

# WTC Memorial Jury Statement for Winning Design

January 13, 2004

Let us begin by acknowledging that memory belongs primarily to the individual: the unique and personal remembrance of someone deeply loved, of shared lives, of unspeakable grief and longing. At the same time, we must acknowledge the extent to which the evolving process of memory also belongs to families and neighborhoods, communities and cities, even entire nations. How to collect the disparate memories of individuals and communities together in one space, with all their various textures and meanings, and give them material form has always been the daunting challenge of any memorial site. How to commemorate at Ground Zero the countless, accumulated memories of the attacks of February 26th, 1993 and September 11th, 2001, tragedies shared by countless individuals and communities here and abroad, has posed an inspiring, yet humbling challenge to thousands of designers from around the world-and to us, the 13 jurors charged with finding a single memorial design only two years after the attacks.

Our memorial mandate, in all of its own complex richness, has been clear from the outset: to remember and honor those who died, to recognize the endurance of those who survived, the courage of the rescuers who risked their lives to save the lives of others, and the unbearable number who died in so doing-as well as the compassion of all those who supported the victims' families in their darkest hours. The families and other advisory councils have also asked us to be especially mindful of the memorial's need to recognize the victims and those who tried to save them, to keep the footprints unencumbered, and provide access to the bedrock at Ground Zero. In addition to meeting the program's needs, we also had to face the stark reality of reintegrating into the urban fabric a site that had been violently torn from it. How to do all this in a single, magnificent memorial design was a very tall order, indeed.

As is quite clear to everyone, we have taken the time we needed to make our final choice from among the 5,201 submissions from 63 different countries. Of all the designs submitted, we have found that "Reflecting Absence" by Michael Arad, in concert with landscape architect Peter Walker, fulfills most eloquently the daunting-but absolutely necessary-demands of this memorial. In its powerful, yet simple articulation of the footprints of the Twin Towers, "Reflecting Absence" has made the voids left by the destruction the primary symbols of our loss. By allowing absence to speak for itself, the designers have made the power of these empty footprints the memorial. At its core, this memorial is anchored deeply in the actual events it commemorates-connecting us to the towers' destruction, and more important, to all the lives lost on that day.

In our descent to the level below the street, down into the outlines left by the lost towers, we find that absence is made palpable in the sight and sound of thin sheets of water falling into reflecting pools, each with a further void at its center. We view the sky, now sharply outlined by the perimeter of the voids, through this veil of falling water. At bedrock of the north tower's footprint, loved ones will be able to mourn privately, in a chamber with a large stone vessel containing unidentified remains of victims that will rest at the base of the void, directly beneath an opening to the sky above.

While the footprints remain empty, however, the surrounding plaza's design has evolved to include beautiful groves of trees, traditional affirmations of life and rebirth. These trees, like memory itself, demand the care and nurturing of those who visit and tend them. They remember life with living forms, and serve as living representations of the destruction and renewal of life in their own annual cycles. The result is a memorial that expresses both the incalculable loss of life and its consoling regeneration. Not only does this memorial creatively address its mandate to preserve the footprints, recognize individual victims, and provide access to bedrock, it also seamlessly reconnects this site to the fabric of its urban community. Because the jury has regarded this memorial as a process that began with the first candlelight vigils, the appearance of posters of missing loved ones, and the laying of flowers around the city, and continued through the rescue and clean-up operations, and continues still through the memorial competition, we do not view our selection of a winner as the end of the memorial. Rather, we see our selection as one more stage of memory. "Reflecting Absence" has evolved through months of conversation between the jury and its creators. This is why the jury is confident that whatever further issues this memorial may need to address over time (such as artifacts and the narrative history of that day) will be made part of the underground interpretive center planned within this memorial site. In this vein, we recommend that the Art Commission of the City of New York advise the Memorial Foundation on how to protect the integrity of the design. We also recommend that provisions be made to accommodate the annual showing of "Tribute in Light."

On behalf of all the jurors, we give our heartfelt congratulations to Michael Arad and Peter Walker on their beautiful and compelling winning design. We also wish to thank the leadership of the LMDC, the Governor, the Mayor, and the public for having granted us complete authority and autonomy to make this very difficult, but crucially important decision. Let this be a place where all of us come together to remember from generation to generation.

Paula Grant Berry  
Susan K. Freedman  
Vartan Gregorian  
Patricia Harris  
Maya Lin  
Michael McKeon  
Julie Menin

Enrique Norten  
Martin Puryear  
Nancy Rosen  
Lowery Stokes Sims  
Michael Van Valkenburgh  
James E. Young