

“*Recuerdo*” “Remember”

I started painting *Recuerdo* on February 4th, 2002. On that day I was listening to NPR when the Sonic Memorial came on. This amazing radio documentary tells of how the twin towers came to be and it shares the stories of the people who worked there. While the news had been filled with items about the business people who died, this show had a story I’ll never forget. A Hispanic man talked about the many construction, house cleaning, maintenance and food service workers who also died that day – most of them immigrants. It struck me that almost every victim’s face that I had seen up to that point was white. I wanted to make a memorial for the idea of the towers as villages with all sorts of classes and nationalities. To me, 9/11 was an attack on humanity, not just an attack on the U.S.



- *Flags*: Shown are 24 of the flags of victims. Over 90 countries lost people.
- *Milagro*: Represents the first responders who were killed.
- *Marigolds*: The traditional flower of Dia de Los Muertos, their fragrant brightness help guide spirit travelers.
- *Bottle caps*: Traditional ornament in folk art, these represent the jumpers, I think of them as sparks whose brightness was gone by the time they reached the earth.
- *Papel Picado*: The South Tower is represented by a papel picado design, a traditional Dia de Los Muertos decoration.
- *A village in the sky*: The North Tower shows life as one might imagine it continuing on. Skeleton waiters serve food, skeleton brokers work on their computers. In the tradition of Dia de Los Muertos, the dead do everything we do, they just do it in the afterlife. When my mind couldn’t wrap itself around the idea of so much life

collapsing into dust, it felt comforting to think of the towers continuing on as an other-worldly village in the sky.

I worked on *Recuerdo* until early 2003 but as the war became eminent I shifted to protesting the invasion of Iraq. The war made it hard to work on the piece for many years. Then, on the 10th anniversary of 9/11 NPR aired the Sonic Memorial again. I found myself overcome by emotion and dusted off *Recuerdo*.

After everything that has happened in the name of 9-11, I feel now that this little memorial to the forgotten people who died that day is as important as ever. I finally completed *Recuerdo* in the Fall of 2013.

References:

The Sonic Memorial Special by Lost & Found Sound/The Kitchen Sisters (Davia Nelson and Nikki Silva). In this intimate, historic, sound-rich documentary, narrator Paul Auster weaves together voicemails, on-site recordings, oral histories, remembrances and stories collected from NPR's Sonic Memorial phone line. Learn more at SonicMemorial.org and listen for free at <http://www.prx.org/pieces/66867-the-sonic-memorial-project>.

Meanings and significance of Dia de Los Muertos and it's symbols:
<http://www.celebrate-day-of-the-dead.com>

List of the Tenants of the World Trade Center:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_tenants_in_One_World_Trade_Center

9/11 By the Numbers: <http://nymag.com/news/articles/wtc/1year/numbers.htm>

A Miracle's Cost: The Story of the last person found alive in the debris of Ground Zero:
<http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1003216,00.html>

World Views: From 1997 to 2001 the Lower Manhattan Cultural Arts Council ran a studio residency program in which temporarily vacant office spaces were converted into artist's studios. Artist Michael Richards died in his studio on 9/11.
http://www.lmcc.net/residencies/workspace/past_sessions/world_views