Byzantine Icons

Definitions

Icon (εικονα): a Greek word that means image, an artistic spiritual representation of a sacred person or event.

Iconography (εικονογραφια): a Greek word that means to write an icon.

Project Focus

Art & Science of Depiction
Software Engineering
Byzantine Icons Software

Where to Start

• History
• Technique
• Analysis

History

• Byzantium is the name given to both the state and the culture of the Eastern Roman Empire in the middle ages.
• The Iconoclastic Controversy (iconolatry vs iconoclasm) of the 7th-9th centuries signifies the emergence of one of history's most sophisticated debates on the nature and function of art.

Iconoclasm vs Iconolatry

DF Iconoclasm: didactic
DF Iconolatry: pagan
Early Icons

Dumbarton Oaks Collection

Early Icons (cont’d)

Traditional Icons

Monastery Iviron, Mt Athos, (13–17th cent.)

Traditional Icons (cont’d)

Monastery Iviron, Mt Athos, (13–17th Cent)

Traditional Icons (cont’d)

Monastery Iviron, Mt Athos, 13th–17th
Traditional Icons (cont’d)

Traditional: Color, Form, Expression

Severity of Color, Form, Expression: Theofanes vs Rublev - 13th century

Modern Icons

Modern Icons (cont’d)
Technique

“From a technical standpoint, writing icons is much the same as, and requires the same set of skills as any other 'fine-art' discipline… a reasonable aptitude for drawing, for form and shape, for composition, and for color… and an ability to apply that aptitude to wood and paint in a fairly straightforward manner.

What is not so obvious from any discussion of the techniques of iconography is that the 'art' of writing icons is at its core a spiritual discipline.”

(Olga Milenbach, Instructor)

Technique- Rules

Rules for the Iconographer

1. Before starting work, make the sign of the Cross; Pray in silence, and pardon your enemies.
2. Work with care on every detail of your icon, as if you were working in front of the Lord Himself.
3. During work, pray in order to strengthen yourself physically and spiritually; avoid all useless words and keep silence.
4. Pray in particular to the Saint whose face you are painting. Keep your mind from distractions and the Saint will be close to you.
5. When you have to choose a color, stretch out your hands interiorly to the Lord and ask His counsel.
6. Do not be jealous of your neighbor's work; his success is your success, too.
7. When your icon is finished, thank God that His Mercy granted you the grace to paint the Holy Images.
8. Have your icon blessed by putting it on the altar. Be the first to pray before it, before giving it to others.
Technique (the Real Thing)

- The pattern
- The board
- Lay down the pattern
- Backgrounds
- The base
- Second flesh
- Highlighting
- Drapery and Clothing
- Gilding

Technique (the Real Thing)

- The pattern
- The board
- Lay down the pattern
- Backgrounds
- The base
- Second flesh
- Highlighting
- Drapery and Clothing
- Gilding

Technique (the Real Thing)

- The pattern
- The board
- Lay down the pattern
- Backgrounds
- The base
- Second flesh
- Highlighting
- Drapery and Clothing
- Gilding

Technique (the Real Thing)

- The pattern
- The board
- Lay down the pattern
- Backgrounds
- The base
- Second flesh
- Highlighting
- Drapery and Clothing
- Gilding

Technique - Summary
Analysis

• Materials
• Wear
• Composition
• Perspective
• Gaze
• Lighting
• Color

Analysis - Materials

Wax & Frescoe, Father Kallinikos

Analysis - Wear

Kseonofontos Monastery, Mt. Athos

Analysis - Composition

Kutlumusiou, Iviron Monasteries, Mt. Athos

Analysis - Perspective

Analysis - Gaze
Analysis - Lighting

Analysis - Color

Variations
- Italo-cretan
- Russian
- Sinai

Variations - Italo-cretan

Variations - Russian

Variations - Sinai
• How exploration has informed software development:
• History, Technique, Analysis
• Writing an Icon vs Painting an Icon
• Q&A