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ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

**A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of
The College of Imaging Arts and Sciences
In Candidacy for the Degree of
MASTER OF FINE ARTS**

WALL WORKS: PAINTING AS RECORD AND REVELATION

By

Donna Kristoff, O.S.U

Approvals

Adviser: Professor Edward Miller

Date: 8.27.92

Adviser: Professor Lawrence Williams

Date: 9/6/92

Adviser: Professor Bruce Sodervick

Date: Aug 27, 92

Acting
Special Assistant to the Dean for Graduate Affairs:
Professor Philip W. Bornarth

Date: 8/24/92

Dean, College of Imaging Arts and Sciences:
Margaret O. Lucas, Ph. D.

Date: 9-3-92

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Date: August 26, 1992

The quiet ruin reveals again the spirit out of which it once stood as a proud structure.

Louis Kahn,
Silence and Light: Spirit in the Architecture of Louis I. Kahn

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Over the period of months during which I was occupied in the production of this thesis, I had been the subject of noteworthy support from a corps of dedicated persons at R.I.T. This group included administrators, staff, and my fellow colleagues at City Center. I especially want to thank Professor Philip W. Bornarth and my other painting instructors. With the generous, technical assistance of Rick Auburn, Industrial Design Shop; Rusty Cragg, the Woodshop; and Frank Smith, Machine Shop, my task was both lightened and enlightened. Finally, for the word-processing of this manuscript, I am deeply indebted to Lisa Marie Belz, O.S.U.

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INTRODUCTION

With a certain magic, old walls have had a way of calling to me. In my travels abroad, I relished walking through narrow passageways in ancient and medieval city quarters. Often I would get happily lost, brushing up against anonymous structures whose faded façades hemmed me in at every turn. Peeling doors beckoned to me with multi-layered patches and drips of paint, mimicking here a Hoffman, there a Pollock, and yet another a de Kooning. Ephemeral signage, graffiti, and poster fragments composed collages à la Schwitters, while cluttered windows and sills recalled large-scale Cornell boxes.

Yet all these details served only to enhance the stark beauty of the walls themselves: their naked materiality, bared to the natural elements, exposed to the drama of human life. Their surfaces unrolled like layers of skin, sometimes stretched taut, sometimes pulled tight; sensitive to touch, vulnerable to scars. Textures encoded the passage of time upon their worn and weathered surfaces.

I came to realize that an **old wall serves as an illuminating metaphor for the process of painting**; a ground is covered with pigmented material, layer upon layer, areas are uncovered, recovered, repaired; images are stated, manipulated, destroyed, re-stated. Color and line merge and emerge; opacity and transparency overlap; a fresh layer becomes new ground to be covered again, and the cycle continues.

To explore this process under my own direction intrigued me. It hinted at a possible direction to pursue for my thesis. But painting is decidedly more than mere manipulation of material. What about meaning, motive, concept? Could the theme of **Old Walls** release within me the creative energy to engage my emotions, as well as my memory and imagination? Was it a subject compelling enough to draw me into a dialogue with it? Could the topic foster a commitment to probe its multi-faceted meaning and sustain the necessary desire to materialize it through periods of doubt and frustration?

The thesis that follows unfolds the history of my wrestling with questions like these, questions that demanded nothing less than my total physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual involvement.

This paper proposes to investigate painting as a record and a revelation. It is organized into chapters which discuss the following: the the inspiration underlying the thesis topic; the process involved in producing the work for exhibition and review; and the sources consulted in developing it. A final reflection evaluates the total experience. Color illustrations accompany and complement the written text.

It is my hope that anyone reading the visible text of these pages would also read the invisible one between the lines (where often the essential truths are found), in order to interpolate from her/his own experience what the static written word is incapable of communicating: the heights and depths of the creative process.

"For this book is not intended as documentation. It is a work of art, and in a work of art what is not said is just as important, if not more so, than what is explicit." (Burden and Merton 1960, Introduction)

CHAPTER I

INSPIRATION

Because walls serve quietly as solid structural supports, they often become **invisible**. Taken for granted, they rarely capture one's attention in the day to day routine of human life. This situation of neglect can be remedied with certain changes in the observer and the observed. Louis Kahn, the contemporary architect, offers reflections on three stages in the life of a building (walls) that impact upon its calling forth a human response.

A building rising from its foundations is eager to exist. It still doesn't have to serve its intended use. Its spirit of wanting to be is impatient and high, allowing no grass under it. A building built is a building in bondage of use. Its spirit then must call out and remind its user of its will to have been. A building that has become a ruin is again free of the bondage of use. But it is different from when it was being built because it now allows foliage to grow over it, as loving as a father permitting the child to pull at his carefully chosen clothes. (Lobell 1979, 168)

Kahn's unique philosophical perspective explains why walls, those becoming and those decaying, have powerful free spirits that draw the human person to attend to them.

Written from a different viewpoint are the ideas of the twentieth century monk-writer Thomas Merton. In his preface to a book of photographs by Shirley Burden taken at Gethsemani Cistercian Monastery in Kentucky, he observes:

And now a man, an artist, comes along with a camera and shows us,

beyond a doubt, that the real monastery, the one that is so obvious that we no longer see it, the one that has become so familiar that we have not even looked at it for years is not only beautiful, but romantically beautiful. It is romantic even in the ordinariness, the banality that we ourselves tend to reject. (Burden and Merton 1960, Introduction)

Merton describes the monastery as a place

where things are seldom thrown away, where ladders remain for weeks in a corner after the work is done; where aged and sentimental statues do not disappear but move gradually backward and outward into shops, attics, barns or greenhouses; . . . (Burden and Merton 1960, Introduction)

Surrounded by all this accumulation, the monks are reminded of the past -- its mistakes and failures. Those who have not accepted their past humbly try to hide it, “. . . just as they also cut down the growing and green things that spring up inexhaustibly even in the present.” Merton praises the wildness of the honeysuckle, the ivy, the hollyhocks crawling up and over the abandoned gates, barns, and statues. (Burden and Merton 1960, Introduction) While Kahn focuses on the quiet ruin which welcomes nature to play around it, like a father whose little child tugs at his trousers, Merton highlights the symbolic role of nature's rampant greenery as it overtakes or reclaims an abbey castoff.

Then we remember that it is the honeysuckle, the hollyhocks and the rest that are really alive and that they have something very appropriate to say about the mercy of God. For His Mercy covers everything and turns mistakes, oversights and forgetfulness into a riot of new creation. (Burden and Merton 1960, Introduction)

Louis Kahn personifies the architectural ruin; Thomas Merton identifies the human observer with the observed. Both present a positive, joyful, and optimistic interpretation of the intermingling of diminishment, decay, death, change, growth, rebirth, and transformation.

In my paintings I have incorporated **aging, decay, and change as vital forces**. The walls faithfully record the human situation in silence and

neutrality. Their perduring façades bear the marks that witness not only to humankind's poetic brushes with the inspired, the sacred, and the mystical, but also its prosaic scrapes with the mundane, the profane, and the physical.

Because they incorporate remnants and fragments, my paintings suggest once having been part of a greater whole. They imply a physical relationship to other walls no longer present in the here and now. Walls belong to a building, buildings form an environment, and environments are inhabited by a specific human society at a particular moment in time. Therefore, walls are social. Amos Rapoport, in discussing the relationship of architecture and culture, offers some key concepts that enhance the function and meaning of the wall. He interprets the built environment as a series of orderly and ordering relationships based upon conscious human choices to restructure the world. (Rapoport 1980, 291)

Language and environment are related because each attempts to impose an order on the world by using schemata originally conceived in thought. "In other words, built environments encode, give expression to and, in turn, influence social, cognitive, and other environments." (Rapoport 1980, 295) While walls do not determine the behavior that occurs within them or around them, they do establish contextual settings that encourage typical responses while inhibiting inappropriate ones. (Rapoport 1980, 295)

Rapoport defines culture as a habitual set of choices which reflect an ideal of life for a particular group of people and distinguishes it from other groups. (Rapoport 1980, 288) The built environment creates the context within which this significant and normative life-style is shaped and communicated. Therefore, cultural differences in beliefs and behaviors logically result in the variations of space, shape, size, scale, and materials

evident in architectural forms throughout human history. (Rapoport 1980, 285) The more complex a culture becomes, the greater its necessity to see **ideals, values, and group identity embodied physically and tangibly in a built environment.** "It produces concrete metaphors for the ideals and beliefs of groups, providing concrete images, *mnemonics* for important things." (Rapoport 1980, 299)

Returning to an earlier reference, the parallel between language and environment, we can now understand how walls became a means of cultural communication. The more sophisticated a society grew, the more differentiated and the less ambiguous its environmental setting needed to be.

Finally, even that is not enough and we find verbal and eikonic [sic] signs -- meaning systems -- distinct from the built environment and superimposed on it to increase the redundancy and hence the clarity of the message. (Rapoport 1980, 300)

At this juncture, it is important to note that the real function of these meaning systems **belongs to the past.** No artist is able to duplicate the walls "of another epoch embodying the desires, the aspirations, the love and hate of the people whose heritage . . . they become." (Kahn 1991, 19)

On the other hand, the past must exist in the present. Without it, a work of art lacks depth and perspective. Aldo van Eyck labels this continuum of the past, present, and future in the artist's mind as the "interiorization of time, or time rendered transparent." (van Eyck 1969, 171)

Therefore, to reproduce the **surface appearances** of the art and architecture of earlier cultures, however skillfully accomplished, demonstrates "a static, clockwork notion of time" and an irrelevant, sentimental antiquarianism. (van Eyck 1969, 171)

It remains the challenge addressing each contemporary artist, as it also

confronted me, to gather the past into the present by searching for that universal condition of humanity that persists despite change.

The next chapter will disclose that treasury of knowledge and personal experience which surfaced to mentor the evolution of my thesis project.

CHAPTER II

RESOURCES

Of those persons, places, and things that have shaped my visual imagination and its personal means of artistic expression, several can be traced back earlier than others. Whether immediate or remote, remembered or forgotten, their power hidden deep within my psyche guided me through to the solutions that resulted in this thesis.

In 1973 I painted a series of canvases at Pratt Institute as part of my M.S. thesis. These diptychs and triptychs investigated the Byzantine icon for its purely formal elements. Because of the interest generated by this limited aesthetic introduction, I devoted many years of study to the theory and theology of the Greek and Russian icon. Gradually I came to realize that all truly great art was essentially iconic, that is, **a transformation of the material into a revelation of the spiritual**. For the Orthodox, the icon is neither a valuable antique nor an appealing work of art. Rather, they regard "it as a redeeming window through which to look into the world transcending time and space," Weier 1977, 1) This iconic vision has retained its central position in my philosophy of art. Its impact can be felt, I believe, in my painting thesis.

When I traveled to Spain in 1989, I expected to be the typical American art teacher on a holiday. I found myself, instead, a wandering pilgrim in search of yet another Romanesque chapel, fresco, or relief. James Michener

must have been my invisible traveling companion, for he shared my own enthusiasm:

When I see a fine example of Romanesque, I feel that I am in the presence of the very best that an age could accomplish, and it was an age that accomplished much. . . . I am standing with stonemasons who saw things simply and resisted the temptation of flying off at strange tangents. There is something perpetually clean and honorable about the best Romanesque, and when I see it my whole being responds, as if the artisans who perfected it were working for me alone. (Michener 1971, 737)

The Catalan Museum atop Barcelona's Montuich became another frequent haunt of mine. Visiting its reconstructed apses and arches which housed Romanesque frescoes carefully translated from their original sites left an indelible impression upon my visual memory. The monumentality of these incomplete and discontinuous wall paintings was startling. The drama of calligraphic draftmanship co-existed with the play of understated color in a dynamism of organic and geometric shapes. How could one's visual imagination not be altered by the impact of such an orchestration?

Catalonia, the northeastern section of Spain, produced a number of avant-garde artists including Miró, Dalí, Picasso, and Gaudí. Today, Antoni Tàpies is acclaimed by Spain as its most famous contemporary artist. The Tàpies Foundation opened in 1990 housing over two thousand works covering his entire career. (Cembalest 1990, 143-144)

Tàpies, whose name means wall in his native Catalan tongue, relates to this thesis in two major ways: his theory about walls and his concepts regarding material.

Tàpies is said to have almost an obsession with walls. In his childhood and adolescence, living through the Spanish Civil War, the wall represented personal isolation and loneliness, as well as social protest and political

suffering. These ideas are described in an essay he wrote entitled "Communication concerning the Wall." (Penrose 1990, 59)

Graffiti enters into Tàpies paintings in a variety of ways. Sometimes it is a mere fingerprint or footprint, at other times, his name, or a word, or an emblem. "Tàpies is quick to appreciate the poetic significance of the anonymous graffiti that appear on the walls of Barcelona. He learned from them to adopt a similar method to convey his own communications, leaving it to his anonymous public to decipher them." (Penrose 1990, 80)

Eventually, Tàpies realized that his paintings had actually become walls themselves. (Penrose 1990, 59)

Real material is very evident in Tàpies' paintings. Yet his emphasis on matter is not to draw attention to itself. This gave his work a sense of independent presence which he felt enabled it to speak forcefully and powerfully on its own, like a talisman or an icon. (Dexeus 1990, 13)

We have seen, of course, that no painter has ever been such a materialist as Tàpies; we have also seen however, that his emphasizing of matter was no more than the necessary technique for making it a bridge, a vehicle for transcendency; (Gimferrer 1975, 43)

CHAPTER III

PROCESS

A better vehicle available in our technologically advanced society to communicate a process is a video. As a written account, this paper compresses the dynamism of human creative activity into a linear string of abstract symbols. Let the reader be aware (beware) that something is usually lost in translation. Nonetheless, this chapter, although written as it is within the limitations of language, offers an accurate account of those methods and procedures pursued during the painting of my thesis.

One of the goals I had set for this series of paintings was to incorporate found and fabricated textural surfaces into them, a direction my paintings had assumed prior to coming to R.I.T. Consequently, I came loaded down with my collection of "junk" and continued to add to it frequently. Scavenging R.I.T waste bins, city parking lots, curb, and dirt alleys earned me the title "bag lady," but resulted in a studio **filled** with an excellent assortment of natural and fabricated treasure. Periodically I would take inventory to jog my imagination as I worked on a painting solution.

The use of preliminary drawings as a means of exploring ideas and planning compositions had always been my initial approach to painting. Therefore, I systematically began to work on my thesis by drawing loose compositions in a scaled down format of 30" x 20". After several time-consuming attempts, I dropped this procedure as too confining. Drawing

full- scale also left me frustrated. Eventually I sensed that the path into the walls was non-linear. Line limped in capturing that physicality for which I was seeking. It proved either too cerebral, diagrammatic, and abstract, or too concrete, descriptive, and detailed. Hitting this impasse was initially confusing, but not unprecedented. On a small multi-canvas painting completed just prior to my thesis, I was confounded with a similar dilemma. Its resolution -- cutting a gash into the canvas -- became a literal "breakthrough" for me. (Appendix A) It forced me to "get into" painting from another direction: the manipulation of materials.

At first it did not occur to me that such an approach was any more than a singular solution. Only after the preparatory drawings for my thesis were thwarted did it dawn on me that I had crossed the threshold into a new creative realm. This discovery was both exhilarating and intimidating because it left me no alternative but to travel into uncharted territory. My experience corroborates what D. David Sapp presents in The Journal of Creative Behavior. Sapp extends Wallas' popular model of the creative process. In addition to Preparation, Incubation, Illumination, and Verification, he introduces an another moment labeled the Point of Creative Frustration (PCF):

Whether or not individuals actually proceed through a Period of Incubation, it seems clear that many persons (especially students of beginners in any field of study) reach a point in their problem-solving or research of alternatives in which a sense of stagnation or frustration occurs. The scientist, artist or writer has traveled his or her familiar road of idea development up to a point where he or she meets with the limit of his or her knowledge or expressive repertoire. The individual confronts a conceptual/expressive boundary and is thwarted or frustrated by the boundary. He or she has utilized all the tools at his or her disposal to complete the concept or product and has explored many alternatives. Yet, the theorem, painting or poem remains unfinished, incomplete. (Sapp 1992, 24)

Working out the logistics of the small triptych, (Appendix A) made it clear to me that using the traditional stretched canvas for large textured walls would pose construction problems involving a complex and continuous system of reinforcement. A second concern was the weight that a large wall panel could assume. A member of my thesis committee erased both problems simultaneously by recommending that insulation styrofoam be used as a main support. Its advantages were multiple: it could be cut, sawed, gouged, punctured, scraped, and broken while retaining its rigidity. And it was lightweight.

To get acquainted with the properties of this new material, I did a series of tests using glues, gesso, polymer mediums, and paste, canvas, string, rope, pumice, gravel, joint compound, spackling compound, sand, ground oyster shells and marble dust. Sections of the styrofoam were gouged, scraped, cut and removed. Textural elements were applied to the surface or inlaid into recesses. Several pieces of the board were glued together to test laminating and deep relief possibilities. (Appendix B) These studies showed styrofoam to be highly adaptable, compatible, and receptive.

Specific findings pertinent to my painting process were: (1) gesso on the styrofoam dried very slowly; (2) wood glue bonded canvas to styrofoam and styrofoam to itself; (3) acrylic matte medium was the best transparent glue and sealer.

The size and format of each wall were automatically established by the selection of a standard measurement for insulation board -- 3/4" x 6' x 4'. In order to create a sense of physical substance and weight, 1" x 3" select pine boards were cut, glued, and nailed to the back of the styrofoam. This wood support was set flush with the edges of the foam to avoid any reference to a

“frame” around a painting. Vertical and/or horizontal wood reinforcements were secured in the back as needed.

To guard against warping, both sides of the styrofoam were sealed with a coat of wood glue. Three walls were covered with unprimed canvas adhered with wood glue. From this stage on, each panel developed independently: the next chapter will discuss each panel separately.

In order to develop a coherent yet nuanced palette for my wall series, I poured over colorplates of Romanesque and Byzantine frescoes from Italy, Spain, Yugoslavia, Turkey, and Greece. Color photocopies, randomly torn or cut, were sorted into four sections according to hue, value, and tonal ranges. From these assortments, collage studies evolved. (Appendix C) These color arrangements were an effective visual reference because they challenged me to expand color relationships with a limited number of hues; to balance value, chromatic, and tonal areas within each painting and among all of them; and to punctuate a subdued color field with sporadic accents of contrast.

The painting medium consisted of dry pigments ground in distilled water and mixed with acrylic matte medium. Because the thesis dealt with old walls and its plaster-like grounds recalled early frescoes, my selected palette consisted of the following pigments: oxides of red, green, black, and blue, ochres, siennas, caput mortuum, cobalt and ultramarine blues, and cadmium yellow. A glazing technique was used; transparent color was enhanced and modified by multiple applications in thin layers overlapping each other. As the surface dried, it became waterproof and sealed: a plus for the conservation and preservation of the painting underneath.

CHAPTER IV
INTERPRETATION

Wall I
Ode: Man & Nature

This wall began with my wanting to say something about the beauty of old barns. My collection of aged wood, rusty metal, and old bricks provided ample materials with which "to play." Initially I explored the stark simplicity of a Shaker wall -- a place for everything and everything in its place. The calligraphic lines parodied by the tool-like metal forms hung upon the wall evoked parallels to Matisse's drawings. Eventually I felt there was not enough integration between the wall itself and what was on it. So, I restructured the wall using the Japanese tatami mat as a grid. I elongated the vertical beam to extend to the top of the painting. This time the entire composition felt too constricted and over-planned. The lower third of the wall which had been partially bricked in seemed right all along. I tore out the upper vertical barn beam and filled in the boxes on the upper left.

By this time my thoughts concerning barns had expanded to consider the more universal relationship of human nature to animals/hunting; vegetation/agriculture. Somehow the wall responded positively to this refinement. Things fell into place -- a barrel hoop became a full moon or an abstract hex sign or a sun or a target. Inside its curve, rocks and textures hinted at plowed fields, phases of the moon, or constellations. Scratches

across the middle surface suggested animal tracks; a rusty saw blade became a sickle. Contrast between the warm, darker color of the lower section and the cool, milky hue of the upper, reinforced the horizontal/vertical structure of the wall, and balanced the play of its curves. The sense of mystery evoked by these hidden clues was beginning to grow stronger. I wanted this painting to communicate that humanity's primitive interdependence with nature was human and whole and holy. Consequently, a tiny window revealing "sacred treasures" of vegetation, along with barn beams covered with oxidized silver leaf, together make reference to the wall as a reliquary of a less complicated era.



DONNA A. KRISTOFF, O.S.U.

Wall I (15,000 B.C. - 1992)
Ode: Man & Nature
Dry Pigment, Silver Leaf, Mixed
Media; Found Objects
6'x4'



DONNA A. KRISTOFF, O.S.U.

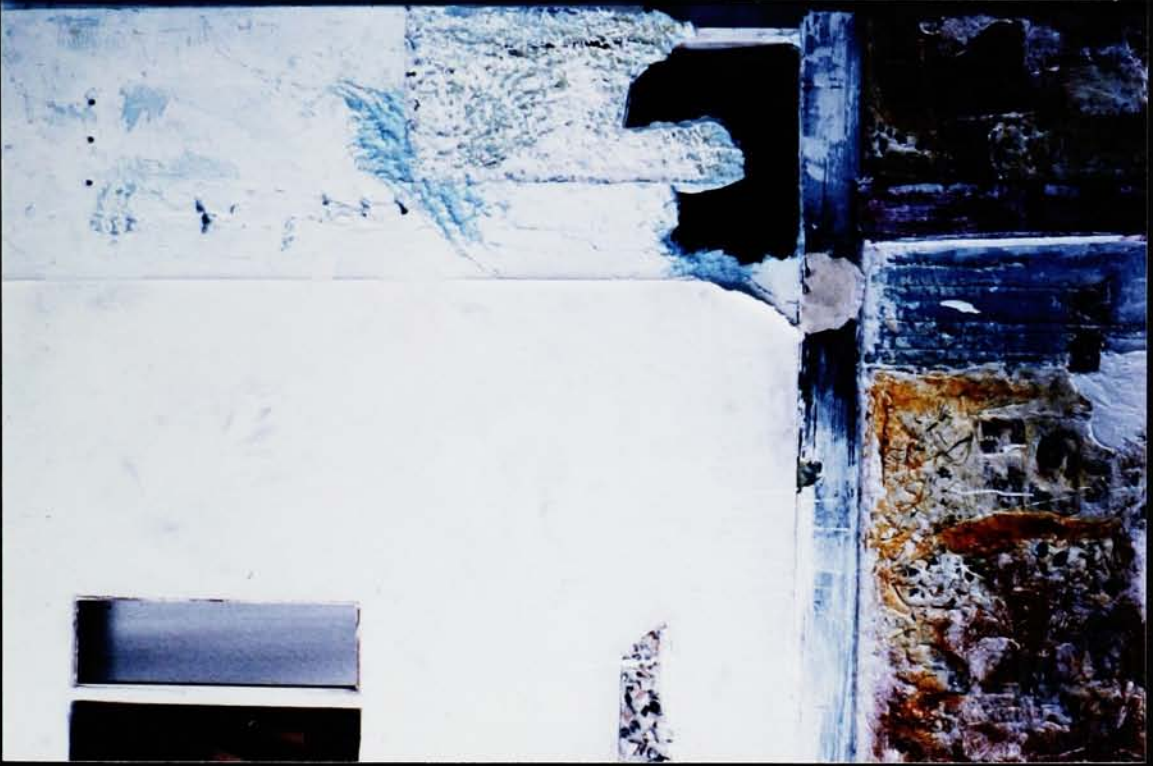
Wall I (15,000 B.C. - 1992)
 Oceanic, Human & Nature
 Clay Pigments, Paper Leaf, Mixed
 Media, Found Objects
 6'x4'



2



1



4



3

Wall II

Epic: Matter & Spirit

Cast-plaster architectural motifs link this wall visually to the birthplace of Western culture. Is it a Greek ruin left intact by the Romans? Or is it a Roman ruin rebuilt from its rubble? Recording archeological antiquities was not my intent. My thoughts were directed more toward **matter** itself: its innate beauty; its receptivity to being formed and transformed into whatever human intelligence and art decided was needed -- a house, a temple, a monument.

Texture is very prominent in this wall piece. Two large gashed and gouged areas reveal raw materials taken from the earth's geological composition: lava rock, old bits of brick and pottery, ash, dirt. Exposed, this interior matter may force the viewer to question her/his experience of walls as mere façades.

The wall's warm reds and cool greens contrast and complement one another as do matter and spirit. Scarcely visible on the left is the linear contour of a seated female figure with a lyre. Does her faded image imply that she is a fragment buried beneath layers of marble dust? Or has she been worn away from the wall's outer surface? This ambiguity could emphasize the difficulty of trying to separate spirit and matter -- a task as futile as trying to hear the song she sings.



DONNA A. KRISTOPF, O.S.U.

Wall II (300 B.C. - 1992)
Epic: Matter & Spirit
Dry Pigment, Mixed Media;
Casting
6'x4'





2



1



4



3

Wall III Hymn: Visible & Invisible

This wall eventually presented me with a special challenge because it was the most figurative of my thesis series. The upper bi-symmetric composition was based on a traditional hieratic model used in Romanesque religious frescoes. The lower one, partially concealed and partially revealed in odd patches of plaster, took form as a later Roman bas-relief carving. Fissures penetrating both layers were filled with smaller textural material; large rusty bolts and iron scrap parts were inserted to imply preservation.

As the central figure, a seated Madonna with Child, was drawn with charcoal and embellished with color and gold leaf, it began to dominate the wall. The integration of the entire panel still had to be achieved, but because I felt a certain emotion for the figure at this stage, I set it aside. Weeks past before work on the painting was resumed. By then I knew what I had to do and had the **inner freedom** to do it.

Sapp's description of the creative process identifies this hiatus as Wallas' Period of Incubation: It is "a varying length of time characterized by a decrease in mental (conscious) and/or physical work. It appears as if the individual needs a period of interruption from the problem-solving in order to clear the mind." (Sapp 1992, 24)

Thus, the clarity of the central figure became obscured as I submerged it into the painting under layers of obliterating passages of color. A mysterious silence arose from deep within the wall. It was more than I had anticipated. I had permitted the wall to acquire the visual humility for which it begged. The viewer was now welcome to enter into the space as an equal, as a guest. As **visibility moves toward invisibility**; communication becomes communion; matter reveals spirit; and human thought yields to wonder.



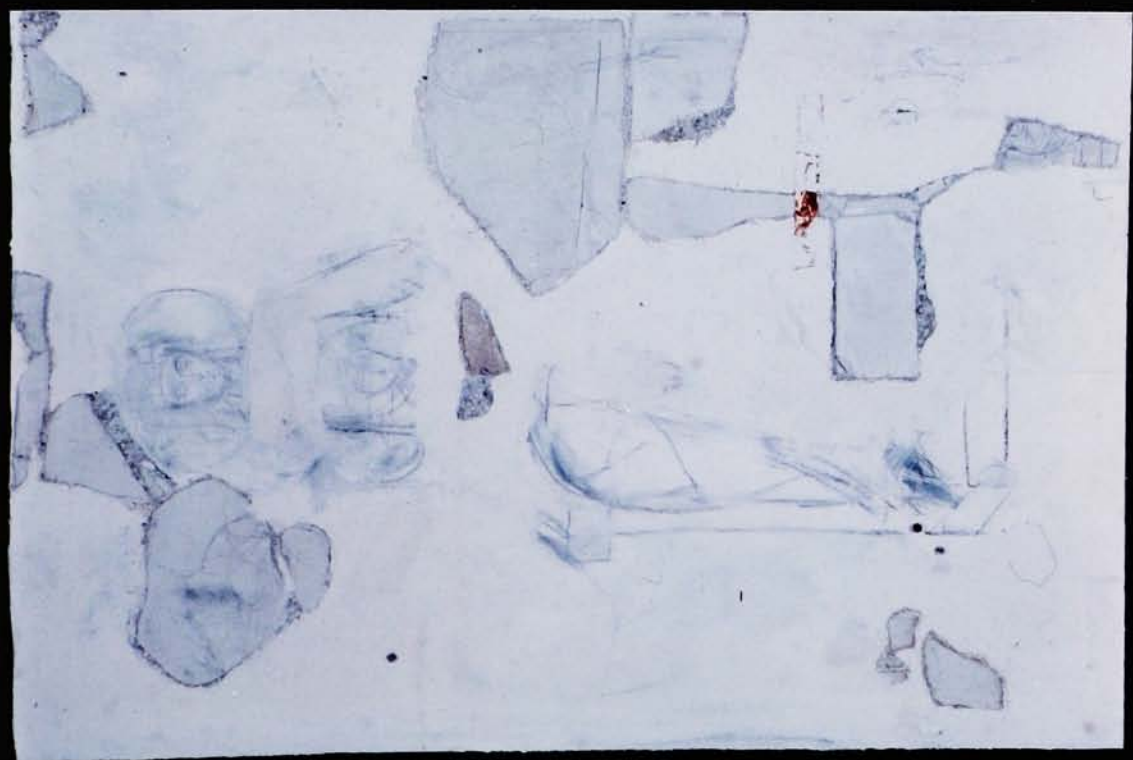
DONNA A. KRISTOFF, O.S.U.

Wall III (800 B.C. - 1992)
Hymn: Visible & Invisible
Dry Pigment, Gold Leaf, Mixed
Media; Found Objects
6'x4'





2



1





31

6



5

Wall IV Elegy: Temporal & Eternal

The first conceptual stirrings about my thesis project included a contemporary statement regarding walls. Recollecting my visit to Anne Frank's house in Amsterdam set the emotional tone for this piece. Her little corner of a dismal room, though long deserted, whispered the presence of a typical young girl on the brink of womanhood. A few tiny magazine pictures glued to a drab wall created a frame for her carefully placed photographic portrait.

That was all there was.

However, my thoughts then shifted to the American experience: displaced families, condemned buildings, abandoned walls, shopping malls; urban renewal, sub-standard housing, suburban sprawl, the shopping mall. All things temporary, tentative, and transitory -- a young girl on the brink of womanhood . . .

The process of "building up" this wall by "breaking down" pieces of styrofoam internalized for me the force of destruction and the fragility of existence: **the dark side of life**. However, as a result of this action, an object larger than myself stood forever frozen in a falling motion. Out of death and despair comes new life: **the bright side of life**. Our confrontation was compassionate: my physical exhaustion, its spiritual impoverishment -- we mirrored each other. The strong identity of the human person, in spite of suffering, suggested by Anne Frank's little corner, spoke of the universal condition of human nature: hope is eternal. My wall panel, the debris of a wrecking ball, had avoided becoming a pile of rubble. Instead it still stood, imperfectly but proud, a monument to its skilled builder and a memorial to

the families protected within its shelter.

This wall suggests a bas relief sculpture. Its cascading layers of styrofoam; curled fragments of faded wallpaper; crevices of rough plaster; and remnants of found objects highlight the third dimension. The accumulation of dirt, marks, scrapes, and scratches show the duration of time -- the fourth dimension.

Patterns of color play against flat planes of neutral tones. Rolled and dripped paint document the decorating desires of a string of recent occupants. Domestic graffiti -- a phone number, a child's crayon drawing -- tell of the wall's universal power as a means of cultural communication.

Amsterdam/America; Anne Frank/Occupant; Time touches the timeless because **the eternal is now**.



DONNA A. KRISTOFF, O.S.U.

Wall IV (1930 - 1992)
Elegy: Temporal & Eternal
Dry Pigment; Mixed Media;
Found Objects
6x4





2



1

DONNA A. KRISTOFF, O.S.U.
Wall IV (1930 - 1992)
Elegy: Temporal & Eternal
Dry Pigment; Mixed Media;
Found Objects
8x4



4



3



6



5

CONCLUSION

The goal of this thesis was to explore through a series of large mixed media paintings the idea of **The Wall** beyond its merely architectural function.

The paintings stand on their own merits, having their own existence separate from mine. At one time, though, in the process of their becoming, we engaged in a mutual dialogue. They became a record and a revelation of a change in me.

What I learned about myself as a painter was invaluable. This is probably the crux of the thesis project.

First, I realized the importance of not working so literally. Ambiguity is a very important part of any work that wants to engage the viewer to discover personal associations within the work. Seeing others' reactions to my wall pieces showed me more clearly that communication is vital.

Second, I agree with Tàpies:

The first thing one has to do is to engage in a dialogue with the materials: they speak, they have a language of their own, and from this the dialogue develops between the artist and his materials. One often has to discard ideas because they conflict with the materials. Then a kind of struggle begins between the idea which I'm trying to express and the material form that I want to give it. (Catoir 1991, 89)

Third, I learned to trust my intuition much more. Instead of relying too heavily on thinking everything out beforehand, I allowed the process to lead me. Doing led to insight; insight led to doing. Sometimes I caught the rhythm; sometimes I lost it; but I knew it would eventually return.

Fourth, the amount of preparation that went into the wall pieces -- from casting plaster of clay impressions made at Mt. Hope Cemetery to gathering and testing materials and constructing supports -- confirmed my commitment to the completion of the thesis project.

Finally, there is no finality. Working on my wall pieces generated many new ideas that had to be noted and shelved for future exploration.

APPENDIX A.

TREE RELIQUARY, 1991

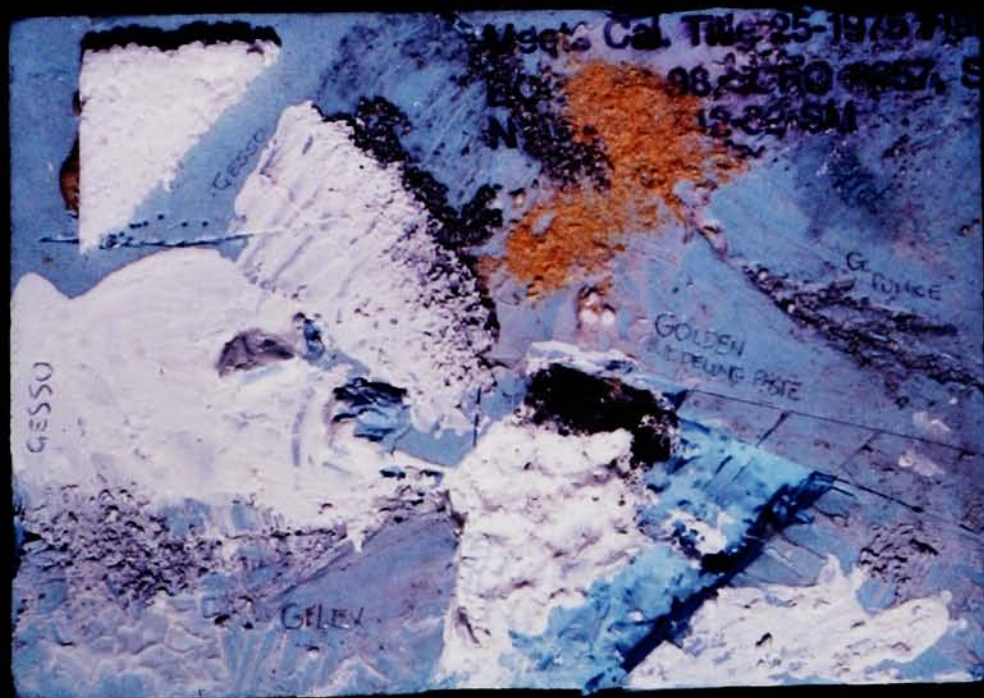


APPENDIX B.

TESTS FOR MATERIALS



1



2



3

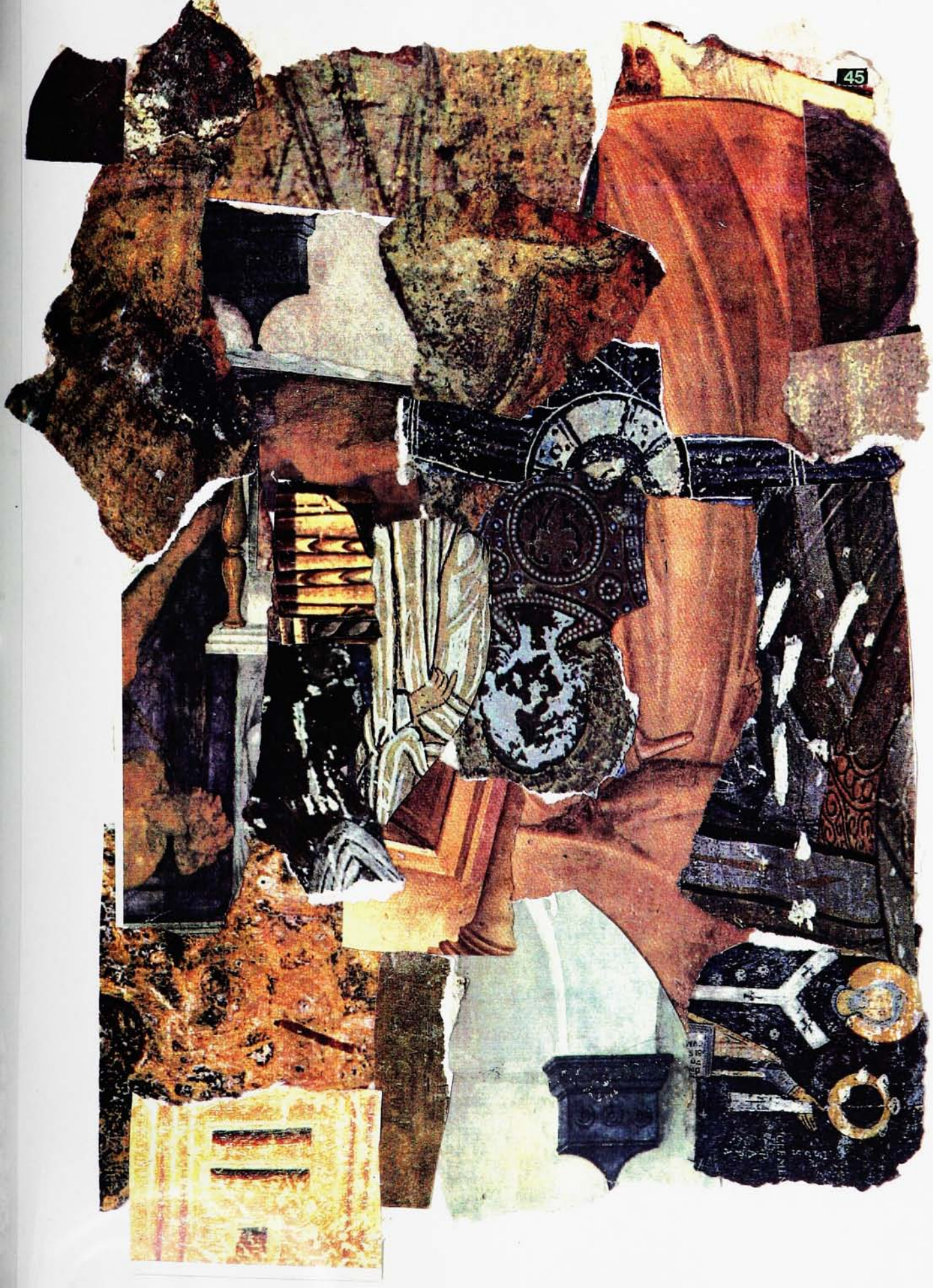


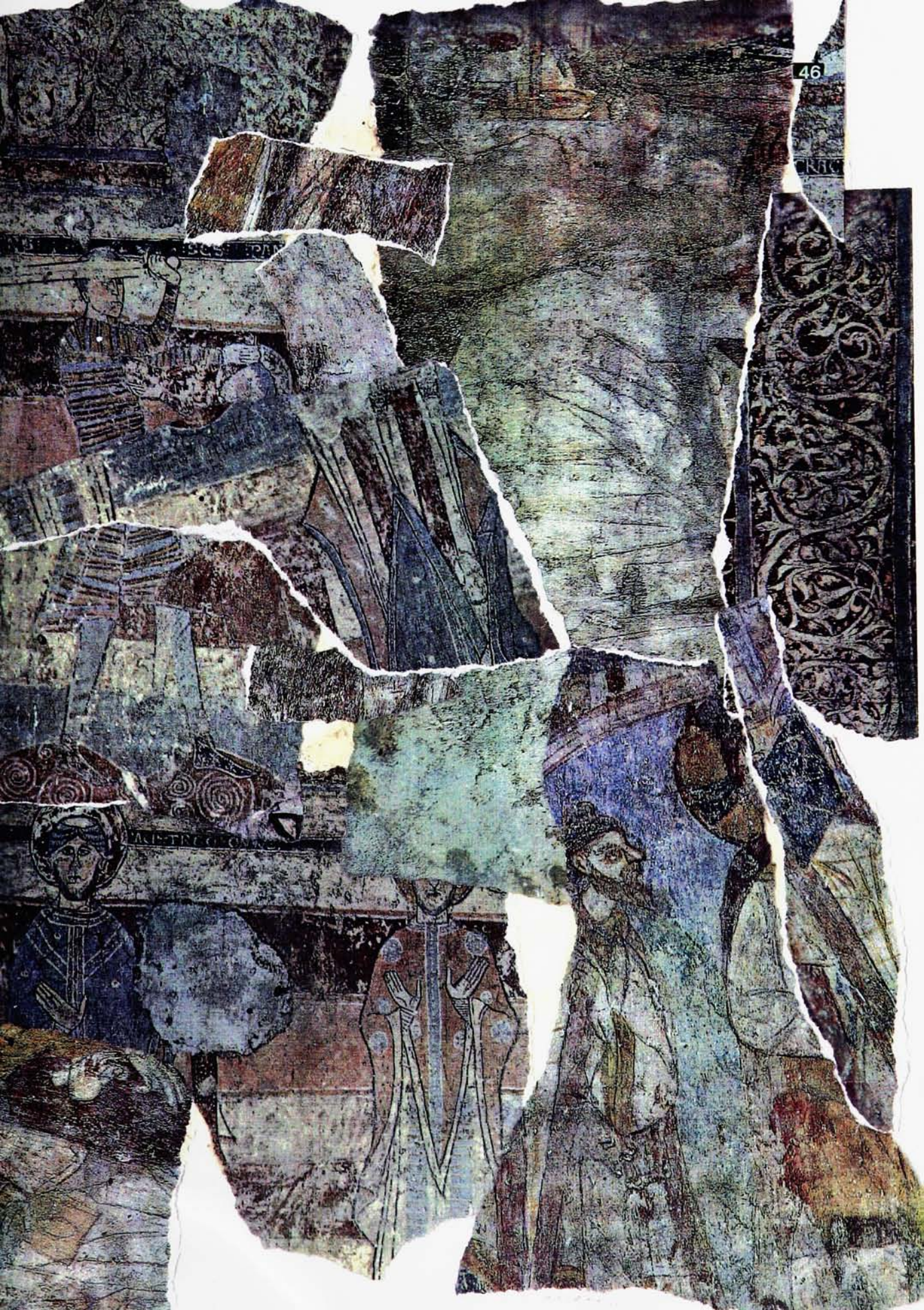
4

APPENDIX C.

COLLAGE COLOR STUDIES











APPENDIX D.
STATEMENT FROM
THESIS EXHIBITION

**MY PAINTINGS CELEBRATE THE TRUTHS
EMBEDDED IN THE PHYSICALITY OF WALLS:**

Walls are always more than mere surface.

Walls are mute witnesses to change in human culture.

Walls are humbly receptive to the impact of human and environmental forces.

Walls present a "presence" that both reveals and conceals.

Walls bear the weight of the human spirit.

Walls endure.

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