

## TOPIC 5

### How does one properly display an icon?

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Icons change the aura of a room. Their meditative force, the warm glow of their colors against a gold ground, fuel a fascination among collectors that can quickly develop into a passion.

Icons usually find their place in living rooms or studies. But there are also collectors who hang icons in their bedrooms. Others have set up a sort of iconostasis in their living room. Icons are also quite often placed to great effect in entrance halls. With the exception of kitchens and bathrooms, icons have probably been displayed in just about every type of room. The crucial question to ask is: where do you enjoy spending time when home. Think about where you like to sit and relax in the evenings after a hard day's work and keep in mind which walls are in view.

Icons are fundamentally very robust and hardy. The constitution of Russian icons, in particular, is such that they were able to withstand the strong seasonal climatic fluctuations that prevail in Russia.

The colors of icons are remarkably lightfast; they are far more durable than those found on, say, watercolors or other works on paper. It is always fascinating to see how icons retain the brilliance of their colors even after hundreds of years. Nevertheless, extreme exposure to light should be avoided. Icons should not be subjected to bright sunlight for long periods.

With their gold grounds, icons were originally made to be seen by candlelight. In the flickering glow of candles and oil lamps, the mysticism of icons finds its greatest expression. Many icon lovers use candles to create a kind of *mise en scène* for their icons, especially during the dark winter months. Try it for yourself: place candles in front of your icons (but at a safe distance, to avoid heat and wax damage) and experience your icons at a completely new level of intensity. In terms of electrical sources of illumination, the traditional standard commercial lightbulb has many advantages. But there are a multitude of other options for appropriate artificial lighting. When in doubt, however, less is more.

If spotlights are dimmed a bit, the proportion of blue light, compared to red, is reduced and the light appears warmer. Table and floor lamps with lampshades—made of glass or silk, for example—give off an indirect, soft light. This often works to enhance the charm and appeal of icons. The warm muted light of a table lamp, for example, can lend the colors of an old icon an intense radiance and depth.

