

# HEAVEN + EARTH

ART of **BYZANTIUM**

from GREEK COLLECTIONS

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**GETTY MUSEUM PRESENTS EXHIBITION OF THE BYZANTINE EMPIRE'S  
RICH VISUAL ARTS AND CULTURE WITH  
PRESENTATIONS AT BOTH THE VILLA AND CENTER**

**First Collaborative Project to Arise From a 2011 Cultural Agreement With  
The Hellenic Ministry of Culture, Features Important Loans from  
Greece on Display for the First Time on the West Coast**

***Heaven and Earth: Art of Byzantium from Greek Collections***

At the J. Paul Getty Museum, Getty Villa

April 9-August 25, 2014

***Heaven and Earth: Byzantine Illumination at the Cultural Crossroads***

At the J. Paul Getty Museum, Getty Center

March 25-June 22, 2014



Icon of the Archangel Michael (Detail), Byzantine, from Constantinople, a.d. 1300-1350. Tempera and gold on wood. Courtesy of the Byzantine and Christian Museum, Athens.

LOS ANGELES – ***Heaven and Earth: Art of Byzantium from Greek Collections***, a major loan exhibition opening at the Getty Villa in Malibu on April 9, explores the artistic and cultural majesty of the Byzantine Empire. The exhibition features 167 objects, including mosaics, icons, frescoes, sculptures, manuscripts, metalwork, jewelry, glass, embroideries, and ceramics drawn from 34 collections throughout Greece, making it the largest and most important collection of Byzantine objects from Greece ever amassed and displayed in Los Angeles.

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Extending the Villa exhibition to the Getty Center in Brentwood, ***Heaven and Earth: Byzantine Illumination at the Cultural Crossroads*** features six rare, richly illuminated manuscripts from Greek collections alongside works from the Getty's own holdings.

"The exhibition at the Villa represents many years of planning and research in partnership with our colleagues in Greece following the signing of a Framework for Cultural Cooperation in 2011," says Timothy Potts, director of the J. Paul Getty Museum. "The importance of this exhibition cannot be overestimated, bringing many of the most important surviving works of Byzantine art to Los Angeles, following their critically acclaimed presentation in Washington, D.C. This exhibition will of course have special meaning to the Greek community of Southern California, but all visitors will be dazzled by the splendor and opulence of Byzantine art, and cannot but be affected by its spiritual power, which permeated the Christian world for a millennium."

Potts continues: "Presenting the art of the Byzantine Empire at both Getty sites and connecting these magnificent loans from Greece to our own collection of antiquities and manuscripts provides a unique opportunity for visitors to get a fuller and more vivid picture of the Byzantine tradition."

Dr. Maria Andreadaki-Vlazaki, director general of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage at the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports adds, "This cultural endeavor is of particular importance for Greece. Preparation began in 2010 when more general issues of cultural cooperation with the United States were advancing, the major achievement being the 2011 signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between the two countries for the imposition of restrictions in the importation to the U.S. of cultural goods having a Greek provenance. This exhibition gives us the opportunity to promote for the first time the intellectual and artistic achievements of Byzantine Greece in the U.S.A."

***Heaven and Earth: Art of Byzantium from Greek Collections (Getty Villa)***

***Heaven and Earth: Art of Byzantium from Greek Collections*** traces the development of Byzantine visual culture from the ancient pagan world of the late Roman Empire to the opulent and deeply spiritual world of the new Christian Byzantine Empire.

Organized by the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports, Athens, with the collaboration of the Benaki Museum, Athens, in association with the J. Paul Getty Museum and the National Gallery of Art, Washington, the exhibition is supported by an indemnity from

the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities. The U.S. tour is made possible by major funding from OPAP S.A. Additional financial support has been provided by the A. G. Leventis Foundation.

The exhibition is built around five thematic sections which range from the adoption of Christianity as the sole state religion in late antiquity to the cosmopolitan nature of the empire and its reflection of the arts of the West, in particular Italy.

"Throughout the exhibition the iconography of classical antiquity is continuously referenced, linking the Getty's antiquities collection to numerous objects on display," says Mary Louise Hart, associate curator of antiquities at the J. Paul Getty Museum and curator of the Getty Villa exhibition. "Previous Villa exhibitions have explored the reception and afterlife of classical antiquity, but this is the first time we have presented its contributions to Christianity and Byzantine Greece."

Spanning the Bosphorus Strait that links the Black Sea to the Mediterranean, the ancient Greek city of Byzantium was renamed Constantinople (present-day Istanbul) and became the new capital of the Roman Empire in A.D. 330. Its ancient name is now used to refer to the culture, period and empire that the rulers of Constantinople created, lasting for more than a millennium. As the state religion, Christianity permeated all aspects of life, profoundly influencing architecture and the visual arts throughout the empire.

Throughout the Late Antique period of the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries, the new religion coexisted with pagan polytheism in a hybrid culture. The exhibition begins by examining prevailing forms of classical antiquity during the early centuries of the first millennium and their role in providing the foundation for Early Christian visual culture. The iconography of the period incorporated Greco-Roman deities alongside Old Testament subjects and crosses evoking the Passion of Christ. The survival of mythological motifs on domestic objects, despite the absolute prevalence of Christianity in religious and political life, confirms the persistence of Greek education and culture in the Byzantine Empire.

The establishment of Christianity as the one and only official religion of the state in the late fourth century led to the transformation of the late Roman Empire in both the public and private spheres. Byzantine churches, with their vast domes above columned basilicas, were built throughout the empire in order to unite the physical, earthly space of its congregation with the divine realm of God the Father. The sacred walls were sheathed in glittering mosaics or painted with elaborate frescoes of Christ, the Virgin Mary, and the saints. The predominance of icons was the hallmark of Byzantine spiritual and cultural expression and provided devotional focus for the faithful both in churches and at home. Important Christian

icons and ecclesiastical accessories which demonstrate the stylistic trends that prevailed throughout the Byzantine Empire are displayed in the exhibition.

The Byzantines were proud of their ancient Greek heritage. Schoolchildren learned how to read from both the Gospels and Homer's *Iliad*. Much of what survives of classical literature and learning is known from copies of texts commissioned by Byzantine intellectuals and transmitted by scribes. The exhibition includes copies of ancient Greek texts, which played an important role in the education of the Byzantine elite.

Inventive and elaborate objects from the private lives of the elite testify to the technical achievements, social habits, status, and wealth of Byzantium's cosmopolitan culture. Functional and decorative accessories of the home and table are on view in the exhibition. Elaborate jewelry dating from the third to tenth century demonstrates the survival of Roman techniques which, when merged with the innovations of Byzantine craftsmen, resulted in spectacular items of prestige.

Byzantium experienced a final artistic flowering during the reign of the Palaiologan dynasty, which lasted from A.D. 1261 until succumbing to the Ottomans in 1453. During and after this time, the mingling of Western and Byzantine traditions is apparent in the features of icon painting in the East, as well as panel painting in the early Renaissance. The exhibition's final section explores the artistic and cultural effects of Byzantine Greece's continuous contact with neighboring political powers.

### ***Heaven and Earth: Byzantine Illumination at the Cultural Crossroads (Getty Center)***

At the Getty Center, ***Heaven and Earth: Byzantine Illumination at the Cultural Crossroads*** continues and expands upon the Villa exhibition by showcasing the Byzantine Empire's rich tradition of manuscript illumination. This exhibition features six manuscripts on generous loan from Greece alongside 11 manuscripts and leaves from the Getty Museum's permanent collection, as well as one leaf from a private collector.

The exhibition extends the theme of Intellectual Life beyond the Villa presentation through the exploration of the main stylistic elements of Byzantine manuscript illumination as well as side-by-side examples of Byzantine influences on artists from Italy, Germany, Armenia, and Ethiopia. The exhibition also explores the political, economic, and social encounters that led to this artistic exchange.

Western Christianity was introduced to Byzantine art and culture primarily through military and commercial relations, such as the Crusades, the opening of merchant trade, and

arranged marriages with Byzantine nobles. Eastern Christianity also adapted early Byzantine iconography and decorative styles, as seen in works by Armenian and Ethiopian artists.

"One comparison that demonstrates Byzantine influence on medieval Eastern Christian art is two illuminations of Saint Luke, one created in 11<sup>th</sup>-century Greece and the other in late 15<sup>th</sup>-century Ethiopia," explains Elizabeth Morrison, senior curator of manuscripts at the J. Paul Getty Museum. "The composition of the Ethiopian image is clearly based on Byzantine models, but whereas the Byzantine artist used naturalistic forms in rendering the saint's form and surroundings, the Ethiopian artist has energized his composition with abstract shapes and colors. So although the scenes differ in their overall aesthetic, the Ethiopian manuscript testifies to Byzantine illumination's continued resonance with later artists in varied regions."

In Greece, ***Heaven and Earth: Art of Byzantium from Greek Collections*** was conceived and curated by Jenny Albani (Architect - Art Historian at the Directorate of Museums, Exhibitions and Educational Programs in the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports), Eugenia Chalkia (Honorary Director of the Byzantine and Christian Museum, Athens), Anastasia Drandaki (Curator of the Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Collection, Benaki Museum, Athens), Demetra Papanikola-Bakirtzi, (Honorary Curator of the Museum of Byzantine Culture, Thessaloniki and Director of the Leventis Municipal Museum of Nicosia, Cyprus) and Anastasia Tourta (Honorary Director of the Museum of Byzantine Culture, Thessaloniki and Director of the European Center for Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Monuments).

***Heaven and Earth: Art of Byzantium from Greek Collections*** at the Getty Villa in Malibu is curated by Mary Louise Hart, associate curator of antiquities at the J. Paul Getty Museum. ***Heaven and Earth: Byzantine Illumination at the Cultural Crossroads*** at the Getty Center in Brentwood is co-curated by Elizabeth Morrison, senior curator of manuscripts at the J. Paul Getty Museum, and Justine Andrews, former intern at the J. Paul Getty Museum and currently associate professor at the University of New Mexico.

The exhibition is accompanied by a two-volume catalogue. The first volume *Heaven and Earth: Byzantine Art from Greek Collection* familiarizes the visitors with the exhibition's content while the second *Heaven and Earth: Cities and Countryside in Byzantine Greece* complements their knowledge on the space in which Byzantine art and culture flourished.

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**The J. Paul Getty Museum** collects in seven distinct areas, including Greek and Roman antiquities, European paintings, drawings, manuscripts, sculpture and decorative arts, and photographs gathered internationally. The Museum's mission is to make the collection meaningful and attractive to a broad audience by presenting and interpreting the works of art through educational programs, special exhibitions, publications, conservation, and research.

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The Getty Center is open Tuesday through Friday and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. It is closed Monday and major holidays. Admission to the Getty Center is always free. Parking is \$15 per car, but reduced to \$10 after 5 p.m. on Saturdays and for evening events throughout the week. No reservation is required for parking or general admission. Reservations are required for event seating and groups of 15 or more. Please call (310) 440-7300 (English or Spanish) for reservations and information. The TTY line for callers who are deaf or hearing impaired is (310) 440-7305. The Getty Center is at 1200 Getty Center Drive, Los Angeles, California.

#### **Visiting the Getty Villa**

The Getty Villa is open Wednesday through Monday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., with special Saturday hours until 9 p.m. October 12–December 7, 2013. It is closed Tuesday and major holidays. Admission to the Getty Villa is always free. A ticket is required for admission. Tickets can be ordered in advance, or on the day of your visit, at [www.getty.edu/visit](http://www.getty.edu/visit) or at (310) 440-7300. Parking is \$15 per car. Groups of 15 or more must make reservations by phone. For more information, call (310) 440-7300 (English or Spanish); (310) 440-7305 (TTY line for the deaf or hearing impaired). The Getty Villa is at 17985 Pacific Coast Highway, Pacific Palisades, California.

Same day parking at both Museum locations (Getty Center and Getty Villa) is available for \$15 through the Getty's Pay Once, Park Twice program.

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