



Holy Image, Hallowed Ground: Icons from Sinai (Getty Trust Publications: J. Paul Getty Museum)

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Isolated in the remote Egyptian desert, at the base of Mount Sinai, sits the oldest continuously inhabited monastery in the Christian world. The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine at Sinai holds the most important collection of Byzantine icons remaining today. This catalogue, published in conjunction with the exhibition *Holy Image, Hallowed Ground: Icons from Sinai*, on view at the J. Paul Getty Museum from November 14, 2006, to March 4, 2007, features forty-three of the monastery's extremely rare--and rarely exhibited--icons and six manuscripts still little-known to the world at large.

The exhibition and catalogue bring to life the central role of the icon in Byzantine religious practices. Themes include the icon's status as holy object, the ways in which the icon sanctified the place of worship, and the monks' quest for the holy. The Greek Orthodox monastery at Mount Sinai not only functioned as a major pilgrimage site for centuries but was also a cultural crossroads at the center of the shifting sands of ecclesiastical and secular politics. The accompanying essays explore how the monastery's contact with the outside world, through pilgrimage, resulted in aesthetic exchanges between the monastery and Coptic, Crusader, and Islamic art; and between the Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholic communities in Europe.

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