

## Director's Note

The Metropolitan Museum is justifiably proud of its exceptional holdings of Byzantine and early medieval art, which constitute the preeminent collection in the United States and one of the world's outstanding assemblages of this material. In recognition of the importance of these holdings, we decided several years ago that a new, greatly enhanced space was necessary for their proper exhibition. The results of our efforts, the Mary and Michael Jaharis Galleries for Byzantine Art, opened in November 2000. The installation—in restored and redesigned Beaux Arts spaces, part of Richard Morris Hunt's architectural plan of 1902—includes an intimate, "cryptlike" gallery under the Grand Staircase, featuring the great brick arches and sloping walls that support the massive granite steps rising above. This area, now housing works from Byzantine Egypt, has been inaccessible to the public since it was built. Adjoining it on the north is a gallery primarily devoted to secular art of the Byzantine and early medieval worlds;

and on the south is a gallery for liturgical art of the Byzantine church and Middle to Late Byzantine secular art. The galleries are the first phase of an extensive project that will eventually encompass every aspect of the holdings of medieval art.

The reinstallation was organized by Peter Barnet, the Michel David-Weill curator in charge; Helen C. Evans, curator; and Melanie Holcomb, assistant curator, in the Department of Medieval Art and The Cloisters. The selection of objects and the texts for this publication, presenting a brief survey of the riches of the new galleries, are by Helen C. Evans, with Melanie Holcomb and Robert Hallman, research associate.

Of course, our plans for these magnificent galleries would never have been realized if it had not been for the extraordinary generosity of Mary and Michael Jaharis, whose deep love of and dedication to Byzantine art and culture made them possible.

Philippe de Montebello, *Director*

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Front cover: *Christ on the Cross, with the Virgin and Saint John*, detail of a box reliquary (see p. 39).  
Back cover: *Personification of Ktisis (or Foundation)*, detail of a floor mosaic (see p. 17)

Unless otherwise noted, all texts are by Helen C. Evans.



The "cryptlike" space under the Grand Staircase, part of the Mary and Michael Jaharis Galleries for Byzantine Art