



3020. Madre della Consolazione

Veneto-Cretan, circa 1600

Egg tempera and gold on gesso and wood

Panel: 28 x 21.5 cm

Inscription in Greek: Identify figures. MP ΘΥ, Mother of God IC XC, Jesus Christ.

Condition: good condition, slight bowing of the panel.

Provenance: Swiss art market



This icon is a good example of Madonnero work. Madonneri was a term of Venetian origin to denote painters, whose workshops in Venetian Crete, Dalmatia, and later in Italy, supplied the popular demand in Italy for images of the Virgin done in the ‘old fashioned’, i.e. Byzantine, tradition.¹ The quality of their work, spanning the 17th and 18th centuries, varies from

¹ Studies shows that a remarkable 81% of the households of Venetian labourers possessed artworks of some sort, see Voulgaropoulou, Margarita, "From Domestic Devotions to the Church Altar: Venerating Icons in the Late Medieval and Early Modern Adriatic", in Ryan, Salvador (ed), *Domestic Devotions in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, 2020, MDPI Books, (reprint from *Religions* in 2019) Also, Omissi, Adraost *Byzantium and Italian Renaissance Art* 209–2010.

somewhat routine to quite good imitations of the 15th and 16th century Cretan Masters. The present work closely follows the great Nikolaos Tzafouris (1468-1501). (Fig. 1.)

A similar work, ascribed to the 16th century, is published on Поиск Святой Руси (Search for Holy Rus).² (Fig. 2.)



Fig. 1. N. Tzafouris, Madre della Consolazione
Private collection, USA



16th c. Cretan School, Madre della Consolazione
Private collection, Russia

The work combines elements of Western imagery with Byzantine iconography originating in Constantinople.

The Mother of God is shown half-length, facing right, with her head inclined towards her son, her eyes directed towards the onlooker. She wears a dark maroon cloak edged with pseudo-Cufic gold embroidery, its green lining visible where it opens at her neck and below her hands. A golden disc with five circles forming a cross fastens the outer garment (*maphorion*) below which the dark smoky-blue of her tunic is revealed. A diaphanous white veil frames her head and face. A gold star is on her left shoulder.

Christ is seated on Mary's right arm, his head slightly turned to the right. He raises his right hand in blessing while gazing towards the viewer. In his left hand he holds a scroll, the symbol of knowledge. He wears a bright vermilion red cloak, the folds done in the geometric Byzantine manner with gold striations. (On Mary's cloak the folds are naturalistic in the late Gothic style.) Beneath he wears a blue tunic covered with tiny stars.³

² http://www.cirota.ru/forum/view.php?subj=49249&order=asc&user_id=6624&show_all=1&pg=104

³ For an analysis with historical references of the prototype by Tzafouris (Fig.1.) see <https://www.templegallery.com/exhibitions/12/works/artworks-3128-madre-della-consolazione-15th-century/>



back of the panel.