

Release of Souls – Katon

Inspiration

Due to my sister Christine's death, I realised the physical pain and depression one endures and the absolute agony of grief. How people expect you to pull yourself together and "Get over it". But the reality is, that healing can only occur one small step at a time. One needs to formulate a daily personal plan in order to reach a state, whereby you are once again operating at your full potential. The sadness never leaves you, but you are able to manage your sadness and resume your place in society. Thus said, if you are unable to find a way to deal with your grief, shrouded in depression, the rest of your life is spent being afraid, angry, resentful, and suspicious. Your wonderful loveliness that you brought into the world at birth is lost.

Recovery is hard because it requires work that no one else can do for you; it's easier to succumb to being a victim of pity.

When something awful is experienced, one feels an obligatory duty to help others who experience the same torment. How do you do that? This was my dilemma as I watched the terrifying visuals of 11 September 2001 unfold upon the screen. With such mass grief and communal sadness, how on earth do you give people **hope** again? We immigrated to Canada from South Africa, to give our children a safer and better future, now there is nowhere else to run, we are **all** affected by terrorism.

As an artist I knew I had to paint something to try and give people a reason to carry on, but what and how could it be done without coming over as cheap and in bad taste. Due to finances it was not possible to attend Christine's funeral, thus closure was hard for me. The idea formulated that if I wanted to restore **hope**, then **closure** was in order, therefore the Memorial art piece **Release of Souls**, came into being. Knowing that it had to be donated to the American people on whose soil this atrocity occurred, I began to share my story and have since been overwhelmed by the people who have come on board to make this **healing gift** a reality.

Sculpture and Paintings

What the Memorial gives people is somewhere they can place a wreath on the yearly date. The structure stands 16ft Square and 18ft high. Retaining the **Survival Wall** as testament to **all** the heroes of the day, who relentlessly searched for and saved lives, and to those who lost their own lives in the quest to save others. The names of the 343 Fire Fighters, New York Port Authority and NYPD, are engraved on the sculpture. I know that their thoughts were not of themselves but simply of the job at hand, and in their hearts their motto might have been, "While **I'm still standing**, there are people to save". Personally I like to call them 'Ground Angels'

The two paintings are symbolic of the **Twin Towers**, as shown on TV they just vaporized to nothing, hence the two Empty Metal spaces in front of the paintings. The two **Empty Metal** spaces are also indicative of the space where you **expect** to see your loved one in daily living, but no matter how hard you look the space remains empty.

The **Pentagon** base is symbolic in its inclusion representing the tragic event of the day. The Sculpture embodies these events in the hope that it may encourage peace to all four corners of the earth, as people from everywhere went to work and were murdered. The structure is designed so that people can walk through the catastrophe, kneel and maybe by encompassing themselves in the unit, begin to heal.

Everybody exudes Light and Colour and when a person dies people soon forget what they physically looked like, but they never forget how a person smelt, the sound of their laughter, the Light and Colour that the person brought to their lives. We live **within** our flesh, therefore when we die we are released **from** our flesh, hence the name **Release of Souls**. Although depicting the reality of the event, the paintings focus not on the blackness of the day, but ask you to close your eyes and visualise thousands of Souls **all at once** breaking free and filling the sky with colour, **Soul Lights**. What an incredible spectacle of Light you would see. Due to my belief, the paintings are bright in colour and I pray help at least someone heal.

Some elements in the paintings have obvious meanings, but the entire piece is open for interpretation as to how it touches, speaks to, the people who will find comfort, hope and healing, when they encompass themselves in the unit, for them it will be entirely personal.