



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Chazen Museum of Art Presents Exhibition of Russian Icons**

Madison, Wisconsin, January 31, 2011—The icon is a distinctive form of holy image in Eastern Orthodox cultures, intended to evoke sacred presence by appealing to the senses. *Holy Image, Sacred Presence: Russian Icons, 1500–1900* will present about thirty works from the museum’s permanent collection to explore the distinctive devotional functions, religious experiences, iconography, and changing styles of Russian icons from the sixteenth to early twentieth centuries. Examples include a mandylion (miraculous image of the face of Jesus), *proskynetaria* and iconostasis panels from Orthodox churches, and small devotional icons for private use. The exhibition is on view March 12–June 5, 2011.

Following the Russian Revolution of 1917, many monasteries and churches were closed and the best icons were collected in state museums. Those dating from the eleventh to seventeenth centuries were prized as representing traditional Russian culture. By contrast, Soviet experts denigrated the style and iconography of later icons from the eighteenth to early twentieth centuries as “contaminated” by Western European influence. It was these icons that the Soviets either relegated to museums of religion or, beginning in the 1930s, sold to foreign tourists and diplomats in government-run shops. American collectors first became aware of Russian icons in the 1920s at official Soviet exhibitions in New York and Boston, and through sales of “imperial Russian treasures” in department stores in the early 1930s.

The museum’s icon collection originated in 1937 with the gift of twenty-three icons by Joseph E. Davies, a prominent lawyer, UW alumnus, and American ambassador to the Soviet Union (1937–1938).

#### **Related Events**

##### **Thursday, March 24, 2011, Artist Lecture**

7:30 p.m. “Eastern Orthodox Icons: Venerable Paintings and their Makers.” *Icon painter David Giffey will give an illustrated lecture on the working methods, materials, and context of Byzantine icon painting. He has documented historic examples in Eastern Europe and the Middle East and painted the iconography at the Assumption Greek Orthodox Church in Madison. Gallery hours will be extended to 7:30 prior to the lecture.* This event is cosponsored by the Chazen and the Department of Art History with funds provided by the UW Arts Institute Year of the Arts.

##### **Friday, March 25, 2011, Curator Lecture and Exhibition Reception**

5:30 p.m. Lecture by guest curator and UW–Madison professor of art history Thomas E. A. Dale  
6:30–8 p.m. Reception for the exhibition *Holy Image, Sacred Presence: Russian Icons, 1500–1900* with refreshments and a cash bar.

##### **Saturday, March 26, 2011, Cinematheque Film**

7 p.m. *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors (Tini zabutykh predkiv)*. USSR, 1966, 97 min., directed by Sergei Paradjanov, in Ukrainian with English subtitles.  
UW Cinematheque, 4070 Vilas Hall, 821 University Ave. Doors open at 6:30 p.m.

*With Ivan Mikolajchuk, Larisa Kadochnikova, Tatyana Bestayeva. Set in the harsh and beautiful Carpathian Mountains, Paradjanov's masterpiece chronicles a doomed love between Ivan and Marichka, a couple from feuding families, and Ivan's life and marriage after Marichka's death. The deeply affecting story merges myth, hypnotic religious iconography, history, poetry, folklore, music, and dance, and remains one of the supreme works of Soviet cinema.*

### **Friday, April 15 and Saturday, April 16: Symposium**

“Russian Icons in Context.” Scholars from Russia and the United States will present recent research on Russian icons—context, collecting, and changing roles in religion and Russian life.

Friday April 15, Room L140

- 5:00 p.m. Keynote lecture: “Russian Icons and the Making of Sacred Spaces,” by Alexei Lidov, director of research at the Institute for World Culture at the Moscow State University

Saturday April 16, Room L150

- Morning session, 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. “History, Collecting and Perception of Russian Icons.” Leonora Neville, associate professor of history, UW–Madison, on “The Emergence of the Icon Tradition”; Judith Deutsch Kornblatt, professor of Slavic languages and literature, UW–Madison, on “Icons in the Russian Religious Renaissance and the Russian Revolution”; Irina Shevelenko, assistant professor of Slavic languages and literature, UW–Madison, on “The 1913 Moscow Exhibition of Old Russian Art and the Perception of Icon Painting in Russian Artistic Circles”; and Karen Kettering, vice president and specialist in Russian art, Sotheby's, New York, on “Joseph Davies and Collecting Russian Icons in the Early Twentieth Century.”
- Afternoon session: 1:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. “New Research on Russian Icons in the Chazen Museum of Art—Iconography, Ritual, Sacred Space.” Case studies of individual icons in the exhibition, presented by UW students.

The symposium is free and open to the public. For more information call 608-263-2340. The symposium is organized by the Department of Art History and co-sponsored by the Chazen Museum of Art and the Department of Slavic Languages and Literature. Funds have been provided by the Alice D. Mortenson-Michael B. Petrovich Chair in Russian History, the Anonymous Committee, the Arts Institute and Year of the Arts program funds, the Center for Russia, East Europe, and Central Asia (CREECA), the Department of Art History, the Medieval Studies Program, and the Russian Flagship Center in the UW–Madison Language Institute.

Generous support for this exhibition has been provided by the Chazen Museum of Art Council; Wisconsin Arts Board with funds from the State of Wisconsin and the National Endowment for the Arts; and Dane County Cultural Affairs Commission.

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Digital images for media use can be found at [http://www.chazen.wisc.edu/pr\\_pictures.asp](http://www.chazen.wisc.edu/pr_pictures.asp)

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The Chazen Museum of Art is open Tuesday–Friday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Saturday and Sunday 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission to galleries and educational events is free. Museum Shop hours are 11 to 4 Tuesday–Sunday. The museum is located on the campus of the University of Wisconsin–Madison. **PLEASE NOTE: THE SOUTH (UNIVERSITY AVENUE) ENTRANCE IS CLOSED UNTIL JUNE 2011.** Visitors can reach the north entrance from Park Street and the Humanities courtyard, or from Library Mall and the East Campus Mall. The north entrance is accessible to wheelchairs; an elevator is down the corridor to the right. Parking is available at the City of Madison State Street Campus Ramp (entrances on Frances and Lake streets) and under University Square. Metered parking is available in the UW lot 46 lower level. Evening and weekend parking is also available in UW lot 83 under Fluno Center, entrance on Frances Street, and in UW lot 7 under Grainger Hall, entrance on Brooks Street. The Chazen will provide sign language interpreters for associated programs by three-week advance request to Anne Lambert, Curator of Education, weekdays, (608) 263-4421 (voice). Information is also available by visiting our Web site at [www.chazen.wisc.edu](http://www.chazen.wisc.edu).