

TOPIC 12

How were old icons made?

Dr. Stefan Brenske, art historian, icons specialist, author, and frequent guest on German television program "Lieb & Teuer" (NDR)

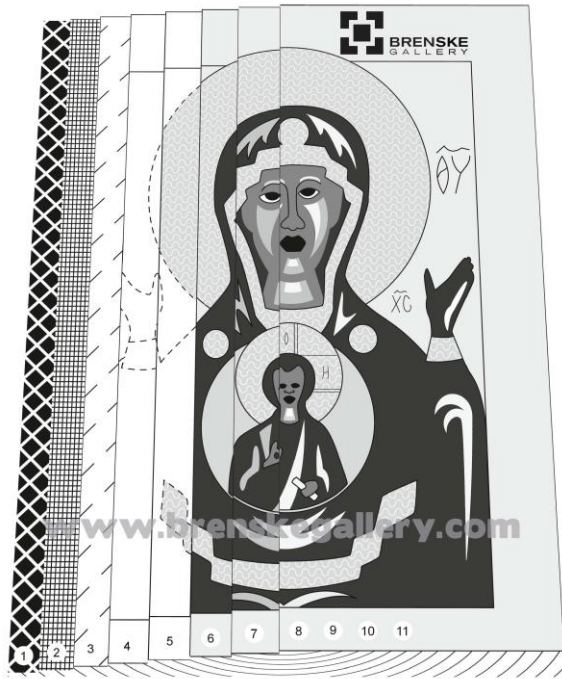
The processes for making old icons are largely understood. Certain materials are no longer obtainable in the same quality as those used by the authors of old icons, and today quite a few production processes are simplified or no longer used because they are too time-consuming.

The masters of icon painting had particularly high expectations for their creations when it came to durability and the specific impact of the colors. Moreover, they thought it was important that the production processes changed as little as possible throughout the centuries. This goes back to the philosophy of the icon: since every icon tries to repeat a miracle-working model, the painter endeavored to closely approximate the miracle-working prototype, not only in terms of form but also in terms of technique. This gave rise to a long history of handing down modes of representation and artistic techniques.

Writing an icon is a process that takes months, one that is interrupted over and over again by stages of technical maturation, for example, the drying of the primed surfaces and paints. The following diagram summarizes what is in fact a far more detailed, multi-stepped process and gives an indication of the complexity involved.

Construction of an icon (simplified)

1. Indentation of the support
2. Gluing on of the linen ground
3. Applying and polishing the gesso (several times)
4. Transfer of the preliminary drawing
5. Application of the gilding in several steps
6. Application of the basic colors
7. Lightening and structuring in multiple stages
8. Application of highlights
9. Flesh colors in layers (carnation) as in 6–8
10. Inscription and/or border design
11. Sealing with varnish (olifa) after several months of drying



Aufbau einer Ikone (vereinfacht)

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| 1 | Einkerbung des Bildträgers | |
| 2 | Aufleimen von Leinwandgrund | |
| 3 | Auftragen und Polieren des Kreidegrunds (mehrmals) | |
| 4 | Übertragung der Vorzeichnung | |
| 5 | Aufbringen der Vergoldung in mehreren Arbeitsgängen | |
| 6 | Anlegen der Grundfarben | |
| 7 | Mehrstufige Aufhellung und Strukturierung | |
| 8 | Auftrag der Hochlichter | |
| 9 | Inkarnate in Schichten wie 6-8 | |
| 10 | Beschriftung und/oder Randgestaltung | |
| 11 | Versiegelung mit Firnis (Olivia) nach mehrmonatiger Trocknung | |