

## **Vocabulary List—Byzantine and Early Christian art**

ambulatory: the passage or walkway around the apse in a church.

appropriation: the practice of taking ideas or objects from another source for a new work of art.

apse: a large, semicircular and usually vaulted niche. In a Christian church, it usually contains the altar.

baptismal font: a large, open vessel or tank, usually of stone, containing water for the Christian rite of baptism.

baptistry: a building used for the Christian ritual of baptism, traditionally having a central plan.

catacomb: an underground burial ground consisting of tunnels on different levels, having niches for urns or sarcophagi.

central-plan building: any structure designed with a primary central space.

clerestory: the topmost zone of a wall with windows in a basilica extending above the roof of the side aisles. Provides direct light into the nave.

codex: a group of manuscript pages held together by stitching or other binding on one side.

crossing: the part of a cross-shaped (cruciform) church where the nave and the transept meet, often marked on the exterior by a tower or a dome.

Deesis: in Byzantine art, the representation of Christ flanked by the Virgin Mary and St. John the Baptist.

exedra (pl. exedrae): a semi-circular niche, often used as decoration or to form interior space.

façade: the face or front wall of a building.

icon: an image representing a sacred figure or event, found most often in the Byzantine and Orthodox Churches. Icons are believed to have miraculous powers and are venerated.

iconoclasm: the destruction of images, especially icons and religious art, caused by differing beliefs about the power, meaning, function or purpose of imagery in religion.

mandorla: Light encircling or emanating from the figure of a sacred person.

monastery: the buildings housing a community of men (monks) living under religious vows.

Pantokrator: Christ as King of the Universe, represented holding a book and giving a blessing.

pendentive: the concave, triangular section of a wall that forms the transition between a square space and the circular base of a dome.

pier: a multi-storied masonry support, often made of concrete, typically square or rectangular shaped and capable of carrying very heavy architectural loads.

squinch: an arch or lintel built across the upper corners of a square space, allowing a circular dome to be securely set above the walls.

Theotokos: in Byzantine art, the Virgin Mary as mother of God.

typology: in Christian iconography, a system of matching Old Testament figures and events and even some classical and other secular sources to New Testament counterparts to which they were seen as prefigurements.