



REPRESENTATIVE ARTIST

***Knights:* A Sculpture Series After 9/11**

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BACKGROUND

As I ran, after being evacuated by the police from my Tribeca studio during 9/11, my adrenaline rush was accompanied by, as it was for many of us in lower Manhattan, a *warrior-strength*. I made fast decisions, helped and fed others, notwithstanding my feelings of bewilderment and powerlessness. Running north I kept looking south. *They're throwing furniture off the Trade Tower. Why? Oh no, it's not furniture. . . .*

Cell phones were not working. There was pandemonium. I kept wondering who was *bombing* us. I held hands with my assistants, Chris, Heather, Matt, John and their two friends from out of town, as we rushed north on Church Street. Chris took off his white shirt, wrapped it around his waist and darted forth. Heather and John tried to buy a radio. None was to be found as stores closed immediately. Chris yelled let's keep running far uptown. I shook my head, thinking *no, they already bombed downtown; they probably will next hit uptown*. My mind issued commands. My emotions were muzzled. Was I afraid? How could I not be?

When we reached Canal Street, there was a huge truck parked on the northeast corner. The windows were left open. No one was inside but its radio was on and blasting news. I wondered if the driver ran from the truck, purposely leaving the radio on for others to hear. I sat on the truck's running board. Others sat on the sidewalk curb. It was a perfect fall day. We

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listened. We waited. We tried cell phones again and again. We comforted one another however we could. I remember remaining calm. Was it *paralysis*? Were my feelings *numbed*? It seemed senseless to run toward someplace else when we had no idea of the reason or origination of the attack or of what/where/when the next strike would occur.

It was around eleven in the morning when I suggested walking in search of more information. There was a bar open. The store manager removed the stools from the counter so we could sit, gave us water and allowed us to use the bathroom and an upstairs phone. I remember climbing the stairs to wait for my turn. Using the phone felt like such a luxury, though I'm not sure if my calls actually got through to anyone. I think the bar had a television but I don't recall what I saw on the screen. I just felt a tremendous appreciation to this generous person for opening his doors. We still had only limited facts as to what was happening. *Was this really taking place? Did our tallest buildings actually come down?* It became dreamlike.

Sometime after noon we left the bar and again walked around. We met a young Korean woman who had no money and didn't speak much English, so we took her into our group. Hunger now mixed with the arrhythmia of the morning, and happily, the Broome Street Bar restaurant was open. We found tables and eventually were served from a limited menu. At one point we all hastened to another room in the restaurant and gathered close together as Mayor Giuliani appeared on the TV screen.

After being comforted somewhat by food and discussion, we decided to split up and go our separate ways. We exchanged phone numbers, plans and money. Chris went to his uptown apartment. The others decided to walk over the Brooklyn Bridge to a friend's house. I thought it best for me to go to my lover's apartment on East 82nd Street rather than to my home in Tribeca. Humbled by this terra incognita, I began walking. There were no running buses or taxis. I walked, for the next hour or two, down into several subway stations and then up again. No trains were operating. I remember passing St. Vincent's Hospital where tables were set up on the sidewalk; people were

handing out cups of water to those of us going by. Stores and churches were open and offering help. Dazed, I kept walking north.

Somewhere midtown, at about four in the afternoon, I saw a taxi with 3 young people piling into the backseat. I ran up to it and opened the front door. "Please," I implored, "let me go with you anywhere uptown." They let me in. The taxi drove them to their destination first and then took me to mine. I was exhausted. I was disoriented. I was very lucky.

Waking up from sleep in the middle of the night, not wanting to disturb my partner, I walked quietly into the living room. From the 29th floor windows, without my distance glasses, I looked south, southeast and southwest. A nearsighted blur became a man running across York Avenue. He was alone in the dead of night. Then there were bursting flashes of light from the sky in the southwest. *Were we being attacked again?* I stood still, aware of my breathing. I don't remember being afraid. Gradually it came to me that it was raining and the man was moving fast to avoid getting soaked. And slowly I realized that the sky was lit from lightning.

TRANSITION THROUGH SCULPTURE

The replay of this day still permeates my psyche, though I could not write my thoughts down until more than three years later. Yet visually and viscerally I began to address it in my art and could unconsciously relive and relieve the moments when I was vulnerable and distraught. With my hands automatically following orders from the petit tyrant of my brain, I refined another layer of my being: a figurative manifestation of myself—fearless and certain. The part of me that felt powerless and unprotected on that sunny day in September was now fully protected by a *warrior-woman*, on call to lead in any battle.

With this sculpture series, I gradually reinvented the notion of the *knight* as a strong figure—*not* in the service of war, *not* even male; but, rather, an armed and armored female presence with antithetical attributes; a creation steeled in defensive garb yet partially naked; a bodyguard and protective spirit which cannot or will not completely disclaim its vulnerability:

A figure

Nude and

Vested in Finery

Defenseless, Armored

Vulnerable, Invincible.

A Monument

Sewing Template

Gesture of

Life's Tease:

Random, Precise.

A Warrior

Still, yet-

Commanding.

Thrust into Battle

All Strength, Fragility.

It is the cauldron of opposites, contradictions and internal battles existing in each of us that excites me in my life and in my art. By scrambling expectations (male/female, power/vulnerability, warrior/pacifist) I attempt in my sculpture to ask questions, agitate, alarm, and arouse a visceral response in myself and in my viewers. With a combination of fused wood, metal, stone and fiber, I arrive at a form that makes me feel *safe*.

Two months after 9/11, I had significant surgery. One night, rising from sleep, I walked to the bathroom, closed the door behind me, and fainted. It was only for a brief moment. I fell straight down, not atilt: simply, quietly, softly onto one knee. No damage. No panic. Calm and order prevailed. But as I fell, I was aware, at my core, of *being* the Twin Tower, as I had seen it neatly disappear in its vertical descent, with no sound, no fuss. I came to consciousness, rose slowly, and walked back to bed and slept.

To this day, when my eyes settle on a tall building, I cannot stop my mind from imagining it *go poof*, melting in a slow downward slump as I gaze, watching it evaporate in air. I have to will myself to stop looking, obsessing, gravitating back to the moments when the devastating blow was a reality. It is at these times when my sculptural *knights* provide me the most solace.

Following are 6 sculptures and 4 drawings, © 2005



Slow Curve 352
2002
wood, stone, metal
53" × 18" × 6"



Vertical Energy 365
2002
wood, metal, stone
54" × 17" × 9"



Protection 469
2002
wood, metal, leather, fiber
48" × 15" × 9"



(K)Night Figure 470
2004
wood, metal, leather, fiber
49" × 19" × 7"



White Night 471
2004
wood
48" × 14" × 5"



Quiet Strength 472
2004
wood, metal, stone, fiber
51" × 15" × 8"



Three Knights 507
2004
graphite & watercolor on paper
11" × 8.5"



Two Knights 509
2004
graphite & conte crayon on paper
11" × 8.5"



Leaning Knight 510
2004
graphite & watercolor on paper
11" × 8.5"



Single Knight 514
2004
graphite on paper
51" × 20"