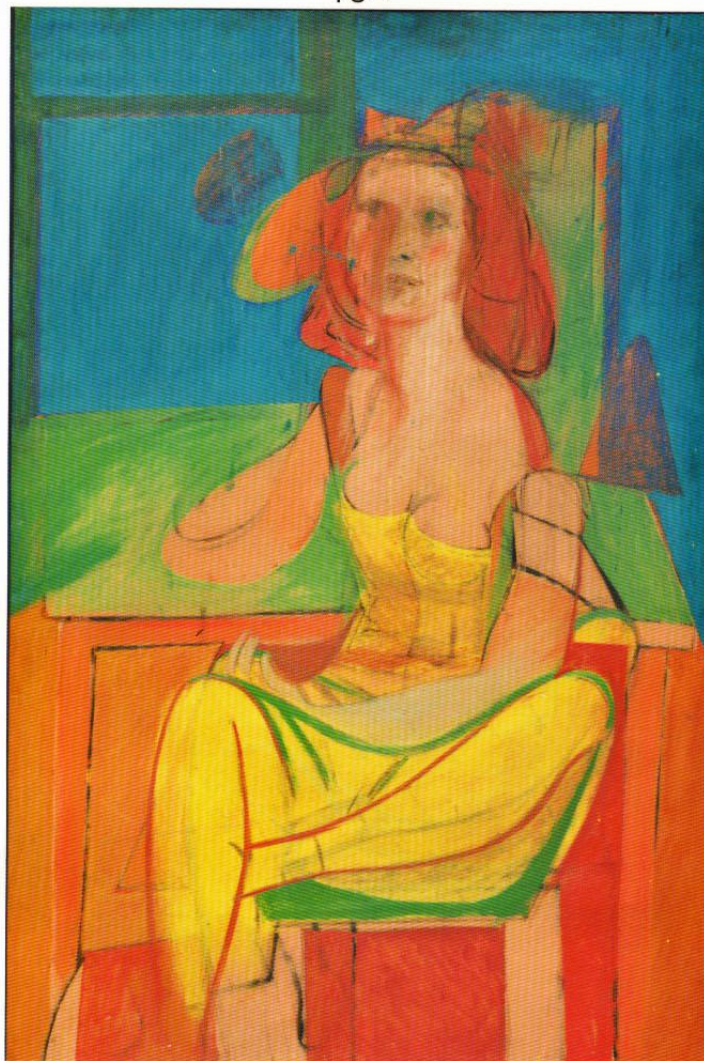




# GALLERY & STUDIO

## de Kooning at MoMA: “Genius death your art is done”

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Willem de Kooning (American, born the Netherlands, 1904-1997) Seated Woman, c. 1940. Oil and charcoal on masonite. 54" x 36" (137.2 x 91.4 cm) Philadelphia Museum of Art. The Albert M. Greenfield and Elizabeth M. Greenfield Collection © 2011 The Willem de Kooning Foundation / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

“The Good Old Bad Old Days”  
another excerpt from Ed McCormack’s memoir in progress  
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## A Memorial Group Show that Raised the Spirits

Surely all of the 9/11 memorials that took place in 2011 were heartfelt. Yet it is doubtful that many were as aesthetically edifying as the group exhibition "Fall: Rising Above 9-11," curated by Carson Ferri-Grant for the West Side Arts Coalition.

Among the variety of works indicating how various artists were affected by the tragedy that took so many innocent lives, one of the most poignant was Nicolas Bouteneff's moving acrylic on canvas "Infinity," depicting the beams of light, ghosts of the towers, that rose in tribute against the night sky for some time after the attacks. Painted with impastos akin to those of Wayne Thiebaud, Bouteneff's acrylic on canvas gave enduring form to that ethereal tribute. Roy Szuper also gave us another powerful image of the towers in his moody photograph "Looking Out My Bedroom Window," in which the two structures were restored to stately life by retrospective vision, yet ominously engulfed in shadow, like a premonition, against the red light of dawn.

Another gifted photographer, "Russell Swanson," also employed shadow dramatically, to silhouette, a young man gazing through the chain link fence around the site into a void of fog in the wake of that fateful morning. Artist/curator Ferri-Grant's oil on canvas "Replanting" was possessed of a melancholy beauty, with the figure of an apparent vegetal

being created with the same neopointillist strokes that compose the surrounding landscape, seated on the grass between two tall trees evoking the towers themselves.

Peter Tunney contributed a work featuring large jumbled stenciled letters in the semi-translucent pale yellowish hue of old newspapers, with headlines about the attacks showing through like pentimento, surrounded by a dull red ground the color of dried blood. Unjumbled, the letters spelled out, "City of Dreams."

A fiery young angel with wings of flame, gazing up at a radiant star was seen in Shikoh Shiraawa's tall diptych in oil on canvas. Beside the painting was an inspirational companion poem in English and Japanese, containing the lines "suddenly / the world was overwhelmed by the darkness / despair, fear, thousands of meaningless deaths / nevertheless / we rise." And as in Bruce Springsteen's song "The Rising," the theme of ascension in the face of devastation was also brilliantly evoked in Regina Valluzzi's semiabstract acrylic on canvas, "Dream of our soul awakens," with its lyrical pink blue, and green hues, and climbing vines soaring upward like the towers against lit-up city windows.

Urban architecture also figured prominently in "Instantaneous," a boldly simplified acrylic on canvas by D.J. Barry, in which the towers were revived by wistful

wishful thinking as totemic structures containing cheerful images of children at play. And a similar theme was interpreted in another unique manner by Artur Pashkov, whose oil on canvas "Dreamscape" showed the two towers standing alone, apart from the city, set against blue mountains and pink clouds in a radiant heavenly realm. In a strong found object assemblage called "Free Fall," however, Olivier Rabbath brought back traumatic memories of victims leaping in desperation from the burning towers with actual shoes and trousers set against a blank background containing a large question mark. And Ha Lee struck an ironic chord with "The Memorial of History: Dictator Laden," in which the monstrous mastermind of the terror attacks, Bin Laden, is seen in a garden incongruously cradling a baby lamb in his arms.

It seemed altogether fitting that, as an outdoor annex to this powerful memorial exhibition, the gifted street artist Hani Shihada, familiar to New Yorkers for over 25 years, executed one of his large sidewalk chalk murals of firemen raising the stars and stripes at Ground Zero on a sidewalk near the gallery.

— Peter Wiley

WSAC, Fall: Rising Above 9/11, recently seen at Broadway Mall Community Center, 96th Street (Center island).

## The Equine Photography of Carol J. Walker

From artists of the French Romantic period like Gericault and Delacroix to the famous 18th century British painter of horses George Stubbs, the idealized equine figure has been such a ubiquitous part of art history that one might easily mistake the images



"Mare in a Blizzard II"

of the Colorado-based photographer Carol J. Walker for paintings — especially since they are presented as Giclee prints on canvas. This, of course, should not be construed as either a compliment or detriment, since the aesthetic qualities of a work in either medium can only be determined on evidence of specific examples. It does, however, suggest Walker's consistent ability to impart a mythic dimension to her pictures, which in photography as much as in painting, can only be the product of a very particular combination of artistic vision and individual sensibility.

Yet what matters even more is Walker's superb sense of composition and the poetic effects she achieves, which would be remarkable in any artist, regardless of her or his medium or chosen subject matter. A less tangible but equally important facet of her

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art is a sense of empathy and intimacy quite rare in animal photography, which she explains as follows: "I seek to capture the essence of the horses that I am photographing by spending time with them and becoming in tune with their nature and behavior. My goal is to provide the viewer with a connection between them

and the horse I am photographing. When I am photographing wild horses I strive to inspire people to help save them."

Toward this end, in 2008 Walker, who has followed herds of wild horses for the past six years in Colorado, Wyoming, and Montana, has published a book called "Wild Hoofbeats: America's Vanishing Wild Horses." And if the photographs in it are anywhere near as striking as the ones in her present New York exhibition, they must garner considerable support for her cause. For her pictures capture dynamically the grace and the glory of these beautiful creatures, whose existence on public lands is now seriously endangered.

One of her most affecting images is "Mare in a Blizzard II," a monochromatic composition with the delicacy of a fine pencil drawing, in which the form of the lone animal

is almost subsumed by a pointillistic flurry of falling snowflakes. By contrast, in "Dark Horses," a herd, backlit by the sun, gallops headlong toward the viewer through a shallow body of water like shadow-steeds in a dream.

"Three Mares Running" harks back to famous horse painters of the Old West, such as Charles M. Russell and Frederick Remington, not only for the energy and velocity it projects, but for the landscape itself, with its vast expanse of blue sky, pink-tinged cumuli, distant mountains, and the sagebrush through which the animals gallop, their manes flying in the breeze. Another picture, in which a magnificent stallion is isolated against a relatively plain background like a monumental sculpture, is more reminiscent of Stubbs' paintings of horses in domesticated settings such as ranches and racetracks.

Neither sensationalized nor sentimental, these thoughtful pictures not only make a convincing case for the preservation of these beautiful creatures that figured so prominently in the history of our country, but also for Carol J. Walker as our most gifted contemporary equine photographer.

— Wilson Wong

Carol J. Walker, Agora Gallery, 530 West 25th Street, Nov. 29 -Dec. 20, 2011. Reception: Thursday, Dec. 1, 6 - 8 pm.

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