



PRESS RELEASE

The State Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow, and the Benaki Museum, Athens, in collaboration with the Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation, jointly organize and present in Moscow the Exhibition

ΣΥΝΑΞΙΣ

СИНАКСИС. Искусство Греции XV–XX веков. Иконы на дереве и бумаге

SYNAXIS. Greek Art 1450 – 2000. Icons on Wood and Paper.

13 July – 26 September 2010

The Exhibition is held under the auspices of the President of the Hellenic Republic Dr. Karolos Papoulias, of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and of the Ministry for Culture and Tourism of the Hellenic Republic. It will constitute a *p r e l u d e* to the cultural events of the “Year 2014 GREECE-RUSSIA”, which will take place in 2014 in the framework of the special cultural exchanges between the two countries.

The Exhibition comprises 135 important religious artworks on wood and on paper, dating from the 15th to the 20th centuries, and come mainly from two important Greek collections: the Velimezis Collection and the Margaritis Collection. It is the first time that such a large number of Greek works will be presented in Russia.

The Velimezis Collection was formed during the years 1934-46 by Emilios Velimezis (1902-1946) and comprises post-Byzantine icons from various Greek regions, representing the artistic tendencies developed in Greece after 1453. The majority of the icons were created in the workshops of Cretan painters in Venetian-held Crete (15th – 16th centuries) at a time when icon-painting flourished. The most important work is an icon in the form of a small altarpiece with the representation of *The Passion of the Christ – Pietà with angels*, a work of western character painted in the technique of Cretan icons by Domenikos Theotokopoulos (El Greco, 1541-1614), prior to his departure from his native Crete.

The Margaritis Collection, formed during the last two decades by Christos Ph. Margaritis, Emilios Ph. Margaritis and Alexander Ger. Makris, comprises a representative group of *anthivola* and working drawings by icon painters from Northwest Greece and religious paintings by well-known Greek artists dating from 1450 until the present.

The Exhibition brings together works of varying historical and artistic significance, and ways of collecting, categorized in the following three main sections, independent of the chronological order in which the works were created : (a) Angels, Saints and Martyrs; (b) The Life of the Virgin; (c) The Christological Cycle.

The aim of the Exhibition is, in the words of its curator, Ms. Thalea Stefanidou, *to restore a thread, a guiding clew for perceiving the text of the icons and to propose a mechanism of inquiry in order to spin webs that intertwine iconographic programs, narrations and illustrations of synaxaria, along with hermeneutic codes of other periods.*

In the *SYNAXIS* Exhibition, the State Pushkin Museum will present for the first time three important Cretan Icons from its collections, putting them in a direct ‘conversation’ with ‘*their sisters*’, five centuries after they left their Masters’ ateliers in the Venetian-held Candia, each one as a gift or token of worship of an Orthodox Christian, Russian or Greek...

Another interesting Icon is *The Head of Christ*, the only Cretan Icon in the former G.Kostakis Collection, donated to the Russian Government and now at the Andrei Rublev Museum in the Andronikov Monastery, which will be kindly lent by the latter for the Exhibition.

The Exhibition in Moscow will be accompanied by :

- an Exhibition Catalogue of extensive documentation, published in Russian and English (c. 272 pp.).
- the Catalogue Raisonné of the Velimezis Icon Collection by Professor Nano Chatzidakis “*Иконы Собрания Велимезиса*” (502 pp).
- the Catalogue Raisonné of the Makris-Margaritis Anthivola Collection by Dr. Andromachi Katselaki and Maria Nanou “*Anthivola from Chioniades*” (420 pp.).
- the CD-Rom “*The Conservation of the Icons in the Velimezis Collection*”

These Catalogues will be distributed by the State Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, as well as by the Greek Embassy in Moscow, to numerous educational and cultural organizations in Russia.

The importance of the Russian translation of the Catalogue Raisonné is furthermore reinforced by the common religious beliefs between Greeks and Russians, as well as by the close affinity among Greek, Russian and Byzantine art.

Main Sponsor of the Exhibition and of its catalogue is the Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation. Sponsors of the Exhibition and of the Catalogue are the Ministry of the Foreign Affairs and the Ministry for Culture and Tourism of the Hellenic Republic, the Welfare Foundation of Social and Cultural Affairs, Alapis Group, Mevgal S.A. and the Athens International Airport.

The inaugural ceremony will take place on July 13th, 2010.

THE PUSHKIN STATE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

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Exhibition duration: Wednesday July 14, 2010 until Sunday September 26, 2010

www.museum.ru

www.benaki.gr

www.onassis.gr

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