FROM BYZANTIUM TO RUSSIA TO ESTONIA: MULTI-SCENE ICONS AS EXPRESSIONS OF A POST-BYZANTINE TRADITION

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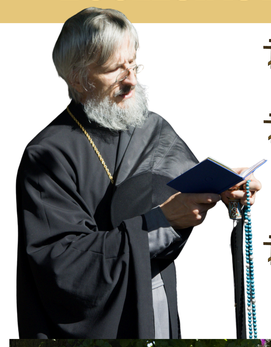
ECCLESIASTICAL JURISDICTION



- Estonia's Eastern Orthodox heritage descends from neither an exclusively Russian nor Byzantine source.
- 110 Orthodox churches and worship sites are institutionally divided between two jurisdictions: the Estonian Apostolic Orthodox Church (EOAC) and the Estonian Christian Orthodox Church (ECOC).
- The ECOC is a semi-autonomous Church that remains canonically affiliated with Moscow but must sever its remaining statutory ties by December 2026









- *The "КРЕСТЫНЫЙ ХОД", an Orthodox event pictured above, honors the icon of the Mother of God "Joy of All Who Sorrow" through a religious procession which transports it from the Church of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker to another church, Tallinn, Estonia, Sophie Works.*

METHODOLOGY & THEORIES





- *Iconographers possess a vast knowledge of the history and artistry of iconography so that they are equipped to restore and produce (left), Tallinn, Estonia, Sophie Works.*
- *An icon is in step one of the photogrammetry process: photographing the angles (right), Tallinn, Estonia, Sophie Works.*

- Contemporary devotional testimonies, icon biographies of icons, and on-site church guidebooks are curated into catalogue entries to investigate Estonia and Russia's Eastern Orthodox legacy.
- *The 'Painter's Manual' of Dionysius of Fourna* acts as the principal post-Byzantine visual guide for identifying and annotating scenes.
- Four interviews, conducted with Russian Orthodox priests, deacons, and iconographers aged 18 to 80 in their churches, demonstrate the icons' contemporary use and interpretation.

MULTI-SCENE ICONS

- Multi-scene icons—grid-like compositions that often combine the Twelve Great Orthodox Feasts with other festal cycles into a single visual field—generate meaning through careful selection, hierarchy, and arrangement rather than scale.
- The selectivity inherent to these icons makes them particularly useful for examining the transformation of the Orthodox legacy beyond Byzantium, as the inclusion, omission, and arrangement of particular feasts may reflect certain theological, artistic, and commercial priorities of the communities responsible for their creation and use.





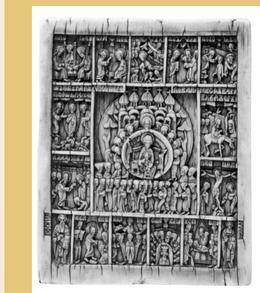
- *15th- 16th c. multi-scene icons from the Kadriorg and KUMU Museums (top two), Kenyon College (bottom middle), and Museum of Russian Icons (bottom left and right), Tallinn, Estonia, Sophie Works.*







COMPARANDA













- *The comparanda shows the evolution of the Post-Byzantine tradition: 11th c. Constantinopolitan from the Glory of Byzantium (top middle), 16th c. from Sinai, Byzantium Russia (bottom three), and 17th c. from the Walters Art Museum (top left and right).*

INTERVIEWS



- "The multi-scene icon represents, artistically and theologically, a desire to return to a time of absolute, total faith." Russian-American deacon and iconographer, late 40s



- *Actively venerated multi-scene icons, Tallinn, Estonia, Sophie Works.*

DIGITAL CATALOGUE

- Using CreateFSU, the catalogue brings together three 3D models and ten photographs of multi-scene icons—which are spatially and temporally dispersed across ecclesiastical, museum, and private collections—into a single comparative resource.
- Photogrammetry, the overlapping of 2D photographs to create 3D models, was used to curate visuals of the museum-accessible iconography.





- *A completed photogrammetric model of a multi-scene icon (left), 16th c., Sophie Works. QR code linking to the digital repository and references (middle). A foldable multi-scene bronze triptych, 19th c., Tallinn, Estonia, Sophie Works.*

POST-BYZANTINE EVOLUTION

- These multi-scene icons examined do not replicate Byzantine models monotonously, but instead reflect artistic interpretation shaped by coeval Orthodox movements, literacy, material constraints, and devotional function.
- Unique artistic styles emerged from this post-Byzantine evolution: keel-shaped scene frames, the intentional exclusion of figures and symbols, and the iconostasis-type composition.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- To my father, thank you for being my hero and for instilling in me the confidence, yet humbleness, that I can do anything I set my mind to.