

## Signed and attributed icons in the Icon Museum of Recklinghausen

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The Icon Museum of Recklinghausen hosts the biggest collection of icons and other objects of Eastern Church Art in Western Europe. The significance of the collections is further highlighted by icons which bear the painter's signature, mostly Russian and Greek (the last will be my focus). That is quite important, as visitors as well as scholars get in touch even deeper with the craft of icon painting and the individual artists (there are also icons that are not signed, but can be attributed to famous and well-known painters). It is the aim of this essay to provide an overview of those works. Afterwards, we will take a closer look at some of the Greek examples, ranging from the 15th to the 19th century.

The museum's database lists signed icons by Russian painters and three more which are attributed, six icons signed by Greek painters and another four which are attributed to Greek artists. One signed icon comes from the area of (North) Macedonia and another can be attributed to an Artist from Syria. Not included in the list below are recent or contemporary works: A painting of Christ's head that was painted by the French artist Ary Scheffer (1795–1858); an icon with the Virgin Glykophilousa (2000) is signed by a Swedish artist, Tania Krosse; another icon depicting Christ is dated to 1998 and signed by Ilgiuz Chanov. A special case is a contemporary icon with an embroidered frame crafted by Natalia Gorkovenko that has been donated by her to the museum in 2019.

### Russian signed icons

- 1) Ivan Antonov: Mother of God of Tichvin, Russia 1762, 31,5 x 26,5 cm (inv. no. 48)
- 2) Nikito Gorbunov: Mother of God "Joy to all who suffer", Russia, middle 18th century, 35,0 x 29,5 cm (inv. no. 70)
- 3) Ivan (family name unclear): Aleksandr Nevskij on horseback, Southwestern Russia, end of 18th century, 29,8 x 26,0 cm (inv. no. 721)
- 4) Kirill (family name unclear): Painted Cross, Russia, 1818, 40,7 x 22,3 cm (inv. nr. 864)
- 5) I. Stefan Fedorov: Saint Nicholas with frame, Russia (Moscow?), 1821, 31,0 x 28,0 cm (inv. no. 660)
- 6) Nazar' Kuzmin Demidovo (it is not sure whether he is the painter or the donor): Resurrection of Christ, Russia, last quarter of the 19th century, 31,2 x 26,2 cm (inv. no. 4090)

- 7) Iosif Andreevič Pankryšov: Saint Marina of Béroea (Aleppo), Russia (Mstera), 1892, 26,5 x 22,5 cm (inv. no. 4089) (**IMAGE 1**).
- 8) Aleksandr Sergeev Egorov: Christ Pantocrator, Russia, 1880/1890, 31,7 x 27,2 cm (inv. no. 3460)
- 9) Vasilij Pavlovič Gur'janov: Archangel Michael with eight saints, Russia (Moscow), 1900, 31,0 x 26,0 cm (inv. no. 3964) (**IMAGE 2**)



**IMAGE 1**

Iosif Andreevič Pankryšov  
 Saint Marina of Béroea (Aleppo)  
 Russia (Mstera), 1892  
 (no. 7)



**IMAGE 2**

Vasilij Pavlovič Gur'janov  
 Archangel Michael with eight saints  
 Russia (Moscow), 1900  
 (no. 9)

## Russian attributed icons

- 10) Semen-Spyridon Cholmogorec: Evangelist Luke, Russia (Jaroslav'l), third quarter of the 17th century, 55,0 x 43,2 cm (inv. nr. 900) (**IMAGE 3**).
- 11) Workshop Bogatyrev: Ascension of Christ / Mandyllion, Russia (Nev'jansk), first quarter of the 19th century, 35,5 x 30,0 cm (inv. nr. 1140)
- 12) Workshop Pesechonov: Saint Nicholas the Wonderworker, Russia, middle 19th century, 34,8 x 28,2 cm (inv. nr. 693)



**IMAGE 3**

Semen-Spyridon Cholmogorec (attr.),  
Evangelist Luke, Russia (Jaroslav'l), third  
quarter of the 17th century  
(no. 10)

## Greek signed icons

- 13) Nikolaos Tzafoures: Madre della Consolazione, Crete, c. 1490/1500, 73,0 x 55,3 cm (inv. no. 9735) (**IMAGE 4**)
- 14) Melachrinos (?): Saint Basil the Great, Greece, early 17th century, 51,5 x 38,5 cm (inv. no. 380)
- 15) Elias Moschos: Christ Pantokrator, Greece (Zakynthos), 1653, 119,0 x 84,5 cm (inv. no. 8) (**IMAGE 5**)
- 16) Konstantinos Tzanes, Dormition of the Virgin, Crete, 1677, 43,5 x 32,0 cm (inv. no. 3943) (**IMAGE 6**)



17) Victor: Saint Anthony of Padova, Greece, Crete or Venice, end of 17th century, 18,5 x 13,5 cm (inv. no. 3940) (IMAGE 7)

18) Philippos Hagiotaphites: The three Patron Saints of the Ionian Islands, Ionian Islands, 1859, 113,4 x 83,0 cm (inv. no. 669) (IMAGE 8)



**IMAGE 4**

Nikolaos Tzafoures

Madre della Consolazione

Crete, c. 1490/1500

(no. 13)



**IMAGE 5**

Elias Moschos

Christ Pantokrator

Greece (Zakynthos), 1653

(no. 15)





**IMAGE 6**

Konstantinos Tzanes

Dormition of the Virgin

Crete, 1677

(no. 16)



**IMAGE 7**

Victor

Saint Anthony of Padua

Greece, Crete or Venice

end of 17th century

(no. 17)



**IMAGE 8**

Philippos Hagiotaphites

The Patron Saints of the

Ionian Islands

Ionian Islands, 1859

(no. 18)

**Greek attributed icons**

- 19) Workshop/pupil of Michael Damaskinos (?): Evangelist Luke, Crete, 2nd half of the 16th century, 31,5 x 26,8 cm (inv. no. 249)
- 20) Emmanuel Tzanes (?): Saint Nicholas, Greece, middle of the 17th century, 29,8 x 21,5 cm (inv. no. 229)
- 21) Andreas Ritzos: Mother of God of the Passion, Crete, end of 15th century, 82,2 x 61,5 cm (inv. no. 680) **(IMAGE 9)**
- 22) Andreas Ritzos: Akra Tapeinosis, Crete, end of 15th century, 64,5 x 49,5 cm (inv. no. 345) **(IMAGE 10)**





**IMAGE 9**

Andreas Ritzos (attr.)  
Mother of God of the Passion  
Crete, end of 15th century  
(21)



**IMAGE 10**

Andreas Ritzos (attr.)  
Akra Tapeinosis  
Crete, end of 15th century  
(22)



## Other areas

23) Girgis Al-Musawwir (attr.): Baptism of Christ, Syria, 2nd half 18th century, 35,3 x 27,5 cm (inv. no. 3767) **(IMAGE 11)**

24) Dimitâr Andonov: Saints Cosmas and Damian, North Macedonia, 1887, 43,5 x 28,6 cm (inv. no. 1135) **(IMAGE 12)**



### **IMAGE 11**

Girgis Al-Musawwir (attr.)  
Baptism of Christ  
Syria, 2nd half 18th century  
(23)



### **IMAGE 12**

Dimitâr Andonov  
Saints Cosmas and Damian  
North Macedonia, 1887  
(24)

## A closer look at some Greek icons and their painters

**Andreas Ritzos** (icon no. 21, 22)

One of the most important icons of the museum is the icon of Virgin of Passion. In that specific iconographic type of the Virgin is depicted half-body, holding Christ in her arms and surrounded by two archangels, who hold the signs of the passion, the spear and the cross. Their hands are covered as a gesture of humble reverence. The Virgin tenderly holds her child in her arms, who turns his head and gazes at the angels. The sadness of Mary is obvious, as she knows about her son's upcoming death. A characteristic element of the iconography is also Christ's untied sandal. The icon bears no signature, but due to its style, is attributed to one of the most famous post-byzantine painters, to Andreas Ritzos. To the right of Christ's head it is possible to discern faint traces of a former inscription that usually is to be found here but had been erased (here in Greek lettering, though on other icons also in Latin, depending on whom commissioned the respective work). It explains that Christ is terrified by the sight of the passion instruments that are presented to him.

The type of the Virgin of the Passion has been generally associated with this painter, as well as with his workshop. Indeed, based on his signed artworks, it can be argued that Ritzos "invented" and established this specific pictorial type in portable images, which was copied by later painters. The second icon of the museum that is attributed to Andreas Ritzos depicts the Christ in the iconographic type of the Man of Sorrows, where Christ is depicted dead, half-body, naked, inside his tomb and blood flows from his pierced wounds. The icon is dated in the late 15<sup>th</sup> c.

Andreas Ritzos lived approximately between 1421 and 1492 and came from Herakleion (Candia) of Crete. A lot of information about him and his life is known today after the publication of notary records of Venice. He oversaw his workshop and collaborated with other painters as well. Later, his two sons, Nikolaos and Thomas also became painters. His customers were both Orthodox and Catholic, as it is witnessed by his signatures and of course his artwork, as he was capable of painting à la *maniera greca* (the Greek/Orthodox way) and à la *maniera Latina* (the Latin way). He was married twice. The last reference about him is found in a record of 22 of February 1492. He must have died between that year and the year 1503, when his son referred to his father as deceased. His signed artworks are few but more than forty are attributed to him. His collaborations and his talent make it difficult to identify an icon, as it could have been executed by a partner, or it could be an exact copy of later date, as many painters in the 15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries copied his art.

### **Nikolaos Tzafoures** (icon no. 13)

A very important icon depicts the Mother of God (inv. nr. 9735) in the iconographic type of the *Madre della Consolazione* (Virgin of compassion), which flourished during the 15th/16th centuries. The Virgin wears a dark chiton and a dark red maphorion, tightened under her face. Of particular interest is the white veil under her maphorion, which is characteristic for the type, instead of the koukoulion with which Virgin usually is depicted. She tenderly holds Christ, who presents a golden globe with a cross, symbol of the world and his reign. Christ is dressed up in a dark chiton and a light orange maphorion with decorative motifs. Both figures bear halos and have been depicted on a gold background.

After the restoration of 1999, letters of the painter's signature were revealed at the bottom of the icon, US ZAFURI P [NIKOLAUS ZAFURI PINXIT]. That signature leads to the well-known painter of the 15th century, Nikolaos Tzafoures from Herakleion, Crete (Greece). He was a master of painting art, capable of painting not only in the Byzantine, but also in the Latin manner, as it shown in the clasp of the maphorion, the globe, the decorated garments. His name is referred to in a lot of notary records between 1487 and 1493 (the last reference is found on a record of 1500). His wife signed as widow in a record on the year 1501. Based on that information we can approximately date our icon to the final decade of the 15th century. He had two sons, who followed his occupation and worked with him. Except of the icons he has signed, artworks where his style is obvious are usually attributed to his workshop in general. Important icons are exhibited in Athens, Vien, New York and St. Petersburg.

### **Elias Moschos** (icon no. 15)

The despotic icon of Christ Pantokrator is dated to 1653 and was painted by a famous painter of the 17th century, Elias Moschos. He was from Rethymno (Crete, Greece) and lived approximately around 1630 and 1687. He was quite productive artist and executed orders not only in Crete but also at Ionian islands. He signed his will in island of Zante in the year of 1666 because he was very ill. He recovered though as he got married to lady Catherine Grypari and had two children. He renewed his will in 1687 and died on the 16th of January of that year.

Despotic icons are called the big-measured icons that were used in the decoration of temples. The main themes of those icons were Christ in the iconographic type of the Pantokrator, Virgin Mary with or without Christ, John the Forerunner, the patron saint of the church and quite usually the archangels up on the doors of the "parabemata" (diaconicon and prothesis).



In our icon Christ is depicted enthroned. He wears a red chiton and a dark green maphorion. He blesses with his right hand, while with the other holds an open codex where we can read a passage from John's gospel in Greek (John 14, 7-8 and 17, 27). Above his head, in dark red circles there are the monograms IC XC (Jesus Christ). His throne is marble and bears decoration both at the bottom and at the back. The ground is rendered with dark green and the whole background is as usually gold. The painter's signature and the date are at the bottom of the icon: Α Χ Ν Γ (=1653) ΧΕΙΡ ΗΛΙΟΥ ΜΟΣΚΟΥ.

#### **Konstantinos Tzanes (icon no. 16)**

Next we look at an icon depicting the Dormition of Virgin Mary by the painter Konstantinos Tzanes, dated to 1677. The icon represents the Dormition of the Virgin according to the Eastern Orthodox tradition, but also her assumption in Heaven, a Western subject incorporated by the artist.

The reclined Virgin is surrounded by mourning apostles and grieving women. Christ appears inside a mandorla, to express his unearthly presence, to receive his mother's soul (represented as an infant) and led her into Heaven. A quite particular episode takes place in front of the Virgin's bed: According to the apocryphal account of the event, a Jewish priest named Iephonias tried to disturb the solemn occasion by pushing down the body of Virgin. But before he could succeed, an angel appeared and cut off his hands. As Iephonias immediately repented and became a Christian, his hands were miraculously restored.

At the upper part of the icon Virgin's Assumption in Heaven is depicted. Virgin stands on a cloud carried by two angels who lead her to Heaven, whose doors are already opened to receive her. Right and left of the scene, the apostles are visible inside clouds; as according to the narration they were miraculously transferred on clouds from their different locations to be present when Mary passed away.

Konstantinos Tzanes well-known painter from Rethymno (Crete, Greece) and he signed as ΚΩΝΣΤΑΝΤΙΝΟΥ ΤΖΑΝΕ ΧΕΙΡ Α Χ Ο Ζ (1677). He was a brother of another more famous painter, Emmanuel Tzanes (to whom one icon from the museum might perhaps be attributed, but not for sure; cf. nr. 20). Konstantinos was active from 1663 to 1685. Together with his brother he studied art in Venice and turned out to be quite talented in painting in "the Western manner". On our icon this can be seen by the way the buildings in the background have been rendered, which is based on Italian Renaissance art.

## **Viktor** (icon no. 17)

An icon of Saint Anthony of Padua of the 18th century (inv. nr. 3940) has been painted by the very well-known artist Viktor. Saint Anthony of Padua is a very popular saint in Western Europe. He was born in Lisbon, but at an early age entered the Franciscan order and lived approximately between 1195 and 1231. He was canonized in 1232, a year after his death.

In our icon Saint Anthony is shown in a common iconographic type, kneeling on the floor and holding Christ as an infant in his arms. According to an episode from the saint's life, during an illness he retired to the castle of Camposampiero in the countryside of Padua to pray in peace. When a count went to visit him, he saw the saint conversing with a child in his arms, from whom light was radiating. At the floor, we can also observe two other iconographic elements typical for Saint Anthony: the white lily, as a symbol of purity and a red codex, which he used while teaching his pupils. The saint is dressed in the characteristic Franciscan attire. There are no indications of the actual castle where the incident occurred. Below the golden background the floor is rendered in red color. The clouds at the left upper part and the angels (in the form of "putti") are quite often found in representations of the 18th century. Quite particular is the altar in front of the saint. It bears the monogram of the Catholic order of the Jesuits (as far as it is known, Jesuitic churches were not founded in Venetian Crete). It indicates strongly that the icon was ordered by a Jesuit and our painter Victor accomplished to unite the order with a Franciscan saint, as the Jesuits had close ties with the Franciscan order and venerated the same saints, such as Saint Anthony of Padua.

The combination of Byzantine and Western characteristics can be explained by the painter himself. Viktor was a Cretan priest who lived approximately around 1650–1697 in Heraklion. Besides portable icons, he decorated the cathicon of a monastery in Peloponnese (Monastery of Philoshofou, Dimitsana). His artworks are exhibited today in Greece, Netherlands, Italy, Israel, Switzerland, Yugoslavia, Russia, Germany, and Australia. Despite his quite enormous output, he generally followed traditional motifs and did not experiment or create unique iconographic subjects. As Viktor lived in Crete during the Venetian occupation he was not only in touch with Venetian and Western art, but was also capable of painting popular Western subjects, such as Saint Anthony of Padua, but still betraying his origins (as seen in the golden background and the rendering of the figure). Some of his clients were of very high status: For example, he was commissioned to paint the banner for Francesco Morosini's flagship in a campaign against the Ottomans. His signature can be detected left, at the bottom of the icon: ΒΙΚΤΩΡ.

### **Philippos Hagiotaphites** (icon no. 18)

A quite rare iconographic subject is the depiction of the three patron Saints of Ionian Islands, Saint Gerasimos of Kefalonia, Saint Spyridon of Corfu and Saint Dionysius of Zakynthos on an icon dated precisely on the 2nd of April of 1859. It bears the signature of a painter which so far has not been detected in any other work of art. The relics of those three saints are still preserved in the consecutive islands and have been associated with numerous miracles. The inscription also provides the donors' names, Demetrios Romas and Demetrios Rizos.

Saint Gerasimos (left) is dressed in his monastic attire and presents an open scroll. Saints Spyridon (center) and Saint Dionysios (right) are dressed in episcopal vestments and hold shut gospels. Saint Spyridon wears his particular head piece, reminiscent of a basket and associated with his name, as σπύρις in Greek means basket. Quite particular is the brick he holds in his hand, from which flames are expanding and water drops fall down. It is connected to a miracle he is believed to have evoked at the First Ecumenical Council in 325. In order to prove that the one God consists of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, he upheld a brick which is formed by soil, water and fire: three substances that are united in one piece.

The donors' names are known from published records. Demetrios Romas belonged most probably to the influential Romas' family of Zakynthos, which played a crucial role in the Greek Revolution. Demetrios Rizos might perhaps be identified as a priest and theologian of Kefalonia, who is mentioned in a collection of Byzantine church law published in 1853.

The artist of this icon is named Philippos Hagiotaphites. As we said above he is unknown from any other artworks. The epithet Hagiotaphites implies a relationship with the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, perhaps even belonging to the eponymous brotherhood whose members bear the epithet until today. In this he might have special interest in Saint Gerasimos, who was active as a sexton at the church of the Holy Sepulchre before he returned to Kefalonia; perhaps Philippos wished to follow his footsteps. The subject of the icon, its style and its donors imply very strongly that the icon was created at the three Ionian Islands, and perhaps the painter's choice was not incidental. Philippos' association with the Holy Lands must have improved his fame in the area.

