

PRESS RELEASE
JULY 7, 2008



Georgia – Medieval Monuments An Online Exhibition by the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz

As of July 7, 2008, the photo library of the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz shows a representative selection of the new inventory on medieval art and architecture from Georgia in the online exhibition **Georgia – Medieval Monuments** (<http://expo.khi.fi.it>).

On July 10, at 11 A.M., we cordially invite you to join us for a presentation of the online exhibition **Georgia – Medieval Monuments** and the research project **Medieval Georgia in a Cross-Cultural Perspective** at the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz.

The online exhibition is the result of an international cooperation project between Georgian, German, Swiss, Italian and Israeli scholars, led by Prof. Dr. Gerhard Wolf, director at the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz, Max-Planck-Institut: As part of the research project **Medieval Georgia in a Cross-Cultural Perspective**, the Kunsthistorisches Institut undertook expeditions in 2006 and 2007 to monuments of medieval Georgia together with the George Chubinashvili National Research Centre for Georgian Art History and Heritage Preservation (Tbilisi) and Prof. Dr. Barbara Schellewald from the University of Basel.

The Israeli photographer and artist **Dror Maayan** (Haifa) accompanied the scholars on these expeditions and created an exceptional collection of documentary photographs of Georgian art and culture, representing a culture of more than one thousand years. This photo campaign resulted in more than one thousand photographs which have been added to the catalogue of the photo library of the Kunsthistorisches Institut and can be searched for online in the digital photo library (www.khi.fotothek.org)

The online exhibition **Georgia – Medieval Monuments** shows a total of 90 photographs from this photo campaign:

The virtual tour begins with the province of Kartli, the former kingdom and also the largest province in East Georgia, where King Mirian declared Christianity as the state religion as early as 337. Closely linked with the Christianisation of the country, the **Dschwari Church** (late 6th/early 7th century) in Mtskheta is classed as one of the best-preserved early-Christian churches in Georgia. In the same town is the **Svetitskhoveli Cathedral** (11th century) – this was the burial place of the Georgian kings and remains the largest church in the country to the present day. Alongside the mural paintings in the St. Nicholas Church in Kintsvisi and those in the Vardzia Monastery, the frescoes in the **Timotesubani Monastery** (late 12th/early 13th century, Samtskhe province) are ranked among the most outstanding examples of medieval art in Georgia. The province of Samtskhe is also the location of the impressive complex of the **Monastery City of Vardzia**, which was carved in the rock. The frescoes in the main church, "Dormitio Mariae" (1184-86) survived the earthquake in 1283.

Of special importance is the **Gelati Monastery** (Imareti province): The paintings in the church document the close relationship with the Byzantine Empire, the apse mosaic "Madonna with Child and the Archangels Michael and Gabriel" (1125-30) is one of the few surviving examples of mosaic art in Georgia. Another highlight is the **David Gareji**

monastic centre in the Steppe landscape of East Georgia (Kakheti province): The Udabno Monastery, which was part of the Assyrian establishment (6th century), houses mural paintings from the 11th – 13th centuries, which demonstrably characterised medieval iconography in Georgia.

The photo library of the Kunsthistorisches Institut contains almost 600,000 photographs of Italian art ranging from the Late Antiquity to the Modern Era for academic research purposes. In seeking to open up new perspectives for Italian research and to drive fundamental comparative research in the European region and the Mediterranean region, the photo library is developing new focal points for its collection. To this end, the library is developing "photo islands", concentrated extensions to its inventory, which selectively complement the traditional areas of interest – the collection on medieval Georgian art is the first of these "photo islands".

With the new additions, which form a globally unique documentation of the medieval monuments of Georgia, now available online, the photo library and the research project **Medieval Georgia in a Cross-Cultural Perspective** provide an extended basis for art-historical research in a cross-cultural context.

On **July 10, at 11 A.M.**, we cordially invite you to join us for the **presentation** of the online exhibition "Georgia – Medieval Monuments" and the research project "Medieval Georgia in a Cross-Cultural Perspective" at the **Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz, Via Giuseppe Giusti 38**.

Georgia – Medieval Monuments – an Online Exhibition by the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz – Max-Planck-Institut and the department of director Wolf
Head of the photo library: Costanza Caraffa
Photo campaign: Dror Maayan
Coordination: Almut Goldhahn
Online from July 7, 2008 onwards at <http://expo.khi.fi.it>

Medieval Georgia in a Cross-Cultural Perspective – a research project by the department of director Wolf of the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz
Presentation on July 10, 2008, 11 A.M. at the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz, Via Giuseppe Giusti 38, 50121 Florence.

The next online exhibition by the photo library opens on October 27, 2008 and is devoted to the Casa Vasari in Florence.

More Information:

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Graphical material

Mtskheta, Jvari-Church: View to the West (Photo: Dror Maayan)
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Animals and Birds spew out the Dead Bodies (detail of the Last Judgment), beginning of the 13th century, Timotesubani, Timotesubani Church, Southern Wall of the Western Bay (Photo: Dror Maayan)
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Vardzia Monastery: General View of the Caves (Photo: Dror Maayan)
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The Holy Face, fresco by Master Giorgi, 1184/1186, Vardzia Monastery, Church of the Dormition, Tympanum of the Southern Portal (Photo: Dror Maayan)

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Archangel Gabriel (detail), Mosaic, 12th century (heavily restored in 16th century), Gelati Monastery, Apse of the Catholicon (Photo: Dror Maayan)

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David Gareij, Udabno Monastery: External View of the Refectory with Murals from the 11th and 13th centuries (Photo: Dror Maayan)

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