

TRUE COLORS  
CURATORS STATEMENT

How Can You Make Art at a Time Like This? How Can You Not?

This collection of works is an artistic affirmation of the strength and resolve of the American people when challenged by tragedy and adversity. It was inspired by the events of September eleven, 2001; artists were the impetus; Meridian International Center the sounding board. This synergy produced the exhibition *True Colors: Meditations on the American Spirit*.

On an achingly beautiful September morning, violence, horror and devastation struck New York, taking many lives and destroying before our eyes one of its shining symbols; then tore a gaping hole in the Pentagon in Washington; and finally turned a peaceful field in Pennsylvania into a fiery grave. The world was a simultaneous witness. In a moment we were all forever changed.

Americans everywhere reacted in shock, sadness, and confusion and sought ways to respond; they volunteered, they prayed, offered financial assistance and gave solace where possible. Messages of condolence and support poured in from around the world.

As is inevitable when a great event stirs the soul, the creative community was moved to respond to the events of September eleven. Artists felt compelled to express their feelings and sought a collective way to make some statement. Some who knew Meridian urged us to provide the vehicle and the idea seemed to us also very compelling. The exhibit began coming together just weeks after the tragedy.

The 68 artists in *True Colors* are a diverse mixture of Americans who to a great extent mirror the ethnic, racial and religious backgrounds of the populace at large. Some from New York and Washington witnessed the tragic events first hand; others, though far from Ground Zero, saw it in the media's unrelenting coverage of the inescapable carnage, grief and courage. Some names are internationally known; others may be less familiar to viewers, but are representative on the finest of American contemporary artists.

For many artists a surge of energy resulted in bold new imagery. For others, works of art previously made now resonated in profound ways and took on meanings heretofore unintended or unimaginable. When taken as a whole, *True Colors* is an exhibition that is far greater than the sum of its disparate parts. One image invariably leads to and builds upon another, until for the viewer something like lyrical poetry of a visual nature occurs. One of art's great beauties lies in its ability to tell us things about our time and place that we did not know we knew.

*True Colors* was first presented in the United States, with initial venues in Washington DC and Manhattan. However, Meridian and the participating artists feel strongly that it is equally important to send this collection of work abroad. All those who lost their lives or were otherwise affected were not Americans. This exhibition has touched all who have seen it.

We are particularly pleased to bring *True Colors* to Turkey, a longtime friend of the United States. It is our hope that here, as in other places the exhibit visits, its visual language may foster a greater understanding of the American character, the inspiring beauty of our land and the strength of its people that enabled the nation to overcome adversity, not simply endure.

This is a thoughtful and reflective time for America. Few of our nation's citizens are more thoughtful than its artists. *True Colors* lets them speak for themselves.

Pamela Bailey  
William Dunlap  
Nancy Matthews