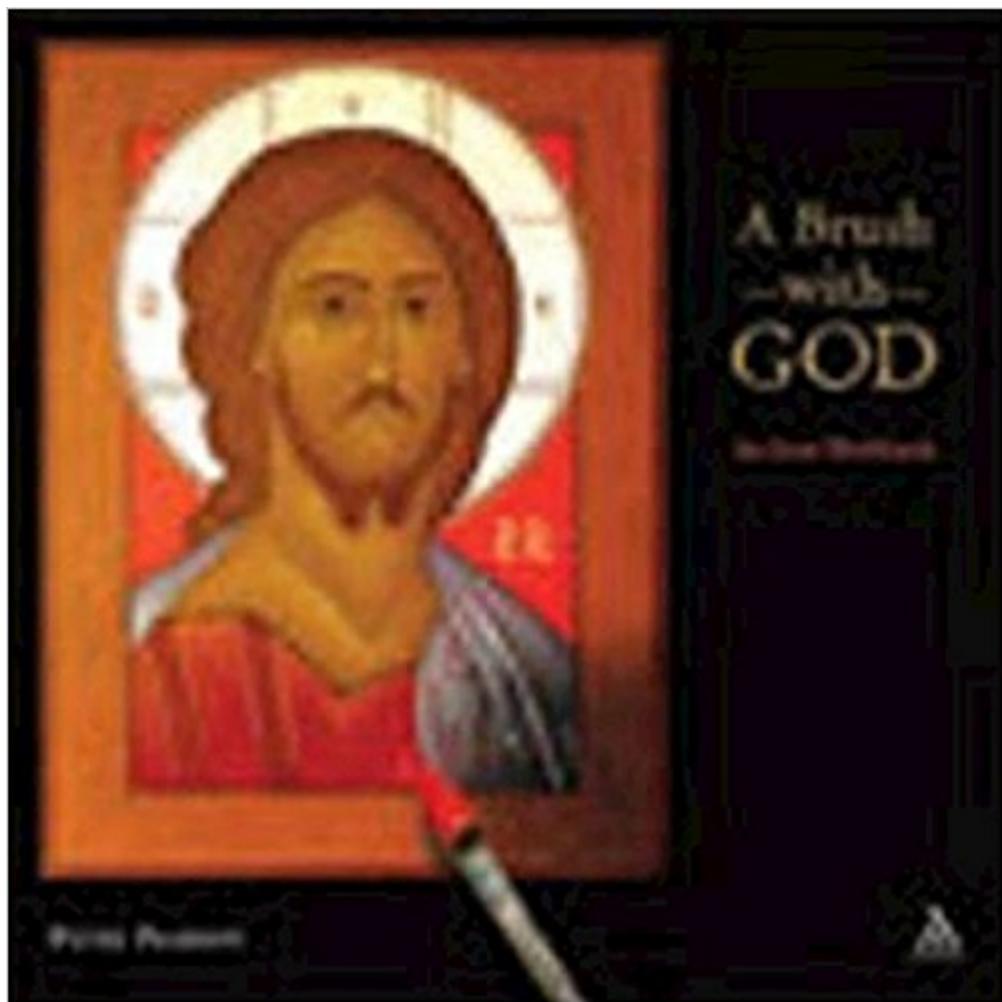


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# A Brush With God: An Icon Workbook



## Synopsis

For more than a thousand years, Eastern Christians have used their hands and hearts to create icons, proclaiming God's reality in a visible and breathtakingly beautiful way. This ancient art is enjoying a renewed interest in the West, as people of faith create icons and use them to meditate on mysteries for which there are no words. *A Brush with God* is a guide to painting icons and using them in prayer. Written with warmth and energy, it describes the history of icons and examines why they have been a spiritual tool for so many centuries. Written from a uniquely Western perspective, the book guides artists from novices to professionals through the process of icon painting, using traditional techniques but employing contemporary materials. Included are eight full-color plates of the artist's icons.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Icon writer (that's fancy church-speak for "painter of icons") Pearson taps into Western Christians' recent interest in icons—but rather than writing yet another introductory book that explains what icons are, when they originated or how to pray with them, Pearson wants to help readers create them. (Well, okay: in the first chapter, Pearson rehearses the history of icons and ruminates about praying with them, but then he gets down to brass tacks.) Chapter two lists the supplies people need to write an icon and explains how to prepare the panels. Pearson then discusses steps

like drawing, applying gold leaf and adding an outer border. After describing the different types of icon styles—Byzantine, Russian, Coptic, contemporary—Pearson walks readers through the steps for making icons of Christ's head and shoulders, the Mother of God and Saint Nicholas. Practical tips abound: avoid "fast drying" varnish, and if readers want to "communicate gold cloth," they should start with an earthy-orange or red base color. An appendix lists shops and Web sites where readers can obtain supplies, and a glossary will help them remember the difference between an iconodule and an iconostasis. Helpful illustrations round out the book. This is a fabulous resource—practical, spiritual and fun. (Oct.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Peter Pearson, a former Benedictine monk, is a priest of the diocese of Bethlehem. He is one of the better known American iconographers. Through his workshops and seminars, as well as the European pilgrimages he leads, he has worked with more than 2000 students.

The first few chapters were engaging and talked about the significance and mystery of icons in both the corporate liturgical realm and that of the heart. Pearson does everything he can to convey to the reader how to prepare for icon writing in the historical context but then sadly, forgoes tradition for modern techniques that are not thoroughly explained for a nervous beginner. I should mention, that I come from the Antiochian Orthodox church and I find a few discrepancies in the historical context, but overall it's firm. Also I just don't see how this can be used effectively. Its lack of details is impractical for both those who want to pursue iconography professionally or even those young children that simply want to learn something new. The book come off as more of a lacking encyclopedia rather than a how to. The details provided are more lacking than even a simple google search would provide in a few clicks. If you want to do this traditionally Orthodox, this isn't the book for you. Yes, some do iconography in other manners, such as mixing small quantities of pigments with linseed oil (which is really just oil paints) on the day of and we also accept printed copies glued onto fiberboard. Does this diminish our experience with God? I hope not. But are we not called to hold fast to the traditions of word and epistle? There is a beauty and joy in traditional icon work and I wish this book grasped that. That said, if Pearson could— I would recommend some serious additions so that children could enjoy it. More pictures including in progress ones, blending techniques, layering, brush work and methods, gesso type and more. For those wanting to do things in the eastern orthodox way, skip this and go for the prosopon DVD series. Also, a great supply list for egg tempera pigments can be found on Betsy porter's website. She also has a lot of great supply links.

As for red clay bole I would use it either premixed or dispersed and added with Titebond hide glue and a drop of honey. Also, the agate burnishers here on are a great deal. Anyhow, this is just my opinion.

I do not paint in acrylic, and I do not follow the rules of Russian iconography. Even so, I use this book. I'm sorry to say it, but the author's work is not my taste. Even so, I use this book. It gives good general instructions in iconography, as well as step-by-step instructions of particular projects. The three projects are Christ's head and shoulders (a somewhat simpler version of what is on the cover), Vladimir Mother of God, and St. Nicholas (not to worry-- he does not look at all like Santa). The projects include a line drawing you can trace and transfer to your board, color names of the paints needed, and maps of the layers of highlights used to give dimension to the figures. I use his book for general information, for the halo template and placement, and especially for the color-mixing recipes because the author likes to keep his colors transparent and does not lighten his colors with white except in the final highlight. He gives a list of supplies you will need, directions for preparing panels, color symbology of icons, and even a project for kids to make their own icon. He thoroughly discusses the spiritual aspects of painting icons and praying with them. I especially enjoyed his thoughts on how praying with the help of icons is not related to idolatry, any more than praying with words is idolatry: "Pictures and words are symbolic representations that help us connect with physical or spiritual reality; they're not the realities to which they point. Why, then, are verbal images so much more worthy than pictorial forms of bearing divine presence?" p. 62 Where there does not seem to be enough information for the student of the traditional icon is in the placement of the figures relative to the positioning grid. I understand Russian icons must fall along particular diagonals. The author suggests students learn about these rules by tracing a print of an old icon. I would have liked for him to say more about how they are designed.

Though I wish I could say I do, I admit that I have little in the way of artistic talent when it comes to painting. Hence I have been reluctant to even consider writing icons. To me, the beautiful thing about the way Peter+ teaches is not only the very approachable manner in which he leads a student, in a step by step manner, to writing an icon, but his emphasis on the contemplative prayer that icon writing actually is. I am very pleased with both of his books on this ancient practice of prayer. Thank you, Peter+ for making this available to those who seek to learn this practice.

A basic overview of how to paint icons using acrylic paint. It is rather threadbare on instructions on

how to prepare a suitable icon board or gold leafing, and does not discuss or provide any overview of the traditional or historical methodologies of iconography and its materials. The book's "how-to" illustrations are in black & white and can be confusing to the uninitiated. However, there are a few reproductions in color of already completed works. For someone looking for a more traditional approach to iconography I would recommend "The Technique of Icon Painting" by Guillem Ramos-Poqui, or "Techniques of Icon and Wall Painting" by Aidan Hart. The 2-disc DVD "The Icon: The Practice of Mind, Hand and Heart" by Vladislav Andrejev is also beautifully presented in its completeness of traditional methods and in discussing the icon's spiritual significance.

Mr Pearson not only instructs the student on the supplies and techniques a future iconographer needs to have to get started but also on the frame of mind a person should strive for when painting Icons. Painting Icons is truly a meditation and prayer process. I found the writing to be easily understood. The instructions were clear. Even if a person is not interested in attempting to paint Icons there is a lot of spiritual content that could apply to anyone in any creative endeavor. I am glad I chose this book as an introduction to the painting of Icons.

I have started taking Icon writing classes

Very general info but well written.

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