



WHAT FOLLOWS WIKO? EMMANUEL STEFANOV MOUTAFOV

Born in 1968 in Sofia; 1987, graduated from the National College of Ancient Languages and Cultures “St. Cyril”, Sofia and published his first book entitled *Pagan Elements in the Cult and Iconography of St. Eliah* in Bulgarian; 1988/89, studied History at the University of Sofia “St. Kliment Oehridski”; 1989, accepted at the University of Athens, Philosophy Department, majored in Archaeology and Art History; 1996, took Master’s Degree in Greece; 1996–97, specialized in Byzantine and Slavonic Palaeography and Art at the Research Center for Slavo-Byzantine Studies “Ivan Dujčev” in Sofia; 2001, became a Ph.D. in world history of the 15th–19th centuries at the Institute for Balkan Studies, Sofia, with the book *Europeanization on Paper: Treatises on Painting in Greek during the First Half of the 18th Century*. Sofia, 2001; 2003 (March–May), Visiting Research Fellow at the Program in Hellenic Studies at Princeton University, NJ; 2010, became an Associate Professor of Medieval and Post-Byzantine Art at the Institute of Art Studies, Sofia; 2010, became a member of the Scientific Board at the Institute for Art Studies and a member of the General Assembly of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. – Address: 6 Balkan Street, Sofia 1303, Bulgaria. E-mail: moutafov1@gmail.com

1. Proposed Project and Related Topics

My research objective here was to work on “Typology and Semantics of the Reverse of Post-Byzantine Icons”. Until now, Katherine Marsengill has been the only person who has done research on this issue: in her 2001 M.A. thesis “Viewing the Back: The Reverse of Byzantine Icons”, submitted at the Lamar Dodd School of Art in Athens, Georgia.

However, the findings of her study have not been published and they deal only with the Byzantine period. Some larger catalogues of Christian art exhibitions and published conference papers occasionally include icon reverses as well, but they have not yet been the object of thorough research. Thus, there was a need for a more complex and comprehensive study – more complex research on the Balkans, that is, based on real and more extensive material, by doing field work and studying materials to be found in museum warehouses.

The methodology of this research was interdisciplinary, using methods from philology, theology, epigraphy, history of art and cultural anthropology. Some of the sources that I examined include: writings by the Church Fathers (such as St. John of Damascus, St. Gregory of Nazianzos, Origen, St. Gregory the Great), Byzantine ekphraseis, 18th- and 19th-century iconographic manuals, donor and dedicational inscriptions and other Greek and Slavic inscriptions and cryptograms. I analyzed the significance of the represented iconographic symbols, the cult practices related to icon worship, their removal from the space of the temple and the home, the rituals in which they are included etc.

I hope the results of this project will help clarify the role of the icon in cult practice, shedding light on its apotropaic function in border spaces and casting doubt on the flat character of Orthodox painting and the lack of perspective and three-dimensionality in the East until the middle of the 19th century. They will also help to explain some aspects of everyday Christianity and the believer's individual relation to the represented character, as well as the direction of his "reading" of the holy images.

I was able to use the extensive holdings in books and catalogues at the Berlin libraries.

While in Wiko I also had the opportunity to write a project-related paper entitled "The image of a cross with cryptograms on the Molos' watermill and its relation to the Cypriot religious tradition of cryptic inscriptions on walls of buildings"; this was possible because of the stimulating atmosphere of the Wiko and of other university departments I visited here. This paper was submitted for publication in October at the University of Glasgow, Scotland.

During my stay in Berlin I noticed also some interesting parallels with decorated reverses of Catholic altar triptychs dated from the 15th and 16th centuries. They contain floral decoration or have certain images like the Holy Mandyion, which probably means that there is a parallel tradition in the West, but this issue has to be studied more carefully and separately because of the differences in the liturgical practices in the two Churches as well as in view of the existence of sculptured holy images in Central and Western Europe.

At the end of my stay I also collected ideas for another paper entitled “Research problems in terminology and periodization of the Christian art in the Ottoman Empire”.

Needless to say I improved my English while working in Wiko, but I also started German language classes, which created a solid basis to keep learning German elsewhere. I really admire the professionalism of Eva and Ursula as language instructors and think they deserve academic positions as well.

2. Workshop Talk

I was invited to present a paper at the weekly colloquium of the Institute (December 13, 2011) and I gave a lecture on “The Both Obvious and Hidden Aspect of Holy Images: the Back Side of the Orthodox Icons”. In preparing for the talk, I was able to reformulate some arguments and clarify certain points with my Co-Fellow Franz Alto Bauer (who is one of the best experts on late Antiquity and early Byzantine art worldwide and who made a glorious introduction to the topic and moderated the follow-up discussion) and to work with the native speakers from the translator’s office in preparing the announcement and the hand-out. My talk was attended by most of the Fellows and their partners and those who couldn’t come asked me to send them my text and image presentation in advance. My talk was followed by perhaps the longest discussion in the period October–December 2011 and the further queries by e-mail lasted for three more days. Unexpectedly, the topic of my lecture also appeared as an inspiration for Mauricio Sotelo, who came to my apartment three days later together with his scenographer Alexander Polzin to comment on one of the future scenes in his opera project “El Público: Ópera bajo la arena”, where they would like to use a bilateral icon and imitate a religious procession. We spoke also about circular movement in religious rituals, the structure of the temple, the division between human and sacred, the obvious and hidden messages of the altar screen and about the principles of the Byzantine music and fire dancing on the feast of St. Constantine and St. Helen in Bulgaria. I offered them my PowerPoint presentation and some other folders with religious images from the Balkans to use as a basis for the scenography. So not only can art inspire research, scholarship can stimulate art, too.

I would like to suggest the establishment of an annual journal with a title like Wiko Tuesdays in which all those colloquium talks could be published, because this would reveal the history and intellectual activity of the research community year by year and in all its variety. Most scholars prefer reading to listening ...

3. Byzantium in Wiko – an Art Experience

During my stay in Wiko I was inspired by the atmosphere, some manuscripts and icons and I made a cycle of pen-and-ink drawings, called Byzantium in Wiko. One of them was exhibited on December 13 outside the Large Colloquium room. I received a few, but generous compliments for my work.

I also visited the Pergamon Museum, the Bode Museum, the Old and New Galleries, the Kulturforum etc., which was a spiritual feast for me and I hope will enlarge my horizon as an artist and scholar. I gave some of my sketches made during the talks to colleagues.

I am happy that I had a chance to meet here in person the truly fantastic American artist of Mexican origin Elena Clement (wife of Claudio Lomnitz), to listen to Horst Bredekamp during the magnificent guided tour he offered us at the Bode Museum, as well as to have the honour to live at the apartment in Villa Walther where Luigi Nono composed his “La Lontananza Nostalgica Utopica Futura, madrigale per più ‘caminantes’”. Anyway, I preferred listening to Alexander Scriabin’s “Concerto per Pianoforte ed Orchestra op. 20” here.

4. Professional Contacts and Consultations

At Wiko, I have been in contact with almost all other visiting Fellows, enjoying papers, attending meetings, participating in workshops and giving more consultations than accepting them, because of the nature of my research and education. I was impressed by the intelligent queries about Christian art made by “hard” scholars like Avril Coghlan, Mark Viney and Sarah Reece.

I spent some hours working on Greek toponyms for the project of Edhem Eldem, with whom I had wonderful conversations about the Ottoman Empire, the Balkans, the Turkish language and delights ... I also had pleasant meetings and fruitful discussions with Susannah Heschel, Khaled El-Rouayheb, James Hunt, Ayşe Buğra, Clemens Leonhard, Bram Tucker, Hoda Barakat, Hollis Taylor, Miloš Vec, James Aronson, Hye Young Sung (Jie-Hyun Lim’s wife) etc.

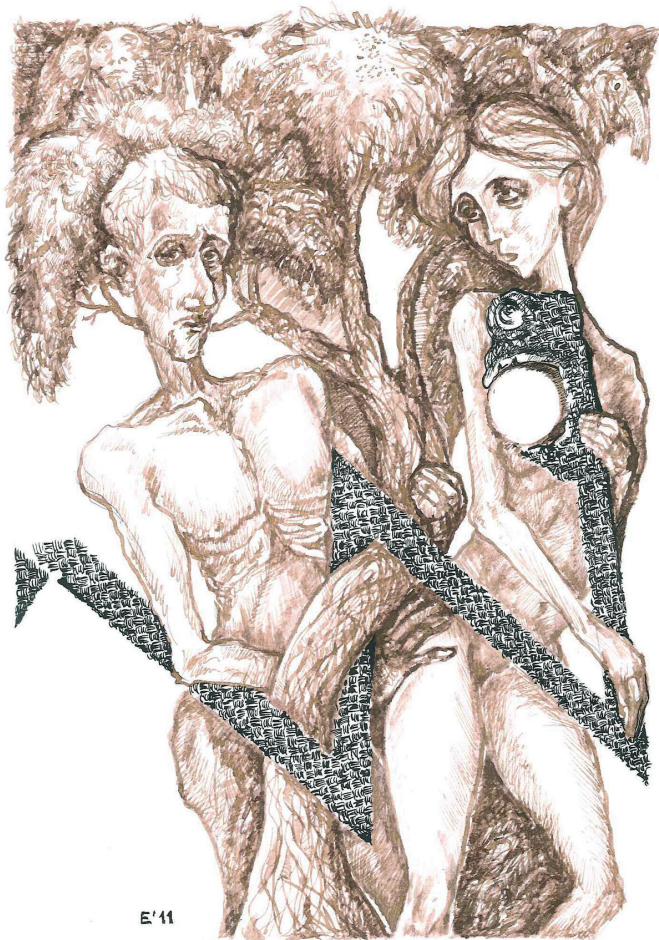
5. Conclusion

I wish every humanistic institution had one Luca Giuliani (luminous mind), one Reinhart Meyer-Kalkus (intelligent motor) and one Sonja Grund (charming book-thrower); then contemporary scholarship and intellectual life in general would be much different. Once again, I would like to thank the office staff for making my stay here easy, joyful and comfortable.

As Wiko has left its significant trace in my career, I hope I left my own small trace here, too, just because one of my *Weisheitszähne* was taken out during my stay in the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin. What a coincidence and what a superficial parallel? Since Wiko is the best, the main question is: what follows it in my life? – Well, I have one more *Weisheitszahn* left ...

Recommended reading

1. Moutafov, Emmanuel, I. Gergova, A. Koujoundzhiev, E. Popova, E. Genova, and D. Gonis. *Гръцки зографи в България след 1453 г. – Έλληνες αγιογράφοι στη Βουλγαρία μετά το 1453* (Greek Icon-Painters in Bulgaria after 1453), Sofia, 2008, 297 p., 350 ill. (bilingual edition in Bulgarian and Modern Greek with summary in English).
2. Moutafov, Emmanuel. “Cryptograms and Bilingualism in Paleologian Art.” *Patrimonium* 3, Skopje, 2010, 251–261 (in Bulgarian with summary in English).
3. Moutafov, Emmanuel. “EIKONOΠΑΘΕΙΑ (Iconopathy) or Who are the Ancient Philosophers represented in the frescoes of the Refectory of Bachkovo monastery and of the Nativity Church in Arbanassi?” *Art Studies Quarterly* 2, Sofia, 2010, 15–19 (in Bulgarian with summary in English).
4. Moutafov, Emmanuel. “How Central the Significance of Icons in the Orthodoxy is?” In *Medieval Christianitas: Different Regions, “Faces”, Approaches*, edited by Tsvetelin Stepanov and Georgi Kazakov, 166–180. Sofia, 2010 (Mediaevalia Christiana, 3).
5. Moutafov, Emmanuel. “Ioannes Tsetiris from Grabovo or Jovan Chetirevich Grabovan?” In *Topics in Post-Byzantine Painting – In Memory of Manolis Chatzidakis*, edited by E. Dracopoulou, 217–229. Athens, 2002.



Emmanuel Moutafis, "Temptation of Adam and
Eve", cycle "Byzantium in Wiko", October 2011,
Berlin

Byzantium in Wiko: Temptation of Adam and Eva