Dear Colleagues!

The Institute for World Culture at Moscow State University, the Department of Medieval Studies of the Research University’ High School of Economics, the Russian Academy of Arts, and the Research Centre for Eastern Christian Culture, would like to invite you to join the International Symposium which will be held in Moscow on 24-26 June 2014, dedicated this year to the subject of:

**The Life-Giving Source.**

*Water in the Hierotopy and Iconography of the Christian World*

The deadline for applications is 1 December 2013. The proceedings of the Symposium will be published in a separate volume containing the abstracts of papers given at the Symposium. You should submit your abstract (no more than three pages in total) by 15 March 2014 in Russian or in English. The papers should also be presented in either of these languages.

**Outline of the Symposium’s Research Programme:**

For the first time the Symposium tackles the subject of water as a means of creating sacred spaces, with a focus on the Byzantine-Russian tradition. Nonetheless, Eastern Christian practices will also be considered within broad
historical and geographical context, which may help to illuminate the uniqueness and distinctiveness of the Byzantine approach. The Symposium is multi-and interdisciplinary in nature, embracing scholars with various research interests and academic backgrounds. The Symposium will explore the often overlooked cultural and artistic aspects of sacred water, as well as scrutinising the – as yet – under developed methodology of the subject in modern cultural history. The Symposium is the result of many years of continuous research, dedicated to the creation of sacred spaces as a distinct form of artistic and spiritual creativity. Within the framework of this research project, a number of international symposia have been held and books published, e.g. Hierotopy. The Creation of Sacred Spaces in Byzantium and Russia, Moscow, 2006; Hierotopy. Comparative Studies, Moscow, 2008; New Jerusalems. Hierotopy and Iconography of Sacred Spaces, Moscow 2009; Spatial Icons. Performativity in Byzantium and Russia, Moscow, 2011. The most recent collection, Hierotopy of Light and Fire in the Culture of the Byzantine World, is forthcoming.

The hierotopic approach, as an auxiliary aid to research, has not only offered the opportunity to look afresh at many “customary” phenomena, but also to substantially expand the field of the historical studies. It is noteworthy that, in the absence of the hierotopic vision which evades positivist classification, whole aspects of the creative process were ignored by scholarship, neither analysed nor even described. Such a substantial phenomenon as sacred water, for instance, has fallen outside the scope of traditional fields of study. At the same time, we know from written sources just how significant the ritual use of water was in annual and daily services, as well as in the private life of every Christian. Sacred concepts related to the general idea of the Life-Giving Source influenced perception of ecclesiastical space in its entirety, and of its most significant liturgical elements. The veneration of holy springs, an integral part of medieval pilgrimage which still continues in present religious practices, shaped sacred landscapes. Water seems one of the most important and barely scrutinised themes in Christian iconography. One may find its reflections in the images of personifications, miraculous icons and visual metaphors.
Topics for discussion and research could include:

1. Philosophical-theological concepts of the sacred nature of water.
2. Water in ritual and liturgical practice.
3. Water as an instrument of hierotopic creativity.
4. ‘Living and dead’ water in architectural space (baptisteries, fountains, agiasma and others).
5. Water imagery in the symbolic structures and decorations of the Christian church.
6. Personifications and the iconography of water in Christian art.
7. The water symbolism of miraculous icons.
8. Sacred water in miracle-stories and legends.
9. Holy springs, pilgrimage and the creation of sacred spaces.
10. Performative aspects of sacred water.
11. Notions and terminology related to holy water.
12. Social and economical aspects of ‘holy water’.

Chair of the Symposium Committee

Alexei Lidov