

PRESS RELEASE

## **AFTERMATH**

### **The World Trade Center Archive**

Joel Meyerowitz

*"I came in as an outsider, an observer bent on keeping the record, but over time I began to feel a part of the very project I'd been intent on recording...I documented the aftermath for everyone who couldn't be there. But this book is dedicated to those who were."*

Joel Meyerowitz, from the introduction to *Aftermath*

*Aftermath* is a historic publication, presenting with great sensitivity and power the only existing photographic record of the monumental achievement of the post 9/11 clean-up of the Ground Zero site. It has been created by master photographer, Joel Meyerowitz, the only photographer to have gained regular access to the site after the event.

Published to coincide with the fifth anniversary of the World Trade Center attacks on Monday September 11 2006, *Aftermath* serves as a poignant elegy to the thousands that lost their lives, but also celebrates the tireless determination of the thousands of workers who assisted in the 'clean up' process.

For Joel Meyerowitz, *Aftermath* was a very personal crusade. In the week after the buildings fell, he had tried to take photographs of the site and had been stopped by a police officer, who had explained that the area was a crime scene and no photographs were allowed. This proved to be a remarkable turning point for Joel.

*'To me, "no photographs" meant no "no history", and in that moment, I decided that I had to find my way into The Zone where I would make a photographic archive for the people of New York,' says Joel, 'One that would describe in all its awesome detail, the impact of the devastation on lower Manhattan.'*

Interspersed with Joel's own stories about these people and events, his photographs tell a unique story of effort and resilience and reflect the unflinching and determined work carried out by the emergency service teams. With over 800 people working, from construction workers, police officers and fire-fighters to welders, engineers, crane operators and volunteers, communities were established and remarkable bonds forged. For many, the events of 9/11 are encapsulated by the images of 'the day' and the falling towers. *Aftermath* presents a different story, the uplifting and inspiring story of the people that were determined to reclaim and renew the site in tribute to all those that had lost their lives.

*'Everyone who worked at Ground Zero was transformed by the unexpected spirituality of the place,' says Joel Meyerowitz. 'The camaraderie among the workers in The Zone reminded me of the stories I hear about the two World Wars, where ordinary men and women, thrown together by a common cause, shared tragedies and victories, and were forever bound together by their effort.'*

Presented on a large scale Meyerowitz's breathtaking, colour photographs document the wreckage in vivid detail, followed by the demolition, excavation and removal of two

million tonnes of debris that would transform the site from one of total devastation to clear ground seventy feet below street level. Throughout, there is a sense of the conflicting scale of the wreckage: the human scale, city scale and, not least nature's scale in its fractured and fitful relationship to architecture.

Joel Meyerowitz's sensitivity captures these contrasting forces. The fireman who searched all year for his brother's remains, raking the site by hand, finding the personal effects of so many others that he became known as 'The Raven'. The facades of offices that were punctured by the falling debris of the towers, steel girders piercing their sides, like pick-up sticks. The weeks immediately after 9/11 when the site resembled a tomb, a forbidden city whose community had been devastated by an event as destructive as any natural disaster.

### The Inspiration behind *Aftermath*

When Joel first began creating the archive, his initial aim had been to set up a collective of photographers that would record the recovery and renewal of the area. Inspired by the work of Dorothea Lange and Walker Evans which had so powerfully recorded the effect of the Great Depression of the 1920s and 30s, Joel was convinced that a similar job needed to be done here. While Lange and Evans had the support and patronage of the FSA (Farm Security Administration), the parties that were controlling the recovery of Ground Zero were not so unified.

Joel battled to get access to the site and it was only through the support of many of the actual workers particularly the Arson Squad that he managed to stay and complete his remarkable project. They understood that history was in the making and the importance of this for future generations.

At the end of the year, 3000 images had been captured by Joel. They were all donated to the Museum of the City of New York. The World Trade Center Archive is part of the permanent collection of this museum where it is available for research, exhibition and publication. For the past few years, a small selection of these photographs was featured in a traveling exhibition to more than 200 cities in 60 countries reaching over 3.5 million people.

### About the Author

Born in 1938, Joel Meyerowitz began his career making spontaneous pictures on the streets of New York and has become one of the most important photographers of his generation. He was one of a small group of photographers who, in the 1960s and 1970s was instrumental in changing attitudes towards colour photography from those of resistance to universal acceptance. An innovator and highly influential teacher, he has won innumerable awards and is perhaps best known for his pioneering colour photographs of architecture, light and space.

***Aftermath* by Joel Meyerowitz will be published on Monday September 2006. Hardback, 304 pages, £45.**

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