

The Ukrainian Museum and Library of Stamford

TREASURES AT THE UKRAINIAN MUSEUM AND LIBRARY OF STAMFORD by Curator Lubow Wolynetz

The collections of the Ukrainian Museum and Library of Stamford encompass Folk, Fine and Religious Art. The Religious Art collection includes icons (both folk and those of professional iconographers), religious paintings, liturgical vessels, priestly vestments, antimensons, shrouds (plashchanytsias), hand crosses and much more.

Of special interest and great artistic value are two large icon-paintings by the world renowned artist and America's most accomplished muralist, Jan Henryk de Rosen.

Jan de Rosen was born in Warsaw in 1891, the son of a court painter to the Russian czar. He died in 1982 in Arlington, VA. He was raised and educated in France but returned to Poland after World War I and began to paint. His first exhibited works were in 1923 in Warsaw, and a few months later in Lviv. His works so impressed Archbishop Josef Teodorovych of the Armenian Catholic Church in Lviv that the Archbishop asked de Rosen to decorate Lviv's Armenian Cathedral with murals and



chapel. It was originally built in the 14th century and was rebuilt many times over the years, most recently in 1908-27. Prior to coming to America, de Rosen also decorated the Theological Seminary in Lviv (1929-30)

pleted in Stamford for the Ukrainian Catholic seminarians of St. Basil College and St. Basil Preparatory School. The dormitory had a chapel that needed to be decorated in the Byzantine style. Bishop Constantine Bohachevsky, the second bishop in the United States for U k r a i n i a n Catholics, knew Jan de Rosen from Lviv and commissioned him to oversee the decoration of the



dom-used Biblical subjects or depicted traditional topics in a non-traditional, original way.

Jan de Rosen's career flourished. He designed many murals and mosaics for churches and cathedrals in the United States. He is best known for the large mosaic of Jesus Christ in Glory located behind the main altar in the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, DC. An examination of the icon of Jesus Christ in the museum suggests that it was a prototype for the mosaic of Jesus Christ in Glory at the



chapel. The artist decorated the chapel and painted the two icon-paintings of Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary that are on exhibit in the

Basilica of the National Shrine. De Rosen's murals and paintings were created using durable wax tempera (a mixture of pigment and beeswax liquefied by alcohol) set against a background of gold leaf. The artist claimed he used Dutch beer to liquefy the wax.

The Ukrainian Museum and Library is



stained glass windows. It is important to note that the Armenian Cathedral is one of the unique monuments of Armenian culture not only in Lviv but in all of Eu-

and chapels and churches in other European cities.

De Rosen came to the United States in 1939 at the invitation of the Polish Embassy to paint decorations for the Polish Pavilion at the World's Fair in New York City. World War II broke out, Poland was overtaken and occupied, and de Rosen chose to remain in the

United States.

The war years were difficult. Very little art was being commissioned. But in 1942, a new dormitory building was com-

pleted. He also painted two shrouds (plashchanytsias), which are also in the museum. The building is no longer used as a dormitory; it has been converted and now

houses the eparchial offices. The chapel is still in use, however, and on special occasions Divine Liturgies are celebrated by the bishop. In painting this chapel, and later other chapels and churches, Jan de Rosen often chose sel-



extremely fortunate and proud to be in possession of such unique artistic gems.

Photographs courtesy of J. Wolanska, a PhD student from Poland doing research on Jan de Rosen in 2004.

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