Analects

The artist is called upon to “read” the past and to add his reading to the future. Reading the past is a habit, a tradition… —JannisKounellis

In Byzantine times, correspondence was the mainmeans of communication for the state and private individuals. To protectthe secrecy of documents sent through this form of communication and to certify their authenticity, the sender would use a lead seal or bulla. The inscriptions and scenes inscribedon these seals, the subject of sigillography, make for a richlydiverse panorama no artist can easily resist. For scholars, on the other hand, they are a rich source of information about the life and culture of Byzantium. The events and scenes they depict carry a strong religious sentiment and reflect the profoundly Christian foundation of Byzantine culture, although more secular representations can also be found.

It was their artistic aspect, however, that appealed to me and first aroused my interest.

Engraved with inspiration, care and expertise by master craftsmen of the age, these small coin-sized formshave come down to usoxidized and damaged, withdetails of scenes haphazardly effaced. Yet they have acquiredthat secret allure of decay and the patina of time without losing any of their value or appeal.

Working with aquatinton tinplates, I tried to transfer whatever piqued my curiosity and aroused my pulse. I played with the mirror that etchinggives me, the positive-negative, creatingengraving surfaces through a “correct” reading. I used thick waxed red thread for stitching to allude to the threads or *mirinthoi*that were used to affix the seals to the documents they authenticated.

As might be expected, the secret charm of Byzantine art and culture could not but lead me to another set of Byzantine possibilities and thus to the creation of two series of works: Together they form what one could call my personal “analects”, in the sense of a collection of favorite subjects.

In this second set I created engraving plates with figures one mightconsiderincompatible with Christianity but which were nonethelessfound all around Byzantine art. These figures believed to have magical, apotropaic powers that point to primordial fears and their overcoming, with means that are not rational, a timely reference, one might say, in today's age of fear and uncertainty.