

Condolence

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No matter how strong evil becomes, it can never destroy hope and beauty.
—ten-year-old boy viewing *Condolence*

On September 11, 2001, for the first time I felt connected with fellow humans across the globe. There it was: an unmistakable ability to see myself in others and others in myself. Oddly, such collective pain and compassion has something incredibly hopeful about it. Being an artist, I went to work to preserve what I felt and give voice to the transformation that took place inside of me. I am sharing what I intended when choosing the visual images presented in this painting. The symbols, however, may (and perhaps should) have different meanings for you.

The young girl pays tribute to children in the world who lose their support system due to violence. The sculpture reminds us of innocent victims of crime and destruction and honors specifically the man and woman who, hand in hand, jumped to their deaths. They will never experience old age, yet their act seems to triumph over death and despair—thus the circular composition of this sculpture, the circle being a symbol of eternity in most cultures. I put the mask in to remind us of those who lost their lives; in the nineteenth century, it was a common practice to take a plaster cast of the dead in order to remember them. What some viewers will perceive as “ribbons” are the representations of bent metal pipes. When I went to Ground Zero right after the 9-11 disaster, I saw metal pipes as far as the eye could see.

The curious shapes suggest a transition between the organic and inorganic. Life, though it can be temporarily terminated, will spring up again. The city skyline merging with the mountainous landscape is meant to suggest that anything manmade is subject to entropy. Disaster occurs when this natural process of decay rushes all at once upon the innocent. A determination to endure such events in a dignified manner is sustained only by compassion. The flowers symbolize hope and an active heart and mind, willing to live and create regardless of circumstance.