EXHIBITION FACT SHEET

Title: *Tradition in Transition: Russian Icons in the Age of the Romanovs*

When: October 5, 2008–January 4, 2009

Description: Russian icons have long been admired and collected as works of art. But first and foremost, icons were—and are—sacred objects meant to play a central role in religious life. This exhibition brings together 43 icons and oklads (decorative covers) ranging from humble paintings on wood to luxurious works embellished with gold, silver, pearls and precious jewels. The earliest date from the 1600s, just before Peter the Great opened Russia to Western influences after 700 years of virtual isolation. The latest are from the rule of the last tsar, Nicholas II, executed by the Bolsheviks in 1918. On tour for the first time, the works are from three private collections, including that of cereal heiress Marjorie Merriweather Post.

Credits: *Tradition in Transition* is organized by the Hillwood Museum & Gardens in collaboration with the Steinhardt-Sherlock Trust and toured by International Arts & Artists, Washington, DC. It is made possible in Rochester by the Robert L. and Mary L. Sproull Fund, with additional support from the George D. and Frieda B. Abraham Foundation, the Chester and Dorris Carlson Charitable Fund, and Deanne Molinari.

Programs & events: These include an exhibition opening party (Oct. 4), lecture by curator Wendy Salmond (Oct. 5), educators’ inservice (Oct. 7), symposium (Nov. 15), family day (Nov. 16), Palette to Palate event (Dec. 4/5), and performances of Russian liturgical music (Dec. 6/11). For details, see attached release or visit [http://mag.rochester.edu/calendar](http://mag.rochester.edu/calendar).

Companion show: In Rochester only, the exhibition is accompanied by *Subverting the Sacred: The Face of Lenin*. Organized by the Memorial Art Gallery, this companion show brings together paintings, posters and artifacts that demonstrate how, after Lenin’s death in 1924, images of his face came to function as a “new icon” for the Soviet citizenry. The works are from the collection of David Rittenhouse, a UR graduate and former member of the US Foreign Service.

Hours: Open Wednesday–Sunday 11 am to 5 pm and until 9 pm on Thursdays. Closed Mondays and Tuesdays.

Admission: $10; college students with ID and senior citizens, $6; children 6–18, $4. Always free to members, UR students, and children 5 and under. Reduced general admission, $6, Thursdays from 5–9 pm, made possible by the Democrat and Chronicle, Thomson West, ExxonMobil Chemical Company and Monroe County.

Information: Patti Giordano 585.276.8932 / pgiordano@mag.rochester.edu
Larissa Masny 585.276.8934 / lmasny@mag.rochester.edu
September 18, 2008

TREASURES OF IMPERIAL RUSSIA COME TO MEMORIAL ART GALLERY
Nationally Touring Exhibition of Romanov Icons Opens October 5

ROCHESTER, NY — Russian icons have long been admired and collected as works of art. But first and foremost, icons were—and are—sacred objects meant to play a central role in religious life. Generally small in size, these “windows through which heaven is glimpsed” not only hung in churches, palaces and peasant homes, but were carried in processions, presented at weddings and used to comfort the sick.

A major traveling exhibition of Russian icons spanning 300 years of Romanov rule opens October 5 at the Memorial Art Gallery and remains on view through January 4. Tradition in Transition: Russian Icons in the Age of the Romanovs brings together 43 icons and oklads (icon covers) from three major private collections, including that of cereal heiress Marjorie Merriweather Post.

On tour for the first time, these works range from humble, roughly-painted wooden icons of the peasant class to luxurious examples made of ivory or painted enamels and housed in gold or silver covers embellished with pearls and precious jewels. The earliest date from the 1600s, when Russia was nearing the end of 700 years of virtual isolation— isolation that ended with Peter the Great’s construction of St. Petersburg, his capital and “window on the West.” This action resulted in an influx of ideas, styles, fashions and ideologies that altered the very fabric of Russian society. The latest are from the rule of the last tsar, Nicholas II, executed by the Bolsheviks in 1918. (Also on view, for comparison, is a more traditional work from the mid-16th century.)

Unlike examples from the 15th and 16th centuries, which adhered strictly to orthodox precepts and prototypes, Romanov-era icons were long considered inferior, impure, even decadent, because of the influence of Western art and culture. But Wendy Salmond, curator of Tradition in Transition, has shown that many of these objects are just as beautiful and just as interesting as icons from the so-called Golden Age.

“Long dismissed as symptoms of icon painting’s decline in the modern age,” writes Dr. Salmond in the exhibition catalog, “these late icons are increasingly attracting the attention of scholars and collectors, who see in them both bridges to the past and mirrors of ongoing historical change.”

Tradition in Transition is organized by the Hillwood Museum & Gardens in collaboration with the Steinhardt-Sherlock Trust and toured by International Arts & Artists, Washington, DC. It is made possible in Rochester by the Robert L. and Mary L. Sproull Fund, with additional support from the George D. and Frieda B. Abraham Foundation, the Chester and Dorris Carlson Charitable Fund, and Deanne Molinari.

Assembling the collection
In the late 1930s, cereal heiress Marjorie Merriweather Post found herself in Moscow, where her husband, Joseph Davies, was serving as US Ambassador. Intrigued by Russian icons, the couple entered the market just as the Soviet government began selling off supposedly inferior works from three centuries of Romanov rule. They were among the last foreigners allowed to buy from stockpiles of icons confiscated by the Soviet government.

Today, the works are housed at Hillwood Museum & Gardens, Mrs. Post’s Washington residence until her death in 1973.


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Hillwood's collection also includes works purchased by Mrs. Post after her return to the US and objects collected by two of her contemporaries from the Moscow diplomatic corps. Her long-time friend, Frances Rosso, was married to the Italian ambassador, and career diplomat Laurence A. Steinhardt served as Davies's successor.

National tour
*Tradition in Transition* opened at Hillwood Museum & Gardens in June 2004. It began its national tour at the Nevada Museum of Art in February 2006 and later traveled to the Timken Museum of Art in San Diego; the Muscarelle Museum of Art at the College of William and Mary, VA; the Boise Art Museum; Loyola University Museum of Art in Chicago; Cummber Museum of Art & Gardens in Jacksonville, FL; the Louisiana Art & Science Museum in Baton Rouge; and the Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art at Oklahoma University. The Memorial Art Gallery is the final stop of the tour.

Programs and events
These include an opening party (October 4), lecture by Dr. Wendy Salmond, curator of the exhibition (October 5), inservice for educators (October 7), all-day symposium (November 15), family day (November 16), Palette to Palate event that explores Russian art and food (December 4/5), and performances of Russian liturgical music (December 6/11). For details, see attached release or visit [http://mag.rochester.edu/calendar](http://mag.rochester.edu/calendar).

These events and others are also included in Across Borders East, a community collaboration spearheaded by MAG and Nazareth College Arts Center. To learn more about Across Borders, which this year explores the art and culture of the Eastern hemisphere, visit [http://acrossborders.rochester.edu](http://acrossborders.rochester.edu).

Subverting the Sacred: The Face of Lenin
Images of Vladimir Ilich Lenin, founder of the Russian Communist Party and first leader of the Soviet Union, permeated every aspect of Soviet society from his death in 1924 until the country’s breakup in 1991. Despite Lenin’s objections to any sort of cult behavior, religious or secular, his face—reproduced on traditional artworks and mass-produced objects alike—would become a “new icon” for the Soviet citizenry.

Organized by MAG, this companion show brings together paintings, posters and artifacts collected by David Rittenhouse, a UR graduate and former member of the US Foreign Service.

*Subverting the Sacred: The Face of Lenin* is on view concurrently with *Tradition in Transition*, from October 5, 2008 through January 4, 2009.

Memorial Art Gallery hours & admission:
Open Wednesday–Sunday 11 am to 5 pm and until 9 pm on Thursdays. Also open until 9 pm on Friday, October 17. Closed Mondays and Tuesdays. Admission $10; college students with ID and senior citizens, $6; children 6–18, $4. Always free to members, UR students, and children 5 and under. Reduced general admission, $4, Thursdays from 5–9 pm, made possible by the Democrat and Chronicle, Thomson West, ExxonMobil Chemical Company and Monroe County.

Press contacts
Patti Giordano 585.276.8932 / pgiordano@mag.rochester.edu
Larissa Masny 585.276.8934 / lmasny@mag.rochester.edu

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EXHIBITION PARTY
Tradition in Transition: Russian Icons in the Age of the Romanovs

Saturday, October 4, 8–11 pm (Patron members and above 5–7 pm)
MAG supporter members and above free; associate members $10; non-members and guests $17; advance tickets required*

Dance to the sounds of eight-piece band Allegro, jam to jazz with Kind of Blue, enjoy Russian folk songs for piano and accordion with Sasha Podolsky, and relax to light classics with Arabesque Winds. Help yourself to munchies, or purchase cocktails, coffee and decadent desserts. And of course, be among the first to see the exhibition!

Sponsored by the Democrat and Chronicle with special thanks to our community partner, Downtown Community Forum.

* For recorded information call 585.276.8901. Tickets for nonmembers only are also available at Wegmans Customer Service Counters (surcharge applies).

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PROGRAMS AND EVENTS

Tradition in Transition: Russian Icons in the Age of the Romanovs

LECTURE

Sunday, October 5, 3 pm, auditorium
Included with MAG admission (free to members)

Hear an illustrated lecture by Dr. Wendy R. Salmond, professor of art history at Chapman University in Orange, CA, and curator of Tradition in Transition: Russian Icons in the Age of the Romanovs.

Presented in cooperation with Downtown Community Forum.

ESPECIALLY FOR EDUCATORS

Tuesday, October 7, 4:30–7 pm / $30*


Preregistration is required; contact Kerry Donovan, 585.276.8971 (kdonovan@mag.rochester.edu).

FILM SCREENING: ANDREI TARKOVSKY’S ANDREI RUBLEV off-site event

Wednesday, October 29, 7 pm at George Eastman House Curtis Theatre / free admission

This 1966 masterpiece is based on the life of a legendary 15th-century icon painter.

Made possible by a grant from The Humanities Project, University of Rochester.

SYMPOSIUM

Saturday, November 15, 9:30 am–5 pm
$15 (registration required) includes MAG admission, symposium, morning coffee, buffet lunch and concert*

“The Authority of the Image” reconsiders the role of the image in art and contemporary visual culture, as exemplified by the Russian icons and images of Lenin currently on exhibit at MAG. The all-day program includes lectures by noted scholars and a performance of Russian liturgical music by Schola Cantorum. Presenters include Robert Bird, University of Chicago; Paul Duro and John Givens, University of Rochester; Nadieszda Kizenko, SUNY Albany; Glenn Peers, University of Texas-Austin; and Wendy Salmond, Chapman University.

Made possible by a grant from The Humanities Project, University of Rochester. Cosponsored with UR’s departments of art and art history and modern languages, and the Eastman School of Music.

* To register or for more information call 276.8970.
PALETTE TO PALATE: INSPIRED BY THE ROMANOv COURT
Thursday, December 4, 6 pm or Friday, December 5, 6 pm

Celebrate *Tradition in Transition* at this festive event combining art, history and fine dining. To whet your appetite you’ll visit the exhibition—a true feast for the eyes—and watch a demonstration by cooking instructor Johanna Heise, who’ll show you how to prepare a sumptuous period meal in your own kitchen. Next, you’ll enjoy the same menu as presented by Cutler’s Restaurant. Over dessert and coffee, art historian Lucy Durkin will give an illustrated presentation about the Romanovs and their world-class collection of masterworks from Rembrandt to Fabergé.

*Registration begins October 1. For more information and pricing, call 276-8959.*

SCHOLA CANTORUM OF ROCHESTER
Saturday, December 6, 3 pm (repeated Thursday, December 11, 7 pm), Fountain Court
*Included with MAG admission (free to members)*

Schola Cantorum of Rochester presents a concert of Russian liturgical music.

GUIDED EXHIBITION TOURS
Sunday, October 5, 1, 2 and 3 pm
Sundays, October 12–January 4, 1 pm
Fridays, October 10–January 2, 2 pm

*Included with MAG admission (free to members)*

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A NOTE ON FUNDING

To: Members of the media

From: Patti Giordano and Larissa Masny
Memorial Art Gallery public relations office

Subject: Funding for Tradition in Transition: Russian Icons in the Age of the Romanovs

Exhibitions of this magnitude are extremely expensive to organize. Indeed, they could not be offered to the community without broad support from private and public agencies. We ask for your help in giving well-deserved public recognition to these generous sponsors.

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The opening party is sponsored by the Democrat and Chronicle.

Special thanks to Downtown Community Forum, our community partner for the opening party and Dr. Salmond’s lecture.