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Aftermath: World Trade Center Archive



Synopsis

After the destruction of the World Trade Center in New York on September 11th 2001, the world-renowned photographer Joel Meyerowitz felt compelled to visit the site, to document and record the aftermath of the largest ever attack on US soil. Although initially turned away by police (on the grounds that the site was a crime scene and could not be photographed), Meyerowitz was determined to gain access to the area. Within days he had established strong links with many of the firefighters, policemen and construction workers contributing to the clean up. With their assistance he became the only photographer to be granted unimpeded access to Ground Zero. Once there he systematically began to document the wreckage followed by the necessary demolition, excavation and removal of tens of thousands of tonnes of debris that would transform the site from one of total devastation to level ground. Soon after the Museum of the City of New York officially engaged Meyerowitz to create an archive of the destruction and recovery at Ground Zero and the immediate neighborhood. The 9/11 Photographic Archive numbers in excess of 5,000 images and will become part of the permanent collections of the Museum of the City of New York.

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Customer Reviews

A few days after 9/11, Joel Meyerowitz --- famed for landscapes of extreme beauty and serenity --- went to the site of the World Trade Center and started taking pictures. He stayed there, day and night, for nine months, until the workers left and only "the pit" remained. During that time, he was the only photographer on site. Just those facts tell you that the 8,500 pictures he took --- whatever he

took --- were remarkable. Two years ago, my wife and I went to a show of this work. Like most other people, we walked through the exhibit in stunned silence, not knowing what to think. The images were completely brutal and oddly beautiful, challenging beyond our immediate ability to respond. Beyond my ability, anyway --- as we left, my wife knew her mind well enough to say she thought we should buy one. We never fight. We never yell. But I found myself on the sidewalk, screaming at Karen: "Are you out of your mind? How could you stand to see that horror every day? No one can live with that!" We did not buy the picture. But time has changed me. I can no longer read about the people who died on 9/11. I can't look at the movies. Simply, I'm done with narratives that others create; I need to put 9/11 into my head my own way. And that leads me to photography. Yes, "every picture tells a story" --- but not until I tell it to myself. So the guy who couldn't bear these photographs on a wall was among the first to buy the massive book --- 15" x 11" pages, some double-spread, some that fold out --- of these pictures. 340 pages of these pictures. Eight-and-a-half pounds of these pictures. Ah, if only they weighed that little on the heart. "Aftermath" starts, as it should, with "before" pictures, taken from Meyerowitz's studio.

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