

HAUSER & WIRTH

AVERY SINGER. FREE FALL

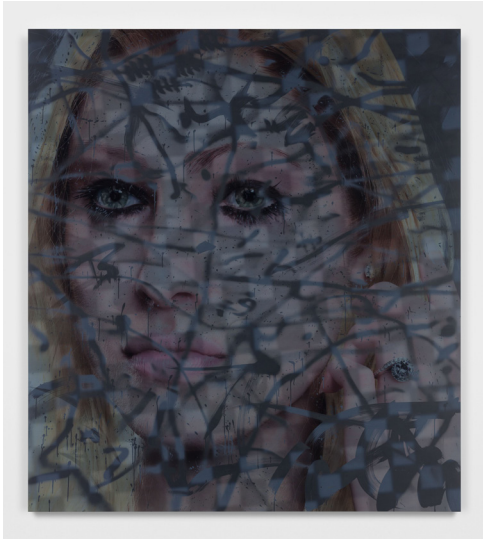
10 OCTOBER – 22 DECEMBER 2023
LONDON

PRESS RELEASE

Avery Singer. Free Fall

Hauser & Wirth London

11 October – 22 December 2023



With 'Free Fall', her first solo exhibition in the UK, American artist Avery Singer reflects upon her personal experience of the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City and explores the wider societal impact of collective trauma and proliferating image culture and media dissemination. Based entirely upon Singer's childhood memories, the works and architectural intervention in 'Free Fall' are a testament to the power of memory—and a memorial to a moment of terror and survival.

For the exhibition, Singer has created an environment that replicates her memories of the interior of the World Trade Center offices—spaces she regularly visited in the years prior to 9/11, as her mother worked in both towers of the World Trade Center. Here, Singer combines the atmospheric banalities of office life with the architectural specificity of the towers' iconic design by Minoru Yamasaki, creating a quietly disorientating installation that is part stage-set, part minimalist sculpture. Within this environment, the artist displays new paintings that bridge the gap between the anonymous digital world and her own interior universe by merging computer-generated worlds created on programs such as Autodesk Maya, the same 3D software used to build the exhibition's immersive architectural environment based upon Singer's memories.

Since 2010, Singer has employed the binary language of computer programs and industrial materials to remove the trace of her own hand while engaging the great traditions of painting and the legacy of modernism. The new large-scale paintings on view in 'Free Fall' combine digital renderings with manual and digital airbrush techniques, liquid and solid masking, and complex layering processes.

Avery Singer gives her personal account in the following statement:

'Free Fall is part of an ongoing body of new work that combines changes in my painting technique, to construct images using high-definition digital rendering and poor-quality machine airbrushing. This development also brought with it a shift in subject matter, to explore something autobiographical that took place in my life before I became an artist.



I turned fourteen on September, 10 2001 and had just enrolled in high school. The following morning, home alone in my parents' Tribeca apartment, I heard a plane, followed by an explosion that felt like an earthquake. From my front window, I saw the north tower of the World Trade Center in flames. Later, I found myself watching people fall to their death, wondering if they'd chosen to jump. I evacuated downtown and that night, my family and I slept in the projection booth at MoMA, where my father worked as a projectionist.

When considering this event now as an artist, one thing that strikes me is the change in image culture between 2001 and 2023. Today, we live in a reality in which tragic events can be livestreamed and broadcast on a mass scale. If 9/11 happened today, we might have seen people's real-time footage, an audio-visual experience of the last moments of their lives, every pixel of their trauma being put online.

Unlike those in the vicinity, most people viewed 9/11 as a cinematic event on television; gruesome images of human body parts scattered across my neighborhood are burnt into my memory. When I thought about how to approach my experience of 9/11 in my mid-thirties, I wondered how I could filter these fragmented images through the lens of making art: the injured man I saw lying in the doorway of my school, the engine from the second plane which exploded on my street, a severed hand found on my best friend's windowsill. And I also thought about the images I experienced second-hand in the media—particularly the 'famous' faces of 9/11, such as Marcy Borders and Rachel Uchitel. I allowed myself to be intuitively led by these images and began to make computer models of them, to memorialize my own experience and create a monument for that moment in time. I took Renee Jeanne Falconetti's acting from *The Passion of Joan of Arc* as a source of inspiration for the portraits, also evoking the iconic stylization of the 1950s starlet. The portraits, which I have titled deepfakes, are mostly based around photographs I have gathered of the subjects. They aren't manipulated using AI, but I have added details (such as makeup, jewelry, dust) that cannot be found in any of the original photos. A fictitious character I call "art student" is depicted smoking an opium or crack pipe, an avatar depicting myself from an earlier time in my life. These images are interspersed with paintings of objects, including a severed hand, a cop car, a local bus station, and other fragments of my memories.

I began conceptualizing the layout of the exhibition pre-9/11, and constructed details of the interior architecture of the two towers. My mom had worked in both the north and south towers up until 2000 as a secretary, so I'd spent a lot of time in the buildings. There were these incredibly long, narrow, windowless hallways—I'd walk past suite after suite, each demarcated with a number. I remember the iconic eighteen inch slit windows, designed by Minoru Yamasaki to combat people experiencing vertigo, so distinctly. I've designed the exhibition space to recreate architectural elements as an installation within the show, so

that it feels as if you've walked into the lobby of an office, both past and present. The windows, elevator doors, bland carpet, curtains, building materials, and paint finishes, all conjure a corporate environment. I wanted to create something that is part minimalist sculptural installation, part stage-set, a space that forms a narrative backdrop for my paintings. I've also designed a bookstore that will house self help books, reminiscent of the Borders below the towers that I visited as a kid, looking at books like 'Chicken Soup for the Soul' by Jack Hansen Canfield.

In confronting this topic, I wanted to use art as a kind of conceptual mediator, to create an emotional landscape of this history for the audience to enter into and define their own experience.'

The solo exhibition 'Avery Singer: Unity Bachelor' at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Miami is also on display until 15 October 2023.

Education Lab

As part of Hauser & Wirth's global learning platform, this exhibition will be complemented by an Education Lab for the first time in the London gallery. In keeping with the concept of memory in Singer's works, visitors will be encouraged to transform their own personal positive memories into physical form through creative writing and drawing. An extensive learning programme will also accompany the exhibition; this includes drop-in interactive recordings as part of The Big Draw Festival throughout October, an educator preview evening and a discursive event 'Painters on Painting' in which artists and tutors facilitate a conversation with university students around Singer's practice.

About Avery Singer

Born in 1987 in New York, Avery Singer has emerged as a powerful contemporary voice whose work explores the possibilities in the convergence of painting and technology. Her highly distinctive oeuvre incorporates both autobiographical and fictional narratives, reflecting upon the art world today and the wider sweep of art history that she has inherited as a painter. Singer's pioneering techniques are deployed to question the ways in which images and their distribution in our contemporary world, are increasingly informed by new media and technologies.

Singer has developed a highly original visual vocabulary that evokes established traditions of archival documentation and a preferred iconography that references the familiar art historical notions of the artist, the muse and the ironies suggested by these tropes. At the same time, her dexterous process is highly technologically advanced, yielding completed works characterized by atmospheric spaces conjuring the digital realm. Singer's nuanced use of industrial automation and three-dimensional computer modeling, such as SketchUp, Blender and DAZ 3D, underpins a complex process of layering. She projects imagery onto large-scale canvases and builds the compositions through airbrushed acrylic paint. The resulting paintings contrast clarity with ambiguity, past with future and geometric precision with intuitively generated forms.

Avery Singer's work gained immediate critical recognition via important solo exhibitions at respected international institutions, including Kunsthalle Zürich (2014), the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2015), Fondazione Sandretto re Rebaudengo, Turin (2015), the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (2016), Secession, Vienna (2016), the Kölnischer Kunstverein, Cologne (2017) and the Museum Ludwig, Cologne (2019). The artist has participated in the 6th Glasgow International Festival of Art, Glasgow, Scotland (2014), the 13th Biennale de Lyon, Lyon, France (2015), '2015 Triennial: Surround Audience,' New Museum, New York (2015) and further acclaim followed Singer's selection by Ralph Rugoff for the 58th International Art Exhibition of the Venice Biennale in 2019. The solo exhibition 'Avery Singer: Unity Bachelor' opened at ICA Miami in 2023.

Singer's work is held in public collections such as Guggenheim Museum, New York; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Museum Ludwig, Cologne, Germany; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Tate, London; and Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, among many others.

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Gallery hours:

Monday to Saturday
10 am – 6 pm

www.hauserwirth.com

Caption and courtesy information:

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Avery Singer in the studio
Photo: Grant Delin

Avery Singer
Deepfake Rachel
2023
Acrylic on canvas stretched over aluminum panel
241.9 x 216.5 x 5.3 cm / 95 1/4 x 85 1/4 x 2 1/8 in
Photo: Lance Brewer

Avery Singer
unk-righthand.obj
2023
Acrylic on canvas stretched over aluminum panel
216.5 x 241.9 x 5.3 cm / 85 1/4 x 95 1/4 x 2 1/8 in

WORKLIST

Living on Broadway (study)

2023

Acrylic on canvas stretched over aluminum panel
51 x 51 x 4 cm / 20 1/8 x 20 1/8 x 1 5/8 in



Deepfake Marcy (study)

2023

Acrylic on canvas stretched over aluminum panel
31 x 23.4 x 4 cm / 12 1/4 x 9 1/4 x 1 5/8 in



Art Student

2023

Acrylic on canvas stretched over aluminum panel
241.5 x 216.2 x 5.4 cm / 95 1/8 x 85 1/8 x 2 1/8 in



Art Student (study)

2023

Acrylic on canvas stretched over aluminum panel
23.6 x 30.7 x 4 cm / 9 1/4 x 12 1/8 x 1 5/8 in



Free Fall

2023

Acrylic on canvas stretched over aluminum panel
254.2 x 305 x 5.4 cm / 100 1/8 x 120 1/8 x 2 1/8 in



Whippits

2023

Acrylic on canvas stretched over aluminum panel
51.1 x 41 x 4 cm / 20 1/8 x 16 1/8 x 1 5/8 in



Deepfake Stan

2023

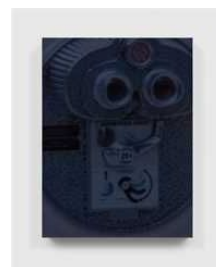
Acrylic on canvas stretched over aluminum panel
241.7 x 216.2 x 5.3 cm / 95 1/8 x 85 1/8 x 2 1/8 in



Living on Broadway (study)

2023

Acrylic on canvas stretched over aluminum panel
31 x 23.5 x 4 cm / 12 1/4 x 9 1/4 x 1 5/8 in



Deepfake Rachel

2023

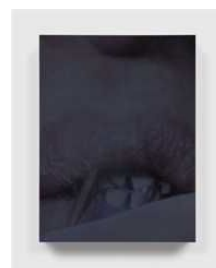
Acrylic on canvas stretched over aluminum panel
241.3 x 216 x 5.4 cm / 95 x 85 x 2 1/8 in



Art Student (study)

2023

Acrylic on canvas stretched over aluminum panel
31 x 23.4 x 4 cm / 12 1/4 x 9 1/4 x 1 5/8 in



Deepfake Marcy

2023

Acrylic on canvas stretched over aluminum panel
241.6 x 216.2 x 5.3 cm / 95 1/8 x 85 1/8 x 2 1/8 in



Living on Broadway (study)

2023

Acrylic on canvas stretched over aluminum panel
51.2 x 51 x 4 cm / 20 1/8 x 20 1/8 x 1 5/8 in



unk-righthand.obj

2023

Acrylic on canvas stretched over aluminum panel
215.9 x 241.5 x 5.4 cm / 85 x 95 1/8 x 2 1/8 in



FURTHER READING

For further reading to learn more about the themes and characters represented in the exhibition, the artist encourages you to explore the following media resources.

[THE NEW YORK TIMES](#)

[11 September 2001](#)

['2 Planes Crash Into World Trade Center' by Terence Neilan](#)

[10](#)

[THE NEW YORK TIMES](#)

[12 September 2001](#)

['A DAY OF TERROR: THE REACTION; A Tough City Is Swept by Anger, Despair and Helplessness' by Jim Dwyer and Susan Sachs](#)

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[THE NEW YORK TIMES](#)

[12 September 2001](#)

['A DAY OF TERROR: CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK; Live Images Make Viewers Witnesses to Horror' by Caryn James](#)

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[THE NEW YORK TIMES](#)

[13 September 2001](#)

['AFTER THE ATTACKS: THE SEARCH; A Few Moments of Hope In a Mountain of Rubble' by Dan Barry](#)

[17](#)

[THE NEW YORK TIMES](#)

[8 October 2002](#)

['Borders to Return Downtown With New Store, Prompting Hope for Retail Revitalization' by Charles V Bagli](#)

[20](#)

[THE NEW YORK TIMES](#)

[10 September 2015](#)

['To the Dust Lady' by Robert Dow](#)

[22](#)

2 Planes Crash Into World Trade Center

By Terence Neilan

Sept. 11, 2001

In parallel attacks in New York City and Washington, planes crashed into each of the twin towers of the World Trade Center around 9 this morning and a plane later crashed into the outer ring of the Pentagon building, causing smoke, fire and a sense of panic in the streets.

Later, after a number of explosions, both towers of the World Trade Center collapsed. An enormous loss of life was feared.

In a short announcement during a visit to Sarasota, Fla., President Bush called the World Trade Center attack "a national tragedy and an apparent act of terrorism against our country."

Julian E. Barnes, a Times reporter, interviewed people who were in the towers at the time of the impact and people who witnessed the planes crashing into the towers.

A man who was standing on the Brooklyn side of the Brooklyn Bridge, Nicholas Gasper, who works for the New York City Transit Department, said he saw a four-engine plane "doing a tilt into the building. From what I saw it looked like the plane sliced into the tower," referring to the second impact. He said he heard the building shake. "I am still shaking," he added.

A second man who was three or four blocks away from the tower, Terrance Phillips, 35, from New Jersey, said he was looking at the fire. "Then I saw a 747 or some kind of plane. It crashed in and exploded. People were watching and then they started stampeding away."

He added: "People were jumping out of the building. People seemed to be deciding just to take their own lives. It was the most horrific thing I have ever seen."

Television cameras captured the collapse in Manhattan. Both towers partially disappeared behind thick clouds of dark smoke; then the top floors of the south tower began to fall. Black smoke was all that remained. The camera's distance made it impossible to see people or details of the floors collapse, but witnesses said they had seen people jumping out windows.

After the second tower fell, the entire area was consumed with smoke, as if clouds had descended and enveloped the lower tip of Manhattan. The smoke continued to spread, over the harbor.

Further television coverage showed people running through the streets pursued by the smoke.

Sherry Day, a reporter at The Times, said she was forced to take refuge in a store to escape the billowing smoke. "Everything's black," she said. "It is impossible to see anything."

In New York City, primary elections for mayor and other offices were called off after they had begun.

At a meeting in Lima, Peru, of the Organization of American States, Secretary of State Colin L. Powell spoke out against the attacks.

"A great tragedy has struck our country and it will not affect the nature of our society," he said. "We'll find out who's responsible for this and bring them to justice." He took no questions and was returning to Washington, cutting short what was to have been a two-day visit.

After the crash at the Pentagon building, the White House, the Capitol building, the Treasury, State Department and all other federal buildings were evacuated. In New York, the United Nations building was also evacuated.

All airline travel within the United States was suspended and Mr. Bush was said to be on his way back from Sarasota to Washington. International flights were being diverted to Canada.

Mr. Bush said in Sarasota that he had ordered that "the full resources of the federal government" be used to carry out a full investigation to find out who was responsible for the World Trade Center attacks.

"Terrorism against our country will not stand," he said, before ending by leading a prayer for victims of the attacks.

Witness accounts differed over what kind of planes were involved in the impacts. One witness told CNN television that the first plane seemed to slow and deliberately line up before crashing into the north tower.

A witness who works in the strategic planning department at The New York Times, Alan Flippen, said that as he came to work on 46th Street just before 9 he saw an American Airlines Boeing 767 flying "very low in the direction of the World Trade Center towers."

He said he did not see the impact, but later reports said one of the planes that crashed into the towers was an American Airlines plane that had been hijacked on a flight from Boston.

In Washington, officials said the F.B.I. was investigating reports of the hijacking before the crashes.

Heavy black smoke billowed into the sky above the gaping holes in the side of the 110-story twin towers, one of New York City's most famous landmarks, and debris rained down upon the street, one of the city's busiest work areas. When the second plane hit, a fireball of flame and smoke erupted, leaving a huge hole in the glass and steel tower.

All New York City-area airports were shut down, and several subway lines were immediately shut down. Trading on Wall Street was suspended and many businesses were ordered to evacuate their personnel.

A version of this article appears in print on of the National edition with the headline: 2 Planes Crash Into World Trade Center

A DAY OF TERROR: THE REACTION

A DAY OF TERROR: THE REACTION; A Tough City Is Swept by Anger, Despair and Helplessness

By Jim Dwyer and Susan Sachs

Sept. 12, 2001

The city changed yesterday. No one, no matter how far from Lower Manhattan, could step on a New York sidewalk untouched by concussions.

The day began in the brilliance of a late summer morning, then was obscured in gray balls of dust and smoke that seemed to touch everyone. The city had become an empire of the stricken.

Erin Dubin, 26 and an aspiring Broadway dancer from Minnesota, had started the day with an audition for "Footloose," hoping for her big break. At midmorning, tears rolling down her face and a cell phone dangling from her limp hand, she stood stock still on 43rd Street at Broadway, staring but barely taking in the news ticker across the street. Her boyfriend worked at Lehman Brothers in the World Trade Center as a Web page designer.

Normally he arrived at work at 9 a.m. and Ms. Dubin fervently hoped he had been delayed. But she could not reach him.

"I hope he was late," she said, frozen in place as the words scrolled endlessly across the buildings at Times Square. "I don't know exactly what I should be doing. Where should I go?"

New Yorkers were members of a tribe in shock, tied in knots and easily moved to sudden tears and swift kindnesses. People moved through Midtown without the ordinary get-out-of-my way pace. They listened to radios. They grabbed one-minute updates from strangers. They spoke urgently into cell phones. They waited quietly in long lines -- no shoving, no impatient words -- at the pay phones on street corners. The hundreds who sat or stood under outdoor jumbo electronic television screens were virtually silent; it was no time for small talk.

Further uptown on Eighth Avenue, a crowd stood around a delivery van, listening to radio reports.

By midmorning, when the news had filtered out to just about everybody and the great cloud of black smoke at the southern end of Manhattan had become a permanent blot on the horizon, businesses began to close down and bars began to fill up. Smokers who had quit decided to take it up again, at least for the day. A bus would stop, going uptown, and people rushed to get on, no matter what its destination.

"Will someone ask the driver where this bus is going?" shouted a woman as she propelled herself toward an M2 limited bus on Madison Avenue. "Just get on or you'll never get out of Manhattan," called back a teenager near the front.

But getting places was out of the question for most people. The only way to go was north, or east, away from the fires and destruction. And for most, the only way to go was on foot. They found bridges closed and highways open to pedestrians and subways stopped dead.

Jim Speziale, driving a bread delivery truck, took pity. He stopped his truck on Park Avenue at 33rd Street, opened the door and invited people in. "I'm going up as far as 59th Street," he shouted to the crowds on the sidewalks. They climbed in by the dozens.

People who made it across the Manhattan Bridge were met by workers from Long Island College Hospital and Brooklyn Hospital Center. They were handing out water and fruit juice to those beginning to trudge down Flatbush Avenue.

"Water and medical attention here!" shouted Claudine Rose, normally a clerical worker at the Brooklyn Hospital Center. "You can call your families across the street and let people know that you're okay."

It was almost as if the city had turned tender, as if people wanted to tip-toe around each other so as not to cause any upset. Normal reactions -- irritation at stalled traffic, peevishness at pedestrians who stopped in the middle of the sidewalk -- were muted.

There were refugees everywhere: a long, slow motion flight from the core of the city, great strings of people putting their feet on the ground, in hopes that it, unlike the sky, was safe. And because they would be putting down their feet many times, some women stopped on Canal Street to buy \$8 flip-flops, a small advantage over high-heeled shoes for such a journey.

As those brushed by the attacks drifted away from the neighborhood around ground zero, they were met with acts of grace, large and small. Keith Vance reported that he found himself a few blocks away from the collapse, in front of a Chinese delicatessen. The proprietor came out with bottles of water. Then a man in a hardware store handed out dust masks used by plasterers.

The numbers of walkers grew as the devastating news took hold. Maria Thomas, at work in Macy's when she heard about the explosions, decided not to stay. "Look, Macy's is a landmark building, you know," she explained from 10 blocks away. As she left, customers were streaming into the store, apparently unaware of what was happening in Lower Manhattan. "It's believable and at the same time it's not believable," said Ms. Thomas.

That was the mental line many people walked: how could this horror, which would not be credible on a movie screen, be actual, be real, be flesh and blood?

For some of those who had been downtown, the horror of the moment emerged as they walked miles toward home, carried along on waves of shock and contemplation. Ed Lamm, who works at J. P. Morgan in New York Plaza, said he could not escape the image.

"It's devastating, just looking back at that scene," said Mr. Lamm, 53, of Mineola, as he crossed the Manhattan Bridge. "The smoke, the darkness. It's like the day stood still.

"You're aware what's in the sky, checking for planes, seeing F-15's in the sky. But we're the lucky ones, we're alive."

Carole Kitrosser, a financial planner who normally works a few blocks from the World Trade Center, was seeing clients uptown yesterday. Her country would never feel the same. "If they can stop New York City from functioning, what happens next?" Ms. Kitrosser said.

She said, she felt "violated."

"I don't think I can ever go downtown to work again," Ms. Kitrosser said. "I don't think I can look at the rubble. Our schools are closed. Our financial district is closed. We're not safe anywhere."

For those at a distance, the pace of events -- one crash, a second crash, a collapse and then another -- brought a slow-motion fear, rising like a tide into consciousness. In Brooklyn Heights, Lisa Morris heard a radio report about the first plane crashing into the tower, and walked onto the street to look across the harbor.

"The first building was in flames and the second plane came right across and went into the second building," she said. "It must have flown over the Statue of Liberty and come right in.

"It was strange to think that the first crash was a horrible accident. And the second, knowing it wasn't an accident, made it so much worse," Ms. Morris said.

Moved by the television and radio coverage, lines of volunteers turned up at hospitals across the city, prepared to donate blood for the survivors. Many were turned away because the hospitals were not ready to accept them, or actually found themselves with enough on hand -- and too few survivors in need of it.

In the Gristede's at Broadway and 108th Street, David McCarthy, 40, was one of many buying jugs of water, "just in case." He added: "I went to the bank, and all the banks except one were closed. And I realized, wait a minute, something's going to happen."

As hard to absorb as adults found the day's events, their worries for children were of another order of magnitude.

"What am I going to tell my daughter?" said Carmen Diaz, who was sent home from her Midtown office along with other employees and was wandering around, hugging a transistor radio, until her daughter's school let out at 3 p.m. "I don't even know myself why such a thing could happen. It will be so hard to explain."

Within an hour of the disaster, hundreds of anxious parents had massed at Public School 192, a school that serves many Dominican immigrants in West Harlem. Some feared a world war would break out, and wanted to protect their children. Others said that if the World Trade Center had been destroyed, then why shouldn't a school be next? Most said that when they heard the news they simply wanted their children to be with them. By 11:40 a.m., parents had picked up all but 150 of the 1,700 students in the school.

Elton Callender, who came to get his nephew, a first grader, said he did not want the boy to hear the news from a stranger and panic. "I just need to explain this stuff to him," Mr. Callender said. "Actually, I'm scared that there could be a world war."

As another boy and his father walked home, tightly holding hands, the boy said: "Papi, did you notice that some people blew up a house?" His father corrected him. "Blew up the World Trade Center!"

"Wha?" the boy exclaimed. "I thought it was a house. And some people died, right?"

"Right," his father said tersely, and kept walking.

Many sought solace in prayers, either alone or in the great holy spaces of the city. Tom Brown, a street corner preacher on Broadway and Canal, had handed out about 500 tracts in 90 minutes. "People think this stuff is baloney, but today they're listening," Mr. Brown said.

At 9 a.m. a bell at the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine began tolling in the slow, steady rhythm of mourning. In the evening, Cardinal Edward M. Egan said Mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral, praising the efforts of rescue workers and those providing medical care. "I saw New York at its best," he said. "I saw police officers and firefighters careless of their own safety, interested in only serving this great city, covered in soot. I saw many of them bleeding from the necks and arms. They're New York at its best. They inspired this New Yorker with pride."

The cardinal said that he had administered last rites to 12 to 15 of the injured who were taken to St. Vincent's Manhattan Hospital. He said one of them died about six minutes later. At one point while he was at St. Vincent's, he looked up and saw the second tower collapse. "It was a nightmare, a nightmare for this city of noble and decent people."

Places of worship all over the city propped open their doors, offering everything from pasta and coffee to a spiritual perspective. And what might normally be seen as unwelcome proselytizing was embraced. At the Middle Collegiate Church on Second Avenue in the East Village, a congregant stood on the steps, urging anyone who paused to come on in. Many took him up on it: people covered in soot, a man who had watched his co-worker die, a woman who worked on the 19th floor of one of the towers and could not reach her daughter.

"There's nothing but death in the air today," said Debbi Gibson, a paralegal who lives in East Harlem. "I don't want to hate anybody. I don't want to judge anybody. So in order to keep my peace I had to be here for a little bit."

Even those who offered solace were not untouched by the tragedy. In the basement of St. Joseph's Church in Greenwich Village, Veronica Johnson, a parishioner, busied herself over a counter laden with food meant for rescue workers, pulling her sunglasses on as she struggled with news that the body of a familiar friend, the Rev. Mychal Judge, had been identified. Father Judge was a Fire Department chaplain. "He married my son. He baptized the kids. He's been there for everybody," she said, her face suddenly damp.

A version of this article appears in print on , Section A, Page 6 of the National edition with the headline: A DAY OF TERROR: THE REACTION; A Tough City Is Swept by Anger, Despair and Helplessness

A DAY OF TERROR: CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK

A DAY OF TERROR: CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK; Live Images Make Viewers Witnesses to Horror

By Caryn James

Sept. 12, 2001

From the time the second plane crashed flaming through the World Trade Center on live television yesterday, viewers became horrified eyewitnesses to terrorist attacks in progress, a phenomenal sight that separates the political violence of our television era from all others.

Though the attack was quickly and frequently compared to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Americans experienced this assault in a far different way, watching disasters accumulate faster than they could be absorbed emotionally.

Many commentators echoed Franklin D. Roosevelt's response to Pearl Harbor. Dan Rather said, "This is another day that no doubt will live in infamy." But no resonant phrase emerged to define yesterday's tragedy the way Roosevelt's radio-age words defined the World War II attack. In this visual era, the incredible live images, replayed throughout the day until their reality sunk in, defined the events. As Senator Charles E. Schumer, Democrat of New York, said on camera, "This is Pearl Harbor, 21st century."

The reporters and anchors were calm and generally cautious, and especially at the start of the day they seemed just as stunned as the rest of us. "What?" Peter Jennings of ABC asked when first told that one of the towers had collapsed.

Even while the anchors were reporting on the first plane crashes, word came of the attack on the Pentagon, and only split-screen images could capture the magnitude of the events. On the left of CNN's screen were plumes of smoke where the World Trade Center used to be; on the right, smoke billowed from the Pentagon. Before noon, John King of CNN said that the Secret Service would not reveal the president's location, and as he reported it, we saw images of a tower on fire and two bodies clearly tumbling to death.

The images were terrifying to watch, yet the coverage was strangely reassuring simply because it existed with such immediacy, even when detailed information was scarce. Imagine how much worse the nightmare would have been if broadcasting had been destroyed. On a day of death, television was a lifeline to what was happening.

Reporters compared the events to Hollywood action movies, but Tom Brokaw may have captured it best when he looked at videotape of people on a street, everything and everyone so covered with ash that the scene was completely gray. It looked "like a nuclear winter in lower Manhattan," Mr. Brokaw said.

Beyond describing the scene, he and others put tough questions to former government officials and terrorism experts in the studios and on the telephone. The attacks represented "a stunning failure of intelligence," Mr. Brokaw said, though most of the experts only speculated about whom to retaliate against, as "war" became one of the day's most common terms.

The least comforting moments involved the president. Mr. Bush first appeared briefly, at 9:30 a.m., surrounded by Florida schoolchildren to whom he had been reading when he learned of the attack. And even though he announced that the country had suffered "an apparent terrorist attack," that live appearance was more reassuring than the taped statement later from an Air Force base in Louisiana. The audio was not working when some networks first played that tape, creating an ominous sense that things were not under control as much as he said. Through the day, some of the most harrowing reports told viewers what they did not know: where the president was. The unseen image of Mr. Bush meeting with advisers "in a bunker" as reporters said, was almost as chilling as the violence on screen.

When he spoke to the nation at 8:30 last night, he had a typically stiff, teleprompted delivery in a speech that, contrasting the "shattered steel" of the buildings with the "steel of American resolve," strained for phrasemaking it could not achieve. "Today our nation saw evil," was the only memorable phrase. But what mattered was that he was visible, live from the Oval Office, offering a sense of stability and a sense of a future.

The day's coverage had already shown that words had less impact than live pictures in this tragedy. Late in the day, ABC showed stunning new video, from a low angle, of the plane running through the second tower. Then the tape was played backward and we saw history reverse itself; the building appeared whole, as if in a wishful dream.

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AFTER THE ATTACKS: THE SEARCH

AFTER THE ATTACKS: THE SEARCH; A Few Moments of Hope In a Mountain of Rubble

By Dan Barry
Sept. 13, 2001

They found themselves in the landscape of nightmare, with jagged stumps marking where mighty buildings once stood, with the sky shrouded by smoke and the ground coated in ash, and search dogs overwhelmed by the smell of flesh in the acrid air. But there was no time to comprehend it all, not with the driving if faint hope that buried somewhere beneath there breathed survivors.

And every now and then, word of a miracle raced through the ranks -- of a man asking about his children, of a woman with hair still neatly braided -- inspiring hundreds of soot-covered, weary rescue workers to continue digging into the debris and steel that once were the World Trade Center towers.

But these adrenaline-pumping moments of hope were sporadic and few, tempered by the dawning, aching realization that for every survivor -- two on Tuesday, perhaps four yesterday -- there were probably thousands dead. By late afternoon, the jaws of huge cranes were biting indiscriminately into the piles of rubble, while police officers, firefighters, soldiers and other rescue workers pried at the ground with shovels and crow bars to free body parts, bits of human flesh, and rubbery patches of skin.

Then, like sanitation workers tending to some hellish park, they carefully dumped the scraps of human remains into a green trash bag held open by a soldier. At times, men gathered to puzzle over a piece of flesh on the ground; dogs sniffed at the bits with little enthusiasm and moved on.

"We don't find much," said a firefighter from East Rutherford, N.J.

At least publicly, city and state officials would not attach any number to the estimated loss of life after two airplanes pierced the twin towers Tuesday morning, a terrorist attack that leveled the World Trade Center buildings.

Instead, the aftermath was hinted at in the discussion of public-service employees missing and presumed dead: 350 New York City firefighters, including senior officers and entire squads; 40 New York City police officers; as many as 200 employees of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey as well as at least 30 Port Authority police officers.

Of the thousands presumed dead, only 82 bodies had been recovered by last night, in a search-and-rescue effort that never seemed to be beyond the reach of danger.

Yesterday afternoon, rescue workers scrambled -- again -- as a remnant of the south tower crumbled, scattering debris. Hundreds of people sought cover behind cars and walls. Then, a short while later, they returned to their grim task.

Magnifying the horror of that task were the reports trickling back to the rest of the world from a restricted and still-dangerous location in the western part of Lower Manhattan, rechristened Ground Zero. Of the 110-story twin towers now collapsed like stacks of steel pancakes. Of social workers with no one to comfort, and surgeons with no one to save, while surgical masks and shoes, gym bags and underwear, littered the ground. Documents that once seemed vital to commerce fluttered in the air.

At some point early yesterday morning -- when breaks in the smoky billows revealed a crescent moon -- a body was pulled from the rubble, and firefighters rushed forward to see if a colleague had been found. It was a man whom no

one recognized, wearing a white shirt, black pants and a wedding ring.

Some of the firefighters cried as they eased the corpse into a body bag and carried it away. "He was married, man," was all that one could say. "He was married."

Such displays of emotion were few; the breadth of the tragedy seemed so mind-numbing that many officials did not even attempt to mask the cold details. When asked yesterday to describe the kinds of injuries being seen among the victims brought to Bellevue Hospital Center, Dr. Robert Hessler said: "The sort of injuries you expect when billions of tons of rubble fall from the sky on top of people."

And James Vaughn, a New York state trooper in charge of a cadaver-sniffing German shepherd named Garo, explained that the crime scene was almost too much for the dog. "There's so much scent it kind of overwhelms him," Trooper Vaughn said, as the dog lapped water from a bowl during a break. "Basically, what he's doing is smelling flesh in the air, and it's just coming out of the cracks. It's everywhere."

But if a dog smelled flesh, people sensed hope that victims were still alive, no matter how unlikely it seemed. Throughout the day came reports, shared at one point by Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani, that rescue workers were in communication with trapped victims, and that cell phone calls were being placed from somewhere beneath the small mountains of steel and concrete.

Climbing down from a hill of debris, Matt Cody, a New York City firefighter, described how he had inched his way through crawl spaces and tunnels, hunting for survivors but finding only human remains, including those of a pregnant woman. But he said that the memory of friends killed on Tuesday -- Firefighter Danny Suhr, crushed by a falling body, and Timothy Stackpole, just recovered from injuries incurred at another fire -- pushed him to keep digging.

"I played football with Danny; I trained with him," Mr. Cody said, his face wet with perspiration, his uniform gray with soot. "I can't tell you how horrible it feels."

The mayor and others seemed to be counting on the likes of Matt Cody.

"That's why you've got to keep focusing on how many people can we save," Mr. Giuliani said yesterday morning. "We know we've lost a lot of people. Now we've got to focus on how many we can save." After that, the city can focus on rebuilding, he said. "It's going to be a beautiful place again."

A return to urban grandeur seemed such a foreign concept in a place where thick dust darkened the day, and floodlights gave night an eerie brightness. Even the wind caused problems: one minute it was carrying the ash and dust eastward to Brooklyn; the next it was blowing west to sting the eyes, inflame the throat, and force officials to reposition their rescue operations.

It seemed that Lower Manhattan's world-famous skyline was now reflected only on the arm patches of the city's rescue workers.

Through Tuesday night and into yesterday morning, rescue-and-recovery workers dug, police officers guarded and medics waited, playing their frustrating roles on a stage blanketed in ash and flecked with bits of color. Red here for the flattened truck from Rescue 1; blue there for a shard of a police car; orange everywhere, for the body bags. And there were signs of red-white-and-blue patriotism everywhere, including the silhouette of an American flag drawn in the dust of a nearby window.

Whatever chaos existed was controlled. Volunteers helped themselves to Burger King hamburger buns, Starbucks biscotti, and any other food they could find in restaurants with shattered glass facades. Firefighters hosed down the elegant lobby of the American Express building on Vesey Street to wash away the dust permeating what had become an emergency trauma center.

There were volunteers everywhere, arguably more than were needed. There was Michael Brennan, an employee of Verizon, hoping to re-establish cell phone communication with any buried survivors.

No one called, reinforcing the sense of quiet acknowledgment that the frantic activity in Lower Manhattan was

more a recovery operation than it was a rescue effort. The greatest single clue: no patients in all those emergency triage centers. "We've all got surgical training," one volunteer, Dr. James Snyder, said early yesterday morning. "But the most we've done is give eyedrops to firemen."

In the hours before yesterday's dawn, hope gave way to fatigue, and anger. Firefighters sipped from bottles of water and stared through the ash masking their faces. Across West Street there sat abandoned and mangled vehicles, including one of the city's rescue trucks. "Fontana. Garvey. Lt. Espo," someone had written on the dust covering one of its windows. "We love you guys."

Every few minutes another band of firefighters would come in from the battle, with little to say. "It's all solid," said Joseph McCormick, a firefighter from North Massapequa, after hours of futile excavation. "People are crushed underneath -- not trapped!"

But at 7:45 A.M., with hot smoke rising from pockets in the rubble and dump trucks carting away load after load of debris, there came encouraging word. John McLoughlin, a Port Authority police officer and the father of four, had been pulled from the rubble after having spent nearly a day buried in darkness. Rescue workers hustled him through an honor guard of colleagues to a waiting ambulance. A throaty cheer went up, as much for the resurrection of hope as for the resurrection of a human being.

"He was talking to us," Richard Doerler, a Nassau County police officer, later recalled. "He knew his name, where he lived, how many kids he had."

But it was not until shortly after noon that a second survivor had been found: a woman who had been trapped in the rubble of a collapsed pedestrian bridge that had also crushed firefighters and fire trucks.

The eyes of Joe Lashendock, an ironworker, had tears in his eyes as he recalled assisting in the rescue of the young woman with her hair in braids. "We said, 'We're going to get you out of here,' " he said. "She just looked at us."

Through late afternoon and into the evening, a numbing, mechanical feel overtook Ground Zero. Large dump trucks with twisted bits of metal jutting awkwardly from their beds lumbered off toward the recently closed Fresh Kills landfill in Staten Island. Mayor Giuliani later explained that the Police Department and the Federal Bureau of Investigation would be examining the debris for evidence of what appeared to be a monumental crime of terrorism.

Shouts punctuated the air, but never offering anything more hopeful than "I need a body bag here!" and "Get me some oxygen!"

Rescue workers grumbled among themselves about the direction of the recovery effort, saying less time should be spent on where the twin towers collapsed, and more on the periphery, where there would be better chance of finding someone alive. Many of them watched in states of helplessness, as though realizing for the first time where they were and what they were doing.

At one of the makeshift emergency centers, exhausted police officers and firefighters lay on cots, arms shielding their eyes. "We have seen no survivors," police Lt. Grant Simmons, a supervisor, explained. "There are rescue workers with eye infections, but nothing else."

Last night, as Mr. Giuliani led a group of politicians south on Greenwich Street toward Ground Zero, a woman named Anita Deblaze stepped forward and begged the mayor for help in finding her 44-year-old son, James. He put his arm around her and sought to reassure her, saying that the search for survivors was continuing.

Mrs. Deblaze gave the mayor her number, just in case. And as she walked away, the mother said: "My son is at the bottom of that pile."

A version of this article appears in print on , Section A, Page 1 of the National edition with the headline: AFTER THE ATTACKS: THE SEARCH; A Few Moments of Hope In a Mountain of Rubble

Borders to Return Downtown With New Store, Prompting Hope for Retail Revitalization

By Charles V. Bagli

Oct. 8, 2002

Borders Books and Music, whose flagship downtown store at the World Trade Center was destroyed in the attack last year, is returning to Lower Manhattan, where it signed a lease last week to open a store in a landmark building on Broadway.

Borders plans to open a three-level store in the American Surety Building at 100 Broadway, a 24-story office building with Ionic colonnades that was built in 1896.

The store, which is to open in the spring, is being hailed as a major commitment to downtown by a national retailer, and by some as the beginning of a retail renaissance on Broadway in a neighborhood that is still suffering from the trade center attack, corporate relocation and layoffs.

"It's great to have them back," said Carl Weisbrod, president of the Alliance for Downtown New York. "It is a very concrete indication of Lower Manhattan's growing strength as a retail center, particularly the Broadway corridor."

That remains to be seen. But Borders did have a special place in the hearts of many downtown residents and workers that was unusual for a chain store.

At community meetings over the last year, many people lamented the loss of the oversize bookstore, whose 200,000 book and music titles, coffee bar, comfortable chairs and late hours functioned as a combination front stoop and living room for many people in Lower Manhattan.

Office workers combed the aisles during the day, while students gathered there after school and adults late in the evening or on weekends to read, use their laptop computers or look for dates. Dozens of children attended the Tuesday morning storytelling hour.

"It wasn't just a bookstore," said Madelyn G. Wils, chairwoman of Community Board 1. "We don't have a community center down here, so people hung out there. There were a lot more emotional connections than just a place to shop."

The Borders store, with 37,700 square feet on three levels, was the largest single retail tenant at the World Trade Center complex and was one of the chain's highest grossing stores.

The concourse served as a regional mall downtown, where a residential neighborhood began to develop over the last two decades.

The new Borders, on Broadway near Pine Street, will be a 33,000-square-foot store, somewhat smaller than the World Trade Center operation, but still larger than the average Borders chain store. Farther south at 2 Broadway, Ann Taylor and 9 West have opened stores.

"It feels like a homecoming," said Tamara L. Heim, president of Borders stores. "We've been looking ever since 9/11. We've been kind of overwhelmed by the response of our customers."

Some business leaders and landlords are hoping that Broadway, the main north-south boulevard, will become the retail center for Lower Manhattan and spur the growth of the residential population.

But in the past, national retailers had gravitated mainly to the trade center, because of the 50,000 workers there. The trade center was also a convenient location for residents of Battery Park City and TriBeCa.

Broadway is east of the trade center site and there are tens of thousands of fewer jobs in Lower Manhattan today than there were a year ago.

Virginia Pittarelli, a retail broker at Madison HGCD, which represented Borders, said that other major retailers were looking for space along Broadway. "Borders will be a catalyst for other retailers," she said. "Broadway is a natural corridor in terms of public transportation and pedestrian pathways."

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The New York Times

City Room
Blogging From the Five Boroughs

METROPOLITAN DIARY

To the Dust Lady

By Robert Dow September 10, 2015 8:30 am

METROPOLITAN DIARY

More Reader Tales From the City »

Dear Diary:

To the dust lady made elegant in ash and smoke.
Her hair, her body dressed in an ashy dress,
her face encased in it. She was not powdered and
this was not Pompeii. This was downtown Manhattan under
a yellow sea. The dust lady somehow elegant in pearls,
her hair a shell of hardening ash. She reaches out
to you, to us, from inside the photograph. The dust lady
not real somehow, not elegant. The reality? Ashes.
We were in ashes and dust. The dust lady seems to be made
elegant as the Titanic is made frightening and elegant
at the bottom of the sea where rust is the dust
of the sea. She in a dust is dust and dust was forced
into her like fists she was made to swallow. She did
swallow the dust and the day, as we swallowed her
burning eyes. She was saved to live in the waters
of memory, to live and be made still, made out of dust
from dust into a photograph. The dust lady was made
to live to die of terror. Years have blown our dust-streaked
tears dry. Love in the ashen face of terror is the grace,
the only elegance, the only thing to breathe in.
Breathe in. Breathe out this dire lady's dust.



Marcy Borders on Sept. 11, 2001.
Stan Honda/Agence France-Presse
— Getty Images

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