The word rushnyk derives from ruka, “hand,” and while it can refer to an ordinary towel, the ceremonial rushnyk is distinct in its ornamentation and its importance. Their typical placement over icons and on crosses over graves and at the sites of holy wells indicates their sacred status. The belief in the protective strength and sacred nature of these textiles is tremendously ancient. The talismanic properties of the rushnyk are reinforced by woven or embroidered motifs at each end.

In almost any Ukrainian home, the family icons—and, more recently, family photographs—would be draped with rushnyky. They are believed to offer protection to family, home and village. When honored guests are greeted, bread and salt are presented on outstretched hands that are covered with a rushnyk. Rushnyky are used in binding rituals, invoke fertility, and function as an opening to the sacred realm. The cloths appear in all family rituals, infants are wrapped in them at birth and they play a significant role in betrothal and wedding ceremonies. Remarkably, even after the turmoil of the twentieth and twenty first centuries the use of rushnyky is still an integral part of Ukrainian culture.
Flexible booking schedule.

**Objects:** 160 rushnyky and related artifacts

**Text:** Extended wall panels and individual object labels delivered electronically

**Supplemental materials:** Docent/interpreter training packet, family guide, and sample press release delivered electronically

**Space Requirements:** 150 linear feet, some items require cases (either floor or wall mounted)

**Fee:** $5,000 for flexible booking, not including shipping or insurance.

**Programs:** Museum staff are available for staff/volunteer training, lectures, gallery talks, and other programming. Additional fees, including travel costs. Availability depends on a mutually agreeable schedule.

**USA Security:** A facilities report and certificate of insurance are required from each venue. Objects loaned must be displayed in secured, environmentally safe cases in locations regularly patrolled by security personnel. Mounted figures or other objects that are difficult to case may be displayed in otherwise suitable areas, provided that adequate security measures are taken. During closed hours, security by guard or electronic devices is required.

**Contact:**
Laura Garrity-Arquitt, Registrar
Museum of Russian Icons
203 Union Street
Clinton, MA 01510 USA
lgarrity@museumofrussianicons.org