCC. LXXXII.

Con Licenza de' Superiori, e Privilegio.

Fig. 1 Guglielmo della Valle, *Lettere Sanesi sopra le Belle Arti, Volume 1* (Venice, 1782).


STORIA

PITTORICA

DELLA ITALIA

DELL' AB. LUIGI LANZI

ANTIQUARIO DELLA R. CORTE DI TOSCANA.

TOMO SECONDO

PARTE SECONDA

Ove si descrivono altre Scuole della Italia superiore, la Bolognese, la Ferrarese, e quelle di Genova e del Piemonte.

BASSANO

A SPESE REMONDINI DI VENEZIA.

1795 - 1796.

Fig. 2 Luigi Lanzi, *Storia pittorica d'Italia,* 2 volumes (Bassano, 1795-1796).

These considerations were also publicized in his best-known text, *Storia pittorica d'Italia* (The Pictorial History of Italy), published between 1795 and 1796 (fig. 2).[32]

Nevertheless, Lanzi seems to not have accepted the eleventh or twelfth century date put forward by Mariotti for this triptych because, as we can read in *Storia pittorica d'Italia*, "among the paintings defined as Greco-Muscovite, some are of good quality, [there is] beautiful architecture, they all have a good balance of colors, the feet are well placed . . . I think they are however more recent."[33] Today, the triptych is identified as belonging to the sixteenth or seventeenth century. Overall, Mariotti's proposed dates for his objects were often inaccurate and generally too early, reflecting the Western assumption that the "Greek" style remained static over time. This notion also attracted the attention of Seroux d'Agincourt, who devoted part of his *Histoire de l'art* to the evolution of the styles of the Greek and Latin schools, emphasizing the influence of the former on the latter, and often assuming that Greek art always came first. As evidence for this theory, the French historian studied several works, including the aforementioned Dormitio Virginis by Ioannis Moskos.[34] The interest in Byzantine art reflects an eagerness for knowledge and connoisseurship of Eastern styles among 18th-century scholars—albeit their conclusions were shaped by their limitations.

A list of the thirty-five icons in the Mariotti collection reveals his fascination with various image types, as well as his largely incorrect dating:

> 1. Ioannis Moskos, *Dormitio Virginis*, Mariotti dated to eighteenth century, now dated seventeenth or eighteenth century;
>
> 2–4. Panels from a triptych, Mariotti dated eleventh to twelfth century, now dated sixteenth or seventeenth century:
>
> - *The Baptism of Jesus Christ, by the Latin pupils of the Greeks;*
> - *The Crucifixion with Madonna and Saint John the Evangelist;*
> - *Saint John the Baptist with Saints Mark and Nicholas;*
>
> 5. *The Five Doctors of the Eastern Church (Saints Anastasius, Basil the Great, John Chrysostom, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Cyril)*, Mariotti dated to eight century (fig. 3);[35]
>
> 6. *Virgin and Child with Saints Anne, Paraskeva, Helen, and Photini*, Mariotti dated between the tenth and eleventh century, now dated to the sixteenth century (fig. 4);
>
> 7. *The Deesis*, Mariotti dated between the tenth and eleventh century, now dated to the seventeenth century (fig. 5);

8–9. *Moses and Melchizedek*, Mariotti dated to twelfth century, now dated between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries;

10. *The Annunciation and Selected Saints*, inscribed with the date 1551;

11. Giovanni Panalopolo, J*esus Christ, the Virgin and Saint John the Baptist*, inscribed with the date 1743;

12–17. Six icons of the *Virgin and Child*, without further details;

18–20. Three icons of the *Virgin Mary*, without further details;

21. *Dormitio Virginis*;

22. A triptych in a silver riza with only the heads of the Virgin, Child, and various saints visible;

23. *The Adoration of the Magi*;

24. *Christ Child Holding the World in His Hand*;

25. A triptych with Christ, the Virgin and Saint John the Baptist in the center, and Saints Nicholas of Bari and Maximus on the sides;

26. *Christ the Savior Holding the Gospels*;

27. *Christ the High Priest*;

28. *Christ and the Adulteress*;

29. *The Ascension of the Lord with the Virgin and Apostles*;

30. A triptych with Saint John the Baptist in the center;

31. An icon of Saints John the Baptist, Anthony, George, and Catherine;

32. *The Angels Burying Saint Catherine on Mount Sinai*;

33. An icon of Saint Catherine, the Virgin, and an unidentified martyr;

34. *Saint George on Horseback*;

35. A small icon with Greek bishops.

Fig. 3 Cretan school, *Five Doctors of the Eastern Church,* 17th century, Vatican Museums, inv. 40089.

Fig. 4 Cretan school, *Virgin and Child with Saints Anne, Paraskevi, Helen and Photini,* 16th century, Vatican Museums, inv. 40074.

Fig. 5 Russian school, *Deesis*, 17th century, Vatican Museums, inv. 40050.

Besides these icons, Mariotti also owned other works of Greek art, among them eighteen wooden objects. The vast majority were small items, including diptychs, triptychs and crosses that depicted stories from the life of Christ or the apostles.[36] This group included four crosses, two ovals, and a *busso traforato* (perforated boxwood), all from the monasteries on Mount Athos.[37] A boxwood heart "ben lavorato, ed intagliato finissimo" (well worked and very finely carved), was decorated on one side with the image of the Virgin and on the other with a saint.[38] Another crucifix was considered a "latina" (Latin) work, but it was so beautiful that "it does not have to envy the other [works] described above from Greece".[39] It is also important to mention one diptych that was described in the third volume of the history of Benevento written by Cardinal Stefano Borgia, who commissioned an engraving of it by Pietro Leone Bombelli (1737–1809). Mariotti's collection was mentioned in connection with this piece: "a fine example of a wooden Greek diptych that the lawyer and scholar Agostino Mariotti owns in Rome along with various other sacred antiquities."[40] In this text, the cardinal uses Bombelli's engraving as a parallel to explain the iconography of the birth of Jesus depicted on the door of the cathedral of Benevento.

An overview of Greek objects from Mariotti's collection should also mention the book *Fragmentum troparii graeci*, a copy of a Byzantine troparion, or short hymn, which was yet another testimony of the Orthodox rites for its collector.[41]

From A Roman Palace to the Vatican Museums

Thanks to documents found in the Vatican archives, we can reconstruct the events surrounding the dispersal of the collection when Mariotti passed away in 1806. All the objects passed by inheritance to Mariotti's sister, Apollonia (dates unknown), and to his brother-in-law, Donato Luparelli (d. 1818). A few months after Donato's death, Apollonia decided to sell her brother's whole collection and started negotiations with the Vatican, which immediately showed a pronounced interest in some of the objects. The first document that mentions the sale, dated February 12, 1819, was drafted by Abbot Giuseppe Lelli (d. 1821) and Filippo Aurelio Visconti (1854–1831), the emissaries of Pope Pius VII Chiaramonti (r. 1800–1823).[42] Lelli had known Mariotti directly because

the lawyer had estimated some valuable objects from Lelli's own collection.[43] Visconti had succeeded his father, Giovanni Battista (1722–1784), as director of the Pio-Clementino Museum and was therefore very familiar with the pope's collections.[44] The list they compiled of works they wished to purchase includes 419 objects accompanied by brief descriptions, as well as their estimations (see table below). From this list, we can see how the pope's art experts favored Christian coins, medals, and series of lead seals, a category that made up more than half of the objects they wished to purchase, constituting 242 pieces (57.8 percent of the listed items). The second most represented category is icons and paintings, numbering 99 objects, or 23.6 percent of the total.

These data help us understand the interests of the papal collections. The focus on the series of lead seals, for example, can be explained by the rarity of having complete series with all the pieces extant. In addition, some seals were considered rare or extremely rare. As for the other coins and medals, they likely helped complete series already present in the papal collection. The interest in Mariotti's paintings, however, was more linked to the history of the collections of the Vatican Museums. The Treaty of Tolentino of 1797 and the period of the Roman Republic (1798–99) had resulted in the dispersal of the pope's collections and the loss of many masterpieces. Napoleon's military campaigns in Italy led to the occupation of the Papal States, and under the Treaty of Tolentino, the pope was forced to cede territory, pay heavy reparations, and surrender many valuable artworks, which were transported to France.[45] After the fall of Napoleon (1769–1821), some confiscated pieces returned to Rome, and the pope continued to expand his collections with new acquisitions. The section of his museum dedicated to "primitive" artists (namely artists who were active in the century and a half between Giotto and Raphael) was still very limited, although this type of work was already present in many private Italian and European collections and enjoyed a growing popularity. The Pacca Edict,[46] published in April 1820, highlights this change of taste and reveals that the categories neglected previously by the pontifical authorities were now officially recognized as worthy of being safeguarded, including all the works that "can illustrate the decadence, the resurrection, and the history of the arts"—meaning that premodern art was now considered important.[47] For this reason, from 1819 to 1820, the pope decided to purchase the icons and works of "primitive" artists of the Mariotti collection with the aim of decorating the rooms of the Vatican library. The pope was also interested in his frescoes, engraved stones, and miscellaneous objects and acquired a total of seventy-eight pieces.

A breakdown of Lelli and Visconti's list for papal acquisitions allows us to draw four main conclusions:

1. Icons made up a large number of the paintings from the Lelli-Visconti list, comprising twenty-nine items out of a total of ninety-nine (29.3 percent);

2. Paintings dated to the fourteenth (nineteen works), fifteenth (seventeen works), and sixteenth centuries (eleven works), numbering forty-seven in sum, constituted almost half of the entries (47.5 percent);

3. A sizeable part of the budget allocated to painting acquisition was spent on the icons (448.50 *scudi romani* [40.9 percent]), followed by early Renaissance paintings from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (respectively, 307 *scudi romani* [28 percent] and 117 *scudi romani* [10.7 percent]).

4. The average price paid for an icon was 15.47 *scudi romani*, second only to that paid for a painting from the fourteenth century (16.16 *scudi romani*).

Most of the twenty-nine icons purchased from the Mariotti collection were small in size, but the most expensive was the large altar triptych with the *Annunciation and Selected Saints* of 1551, valued at 80 *scudi romani*, followed by the *Virgin and Child with Saints Anne, Paraskevi, Helen, and Photini*, estimated at 40 *scudi romani*. Four other icons were each estimated at 30 *scudi romani*, such as the *Dormition* by Ioannis Moskos, the *Five Doctors of the Eastern Church*, the panel with *Moses*, and an icon of the *Virgin Mary*. The pope's collection already boasted a respectable number of icons thanks to the donation of Francesco Vettori before 1757, and the additions from Mariotti's collection were intended to help fill in the last chronological and iconographic gaps.

While the archival sources enable a general reconstruction of the collecting preferences of the pope's emissaries, there is only sufficient information in a few cases to reconstruct the history of individual icons. Regrettably, it is impossible to trace the current location of the entirety of these twenty-nine icons; however, the location of the triptych with the *Baptism of Jesus Christ, the Crucifixion, and Saints John the Baptist, Mark, and Nicholas,* the *Five Doctors of the Eastern Church,* the *Virgin and Child with Saints Anne, Paraskevi, Helen, and Photini*, and the pair of panels representing *Moses* and *Melchizedek* is known.[48]

The paintings and the icons purchased from Mariotti's collection joined the rooms of the Christian Museum when they entered the papal collection. However, they would not remain there very long, as over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the Vatican Museums underwent many changes, with much rearrangement of the galleries and relocation of the objects. Why they were displayed in these rooms rather than in the museum's picture halls, which would have been the most obvious choice, is something of a mystery. At the time, the works of "primitive" artists and icons were regarded primarily as testimonies of the medieval Christian past, whereas the picture gallery showcased the most important modern works in the Vatican Museums, such as

paintings by Raphael (1483–1520) and Caravaggio (1571–1610).[49]

An important change took place with the 1837 inauguration of the room of paintings of the Middle Ages, commissioned by Pope Gregory XVI Cappellari (r. 1831–46). On this occasion, some of Mariotti's paintings were moved from the Christian Museum to that new location, which is currently known as the Sala degli Indirizzi (Addresses Room).[50] The objects here were displayed in twenty cabinets made by Raffaele Stern (1774–1820) in 1820.[51] This arrangement was much appreciated by the pope's contemporaries, including Antonio Nibby (1792–1839) who, in 1838, celebrated the new opening in his guide to Rome:

> Returning to the hall of ancient paintings, embellished on the high walls with frescoes by Professor Filippo Cavaliere Agricola, you can see around the cabinets rich in American wood, equipped with crystals, made with beautiful architecture and decorated with gilding. Within them are, jealously guarded, many rare paintings of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, most of them on panel and all with sacred subjects. These very valuable paintings, excluding a few, come from Mariotti's museum, and Pope Gregory XVI had them cleaned and decorated with rich frames and here placed and arranged them in a beautiful order.[52]

Thus, thirty years after his death, Mariotti's collection continued to interest scholars and art lovers. The investment of the Vatican in Byzantine, or "Greco-Russian," art prompted Monsignor Gabriele Laureani (1788–1849), *primo custode* of the Vatican Library, to assemble in the Sacred Museum "a precious collection of the most ancient images of the Christian rite."[53] The upheavals and changes in the museum's internal structuring in 1854, due to Giuseppe Marchi (1795-1860) and his pupil Giovanni Battista De Rossi (1822-1894), were also recalled by the text of Canon Xavier Barbier de Montault (1830–1901), published in 1867 and devoted to the artworks in the various rooms of the Vatican Museums.[54] According to this guide, immediately after the library, the visitor entered the room of the Museo Sacro, whose objects were divided into three major periods and displayed in six cases and eighteen cabinets. Here viewers encountered "first of all, the Latin art of the catacombs or of the first centuries; [then] the art of the Middle Ages, Renaissance, and modern times; and finally Byzantine art, which, having a distinct character, was not to be confused with the art of the West."[55] These latter works were divided according to the material from which they were produced: "We have different categories for goldsmithing, silverware, bronze, enameling, ivory, ceramic, glyptic, numismatic, painting, etc."[56]

The arrangement of the showcases and cupboards still forms a geometric partition today, with the cabinets (three per side) separating the eighteen cupboards (nine per

side) in groups of three. The Byzantine section continues to present some works that belonged to Mariotti. We find the icons of the *Five Doctors of the Eastern Church*, the *Virgin and Child with Saints Anne, Paraskevi, Helen, and Photini*, and the two Greek paintings of *Moses* and *Melchizedek*. At the start of the twentieth century, further changes disrupted the pope's museums, starting with the Pinacoteca during the pontificate of Pius X Sarto (r. 1903–14). In 1909, he decided to add paintings from the Middle Ages to the picture gallery and to move all of the collections to the ground floor of the Apostolic Palace, into the seven large rooms of the Belvedere corridor, the so-called Bramante Gallery. However, because of the direct sunlight on the works, this arrangement was not retained for long.

The paintings found their current place in the building constructed in 1930–31 by Luca Beltrami (1854–1933), the architect of Pope Pius XI Ratti (r. 1922–39). This new space, opened in 1932, consists of two floors: the lower one houses the conservation and restoration laboratories, the photography cabinet, the depository, and the administration offices. Upstairs is the gallery, following the same ground plan. The new rooms of the Pinacoteca still preserve the layout of 1932, but a chronological arrangement is now privileged over an organization by schools. In addition to these works, this new arrangement was accompanied by the first-ever exhibition to the public of a large number of paintings that were hitherto inaccessible, namely: a set of Byzantine and Russian icons; other paintings from "primitive" artists; panels from the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries; as well as a number of works previously displayed in the pope's summer residence at Castel Gandolfo. This display brought on view artworks that had previously been in the pope's private apartments, the offices of the papal administration, or stored in the depository. The change made it possible to appreciate a large selection of the works preserved in the Vatican and several paintings from the Mariotti collection, which are still exhibited alongside other pieces of the papal collections.

Among the pieces of Mariotti's collection, we know the current location of six of them. In Room XVIII: Fifteenth to Nineteenth Century (Icon Room), are the *Five Doctors of the Eastern Church* (display case 7/c, inv. no. 40089), the *Virgin and Child with Saints Anne, Paraskevi, Helen, and Photini* (display case 7/b, inv. no. 40074), and the *Deesis* (display case 2/a, inv. no. 40050). In the papal private administration rooms or reserves are the triptych with the *Baptism of Jesus Christ, the Crucifixion and Saints John the Baptist, Mark, and Nicholas* (inv. nos. 40034–36), the *Moses* (inv. no. 40892), and the *Melchizedek* (inv. no. 40893).

Conclusions

This study of the Mariotti collection provides insight to the Roman collections of Eastern

art in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Mariotti's great interest in icons was due to his passion for the Greek language and culture. His training and his acclaim as a Hellenist inspired him to collect this class of objects, then still rare in such large numbers in private collections. Marrioti appreciated both the icons' visual style and their value in documenting Greek devotional practice, hence his attention their inscriptions and iconography. The pope's acquisition of Mariotti's rich collection and its current display in the Vatican Museums indicates the lasting importance of this complex and multifaceted man, who is today almost completely forgotten.

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Notes

Unless otherwise indicated, translations are mine.

1 S. Moretti, *Roma bizantina: Opere d'arte dall'impero di Costantinopoli nelle collezioni romane* (Rome: Campisano, 2014). On Mariotti, see G. Previtali, *La fortuna dei primitivi: Da Vasari ai neoclassici* (Torino: Einaudi, [1964]1989), 227nn1–4, 230; F. Todini, "Agostino Mariotti: Un collezionista nella Roma settecentesca," *Antologia di Belle Arti Roma 13–14* (1980): 27–37; A. Tartuferi and G. Tormen, eds., *La fortuna dei primitivi Tesori d'arte dalle collezioni italiane fra Sette e Ottocento*, exh. cat. (Florence: Giunti, 2014), 35–145; G. Odone, "L'avocat Agostino Mariotti (1724–1806) et son musée, "une des curiosités de Rome" (PhD diss., Université de Lorraine; Università degli studi La Sapienza (Rome), 2020).

2 On the emergence of Byzantine Studies, inclusive of art history, in the sixteenth to eighteenth century, see Nathanael Aschenbrenner and Jake Ransohoff, eds, *The Invention of Byzantium in Early Modern Europe* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 2021).

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6 Musée du Louvre, inv. no. OA 9063. A. Héron de Villefosse, "L'ivoire de Peiresc," *Mémoires de la Société nationale des Antiquaires de France* 75 (1915–18): 267–95; J. Durand, *Byzance: L'art byzantin dans les collections publiques françaises* (Paris: Éditions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 1992), 63–65; A. Cutler, "Barberiniana: Notes on the Making, Content, and Provenance of Louvre OA. 9063," in *Tesserae: Festschrift für Josef Engemann, Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* S18 (1993): 329–39; M. Cristini, "Eburnei nuntii: I dittici consolari e la diplomazia imperiale del VI secolo," *Historia:*

Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte 68 (2019): 489–520. During the eighteenth century, the ivory was sold together with other objects from the Barberini collection and eventually arrived at the Musée du Louvre, Paris.

7 Mauro della Valle, *Costantinopoli e il suo impero. Arte, architettura, urbanistica nel millennio bizantino* (Milan: Jaca, 2007); G. Pittiglio in I. A. Eliades, ed., *Cipro e l'Italia al tempo di Bisanzio: L'icona grande di San Nicola tis Stegis del XIII secolo restaurata a Roma*, exh. cat. (Rome: Museo Bizantino e Galleria d'Arte, Fondazione Arcivescovo Macario III, Nicosia, 2009), 227–30; S. Moretti, "Viaggio di un trittico eburneo da Costantinopoli a Roma: Note in margine al 'Corpus degli oggetti bizantini in Italia,'" in *La sapienza bizantina: Un secolo di ricerche sulla civiltà di Bisanzio all'Università di Roma* (Rome: Campisano Editore, 2012), 225–44.

8 A. F. Gori and G. B. Passeri, *Thesaurus veterum Diptychorum consularium et ecclesiasticorum* (Florence: Typographia Caietani Albizzini, 1759), ii, table 50.

9 J-B-L-G. Seroux d'Agincourt, *Histoire de l'art par les monuments: Depuis sa décadence au IV siècle jusqu'à son renouvellement au XVI* (Paris: Treuttel et Würtz, 1823), 4: table 3.

10 Inv. no. 9178; Moretti, *Roma bizantina*, fig. 26.

11 "una piccola reliquia di varie parti dell'antica basilica." S. Danesi Squarzina, *Caravaggio e i Giustiniani* (Milan: Electa, 2001), 21. See also Moretti, *Roma bizantina*, 74n252.

12 Moretti, *Roma bizantina*, 76nn263–64.

13 L. A. Muratori, *Antiquitates italicae medii aevi*, 6 vols. (Mediolani: ex Typographia Societatis Palatinae in Regia Curia, 1738–43).

14 A. Bosio, *Roma sotterranea opera postuma di Antonio Bosio romano* (Rome: Guglielmo Facciotti, 1632). For an in-depth study of the relationship between Bosio and collectors of Christian antiquities, see C. Cecalupo, *Antonio Bosio e i primi collezionisti di antichità cristiane*, 2 vols. (Vatican City: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 2020).

15 M. Boldetti, *Osservazioni sopra i cimiteri de' santi martiri ed antichi cristiani di Roma* (Rome: Giovanni Maria Salvioni, 1720).

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Nella Stamperia Vaticana presso Giovanni Maria Salvioni, 1737–54).

17 B. Sölch, *Francesco Bianchini (1662–1729) und die Anfänge öfentlicher Museen in Rom* (Monaco: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2007); P. Liverani, "Il 'Museo Ecclesiastico' e dintorni," in *Francesco Bianchini (1662–1729) und die europäische gelehrte Welt um 1700*, ed. Valentin Kockel and Brigitte Sölch (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2005), 207–34.

18 For a study of collections of medieval objects in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Rome, see G. Odone, "Passato/Passati: Medioevo ecclesiastico e classicismo artistico a confronto nel Settecento romano," in *L'invenzione del passato nel Settecento*, ed. M. Formica, A. M. Rao, and S. Tatti, (Rome: Storia e Letteratura, 2022), 103–14.

19 A. de Angelis, "La collezione di primitivi del cardinale Francesco Saverio de Zelada (1717–1801)," *Ricerche di Storia dell'Arte* 77 (2002): 41–53.

20 On the Borgia collection, see *Le quattro voci del mondo: Arte, culture e saperi nella collezione di Stefano Borgia* 1731–1804), acts of the colloquium, Velletri, Palazzo Comunale, 13–14 May 2000, Electa; *La collezione Borgia: Curiosità e tesori da ogni parte del mondo*, ed. Anna Germano and Marco Nocca, exh. cat. (Naples: Electa, 2001), especially Marco Nocca's article, "'Bell'ornamento per la Patria, e un bel decoro per la casa': Stefano Borgia e la sua collezione," pp. 37–53.

21 A librarian and scholar born in Lebanon, Giuseppe Simonio Assemani contributed to the spread of Eastern studies in Italy in the eighteenth century thanks to his writings and collection of Eastern and Greek manuscripts. On the importance of the Maronite College in Rome, see Pierre Raphaël, *Le róle du Collège maronite romain dans l'orientalisme aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles* (Beirut: Université Saint-Joseph, 1950),123–36.

22 Francesco Vettori possessed several icons in his collection: https://catalogo.museivaticani.va/index.php/MultiSearch/Index?search=Francesco+Vettori.

23 Biblioteca Vallicelliana di Roma (BVR), MS Allacci 172, fol. 62.

24 The letter is entirely preserved in Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (BAV), Vat. lat. 9189, fols. 79r–81r.

25 "Anche per natural propensione avuta perfin dalla prima adolescenza alle belle arti, emmi riuscito fare una serie di Pitture, in cui le une dalla venuta del Signore insino a Michelangelo provarono la verità della Religione, e della Storia Ecclesiastica, e le altre da Michelangelo a noi la perfezione del disegno." BAV, Vat. lat. 9187, fol. 108r.

26 Moretti, *Roma bizantina*, 92-95.

27 Simona Moretti, *La miniatura medievale nel Seicento e nel Settecento: Fra erudizione, filologia e storia dell'arte*, Storia della miniatura 12 (Florence: Centro Di, 2008), 137–48, esp. 147nn48–49.

28 Manolis Chatzidakis and Evgenia Drakopoulou, *Hellēnes zōgraphoi meta tēn halōsē* (1450-1830), 2 vols. (Athens: Kentro Neoellēnikōn Ereunōn, 1987-2010), 2:203–5.

29 I. Kulczynski, *Specimen ecclesiæ Ruthenicæ, ab origine susceptæ fidei ad nostra usquè tempora in suis captibus seu primatibus Russiæ cum S. Sede apostolica romana* (Paris, 1733).

30 "Si distinguono dalle latine le pitture greche non solamente per le diverse lettere o greche o latine appostevi, ma ancora per la maniera totalmente diversa [di essere dipinte]." G. Della Valle, *Lettere Sanesi di un socio dell'Accademia di Fossano sopra le belle arti* (Venice: Presso G. Pasquali, 1782), 1:218.

31 "bello molto con pieghe mantenute, volti e nudo assai ragionevoli, ma di brutte mani e piedi troppo esili, in uno il Battesimo di Nostro Signore rappresentato come in certi musaici e bassorilievi, e l'acqua è rappresentata per via di linee parallele, una sopra l'altra, vedi Giovanni con pelle, l'angelo che tiene le vesti. In altro San Giovanni Battista, in altro la Crocefissione BEATA CRUSIFIXIO [*sic*] con simil carattere gli altri. Credonsi lavori di Italiani scolari de' Greci." Luigi Lanzi, *Taccuini*, 1794, in Biblioteca degli Uffizi (BGU), MS 36,10, fol. 41r.

32 "fra le pitture iscritte grecomosche, alcune sono di buon disegno, bell'architetture, di tutte bell'equilibrio di colori, piedi ben collocati . . . le credo però più recenti." BGU, MS 36,10, fol. 41v.

33 BGU, MS 36,10, fol. 41v.

34 Seroux d'Agincourt, *Histoire de l'art*, 2:100; n.(a). BAV, Vat. lat. 9189, fol. 46r.

35 Mariotti claims to have bought the icon, whose Greek origin is posited by the words "EX BIZANTIO" on the back of the panel, directly from the heirs of the Roman art dealer called "Spagna." BAV, Vat. lat. 9189, fol. 73v; Antonio Muñoz, *I quadri bizantini della Pinacoteca Vaticana provenienti dalla Biblioteca Vaticana* (Rome: Danesi, 1929), 9, pl. III.2.

36 BAV, Arch. bibl. 67, fol. 246v n28; fol. 248v n. 58; fols 252r–v n. 123–32; fol. 261v n. 241, 243; fols. 268r–69r nn. 372, 380–86, 396–99; BAV, Vat. lat. 9189, fol. 15r, 37v, 39r, 40v, 47r, 90v, 101r, 133r, 160r.

37 BAV, Arch. bibl. 67, fol. 268v n. 380–82; fol. 269r n. 396–99; BAV, Vat. lat. 9189, fol. 15r, 37v.

38 BAV, Arch. bibl. 67, fol. 268v n. 386.

39 "non invidia le altre [opere] descritte della Grecia." BAV, Arch. bibl. 67, fol. 298v n. 385.

40 "bell'esempio in un dittico greco in legno, che con varie altre sacre antichità possiede in Roma l'erudito Avvocato Agostino Mariotti." Stefano Borgia, *Memorie istoriche della pontificia città di Benevento dal secolo VIII al secolo XVIII divise in tre parti raccolte* (Rome: Salomoni, 1769), 3:pl. XLI.

41 We have no information on this book, other than the title. BAV, Arch. bibl. MS 67, fol. 79v n. 20.

42 "Indicazione delle Antichità Sacre della chiara memoria dell'Avvocato Agostino Mariotti, ora della Sig:ra Apollonia Mariotti, vedova Luparelli." BAV, Arch. bibl. MS 69, fol. 3 r–11r.

43 See S. Moretti, "Sulle tracce di Bizanzio: Due (anzi tre) codici miniati dispersi e ritrovati," *Rivista di storia della miniatura* 20 (2016): 66nn25–28.

44 On Filippo Aurelio Visconti, see *L'elogio di Filippo Aurelio visconti socio ordinario vice-segretario ed archivista dell'Accademia letto dal socio ordinario Cav. Luigi Cardinali nell'Adunanza tenuta nel di' 30 aprile* 1835, Atti dell'Accademia Romana di Archeologia, Dissertazioni 6 (Nella Stamperia della R. C. A., 1835), 413–59 ; D. Gallo, "I Visconti al servizio di papi, della Repubblica e di Napoleone," *Roma moderna e contemporanea* (January–April 1994): 77–90, at 82n14; Françoise Hamon and Charles MacCallum, ed., *Louis Visconti*, 1791–1853, exh. cat. (Paris: Délégation à l'action artistique de la Ville de Paris, 1991), 48–59, at 51–52.

45 On the relationship between "Repubblica Romana" and the arts, see P. P. Racioppi, "La Repubblica romana e le Belle Arti (1798–99): Dispersione e conservazione del patrimonio artistico," *Roma moderna e contemporanea* 9, nos. 1–3 (2001): 193–215.

46 *Editto dell'emminentissimo, e reverendissimo Signor Cardinal Pacca Camerlengo di S. Chiesa sopra le Antichità, e gli Scavi* (Rome: Vincenzo Poggiolini Stampatore, 1820). The document was transcribed in Valter Curzi, *Bene culturale e pubblica utilità:Politiche di tutela a Roma tra Ancien Régime e Restaurazione* (Argelato, Italy: Minerva, 2004), 178–86.

47 "possono illustrare il decadimento, il risorgimento, e la Storia delle Arti." Curzi, *Bene culturale*, no. 20. On the safeguarding works of art in the time of Pius VII and around the Pacca Edict, see Valter Curzi, "Nuova coscienza e uso politico del patrimonio artistico negli anni del pontificato di Pio VII Chiaramonti," in L*'arte contesa nell' età di Napoleone, Pio VII e Canova*, ed. Roberto Balzani, exh. cat. (Milan: Silvana, 2009), 28–32.

48 Maria Bianco Fiorin, *Icone della Pinacoteca Vaticana* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1995), 15, 28, 31, 34 e 42.

49 In 1820, the collection of the Picture Gallery was formed by the paintings "i più classici ad olio, che in tavola o in tela fecero i più rinomati pittori delle Scuole Italiane" ("the most classic in oil, as well as on board or canvas made by the most renowned painters of the Italian Schools"), and it was housed in the rooms of the Borgia apartment. The list of paintings exhibited at the time, including very few works by "primitive" artists, can be found in Giuseppe Antonio Guattani, *I più celebri quadri delle diverse scuole italiane riuniti nell'appartamento Borgia del Vaticano disegnati ed incisi da Giuseppe Craffonara* (Rome: nella Stamperia de Romanis, 1820).

50 In 1818, during the time of Pope Pius VII, the room was used to temporarily conserve the library of Cardinal De Zelada. Its current name derives from the fact that until Pius XI (r. 1922–39), it housed the homage messages addressed to popes Leo XIII (r. 1878–1903) and Pius X (r. 1903–14). Today, this room is part of the Christian Museum and holds a collection of enamel, ivory, and metals objects.

51 Unfortunately, there is no catalogue explaining each showcase. It was only many years later, with the work of Xavier Barbier de Montault in 1867, that we could trace the arrangement of all the works in the twenty cabinets of the room. The Vatican archives hold a manuscript from 1880, written by Carlo Descemet, that contains the list of paintings kept in the twenty cases, but it does not provide any additional information beyond Xavier Barbier de Montault, *La bibliothèque vaticane et ses annexes: Le musée Chrétien, la salle des tableaux du Moyen-Âge, les chambres Borgia, etc.* (Rome: Librairie de Joseph Spithoever, 1867). See also C. Descemet, *Pitture medievali e cristiane custodite nellaXX vetrinadella Vaticana. Inventario descrittivo compilato dal comm.* C. D. (Rome, 1880).

52 "Tornando poscia nella sala delle pitture antiche, abbellita sull'alto delle pareti con affreschi del professor Filippo cavaliere Agricola, si veggono attorno negli armadii ricchissimi di legno americano, muniti di cristalli, fatti con bella architettura e ornati di dorature. Entro di essi custodisconsi gelosamente molti rari dipinti del secolo XIII, e XIV, la maggior parte in tavola e tutti di sacro argomento. Queste pregevolissime pitture,

poche escluse, provengono dal museo Mariotti ed il regnante Gregorio XVI fattele ripulire ed ornare con ricche cornici qui le ha collocate e disposte con bell'ordine." Antonio Nibby, *Roma nell'anno MDCCCXXXVIII: Parte seconda moderna* (Rome: Tipografia Belle Arti, 1841), 245.

53 "una preziosa raccolta delle più antiche immagini del culto Cristiano." Gaetano Moroni, *Dizionario di erudizione storico-ecclesiastica da S. Pietro sino ai giorni nostri, XXXII* (Venice: Emiliana, 1845), 49:270.

54 Barbier de Montault, *Bibliothèque vaticane et ses annexes*.

55 "tout d'abord l'art latin des catacombes ou des premiers siècles; l'art du Moyen-Âge, de la Renaissance et des temps modernes; enfin l'art byzantin, qui, ayant un cachet à part, devait ne pas être confondu avec l'art de l'Occident." Barbier de Montault, *Bibliothèque vaticane et ses annexes*, 42.

56 "Nous avons des catégories différentes pour l'orfèvrerie, l'argenterie, la bronzerie, l'émaillerie, l'ivoirerie, la céramique, la glyptique, la numismatique, la peinture, etc." Barbier de Montault, *Bibliothèque vaticane et ses annexes*, 42.

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Justin Willson

Authenticity and Dissimulation in the Joseph Davies Icon Collection

Abstract

The Chazen Museum of Art in Madison, Wisconsin, houses a unique set of Russian feast icons. This study proposes that the Chazen feast icons offer a glimpse into a wider phenomenon of collecting, namely, the desire to create patterns and unity amidst disorder and difference. This set includes authentic Muscovite-era painting but also dissimulations common to Old Believer restorers and workshops dependent on pattern books. Old Believers, who rejected Westernizing trends in icon painting, promoted the publication of pattern books, and they came to play an important role in twentieth-century icon painting. The author suggests that we should embrace the heterogeneity of such groups. Often scholars are trained to see similarity, which allows them to generalize about stylistic and iconographic developments and the function of images in a world distant from the present. However, the search for similarity and coherence runs aground on such a highly synthetic group as the Chazen feast icons. Studying the differences between the individual panels allows one to see how a composite whole may have come into existence with restoration campaigns or for the art market, catering to the desire to see unity amidst multiplicity.

Keywords: Chazen Museum of Art, Joseph Davies, Authenticity, Russian Icons, Muscovite Art.

The Chazen Museum of Art in Madison, Wisconsin, houses a set of Russian feast icons that is unique in North American collections (Figs 1–5). Small in size, the panels measure 34 x 29 centimeters. They are suited for display in the templon, a beam stretching across the altar space in Orthodox churches. Complete sets of feast icons are rare, and of the twelve depictions of the major annual feasts, the Chazen houses five: the Pokrov, Baptism, Crucifixion, Pentecost, and Anastasis, the last of which is slightly smaller than the others, measuring only 12 ½ x 11 ½ inches. The original set may have included a sixth panel depicting the Annunciation; painted in a slightly different style, it is now kept at the Menil Collection in Houston (Fig. 6).[1] Measuring the same size as the first four panels, it is stylistically closest to the Pokrov icon at the Chazen.

Fig. 1 Pokrov, tempera transfer onto new wood panel, 16th century, with modern repainting. 34 x 29 cm. Madison, WI, Chazen Museum of Art, inv. no. 37.1.8.

Fig. 2 Anastasis, tempera on wood, late 19th or early 20th century. 34 x 29 cm. Madison, WI, Chazen Museum of Art, inv. no. 37.1.10.

Fig. 3 Baptism of Christ, fragmentary tempera transfer onto new wood panel, 16th century, with modern repainting. 34 x 29 cm. Madison, WI, Chazen Museum of Art, inv. no. 37.1.9.

In the present study I propose that the Chazen feast icons offer a glimpse into American collecting practices in the early twentieth century. This set of icons includes authentic Muscovite-era painting but also dissimulations that betray an artist's knowledge of late nineteenth-century pattern books. Russian workshops which rejected Westernizing

trends in icon painting promoted the publication of pattern books, and they came to play an important role in twentieth-century icon painting. In my discussion I suggest that we should embrace the heterogeneity of such groups. Often scholars are trained to see similarity, which allows them to generalize about such phenomena as stylistic development and the function of images in a world distant, if not utterly inaccessible, from the present. However, the search for similarity runs aground on such a highly synthetic group as the Chazen feast icons. Looking closely at the differences between each of the individual panels allows one to see how a composite whole came into existence for the art market, catering to the desire to see unity amidst multiplicity.

Fig. 4 Crucifixion, fragmentary tempera transfer onto new wood panel, 16th century, with modern repainting. 34 x 29 cm. Madison, WI, Chazen Museum of Art, inv. no. 37.1.11.

Fig. 5 Pentecost, tempera on wood, late 19th or early 20th century. 34 x 29 cm. Madison, WI, Chazen Museum of Art, inv. no. 37.1.12.

The Madison feast panels came to the University of Wisconsin in 1938. They were the gift of Joseph E. Davies, the husband of Marjorie Merriweather Post–herself a highly successful collector of Russian icons and Romanov-era artworks.[2] Davies graduated from the University of Wisconsin in 1898, practiced law in the city, and served as chair of the Democratic Party of Wisconsin. In 1913 he moved to Washington, DC where he was in close contact with President Woodrow Wilson. In 1937 Davies received the ambassadorship to the USSR from President Roosevelt, the second such position within the State Department. As ambassador Davies advocated for congenial US-Soviet relations, and he even wrote a bestseller, *Mission to Moscow* (1942), in which he urged wider American support for the Soviet Union.

Fig. 6 Annunciation, tempera transfer onto new wood panel, 16th century, with modern repainting. 32.5 x 28 cm. Houston, TX, The Menil Collection, inv. no. 85-057.23 DJ.

While living abroad Davies gained a high appreciation of Russian visual art, and he acquired nearly two dozen icons and Soviet realist paintings. Upon returning to the United States in 1938, he donated his collection of Russian art to his alma mater. As late as summer 1937 Davies was still in the planning stages of assembling his icon collection, which eventually numbered some twenty-three panels. Yet by November of that same year he had already begun planning an exhibit in Madison—a whirlwind like speed.[3] By summer of 1938 the Davies Collection of Russian art would be on display at Memorial Union on the campus of the University of Wisconsin during graduation ceremonies, accompanied by a catalogue issued in New York dating to the same year.[4]

The catalogue of the Davies Collection, published by the Alumni Association of the University of Wisconsin of the City of New York, describes but does not illustrate the five feast icons in question. Lacking detailed accession notes, it is impossible to know in what condition they arrived in Madison. Following their exhibition the panels were placed in storage in the basement of Bascom Hall, then home of the art history department; there they remained until the construction of the Elvehjem Art Center in 1970. Before their transferal, the feast icons underwent cleaning and restoration, but unfortunately no photographs were taken during their conservation. Since no other early reproductions appear to have survived (there are none in the object files at the Chazen), their exact state of preservation at the time of acquisition, during their time in Bascom Hall, and throughout the early years of the Elvehjem remains uncertain.

The icons first received scholarly attention from George Galavaris, a student of Kurt Weitzmann at Princeton University. Galavaris had been apprised of the Davies collection while serving as a visiting professor at the University of Wisconsin in the late 1960s. At that time the Elvehjem was still being built, but its director, Millard Rogers, who later served as director of the Cincinnati Art Museum, took Galavaris to see the icons in the basement of Bascom Hall. In the 1960s, the study of icons was still in its infancy in the United States and Europe, as discussed by Louise Hardiman in her contribution to this volume; the fullest research was then carried out mostly in Greece, Russia, and Eastern Europe. In his 1973 catalogue of the Davies icons, Galavaris, whose

primary area of specialization was Byzantine manuscripts, describes Bascom Hall as if it were a catacomb housing ancient death masks: "The faces in the icons were dim, dark, and tarnished; some had suffered cracks, while others had become a feast for worms. And yet the piercing eyes in these faces were so much alive! I dared not touch these treasures, for I remembered that, once in a monastery in the East, a monk had told me not to touch a holy icon if my hands were not holy."[5] Galavaris's enchanted encounter with the "holy" portraits led him to keep his distance, saturated as the icons were with the spiritual aura of the "East." The words of a monk, not the demands of connoisseurship, guided his cataloguing of the Davies icons. This fact is important because his study has shaped their reception by the field of art history.

Fig. 7 Rear of Pentecost icon (Fig. 5).

Taking a closer look at the Davies feast icons, the artificiality of their ostensible coherence and collective identity as a "set" becomes clear. For instance, the Pokrov icon stands out from the set for several reasons (Fig. 1). All five of the Chazen icons would, at first glance, appear to be transfers to new wooden panels, as suggested by the marks on the rear of the Pentecost (Fig. 7). Likewise, they all bear painted inventory numbers from the State Tretyakov Gallery, as discussed further below. On the front of the Pokrov, we can see that an artist has glued an older paint layer onto a new wooden board. One can appreciate the even, rectilinear, brittle craquelure, which is extremely difficult to replicate even through sophisticated forgery techniques (such as painting the cracks with a fine-tipped brush), and the meandering edge of the central section of the composition. Typical of Novgorodian icons, the Pokrov exhibits few broken colors. Such architectural ensembles, with onion domes and mottled marble pillars, are widespread in sixteenth-century east Slavic iconography, and the original paint layer probably dates to the middle of that century. That said, portions of the icon have been repainted, perhaps several times. For instance, there is discoloration on the Mother of God's garments, her hand, Andrew's pointing hand, and the haloes of certain figures. However, overall, the icon is in relatively good condition with only minor abrasions.

The situation looks very different with the Anastasis (Fig. 2). To begin with, the color palette is markedly distinct. Here one finds broken blues, limey greens, iridescent greys, and pastel browns. Moreover, the craggy mountains, which are adorned with highlights, glow with a peachy tone, a departure from early Muscovite icons, which tend rather

to exhibit chalky mountains, as seen on the Chazen icon of Christ's Baptism (Fig. 3). Strangely, the painter has placed Christ's resurrected body within a gauzy mandorla through which can be glimpsed a terraced slope—a highly unusual choice which has few parallels in Russian iconography. We can be sure that the conservators did not mistakenly clean away the blue paint layer of the mandorla, accidentally revealing a landscape beneath, because the gold leaf, which has been applied on top of the paint, remains in place. In short, this filmy patina belongs to the uppermost layers of paint.

In his catalogue of the Chazen collection Galavaris takes note of the color discrepancy between the Anastasis and the other four panels at the Chazen; he thus assigns the former to the early seventeenth century, whereas he places the latter in the sixteenth century. Nevertheless, he follows the 1938 catalogue in attributing the entire set to the Kyiv Monastery of the Caves. The basis for this provenance is admittedly slim, perhaps simply reflecting what the Soviet dealers in Moscow told Davies. Similarly, whereas Galavaris identifies the entire set of feast icons as transfers, in fact only the Pokrov, and small sections of the Crucifixion and the Baptism, as well as the Annunciation at the Menil, contain the authentic craquelure and rough-hewn edge of a paint layer lifted from its original support.

These conclusions are supported by the fifth icon in the set—the Pentecost (Fig. 5). Curiously, the paint layers here appear to have worn thin over time even though they are free of craquelure. For instance, looking closely at the halo of the apostle seated at the bottom right, one spots flecks of gold leaf that seem to just barely adhere to the uppermost paint layer. Moreover, many of the apostles' garments have suffered uneven damage. But when one lifts the panel to inspect the surface in raking light, there is in fact no evidence of paint loss, no stratigraphy of applications of tempera. This is surprising because, stepping back from the panel, one would expect to find a surface built up of coats of paint to create a highly complex patina, but that is not the case.

Similar anomalies appear elsewhere on the Pentecost icon—for instance, in the towel lined with twelve scrolls held by the figure of Cosmos at the center bottom. Icon painters in Muscovy often shaded this textile a soft white hue or light tan. Here, presumably, the towel would originally have been an off white or creamy yellow since the scrolls are almost pure white. Over time the towel appears to have browned. On its left side, not one but several paint layers have worn thin, because the ochre underpainting now peeks out. However, this discoloration actually lies in the uppermost coating. Indeed, upon examination, the ochre underneath turns out to be a red streak added to the yellowish upper layer. Standing back, one realizes that this is a modern paint layer that has been antiqued to resemble an abraded sixteenth-century surface.

This conclusion is buttressed by a quick look at another figure: the apostle James,

seated on the lower left second up from the bottom. James's face looks as if it has suffered extensive paint loss; his skin tone blends almost seamlessly into his hairline, and several flecks of white accentuate the modeling of his angular face. His beard appears to be smudged: not an iconographer's error but an unfortunate staining of the sort so often found on panels stripped down to their original paint layer by modern conservators. Over the apostle's right shoulder is an indistinct passage where we seem to be seeing through a lock of hair that has rubbed away, revealing the upper part of James's shoulder and lower neck. Likewise, we see that the halo of the lower left figure, just below James, has also suffered losses. The top of his halo is marked by streaks of red and brown. The halo's dotted line indicates that the painter corrected its curve. However, the ring, which we are meant to see as the etched line of a "sixteenth-century" painter working in gold leaf, is not pressed into the board but is rather a thinly painted line. Thus, we have been made to see overlapping ruts in the trench of a compass and, where the gold has flaked away, to glimpse the ochre underneath (e.g., on the lower right figure's nimbus). However, all of this is an illusion, for there are no visible losses to the image's topography of pigments.

To summarize this analysis of the Chazen feast icons: this is a highly composite group. The Pokrov, as well as the Menil Annunciation, are fully authentic transfers onto new wooden boards. The Crucifixion includes an authentic sixteenth-century transfer in the sections in and around the cross, including especially Christ's body; but the remaining figures and parts of the scene were reconstructed in modern times. In the Baptism Christ's body may include a few small sections of transfer (e.g., in Christ's midriff), but the rest of the composition is, again, a later restoration, including in the landscape, which closely reflects older models. The Pentecost, on the other hand, includes no visible transfer but rather is a fully modern panel, with no section bearing any medieval painting. Finally, the Anastasis is also a modern panel, but its smaller size, composition, and color palette suggest that it may have been added to the group at a later time.

Given the provenance of the Davies feast icons, the group must have come together before the early 1920s. Elena Osokina has meticulously studied the pre-Revolutionary and Soviet archival sources for the Davies panels, including information about the inventory numbers on their backsides. The Pentecost icon bears on its top left the inventory number 1577 from the State Museum Depository (*Gosudarstvennyi Muzeinyi Fond*) (See Fig. 7).[6] The second appearance of the inventory number just below is preceded by the abbreviation "A. K." which Osokina has persuasively argued was the "English Club" (*Angliiskii Klub*)—a separate division of the Depository which stood apart from the main collection. Before this division was liquidated, the feast icons were transferred to the State Tretyakov Gallery where they received the new inventory number written at the bottom. According to official state records, the feast icons, some of which had been dated to the sixteenth century in Soviet documents, left the

Tretyakov Gallery to be sold by Antikvariat in November 1935—a mere two years before they were acquired by Davies.[7] As Osokina observes, the official records of the State Museum Depository only tracked icons in its central collection. Since the feast icons were held at the English Club, the registry of icons held at the Depository includes no record of their existence. This absence of information renders it impossible to say for certain where the Depository had acquired the icons—whether from an iconostasis of a small chapel, a private collection, or somewhere else.[8] In what follows I leave the question of their original gathering open-ended, exploring both the possibility that they were brought together for a liturgical context and to be sold to a private collector.

Ten years after Galavaris catalogued the Davies icon collection, the director of the Elvehjem Art Center, Katherine Mead, sent the panels to the Walters Art Gallery for technical analysis. The specialist conservator Manuel Theodore recounted that he found modern pigments on many of the icons. Along with a report, which he delivered to Mead, Theodore forwarded reproductions of X-rays, infrared, and ultraviolet light 4 x 5 inch negatives, color slides, stratigraphic drawings, and photomicrographs of a variety of paint samples. Theodore's reports are now kept in a binder with the object files for the Davies collection at the Chazen. Theodore recommended that Mead "not release any information about the icons until [she] had sufficient time to develop a museum position regarding them and had published a statement of this position." To this day the Chazen has not taken any "position" on the feast icons per se, and, unfortunately, it would appear that scholarship has overcorrected for Theodore's report. The latest online metadata lists all five panels as "early 20th century (late 16th-century style)."[9] However, the icon of the Pokrov, not to mention its counterpart at the Menil, is indisputably an original transfer, and the panels of the Crucifixion and Baptism at the Chazen also preserve at least some traces of original painting. This sweeping redating of the group inversely mirrors Galavaris's assertion that all five icons are authentic transfers, even though the antiquing and imitation of degradation can be seen with the naked eye. Neither of these all-or-nothing solutions quite does justice to the piecemeal, historical assemblage of the panels, which travelled very different biographical paths into their union as a festal group.

While it is impossible to know why the Pokrov and Annunciation icons are the sole fully sixteenth-century transfers, one can imagine a few different scenarios for their creation. It is well known that Old Believer workshops in late imperial Russia sought out sixteenth-century icons, regarding them as representatives of the authentic—medieval, or Byzantine—way to paint. The members of this variegated religious community adhered to premodern liturgical customs and an ancient style of icon painting, rejecting the Western reforms of the Russian Church undertaken during the Synodal period. Seen

in this light, the transfers of sixteenth-century images onto a modern support would have been a pious attempt to preserve highly venerated artistic forms. The fact that the master who restored these panels did not simulate a transfer for all the icons could point to an Old Believer workshop, for a patron from this community would have been attuned to the old style, knowing well the difference between a modern copy "in the old style" and a genuine transfer. The goal for this hypothetical commission, in which a coherent "group" was devised out of a medley of approaches to old objects, would have been to fashion a set from one or two salvageable sixteenth-century panels, filling out a cycle for a chapel or shrine. In this case, the modern pigments that Theodore found on the Pokrov would not surprise because Old Believers refurbished deteriorated panels on a wide scale.[10]

On the other hand, one might imagine a studio working for a dealer, filling out the set of feast icons for the market. Once they had been kept for a period in a private collection, the panels would have been later acquired by state collections. Here the motive for the assembly of a "set" would be entirely economic. A complete or almost complete cycle of "medieval" panels would fetch a higher price than one or two isolated transfers. However, this scenario presents problems of a rather different sort. For starters, it is hard to explain why the painter—who might in this case be called a "forger"—did not design all the panels to look more or less alike. Inexplicably, they would seem not even to have been concerned with hiding the meandering line of the transfer on the Pokrov and the Annunciation icons. This tell-tale detail immediately jumps out at a knowledgeable viewer, underscoring the stages of the panels' biography. If the painter were indeed a forger passing the whole set off as sixteenth century, why, then, would they not square off the edges of the transfer and camouflage its line? One might suppose that it was because the intended buyer would have been little versed in the appearance of medieval Russian icon painting. But if that were the case, then why even bother with producing transfers, which is a costly, time-consuming process which carries the added risk of damaging the older paint layer? If the buyer were not able to tell the difference, then the dealer would be wasting time and money. It would make more sense to sell a dozen antiqued panels rather than a mix-and-match of transfers and modern reproductions. To resolve this discrepancy, one might explain the authentic transfers as show pieces displayed to a potential buyer for scrutiny, whereas the others were kept in cases, but there is little evidence to support this idea. If we assume that the panels were perhaps artificially covered in grime and candle smoke, as Galavaris describes them, then we might imagine that their glaring difference in condition was harder to discern. Perhaps then the seller acquired the set from Old Believers, who are known to have had many icons confiscated, then sold them as a medieval set, aware that their degraded state would make it hard to detect their actual age. This scenario would solve the problem of incorporating costly transfers, but its complexity might argue against its likelihood.

One scenario that we can safely rule out is that the two full transfers are actually inauthentic. The time-consuming process of faking cracked tempera costs more than the market value of a small panel. In his infamous attack on the George Hann collection, Vladimir Teteriatnikov claimed that numerous Russian icons in American collections display forged craquelure. Teteriatnikov cited the Spanish Forger of medieval miniatures and Han van Meegeren, the forger of Vermeer, both of whom simulated aged layers of pigment by baking parchment pages and wooden boards in the oven at high temperatures.[11] However, the Pokrov and Annunciation icons exhibit paint layers that closely match what one finds on authentic medieval Russian icons. The fine, rectilinear lines of the craquelure betray no trace of caking or any of the matted, rounded clumping found on painted surfaces that have been doctored to look aged. Teteriatnikov's conspiratorial scenario thus looks highly unlikely for the Chazen group.

Given the balance of evidence, I would propose that we envision a painter working in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century. These were the decades when Old Believers were actively recovering old panels and when Russian icons were being cleaned for the first time, after which they received a warm reception by the avant-garde and were exhibited abroad.[12] Whether the master was working for a pious Old Believer or another collector, after which the icons entered the State Tretyakov Gallery, is in the final analysis difficult to say. Why the painter fell back on authentic transfers in two instances also remains unclear, as does the motivation to antique the paint layers. However, it should be recalled that several hands were involved and that the Pokrov and Annunciation could have been show pieces. The painter of the Pentecost, Crucifixion and Baptism, all of which are executed in an identical style, which imitates the best early sixteenth-century Novgorodian and Muscovite icons, was a highly gifted individual. Whoever ultimately brought these panels together and offered them to Davies as a set no doubt did so for the art market, but whether they themselves knew, or cared to know, the full complexity of their various times of creation remains unclear. The chronological phases of a "set" can vary, with each owner shaping the origin narrative to suit their own needs.

On the Pentecost icon a tell-tale anachronism sheds light on how medieval icons were received in modernity. Indeed, the Davies feast icons specifically show us how the Muscovite period of artistic flourishing was viewed in late imperial Russia and the early Soviet period. The Pentecost icon displays what could be called the *hermeneutic circle of authentication*. Strategies developed in earlier centuries to guard against Muscovite painters adopting Western trends were deployed by contemporary painters to endow reproductions with an air of authenticity.

The Pentecost icon includes an inscription in the black space around the figure of Cosmos (the World) at the bottom. This text is an icon commentary—a uniquely Russian literary genre. Church leaders devised this body of literature over the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries to keep painters from abandoning Byzantine iconography in favor of Western painting. Written typically in the form of question-and-answer (*erotapokrisi*s), these texts addressed concerns that viewers had about puzzling aspects of Byzantine and Slavic iconography. Their authors justified particular details with reference to scripture, the church fathers, the liturgy, and other theological texts.[13]

The inscription on the Chazen Pentecost icon reads:

> The man is called "the World," and he appears as an old man because he has been aged by Adam's fall into sin, and he is in the dark place which represents the whole world being in a state of unbelief. His garment is red because it is stained by the blood of all the sacrifices made to the idols. He has a royal crown on his head to symbolize that sin was ruling in the world until that time. And he is holding a strip of cloth in his hands on which are the twelve scrolls, which represent the twelve apostles who illuminated the whole world with their blessed teaching.[14]

The commentary on which this inscription is based first appears in interpretive pattern books in the seventeenth century. One such pattern book was drawn up in 1669 and is now kept at the State History Museum in Moscow.[15] The text is based on a conversation, written down most likely in the second quarter of the sixteenth century, between the Athonite monk and translator Maksim Grek and the German and Latin speaking court official Nicholas Bülow.[16] In their exchange Bülow accuses Russian painters of not knowing why they paint the way they do, claiming: "Our [i.e. Catholic] painters do not depict the Pentecost in this way. However, your painters do, and they reason as you say, 'Whence has this [iconography] been taken? This gloss [*tolk*"] [i.e. Acts 2:1–4] does not agree with it [i.e. the depiction]!' Yet, many icon painters depict things that are not in the *podlinniki* [i.e., model books], and one must write and give them an answer!"[17] Maksim did not seek to defend the practices of painters in Muscovy, many of whom he knew firsthand and whom he himself suspected of straying from the Byzantine canons. Indeed, Maksim believed that painters needed to know the scriptural basis of iconography, a conviction shared by other Muscovite church leaders of the period. Sixteenth-century hierarchs, such as Metropolitan Makarii, would disseminate commentaries widely; they invoked these texts not only to defend iconography from the attacks of foreigners such as Bülow, but to provide exegetical explanations to workshops.[18] The commentary found on the Chazen icon was originally developed to provide the sort of "answer" Bülow sought—a written apology for canonical but perhaps

still not self-evident features of Byzantine art. Without an authoritative testimony, Russian painters might abandon them as unnecessary.

The Russian Church's regard for icon commentaries was not unwarranted. Elsewhere in the Orthodox world, authorities questioned the wisdom of Byzantine iconography. In 1727 the Athonite monk and icon painter Dionysios of Fourna wrote to the priest Anastasios Gordios, with whom he consulted about points of iconography. Dionysios's question concerned the figure of Cosmos in the Pentecost iconography—the same figure that was the focus of the Slavic commentary. Intriguingly, Anastasios rejected the type of image displayed on the Chazen icon. Instead of showing Cosmos, Anastasios preferred a composition portraying the Mother of God. Thus, he wrote to Dionysios: "Regarding the depiction of the Pentecost, that which has the Virgin and the apostles kneeling and the tongues of fire upon them seems better to me, and that in which Cosmos is personified as a man and the apostles around him seems less good, even though this representation has equally good meaning. But let whoever wishes, make their own choice."[19] In the end Dionysios did not follow Anastasios's advice. Consequently, his *Hermeneia*, which he compiled a few years later, recommends the Byzantine image with Cosmos.[20]

In 1903 A. I. Uspenskii published the so-called *Bolshakov Patternbook*, a late seventeenth-century compilation that includes the commentary on the Pentecost icon as well as other commentaries.[21] Uspenskii was invested in reforming iconography in line with early Muscovite painting. With the *Bolshakov Patternbook* he sought to put working models, preserved by Old Believers, in front of painters' eyes. In this respect, he was following the spirit of the commentary itself which was intended to guard against Western influences in Russian painting. Ironically, Uspenskii's model book would serve as a sort of guidebook for workshops presenting an idealized version of Russia's religious past in icons which fell into the hands of Western buyers.

Fig. 8 Sophia with Saints, tempera on wood, 17th century. 180 x 131 cm. Russia, Yaroslavl Museum Reserve, inv. no. 41526 (ik. 405).

By 1903 the function of icon commentaries had shifted—from a defense against Catholic, or Protestant, influences in Muscovite painting, to a critique of Western trends endorsed by the Russian Church itself. Since the seventeenth century, icon commentaries had circulated among Old Believers. These groups formally broke away from the Russian

Church in the 1670s, resisting the academic styles of painting favored by the Synod. For Old Believers it was sixteenth-century icons that represented the authentic Byzantine tradition, a fact that explains the commentary's appearance on the Chazen icon. That said, sixteenth-century painters only infrequently inscribed icons with commentaries, whereas later Old Believers retroactively added them onto older iconography that was singled out as controversial and retrograde after the reforms of Peter the Great. For instance, in 1722, a Russian Synod banned the iconography of Sophia, which thereafter flourished mostly in Old Believer communities. One seventeenth-century icon, now in Yaroslavl, includes the commentary on Sophia's iconography along its lower frame; this question-and-answer text was among the earliest, developed in Novgorod in the late fifteenth century (Fig. 8).[22] Among other details, the author explains why Sophia's throne has seven legs, declaring that they symbolize the seven spirits of Wisdom (cf. Isa. 11:2-3). Most likely, an eighteenth-century Old Believer added this commentary to the Yaroslavl panel, after the iconography had gone underground following the Petrine reforms. For Old Believers, the commentary validated an image that the Church had heretically rejected.

In all, the Chazen feast icons offer a fascinating glimpse into how complex even a single set of Russian panels in American collections can be. Davies' acquisition brings into vivid focus the overlapping worlds of Byzantinists, such as Galavaris, collectors, such as Joseph Davies, and university museums, such as the Chazen. Unfortunately, it remains impossible to specify the exact historical circumstances in which the set of icons was brought together, but given what has been said, it may have been a decision made with an eye to the art market by a museum official working to deaccession icons for Western buyers. In turn, the biographical complexity of this set begs the question of how scholars continue to construct and view sub-groups within North American collections. Often, the scholarly tendency is to look for similarities, leading one to overlook important differences. However, attending to these discrepancies is highly informative. Indeed, iconographic sets or ensembles may frequently be far more hybrid, heterogeneous mélanges than curatorial departments and scholars have allowed. Thus, the compilers of the 1938 catalogue uncritically accepted the provenance assigned by the Russian sellers, stating that all of the panels date to late sixteenth- or early seventeenth-century Kyiv. Thirty-five years later Galavaris repeated this provenance, although he noticed the transfer on the Pokrov. To construct a coherent set, he stated that all of the panels were transfers, notwithstanding their stylistic and technical differences. Noting the peculiarity of the color scheme on the icon of the Anastasis, he assigned it a slightly later date, placing it in the early seventeenth century. Finally, on technical grounds, Manuel Theodore hastily implied that the set was composed of late nineteenth- or early twentieth-century forgeries, disregarding the fact that some were authentic transfers

and that icons were routinely repainted and restored by Old Believers in the late imperial epoch, as well as by studios in the early Soviet period.

In short, the solutions of both Galavaris and Theodore are unsatisfying because neither does justice to the complexity of the Chazen group. This complexity is the lasting value of the Davies icon collection. Seen as a set, the feast icons resist easy binaries (authentic/premodern work or artificial/modern forgery), displaying a motley patchwork of periods, styles, and techniques. In so doing, they challenge scholars to look closer and to question simple answers, forcing one to imagine multi-phased scenarios in which motives become fuzzy, and religious and economic, sectarian and Orthodox intentions potentially all have their say. Perhaps unhelpfully, the strategies of dissimulation and authentication sometimes even converge, as in the case of the Pentecost icon. Its inscription belongs to a literary genre originally designed to defend the Byzantine tradition from Catholic "outsiders." But in a double twist of fate, the Church, amidst so many other Westernizing cultural trends in Russia, moved far beyond its Byzantine roots, which over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries would be preserved by Old Believers. In the nineteenth century, scholars looking to reform icon painting idealized the sixteenth century as a pure era of spiritual expression and unalloyed belief. In this world, icon commentaries came to be seen as a distillation of the true way to design and defend religious imagery. An icon with a commentary could help a studio pass off a modern reproduction as an ancient panel. Such an image was ostensibly self-explanatory. Its hermeneutic closure exuded the aura of a pristine time and place before the tradition of icon painting had purportedly been corrupted.

About the Author

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Notes

1 The icon is catalogued by Annmarie Weyl Carr in *Imprinting the Divine: Byzantine and Russian Icons from the Menil Collection*, ed. Carr (Houston, TX: The Menil Collection, 2011), cat. no. 47 (pp. 136–37)

2 For the icons owned by Post, see Wendy Salmond, *Russian Icons at Hillwood* (Washington, DC: Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens, 1998).

3 For the archival documents for the Davies collection, see Elena Osokina, *Nebesnaia golubizna angel'skikh odezhd: sud'ba proizvedenii drevnerusskoi zhivopisi 1920–1930-e gody* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2018), 461. For an overview of the collecting of Joseph Davies and Marjorie Merriweather Post in Moscow, see Anne Odom, "American Collectors of Russian Decorative Art," in *Treasures into Tractors: The Selling of Russia's Cultural Heritage, 1918-1938*, ed. Anne Odom and Wendy R. Salmond (Washington, DC: Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens, 2009), 264–95, at 267–75.

4 *The Joseph E. Davies Collection of Russian Paintings and Icons* (New York, 1938).

5 Galavaris, *Icons from the Elvehjem Art Center*, p. xi.

6 Osokina, *Nebesnaia golubizna*, 619–20, 621–22.

7 Osokina, *Nebesnaia golubizna*, 463–64, 475–76.

8 Osokina, *Nebesnaia golubizna*, 463–64, 475–76.

9 See the entry for the Pokrov: https://chazen.wisc.edu/collection/16929/our-lady-of-the-mantle-pokrov/ Accessed December 18, 2024. While I agree with Osokina (*Nebesnaia golubizna*, 475), that the Chazen has overcorrected based on Theodore's study of paint samples, the problem lies less with the conservator's method than with the conclusions drawn from the study. Osokina asserts: "Where precisely he [i.e., Theodore] took the examples of pigment, whether from the original layer or the repainting, is not known." However, Theodore's report on two of the most significant icons in the Davies collection, a large Nativity and Our Lady of the Sign, include multiple stratigraphic drawings of the samples, exact coordinates of their location on the panels, and notes discussing the paint layers. Indeed, Theodore himself expresses caution about the conclusions that one might draw from his study. Hence, at one point in his report, speaking about the Our Lady of the Sign, he writes below the heading "Description of area sampled": "Flesh in Christ's neck. Top layer of paint only?" Thus, perhaps unknowingly, he highlights the key issue that must be considered when drawing

conclusions from a study dependent on paint samples: icons were often refurbished out of honor to the saints. Thus, the paint layer must be perfectly clarified before conclusive statements can be made about the authenticity of the original stratum.

10 On Old Believer restorations, see especially Oleg Tarasov, *Icon and Devotion: Sacred Spaces in Imperial Russia*, trans. Robin Milner-Gulland (London: Reaktion Books, 2002).

11 Vladimir Teteriatnikov, *Icons and Fakes: Notes on the George R. Hann Collection*, 3 vols. (New York: [No publisher given], 1981), 2:131.

12 See Maria Taroutina, *The Icon and the Square: Russian Modernism and the Russo-Byzantine Revival* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2018).

13 On this genre, see Ágnes Kriza, *Depicting Orthodoxy in the Russian Middle Ages: The Novgorod Icon of Sophia, the Divine Wisdom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022).

14 See Gregory Melnik, *An Icon Painter's Notebook: The Bolshakov Edition (An Anthology of Source Materials)* (Torrance, CA: Oakwood Publications, 1995), 34–35 (translation revised to accord with the inscription).

15 See a podlinnik with a handful of iconophile texts: Moscow, State History Museum, Uvar. 495, fols. 121r–22v, 161v–63r. Catalogued in Arkh. Leonid, *Sistematicheskoe opisanie slaviano-rossiiskikh rukopisei sobraniia Grafa* A. S. Uvarova, 2 vols. (Moscow: Tvorishchestvo Tipografii A. I. Mamontova, 1893–94), 2:516–18 (cat. no. 1281).

16 See, for background and the manuscript, A. A. Zimin, "Doktor Nikolai Bulev: publitsist i uchenyi medik," in *Issledovaniia i materialy po drevnerusskoi literature*, ed. V. D. Kuz'mina (Moscow: Institut mirovoi literatury imeni A.M. Gor kogo, 1961), 78–86, at 83.

17 See A. I. Sobolevskii, "Materialy i zametki po drevne-russkoi literature 7: iz istorii ikonopisi," *Izvestiia otdeleniia russkogo iazyka i slovesnosti* 20, no. 2 (1915): 261–90, at 275–76; and L. S. Kovtun, "Simvolika v azbukovnikakh," *Trudy otdela drevnerusskoi literatury* 38 (1985): 215–30, at 228–30.

18 For another commentary, justifying the depiction of Christ as a crucified seraph, see Karl Christian Felmy, "Die Ikone 'Eingeborener Sohn'," in '*Die Weisheit baute ihr Haus:' Untersuchungen zu hymnischen und didaktischen Ikonen*, ed. Felmy and Eva Haustein-Bartsch (Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1999), 93–111, at 106. See also Ágnes Kriza, "The Russian *Gnadenstuhl*," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 79 (2016):

79–130.

19 K. Th. Demaras, "Theophanous tou ex Agraphōn: Bios Dionysiou tou ek Phourna," *Hellēnika* 10 (1938): 213–72, at 259. Discussed in George Kakavas, *Dionysios of Fourna: Artistic Creation and Literary Description* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 52.

20 Paul Hetherington, *The Painter's Manual of Dionysius of Fourna* (Torrance, CA: Oakwood Publications, 1989), 40.

21 A. I. Uspenskii, *Podlinnik ikonopisnyi, izdanie S. T. Bol'shakova* (Moscow: A. I. Snegirevoi, 1903), 15–16.

22 L. V. Nersesian, ed., *Ikony Iaroslavlia XIII–serediny XVII veka: shedevry drevnerusskoi zhivopisi v muzeiakh Iaroslavlia*, 2 vols. (Moscow: Severnyi Palomnik, 2009), vol. 2, cat. no. 142 (pp. 186–93). On the Sophia commentary, see Kriza, *Depicting Orthodoxy*.