

Abstract

I. For the summer of 2008, I plan to research a Byzantine-style bronze icon of European manufacture that was purchased by Dr. Sara Orel while in Egypt in January 2008. In researching this icon, I hope to answer the following questions:

- The scenes shown on the icon are the life of Christ, life of Mary, and miracles of icons. Why are these particular scenes grouped together?
- Why was the icon found in Egypt and how did it get there? What is the country of origin?
- How old is the icon?
- What was the purpose? Did it have any particular meaning? Was it unique?

II. From doing this research project, I hope to learn about artifacts similar to the icon that were made at or around the same time as well as international relationships (by answering why the icon was brought to Egypt).

III. In order to achieve the goals and objectives of the research, it will be necessary for me to meet with scholars in the art world to learn about this icon. I have already been in contact with professors at Washington University in St. Louis as well as Saint Louis University. It will be necessary for me to conduct background research in specialized libraries, such as those at Saint Louis University, in order to get a historical perspective of the icon.

IV. The success of the project will be measured by my ability to answer the above questions.

V. I will share the results of the project with the faculty and my peers at Truman at the Student Research Conference. I will use visual representations of the icon and present the findings of my research. I may also do a presentation at the regional meeting of American Schools of Oriental Research, which will be in St. Louis in April of 2009, as well as the Society of Biblical Literature regional conference.

Student Investigator's Qualifications

I am a history/art history double major and plan on entering the field of museum studies once I graduate from Truman in May of 2010. I currently have completed sixty-seven hours, which includes both classes taken here as well as transfer credit brought in from other institutions.

I am extremely interested in this project because it will prepare me for the type of research I will be doing as a museum professional. Completing this project will also enable me to expand my understanding of art history. There are very few original works of art available here at Truman, so therefore investigating this icon presents an excellent opportunity for an art history major to gain valuable hands-on experience. This project will be beneficial towards my educational and professional careers.

Caves to Cathedrals, a survey of art history from prehistoric times to the Renaissance, is the class that gave me a background in Byzantine and Early Christian art. My study abroad trip to Cairo, Egypt, introduced me to Early Christian art in its context, allowing me to better approach an object of Byzantine origin. So far, the research that I have done has only been for classes and culminated in writing term papers and giving presentations; this will enable me to put into practice knowledge I have learned from books.

I do have experience with working in a museum setting; last summer I worked at Washington University's Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum and I currently volunteer at the Still National Osteopathic Museum located on the campus of A.T. Still University. These opportunities have given me the chance to practice presenting art to the public and will help me present my research at Truman and at other conferences.

Goals and Objectives

During the grant period, I hope to learn as much as I can about the icon that was found in Cairo, Egypt. Preliminary examination and consultation by Dr. Orel and Dr. Patrick Lecaque indicates this is not a native product of Egypt, so I specifically hope to find out about the origins of the icon as well as how it wound up in Cairo. Other questions, such as why the particular scenes are grouped together and the purpose of the icon will also be the subject of my investigation.

To do this study I will need to research icons in general and find out for whom they were typically made, how they were used, and if the material was ever something other than bronze. Also of importance to me is finding out about Egypt's relationship with Byzantine Europe. This definitely must be taken into consideration when attempting to answer the questions posed above.

My first goal for the project is to compose a detailed condition report of the icon; this report will include extensively surveying the object and recording damages or other pertinent information. I will provide photographs and drawings of the object in order to gain a better understanding of the object. This type of work, a condition report, is commonly done in museums when a curator accession items into a collection; participating in one as an undergraduate is an important opportunity for someone who one day will be in the museum field.

Methodology and Procedures

I will begin the project after the spring semester and complete it by August 15, 2008. I plan to spend thirty hours a week focusing on the project. During the grant period, I will spend two weeks documenting the icon itself, by preparing a condition report of it. I will also do a close visual analysis, description and identification of the scenes, both recorded verbally as well as visually (through photographs and drawings). After those have been completed, the majority of the summer will focus on research about the iconography of the object and finding the significance of the certain scenes being grouped together. I will consult journal articles, books, museum catalogues, and websites dedicated to Byzantine and Christian art.

Libraries and museums that will be of use throughout the entirety of the project are: Pickler Memorial Library, Pius XII Memorial Library (located on the campus of Saint Louis University), Kranzberg Art and Architecture Library (located at Washington University in Saint Louis), the Saint Louis Art Museum, and the Saint Louis University Museum of Art (SLUMA, which has a particularly fine collection of religious art and artifacts from the thirteenth through the twentieth centuries). I have been in contact with several professors at Washington University in St. Louis and Saint Louis University who will be more than willing to help me gain more information about the icon. They include:

- Alicia Walker, Associate Professor of Art History and Archaeology (Medieval Art and Architecture), Washington University in Saint Louis
 - Dr. Walker's area of expertise is Byzantine art, and she has given a lecture entitled "Byzantine Icons in Byzantine Life," which relates well to the subject I would like to work with.

- Maureen Quigley, Associate Professor of Art History at Saint Louis University
 - Dr. Maureen Quigley's area of expertise is Medieval and Christian art, and will be particularly helpful in explaining the scenes that appear on the icon.

Further opportunity to study Byzantine icons involves a possible trip to the Art Institute of Chicago or the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. Both museums are internationally known for their extensive collections of Byzantine art and icons. Going to either of these museums would help me gain a more visual perspective of the icon and would allow me to compare it first hand with others.

Timeline

1) May 12-25, 2008 (2 Weeks)

- a) For the first two weeks of this project, I will conduct an examination of the object itself. In this examination, I will record the condition, make notes of the iconography (this may or may not include drawings), and extensively photograph the object.

2) May 26-June 29, 2008 (5 Weeks)

- a) I will focus on the iconography of the object, starting with researching all of the scenes and recording the findings, as well as research why the particular scenes are grouped together. I will then study the history of Egypt and it's relationship with Byzantine Europe in order to determine how the icon got to Egypt.

3) July 20-August 15, 2008 (4 Weeks-continuing after family vacation)

- a) I will use the rest of the grant period to write up my results as well as to prepare an abstract that can be submitted for conferences.

Budget Summary

For this research project, I am requesting a total of \$2000.00. This money will go towards the following:

- 3 roundtrips from St. Louis to Kirksville, with one-way distance between these cities being 203.54 miles (45.5 cents/mile x 1221.24 miles=**\$550.00**)
- Airfare to Chicago or Washington, D.C.: **\$250**
- Living expenses while in Chicago or Washington, D.C.: \$100 a day for six days=**\$600.00**
- Museum or library expenses (photocopying materials, entrance fees): **\$100.00**
- Stipend/living expenses: **\$500.00**

Evaluation/Dissemination

A successful outcome of this project would be a paper that answers the questions I have posed:

- The scenes shown on the icon are the life of Christ, life of Mary, and miracles of icons. Why are these particular scenes grouped together?
- Why was the icon found in Egypt and how did it get there? What is the country of origin?
- How old is the icon?
- What was the purpose? Did it have any particular meaning? Was it unique?

The results will be presented at the Student Research Conference in the spring of 2009 and could lead to regional (Missouri Art History Society, Society of Biblical Literature) or national (NCUR) conference presentations as well as a publication in Truman's *Apprentice Historian* or in an undergraduate research journal.