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MOMENTS IN THE HISTORY OF AN ICON COLLECTION

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM IN LVIV, 1905–2005

This chapter surveys the history of an important icon collection in a historically disturbed part of Eastern Europe over the course of the last hundred years. It differs from most of the other contributions in this volume in that it deals with Russia only obliquely. Lviv (also known as Lemberg or Lwów) was the capital city of the Austrian crownland of Galicia. Before Austria took it in 1772, it had belonged to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The city was founded by the Rus Prince Danylo of Galicia-Volhynia in the mid-thirteenth century. Lviv was never under Russian rule except for a brief period of occupation during World War I. After the war, Ukrainians and Poles fought over it, and the Poles won. Lviv remained a part of Poland from 1918 until 1939, when the Red Army took it, as agreed upon in the secret protocols to the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact. In 1940, it was formally incorporated into the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. Nazi Germany turned on its former ally in 1941 and occupied Lviv until 1944, when the Soviets took it back. In 1991, Ukraine declared independence from the Soviet Union, and Lviv became part of the independent Ukrainian state.

The Carpathian mountain region south of Lviv had an exceptionally vibrant and distinctive tradition of icon painting, remnants of which still survive today. The Eastern Christians of both Lviv and the

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Carpathian region were Orthodox in religion until about 1700, when they accepted union with the Catholic Church, while retaining their own rituals and sacral culture. Since 1774, the former Orthodox of this region (and Transylvania) have been known as Greek Catholics. Most of the icons in the collection of the National Museum in Lviv derive from this Carpathian tradition. Icons began to be painted in monasteries in the mountain localities in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. These icons were informed by the general Byzantine and post-Byzantine tradition, but particularly important in their development were the iconographies elaborated in Novgorod and Pskov and, to a lesser extent, in Moldavia. Since the Carpathian region constituted the westernmost extension of the East Slavic Rus settlement, its iconography was early influenced by Gothic and other Western art. Over time, fewer monks and increasing numbers of craftsmen engaged in the painting of icons, with the mid-seventeenth century constituting the caesura between a more monastic and a more popular phase. Although North Rus influences were strong in the fifteenth century, the icons of the Carpathians lost touch with the Russian tradition thereafter. If icons have a nationality, then the icons in the National Museum in Lviv are not Russian icons, but Ukrainian icons.[1] The Lviv collection is the single largest repository of the products of the Carpathian iconographic tradition.

The icons in the Lviv collection were painted in an environment of animal husbandry, monasteries, Tatar raids, and serfdom. They were collected in an era of trains, nationalism, and Communism. They were produced in small wooden monasteries and in small towns in the foothills. They were collected in what was for this part of Europe a big city. Lviv's population was almost 130,000 in 1910 and is nearly 800,000 today. The vicissitudes of Lviv's recent history and the impact of new attitudes on the National Museum's icon collection reflect the interplay of art and nation in modernity.

HALCYON DAYS UNDER EMPEROR FRANZ JOSEPH, 1905–1914

The origins of the National Museum lie in the twilight years of Austria-Hungary. The museum's founder was the Greek Catholic metropolitan of Halych and archbishop of Lviv, Andrei Sheptytsky. Metropolitan Andrei had been born into an aristocratic Roman Catholic, Polish family but returned to the Greek Catholic Church of his ancestors and adopted the Ukrainian nationality; or, as they said in the early twentieth century, the Ruthenian nationality. As a scion of the upper elite, he had toured Western Europe and studied its art firsthand. He had a finely educated aesthetic sense,[2] a love of the visual arts, and great wealth. As head of the Greek Catholic Church from 1900 until his death in 1944, he was a magnanimous patron of the arts, sacral and secular.[3] His most generous donation was the National Museum with its rich collection of icons.

Sheptytsky began to purchase old icons long before the museum came into existence. As a novice at the Basilian monastery in Dobromyl in 1888, he had frequently visited the nearby village of Poliana, where the wooden church contained magnificent icons from the fifteenth and sixteenth

centuries. Years later, however, he took some novices to the church to show them the icons and was horrified to discover that the villagers were about to burn them. They had built a new brick church, and they were knocking down the old one and disposing of its icons in the prescribed manner. In fact, the destruction of old icons in this region was immense at the end of the nineteenth century. The Ruthenian national movement had been urging the peasants to build new churches out of brick and stone to replace their wooden structures and to adorn them with new images painted by professionally trained artists. In the case of Poliana, however, Sheptytsky bought some of the icons and saved them. These were later to form the nucleus of the National Museum's collection.[4] Today icons from this purchase are on permanent display: the Raising of Lazarus (fig. 8), the Entry into Jerusalem, the Descent into Hades (pl. 3), and the Descent of the Holy Spirit, all from the sixteenth century. In his memoirs, which recount the incidents in Poliana, the metropolitan cannot remember exactly when he made his purchase, but suspects it was while he was bishop of Stanyslaviv, that is, in 1899–1900.

At the time Sheptytsky bought these icons, they were little understood and little appreciated. In his memoirs, he recalls his first trip to Kyiv in 1886 or 1887. He had visited the museum of the Spiritual Academy, which possessed "a beautiful, though not very large" collection of icons. The custos of the museum, Nikolai Petrov, a historian of great erudition, said to him: "No one knows if there are any differences among these icons, or styles, or features of a certain school, because no one so far has done any research on them." As Sheptytsky recalled, until the 1890s the dominant idea was that art had to be realistic, so it was difficult to appreciate the old icons.[5]

The art historian Mykhailo Dragan, who helped build the National Museum's collection, complained that, with very few exceptions, priests had no appreciation whatsoever for the icons. They treated them as scrap: they were stored in the bell tower, burned for fuel, or nailed to the outside of the church; they were used to make a tetrapod or closet or to patch broken windows and holes.[6] The director of the museum noted that old icons were also used to make altars and bell-tower steps.[7] Of course, the profanation of centuries-old icons as building material preserved them for posterity, while the pious act of burning them did not. Art historians, at least, can be grateful for the sacrilege.

Metropolitan Andrei's approach to the icons was primarily aesthetic rather than spiritual. He understood them as, in the first place, works of art. His memoirs open with a scene from Merezhkovsky's historical novel *Leonardo da Vinci* (1902), in which the artist visits the workshop of an icon painter in Rome who came as part of a Muscovite legation to the pope. Leonardo examines the icon with intense curiosity but, it seems, without the slightest recognition that the icon was an object of the same art of which he himself was a master. In the metropolitan's view, Merezhkovsky erred here: Leonardo was too sensitive an artist not to have appreciated the artistic quality of icons.

For this cultivated twentieth-century bishop, the aesthetic emotions produced by

icons perhaps even accounted for why they were often considered miraculous:

> In general the icon was considered rather a genre of applied art, something like an Easter egg [*pysanka*], of interest perhaps, of value perhaps, but not an image, not a picture. I think, though, that not only I, but everyone else, has felt and feels some enchantment in all these works of the hieratic arts of the East. In my opinion, they work on human nature in such a way that sometimes instantaneously physical tremors of emotion run through a person from head to foot upon looking at a work of art, an icon. At such times someone might even ascribe to the old icon a wonder-working or even magical power. In fact these mysterious bodily

FIG. 8 Raising of Lazarus, Poliana, sixteenth century. Reproduced from Hryhorii Lohvyn, Lada Miliaieva, and Vira Svientsits'ka, eds., *Ukrains'kyi seredn'ovichnyi zhyvopys* (Kiev: Mystetstvo, 1976), LXXXVI.

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> tremors, this physical emotion of the organism, is probably the result of a natural reaction to beauty, which unconsciously envelops the person.

These emotions are similar to love, he continues, and this love in the heart makes it difficult, or even impossible, to become a disinterested expert on icons.[8]

As the metropolitan's collection grew, he decided to use it as the basis for establishing a museum. It was formally initiated on 23 February 1905 and was originally named the Church Museum.[9] The metropolitan made an inspired choice of director in the young Ilarion Svientsitsky, who had studied in Lviv, St. Petersburg, and Vienna. The premises of the museum at first were a converted five-room carriage house within the complex of the metropolitan residence.[10] In 1907, the metropolitan bought another building for the museum from the Polish artist Jan Styka,[11] and in July 1911 he bought a two-story building, which remains in the museum's possession to this day (42 Drahomanov St.). During the first decade of the museum's existence, the metropolitan donated a small fortune in money (350,000 crowns) as well as 3,400 of the 16,500 items then in its collection.[12] In the year of its founding, 1905, the museum initiated systematic expeditions to the Ukrainian countryside to acquire icons.[13]

In July–August 1911, the museum was renamed the National Museum. At this point, the museum was still involved exclusively in collecting, not exhibiting, but as of 13 December 1913 it was opened to the public.[15] In connection with this, in 1913 Svientsitsky published the first guidebook, with photos of some of the displays.[16] Among the visitors to the museum in 1914 was the British historian Robert Seton-Watson.[17]

ICON ACQUISITIONS, 1905–1919

Year(s)	Number of Icons Acquired
1905–07	445
1908	282
1909	544
1910	68
1911	130
1912	185
1913	190
1914	127
1915–17	4
1918	197
1919	4
Total	2,176

Source: Ilarion Svientsits'kyi, *Pro muzei ta muzeinytstvo (narysy i zamitky)* (Lviv: Z drukarni "Dila," 1920), 76–77.[14]

Behind the scenes, work had begun on the restoration of the icons in the museum's collection. The most prominent artist hired for this purpose was Mykhailo Boichuk, who worked for the museum in 1913–14.[18] Boichuk, who had studied in Kraków, Munich, Vienna, and Paris, resided mainly in Kyiv after the war broke out and later went on to become one of the key figures in twentieth-century Ukrainian art as the leader of the Monumentalists in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. The aesthetic program of his movement made much use of the old Ukrainian icons he knew so well. His story does not have a happy ending. Boichuk was arrested in the mid-1930s as an "agent of the Vatican" and

shot; his paintings and frescoes were systematically destroyed.[19]

The first years of the National Museum's existence, before the eruption of World War I, were peaceful, a time of systematic accumulation and development. Only one incident marred this idyll. On 12 April 1908, a Ukrainian student, Myroslav Sichynsky, shot dead the viceroy of Galicia, the Polish count Andrzej Potocki. The Poles of Lviv, who at this time constituted the majority of the city's inhabitants, were enraged. On the day after the assassination, an angry mob marched through the city vandalizing Ukrainian institutions, and a few windows in the National Museum were broken as a result.[20]

WAR AND RUSSIAN OCCUPATION, 1914–1918

Not long after World War I broke out, Russian forces occupied Lviv. The Russian administration combated the Ukrainian movement, and this had repercussions for the National Museum. Its founder, Sheptytsky, was arrested on 19 September 1914 and exiled to the interior of Russia. He was unable to return to Lviv until 10 September 1917.[21] The museum's director, Svientsitsky, was arrested on 17 February 1915, released on 14 March, then exiled to Kyiv in June. He was unable to return to Lviv until 28 March 1918. With both the founder and director absent, the museum was endangered. Fortunately, a number of individuals rallied to protect it, with a particularly prominent role being played by Anna Pavlyk, once a famous radical activist. They formed a curatorium in June 1915. While in exile, Svientsitsky corresponded with the curatorium about how to preserve the museum. At one point he urged them to collect antiquities because lately Jews had been buying them up.[22]

The war years did bring some good fortune to the museum, however. The church in Bohorodchany, which possessed a splendid baroque iconostasis painted by Yov Kondzelevych and originally installed in the Maniava Skete, burned down in 1916 as a result of artillery fire. However, the Austrians were able to save the iconostasis and ship it for safekeeping to Vienna. Later it was transferred to the National Museum in Lviv, a very significant acquisition (pl. 4).[23]

Among the visitors to the museum in 1915 was the Russian liberal Pyotr Struve.[24]

A UKRAINIAN MUSEUM IN POLAND, 1918–1939

With the collapse of Austria-Hungary and the denouement of the war, Poles and Ukrainians clashed over Galicia. On 1 November 1918, the Ukrainians declared Galicia to be part of the West Ukrainian National Republic, with its capital in Lviv. Since the Poles were still numerically dominant in the city, however, they managed to expel the Ukrainians after a few weeks. The war continued in the rest of Galicia until June 1919, when the Ukrainian Galician Army was defeated.

During the course of hostilities, on 23 November 1918, the museum building was badly damaged by artillery fire, but Ukrainians in the United States sent money for repairs.[25] Also during the Polish-Ukrainian War, the museum was searched eight times for weapons. The intrusion of armed, angry soldiers into the museum exposed the staff and the director's family to serious peril.

Although the director was still occasionally harassed in the mid-1920s, the interwar period saw the return of systematic work in the museum.[26] In fact, from time to time the Polish government allotted funds to the museum.[27]

It was at this time that collection analysis and icon scholarship took a few steps forward. The two most important publications of those years were both the work of Svientsitsky: a book titled *The Iconography of Galician Ukraine in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*[28] and an album of photographs of icons in the museum's collection (in black and white, of course).[29] The 1928 monograph on iconography remains the best piece of icon scholarship to come out of the museum. Five issues of a museum yearbook also appeared (1934–38).

The restoration of icons continued. An experienced restorer from Kyiv, Volodymyr Peshchansky, was hired by the museum in 1922–26. A talented local painter, Yaroslava Muzyka, began restoring icons in 1926;[30] she spent the spring and summer of 1928 improving her knowledge of restoration in Kyiv, Moscow, Leningrad, and Novgorod.[31] Visitors to the museum in 1928 included the Soviet consul in Lviv, Yury Lapchynsky, and the Ukrainian opera diva Salomea Krusceniski.[32]

Some insight into the mood and attitudes at the museum can be gleaned from an article that appeared in the 1938 issue of its yearbook. It showed how impressed foreign visitors were with the icon collection. A couple from Oxford was fascinated by the icons because of the "unique beauty of the rhythm of their draftsmanship and color." A performer from New York studied the costume and gestures in the icons in preparation for singing the folk songs of various nations. A few years previously the chief conservator of France and his wife, accompanied by the conservator of Lviv palatinate (*województwo*), visited the collection. The Frenchman declared that "he had discovered a great world of original beauty unknown to him before." In 1937, two Parisian artists spent several days with the icons sketching "the treasures of the living source of truly great art." The author of the article concluded from these examples: "Foreign experts on world art teach us to value the monuments and works of the Galician land at the same level as the artistic works of Western Europe."[33]

WORLD WAR II, 1939–1945

On 1 September 1939, Nazi Germany invaded Poland from the West. The initial panic of the Polish authorities resulted in trouble for the museum. The director's daughter, Vira Svientsitska, who was also on staff in the museum, was arrested by the Poles on the very day of the German attack. (In 1934–36, she had already spent a year and a half in prison for involvement with the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists.)[34] That same night soldiers searched the museum, abducted its guard, and shot a dog. In the ensuing days, bombs shattered windows in the museum.

On 17 September, the Red Army invaded from the East, and Lviv was soon to become a part of Soviet Ukraine. The National Museum then ceased to be an independent entity, being merged with the newly formed Lviv Art Gallery. Svientsitsky resisted some of the new authorities' orders,

such as to remove the statue of the museum's founder that stood in the square in front of the museum. Svientsitsky was therefore fired as director on 7 March 1941 and replaced soon thereafter by a certain A. Ch. Bakhmatov. Svientsitsky continued to work at the museum, however. Although the Communists were redesigning the museum to emphasize realism, the icon collection was not particularly threatened in these years. In fact, work began then on the restoration of the Bohorodchany iconostasis.

The German attack on the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941 resulted in Svientsitsky's reinstatement as director a week later. The museum continued to function under German rule,[35] visited by Germans and Ukrainians alike. The restoration of the Bohorodchany iconostasis continued, and the restoration of the Zhovkva iconostasis of Ivan Rutkovych began. Yaroslava Muzyka was again taking a leading part in this work. In the fall of 1943, as the Red Army advanced westward, some Ukrainians argued that the museum's collection should be evacuated west to save it from the Bolsheviks. Svientsitsky, however, opposed this, and his view prevailed.

Windows once more broke in the museum as Soviet bombs fell on Lviv on 9 April 1944. The Red Army returned in July, and on the 28th of that month Svientsitsky was reconfirmed by the Soviets as director. On 1 November 1944, the founder of the museum, Metropolitan Andrei Sheptytsky, "fell asleep in the Lord"—he was to be written out of the Soviet version of the museum's history in any case.[36] The National Museum was formally reopened in 1945 under a new name, the Lviv State Museum of Ukrainian Art (later the "State" was dropped). This time the museum was not merged with the Lviv Art Gallery.[37]

A SOVIET INSTITUTION, 1945–1991

Svientsitsky, who spoke his mind rather frankly, was to remain an intractable personality for the Soviets. For example, at a meeting in October 1945 with a Moscow representative of the All-Union Architecture Committee, he complained that wages for scholarly workers in Lviv were so low that they could not carry on with their work: "You eastern people are used to this kind of life, but we can't live this way. We know what scholarly work is and we want to have real compensation for it, enough so that we can continue to perform our work. We can't work naked and hungry and live in the little boxes that you live in."[38] Svientsitsky also kept on staff several members of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, including his own daughter Vira and the restorer Yaroslava Muzyka, even though at this time a civil war still raged between the Soviet authorities and the armed nationalist underground. He also resisted taking on Communist Party and Komsomol members.[39] As a result, in 1947–50 the political police arrested a number of museum workers, including Vira Svientsitska, who was arrested on 3 November 1948 and did not return from the Gulag until August 1956.[40] The inevitable came on 25 November 1952, when Svientsitsky was replaced as director by Viacheslav Semiarchuk. Fortunately, Semiarchuk turned out to be a decent man, protective of the icons. Svientsitsky did not long survive his removal: he passed away on 18 September 1956 at the age of eighty.[41]

During this turbulent period, thousands of publications and works of art in the museum's collection were deliberately destroyed or stolen by the deputy director, Vasyl Liubchyk. In the main, the works affected were ideologically problematic, but not all of them, since a search revealed that Liubchyk had pilfered a Tiepolo and a number of rare books. He was prosecuted in 1957 but never punished.[42] Liubchyk did not take or harm any icons, but in early August 1952 a member of a Party commission advised the museum "to burn this church junk."[43]

In February 1953, the entire icon collection was moved across town to an Armenian cathedral, which the Soviet authorities had closed down. The move had been planned since at least April 1952. Although the cathedral was damp, it was better protected from the extremes of heat and cold than the museum building itself, and the entire icon collection was preserved intact.[44]

Vira Svientsitska returned from the camps to Lviv not long before her father's death. Director Semiarchuk hired her back, and she remained on staff until her own death on 21 May 1991.[45] During this time she was the most prolific scholar there. She put forward a view of the icons as folk productions that expressed the Ukrainian people's longing for national and social liberation. During the perestroika period, the patriotism in her interpretation of iconography grew even more pronounced. For example, in a 1990 book on the Lviv icon collection titled *The Heritage of the Ages,* she wrote: "By the masterpieces it created, the Ukrainian people testified to the greatness of its indomitable spirit, the high level of culture inherited from its ancestors, and the inexhaustible potential force of its creative genius."[46] She never seems to have thought about the icons as sacral art, and their theological significance did not figure in her writings, not even in those published in the early 1990s. In her book on Ivan Rutkovych, published in 1966, she wrote: "In the course of the seventeenth century, the icon gradually lost the meaning of a certain hieratic-mystical and abstract symbol, removed from life, and took on the characteristics of a realistic depiction filled with humanism." She liked Rutkovych because "he introduced into his religious compositions with traditional and new themes not only elements of portraiture, landscape, and scenes of daily life, but also social and patriotic motifs, thus enriching the means of artistic expression."[47] Her interpretation of icons suited the tastes of both Communists and nationalists.

In the Soviet Union and its successor states, there has been a long-standing conflict between museum workers and Christian believers. Our museum was also involved in this. It took advantage of Nikita Khrushchev's antireligious campaign in 1960 to lobby for state aid in preserving artifacts from congregations, generally by removing them from churches. The museum's petition was signed by the director at that time, Ivan Katrushenko, by the scholarly secretary Kh. Sanotska, and by Vira Svientsitska.

> It is well known that many valuable monuments of old Ukrainian art are located in cult buildings. It is not always possible to transfer them for

> preservation to the museum. Meanwhile the proprietors, concerned about "the splendor of the church," "restore" without supervision the painting and carving of prominent masters of the past, ruining beyond repair, almost before our eyes, original and very valuable works, often with dates and authorial signatures. . . . The Lviv State Museum of Ukrainian Art requests support in this endeavor and cooperation in taking measures to preserve particular monuments undamaged on site, or transfer them for permanent safekeeping to the museum.[48]

In the "times of stagnation" that followed Khrushchev, the museum soldiered along as a Soviet institution without much of note occurring. The situation changed when Gorbachev's glasnost and perestroika finally began to affect Ukraine in 1989, which was later than elsewhere in the Soviet Union. A sign of the times was that on 17 July 1990 the museum returned to its former name, the National Museum in Lviv.[49]

A NATIONAL MUSEUM IN INDEPENDENT UKRAINE, 1991–2005

On 24 August 1991, Ukraine declared itself an independent state, with major consequences for the icon collection. For one thing, less than a week later, on 30 August, the Lviv provincial authorities gave the National Museum the building of the former Lenin Museum. With the additional space, the museum was able to expand the number of icons on display. The section "Ukrainian Art of the Twelfth Through Eighteenth Centuries," conceived by Oleh Sydor, curator for Old Ukrainian art, occupied about half the galleries on two floors. It officially opened on 14 May 1999.[50]

Intellectual work on the icons intensified. Beginning in 1996, the museum sponsored an annual conference on Ukrainian sacral art.[51] It put on special exhibitions as well: icons of the Bohorodchany iconostasis (1995), of the Prylbychi iconostasis (which Sheptytsky knew from his childhood in that village) (1997), of the Passion (1998), of the Nativity of Christ (2000),[52] and of the Last Judgment (2001) (fig. 9).[53] Oleh Sydor worked on cataloging the icon collection, publishing some portions of the catalog in the revived yearbook of the National Museum.[54] An album of icons in the collection was also published in 1998 by the director at that time, Vasyl Otkovych, and the photographer Vasyl Pylypiuk.[55] Unfortunately, the publication left much to be desired in terms of both content and quality of illustrations.[56]

The National Museum has received some high-profile visitors since independence. A summit of European presidents was held in Lviv in May 1999, and nine heads of state visited the museum at that time. Earlier, on 17 November 1997, Hillary Clinton and Liudmyla Kuchma, the first ladies of America and Ukraine, not only toured the museum, but reportedly "took part directly in the restoration of the icon Old Testament Trinity" from the Bohorodchany iconostasis![57]

Yet by no means has independence been an unmixed blessing. Certain longstanding problems remain unsolved. Even in the Soviet period, scholars, foreign and Ukrainian alike, complained about the lack of access to the museum's holdings; little

FIG. 9 Last Judgment, Vovche, sixteenth century, detail.

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has changed for researchers since independence. The revived yearbook of the museum, an extremely valuable publication for everyone interested in these icons, cannot be purchased; the director gives it personally to fortunate recipients. No issue has appeared since 2001.

The museum does not have the resources to heat the building on Freedom (formerly Lenin) Prospect adequately in the winter. Visitors to the Last Judgment exhibition in December 2001 had to wear overcoats inside the building. What effect freezing temperatures have on five-hundred-year-old egg tempera and linden boards is hard to say. Perhaps the icons felt as if they were back in their unheated mountain churches.

The fall of Communism also changed the status of the Armenian cathedral, where the bulk of the icon collection had been stored for half a century. The Armenian community in Lviv successfully petitioned to have the cathedral reopened and restored to them, and the icons had to be moved. The Armenians gave money for a new structure in which to house the icons. Critics, however, say that the transfer is proving to be disastrous for the icons. They had been in a damp environment in the Armenian cathedral, but were moved at the end of 2002 to the dry environment of the new building. According to a newspaper article titled "A Coffin for Icons," the icons started to swell within two weeks of the move, and twenty of the icons were in critical condition. The curator of the collection, Oleh Sydor, resigned in protest. Since the whole affair became a public scandal, the director of the National Museum, Myroslav Otkovych, the brother of his predecessor, was transferred to other work.[58] By 2005, the issue of the transfer and possible deterioration of the icons had disappeared from the press. (Although that year saw a strike of the National Museum's staff, this had nothing to do with the icons.)

The most important development in recent years is that Sydor's successor as curator of the icon collection, Maria

Helytovych, has published excellent catalogs of two icon genres in the collection: the Mother of God "with praises" and the Savior in Glory.[59]

CONCLUSION

At the beginning of the century surveyed in this account, some people began to see icons anew. Attitudes toward icons were affected by the same shift of aesthetic paradigm that allowed taste to transcend the metanarratives of Western art, permitted the appreciation of African and "primitive" art, and precipitated the first works of abstract sculpture. They were now perceived not so much as instruments of salvation but as works of art. Perhaps this was just a translation of their sacrality into the worldview of modernity; art had become more sacred than religion in the modern outlook. For the traditional believers who worshiped something other than art, however, icons were a connection with the divine. And just like the mezuzah on the doorframe of Jewish houses, icons could lose their efficacy through physical deterioration. So when icons were old and dirty, covered with smudges from lamp oil, candle smoke, and incense, believers cast them into rivers, buried them in the earth, stored them in the belfries, or consigned them to bonfires.

People who saw in the new way, such as Metropolitan Andrei Sheptytsky, could not bear to see the new sacrality of art profaned in this way. Moreover, they saw in these images of the Savior, of the saints, and of the Mother of God something else that had become very sacred—the nation. The icons were embodiments of ancient national culture. They needed to be placed in national institutions, and where these were lacking they needed to be created. The good metropolitan, as we have seen, funded a National Museum in which to house the icons he had saved from believers as yet insufficiently infused with the modern spirit of nationality and art appreciation.

And so the icons were transferred from their natural habitat in the churches of the Carpathian region to the museum in the local capital city. Each icon, instead of fitting into the elaborate program of a village church, where they were arranged according to sacred history and geography, were now hung in the exhibit halls chronologically, completely divorced from a context of traditional worship and theology.

A museum is but a building in a city, and it experiences in its own way the history that transpires around it. The front passed over Lviv several times in each of the two world wars. After each war, Lviv was also caught in conditions of civil war (the Polish-Ukrainian war of 1918–19 and the anti-Soviet nationalist insurgency of 1944–50). The museum's founder, director, and staff were all at some point imprisoned and exiled. Extremist nationalists as well as Communists occupied leading posts in the museum at different times, and sometimes at the same time. Communism was, of course, a powerful manifestation of modernity in this part of the world. Fortunately for the icons, the Communists also saw them as the metropolitan did—as old works of art and repositories of national culture.

To me, the embodiment of all that transpired was Vira Svientsitska, the daughter of the National Museum's first and longest-serving director. Imprisoned by both the Poles and the Soviets for her

Ukrainian nationalism, she later made a brilliant career in the Soviet-era museum and art history establishment. She had no interest at all in religion and instead worked out a discourse about icons that stressed social and national liberation, a discourse that could serve nationalists and Communists equally well. Unlike many others in cultural institutions across Ukraine, she made the transition from Soviet power to independence easily. And it was just as easily that the former Lenin Museum became the new National Museum with its superb collection of Carpathian icons.

In 1976, I was in a department store in what was then called Leningrad. I was shocked to find a corner there with a statue of Lenin, adorned with flowers and inscribed with the following words: *Lenin i nyne zhivee vsekh zhivykh*—"Even today Lenin is more alive than anyone alive." It seemed so incongruously religious to me. In that same year, I visited the Lenin Museum in Lviv. Portraits and posters of the Great Lenin hung on every wall. Today on those same walls one finds Saint George, Jesus Christ, Saint Peter, and the Mother of God. Before there were scenes of the speech at the Finland Station and the storming of the Winter Palace; now these have been replaced by the Transfiguration and the Last Judgment. Much has changed. Or not.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 5

1. John-Paul Himka, *Last Judgment Iconography in the Carpathians* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009).

2. His closest collaborator in the work of the museum described the metropolitan as follows: "Himself an aesthete-connoisseur of the fine arts, even with an artistic talent for drawing, Metropolitan Andrei Sheptytsky looked at all the remnants of our cultural-national life from the point of view of art and style in connection with church ritual and folk tradition." Ilarion Svientsits'kyi, *Pro muzei ta muzeinytstvo (narysy i zamitky)* (Lviv: Z drukarni "Dila," 1920), 25.

3. See Myroslava M. Mudrak, "Sheptyts'kyi as Patron of the Arts," in *Morality and Reality: The Life and Times of Andrei Sheptyts'kyi*, ed. Paul R. Magocsi (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta, 1989), 289–311.

4. Andrei Sheptyts'kyi, "Moi spomyny pro predmet muzeinykh zbirok," in *Dvaitsiat'piat'-littia Natsional'noho Muzeiu u L'vovi*, ed. I. Svientsitskyi (Lviv: Naukova fundatsiia halyts'koho mytropolyta Andreia Sheptyts'koho, 1930), 3. For an analysis of the Poliana icons, see Mariia Helytovych, "Ansambl' ikon tserkvy Pokrovu Bohorodytsi v Poliani poblyzu Dobromylia ta pam"iatky ioho kola," in *Zachodnioukraińska sztuka cerkiewna: Dzieła—twórcy—ośrodki—techniki: Materiały z międzynarodowej konferencji naukowej 10–11 maja 2003 roku*, ed. Jarosław Giemza (Łańcut: Muzeum-Zamek w Łańcucie, 2003), 83–105.

5. Sheptyts'kyi, "Moi spomyny," 1.

6. Mykhailo Dragan, "Z pratsi v muzeiu i dlia n'oho," in Svientsits'kyi, *Dvaitsiat'piat'-littia Natsional'noho Muzeiu*, 41.

7. I. Svientsits'kyi, *Ikonopys' halyts'koi Ukrainy XV–XVI. vikiv*, Zbirky Natsional'noho muzeiu u L'vovi (Lviv, 1928), 2.

8. Sheptyts'kyi, "Moi spomyny," 1.

9. I. Sventsitskii, *Natsional'nii* [*sic*] *Muzei vo L'vove (1905–1915)*, Otdel'nyi ottisk iz No 31 [1915] Neofitsial'noi chasti "L'vovskogo Vestnika" (Lviv, 1915), 1.

10. Mudrak, "Sheptyts'kyi as Patron of the Arts," 290.

11. Mykola Batih, "Bili storinky v istorii Natsional'noho Muzeiu u L'vovi," *Litopys Natsional'noho Muzeiu u L'vovi*, no. 1 (6) (2000): 7. There is a somewhat different chronology in Mudrak, "Sheptyts'kyi as Patron of the Arts," 290.

12. Sventsitskii, *Natsional'nii Muzei vo L'vove*, 2–3. On discrepant information and difficulties in establishing the extent of the metropolitan's largesse, see Mudrak, "Sheptyts'kyi as Patron of the Arts," 303n20.

13. Zoriana Lyl'o, "Natsional'nyi muzei u L'vovi: stanovlennia ta formuvannia zbirok," in Jarosław Giemza, ed., *Zachodnioukraińska sztuka cerkiewna*, pt. 2: *Materiały z międzynarodowej konferencji naukowej Łańcut-Kotań 17–18 kwietnia 2004 roku* (Łańcut: Muzeum-Zamek w Łańcucie, 2004), 214.

14. Writing in this same publication, Svientsitsky states that the icon collection comprised "about 1,200 numbers." Svientsits'kyi, *Pro muzei ta muzeinytstvo*, 26. I am not sure how to explain the discrepancy between this statement and the total I received after adding up all the icons acquired in 1905–19. Perhaps some inventory numbers included more than one item, or perhaps certain acquisitions were not eventually incorporated into the museum collection.

15. "Litopys rozvytku Natsional'noho Muzeiu," in Svientsits'kyi, *Dvaitsiat'piat'-littia Natsional'noho Muzeiu*, 69–70.

16. Ilarion Svientsits'kyi, *Iliustrovanyi providnyk po Natsional'nim Muzeievi u L'vovi* (Zhovkva: Pechatnia Vasylyian, 1913).

17. "Vyznachni hosti muzeiu," in Svientsits'kyi, *Dvaitsiat'piat'-littia Natsional'noho Muzeiu*, 78–79.

18. Svientsits'kyi, *Ikonopys' halyts'koi Ukrainy*, 3. On other restorers in this period, see Lyl'o, "Natsional'nyi muzei u L'vovi," 214.

19. Volodymyr Kubijovyč and Danylo Husar Struk, eds., *Encyclopedia of Ukraine*, 5 vols. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984–93), s.v. "Boichuk, Mykhailo" (by S. Hordynsky); Myroslav Shkandrij, *Modernists, Marxists, and the Nation: The*

Ukrainian Literary Discussion of the 1920s (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, University of Alberta, 1992), 163–68.

20. "Litopys rozvytku Natsional'noho Muzeiu."

21. *Tsars'kyi viazen' 1914–1917* (Lviv: Nakladom Komitetu "Zhyvoho Pamiatnyka," 1918).

22. Batih, "Bili storinky," 8–11.

23. Ibid., 10.

24. "Vyznachni hosti muzeiu."

25. Ilarion Svientsits'kyi, "XXV. lit diial'nosty Natsional'noho Muzeiu," in Svientsits'kyi, *Dvaitsiat'piat'-littia Natsional'noho Muzeiu u L'vovi,* 13. "Litopys rozvytku Natsional'noho Muzeiu."

26. Batih, "Bili storinky," 11.

27. Lyl'o, "Natsional'nyi muzei u L'vovi," 222, 226.

28. Svientsits'kyi, *Ikonopys' halyts'koi Ukrainy.*

29. Ilarion Svientsitskyi-Sviatyts'kyi [*sic*], *Ikony halyts'koi Ukrainy XV–XVI. vikiv,* Zbirky Natsional'noho muzeiu u L'vovi (Lviv, 1929).

30. Svientsits'kyi, *Ikonopys' halyts'koi Ukrainy,* 3.

31. I. Svientsits'kyi, "Zvit upravy Natsional'noho Muzeiu za 1928 rik. Zahal'nyi stan u XXV-mu rokovi diial'nosty," *Kanadys'kyi ukrainets* (Winnipeg), 1 May 1929.

32. Ibid., 8 May 1949.

33. (ia. v.), "Z muzeinykh problem: iak slid dyvytysia na vystavy tvoriv mystetstva," *Litopys Natsional'noho Muzeiu* (1938): 10. See also Lyl'o, "Natsional'nyi muzei u L'vovi," 221–25.

34. Solomiia Diakiv, ed., *Lysty Mytropolyta Andreia Sheptyts'koho do Ilariona Sventsits'koho. Z arkhivu Natsional'noho muzeiu u L'vovi* (Lviv: NVF "Ukrains'ki tekhnolohii," 2005), 21–22.

35. Some documents indicate that the museum was closed throughout the German occupation: Tamara Halaichak et al., eds., *Kul'turne zhyttia v Ukraini. Zakhidni zemli. Dokumenty i materialy,* 3 vols. (Kiev: Naukova dumka, 1995–), 1:136, 1:151. However, the museum diary that Batih relied upon, "Bili storinky," tells a different story altogether.

36. See, for example, H. D. Iakushchenko and Ia. I. Nanovs'kyi, *L'vivs'kyi muzei ukrains'koho mystetstva. Zhyvopys, skul'ptura, hrafika* (Kiev: Mystetstvo, 1975).

37. Batih, "Bili storinky," 13–17.

38. Halaichak, *Kul'turne zhyttia v Ukraini,* 1:292–93; see also 1:511.

39. Batih, "Bili storinky," 17–18.

40. Ibid., 22. Mykola Batih, "Bili storinky v istorii Natsional'noho Muzeiu u L'vovi 1952–1962 rr.," *Litopys Natsional'noho Muzeiu u L'vovi,* no. 2 (7) (2001): 15.

41. Batih, "Bili storinky," 27.

42. Halaichak, *Kul'turne zhyttia v Ukraini,* 1:673–74, 2:251–53, 2:285, 2:504–6, 2:566–67. See also Batih, "Bili storinky," 23–26.

43. Batih, "Bili storinky," 26. Batih, "Bili storinky . . . 1952–1962," 7.

44. Batih, "Bili storinky . . . 1952–1962," 7–9. A more negative characterization of the conditions in the Armenian cathedral can be found in Myroslav Otkovych, "Problemy muzeinoho zberihania tvoriv ikonopysu," in *Zachodnioukraińska sztuka cerkiewna,* pt. 2: *Materiały z międzynarodowej konferencji naukowej Łańcut-Kotań 17–18 kwietnia 2004 roku,* ed. Giemza, 539.

45. Batih, "Bili storinky . . . 1952–1962," 15. Kubijovyč and Struk, *Encyclopedia of Ukraine,* s.v. "Svientsits'ka, Vira."

46. V. I. Svientsits'ka and O. F. Sydor, *Spadshchyna vikiv. Ukrains'ke maliarstvo XIV–XVIII, stolit' u muzeinykh kolektsiiakh L'vova* (Lviv: Kameniar, 1990), 10.

47. Vira Svientsits'ka, *Ivan Rutkovych i stanovlennia realizmu v ukrains'komu maliarstvi XVII st.* (Kiev: Naukova dumka, 1966), 12, 58.

48. Halaichak, *Kul'turne zhyttia v Ukraini,* 2:467–68.

49. Tetiana Lupii, "Khronika 1991–1999 rokiv," *Litopys Natsional'noho Muzeiu u L'vovi,* no. 1 (6) (2000): 59.

50. Ibid., 59, 74.

51. Ibid., 66, 73.

52. Ibid., 64, 71, 73, 75.

53. I flew to Lviv to see this last exhibition myself.

54. Oleh Sydor, "Ikony maistriv Oleksiia i Dymytriia v kolektsii Natsional'noho muzeiu u L'vovi. Z materialiv do zvedenoho kataloha zbirok NML," *Litopys Natsional'noho muzeiu u L'vovi,* no. 1 (6) (2000): 89–152. Oleh Sydor, "Reiestr ikon Strashnoho Sudu v kolektsii NML," *Litopys Natsional'noho muzeiu u L'vovi,* no. 2 (7) (2001): 90–96.

55. V. P. Otkovych and V. Pylyp"iuk, *Ukrains'ka ikona XIV–XVIII st., Zbirky Natsional'noho muzeiu u L'vovi* (Lviv, 1998).

56. John-Paul Himka, "Episodes in the Historiography of the Ukrainian Icon," *Journal of Ukrainian Studies* 29 (Summer–Winter 2004): 156–57.

57. Lupii, "Khronika 1991–1999 rokiv," 71–72, 76.

58. Viktoriia Sadova, "Truna dlia ikon," *Arhument-hazeta*, 23 January 2003.

59. Mariia Helytovych, *Bohorodytsia z Dytiam i pokhvaloiu. Ikony kolektsii Natsional'no muzeiu* (Lviv: Svichado, 2005); idem, *Ukrains'ki ikony "Spas u Slavi"* (Lviv: Vydavnytstvo "Drukars'ki kunshty," Natsional'nyi muzei u L'vovi, 2005). I have reviewed the latter in *Journal of Ukainian Studies* 31 (Summer–Winter 2006): 240–42.