Dia Rhythm and Light, Colour, Form and Compassion…
an “Icon(ograph)ical” voyage in ways of reading

Byzantine Ecclesiial Monuments

by

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Abstract

What can Iconography, also known as Byzantine art say to 21st century people? Arts of the past reveal local visual languages that envelop the values, morality and spirituality of peoples of the past, who are geographically and/or timely distant from us, contemporary 21st century citizens living in an era of consumerism and ecological and social degradation. The significance of studying visual arts of the past is important for raising awareness of our selfhood in relation to the “Other” in the human and more than human world. On the pretext of engaging aesthetically with the frescoes inside the chapels of Panayia Phorviotissa, Panayia Arakiotissa and the Akathist Hymn chapel of Saint John Monastery from Cyprus (all chapels are included in the UNESCO World Heritage List) dated back to 12th-14th AC, this thesis invites the reader into a journey through the medium of art to read the aforementioned chapels and proceed into reflection: What might the frescos imply in our “troubled” times? What would the study of the fresco mean for the “more-than-human-world”? How would the art of the past such as iconography challenge hierarchies and our position on cosmos? In addition to the above, based on and combining imaginative education, place-based pedagogy, museum and arts education, this dissertation describes how all the above were used for the development of a program of activities to explore the aforementioned murals. Based on the technical characteristics of the murals like rhythm, line, form and colour this research narrates a trip inwards, upwards and through compassion outwards to embrace the world.

Keywords: aesthetics; iconography; art gallery and museum pedagogy; sacred arts; arts based methodologies; imagination; a/r/tography
Dedication

To Efthymia, George and all people in quest!
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The icon painters of the past whose names in most cases have been lost in the mists of time but whose virtuosity—embroidered by virtue and spirituality—can be traced through their artwork, offered a vast tank of knowledge, artistic, aesthetic, theoretical and practical regarding the sacred and the aesthetic in art and navigated me to art oceans of unprecedented profundness/depth... A heart felt thank you to them for their artistic and spiritual wisdom bequeathed to generations to come and for lighting my art journey with empathy, compassion and love amalgamated with line, rhythm, form and colour...

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Chapter 1.

Introduction

As you set out for Ithaka
hope the voyage is a long one,
full of adventure, full of discovery…
Ithaka gave you the marvelous journey.
Without her you would not have set out.
She has nothing left to give you now.
And if you find her poor, Ithaka won't have fooled you.
Wise as you will have become, so full of experience,
You will have understood by then what these Ithakas mean.


“Through my entire life, one word tyrannized and beat me: Ascent. This ascent I want here, with truth and imagination and the red footsteps that my own ascent left…”

—Nicos Kazantzakis (Report to Greco, my translation).
Figure 1. “Ascent”, E. Hadjipieri, oil on canvas, 2016, 60cm X 30cm
Events, legends, lived experiences, utopian dreams, fulfilled expectations, concrete achievements, disappointment chimeras, fugitive inspirations, elusive aspirations, mnemonic stigmata are included in the heavy pages of journeys, physical and spiritual; real, imaginative and esoteric; aesthetic and contemplative… These journeys involve homeland and cosmos, people of the past and people of synchronous times as well as the people of yet to come, borders and infinity and red footsteps; red, because of the blood one leaves behind, one’s own and others, in the effort to surpass oneself, in the effort to discover the human condition, to understand oneself and how to guide one’s life, how to lead, like Odysseus, towards one’s special Ithaca… footsteps full of colour, lines, forms, rhythm and compassion filled with the richness of such travel as according to Alexandrian Greek poet Constantine Cavafy, “Wise as you will have become, so full of experience, you will have understood by then what these Ithacas mean”.

“You have the brushes, you have the colours, paint paradise and get in”, says writer Nicos Kazantzakis… and yet the discovery of one’s paradise or esoteric calmness and artistic identity is not an easy process. This anthology of chapters, paintings and poems describes an artistic quest which began a long time ago when I was attempting to explore the human figure and portraiture. Can someone analyze and re-synthesize the human figure and portraiture without researching the human condition? What does it mean to be human? Can someone examine the human condition without a sense of introspection or “touching” the most intimate part of oneself, the psyche of the artist? What are the stop moments that arrested my attention during the process of “capturing” the human figure as it appears to my artistic development? How, in retrospect, might I identify my route in painting the human figure and my movement from naturalism to romanticism and to iconography? In the portraiture of myself, what would the basic elements of the synthesis be?

Again the words of Kazantzakis in his Report to Greco (referring to El Greco as his compatriot from Crete) echo in my mind:

You will find, dear reader, in these pages the red line, made out of drops of my blood, marking my route in between people, passions and ideas… Four have been the most decisive steps in my ascending way… This route filled with blood, from one great soul to another, now at sunset, I am attempting in my travel book to mark with… Through my entire life, one word tyrannized and beat me: Ascent. This ascent I want here, with truth
and imagination and the red footsteps that my own ascent left… Kazantzakis (Report to Greco, my translation).

In my query, distinguished are the Romantic artists like Bouguereau, Delacroix, Alma-Tadema, Repin, Kraskoy, Godward and others whose human figures were filled with flame and passion, figures being nothing but flame and passion. My artistic path also passed from known and mostly unknown icon painters who translated the divine light and their existential thirst into form, colour and compassion amalgamated in human figures inseparable from morality and sacredness, figures echoing a spiritual side of human nature.

Following Leonid Ouspensky, one of the pioneers in the rivalry of iconographical art who urged his students to search and include local elements (from where they come from) into their art, I started visiting chapels and monasteries in the mountainous region of Cyprus. The effort rewarded me as during my fieldtrips I (re)discovered among the beautiful and valuable (aesthetically and historically) samples of the iconographical art, my roots which strengthened who I am and added valuable insights in my artistic practice. Three chapels in particular, the chapel of Panayia Phorviotissa of Asinou, the Panayia of Arakas and the Chapel of the Akathist Hymn in St John’s Monastery on the northeastern part of Troodos mountaineer, opened spiritual and aesthetic windows of perception and enriched my understanding in art and aesthetics.

This art form was sculpted by time in the beliefs of the people who inhabited this piece of land centuries ago… I often wonder what Byzantine Art narrate to those of us, living in the 21st century? Why read/listen to what these murals say? What does it mean, in the midst of contemporary mass image production and a sense of being/living in disinterested epoch (to survive mass image consumption) to attend to icons, which—through the big expressive eyes of the painted Saints—“stare” back at you inviting dialogue (reciprocal action)? By “tracing” sources of the past, could we find—in the unsettled and troubled times (Hattam, 2009) that we are living characterized by ecological and social degradation in unprecedented levels—resources for antidotes?

My research coincided with my professional duties, which apart from art teaching, I work as art gallery and museum pedagogue-counselor for the Cypriot Ministry of Education and Culture. One of the aims of the Cypriot national curriculum is to encourage out door activities that promote learning about local culture and the natural
environment. Emphasis is given to outdoor educational activities targeting the exploration of important monuments, as well as natural and cultural landscapes, first, in the area where the school is located, at second level, all over the island and at the third level, outside the island (Mediterranean, European and global culture). Attempting to diminish the impacts of globalization as a wave of “smashing” local cultures, the shift is to (re)discover local sources that could eventually become resources of antidotes against globalization and the degradation of the natural, social and cultural environments. Apart from contemplating the interior frescos of the chapels for my own personal, professional and artistic development, I also created a didactical proposal which emerged during my research, on how to approach the chapel.

The present corpus of essays/chapters is enriched by artwork, immersing from the study of the frescoes and the monuments in general as a way of comprehending and as a way of representation of the new knowledge. I created the included artwork as a visual way of exploring and documenting my sentiments/emotions and thoughts.

The anthology of chapters that compose my thesis could be regarded as a voyage starting from the art of iconography which through rhythm, line, form and colour, moves from the present to the future through the past, from the perspective of the physical eye of the visitor to the gaze and the “augmented” and “broaden” vision of the Pantocrator (Jesus Christ the All-Holder, the All-Ruler) and the changing perspectives of oneself in the world, as well as from a myopic and selfish view of cosmos to a compassionate glimpse of it.

The nature of my inquiry is focused on a specific religious art of the past and my reflections as I engage in my research through artmaking. Inevitably, my being in inquiry and moving through in-between spaces, made visible my interactive/dialogic process while reflecting on the iconographical art. The encounters with the medieval art produced art with symbolisms, thus linking a medieval art genre with the 21st century settings, and therefore engaging a/r/tography as my form of inquiry and understanding.

Thematically, the chapters concentrate on the sacred space, the iconographical portraiture, the soul of the artist and the tensions/challenges the artist could face, and an imaginative educational fieldtrip as well as a synthesis of the aforementioned. Please, join me now as I wander through and linger with the landscape and art that inspired my
research and this offering, a curated thesis, an icon(ograph)ical” voyage in ways of reading Byzantine ecclesial monuments, and attending to our learning…the monument and all within awaits our reading….
Chapter 2.

Mapping the journey

Hope the voyage is a long one.
May there be many a summer morning when,
with what pleasure, what joy,
you come into harbours seen for the first time;
may you stop at Phoenician trading stations
to buy fine things,
mother of pearl and coral, amber and ebony,
sensual perfume of every kind—
as many sensual perfumes as you can;
and may you visit many Egyptian cities
to gather stores of knowledge from their scholars.


I have always considered monuments and art places as places that become spaces literally and metaphorically, imaginative and esoteric, individual and collective thus (s)p(l)aces as palimpsests of multilayered meanings. The three chapels in this research are ‘my (s)p(l)aces’ of exploration or wandering where, paraphrasing Tournier (1971, in Jokela: 2008:3) “individuals become attached to their place and merge with it… [associating] their place with their image of themselves, [locating] themselves there wholly, so that no one can touch the place without touching them”. I also linked visual art as “my space” of identity formation agreeing with Jokela (2008:3) locating identities in symbolic time and space in an imaginary geography. It is through these lenses—of travelling in imaginary geography—that I would like to address my wandering in the landscape of iconographical art through the murals of three chapels from the Troodos mountain range: Panayia Phorviotissa, Panayia Arakiotissa and St John Monastery.

My main navigating tools in this journey are art and the act of painting as well as writing. Painting (zografein: ζωγραφεῖν) in Greek etymologically derives from “write” and “life”. This voyage is narrated through word and images, reflections from arts of the past. Mind, dear reader, that this trip, unfolded in a linear text and through artworks, has the
form of a spiral: it remains to the viewer/reader to define on which part of the spiral the
journey continues… sometimes the viewer might be closer to the center and sometimes
closer to the infinite periphery for this journey commences from art, being progressing in
turquoise, cinnabar, lapis lazuli, alizarin crimson as well as in lines, curves and forms
and ends (or sets up for a new destination) to the chora and of compassion. The journey
starts here and now. Through the past, the voyage takes us to the future, a terrain one
can get glimpses of the far years to come…This voyage aims to leave the imagination of
the viewer/reader to unroll, as stated previously, in the form of a spiral, allowing the
receiver to self-locate him/herself into the journey… (Figure 3).
Figure 2. In spiral the journey unfolds, E. Hadjipieri, mixed media on canvas, 2018, 40cm X 60cm.

In the steps of a navigator cartograph-ing the journey I would like to unfold the map to the readers, co-travellers of this voyage. This trip will begin from the harbour of iconographical art (definition and main characteristics) and will proceed to different harbors-ecclesial monuments as mentioned above.
2.1. The art of Iconography (Byzantine Art)

The world of the senses mirrors the world of the spirit. The essences and orders which are above us are incorporeal… Our human hierarchy, on the other hand, is filled with the multiplicity of visible symbols, through which we are let up hierarchically and according to our ability to the unity of God.

(Dionysius the Areopagite, in Runciman, 1975, p.81)

Iconography is often referred to as Byzantine Art. However, significant debate exists about the use of “Byzantine” as it refers to Byzantium, an ancient Greek colony, which at the chronological period during which Iconography emerged and flourished was renamed “Constantinople” signifying an era different (culturally since it was influenced by Christianity) from that of antiquity (even though a continuation of antiquity). As the historian Glukatzi-Ahrweiller (2010) points out the term “Byzantine”, though still used, is considered not representative.

Defining the art of Iconography is problematic for western art historians as it involves a welcomed pluralism in definitions as a “style or mode of expression” (formal approach); as an “evolved type of classicism” (cultural approach); as the art of Constantinople the capital of Eastern Roman Empire (political approach); and as the art of the Orthodox Church (spiritual approach) (Cormack, 2000:3). Following the example of researchers (Cormack, 2000; Mathews, 1998) I will use a limited definition: Iconography is a religious Christian art emerging from Constantinople (the capital of Eastern Roman Empire or Byzantine Empire), between 4th and 15th centuries. With the art of Iconography, Christianity became socially visible and used art as its missionary armory (Cormack, 2000). According to Talbot Rice (1935, p.54) “Christianity was thus not only one of the principal factors governing the development of iconography, it was also one of the most important in its creation. It molded and influenced the art as a sculptor molds his clay; it set certain bounds upon art which could never been transgressed”.

To summarize, given the pluralism of definitions of Iconography, I introduce Iconography as religious Christian art, still developing, using creatively elements from various Eastern and Western (Greco, Aramean) traditions, influenced by medieval and
renaissance art but yet not in a reciprocal way, concentrated on the depiction of the human figure in two dimensional paintings in attempts to link the human and Divine.

2.2. Painting divinity

A primary aim of the church is the unification of all (archieratical pray: η των πάντων ενότης, ἵνα ὑσι ἐν, to become one) against division /death (dia-bolic etymologically means “dividing”). Divinity unites people. Icons are symbols (syn-bolic etymologically means “uniting”) of divinity and sanctity (Kordis, 2011, Photiou, 1996). Iconographic Art, as a symbol of divinity and sanctity, serves to lead the worshipper to divinity, according to the theosis dogma: God becomes body (incarnation of Christ) so that humans could become gods in grace (Saints).

Iconography is the art of the Orthodox Church. Iconography aims to depict the “theosis” dogma of the Orthodox Church: the Incarnation of God (Runciman, 1975), God becomes body-human. The Incarnation signified a new relationship between God and human (Stuart, 1975), which can be understood at two levels. First, since God through the Incarnation revealed Himself, this revelation allowed artists to depict God visually. Secondly, this depiction signified the potentiality of the deification of Man, in the sense that God became human so that human can become God-in-grace (St. Athanasios, in Mathews, 1998: 119). As Stuart (1975) explains, God by flesh-taking resembles human but also human was created by the image and likeness of God since Man has body, mind and soul. God became human to teach humans how to become divine.

According to the outcomes of the 7th Ecumenical Synod, divinity cannot be painted. The icons do describe visually neither divinity nor humanity. Icons depict the hypostasis of divinity, not the nature of it (Kordis, 2011). As a result of the Incarnation (God acquiring human body), the form (morphē) of the hypostasis of the Incarnated Christ became visible and thus painted.

Iconography and the spirituality of the Orthodox Church are interconnected. The icons are the visual interpretations of the gospels (Etimasia, 2006). They are symbolical and hypostatic: they want to reach the archetype so that to make it visible and to do that, they use a symbolic language (e.g. the forehead is bigger because it is full of spirituality and thus depicts the hypostasis of the person.) Spirituality and the visualization cannot
be separated in this art practice. Iconography is not an art form depicting religious themes; rather iconography is a religious art (Stuart, 1975).

According to St Theodore Stoudite (9th century AC) (in Kordis, 2011), the icon of Christ is the external human *morphé* of his hypostasis. Jesus was born “animated”, “iconographed”. The painters (iconographers) are re-painting the morphé of Christ’s hypostasis. Saint Photios (Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, 9th century) emphasized that the art of iconography finds suitable artistic ways to present the *morphé* of the hypostasis of Christ to the laity. The iconographers, then, become tools, reanimating, repainting, reproducing Christ. Thus, since the *morphé* of Christ already pre-exists, iconographers are not creators, rather they are presenters (Kordis, 2011). During the first centuries the iconographers did not sign their works, since they were reproducers or presenters. Under Western influence, when they started to sign their work, they wrote “by the hand of ……”.

### 2.2.1. Painting sanctity

Depicting a Saint is not about writing-painting a special ontological condition, “sanctity”. According to Kordis (2011), the consideration of the depiction of a Saint through a specific artistic manner is problematic for the following reasons: the hermeneutical approach of depicting sanctity by a certain artistic way is not explained or mentioned in the tradition of the church. The visual inscriptions were accomplished in a specific unique artistic way, then, this way would remain unchangeable throughout the continuum of time. Therefore it would not explain the rich and flourishing range of iconographic styles developed over time and spread in several geographical locations, as revealed from an historical artistic angle. Nor would it explain why subjects without sanctity (e.g. Judas) were painted in the same way or style as saints. Kordis also mentions another situation in which the link between the depiction of sanctity and a specific artistic style appears problematic: those icons where effects like tearing or oil flow occur without scientific explanation and those that do not necessarily adhere to what is broadly considered as Byzantine style.

So how is sanctity depicted in the art of iconography? How did the Byzantine worldview considered the relation between the Saints and God? Sanctity is nothing but the proximity-unification-meeting of a person with Christ. As a consequence of this
unification, the nature of the individual experiences catharsis. Therefore a Saint is an individual free of defects, of passions, a person embodying the most authentic expression of human nature; a person who exists as such because of the person’s connection with Christ (Kordis, 2011). In other words, sanctity is the unification with God. Thus, the visualization of sanctity is the inscription of the relationship of the person (Saint) with Christ. The inscription of the aforementioned relationship is apparent in many levels and with a variety of techniques that will be cited below. In Kordis’s (2014) words:

Icon painting uses the media of art and, following the Tradition of the Church, its goal is to render the external form of any person depicted. For that purpose this art elaborates and transforms the form under one condition, the image must always be recognizable by the faithful beholder. So the icon painter first makes the icon more abstract than a photo. And then, the artist renders this purified form in an artistic manner which is appropriate to the sacred person. He has to “invent”, to create a painting mode that is suitable and good. (Kordis, 2014:2)

The relationship is depicted in reference to the iconographical program of the temple that serves as a “perfected world” (Barrie (2010), the symbol of the heaven on earth (Miheles, 1990), an analogical medium (Pikiones, 1985; Kontoglou, 1960; Gkikas, Ouspensky, 1993) or, according to Kordis (2011, 2014), an image of the relationship between God and human, an image of the divine and human body of Christ, symbolizing God and the believers from the past, the present and the future. The church is a place of transition to another sphere of being, of existence whilst ‘Rhythm’ is the basic tool for the transformation of the place as a space of transcendence. Kordis (2014) explains:

Rhythm is the basic instrument the painters during the Byzantine period used in order to achieve communion between the beholder-believer and the person depicted. The main idea was that the icon is not merely an image, a form on the wall of a church or on a surface of wood… In this way the icon could demonstrate the belief that the Church is the living Body of Christ in time and space, where all members are embodied and live. In this perspective the icon should give the spectator the impression that whatever is depicted is alive, is present. So they had to create a system of painting principles that could serve this need. Rhythm was the basic instrument. Rhythm is a way of handling the movements and energies that exist on a painting surface. Any line or color is energy. The painter could organize these movements or energies in order for the icon to enter the reality of the spectator and meet him. …There is always movement, indicating life and motion, and at the same time there is also stability that indicates eternity, a state of timeless reality...(Kordis, 2014:3)
The iconographical program of a temple is the visual representation of the church as a divine and human body. The murals are not completed on the walls; the “canvas” is expanded so that apart from Christ, the angels and the Saints, and viewers (people who are alive, here and now) are included also. The iconographical program is not a “frozen”–in-time screen but rather a scene within which God, Saints and laity share and co-exist. The iconographical program becomes the inscription of the relationship of Saints and laity with God.

To understand the art of Iconography and rhythm, Gervase Mathew (in Stuart, 1975) suggests a parallel with the ballet or music. It is necessary to cultivate an appreciation of music so that to delve further and appreciate the very good music, for it is in musical terms that we should seek to understand the ideally harmonized linear rhythms traced by the artist’s brush and the harmonious apportionment of the color over the surface of the panel. …the icon painter, like the musician, varies the sequence of notes in order to express an appropriate mood….Music like icon painting, springs from a life force which transcends deformity, decay and even death itself. The icon is ultimately the expression of Truth…which can only be experienced. (p.37)

2.2.2. The unity-element of iconography as set in the broader context of the Orthodox Arts

Despite the fact that the panel icon is a whole in itself, it is displayed in the broader context of the church where the liturgy takes place. The building of the church was, according to Runciman (1975), “a single vast icon”, a “second house, the meeting place of an extended family” (Cormack, 2-3), “joining the ranks of a company of friends (Mathews, 116), with the icons constituting “a holy company which the spectator is invited to join” (Mathews, 114).

The church is the scene for the liturgy to take place. Stuart (1975) regards the liturgy as the masterpiece of the Orthodox Art in which the “divine plan is seen in action and [in which] all the parts are united with the whole and the idea of perfect harmony or synthesis is attained” (p.39). According to Runciman (1975: 97) the liturgy was the “daily representation of the Passion on earth and the church building was the scene of this representation… the universe into which Christ descended”. In the liturgy all the different elements of art (architecture, painting and music) co-existed and co-performed
harmoniously so that the worshipper would be anagogically ascended to the spiritual. According to Stuart (1975:39), through the liturgy,

…the worshipper has stepped into a microcosmic organism, in which his simultaneously experienced sensations are co-ordinated…Resolved through the medium of art, the nature between the interdependence between matter and spirit has been explained. And through participation in the mystery of the Eucharist, Man is united with God”(p.39).

Rhythm is a vehicle visualizing the unification of Man with God. Technically, by the lack of perspective, by the vertical position of the figures on the wall, the ¾ facial position so that the figure (saint) stares at the viewer, the movement of colour (usually from tonically darker and warmer to tonically lighter/brighter and cold (which results in equilibrium with the vertical position of the figure), the metaphysical world and the material world appear to be one single reality, sharing the same space and time. Whoever is included in the iconographical program of the temple, exists in the same chronotopia with the Saints and God, in other words he/she is in a relationship with God, if you will, both Saints and laity form the body of Christ, the body of the church so the iconographer depicts the movement, the rhythm (rhythm etymologically derives from the verb “move”, “flow”) of the saints towards the viewer. The center of the artwork/iconographical program of the temple becomes the viewer, the laity who is invited to “ascent” to a spiritual level of existence (anagogical and pedagogical character of iconography. Also see chapter “Imaginary Fieldtrip). The lack of perspective, then, or “reversed perspective”, a term misinterpreted in art history (Antonova,2009; Kordis,2011) is purposely proposed and implemented by the iconographer to give the effect of unity/relationship with God. A common characterization of the iconographical art is the aliveness of the figures. Kordis argues that the effect of aliveness is not due to naturalistic elements but due to the purposiveness of the painting: the figures are painted in a way to appear as if sharing the same time and space with the viewer.

Summarizing, iconographic art, through the medium of rhythm applied in the iconographical program of the church, attempts to unite the material and the spiritual world and by having the viewer-spectator as the point of reference of the murals, invites the latter (viewer) to ascent anagogically to the sphere of God.

In the painting “Ascent”, I tried through the use of calligraphy, (influenced by the curvy-linear calligraphic character of iconographic art) to depict the anagogical character
of iconography. Calligraphic lines (vertical and horizontal) and also a chromatic variation (from tonically darker and colder colors to tonically lighter and warmer) were implemented to show movement-flow upwards. The ascending flow also describes the personal route of the believer upwards, towards the metaphysical.
In the painting “Ascent”, I tried – through the use of calligraphy, influenced by the curvy-linear calligraphic character of iconographic art) to depict the anagogical character of iconography. Calligraphic lines (vertical and horizontal) and also a chromatic variation (from tonically darker and colder colours to tonically lighter and warmer) were implemented to show movement-flow upwards. (Ascent towards the spiritual light)

Figure 3. "Ascent", E. Hadjipieri, oil on canvas, 2016, 60cm X 30cm

2.3. The chapels

Three chapels serve as the beginning of the exploration described in this thesis. What follows are brief historical accounts on Panayia Phorviotissa, Panayia Arakiotissa and Saint John (Akathist Hymn) chapels. All chapels are located in the Nicosia (capital)
district and belong to the Troodos mountain churches of the Morphou bishopric. All three chapels are close one to the other and also close to where I live.

2.3.1. **Panayia Phorviotissa**

The chapel of Panayia Phorviotissa is the only remains of the Monastery of Phorvia. It is one of the most important Byzantine churches of Cyprus and it is registered in the UNESCO World Heritage List as well as in the European Heritage List (EHL).

The monastery was founded by Magister Nicephore Ischyrius in 1099, after the death of Ghephyra (his daughter or wife). Nicephore became a monk under the name of Nicholaus and lived in the Monastery till his death in 1115. (Hadjichristodhoulou, 2009). The creation of the Monastery by Nicephore and the dedication to Virgin Mary (Panayia) as well as Ghephyra are depicted among the murals (Figures 5-6).

The name of the founder (Nicephore) as well as the epithet “phorvia” appear in several parts in the wall paintings. Phorvion or euphorium was a pharmaceutical herb growing in the area where the church was built. Also “phorvia” could derive from the word “Phoradha” («φοράδα»: female horse) as the area had horse stables.

The fraternity of the monastery survived the 15th and 16th centuries (Frankish and Venetian conquest). During the Ottoman conquest (1570-1878) the number of monks was severely reduced. At the end of 18th century the monastery was abandoned for unknown reasons. Part of the wall paintings date back to 1106 AD by a Constantinopolitan artist who applied the trends of Comnenean Byzantine art while others are dated around the beginning of 13th century and have Frankish (western) influences. A semi-destroyed epigraph informs that the narthex was covered by murals for a second time in the years 1332/1333. (Hadjichristodhoulou and Myriantheus, 2009).

**The narthex murals**

The narthex was painted for the first time at the end of 12th century. Parts of this first decoration appear underneath the newest ones of 1332/1333.

The iconographical program of the narthex consists of the dome with the Pantocrator and the chorus of angels (the specific mural is called “Throne Preparation” and has eschatological character - fig.1). Around and below the dome mural are the wall
paintings of Saints, the personifications of Sea/Mare and Land/Terra, the Last Judgment, the donors (persons who made a donation to the monastery or funeral portraits of laity, painted alongside the saints/protectors).

Technically, the frescoes of the narthex as well as the depictions of donors have western influences as the donors appear dressed in the clothes and hairstyles of their time of creation, many of them wearing western clothes. The colour palette includes mainly blue, green and brown/earthy hues. The colour is applied in harsh brush strokes whilst the plasticity of colour on the surfaces is simple.

Sample of murals from Panayia Phorviotissa are offered in the following pages, so that you might have a sense of the icons, which I read iconographically.

Figure 4. The dome of the narthex of Panayia Phorviotissa Panayia Phorviotissa of Asinou Chapel, Cyprus. Unknown photographer. Retrieved from: https://www.visitsolea.com/%CF%84%CE%BF%CE%B9%CF%87%CE%BF%CE%B3%CF%81%CE%B1%CF%86%CE%AF%CE%B5%CF%82-%CE%BD%CE%B1%CE%BF%CF%8D-%CF%80%CE%B1%CE%BD%CE%B1%CE%B3%CE%AF%CE%B1%CF%82-%CF%84%CE%B7%CF%82-%CE%B1%CF%83%CE%AF%CE%BD%CE%BF/
Figure 5. Founder Nicephore donating the church to Virgin Mary. Panayia Phorviotissa of Asinou Chapel, Cyprus. Unknown Photographer. Retrieved from: https://proskynitis.blogspot.com/2015/10/blog-post_866.html
Figure 6. Magister Nicephore Ischyrius and Ghephyra donate the church to Virgin Mary, Panayia Phorviotissa of Asinou Chapel, Cyprus. Unknown Photographer.
Figure 7. Saint George (detail). Panayia Phorbiotissa of Asinou Chapel, Cyprus. Unknown photographer.
Retrieved from: http://4.bp.blogspot.com/-FA44J_0DaT0/U1eECimS4BI/AAAAAAAAAgI/GW_C0HevHhc/s1600/%CE%91%CE%99%CE%9F%CE%A3+%CE%95%CE%A6%CE%99%CE%A0%CE%A0%CE%A3+%CE%A6%25CE%25A4%25CE%259F+6.jpg
Figure 8. Terra and Mare mural (Detail). Panayia Phorviotissa of Asinou Chapel, Cyprus. Unknown photographer. Retrieved from: https://www.visitsolea.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/toixografies_asinou3.jpg
Figure 10. Scenes from the Door of Heaven, The Final Judgement, Terra and Mare. Panayia Phorviotissa of Asinou Chapel, Cyprus. Unknown photographer.

Retrieved from: https://www.visitsolea.com/%CF%84%CE%BF%CE%B9%CF%87%CE%BF%CE%B3%CF%81%CE%B1%CF%86%CE%AF%CE%85%CF%82-%CE%BD%CE%B1%CE%BF%CF%8D-%CF%80%CE%B1%CE%BD%CE%B1%CE%B3%CE%AF%CE%B1%CF%82-%CF%84%CE%B7%CF%82-%CE%B1%CF%83%CE%AF%CE%BD%CE%BF/
Figure 11. Virgin Mary with donors, Panayia Phorviotissa of Asinou Chapel, Cyprus. Photographer: Vasos Stylianou, in Hadjichristodoulou and Myriantheus, 2009.

Figure 12. The southern wall fresco. The arrows show some of the donors next to the saints. Panayia Phorviotissa of Asinou Chapel, Cyprus. Photographer: Vasos Stylianou, in Hadjichristodoulou and Myriantheus, 2009.
Figure 13. The Panayia Phorviotissa mural. On the left there is the donor Theophile and at the right the agrina and the dogs. Panayia Phorviotissa of Asinou Chapel, Cyprus. Photographer: Vasos Stylianou, in Hadjichristodoulou and Myriantheus, 2009.
2.3.2. Panayia Arakiotissa

The chapel of Panayia Arakiotissa has been included in the UNESCO World Heritage List since 1985, in the Nicosia district, belonging to the Troodos mountain churches of the Morphou Bishopric. The chapel was built during the second half of 12th century, probably as a private chapel at first, during an era when monastic life in Cyprus was flourishing. Also, the era of the creation of the chapel and monastery was a distinct one: The 11th AD century was marked by huge waves of refugees from Minor Asia (Cappadocia, Cilicia, Lycia, Pamphylia and other parts of Asia Minor) to the northern part of Cyprus. Emperor Alexius Comnenus for strategic reasons based his vanguard bastion in Cyprus. The numerous castles of the island along with many churches were built to fulfill the need for military and spiritual protection of the locals and the refugees during the 11th century AD, according to Metropolitan Neophytos (2008).

The monastical fraternity of Panayia Arakiotissa decreased in 1735. A small fraternity lived there until the early 19th century and then the monastery was abandoned. The tragic events of the 9th July 1821 massacre which resulted in the death of the majority of priesthood by the then Ottoman rulers of the island might be the reason for the end of the fraternity (Hadjichristodoulou, 2009).

The etymology of the epithet Arakiotissa or “of Arakas” is ambivalent: Russian monk Barsky (Hadjichristodoulou, 2009) wrote that according to tradition, “Arakas” comes from the word “yerakas” (γέρακας: hawk). According to that legend, a prince who was out hunting sent his servants to free his hawk caught in a bush. When his servants approached the bush they discovered the icon of the Virgin Mary to whom the chapel is dedicated. Another etymological explanation derives from the word “arakas” (άρακας: peas) of a vegetable growing in the region. The tradition of giving the epithet of a plant or herb is not unusual: Panayia Phorviotissa, Panayia Palouriotissa, Panayia Macedonitissa (phorvium or euphorvium, paloura and macedonisi are plants).

The internal part of the chapel is covered by frescoes from the donations of Leon the Ruler, in December 1192. The frescos are considered as excellent examples of post Comnenean art which consist of the most completed circle of iconographic art of the mid Byzantine period of Cyprus and they also express/depict the then stylistic trends of Byzantine Art of Constantinople (the political and cultural center of the era). The
importance of the specific frescoes lies in the fact that not only they are of high aesthetic value but they also are rare since frescoes of the same period from Constantinople did not survive. Architecturally the chapel is a single aisle structure with a dome. During the Frankish period (1192-1489) it was common to add a second wooden roof to cover the building. Among the paradigms of such chapels are the churches of Troodos mountaineer including Panayia Arakiotissa, Panayia Phorviotissa and St John Monastery. Metropolitan Neophytos of Soloi and Morphou (2008: 6) (the bishopric the three churches belong to) proposes that beyond the practical reasons for the task of adding a second roof there may have been

a spiritual motivation… the new roof structure also covers the appearance of the external shape, it covers all the beauty of the byzantine architecture, as if sending us on an inner quest, to go deeper beyond surface beauty and find the essence of the indescribable beauty of Christ. The addition of the roof, moreover, may also have been a part of a process of internalization with which these people learnt to deal with their most painful and difficult moments brought about by turbulent history.

Though not all frescoes were created the same period nor by the same artist, it is mostly believed that the principal iconographic program was created by artist, Theodore Apsevdes (in 1192) who some years before painted the hermitage of Saint Neophytos (engleistra) (1183 AD). Apsevdes’s meeting with Saint Neophytos (hieromonk, founder of a monastery and significant writer) was important since one saint and a painter (who knew how to visualize the dogma) met, collaborated and complemented each other. Theodore Apsevdes was an exceptional and virtuosic icon painter (iconographer) but also an individual who had deep theological knowledge that allowed him to visually depict sanctity and divinity in a way that still impresses the contemporary viewer/visitor. It is also notable that he painted the church walls during December, a month with snow and difficult weather conditions when the building was roofless. His dedication to complete the task manifests his asceticism as well as his capability to turn theology into rhythm, colour, form and line.

The frescoes of Panayia Arakiotissa could be regarded as the starting point of the artistic production on the island during the years of the Frankish rule. They are characterized as expressive in motion, of high decorativeness, as projecting a quest for beauty, as bearing movement through agitated drapery, painting the figures in ethereal, slender and sophisticated poses. Eliades (2017) supports that among other reasons
such a high aesthetic value, the significance of the frescoes lies in the fact that many characteristics of the Comnenean art as depicted in the compositions of the frescoes, are repeated in the art of 13th century (Maniera Cypria). For many years 13th Cypriot iconographic art was considered by art historians to be made/imported by crusaders whilst the appearance of these characteristics in this locale suggests that they were made by Cypriot or Greek artists in workshops in Cyprus.

Sample of murals decorating the walls of the chapel of Panayia Arakiotissa:

Figure 14. Angels from the Nativity fresco (detail). Panayia Arakiotissa Chapel, Cyprus. Courtesy of unnamed photographer. (note 3).
Figure 15. Jesus Christ. (portrait from a whole figure fresco), Panayia Arakiotissa Chapel, Cyprus. Courtesy of unnamed photographer.
Figure 16. The salutation of the three Persian Magii. (detail from the Nativity fresco), Panayia Arakiotissa Chapel, Cyprus. Courtesy of unnamed photographer.
Figure 17. Archangel Gabriel in the Evangelism mural, Panayia Arakiotissa Chapel, Cyprus. Courtesy of unnamed photographer.
Figure 18. The dome composition, Panayia Arakiotissa Chapel, Cyprus. Courtesy of unnamed photographer.
Figure 19. Portrait of Christ from the dome composition, Panayia Arakiotissa Chapel, Cyprus. Courtesy of unnamed photographer.
Figure 20. Angel from the Throne Preparation fresco of the dome Preparation, Panayia Arakiotissa Chapel, Cyprus. Courtesy of unnamed photographer.

Figure 21. Angels from the Throne Preparation, Panayia Arakiotissa Chapel, Cyprus. Courtesy of unnamed photographer.
Figure 22. Angels from the Throne Preparation composition, Panayia Arakiotissa Chapel, Cyprus. Courtesy of unnamed photographer.

Figure 23. Angels from the Throne Preparation composition, Panayia Arakiotissa Chapel, Cyprus. Courtesy of unnamed photographer.
Figure 24. Angels from the Throne Preparation composition, Panayia Arakiotissa Chapel, Cyprus. Courtesy of unnamed photographer.

Figure 25. Angels from the Throne Preparation composition. Panayia Arakiotissa Chapel, Cyprus. Courtesy of unnamed photographer.
Figure 26. Prophets (zone below the Throne Preparation zone). Panayia Arakiotissa Chapel, Cyprus. Courtesy of unnamed photographer.
Figure 27. Jesus Christ in glory. Panayia Arakiotissa Chapel, Cyprus. Courtesy of unnamed photographer.
Figure 28. Archangel Michael. Panayia Arakiotissa Chapel, Cyprus. Courtesy of unnamed photographer.
Figure 29. Archangel Gabriel. Panayia Arakiotissa Chapel, Cyprus. Courtesy of unnamed photographer.
Figure 30. Christ in Glory, Panayia Arakiotissa Chapel, Cyprus. Courtesy of unnamed photographer.
Figure 31. Our Lady of Arakas. Panayia Arakiotissa Chapel, Cyprus.
Figure 32. The iconostasis. Panayia Arakiotissa Chapel, Cyprus.
2.3.3. **Saint John Monastery**

The Monastery of St John has been registered on the UNESCO World Heritage list since 1985. Like the aforementioned chapels, it is also located in the mountainous part of the Morphou Bishopric, in the Nicosia District, where I live. The specific monastery, despite the fact that its date of creation is unknown, condenses in a few square meters, the two thousand years of Christianity in Cyprus. By the monastical complex is the place where St Heraclidius (one of the first bishops of Cyprus) was baptized in year 43AD by Apostle Paul and Apostle Varnavas, the latter being the founder of the church of Cyprus. The series of frescoes reveal the characteristics of the historical periods of the island in the Byzantine era, the Frankish rule, the Venetian rule and the Ottoman rule.

The monasterial complex consists of three chapels buildings that contain the cells of the monks, the bakery, the olive mill, a classroom within the monasterial buildings in mid 19th century and an elementary school.

The three chapels are dedicated to St Heraclidius, St John and the Akathist Hymn (a hymn dedicated to Virgin Mary, a poetical masterpiece composed as an action of gratitude for saving Constantinople from the siege of Avari in the night of 7th to 8th of August 626 AD). Thematically, the hymn, in eloquent lyrics and allegories, talks of the Incarnation of Christ through Virgin Mary.

The first chapel, dedicated to St Heracledius existed during the 11th AD century. The second chapel, dedicated to St John was built for the first time in the 12th century and was rebuilt (because of destruction) in the 15th century. The chapel of the Akathist Hymn was built the second half of 15th century. The fraternity existed until the beginning of 19th century.

As for the murals, traces of frescos date back to 11th century. The main part of the frescos dates back to 13th century and consists of an important iconographic composition that includes some rare depictions such as the sacred mandelion (handkerchief) with the face of Christ. The narthex was painted by a Constantinopolitan artist who found refuge on the island after the fall of Constantinople.
Chapel of the Akathist Hymn

The frescos of the Akathist Hymn chapel are well preserved and of exceptional aesthetic value in terms of iconographic composition. They offer the best example in Cyprus on frescoes that include Byzantine elements (the portraits) as well as Italian/Renaissance elements (perspective, three dimensions). This style is called Cypro-Renaissance and shows on wood panel icons as well as on wall surface. The blend of two cultures or two styles: la maniéra Greca and la maniéra Italiana suggest a climate of cultural and religious tolerance, probably after the Synod of Ferrara/Florence in 1439 (Morphou Bishopric, 2017) although during the Frankish and Venetian rule of the island, incidences of religious intolerance have been noted against the local orthodox clergy. The unknown iconographer of the chapel must have been very skilled in Byzantine art as well as aware of the western art trends such as the concept of three-dimensionality as well as naturalism in human portraiture which we can see in the representation of the figures located behind the pillars and on the wall behind (see figure 44 for instance).

Apart from the murals, the monastery has the oldest wooden altarpiece on the island, which is decorated by emblems/heraldries/blazons/crests. Also, the cranium of St John rests in a golden plated case. On the wall above the cranium case are the signatures of individuals who have visited the place. Among them is the signature of Russian hieromonsk Wassily Barsky who visited the most important monasteries and churches of Cyprus. Recent research (Eliades, 2017) suggests that during the 13th and 14th centuries the monastery was a significant center of iconography (icon production and murals making).

Note in the following images the tendency of the artist to incorporate three-dimensionality in the frescos located in the three chapels.
Figure 33.  Saint John. St John Lambadestes Monastery, Cyprus. Unknown photographer.
Retrieved from: http://www.hellenicaworld.com/Cyprus/Geo/gr/Kalopanagiotis06.html
Figure 34. Iconostasis, Saint Heracleidios chapel, Saint John Lambadestes Monastery, Cyprus. Photographer: Vasos Stylianou, in Papageorgiou, 2009.
Figure 35. The root of Jesse, Saint John Lambadestes Monastery, Cyprus. Unknown photographer. Retrieved from: http://churchofcyprus.org.cy/6303/%CE%B1%CE%B3-%CE%B9%CF%89%CE%B1%CE%BD%CE%B7%CF%83-%CE%BB%CE%B1%CE%BC%CF%80%CE%B1%CE%B4%CE%B9%CF%83%CF%84%CE%B7%CF%8310?date=2018-09-07
Figure 37. The hospitality of Abraham. The three angels symbolise the Holy Trinity. Note again the three dimensionality regarding the architectonic structure of the building. Saint John Lambadestes Monastery, Cyprus. Unknown photographer.

Retrieved from: http://churchofcyprus.org.cy/6303/%CE%B1%CE%B3-%CE%B9%CF%89%CE%B1%CE%BD%CE%BD%CE%B7%CF%83-%CE%BB%CE%B1%CE%BC%CF%80%CE%B1%CE%B4%CE%B9%CF%83%CF%84%CE%B7%CF%83
Figure 38. The Holy Cranium Case. On the wall one can see the signatures of persons who visited the Monastery. Among them is the signature of the Russian monk Wassily Barsky who visited Cyprus the 18th century. Saint John Lambadestes Monastery, Cyprus. Unknown photographer.

2.4. Art as Inquiry: Reading art through A/r_toigraphy

Meeting-a-dome, as I have through painting in response, raises many questions on art and its purposiveness and possible answers vary according to the subjectivity of the person/artist/researcher/art teacher. Whether we follow Block’s (Tarkofsky, 1987:49) notion that the poet (or artist) creates beauty out of chaos or Miheles’s (1945/2001) saying that the artist is a creator of worlds within worlds or poet’s Pushkin argument that the poem – like science – is a vehicle/a means to comprehend the world, or as a tool of knowledge of the world in the voyage of people to the Absolute truth, as Tarkofsky (1987) supports; art is important to the human query of knowledge: self knowledge, communal knowledge, and knowledge of the world.

Through the medium of art, as noted by Tarkofsky (1987), (art being an incarnation of human thought) the human being “conquers” reality through subjective experience. Unlike scientific knowledge, Tarkofsky continues, in which knowledge ascends an endless scale every time new knowledge substitutes the old, artistic creation is present each time as a new and unique image of the world. Artistic knowledge intuitively appears as an invitation to show at an instance the beauty, the ugliness, the compassion and hardness, the infinite within the a form, the spirit into material, the eternal within the finite… the artist then, as stated by Miheles (1945/2001), becomes a creator of worlds within worlds, a gift special and unique.

Texting the visual is a challenge in itself: a spatial ecclesial monument such as the chapels for this research can be viewed either as a whole monad or partly. It can be viewed in sequence or on simultaneous glimpse. The basic act is “seeing” and the fundamental task in this and other research lies in transforming the “seeing” into words, into a text. Word or texts are characterized by linearity, by sequence. The task of transforming seeing into word (oral or written) is a complicated one and puzzled researchers for long (Webb, 1999). Michael the Deacon (12th century AC) attempting to describe the church of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, talks of the challenges he faces in turning a topos (place) into a rhetorical topos through word:

a rhetorical topos …expresses a significant truth: description, the representation of the visual through the medium of the word, is a problematic enterprise that raises many questions. To what extent is it possible, for example, to represent a material object in an immaterial, intelligible medium such as language? How does one represent any static
three-dimensional object in a medium that unfolds in time? How can one represent in words the totality of visual experience—the infinite varieties of color, space, depth, texture, light, and shade—offered by even the simplest object? Moreover, the linear unfolding of a text ... demands the imposition of a temporal order onto material that is in reality perceived simultaneously by a viewer. For although a work of art or architecture may be experienced sequentially... any single glance takes in more than could be expressed in a single statement. (Webb, 1999: 59-60).

The aforementioned task of translating a spatial artwork into a linear text would be the main argument for the inclusion of artwork as a response to "reading" the dome as architecture and artwork (mural), as I do through the following text, through a series of notes, images, and reflection. All paintings, poems, and reflections emerged from the creative interaction between myself, as the researcher/artist/teacher, and the ecclesiastical monuments.

The notion of art as knowledge and a vehicle to augment human understanding has been evolving for nearly four decades or so within the field of arts-based educational research. As Eisner (2009:5) notes, “knowing is a multiple state of affairs, not a singular one. In pragmatic terms knowing is always about relationships”. Deleuze and Quattari considered knowledge and learning as flows, a net of relationships and interconnected as rhizomes, infinite, without center, peripheries or endings (Gough,2009). The rhizomatic form of knowledge brings forward a polyglot multiplicity of knowledge or ways of knowing, and thus the need to engage/recognize alternative ways of expression, the arts being one of them.

The act of reading a monument is a multisensory, haptic and kinesthetic experience (Barrie, 2010). A religious monument, apart from its aesthetic value bears the beliefs-ethos of peoples of the past as well as acts as a medium transferring the worshipper into another level of existence. The polysemous character of the subject of aesthetic contemplation (monument) and the plethora of ways approaching the reading (kinesthetic, haptic, multisensory) of the monument as well as the sometimes ineffability of word to describe art enhanced the adoption of alternative ways of reading and projecting/presenting the reading. The use of artworks and poems arrive from the researcher’s own reflections as a way of learning and expressing the experience as well as presenting visually or orally the outcome of the researchers’ interaction with the monuments. Langer (1957, in Eisner, p.7) supports that artworks “represent artist's ability to create a structure of forms that are in their relationships analogs to the forms of
feeling human experience”. Weber (2009:44-46) identifies ten reasons for using visual images in research: they “capture the ineffable and engage us into seeing attentively things in new ways… they are memorable, bear multiple layers of meaning and can communicate more holistic meaning… they enhance empathy and are carriers of theory through metaphor and symbol… they are carriers of embodied knowledge and they are more accessible than other forms of discourse… they enhance reflexivity and they provoke/facilitate action for social justice”. Images due to their capacity to provoke emotion, empathy and lead to social action, as well as their communicative ability to make things visible offer alternative ways of viewing things; thus the arts can become, as Eisner advocates, valuable research tools.

In my work as artist, researcher, and museum educator, a/r/tography offers a valuable canvas in which to conduct my research in. When approaching an artwork, I cannot rebuff my being artist, researcher and teacher. The three characteristics of my identity are interwoven. There are, indeed, times that one overpasses the other for a period of time but all three characteristics are there, present, co-existing and enriching my approach to the artwork. This co-existence enriches my understandings of the artwork/monument. A/r/tography acknowledges the interaction and in between spaces between the artist, researcher and teacher.

A/r/tography is one of arts based methodological systems used to carry out research. A/r/tography is defined by Irwin and Springgay (2008: xx) as a research methodology that entangles and performs what Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guatari (1987) refer to as a rhizome… an assemblage that moves and flows in dynamic momentum… Building on the concept of rhizome, a/r/tography radically transforms the idea of theory as an abstract system distinct and separate from practice. Alternatively, theory is perceived as a critical exchange bearing the characteristics of responsiveness, reflectiveness and relativity, constantly being reshaped and recreated, in other words turning into embodied knowledge, into living inquiry.

A/r/tography lies in between spaces and evolves through six renderings of engagement during the process of inquiry and creation. These renderings inform my understanding of my inquiry, as I engage in a living inquiry that embraces my identity as researcher/museum educator/ arts, seeing my art from these multiple perspectives. The interplay between my writing and my art, the role of the poetic that brings to light, the
multisensory approach to the subject of research and the ability to reflect on and present using image/art and word, the connection between artwork and a/r/t/work, the second resulting from the multiperspectivity of an a/ r/ tographer’s identity, the use of the metaphor of a journey are among the reasons for which this research lies in the terrain of a/ r/ tography. Six renderings of a/ r/ tography are discussed in light of how my inquiry is informed.

1/ Contiguity: enhances comprehension of ideas connected adjacently one to another: acknowledges in between spaces and orients towards relational aesthetics (Irwin and Springgay, 2008). My approach to the monuments was achieved through the lenses of educator, artist and researcher. The multi-perspective lenses enriched my understandings regarding the subject matter; the artworks were the creative product of the aforementioned multiperspective approach thus being art and a/r/t. A/ r/ tography acknowledges the existence of multiple identities and the multileveled/multiperspective interaction with the subject matter: My eye has been exercised to “see” “both” and “and” connections. But so is my understanding and subjective perception regarding arts. Tradition and novelty, naturalism and abstraction, iconography and other genres of art, east and west are bound together, tied unbreakably, fused in and in dialogue with contemporary artistic practice. Within a/ r/ tography the interactions of the self with the subject of inquiry as well as the consideration of in between spaces that acknowledges seeing “both” and “and” connections could become apparent and visible.

2/Living inquiry, according to Irwin and Springgay (2008: xxix) “refers to the ongoing living practices of being an artist, researcher and educator” thus living inquiry becomes life commitment to both the arts and education. Creating meaning could therefore include practical, theoretical and artful ways of engagement. By “reading” monuments and past art forms, engaging deeply and dialoguing with art could inevitably lead to “reading” the monument of one’s own life. The arts of the past (monumental or two dimensional) could- as it did in my case, bridge the present with the past generations, their art and consequently to the beliefs visualized via the medium of traditional art. The engagement is not only linking you with the past but could engage you “deeply” in reconsidering your position within cosmos, might change the center of your life spiral round compassion (as through the augmented vision of the Pantocrator) and thus altering the continuum of your life, making you more fully present into the world and leading your life more freely lived. By engaging with art, you might end up seeing
not only the past history but your own history through a multi angle prism. As we are looking for more holistic and sustainable ways to guide our lives on earth, past-traditional-indigenous artforms, enveloped by the worldviews (beliefs, practices, values, ethos) of peoples of the past and sculpted by immutable and adaptable rules, could become (re)sources of antidotes for contemporary dilemmas and crises. The richness and depth of traditional/indigenous arts could enlighten our life paths and orient us in more earth-friendly ways of living in the more than human world. We exist in a net of relationships: the spiritual, nature, arts, human and more than human worlds are interwoven with our own self (personal) ecology. Understanding our position in cosmos and our connections might be a life aim and also a pedagogical aim. I agree with Kelly (2010: 83) that “stories, artistic images and emerging visions that accompany us on our journey create psychological landscapes, soul spaces and unique ecologies where we dwell”. These spaces and ecologies act like the brush strokes on canvas or like the stones forming the mosaic of life. In artistic creation they shape and give character to the lines and the forms and use colour with sensitivity. Whether the outcome is an artwork or a poem or a pedagogical fieldtrip/program or more generally speaking, the pathway of someone’s life, the aforementioned spaces and their interconnections co-exist: a/r/tography offers valuable tools to acknowledge them and make them visible.

Through an inquiry process that is artistic and educational, new knowledge and thinking emerges as “doing”, as art practicing, artmaking. My reading of the monument and its art, through the medium of art and poetry, enhanced my understandings. As the layers of colours, lines and forms were applied on canvas, layers of knowledge for the subject matter were applied, thus enriching my understandings. The “what”, “why” and “how” during a painting creation process could be seen as a dialogue with calligraphy, iconography, monumental art, traditional/indigenous art and contemporary art. In the following chapters, by the means of painting, the inquiry/dialogue of a spatial subject such as a monument is alternatively explored through another spatial means, painting which could be naturalistic or symbolic/conceptual and thus polysemous regarding form and purposiveness.

3/Metaphor and Metonymy: Metaphors and metonyms act as “interwined relationships which meaning un/creates itself (Irwin and Springgay, 2008: xxx). Metonym and metaphor enhance understanding of the world and facilitates the perception of relationships into the senses. By substituting signifiers (as in metaphor or by re-
arrangement of subject/object (like in metonym), new openings of perception of the world are created (Irwin and Springgay, 2008: xxx).

This research will be presented in the form of a journey that starts from here and now, and is oriented from present to the future through the past via form, color, rhythm and compassion. A journey commencing from a specific site (the monument and its art) in a specific time is symbolic, esoterical, even spiritual and educational. By reading/dialoguing with a monument, by being present within a particular space and time, you cannot but start reading the monument of yourself. Therefore, such an inquiry that includes reading of a monument and more specifically a religious monument concerns many territories and in between spaces (artistic/aesthetic, historical, social, spiritual, educational, personal) for which a/r/t/ography offers a valuable mechanism to capture. The metaphor of a journey among these territories and in between spaces, with moments of stillness (stop moments) and movement (across territories) facilitates the hermeneutics of the reading/dialoguing with the monument.

4/ Openings: a/r/tography encourages the ‘opening’ of relationships and conversations and opening up possibilities (Irwin and Springgay, 2008: xxx). Beyond the known and the already learned, a/r/tography acknowledges resistances as “places” where knowledge emerges. In the in-between spaces of an a/r/tographer’s inquiry, in the artistic mode of query, with the connections with history, education, art, religion, ecology, within the art practice there are prospects for new openings, links, interconnections and conversations. Approaching/reading/dialoguing with a monument bears its own symbolisms and significances. The prospects of such approaches in educational settings manifest new openings/discoveries of new knowledge and new possibilities regarding the challenges of contemporary society and education. The sometimes initial surprise when dialoguing with arts of the past may result in enriching the reader’s knowledge and understanding as within arts of the past lie the beliefs and worldviews of peoples of the past and their response to the everydayness and to existential queries. Therefore engaging with arts of the past through the lenses of today opens the ground for a polsyncretic stance and source of relationships from where new knowledge and understandings may emerge.

5/ Reverberation: Irwin and Springgay (2008: xxx) consider reverberation as “a dynamic movement, dramatic or subtle, that forces a/r/tographers to shift their
understandings of phenomena”. The aforementioned dynamic flow led to an artistic response to the study of the medieval monuments and the iconographical art. The artistic response which could be considered as a second reading from 21\textsuperscript{st} century stance, acts as an antiphonal melodical play in which through the interaction/dialogue of the past (through art of the past) and present times (via the artwork created by a 21\textsuperscript{st} century a/ r/ tographer) understandings are embodied and deepened. Rhythm, form, line and colour are transformed and reanimated through today’s view. The transformation is amalgamated through the same media (rhythm, form, line and colour) in contemporary artwork.

6/ Excess: excess is “that which is created when control and regulation disappear and we grapple with what lies outside the acceptable” (Irwin and Springgay, 2008: xxx). Excess, then, leads to possible transformation. The study of a religious artform of the past (icon painting) could not only mean the study of artistic elements as line, colour, shape, form, architectonics etcetera) but also, as mentioned before, the world beliefs of peoples of the past and inevitably the relation (by comparison) to contemporary beliefs as well as the study of self. How did peoples of the past view spirituality, sickness, death, nature? How can we describe that worldview in terms of (holistic) relationships/bonds? How do we view ourselves and the spiritual, death, decay, and nature, today? What survived till today and in what form? Ultimately, the artwork could be regarded as a commentary of the dialogic engagement with the art of the past and what it represents as explored through contemporary lenses.

Through the renderings, theory, practice and creativity intertwine and inform one another. The interactions and insights of the a/ r/ tographer with the phenomenon in question offer insight into relational aesthetics and relational learning.

The action of reading a monument was not an action directed from a person to the subject… rather I experienced it as a dialogic relationship. The architectural element of the dome did not appear as a screen designed to visually show a story, rather the dome was an invitation and a stage for a reciprocal action. The direction of the reading was not from the viewer towards the murals of the dome; rather it was directed from the physical topos (space) to the imaginary chora (space) and to the inner topoi (spaces) of the heart, the body, the intellect of the viewer. To “read” a monument- as a viewer-means to be situated in an “in between” position where “the sensual world provides the
ever present condition of coition with the environment of which we are inseparably
joined” (Barrie, 2010:229). Attempting to “read” the Byzantine worldview expanded the
way I perceive myself within the world, resulting in the surprising and audacious feeling
of existing and being in between the past, the present and the future and a dissolve of
separations. Reading the artwork/monument was like delving into a shell of memory, the
shell of the world, a shell of myself.

…a coquillage de mémoire

that time eloquently sculpted

according to the playful interlude

with Mnemosyne…
Figure 39.  Coquillage de Mémoire, E. Hadjipieri, oil on linen, 60cm X 60cm
2.4.1. A few words on poetic inquiry:

*Language listens to the world. I listen with it. What I hear when I listen is a question, which is listening itself. The question often changes form: from silence to breathing to speaking to music to voices to visions to silence again*” *(Bringhurst, 2006:63)*

Bringhurst pays attention to inhabiting/dwelling within language, in other words, as a way of being/existing and a vehicle for reading/listening to/understanding the several scriptures of the natural and constructed worlds in which we dwell and comprehend the multiple and different meanings deriving from it.

In education the question/challenge turns around to how to read/listen the language(s) /meanings of the manifold world we live on and within, how to interact/read/translate the smells, singings, rocks, rivers, flying of birds, a monument, a medieval castle or an antiquity town, a temple, or even the monuments of ourselves. How to listen to the multiplicity of this world, human and more than human, that co-exist and shape the polymorphous and polyphonic entity that we call “world”?

the autumns of our lives year in year out

“sound” like the melody of a flute:
Melancolique, sad, fragile,

turning the letters of missed expectations into golden ochre

and the joy of “touched” dreams into a swirling of yellow golden leaves

following – tuned to nature- their choreographic destiny

to the ephemeral of their being…

Like travellers without a star to orient

we sailed for the unknown

the autumn being the chora (place) of retrospection…
I am by no means a poet. However, poems and images co-exist with text and a few words on poetic inquiry are necessary. Poetry, as with visual arts, gave me the medium to express what could be otherwise regarded as ineffable or with difficulty expressed... The lyric/poetic way emerged naturally as I was interacting/dialoguing with the monuments. A poetic response served me as a natural means to capture my emotions and thoughts in ways that cannot be easily be captured and be included in an academic text. Poetry facilitated my willingness to communicate my ideas and sentiments with the readers of this text. Writing poetry enhanced being present with the subject matter and acted as an invitation to listen to and read/dialogue stones, smells, songs, monuments, medieval towns and villages, the monument of oneself and cosmos.

Poetry's contribution is to broaden our oral horizons to listen/capture the nuances of the pluralism of voices within the network of relationships we live in. The metaphoric poetical language as lyric thought “is a kind of ontological exploration and metaphors are the charges set by the seismic crew”. Metaphorical thinking creates vibrant waves that enhance seeing the world anew and accelerates “the decomposition of the rigid aspects of worldviews” (Derby, 2012:12) with great prospects regarding how to live in the world. Derby (2012;12) supports that the development of the “metaphoric capacity characteristic of good poetry is in a sense a pedagogic practice of central concern to ecological education”.

Leggo (2008:171) considers poetry as a “way of knowing and living, a way of examining lived experiences by attending to issues of identity, relationship and community. Poetry acknowledges how the heart and imagination are always integral part of human knowing. Poetry seeks the truth about human experience. Poetry is a way thinking through affinities”. Leggo (2008:171) continues that “writing enables the writer to explore possibilities for meaningful living in the world”... and adds that “attention to words can open up possibilities for attending to the world and becoming in the world”. But isn’t opening up to possibilities of what Maxine Greene calls, “releasing the imagination”, a way of, and an educational aim/vehicle/ambition, to learn how to live in this world? Attending multiple ways of and becoming assists in perceiving ourselves as parts in an interconnected world. In Greene’s words: “All we can do … is cultivate multiple ways of seeing and multiple dialogues in a world where nothing stays the same” (1995:16).
Thus the poetry interwoven throughout the text are the places where thoughts, ideas, monuments and other visual art forms are interconnected and from which possibilities of co-existing and dialoguing with art forms of the past and the world in general, merge/fuse. Poetry and art forms enhance the creation of new spaces where understandings emerge, which make our living in the world more meaningful.

Among the forms of qualitative research and especially arts based inquiry stands poetic inquiry. Poetic inquiry is an attempt to offer interdisciplinary opportunities in humanities, social sciences and aesthetics among other disciplines. It is a “response to the crisis of representation experienced in postmodern critical perspectives (Prendergrast, 2009:2). Either presented as a single poem or accompanied with text, image or artwork or as “a prose based essay throughout”, poetic inquiry is receiving acceptance in conferences and reviewed publications (Prendergrast, 2009: 2).
Chapter 3.

Towards the sacred: chapels and domes

Seen from a distance, the dome, at times, appears to be reflecting and spreading golden sunshine onto the building leaving the spectator wondering if the spherical dome is a movement of the land through the building to discreetly reach the sky and attempt to capture a tiny part of its vastness... or is the dome a gesture/ a gift from the sky to the land or an invitation to move towards the infiniteness of the universe upwards... What is beneath the dome? What does this in-between location (land and sky) signify (if it signifies anything at all)?

The shape of the dome in relation to the rest of the building and in relation also to the landscape, leaves the viewer with a feeling of flow, vehemence, serenity. Although taller than the rest of the building, the dome lacks the tall poignant angles and niches of the Gothic architectural rhythm that give the sense of a strong force towards the sky. Rather, the hemispherical dome appears to be gently and calmly standing in between heaven and earth, leaving a feeling of wonder: is the dome a celestial gift from heaven to earth as a protective cover or is it the earth trying to reach the skies... The Gothic rhythm comes easily to mind since, according to Miheles (1945), both the gothic and byzantine rhythms could be regarded as architectonics of the sublime, in “comparison” to the aesthetic category of the “beautiful”. (my notes)

The dome of a church is one of the ecclesiastical elements that are distinguished by being viewed externally (as architectural part) and esoterically/internally (as a part bearing its own symbolism as architectonics and as the place depicting Christ, the Pantocrator (All Holder, All Ruler). Beneath the dome is “inscribed” (the word “paint” in Greek etymologically means life + write) the image of Christ the Pantocrator, usually with one hand blessing the worshippers and the other holding the New Testament book or a papyrus with phrases from gospels. Round the Pantocrator, there is a chorus of angels. The mural with the chorus of angels is called “Throne Preparation” and has eschatological meaning: the narration of the second coming of Christ. In a lower level (below the “throne preparation) are murals of the Evangelists, Apostles and Saints.

3.1. Towards the place

Via a forested narrow street, after two turnings appears a huge, many centuries old oak tree that shields the chapel. Descending the four steps, one enters the yard in
front of the chapel, leaving a fountain on the right hand. The building, simple, humble, tranquil is hardly distinguishable from the all year round green oak tree or the mountain rocks on the right side. The, almost one thousand years old chapel, stands calmly, patiently, quietly. I sit for a while to take a breath, and cast a more attentive look of the environment and the building. Other senses begin to be more noticeable as well as the surrounding elements: the breeze interacting with the leaves, the birds song, the nearby stream, the smell of the ground after the rain, the last glimpses of the sun on a spring afternoon at my face… the sounds of human activity are lost one and a half kilometer away even though the sounds of cars (the valley acts as an amplifier) interrupt the tranquility once or twice.

The Pantocrator in the dome surrounded by a chorus of angels, the saints, the donors, the angels unfolding the map of the universe/cosmos… The wall paintings are narrating a journey, a journey that started very long ago, before I was born, at the beginning of times, “the voyage of cosmos”. At the same time the journey appears to be departing anew, at the ever present, a journey individual but also universal, a journey that transpasses the borders of time and moves from “now” to the past and the future, a journey from here (earth) to the celestial, metaphysical, spiritual. Attending aesthetically the murals resembles a promenade through art(s) (artforms of the past: à la manière Grecque et à l’ Italienne) leading in imaginary topoi (places).

On the western wall inside, there are murals with the personification of the Sea and the Land, the angels, the Saints, the donors—people like you and me—living in other times and whose needs brought their steps into the chapel asking for guidance, help or thanking … Donors dressed in aristocratic medieval time dresses and poor people…all of them appearing equal in the challenges of life… Were their needs/anxieties/worries much different from my own? What were their existential worries? How did they see themselves and the world they lived in?
Figure 40. Towards the light, E. Hadjipieri, oil on canvas, 2014, 50cm X 80cm.
The murals, all with existential character appear to make an invitation into a journey beyond the boundaries of time and space, but also beyond the boundaries of the self, to the chora (landscape) of the heart. It seems that in the iconographical program of the chapel, all, the viewer, the sea, the land, the saints, the donors (laity depicted smaller with the gesture of praying, by the Saints), the angels, the stars, earth are—whether they realize it or not—on a continual voyage… towards God, towards Light, under the auspices of the Pantocrator… a journey that passes a person’s lifespan over another spectrum…

the autumns of our lives year in year out
“sound” like the melody of a flute:
Melancolique, sad, fragile,
turning the letters of missed expectations into golden ochre
and the joy of “touched” dreams into a swirling of yellow golden leaves
following – tuned to nature- their choreographic destiny
to the ephemeral of their being…

Like travellers without a star to orient
we sailed for the unknown

the autumn being the chora (place) of retrospection…

As the summers of our lives fade and our bare foot steps on a sandy beach are erased by the waves of time,

stroke by stroke, the touched and untouched dreams
add tints of yellow ochre into the leaves
transforming into pure gold

the leaves of our lives…

Take my hand…
Figure 41. Take my hand..., E. Hadjipieri, oil on linen, 23 carat gold, 2016, 60 cm X 60 cm
As I approach the chapel of the Akathist Hymn, my first thoughts are on the building and its architectural form. Although appearing small to my eyes, used to seeing
huge 20 and 21st buildings, they probably appeared bigger to medieval people. Despite the fact that I recognize the “roofing” type usual in the chapels of this mountaineer, the rest of the building is unique as an architectural form, very well bonded with the landscape and especially, with the site of the mountain at its right. Wood and stone and clay, materials taken from the earth and being returned to it in the form of an ornament, or a bridge linking the earth with the celestial, the known and touchable with the unearthly, the ineffable, the metaphysical. The yard, appears to have been stepped upon by people for a long time and the votive offerings, usually textiles, dusted and destroyed, are silent testimonies of times of poorness, times of need, times of illnesses, times of fear, times of acknowledgement of the weakness of the human conditions. How could it have been like, I wonder, peasant women praying, asking for help for cure of their offspring in times where the doctors were too far away and too expensive to visit for in the core of time, anxieties, sadness and challenges never quitted humanity no matter the chronological era?

I open the wooden door and enter. Light darkness but no fear. Some known figures are visible, the saints (icons) appear on the iconostasis. I light a candle. The atmosphere in the inner space changes. The yellow-orange light diffuses and makes the place appear more familiar. I light more candles and sit for a while. It takes some time to slow down and see. As Pikiones says, it needs an inner eye to see. Sometimes the inner eye opens as the physical eyes close. The semi darkness brings mysticism to the place. As I look at the figures of saints on the icons, the big expressive eyes seem to stare back. I feel I can be heard by them and murmur a small pray. Now, more calm and relieved, I watch carefully the icons. The semi darkness, the rhythmical decoration on the wooden iconostasis, the smell of incense, the weak light of the candles, the tranquility, the gaze towards the icons and the big expressive eyes that seem to return the gaze, the forested scenery outside, bring a sense of being transferred elsewhere, uplifted to other spheres, more spiritual vibrations orchestrated. I had read once on Cistercian monastic architecture that the architectural form “was not intended to take one’s breath away, quite the contrary, it was intended to take one’s breath, slowly and evenly, to an internal quietude, just as the valley site itself invited this slow process of interiorization. The “message” of the church was one of simplicity, of harmony, of tranquility” (Kinder, 2002 in Richmond, 2009). I would add Miheles (1946/2001), linking the aesthetic with the sublime, speaking of Byzantine architecture and art wanting to ascend the human to the celestial or St. Gregory Palamas (in Connena, 2000) who supports that the center of human existence is the human heart as depicted in the architectures and panel icons. I cannot help but acknowledge an aesthetic esoteric movement: in the landscape there is situated the chapel and its yard, inside the yard there is the chapel, simple outside but the withinness of it is rich, inside the chapel there is
the sublime marked with the iconostasis. One might say a movement towards the heart of the building and metaphorically to that part of the body that in order to touch it you need hands longer than the universe (Saint Nicholas Velimirovich). Or, one might say, there is also another movement, exactly the opposite form the aforementioned, co-existing with the first: from the interior and smaller to the outside and bigger... an embrace of love and compassion from the sublime outwards towards the world... (my notes)

As the cold brings me back to reality, in my mind come people of the old times minding the weather, often the snow covered path; they come and light a candle and humbly rest their worries with the saints. For centuries, this was the case, day in, day out, year in, year out. The chapel transforms from a screen where art and the worldview of the past is depicted, to a stage where people and worldviews of the past become vivid, alive. The timely and even cultural distance (though I embody parts of that culture as parts of the culture of the place of I was born and I am currently living) could make this aesthetic journey difficult. I think, though, that by spending time in the place, being physically there, could enable the visitor to have glimpses of the past and the worldview of these specific people.

My gaze moves around the thick stone walls below the dome... On the Western wall I cannot but be "captured" by the frescoes... The chapel of the Akathist Hymn opens other doors of perception... the figures there are part of a special hagiographical series, each one being inspired by the Akathist Hymn (a hymn, separated in 24 parts, each starting by each letter of the Greek alphabet, regarding psalms on Virgin Mary, the hymn to be sung standing, which is what "akathist" means) narrating a special historical event of Constantinople being saved from siege due to miraculous appearance of Virgin Mary as well as the gratitude of the laity towards her for her protection and affection in every aspect of the life of every person. The narration of the gratitude and the visualization of this gratitude into a complex iconographical program in the Frankish and the Venetian conquest period of the island —having both Byzantine (à la manièra Greca) and Renaissance elements (à l’ Italienne)—results in a rich in colour and form artistic wave (the Cypro- Renaissance) style which bears elements of the coexistence of two major artistic traditions (the spirituality of Byzantine art and the 3D perspective of Renaissance) and thus is a great source of inspiration.

On another wall, evidence, reminiscent of another era of the turbulent history of the island, is visible: the mural series of the figures of Saints with the eyes destroyed. It was common during the Ottoman conquest (1570) for the Ottomans to violently enter churches. They destroyed the gaze of the painted Saints as the strength of the gaze could have initiated feelings of fear or guilt...
The scenography of the dome in Panayia Arakiotissa painted by the well-known Constantinopolitan artist Apsevdes reveals through the beauty of the calligraphic line a rhythmically orchestrated world, a perfected world.

The gaze of the Pantocrator follows me as I move below. I feel it, even if I do not direct my gaze upwards. Wondering on the continual gaze of the Pantocrator, another scene comes to mind. The absence of the Pantocrator Mural as evidenced through the words of a refugee, three decades after the Turkish invasion on the island (1974) and the military occupation of the northern part of the island, who managed, due to a political agreement that resulted in the opening of the “Green line” which divides the island in two parts; to visit her village in the occupied areas as well as the chapel of St Eufemianos in Lyssi village at the occupied northern part of the island. She described that upon entering the small chapel she had the feeling of absence. When she finally raised her head upwards she linked the feeling of absence with the lack of the mural covering the dome. The mural, following the fate of many monuments in the occupied (Northern part) areas of Cyprus had been removed by illicit traders of antiquities, sold to Menil Museum in the USA and returned after some years to the Byzantine Museum. (my notes)

Under the gaze of the Pantocrator of the dome that could “see” all and each one of us individually, and those of the chorus of angels and saints, spatial boundaries collapse. One cannot but let oneself be carried away and feel the polyphonic vibrations of the subliminal incantations of the chorus of saints and angels inviting the viewer to another “reality”, a metaphysical one, to an interwoven and reciprocal existence that challenges the known and leads to another perception of the world, the spiritual perception of the world as sacred.

The chorus of angels and saints, depicted in ¾ position, appear to rise from the wall and move downwards and towards the laity to invite them to the spiritual sphere. It is at this moment that I decided that I would “add” my own epigraphic sign in the subliminal scenography of cosmos as it is calligraphically and chromatically symbolized in the anthropic geometrical standards, in the dome. I would rather concentrate on the angels and paint my angel as a reflection of my being, since according to the Orthodox Church every person from the outset of his/her life is accompanied by an angel.
I stared once again polysyncretically at the chorus of angels, thoughtfully, attempting to grasp the polymorphic character of the depiction of the angelic chorus that faced me. The angels have certain specific stylistic characteristics (rich curly hair with a ribbon, big eyes, small mouths, wings) but yet, each one has specific characteristics that differentiate one from the other. After all, the perception of individuality is vital in the Eastern Church.

I would keep, of course, at the stage of creating a sketch of the figure, the ¾ facial position, big expressive eyes, the curly hair and the multi-colored wings, the calligraphic curvilinear character when drawing, as well as the chromatical movement from warm colors to tonically lighter cold colors. Yet I will need to pay special attention to the “morphéé (the face), which is the element that gives the character of the angel.

I will be working from the positioning of a panel icon that would be viewed from a close position in contrast to the murals that are made in such a way to appear beautiful from a distance. Fresco painting requires decisive and quick paint strokes as fresco dries quickly thus not allowing time for details. Creating a panel icon will give me time for more detailed work. In some instances, the head is proportionally bigger (or as seen in other murals, smaller, following the ratio head: body as 1:9 or 1:12 or even 1:14 (e.g. Andrey Roubliev) when the regular analogy is 1:8 or 1:8,5). In many Cypriot churches the head, however is proportionally bigger mostly because of a naïve style of Iconography during the eras of conquest).

I will emphatically make the head bigger and the eyes also large as I want to emphasize the gaze effect. When I feel as if the angel is staring back at me or as if the angel’s gaze follows me I will stop; it means that the first stage of drawing/sketching is completed.

When sketching the linings of clothes, or sketching the forms of the wings, it is important that the lines (e.g. for the dress) support one another in a way that the existence of one prerequisite (need) is fulfilled by the existence of the other. In designing the parts (e.g. the wings) the forms should be independent from the whole but yet in relevance with the whole. Iconography is an art form of relations, in theory and practice (technical art). The interdependence of lines and forms and the relevance of parts and the whole are rules applied on every part of the painting. For example, in the arrangement of the curly hair, each single hair follows a rhythm and all hair follows the rhythm of the face and the face
follows the rhythm of the body/figure whilst the figure follows the rhythm of the mural composition.

In the process of painting/ coloring, I will add diaphanous layers of color starting from tonically dark warm colors to tonically lighter (and in some cases cold color). The choice of color is mine but following the examples of old masters of iconography, I will choose to use “warm” “colors” like umber, sienna, vermillion, ochre, green or almost the same palette used by iconographers, medieval western artists and the Romantics, (warm earthly hues plus blue).

3.2. First artistic response

My first artistic response to seeing the dome is to draw an angel. As the chronotopia beneath the dome expands from here and now to the past (time of construction and painting) to the future and eternity (as the Pantocrator and the Throne Preparation murals narrate) the angel, is an entity of this world and the metaphysical one. I choose to paint my angel as a reflection of myself, my body being here and now and my angel linking, getting glimpses of that other world which can be seen not by natural but by the inner eyes (Pikionis, 1935). The ethereal nature of the angel brings to mind the sense that there is something beyond what we see, hear, smell or grasp … and eventually guides us to (re)consider the ephemeral of our existence…

Thinking on how to draw my angel, I decide to start with the basic guidelines, while leaving ground for experimentation as the work develops. I like the lines of Apsevdes, the iconographer of Arakiotissa chapel, his curvy calligraphic lines show movement but also sureness of the head, conviction of the mind and faith.

Once the topic (angel) and the basic guidelines are decided, I begin sketching directly on wood panel (previously gesso prepared). I use a mixture of ochre and English red diluted in a mixture of egg and vinegar (egg tempera). The color is almost transparent. The transparency allows me to make a first sketch and make the necessary adjustments to the drawing without –at this stage- damaging the wood/gesso surface or putting too many layers of color. First I make the basic forms. The basic forms (head, figure, wings) are included into bigger geometrical shapes (big oval) so that there is a coherence when designing the lines. Coherence of one part to the other part and each
part to the whole is a fundamental element in iconographer’s Apsevdes murals in Panayia Arakiotissa as well as in iconographical work in general.

What follows is a series of images, depicting the stages of layering tempera on the wooden panel icon.

Figure 43. Angel in progress, E. Hadjipieri, egg tempera on gesso prepared wood, 2015, 50cmX 30cm.

At this point I need to make the design clearer. I clean what is redundant on the surface. I emphasize the basic lines with dark colour. This is the stage that I can ask if the angel appears to be staring back. The returning gaze effect is a very vital element for the function and the successful drawing of the icon. At this stage, as stated before, the sketching is in progress. The dark lines allow me to examine once again the anatomy and make necessary adjustments and corrections plus attempt to give the first stigma of character of the figure.
Gradually all surfaces will be covered by almost transparent layers of color. Transparency (lazzuras) is a technique that “allows” the final artistic product to appear less materialistic or more metaphysical if you will, which is the aim of iconography: to depict another reality, a sphere not of this world, a sphere of spirituality. Unfortunately, the layering cannot be shown on a photograph. One of the major problems, we, students of iconographical art (and if I could add, students of art especially arts of the past, e.g. Renaissance, Romanticism) encounter is the need to visit often museums, churches and

Figure 44. Angel, in progress, E. Hadjipieri, egg tempera on gesso prepared wood.
galleries for a closer look at the icons (or other artworks) as many important elements of an artwork are not captured by the photographic lenses or printed reproductions.

Figure 45.  Angel in progress, E. Hadjipieri, egg tempera on gesso prepared wood, 2015, 50cmx30cm
Figure 46. Angel in progress, E. Hadjipieri, egg tempera on gesso prepared wood, 2015, 50 X 30 cm.
Figure 47. Angel in progress, E. Hadjipieri, egg tempera on gesso prepared wood, 2015, 50cm X 30cm.
Figure 48. Angel in progress, E. Hadjipieri, egg tempera on gesso prepared wood, 2015, 50cm X 30 cm.
The addition of colour influences the impression the artwork makes and allows
place for experimentation during the development stage. All the surfaces (face, clothes,
wings) will be gradually developed simultaneously so that there will be chromatic
harmony. As I add transparent layers of colour, the dark guidelines made in the previous
stage soon almost disappear allowing changes. Gradually as the colour gives the
‘suspicion’ of volume, there is a need to re-think and probably re-define the sketch. As
the work develops, more and more layers of egg tempera are added, and the surface will
no longer allow changes. Unlike materials invented from the 1600 onwards (oils and
much later acrylics and other synthetic colours) there is a limitation on the number of
layers I can apply. There is no definite number, but you “sense” when the surface
gradually becomes saturated. The sensibility of the calligraphic sable brushes passes on
to the hand.
Figure 49. Angel in progress, E. Hadjipieri, egg tempera on gesso prepared wood, 2015, 50cm X 30 cm.
Figure 50. Angel in progress, E. Hadjipieri, egg tempera on gesso prepared wood, 2015, 50cm X 30cm
Figure 51. Angel in progress, E. Hadjipieri, egg tempera on gesso prepared wood, 2015, 50cm X 30cm

Influenced by the earthly hues used by 12th and 13th century iconographers in Cyprus, my chromatic palette includes earth green, burnt and raw sienna, burnt and raw umber, English red, cadmium red, vermilion and ochre. So far, in my artistic practice as iconographer, I have chosen the most known way by following the principles of the Macedonian rather than the Cretan schools and for some years I was fascinated by the chromatic variety and synthesis of the Russian School.
These last months, however, mostly because part of my professional duties involve the creation of activities that would enable primary school students to explore and enjoy the monuments in the location near their school, I have been paying attention to the local characteristics of the iconographical art. Though it would sound like a cliché, I (re)discovered a rich resource of inspiration and learning. The calligraphic lines of 13th century iconographer Apsevdes, the earthly colors by the anonymous iconographer of
the dome at the narthex (Panagia Phorviotissa) were my basic influences in painting this angel. Also, as previously mentioned, the analogy of the human body and head as depicted in many 12th and 13th century churches in Cyprus (Maniera Cypria) was chosen so that more emphasis would be given to the head and the eyes.

Figure 53. Angel in progress, E. Hadjipieri, egg tempera on gesso prepared wood, 2015, 50cm X 30 cm.
In drawing the clothes, Apsevdes is again a very good teacher especially when studying rhythm. Every line is not independent but rather exists in relation to the others. In drawing the hair, the same principle is applied: every single hair exists in rhythm with the rest. As noted earlier, everything in an icon exists in a rhythmical relation to each individual section of the form (forms).

I leave the application of leaves of 23 carat gold for a later (but not final) stage as the golden plated surface is sensitive and thus can be damaged easily before varnishing. The application of golden leaves changes the way the colours look. Some appear duller and some appear brighter. So, before final stage I have to re-establish chromatic equilibrium.

Almost done. Does the angel appear “alive” as if she is staring back? Is there harmony in color, form, light, line? What does the expression of the angel look like? Does the angel appear benevolent, strict, unreachable and friendly?

The last task before varnishing is the lettering. With calligraphic accuracy the name of the figure plus any letters in a text are written.

The varnishing is important as the icon is painted using natural means (wood, natural colours, egg tempera, varnishes with mastic and other natural materials) meaning that the artwork is extremely sensitive to damage. Using recipes which have been used for centuries to make and apply varnish, I complete the icon. Varnishing is a long process demanding numerous ingredients and techniques of preparation as well as being cautious not to add too much or too small a quantity of one ingredient; too much boiling or cooling, or humidity would result in damage. However, varnishing is a process that I enjoy because following the strict guidelines for the preparation and the smell of mastic and other oils, smells from nature almost forgotten, and the slow and attentive process has the effect of “slowing down” myself living in the 21st century quick rhythms. Also, there is a sense of taking into my hands the whole process of icon painting, from the wood panel preparation with gesso, to the painting and finally the sealing of the creation with varnish, exactly as generations of iconographers of the past had been doing… this practice gives a sense of unity with the past…

Studying the art of iconography in the actual places the frescoes and panel icons were painted and used in devotional/worship purposes, the ability to focus in certain
aspects but without excluding from my optical spectrum the rest, enabled me to better understand the idea of “Rhythm” and the interdependence of the parts in multiple levels: the murals in relation to the architectonics, the building in relation to the landscape, the subjects of a mural in relation to the topic of the mural, the parts of a subject (e.g. the hands or head) in relation to the whole figure, the lettering in relation to the subject … the color palette used in every mural or segment of panel icons in relation to the wholeness of the artistic inscription of the place (in frescoes and panel icons)… a close detailed look into the way the iconographer used the brush reveals more than what can be shown from a photo. If I might add, the atmosphere of the place could change the experience of the place…

My attempt to read the architectural and artistic (wall painted) element of the dome resulted in “engagement with the artifacts and a confrontation of the reader with an unresolvable paradox and so drive the mind to the spiritual level on which such passages (images) have their proper resolution and meaning.” (Constas, 2014: 21). In our 21st century image and consumer laden world, medieval architecture is an organic unity and such artistic work can “reveal the richness and distinctiveness of the local cultural community and is a worthy educational activity” (Richmond, 2009:63)

3.3. Second artistic response: towards the sacred

Creating the painting: The sacred space is the beginning

Let’s follow St Gregory Palamas’ words that the “heart is the center of human existence” and accept them as being manifested—regarding architecture—in the monasterial complex growing-expanding from the chapel (the heart) inside the inner yard to the perimeter of the monastery and the landscape. I choose to place the monastery in the center of the canvas and part of the landscape surrounding the building. Any items revealing evidence of time/epoch (e.g. cars) will be omitted as I want the viewer to decide on the time.

I will follow the architectural morphology of the monument without changes, at least not major ones. From a specific angle, the architectural complex appears to be rolling around a spiral. The spiral will lead the reader-viewer to move imaginatively within
the landscape but could also make the monument appear to be moving. The building complex from at a certain angle resembles a boat moving left and upwards.

Once the composition is set, there is the time factor to be determined. Wanting to give the sense of a monument standing on the land for centuries I must decide on the approach/technique and especially the factor of “light”. Artistically, in considering my choices, I can “move” from the Renaissance era of implementing technique and color palette-light as they were used by artists of their time (when painting buildings, palaces, churches, towns et cetera) up to and including photorealism. I reject photorealism as this technique would force me to focus on the details required to depict the monument at the risk of losing the character of the place. I consider my choices. The Renaissance technique and color spectrum/light could be applied. The Renaissance palette would add a darkness to the painting. Yes, the dark colors (based on burnt umber) would give the effect of “oldness” but on the other hand they would result in “hiding” the building, as the architectural lines would not be very visible or distinguishable. In addition to that, dark hues would not compete with the Mediterranean landscape which is so much more translucent.
The final decision of the colour palette is taken at the initial steps of the painting. I decide to start with the Renaissance palette and “see” how it works on canvas (photo 1). My sense is that eventually I will need to “light” the colour and move to a rather ‘romantic palette (colours mostly preferred by romantic artists and which include mostly warm earthly hues) by adding almost transparent layers of colour, thus still keeping the medieval/renaissance darkness/oldness that would enrich the texture and also.
Figure 55. The sacred space is the beginning, (in progress), E. Hadjipieri, oil, 2015, 70cm X 70cm

Figure 56. the sacred space is the beginning, (in progress), E. Hadjipieri, oils, 2015, 70cm X 70cm
The earthly yellowish hues of the Romantic palette would give me both the effect of ‘oldness’ and the tones of a Mediterranean landscape “speckled” by light.

Once the decision of the colour palette is made (while still leaving place for experimentation) I choose to let the building and landscape evolve through transparent layers of colour. The gradual lighting through transparent layers result in harmony (regarding colour) in all the forms of the painting (background landscape, front landscape, building), harmony in the lighting conditions of the several forms/elements of the artwork. And finally, this approach would allow space for experimentation as all the parts of painting would be developing simultaneously. The process of changing palette and lighting appears in the stages in figures 61 and 65.
Figure 57. The sacred space is the beginning, (in progress), E. Hadjipieri, oils, 2015, 70cm X 70 cm
Figure 58. The sacred space is the beginning, E. Hadjipieri, 2015, 70 cm X 70 cm
As the painting develops with the transparent layers of color/light, layers of history are revealed. When thinking/preparing the chromatic and light conditions I attempted to imagine how the building would have appeared in different periods. As the monastic building takes shape and whilst the architectural lines become more visible, the monument is revealed through the several architectural rhythms and the additions in the perimeter. (Figures 64-65)
Figure 60. the sacred space is the beginning, in progress, E. Hadjipieri, oils, 2015, 70cm X 70cm
At this point (figure 67) the artwork is nearly 70% finished. I choose to stop adding layers of color and rather concentrate on the form in front of the monastery which is perspectively closer to the viewers’ eyes. I decide to add trees at those points where the new forms would enhance harmony in the composition (specifically at the points where the building has sharp architectural lines in order to create tension for the viewer or where there is empty space) without hiding the monasterial complex but rather give a sense of a monastery within landscape/nature. The addition of a blossoming almond tree would add more vivid color and an “air” of freshness to the rather conservative colors on canvas. Despite the fact that the landscape is covered by trees, these two additions, the old olive tree and the blossoming almond tree do not exist in the actual landscape. They are created because the compositional parts of the painting “demand” new forms that would both fill the empty place and by acting as a playful interlude that by shape and color would emphasize the aspect of oldness and timelessness (intertemporality), both being characteristics of the monument, both (oldness and timelessness) sculpting the soul of the monument.
The rules of perspective show that the olive tree—closer to the building than the almond tree—adds a creative tension to the overall movement of the painting (to the left). The olive tree gives a sense of oldness and intertemporality or timelessness whilst the almond tree gives a sense of freshness and newness (enhanced by the blossoms).

Figure 62. The sacred space is the beginning, E. Hadjipieri, 2015, 70cm X70cm
The trees and flowers (figures 68, 69) are parts of local Mediterranean flora that help the viewer locate the monument within the landscape. The colors used are attentively refined so that they give the sense of flora absorbing every drop of rain or early morning moisture to have their thirst, in the Mediterranean hot climate, quenched. I used dark and brownish green hues with discreet touches of spring green.
As the painting almost reaches its final stage (figure 70) I stop to reflect on it.

Is the monastery visible/viewable but also united with the landscape?

Do the chromatic palette and light locate the monument spatially (Mediterranean)? Do the chromatic palette and light guide the viewer in a timely location, independent from synchronous time? (Can time location—depending on the viewer—be somewhere between now and the past?)

Is there harmony in the chosen color/light?

Is there harmony in the composition (shapes)?

Does the painting give—at least—a glimpse of the soul/heart of the monument?

Figure 64. The sacred space is the beginning, E. Hadjipieri, oils, 2015, 70cm X70cm.
What did I learn by developing the specific project?

I “know” the monasterial building” better than before. Every line to show the architectonics, every brush to reveal the texture of the walls, every drop of ochre and umber hues to give a sense of “oldness”, a sense of something emerging from ancient times and as well every drop of yellow and white hues to reveal the Mediterranean light so strong, penetrating and present, helped me to locate myself within the landscape where the monasterial complex is situated. By drawing and painting a stone from the bell tower, a ceramic of the roof, a curving line of the chapels (figures 70 and 71), a leaf from the olive tree (figure 72), a blossom from the almond tree or cyclamens or chamomile flowers (figures 73-74) helped me come to know both the monastery and the Mediterranean landscape better as I had to pay attention to the details of the monastery and analyze them in terms of shape, colour, texture, light and then refine them so that I could understand the character of the natural and built landscape as a whole but also the character within every small part.

Figure 65. The sacred space is the beginning (detail), E. Hadjipieri, 2015, oils, 70cm X 70cm

The combination of both working in microlevel (detail) and macrolevel (having in mind the whole picture) helped the project evolve. And to be enabled to move in the
aforementioned levels (micro and macro), a combination of feeling, body and mind acting together helped me to arrive at what I perceive to be the essence/soul of the subject.

Figure 66. The sacred space is the beginning (detail), E. Hadjipieri, 2015, 70cm x70cm
Figure 67. The sacred space is the beginning (detail), E. Hadjipieri, 2015, 70cm X 70cm.

Figure 68. The sacred space is the beginning (detail), E. Hadjipieri, 2015, 70cm X 70cm.
Figure 69. The sacred space is the beginning (detail), E. Hadjipieri, 2015, 70cm X 70cm.
The process of moving from the whole picture to the details and vice versa with all the emotion deriving from experiencing the place that continuously guided me as I would analyze shapes/forms, texture, light/colour and reform them on canvas. This process/movement enriched by feeling led to my decision to implement the technique of the transparent layers, a time-consuming technique that results in a more elaborate final stage and also makes the hint that the final product is much more than the sum of the parts.

Looking at the painting at this final stage I capture something other than just a realistic attribution (carrying out/performance) of the subject. The artwork is a new “place”, a new landscape enveloped with the emotion, thought/imagination deriving—as aesthetic embodied responses—from a specific site/space. These aesthetic embodied responses guided me as the creator to decide on several technical aspects of the artwork. The reading/view of the specific artwork by other viewers/readers will also create new imaginary and internal “spaces” created by the interaction of the new reader with the artwork through the perspective of the creator (on canvas) that hopefully would evoke the emotion of the former.

The ability of art works to challenge the mind, the sentiments and the imagination of the viewer, to challenge the memory, to enact queries and questions, or to trace ways of solutions, in other words to interact with and inspire, is unique. It is within this characteristic that the power of the arts lies. And if this inner process can come out in the form of the arts, or a series of paintings in this case, then the production of artwork as a second reading of the initial artwork projects the power of the initial artwork to become a source of inspiration. In Dewey’s (1934) words:

…to perceive, a beholder must create his own experience. And his creation must include relations comparable to those which the original producer underwent. They are not the same in any literal sense. But with the perceiver, as with the artist, there must be an ordering of the elements of the whole that is in form, although not in details, the same as the process of organization the creator of the work consciously experienced. Without an act of recreation, the object is not perceived as a work of art. The artist selected, simplified, clarified, abridged and condensed according to his interest. The beholder must go through these operations according to his point of view and interest. (Dewey, Art as Experience, 1934: 54).
I would like, as an epilogue, to quote Maxine Greene on imagination:

Imagination is not only the power to form mental images, although it is partly that. It is also the power to mold experience into something new, to create fictive situations. It is, as well, the power—by means of sympathetic feeling—to put oneself in another’s place. (Greene, Variations on a Blue Guitar, 2001:30).
Chapter 4.

The sacred space is the beginning

There are places made out of bricks or stones, hard to break, cutting the view reciprocally. There are places made out of glass, fragile and allowing an openness to view and to be seen, yet not allowing movement inside out. There are places with doors… there are places without doors… But what I am interested in is the kind of places that free and lift the spirit…

Where to search for an icon in an image laden world? To proceed delving further into my artistic queries I explore the art of the past in chapels, also in art museums. The experience from studying iconography in place of creation or initial display is unique: not only you can see iconographical compositions by the same artist or iconographical compositions of different iconographical streams/styles (in some cases) and understand the aesthetic solutions the artist invented to cover a surface but you can feel the ambiance through the light conditions, the acoustic stimuli of the psalters as if you are there during the mass, the smell of olibanum that create a holistic sphere of perception, understanding and hermeneutic engagement. Even the slowing doing from the 24/7 rhythm of everydayness, the leaving the city and travelling towards the countryside results in slowing down. Entering a chapel resembles entering a microcosmic universe that makes your inner time stop, or translates your inner time in a series of stop moments. In thinking about stop moments, as defined by Fels (2010), notions of natality (Arendt, 1958), or moments of awakening and wide awareness (Greene, 1978) are embodied within stop moments. Stops, according to Fels (2010:3), are “action sites of learning which, in turn, inform our pedagogical practices. Upon our reflection that call our attention to what matters.” Writer Milorand Pavitz (1996) in his book Scenery painted by tea writes that death is that part of time that cannot stop. If literally losing a way of existing/being in the world could be considered as a kind of death; then by being present/attentive in one of these chapels that have been sculpted by time, crafted by the beliefs of peoples of the past and painted by artists whose names (in the majority of cases) have been lost in the theatre of aeons, might assist in relocating oneself both personally and aesthetically in the case of individuals with artistic queries, within the
The presence of a single and vast icon (the whole ecclesiastical building is parallelized as an icon) to explore.

The chapels in my investigation belong to the same category of chapels/former monasteries regarding the architectural form and the materials of construction. Also, all of them are inscribed by frescos of note (rarity, artistic excellence, uniqueness of topic, depicting different byzantine styles for example). They can offer the artist, as illustrated earlier, a grand opportunity to study interesting art in its space of creation and function. These are the major reasons for choosing to study local artistry outside of a museum, in places of original creation, display and local characteristics. The ambiance/subliminal atmosphere they create offer the opportunity for a holistic “reading” of the chapels.

This chapter, along with describing some of the murals and their symbolism, sites my impressions from my attempt to read them. My impressions come mainly in the form of painting/second reading of the murals as I attempt to capture my impressions and understandings of them. The two paintings/artistic responses (“Angel” and “Towards the sacred”) in the previous chapter are explanatory and introductory to the art of iconography and to the monuments/chapels and their natural surroundings. They also serve as prologue-introduction to this chapter, which is focused on sacred space. The “Angel” and “Towards the sacred” are accompanied by detailed description of my process and rationale to assist the viewer/reader into understanding the techniques used, to the monuments and lastly enhance aesthetic engagement with the series of paintings in this and next chapters which will be included along with the text. The series of paintings in this and the next chapters will be accompanied mainly by the aim and concept behind the scenography/composition. The technical matters (similar to the previously fully detailed artworks will be omitted as a long description would disrupt the flow of reading and viewing the artwork.

The following image/text was inspired mainly by the murals of the Panayia Phorviotissa and also by the dome of Panayia Arakiotissa and the chapels of St John Monastery. The pretext was the mural of the “Sea” depicting the personification of the Sea sitting on a cetacean species holding a sailing boat symbolizing the “Journey of Life”
(as stated by Bishop of Morphou area to which bishopric the three chapels belong). The overall iconographical synthesis under the dome with the Pantocrator and on the walls nearby and the iconographic technique (rhythm, color, curvilinear character) invite the visitor/viewer/pilgrim on a journey, a voyage that is universal but also individual, a trip beginning form “here” and “now” and moves into the future (teleological end, end of the life span of a person, end of Times); and from the innermost part of the human soul to the ‘high call’, the heavenly realm; and through the figurative portraiture of Saints and the donors (painted along the protector Saints) to the iconicity of personhood. Challenging as well as ambitious as the task might appear, this iconographical chapter attempts to capture my attempt to aesthetically approach and read the murals within the architectural space in which they are located.

This chapter, then, is on how I approached and read, through an iconographic dialogue, the sacred space of the Panayia Phorviotissa narthex (mainly), the Panayia Arakiotissa chapel and the chapels of St John monastery. Deriving from Gadamer’s notion (1986: 49) that any “concentration on method can conceal much that art and history has to teach us”, the latter part will emerge from aesthetic contemplation and will be enriched by artworks inspired and developed as outcomes of the aesthetic reading of the murals.

4.1. The sacred space is the beginning

One of the basic characteristics of the iconographical art as well as sacred architecture (Barrie, 2010; Connena, 2000) is art as mediator through the ritual that takes place in the specific space connecting the human with the Divine or to the place where answers for existential questions could be residing. Icons and the architecture of the ecclesial building as places of worship and “instruments” of the worshipping process guide the pilgrims to find their way of living their lives and critically reflect on and clarify their thesis/where they stand in this world. Barrie (2010:212) writes that it is “particularly incumbent on contemporary culture (and its architects and artists) to discover new expressions of enduring spiritual themes—perspectives that reveal the perennial condition of human consciousness, of which we are all a part,” a position particularly interesting and necessary to consider in synchronous times characterized by a changing of the traditional hierarchical roles. There is a window opening for new possibilities in learning how to express the “sacred”/“divine”; engaging in the study of how the “sacred”
was incarnated in the arts by the peoples of the past. The aforementioned (arts of the past) could enrich our understandings and help find our location in the arts (for those dealing with arts) or even our position in cosmos (inspired by the worldview and beliefs of the peoples of the past. Art is a cultural artifact that expresses political, social, economic, ecological, historical context and in the case of religious arts also the spirituality of the specific dogma they are linked with/derive from. As Richmond (2009) proposes the arts of the past project the worldviews and beliefs of the people of the past that could in turn help us shape our own view of the world and understand what is important to fight for, and create.

The study of sacred art in its initial place of creation and/or display offers the ground for other perspectives in the comprehension of and hermeneutic engagement with the artwork (mural and architectural structure in the case of this research). Barrie (2010:213) referring to the aesthetic contemplation regarding sacred architectures argues that the “inclusion of haptic, kinesthetic, and multisensory experiences of architecture is essential to decipher its content and interpret its significance and meaning”. He also supports, and I fully contend, that use and ritual vivify and complete the sacred architectures (temples, churches). The study of the murals within a chapel in its original place of creation, murals created to fit a specific architectural space and specific surfaces, with certain light conditions (semi darkness), lightened by the pale light of bee wax candles, with the smell of olibanum, and with the acoustic accompaniment from the psalters or even the common prayer by a group of pilgrims/worshipers changes what the mind and the body perceives. Also, the display of a series of murals/artworks often created by the same artist allows a further understanding of the work as a synthesis/composition and to identifying the characteristics of a specific artist. The murals of the narthex of Panayia Phorviotissa painted by the same unknown iconographer under the dome give a different perspective in how to view the complete artwork, which appears like a single story narrative (all different parts/murals appear like being parts of the same narrative). It is important to bear in mind that in the iconography program of a temple (in Byzantine art) the viewer/pilgrim/worshipper is the center of the whole artwork composition. According to Barrie (2010:214) the strength of sacred places resides on their ability to both “deliver’ the divine while simultaneously ‘connecting’ to the divine” which reveals a sensual engagement of the human subject with the synthesis of rhythm, form, line, colour, architectonics as it is applied /incarnated in the chapel.
Iconography is anagogical: attempts to uplift the viewer to enable him/her to see him/herself and cosmos through the augmented and broaden vision/gaze of the Pantocrator.

The relatively recent term hierotopy appears to be recognizing and including all these aforementioned parameters regarding the study of sacred arts. Hierotopy is a relatively new concept and research field as “the issue of terminology and the linguistic research apparatus appears as a crucial one due to the fact that most of our terms were elaborated to describe flat pictures and are not adequate for the phenomena dealing with sacred spaces” (Lidov, 2016:2). The term is created by the combination of two Greek words: “hieros” (sacred) and “topos” (space). Lidov (2016:3), the creator of the term, defines hierotopy as “the creation of sacred spaces regarded as a special form of human creativity, and a field of historical research which reveals and analyses specific relevant examples of that creativity”. Along with this term, quite a few terms have been suggested in recent years to describe the phenomenon of sacred space: “Chorotopos” by P. Brown inspired by Bakhtin’s (1937) “Chronotop”, “hierotopos” by N. Bakirtzis (2006) to make visible the phenomenon of a monastery and its sacred environment, “chorography” by N. Tsar for the description of circular movement as main characteristic of the Byzantine temple to mention but a few. All the aforementioned terms were invented to facilitate the reading of multi sensor devices and performative aspects and sacredness of Byzantine ecclesiastical monuments (Bacci, 2016).

Chapels and monasteries were usually built in areas of natural beauty and tranquility (ideal for hesychasm and asceticism) and in a distance from mass dwelled places. The architectonics were in harmonic accordance with the surrounding landscape and appeared as if the built temple emerged from nature as if aspiring to imitate nature or in Barrie’ (2010:214) words “to replicate pertinent aspects of the natural world”. Connena (2000) supports that the monastical architecture was created in organic accordance with the natural landscape. In the same lines:

The man made world is an alternative nature, so to speak, created by artifice and borne as a human reflection of the wonder we find in the natural world – the heavens, the seasons, landscapes and seascapes, plants and animals. (Crowe, 1985:7)

An artwork reveals in a picture all humanity past and present (Tarkofsky, 1987). Like science, art invites a hermeneutic engagement with the world and guides the viewer
in how to live his/her life and ultimately reach the aim of human existence. In this sentence lies the significance for studying history and arts. Their ability to make things (contemporary problems and solutions) visible and question hierarchies and common approaches emerges from the fact that they do not act as “explanations of how we arrived at the present, disconnected from the thoughtful making of architecture and place” (Barrie, 2010:216). The fragmentation of knowledge and the conception of time and history as a linearity/sequential process project a rather limited view of the complexity of our relationships to the past. We physically live, make our decisions, act, move, interact in present time but we are not a-historical rootless entities. We still belong in a past that forms part of who we are today and the past influences our actions in contemporary (present) time. Art and architecture crystallize that past and often act not as frozen projections on a screen but rather they offer a stage on which there is ground for interaction/dialogic engagement.

In the painting “From the beginning until now”, I aimed at illustrating the constant interactions between the past and the present. Calligraphic curvilinear lines, in light tones, were used to show the interaction. The assenting direction of the calligraphic lines show a way from past to present (or vice versa) whilst the upper part of the painting presents the morphé (form) of the interaction visualized by the female figure.
Figure 70. From the beginning until now, E. Hadjipieri, 2018, oils, 90cm X 40cm.
Gadamer (1986:xi) says “We do not encounter a work of art without being transformed at the process”. What might be as a continual characteristic of arts could be its ability to engage, to inform and transform us. Arts (murals and architecture in this study) engage us in multitudinous, multivalent and complex ways and broaden our minds not to see dichotomies but rather to see “both” or “and” links. We can see both the past and the present and the future, the old and the new, the known and the unknown, the material and the spiritual/immaterial, the sensual and the conceptual, the subjective and the objective, the environment and the individual (human subject), the whole and the monad (one subject). Separations are collapsed. Buber’s (1958) notion of I/Thou rather than I (the individual self) and the Other. When encountering art (and in this case the specific artform of iconography) we are inclined not to dichotomize our thought but rather engage in making connections and inclusions.

The orthodox world-view is one of total synthesis and unity (Stuart, 1975). There is an interrelatedness between the parts and the whole. According to Photiou (1996) the sum of the parts is even bigger than the whole indicating not only the existence of different subjects but the interconnections among them. In this prism of interrelatedness, matter is linked to the spiritual and God is inseparable from the universe. Apart for the connection between body-mind-soul, the connection between church and the state, Stuart (1975) also indicates the connection between art and philosophy, thus form and content.

Entering into a dialogue with the chapels and their art resembles an invitation to another world. What follows is a reflective and artistic encounter from my reading of the chapels. Phorviotissa, Arakiotissa and St John monasteries, unrolled to be read.

4.2. Reading the chapels

First the picturesque and tranquil natural surroundings bring calmness and a feeling of “slowing down”. The stone built walls of the chapel seem to be organically bond, emerging from the landscape whilst the “coldness” of the external rough materials (stones) is balanced with the earthly hues that color the stones. The external simplistic morphé (form) of the chapel however does not reveal the rich interior and the earthly hues inscribed murals. The semi-darkness equilibrated with lighted bee wax candles offers another perspective in the specific space. Under the dome with the fresco of the
Pantocrator with the embracing gaze, you do have a feeling of wonder whilst the rest of the iconographic composition: the angelic chorus, the saints, the donors, the Sea, the Land appear as if all are rolling from and towards the Pantocrator. It is not difficult to catch yourself spinning metaphorically into an upwards movement since in the iconographic program the human subject/visitor/devout is included in the iconographical composition from the privileged spot of the center. The dialogic engagement with art (and potently through ritual as Barrie (2010) notes, is anagogic, even transformational. Transformation could mean a broadened sight (Barrie, 2010). It could also mean relocating yourself in the world or, in this case, sharing the augmented and compassionate gaze of the Pantocrator. We are touched by a work of art, it means that we were able to “connect” or engage with it somehow. The art, as material culture, could result in a deeper and more substantial connection with the world where the world becomes “both brighter and burdensome” (Gadamer, 1986:26). I am not suggesting that all religious art and architecture in every built paradigm are successful in creating a feeling of engagement with the art and the world. Nor am I suggesting that every time you step into the microcosm of a church/chapel the same effect and in the same degree of engagement takes place. As Barrie (2010:219) proposes, we may be ‘informed’ of one monument through descriptions but “we come to ‘understand’ that monument when we stand in its central space on a particular day, at a certain time of our lives, and in relationship to others”. Also, in contemporary cultural relativism there is the danger of misunderstanding or diminishing the importance of sacred architectures to contemporary times. From a contemporary point of view we might be able to understand the context (negative or positive conditions at time of construction, agents that enhanced religion) regarding a sacred monument but it is important to consider them as mediators or vehicles ‘guiding’ the people (laity and devouts) to another vision of the world. The sacred or religious monuments either functioning as perfected worlds or micro models of the cosmos have a mediating ability as their distinct characteristic. According to Barrie (2010:219) the nature of religious monuments “brings us to a different physical place...[the sacred places/monuments] have the potential to lead us to a changed ontological position.” The great power of religious monuments and religious arts is found on their ability to transform/metamorphose the human subject.

What follows are a series of iconographic paintings and musings inspired by my “reading” of the three chapels, and the landscape within which they dwell.
4.2.1. Tranquility

Figure 71. Tranquility, E. Hadjipieri, 2016, oils, 50cm X 50cm.
The tranquility and natural beauty of the landscape slows down the quick rhythm of life and gradually prepares within me, a need for introspection, even for prayer or a tendency to lift the spirit beyond everydayness, maybe into another way of being. The painting “Tranquility” was inspired by the experience of being distant from the city and everything such a distancing represents as well as the everyday rush on a 24/7 basis. The city appears in the background... somewhere in the foreground, the boats give the hint of the existence of a human subject, yet the latter is not visible, rather the viewer might guess the presence of a human subject. The color palette is limited: turquoise is applied to give a sense of travelling and a sense that this trip might be more than a change of place but rather a journey into the self, or a spiritual journey. Another characteristic of the painting is stillness: the seascape appears calm. A hint of movement is depicted in the smoke rising from the cityscape in the distant background. I wanted to give a sense of tranquility and serenity by the lack of movement.

4.2.2. Impulses-Soul’s vibrations

In the penumbral light of Panayia Arakiotissa, the painted angels and the saints appear to be moving, dancing, celebrating. The stillness of the body of the person standing below might not easily reveal the awe of the psyche within the body as all other senses are captured by the holiness of the place. As a viewer, I entered the narrative of the frescoes and travelled along the curvilinear movement of the frescos. The line of the “being” or the soul of the viewer is uplifted and enters the curves and lines of the overall composition, as if the pulses of the heart are joining the sublime melody of the iconographical composition, creating impulses that are become part of the choreographic synthesis of the murals and of that “other” stage of existence they symbolically represent. My painting “Pulses” or “Soul’s vibrations” aims to depict the pulses or impulses of the human soul and a feeling of voyaging when encountering a spiritual/sacred place through the artwork within.
Figure 72. Impulses or Soul's vibrations, E. Hadjipieri, 2017, mixed media on canvas, 120cm X 60 cm.
4.2.3. Allegory

Whether the use of earthly hues was a result of necessity/lack of colors (at those times the artist had to travel and search for the colors embodied within natural entities, usually stones, sea shells, leaves etcetera) or a stylistic opinion, the artistic outcome is characterized by chromatic harmony (all colors have tints of brown). The harmony that I hope to have created is to be transferred to the visitor/viewer, thus inspiring feelings of familiarity and calmness, such feelings allowing/enhancing a sense of safety in the upwards and/or inwards journey that the art composition invites the viewer to attend.

The existential scenes (fresco compositions depicting the Final Judgement with an angel (un)folding the papyrus of cosmos below the Pantocrator among other depictions) give a sense of spatial and chronical (timely) expanding, as well as a different understanding of the lifespan of a person in terms of eternity. The overall iconographic program—consisting of the personifications of Terra and Sea, the Last Judgment, the Saints and the donors (persons of other times whose traces are found in the murals), under the Pantocrator and the angelic chorus, as well as their proximity and visual direction towards the viewer (the ever contemporary human subject standing on the floor in the center of the art synthesis which is directed towards him/her, or in other words the living human subject who is becoming part of the iconographical composition—all the above create an effect of movement and travelling in a journey that is individual but also universal in which, as stated before, the person standing in the narthex under the dome is included in the composition.

The calligraphic curvilinear character of the Panayia Arakiotissa is due to an excellent artist (who is believed to be magister Apsevdes) who with virtuosic brush strokes gave a strong sense of movement through the bodily poses of the figures depicted in the frescoes, (as shown in the hair, hand through the clothes) all resembling an invitation to participate in the choreography of the expertise calligraphic line and a metaphysical dance or voyage. In contrast to the virtuosic calligraphic style of Apsevdes, the unknown icon painter of the frescoes of Panayia Phorviotissa narthex also invites the viewer on a spiritual journey, this time through the stability of the figures, the simplicity of the forms and the relatively poor chromatic palette restricted mainly in earthly brownish hues. As paradox as the above might sound, it is the stability of the figures, the sureness of the gaze and the earthly colors that offer a sense of sureness, protection, and
familiarity to the viewer to embark on his /her own journey inwards, upwards, back to the past, towards the future, and outwards towards the community, which is laconically but yet eloquently narrated through the frescoes. It appears as if all elements of the synthesis, the saints, Terra, Sea, angels, saints, donors, the live human subject have embarked to the boat of life and sailed… The depiction of Panayia of Phorvia above the eastern door with the hands open to embrace cosmos leaves a feeling of safety…

I attempt to capture the aforementioned inner movement and embark with of all the elements in a journey towards eternity in a painting I created that I titled, “Allegory”.

Figure 73. Allegory, E. Hadjipieri, 2017, oil on canvas,100cm X 100cm.
The artwork’s composition unfolds in a circle inscribed on a square canvas, the architectural form when one is standing below the dome and lifting one’s eyes upwards: The circular dome is supported by a square structure. The circle bears a two-fold symbolism: as a compass, it is an instrument of space, orientation to space. As a clock, it becomes an instrument of time. The elements inside the circle/compass/clock (sailing boat, birds, waves, land, sky) appear to be expanding from the spatial and timely limit of the circle.

The specific artwork attempts to capture the spirit of the art of iconography (Byzantine art) and project it to our times, to the contemporary 21st century world. The large circle acts as signal for defining space and time. The circle regarded as a compass defines space(s). The compass and the four directions of the horizon expand the spatial territory to include every continent on Earth. In addition to that, the four triangles at the four edges of the square canvas depict four spaces:
a/ Terra (land), fertile covered in red blossoms and the deserts visualized by the earthly hues at the right edge triangle above. As stated before, the space is expanded to the four directions of the compass and projects into the 21st century explored world and includes Earth as a whole.

b/ Water reminding all the oceans and seas of the world. The element of the water is depicted in a series of waves at the left edge triangle below.
c/ The sky and the universe (up left edge) symbolize the continual exploration and sense of wonder intertwined with human nature. The Polaris is shining and acts as a signal for direction...as the values once cultivated by the Christianity spirit..
d/ Last but not least, the metaphysical/spiritual space appear at the triangle at the right upper edge of the canvas. The intelligible and the metaphysical space is visually depicted by curvilinear movement of white, orange and bluish colors towards the upper right part of the painting, trespassing and expanding the space inside and outside the compass.
As previously mentioned, the large circle on the canvas is a metaphor for both space (as a compass) and time by considering/regarding the large circle as a clock depicting time. The circle—compass-clock is collapsed in two parts: at the left part, the clock is overpassed by the waves, which at this moment represent the continual succession of generations. The water flow symbolizes the fluidity of time running endlessly from the past to the present and the future…
Figure 78. Allegory, E. Hadjipieri, 2017, oils, 100cm X 100cm.
At the core of the painting and inside a smaller circle sails a boat. The boat navigates into rough waters. But hasn’t humanity from the beginning of time been passing through turmoil, wars, catastrophes? The boat symbolizes humanity, fragile but also strong, determined, navigating through prosperous times and through times of hardship, poverty, famine, war and disaster… The boat is located within a small circle which a/ plays the role of a magnifying mirror making more visible the boat/humanity and b/ symbolizes the earthly globe. The sail of the boat is characterized by the cut outs of birds. The five birds symbolize the five continents and at large the worlds’ civilizations and cultures. The birds, cut out from the sail, continue sailing beyond the borders of time and space (or the circle-compass-clock) towards the metaphysical/spiritual place/ space. The birds are more than five (five cut outs from the sail) to show the flourishing that occurs through the cultural interaction/ relationships. Re-vitalizing, enlivening a vibrant culture could be one way to resolve the dead ends of a contemporary consumer and generally aggressive (in both social and environmental aspects) contemporary world and even possibly proceed to the promotion of peace between the nations. (Praying and contemplative practices could be another).

On another level, the shape of the canvas is that of a square and the basic shape/form of the composition is the large circle. The square shape of the canvas symbolizes the rationalization of the Western Civilization whilst the large circle stands for the holisticity of the Eastern spirit. There is no tension between them on the canvas, rather the composition was created targeting the co-existence of both circle and square,
both Eastern and Western cultures (or the in between west and east cultures, a paradigm being the religious art in Cypriot churches).

Last but not least the perspective of the composition is such that challenges the angle of the viewer. The perspective attempts to lift the spectator to the sky and from there, among the stars and, from a distance, to thus enable him/her to see the world and humanity anew as well as enhance a deep understanding of humanity and generally what is important in this world.

The curvilinear character of the texture and the orbits aim in showing a world that is in a constant movement through the parameter of time and space.

4.2.4. Mnemosyne

Beauty, a term elusive and difficult to define but yet approached by philosophers and art theorists, is not exhausted in scenographic surfaces but rather can be defined by its ability to guide one to the perception of the intrinsic beauty of the world (Barrie, 2010). Gadamer (1989:15) also suggested that, “the ontological function of the beautiful is to bridge the chasm between the ideal and the real.” This notion is not new. For Plato beauty was a mediator between the world of the forms and the perceptual world. This function/characteristic of beauty (as a mediator) is anagogical and at the same time transformational. The tall ascetic human figures with the expressive eyes and dark skin painted on the wall do not reflect the harmonic proportions of the human figure. Yet, they hold and spread the aroma of another type of beauty, they look as if they come from another realm of existence. Their expression of calmness and apathy invites the viewer to a different level or way of existing. Beauty in Byzantine terms is not a quality measured in external terms and through external characteristics but rather is a quality applied to depict the being or the withinness (full of God’s grace) of the human subjects or any other subjects (nature, animals etcetera).

In the Western concept of time, time appears linear, directed from the past towards the future. The common thought is of parallel lifespan directions continuing separately and individually, egocentrically, even acquisitively. Sacred places or hierotopies could act like Mnemosyne, the mythological Olympian goddess of memory. Mnemosyne connects the past and the present. Sacred spaces—like the
aforementioned religious chapels—can expand time and space and include Ktisis (cosmos, Creation), the peoples of the past, nature are incarnated in sacred spaces like, for example, the narthex of Phorviotissa. According to Barrie (2010:222) “time in sacred architecture is both collapsed and expanded. Here ancestors and the cosmos are embodied – are present – and the individual finds themselves part of a much larger context”.

The painting “Ghephyra of mnemosyne” (bridge of memory/mnemosyne) was inspired by personal memories and the cosmos being incarnated in the murals, which acted like a bridge uniting the past, the present and the future. Ghephyra is the name of the daughter (some believe the wife) of the Phorvia monastery founder. But the name (in Greek) also means “bridge”. Emerging from the art of the past is a “ghephyra”, a bridge, literally and metaphorically, that could lead the individual on a journey from the present and through the past to the eschatological future. The colors of the painting that I chose are not natural: turquoise and cyan pthalo green are used to enhance the metaphorical bridge whereas the composition has realistic elements to enhance the sense that the mnemonic journey begins from here and now and proceeds to the past and, as aforementioned, to the future. There is a poem about memory written on the surface of the canvas. The large written word on the painting, “Μνήμη,” means memory.
Figure 80. Ghephyra of Mnemosyne, E. Hadjipieri, 2015, oil on canvas, 90cm x 40cm.
The mnemonic power of architecture and the art of the chapels, particularly the frescos, is vivid and impactful in my research. The faces of the saints, their demeanor strict yet calm with their big expressive eyes in the limited light conditions appear to be alive and dramatic. But my gaze is captured by the images of the donors, people like you and me, peoples of the past who stood on this piece of land several centuries ago and whose life situations (or their death) brought them or their relatives in this chapel to make donations to the monastery (including donating the money for funeral portraits, their image or the image of a beloved person who had passed away).

4.2.5. Coquillage de mémoire

As I observe the images of the donors, I cannot help but read the scriptures that sometimes accompany the frescoes. A female donor is dressed in western clothes of those times with her head covered by a black head scarf whose patterns remind the headscarves of Near East, Palestine and Syria. According to my guide, the painted female figure is probably a woman who found refuge/shelter in Cyprus during the years of the siege and fall of Acre, a city near Jerusalem. Acre was a major town and harbour that was inhabited by crusaders, knights, princes) and a beloved place to live for western European royalty. After the fall of Acre to the Arabs, during the 3rd crusade, the western European knights attempted to re-capture the town. The town was in siege for two years 1189-1191 and finally the city fell to the crusaders. Anna, another donor, dressed like a lady from a prosperous family, is painted next to Saint Anna, Anastasia Saramalyna with a white headscarf is depicted next to St. Anastasios, George Kallias, as the epigraph denotes, is the donor who made the donation for the mural of St. George, Hieromonk Varnavas wears his hieratic uniform and is depicted portrayed above Panayia Eleousa, opposite is the after death portrait of the monk Theophile bearing a head cover, poignant shoes and his hieratic robe, the two dogs and the two agrina (wild deer endemic to Cyprus) may or may not belong to the monk Theophile or the priest Varnavas… (Note that hunting, especially of agrina, was a most favourite habit during the Byzantine period and during the Frankish rule among the aristocracy (Hadjichristodhoulou, 2009). However, only during the Frankish rule is it believed that they used dogs for hunting and therefore, researchers consider the depiction of the dogs to be of Western influence). A male donor dressed in western clothes and wearing a white hat appears next to St. George the Cypriot. Towards the southern arc are the portraits of monk Callinicus and a
man called Vassilius/Basil. St. Irene, daughter of St. Spyridon is painted at the west (this depiction is the only one in Cyprus). Anna, Anastasia Saramalyna, Basil, Theophile, Varnavas, people who once occupied the same place and connected to the chapel for one reason or another and whose traces of existence are here, among the figures on the murals, their facsimile a reminder to the contemporary visitor of the finite lifespan or the infinite existence in the heavenly a-chronical realm.

The majority donor portraits are funeral portraits (Hadjichristodhoulou, 2009) - a tradition not unknown from antiquity if you consider for example the Fayum portraits (Doxiade, 1997). Painting the deceased next to Saints is to ask for their accompaniment and prayers in the after death life). The donors could also be people whose life difficulties or prosperity brought them here next to the Saints/protectors under the compassionate gaze of the Pantocrator to ask for help or just to express gratitude. Are their difficulties or prosperity different from the ones contemporary people face or enjoy? Wars, illnesses (swine in medieval times), conquests, lack of rain) have never ceased to discomfort humanity… Again I turn my gaze to the refugee from Acre… it is not the first or only time Cyprus was a place of refuge and protection… As the cliché thought that history repeats itself passes from my mind, the image of refugees from Near East (Syria this time) getting on small boats/wrecks in search of safety whilst one cannot determine if the real wreck is the boat they have embarked or their souls and their bodies leaving everything behind in the panic or desire to be saved… The refugee problem repeats itself… the violent military invasion in 1974 caused 200 000 Cypriots (1/3 of total population), including my parents, to leave everything behind and move from the northern to the southern part of the island … the wounds from that difficult period still visible… The regime change in Egypt in mid 1950s resulted in Cyprus receiving another wave of the Greek and Cypriot diaspora from Alexandria (Egypt). During the Second World War Jewish people also found refuge in Cyprus… The difficult period of 1922 and the massacres in Minor Asia were marked by Greeks and Armenians seeking refuge in this same piece of land… Shall I continue (un)rolling the wheel of time? The ribbon of time is filled with events and periods of people coming to Cyprus seeking refuge: the 11th AD century influxes of peoples from Minor Asia, the iconographers during the iconoclasm period, crusaders who after the battles in the holy land came to Cyprus and led a life of asceticism to mention just a few. The last hundred years were marked by the fear, despair and agony, the feelings of and struggles for self-preservation of peoples
being displaced... like the woman of western origin from Acre of which traces of her existence and her history are painted in the narthex frescoes... however, along with the grief for the peoples and their displacement there is comfort... for along the murals there is the scene of Christ as a baby leaving as a refugee from his home land for Egypt...

Below is the depiction of Christ leaving for Egypt from the frescoes of St John (chapel of the Akathist Hymn/ Cypro-Renaissance style). Christ then becomes as an archetype of refugee and displacement and Egypt the archetype of a country of receiving refugees even if at the time of receiving Christ Egypt and Israel had hostile relationships. The difficult circumstances that the principal persons of Christianity (e.g. Virgin Mary and Christ were displaced or became refugees) faced. The divine plan for them to find refuge in the hostile land of Egypt bears its own meanings and messages projected in the ever present.

Figure 81. Fragments of the Akathist Hymn fresco in the homonymous chapel showing events related to the early childhood of Christ. The compositions show the salutation of the Magii, the Magii leaving and Virgin Mary with Christ going to Egypt.

Again my gaze focuses on the headscarves of the female donors and especially the scarf of Samalyna. The tradition of covering the head with scarfs is still vivid today and easily observed among elderly women. The scarfs are very familiar as they look like the ones my grandmother used to wear. The motifs, the variety of colors, the way the scarf is fastened on the head, the clothe material (silk or cotton), the way they are created (handmade embroidery, or stamped; the tradition of a certain stamped technique came to Cyprus from Minor Asian refugees (Greeks and Armenians) are like the ones worn today and are made by the same traditional methods. My journey of memory
begins this time with the scarves which I attempt to show first with Coquillage de Mémoire, in which a mnemonic shell is painted the place of the scarf.

Figure 82. Coquillage de Mémoire, E. Hadjipieri, 2017, digitally processed artwork previously hand painted in oils on linen.
4.2.6. **In turquoise the journey unfolds**

The images of the women/donors wearing scarves whose life journey brought them into the same physical space where I am stand today, and the notion of one’s lifespan as finite in relation to Time as infinite and sacred as well as the notion of life as a journey towards eternity inspired me to create the painting “In turquoise colour the journey unfolds”. The turquoise headscarf symbolizes freedom and a sense of wandering or travelling. The portrait of a contemporary female figure with the turquoise headscarf will, in the projection of time, be reminiscent/ a trace of the existence of the depicted. But the turquoise acts symbolically as a color of eternity and freedom and of voyage. And as such, the depicted subject is calm and defies decay. (I explore the issue of portraiture in the chapter: Towards the iconicity of personhood).

![Image of the painting](image-url)

**Figure 83.** In turquoise colour the journey unfolds, in progress, E. Hadjipieri, 60cm X 60 cm.
Figure 84. In turquoise colour the journey unfolds, E. Hadjipieri, oil on linen, 2016, 60cm X 60 cm.
4.2.7. Terra and Mare (Land and Sea)

I turn again to the personifications of Terra and Sea. Terra is sitting on a beast of the land, a lion, surrounded by a landscape with animals. Sea is also sitting on a whale, dolphin or a kind of a gigantic sea creature. The sea is transparent filled with fish and octopuses. Both Terra and Sea are depicted as human figures, their head in a halo. They are painted below the dome with the Pantocrator, in the same level as the saints and the donors - peoples of the past - and individuals of today –the viewers/visitors. What would the way of depicting Terra and Sea signify for Nature? How was the artist inspired?

A possible answer comes to mind as I remember some psalms. Nature appears as being compassionate to the passion of Christ. The Creation groans together with Christ. Nature personified appears as the “other”; wearing a halo symbolizes Nature’s sanctity. Nature for the Orthodox worldview is sacred.

The role of the human subjects becomes the role of the priest: caring, protecting, preserving. Priesthood, according to Zezioulas (2011) is two-fold: When the Human uses/treats the Ktisis and creatively completes it and offers it to God, then Ktisis is liberated and overpasses her own existential limits and exists (without decay). When the human becomes the priest of Creation, the Human is also considered as a creator. Among the truly creative actions of human, there is a hieratic character. Priesthood also becomes an existential behavior. Also, Zezioulas continues, Christ becomes the incarnation of Ktisis and the ultimate priest. The ecological degradation is a cultural crisis that has to do with the loss of the sacredness of Ktisis in the human civilization.

Look at a stone, and notice that even a stone carries some mark of the creator. It is the same with an ant, a bee, a mosquito. The wisdom of the creator is revealed in the smallest creatures. It is he who has spread out the heavens and laid out the immensity of the seas. It is he also what has made the tiny hollow shaft of the bees’ sting. All the objects in the world are an invitation to faith, not to unbelief. (Basil of Caesarea, On Psalm 32.3 PG29.329, in Cryssavgis 2006)

The above quote will help us understand the connection between Iconography and life in nature- cosmos. The icon concentrates on the issue of existence and co-existence (Stuart, 1975). The iconographer does not want to imitate nature; rather he/she wants to understand how and why nature functions the way it does (Stuart,1975).
Not interested in the shell of the egg, the iconographer is interested in the life inside the egg. The iconographer wants to understand the mechanism of living things so that to depict perfect beauty and the source of that beauty.

The spirituality and the visualization cannot be separated in this art. As mentioned earlier, iconography is not an art form depicting religious themes; rather it is a religious art (Stuart, 1975). More than that, Iconography is a visual language that surpasses dualisms: the person is depicted holistically, iconography attempts to visualize the concept of interrelatedness between the material and the spiritual world, and in a sense, captures cosmos as a cosmic icon, that is, the world as sacred. The aim of iconography is to educate people and lead them to see the invisible, to see and live the archetype way of life. Iconography is directed to stimulate the body and the mind and the soul of the person to understand the dogma and re-establish relationships, intra-personal, interpersonal, with nature, with God. The interrelatedness aspect of Christianity faith and worldview as it is written and depicted in the murals has implications in the way we understand our position in cosmos and our relationships within it. Iconography presents an ideal unification of all subjects, the material and the spiritual world. For the world is a sacred jewel (this is what “cosmos” means in Greek) thus bringing us to the discussion of contemporary ecology. According to Cryssavgis (2006):

Contemporary deep ecology emphasizes the fact that the correct perspective and relationship between humanity and creation has been distorted, almost destroyed. Yet the little significance is attached to the reality that all things are coherent not just in their interrelatedness and interdependence, but also in their relation to and dependence on God. In fact, to be estranged from God is to lose touch also with the created reality and with what really matters in this world. (p.112).

The study of iconography raises the discussion of appreciation of local visual languages, the world views they depict and, of course, possible implementations regarding moral based education and aesthetic education as educational practices that trespass dualisms and which seek to serve as antidotes to contemporary aggressive market oriented society.

The mnemonic relationships enhanced by sacred places/architectures/arts, as well as other connections that might be created, lead to the establishment of critical relationships. Critical relationships derive and result from a deep co-interaction of the
viewer within and with the space/architecture/art. The creation of an intermediated level where the human subject and the sacred space/architecture/ art are dialoguing/interacting illustrates how the power of such spaces are not the projections of frozen images of the past but rather dwells within the spectators or viewers being engaged in a theatric/performative scene where the human subject and the art/space dialogue and establish relationships. According to Barrie (2010:222):

through measure, proportion, and geometry for example we articulate the relationships between parts... What is often not considered are the immaterial relationships equally essential to an articulate architecture. I have noted that objects alone do not create meaningful connections- it is only through interaction, a dialectical dance, that the coition between one and the environment is possible. ...in the dynamics of human relations seeing oneself not as much as singular but in relationship to others is the result of emotional maturity and, when one occupies this middle zone of interrelationship, the anxiety of maintaining rigid self- conceptions expand into a broader context.
4.2.8. **Antiphonal interlude**

*Figure 85.* Antiphonal Interlude, E. Hadjipieri, oils, 2017, 120cm X 60 cm.
Under the dome, in the twilight of a thousand year old chapel covered by frescoes the bodily senses cease in awe… that’s when the senses of the soul begin to see, to listen and to understand. The big expressive eyes of the Pantocrator and the calm gaze of the angels and saints painted on the walls, the light-shadow game of the bee wax candles’ flame, the smell of olibanum as well as the quiet monophonic psalm read or quoted by the priest so long ago still remain as mnemonic signals in the strands of my memory. The hierotopic (hieros topos- sacred place) atmosphere enhanced by the aforementioned elements signals a call for a voyage – one that leads to the inner space of yourself, to the innermost cells of your soul and another (journey) lifting the spirit upwards to a metaphysical or spiritual sphere of existence. As weird as it might sound to the uninitiated, under the dome, it appears as if the two spaces, the chora (space) of your being/self and the Heaven realm or spiritual landscape, are linked or correlated. As monks repeat the “prayer of the heart” in complete eurhythmy with the pulses of the heart these two ways, the inward journey to the self and the outward journey/openness to the world, are joined and the spirit moves upward as both journeys take place in the domain (chora) of the heart, the space of compassion.

Engaging with an artwork is a process of creating a dialogue between the art and the viewer/reader where the viewer’s history, knowledge, sentiments play a significant role in guiding the dialogue. In a few words, the imaginative experience deriving from dialoguing, gazing, experiencing an artwork, is, according to Armstrong (2000: 33) enhanced, both by the individuals’ personal background and contextual information, targeting “contemplation” (p.78). Contemplation is the fruitful outcome of aesthetic experience, which produces further insights and deep emotions. Personal experiences and perspectives affect the quality of the individual’s contemplation.

In the act of gazing or looking at artwork, (Armstrong, 2000: 40) the viewer unfolds his/ her emotions, concerns, interests, which enrich his/ her aesthetic engagement. What is invested by the viewer, when gazing an artwork, affects the quality of his/ her aesthetic experience. I could understand the feeling of full engagement when gazing at the dome and the murals below. Once I had experienced the feeling of engagement, the task was to show in a rather “still” medium the immersion or the full engagement, the harmonious accordance of the deepest chords of one’s psyche with the chords of one of the best products of human creativity and emotion, an artwork. That
was how I captured the thematic topic of this artwork and that's how the title of the artwork, “Antiphonal interlude” came up.

The painting “Antiphonal interlude” is an acoustic painting inspired by the aesthetic contemplation and dialogue between a human subject and an artwork or architecture at one level and when the human nature “expands” when being “in relation”. In other words, the painting aims to depict a moment when the chords of the psyche play a harmonic melody when I engage with art. My “keywords” or most basic elements for this painting were: music/melody, harmony, calmness, movement, and emotion as well as two subjects so that a dialogue could happen.

The sense of aesthetic contemplation or aesthetic engagement could metaphorically be related to that of music: you don’t see the sound but yet the melody comes through the ears to the rest of the body, to the mind and the soul, in other words to the human spirit. Once having decided on how to depict the full engagement with the artwork, I thus paralleled my engagement with the acoustic stimulus of music.

To proceed with the composition of the painting, I had to decide on a scene (background) as well as the basic elements that I would incorporate. In “Antiphonal interlude” a seascape was chosen to scenographically envelop the painting. The seascape “adds sound” to the artwork and also movement (through the waves even in calm seas like the one in the painting). In a painting where “sound” plays an important role, the sound of the waves as they reach the beach will add a constant hypotonic accompaniment of a violin concert executed by an angel—an ethereal being, elusive, fugitive, an entity that appears as a mediator between an earthly and heavenly realm. In the painting the angel symbolizes art forms that could serve as anagogic or even as transformational. The angel – as a subject/element of the painting – resulted from my focus of the study in the iconographical art – an art linked tightly to the sublime – and was inspired by the angelic chorus below the Pantocrator.

The other subject is a girl sitting on an old wooden boat, gazing at the angel who appears in the sky among the clouds, playing a violin. Both subjects, the angel and the girl, seem absorbed. The violin melodic interlude resembles an invitation … to a journey, to a dialogue… Interlude: a melodic piece that acts as a bridge between two musical
parts... here in two “worlds”... whilst the landscape scene enhances the sense of calmness and of voyaging.

The girl seems to be carried away, in an ecstatic condition. Her head is bent towards the angel... and a discreet movement of the body as if “dancing” with the music, is shown by almost transparent curvilinear brush strokes near the legs and the hands. The movement is calm, harmonic to the melody and the overall calmness of the landscape which I attempted to be pictorially show with the semi transparency and lightness of the curvilinear brush strokes....

As the melody progresses the girl is more and more “captured”/ touched” by and interacts with it... She moves towards the angel. The smallest girlish figure at the right of the larger girlish figure are identically the same girl being entirely carried away by the music...

There are elements from iconographical art in the way I attended to the brush strokes and the way the color in light and dark tones is applied in transparent layers of color.

4.2.9. Once upon a time

Once upon the time there was cosmos, the universe, the stars... Once upon the time a sole traveler sailed on a journey, individual but also universal—the metaphor applied to everyone whether he/she realizes it or not—a journey that known or unknown byzantine iconographers attempted to show pictorially in accordance to the byzantine (Orthodox Christian Church) worldview... Under the dome with the Pantocrator, all (angels, saints, donors, the Sea, the Terra, the living human subject standing in a lower level) appear to be spinning and moving upwards and from the present move to the past to reach the future at the end of time. The past, the present and the future are fused while both linear time and three dimensional space are collapsed... the time and the space become infinite and vessels of unison of past generations and worldviews and the contemporary generation... the time and space are reconciled and become mediators of co- existence of the past and the present directed towards the future...

“Once upon a time” is the title of the painting below that captures a nostalgic dialogue between an elderly woman (probably a grandmother) and a child (probably a
grandson). The existence of two different generations aims to depict the past and the present in a harmonious, co-existing and reconciled relationship. The elderly woman holds a book with the pages showing a boat/a trip while in the distant background of the painting there is the same sailing boat (illustrated in the book the elderly woman holds) navigating for lands imaginary and unknown, towards the past (the boat already exists in the book), towards the future… towards space that awaits the viewer to define…. The illustrated book stand for the past, the actual sailing boat the present and the sailing trip the future that has not yet come and as said before, the human subjects in the foreground symbolize the reconciled two generations. The elderly woman is as if she is narrating a story, (in our case inspired by the murals a story of the teleological and eschatological journey of humanity according to the Byzantine worldview) while the journey/story also continues its way…
Figure 86. Once upon a time, E. Hadjipieri, 2017, oils, 130cm X 155cm.
Scenographically the painting evolves round a dynamic moving spiral enforced by orbits that give an inner movement to the scene.
Figure 88. Once upon a time, sketch, E Hadjipieri, 2017.

Sketch when the background was painted (an action to see how it feels when the background is actually covered in colours for final decision on how to proceed with the compositional parts).
Figure 89. Once upon a time, sketch, E. Hadjipieri, 2017.

The composition of the painting is evolving round a spiral with orbits. The composition, in this way, becomes dynamic and has inner movement.
4.2.10. Artwork: “12:15”

The overall narration of the murals especially those below the dome, resembles an invitation for a journey that has already begun, one that is personal as well as universal. Painting “12:15” was inspired by the notion of “voyage” that the iconographical art in the murals narrate and in which the living person/viewer standing “reading” participates.
Figure 90. "12:15", E. Hadjipieri, oil on rough surface, 2016, 120cm X 60cm.
Painting “12:15” was developed round the concept of a clock that divides or unites the two areas of the painting surface: the foreground consists of a spring scenery with blossoms while in the background (inside the circle/clock) a voyageur in a boat proceeds into a journey. The female figure, sitting on the edge of the clock circular perimeter, acts as a bridge between the two spaces, the external (foreground blossomed spring where the rebirth of nature signifies the beginning of a new era) and the esoterical/inner (the boat trip that could symbolize a journey that has already begun voluntarily or inadvertently whether realized or not, personal or universal, inwards, upwards, outwards, backwards to the past or forwards as a projection to the future, spiritual or allegorical or metaphorical a travel of the lifespan of a person).

The painting seeks to leave a sense of ambiguity in the viewer regarding the nature of the journey (as mentioned above) and regarding the thoughts of the female figure. However, as the hands of the clock signify – and I have used these on purpose in the painting to show the two main elements of the painting (the female face and the voyageur), the journey has already started whether we realize it or not. Usually referring to 12:00 as a time of beginning of a new day or when a previous and a proceeding part “meet”, “12:15” inevitably shows that the journey has already begun...

Compositionally, the painting evolves round a spiral beginning from the female face, continuing round the perimeter of the clock and expanding to the imaginary circular perimeter marked by the feet of the figure and the flora at the lower level of the painting. The hands of the clock begin at the point where the heart of the female is... placing emotion as a vital element regarding journeying whatever the nature of the journey is while the human heart—using the words of Saint Nicholas Velimirovich “to be reached needs hands longer than the universe” signifying hands of compassion and love. Whether the human heart is the starting point or the destination or an accompanying subject to the journey I leave the viewer to decide as I would leave the viewer to navigate in or associate with the thoughts of the female and thus solve the ambiguity of the painting...
Figure 91. "12:15", E. Hadjipieri, 2016, oil on rough handmade surface, 120cm X 60cm.
Finally, technically, the large whitish flowers serve as an architectural element to bring stability and equilibrium in the overall circular and spiral composition. The blossomed branches of the tree at the upper level also serve as an element of enriching the spiral movement. Both these elements help to stabilize and bring harmony to the compositional parts that are characterized by circular and spiral movement.

4.2.11. Lifespan and time

A journey could be an invitation to travel inwards, a journey of introspection towards reconsideration and reconciliation.

The existential character of murals as well as the depiction of donors in frescoes add another dimension of the lifespan of an individual, and to the consideration of the time of human lifespan as finite, and, also the eschatological time as non measurable, non linear, as infinite, as sacred, as spinning round the Pantocrator. The three portraits below depict three ages of the human life:

a/ Childhood characterized by innocence and bright ribbons of a promising future that begins to be shaped in the best conditions (at least, for many individuals). A rather sweet, pink background turns us to childhood. The clear gaze and the calm face of the girl are surrounded by ribbons on which there is a poem about the dreams a child could have considering her life…

b/ First youth, painted by brushstrokes that give the effect of mosaic, by colors, light and dark tones that are disseminated in all the surfaces of the figure. With the mosaic-like brush strokes, the light is dispersed in ways not always obeying optical rules and naturalistic painting, which in turn resembles the way light is dispersed in iconographic portraits. I chose the mosaic-like brush strokes so as to give the effect of a life being shaped, that there is nothing definite in the future of the portrayed person but like the mosaic, stone by stone or brush stroke by brush stroke the life is being shaped or painted in the canvas of life.

c/ Maturity: the earthly tones give a sense of familiarity and connection with the depicted… the earthly tones also show maturity, deep emotional growth, and sentimental connection to people and environment. This canvas was worked with oils and became rough. Even though it cannot be easily viewed from a photo, the portrait
gradually became tender and soft as the tenderness and softness and compassion in the continuum of life as challenges enter and leave their traces in the ribbon of life/time.
Figure 92. Childhood, E. Hadjipieri, 2017, oil on canvas, 50cm X 50 cm.
Figure 93. First Youth, E. Hadjipieri, 2017, oil on canvas, 50cm x 50cm
Figure 94.  
Maturity, E. Hadjipieri, 2017, oil on canvas, 50cm x 50cm.
4.2.12. Emptiness

The painting “Lighting emptiness”, follows the thematic of the others as I read the murals as metaphors of a sea journey, the latter inspired by the personification of the Sea holding the boat of life. During sunset, the colors of the sky become dramatic and the glimpses of the chromatic palette are projected onto the boat, the waves, the lighthouse…. Like the sailing boat, the Sea holds symbolizing the boat/ trip of life, the boats in the painting bear the same symbolism. In the forefront there is a boat but yet there is no trace of presence… the boat is rocked by the waves…it is anchored… we do not know who or what keeps the boat anchored… The reflection of the sunset colors adds a dramatic tone to the movement of the boat and lights its emptiness/ the absence. The lighthouse projects light that symbolically is linked to the light we may receive from worldviews of the past but also in this specific case of religious arts by the light of God… the sun as it sinks into the horizon creates a path of light on the sea… the sailing boat in the distance navigates gently towards its destination… the sun, the lighthouse and its light, the sailing boat project safety… but yet the absence and the emptiness of the anchored boat in the foreground becomes more intense… as questions are raised as for
who or what keeps it drawn up on shore…or where the sailing boat in the distance sails to?

4.2.13. When I had the chance to be/ live in my cell for a moment.”

This next artwork attempts to capture an allegory of a journey inwards physically and metaphorically, emotionally and spiritually. The notion of “cell” bares its own polysemy: “cell” as the smallest part of the human body but also as a space of physical voluntary or involuntary deterioration or a mental/emotional expansion (a monastic cell, a prison cell, metaphorically a selfhood cell). The curvilinear character of the background stripes are implemented so as to give a sense of movement and a sense of voyaging into a space that asks the viewer to define or navigate (or identify) with the innocent eyes of a child’s soul… The stripes move calmly for such an inwards journey of a young child with conviction of the heart and sureness of the head offering not tension but rather serenity. The stripes in the background conduct a vibrating choreography of a journey personal but also universal in a space that awaits the viewer to define.

“When I had the chance to be/ live in my cell for a moment” was inspired from an aesthetic engagement with an artwork, specifically with my encounter of the dome and surrounding murals of Panayia Phorviotissa chapel. As mentioned before, the dialogic engagement with an artwork is not a passive procedure: the murals are not a screen for someone to passively see. Rather they form a stage where a dialogue is initiated between the artwork and the viewer, the dialogue being a participatory act. The participation of the viewer is intense in the case of the Byzantine murals as in Byzantine iconography the viewer is a vital element/subject of the whole iconographic program of the church and thus central to it. The painting intends to depict the esoteric impulses of the human soul dialoguing with the artwork and the inner journey commencing with the artistic engagement with the murals… The nature of Byzantine art is such that it is an invitation to a journey both personal and internal and at the same time external and ecumenical, a journey in which the past and the eschatological future are fused into the fugitiveness and elusiveness of present as the art aims to embrace humanity (the humanity of each one of us and all simultaneously).
Figure 96. When I had the chance to be/live in my cell for a moment, E. Hadjipieri, 2017, oil on canvas, 60cm x 60cm.
4.2.14. “Immersing”, “Do you read yourself in me?” and “Contemplating”

The following paintings (“Immersing”, “Do you read yourself in me?” and “Contemplating”) resulted from the feeling of aesthetic contemplation when engaging with an artwork. All three scholars (Iser, 1978; Armstrong, 2000 and Bakhtin, 1981) support a reader-centered or “reader–oriented” theory (term used by Iser, 1978: 23) which favors the individual’s response to the artistic source. For Iser (1978:29) the art is embodied/incorporated into the individual’s personal experience. In other words, the same text (or art) is perceived (comprehended) differently in different situations. In different viewers/readers, in different readings (first, second, third and so on in reading/gazing). For Bakhtin (1981: 358) “the framing context, like the sculptors chisel, hews out the rough outlines of someone’s speech, and carves the images of speech life”.

Apart from the personal context (memories, emotions, knowledge) Armstrong (2000) supports that contextual information influences viewers’ engagement with artwork. In addition, art calls/challenges viewers to imaginatively unfold or re-experience the aesthetic process.

4.2.15. Contemplating

The imaginative experience derived from dialoguing, gazing, experiencing an artwork, is, according to Armstrong (2000: 33) enhanced both by the individuals’ personal background and contextual information, targeting “contemplation” (p.78). Contemplation is the fruitful outcome of aesthetic experience which produces further insights and deep emotions. Personal experiences and perspectives affect the quality of the individual’s contemplation.

Engaging with an artwork gives the viewer a taste of entering into an imaginary dialogue. I attempt to show the feeling of contemplation, of fulfillment, even happiness in the painting below. The background is a landscape that combines natural and built environments (the fountain and the stone paved path in front, in the chapel’s yard). It is as if the individual is coming from the past due to the way the female is dressed… What is important, however, is the facial expression of happiness, pleasure, satisfaction as she gazes outwards….
Figure 97. Contemplating, E. Hadjipieri, 2017, oil on canvas, 120cm x 80cm.
4.2.16. Do you see yourself in me?

The enigmatic question by Durell's expression (1969): “All landscapes ask the same question: I can see you. Can you see yourself in me?” is the title for the next artwork. The idea is of a monument within a landscape being gradually transformed into a human figure or a human subject being gradually transformed into landscape thus attempting to show their bond. I attempt in this painting to capture what through interaction results in two bodies becoming one or the embodiment of the interaction.

Figure 98. Do you read yourself in me?, E. Hadjipieri, mixed media on paper, 2018, 20cm x 35cm.
4.2.17. Immersing

The next painting “Immersing” explores the relationship between the place-monument and the human person. The background is from the monastery, the stairs before the bell tower. The light conditions are such that there is an interplay between shadow and light, or symbolically, between the positive and negative challenges of the “ascending” route of life. The vertical wooden column poetically acts as a link between the earth and the sky whilst the seated human figure contemplates an in-between position. The traditional costume that the woman is wearing is in remembrance of peoples of the past coming to such places for their spiritual queries.
Figure 99. Immersing, E. Hadjipieri, aquarella and water colour pencils on paper, 2018, 20cm x 35cm.
4.2.18. (Un)rolling mneme

The painting “(Un)rolling mneme” (see below) is a naturalistic painting. Its inspiration derives from my interactions with the monument/cultural landscape, which began from a very early age. A path links the child figure with a traditional village and a monastery.

On the first level a child (new generation, the present) is depicted “linked” with a traditional (cultural, if you will) village landscape via a path.
Figure 100. (Un)rolling mneme, E. Hadjipieri, oil on canvas, 2014, 120cm x 120cm.
Figure 101. (Un)rolling mneme (detail), E. Hadjipieri, 2014, oil, 120cm x 120cm.
Figure 102. (Un)rolling mneme (detail), E. Hadjipieri, oil, 2014, 120cm x 120cm.
There are times
that words escape from
lips
eyes
book pages
stone paved street
dusty glass of a wooden window,
basil leaves growing into a broken pot out of clay
laughter before a fire place
in days of winter
joy below a starry sky
in nights of summer breeze…

There are instants
that words transform into colors
vermilion for vulnerability
crimson alizarin for persistence and continuation
white to show deep and absolute silence hidden in the within-ness of things
black for absence
greens and browns borrowed from earth and vegetation
etheereal blues and lilac for mysticism…

There are times
that colors become music
Vibrations of sentiments
oblivion and remembrance
absence and presence
happiness and sorrow

There are times that colors become space
topographies of memories
landscapes of the past and nostalgia
cloudscapes of the future and anticipation
seascapes of the present refusing to stay still to be captured

There are times that colors become dreams
shadows projected on empty walls and streets
Testimonies of elusiveness
Bearers of hope and disappointment
drawing spirals on the sand
vanished by the wind and sea…

There are times that colors become houses, stone paved streets, churches and monasteries,
embroidered curtains, vases out of clay
blossoms and spring smells
psalms mixed with songs and lullabies
writing stories of the past and the future into the present
life path
of a girl
holding tightly her toy
on a warm Mediterranean day.
Figure 103.  (Un)rolling mneme (detail), E. Hadjipieri, oil, 2014, 120cm x 120cm.
4.2.19. Dreamscape or rearticulating the landscape

The earth becomes a place of deep listening and I cooperate with the textures of earth to see what emerges through my body. My body is the earth and the earth is the body. Here is the place for this relationship to bloom into form. (Snowber, nd)

Place is not an abstract concept but a mixture of material elements, accompanied by non-material phenomena that through human presence are transferred to place. Place acquires meaning(s), sentiments, operations, expectations through human presence and engagement. It is at this point that the place becomes (cultural) landscape. An individual’s interest of place is existential and results in defining his/her existence (life) in relation to the surrounding place, thus bringing meaning, order and values in a material place, a place of images, experience and time-storied facts. Bachelard (1982:25, my translation) in his poetics of place mentions: “The place as captured by imagination has nothing to do with the indifferent place as perceived by a geometrist. It is a living place. Lived not only in its positivity but with all the partialities of imagination as well and this characteristic almost always fascinates us”.

The painting “Dreamscape” or “rearticulating the space” (below) evolved from an attempt to give a sense of dreaming or being in an imaginary geography. My thought was to give the impression of a landscape and a figure co-interacting. The landscape and the figure were painted in a rather minimal way but with influences from romanticism. The choice to use rather ‘cold’ colors (turquoise instead of warm earthly hues) on the figure and on the background (tints of turquoise) help to create the effect of dreaming, imaginary, inner if you will, scenery. The flesh was covered by background colors to give the sense of the figure mixing with the landscape or becoming one with the landscape. The swan serves as a medium for the interaction of the figure with the landscape while the hand gesture is meant to provide a sense of warmth and tenderness. For aesthetic reasons, aquarello technique and calligraphy, through engraving techniques, were applied to enrich the texture.
One entity, two elements:

A walker inside the landscape…

A landscape walking into the human figure…

Who is walking and where?

Water and waves, land and rocks written on the legs, the arms, the face…

Water and waves, land and rocks becoming flesh and arteries

Landscape-walker

One body.
Chapter 5.

Towards the iconicity of the person

The icon is almost ready. I stare back for a moment to see it from a distance and to leave time for the egg tempera to dry so that I could continue. I need to rest as well as the concentration and stability for the long calligraphic lines at the final stages is a fatiguing process. A few thoughts emerged from a peripatetic promenade at the beach:

The art of iconography and its rich calligraphic elements resemble the beauty of the line of a sea shell. The shell is developed in the form of a spiral. According to the sort of the sea shell there can be visible other calligraphic and symmetrical lines that follow a rhythm. The colour range of the sea shell is relatively limited but it does not at all decrease the beauty of the whole composition. On the contrary, they compliment each other. The lack of a variety of colours emphasizes the curves. The line beautifies the colours by giving form and translucency to the shell, which in turn allows a play of light and shadow with the sun light (and so the colours multiply).

If you put the sea shell to the ear you can hear an echo… an echo coming from a space you do not see but yet you can understand it exists from the external shape of the shell and by the echo of the air as it spins inside the body of the shell. The echo resembles the sound of the waves, from a world that you can see, hear, smell, touch, walk with your senses…the world we live in. If you stare/ turn back, you will see the traces of your nude footprints on the sand as they are gradually erased by the waves…

The art of the iconography is like a sea shell. Its beauty emerges from the calligraphic curvilinear character and the colours that are in a complimentary connection. (Note that the colour range in iconography varies according to the stylistic trend… there are artistic periods in iconography characterized by plurality of colours, especially expensive ones like lapis lazuli). Though iconography is up to some degree naturalistic, it is also abstract (symbolic) being an agent of communication between the sphere of spirituality and the world we live in… or a bearer of message (like the sound of the waves) and seeks to show another way of living/existing/ being and a path to approach existential questions (the erasure of the footprints on the sand).
The symbolic character and the symbolic visual language of this genre of art enriched my artistic queries and offered me a new way of painting as well as a new way of perceiving the world through the worldview of this ecclesiastical art. The medium of the iconographical art is the morphé, the portraiture. And through the symbolism the artists of the past developed avant garde lines, forms and techniques… worth exploring and experimenting with…

For many years I concentrated in drawing and painting the human figure and my quest for realistic portraiture. Gradually I was attracted by the techniques of the Romantic masters. Almost in a parallel way, I was searching for ways of symbolic painting beyond naturalism. My quest for abstraction brought me, as paradoxical as this might appear, to the past, to local resources, specifically to Iconography.

Parenthetically I would like to add a few words on the how and why from a search in abstraction a painter could turn to the past… It was through the abstraction and conceptualization the 20th century art that Iconography was (re) discovered and appreciated in the western context as exquisite example of abstraction, even though as Justiniano supports (2015), the rediscovery came with the extraction of the icon from its liturgical function. As Skleres (2011) suggests, iconographic techniques (light-shadow-colour connection, surrealism, cubism e.g. in the way the buildings are painted) were pioneering artistic movements at that time, avant garde styles that we can see again (applied in similar or different ways) many years later e.g. in impressionism, cubism, fauvism, surrealism, expressionism) (Skleres, 2011, Glykatzi- Aurweiller).

My personal artistic queries regarding portraiture brought me back to iconography (but it doesn’t mean that I did not experiment in other styles (e.g. impressionism, cubism, fauvism, surrealism, expressionism to name but a few). However, it is a challenge for an artist to learn, experiment, apply the techniques of the old masters as it is a challenge to study how the above were implemented in local contexts (influenced by many factors: historical, political, economic or practical such as finding colors). The specific historical, political, economic etcetera factors in the last millennium in Cyprus influenced art. Therefore I looked for alternative ways to delve further into studying portraiture through an artform of the past (icon painting), especially as this genre is manifested in the local context of the Troodos mountain region and in the places of initial creation and exposure, in the chapels.
Drawing or painting a calligraphic line is linked with long study and practice, and knowledge of the context… a curvilinear calligraphic line with a specific color and a specific illumination (shine) is a line unrolling towards the past and towards the heart of the painter (old or contemporary)… a calligraphic line that emerges from the knowledge of the past, the beauty of humanness, the balance of the soul and from emotion can empower the voice of the artist… as famous cellist Rostropovich (nd) says: “When I started learning the cello I fell in love with the instrument because it seemed like a voice: my voice”. Alike, I found a voice in the curvilinear calligraphic character of iconography, echoing from the sea shell of the past: a voice of myself…

This chapter is a shell of portraiture… Byzantine portraiture is the starting point and through a discussion on what is iconographical portraiture in relation to naturalism (as in arts and photography) ends with a series of inscriptions on icons deriving from the study of iconography as it is manifested in a specific Cypriot context.

5.1. Naturalistic and iconographic portraiture.

Entering the world of iconography is a fruitful and rewarding experience in itself but approaching it aesthetically attending to iconography at the original place of exposition and function (in a church) bares its uniqueness in its ability to navigate the viewer in esoteric and chromatic landscapes of the surreal. If the human psyche resembles a nutshell from which one can hear the echo of God, then inside a chapel, the incantonic vibrations are louder and yet calmer… it is ideal for art researchers to study artworks in the place of their initial display. The study of the composition in relation to the whole iconographical program of the temple, the architectonics, the light conditions of the building (that affect the tonical range of the artist’s palette); the opportunity to study a plethora of artwork by the same artist (in the majority of cases, in other words, the opportunity to study a specific artist: e.g. his lines, his palette); the ability to study artworks of different periods (in some instances like the St John’s Monastery that includes three chapels; the traces of the different historical periods of the island (Cypro-Renaissance frescoes, the destructions of the eyes/gaze by the Ottoman conquers in a later period) among others, with the addition to see the function of the specific artwork (icons whether panel icons or murals have a certain liturgical function), smell the olibanum and the psalms; becomes a treasure trove of resources for artistic study and aesthetic contemplation.
For the purposes of this research, this chapter will be focused on portraiture and the presentation of a small collection of panel icons. When referring to an artwork (or collections of artworks) and especially the process of the making, it is inevitable, yet invited, to provide a prologue or “draw” verbally the framework in which they were created. As the discussion unfolds, such introduction makes visible certain perceptions or traces of the Byzantine art worldview as well as provides the guidelines of the artwork making. In cases concerning a local visual language and/or an artform of the past, a prologue is also useful in opening a door of perception, in other words unlocking a code of viewing regarding the specific artform.

Influenced and intrigued by viewing the frescoes and panel icons of local chapels (but yet whose aesthetic value has been recognized (UNESCO list of World Cultural heritage) I became enveloped in a veil of query on specific artistic trends in iconography, such as Comnenean, Paleologean, Maniera Cypria, Cypro- Renaissance. After studying the art of iconography in the general context (especially Greek and Russian that are the major iconographic traditions, each one bearing several trends), the last couple of years I turned to studying the local samples.

The main theme of my artistic query is the human figure and specifically portraiture. I could say that one of the reasons for what has turned into a fifteen year old study of the iconographical art was my need to find and explore even more (or alternative ways) ways to represent the human figure and portraiture after following a study of naturalistic ways of the genre and especially as expressed in Romanticism (and a further parallel study in human figure anatomy and anatomy of human face).

Byzantine portraiture has its specific characteristics that differentiate it from realistic portraiture as it is widely known in western art history. The difference is an ontological theoretical approach as it will be further developed below...

Naturalistic portraiture and iconography share common ground. Painters can be influenced from iconography as well as the icon can take elements from realistic art. They use same mediums (liquid color and brushes, though not necessarily identical) and they are visual artistic languages. Realistic portraiture, following the nature of probably every artform, attempts to surpass death, misery, routine (Skleres, 2011). Since the first drawings in caves, the mnemonic aspect of art was distinguished. The tendency for
remembrance no matter if depicted in human figure, landscape or natura morta (still life), evident in realistic art, is a common characteristic shared with iconography. Iconography, eschatological in nature, aims exactly in depicting visually the spiritual, the metaphysical, the imperishable (Zernov, 1945; Etimasia, 2000).

Iconography differs from secular art in the sense that due to the eschatological character the icon rather adopts a teleological approach of art as a medium for the eternal, the spiritual, the metaphysical, the immaterial and therefore acts as a pedagogical channel to lead the worshipper towards his/her highest calling.

Iconography is not concerned with anything perishable... rather by abstraction and by lighting as well as other features like reversed perspective, excess of the characteristics of the human face and body to mention but a few) aims in depicting eternal life. Iconography is a constant reminder of the Resurrection and the metamorphosis of cosmos because of Resurrection.

Realistic art and iconography are both visual art forms as aforementioned. When the painter attempts to give an eternal character of the subject then he/she resembles iconographers. Skleres (2011) regards Van Gogh’s dish with the excess light on the quinces (in “Still life with quinces”) as an attempt to overcome the decaying. Isn’t the “Starring Night” of the same painter an attempt to depict things not as seen by the physical sight but by an inner gaze catching the mechanism, the inner power that holds the stars... the iconographer attempts to depict not the egg but what is inside the shell, to capture the being of the subject...

In all visual arts including sculpture, artists face the challenges of the transformation and representation of a three (or more than three, according to physics) dimensional space into the two-dimensional space of the painting surface as well as the representation of time in a spatial medium (painting surface). The above is a vital problem in visual representational arts (Antonova, 2010). Iconography differs in its way of representing time and space. Time and space as seen through the perspective of the Resurrection are metamorphosed (expanded). Time and space, according to Zizioulas (in Skleres, 2011) have a positive and a negative aspect. For example, space (at present time) unites some people as a common shared ground (positive aspect of space). Time (also in present time) also unites people as it can be shared by them in the doing of
various acts together (e.g. discussing, eating together et cetera) But due to the laws of physics, space and time could have negative aspects in the sense that they can separate people from union.

The Byzantines show time and space as expanded, as infinite, as a uniting agent, as “beloving” (Skleres, 2011). Time and space are enlarged so that to make people get the hint of that other world, the spiritual one. Space and time become free from the laws of nature (non transparency, non contemporaneity, non permeability [transmittance], gravity), achieved through a variety of representational ways (e.g. reversed perspective, events that differ in the time and in the space an event took place, appear at the same panel, the light etcetera). For example, in the icon of the Nativity (fig. 107), events that did not take happen in the same time or place are depicted on the surface of the same painting. The birth, the first bath of baby Christ, the angel guiding the Persian Magi, The angel calling the shepherds did not occur in exact the same time or exactly the same place but all these events do appear in the same icon. Everything (animals, tree leaves, mountains, individuals, etcetera) are depicted in the composition and colored (lighted) according to Christ. The ethos of the icon is then, Christological. Iconography depicts the glory of God. In more detail, Christ is the hypostatic glory of God through incarnation.
5.2. Can we call an icon a portrait?

What are the features that would allow the characterization of a portrait as iconographical? What are the parallels, the congruent and the divergent routes regarding portraiture and iconographic portraiture (icon)? Both naturalistic /realistic art and iconography are visual artistic languages / or mediums. Artists may be inspired by icons and iconographers borrow elements from naturalistic art and vice versa. The difference between an iconographical portrait and a naturalistic portrait is an ontological one.

Photography and iconographical portrait:

Though both portrait photography and iconographical portraiture deal with the depiction of the human figure (whole figure or upper human figure), there are fundamental differences between the two genres. Byzantine portraiture differs from photography. The photograph, following the laws of nature is inscribed by the shadows (or digitally). A portrait photograph is a reminiscence or artifact of the depicted human subject, who was living at the time of the photograph, who now lives in the past and, who, in present time, eventually died or eventually will. The iconographical portrait is
inscribed by the Light (of God and technically, by transparent layers of lighter and lighter colour), and is not a reminiscence of the past but rather a facsimile—a reminder—of the future: how the depicted human subject (Saint) will appear in the end of times, in heaven. The Saint appears resurrected, alive, eternal in Heaven.

Due to the proportionally big eyes with the iris turned towards the viewer (3/4 position of the face) visual expression is an important element for the depiction of Byzantine portrait. The gaze and the eyes are sacred. Skleres (2011) supports that the depicted person sees something completely new, not of this world, indestructible, imperishable. The expression of the depicted is in a sense of wonder of the seen Heaven. Love and compassion are also traced in the gaze. According to Runciman (1975:92) “the image was there to show that the prototype was present at the liturgy and to provide a channel through which the worshipper could reach the prototype”. The author of the life of St Stephen (in Runciman (1975:87) supports that “the icon is the door opening the God created mind to the likeness of the original within”.

Skleres (2011) is specific: the photographic portrait is captured according to the optical laws of nature. The depicted figure is “inscribed” in shadows. The iconographical portrait is “inscribed” by Light that symbolizes the metaphysical/spiritual light (God’s light) that the figure has because he/she is in Heaven. The photographic portrait is a reminiscence of a person, in other words, the photographic portrait bears a mnemonic (remembrance) characteristic of someone in a moment, in the past. The iconographic portrait by comparison acts as a facsimile from the future, as a mnemonic trace of the future, an eschatological sign of how the human figure resides in Heaven, in other words, how the certain human person will be viewed/seen in the kingdom of God in the end of times. Lastly, the human figure in the photographic portrait bears decay, will die or is already passed away. The iconographical portrait depicts the human figure eternal, “resurrected” in the end of times. Time and place in the photographic portrait are facing decay/death. In the iconographic portrait time and place are regarded (and symbolically depicted) resurrected/eternal/ imperishable exactly because Christ resurrection was applied in all Nature/ Ktisis (Skleres, 2011).

There are many examples of the iconographic portraits that illustrate understanding (Justiniano, 2015; Photiou,1998; Skleres, 2011): For example, in the icon of the Nativity, as stated earlier, events that did not happen in the same place or time;
the salutation of the magi, the angel informing the shepherds, the first bath of Christ all appear in the same icon. When iconographer paints a tree, for example, the tree appears with very few leaves. These few leaves symbolize the entire foliation, whilst every single leaf is painted distinctively because every element (even the smallest) is important and bears its own lighting, as it is with every hair individually painted and lighted. The folds in clothes are painted so that they are relational one to the other (Kordis, 2011). In the depiction of Saints who lived in the twentieth century whose images have since been photographed, an iconographical portrait differs from a photographic one.

An icon, therefore, could be considered a portrait under the condition that the depicted theme appears resurrected, eternal. This is an ontological stance and differentiation from other art forms. This understanding is important as it liberates artists from adopting one unique style and allows ground for experimentation. Experimentation within the ontological understanding of the theme of iconographical portraiture is how the rich variations, trends, waves of iconography were developed through the core of time in different parts of the Byzantine Empire, always with a deep knowledge of tradition preceding experimentation.

In the mid light of the chapel the feeling of being watched fills the space. Austere faces as if coming from another sphere of existing are there, present as they were present for my parents, my grandparents and other generations of people of the past... How many people have been in my spatial position, consciously or unconsciously staring at and being stared by a series of people, not that different from you and me but yet they are testimonies of an immense beauty of the soul, a beauty that is not quenched via naturalistic elements of this world but rather through modesty in manner. A sense of presence is created. To an attentive reader of the murals for aesthetic or other reasons, the human artistic creation reaches other levels, subliminal layers.

The sense of staring that the murals in semi darkness evoke explains the level of lightening of color of the face and clothes of the depicted. In mid light, all have to have a final level of lightening (psimithies) tonically lighter from the previous levels. This is an important element to bear in mind. The frescoes’ background is covered in dark color that helps the figure appear lighter. In panel icons, though, in the iconostasis, the icon panel background is covered by golden leaves. In this case, rightly, the iconographer painted the faces much lighter (in comparison to the murals). Looking at the mural, even partially, I can have in mind the whole iconographical program of the temple. This perspective allows me to study how the iconographer of the past found aesthetic solutions to
present major murals but with a sense of synthesis and a sense of all being connected. The figures of saints on the wall, in frontal or \( \frac{3}{4} \) position appear harmonious due to likeness but yet interesting due to differentiation of one figure from the other since the iconographer, faithful to the ecclesiastical traditions maintained an individual character for each one of the figures, yet, as aforementioned, all of them belonging harmonically to the same iconographical part. The use of warm earthly colors result in chromatic harmony of the composition. Whether the use of earthly hues derived from necessity, it was hard for Byzantine, Medieval, Renaissance artists to gather their materials. They often had to travel to different parts of the eastern Mediterranean basin or beyond in mainland to get supplies of colour, gold, and other useful materials. In cases of lack of colors, the mixing with local mud resulted in augmentation of the quantity but also to alteration of color, as a consequence or done on purpose. Colour harmony is not important at this moment as I am not looking at this time at the whys but at the representational manner/style/way of painting. All the above evolves out of attentive study of the murals in the space they exist which in turn shows the importance of studying in the space of initial exposition.

The experience of the artwork in a specific church is not a one-dimensional experience. All the senses are stimulated. Soul and mind cooperate with sight. How can I not think of the generations of the past and of the finiteness of human life when surrounded by artwork that acts as a fascimile from other time, of the past and the future... How can I not feel the vibrations of the anonymous iconographer of the narthex of Panagia Phorviotissa when staring at the representation of cosmos, land, sea, the chorus of angles under the Pantocrator, the angels on the western wall (un)folding the map of universe? How can I not feel the movement and liveness of the murals by Apsevdes who was a magister from Constantinople, inscribing even the letterings into the compositional drawing so that there is unity... How can I not be carried away by the rich outcome of the Cypro Renaissance and feel the fresh angle/ wave and imagine how that part of the temple appeared in the eyes of the people at the time of creation? How can I not feel to the bone the fear of people when the temple and pilgrims were experiencing vandalisms by the Ottomans who in order to act more freely destroyed the eyes of the figures on the murals, not wanting to feel their gaze? (my notes)

### 5.3. Artistic response: painting icons

What follows is a collection of icons, which I painted, influenced by my study of the murals. The first two icons depict Virgin Mary. She is one of the most famous subjects for depiction and yet one of the most difficult as, firstly, female figures in general need expertise in painting the face and any surface of complexion and secondly, special attention needs to be given to the expression, the expression of joy and sorrow (as she
knows the crucifixion of her Son will eventually take place but she anticipates His Resurrection) and compassion for humanity.
Figure 106. Virgin Mary, E. Hadjipieri, egg tempera on gesso prepared wood, 23 carat gold on background, 2016, 35cm x 25cm.
Figure 107. Virgin Mary, E. Hadjipieri, egg tempera on gesso prepared wood, 2014, 23 carat gold, 35cm x 25cm.
In the sketching of Virgin Mary, an attentive student of art and art history cannot avoid viewing the continuity from antiquity art though three dimensional art: sculpture and antiquity painting) and see how Christianity fused and transformed antiquity art into Christian art, Byzantine art (two dimensional art). The techniques (e.g., encaustic, colors, forms, lines) are borrowed from ancient Greek Roman art and especially the Fayum portraits (the biggest corpus of antiquity portraits). The stylization of Virgin Mary and other female saints was developed from the statues of Hera, Athena, or Artemis or any other Olympian goddess... as well as the hair of women or angels' hair was borrowed from the hair of the antiquity statues of women figures. The eyebrows (semi cycle) were also taken from antiquity as well as the small mouth that antiquity painters and sculptors used to show the virtue of humility/modesty (Skleres, 2011). However, iconography differed not only in the sense that the 3D plastic art (sculpture) gradually became 2-dimensional (to direct the viewer to see beyond the 3D world we live in and move to metaphysical spheres) but in the ethos. Art became, as Miheles (1946) (among others support, sublime, or as Vranos (1984) supports, spiritual.

Iconographical art shows new aesthetic solutions or approaches to many aspects (organization of space and time for instance) especially in the expression of the face that will be useful to consider in the creation of the portrait icons below. For example, an iconographical portrait not only wants to depict the virtues of the person as in antiquity sculpture and painting but also to make visible that the depicted person lives in another level of existence, in a spiritual way, without bearing signs of detriment, decay, blight, death as the latter have been overpassed by the event of Resurrection. In contrast to Giotto, Cimambue, Rafael who depicted religious themes in the traditional way of realistic painting, iconography that preceded invented new techniques, new ways of representation to show the new concept, the new religion, Christianity (Skleres, 2011; Etimasia, 2000).

Since the depicted person in the icon has acquired sanctity (in the case of Saints) their iconographic portrait is made as such as to indicate their spiritual metamorphosis and that they have become vessels of God's grace. In an iconographic portrait the eyes appear proportionately big and expressive as they have seen the heavenly realm. The ears are also depicted enlarged in order to hear God's words. The nose is prolonged and narrow as to smell the spiritual aroma of the Holy Trinity not the odor of this world whilst the mouth is drawn very small as the intake of food is
decreased, and through fasting and praying, the mouth becomes an organ of spirituality, an organ to offer Eucharistic psalms and the kiss of peace. The forehead is proportionately big, large and tall symbolizing wisdom and spiritual thought (Etimasia, 2000). The gaze is an important element in the morphé of the depicted. The gaze is made as such that the depicted subject is looking at the worshipper. This is the liturgical function of the icon: the icon as a medium of communication and communion. Again I would remind the reader that in the iconographical art the worshipper is the center. Art Historian Otto Demus in (Mathews, 1998, p.114) supports that:

the image is not separated from the beholder by the “imaginary glass pane” of the picture plane behind which an illusionistic picture begins: it opens into the real space in front, where the beholder lives and moves. His space and the space in which the holy persons exist and act are identical. The Byzantine church itself is the “picture-space” of the icons. The beholder sees himself witnessing the holy events and conversing with the holy persons. He is not cut off from them; he is bodily enclosed in the grand icon of the church; he is surrounded by the congregation of the saints and takes part in the events he sees.

Evdokimov (in Etimasia,2000) referring to how the body is painted on an icon, points out that the body is sketched lightly, gently, gracefully, the body is suggested beneath the garments through simple folds/rumples. Their linear aridity does not guide the eye to the anatomy but rather guides the gaze esoterically, to the spirituality within. Quenot (1993) adds that the body is often disappeared below cloaks/mantles. However these mantles do not cover the human body but rather they envelop the souls of the depicted figures, acquiring the psyche’s transparent colors (as illustrated in the way the color/egg tempera is applied in transparent layers). Thus, Quenot suggests that the rumples of the clothes do not show natural movement but rather the pneumatic/spiritual vibration of the whole existence/being of the depicted figure.

The alteration of the morphé (human face and figure) to anti- naturalism, the stylization (use of geometric forms) exaggeration and understatement/simplicity are some of the characteristics of Byzantine iconography. All the above elements derive from theological grounds and are expressed through symbols in the icon. Kontoglou (1960) in the same lines supports the position that the character of the icons is not natural; rather it is liturgical and symbolical, thus spiritual. By learning the meaning of the iconographical symbolism, we become able to appreciate it and let it guide us to the spiritual/metaphysical realm.
The expression of the faces is that of calmness. No expression of animosity/evil appears on the faces even if the face depicted is Judas or an executioner. Forbearance is another characteristic of iconographical portraiture. It couldn't be otherwise for in the orthodox dogma every human figure is an icon of God, bears the mark of the Creator. Despite the fact that the human figure /icon of God could be tarnished, respect of the fact that every human is the icon of God is depicted through the calm expression of all. The latter is in accordance during the service when the priest sprinkles incense to the icons and to all the living icons (human beings). In this way, according to Evdokimov (In Etimasia, 2000), the church glorifies the icon of God within every human being.

The colours that I chose are the traditional colours used in iconography. The first icon has some chromatic variations that are influenced by artist Apsevdes who painted one of the chapels. This part of chromatic experimentation, using complementary colours to upgrade tonically, is mostly visible in the clothes of Christ. (In the photographs below, the variations of colour are not very observable except for the clothes of Christ. The golden decoration describes in a discreet way the richness of the Queen of Heavens (Virgin Mary) and also serves as giving light to the dark hues of the clothes, a necessary gesture in the minimal light conditions of Medieval churches.

In all the icons below, (and the Virgin Mary icons above) I experimented with the application of light and in lighting (painting) the shadow of the face and skin in general. The combination of cold and warm colours, and complimentary colours result in an optical and chromatical bondage of light and shadow. Late 13th century till early 14th century was an era of colour experimentation that resulted in the plasticity (giving spherical shape) of the figure through the use of complimentary colors in the shadows and then on the lighting. It is easier to see this effect in the darker side of the face and skin which results in plasticity. The addition of vermilion hue on the darker sides is an example. An application of this rule, referring to Western art could be observable by the Impressionists.

My invitation is to linger with the icons that follow, which through you, seek to engage in meaningful conversation.
Figure 108. Saint John the Baptist, E. Hadjipieris, egg tempera on gesso prepared wood, 23 carat gold, 2016, 55cm x 35 cm.
Figure 109. Saint Heracledius, E. Hadjipieri, egg tempera on gesso prepared wood, 23 garat gold, 2017, 35cm x 25cm.
Figure 110. Jesus Christ Pantocrator, E. Hadjipieri, egg tempera on gesso wood, 23 carat gold, 2013.
Figure 111. Jesus Christ Pantocrator (detail), E. Hadjipieri, egg tempera on gesso prepared wood, 23 carat gold, 35cm x 25 cm.
Figure 112. Saint John Lampadestes, E. Hadjipieri, egg tempera on gesso prepared wood, 23 carat gold, 2016, 12cm x 7cm.
Saint John the Theologian, E. Hadjipieri, egg tempera on gesso prepared wood, 23 carat gold, 2016, 45cm x 35cm.
In the making of these icons, I was inspired by the murals I visited and the application of characteristics of the specific local visual languages of iconographical art (the latter being manifested in the murals of the specific chapels was one parameter guiding me). The other parameter (or variable) in the equation of artistic creation is the tension (very visible in iconography, and in the artwork I created) between abstraction, realism, naturalism and symbolism. Though abstraction or symbolism is visible in all the artwork, there are different degrees in which the abstraction/naturalism is manifested: The naiveté (of a certain degree) of the Maniera Cypria appears in Saint John L. (Figure 117), the calligraphic harmony of Apsevdes is attempted to be given to the depiction of Jesus Christ, the expression of the second icon of Virgin Mary (Figure 113) appears to be more naturalistic (though not at any sense realistic) borrowing elements from the Cypro – Renaissance style.

There is no excess in the luminosity/lightening of the morphé (human figure) nor in the clothes. I wanted the tonical variation to move smoothly as in the Asinou murals. The unknown iconographer of Asinou managed with a rather restricted chromatic palette and warm earthly hues as well as with simplicity of drawing to make the skies descend to Earth and the viewer (even centuries after the creation of the murals) to ascend to the skies, within a sphere of spirituality. And this is marvelous… In the sketching of the portraits I had Apsevdes as a guide… he managed to unite/depict the physical morphé in a way that goes beyond physicality and shows sanctity/divinity. In a way, he used complementarily both naturalism and abstraction. Through the virtuosic use of calligraphic line, he created a unison of the aforementioned abstraction and naturalism and this technique and ambition is what I took from him and attempted to apply in the iconographic portraits, especially in St Heracleidius (figure 115) and St John (Figure 114). Influenced by the naturalistic touch of the Cypro-Renaissance genre of the Akathist chapel, I also added naturalistic tints to the portraits, more visible in the Virgin Mary icons (Figures 112-115).

Line, form, color are artistic tools but in the art form in question, (iconography), they become agents of communion. The relativity of the line, the discreet use of color and light to render plasticity and the rather flat background result in a dynamic projection of the depicted figure towards the viewer, thus creating a common space where the viewer and the iconographed figure co-exist in a unity. The feeling of communion that I experience when studying the murals is vivid. The chapels, the frescoes and icons in the
viewer’s presence are a harmonious whole that projects unity – expanded in time and space – so that from and through the iconicity of sacredness, we are moved to “see” the iconicity of sacredness in ourselves and to discover the iconicity of personhood and humanness, and finally, “sense” the compassionate gaze of the Pantocrator.

Concluding this chapter I wonder what your impressions are regarding the iconicity of personhood and sacredness especially as shared through the present chapter and artwork.
Chapter 6.

Tracking the artist’s psyche

Figure 114. In front of the waves the voice unrolls, E. Hadjipieri, oil on canvas, 2017, 35cm x 50cm.
Born out of curiosity, or narcissism, or agony
or because of care,
or even just a will
to be noticed,
to be viewed,
to be listened to
in a city that resembles a cage

the psyche of the artist rebels…

Softly the psyche speaks
but no one listens
in a city that resembles a grand party…
The psyche speaks louder and louder
but still no response
not even a sign that the voice is being heard…
Lastly the psyche, rebelling, shouts
but the scream is lost
in the voices, noise, murmurs, laughter and cry
of the cityscape

The (icon) painter’s psyche
speaks at night
and the voice resembles a whisper
calm, soft, even compassionate
For in the night’s silence
the esoteric chords of the soul
reach the inner chords
of the cityscape, the peoplescape, the naturescape…
Synchronizing with the cosmic frequencies…

As the final veils of the sunlight disappear in the horizon of a seascape
the soul of the artist whispers
and the sea waves multiply the whisper,
they carry it afar to reach
sunlight that adds the final tints of colour
in the canvas of cosmos

As the coloured veils of the sun
disappear in the horizon
adding dramatic tints of crimson, orange and yellow
in the fabric of cosmos,
the soul of the painter whispers once more
to be multiplied and strengthened by the sea breeze and the waves
so that to reach the cosmic incantations of the universe
playing a day night interlude
in the elegy of cosmos.
As the prologue might have revealed, this chapter concentrates on the (icon) painter and the tensions she faces when approaching art and especially iconography through studying the genre in chapels (original spaces of creation and exhibition). I will touch on issues such as naturalism and abstraction, style and culture, copying or creating, secular and spiritual, art of the past and art making of present time, ethos; issues that challenge a contemporary painter, issues that a contemporary painter who also practices in traditional artforms deals with frequently, issues that like a sculptor refine the artist’s worldview and practice.

6.1. Tradition and Novelty

When I spend time in Athens, I try to find the graffiti of Fikos. In a largely gray city that often appears chaotic, dystopian, mechanistic as do many contemporary metropolitan cities everywhere on the world, the art of Fikos appears as a refreshing and resuscitating oasis. Fikos, student of well-known icon painter and academician Kordis, united in his unique creative way, creates lyrical graffiti that spells out romanticism, sensitivity, as well as deep understanding of synchronous—an aesthetic living in cement block built cities whose compassionate gaze wants to offer an alternative look to the external walls of the buildings. You will recognize, of course, in the images of Fikos’s graffiti below the iconographic influence/character in his street art…

![Grafitti, Fikos.](image115.jpg)

Figure 115. Grafitti, Fikos.
I have a special love for Fiko’s work.

In this chapter, Fikos’ artwork will serve as a bridge to discuss issues of tradition and novelty. Grafitti or neo muralism, as Fikos describes, can be regarded “as an attempt to imaginatively transform our bleak post-industrial environments—to offer an alternative vision, by infusing them with images suggestive of a far richer living and higher reality, imbued with beauty, lyricism, joy, rhythm, and hope” (2016:2). The first similarity with iconography has appeared as reflected in the aims of neo-muralism. A second similarity arises in the fact that both genres, street art and iconography, like other artforms, are directed to engage people and to interact with people’s feelings and thoughts. Thus there has to be cautiousness on behalf of the artist on what the he or she creates...”only”, according to Fikos (2016:2) who acknowledges the long tradition of the church, “the church has an experience of 2000 years so they have already settled what works and what doesn’t.” I would add, however, that there are changes in these 2000 years, especially the last couple of eons that could also affect religious art. The issue of tradition and novelty is one whose importance and influence becomes important all the more.
Fiko’s work is only one example of the influence of iconographical art as we see it today. Despite the fact that secular and religious art in the Byzantine years were, at periods, identical, the gap between the two genres (secular and religious) has been broadened relatively in the most recent years. Due to the rediscovery of the icon evolving from the Romantic movement and its tendency to acknowledge the local, the gap might be slightly shortening...

Many illustrations for children’s books are influenced by iconography. Contemporary artists influenced by the technical aspects include, for example, Tsarouhes, Kordis (in his secular art), Tassos, and Russian painter Kush. If we turn back the clock a little, in the early twentieth century, the black square of Malevich projected against the wall, thus opening space to the viewer resembles the reverse perspective of iconography (Xamist, 2016).

Some contemporary iconographers like Mitrovic and Kordis proceeded to creatively ‘escape” in some levels from traditional rules of iconography. Other icon painters, like Ilie Bobianu, paint in a rather classical form. The work of the latter is characterized by strength and sensitivity and brings calmness. There are traces of Panselinos, of Paleologean art, of Cretan art, and his work projects the ideal position and ability of a contemporary iconographer to study the iconographical studies of the past and fuse them together according to his or her idiosyncrasy.
Figure 117. The message of Resurrection icon, George Kordis.

I deliberately started this chapter by staging the contemporary context – which appears to be rather plethoristic and which expands in many directions and levels. From children's book illustrations to graffiti, to secular and ecclesiastical art, to the avant garde movements of the early 20th century and their relation to the "old" iconographical art, to the symbolism, abstraction and conceptualization of art from the mid 20th century onwards, iconography is apparent in today's visual literacy. Iconography bears a distinctive place in contemporary art making and a turn towards it is not one of nostalgia
for an art of the medieval past but rather a turn towards delving further into exploring what art is and its purposiveness.

In my apprenticeship to art, significant time was dedicated to looking at art (the work of old masters but also contemporary work) and in discussions on several artistic subjects as well as viewing my work in relation to other artwork. The aforementioned task was one of the most important actions in my delving further into art as my eyes were trained to notice relationships and to express them visually as proportions through color, line and form.

It is from the lenses of seeing-in-relations, that I see secular and religious art, traditional and contemporary art, naturalism and abstraction as well as my artistic engagement with art both as an art pedagogue and artist. I am an artist whose path of art is expressed in a diptych schema: the human figure, which is my focus, is approached both from the view of iconography and from the aspect of secular art (especially romanticism and contemporary). A diptych schema is one schema having two aspects but there are co-relations between the genres. How could there not be such a correlational characteristic when art is alive? Borrowing schemata of other genres of the past and contemporary and through the personality of the artist, artwork is transformed into new creations that simultaneously challenge and recognize conventions, all the while embracing the spirit embodied within.

The approach by contemporary iconographers and academicians like Sklères as they apply the achievements of neopatristic theological synthesis to contemporary church arts is an authentic one (Mitrovic in his interview to Davydov and Shalamova, 2016). Florovsky (1975) also supports the understanding that the aim of contemporary theology is not a mere turn to the spiritual figures of the past (the Fathers and Mothers of the church) but rather a shift to the spirit of them, their perceptions and teaching regarding the dogma/theological issues.

After all, the medieval church as Mitrovic (2016:4) among others support “never asked painters to reproduce the work of great painters or epochs but simply to reproduce the faces of saints and events about Salvation.” Otherwise medieval ecclesiastical art would not have the stylistic development and the visual polyglot character it has. There would not be the local visual idiolects one can observe in

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different chronically and geographically diverse regions. There would not be the Maniera Cypria or the Cypro-Renaissance way of expression in the Cypriot artistic path.

The goal of a contemporary icon painter could therefore be the transformation of synchronous cultural context. Iconographers are not required to visually express the faith of peoples of past generations but to explore the faith of contemporary people, however one understands faith to be. Icon painting today need not be about telling stories of medieval times but to be enlivened by contemporary times, places, and relationships of today. As Mitrovic (2016:5) comments, “no matter how primitive and rudimentary our expression is, it has to be done from the heart, through mind and body”.

Art making is a creative process by definition. The ability to create is inherent the human nature and, one may suggest, God-given. So, when considering the issue of contemporary icon painting, artists could be learning that within the tradition of iconography, there is a rich depth of understanding that can be taught (which is why paintings of traditional icons are sometimes copied during the early years of an iconographer’s apprenticeship). But if an artist really wants to understand the layers of meaning of iconography, he/she needs to enter into a dialogue with tradition/medieval art from a contemporary position. After all, an icon made today is a contemporary artifact even if the artist follows strictly medieval iconographical rules of Cretan School, or Comnenean or Paleologean or any other Byzantine iconographical school/wave. However, our contemporaneity gives us a different approach and level of accessibility: for example, a contemporary iconographer can easily “reach” a wealth of medieval icons, classified by art historians according to criteria, all icons available at a glance by scrolling through images on a computer tablet or by visiting Byzantine museums or churches. All artistic styles are easily accessible to today’s art student. Also, all materials are easily and effortlessly available (with a nod to price). Art shops offer a plethora of colour-refined powders in a range of qualities. The same is true with brushes or leaves of gold or glues or varnishes.

I am glad that in a practical level I do not have to spend valuable time creating my medium, even though I “envy” Canada-based Symeon van Donkelaar from Conestoga, an icon painter who creates his color palette the “old” traditional way by finding stones and terras from the place he lives in, pounding them into powder to make paint and then using these paints in his icons. One could argue that such an artist-
intensive procedure offers a sense of a “bigger” immersion in the icon. The local colours give a distinct inherent local character to the icon, making evident the close connection between the artist, the nature/colours, and the artwork created. Lastly the whole procedure could be regarded as a holistic eucharistic action. Considering the icon painters of the past, their practical difficulties were great: for example, medium preparation (gesso, colours, wood, glues, gold leaves, wood waxing et cetera) was a long procedure; their searching in nature for materials or buying them from bazars (of metropolitan cities like Constantinople and Alexandria (like lapis lazuli, genuine cinnabar, porphyra among others) were time-consuming. The filtering of the colours and glues, the clearness and thinness of the gold leaves facilitate the work of icon painters today and yet make it … contemporary.

The gilding (applications of golden leaves) techniques have multiplied and it is not difficult to choose a technique that is most suitable for the individual artist. The mediums and instruments for gilding used today can make the background surface bright and shiny like a mirror…although I miss the traces made by the hand of a medieval painter with the use of Ethiopian stone with the expected hand inaccuracy and the sense that an individual artist of flesh and blood hides behind the technique. Contemporary instruments for wood (gesso) preparation and even the occasional use of synthetic wood (for ecological purposes or for increased endurance) to facilitate the gilding can result in a mechanistically perfect result. But I am not interested so much in perfection rather than viewing the relatively “imperfect” human hand and the sensitivity that comes along side.

I am not interested in gilding that is so perfect that the background appears like a mirror, both for aesthetic and theological reasons. The worshipper salutes the iconographed figure. The “mirror” effect in the gilded surface appears to be luminous, symbolizing divinity or sanctity. If used discretely, it can both depict divinity and humanness as the golden background would give space for the figure (made by the medium of color) to be seen and noticed by the believer, even gives ground for the luminosity of the face/morphé to be seen. However, if the golden background is so perfectly executed so that it is like a mirror, then the background reflects the figure of the worshipper standing in front of the icon, which results in the worshipper saluting his/her idol reflected in the golden background instead of the painted saint. Such positioning
would not stand theologically as icons are made for the worshipper to salute/communicate with a saint not the viewer’s reflection.

Thus in the making of my icons, I use a rather “humble” gilding technique that does not give a mirror-like effect. A less luminous golden background leaves space for the face/morphé to be more visible, more enlightened, more divine. Sometimes I choose to use gold only in the halo that I, again, decrease the luminosity by drawing ornamental calligraphic curves (as seen in the icons below). Or I paint the background with color or discretely use gold in the dress ornaments made out of 23 carats, or sometimes, the ornaments are painted by yellow ochre. Each time my decision is taken according the composition as the painting evolves.

Why do I choose to do so? I want to emphasis the human figure/ the morphé/ the pneuma of the depicted. The morphé/ the facial expression of the depicted saint should appear as the central part of the icon, catching the viewer’s eye, not allowing the eye or the mind wander… In so doing (or attempting to do) I reduce /decrease any other components of the composition that would relatively “hide” the human face. Why? I imagine that a contemporary person—living in the anonymity of our dystopic cities and the quick rhythms of life as well as aggressive competition—would rather have an icon in which the human figure appears “alive”, compassionate, looking at the viewer, ready to listen and attend to.

There is also another reason to de-emphasize shine or metallic glow. Our epoch is characterized by metallic glows, neon lightening, fake or real… especially evident during the night when the lightening and glow give a different character to merchant avenues, city centers, restaurants etcetera. We, contemporary people, wear metallic glows… silver, gold or metallic copper sandals, belts, purses, watches, jewels… even cosmetics now have metallic glows… The electricity lighted cities hide the light of the stars, depriving us from viewing the starry night that inspired poets, musicians, painters… I am not suggesting that artificial lightening/luminosity or the dress habit should change… I’m just—and this is purely a subjective opinion—trying to bring equilibrium or eliminate what is redundant, so that in the limited time one has for praying, I try to make an icon – to my ability—act as a channel between the individual (who is in a constant run to catch up with his/her everyday obligations) and the Divine. Sometimes I
experiment in how the icon would look in different light conditions such as in the light of a candle (as many artists do).

Let me return to the facial expression of the icon. Solemnity and simplicity could be guides to contemporary icon making in an attempt to capture and depict through a static medium an esoterical (inner) power, a radiance from inner transformation, as well as clarity, purity and sanctity that give the stigma of other levels of being/existing in the world. This is, I believe, the target of a contemporary icon painter: to attempt to depict through the inner qualities of a figure glimpses of an alternative way of being.

When painting, my contemporaneity is a major factor that influences my art practice. Contemporaneity might lead one artist to enter into a dialogue with the art techniques of the past from his or her position of today so as to use the visual language of the past in new creative ways… such experimentation is needed in order for the contemporary icon to become “theology in color” and an active way of being in the world. Gilding is one example of how I attempt to make use/take advantage of my contemporaneity. Another example could be my emphasis on human portraiture, my commitment to the power of human expression. My need for a face that appears compassionate and friendly, ready to communicate and yet, remains other-worldly, compels me not to draw faces that are strict or foreboding. I would rather move between expression of apathy/calmness and sympathy like the icon of the Christ or expressions that have elements of naturalism such as Virgin Mary.

The colour palette that I use is becoming narrower, regarding my work in iconography and my art-making in general, though some iconographic artistic styles of the past are characterized by daring/bold and strength (red skies or mountains for example). Again, the reason for this choice of a muted colour palette lies in the abundance of colors in our contemporary image-driven world. In contrast to my initial icons made years ago, I now prefer simplicity (regarding color), especially as far as textiles are concerned. Thus is the viewer protected from factors that might cause the eye to wander in the composition and miss the figure/portrait, which is the main element. See, for example the limited earthly palette of the anonymous iconographer/muralist of Panayia Phorviotissa: the restricted chromatic palette and the simplicity of the forms lead the viewer to the over-worldly, to the Divine (figures 5 - 16).
There are also other factors that might be considered regarding icon painting today. For example, unlike the chapels mentioned in the previous essays, contemporary churches are larger, with more light (from windows and from electrical lamps), with generally white walls, simple wooden furniture. Such parameters could guide a contemporary icon painter to re-arrange his/her colour palette; or proceed to stylistic changes regarding panel icons or murals; or re-adjust his/her luminosity, color, form and line in terms of naturalism and abstraction, (taking also in consideration, of course, the idiolect of the individual artist).

The contemporary group of people that the icons are directed to differs enormously from those of medieval societies. Contemporary societies are multicultural and globalized. Multiculturism is a factor to take into consideration for an icon painter paints not only for him/herself but for those who come to view his or her work and for those who will live in the future. There are ways of implementing/incorporating such variables in iconography. Contemporary art as a medium that trespasses nationalities and unites cultures could play a significant role here.

The relation between iconography and contemporary art is an important one. Matisse (who could be called as one of the pioneers in contemporary art) once noted after seeing Ostroukhov’s collection of icons during a visit to Russia: “What clearness and display of great, strong feeling. Your young people have here, in their own home far better models of art than abroad. French artists should come to study in Russia, Italy offers less in this field” (in Justiniano, 2016b). Contemporary art helped to rediscover medieval iconography. Abstraction, symbolism, expressionism, the fluidity of time and space are common grounds for the two genres even though implemented in various ways. Considering that contemporary art is a common language that connects and unifies peoples from around the globe, then, could contemporary art assist in reimagining medieval art?

We contemporary people, with our complexities, souls, bodies, minds, experience, unprecedented knowledge, if we are to actively participate in the Eucharistic mass, then there should there not be at least a part of our visual expressions, culture and creations apparent? Otherwise, there is something inauthentic in our active presence. A creative renovation of church art and enrichment of medieval art would serve as a bridge of continuity and unity of past, present and future generations.
Continuity does not occur by copying/mimicking but rather as Mitrovic (2016) says, through the understanding of the spirit of Byzantine artistic heritage.

In a postmodern, synchronous and pluralistic society, should we try to accomplish stylistic unity? Obviously not. In our diverse worlds, there needs to be room for the individual and the local. Even in the most conservative arts, there is place for creativity and experimentation, argues Justiniano (2016c:2). Hart puts forth the argument well:

an icon is an icon and able to be venerated because it bears the name of the Saint/feast (or be recognizable as such if the name is not there any longer), regardless of its style. Additionally, however, in its style it should ideally reflect a transfigured world, which is material and three dimensional, and yet should also use abstract means to suggest this world transfigured (this is where stylistic variation is manifold) (Hart, in Justiniano, 2016c:2).

Burkhardt (1986:8), in the same lines, referring to the progression in traditional arts notes that "in reality no work exists that is traditional, and therefore "bound" by changeless principles, which does not give sensible expression to a certain creative joy of the soul'. The same tradition, (of the Eastern or Orthodox Church) through the core of time was embodied in a plethora of styles, and also, nowadays, is still being embodied in polymorphous styles/waves and is expressed in pictorially polyglot dialects, idioms and idiolects. As Coomaraswamy (1977:15) points out, because the traditional artist has made “the forms he makes use of as his own… The proof of artistic liberties lies in the fact that even in the most conservative arts there are easily recognizable local styles and stylistic sequences”.

Multiplicity exists and is welcomed. It is a matter of ethos regarding the how a traditional artist, in this case, the icon painter will lead his/her art making. Ethos refers to the artist (ethnic temperament, purity of vision, skill…) but also to what is generally called “Byzantine style”. Byzantine style is better understood as “the traditional method or artistic system of icon painting encapsulating those pictorial principles that remain constant in spite of stylistic variations” (Justiniano, 2016c:22). Kordis (in Justiniano, 2016c) also mentions iconographic principles that are constant; unchanging abstraction holds a key role in those non-changing iconographic principles that embody the characteristics of timelessness, profundity, spirituality, other-worldliness. Abstraction
within the Byzantine artistic system is a parameter that brings unity in the existing multiplicity of iconographic styles.

Regarding style, it is important to have in mind the Byzantines’ perceptions on art and style. Maguire (1989) notes:

When the Byzantines wrote about art, they did not discuss it in the vocabulary of twentieth-century art criticism, making an artificial distinction between style and iconography. They discussed the interrelationships of form and meaning in their own vocabulary, which was largely then vocabulary of Late Antique rhetoric... But a close reading of the Byzantine writers reveals that they were, in fact, extremely sensitive to styles and to their meanings, whether those styles were in present day terms, classicizing and naturalistic on the one hand, or abstract and schematic on the other. (p.217)

He also adds:

In summary, different artistic styles could carry definite messages...The style could be classicizing and naturalistic... or it could be highly abstract, as in the case of imperial portraits in Hagia Sophia. But, in either case, style was part and parcel of the message of the work of art. (p.229)

The existence of a range of styles regarding iconography raises the question on how a contemporary icon painter could render those through contemporary settings. The next subsection is on artistic tensions in iconography.

6.2. Tensions in contemporary icon painting

In the making of icons, the inspiration from the murals and the application of characteristics of the specific local visual idioms of iconographical art as the latter is manifested in the murals of the specific chapels is one parameter. The other parameter or variable in the equation of artistic creation are the tensions (visible in iconography) between abstraction, realism, naturalism, symbolism, tradition, innovation as well as how all the above are fused with the artist’s temperament. Contemporaneity completes the equation.

The art making is one side of the coin whilst the underlying theoretical knowledge is the other. These create the framework in which the artist can experiment. The experimentation in technique/brash strokes, the color palette, composition, ornaments, and gilding that I engaged in during my research is viewable in the icons/paintings that I
created. During the process of painting, I came through tensions between realisms, abstraction and naturalism, which I further would like to discuss.

As “perspective” was accepted as an artistic convention in Western art, the Jesuit missionaries used it in their missionary expeditions in China. The paintings depicting religious themes appeared as technical marvels to the Chinese emperor and were attributed a rather religious respect. However Scolari (2012) comments: “the evangelical message was ignored since for the Chinese the manner of representation was not realistic”. Soon the Jesuit art was colonized by adopting Chinese elements (regarding the time and space representations) in the images they used.

The issue of realism is relative and holds a cultural burden, as we can see in the paradigmatic examples below:
Figure 118. The visitation of Saint Elizabeth. Geronimo Nadal, Adnotaciones et meditationes in Evangelia (Antwerp, 1595). Jesuit missionaries initially used this kind of image for missionary purposes that the Chinese found unrealistic., in Justiniano, 2016b
Figure 119. The visitation of Saint Elizabeth, in "Chinese style", Giovanni da Rocha, Metodo del Rosario, 1620). Soon after missionaries went to China, the Chinese style was implemented in the representation of religious themes (in Justiniano, 2016b).
The second paradigm refers to how Gregory Melissenos (a Byzantine cleric) who during the Synod (council) of Ferrara Florence, visited a Latin church. In Melissenos’ words:

When I enter a church of the Latins, I do not revere any of the [images of] saints that are there, because I do not recognize any of them. At the most, I may recognize Christ, but I do not revere Him either, since I do not know how he is inscribed. But I make my own [sign of] the cross and revere it. I revere the cross that I make myself, and not anything else that I see there (in Maguire, 1989:46).

Therefore, the pictorial style or aesthetic canons embody “an ethos, a mentality, an idea, a code that communicates a conception, a paradigm, a worldview” (Justiniano, 2016b:7).

Realism becomes a relative term. What is considered by a societal /cultural group as life-like or as a photographic depiction of the phenomenal world might not be considered as such as by another. The pictograms usually created in various forms of folk arts for some are considered as realistic, as full of life. Pictorial symbolization or abstraction becomes then, realistic. The artistic style becomes a question of interpretation of reality, which is a metaphysical hermeneutic interpretation. In Justiniano’s words: “the question is whether or not our metaphysics conform to the truly Real” (2016b:7). The iconographical style was then a means to incarnate the orthodox metaphysics/theology.

The medium of iconographical art was the human figure/portraiture. What happens if we expand the metaphysics of orthodoxy and abstraction to the case of portraiture as expressed by the art of iconography? Saint John of Shanghai (a 20th century scholar, archbishop with immense philanthropic work, who was declared Saint recently) supports that iconography attempts to capture the wholeness of the human nature. In his words:

The Icon is not simply a representation, a portrait. In later times only has the bodily been represented, but an Icon is still supposed to remind people of the spiritual aspect of the person depicted…Thus, we see that an Icon must indeed depict that which we see with our eyes, preserving the characteristics of the body’s form, for in this world the soul acts through the body; yet at the same time it must point towards the inner, spiritual essence… The task of the iconographer is precisely to render, as far as possible and to as great an extent as possible, those spiritual qualities whereby the person depicted acquired the Kingdom of Heaven…(St. John of Shanghai and San Francisco, 1980:42-45)
When St. John refers to the icon and proposes that the latter “must point towards the inner spiritual essence,” he speaks of the icon depicting the hypostasis of Christ. He also mentions that “we can indeed give intimations of the divine nature through symbolic depiction of the human likeness of the Logos incarnate, by virtue of the hypostatic union” (Justiniano, 2016b:15). Abstraction is a facilitator as, according to Kordis (in Justiniano, 2016b:15),

the painter removes all the elements that are inappropriate and satisfy human curiosity, but do not serve the sacred mission of the icon. So the icon painter first makes the icon more abstract than a photo. And then, the artist renders this purified form in an artistic manner which is appropriate to the sacred person.

The work of the icon painter is focused in rendering insofar as and to whatever degree that the spiritual qualities whereby the painted parson acquired heavenly realm. In Justiniano’s words: “the virtue of the Saint is intuited, as it is manifested in his likeness, and then represented through symbolic realism. Hence the iconographer intuits the likeness of the saint as a true appearance, not as the word sometimes implies, that is, illusion, but, rather, as an unveiling of the fruits of participation in the divine nature, which is interpreted as meaning energetically or kata energeian (i.e. as theosis)” (Justiniano, 2016b:15). Illusionism exists in the iconographical portraits yet there are degrees of naturalism. Up to a point realism / illusionism could challenge the liturgical function of the icon and could not comply with the metaphysical character of the icon.

Another element that gives tension to the iconographer is the issue of light-shadow (darker tones). The addition of darker tones to show form is almost absent in iconography. The forms are usually shown/inscribed by lighter and lighter tones. Light symbolizes goodness. This is the reason that icons are considered to be created by light. However, there are darker tones. In this issue I would agree with Justiniano (2016) that there are degrees of emphasis regarding the dark/light in icons as well as in other art genres. A both/ and approach on this matter would be fruitful and leave space for experimentation.

The flat golden background of some icons makes any sense of illusionism disappear and operates as another internal light source. The sources of light/illumination in the icon are multiple: inner and external, natural/physical and divine, directional and all
encompassing (Justiniano, 2016b). The halo, the golden background, the golden strips on the clothes, the psimithia (lightest tones below the eyes).

For example, in the icon of Christ, (fig. 112 below) the human figure is relatively rendered in dark tones, which are equilibrated by the golden halo and stripes. The golden halo and the golden stripes on the garment make an effective way to reveal God as the ‘light of the world’. The morphé, both natural and yet abstract, with an expression of calmness shows both the divine and human nature of the depicted. The morphé is created by transparent layers of color (lazurras) and by curvilinear calligraphic lines that become thinner and thinner as well as lighter and schematize the forms of the face. These lines are more observable on the hair/beard (because they are dark) but give an idea on how the complexion develops.
Figure 120. Jesus Christ Pantocrator, E. Hadjipieri, egg tempera on gesso prepared wood, 23 carat gold, 2013, 35cm x 25 cm.
6.3. Painting icons today

In my art making I often move between iconography and realism as the latter was expressed by the Romantic artists. Each genre (as well as other genres that I have studied practically or theoretically) is art. Art is polymorphic, never static, constantly changing/developing. Every painting is a synthesis of brushstrokes, colors, lines and forms that were developed after years of exercise in icon painting, human figure painting, realism, calligraphy, abstraction and naturalism. All my previous exercises formed who I am and where I stand artistically.

I do not like following absolute characterizations such as “conservative” or “traditional” artists for those who merely copy nor “modernist” or “progressive” painters for those who implement elements of contemporary art in their practice. Icons/copies are not always sterile. A syncretic study of artwork of “copier” and “modernist” artists would show that there is a body of work characterized as a “bad” example that derives from both categories of artists. To my understanding a first step before proceeding to developing your own artistic style is to become a good painter, an artist who acquires several techniques at a relatively high level that would allow him/her to control the medium and express him/herself the way he/she wants to.

What is tradition? If tradition could be defined not as a frozen image of the past but rather as a living ‘entity’ that carries in each epoch the elements, which are still valid; which enriches each period by new elements while abolishing those which are redundant, and again moving to a next era always filtering elements, what possibilities arrive?

Painting an icon today by borrowing contemporary elements or elements of the past does not necessarily mean you are about to paint a “good” or rather meaningful icon. A good contemporary icon would/should express the queries of the synchronous society of the artist and even attempt to give answers to contemporary questions of people of today. This is what the icons—and if I might say art generally—expresses in the different eras. As contemporary icon painters we are not asked to perfectly copy an icon of the past or to incorporate elements of contemporary art but to rather use the aforementioned as tools/as a beginning to express our own faith, our questions, our queries, our 21st century quests. The task of the iconographer is one characterized by
multi-lingualism as there are several periods or waves, or styles, each distinct but interconnected. So in the case of mere copying, one might well ask: why copy 14th century frescoes or panel icons instead of artworks of another period? Why not copy a local path (e.g. as iconographical art was expressed in Cyprus in different periods, or the Russian path) and follow only the “wide” general path (or Greek path, even though there are many trends/styles in different times)? A contemporary icon painter may have access to the styles of the past from the stanza of 21st century.

The Comnenean iconographic style, Paleologean, Macedonian or Cretan, or any other iconographical style were developed as natural dialects (of the same language) according to the idiosyncrasy of the peoples of specific times, as well as economical, political, historical and social factors. So too should contemporary icon painting naturally spring from the queries of contemporary human experience and be “sculpted” by the techniques of the past and of today.

Icons are objects of utility (for praying) and also objects of art, objects of beauty and a palimpsest, that is a visual text incorporating a plethora of layers of meaning and thought. A contemporary icon might derive from typological canons/rules, but such an icon has been made within a community and for a community by the means that connects the community together and also links the latter with the spiritual. In this sense, Pageau (2016:7) and Skleres propose that icon painting is thus an action of love, and I would add that it is also an act of compassion. Between a world of extremes (Pageau, 2016) characterized by robots and mutants, liturgical art—in this case icon painting—could find the in-between way. And like Pageau (2016:10), I would agree that to find virtue in liturgical art we must look to avoid meaningless copying AND meaningless innovation both pure utilitarianism and pure aesthetic contemplation. Rather bringing together a joyful exploration of our predecessors with the effort to take these visual languages into our own, moving forward with prayer and humility, the visual and typological languages of the icon will appear as a living and breathing communal art which can still be a vibrant and authentic testimony in a world of robots and mutants.

Site-specific experience in the chapels with the frescoes might lead (at least as I have experienced) to a connection with the past, the peoples of the past and their worldview as well as the past iconographer’s art and worldview. The frescoes of the Panayia of Arakas (figures 17-37) are painted with enthusiastic spontaneity that make
the painted figures appear to be filled with expressive immediacy. Every line, even the line/figure of a letter (as all saints have their name written next to the figure) seems to be inscribed in a great oval shape in harmonic accordance with the painted figures who also appear to be “constructed” by little circular (or oval) forms being in turn inscribed in larger circular forms. The freedom and playfulness of the line augments the figure’s solemnity while in the eyes of a viewer the lines appear to be singing and dancing and give the effect of a viewer to be within a happy event, a dance. The simplicity of the line and restricted color palette of the Panayia Phorviotissa, as well as the relatively simplified form, depict how great/deep, sublime ideas and simplicity can co-exist without jeopardizing the depth of the ideas, but rather reinforce them in the way that abstraction could lead to an anagogic effect, which is the main characteristic of iconographical art.

The Akathist Hymn frescoes (figures 38 – 45)) give a paradigmatic example of how two cultures-traditions of the East and the West merge, and offer 21st century people glimpses on how different genres can have both a place and also how two other traditions—that of the past and that of today could co-exist in religious and secular art, as witnessed by the future.

The traditions of iconography give tools and knowledge and also the openness (especially in the Akathist Hymn frescoes) for change. Through the study of the past an artist could find a depository of knowledge but then, it comes to be seen how a contemporary artist might (re)use this knowledge from the stance of today, for people of today. Tool/ method could derive from tradition but style is up to how these are used, and for what intent. Ruskin puts it eloquently: “That virtue of originality that men so strain after is not newness (as they vainly think), it is only genuineness; it all depends on this single glorious faculty of getting to the spring of things and working out from that” (quoted in Justiniano, 2016).

Connections inevitably are made when one contemplates art in a specific site. The unveiling—to the extent that such unveiling could be possible—of the idiosyncracy of the artist of the past; the understanding of what was in value for societies of the past in comparison to what is of value today; and an intuitive feeling of another subliminal world passes to us through one of the finest mediums of human creation, art, cannot but touch a human soul.
Attending the chapels and the murals is a multifaceted experience that touches many aspects of the human condition and primarily, the part that is linked to spirituality. As elusive and fugitive as the spiritual condition could be, I tried to grasp it through the medium of art (murals) and attempted to document my subjective experience through a medium that I know best: painting. My quest that initially brought me to icon painting was to discover the human condition, the human subject.

At first my artistic practice effort was directed towards the realistic depiction of the human portraiture and figure. For a quite long period I made a stop to study the Romantics, in practice and in theory. But my quest to find more about the human nature and “uncover” the essence of it, I experimented in abstract art for a while until 15 years ago when I did my first icons… I wanted to learn more… and became fascinated with the theology/philosophy linked to how the human nature is perceived and therefore depicted in iconography. In front of me opened a path to an art form that later on became an avenue. My artistic horizon expanded and still expands. In my artwork (I do not separate iconography and the other art styles I implement as for me they are parts of art and the artistic genres I studied) different art styles are fused together and inform my style.

Also, my quest to the human condition led me to questions such as what is the human condition especially in terms of spirituality, in the monument/museum/chapel of my life or of a human life, what would/should be included; if I was to paint the sail boat of my life what would be the destination and the equipment? With art, I am only trying to add my color tints in the canvas of the world I want to live in… Art is not merely a means of entertainment or decoration. Art is a medium for change, for changing ourselves and for changing the world for the best. In this world beauty and ethics are merged, fused, co related. In this sense an ideal world becomes the world that defies decay (coming from our aggressive behavior) and the ephemeral, and dares to gaze at eternity.

6.4. The soul of the artist:

How to visualize the soul of the artist/icon painter? This would not be an easy task but I will attempt to “catch up” and depict some elements. The elegance and the spirituality of the calligraphic curvilinear character would be the means of and the starting point to reveal the character of the icon painter and artist through the medium of line.
The long curvilinear assured brush strokes—especially when infused with color—reveal the sensitivity of the heart as well as sureness of the head as well as serenity and calmness, for in a calligraphic trace (as in other artforms) the condition of the temper of the icon painter/painter is revealed.

Borrowing the strong but full of emotion calligraphic lines as I read them in the murals I decided to make an abstract calligraphic painting to depict the soul of the artist. On a blue background and beginning from the central point of the rectangle canvas surface (which is the central point, the core/ the heart of the painting) the calligraphic strokes expand and flourish. Simple, without any sophisticated ornamental elements, I wanted to inscribe, through the power of the line, sensitivity as well as sureness and calmness, two characteristics I believe essential and elemental in art and icon painting.

The brush strokes expand… but so does the artist and iconographer when testing his/her limits/borders and the unquenched tense of the art soul to experiment, especially when the exploration is within the parameters and possibilities of a certain tradition. My seeking led me to the creation of ‘the elegy of the soul’.
Figure 121.  Elegy of the soul, E. Hadjipieri, 2016, oil on canvas, 80cm x 40cm.
Chapter 7.

Imaginative Pedagogical Voyage

Figure 122. Terra and Mare (Personifications of Sea and Land), Narthex of Panayia Phorviotissa chapel, Asinou, Cyprus.

“Paint the boat of your life, as you imagine it, and sail along...,” said the art teacher. “Draw your dreams and your wishes and give them form and color.” Soon, in the penumbral, mid light of a thousand year old, stone-wall chapel all you can hear are the scratches of pencils on paper. Absorbed and dedicated, ten year old students perform the task... curvy lines with blue azul, turquoise, vermilion, earth green cover the paper and forms are combined with words...

The above painting task serves as an epilogue to a fieldtrip with students aiming to study an UNESCO monument close to the school, a fieldtrip that you may follow imaginatively through the notes of the teacher and the description of the activities. The same teaching act (painting) is now serving as a prologue to a voyage that started long ago, at the beginning of times, “the voyage of cosmos”. At the same time, the journey appears to be departing anew, at the ever present, a journey, individual but also universal, a journey that trans passes the borders of time and moves from “now” to the past and the future, a journey from here (earth) to the celestial, metaphysical, spiritual. Attending aesthetically to the murals resembles a promenade through art(s) (artforms of the past: à la manière Grecque et à l’ Italienne)... The journey begins under the gaze of the Pantocrator painted on the dome, surrounded by a chorus of angels, the saints, the
One part of my teaching duties, enhanced by the national curriculum, is to take advantage of the cultural heritage at the local level and incorporate it into the teaching process. I had the luck of working at the specific school, which took its name from nearby Asinou area in the forest, which in turn took the name from the ancient town of Asine in the Peloponnese (mentioned in Homer’s Iliad) from where the first inhabitants arrived. Asine is also mentioned in the known poem, “The king of Asine”, by Nobel poet George Seferis who, in the pretext of the discovery of the facade of the ancient king of Asine, wrote a poem on human existence. The Asinou area is well known for the chapel of “Our Lady Phorviotissa of Asinou”, the only remains of the monastery of Phorviae, founded nine centuries ago and registered in the UNESCO World Heritage list. The chapel is also known for its frescoes, dating back to the 11th century AC. The design of a field trip to study the ecclesial monument was a challenge in the sense of deciding how to include activities that would enhance the historical empathy of the children, promote their aesthetic engagement and appreciation, enhance their understanding on the Byzantine worldview and discuss current issues such as the ecological and refugee crises as well as understand the historical, aesthetic, religious and social value of the local monument.

The organization of such fieldtrips coincided with my own artistic quests on re-discovering the Byzantine heritage of the island through local samples of frescoes and icons. Despite the fact that I had previously visited repeatedly the chapel for my artistic queries, I visited it again in order to finalize which frescoes would be studied by the children, to see the space and the frescoes where the children would soon be sitting, and last but not least, to think through and test the activities that would enable the children to “read” the monument and the frescoes.

Another step before discovering the children’s prior knowledge and whether they would be interested in a fieldtrip to the local chapel. Some of the following questions could be asked to initiate a discussion: Have you heard of the Asinou chapel? Have you ever been there? If yes, what do you remember from your visit? What did you like most? Is there anything you would like to know more about? Can you recall anything from the frescoes? The chapel is a UNESCO monument (explanation of the term). Do you know...
why? Why do you think buses with foreigners and many people from other parts of the island visit it? Do you know why it is named “Phorviotissa of Asinou”? How about we visit the place together and find out?

I wanted to create an art class exploring the specific characteristics of the art of iconography, especially regarding the aim of the art; introduce basic elements on iconographical portraiture; plus a few introductory notes on the history of the specific monument; and also provide a brief account on the medieval history of Cyprus in order to raise a discussion on the issue of refugees. Of course all the above would be informed with the documentary “Me, Panselinos…”, a documentary narrating freely the life of one of the most well-known Byzantine icon painters. In addition, we would engage in activities such as illustrating scenes of the creation of the monastery, identification and recognition of facial characteristics of iconographical portraiture by showing many samples and first sketches, illustrating those characteristics in portraiture… the writing of a small poem on the monastery and rhythmically sing the poem together so that the song would be a musical interlude/ a bridge between one activity and another… The fifth graders for whom the fieldtrip was being designed are already being taught the history of Byzantine times so with the collaboration of the teacher it would be possible to make a turn on Byzantine culture…

7.1. At the site

After preparatory classes to facilitate the fieldtrip and the study of the monastery, the children already know their responsibilities to facilitate the process (e.g. one student would be responsible for the cameras, others responsible for carrying the pillows and the like) and a mini bus sets off for a fifteen minute drive.

If I was to involve myself in a museum pedagogy program in the chapel, I would emphasize the frescoes and focus on the artistic aspect of the chapel. The history of the chapel would be mentioned in the introductory pre-visit class, but on-site, I would concentrate on the frescoes as they are the highlight of the chapel and are worth looking at in many levels e.g. aesthetic, historical, spiritual … Before letting the children and the teacher organize themselves for the activities to take place, we would look at the planning of the lesson that will encompass a whole school day.
7.2. **First part of activities-location within landscape:**

When planning the activities, I was interested in studying the monument within the landscape where it is situated. Following Venezia Carta (1964) who supports the approach of “reading” a monument by considering its surroundings, I wondered why this place had been chosen for its asceticism. Thus I decided that the fieldtrip would begin with activities placing the monument and ourselves within the landscape, activities to guide the students to “see” the landscape (and its beauty and tranquility).

*Example of activities:* silent sound walks, closing the eyes and listening, making natural colors (making a color palette using materials from nature e.g. grass, wild flowers, leaves, sand), listening to poem, writing poem, photographing the landscape, sketches of the landscape. Discussion on “why do you think this area was chosen for the construction of the monastery?”

During the implementation of this set of activities, children will be moving freely alone or in teams inside the perimeter of the chapel’s yard. They will be closing their eyes to collect sounds, moving around silently to gather images, choosing sites to sit and sketch or write a poem, finding materials from nature that could be used later for making colors and then gathering together to present, discuss, conclude…

7.3. **Second part of activities- the architectural structure**

The second set of activities would concentrate on the architectural shell. This approach would serve to define the curvilinear character that is apparent both in the architecture (monumental art) and in the frescos inside. The acknowledgement of the materials would lead to the concept of Byzantine art as organic, evolving from the landscape.

*Suggested activities:* walking in the perimeter of the church, photography of the “best” (according of the children) external side of the chapel to make relevant presentation in class, recognition of shapes and materials game, finding alternative (non-conventional) ways to measure the perimeter, guessing the height by measuring the shadow.
Again, during this set of activities, the children, in teams, will be executing their tasks by moving round the chapel in order to define its architectural structure. It would be up to the students to decide the means they would use to carry out the tasks assigned so sufficient time for experimentation will be available. Towards the end of the set of activities, the students will sit to engage in presentations and discussions about the topic of defining the characteristics of the architectural shell, compare it to similar structures, and determine the organic and unique character of the specific monument. The relatively simple structure does not show the rich interior of the chapel. What would one see inside? The last question would lead to the main research, studying the murals after a short break.

7.4. Third set of activities: inside the chapel

After singing the poem they had created, the children would enter the chapel and form a circle in the middle of the main building. They would be asked to search and find a fresco that illustrates the creation of the Monastery. Once they find it, they will recall the facts of the founding of the Monastery. The specific fresco shows the founder and his daughter kneeling, offering a miniature of a church to Our Lady of Phorviae. Attentive observation of their clothes could initiate a dialogue on people of the past. This conversation will be useful later when we study images of the donors.

The main building is offered for studying portraiture. After working in teams and locating several pieces of clothes or other elements, students will read a riddle, be asked to discover the fresco the riddle refers to, and then prepare either a frozen image or a short theatrical scene with their bodies and facial expressions relevant to the fresco. This activity is to turn the attention of the children to observe the faces of saints and enhance their understanding of Byzantine portraiture. How are the saints sketched and why? They are not naturalistic. Why? What is iconography trying to show? After recognizing the basic characteristics of the iconographical portraiture and discussing the aim of iconography, the children might be asked to consider their location in relation to the saints on the side walls and scenes from the life of Jesus on the taller layers of the side walls and on the ceiling. The latter activity could lead to a discussion on the hierarchy indicated by the height of the depicted and also leave a sense that they too are also included in the overall iconographic program of the chapel. The later would serve as a
bridge to study the frescoes of the narthex, situated under the gaze of the Pantocrator, under and round the dome.

7.4.1. **Under the gaze of the Pantocrator**

The third and also the main part of our imagined field trip, would be the study of the painted frescoes in the interior of the chapel. Here, I would need to define the places to stop. There is not enough time to examine all the frescoes nor mention all the characteristics of Byzantine art or the historical periods of the island in one field trip. At this stage, I would not be concerned as to the recognition of the different periods of the frescos. I would be interested in the definition of the facial characteristics of the Byzantine portraiture, and those of the Land and Sea representations and the donors. I would ensure that all the stops would be thematically bonded/linked so that it would be easier for the students to understand what they are seeing. In situations like this, I would return to the basics: what is the essence of Byzantine art? Its anagogical/spiritual character? How would I pass that information to the students, not in a partial way but as a whole, as one narration of one theme? Standing with all of the students under the dome with the Pantocrator would help them to conceive the whole composition as one single narration, “under the gaze of the Pantocrator”. That would be my central stop.

**Example of activities:**

Standing with students below the dome:

Discussion: Who is depicted above? Who are they accompanying? Where is that scene taking place and when? What, according to your opinion, could the angels been saying or doing? We would engage in a movement game (changing places to see if the Pantocrator from the dome is viewing them), leading to a discussion of the gaze and the facial characteristics based on the portraits of the Pantocrator, the angels and the saints. I would invite the children to “paint your angel… write your own prayer…”

Listen to a poem and find the mural that inspired the poet. The poem is written by Nobel prize awarded poet George Seferis who was inspired by the frescoes of the Sea and Terra of the specific chapel when as ambassador of Greece to Cyprus he visited the island… The children could be asked to guess which fresco the poem is about.
The personification of the Sea and the Land: how are the land and the sea depicted? How are fish and animals depicted? What does the style of representation remind you? (anthropomorphism). Why, do you think, are they depicted as persons? What does that imply about our behavior towards earth and sea, nature in general? (discussion towards Nature as the "other", Nature as sacred).

Why do you think the iconographer painted the fresco under the Pantocrator? (sacredness, protection, we are all —humans and other than humans—below the aegis of the Pantocrator). Below the dome, as the children are seated, a map is unrolled on the floor to facilitate discussion.

The Sea is holding a sailing boat, the boat of life… Draw and paint the boat of your life as you imagine it… you can include your dreams, your expectations, and you can draw whatever you think is necessary for your journey, literally and metaphorically…

A boat moves on the map coming to Cyprus. The boat carries the icon painter and his crew. What would their intinerary be and why? (usually, icon painters came from Constantinople). Usually, there were bazars for an icon painter to get stones and materials to make colors. What could be the stops to the grand bazars of the time? (The icon painter of the specific chapel is unknown so we only make guesses) Also, for the 5th graders, as they are learning about the Byzantine era in the curriculum, this activity connects to what they are learning in history. A final question: could you guess the person behind the icon painter, based on his murals? What topics might be of his interest?

Some parts of the murals from this chapel were used as images of stamps. Create your own stamp inspired from the murals. (Cyprus has got quite a reputation for stamps in the philotelistic circles). 

Finish with a game: seated in a circle, the children pick up labels with words and make a presentation according what the word or phrase written on the label.

The task of “transcribing” a place into a pedagogical program is not an easy task. However it is one of the most challenging and rewarding in the sense that a place, a monument, a painting can “live” again through the eyes of the children. The success is
not one that can be measured but yet can be observed through the actions of the people the program was directed to. Surely, future fieldtrips will be different. But yet, the first attempt is the one that leaves its mark in the memory.
Chapter 8.

Epilogue

Beloved grandpa,

How much time has passed since the night I spent to Toledo and you smelled that another Cretan from your neighborhood arrived… You were raised from your tomb, you became dream and you came to find me… One lightening time? Three centuries time? Who, in the ambiance of love, can differentiate the lightening from three centuries time? Since then, a life has passed… All my life I have been a violin bow in merciless insatiable hands, how many times did the invisible hands stretched over the bow till the extent I could hear it creaking to break! Let it break! I was shouting… you had told me, Grandpa, to choose… and I chose…

Did I win? Was I beaten? I only know that I am full of wounds but yet still standing up.

Full of wounds, all in the chest, I did whatever I could, Grandpa, even more—as you advised me—than I could bear so that I wouldn’t embarrass you… and here I come, now that the (esoteric) battle is over, to lie next to you, to become soil next to you, both of us waiting for the day of reckoning. I kiss your hand, I kiss your right shoulder, I kiss your left shoulder, Grandpa welcome…” (Nicos Kazantzakis, Report to Greco, my translation)

Like an apophatic echo from a sea shell’s spiral of time the words of Cretan writer Kazantzakis, in the end of his life, when writing his autobiographical book, “Report to Greco”, are directed to another great spirit from Crete, the painter Domenicos Theotocopoulos, known as El Greco. But yet, these words, filled with the wisdom and sincerity of a person who attempted to lead his life freely lived (as a free spirit) appear inscripted in every life journeys personal and universal…

As for my artistic and personal journey as it appears in this thesis comes to an end, Kazantzakis’ letter to Greco makes more sense than ever. Like him, like many people on a quest, I had had my agonies in searching my artistic path which is also linked to an inner, an esoterical journey through the labyrinths of psyche, of the spiritual, of art, of present world, of history, of identity… The inner journey could be the longest and the most difficult voyage in one’s life. There are also points when you have to make choices and decide on compromising, or fighting against all difficulties, or choose an
intermediate route. There’s a point when –like Kazantzakis- you ask: “Have I won? Or have I been beaten up?” I had had these questions and choices: regarding the role of art, regarding the sources of my inspiration (past, contemporary arts, local, international), regarding finding my own way of expression, regarding Tradition and Creation…

There is much wisdom in the old Masters of art and in arts of the past. I sensed its presence when entering sacred places. I felt it when studying the frescoes. Iconographical art is not only “to instruct us and offer a means of communion with the persons depicted, but also initiate us into a more spiritual way of seeing the world” (Hard, 2013:1). Through the application of “reversed” and other systems of perspective, iconographical art acts as a threshold or as a mediating place challenging rationalistic perception and anagogically lifting the viewer into a “supra-rational-beyond reason” (Hard, 2013:1) so that to be able to share the gaze of God, see oneself through the eyes of God and re-size the anthropic and universal scales, perceive the world through the lenses of God as sacred and incite the viewer into a re-centering oneself round compassion and love. Whether stylistically exceptional with calligraphic virtuosity (of the Arakiotissa frescoes) or chromatically simple (like the Phorviotissa narthex frescoes) or hybrid (as in the Akathist chapel- Cypro-Renaissance genre) fruitfully and creatively amalgamating the best of the Eastern (Byzantine) and Western (Renaissance) artistic elements, by standing below the dome you cannot but experience an uplifting force, a strong urge to see things anew and eventually transform the way you perceive yourself within the world and begin an inner metamorphosis. I felt like this when standing below the dome in the chapels which appeared like artifacts, reminisces or facsimiles from another sphere of existence, bringing a breeze of a-lethea (remembrance, truth, “lethe” is oblivion) as it changes the scale of yourself and makes you share a glimpse of a world sacred. And this change, an ability to see yourself and the world metamorphosed as through the eyes of God, made available through art, demonstrates the grandeur of the sublime arts and the splendor of the old painters trying to complete the task.

If I am to write on what were the major benefits in studying the Byzantine ecclesial monuments, those would be the embodied knowledge of the power of art to lift up and metamorphose the viewer by offering another—a spiritual way of self—location as well as understanding of yourself within the world consequence on how to lead your life. I remember…when standing below the dome with the Pantocrator illustration and
viewing the frescoes of Terra/Land and Mare/Sea….simplicity, a degree of naïveté, one could say, but also vividness, symbolism and profound layers of meaning condensed.

Through a relatively simple synthesis, the icon painter depicted the essence (according to the scriptures): through the personifications of Mare and Terra, the natural environment appeared animated (anima-soul), alive, as sacred, as “other” also being created by the Pantocrator and also bearing divine grace (the way light is applied in the personifications and the fish and animals as if they are sources of light, the same way the light is applied in human figures), as sacred entity and as such, worth of deep respect. The Medieval artist gathered in his composition a deep ecological message contemporary to all generations.

I can recall my surprise when realizing that under the dome and the gaze of the Pantocrator, the living persons of 21st century, the saints, the angels, the donors, Terra and Land all appeared to be included in the same narration that starts from here and now and moves to the past but also are being oriented towards the eschatological future. I remember studying attentively the personified Mare of a whale or a cetacean sea creature holding a sailing boat on one hand. This image as I experience it, changes my life-scale and my broader perception of things. As the boat symbolizes, as human construction, human beings being small in comparison to nature, challenges who belongs where. If we consider the boat as the symbol of a life journey, as argued by Bishop of Morphou, then the personal and inner time of one’s lifespan becomes universal (every individual’s life journey) and also eschatological as the restricted geographically and timely lifespan expands/ is directed towards the eternal.

The animals of Sea and Land could have been painted by the unknown artist as elements whose presence or movement could reveal the world/nature as animated. The condensed fauna reveal the “other”. The small/condensed substitutes the big and the substitution or metonymy could become their eschatological symbolism. For the aforementioned fresco composition from the 12th century, it could be said that they still have validity and value today. Simplicity, symbolization and yet timelessness, my gift from the specific artwork.

The figures of Saints and donors, mnemonic traces, fragments of time, send their own messages… their presence, in the light of the dogma of Christianity brings
constantly to mind the passage to another sphere of being, after death. Also the light symbolizes that these figures have defeated death as they are in the heavenly realm. Their big supra-natural eyes hint of their sight in the heavenly realm. Their small mouth (lack of greed), long hands (to embrace the world) and facial expression of calmness bear their own significance. The donors, traces of people of the past whose life circumstances brought them to the chapels for comfort (were their difficulties different than ours?) and the saints leave a sense not of absence of time but rather an ambiance of timelessness or eternity. Another gift from the frescos, the possibility and ways to make portraiture that bears timelessness.

Apart from aesthetic elements such as the beauty of the calligraphic line or color palette or composition and integrational skills of specific icon painters, the timelessness character of iconography and its ability to act as a daedalon, were the major gifts which could give me the elements to proceed in my artistic route. Iconography moves round timeless pictorial principles, which “derive their timelessness and accuracy from participation to immutable Tradition” (Justiniano, 2014:3, part 1). Novelty can co-exist creatively with tradition or within these immutable principles.

Thinking in relations holistically, at the level of individual icons, at the level of specific compositions, at the level of the iconographical program of the temple, at the level of specific details of each figure… even in the way letters are inscribed in schemata that bind together with the human figure… Usually rare are the occasions to see the development of artworks without fragmentations… thinking in relation in a basic “rule” in the art of iconography and also an art rule that could help an artist’s development. This too was another gift.

If sacred or religious arts and architectures could act as mediators to “transform” the viewer’s self knowledge and self location within the world by “uplifting” the viewer, then, the potentials in exploring such places in education could be further explored to enrich students’ identity and help them understand how to lead their lives.

The energy from these places (ecclesial chapels) is enormous, spiraling from now, the past and the future, from here to the metaphysical sphere, challenging who is in the center of the spiral and questioning the scale of perceiving things and re-centering
human existence around love, around compassion, around God... while this invitation for a voyage is realized through the power and offering of art.

Figure 123. Voyage, E. Hadjipieri, 2018, oil on canvas, 80cm x 50cm.

The worldscape could be a canvas that depicts the world the way we-human subjects- have been seeing. Through our canvases /paintings we live, create, contact, understand ourselves. Consequently, to start seeing/listening/attending to the worldview(s) that shape and perform us, is vital. According to Terkenle (1996), looking at the world canvas humoristically, poetically, artistically, philosophically, correctly or even wrongly is not as important as to start seeing/listening to/ reading it for in these ways we see/listen to /read ourselves and our civilization as well. Acknowledging the polysemous messages of the plethora of voices in the worldscape enables us to enrich or widen or awaken ourselves. Attending to a monument or a small stone matters....
In the stones of the past inhabit living souls
and living worlds
and words (thoughts) bequeathed from the past.
As patience is a virtue;
as you meet/touch a stone
(wanting to reach humanity;)
stop and wait
for the psyche to reveal herself…
And once she does
Listen…

Once upon a time…

Figure 124. In the stones of the past inhabit living souls, E. Hadjipieri, 2018, oil on canvas, 50cmx50cm
Attending to a monument
or a small stone matters…
as the spirit inside invites *apoplous* (2)
which means
“a boat to leave the harbour”
and sail within or beyond the cartographer’s map
to attend to the endless, rich, and resourceful polyphony of the world.

The word *apoplous* is painted on the canvas background in Figure 129.
Endnotes

1. The term “Byzantines” according to several researchers is problematic as it is a term that Western Historians used for the people of the Roman Empire, later Eastern Roman Empire with Constantinople as capital. For the specific period (4-15 century) the capital was renamed from Byzantium (name of city from antiquity era) to Constantinople after Emperor Constantine A who decided to use it as the capital of Roman Empire (instead of Rome) The citizens of this empire did not call themselves Byzantines. However, for the purposes of this essay I would follow the example of many scholars using the term Byzantines referring to the subjects of the Eastern Roman Empire, known as Byzantine Empire.

2. The word *apoploous* is used for vessels departing-outgoing from ports.

3. All figures 17 till 33 are from a photographer that wished to be anonymous. All photos that are “courtesy of unnamed photographer” are from that individual for whom I always be gratefull.
References


