



## 3 / A PANEL OF YELLOW BLOSSOMS

How can all this — a vision of a given wholeness experienced through feeling — affect our actions? Let us consider a panel painted for the interior of a building as a tiny part of the wall surface. In the panel which I show here, from the wholeness of the place where I was doing the work, I began with an inner feeling of a shining blue. It was an intense blue, sky-like, yet more intense, illuminated by the light of yellow stars.

During the work of painting, this inner feeling of blue which I could see clearly in my mind's eye, though it was not yet realized, acted as a kind of vision to guide the work of the painting.

I began by trying to find an actual physical color which matched the light I saw in my mind. I found a beautiful soft shining blue, manganese blue, white, and cerulean blue, with a touch of ultramarine and grey. I began by painting this blue over the whole panel. When I filled the panel, I painted small yellow stars all over it, in an effort to make the blue shine more. It was, at this stage, partially beautiful.

However, it seemed flat and incomplete, and did not yet match the energy of the heavenly blue I could still see in my mind's eye. I began trying to intensify it. I worked for eight hours, adding more and more color — big daubs of orange and



*Yellow Blossoms, oil on wooden panel, 1987*

yellow towards the top; blobs of dark red near the bottom. After eight hours of work, the painting was ruined, a mess. But there was a spark created by the yellow daubs. I noticed that the way they interacted with the blue, did begin to make it shine in just the way that I had seen; a glimmer of that feeling had begun to enter in.

In frustration at the build-up of thick paint, I wiped the whole panel clean with turpentine. But I had discovered the essential thing about the physical device needed to realize the deep feeling of heavenly blue that remained in my mind's eye. To make the blue shine, in the way that created the feeling I had experienced, the painting needed big yellow blossoms towards the top.

I began again. This second time, I *started*

with these yellow blossoms, put them in first. Even now, the painting was *about* the shining blue, but I only painted yellow blossoms. Then gradually, over the next few days, I painted the pale blue blossoms, dark grey panel, red panels, green stems, and in between the yellow blossoms, the small amount of blue. Even in this blue, most of it was pale, reddish, towards lilac. Only one spot, no more than one square inch, has the literal color of the original shining blue. Yet the painting is still mainly about this blue, and what it takes to make it shine — to realize the feeling of that original blue in my mind's eye.

From the beginning to the end, even when the panel reached its final “yellow” state, I held the vision of the inner shining blue, that had first prompted me to make the panel in that place.



#### 4 / GRASPING THE FEELING OF A FISHPOND AS A WHOLE

Here is another example of the way feeling must be the clue to wholeness, when we seek to make something alive. I once had an interesting discussion with Sim Van der Ryn. He was arguing that feeling is not enough. In his view it was too vague, too emotional. For instance, he said: “In making a sustainable fishpond which works, you just have to concentrate on the facts about fish life, water, plants, and so on, ecological facts about a healthy pond.” I told him: “It is true that these ecological facts are a necessary part of our knowledge, our understanding of how to make a pond. And it is true that many of us know too little about what it requires to make the world sustainable, harmonious in its biological and chemical detail, and so on. But suppose, indeed, that we are trying to build a fishpond. The facts about the ecology of the pond — no matter how detailed by themselves — will not tell us how to make that pond good. Even if we have theories and facts about sustainability, edge plants, fish breeding, water temperature, types of weed,

types of insect, and so on — even with all of this we will not succeed in making the pond have life unless we also have a clear inner feeling — a subliminal perception, and awareness, and anticipation — of what life in that pond will be like.” That means we must have a dim awareness within us, of what a pond with life is like, as a whole and in its feeling. If we do have that feeling of life clear (for the fishpond), we can then use it to guide us. It will help us move towards a pond which does have life. But if we do not have such a feeling clear in us, no amount of knowledge about ecology and sustainability will get us to a pond that has life in the sense I am discussing. We shall just be left scrambling mentally, churning about, marshaling our facts, making experiments perhaps — but still not clarified by an inner vision which tells us what to do. Building the pond, stocking it, putting weeds in it, placing bushes around it, we need to be guided by an inner vision of good life in this pond. We must have a feeling, in us, which will