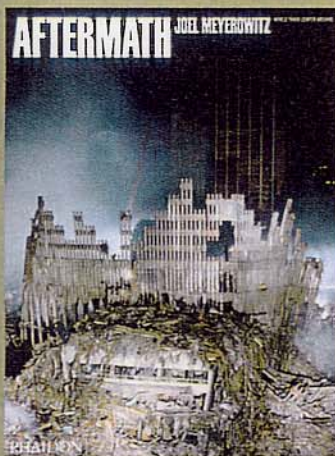


8 (EIGHT PHOTOJOURNALISM)

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CIRCULATION: NOT KNOWN**



Aftermath
Joel Meyerowitz
Published By Phaidon
www.phaidon.com
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(304pp Hardback)

Five years ago, Joel Meyerowitz took on the self-appointed task of creating a historical document of the site of rubble in New York that was the result of 11 September 2001. *Aftermath*, the prodigious tome taken on by Phaidon, stands as a memorial to both the process of excavating and all whose lives were taken or affected by the events. The physical and emotional weight of Meyerowitz's World Trade Center Archive is intimidating to say the least.

Meyerowitz took it upon himself to gain access to Ground Zero, the site where the World Trade Center once stood, by whatever means necessary. His determination was borne out of his initial expulsion from the site on the basis that no members of the press were permitted. Outraged by such a decree, and its implication that any historical record would be nonexistent, Meyerowitz, day in and day out, fought his way into the site until his presence became part of the scenery. His record of events began on 28 September 2001 and lasted until 30 May 2002. All 300 pages of *Aftermath* are dominated with large format, intensely detailed images of the site as it is slowly cleared – rubble transported out, artefacts uncovered and human remains discovered.

In *Aftermath*, Meyerowitz repeatedly describes the sheer

emotional pull of the "pile", as Ground Zero was referred to by those responsible for its excavation. The daily transport between the "real world" and the "pile", for everyone – volunteers, iron welders, fire men and police – was not an easy task. For many, as the clean-up came to an end, leaving the "pile" was as difficult as beginning the task. Throughout Meyerowitz's encounters and musings, and symbolic of the fragility of stereotypes, is the burden of sorrow that the construction workers endured each day, often bringing these rough, tattooed men to tears. As one lone man, raking through the dirt eloquently put it in the last day before the site was finished "We are gardeners on the garden of the dead."

Ten million tonnes of corrugated steel was melted down into movable pieces only to uncover more of the same for months upon end. The distant images of the site allow for little variation when viewed chronologically. Yet, interspersed are the more intimate images – portraits of the people he met on the site and relied on; the discovery of human remains, of which there were over 9,000, that always, without fail, was followed by a ceremony; an abandoned but not completely destroyed, daycare centre coated in a thick film of grey dust resembling, as Meyerowitz suggests, the remains of Pompeii. "The insignificant objects that describe a passing moment in culture".

His detailed yet sometimes poetic descriptions of the slow and arduous task ahead are scattered throughout the pages like those jotted down in a personal journal. "As I watched sunlight and shadow pass in waves over the site, I thought about nature's indifference to our passage on earth. Throughout history, great tragedies have happened on days like today. And yet it is often nature and time that eventually help us move away from grief and grant us perspective and hope. I decided to set up my camera". Tragedies often afford insights like these.

What is refreshing about Meyerowitz's approach is the

complete absence of the political *how* and *why*. *Aftermath* does not pretend to be more than it is, an archive to an historical event. The intentional publication date of, September 2006, marks five years since the terrorist attacks. For New Yorkers, this body of work will resonate deeper than for those of us who were not in New York during September 2001, witnessing the sudden transformation of their city under tragic circumstances. Now, they too will be able to peer behind the POLICE LINE DO NOT CROSS tape that so stringently cordoned off the area. Credit must be given to Meyerowitz for his determination and wilfulness to bring this home to his fellow New Yorkers. *In memory of Lesley Thomas-O'Keefe.* LH