

## **Marina Vidas. Project: *Trecento* Siense Panel Paintings at the National Gallery of Denmark: Byzantine and Western Traditions**

My stay at the Danish Academy in Athens from July 8- 30, 2024 was very fruitful. It allowed me primarily to study the significant collections of Byzantine jewelry, icons, as well as wall and manuscript painting in Athens. As a result, I was able to complete my forthcoming book "Italian Paintings Featuring Gold at the National Gallery of Denmark: Reflection, Devotion, Experience (c. 1320 – c. 1450)," which is concerned with eleven fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Italian gold background paintings in the collection of the National Gallery of Denmark (Statens Museum for Kunst). My stay in Athens had particular relevance for the contents of four of my essays, namely those concerned with the Master of the Città di Castello's *Madonna and Child*, Ambrogio Lorenzetti's *St. John the Baptist*, and the Master of the Palazzo Venezia Madonna's *St. Victor* and *St. Corona*. All four paintings are detached panels from now dismembered altarpieces and were executed by Siense painters. While in Athens I was able to examine the ways in which the Italian paintings in Copenhagen drew inspiration from works from the Christian East. This can be seen in terms of the use of gold grounds and the palette of pigments, facial features and expressions, clothing and poses, style and symbolism. I was able to find antique and Byzantine examples in Athenian collections, for example, of the types of jewelry worn by St. Corona in the panel by the Master of the Palazzo Venezia Madonna. I am, therefore, more comfortable with arguing in my book that St. Corona's supposed Eastern origins played a role in the way in which she was depicted in Siena.

The Benaki Museum of Greek Culture, The Byzantine and Christian Museum and the National Library of Greece house some of the most important collections of Byzantine art. As an art historian it is essential to see the objects and the paintings in order to gain an understanding of their conditions, quality, employed techniques and styles. Moreover, seeing these works had a very different impact on me in terms of sensory experiences than available reproductions of these paintings (which are often not of high quality). A significant part of my book is devoted to how the medieval beholder might have experienced the paintings at the National Gallery of Denmark and therefore seeing the works in Athens was also relevant in this regard. Additionally, I was able to see and experience a number of Byzantine churches in and around Athens, including Panaghia Gorgoepikis, Nicholas Rangavas, Holy Apostles, and Daphni. Seeing the archaeological sites and museums of antiquities in Athens and its surroundings was the cherry on top of my stay.

In Athens I was able to meet with scholars who reside there. I was particularly grateful to have had the opportunity to talk to Byzantinists and historians of Early Christian art. I am also indebted to my flat mate, the painter Jesus Herrera Martinez, for our interesting conversations and his very insightful comments concerning the antiquities and paintings in Athens that were of interest to both of us.