

Maria Lidova

As an art historian, I work primarily on Byzantine, late antique and early medieval art. Before joining the Empires of Faith project, I studied in Russia (Moscow State University) and Italy (Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa), and had a long-term stay in Paris (École Normale Supérieure) and a scholarship in Florence (Max-Planck Kunsthistorisches Institut). I have conducted the main bulk of my field research in Rome under the auspices of the American Academy. Besides the opportunity to gain foundational skills and to work directly with the artefacts, studying abroad allowed me to explore different approaches to art and material culture and to become interested in methodological issues as well as current attempts to overcome limitations within existing scholarship.

My research agenda has always been connected to questions similar to those faced by the Empires of Faith project. That is why I was so enthusiastic to join the project in 2013. Within the vast and complicated artistic heritage of late antiquity, I primarily look at the earliest Christian icons surviving in Rome (6th-8th C), in particular those of the Mother of God, and discuss the pertinence of this material for broader discussion of early Byzantine and Mediterranean culture, icon worship, and the cult of the Virgin. In this, I have to overcome the limits of traditional approaches and scholarly divisions based on geographical differentiations, ideas of religious distinctiveness, and, above all, on stereotypical frameworks most of which came to the fore at a later stage of European history.

In connection with the latter, I was particularly interested to take part in a joint endeavour of the Empires of Faith project, which will result in the publication of a groundbreaking volume on the historiography of the late antique art. For this volume, I have prepared an extensive survey on the rise of Byzantine scholarship and art history in late imperial Russia, scholars of which, before the Revolution, were some of the principal proponents of Byzantium in an international academic environment. Together with other members of the project, I am currently engaged in the preparation of an exhibition at the Ashmolean to be held in Autumn 2017, and am responsible alongside my collaborators, [Dominic Dalglish](#) and [Philippa Adrych](#), for the first section which is dedicated to the transition from Roman polytheistic to Early Christian monotheistic visual culture and the complexities of late antique religious interactions reflected in art.

Selected**publications:**

'Empress, Virgin, Ecclesia. The Icon of Santa Maria in Trastevere in the Early Byzantine Context', *IKON: Journal of Iconographic Studies*, 9 (2016), 109-128

'The Imperial Theotokos: Revealing the Concept of Early Christian Imagery in Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome', *Convivium*, II/2 (2015), 60-81

'The Earliest Images of Maria Regina in Rome and Byzantine Imperial Iconography', *Niš and Byzantium. The Collection of Scientific Works*, VIII (2010), 231-243

'The Artist's Signature in Byzantium. Six Icons by Ioannes Tohabi in Sinai Monastery (11th-12th century)', *Opera Nomina Historiae. Giornale di cultura artistica*, 1 (2009), 77-98

'L'icona acheropita della Vergine di Santa Maria in Trastevere a Roma', *Le arti a confronto con il sacro. Metodi di ricerca e nuove prospettive d'indagine interdisciplinare*, ed. by Valentina Cantone and Silvia Fumian (Padova, 2009), 19-28