

**Title:** Mikhail Vrubel's Demon Series and the Reflection of Icon Painting: Between Orthodox Design and Religious Aestheticism  
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The demon series of the painter Mikhail Vrubel (1856–1910) is known as the most famous artwork of Russian symbolism at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Vrubel was inspired by the poem “Demon” (1841) from the writer and poet Mikhail Lermontov, for whom he also illustrated his poem in 1890/91. Vrubel transferred the so-called mythopoetic symbols from the narrative text form to symbolist motifs. By doing so, Vrubel reflected in his demon paintings “Demon Seated” (1890), “Flying Demon” (1899), and “Falling Demon” (1902) on the eschatological and prophetic world-view, which was formulated in the Russian religious philosophy between 1850–1910 (e.g. Nikolaj Berdjajev, Pavel Florenskij) and on the theory of Russian symbolism (e.g. Vladimir Solov'ev, Vjačeslav Ivanov, Andrej Beljy). This fact has often been overlooked by western art historical research on Vrubel. The translation of the western traditional demon type by Vrubel into a so-called “anti-demon” can be seen in his invention of a symbolist pictorial language, in his created synthesis of defined and undefined forms, his color-range, as well as in his treatment of shades. In so doing he re-formulated the romantically western demontype. This made him a *re-inventor* of the icon painting tradition. However, this occurred not in his icon paintings themselves, but, on the contrary, by his individualized demon motifs. This antithetical relation between Vrubel's icons and his demon paintings is accounted for by his aesthetic concept of spiritual penetration of forms.