

## The Icon collection of the Municipal Art Gallery (MAG)

The Collection of the Municipal Art Gallery of Thessaloniki is constituted of 123 portable icons and holy relics. 63 icons of the Collection come from the church of the cemetery of Evangelistria founded in 1875 by the Men's Charity Association of Thessaloniki and they were incorporated into the collection of the Municipal Art Gallery in 1987 and 1988. Their majority dates from the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, following the creation of the cemetery. However, the existence of older icons (14th -18th c.) in combination with their different types indicates that in the Church of Evangelistria, there were accumulated important relics of the Greek Orthodox community originated from elsewhere.

## The Icon collection of the Museum of Byzantine Culture (MBC)

The icon collection of the Museum of Byzantine Culture includes about 1025 icons and is one of the greatest public icon collections in Greece. It covers a wide time span from the late 12th century to the 20th century. The main part of the collection is constituted of byzantine and post-byzantine icons which after the liberation of Macedonia, were transferred to the Byzantine and Christian Museum of Athens to be guarded with other items and they remained there from 1916 to 1994. Another interesting set of mostly post-byzantine icons was added to this main part in 1987, after the execution of the collector Dimitrios Oikonomopoulos' will. This set was initially displayed in the White Tower for an exhibition dedicated to the 2300 years of Thessaloniki while today it is displayed in a museum hall with the same name .



1. Architrave icon of St Peter, 17th c. (MAG Collection)  
2. Architrave icon St Mathew, 17th c. (MBC Collection)

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Cover: Icon of St George as mounted dragon - slayer, 1810, renovation 1876 (MBC Collection)

## TEMPORARY EXHIBITION

# Two Collections meet

Temporary Exhibiton Wing  
«Kyriakos Krokos»



**Long-term Loan to the Museum of Byzantine Culture -  
Temporary Exhibition "Two collections meet"**

In 2015 (30/11) the Municipality of Thessaloniki decided to give 109 icons and holy relics from the Collection of the Municipal Art Gallery to the Museum of Byzantine Culture as a loan for 30 years. The relevant ministerial decision (17-6-2016) set the initial borrowing for five years since the day of the delivery (11-11-2016), with the possibility of renewal. The aim of the borrowing is the preservation, maintenance and exhibition of the cultural goods of the Municipal Art Gallery by the Museum of Byzantine Culture. On the 20th of December 2016, the Museum organized a symbolic welcoming ceremony of the icons honouring at the same time the Mayor of Thessaloniki by giving gifts and souvenirs.

Through the exhibition "Two Collections meet" the Museum of Byzantine Culture accomplishes the goals of this loan agreement providing to the wide audience and to specialists the Collection of the Municipal Art Gallery, after the conservation and the research of its icons and holy relics. Most of these items (23) are displayed for the first time.

The title of the exhibition "Two Collections meet" indicates the intention of this exhibition to compose a totality coming from the combining study of the objects of two collections: the one of the Municipal Art Gallery of Thessaloniki and the other of the Museum of Byzantine Culture. Each Collection is complementary to the other, as through this synthesis, the

various aspects of orthodox Christian art over the centuries after the Fall of Constantinople are featured. These aspects are related to the relevant socioeconomic context. In addition, the list of both known and unknown painters' work pieces and workshops is also completed. Emphasis is placed on the territory of northern Greece which was under the Ottoman rule, with a focus on the wider area of Central Macedonia, Thessaloniki and Mount Athos.

The idea of this title sourced from the presence of work pieces of the same painter/workshop in both Collections while having a common operational purpose (architrave icons).

The temporary exhibition "Two collections meet" presents 129 cultural goods, portable icons, objects of private worship, liturgical items, vestments, holy relics from the Collections of the Municipal Art Gallery (50) and the Museum of Byzantine Culture (79) dated from the 14th until the beginning of the 20th century. Actually, 85 of those are displayed for the first time after their maintenance and scientific substitution in the Museum.

This exhibition is divided into two units: the introductory and the main one. In the introductory unit (ground floor), the identity of both Collections, the long-term borrowing of icons and holy relics from the Collection of the Municipal Art Gallery to the Museum of Byzantine Culture and the philosophy of the exhibition are briefly showed through five sub-units. Then, there is a reference to the older icons of the Collection of the Municipal Art Gallery which are the oldest ones of this

exhibition and constitute the link between the smooth transition from the painting of the Late Byzantine period to that of the Post – Byzantine period. There are also references to the conservation of the icons and its results, the general role of the icon and the painters' technique-artistic style and iconography. The second main unit (upper room and floor) which is divided into nine sub-units deals with issues concerning Post-Byzantine religious orthodox painting generally in the Greek regions under Ottoman rule, with a focus on Macedonia, Thessaloniki and Mount Athos. It is based on the material offered from the two Collections and it mainly concerns portable icon painting, the painters' movements, their communication networks, specific workshops or family ones and fellowships that acted in that period and mostly from the 17th century to the early 20th one, in the abovementioned areas while sometimes they were even established there. In addition, there are many issues that are discussed concerning the topics of the icons and their iconography over the centuries after the Fall and their symbolisms. Issues concerning the icon agents and donors are discussed as well. In a specific sub-unit there are liturgical books, vestments and items of the Collection of the Municipal Art Gallery (11) and of the Museum of Byzantine Culture (13) that are showcased for the first time.

The exhibition wishes to display to the wide and target audience selected and representative examples of the orthodox religious art of the two Collections, as cultural works, but at the same time, as works of faith and piety with doctrinal content serving the needs of the Orthodox church, the public and private worship.



- 1, 2. Double – sided icon.  
A. The Virgin and Child.  
B. The Man of Sorrows, 14th c.  
(MAG Collection)
3. Icon of St George as  
mounted dragon - slayer, 1760  
(MBC Collection)
4. Icon of the Three Hierarchs,  
1889, painter Mitakos  
Chatzistamatis (MAG Collection)
5. Bema - doors, 1795  
(MBC Collection)
6. Icon of the Three Evangelists,  
1815, painter Mitrofanis  
(MBC Collection)
7. Icon of the Virgin Mary  
Spilaiotissa, 1830, painter  
Demetrius (MAG Collection)
8. Chalice, 19th c.  
(MAG Collection)
9. Sanctification Cross,  
18th – 19th c. (MAG Collection)
10. Wooden Blessing Cross,  
18th c. (MBC Collection)
11. Gospel, 19th c.  
(MAG Collection)
12. Pix of Russian Art, 19th c.  
(MBC Collection)