

I was on my way to the foundry in Beacon, NY where I was working on the 35' Queen Catherine statue for the borough of Queens. My husband was with me. We crossed over the George Washington Bridge and were driving up the Pallisades Parkway when I noted an extraordinary amount of stalled traffic in the opposite direction. Cars were no longer allowed to enter the city but we didn't know it until we arrived at the foundry and heard the terrible news. A plane had hit the World Trade Center...the foundry was strangely silent....there was no television but there was an old radio in the mold makers room. We gathered around it and listened as it delivered the news piece by piece. After the second plane crashed it became clear we were under attack. There was no way I could work.

Since we couldn't get back to Manhattan, we took the ferry to East Hampton where I have had a studio since 1970. The television set became the focal point of our lives. I watched until my eyes became bloodshot...and still I couldn't stop....like everyone else, glued, riveted...stuck, fixated.

The sky that day was an intense cerulean blue and East Hampton was even more beautiful than ever. The shock lasted for at least a week and so did the beautiful weather. I needed to get away from the TV, from the horrific images, from the feeling of despair...it was pulling me down. I packed up my watercolors, brushes, Arches watercolor block and all the other paraphernalia that watercolorists use and drove up to the docks at Montauk. I found out which boats were in for the day and which ones would go out in the afternoon. I needed to assess how much time I had and what direction the light would come from...where the sun would set. I found an old crate to sit on and set myself up. The dock stinks from dead fish, bait and brine, it permeated everything and I didn't mind....it was real, the nets were real, the pulleys, ropes, buckets, rusty pipes, the trawlers themselves, they all were real. I painted from morning till the last rays of the sun sunk so low there was no more light. I went every day, worked without stopping exhilarated by the salt spray hitting my face, the fierce sun beating down, the ocean breezes, the smells. The fishermen got to know me, gave me a fish or two at the end of the day....commented on my paintings of their boats....My brain was being healed....Art does that. It can heal the brain and the heart. This was what life is really about, what it should be about.

I look at those watercolors now and realize that they are different from all of the other watercolors I have made over the years. I previously used pale watered down washes....now my colors were so intense they seemed to vibrate with the energy of the crash. That same energy was circulating around the globe in different ways with different results.

I spoke to Wayne Thiebaud during that time. He asked what I was doing and I told him. "Wayne", I said, "I don't know what's wrong with me. I should be painting images of planes hitting the World Trade Center and all I can do is paint the fishing boats at Montauk." Wayne said he understood perfectly. After the Bay of Pigs, he went to his studio and painted a vase of flowers.

Audrey Flack
2005

In 2002, I wrote to Cindy Sherman, asking whether she was able to make work after 9/11, and what it looked like. She responded as follows: "I am fine, though it is hard to think of what kind of work to make at this point, other than decorative, escapist, or abstract. I suppose I'll explore one or all of these things." In June, 2005, I reminded her of what she had written, and asked how she solved the problem. Here is her response, which I thought would serve as her statement about the relevance of this work to 9/11, and at the same time as a valuable expression of the way the mind of a deeply original artist works.

ACD

Yes, I remember our conversation back then. The following summer I did try to make some work, extensions of the Hollywood dames I had done in 2000. But they were too self-consciously sad, even though I'd wanted to show sadness, it just didn't work. Then I thought that these characters should be strong, uplifting, invigorating yet ordinary, common folk. In essence, heroic. So I did 2 more characters, one I refer to as a gardener or farmgirl and the other is a bit more of a bimbo, but she's damn proud of it. It was these 2 characters that I first used the computer to add colorful backgrounds to make them seem more poster-like (adding to the heroicism –like a Rosie the Riveter).

They are the only 2 pieces that I was able to do as I started having a technical problem that blew the wind out of my sails and it wasn't until the following year that I started the clowns (which actually were sort of another response to 911 on their own, images that could seem cheery on the surface but horrific underneath, and clowns are meant to cheer us up, hah!) But I'd be happy to be a part of the show. I'm not sure that the work will really read as being a response to 911 but you can decide.

Cindy Sherman
2005

Having lived and worked in downtown Manhattan for the past thirty years the events of September 11 became an intimate part of my life. Walking into the area, passing through the checkpoints of a war zone it was impossible not to see the new realities of the city, the large inaccessible areas, the shifting borders around the areas impacted by the attack. As more of the city gradually became accessible, thousands of people came to trace the perimeter of Ground Zero, turning it into a moving pilgrimage. Working from these observations and with a desire to contribute in some tangible way, I started to consider this edge as a site in a collaborative project with Victoria Marshall and Elliott Maltby.

A number of interventions were to be implemented immediately: figure eights painted on the paving at key intersections to visually tie one piece of the city to the next, all existing barriers and fences painted blue. New fragments of fencing, seating, planting, and blue lights were proposed to form a movable perimeter that would become increasingly dense and noticeable as the zone of exclusion became smaller: a coalescing of separate parts. These elements would replace the disparate fences and barricades that originally defined the edge – wood, concrete, chain link and pipe – and form a boundary wreath for the construction site. Rather than encountering a crime scene with barriers that hide the site from view, this proposal would allow for visual access during the years of recovery and reconstruction. This permeable edge would provide space for the tangible objects of our memories, the flowers and the notes which enable people to continue to look and remember. By allowing visitors to participate in defining Ground Zero, *Moving Perimeter* would have made it possible for visitors to come as mourners rather than just as voyeurs. The shrines of flowers and candles that appeared throughout the city at various sites were such a powerful presence; would it be possible to set up a situation that recognizes their effect and encourages the continuation of this practice? Instead of seeing this act of remembrance disappear over time this transitional project provided a structure to ensure its continuation. As it became known that everyone who visited Ground Zero should bring flowers to place along the perimeter, a permanent presence of color and life would be created. The importance of ritual that emerged throughout the city is acknowledged, as a place is created for people to come to terms with their experience and sense of loss.

At the completion of reconstruction the various elements were to be temporarily reconfigured into a large scale three-dimensional figure eight. As visitors once again came to the center of Ground Zero they would find this pattern marked by bands of flowers by day or see it as a figure outlined by the fire of candles at night. Moving through the multiple paths created by the arrangement of elements, tracing this infinite line, the visitors become the form themselves, activating the symbol of the endless knot by their movement.

Mary Miss
2005

*"There are no excuses for cruelty."
Chinese fortune cookie*

9/11 left many of us wondering what life is all about. It left many feeling irrelevant and very small. And it made all goodness, civility and gentleness seem weak in the face of hate and violence. Does an act of madness eliminate all optimism? Does it make all things caring and good inconsequential? More importantly, what is our response? To answer hatred with hatred? Answer with images of horror to counter their horror? Do we stop creating? Do we stop making beauty?

My answer is: no. First we must mourn. Then we must grieve. But then we must go on to create more beauty and more goodness to counterbalance the baseness and ignorance of our species.

I see these Lace Paintings as an act of defiance. They are, (as all true creative acts are), part of the continuous work of "mending the firmament" that is constantly being shredded by hatred, ignorance, and brutality. I believe that everything put out into the world has an effect. It is therefore essential that we all act to counter the destructive forces put out into world with creative ones.

Why Lace? I knew I did not want to reflect the unnatural atrocities and horrors done by madmen who are given legitimacy by being called "terrorists" (that's a word that has to be redefined). I did not want their insanity to enter into my studio. I did not want to paint their psychosis nor burnish it into my art or our culture. For me, Lace is a metaphor for the interconnectedness of all things. We are all made of the same fabric. We are all apart of each other-- woven by a single string or force of energy that creates the ebb and flow of this ALL, in which we live. Lace is a collective system of unity that is delicate, beautiful and powerful. And it evokes an enormous feeling of gentleness and caring and an affirmation of life.

Curiously, I did not think of any of this when making these paintings. I felt instead a great imbalance-- that the firmament was badly torn -- and had to be mended. Subconsciously it took the form of lace. These paintings also came out of an enormous drive of energy caused by the notion that one cannot be stilled by violence and from an even larger pressing need to respond with the need to heal. Art has the power to plant seeds of optimism deeply into the human psyche. For me there is no higher calling for art. It is essential that we always be reminded of our aptitude for compassion, civility and and most of all, beauty.

R R Zakanitch
5 Sept 05

As To The Memorial

I witnessed the fire and disintegration of the Twin Towers from the roof of my Brooklyn studio. While watching, I had to tell my brain repeatedly what the people trapped in those buildings were going through, as my eyes only wanted to look at a spectacle with little understanding of what I was experiencing.

On September the 12th, I spent the day at home in Manhattan watching television and feeling over and over the impact of the fiery and explosive images. They were used with such frequency with little introduction or context that I could bear to do this for no more than one day – they exhausted me. I found myself again the following morning trying to adhere to my daily rhythm in my studio, trying to steer and focus my ideas there without much success.

As a sculptor, I constantly think of the possibility of preserving a portion of the Twin Tower destruction. Philippe de Montebello suggested saving the ten story leaning frame still remaining on the site. In as much as to me this comes too close to looking like a conventional minimalist sculpture, I would go further and say that we need to preserve a portion of the site that not only reaches to the sky as a condensed abstraction but goes deep into the earth with its surrounding layers. Such a solution would offer a more realistic sense of what happened.

I feel strongly, I need more time to think. I don't want to see some conclusive image of a memorial or an architectural structure commemorating an event this deep. Furthermore as a sculptor, it is difficult for me to imagine a memorial more powerful than a portion of the site, which has suffered this unparalleled devastation. Perhaps the memorial could also come in the form of a structure physically preserving this chosen segment of history and perhaps the outer edges of the footprint of the Twin Towers could be permanently traced onto the ground.

From the first day of the bombing I have had strong desires to go to the site of destruction, hoping that through the visual cues there, I might be led to a place of better understanding. Almost daily, I walked up to as far as the police barricades would allow me. Each visit helped some. I feel it will take others and me weeks – years - perhaps generations to know what happened that day. I feel strongly that the physical preservation of that moment could possibly contribute to a better understanding of an experience so difficult to anchor, to leaf through, to ingest.

Lace Medallion is a sculpture that I made in the spring of 2002. It is always close to impossible for me to make a link with an experience and the visual manifestation of that experience in my artwork.

A more general thought, I feel that much of the visual manifestation of that which is to represent 9/11 on site seems to have gotten sanitized and institutionalized in a way as to contain that event on a plane that feels very distant.

Ursula von Rydingsvard
September 25, 2001

These 8 photos are members of a larger series done between September 12, 2001 and approximately December 1, 2001. They are, for the most part, photos of other photos and photos of copies of other photos which were pinned, taped and stapled to walls, billboards, subway entrances, hospital facades, storefront windows, bus stops, etc. around Manhattan, chiefly between Chambers Street and Grand Central Station. As weather and time began to take its toll, the images began to deteriorate-- a kind of 2nd disappearance. Given the slim to zero chance of rescue or even recovery, one intention of my project was to rescue the images--to halt their effacement so that the images would be locked--or crystallized--in photo-chemical emulsion like specks of organic material trapped in amber. In this way, perhaps the humanity of those who perished might be witnessed anonymously.

Jeffrey Lohn
2005

This altar installation was my response to the devastation and trauma of September 11, 2001. Like the rest of the world, I watched the news media's obsessive replay of the terrorist attack which was as psychically horrific as the physical reality of a terrorist hit on American soil. I was consumed with shock, the wounded bodies, traumatized survivors, heroes, soldiers, citizens and the tremendous loss of human life.

Reading the newspapers, I realized that there was no "news" being reported...only prayers filled the pages. I was deeply moved by the public display of grief and began to clip and save the prayers, advertisements and condolences of grief. This act started the process to channel my own feelings of helplessness, loss, grief and overwhelming sadness. My paralysis was intense. I withdrew from a faculty exhibition only to be severely admonished by a young artist who felt that my attitude was an unacceptable response to a global crisis of this magnitude.

Prayers for the New Ancestors became means for me to create a site of peace for the recently departed spirits – the new ancestors - who were so violently torn away from this earthy plane. It also became a place for the living – the warrior spirits who needed a sanctuary, a sacred place for reflection and mental calm. The walls of the shrine are lined with the public prayers from the newspapers. The altar is dressed with lace and dollies, an American flag, the Bible and photos of departed loved ones gathered from my community. Candles, herbs, fresh eucalyptus, shells, and coins adorn the altar with a star lit sky to symbolize the new spirits who hover between the land of the living and the Other World ... in shock, lost, confused and angry.

Within the realm of spirits, altars and shrines are critical to the psychic well-being of human cultures all over the world. My ancestry is grounded in the African Caribbean Diaspora of Barbados where my grandmother and aunts learned to tend the altars and shrines in their church. This legacy lives on in me as I create spaces to address the spiritual needs of the Ancestors, the living and to honor the spirits of the recently departed.

Leslie King-Hammond
2005

THE YELLOW FIELD

I was returning from having had breakfast uptown with my friend Reed Rubin, when the subway attendant announced that an aircraft had hit the World Trade Center. The E train was discontinued south of the West Fourth Street station until further notice. As I walked across Lafayette Street crowds of people were walking patiently north. Their faces were serious. The silence surrounding them and me was immense, despite the increasingly acute sound of sirens and helicopters everywhere.

I have no TV. I stood in the bar near my studio. A few customers were there and more came in. That's where I saw the second plane enter the other tower in the screen. I stayed for a long while, then went around the corner to that which was my studio at the time, a large garage covered by a big skylight, and opened the radio.

What to do? I was flooded by the usual dilemmas about the relevance of art in the face of modern war and injustice. Many artists of old represented war in a way that did not appear to reflect any doubts about the validity of their general artistic pursuit. Now we instead question our fateful indirectness in social matters, and find no answer. When we mobilize in the streets, we help the propaganda for some of the causes we support, such as anti-war or anti-racist sentiment. That's the only time we achieve a scant connection with others outside the art world. However, when some of us aestheticize ideology or activism to serve them in luxury capitalistic galleries, it's self-serving because we seldom reach beyond the art ghetto. I feel that instead of sensationalized tragedy, trivialized anecdotes, slogans that fall either on deaf or on already converted ears, a delicate touch of paint could be a truer statement of resilience, maybe even of resistance.

I immediately wrote for *The Art Newspaper* a column comparing this attack to the sack of ancient Rome by the Huns. The central core of an empire could be stabbed and that marked the beginning of its decline. Frontier wars, inner corruption, weakness. The arts flourish in late empires, like the agave cactus that pushes a magnificent phallic flower into the sky before dying.

A profound tiredness overcame me. I felt I must make some art as a testimony of survival, but I couldn't make myself either refer to the events under way or invent anything new. I opened a book about my art and found the small photo of a landscape watercolor of a large yellow field. I had painted it in Upstate New York some years before. I started copying it. Because of the difference between the size of the reproduction and the paper area I was coloring, I had to concentrate on inventing the details in the new painting. This woke me up, captured my attention, held me together.

I fell into short sleep on the couch every forty minutes or so and kept stubbornly painting, like a shipwreck who refuses to let the waves lull him into drowning. This went on all night. In the morning I walked all the way to ninetieth street in an attempt to find a newspaper. Sold out. Back to studio, radio and painting. At one point the news began to morph into common products and I started playing CD's: Bach, Reggae, Mingus..

I observed how despite the tragedy less than a mile away from me, my bodymind was content at being able to eat, sleep and wash. No matter how compassionate or saddened one might be, it is impossible to really empathize with disaster affecting others, even at a short distance. Then started the smell. It came from the south when the wind turned. I have it in my mind forever. Burned corpses and computer plastic mixed in the air, ashes in emulsion with our breathing.

The digicam fell into my hands. During the last couple of years I had sent friends some private publications of mine, each collecting photos of indifferent themes, like nails on street walls or puddles after the rain, which strangely appeared to take on some significance once reproduced in photocopy and stapled together. The series was alternately called "Nothing" and "Something", certainly not a new idea. I went out to Kenmare Street and snapped images of the tragic cloud of vapor traversing the sky above the tenements there. No sensational image, just the passing of time marked by slight differences in the shape of the giant smoke. I sent the booklet like the others, as a routine matter of practice. During the following days I copied the yellow field watercolor again and then again and then again.

Lucio Pozzi
25 August 2005

The BLUE LIGHTS were to me
a true inspiration because
of their BEAUTY & SIMPLICITY.
The moon was right in the
middle and snow flurries
came down around us.
Because I believed then that
we'd never see the Blue Lights
again, I decided to record
them on paper for everyone in
the world to see.

Barbara Westman 2005