

Cambridge, 8th of May 2016

Dear Sylvia,

If forms are facts, then formalism is an attitude. And this is an attitude I do not care for. Because in forms I see signs and events, suggestions, indications, emotions, contradictions... I took what you said as a liberating encouragement: "How do we go beyond forms?" You see, all that has interested me in those atypical minerals is the way they fail their own forms. As their poetic nomenclature confirms, pseudomorphs are themselves "false forms". And form in that case is a process that ended; they could have been also called "false formations". Isn't substitution sublimation in drag?

I treated them as jewels because it seemed to me as the most evident way to turn them into sculptures. I want you now to turn them into events. You should perform them (you and Katy) not as sculptures but as "jewels". Having said that they shall always remain sculptures.(1)

I have a memory I wish to suggest as a script. When I was young I remember gold merchants coming to the house. They were itinerant jewellers I guess, a profession that must have been extinct ever since. They came immaculately dressed, with a black Samsonite briefcase in hand, full of gold. I remember them opening the lid with great control and carefully demonstrating their "pieces" (that is how they will call the jewels, "pieces"). They passed them through their fingers with great virtuosity, weighed them as a proof, described the design with hyperbolic metaphors, made you try them, advanced flatteries and pushed you to buy them...

I am not nostalgic. I loathe nostalgia as it is but a caricature of the past. By recalling this memory though, I realised today, that the opening of the briefcase constitutes my oldest memory of theatre. I was thus introduced at once to theatre and dealing with this singular gesture; and I needed to turn these minerals into jewels in order to be reminded of that. This is probably why I stand ecstatic in front of the eloquence of Bernard- Marie Koltès' *In the Solitude of Cotton Fields*, as he defined both the act of representation and the format of negotiation - theatre and deal - in one single stroke of a pen: "Tell me what you've got and I'll tell you what I want".

We shall keep the sculptures in closed boxes. You shall show them to the visitors. Open the lid, pass them through your fingers, describe them, and explain the specificities of the minerals.

I also decided not to install the paintings I made. Only one, or rather only one at a time. You shall decide the lapses, the rhythm and the order. I have chosen the spot. I believe that the space between

the two arches you constructed with Etienne is a perfect *proskynetarion* stand and I would like to treat those paintings as if they were *proskynetarion* icons. As a non-believer who was dragged to the church since a young age I could but isolate myself in the elaborate theatricality of the ceremony. And I still find it fascinating. Specifically the fluidity of what we call “hanging” in our tradition of exhibition making. In the practice of the church they will place and remove from the *proskynetarion* stand a painting per day. Please leave the rest of the paintings as I turned them around exactly where they are. This is actually where the transporters positioned them. There is an economy of space that always works better than any premeditated *gestus*.(2)

Yesterday I realised that an icon I’ve wanted to see for a long time is found in the nearby British Museum. I went to see it and I would like to make this act a part of my exhibition. Could you please urge every visitor (and accompany them when possible) to the British Museum. It is a 5-minute walk from the gallery. Once you arrive there you should cross the big gate (avoid taking bags, it is faster through security), climb the stairs to the 3rd floor and walk to the left until you reach gallery N.40. There, on the right edge of the room, against a cacophonous burgundy wall, you can see a portable icon of the *Triumph of the Orthodoxy* (c.1400, Marmara Region). It constitutes the earliest known depiction of the restoration of images in Byzantium after decades of an official ban, the so-called period of iconoclasm. Please point out to the people you accompany the focal point of the composition, which here is intended to be understood as the physical icon in itself (*Virgin Hodegetria* that iconophiles believed to have been painted by St. Luke the Evangelist). It is a *mise en abyme* that defines the act of representation and the representation itself as a relic in the making. The icon is on a stage with the curtains drawn (on a *proskynetarion* as well); theatre and veneration have always been intimately connected. On the left and right, before the Empress and the patriarch, stand two guardians with red hats and wings. Value and desire are simultaneously announced as with the establishment of iconography. They will remain bound up to our days.(3)

Please remember to verify tomorrow morning the exact time that the sun hits the window; if it is sunny of course. I like the idea of surrendering to the most unreliable relationship we have: the weather; in a place where this relationship is predicted unreliably: London. Looking to the blue sky outside of my window I am now rather confident that the sun will bless us in the next two months and that the colours I adopted will occasionally filter its spectrum with memory, desire.(4)

Until soon,

Christodoulos

(1) In mineralogy, a pseudomorph is a mineral or mineral compound that appears in an atypical form, resulting from a substitution process in which the appearance and dimensions remain constant, but the original mineral is replaced by another. Panayiotou has produced a collection of jewellery combining pseudomorph minerals with gold. The term pseudomorph directly translates to “false form”.

*Untitled*, Earring. Calcite pseudomorph after ikaite, 18ct yellow gold, handmade

*Untitled*, Earring. Limonite crystals over rose pseudomorph after pyrite, 18ct yellow gold, handmade

*Untitled*, Pendant. Limonite pseudomorph after Fungus in quartz, 18ct yellow gold, cast

*Untitled*, Pair of earrings. Gray phosphate nodules pseudomorph after wavelike botryoidal crystals, 18ct yellow gold, handmade

*Untitled*, Pendant. White baryte pseudomorph after di-pyramidal alstonite on matrix, 18ct yellow gold, handmade  
*Untitled*, Ring. Carnelian pseudomorph after aragonite, 18ct yellow gold, handmade

*Untitled*, Earring. Aragonite pseudomorph after calcite crystal, 18ct yellow gold, handmade

*Untitled*, Earring. Aragonite pseudomorph after calcite crystal, 18ct yellow gold, handmade

*Untitled*, Pendant. Pseudomorph after aragonite, 18ct yellow gold, handmade

*Untitled*, Pendant and choker. Quartz pseudomorph after anhydrite, 18ct yellow gold, handmade

*Untitled*, Brooch. Agate pseudomorph cabochon, 18ct yellow gold, handmade

*Untitled*, Pair of earrings. Coyamito agate after aragonite cabochon, 18ct yellow gold, handmade

*Untitled*, Pendant. Sagenite agate crystal pseudomorph, 18ct yellow gold, handmade

*Untitled*, Pendant. Hematite after magnetite, 18ct yellow gold, handmade

*Untitled*, Brooch. Agate pseudomorph cabochon, 18ct yellow gold, handmade

*Untitled*, Ring. Hematite after magnetite, 18ct yellow gold, handmade

*Untitled*, Pendant. Actinolite pseudomorph after diopside, 18ct yellow gold, handmade

(all works: Dimensions variable, 2016)

(2) Since 2012, Panayiotou has worked with icon makers to produce monochromatic, non-representational paintings, using the same artisanal process that is used in the creation of Orthodox religious icons. The details in these six new works, marking a development in this existing body of work, create a departure from the previous monochromes. With these paintings Panayiotou abstracts representation, but brings forth the golden or night-time blue background, the concentric circles of Mother and Child’s halos (distant, touching, crossing), or the at green plane of landscape as the only

references within the paintings. The process reposes on a commercial application of Byzantine iconography (and the act of ordering an icon) and develops conceptually into the historic battle of iconomachy, a war on the power status of representation. One painting will be installed in the gallery at any one time, and will change throughout the duration of the exhibition. “Movable icons hung on the walls of the churches and were placed for veneration on a separate stand in front of the iconostasis on the feast day of their subject. Ideally, each church had an icon for each day of the year. Some churches also had cult icons that received special veneration; presented on their own stands, or ‘thrones,’ they were accorded feasts and rituals” (Annemarie Weyl Carr).

*Untitled*, wood, paint, gold leaf, 80 x 55 cm, 80 x 55 cm, 80 x 55 cm, 70 x 49 cm, 70 x 49 cm, 125 x 85 cm, 2016

(3) Walk to the British Museum and see:

*Icon with the Triumph of Orthodoxy*

c. 1400, Marmara Region, wood, linen, gold, gesso On display: G40/dc14/sA

Museum number: 1988,0411.14- The colours introduced through the stained glass window into the gallery reference their symptomatic disappearance from the rainbow flag by which the LGBT community is commonly represented. The pink stripe was included in the original flag conceived by the activist Gilbert Baker in 1978. Unexpected interest ensued, leading to a subsequent shortage of pink fabric in the US market. In turn, the design was reworked (resulting in a “commercial version”), and a year later it was further reduced for symmetry to six colours, where the original indigo and turquoise strips were consequently replaced by royal blue. This became the standard version of the flag. Pink, indigo and turquoise re-emerge as solid colours, littered through the spectrum of light, re-inserting themselves temporarily into the space of the gallery.

*Untitled*, stained glass window, 122 x 52.5 cm, 2016

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