INLEK'OKASCE
PREFACE

For many years I have been interested in the problems and possibilities of creating a work that deals with the nature of autobiography while avoiding the idioms of self-portraiture and linear narrative. Indeed, the experience of memory is never linear, and self-image has little to do with one's reflection in a mirror.

In 1987, while recuperating from an accident and unable to work, I found myself thumbing through the instruction book for a deck of Tarot cards. I was intrigued with the methodical way in which this "oracle" divided up the possible range of human experience, and although it was geared towards a divination of the future, I found it to be a useful structure for the ordering of an autobiographical project.

Invert, Oracle was conceived as an installation consisting of paintings, drawings and texts. The installation is an enclosed room, approximately sixteen feet by sixteen feet and fourteen feet high, taking its general visual cues from both a fortune-teller's tent and a mausoleum. On the exterior of the installation are two "tent flaps" that act as both entrance and explanation of the objects inside. On this panel are 78 text panels, each pairing definitions of the individual Tarot cards with reminiscences generated by these definitions.
The interior of the installation is divided into three sections. The Major Arcana of the Tarot, twenty-two cards in all, was divided into masculine and feminine aspects, ten of them for panels regarding memories of my father, (the large paintings on doors suspended from the ceiling, together entitled *Father*), and twelve for memories of my mother (the sections of the circular table, entitled *Mother*). The Minor Arcana, fifty-six cards in all, is used for autobiographical memories, and is represented by the fifty-six small circular drawings (jointly entitled *Autobiography*) scattered on the interior walls of the installation.

This catalog is intended as both a record of the installation and as a key to the relationships between its images and texts. As in any record of a place or event, there is a trade-off between the ease of assimilation this volume represents and the experience of the work. As a reference to the experience of being in the installation, I have included a series of photographs of the viewer’s progress through the space. The other major difference between this record and the installation is the spatial separation of language and image. Each text in this book accompanies a corresponding image, enabling the reader to more easily make visual/verbal connections, in opposition to the installation itself, where the two have been deliberately separated.

- David Cannon Dashiell
Plate II

View of installation interior showing location of *Father* above, *Mother* below, and *Autobiography* on the walls.
THE EMPEROR

Authority. One who is master of his emotions; active intelligence able to realize ideas.

**Reverse:** Immaturity. Tendency to be gullible. Self-control limited.

_Early in my father’s career, he was instrumental in the development of photogrammetry, a technique for creating three-dimensional maps. His expertise in this area made him invaluable to the intelligence industry during World War Two. Later in his life, he began to understand the moral contradictions involved in using his skills for the benefit of a spy network. His pride of covert career turned to hidden shame, and he instead began to extol the virtues of his overt craft._
THE EMPRESS

Fertility in body or mind, initiative, action, bountiful harvest. Good luck.

Reverse: Sterility, wastefulness of resources, indecision, disruption of life at home or in society.

Because her senses of taste and sight (among others) were failing her when my mother's fatal illness began to manifest itself, she accidentally baked a pie using salt instead of sugar. In order to please her and prevent her from recognizing the extent of her illness, I pretended to enjoy the piece she offered me. The rest of the pie was never eaten, and my mother soon realized why. As the pie had been destroyed by the loss of her sensual acuity, I had destroyed a familiar ritual between mother and son by my deceit.
KING OF RODS

A man of noble character — honest, loyal, conscientious and just. Generally married, often a countryman.

Reverse: Unyielding in judgments; strict but tolerant. Advice should be considered.

I was attracted to my anthropology teacher in college, and although he was married and suspected the sexual nature of my attraction to him, he had no qualms about our close friendship. I eventually found it difficult to be near him, as his easygoing physicality became a test of my unspoken desire. He eventually told me he understood the nature of my disturbance and offered his body as a token of friendship.
QUEEN OF CUPS

A beautiful, loving woman, intuitive and yet practical too. Happy marriage, vision.

Reverse: In some ways may be a good woman, but may be perverse, not to be trusted.

A woman I know divorced her husband and took custody of their son when she realized that her marriage was loveless. She fell in love with another man, and her new lover left his wife. All four parties were friends of mine, and so I was subjected to stories and accusations from all sides, leaving me somewhat wary of everyone. I was eventually convinced of her good intentions not only by her unflagging personal support, but by her fierce devotion to the people and ideas that mattered to her. What I had prejudicially assumed at first to be an impulsive act of lust on her part, I eventually came to understand as a justifiable and passionate act of the will.
NINE OF SWORDS

Vacillation on an important matter, failure, disappointment, desolation. May mean miscarriage or death of a loved one.

Reverse: Shame, suspicion, uncertainty, imprisonment.

When I was young, I belonged to the boy scouts. At one point I was a patrol leader, and often would hold meetings at an old complex of army barracks on an army base. One night, I talked my patrol into exploring the complex by climbing along the interconnected roofs. We had great fun at this, as the complex was huge and maze-like. Suddenly, we were surrounded by military police with guns and searchlights, and with helicopters overhead. They took us to military police headquarters, and made us wait for our parents to arrive. We were terribly frightened and confused. My father arrived, furious, and while driving me home, told me that we had been running on the roof of a CIA building where they had been interrogating a spy, and that we had caused the entire army base to go on alert.
PAGE OF PENTACLES

A young person; serious, scholarly, hardworking. May denote scholarship, respect for new ideas.

Reverse: Rebel, dissipation, prodigality and unfavorable news.

A friend of mine in high school once joined me for a party at my house with my brother and a friend of his. My father and stepmother had gone on a trip, and had strictly forbade us to invite anyone to the house while they were gone. My friend and I obtained what we thought was mescaline, expecting to have an amusing evening. The mescaline turned out to be a deliriant. Everyone except my brother’s friend and I ran off, wildly delirious. My brother was found miles away naked in someone’s garage, and was taken to a juvenile detention center. The following morning, my friend’s parents called in great distress, saying that their son was on the roof of their house. My parents were contacted by the police, came home immediately, and kept me grounded for a month.