





REFLECTIONS *of Generosity*

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IMM



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Cover images by:

Ron V. Kelsey, *Homecoming IR Flag*, 2009. Hand Printed Original Lithograph. Printed by Timothy P. Sheesley at Corridor Press, Otego, NY.

Tim P. Sheesley, *Convergence*, 2008. Hand Printed Original Lithograph.

Neil C. Jones, *Welcome to the Army*, 2009. Photographs.

Published in association with Samizdat Creative Services.  
[www.samizdatcreative.com](http://www.samizdatcreative.com)

ISBN 978-0-9843501-1-7

Library of Congress Control Number: 2010921476





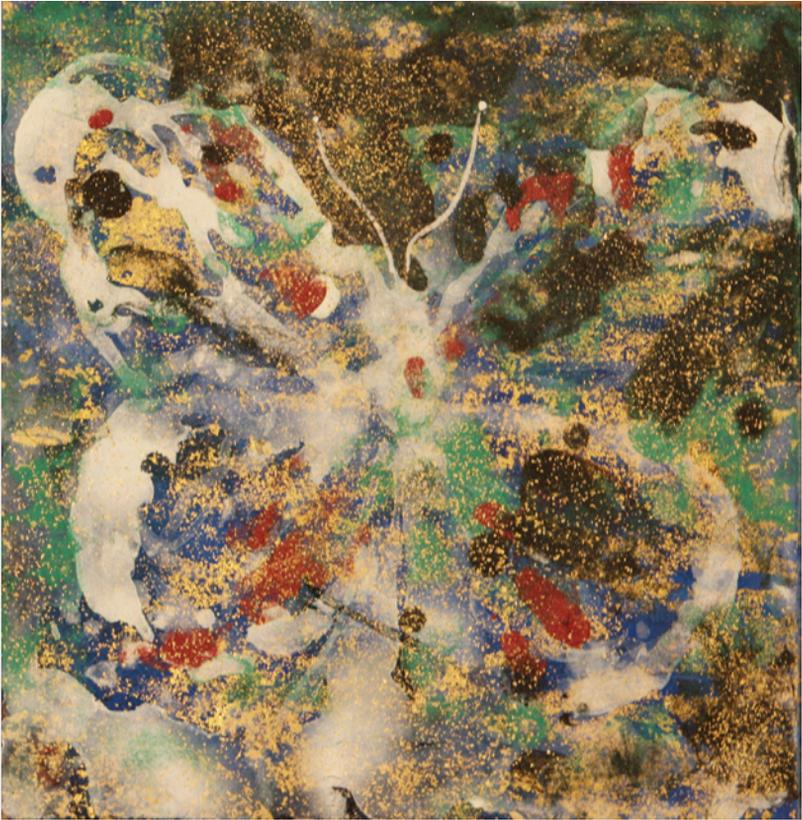
Teresa Valla, *Pomegranate Caretakers*, Water-based paint on Wood. 11"x14".

*In Memory of*  
the people who gave their lives  
during 9/11 and the many  
Soldiers who have given their  
lives since the start of our  
current conflicts.



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Makoto Fujimura, *Azurite Butterfly*, 2009. Mineral Pigments, Gold on Kumohada. 8"x8".



## *Foreword*

An internship program placing students with professionals in New York City contacted me about an art student from Wabash College. Knowing that a fall season would be a busy time for me as an artist, I agreed to interview him. Ron came in to see me, and brought some samples of his work. Reading through his resume, I noted that he was also in the U.S. Army Reserve. He said that he would not be able to work on Saturdays due to his commitment to the military. It was the summer of 2001, and the interview took place in my studio only ten blocks away from what is now Ground Zero.

On September 11th, I spent a good amount of time trying to find out whether my children, who attended schools only three blocks away from the towers, and my wife, who was at our loft only two blocks away from

Building Seven<sup>i</sup>, were safe. I must confess I did not think to ask where Ron was. But in the days that followed, I became concerned as I realized that he, being in the Army Reserve, would be drawn into the vortex of needs and chaos swirling about in TriBeCa.

Ron did manage to contact me on my cell phone, but I could not retrieve the voicemail he left for a few days. He had asked me if my family was OK (yes) and told me that he had been called to report to the Bronx Army center, where he would be needed indefinitely. By the time I felt settled enough to return to my studio, I began to work on a project that would give local artists an opportunity to mediate our neighbors' experiences: Tribeca Temporary.<sup>ii</sup> When Ron returned to my studio, he was eager to help, and thus began one of the most unique and intense internship experiences in NYC: combining military, art, and ministry experiences in the face of intense tragedy.

Ron told me later that he learned much from me, but I do not remember if at any moment I felt I was teaching him anything. All of the TriBeCa Temporary exhibits, events, and conversations were as spontaneous as 9/11 itself. Unlike that fateful day, however, these were tiny life-giving events, seemingly invisible to the outside world. Ron was there to experience something miraculous, and his presence provided me the assurance of having a young man in training with the Army beside me in my post-9/11 fog.

After completing his internship, I knew that Ron would be reporting to the Army with plans to become a chaplain. I lost touch with him soon after that. Years later, his grandmother saw an article about me in a magazine and wrote with the update that Ron would be deployed to Iraq.

I sent him a care package, which included *Refractions*, a book I wrote. In *Refractions*, I catalogued many of my experiences after 9/11 as an artist

and person of faith. In my role as a member of the National Council on the Arts, I traveled frequently to represent the U.S. and to advocate for the arts; many of these experiences are in *Refractions* as well.

When Ron sent me a photograph of him sitting in front of Saddam Hussein's former palace, I felt a chill in my bones (see page 32). What we had experienced and written about after 9/11, my epistles from Ground Zero, was being read right in the heart of another conflict thousands of miles away. My exhortation toward generative creativity, to be able to create peace even in Ground Zero, was being read by a Soldier in Iraq.

What you are about to read and experience through the essays and images in these pages will surely be a gift. They are wartime epistles, a heartfelt effort to communicate to those at home the details of one Soldier's experiences from the front lines of battle. Ron's words both exhort and challenge us to wrestle with issues of art, faith, and humanity; such is the goal of any International Arts Movement project. As you ask, "What is art?" and "What is true sacrifice?" you will journey with us as we expand the boundaries of humanity. Democracy, after all, should birth great diversity, and freedom should allow us to wrestle with deeper questions.

Ron and I owe a special nod of gratitude to the former Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, poet Dana Gioia. Despite many challenges, Dana pursued many innovative projects as a way to serve Soldiers and their families. "Operation Homecoming" gave returning Soldiers valuable time to reflect and write their wartime experiences. Dana also brought Shakespeare and opera to the military bases. It was a simple yet rare thought to say that the Soldiers and their families are citizens in need of art, as much as any other Americans. Much of my writing that inspired Ron was a result of Dana's visionary leadership.

Ron is a true artist. His work resonates with honesty and authenticity. His art comes to us devoid of cynicism yet acknowledging the reality of darkness, and I have come to learn that Ron is able to articulate the same sentiment with words. Not only does he paint, but he also *writes* catalytically, exhorting others to create. We are fortunate to have a burgeoning Renaissance man disguised as a Soldier in our midst.

What began as a small seed of art after 9/11 is now being shared generously via Ron's efforts on behalf of the military community. There will no doubt be stories in the coming days of those who will be affected deeply. After all, we must remember that many of the world's greatest artists have dealt with the themes of war and peace. Whether Vietnam-era Pulitzer winners, or J.R.R Tolkien, Goya or Picasso, wartime artists remind us that we cannot escape the realities of our dark conflicts. Those who lost their lives had voices that are now rendered mute. Our calling is to speak into that void, to reach beyond the barriers that separate us, and let our offerings of peace resonate between life and death. That is the lesson Ron has learned, and that is what I experienced, with Ron's help, following September 2001.

*Mako Fujimura, New York City, January 2010*





Sandra Jean Ceas, *Time Heals*. Installation.



## *Introduction*

When I first sat down to write this book I was a mere five-minute drive from Saddam Hussein's former palace in Baghdad. The sound of test fires from defense batteries filled the 12-by-9 foot CHU (Containerized Housing Unit) where I lived, and the rare mortar or rocket attacks hit in locations that sounded far too close for comfort. It was here in this war-torn place that I sought moments of creativity, and as I wrote and sketched designs for paintings I discovered what makes life worth living in times of war and peace.

How did I, an artist, end up fighting a war in Iraq?

I was selected by Wabash College in 2001 for a six-month internship to study art in New York City. As I researched artists who might match

my interest in art and religion, only one caught my attention: Makoto Fujimura. Mako, who would go on to be appointed by the President of the United States to serve on the National Council on the Arts (2003-2009) and to be awarded the National Endowment for the Arts Chairman's Medal in recognition of his service to the arts in the United States,<sup>1</sup> graciously accepted my request for an internship. That September I was his apprentice, gleaning not only practical lessons in painting, but spiritual lessons in life. Through our shared experience of living through 9/11, I realized that beauty can exist in the face of tragedy and that it is possible to continue being an artist and messenger of love through such times of grief.

Mako talks about beauty through sacrifice in his essay "Beauty without Regret:"

Every beauty suffers. A research scientist friend once told me that the autumn leaves are most beautiful on the trees by the roadside because they happen to be distressed by the salt and pollution. Every sunset is a reminder of the impending death of Nature herself. The minerals I use must be pulverized to bring out their beauty. The Japanese were right in associating beauty with death.<sup>2</sup>

Seven years after the towers fell, I was deployed for a year to Iraq where I witnessed beauty through sacrifice firsthand. If not for the sacrifice of my comrades, I would not have had the opportunity to discover the profound truths of living a good life through times of tragedy as a husband, a father, an artist, and a Soldier.

This book explores these themes of suffering and beauty, honor and remembrance, and restoration and peace. All the artwork included in these pages was generously donated by the artists and originally shown in the *Reflections of Generosity* exhibit at Fort Drum, New York in 2009. Today, *Reflections of Generosity* is a traveling exhibition being installed in

military bases around the world to honor our fallen heroes and those who continue to serve as Soldiers.

Before turning the page, please pause for a moment to honor and remember all the men and women who sacrificed their beautiful lives as a result of 9/11 and the subsequent ongoing conflicts.



Jay Walker, *Fatigue*, Oil on Linen. 80" x 50".

*“Come back with your shield—or on it.”<sup>3</sup>*

## *Tribute*

Thankfully, these were not the words my wife Kyla used as I left for Iraq. Instead, as I held my kids, we shared tears of grief as we accepted the fact that this journey could end in my own sacrifice. These memories came into my mind the first day I saw The Hero’s Wall, an area in the headquarters building set aside to pay tribute to Soldiers who have given their lives since the start of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division’s tour in Iraq. As the two TV screens flipped through pictures of these Soldiers, I imagined the last moments these men and women experienced with their kids, the last kisses they shared with their spouses, and the talents they left behind. These are just a few of many moments made priceless by a person’s sacrifice.

Below the TV screens sat a bronze statue of combat boots, an M-16, and a helmet. The dog tags of each lost Hero were hanging on the rifle. This sculpture tribute inspired me to paint the *Homecoming: IR Flag* lithograph edition to honor the Soldiers who give their lives through voluntary service to our country.<sup>4</sup>

We all share the emotional turmoil of these ongoing sacrifices, even through fleeting encounters with Soldiers. My friend Christy Tennant pays tribute to a Soldier she shared a flight with in “Song for a Soldier I Met on a Plane”:

I saw a man dressed in desert brown  
His name on his chest and a baby in his arms  
His bride was crying as she kissed him goodbye  
I prayed for them as I boarded my flight

Turned out that we were seated side by side  
Tried to make small talk as the plane took flight  
I wanted to tell him how grateful I was  
For the work that he was doing on behalf of all of us

And, “I am praying for you, And I am pulling for you  
As I remember every word you said  
And I am cheering for you, And I am hoping for you  
To finish strong, my friend.”<sup>5</sup>

Toward the middle of my deployment, Kyla told me she met an 82-year-old World War II veteran at a car repair shop. As she waited for our car to be repaired, he told her of his experiences on the shores of Normandy. He described running beside his best friend when suddenly he heard a landmine go off. Turning, the veteran saw his mortally wounded friend holding a picture of his wife and kids. In a broken voice, the hero’s last words were, “Please tell my wife and kids that I love them.” This Soldier’s

sacrifice has not been forgotten, and I carry the beauty of that moment with me everyday I wear the uniform.

Many Soldiers have paid the ultimate price for freedom, something illustrated by Jay Walker's painting *Fatigue*. In this large painting of a uniform floating in empty space, I once again experience the void and grief that remains after sacrifices have been made for the beauty of freedom and democracy.

The history and high cost of freedom can be traced back to the many wars fought by Soldiers. These ideas are captured in the installation *We Are Climbing* by Charles A. Westfall, who says:

The Civil War, World War II, and, for Christians, even the instance of Christ's crucifixion represent circumstances in which redemption for nations and for individuals comes at a heavy cost and only after bloodshed. This does not constitute an endorsement of violence or of physical force. It is simply my attempt to engage with this very complicated reality—one that service men and women seem to understand intuitively.<sup>6</sup>



Charles A. Westfall, *We Are Climbing*, Installation.

The benefit of a nation's redemption and freedom is celebrated by Mako Fujimura in *Refractions*:

We have a very unique patronage system that encourages democratic patronage of the arts, such as the National Endowment for the Arts . . . (which has) connected with the Shakespeare in American Communities program, the Jazz Masters program, and the touring of Martha Graham dance troupe . . . These distinctively American forms of art, I would argue, are the greatest fruits of our democracy. And we have every reason to celebrate and broadcast with pride what freedom has brought us.<sup>7</sup>

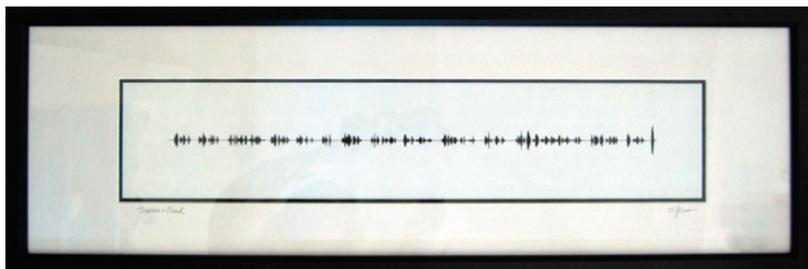
Shortly after returning from Iraq, but still living in the shadows of war, I used each brush stroke of paint and jot of ink to wrestle with my thoughts and questions about the cost of freedom. As I painted, a vision was born where art and music were created to benefit those still in the grip of loss and suffering. Beyond the scars of war, the charity of such creativity provides a way to stay strong through everyday trials.

Soldiers who voluntarily wear the uniform and live out *The Seven Army Values* demonstrate the value of charitable giving, which is not limited to—or strictly defined by—money.<sup>8</sup> As they walk the tightrope of sacrifice, they draw strength from the Soldier's Creed.

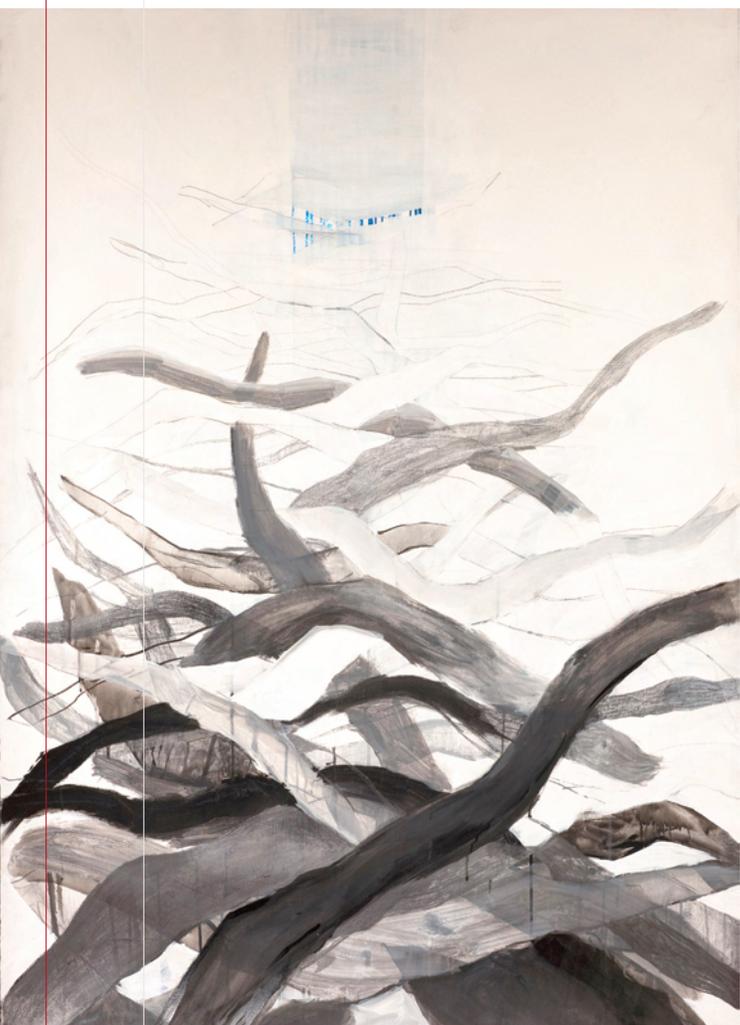
In her sound wave digital print of the Soldier's Creed<sup>9</sup>, Sandra Ceas captures its essence: the values of Soldiers whose daily commitment to defending freedom and democracy enables progress toward restoration and peace.

I am an American Soldier.  
I am a Warrior and a member of a team.  
I serve the people of the United States,  
    and live the Army Values.  
I will always place the mission first.  
I will never accept defeat.

I will never quit.  
I will never leave a fallen comrade.  
I am disciplined, physically and mentally tough,  
trained and proficient in my warrior  
tasks and drills.  
I always maintain my arms, my equipment, and myself.  
I am an expert and I am a professional.  
I stand ready to deploy, engage,  
and destroy the enemies of the United States of America  
in close combat.  
I am a guardian of freedom and the American way of life.  
I am an American Soldier.<sup>10</sup>



Sandra Jean Ceas, *Soldier's Creed*, Digital Print.



Alison Stigora, *Waiting (Ascent-Descent)*, Graphite, Charcoal, Acrylic, & Metallic Tape. 42"x52".

## *Sacrifice*

On July 23, 2008 at 6:10 p.m. in Baghdad, Iraq, I received the following instant message:

“Congratulations Ron, your wife just had a baby girl!”<sup>11</sup>

I was able to see Adelaide through a web cam, and I was moved by the beauty of the moment. Filled with joy, I leapt to my feet and clasped my hands together in excitement. In the background of the screen, the doctor lifted our precious daughter into the world. Though miles away, the emotions of becoming a father for the third time made our daily sacrifice for freedom more worthwhile.

Shortly after this, I experienced the first tragedy of my deployment to Iraq. Walking to work, I heard sirens from the police vehicles. Down the road, Soldiers wandered around with stunned, dazed, and shocked looks on their faces. A fellow Soldier had taken his own life. A week later, his picture was displayed on the fallen Soldier's wall monitor. He looked so young in that photo. I began asking myself, "What, as an artist, could I have done to help this individual?" Could a painting have filled him with hope? Would a listening ear have brought him relief beyond thoughts of suicide? Sadly, this was not the last time I asked these questions in Iraq.

Returning to the office, I longed to speak with other Soldiers about the incident. The tower of grief that day overshadowed the recent joy I felt of becoming a father. I searched for balance among suffering, longed for hope beyond tragedy, and sought to understand the purpose of nature's fragile design.

It is hard to find beauty among the sacrifices of everyday life. It seems natural to look for answers that seem nowhere to be found—what is the main purpose of existence? In his book *A Grief Observed*, C.S. Lewis wrestles with this question as well:

Sometimes, Lord, one is tempted to say that if you wanted us to behave like the lilies of the field you might have given us an organization more like theirs. But that, I suppose, is just your grand experiment. Or no; not an experiment, for you have no need to find things out. Rather your grand enterprise. To make an organism which is also spirit; to make that terrible oxymoron, a spiritual animal. To take a poor primate, a beast with nerve-endings all over it, a creature with a stomach that wants to be filled, a breeding animal that wants its mate, and say, Now get on with it. Become a god.<sup>12</sup>

I connected with Lewis's doubts and frustrations through my own experience with grief that day, and this grief challenged how I understood life and art. Even further, I began to doubt the perfection of beauty within God's creation. I wondered if perhaps the world was still in some ways "formless and empty."<sup>13</sup> The amount of faith it would take for me to see God beyond the darkness that remains over the surface of the Earth seemed insurmountable. Even so, I drew some hope from visualizing the Spirit of God hovering over my waters of doubt and sorrow.

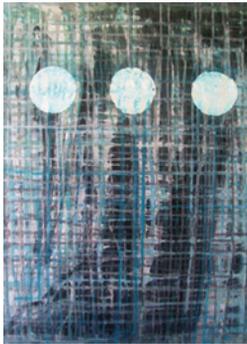
Looking back on my deployment, the stories of Daniel in the lion's den and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego come to mind. These men experienced peace beyond human understanding, a peace that transcended the confines of war and tragedy. I think of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego in particular because they, like many Soldiers, were tested by fire. They were thrown into the inferno—they stood and were refined by it. Fire destroys, but it also perfects and beautifies. Peace is a form of beauty that is perfected through sacrifice. The lives of Soldiers are like "burnt wood. . . that bears evidence of survival."<sup>14</sup>

Alison Stigora captures these ideas in her drawing *Waiting (ascent-decent)*:

Survival implies both experiencing and also passing through catastrophe . . . Destruction and creation often live side by side. As I work, the process of destroying and recreating is what allows a sculpture or drawing to develop. Fire consumes, but not completely. I salvage charred remains from the aftermath of a fire and allow those same ash-covered remains to communicate their story of survival as they are reborn into new works.<sup>15</sup>

Thinking about art in the shadow of war, I realize that my own process of painting represents beauty through sacrifice as well. It is gratifying to watch the slow breakdown of the layered acrylic paint after I apply various

colors and pour water onto the canvas: the water and brush act as wind upon the rocks of thickened paint. I explore the mystery of the painting by slowly adding more water before the paint dries. The water naturally cascades down the canvas, and I stand back, observing the colors that are revealed and the open spaces that still remain. What is barely seen becomes the object of my imagination.



Ron Kelsey, *Beauty Through Sacrifice*, Acrylic on Canvas. 18"x24"x6".

Over time, paint drips from each canvas into puddles on the floor. For me, these puddles represent sacrifice. In the *Beauty Through Sacrifice* series, I set a canvas under each *Beauty* painting, and as the water cascaded down the paintings the drips captured on the canvas below became reminiscent of the tears, suffering, and pain I endured throughout my deployment to Iraq. The resulting piece represents my personal refinement through the grieving process I experienced in war.

The process of creating this series taught me to see the influence of the Creator upon the created in every act of creation, and this led me to experience peace beyond human understanding, a peace transcending the confines of war and tragedy.



Air Force Staff Sgt. Marsha L. Gonzalez, *Reflections Upon Refractions*. Photograph.

## Reflections

Sitting in a bomb shelter in front of Saddam Hussein's former palace, I found relief from the burning sun to reflect upon *Refractions*. As I read the quote below, I was approached by a Soldier I had never met before who asked if she could take my photograph. In that moment of time, Staff Sgt. Gonzalez unknowingly captured me being moved and inspired by the following words penned by my mentor:

God appeared in flesh via the babe in a manger, bridging eternal gaps in the incarnation: Flesh therefore, is given the weight of glory. God came, supped as a man, and bled to bring our bodies and spirits to merge into heaven. He defined humanity within his own body. As Dutch art historian Hans Rookmaaker famously stated, "Christ did not come to make us Christians . . . but that he came to redeem us that we might be human in the full sense of the word." Our Lord humbled himself to have a body, to make himself

vulnerable, to be lifted up in ignominy, and to find resurrection in that glorious body.<sup>16</sup>

After I returned from Iraq, I discovered a profound physical connection with these words through the construction of box canvases. I carefully cut through selected pieces of wood for the frame, the table saw buzzing noisily. As I picked up a hammer, I figured Jesus probably had a similar tool to work with, and it did not take long to realize how small the nails I had at my disposal were compared to some of the nails used in Roman times. As I stretched my canvas over the wood, I imagined the finished work upon its smooth white surface, and that glorious finished Work.

Throughout history, artists have used religious symbolism as a framework for wrestling with the deep spiritual questions that face all of humanity. John Russell does this in his painting *Anchor*, which creates a unique perspective of the cross:

The vertical and horizontal respectively signify active and passive, life and death, spirit and flesh, resurrection and sacrifice, eternity and time, heaven and earth, other and self, male and female, divine and human, God and Man, Jesus Christ and His Church. Their intersection signifies the union of these—the two made one . . . Unification of these opposites is accomplished only by spiritual struggle.

From Iraq, I bear the scars of spiritual and physical struggle in my memory, my spirit, and on my body, and every day I strive to unify these broken pieces. I long for reconciliation and peace, in body and in memory.

As I hung the installation *Memoir: Tenses* by Ann Nelson for the *Reflections of Generosity* exhibit at Fort Drum, I was reminded of how often “memories slip away from one’s attempt to organize them.”<sup>17</sup> In the same way, this book shares that quality of brokenness. All reflections of life provide only glimpses into the fullness of humanity. As Ann Nelson states, “A well-

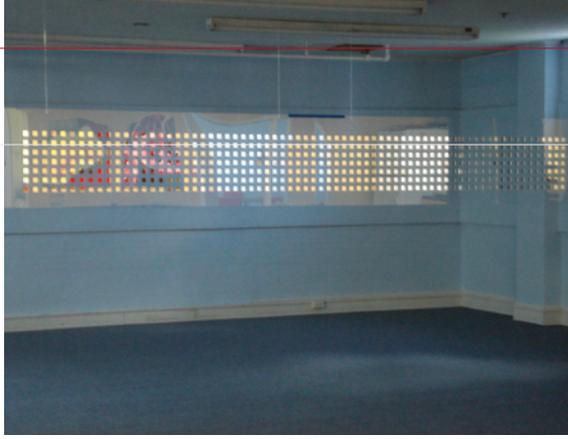
woven narrative evokes a belief in history or significance of oneself . . . some connections remain just out of reach, waiting in a half-light for the definition and body of paint.”<sup>18</sup>



John Russell, *Anchor*, Acrylic and Charcoal on Canvas. Fixed.



Anne Nelson, *Memoir: Tenses*, Oil, Gesso, and Pencil on Vellum. Installation 54"x81".



Gerda Liebmann, *490, Mirror Tiles on Plexiglass*. 110".

One of the most profound steps in healing brokenness, of peace and unification within ourselves and with others, is found in the generosity of forgiveness. Gerda Liebmann offers a tangible depiction of Christ's teaching on forgiveness. Her installation, *490*, features as many mirrors on plexiglass. As the audience views the work, they see partial images of themselves reflected on the mirrors. Through this experience, Gerda shows that "it is not just a matter of the number of times we are to forgive—but also as a complete change in our focus, from the capacity of the other to sin, to our own capacity to forgive."<sup>19</sup>

During a recent trip to Canada, I experienced healing through forgiveness. After my son was bitten by a large dog, we had to rush him to a Canadian emergency room. The only doctor available to treat my son was not from America or Canada, but from Libya. As I greeted the doctor, I experienced flashbacks of the Iraqi citizens I guarded on many construction details—I was always warned to stay alert. With a magazine in the chamber, I doubted whether I could bring myself to kill a man in self-defense. With the possibility of imminent and sudden violence every day, I experienced constant fear of death and the challenges of taking another man's life. However, through the doctor's gentle ministrations to my son, I found healing of the fears and guarded thoughts left over from the war-torn battlefields of Iraq. It helped me to not be fearful of Middle Eastern

culture, which also strives to experience peace beyond the scars of their violent world.

I also found the beauty and hope of forgiveness while I was in Iraq. I wrote the following letter to Mako Fujimura the day before Easter as I struggled with the recent loss of fellow Soldiers:

Mako,

In today's moment of grief, I want to thank you for writing your essay "Operation Homecoming: Epistles of Injury." Yesterday, the 10th Mountain Division lost five Soldiers under its command to an IED. Today their families and the Soldiers of the 10th MTN DIV remain captured by the weight and burden of tragedy. On this day before Easter, I found hope in the following words from *Refractions*:

"Art should let 'the other ones loose' from the bondage of decay, apathy, and loss. To the extent we are able to do that, we will see a new language of expression that is not self-centered but self-giving and generous. Yes, I believe that art can, and ought to, exist apart from wars. But the only place in history where this has been the case—a place called Eden, where a poet named Adam dwelled—is today hidden inaccessibly beneath the rubble of Iraq . . .

In Jesus' realism of 'such things must happen,' he was also reminding us that our sacrifice, either for just or unjust reasons, would not be the last word. Our efforts, however noble, will not end the cause of injustice. Nevertheless, we are all called to self-sacrifice. None is exempt, not even a pacifist thirteen-year-old secluded as far away from Iraq as humanly possible. And Jesus knows, firsthand, what it means to die an unjust death without picking up a stone or spear. Instead, he continues to breathe life into us in our funerary songs . . .

Our path back to Eden is blocked, but there is a way in to the feast of the selfless. Only the words of forgiveness, utterly stripped down to the core of faith, can echo the timeless, or the timeful, promise of an Easter morning. That is our true homecoming.<sup>20</sup>



Pamela Moore, *Moment In Time*, Printed Fabric. 4-4'x6' panel installation.

## *Generosity*

*Walking slowly, the whirling blur of a distant movie came into view  
Impending Danger threatened my Soul  
Inexplicably, Reason left me. I could not See  
Smoke filled into my heart of Grey  
Floating Illusions surrounded me  
Fear scaled to a higher Octave  
Time had Stopped  
All that Was  
was not.<sup>21</sup>*

I was in New York City conducting Army Reserve duty at the Armory building in the Bronx on September 11, 2001. At 8:55 a.m., after getting a drink of water at the water fountain in one of the hallways, I heard a

Soldier crying in a nearby office. Rounding the corner, I saw her looking at a small black-and-white television, which showed the top of the North Tower consumed in smoke and flames. The horror and fear of that moment made my heart skip a beat, and I began to sweat. I continued to watch in shock as the South Tower was hit by a second airplane at 9:03.<sup>22</sup> I broke down in tears. After a few hours of deliberation our commander released us all to go home to our family and friends.

Upon entering the streets of New York, the city I knew before was no more. People walked around in a daze—many thought that the world was ending. I headed to the subway station but it was closed, so I hailed a cab and made my way back to the New York Arts Program building on West 29<sup>th</sup> Street. Fellow students and friends were glued to the television there for any sign of hope beyond the events, for a show of generosity.

Shortly after the twin towers fell, I was encouraged after reading about the heroism of Mychal Judge in the booklet, *Fallen But Not Forgotten*:

The heroes of 9-11 bore the first flags of generosity. One such hero was Mychal Judge: “He was following his call as a chaplain—ministering to his fellow firefighters at their moment of greatest need—when his end came . . . Among the first of more than 350 firefighters lost at the trade center, Mychal Judge leads a hero’s procession that will linger long in New York city’s admiration . . . We came to bury his voice but not his spirit, his hands but not his works, his heart but not his love . . .”<sup>23</sup>

Other demonstrations of generosity filled the ruins of the World Trade Center. After the subway stations reopened in the days following the attacks, I noticed a lot of people with dirty cotton masks on their faces coming back from Ground Zero. I asked one of the workers what it was like down there at the site. He said that it was the worst experience of his life and that it was hard to sleep after experiencing the sight and smell

of the wreckage. Even after facing such difficulties, many volunteers kept working long hours throughout the following weeks.

Another sign of generosity I experienced was through Mako Fujimura's studio-mate, Hiroshi Senju, who donated a space for artists to use in response to the tragedy. Mako mentions this in *Refractions*, stating, "We decided to make the studio a place where local artists could exhibit, dialogue, and find healing. We called it TriBeCa Temporary and dedicated it as an 'oasis of collaboration by Ground Zero artists.'"<sup>24</sup>

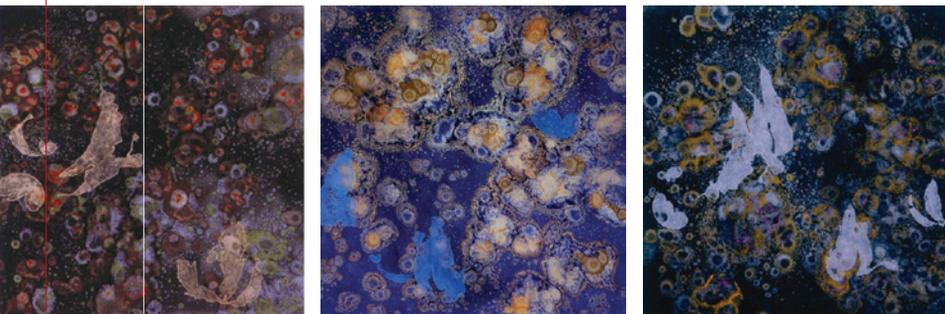
Through these experiences, I witnessed the hope that generosity can bring among the ruins of tragedy. I also learned that that the challenges of war are not just experienced by Soldiers—we are all affected by its aftermath and sorrows. But in times of war, as in times of peace, art can facilitate healing and restoration.

Clay Enoch's sculpture, *Hope*, from the *Reflections of Generosity* exhibit, shows the bond of artists, Soldiers, and humanity within the moments of tragedy. His work represents "the transformation from complete devastation to true hope . . . the middle figure lingers in grief and consolation, but ultimately yields to the pull of indefatigable hope."<sup>25</sup>



Clay Enoch, *Hope*, Bronze, Limited Edition of 11. 34" tall x 5"x6".

Generosity insulates people from the tragedies that seek to overwhelm their daily lives. In times of grief, it is never too late to experience hope, which can be generously shared and passed on to those who need it the most.



Joyce Lee, *Within Without* triptych: (from left to right) *Within Her Without Him*, *Within You Without You*, *Within Him Without Her*, Oil on Canvas.

## *Family*

I attended a leadership conference in Branson, Missouri in the summer of 2001. It was held at a historic mansion at the top of a small hill, which sloped to a lake. The sun reflected off each ripple of the water. Upon entering the front door, I was greeted by an elegant fountain that dripped water into a pool with golden fish. The room was filled with the soft chords of music that emanated from the conference room. Just then a heavenly voice began to sing a melody that drew me into the main hall and to a beautiful woman who would later become my wife.

Our marriage has not always been a land of fairy tales. Instead, like all couples, we have endured the tides of grief and sorrow. As our family grapples with the challenges of ongoing deployment, we use art and song to facilitate healing within our home. After I returned from Iraq, Kyla

wrote a song called “Love, Life” to describe the emotional challenges of being separated from me and raising three kids on her own:

Entering into the dark unknowing, throwing  
All that we have to the dark  
With our love lights glowing.

Everyone knows who we are ‘cause you’re going  
All of us trying so hard to be strong.

Love Life, how can we last for so long, Love  
Many have passed before we have  
So much to give to this world.

Watching the look in his eyes, it’s breaking  
Giving him their hugs goodbye is so hard . . . <sup>26</sup>

The emotional challenges of separation and loss are further illustrated in the *Within, Without* triptych paintings by Joyce Lee, about which she writes:

The forms in the triptych were inspired by foliage at Xi Hu (West Lake) in Hangzhou, China, one of the most beautiful scenic places in the country, but overrun with tourists. I visited here after the loss of a serious relationship, and was struck by the clash between Nature and manufactured Culture . . . <sup>27</sup>

In order to cope with the separation from my family during deployments, I often attended chapel. The first time I entered the trailer, I noticed it was only three times the size of my living quarters. It became clear to me that chaplains, like artists, do their best with what they have available. As I sat down in the chair near the front of the chapel, I noticed a table with two candles and the Eucharist—one of the only familiar sights from back home I experienced in Iraq.

Toward the middle of the service, Chaplain Jones approached the candles, saying:

As we light these candles, there is a twofold message. This first candle is lit to remember the Soldiers who are engaged in conflicts this week...We light this second one to remember the Soldiers who have fallen in combat this week...It is not enough to just remember the Soldier, but we must also take time to consider the families of these heroic men and women, who have shared and experienced the sacrifice of the fallen as well.

He then went on to mention that all across the nation, candles were being lit to recognize the men and women who had given their lives for our country.<sup>28</sup>

At the TriBeCa Temporary Exhibit in April 2002, there was a room that contained a single candle and a video that showed images of heroic sacrifice. Mako describes the beauty of such sacrifice:

The rescuers, along with other heroes of 9/11, redefined life's true expression of beauty, which was forgotten by the "convoluted theory" of recent times. The firefighter's "art" was their sacrifice. Their lives were offered up in response to the terrorist's "art" of vengeance in their "last extremity." Compared to the vengeance, those who sacrificed their own lives so that others could find life was the true *metanoia*, turning 180 degrees to face death head-on rather than fleeing. Through their sacrificial love, we can begin to know and experience true beauty.<sup>29</sup>

Candles now constantly remind me of the families who demonstrate sacrificial love every day and who struggle through the grief that accompanies it.

Throughout the tragedies of 9/11 and the current conflicts, there exist spiritual and emotional connections between people. Craig Hawkins

illustrates this in his drawing *Treasure*, in which family is presented as a landscape. He describes this work:

Like a sunrise giving light, unity, and strength to the land, the arcing lines form a connection between each person in the family. The intent of this piece is to display the invisible emotional and spiritual connections within a family unit. Our heart makes its home in whatever we treasure most. Whenever that treasure is a person, we are always connected to them no matter the physical distance.<sup>30</sup>

In preparation for the next deployment, I realize that commitment to my family is a task that demands more than I ever thought it would prior to marriage. Although the cost is high, the beauty and experience that comes from such sacrifice is priceless. Sacrifices are often shared by the whole family and, as we have seen, beauty suffers. But making the right sacrifices refines that beauty into something eternally valuable.



Maria Consuelo Vargas de Speiss (Macon),  
*Lamentation*, Wood Cut Print. 2.5"x1.8".



Craig Hawkins, *Treasure*, Charcoal on Paper. 10"x13".



Sharon Graham Sargent, *The Reason*, Acrylic on Stretched Canvas. 16" x 20".

## *Harmony*

As I run around the first bend of the familiar two-mile route, it is hard to believe that my tour in Iraq is finally coming to a close. Crossing a small bridge that I've crossed countless times before, the putrid water within one of Saddam Hussein's manmade lakes gives off an unpleasant aroma. In such moments, I cherish the memories and qualities of the United States, which seem so far away.

The harmony and rhythm of each step on the cement road brings me back to the task at hand: running. I experience a peace of mind in my many runs around the lakes in Baghdad, a peace that allows for moments of creativity. These ideas, once born, are tried and tested against the other thoughts that come throughout the day. As Mako describes it:

The process of creating renews my spirit, and I find myself attuned to the details of life rather than being stressed by being overwhelmed. I find myself listening rather than shouting into the void. Creating art opens my heart to see and listen to the world around me, opening a new vista of experience.<sup>31</sup>

Harmony is the goal of every painting I design and create. As the audience enters the gallery and is greeted by each work, the ones that have true synchronization will convince the viewer to stop and consider it. Harmony is the process of creating a complete thought within the elements of form, color, and design. Once achieved, the painting is like a good book that the reader cannot put down, and when the moment comes for the audience to be separated from the work its image sticks in the mind for future contemplation.

A harmonious painting does more than just answer questions for the viewer; it also goes beyond the viewer's preconceived notion of what art is and what art is not. As Leo Tolstoy wrote in "What is Art?"

Through the influence of real art, aided by science, guided by religion, that peaceful co-operation of man, which is now maintained by external means—by our law-courts, police, charitable institutions, factory inspection, and so forth—should be obtained by man's free and joyous activity. Art should cause violence to be set aside.<sup>32</sup>

Music, like art, uses harmony to restore a kind of peace. For example, at the *Reflections of Generosity* opening at Fort Drum on August 19, 2009, Christa Wells, Christy Tennant, and Kyla Kelsey performed for an audience of Soldiers, artists, and their families. Christa Wells dedicated one of her songs to the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division of Fort Drum, which is one of the most deployed divisions in the United States. As she played "Song of Blessing," the following lyrics captivated the audience:

May your feet find the road that is narrow and sure  
May they carry you home when you've finished your work  
May the light shine upon you,  
All around you, in the moments  
When the darkness would like to take you in  
May the quiet voice inside you  
Keep the truth alive and guide you as you run,  
It's gonna be a hard run

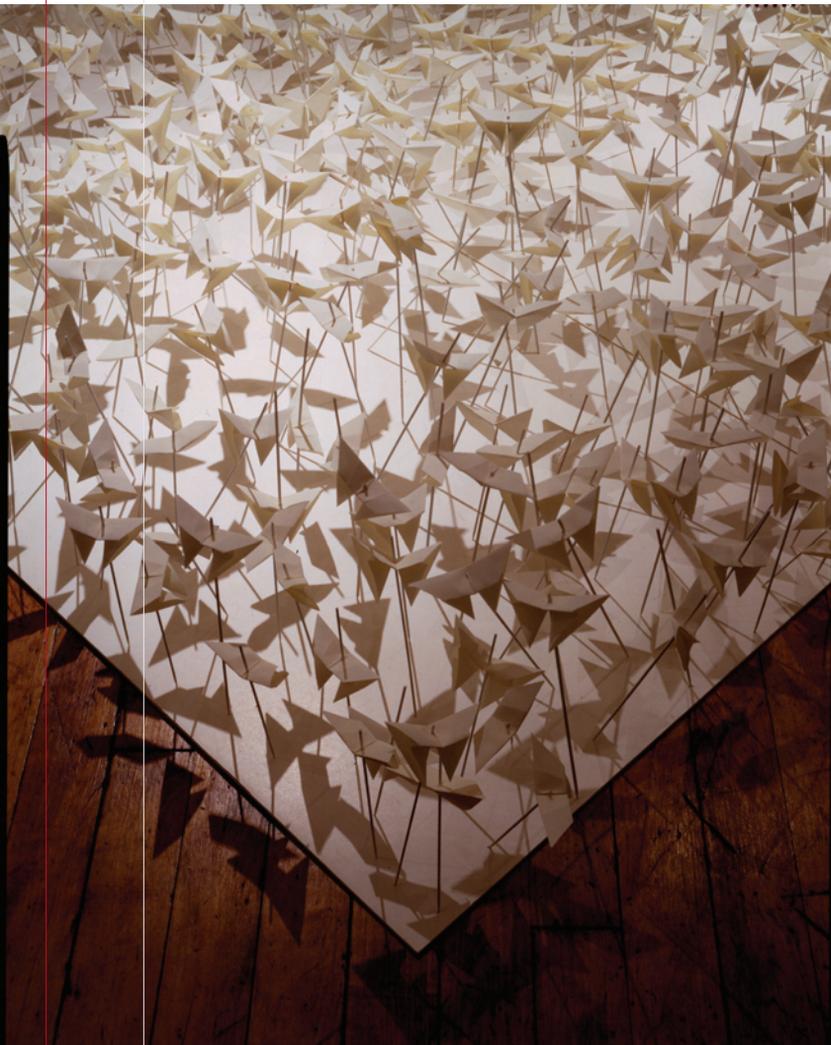
Take care of your heart  
Take the long way,  
If that's where peace is born  
Take beauty from the ashes  
Let the beauty rise up  
That's where hope comes from

May you hold your head up, and shoulder the sky  
May your chorus be sung as you follow the fight:  
That you will go into the hills and  
Face the fearsome bitter cold  
You are a guardian of freedom in this place  
That you will stand until it's over  
You will make the climb to glory, you will climb  
So high . . .<sup>33</sup>

Until the conflicts of our time subside, I will settle for peace experienced within moments of created harmony. Each piece of art along the gallery walls depicts a uniform rhythm of brush strokes, carving angles, and camera shots. Not all of the works display complete harmony, but I still find a way to cherish each one in its own way. I am reminded to stay committed to the creative process, for each mistake or undeveloped idea reminds me of what to paint and not to paint. The true beauty of these works is their ability to reveal my place among the artisans of our time. I am one ripple in the sea of humanity, seeking to capture the emotion of each ray of sun between the rocks of tragedy that drop into the living water, longing for that moment of everlasting peace.

Each creator working for restoration and peace works in harmony with all other such creators. Our combined thoughts and efforts form a landscape of art. Observing this vast canvas is the audience of the world, captivated by the artists' harmony and unity. And when the moment comes for the audience to turn away from the work, to leave the gallery and return home, its image remains imprinted in the collective mind, continuing its work toward restoration and peace.





Gretchen Bender *Butterflies*. Photo by Ed Gorn.

## Inspiration

As I stepped off the plane at Fort Drum to greet my family, the emotions of seeing them again were comparable to the joys of becoming a father. I felt the way I did the first time I met my wife. There were shared smiles and many tears of relief and contentment, and the phrase *it is finished* repeated in my mind. The realization set in that these happy “mission complete” moments are pauses within the cycle of ongoing deployments. Although thinking already of leaving again spurs difficult, painful thoughts and emotions, I stand ready for what is to come. This is the kind of experience that feeds inspiration and increases hunger for creativity.

As I finish my paintings, the easel’s silhouette casts a shadow across the smooth cement floor. Each fluid movement of paint creates an atmosphere inspiring exploration and accomplishment. In this environment,

inspiration directs my course toward the completed work. The refined paintings sit solemnly against the wall, each drip drying after the final finishing touches. I stand in awe of the silence, the finality of the moment. At the same time, I am filled with desire for further discoveries. Deep within me rises a longing for more moments of reflection.

It is in these times that the busyness of life is paused for meditation among works that radiate peace and restoration.

Inspiration beyond the completed works is echoed within the *Stations of the Cross*. As Jesus spoke his last words on the cross, it did not seem like a proper ending for his narrative or life's work. Could it be that his words were filled with a sense of longing, visions that went beyond his death, hope that humanity would be restored, peace beyond human measure? As the story unfolds, beauty is revealed through brokenness upon a cross-shaped easel, creating the possibility for a sequence of events beyond the grave. A saving grace remains beyond grief and sorrow, awaiting a resurrection that God had designed.

In consideration of Christ's generosity, I realize that there remains a greater calling in life. It is not enough for artists to ask their audiences to make additional sacrifices. Rather, artists should be the lens through which their audience sees the value and beauty of the sacrifices they have already made. As a reflection of the Creator upon the created, every artist can be a curator of the message of truth, resurrecting the hope underlying each person's life.

Every life story is short compared to nature's epic, but the narrative created by each artist has the potential to inspire beyond his or her lifetime. This is the artist's true labor, and it is captured within Gretchen Bender's *Butterflies*. This installation was created for TriBeCa Temporary

in response to the tragedy of 9/11. This was the last work Gretchen ever exhibited, yet the story and inspiration behind the work lives on. With *Butterflies*, the words *it is finished* take on new meaning for both artist and audience. Mako remembers:

As she folded hundreds of white origami butterflies and carefully arranged them on the floor, representing her experience that, she repeatedly told me, was her “resurrection moment” . . . Gretchen *saw* the butterfly. She experienced beauty and then began to experience a “spiritual shift.”<sup>34</sup>

For the year I served in Iraq’s galleries of beauty and sacrifice, I discovered my own *resurrection moment* and *spiritual shift*. It became clear to me through the inspiration of these moments that the qualities and themes of each untitled work are priceless and need to be shared.

In the lasting memory of our heroes whose daily generosity gives us the hope and beauty we need for restoration and peace, I humbly offer the words of these essays as a sacrifice to their broken and, in the end, resurrected beauty. May the generosity of their lives live on through the charity of our own personal sacrifices.



C. Robin Janning, *Peace, Love and Understanding*, Mixed Media, 18"x24".



Tim Sheesley, *Convergence*,  
Original Lithograph.



## *notes*

### *Foreward*

- i. Building Seven held the main electric infrastructure for the World Trade Centers, including the bunker for emergency control for the Mayor. It fell last on 9/11 as a result of fire at 5:22 p.m.
- ii. [www.tribecatemporary.com](http://www.tribecatemporary.com)

### *Introduction*

1. This position is the highest public arts position in the United States. National Council on the Arts members are appointed by the President and approved by the senate. Past members include Leonard Bernstein, Richard Diebenkorn, Duke Ellington, Helen Hayes, Charlton Heston, Harper Lee, Gregory Peck, Sidney Poitier, David Smith, John Steinbeck, and Isaac Stern.

2. Fujimura, Makoto. *Beauty without Regret*. 17 February 2009. <http://www.makotofujimura.com/essays/>.

### *One.* TRIBUTE

3. *300*. Dir. Zack Snyder. Perf. Lena Headey. Legendary Pictures, 2006.
4. The *Homecoming: IR Flag* original print is displayed on the cover of this book. This print was given as a gift to thirty Soldiers who recently returned from Iraq.
5. Tennant, Christy. "Song for a Soldier I Met on a Plane," *Reflections of Generosity* Exhibit, 2009.
6. Westfall, Charles. *We Are Climbing. Reflections of Generosity* Exhibit, 2009.
7. Fujimura, Mako. *Refractions*. Colorado Springs: Navpress, 2009.
8. The Seven Army Values are as follows: Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity, and Personal Courage.
9. Ceas, Sandra Jean. *Soldiers Creed. Reflections of Generosity* Exhibit, 2009.
10. United States Army. *Soldiers Creed*.

### *Two.* SACRIFICE

11. Thanks to Jill Brown I was able to communicate with my wife through the birth of our daughter Adelaide Josephine Kelsey.
12. Lewis, C. S. *A Grief Observed*. Faber and Faber, 1961.
13. Genesis 1:2
14. Stigora, Alison. *Waiting (ascent-decent). Reflections of Generosity* Exhibit, 2009.
15. Stigora, Alison. *Waiting (ascent-decent). Reflections of Generosity* Exhibit, 2009.

### *Three.* REFLECTIONS

16. Fujimura, Mako. *Refractions*. Colorado Springs: Navpress, 2009.
17. Nelson, Ann. *Memoir: Tenses. Reflections of Generosity* Exhibit, 2009.
18. Nelson, Ann. *Memoir: Tenses. Reflections of Generosity* Exhibit, 2009.
19. Liebmann, Gerda. *490. Reflections of Generosity* Exhibit, 2009.
20. The full letter to Mako can be viewed on Mako's blog at the following website: <http://www.makofujimura.com>

*Four.* GENEROSITY

21. Moore, Pamela. *Moment in Time. Reflections of Generosity Exhibit*, 2009.
22. "Timeline for the day of the September 11 attacks." Wikipedia, 2009. 23 February 2009. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/September\\_11,\\_2001\\_timeline\\_for\\_the\\_day\\_of\\_the\\_attacks](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/September_11,_2001_timeline_for_the_day_of_the_attacks).
23. Kings College. *Fallen but not Forgotten*. Priority Associates, 2001.
24. Fujimura, Mako. *Refractions*. Colorado Springs: Navpress, 2009.
25. Enoch, Clay. *Hope. Reflections of Generosity Exhibit*, 2009.

*Five.* FAMILY

26. Kelsey, Kyla. "Love, Life". *Reflections of Generosity Exhibit*, 2009.
27. Lee, Joyce. *Within Without* triptych. *Reflections of Generosity Exhibit*, 2009.
28. Jones, Michael. "Dedication to Soldiers and Families". Iraq, 2009.
29. Fujimura, Mako. *Refractions*. Colorado Springs: Navpress, 2009.
30. Hawkins, Craig. *Treasure. Reflections of Generosity Exhibit*, 2009.

*Six.* HARMONY

31. Fujimura, Mako. *Refractions*. Colorado Springs: Navpress, 2009.
32. Tolstoy, Leo. *What Is Art and Essays on Art*. Oxford: Oxford Press, 1930.
33. Wells, Christa. "Song of Blessing". 2009.

*Seven.* INSPIRATION

34. Fujimura, Mako. *Refractions*. Colorado Springs: Navpress, 2009.





## *about the author*

*Sgt. Ron Kelsey* was born in 1980 in Covington, Kentucky. He joined the U.S. Army Reserve in 1999 and continued to study art and religion for four years at Wabash Liberal Arts College. After transferring to Active Army in 2006, he began studying at Liberty University to become a military chaplain. His artwork has been shown in Canada and throughout the United States.

Ron Kelsey received a nonprofit military commission in 2009 for a lithograph to benefit thirty Soldiers coming home from Iraq. At this time, he also became International Arts Movement's Military Liaison for the Arts. After returning from Iraq in May of 2009, he organized IAM's first military art exhibit called *Reflections of Generosity* at Fort Drum, New York.

The *Reflections of Generosity* exhibit then traveled from New York to Illesheim, Germany to be installed in a military base there, with future exhibitions in development. Ron Kelsey is currently working on a nonprofit military artwork commission to support various Soldiers of Illesheim who will return from Iraq in September of 2010.

*Also Available from International Arts Movement*

RIVER GRACE by Makoto Fujimura



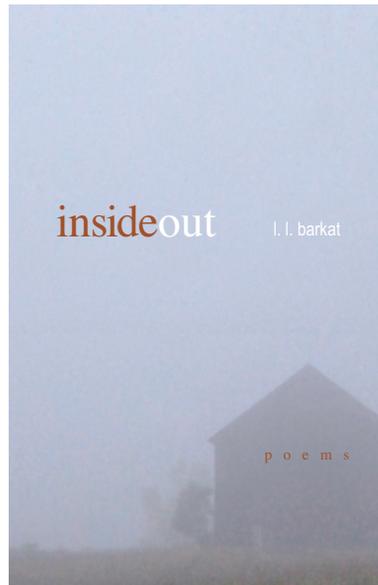
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## *About Reflections of Generosity*

As Soldiers and their families come to grips with ongoing deployments, the need for emotional and spiritual healing is greater than ever.

*Reflections of Generosity: Toward Restoration and Peace* is a traveling exhibition about the power of painting, sculpture, and song to facilitate restoration through generosity, community, and beauty. Artwork and performances reflect the spirit of ongoing generosity demonstrated by the military. Each exhibit is dedicated to the memory of the Heroes of 9-11 and the Soldiers who have given their lives in recent conflicts.

Joining *Reflections of Generosity* is as simple as contacting the Military Liaison for the Arts and then getting involved.

But supporting our everyday Heroes cannot occur without the financial support of RoG Patrons. If you are a part of IAM or a military community, please support *Reflections of Generosity* by donating financially. Gifts are tax-deductible due to the ongoing support of IAM.

Reflections of Generosity relies on the generosity of its supporters. Every gift we receive helps bring about healing and restoration in the lives of Soldiers and their families.

## *About International Arts Movement*

International Arts Movement is a non-profit arts organization that gathers artists and creative catalysts to wrestle with the deep questions of art, faith, and humanity. Through lectures, performances, exhibitions, screenings, projects, and workshops, IAM equips artists of all disciplines to generate good, true, and beautiful cultural artifacts: signposts pointing toward the “world that ought to be.”

A portion of the proceeds from this book benefits International Arts Movement and *Reflections of Generosity*.

[www.internationalartsmovement.org](http://www.internationalartsmovement.org)

