



VARLEY GALLERY OF MARKHAM THE SACRED IMAGE OF THE ICON: A WORLD OF BELIEF FIRST EXHIBITION OF ITS KIND IN CANADA (MAY 8 – SEPTEMBER 1, 2008)

The Sacred Image of the Icon: A World of Belief exhibition features over 150 traditional icon paintings spanning over four centuries, from the 16th century to the present day. The icons come from Oriental and Eastern Orthodox traditions and from Ethiopia and Egypt to Greece, Serbia, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Russia, and the Ukraine. It is the first time in Canada that such an exhibition has been mounted.



Triptych - St. Mark's Coptic Museum
16th century

At the opening reception, Dr. Sheila Campbell, guest curator, said that visitors are likely to view the exhibition from two perspectives: the role icons play in the spiritual and liturgical life of Orthodox traditions or appreciate their aesthetic and artistic beauty. Katarina Atanassova, Curator at the Varley Gallery explained that the icons are arranged thematically: Calendar icons of religious feasts, scenes from the life of Christ, icons of Christ the Pantocrator, John the Baptist, Deesis, St. Mary including her life, Byzantine tradition, Slavic local saints, "military" saints, Ethiopian and Coptic icons and more. There is also a visual illustration of an icon of Christ the Pantocrator showing the different steps in writing an icon. A second illustration shows process of the restoration of an icon.



Intricate calendar of saints celebrated during the Church year 18th century, Russian

The Curators of the exhibition selected ten icons from St. Mark's Coptic Museum: the icons of the four evangelists written by Isaac Fanous, the "Burial of Christ" by Bedour Latif and Youssef Nassif, two icons of the Holy Family's Journey to Egypt, and the 16th century triptych of St. Mary with the Divine Child with St Demetrius and St George on each wing. Also selected are two Ethiopian artefacts: a folding hand cross and a folding liturgical altar book stand. Both opening up to a diptych – icons painted on two hinged panels often called "travelling" icons.

This is an exhibition not to be missed! Many visitors have already returned a second and third time. It is a feast for the eyes and the spirit!



Ethiopian folding hand cross - St. Mark's Coptic Museum, 20th century

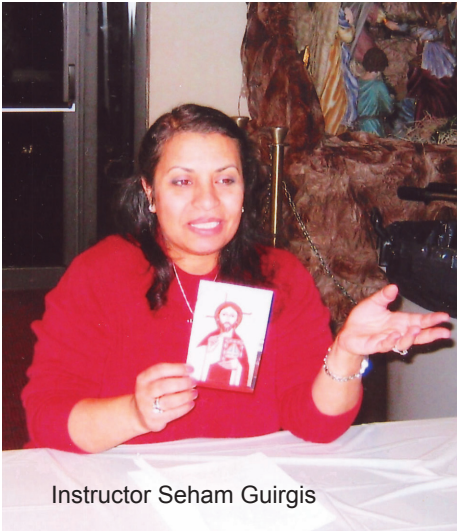
Regular Gallery opening hours:

10.00am- 5.00pm Tuesdays - Saturdays
12.00 – 5.00pm Sundays
Closed on Mondays
July and August open daily

The Varley Gallery of Markham is located at 216 Main Street, Unionville, Ontario.
www.varleygallery.ca

ACTIVITIES HIGHLIGHTS

Writing Neo-Coptic Icons Course Level II - January 14 to April 14, 2008

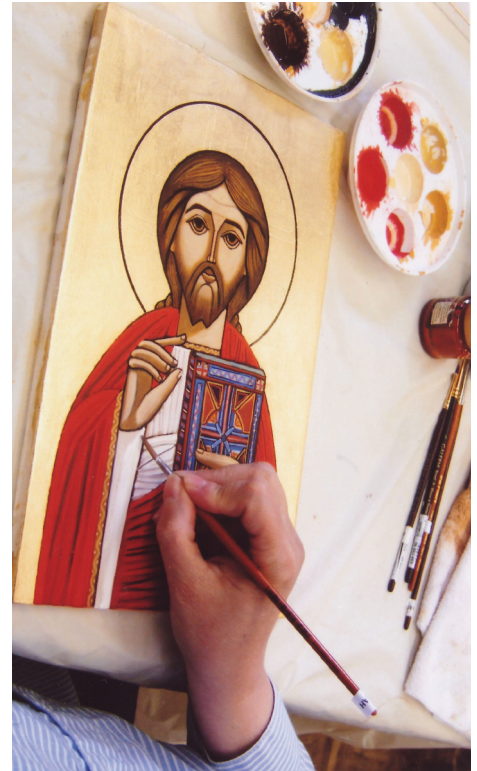


Instructor Seham Guirgis

St. Mark's Coptic Museum put together a "Writing Neo-Coptic Icons" course. The course ran from January 14 to April 14, 2008. The instructor of the course was Mrs. Seham Guirgis, a professional iconographer with a

Master's degree in Coptic Art from the Institute for Coptic Studies in Cairo where she was also taught.

Students learned about the history of Coptic icons, the artistic features and the technique of writing Neo-Coptic icon, and acquired the skill of the hand movement. Eight students registered for the course. They worked on the same icon image of Christ Teacher and were surprised at the difference in expression of their final outcome! The spirituality of the process of writing an icon was the most significant experience: "It is a privilege and inspiring to live life as you portray God in an icon" said one student and another said "I felt God's presence...closer to God". The Museum and the students are looking forward to the next installment of this course.

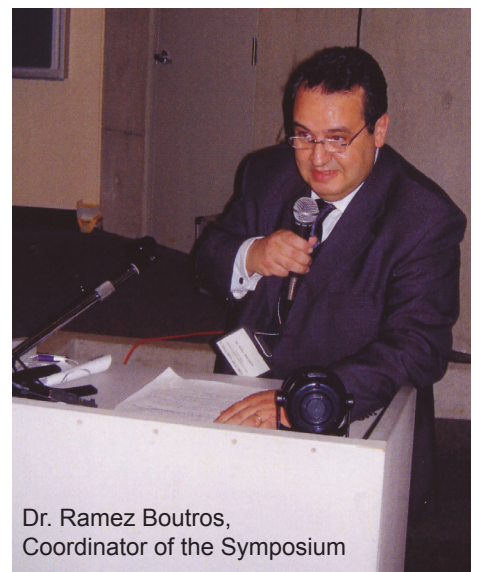


First Annual Coptic Studies Symposium – March 29, 2008

The First Annual Coptic Studies Symposium at the University of Toronto (U of T) was co-sponsored by the U of T Department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations (NMC) and St. Mark's Coptic Museum. One hundred and ten participants registered from various parts of Ontario and Quebec. But numbers alone are not the only criteria of success. Participants included students and faculty members from various academic disciplines, museum staff, Egyptologists, clergy and members from various denominations, and others who joined out of sheer interest. Several university students also expressed a keen interest in pursuing courses in Coptic Studies.

The Symposium Coordinator was Dr. Ramez Boutros, Coptologist and Visiting Fellow at the U of T Pontifical Institute for Medieval Studies. The day was opened by Professor Linda Northrup, Chair of NMC and Father Marcos Marcos, Proto-Priest, St. Mark's Coptic Orthodox Church. The programme of the Symposium was divided into four thematic areas: Coptic Art and Artefacts, Language and Manuscripts, Archaeology and History of Sites and Contemporary History and Art. Speakers came from universities and museums from British Columbia and from Ontario (Peterborough, London, Ottawa and Toronto). Mme Dominique Bénazeth, Chief of the Coptic Section, Louvre Museum in Paris, France, was the only international speaker.

Participants remained for the entire day listening and asking question to the eleven speakers and engaged in lively discussions during breaks and



Dr. Ramez Boutros,
Coordinator of the Symposium

lunch. All present were also able to appreciate an icons exhibition of three Neo-Coptic iconographers: Seham Guirgis, Salwa Iskander and Dalia Sobhi.