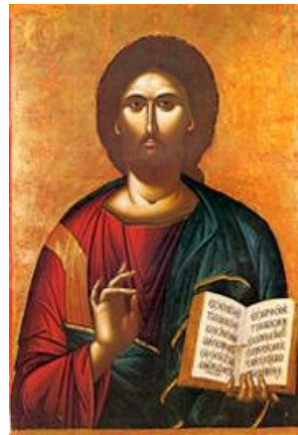


# Byzantine Icons

- **4.209**  
**The Art and Science of Depiction**
- Fredo Durand, Julie Dorsey
- **Spring 2001**
- **Konstantinos Tsakonas,**  
**tsakonas@mit.edu**

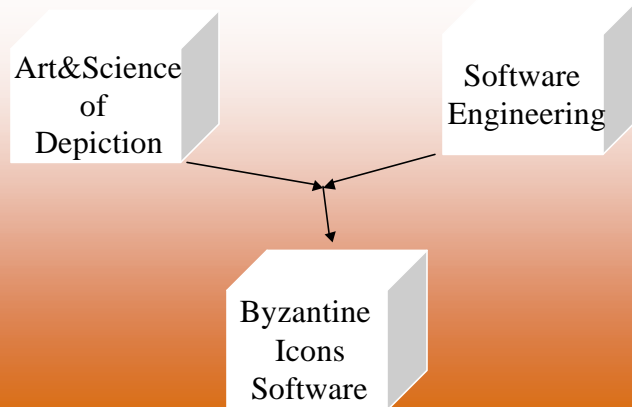


## Definitions

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

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

## Project Focus



## 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 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> centuries signifies the emergence of one of history's most sophisticated debates on the nature and function of art.
- <http://www.mmedia.co.yu/IKONE/Uvodeng.htm>

## Iconoclasm vs Iconolatry

DF Iconoclasm: didactic

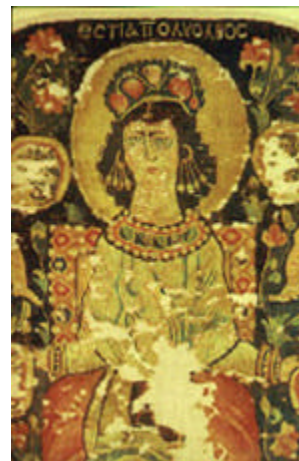
DF Iconolatry: pagan

## Early Icons



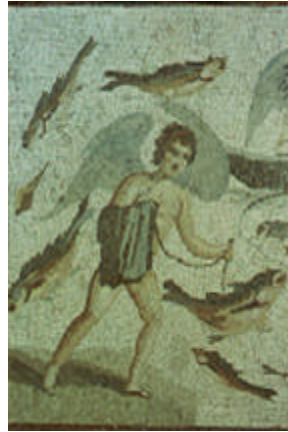
Dumbarton Oaks Collection

## Early Icons (cont'd)



Dumbarton Oaks Collection

## Early Icons (cont'd)



Dumbarton Oaks Collection

## Traditional Icons



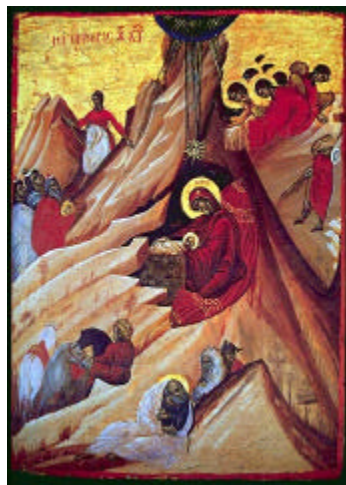
Monastery Iviron, Mt Athos, (13<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> cent.)

## Traditional Icons (cont'd)



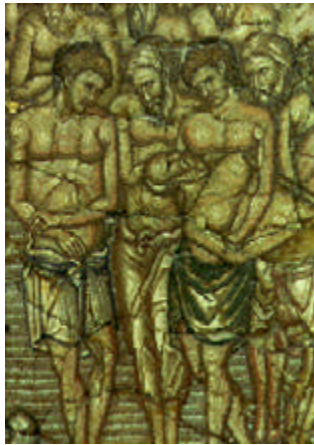
Monastery Iviron, Mt Athos, (13<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> Cent)

## Traditional Icons ( cont'd)



Monastery Iviron, Mt Athos, 13<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup>

## Traditional Icons ( cont'd)



Constantinople, ca 1300

## Traditional: Color, Form, Expression



Severity of Color, Form, Expression:  
Theofanes vs Rublev - 13<sup>th</sup> century

## Traditional: Color, Form, Expression



Severity of Form, Color, Expression:  
Theofanes vs Rublev – (13<sup>th</sup> century)

## Traditional: Color, Form, Expression



Severity of Color, Form, Expression:  
Theofanes vs Rublev – 13<sup>th</sup> century



## Modern Icons



by Father Kallinikos, Cyprus 2000

## Modern Icons ( cont'd)\_



Father Kallinikos, Cyprus 2000

## Modern Icons ( cont'd)



Irene, New Mexico 2000

## 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 Milenback, Instructor)

## Technique

“Before proceeding to paint an icon, the artist's manual of Mount Athos demands that "the painter is to pray to Jesus Christ in front of an image of the Virgin Hodegetria for the forgiveness of his sins"; while working on the icon he should fast, pray and concentrate all his thoughts on the sacred subject. In the execution of the various portraits and subjects represented in the icon, the artist was obliged to observe the pictorial canons laid down in the manuals, in which the posture, the hair and beard style, apparel and attributes of each image were prescribed in more or less detail.” ( from an Introduction to Icons by Uvodeng, Mmedia)

## Technique- Prayers

- **A Prayer for Consecrating an Iconographer from Mt. Athos**

*Thou Who hast so admirably imprinted Thy features on the cloth sent to King Abgar of Edessa, and hast so wonderfully inspired Luke Thy Evangelist: Enlighten my soul and that of Thy servant; Guide his hand that he may reproduce Thy features, those of the Holy Virgin and of all Thy saints, for the glory and peace of Thy Holy Church. Spare him from temptations and diabolical imaginations in the name of Thy Mother, St. Luke, and all the Saints. Amen.*

- **Prayer Before Beginning an Icon**
- **Prayer After Completing an Icon**

## 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.

## Technique-Rules ( cont'd)

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
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- **The base**
- Second flesh
- Highlighting
- Drapery and Clothing
- Gilding



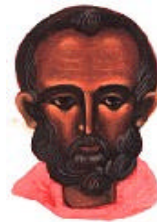
## Technique ( the Real Thing)

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

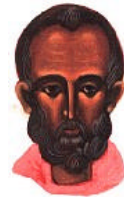


## Technique ( the Real Thing)

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



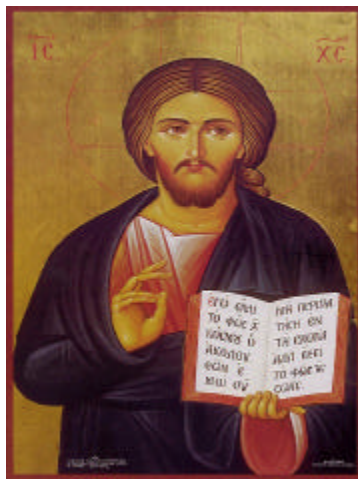
## Technique - Summary



# Analysis

- Materials
- Wear
- Composition
- Perspective
- Gaze
- Lighting
- Color

## Analysis-Materials



Wax&Frescoe, Father Kallilnikos



## Analysis- Wear



Kseonofontos Monastery, MtAthos

## Analysis- Composition



Kutlumusiou, Iviron Monasteries, Mt Athos

## Analysis- Perspective



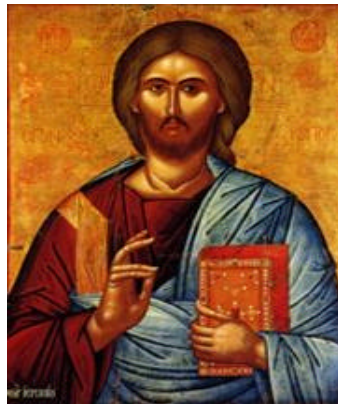
## Analysis- Gaze



## Analysis-Lighting



## Analysis - Color



## Variations

- Italo-cretan
- Russian
- Sinai

## Variations- Italo-cretan



## Variations- Russian



## Variations - Sinai



## Back to Project

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

ΤΕΛΟΣ