American Art After September 11:
A Consideration of
The Twin Towers

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The September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center had a profound effect on the American art world. The events and aftermath triggered a shift in public sensibility toward abstraction and raised dilemmas in terms of representing the human figure. Further, the representation of 9/11 recalls and amplifies the debates over modernism first advanced when Maya Lin’s Vietnam Veterans Memorial was selected for the National Mall in Washington, D.C. and during the ensuing controversy. This discussion will consider the ways in which Lin’s elder status in this discussion showcases the role modernism plays in the commodification of 9/11. A major issue in this discussion is the function of the widespread response of public grief and anger played, and continues to play, in the valuation of art pieces following that tragic day’s events. The American response involves two linked issues: the susceptibility of art to transformation because of broad public interest and the existence of archetypal images for catastrophe. The building and destruction of the World Trade Center, the role of art after the attacks, the kind of art allowed and censored, the artistic response in the New York art world, and finally, the plans for Ground Zero are all considered here to determine these points.

The September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center were secured vividly in the American imagination as an unparalleled attack on American shores. Within a few short hours, more than 3,000 people had been killed, many more injured. Initially, critics expected a major paradigm shift, in which ironic postmodern art would disappear from the scene. The predicted “new literalism” was most prominent in the first wave of visual responses, evident in the temporary memorials to the victims. A few specific works have been particularly well received.

by the avant-garde, including the *Tribute of Light* of 2002. More recently, several art pieces have also gained attention for the negative outcry against them as too explicit because they are figurative. The general public largely dismisses these initially executed pieces, favoring more solemn and abstract memorials in the tradition of Lin’s *Vietnam Veterans Memorial* of 1982 (Figure 1). The terrorist acts were broadcast and reprinted as they were occurring and immediately afterward, so that a horrific series of transmitted and reproduced images were imprinted onto the collective sensibility. This immediacy of experience affected the way artists viewed the events and their art making since 9/11.

![Figure 1: Maya Lin’s *View of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial* (1982).](image)

At first, artists were responding to the televised images of the attacks. On September 10, 2001, Mayor Rudolph Giuliani was embroiled in forming a cultural committee to review funding for museums—the outcome of the outcry he prompted over the 1999 exhibition *Sensation: Young British Artists from the Saatchi Collection* at the Brooklyn Museum of Art, which Giuliani criticized harshly for displaying Anglo-Nigerian artist Chris Olifi’s painting of a Madonna ornamented with sacks of elephant dung. Then, soon after 9/11, and as a result of his decisive reactions to events of the day, Giuliani became a kind of paragon of civic virtue, suggesting that patronizing a Broadway

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show was patriotic. He appeared on Saturday Night Live to promote New York’s status as an outstanding place. His role as a defender of artistic morality was bolstered by his newfound status as quick responder to disaster and, subsequently, cultural maven. This transition in Guiliani’s cultural status is a barometer of the importance the World Trade Center had as a symbol of New York City. Tourists visited the Statue of Liberty, but residents and more tourists went to the Twin Towers. They held an important position in the idea of New York.

Skyscrapers are essentially the cathedrals of our time—monumental structures to individuals, or to organizations, or to civilization itself and the Twin Towers exceeded this notion.3 “Vertical is to live, horizontal is to die,” the designer Buckminster Fuller once said.4 New York in the 1960s was a city on the rise. The World Trade Center project symbolized confidence in the notion that “Bigger is better.”5 On completion in 1971 and 1973, respectively, the Twin Towers were the world’s tallest and the largest buildings, reaching a height of 110 stories. The World Trade Center embodied civic and economic aspirations to make the downtown a thriving business center. The buildings were notoriously overpowering. The poster for the 1976 remake of King Kong showed the World Trade Towers as the setting for the final drama in the climax of the film, replacing the Empire State Building in the original film as the symbol of New York’s skyline. Director Dino De Laurentiis had to position the ape at the edge of one of the towers to avoid having the buildings dwarf him. Once the ape fell, the director was again faced with the scale of the buildings, especially in relation to the five acre wide open space of the plaza. The popular film Working Girl (1988), starring Melanie Griffith, showed her in several scenes looking toward the Twin Towers as a sign of her wish to leave behind her life as a secretary. The buildings became a symbol of economic success and of the great ambitions of Manhattan itself.

The dominance of the structures was first significantly challenged in February 1993, when a bomb went off in a parking garage, killing six people and injuring 1,000. Then came the attack on September 11, 2001: the impact of the airplanes did not destroy the buildings, but the inferno that followed about one hour later did. Reporter Sue McAllister noted that the terrorists had chosen the Twin Towers because “the towers are recognized worldwide as a symbol of American financial dominance, and that’s why they were picked instead of defense installations or key transportation routes, for example” (1F). These

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3This aspect was evident in the facades of the Twin Towers, with their elongated, pointed arch elements, recalling the height and shape of Gothic cathedral building and arches.

4See American Scholar (1969).

5The concept of “Bigger is better,” originates with the hyperphallic Roman deity Piriapus.
buildings functioned symbolically and visually. Additionally, the World Trade Center complex included several art works which took on a new meaning following the events of September 11.

The sculptures once located on the World Trade Center plaza and surrounding area became symbols of artistic power and survival, especially Fritz Koenig’s Sphere for Plaza Fountain, a 45,000-pound steel and bronze sculpture, which sat above a granite fountain. It was created in 1971 and was dedicated as a monument to world peace through world trade. The sculpture suffered a large gash on 9/11 but remained structurally intact. The Koenig sculpture became a kind of touchstone for survival, attracting much attention from the workers on the site cleanup, who carefully safeguarded it, as well as from the New York community. The reinstallation of the Sphere in Battery Park City in March of 2002 coincided with the six-month anniversary of the attack. It became the center of a memorial including rows of trees, benches, and an eternal flame for the victims.

J. Seward Johnson Jr.’s Double Check of 1982, located at 1 Liberty Plaza, was another sculpture located near the World Trade Towers. After the attack, it was severely damaged, a symbol of the lost office workers as it portrayed a man dressed in a business suit pausing while seated on the bench to check his briefcase. Kitty Evans, an amateur painter, made it the central subject of her painting Liberty Park, WTC911; her painting shows the ruination of the worker’s daily activities, showing the sculpture surrounded by the debris. The painting was made from newspaper photographs documenting the debris around the damaged sculpture.

There were several major artistic losses at the site. One of the most prominent was the Cantor Collection, which included many sculptures by nineteenth-century French sculptor Auguste Rodin. Some parts of sculptures showed up in the debris. A small (71 cm) version of Rodin’s celebrated Thinker was recovered but then mysteriously disappeared. Speculation is that it was taken by one of the workers at Ground Zero.

There were seven public sculptures at the World Trade Center and more than one hundred other works of art, but most were destroyed, including Alexander Calder’s WTC Stabile (Bent Propeller) of 1971.

How do the images of 9/11 relate to historical and recent artistic responses to similar tragedies? The main link is the memorialization of the victims, showing the chaos of the events. Nineteenth-century Spanish romantic painter Francisco Goya’s painting titled The Third of May, 1808 of 1814—another tragic event associated with a specific date—depicts the assassination of Spaniards by the Napoleonic army.

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7Fritz Koenig, The Sphere, in Battery Park, after relocation (http://sights.seindal.dk/photo/10478,s1282f.html).
The artist emphasizes the horror on the face of the individual, who is sure of his fate. Pablo Picasso’s renowned *Guernica* of 1937 is a gruesome interpretation of the 1,600 Spanish civilians who were killed or wounded because Francisco Franco allowed the German air force to use the village for target practice. The artistic responses of 9/11 seem more solemn by comparison to these earlier outraged expressions, which is another element suggesting Lin’s influence.

One of the predominant works—ever-present in the discussions of memorializing/monumentalizing the victims of 9/11—is the *Vietnam Veterans Memorial*. Despite the controversy surrounding its installation as an abstract monument, which was eventually undermined by the addition of a figurative sculpture and an American flag nearby, its interactivity stands as a benchmark against which all subsequent monuments and memorials are measured.

The temporary memorials to the victims have been the focus of popular attention and have been regarded as art pieces, sometimes even performative artistic expressions by a mass of unrelated people moved by personal tragedy, sympathy, or sentiment. The response to rapidly produced memorials has a tradition in works as the AIDS Memorial Quilt which began as a way to memorialize individuals as quickly as the squares could be made by the mourners but has become an on-going memorial with 44,000 panels and continues to grow.

Thomas E. Franklin’s photo of the flag being raised by three firefighters first appeared on September 12, 2001, in *The Record*, the newspaper of Bergen County, New Jersey. It has become a focus of interest for many Americans, so much so that it has already been reproduced as a bronze sculpture and a postage stamp now known as the “Heroes of 2001,” the receipts of which will provide relief to families of the victims of 9/11 (Figure 2). It is reminiscent in composition of the 1945 photograph by Joe Rosenthal of flag raising on Iwo Jima, which later was adapted as a bronze sculpture as well. However, while in the 2001 photograph, all three firefighters are white; in the sculpture, two of the firefighters are men of color, most likely one is African American and the other is Latino. The discourse about race surrounding this sculpture shows how the memorialization must respond to the current discourse, touting the strength and unity of all Americans through the diversity of the imagery. Not only must the sculpture memorialize the firefighters, it must also serve to underscore prevailing notions about diversity and unity in the United States. This situation closely resembles the scenario of Lin’s sculpture, which was eventually considered inadequate by some veterans and members of the public and an addition of a figurative sculpture with clear indications of the different race of the figures was added to the memorial site in

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*See Parry (2001).*
Washington, D.C. Art Spiegelman’s cover illustration for the September 24, 2001, issue of The New Yorker is one of the first abstract images of 9/11 to appear. The images that still are more readily accepted are those that do not show the horrors of the events. Regarded as one of the first significant responses to the attack, Spiegelman’s cover attracted attention for its subtlety. Extremely difficult to reproduce, this image shows the towers as black on blue on black. The actual cover was difficult to read, and the towers seemed to float in and out of view. The designer carefully placed the antenna of the tower intersecting the letter “w” in the word “New” to suggest the social division caused by the events.

Figure 2: The 2002 U.S. Postage Stamp based on photograph taken by Thomas E. Franklin, from left, George Johnson, Dan McWilliams and Billy Eisengrein, raising the American flag at the World Trade Center.

America memorializes such events in the contemporary art world following the influence of the response to The Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Ultimately, the Vietnam War missing and dead were memorialized in Lin’s solemn and evocative Vietnam Veterans Memorial. The design engendered a great public debate for its abstraction, the listing of names as on a grave marker, its blackness, its position in the ground, and

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*Art Spiegelman, Cover for the New Yorker, September 24, 2001* (http://www.newyorker.com/online/covers/articles/011008on_onlineonly01).
because of the age and ethnicity of its maker. Despite the controversy, it has had a decisive influence, becoming an iconic image, and raising Lin to preeminent status among memorializing committees and those wishing to commission monuments.

How has the avant-garde reacted so far to the World Trade Center attacks? The attacks had such a negative impact on so many people both in the art world and in the general public, frightened many, that the avant-garde’s typical ironic critiques have been silenced. German composer Karl Heinz Stockhausen commented that the attacks on September 11 were “the greatest possible work of art that one could create.” Stockhausen is noted for flouting the rules of art in his work, a hallmark of the avant-garde, which, when linked with the terrorist acts, caused a huge outcry against him, resulting in the cancellation of several of his concerts. Similarly to Stockhausen, British artist Damien Hirst remarked:

The thing about 9/11 is that it’s kind of an artwork in its own right. It was wicked, but it was devised in this way for this kind of impact. It was devised visually.

Hirst further noted that now an airplane as a weapon has become a subject for artists. Hirst had to apologize publicly for his comments. Yet we are already seeing Hirst’s comments as a reality, as in several works made soon after the attacks that show the airplane alone but shadowy or ominous, including Chandra Cerrito’s New Fears #5 or Brooke A. Knight’s Flight Plan. The new visual interpretation of the airplane was an aspect of the thesis of the 2003 exhibition Defying Gravity: Contemporary Art and Flight at the North Carolina Museum of Art, intended as a centennial commemorative of the Wright Brothers’ 1903 flight at Kitty Hawk.

Several works have been removed from exhibition, resulting from a desire for sensitivity following a public uproar about images of the falling figure. It is the figurative pieces with which the public has been criticizing. The American public was prevented from seeing media images of those who jumped or fell to their deaths from the World Trade Center. But many New Yorkers, including artists, did see them as the events occurred, as well as viewing video available on the Internet. Eric Fischl’s commemorative bronze sculpture Tumbling

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{10}}For further discussion of the controversy surrounding this monument, see Hass (1998).
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{11}}Stockhausen made the remark at a Sunday, September 16, 2001, press conference in Hamburg, and almost immediately retracted it due to widespread backlash against him. See Tommasini (2001).
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{12}}For discussion of the initial comments, see Allison (2002). For review of Hirst’s apology, see “Hirst apologises for 11 Sept comments” (2002).}
Woman of 2002, which was displayed in Rockefeller Center in September 2002, was draped and surrounded by a wall only a week after its installation. The form of the contorted figure has many precedents in modern art, as in Auguste Rodin’s work. But in this context, so close to the one-year anniversary of the World Trade Center disaster, it was deemed too distressing and was removed after much public outcry.

Sharon Paz’s Falling of 2002 was also unveiled in September of 2002 (Figure 3). Paz adhered cutouts of silhouetted falling figures she had found on the Internet to the windows of the Jamaica Center for Arts & Learning in Queens. In her press statement Paz remarked, “falling is one of the basic human fears” and showed the lack of choice faced by the victims of the attacks. The piece was removed by the center on September 23 because it was regarded as an insensitive reminder of 9/11 (Ilnytzy 2002). The question of whether this treatment is sensitive or censorship has now become an element of the dialogue surrounding this work, even though falling has been a part of memorializations of similar situations, such as paintings by hibakushu, or atomic bomb survivors—for example, a small painting from the mid-1970s by Ikeda Zenko and Ikeda Chieko that depicts figures in Hiroshima jumping and falling into a river, seeking the cooling effects of the water. The dominance of Lin’s memorial underscores the difference between what was acceptable before its installation and what is acceptable now.

James Peterson, a self-proclaimed “guerrilla artist,” questioned the issue of good taste, painting a black and yellow mural of a plane accompanied by the title “Caution: Low Flying Planes” on a building in lower Manhattan, nine blocks from Ground Zero. The artist distributed a handout describing his motivations for making the work to those he saw looking at his work. Several complaints requesting that it be removed eventually resulted in its removal (Kelley B9). However, one insightful viewer was quoted as commenting, “If that was a Tommy Hilfiger ad, nobody would be complaining . . . If it was a 12-year-old with too much lipstick on, that would have been all right. But this is not?” (Duke C01). The anti-jingoistic nature of this work is taken as anti-American in the current climate.

The accepted monuments have a curious similarity; that is, many of them incorporate the form of the two towers. The explicit connection between the image of the doubled towers is that their forms almost exactly mimic each other. Duplication of imagery is a way to undermine the authority of the unique statement, but it is also a way to reinforce its power, as in the case of the Twin Towers. The issue of reproduction in contemporary art is a vital one because of the artistic desire to undermine the commodification of art through mechanical reproduction. Frankfurt School philosopher Walter Benjamin first advanced this Marxian idea in 1936 in his essay “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” (1970), in which he celebrated the emancipatory prospects of cinema for avoiding art’s aura and authenticity, uniqueness, and originality. The idea of strengthening an image by repeating it also recalls the idea of a doppelgänger, an archetypal surrogate figure of equivalence, sometimes a menacing or evil twin, is typically completely identical and opposite.\(^{14}\) Duplication of forms, doubling, calls into question ideas about originality,

\(^{14}\) I am indebted to Professor Shin-ichi Anzai, Associate Professor of Aesthetics at the Graduate School of Integrated Arts and Sciences at The University of Tokyo for his insights on the many issues related to the doubling of the towers. He offered me several key and useful suggestions in my investigations into this area.
uniformity, and difference. In the case of many doubled towers, for example in Cesar Pelli’s Petronas Towers in Malaysia—a postmodern reinterpretation of Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris—the doubling symbolically strengthens the ideological content of the building, reinforcing the power of the church in the Gothic structure or the dominance of finance in the recent example. The doubling of the Twin Towers, the repetition stemmed from the desire for as much commercial space as possible on the World Trade Center site, a pragmatic, albeit fiscally-motivated concern, as the buildings never had complete occupancy.

Though Stockhausen and Hirst’s comments were controversial, they address an inescapable status of the strikes on the buildings as increasing the force of the attacks because the terrorists destroyed two buildings that mirrored each other. Therefore, the doubling of the buildings has some sinister or grievous implications, as it enhances the tragedy; from the terrorist’s point of view, the repetition of the buildings increased the chances for success in creating a disaster and makes the precise artistry of their attack clear (see Baudrillard 2002). Even more menacing is the idea that the replication of the buildings suggests ironically the harmonizing effect of the event. Then, the media attention underscored the effect of doubling. Many heard about the first tower being hit and had time to “tune in,” to turn and look, or to glance and witness the second tower being hit and falling. The tragedy and drama of this unimaginable calamity were doubled by the media’s endless, immediate repetition. In this sense, doubling here could easily refer to double-tongued or duplicitous, and even the terrorists themselves at the very overwhelming moment of the attack were aware of the theatrical episode created by the media. Also, the doubling suggests the “other” within the shores of the United States, but the horror and anger of the event prompted a series of outbursts and resulted in military actions.

Despite the pejorative connotation of the doubling, images of the Twin Towers have been subjects of the well-received memorials. The first large-scale memorial, which was roundly praised in the art world, was Tribute in Light of 2001, which consisted of two great beams of light that rose from Battery Park City and shone each night for thirty-two days from dusk to 11 p.m. The work is the result of a collaboration of several arts professionals who each came up with the similar idea on their own conceived of a doubled shaft of light to replace the doubled vertical elements of lower Manhattan; they were architect Richard Nash Gould, who wanted to replace the missing Twin Towers with light; artists Julian LaVerdiere and Paul Myoda, who conceptualized a project called “Phantom Towers,” using light as a way of sculpting the dust rising from the Ground Zero site; architects John Bennett and Gustavo Bonevardi, who suggested a “Project for the Immediate Reconstruction
of the Manhattan Skyline”; and Paul Marantz, an architect and lighting designer.

Since the use of figures has been reviled, the avant-garde has responded to avoid representations of the horror of the falling and instead have put another image—this minimal, geometric one—in the collective mind’s eye. Several community murals that emphasize the Twin Towers in views of the New York City skyline went up on public walls very rapidly. The doubled rectangles have become abstract shapes referring to the attack and to the lives lost therein.

Numerous images showing the buildings or using the doubling format of the Twin Towers as the basis for the composition were exhibited in *Time to Consider: The Arts Respond to 9.11*, part of a collaborative public art project among four New York arts organizations that offers reflections by artists, poets, designers, and architects. One work is particularly compelling: Kay Rosen’s *Missing*, of 2002 (Figure 4). This image uses the doubled word “remember” in a vertical orientation, but the has been omitted.

![Figure 4: Kay Rosen, Missing, 2002.](image)

15 In reviewing the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art exhibition “A Minimal Future” (2004), Michael Kimmelman made an interesting point about the authority of minimal forms at this time: “And lately (see ground zero) Minimalism has become the default mode for our memorial culture, the proverbial blank slate onto which we inscribe what we want the future to remember about us. Austerity and authority, Minimalist tropes, implying puritan spirituality, are serving the role that angels did on sculptural monuments in the past.”
Here is New York began as an exhibition and sale of photographs of the World Trade Center in response to the attacks. Anyone and everyone, meaning the public at large, were invited to submit photographs. Another well-received exhibition and group of works was brought together for Reactions: A Global Response to the 9/11 Attacks in January 2002 and mounted at the respected New York alternative gallery Exit Art in spring 2002, as a way to respond to the urgent need to express emotions in a creative way. The gallery’s only directive was that each submission had to be 8 1/2 by 11 inches. An open call resulted in submissions by 3,500 people. The exhibition ultimately consisted of 2,443 pieces hung closely in rows from wires strung across the gallery—works by children alongside submissions from internationally renowned artists. The Prints and Photographs Division of the Library of Congress acquired the entire archive. The works ranged from patriotic or antiwar statements to remembrances to attractive memorials, such as Jen Kim’s Flower Towers of 2001 (Figure 5). Carter Hodgkin’s Prayer for My Block—Chambers Street, also of 2001, recognizes a Muslim voice in the midst of so much anti-Muslim sentiment and includes an overlay of a prayer in Arabic on a photograph of a dust-filled street near the Ground Zero site (Figure 6).  

Figure 5: Jen Kim, Flower Towers, 2001, acrylic with overlays.

16 Linda Hesh’s Safe/Suspect of 2001 uses digital imaging technology to manipulate the model’s face to make him appear more Caucasian in one image then more Semitic in another image. It deals with the prevalent racism directed at people with an Arab appearance following the attacks.
Another key exhibition that drew wide-ranging attention was the Max Protech Gallery exhibition A New World Trade Center: Design Proposals, for which a gallery owner working in collaboration with the editors of Architectural Record invited more than one hundred architects worldwide to submit proposals for the redevelopment of the Twin Towers site. Sixty submissions revealed a myriad of responses, from fanciful to meditative. Free from the burden of economics or construction limitations, the architects proposed comical and inventive possibilities, including such projects as Jacob + MacFarlane’s A New World Peace Center of 2002, in which colorful tube forms snake up like buildings, adorned with messages recalling recent peace conferences or treaties.

Figure 6: Carter Hodgkin, Prayer for My Block—Chambers Street, 2001, collage.

Ground Zero has become a subject of controversy in terms of what will occupy the site—a memorial? a building?—and how the elements will relate. Arthur Danto remarked, “No one loved the towers as much as everyone missed them.” In American history, there have been many large-scale memorials to military actions, but few to terrorist actions, save the Oklahoma City National Memorial of 1996 (Figure 7). Like Washington memorial, the Oklahoma one includes some geometric
abstract elements that dominate the site. Additionally, a series of granite panels with survivors’ names in Oklahoma duplicate the use of text in the Washington piece, as does a fence for temporary remembrances in Oklahoma, which actually is synonymous with the Washington work. The Oklahoma work also includes elements that the Washington memorial doesn’t; these include 168 chairs to those killed by the bombing and several plantings and trees as memorials at the site. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial became a kind of touchstone for an appropriate memorial for September 11, which was visited by Lower Manhattan Development Corporation officials to determine what the artists would memorialize about Ground Zero.

Figure 7: East Gate and 168 Chairs of the Oklahoma City National Memorial, 2000. Photo by Ann E. Clark, © 2005 Oklahoma City National Memorial Foundation.

Daniel Liebeskind’s Freedom Tower project was selected as the architectural structure and overall plan for the site at the end of February 2003. It is titled tower of gardens and park of Heroes and wedge of light and includes an excavation down to the original foundations of the Twin Towers as the location for the eventual memorial accompanying the building. The Freedom Tower would reach a height of 1,776 feet. The process of selecting this plan received a great deal of attention. Detractors feel that the design represents facture and the state of shock after 9/11 or, as architecture critic Herbert Muschamp wrote in the The New York Times, a “freezing of the memory of what had occurred,” asking why this site should be dedicated to “an artistic representation of enemy assault” (E1). One of the images people find most distressing is that of the shard, which suggests archeology and loss. However, the plans have also been appreciated for leaving in evidence the original
barrier, or slurry wall. The reason the work was finally selected is its focus on green space and its large memorial. And yet, these designs and memorials have all been modified and continued to be discussed and debated for their appropriateness, functionality as memorials, and for their safety.

The memorial selection process has been compelling for its embrace of Lin’s Vietnam Veterans Memorial, as has been pointed out most prominently by the The New York Observer headline for an article by Clay Risen: “Memorial Eight Embody Dogma after Maya Lin” (1). This description of Lin’s influence as canonical to the level of dogma was then confirmed through the announcement that the selected commission by Michael Arad, with significant modifications by Peter Walker (now regarded as the partner in the memorial), and titled Reflecting Absence, resembled a sketch Lin had made. She sat on the panel of thirteen jurors that selected this plan. Though Arad and Walker are not accused of stealing Lin’s idea, the resemblance affirms her status as a memorial planner and designer in this period of history.

This interest in the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and its abstract simplicity, though, does not reveal that Lin’s process for conceptualizing the earlier work was followed. Lin vehemently disagreed with the veterans’ position that they “owned” the imagery of the memorial, pursuing instead a course that evolved from her creativity, with the controversial result that the veterans have had two figurative sculptural groupings and a flag installed near Lin’s memorial. Though Lin’s work has now achieved almost symbolic status and is widely imitated, it has been compromised and those changes have met with a generally negative reception. The abstract wall has a much higher status, as evidenced by the flattery of the replications. In response to many queries for her opinion on the direction that the 9/11 memorial should take, Lin noted that her concern was that the victims’ families seem to claim priority in determining the memorial, similar to the moral ownership granted to Holocaust victims and families.17 Similarly, the 9/11 victims’ families have expressed mixed reviews; the negative opinion represented by a group called the Coalition of 9/11 Families, insisting that the original footprints of the Twin Towers be preserved, issued a statement rejecting the Arad/Walker plan.18

Currently, visitors to Ground Zero will see the Viewing Wall, which is a kind of modified version of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, listing the names of the victims, accompanied by historic photographs of the site (Figure 1). The resulting outpouring of creative energy following the events of September 11, 2001 has been staggering: there is much in

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17For Lin’s comments about the families of 9/11 victims, see Menand (2002); for discussion of an artist who challenges the status the victims and families have in imaging the Holocaust, see Swartz (2002).
addition to what has been discussed here. Responses are still to come. How will the Patriot Act of 2001 affect those works of art? Is it possible to avoid isolationism and remain inclusive in such patriotic moments? Perhaps what is most important is that what artists continue to produce, whether about the tragedies or not, bear witness to the survival of art despite horrific realities.\footnote{This article developed out of a lecture “American Art After 9/11,” which I presented on multiple occasions during my year (2002-2003) as a Fulbright Scholar in Japan. I presented that lecture at the Kitakyushu Municipal Museum of Art, co-sponsored by the Fukuoka American Center, January 2003; the American Center, U.S. Consulate General Naha, Okinawa, February 2003; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, co-sponsored by the Tokyo American Center, February 2003; the Sendai Friendship Forum, March 2003; the 2003 American Studies Distinguished Lecture Series at the Tohoku University Open University, Sendai, Japan, March 2003; the Kansai American Center, Osaka, April 2003 (followed by a commentary by artist Robert Kushner on his art and its relationship to 9/11); Miyazaki International College, May 2003; the Kyoritsu Women’s University, June 2003; Tama University Art Museum, co-sponsored by the Tokyo American Center, June 2003. I am grateful for the assistance of Ken Moskowitz, Mark Davidson, and the staff of the American Centers of Japan and the American Embassy in Tokyo in arranging many of these lectures. I must also acknowledge the support of Lynn Swartz Dodd and Maya Hoptman in developing this article.}

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