

**After September 11: Ground Zero
Photographs by Joel Meyerowitz**

Foreign Ministry

September 3, 2002

Ambassador Coats

Secretary Pleuger,

Dr. Prinz,

Herr Schultze,

Liebe Gaeste,

September 11 – almost one year later.

I doubt if any of us will ever forget where we were and how we felt when we first learned of the attacks.

We will never forget the shock and horror of the first hours, the images -- of an airplane slicing into the south tower of the World Trade Center, of the crumbling skyscrapers, of ash and smoke hanging over the New York skyline -- images that kept us glued, numb, to the screens of our televisions. We will never forget the magnetic pull of those images, about the hold they had on us.

9/11 has already become part of our cultural fabric – the news reports that went around the world on that terrible day have become memories.

But as Secretary of State Powell said in Washington last February when he launched this travelling exhibit of photographs by Joel Meyerowitz on their journey around the world. "Remembrance – history – requires a face."

This exhibit puts a face on the aftermath of the tragedy.

Returning to his native New York a few days after the tragic events of September 11th, Joel Meyerowitz immediately made his way down to Ground Zero to see how he could help. He took out his camera but was reminded by a police officer that this was a crime scene and no photographs were permitted. It was at this moment that he realised what he must do, for he knew that no photographs meant no history and decided that he would find a way in and make an archive for the City of New York.

A selection of those photographs makes up this exhibit. In these photographs, we find "order in a disordered world, beauty in the most blasted terrain, a path out of the confusion." These pictures both fix and shape our experience of an event that even those who lived through it can't quite comprehend.

Pictures that make it all real, help to understand, make us feel something besides numb.

September 11 rallied a new kind of coalition, both political and emotional.

It unified people from countries around the world and inspired, in President Bush's words, "a deeper appreciation of the things that matter most in our lives -- our faith, our love for family and friends, and our freedom."

This exhibit, in putting a face on the memories of September 11 that haunt us, shows us why we feel that way.

That is why we appreciate Minister Fischer's agreement to show this exhibit now -- as we prepare to mark the first anniversary of 9/11. We know another planned project had to be postponed.

This exhibit is important because the photographs here document feelings and emotions that transcend time, culture, and history.

In speaking about the project, Joel Meyerowitz said recently, "Everyone here has been transformed by the spirituality of Ground Zero. The camaraderie among the workers reminded me of the stories we've heard about the World Wars, where men and women are thrown together by a common cause, share tragedies and victories, and are forever bound to one another by their effort." He also used the words beauty -- and nostalgia -- in talking about the project - "a nostalgia for the beginning, the hopefulness that survivors would be found, the uplifting moment of helping."

That is what makes these photographs enduring reminders.

As Rudolph Giuliani, whose resolve and compassion as Mayor of the City of New York so impressed and reassured the world, said, "These photographs capture the horror and heroism of September 11 and its aftermath... Our rescuers met the worst of humanity with the best of humanity, and in the process they inspired freedom-loving people everywhere."