

TOPIC 11

Where is the best place to buy an icon?

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A good icon at a reasonable price purchased from a reputable name need not be any more expensive than a bad icon at an inflated price from a dubious source. The purchase of an icon is only in the rarest of cases an isolated event. Some time may pass between the first encounter with a work at an exhibition and the moment when, paid for and accompanied by all its documents, it hangs on the wall of its future owner. Quite often this establishes a bond for life, because a reputable dealer will also feel a responsibility, beyond the statutory warranty obligation, for making sure that the icon is prospering (for example, checking that no latent defects are emerging over time) and that the buyer continues to be happy with his/her choice. Quite often this relationship also extends to the next generation, on both sides: for example, the buyer's heirs might have questions about the work, or the seller's successors might be interested in a repurchase. This sort of long-term perspective means you should carefully consider whether you feel well served by the seller.

As to whether or not an icon is collection-worthy—this is not secret knowledge but can be stated objectively, discussed, and substantiated by the buyer. Nevertheless, a large part in the decision to sell is left to trust. If you have a good feeling about the icon and the seller, then you should opt for the transaction. If you have an uneasy feeling about one of the two, or even both, then you should avoid it.

In any case, we recommend that you have the properties of the purchased icon confirmed in writing. At the very least, this is done on the sales receipt, the invoice; ideally, the piece also comes with a more comprehensive expertise that comprises a detailed description of the icon, comparisons to relevant museum pieces, and a list of features specific to the icon, including any later alterations, restorations, and the like. A document of this sort, when written by a recognized specialist, may well increase the resale value later.



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