

A FEW WORDS FROM OUR INSTRUCTOR

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Today, there are quite a few workshops and schools that teach icon-painting. Their syllabi and focus may differ a lot from each other. Basically, they differ in the extent to which the educational process is focused on the study of the works of old masters or modern iconography. In some workshops, training is devoted to copying ancient icons. In others, from the very beginning, the emphasis is on modern iconography.

We believe that these two elements should complement each other.

Of course, at the beginning, the training should base on the best examples of ancient icon-painting. We will orient students, first of all, to examples of Byzantine art of the 13th-14th centuries. This is the time of the so-called "Paleologian Renaissance". In this period, Byzantine icon-painting and monumental art reached their zenith. Another example is the post-Byzantine art of Crete and Rus' of the 15th-16th centuries. These samples are very suitable for teaching as they are the most elaborated and consistent in their methodology. This makes them convenient for perception by aspiring icon-painters. These accessible examples will allow the students to master the "language" of icon-painting. This will lay the foundation for further development.

That said, training should not be based only on copying. One of the central tasks of the course is to develop the student's skill of independent iconographic drawing. *By the end of the training, the students should be able not only to make a good copy of the predecessor's icon, but to create an iconographic image on their own.* They should also be able to transfer a realistic image into the language of the icon. For example, they should be able to consider a photograph of one of the new, recently canonized saints, applying the basics of academic drawing, perspective, color science and formal composition as tools for the artist.

These auxiliary subjects are part of the college or university syllabus of traditional art education. Mastering these subjects, at least at a basic level, will help the aspiring iconographer to understand the whole process. It will significantly expand his or her competence in later independent work.

Let us make a digression. After the Soviet period, the revival of icon-painting began. At that time, some believed that an icon-painter is something opposite to a secular artist. Many trained artists strove to begin painting icons by rejecting everything they

were taught at the academy. The beautiful maxim by the famous iconographer Archimandrite Zenon (Theodor) was well-spread. He said: "The icon-painter must kill the artist in himself." At that time, we worked in the icon-painting workshop of the Saint Elisabeth Convent in Minsk. We thought: here we are, crippled by secular education. But how nice it would be to find a person who would immediately begin his education by copying old icons! Perhaps such would have managed to enter the measure of the ancient icon painters.

But the time went on. Not only did Archimandrite Zenon not kill the artist in himself, but, they say, he also abandoned his beautiful maxim. People without art education joined our workshop and started to paint icons. But it turned out that those who received a good secular education were able to achieve the best results in iconography. These were especially those who were good at academic drawing. Their capabilities turned out to be incomparably wider. Their level of knowledge of the material was incomparably higher.

This is why we are sure that a student of iconography should strive to become not only a good "icon painter" but also a good "artist". These two qualities not only do not contradict each other. On the contrary, they can greatly help each other. Only when they interact can one create a good ICON.

For our part, we see our task in guiding the future iconographers and provide the necessary basis for their further development.

— *Ekaterina Daineko*
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