



3014. The Annunciation

Russian, circa 1850

Panel: 61.5 x 51.5 x 3.2cm

Condition: Excellent

Inscription in Church Slavonic: Gabriel, Archangel, Гавриил Архангел; Mother of God - МР ΘΥ

Feast Day: 25th March

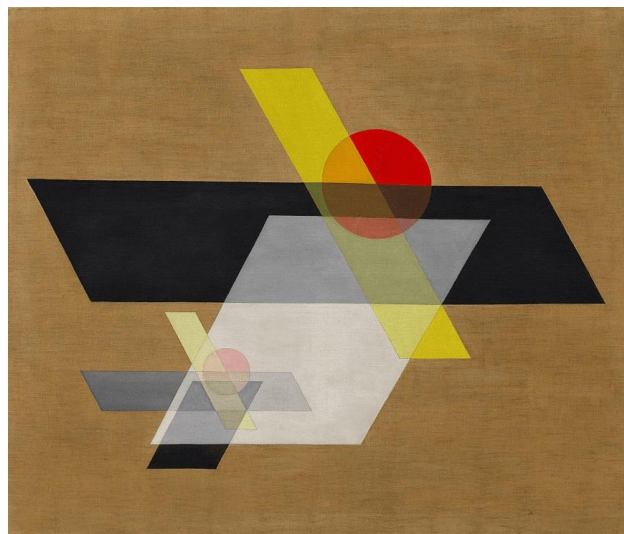
Provenance: Private collection, London. Temple Gallery, Christmas 2000.

The icon is remarkable for the bold abstract treatment of the architecture in both design and colour. Such other-worldly effects had been developed in Russia in the late 14th century under the influence of Byzantine art. The art of the period, both in Moscow and in Constantinople developed in the climate of Hesychasm, the mystical tradition of interior prayer practiced by the Desert Fathers in the Early Christian period. It was revived by Saint Gregory Palamas (died 14 November 1357), the great teacher and mystic of Mount Athos. Always controversial, Hesychasm would be banned and revived throughout the centuries. Its most notable reiterations would be on Mount Athos in the 18th century and in Russia in the 19th.

Hesychasm's effect on icon painting would produce visions of another reality, ecstatic images where the pictured events are not subject to the laws of this world. They could express realities expressing the values of eternity beyond three dimensional space.



Annunciation detail



László Moholy-Nagy, A II (Construction A II), 1924. Guggenheim

The spaces and the forms constituting the architectural background are not logical according to the values of the material world, but their symbolism is profoundly significant for the representation of spiritual reality. The rhythm and thrust of the abstract forms presage the Russian Avant Garde of the early 20th century.²

² See A. Spira, *The Avant Garde icon*, Lund Humphries Publishers Ltd, 2008