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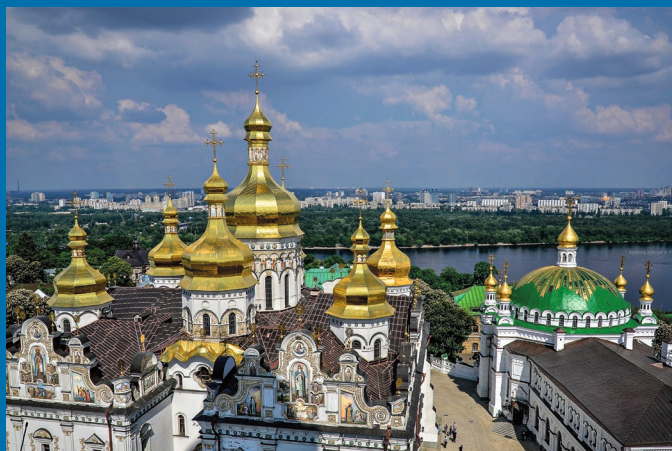


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The Kyiv Pechersk Lavra Cathedral of the Dormition  
Photograph by Yurii Kaganov

# Ukraine: the sacred treasures of an invincible nation

2023 05 18 –  
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Front cover  
Pyx. 1767  
Silver, finift (pictorial enamel), quartz, glass, casting,  
embossing, engraving, gilding, niello (black enamel);  
75 x 50 x 34.5 cm





"Ascension" icon  
17th c., Volhynia  
Wood, gesso, tempera, carving  
into gesso; 111 x 89 cm

*Christ in Majesty* icon  
2nd half of the 16th c., Galicia  
Wood, gesso, tempera, carving  
into gesso; 124 x 93 cm

Embroidered patch on  
*Nativity of Christ*  
phelonion  
17th c.  
Linen, gold, silver and silk  
thread, pearls, oil paint;  
d – 27 cm

The exhibition consists of Ukrainian sacred artworks of the 16th–18th centuries from the collections of the National Kyiv-Pechersk Historical and Cultural Preserve, the largest museum complex in Ukraine. Since the first years of the Preserve's existence, its employees have been preserving and researching the cultural heritage of the Kyiv-Pechersk Monastery, a centuries-old centre of spirituality of the Ukrainian nation. Due to their efforts, sites of the unique architectural ensemble of the Monastery as well as outstanding works of art created by Ukrainian and European masters were successfully preserved. During the years of destruction and oblivion of national traditions carried out by the Bolshevik government, Ukrainian intellectuals continued to salvage unique examples of national art, regardless of the instructions issued by militant atheist ideologues. Currently, the collections of the National Kyiv-Pechersk Historical and Cultural Preserve contain hundreds of artworks, such as precious metal-work objects and textiles, old printed books, portraits, photographs and archaeological objects.

The exhibition represents iconic works that reflect the centuries-old evolution of Ukrainian icon painting, introducing the public to the traditions of exquisite Ukrainian goldsmithery and embroidery.

The art of icon painting is among the most acclaimed facets of Ukrainian sacred art. It is in icon painting that

the idea of national self-identification of the Ukrainian nation is embodied in its fullest possible way. The origins of Ukrainian icon painting date back to the culture of Byzantium. Later, Ukrainian icons were influenced by European art but despite this fact, their national originality and unique style were preserved, the features of which are eloquently visible in the artworks on display at this exhibition.

The development of Ukrainian icon painting in the 16th–17th centuries can be traced to the works of masters from Halychyna (Galicia) and Volhynia. The classical style of Ukrainian icons is apparent in the *Christ in Majesty* icon, created in the 16th century by a talented icon painter from Galicia. Another interesting piece in this exhibition is the *Ascension* icon. It was created by an icon painter from Volhynia, who came from the people and upheld a sincere and poetic perception of the spiritual world.

The end of the 17th and the beginning of the 18th centuries is the period when Ukrainian art truly flourished, which was associated with the spread of the Baroque in Ukraine. The Ukrainian Baroque is a unique phenomenon characterised by a fusion of the typical features of European Baroque art and local national traditions. The icons of this period boast richer use of colour and are in a larger format, features in line with the more exuberant character of Ukrainian Cossacks. At this time, the Kyiv and

Chernihiv regions (Left-bank Ukraine) became the leading centres of icon painting. Among the exhibits there are such icons as *Virgin Hodegetria* from the Kyiv region, *St Nicholas the Wonderworker* and an extremely exquisite festive icon – *Synaxis of the Holy Archangel Michael*, an artwork from the village of Berezna in the Chernihiv region. Two icons of the 1730s from the Festival tier of the iconostasis of the Gate Church of the Trinity – *The Nativity of the Mother of God* and *The Nativity of Christ*, demonstrate the creative manner of Lavra iconographers.

Baroque traditions are vividly evident in Ukrainian goldsmithery works and embroidery. The objects presented at the exhibition (such as a chalice, pyx, altar crosses, vestments and samples of embroidered decor for the clergy's vestments) visualise the solemn beauty and spiritual sublimity that were a signature feature of the conduct of services in Ukrainian churches.

Despite the imperial Russification policy of the 18th–19th centuries, as well as the tragic events of the 20th century, Ukrainian sacred art monuments have been preserved by generations of museum workers and restorers. As a result, today, when Russian invaders are trying to barbarically destroy Ukrainian culture as well as the memory and values of the Ukrainian people, this exhibition serves as a vivid example of the indomitable spirit and thousand-year history of an unconquered nation.