

THE GREEK STAR



CELEBRATES 105 YEARS
1904-2009!

The Voice of Chicago's Hellenic Community
Serving Hellenism in America!

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Kantylis, Inc. Creates Unique Gifts

By: Maria A. Karamitsos

The Web site says, "Gifts that enlighten with creativity, thought and passion," and those adjectives describe the driving force behind Kantylis, Inc. founder Panos Fiorentinos. This model-builder and photographer has channeled his talents and energy into creating unique gifts targeted to the Greek American market.

Panos founded Kantylis a few years ago, in order to publish his book "*ECCLESIA: Greek Orthodox Churches of the Chicago Metropolis.*" The book, for which he shot all the photography, took three years to complete. It was truly a labor of love. This one of a kind book should be on the coffee table of every Greek in the Metropolis; it's the only book that chronicles the histories of all the churches in our Metropolis of Chicago. It's received rave reviews, and has been described as "an impressive work of photography and art that truly brings to life the Greek Orthodox Church and its iconography." It can be found on the shelves at The Art Institute of Chicago Book Store, Prairie Avenue (Architectural) Bookstore, National Hellenic Museum, and the Chicago Architectural Foundation Gift Store. The book has also been cataloged at Harvard University, the Institute for Sacred Architecture, University of Notre Dame, North Park University, DePaul University, Judson College, University of Illinois at Urbana, Indiana University, Minnesota University, Library of Congress, Princeton University, Houston University, University of Washington, Patriarch Athenagoras Orthodox Institute, Preservation of American Hellenic History and other organizations.

"I'm proud to say it's been cited with praise in scholarly works, and it's listed as a reference in the footnotes of a book by Mark Allen Torgerson, called '*An Architecture of Immanence: Architecture for Worship and Ministry Today.*' It has traveled throughout the world as people give it as gifts to friends in various countries," shared Panos. "Even the Greeks, not just people of other ethnic backgrounds, are amazed at the beauty, the vibrant color and the detail of our American churches. Several non-Orthodox people have said that they learned more about Orthodoxy from the book's essays than other more lengthy sources, which means that I did achieve my goal of creating 'Orthodoxy 101.'" He has often heard from members of the church communities that he writes about in the book, who express their gratitude for immortalizing the history of their parish. "When I published the book, a 24 x 36 inch poster was created to use as a way to

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promote it. The poster has a picture of the facade of each of the 59 churches along with a simple message: 'CH____CH, What's Missing? UR.' Many churches have this poster up on their halls. That's gratifying," he continued. Additionally, architects and iconographers use the book as a reference due to its depth, detail and timeless quality.

His primary career is building architectural models, and he does freelance work for architects and other organizations. That keeps it interesting; as he notes that the projects are varied and interesting. One of his most recent projects was the creation of a model of the Assumption Greek Orthodox Church in Chicago, commissioned by the Center for Religious Architecture of Chicago.

Recently, he also worked on a model of the Smart House, an energy efficient house on display in life size, along with the model, at the Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago. "Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church in San Francisco asked me to build a Tabernacle out of brass, which has been completed and is sitting proudly on their altar table," Panos explained. He also built a model of the new facilities at Saint John the Baptist Church in Des Plaines, Ill., to help the congregation visualize the project. Not all of his exhibits are buildings; one unusual project he worked on was to build a twenty-four inch diameter model of a half of an eyeball for a personal injury case. Many of his works can be viewed on his Web site at www.Pfmodels.com.

Panos is now working on ways to incorporate models into teaching environments such as elementary schools and more. "We Greeks have such an extensive history of architecture to choose from - why not teach architecture with three dimensional objects?" he offered.

One thing really leads to another. Through his model making, he developed a new product idea for Kantyli: engraving wooden frames. "I began with some simple ones in Greek and English that were geared towards giving as gifts to Pappou and Yiayia and Nouna and Nouno," the entrepreneur described. Those initial sayings have become the biggest sellers, especially the Yiayia and Pappou frames with the names of all the grandchildren engraved on it.

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Currently, there are more than 100 existing designs and personalized items are also available. "I have recently completed graduation frames for the Saint Demetrios

Greek schools and was able to put an etching of their church on the frames by using one of the pictures from my book. My brain is always trying to use what I have already done and take it to the next, hopefully, creative level." He's begun to branch out from frames, and is engraving pen boxes, wine toppers, key chains, mirror compacts and other wood products along with recognition and award plaques. In addition to graphics, he can engrave with Greek or English words, and logos. Other new additions to the Kantlyli line are planks of cedar wood with Greek names engraved on them, plus whimsical wall signs and wall tiles that contain a singular letter on each tile, which when put next to each other spell words, resembling a crossword puzzle that sticks on the wall.

The wheels are always turning, and Panos has recently begun offering his wares for fundraisers for various groups. "I enjoy very much working with people to come up with unique items and ideas for them. I like using the Greek angle because I think Greeks, even if not fluent, feel a pride in seeing their language, which is so much of our culture, continue to survive."

Panos is continually devising new designs, so check the Web site often to see his latest creations. He is also selling his items at local church festivals. "If you see me at a festival please stop by and introduce yourself," he said. Visit www.kantlyli.com for unique gift ideas, and brighten someone's day.