

St. Michael & All Angels Episcopal Church, Concord  
St. John's Episcopal Church, Clayton  
*December 10, 2016 to February 17, 2017*

# ICONS IN TRANSFORMATION



# FROM EUROPE TO CALIFORNIA!

This dramatic traveling exhibit, *Icons in Transformation*, has toured cathedrals and museums in both Europe and the United States. Over 150,000 people have explored the beautiful art of the acclaimed abstract



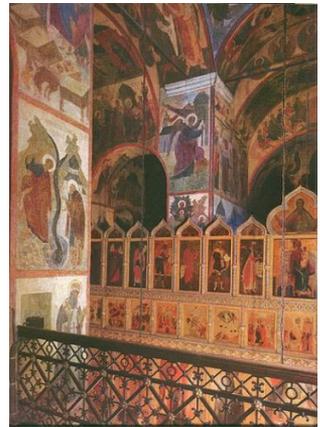
expressionist artist Ludmila Pawlowska. St. Michael and All Angels and St. John’s Episcopal Churches will together display over 150 pieces. Ludmila offers a rare opportunity to see both her work and the path of her contemporary vision – derived from traditional Russian icons. The collection includes both her own art and icons from Vassilevsky Monastery.

*HRH Prince Charles & Ludmila*

## ABOUT ICONS

Traditional and modern icons are sometimes described as “*windows to heaven*” or a “*showing forth of God.*” The icon’s purpose is not to illustrate or decorate, but to beckon the viewer into an intimate experience of God.

On entering an Orthodox Church, one is surrounded by icons. Separating the main body of the church from the altar area is an iconostasis – a large screen covered with icons. Around the perimeter are many icons, some with places for candles to be lit – and for people to stand and pray. Meditation through “*gazing*” is practiced, as the icon becomes a way of connecting with God, the divine mystery.



*Cathedral of the Annunciation, Moscow, 1484*

## ICONS IN TRANSFORMATION

Ludmila chose the name for this exhibit from Matisse, who wrote, on his first visit to Moscow in 1911:



*“Yesterday I saw a collection of old Russian icons. This is truly great art. I am quite taken by iconic paintings: ... I am in love with their touching simplicity... The artist’s soul emerges in these icons like a mystical flower. It is through them that we should learn to understand art. I have seen artwork from the churches of many different countries, but nowhere have I met such powerful expression, such a feeling of mystery...everywhere the same luminosity and devotion...”*

### THE ART – a short introduction!

**Texture;** Mila’s process starts with special, high quality plywood from a Swedish manufacturer. She adds layers of gesso as a ground, and builds up texture with pastes, fabric and thick paints.

**Light;** Mila lavishes love on her surfaces, by often using special metallic paints, which glitter in strong light, and glow in softer light.

**Colors;** Blue symbolizing heaven. Gold eternity. Red the color of passion. Green the color of life and renewal.

**Cut-outs;** Sometimes Mila plunges a saw blade right through her pieces and cuts out spirals, crosses and other shapes, inviting the visitor to gaze within. *“We all have something inside.”*



*Heaven*

**Stones;** Many of the stones implanted in the works are a special, fossil-rich limestone that is common near her home. *“Stone is timeless and carries the memories of ages.”* Mila says.

**The Inspiration;** Mila’s collection includes traditional icons from the monastery workshops in the years since a measure of religious freedom returned to Russia. It is the spirituality of these icons which has inspired her work.



## CALL ME MILA

Her family had been shattered by the Russian revolution. Her grandfather was deported to Siberia in 1936, when her father was only two.

Ludmila grew up in Karaganda, Kazakhstan.... A mid-sized city full of highly educated people, culture and good schools – but a place of exile. Her mother was her soul-mate, and art her refuge.

At 15, she left for Moscow to attend an art academy - socialist realism was the painting style of the day – but she worked her way into textile design and magazine illustration. She was baptized in the Russian Orthodox Church at 18 – which at the time was illegal.

She met Jan Lech – an early music specialist and lutenist who had moved into the business side of the arts – and eventually married and moved to Sweden.

After a few years, her mother was able to come and visit. After only a few months her mother died from a massive stroke and Mila's life changed as she looked for answers to unspoken questions.

It was in Russian monasteries that she found ancient wisdom and contemporary icons painted in the classical style. Today she is an abstract expressionist, and her paintings express her feelings. She carved letters to her mother in her paintings, as a heavily textured almost sculptural style evolved. *“After every image was finished, I felt a sense of relief. I was finding my own way to God. All the art over these last years has been a spiritual journey.”*

For more information about **Icons in Transformation**, visit our websites [www.saintmichaelsconcord.org](http://www.saintmichaelsconcord.org), [www.saintjohnsparish.org](http://www.saintjohnsparish.org), or [www.holyspiritchurchecc.org](http://www.holyspiritchurchecc.org)