

Twenty years from the Journey Home Twenty years Museum of Byzantine Culture

AGATHONIKI TSILIPAKOU, Ph.D. Archaeologist,
Director of Museum of Byzantine Culture, Thessaloniki. Hellas
Email: ntsilipakou@yahoo.gr

Summary: The Museum of Byzantine Culture is a state museum, which is part of the Ministry of Culture and Sports. The building, a work of art and historically listed monument, constructed between 1989-1993 and based on the plans of Kyriakos Krokos, joins elements of modernism and of Greek architectural heritage. It has received a special notion by the international committee of the competition Awards 2000 of the Hellenic Institute for Architecture. In 2005, the Museum of Byzantine Culture was awarded the "Museum Prize" of the Council of Europe, given for the first time in its history to a Greek museum. The Museum received this distinction because of its "visitors-friendly" and educational character. The eleven rooms of the permanent exhibition opened gradually to the public from 1997 to the beginning of 2004. 2014 is a landmark, because there have been supplemented twenty years from its first opening to the public. One of our goals is to organize exhibitions with institutions located both in Greece and abroad. We aim at establishing unique events promoting not only scholarly research, but also dissemination of knowledge to the wider public. The Museum's overall work involves a variety of subjects connected to the Byzantine and Post-Byzantine culture, and the role of Thessaloniki as the most important political, economic, intellectual, and artistic centre after Constantinople in the process of its incorporation in the Modern Greek state.

According to the writings of the unforgettable Eftychia Kourkoutidou - Nicolaidou, first Director of the Museum of Byzantine Culture, curator of Byzantine Antiquities at the time of its foundation, in the first part (1994) of the trilingual periodic edition *Museum of Byzantine Culture*: "The Museum which has recently been founded in Thessaloniki is intended to be a centre for the preservation, investigation and study of those remnants of Byzantine culture which still survive in Macedonia in general, and Thessaloniki in particular, the most important centre after Constantinople in the European part of the Byzantine Empire", "Parallel the new museum with its permanent exhibitions, its attractive spaces for temporary exhibitions on special themes, its modern conservation laboratories, its scientifically laid - out archaeological storerooms providing a place of research and investigation for the Museum's constant renewal, its educational programs for young people, its information systems, its regular scientific and scholarly meetings and conferences, and many cultural events....will function as a second pole for research into and promotion of Byzantine culture" together with the monuments of the city themselves.



This year the Museum of Byzantine Culture is celebrating. 2014 is a landmark, because there have been supplemented twenty years from its first opening to the public with the first temporary exhibition “Byzantine Treasures of Thessaloniki. The Return Journey” on 11th September 1994. That way officially opened by the prime minister himself, the Museum of Byzantine Culture. That inaugural exhibition with the inspired title marked the return of the Byzantine Antiquities, in June 1994¹, which were repatriated after about eighty years of their residence in Athens, in the Byzantine and Christian Museum where they have been transferred in 1916 and delimits the end of a long-lasting effort for the foundation of Byzantine Museum in Macedonia and more specifically in Thessaloniki, which is connected with events and persons of the modern and contemporary

history of Modern Greek state.

In August 1913, a decree issued by the Governor General of Macedonia, Stephanos Dragoumis, resolved to establish a «Central Byzantine Museum» in Thessaloniki (no 746/21.8.1913/Government Gazette, Annex of Thessaloniki, 3th September, serial number 25 - decree of 31th August), which stipulates that the museum is to be installed in Acheiropoietos church. In a relevant letter written by Archbishop Gennadios of Thessaloniki (no 661/22.8.1913) is clearly apparent the properness of that church, “quite capable...of serving as the auspiciously founded Central Byzantine Museum of Greece”. In the same year (9-9-1913) Adamandios Adamandiou, Professor of Byzantine Art and Archaeology in Athens University, curator of Christian and Medieval Monuments since 1908, presented (written in 7-9-1913) Dragoumis with a “Memorandum on the Establishment and Organisation of a Central Byzantine Museum in Macedonia”, “a general diagram of the establishment and scientific organization of the Museum” developing among other reasons, why “has been reserved under Divine Providence, the second capital of the Byzantine Empire, the official medieval city of Thessaloniki as the city of the Central Byzantine museum” because “Where else, owing to both its geographical position between West and East and its exalted historical statue, in the fullest sence, in the Byzantine Empire, is more favourably predestined to be the finest centre of research into Christian and Byzantine art than the great and glorious Byzantine city of Thessaloniki?” Thessaloniki is “the city that symbolizes the national ideal of the reestablishment of the Great Greek Empire”, indicates the revival of the Great Idea including the patriotic enthusiasm but then political considerations necessitated the establishment of a Byzantine and at least Christian Museum in Athens, as it was defined in article 1 of the Law N. 401/17-11-1914 (Government Gazette, ΦΕΚ 347/Α'/25-11-1914), that it shall contain “works of Byzantine, mediaeval, and Christian Art from the early Christian period until the establishment of the Greek Kingdom with the exception of those in Macedonia”. Article 9 explains that “a second royal decree may establish another museum in Thessaloniki

¹ The word “return” refers in the ministerial decision (ΥΠΠΟ/ΑΡΧ/Β2/Φ21/44861/467/6-9-1993) of the approval of the return to Thessaloniki and deposit at the Museum of Byzantine Culture of specific icons and relics, which had been transferred to Athens and kept at the Byzantine and Christian Museum.

for the works in Macedonia under the direction of the curator of Byzantine and Medieval Monuments”.

On 31st December 1915, when in Thessaloniki had already landed allied troops of the Entente, the electoral commission of the Byzantine and Christian Museum decided, according relevant suggestion of the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs and Public Education, the passage of Adamandiou to Thessaloniki “to rescue the relics which had been found at risk because of the specific circumstances” (Proceedings of the fourth Session). Adamandiou collected with the help of the lawyer G. Komitopoulos and transferred to Athens in early 1916, more than 1600 objects, which have been imported in the Byzantine and Christian Museum and remained in its exhibition or in its storerooms until 1994.

The interest of founding Byzantine Museum in Thessaloniki regenerated after the change of polity in 1975. By a relevant act of the Central Archaeological Council (18/25.5.1975) a nationwide architectural competition was announced in 1977 about the design of the new building and it was won by the unforgettable and distinguished architect and painter Kyriakos Krokos, who was asked to develop the final study². The first phase of the study completed in 1978-1979, while the second after six years, during 1985-1987 in collaboration with the architect G. Makris (partners architects: G. Kalavritinou, L. Mantziou and N. Rokas) because of a problem of the concession of the preferred land (part of the former Tsiroyiannis Army Camp), property of the National Defence Fund, for the construction of new museum, that was resolved 1984 with the personal intervention of the then Prime Minister and Minister for National Defence, Andreas Papandreou. In 1988 the project of construction was included among the European Community's Integrated Mediterranean Programs. The foundation stone was laid in March 1989 by the unforgettable Melina Merkouri, Minister for Culture in that period. The building was completed and handed over in October 1993. On 13 April 1993 the Minister for Culture, Mrs Dora Bakoyanni, in consultation with the Central Archaeological Council, issued a decision approving the museographical program proposed by the Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities responsible for the Museum and the name put forward by the Ephorate: “the Museum of Byzantine Culture”. Since 1997 the Museum of Byzantine Culture has had the status of an independent initially regional service of the Ministry of Culture and Sports as it was defined in the § 15 of the article 7 of the Law N. 2557/23-12-1997 (“Institutions, measures and actions for cultural development”, ΦΕΚ 271/Α'/24-12-1997). By decision of minister it would be established the regulation of Museum's operation, would be regulated matters about the organisation, operation and its administration, the relations with the Ephorates (Services) of Byzantine Antiquities of Ministry and each other necessary detail, which has been achieved by the ministerial decision ΥΠΠΟ/ΓΝΟΣ/50304/26-10-1999 (ΦΕΚ 2018/Β'/17-11-1999), according to which the Museum now established as a special regional Service, Directorate level and located on the Stratou Avenue and in the White Tower³. Purposes of the Museum defined as follows:

Article 4, Purposes: The Museum of Byzantine Culture is a scientific foundation, open to the public with wider cultural and educational character, and has the purpose of collection, preservation, protection, conservation, exhibition, promotion, and study of works and objects of the Early Christian, Byzantine, Medieval in general and post - Byzantine period, derived mainly from the geographical area of Macedonia and from the excavation material in the area of responsibility of the 9th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities with which cooperates directly. The Museum of Byzantine

² On the occasion of the competition started his collaboration with the designer Tasia Papanikolaou.

³ Previous decision (ΥΠΠΟ/ΔΙΟΙΚ/Α/21457/7-5-1999, ΦΕΚ 884/Β/26-5-1999) has defined that Museum of Byzantine Culture belongs from its establishment to the special regional Services of the Ministry of Culture and is added thereto as listed in the provisions of the article 39 of the presidential decree ΠΔ 94/1977 about the Organization of the Ministry of Culture.

Culture also cooperates appropriate with other EBA, if this is necessary for the enrichment and the fuller, better and more scientifically documented presentation of its exhibitions. The Museum of Byzantine Culture in the context of carrying out its objectives, addressed to the wide public, encourages appropriate activities to increase attendance of visitors to the museum, promotes recreational and educational contact of the public with its collections and guarantees the science-based and internationally probationary museological approach of their presentation."

Then the structure and the above mentioned responsibilities are amended after publication of the presidential decree ΠΔ/191 ("Organization of the Ministry of Culture", ΦΕΚ 146/Α'/13-6-2003) as it was defined in the article 56. Its responsibilities described in detail as follows: "matters relating to the acquisition, acceptance, storage, conservation, registration, documentation, research, study, publication, exhibition and promotion to the public objects of the Early Christian, Byzantine, Medieval in general and post-Byzantine period in Northern Greece, as of the modern era with issues relating to the Byzantine and Christian art".

The building of the Museum of Byzantine Culture, among the best works of public architecture of the last decades in Greece, has been received «outside competition» a special notion by the international committee of the competition «Awards 2000» of the Hellenic Institute for Architecture as «an exemplary of its kind and worthy example of large public building, in the category of Public Works». In 2001 the Ministry of Culture has declared it a historically protected monument, and a work of art (ΥΠΠΟ/ΔΙΛΑΠ/Γ/3142/55420/19-10-2001, ΦΕΚ 1458/Β'/22-10-2001).



Main features of the museum is the large "aithrion", courtyard with perimeter Gallery after the external entrance opened in the masonry, which rises to the north to isolate the area from the intensity of the Stratou Avenue. The intention of the architect was "this space to work apocalyptic causing memory". As Krokos confides: "I wanted a space that movement in it gives a feeling of freedom, shaking senses, and where the exhibit will be the surprise within the movement." [...] "The form of the building without obvious references to another era, with main materials concrete and brick - is a picture I have from the block of flats before plastered when they are showing their little truth". Indeed in the Museum of Byzantine Culture, after integration of all permanent exhibitions in 2004, the visitor "is getting a strong feeling of walking through the past",

the presentation and the interpretation in the Museum are not only original and surprising, but can also be moving sometimes", as Ms Aleid Rensen member of the EMF judging committee pointed.

The Museum, a pioneer in addressing both the exhibits and the actions and the high quality of its services in perfect balance with each other, was awarded the "Museum Prize" of the Council of Europe for 2005, one of the major European distinctions in the field of cultural heritage, given for the first time in its history to a Greek museum. The above mentioned Prize has been awarded every year since 1977 to a museum which has either recently completed its permanent exhibition, or re-

organized the presentation of its collections, the criterion being that the museum has contributed significantly to awareness of Europe's common cultural heritage, selected from among a number of candidate museums put forward by the European Museum Forum's judging committee. The decision to give the prize to the Museum of Byzantine Culture was taken unanimously by the Council of Europe's Committee for Culture, Science and Education in Paris on 2 December 2004, that has been announced in a letter to the Museum on 15 December by the President of the Parliamentary session of the Council of Europe Peter Schieder. The jury based its decision on "the excellence of the museum" and the "balance between conservation, preservation, and presentation" of the exhibits, noting in particular the absence of show-cases and the promotion of the conservation work. It described the Museum as "visitors-friendly" and underlined its educational character. The official award ceremony coincided with the 50th anniversary of the European Cultural Treaty and took place on 26 April 2005 at the Palais Rohan in Strasbourg. The trophy, the statuette "femme aux beaux seins" by Joan Miro had been displayed at the Museum for a year and today in the same position is a photographic depiction beside the main entrance to the permanent exhibition.

The eleven rooms of the permanent exhibition opened gradually to the public from 1997 to the beginning of 2004. In an area of 3,430 m² presented through authentic exhibits, coming mainly from Thessaloniki and Macedonia, visual material and multimedia, aspects of Byzantine and post-Byzantine culture through various thematic and according to standard integration in periods of Byzantine history and art, with particular emphasis on perfect and imaginative museographic and artistic design. There are exhibited 3190 archaeological objects, relics and works of art from the 46.000 and more included in the collections, which date from the 2nd to the 20th century AD.

The visitor after the reception area enters and proceeds to an internal corridor, "dromos", a helical ascendant path to reach the level of which he started through a large scale. This corridor unifies the exhibition areas giving at the same time the visitor the possibility of choice, to visit a concrete room without seeing obligatorily previous rooms. "This adversative relation of route and room also intensified with the different treatment of materials, characterizes the quality of internal space of Museum". The lighting of this route becomes from internal courtyards and windows - panes of glass, while the lighting of rooms from superstructure with sun protected elements.

The first three rooms are related to the Early Christian period and address issues of transition from Late Antiquity to the Early Byzantine period in the course of predominance of the Christian religion and its triumph from the 4th to 6th c. AD. In the first room («The Early Christian temple»), that was inaugurated in June 1997, is approached the architecture, decoration, liturgical vessels and equipment of an early Christian church through the basic type of the woodenroofed aisled basilica. Of particular interest are the marble incrustations, the marble revetment slabs and mosaics of the churches of St. Demetrius and Acheiropoitos, mother - of - pearl incrustation from mural decorations, glass panes, wall paintings and architectural sculptures (slabs, capitals, imposts).



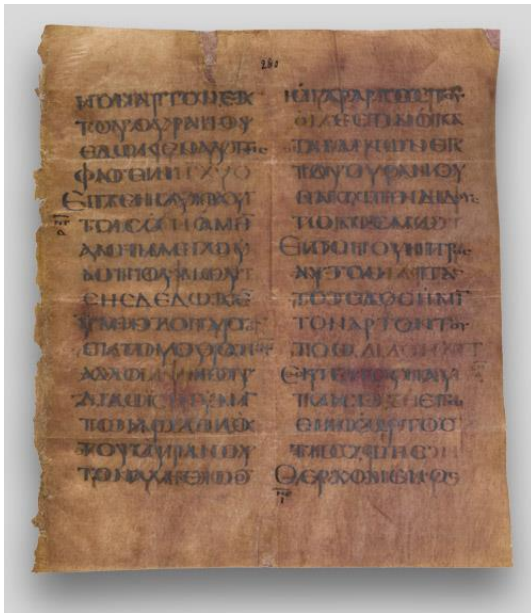
Extremely rare frieze, of 5th-6th century, from the church of St. Minas: fourteen relief plaques depicting animals and birds are separated with rich soft acanthus leaves impress with their realism and the successful expression of movement.



Extremely rare fan - shaped pulpit from the Basilica C, Philippi with one entrance and two staircases brings to our memory the equivalent of the Rotunda of Thessaloniki, which is now in the Archaeological Museum of Istanbul.

Silver reliquary from N. Heraclea, of the late 4th century, rare work of Early Christian silversmith attributed to Thessaloniki's workshop, which was directly related to the corresponding laboratories the same season in Constantinople. The four sides of the casket are decorated with symbolical representations in high relief from the Ancient and New Testament (Christ delivering the Law to the Apostles Peter and Paul, Three Boys in the Furnace, Daniel in the Lions Den, Tradition of the Ten Commandments to Moses). On the surface of the cover the monogram of Christ is flanked by the letters A and Ω of the Revelation, which indicate the beginning and end, and the eternal presence of God in Creation. Its edges encircles shoot from vine leaves and grapes.





Purple leaf of parchment (John 6:31-39) from a book of the Four Gospels (tetraevangelion), the so-called St Petersburg codex, rare example of religious book of 6th century with silver capital letters, where the abbreviations of nomina sacra are highlighted with gold.

In the second room («Early Christian city and residence»), that was inaugurated on 10-7-1998, with the triclinium as its centre, the reception hall of a rich house in Thessaloniki are developing issues which highlight the role of the city as a fortified residential complex, with public and daily life, professional activities, economic life, trade, workshops, residence and its equipment (pottery and glassware) activities there (weaving, cooking), vesture, ornateness and grooming.

Marble pedestal of the 4th-5th century from Thessaloniki, Kassandrou street, near the church of St. Demetrios, with relief female allegorical figures. The one with a shield rendered as an Amazon has been identified with the Fortune of Rome, while the other holding the horn of abundance is the Fortune of Constantinople or Thessaloniki.



Rim of a well. This dossert/impost block of the temple of the 5th century depicted with a relief cross surrounded by wide meandering acanthus leaves. At a later period, possibly in the years of Ottoman rule, the suffix/dossert used as an orifice of a well.





Central exhibit, the triclinium, that is an apsidal reception room of an urban house in 5th-century Thessaloniki. Around it developed the other rooms of the house. The rectangular room is paved with mosaic floor with geometric and floral motifs, the walls are decorated with painted panels which imitate marble revetment. A dedicatory inscription praying for happiness for the house' owners, Eusebius, Marcia, Helladitis and Klementini is included in a panel. The apse on which the

couches were placed is paved with thick mosaic of irregular pieces of marble.



In the third room («From the Elysian Fields of Antiquity to the Christian Paradise»), that was inaugurated on 29-3-1997 and organized as part of the European Science Foundation research project “The Transformation of the Roman World AD 400-900” with the support of the European Union, Raphael Program, is handled the subject of the title throughout the typology of tombs in the cemeteries outside the fortification walls of the town, the funerary inscriptions, the objects that accompanied the deceased to the grave and generally of the funerary cult and the extremely rare and unique collection of wall-paintings from the tombs which illustrates marvelously the route of transition from the conception of Late Antiquity about life after death in a heavenly place of material prosperity and the survivals from the ancient world in burial customs and decoration to the final triumph of the Cross with the predominance of new religion and world-view about final judgment and the resurrection of the dead.

Table Support (“trapezoforon”) with the Good Shepherd - Western cemetery, Axios burial complex, mid - 4th century.



Vaulted tomb decorated with a family of Flavius Eustorgius performing the funerary customs in honor of their dead forefathers, mid 4th century.

Tomb decorated with motifs referring to the desired heaven of the dead with specific material pleasures (carcase, heart, liver, ham and two large fishes), first quarter of the 4th century.

Funerary wall painting from the west all of a vaulted tomb (East Cemetery) with the history of Sossanah (Susanna) in the Old Testament, who has been accused by two Jewish judgments of adultery and who has proved her innocence. The history of Sossanah is an allegory of the triumph of the Christian Church against its heretic persecutors, first half of the 5th century.



In the next three rooms, inaugurated on 10-11-2000, we are entering the main Byzantine period. The first room with the title: "From Iconoclasm (8th-9th c.) to the splendour of Macedonian and Comnenian dynasties" is referring to the period from the 8th to the 12th century. The 9th century with the triumph of Orthodoxy in 843 after the iconoclastic crisis and the reinstatement of Byzantine rule in the East and in Southern Balkans signals the beginning of a new era of the Middle Byzantine period, which is characterized by the regeneration of arts and letters, the Greek culture, the Byzantine humanism and the universal idea of Byzantium with decisive political and cultural influence on all

over the then known world and particularly on the peoples of the Balkans. There are represented new architectural types of a byzantine church in this period (the simple and composite octagonal and the domed cross - in - square church, which expresses the new theology through the development of the iconographic program), through exhibits as architectural sculptures, painted wooden

and marble icons, items of ritual use, but also generally manifestations of public and private life during this period through stamps, coins, funerary monuments, everyday life objects, clothing and personal adornment (grooming).



Relief icon of the Virgin Orans, 11th century. From the holes in her palms was flowing the holy water, which was collected in a utensil in the height of her pelvis.



Koutrouvia, lead vials: Pilgrims - travelers took with them venerable objects as holy water, myrrh or oil, transporting blessing in their land and their relatives. Thessaloniki became an important pilgrimage center during Middle Byzantine Period. SS Demetrios and Theodora have been the two local myrrh - emanating saints, whose veneration spread in the orthodox Slavic peoples.



Icon of the Virgin holding Christ on her right arm (“dexiokratousa”), about 1200, probably a work imported from Cyprus.

Manuscript of a late 11th - century lectionary, written on 325 leaves of fine parchment. Decorated with miniatures of the evangelists Matthew, Mark and Luke. Probably is a product of an important scriptorium in Constantinople.



Pair of gold wristbands, 9th -10th century, an excellent example of cloisonné enamel technique with motifs of the plant and animal kingdom.



Gold and silk made piece of textile, found in a tomb in the Basilica of Saint Achilles, the small islet of Prespa, a rare and important excavation finding, 10th-11th century. The decorative pattern with rows of medals filled with birds, probably hawks, placed within them is a common theme decorating garments of strong personalities in the Byzantine world.

The next room is the one titled: “The dynasties of the Byzantine emperors”, in which are presented the imperial dynasties of Byzantium from the time of Heraclius (610-641) to the Fall of Constantinople in 1453 throughout genealogical trees, coins, hoards of coins and stamps.



Gold coin (hyperpyron) of Manuel I Komninos (1143-1180)



Hoard of gold coins issued by the emperors Basil II (976-1025), Romanos III (1028-1034) and Constantine IX (1042-1055)

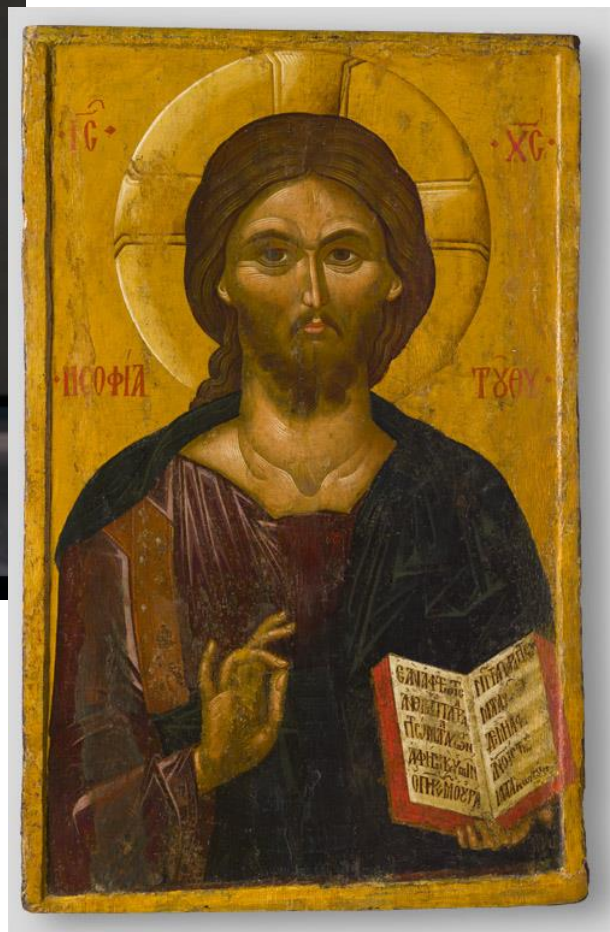
In the next room with the title: “The Byzantine fortress” are presented the defence system of the Byzantine Empire, the organization of the city-castle and the daily life and production in and out of it. The archaeological material derived from castles in Macedonia and mainly from the one at Rendina. The exhibition is supplemented by video installation, which informs the visitor about the castles of north Greece and Thrace.

The tour in the Byzantine world closes with the room: “The twilight of Byzantium (1204-1453)”, inaugurated on 8-3-2002. The organization and the conservation of the exhibits were sponsored by Groupe Carrefour Marinopoulos S.A., in memory of Ioannis P. Marinopoulos. The Late Byzantine period is for Thessaloniki a time of intellectual development, theological pursuits and social move-

ments that have led to the revival of artistic creativity and particularly of painting and figurative art in general, the radiation of which influences Mount Athos and the neighbouring Slav peoples.



Bilateral icon with Virgin Eleousa, A Side, 14th century. Double sided icons commonly used in processions, while in other cases used the back side, where the main has been perished.



Icon of Christ as "The Wisdom of God", probably from the iconostasis of the church of St. Sophia in Thessaloniki, second half of 14th century. Masterpiece of painting art which crystallizes the intellectual pursuits of that period through the elaboration of color and light. A work that has been a prototype without being able to find worthy imitators.



The gold - embroidered silk epitaphios, about 1300, is one of the most valuable masterpieces of Byzantine gold - embroidery that could be worthy linked with works of monumental painting.



Unfinished relief icon of Christ Pantocrator, 14th century, which argues for the existence of workshops manufacturing marble relief icons in Thessaloniki.



Omphalion, a circular sculpture, with depiction of an eagle tearing apart a hare in a vineyard, in champlévé technique with insert red wax and gum from the church of St. Sophia at Trebizond (1238-1263).

Glass vases and glazed pottery confirm the role of Thessaloniki as a commercial centre.

Great part of the collections now exhibited in the permanent exhibition or stored in the warehouses of the Museum of Byzantine Culture came from donations and sponsorships-financial aid for the purchase of movable monuments or works of art. Even from the time it belonged to the 9th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities before its independence in 1997, as a Special Regional Service, but even before its foundation the Museum has been the recipient of donations until today. The first donation was made in 1977, while the second one in 1981. Then, from the 1980s to the present day there is a constant flow of donations that enrich the museum's collections, almost on an annual basis, and demonstrate active participation of citizens, especially of the local community and not only, and the trust in the work of the Museum of Byzantine Culture, despite the economic depression. Among them stand out the great donations of Demetrios Economopoulos and Dori Papastratou collections exposed in two rooms of the permanent exhibition of the Museum bearing their names. The first one devolved to the Museum after collector's testament already from 1986. The formal transfer took place shortly afterwards, in 1987, with the care of his wife Anastasia Zamidi - Economopoulos. It consists of 1460 objects dating from prehistoric times to the 19th century with quantitative and qualitative superiority of Byzantine and post-Byzantine icons. The collection of Dori Papastratou, constituted by 232 engravings of

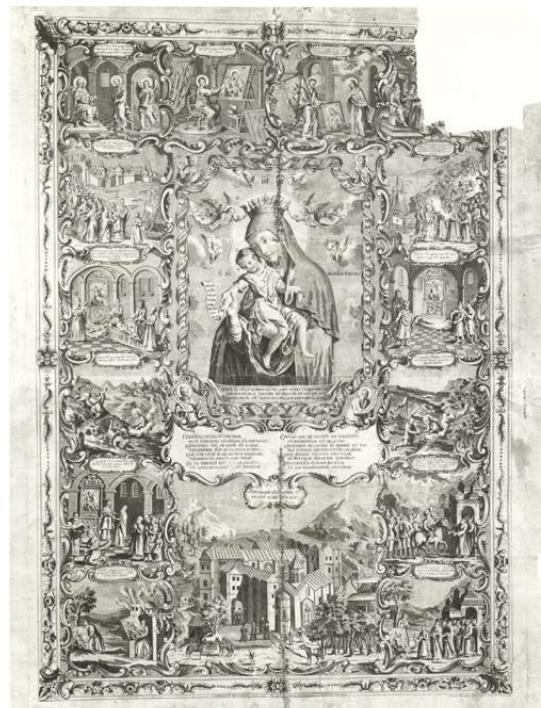


18th and 19th century, eight wooden and copper matrices, given to the Museum in 1994 by her daughters Marina and Daphne Eliades. Parts of these private collections exhibited honorably in two separate rooms, which were inaugurated on 05.27.2001 and function as independent entities, while supplementing the museum's main thematic display, and they also allow visitors to perceive, through the choice of archaeological material, the collectors' sources, motives, and orientations when putting their collections together.

In the room 8 are presented works of the Dori Papastratou collection, a copper written table and Christian Orthodox religious engravings which come from all the main centres where they were printed, from Venice, Vienna, Mount Athos, Constantinople, Leopoldis. They were the monasteries' chief means of communicating with the outside world. They were distributed to the faithful as *eulogia*, "blessing", encouraging them to give the monasteries financial support by making a pilgrimage. Collection objects that are not exposed presented occasionally in temporary exhibitions both in Greece and abroad highlighting the special value of the collection and the special contribution of the collector who brought forth the interest of experts and the public an ambiguous visual material of post-Byzantine religious painting.



Tinted woodcut depicts St John of the Ladder, printed in 1700 at Leopoldis (Lviv) now in Ukraine and was commissioned by the Sinai Monastery.



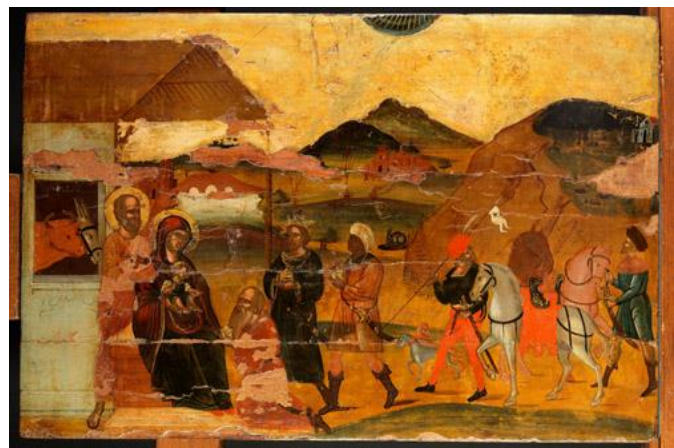
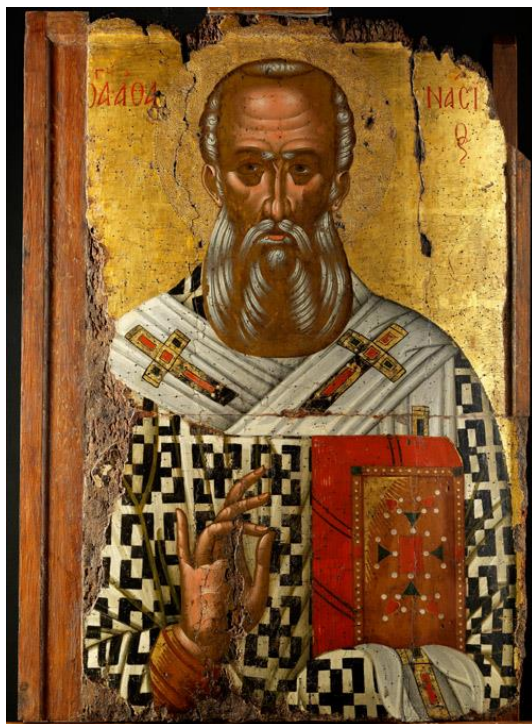
Engraving depicts the Kykkos Monastery on Cyprus, printed in Venice in 1778, commissioned by the Kykkos Monastery.



Engraving depicts the Monastery of Saint Paul on Mount Athos, printed in Vienna in 1798, commissioned by Saint Paul Monastery.

In the next 9th room is respectively displayed part of the Demetrios Ekonomopoulos Collection. For the exhibition selected representative works of each category. But the main volume of the collection and therefore of the exhibition material are icons, dating from the late 14th to the 19th century. There are presented 146 objects. Their choice was driven by their age, their artistic value and the diverse trends and schools of post-Byzantine painting representing.

The Adoration of the Magi, early 16th century. It belongs to a large group of icons of the 15th and 16th centuries, characterized as «Italian - Cretan». In them predominate western elements, however, they have been painted by Cretan artists, usually ordered by a Catholic client.



Icon of St Athanasios of Alexandria, a work of Cretan school, end of 15th century.

The Museum recognizing the contribution of donors - sponsors to create and enrich the Museum's collections organizes occasionally small temporary exhibitions with new acquisitions from donations⁴, while this year we are planning a retrospective from 1977 until today within the celebration of the twenty years of our Museum.



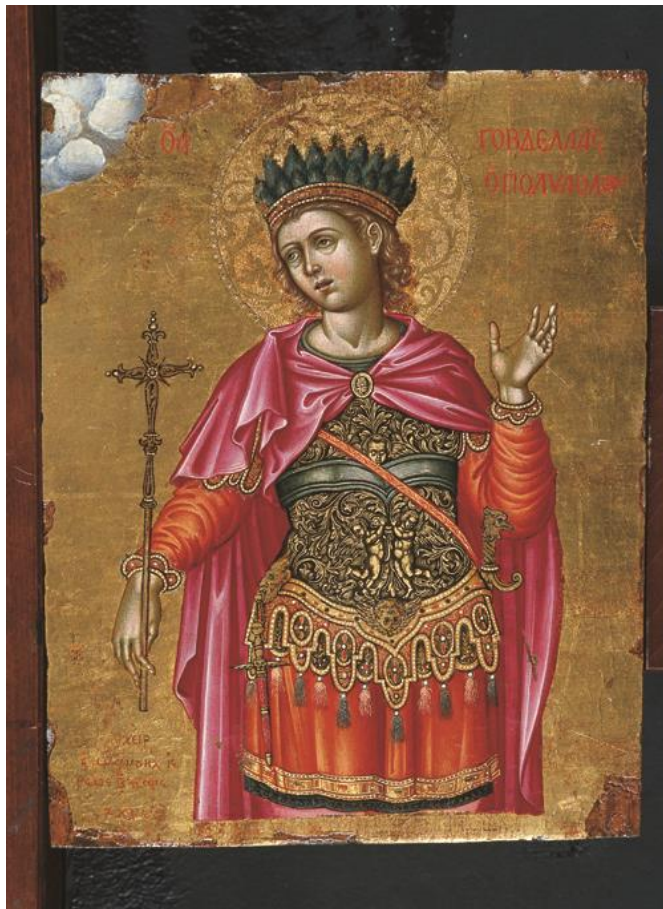
The last room based on the conventional chronological path is the room 10 “Byzantium after Byzantium”, inaugurated on 31-1-2004 simultaneously with the next and the last spatially room of the wing of the permanent Museum's exhibition. In the room 10 is presented the Byzantine heritage in the years after the Fall of Constantinople. The paintings on display represent the various schools of painting in the Greek areas under Ottoman and Venetian rule. Engravings also are presented, while the display also includes some outstanding examples of ecclesiastical gold embroidery, liturgical books and examples of ecclesiastical silverwork. Lastly, an approach is made to the survival of aspects of Byzantine culture in the private domain, with references to private worship and everyday life.

Icon of the Virgin Galaktotrophousa, 1784, painted by the monk Makarios, leader of the painters from the village of Galatista.

Icon with the Judgement of Potiphar, 1677-1682, executed by the famous Cretan painter Theodor Poulakis. It is a part of a broader group of icons (four of them are exhibited in our Museum) which depict the story of Joseph from the Ancient Testament.



⁴ Donor's exhibitions: 1) 17-12-1999 (Museum of Byzantine Culture 7, 2000, 6, pin. 3), 2) 28-4-2002 (Museum of Byzantine Culture 9, 2002, 9, 104-109), 3) 2007.



Icon of St Govdelaas, 1655, executed by the well-known painter of Cretan School, Emmanuel Tzanes.



Parts of the ikonostasis of St Athanasios Church. Belonging to different periods, which correspond to phases of repairs or renovations of the ikonostasis of the church. The epistyle and the Pyramis from the oldest phase of the ikonostasis, mid - 16th century, are exposed to the right of it. The epistyle is attributed to the painter Frangos Katelanos from Thebes, the supreme representative of the second great School of this period, the North-West Greek School.



Gold and silk sakkos which belonged to Bishop Ioannikios of Melenico (1745-1753), a work made by Christophoros Zefarovitch, a Serbian multitalented artist who has been active as painter, carver and designer of ecclesiastical embroideries.

In the niches of the corridor, in the exit to the last room are displayed in two show - cases everyday life objects, products and waste of pottery workshops of the post-Byzantine period.



The last room entitled “Discovering the Past” is an “epilogue” to the permanent display. By displaying archaeological material and using digital applications, this last room traces the journey made by an ancient object from the excavation where it is discovered to the museum where it is displayed. The intervening stages are the one of recording, of study and conservation. The history of museums is also presented via two computer units and touch screens. The only authentic exhibit is a floor mosaic from the reception and banquet hall of an urban villa of the 5th century in Thessaloniki ,

which was revealed after excavation. It illustrates rich geometric issues associated with the personifications of the sun, months and winds. The finding is accompanied by a contemporary artwork, a wall painting referring to the urban landscape of Thessaloniki, recalling the circumstances of the discovery but also the continuity of the new town on the old one.

In the lobby of our Museum visitors have the opportunity to be informed through the help of an application of an electronic platform under the title "Exploring the world of Byzantium", a production of the European Centre of Byzantine and Post Byzantine Monuments, which fully corresponds to the museological approach of our Museum and its educational character.

The department of Educational Programs of the Museum of Byzantine Culture has been planning and implementing educational activities since 1998. The programs are addressed to kindergarten pupils, primary and secondary school students, teachers, families, as well as children and adults with disabilities. For each group various educational activities are organized; these aim to create amusing and constructive visits to the Museum featuring several interactive and educational games and putting the participants in different roles. Teachers are also encouraged to organize educational visits themselves with the help of "books for the teacher", which is also published by the museum. The Department of Educational Programs of our Museum also participates and organizes workshops, seminars, university courses, with announcements promoting education policy, presenting educational activities of the Museum and training of teachers in approach of museum objects, while encouraging school actions on the experiential approach of aspects of Byzantine culture.

The Museum has also seven different conservation laboratories, fully equipped, which specialize in specific types of archaeological material, wood and icons, ceramics and glass, metal, paper, wall paintings, mosaics, marble and stone. In addition there is a special room in which temporarily are deposited the discoveries for the first cleaning before promoting in specific laboratories. Our laboratories are implementing modern methods of diagnosis and conservation accepted by the international scientific community and they become an attraction for education and training of many students from Greece and abroad. They are cooperating with domestic and international research centers and undertake the conservation of collections from other countries within European programs. In our laboratories are also conserved apart from the objects of the Museum's collections and others hosted, becoming from the Services of the Ministry of Culture or other beneficial to the public entities, under the guidance and supervision of our experienced and qualified staff. Our aim is to promote the work of our conservation laboratories displayed through workshops, seminars, special editions and temporary exhibitions with educational and interactive character.

The multi-level "Byzantium" bottom up system has been designed in 2001 by the Department of Computer Science of the Aristotle's University of Thessaloniki and developed such as a powerful multi-information database tool, to systemize and manage the documentation data from the various stages of the conservation procedure. This system unifies the registration and documentation of all the art objects belonging to the collections of the Museum, throughout all stages of the work undertaken in the conservation laboratories, the photographic workshop and registry, the temporary and permanent storage areas and the exhibition galleries.



Naturally the museum also has storage areas, the good organization and functionality of which contributes greatly to the proper operation of a museum. From the stage of architectural design have been provided storage and laboratory areas of 2.900 m². The storerooms formed properly so that various kinds of archaeological finds kept under conditions according to the international standards. There have been adopted solutions used by industrial storage, such as shelves and pallets which are moved with a forklift truck for the storage of sculptures and uploading of icons and mosaics in vertical sliding metal frames. For ceramics is used appro-

propriately modified system of rolling racks used in libraries. One more "unorthodox" method was adopted to store the great number of amphorae. In a model of ship built with sponsorship of "PAPASTRATOS" "stored" the amphorae one above the other with the way they stacked in the hold of a merchant ship in antiquity. The system has been proved ideal, because it secured space economy and stability for contained ceramic vessels. All these create the most appropriate storage conditions and working of the staff, while it also offers the opportunity of educational activities. We are planning for the future the reorganization of storage areas for more space economy, creating training courses and interaction for the audience.



The Museum has a multipurpose room (58 m²), which in the last three years is utilized as an exhibition room, because of the rich exhibition program of our museum, main gallery of temporary exhibitions bearing the name of the designer of the building Kyriakos Krokos (411 m²), the large courtyard with the peristylon, two auditoriums, one smaller in the main museum building, the "Melina Mercouri" (capacity of 70 persons) and a larger one in the Administration building, the "Stefanos Dragoumis" (capacity of 160 persons), which conducted educational

and cultural activities, art and literary events, projections, lectures, meetings, conferences, seminars, educational programs.

Our Museum also offers a shop of the Archaeological Receipts Fund, where the visitor can buy editions related to cultural, archaeological, historical themes, art books, children's books, copies of archaeological artefacts from ancient times to the post-Byzantine period, modern constructions inspired by the exhibits, clothing, jewelry, practical gifts, toys, posters and postcards, etc. Income from tickets and items for sale manages the Archaeological Receipts Fund, because the museum is a public service. Also



in direct communication with the reception of the Museum is a cafe - restaurant which is leased to a tenant by the Archaeological Receipts Fund, which is the owner.

The permanent exhibition on the history of city of Thessaloniki, as this is hosted by the White Tower, namely the most popular historic building and symbol of Thessaloniki, is also a part of the Museum of Byzantine Culture. The exhibition traces the history of the city since its founding in 316/15 until modern times, through various aspects of its culture. The difficult task of presenting a 23-century history in a space of 450m² was accomplished through the use of new technologies: Information is presented mainly through impressive multimedia interactive applications of image and sound (video, slides-show, projections, touch screens, light boxes, sound documents) along with printed graphic compositions, all harmonically combined with the limited number of objects displayed. For foreign visitors there is also an audio tour in English.

Additional information is provided through a DVD-ROM as well on the museum's website www.lpth.org. The DVD-ROM, which encompasses all the applications and information, is distributed to schools. Visitors of the website have the opportunity to view a digital map of the city with monuments and museums, a timeline with events relevant to Thessaloniki, scientific articles of distinguished historians and archaeologists, bibliography on the city and recipes revealing the diversity which characterizes the city's culinary identity.

One of the top cultural events that took place at the Museum during the period of twenty years of its operation was the temporary exhibition "Treasures of Mount Athos" which was jointly organized by the Holy Community of Mount Athos and the Organization for the "Cultural Capital of Europe, Thessaloniki 1997" with the scientific and technical support of the Services in the Ministry of Culture, that has been opened on 21 June 1997 by the President of the Hellenic Republic, Mr K. Stefanopoulos. The exhibition which lasted until April 30, 1998, was visited by the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew (29-9-1997) himself and attracted 700.000 visitors, among them a large number of national leaders, scientific, political and religious figures from all over the world.

Sixteen years later the patriarch, a great honor for the Museum for a second time, launches himself on 23 October 2013 the temporary exhibition "The veneration of Saint Mamas in the Mediterranean: A traveller border defender Saint", an exhibition organized by our Museum in collaboration with the Holy Bishopric and the Municipality of Morphou, Cyprus within the context of 4th Biennale of Contemporary Art at Thessaloniki based on the thematic unit "Mediterranean". The theme of the exhibition, which could be the subject of specific research program, was scientifically and museological approached for the first time not only in Greece but internationally. Through seven units and eleven subsections have been presented the identity and history of Saint Mamas, the dissemination of his veneration in the Mediterranean with an emphasis in Cyprus and Greece through sources, his depictions in art, places of worship of the early Christian to modern times. Target the research and highlighting of timeless cultural relations in the Mediterranean through the sea routes of communication.

As part of implementation of exhibitions as a result of scientific research or research project or collaboration between the Museum and other institutions such as the European Centre of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Monuments, aiming conservation and enhancement of cultural heritage of Greece and the wider area that once was part of the Byzantine empire, we will mention the major temporary exhibitions organized - hosted at the Museum of Byzantine Culture: 1) "Byzantine Glazed Ceramics: The Arts of Sgraffito", 1999 on the occasion of the 7th International Congress of Medieval Pottery in the Mediterranean, which was also presented at Rhodes. 2) "Every Day Life in Byzantium" (White Tower), 2001, organized as part of a multi - venue exhibition "Byzantine Hours:

Works and Dates in Byzantium” which was held in Athens, Thessaloniki and Mistras. 3) “Icons from the Orthodox Communities of Albania: From the Collections of the National Museum of Medieval Art in Korçe” (14.3 - 12.6.2006), presented the results of a successful five year collaboration program between the Museum of Byzantine Culture, the ECBPM and the National Museum of Medieval Art in Korçe, covered the areas of scientific research, conservation, training and the transfer of expertise. 4) “Architecture as Icon. Perception and representation of Architecture in Byzantine Art” (6.11.2009 - 31.01.2010) also presented at the Art Museum, Department of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University (6.3.2010 - 6.6.2010), a collaboration with the European Centre of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Monuments and the Princeton University (Program in Hellenic Studies).

To highlight unknown aspects of the history of Thessaloniki in the process of its integration in the Modern Greek state we have co-organized two highly successful exhibitions in 2012, the 100th anniversary year of the liberation of Thessaloniki and the action “Thessaloniki Cultural Crossroad 2012”: 1) “Thessaloniki of Collectors. City Stories” (21.9 - 8.12.2013) and 2) “The Armée d’ Orient in the Balkans: Archaeological evidence of a hospital in Thermi/Sédès” in collaboration with the 16th Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classic Antiquities, the History Center of the Municipality of Thessaloniki and the French Consulate (21.12.2013 - 12.5.2013). The first exhibition, result of creative synergy of our Museum with Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, launched by the Deputy Minister of Religious Education, Culture and Sports Kostas Tzavaras, despite its brief period of duration time, just two months, visited over 8.000 people.

The extroversion of our Museum outside space and place marked the temporary exhibition “A history of light to light” organized by the Museum in 2011, a collaboration with the Folklore and Ethnological Museum of Macedonia and Thrace in its place (31.10.2011 - 11.6.2012), which enriched hosted with great success in the summer of 2012 at “Technopolis” of Athens Municipality. Inter - country cooperation is certified by a number of exhibits in 2012 and 2013: 1) “Kyrillitsa: thirty works of contemporary artists of Plovdiv inspired by the Cyrillic alphabet” (23.5 - 8.7.2012), 2) “The Light of Letters” (28.11.2013 - 4.5.2014, Consulate General of the Republic of Bulgaria, Department of Balkan, Slavic and Oriental Studies University of Macedonia), 3) “And so the Word had spread among young people” (29.11 - 20.12.2013, Municipality of Thessaloniki, Consulate General of the Republic of Serbia), the last two as part of the celebrations of the anniversary year of Cyril and Methodius, 4) “Architectural Treasures of the heart of Medieval Serbia” (7.12.2012 - 31.3.2013, Institute Kraljevo Serbia). An example of cooperation with the other four major art museums of Thessaloniki (“Movement of 5M”) and the Louvre Museum was the exhibition “The reliquary of the True Cross” in the context of a multi - venue exhibition “Works of art from the Louvre in Thessaloniki” (14.10 - 27.01.2013).

One of our Museum' goals is to organize temporary exhibitions with institutions located both in Greece and abroad. We aim at establishing unique events promoting not only scholarly research, but also the dissemination of knowledge to a wider public. The Museum's overall work involves a variety of subjects related to the Byzantine and Post-Byzantine culture, the mutual influences between Orthodox and non-Orthodox peoples within the ecumenical Byzantine Empire and -last but not least- the role of Thessaloniki as the most important political, economic, intellectual, and artistic centre after Constantinople in the process of its incorporation in the Modern Greek state. We care all our exhibitions to be accompanied by a corresponding bilingual (Greek - English / Greek -French sometimes) scientific catalogue with specific thematic units, while flanked by parallel actions of literature and art. We established the inauguration of these exhibitions enriched with music events. We are planning new digital interactive applications, which will contribute to the management and development of the exhibits and collections of the Museum in a friendly and accessible way, and will enhance recreational and educational contact of the Museum with the public. We also wish to

organize in the future digital thematic temporary exhibitions and specially designed trails in our permanent exhibition for visually impaired and blind people. To promote our actions beside special oblations, press releases to the media, television and radio broadcasts, we also use the Museum's website (www.mbp.gr) and the social media, of which each person regardless of origin and ethnicity may be informed. Our exhibitions always accompanied by explanatory and informative bilingual text (Greek - English / Greek - French).

Alongside the Museum participates in all actions, of national, European or international range in the context of anniversary celebrations, such as "the Night of Museums", "the International Museum Day" in cooperation with other partners, to produce small films of special thematic (video), tours, art events (dance, music events), special educational activities, interactive exhibitions. We laid the groundwork for new institutions of visitors' service-information, which became a reality, such as thematic lecture-tour cycles with the title "One exhibit tells his story" and "Tales from the depths of the Museum" with the first unit: weapons and diplomacy in Byzantium.

All the above mentioned are part of the strategic planning to attract more visitors in the Museum. In our place have been implemented during last two years 2012-2013 above 150 actions, without the number of temporary exhibitions and daily educational programs. During the same period we have an increase in visitors of 63% in comparison with 2011 despite the economic crisis, which highlights the renewal of the extroversion policy of the Museum and the occasionally enrichment of temporary exhibitions of high quality with new interesting themes as decisive factors in attracting visitors.

Within the framework of the anniversary of 2014 the Museum organized a temporary exhibition with the title "Ex Thessalonica Lux" (31.1.2013 - 4.5.2014), honouring Thessaloniki as the birthplace of Saints Cyril and Methodius. In this original temporary exhibition the definitive contribution of the Thessalonian brothers, Constantine - Cyril and Methodius is highlighted regarding the invention of the Slavonic script, the establishment of the Cyrillic alphabet –the third official alphabet of European Union- along with the subsequent spread of Christianity in the world of today's Central Europe and beyond. For all the above-mentioned reasons, the exhibition is to frame the parallel activities of the Greek Presidency of the Council of the European Union during the first semester of the year. The exhibits shed light on the middle Byzantine Thessaloniki and on the largely unknown 9th century, the spiritual and cultural background of Thessaloniki and Constantinople, the diplomatic, missionary and cultural activity of Saints Cyril and Methodius among the Slavs of today's Central Europe, and finally the impact of their work. Apart from a rich visual material, the display is enriched by selected original exhibits from the collections of the Museum of Byzantine Culture, the 9th and 10th Ephorates of Byzantine Antiquities and the Georgios Tsolozidis private collection. The largest part of this material is presented to the public for the first time and it comes from recent excavations.

Our overall goal is to make the museum an appealing destination for all ages, taking into consideration the public's interests and regardless of their level of education, a museum accessible, centered to the human being. We seek to integrate the museum within the city's cultural life, organizing literary and artistic events, conferences and workshops with modern themes related to culture. Our collaborators are mainly museums, institutions and organizations in Thessaloniki, but we also reinforce our collaborations with various institutions from abroad. Through the support we receive from the "Association of Friends of the Museum", through collaborations, sponsoring and above all through our passion to promote our culture, the Museum of Byzantine Culture remains active, as a healthy public service in a period of crisis.

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