

Dissertation presented at Uppsala University to be publicly examined in Humanistiska teatern, 752 38, Uppsala, Wednesday, 9 May 2018 at 10:00 for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The examination will be conducted in Swedish.

Abstract

Brändén, I. 2018. Bilder och berättelser om Sankt Nikolaus. Några vitaikoner studerade mot bakgrund av text och liturgi. *Figura Nova: Uppsala studies in the history of art* 35. 332 pp. Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis. ISBN 978-91-513-0265-2.

This dissertation concerns the pictorial language and communicative aspects of the vita icons of S Nicholas. The starting point is three vita icons of the saint of Russian origin in Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, dated to the end of the 15th century to the middle of the 17th century. Studies of the textual vitas of S Nicholas and texts of the services on the saint's feast days leads to an understanding of the selection, sequence and location of episodes from the saint's life in icons. The narrative and structural strategies of a number of S Nicholas vita icons are studied in comparison with vita icons of other saints (bishops, martyrs and monastic persons). These analyses reveal common narrative strategies and paradigmatic relations. Furthermore, attention is put on the spatial and semantic interactions between scenes within the cycle of S Nicholas vita icons, and their interplay with elements in the central part of the icons. The dissertation also discusses the possible connections between the pictorial language of S Nicholas vita icons, the structure and pictorial program of an iconostasis and some elements in the flow of liturgy. General patterns are noticed concerning the location of different themes in the narrative cycle of vita icons. The results show how the themes, colours and elements in the environment can link scenes together and help the viewers gaze through the pictorial landscape. A number of paradigmatic relationships between vita icons of S Nicholas and liturgy are identified, notably between the scene with the translation of the saint's relics and the carrying of the Gospel Book and the Holy Gifts through passages in the iconostasis. Thus, various theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of icons, texts and liturgical context have resulted in a more nuanced understanding of the pictorial narrative program of S Nicholas vita icons.

Keywords: vita icon, narrative icon, narrative cycle, icon, visual grammar, S Nicholas of Myra, 15th century icon, 16th century icon, 17th century icon, narrative structure, pictorial program, spatial relations, text and image, hagiography, iconography, iconostasis, icon and liturgy, Nationalmuseum.

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ISSN 0071-481X

ISBN 978-91-513-0265-2

urn:nbn:se:uu:diva-345635 (<http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:uu:diva-345635>)