

THE CREATION OF NEW METAPHORS  
OUT OF SYMBOLS FROM THE PAST

PROBLEM IN LIEU OF THESIS

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

My work has always been autobiographical. At the beginning of graduate school, I started using the female figure as a symbol of the "self" in order to express a process of self-investigation through the use of color and space relationships.

Shortly after that, I realized the need to explore and include, with my imagery, references to influences from my own culture. I began to combine the female figure, as a symbol of the self in the present, with imagery from my Greek cultural background, as metaphors for my past. These metaphors varied from ancient Greek art imagery, such as Minoan Snake Priestesses and archaic Caryatids, to mathematical equations and geometrical schemata that invoked the Golden Mean. My work varied from oil paintings on stretched and non-stretched canvas to drawings with paint sticks that developed from monotypes that were mainly in black and white motifs.

Through this process of stating the present and exploring the past, I came to realize that my need to

identify with my earlier beginnings was not merely reference to my own culture for the sake of a linear or historical progress of my autobiography. Indeed, this was an analogy to my need for identification with that part of the self that is known in a subconscious way and which becomes known in a conscious way only through symbol and metaphor. Although my referencing Greek imagery was indicative of separation from my home and of a need to return to my earlier beginnings, it was also suggestive of something else -- a separation from the true self and a yearning for return to a different beginning, a spiritual one. This reference alluded to the core of the word "religion," which is derived from the Latin religio or religare, meaning returning or reconnecting to the beginning, a spiritual beginning.

In order to focus upon and intensify this idea, I started searching for new figures from my own culture. I began researching Orthodox Greek and Russian iconography. While I was home in Greece this past summer, I began exploring old churches that were undergoing restoration in an effort to discover imagery that I might possibly incorporate in my work. Furthermore, I contacted some of my Greek artist friends and discovered that they were also using some orthodox iconography in their work. Some of them were involved in the restoration of old icons at the Benakion Museum in Athens and restoration of frescoes in some of the

old churches. With them I visited the restoration section of the museum and viewed their recordings and findings of the before, during, and after images. I was enchanted. The look of fragmentation and the feeling of rediscovery appealed to me. The physical appearance and the implications and connotations of the process of restoration appeared to be analogous to my concern with self-investigation.

When I returned to the States, I entered my studio eager to discover how I could bring all of this exciting information into my art work. I began working on large pieces of non-stretched canvas and, using fragments of religious Greek iconography, I attempted to reproduce some of the feeling borne by the frescoes and icons in the old Greek churches.

I felt that the physicality of the surface was very important. I started mixing wax with the oils for a rich surface which I could scratch in order to cover and/or reveal an underpainted image, or hint toward a pre-existing image under what would be the finished surface. I moved away from my earlier black-and-white scheme by combining contemporary fluorescent magenta and cobalt blue as a contemporary reference, and gold oil stick and gold leaf as a gesture toward the Byzantine past.

I saw the need to include some reference to the burning candles as offerings in front of the icons; thus, the idea of including a three-dimensional object, trays, was introduced. I also took into consideration retaining some of the imagery of ancient Greek culture that I had used in my past works, Caryatids, figures on vessels, etc., and the Golden Mean which seemed to be the most appropriate touchstone for my work.

For a year I have tried to appropriate and manipulate imagery from Greek and Russian icons in order to bring past and present together, and as a result of these efforts I have produced a successful body of paintings on large non-stretched canvas. Recently I have begun to experiment with monotypes and mixed media on small-sized paper. The result of the experiment led to binding these monotypes into a small book.

The formal, conceptual, and technical relationships between the book and the paintings have created an opportunity in which valuable possibilities could be investigated on a comparative basis.

#### Statement of the Problem

In order to become more aware of valuable characteristics that may be unique to the paintings and/or the books, I

proposed to execute a body of work consisting of four sets, each set containing one painting and one book. I continued using religious icons as subject matter and the motif of the layered pentimento of the fresco as a metaphor for self-investigation.

With that purpose in mind, I addressed the following questions:

1. Does the difference in size and form of the books and the painting change the content of the work, and how?
2. Does the difference in media and technique affect the content and/or the imagery of the books and the paintings, and how?
3. Which body of work is more successful, and why?

#### Methodology

I resolved these questions by creating a body of four sets of works. Each set consisted of a book in mixed media, and one painting on non-stretched canvas. Keeping in mind my intention to develop a resonant visual relationship between book and painting, I created imagery within each set that echoed back and forth between the individual works. Adhering



to the task of my thesis problem -- to lay out a broad, comparative overview that described the discrete bodies of work (paintings and books), and also to address the more personal one-on-one interrelationships between each book and painting within each set -- I have accordingly explored both the broader and the more specific questions of relationships in my discussion of the works.

During the compositional process of the work, I kept a journal and also used a recorder to document my findings.

## CHAPTER II

### DESCRIPTION OF THE WORK

*Byzantine Tones p* (p = painting) and *Byzantine Tones b* (b = book) comprise the first painting and book set. *Byzantine Tones p* is a large oil painting on a 76" X 32" non-stretched canvas. The shape of the painting is the result of sewing two pieces of canvas together. The seam between the two pieces acts as a common horizontal line that keeps the pieces together in order to form a larger vertical piece, and at the same time, it acts as a separation within the whole piece that divides the canvas in an oblong shape in the upper half and a square shape in the lower half. The whole surface of the piece has been covered with a thick layer of black oil paint mixed with wax. The manipulation of the surface is such that the black acts as field in some areas, whereas it also acts as figure in others.

The image that appears from the top of the canvas's oblong shape is that of two hands merging and releasing a white dove that with outspread wings appears to be flying downward. The white hands that merge out of the magenta sleeves are stylized in the manner of Byzantine iconography.

The images that appear in the lower part of the upper shape are those of a square, a triangle, and a circle placed in a horizontal line to counteract the vertical movement of the dove. The geometric shapes are rendered in white line laying flat on top of the black field, and some magenta has been placed within the triangle.

The white line of the geometric shapes and the magenta within the triangle echo the colors that appear in the sleeves, hands, and dove on the very top of the painting. This repetition acts as a vehicle that carries the eye back and forth in a vertical movement. Another unifying element of repetition that connects upper and lower halves is the movement of the gold color that appears to pour out of the sleeves and hands to surround the dove and spill downward through the black field where it then spreads into the square shape at the bottom of the canvas.

On the square lower part of the canvas, the image is that of three holy men shaped in white outline on top of the black field. Here the black acts as both figure and field. The crowded overlapping grouping and the linearity of the three holy men are imitative of the stylized manner of Byzantine iconography. However, the isocephalic Byzantine arrangement of the figures is overthrown by the placement of the middle holy man, dropped to a lower position, and who,

with his head tilted back and eyes gazing upward, extends a line that falls on the same implied vertical axis where the dove and the triangle are aligned. His gaze on that vertical axis creates an upward movement that passes through the triangle whose point lifts the movement higher, thus carrying it to the dove which, in turn, forces the movement back downward to the holy man's eyes. Thus a continual two-way vertical movement is created and suggests an interchange between upper and lower halves, between sender and receiver. In addition, the hand of the middle holy man enters the canvas from the lower edge in a parallel but opposite direction than that of the hands entering down from the top half of the canvas. Equivalent but opposite gestural meaning is effected by having the disembodied hands above open toward the viewer in a giving and releasing gesture while the hand of the holy man at the bottom is turned toward his chest in an accepting and gathering motion.

Some areas of the nimbi of the holy men are done in gold leaf, black oil mixed with wax, and gold oil stick, to evoke a surface reminiscent of old weathered icons or church frescoes whose images are composed of a combination of the still surviving original imagery and random black spaces where that imagery has been destroyed.

The format of *Byzantine Tones b* is not that of a conventional book, but of panels joined together to make a four-section screen or altarpiece. When closed, it is 14.75" X 5.5" x 2", and when opened it is 14.75" X 22". Each page, or panel, has been constructed from wood, paper, and plexiglass. The images appear on the paper which is sandwiched between wood and plexiglass and fastened with metal screws. The panels are joined by brass hinges. The backs of all the panels are covered in gold leaf. The first and last panels take the shape of the Gothic arch, and the second and third panels are in the shape of the round arch.

Printmaking techniques, mainly monotypes on gold and silver paper, have been used to produce the images on pages. Each page is divided into two equal gold and silver squares. The image of the hands and the dove on the upper gold square of the book's first page is a repetition of the image found in the upper part of the painting. The image of the holy man in the lower square of the last page is a repetition of the image found in the lower half of the painting. The square, triangle, and circle that appear in the middle of the painting are repeated on the top of the third panel in the black surface of its round arch. The silver squares in the book act as a vehicle to bear the written text.

Equivalent and contrasting elements of movement are

shared between the painting and the book. The vertical line of the painting is repeated in the vertical placement of the squares in the book, and that movement is counterpointed by the horizontal textual lines of the book and the sequencing of its panels. Additionally, the images, text, and sequencing of the panels creates an implied horizontal force through the unfolding narrative of the book. Thus the combined movements of horizontality creates a unifying and cohesive effect.

Other similarities and differences that link painting and book arise out of the imagery, the use of color and gold leaf, and the manipulation of the surface. The written text, acting as an element of form and content in the book, does not appear in the painting. Differences in size and form in the works, as well as in media and technique, have generated mutually exclusive content and imagery. In other words, content is integrally affected by form. The small scale of the book and its three-dimensional format -- the fact that it can be handled -- creates an intimate effect, whereas the larger scale of the painting whose two-dimensionality requires its placement on a wall, creates a physical distance between viewer and painting. Furthermore, while the painting is experienced through the eyes, the book is experienced both through the eyes and hands. The book's form, at variance with the painting, implies an expectation

of text, and the text itself and the element of language make the book's content even more distinct from that of the painting. Both painting and book have rich surfaces in common. The wrinkles of the canvas, the gold leafing, and the scratches on the surface of the painting create an actual texture that can be felt, while the manipulation of materials and techniques applied to the inked surface of the book create an implied texture that can be seen and read but not felt. Both textures, both actual and implied, are very successful in their richness.

Another aspect of the book that is successful is its format. Although it can be opened, read, and closed as any conventional book can be, it is also an object d'art whose bi-polar format of Gothic and round arches, suggesting monumental architectural, and whose small size, suggesting intimacy and preciousness, create a productive tension.

The idea for the second painting and book set is based upon an icon of *The Dream of the Magi*. For *Angel's Critique on a Child's Painting* p, 36" X 72", two pieces of canvas have been sewn together to create a two-panel painting. On the left panel of the painting the three magi have been replaced with three sleeping children. In the prototypical icon of *The Dream of the Magi*, the angel is pointing at the star of Bethlehem which, according to the narrative, will

lead the magi to the nativity scene. In the painting the star is replaced by a round arch that acts as a gateway to the right panel where, instead of a nativity scene, there is a geometrical representation of the Golden Mean and a drawing of a square house with a tree and a child standing at the doorway. The drawing is done in a childlike style, attempting to stay within the lines of a simple white outline drawing. The square can be read both as a house that evokes the naivete of a child's drawing, and as a geometric shape that summons forth the complexity of the Golden Mean.

The opening narrative of the painting starts out in the left panel at the point where the angel touches the child's hand. The story continues to build as the eye moves through the right hand of the angel, through his body, and emerges from the angel's left hand which points at the arch. From the arch, dotted lines carry the movement into the geometrical shapes of the right panel. This is a pivotal point. If the square is read simply as a pure geometrical shape, the viewer's eye will reverse direction and backtrack over the dotted lines, back to the left-hand panel where it returns to its starting point. If the square is read as a childlike drawing of a house, then the eye will continue forward, out the door of the house, and down along the river that goes on flowing and pulling the viewer's eye beyond the edge of the painting, thus breaking the tension of the back-



and-forth movement between the two panels, and providing relief outside the canvas.

Therefore, depending upon which point of reference the viewer chooses, whether the square is a pure shape or a symbol for a house, the square raises the question of what is simple and what is complex. In other words, the square maintains both its basic integrity of shape but also produces a complex ambiguity. This fluctuating movement on the referential and connotative levels of meaning is analogous to the back-and-forth movement of the eye in reading the painting as a whole.

*Angel's Critique on a Child's Drawing b* is a square book of four pages, measuring 7.25" X 7.25" X 1/4". Back and front covers are made up of small, square, gold pieces of paper glued on BFK paper. The book is bound in square stitching by metallic gold thread, reminiscent of Japanese book-binding techniques. This gives the book a delicate and ornamental quality. At the end of the stitching, at the bottom left corner of the book, two pieces of thread hang with a tassel attached to each piece. Stitching and tassel intensify and enhance the book's quality as a precious object. Each page of the book is composed of hand-made paper, which evokes the feel of the organic.

The image on the first page is the same round arch that the angel is pointing at in the painting. The arch is rendered in metallic gold line against a square black field. The technique used combines that of monotype and drawing. The crispness of the black monotype square creates a nice contrast against the softer-looking deckled edges of the hand-made paper.

What appears on the second page is the image of the three sleeping children, which, while similar to that of the painting, is reversed. It is a monotype with black ink on a 3" X 3" piece of gold paper, which, in turn, is glued on the lower right side of the page. The layer of ink on the surface has been diluted with turpentine and scratched to reveal the layer of gold beneath it. The effect is that of a delicate, small drawing of three children sleeping in an uncomfortable, stacked position.

The third page is composed of four 3" X 3" pieces of gold paper that creates a large gold surface, which, again, has been scratched. The black ink that has been applied on the gold and then wiped off, remains in the crevices. This process has created a scuffed-up, deteriorated surface. The drawing on this surface looks almost like graffiti on a crumbling gold wall, similar to that of the childlike drawing in the painting, mingled in with the geometry of the

Golden Mean. But the geometry becomes subordinate to the child's drawing. In the painting, the geometry and the child compete, but in the book the naive drawing of child wins out over preciousness of the gold's effect and the complex geometry based on the Golden Mean. This is the result of media and technique. In the book the images of the child and the Golden Mean have been approached through the technique of drawing, and that technique overpowers the geometry. In the painting, the power of linear geometry in the form of straight and broken lines overpowers the freer drawing.

The fourth and final page of the book is a monotype of the angel that appears on the left panel of the painting. But here its image is reversed and has been rendered in white and gold on a black square field. The technique and the materials here have produced the angel's form in a luminous and fluid fashion. He appears to be an ethereal figure caught in a moment of motion. Compared to this angel, the angel of the painting appears static and grounded in the ephemeral world. It is the thick white paint mixed with wax that creates a turgid texture describing a heavy, opaque body obviously affected by gravity.

The round arch of the first page functions as an entry to the rest of the book, and the angel of the last page, by pointing to the left, suggests re-entry to the book from

right to left. As in the painting, the book also deals with a narrative that moves from left to right with the implication that this direction could be reversed. According to Carl G. Jung, in *Psyche and Symbol*, the movement from left to right is attached to the intellectual or conscious mode of cognition, while the movement from right to left suggests the intuitive or subconscious mode of perception. All this is taking place within the square shape of the book, which represents balance between the analytic mode (rational) and the synthetic mode (intuitive) of human functioning. The whole book has been formally constructed with a square as the basic and decisive element. Thus these directions and shapes give the book a psychological dimension that mirrors the underlying process of self-investigation.

Although the painting and book share similar imagery, that imagery changes from one to the other because of media, technique, and scale. Thus the changes which have brought about a difference in context, but not in basic content, have created successful works within their separate individual settings. At first when I was comparing the two works, I was confronted with a situation in which I was looking at a painting whose imagery could be perceived and grasped wholly and at once. In the book, I could see nothing beyond the cover's surface and the technique of the binding.

Regardless of the fact that I was aware of the images in the book, I saw the book as an object that could not compete image-wise with the painting. Once I started opening the pages and establishing an intimate relationship with the book, I found each page to be very involving in form and content. Each page could be seen as a narrative of its own, as well as a part of the larger ongoing narrative. The form of the book involves two elements that do not exist in the painting, time and memory. Because of its form, the painting is available to the viewer all at once, but because of the form of the book, it and its narrative require sequential timing and the active memory of the viewer which must be brought forward through time. Because of the new elements of time and memory, interest and complexity were added to the book, and thus I felt that the work was successful.

The third set of the work consists of *Phoebe b* and *Phoebe p* (*p* was executed after the book). The book, 6" X 9.5" X 1/4" in a vertical format, is bound in gold leaf cover and held together by double stitching of gold thread. An 8.5" X 1/8" X 1/8" hollow brass rod runs through the stitching. The inclusion of the brass rod incorporated a three-dimensional object on a flat surface, and also was meant, conceptually, as a reference to scroll manuscripts bound by rods. The book consists of five pages, each of which contains a gold and silver leaf square along with written text. Images appear on

the first, fourth, and fifth pages. The gold and silver surfaces of the five pages have been scratched and then rubbed with black ink to create an effect of deterioration. In fact, to enhance the effect of viewing an old manuscript, some of the text disappears into the black cracks in the gold and silver leaf. Contrapuntally, here a contemporary text unfolds on the surface, a text that makes reference within itself to the old through its fixed form, domains of imagery, and argument. Thus the object d'art and the text interrelate and enhance one another.

The image that appears on the bottom of the first page is a black ink monotype on gold leaf. Through an additive and subtractive process, the image appears as a drawing of an angel's face in black and gold, with nimbus around the head and feathers behind the nimbus to suggest wings. The movement of the angel, who appears to be moving from right to left, ties in with the narrative on the fourth page which reads: "you grow wings that carry you only to the west."

The second image, which appears on the top of the fourth page, is a geometric shape composed of a triangle within a square surrounded by a circle. The drawing is on a silver leaf surface which has been treated with gold, silver, copper, and black printmaking inks in an additive and subtractive process. The image makes a reference to the text

that appears on the bottom portion of the same page and ties in with the words "perceiving life through geometry."

The third image of the book, which appears on the fifth and final page, is a linear stylized drawing of a man with butterfly wings. The drawing is done in black ink on a gold surface that has been scratched and then rubbed with black and magenta printmaking inks. The image makes a reference to the narrative about a man and flight.

In terms of the compositional process of the writing, I was at first very skeptical about presenting a text in English. I had been keeping a journal in Greek, but when I attempted to translate it into English, I found some of the ideas and power of the original language got lost in translation. Therefore, I began writing directly in English which I feel produced a more successful text.

The narrative and symbolic relationship between the three images and the text is symbiotic and hierarchical. One cannot infer the textual narrative by looking at the images, but rather the reverse is true; one must read the text to fill in the narrative of the images. Another entwining component of the mixed media is that the squares containing text can be considered in terms of both writing and visual forms, an effect created by the materials and techniques

used whereby the manipulated surface creates an interaction between writing and surface, one that echoes the balance and parallel equivalency between drawing and surface.

*Phoebe p* completes, complements, and was pressured into being by *Phoebe b*. The painting is on a 27" X 54" non-stretched canvas. Two pieces of canvas have been sewn together and the resultant seam acts as both a medial, vertical connecting and dividing line. Reflecting the pages of *Phoebe b*, the painting is composed of two equal squares, only the squares in the painting have been arranged horizontally, whereas the squares of the book have been arranged vertically.

The left panel of the canvas is a gold square. The intention here was to create a surface with painting media and techniques that would resemble the surface of the squares in the book. Working again in an additive and subtractive compositional process, I created layers with various paints mixed with wax. Using an admixture of gold, black, copper, gold stick, and copper granules mixed in gold paint, I proceeded to scratch and scrape the surface. These processes and materials were then extended to the right-side panel where silver served as the main vehicle. The painting's surface resembles that of the book; in fact, the preparation of the painting's surface was so involving that



I thought of it as painting and thus felt that the placement of images here would be an organic extension of the surface's processing.

After working on the painting's surface, I put it aside for a time so that I could gain some aesthetic distance from it and figure out how to proceed. I went back to the book, looking for other potential relationships between book and painting. I liked the images in the book and I liked the intimate effect created by their small size. How could these images be transferred onto the painting and in what form? Was it necessary to continue to use only paint in the painting? After pondering this, I decided to use mixed media, and reproduced the geometric image of the fourth page of the book on the silver square on the right side of the canvas. The image was enlarged to cover a 27" X 27" area, and it was done in paint, paint sticks, and oil crayons. The change in scale, media, and technique transformed the image so that it did not appear as crisp and immediate as it did in the book. However, the geometric form, as it appears in the painting, produced a rich, tactile, and complex surface which feels appropriate to the painting.

Again, using mixed media, I chose the image of the man with butterfly wings on the last page of the book, using the same process, materials, techniques, and scale, and then

glued it onto the silver square of the painting. I aligned it with the extended vertical and horizontal of the square on the upper left side where square and circle meet. Consequently, the image seemed lost in the painting because of its small 3" X 3" size. I decided to intensify and bring more focus to the image by employing color and media that did not appear elsewhere on the canvas. Since I had used metal on the cover of the book, I chose metal for my media in the painting to solve my problem of imbalance. And since magenta appears in the image, I chose a magenta-colored metal. I anodized a small 2" X 3.5" X 1/4" aluminum tray in magenta, and placed it underneath the image of the man with butterfly wings. Immediately, more attention was brought to the tray and then to the image above it. The geometric shape that had previously outbalanced the image settled into a quieter and more balanced relationship with it. The tray provided a horizontal segment upon which the eye could rest and could then proceed on to explore the very small image above it.

Continuing the process of transferring images between the works, I appropriated the image of the angel from the first page of the book for the left square of the canvas. I used the same technique of monotype in black and gold ink, kept the size of the angel image intact, but changed some of the materials. Instead of a 3" X 3" gold square surface, I used

a 7" X 7" light brown, hand-made paper and a black square (residing in the center of the gold panel of the painting) that is slightly larger than the surface on which the image appears in the book. The square echoes the larger square shape upon which it's been placed, and its gold and black colors reference the gold and black painted surface. The fact that it is a square within a square intensifies the principle of overall formal structure that the book and painting share.

Regarding the success of the works in terms of addressing their aesthetic achievements in relation to their formal solutions, I feel that *Phoebe p*, because it came as somewhat of an afterthought, is less successful, more of a formal exercise in transference of techniques and approaches than a work of art. Because its meaning stops at the boundary of formal concerns, its form has become its content. The book's meaning, however, emerges from the confluence of form, imagery, and text, and creates an allegorical narrative rich in tropes that reference the past through its precious metal surfaces and the present through its contemporary visual appearance and style of language.

*Sacra Conversazione p*, part of the fourth set, is a 56" X 44" painting on a non-stretched surface. Seven inches from the top, a 3.5" X 44" piece of gessoed canvas has been sewn

on the painting. The narrow strip of canvas is attached only at its top horizontal side, and the rest hangs loose over the painting. The strip has been burned in four places, creating the illusion that smokey candles have been burning in front of it. A 3.5" X 4" X 2" anodized aluminum tray in magenta hangs below each smoke stain, a reference to the perpetually burning candles in front of icons in the Greek church.

The entire surface of the canvas below the aluminum trays has been painted in cobalt blue mixed with black. The majority of the canvas is occupied by the image of an angel whose head, torso, and hand have been drawn in white oil crayon. The nimbus around the head has been painted mainly in gold stick, allowing some of the blue underpaint to come through. The left wing has been layered in white oil mixed with wax. The right wing has been drawn in white oil stick, and some of the feathers have been shaped loosely, allowing a lot of the blue underpaint to be seen. The resulting texture is meant to reference the perntimento effect of old frescoes. The field above and behind the angel has been painted in black, gold, and copper oils mixed with wax.

A square has been drawn in magenta to encompass the head and most of the angel's nimbus. Here, again, I am playing with the geometric forms of the square, the circle, and the

triangle. The nimbus forms the circle, and the triangle is implied within the square by the shape of the space that the head and shoulders occupy.

In an effort to create an interaction between viewer and painting, the angel, his wings spread, stands in the middle of the canvas, smiles an archaic smile and stares at the viewer. His right hand is raised to his chest and his palm is turned toward the viewer in a gesture that suggests either an attempt to touch or to ward off. This is the first painting in this body of work that implies some sort of interaction between the viewer and viewed. Contrary to the convention of the distracted, meditative distance of the figures in Greek iconography, which precludes interaction between the viewer and viewed, this reverse manipulation and paraphrase of the Byzantine style acknowledges and thus empowers the viewer as a participant in the work of art.

A major successful aspect of the painting lies in its complementary juxtaposition of old and new: the trays and smoked canvas, and the fifteenth-century title of work, *Sacra Conversazione*, invoke the saints of past epoches who through the intercourse of eye contact bring older allusions forward to the contemporary, which is effected by the geometric shapes, magenta color, and that implied presence of an interactive audience.

The concept of *Sacra Conversazione b* emerged from an experiment in mixed media, especially anodized aluminum for *Phoebe p* and *Sacra Conversazione p*. Reaching back to the *Evangelium* in the Greek Orthodox church, a large, heavy book bound in silver or gold, I decided to include metal material in the *Sacra Conversazione*. At first, in order to echo the cover of the *Evangelium* artifact, I decided to present the cover of the book without contents. But since the very form of a book generates the idea of text, I decided to maintain a productive tension between these two concepts by including some writing on the inside cover of the book.

The cover of the book is 7.5" X 5.5" X 1/4". The external leaf of the front cover is a 7.5" X 5.5" piece of anodized aluminum in magenta. The metal has been chased and reposed to form a plain border in shallow relief consisting of two parallel lines running alongside the edges of the metal surface. The aluminum leaf paraphrases the gold or silver of the *Evangelium* and the raised border paraphrases the shallow relief of the religious text. By appropriating formal elements from an old symbol and paraphrasing its content, I have compounded a new metaphor from the admixture of old form and new text.

A square 1/2" X 1/2" section has been cut out from the metal in the center of the upper half of the cover. This

square makes a reference to the square containing the angel's face and nimbus in *Sacra Conversazione* p. The open square in the cover acts as a window that reveals the image of angel and nimbus placed behind it. The image has been reversed and downscaled from that of the canvas so that it has lost some of its detail. Because of this, the strong interaction of eye contact that exists between viewer and viewed with the painting is diminished in the book, and since the book's image is merely a fragment of the original image in the painting, there is a diminished visual interaction between book and audience. On the other hand, because the book can be physically held, there is a new and more intimate level of feeling established. Thus both works offer interaction, but because of their varied formal natures, the interaction is manifested in different forms. The similarities and differences in media, form, materials, and techniques of the painting and book create a nice interplay within the set. The transition from the aluminum trays of the painting to the aluminum cover of book was made smoother by having them share the same color, by both works suggesting three-dimensionality, and by their sharing similar content.

After the general form of the book was completed, I had an expectation of text either in the form of writing or imagery. I placed a piece of 3.5" X 5.5" gold leaf on the

blue aluminum of the inside covers which provided a surface for the text. My impulse here was to place the contemporary against the past. The past had already been translated into being by using the angel and the gold as references to Greek iconography, and the present was evoked with the use of contemporary metals and methods. Now I had to locate a text that would mirror and sum up this polar conception.

I found an appropriate text through my collaboration with the poet Jack Myers. The fact that the collaborators are Greek and American was an added bonus to the concept of the work. The content of the poem, "All I Can Do," brings past and present together by evoking some of the formal conventions and poetic sensibility of the ancient Japanese haiku form adapted to the American colloquial idiom. The poem poses manufactured objects against the forces of nature, the everyday individual against the eternal spirit, and phenomenological nature against consciousness. The result, in form and content, is a very successful piece of mixed media work. It also allowed Jack to experience his medium of language outside of its conventional format as a part of a one-of-a-kind object d'art.

The tensions created out of the differences and similarities in form, media, and techniques between the book and painting do not change the shared abstract level of



their content. The communication that exists between painting and viewer, the fusion of past and present, exists in the book as well.

## CHAPTER III

### CONCLUSION

Beyond the discussion of the techniques and media of the works, and their dynamics, I would now like to address several larger considerations. The first concerns the mutuality and exclusivity of the pieces. Although the paintings and books were conceived as a yoked project, works that acted in a complementary and enhancing way, I also intended the paintings and books as autonomous works of art, able to stand aesthetically on and in their own right. In other words there are, for the purposes of this discussion, two mutually exclusive projects here: 1) the paintings and books considered as one conjunctive work of art, and 2) the individual paintings and books as individual, discrete works of art.

Regarding the question of whether one group of work is more consistently successful than the other, I would have to conclude that this is true in the case of the books. The reason this is true, I think is because there was a lot more experimentation, and thus creativity, involved in the three-dimensional objects of the books as compared to the two-dimensional paintings. Another element that created more

interest and scope to the books was the added element of including texts, which imply both visual and semantic levels of meaning. The books, at first conceived in the conventional manner, evolved into different forms. One became an altar piece; others evolved in the direction of being objects d'art. I do not at all consider the paintings to be failures, only more limited in their success, limited by the "classical baggage" of predictability and convention. Furthermore, the ultimate success of the book group was in its opening up to me new directions for further formal experimentation in form, size, materials, and techniques. I expect my discoveries from working with the books to cross-fertilize with my work in paintings. I foresee my continuing to work both on a small scale in terms of producing more books in the form of object d'art, and also working on a large scale with three-dimensional object-paintings possibly conceived as architectural structures that break the boundaries of media and which will include the elements of time and memory borrowed from the sequentially timed and parceled out segments of the book experience.

In terms of gaining new insights while working in the fever of the creative, compositional mode, I noticed that while I was working on small-scale monotypes, I became obsessed with every single detail of the surface. This impelling absorption in the process was made more engaging

by the fact that the technique of the monotype allowed me to create multiple layers on an immediate basis without the necessary delay of drying time. The end result of this is that I was able to create quite spontaneously, thereby fusing the act of art to life, which is to say, that the mechanical process of monotypes which was being focused in a small area put me more in touch with my original, personal and aesthetic need to connect the influences of my ancient Greek culture and its artifacts to my contemporary experience as an American. The vista of these new possibilities of aesthetic concepts and forms has literally been brought about through the manipulation of materials and formal elements, which is to say, this project has, in effect, created a path to new creative and intellectual growth.

## ILLUSTRATIONS























