

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **IKON/Iconography at the MET**

Symbols, customs and rituals vary in every culture that reflect human attempt to visualize and interpret the divine. Representation became a human tool in understanding and exploring the spiritual aspect of life. Prehistoric cave drawings and fully detailed tabletop images, animist and Christian, remain as evidence of a special encounter between human artistry and divine presence.

Iconography is the branch of art history that deals with the identification, description, classification, and interpretation of the subject matter of the figurative arts. Derived from the Greek word *eikōn*, meaning 'likeness', it covers the study of symbols or form depicted in a work of art. It is not only limited to religions or philosophical views, but also extends to the realm of politics, and to civil society.

Religious iconography adds both embellishment and depth to a sacred representation. From a period of religious oppressions where symbols and messages were secretly encoded, imagery continued to progress adding more character and theological meaning to an icon. Icon-painting is among the oldest tradition of Christian Catholic art. The profound art of icon-painting started from the Byzantine Empire with Constantinople as its ancient centre, now modern day Istanbul in Turkey.

Among Christian religious imagery worthy of veneration and appreciation are Russian Icons. Henri Matisse once wrote in a letter to Pablo Picasso, "You don't know nothing about color if you did not see Russian icons" [sic]. But aside from the bright colors and intricate metal applications, each icon is filled with symbols. These inscriptions are more than simple labels, each narrating a story of great significance. Details that add ornamentation become an entry-point for a religious experience. Orthodox Christians strongly believe that religious art is a pictorial profession of their beliefs.

This exhibit presents a conversation between Russian Icons from the PCGG Collection and selections from the 18<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century religious paintings from the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Collection. It also explores the unique, though often similar, imagery of Russian and Filipino religious iconography. It allows us to understand what is obvious before our eyes while moving our spirit to spiritual appreciation.

"Ikon/Iconography" runs April 15, 2012 at the Galeriya Bangko Sentral of Metropolitan Museum of Manila. The Met is located at the Banko Sentral ng Pilipinas Complex, Roxas Boulevard, Manila. Museum hours are from 9am – 6pm, Monday to Saturday; closed on Sundays, holidays and first Mondays of the month. For more details please call 708-7829 or email at [info@metmuseum.ph](mailto:info@metmuseum.ph). Visit us at [www.metmuseum.ph](http://www.metmuseum.ph) and [www.facebook.com/metmuseum.manila](http://www.facebook.com/metmuseum.manila)

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