NARRATIVE:
On March 11th—the 6 month anniversary of September 11th—desiring a quite calm place of reflection, you enter a softly lit, warmly painted gallery. You are greeted with a seven-foot tall grid of what looks at first to be a quilt of white paper squares hanging from the ceiling. When you approach, you realize that this grid is constructed out of magazine pages with images of candles sandwiched in-between. As the piece is back-lit, the candles glow ever so slightly. If you counted, you’d realize that there are over 3,000 of these squares held together with archival tape—the number of lives lost on September 11th.

Next, you behold four images by a Boston-based photographer: a memorial to two of the airline pilots in Boston, a memorial to firefighters arranged on an office chair in New York City, a memorial arranged around a tree at the Pentagon, and a memorial in the snowy fields of Pennsylvania. Another photographer, also a folklorist and ethnologist, wished for her images to be tacked to the wall, just like the make-shift memorials and missing posters she documented. Another grid greets you. Typed phrases such as “Dawn Skyline from Brooklyn September 12th, 2001” emerge from a sea of black. Each of us will conjure up a different, or maybe the same, photograph to accompany the words.

You sit down at one of two computers and explore Faith—a website documenting a photo project and public installation (since removed) of over 180 people who attended the September 14, 2001 candlelight vigil in Union Square. You then proceed to a small room where you watch a one-minute video showing a close-up of a candle: A Moment of Silence. The video was shot during the worldwide September 21, 2001 call to light a candle in memory of the events.

What you behold is varied in subject and media, but united in theme: a string of Christmas lights with 9-11 media images inserted, a map of Ground Zero indicating viewing locations and temporary memorials (with copies available for walk-in gallery visitors), a wedding dress adorned with newspaper images of Afghan people, glowing lightboxes with images of “God Bless America” commercial signs, and a website and photographs concerning the use and display of the American flag in the days and weeks afterward.

You end your visit by reading a sign tacked to a fence in one of the photographs: “All of you taking photos, I wonder if you really see what’s here or if you’re so concerned with getting that perfect shot that you’ve forgotten that this is a tragedy site, and not a tourist attraction. As I continually had to move ‘out of someone’s way’ as they carefully tried to frame this place of mourning, I kept wondering what makes us think we can capture the pain, the loss, the pride and the confusion—this complexity—into a 4 x 5 glossy. – Firegirl, NYC, 9/17/01.”

Affixed underneath this handwritten note are two responses to Firegirl’s comments. Perhaps no single photograph or even exhibition can capture the essence of such an event, but with reverence to what they represent, photographers, artists, galleries, and museums add to this dialogue.

This is a just a small selection of the work in 6 Months, A Memorial and of what we hope a gallery visitor might experience when viewing the presentation.

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SYNOPSIS
6 Months, A Memorial (March 11-April 28, 2002) is a presentation of photographically-based works made in response to, but not necessarily documents of, September 11 memorials (defined in a broad sense) as well as the role of photography in our conception of the events. From a national open call for submissions, we received almost 100 responses and selected over 25 artists displaying more than 60 works on this theme.

PHILOSOPHY
Please note that we are trying to keep this as “un-exhibit like” as possible. As a result, we will not be having a “wine and cheese opening,” but an open house on Monday, March 11th from 8am to 8pm. In addition, the show will be free for its entire run. We conceived of this as a gathering of memorials creating a larger memorial, instead of the traditional gallery exhibition. Interestingly, many of the artists included also veered away from their usual format: black-and-white photographers turned to color and traditional artists turned to mixed media installations and group projects. A section will be dedicated to Boston University (30 lives were lost from its community) featuring images of events and memorials taken by BU Photo Services during the month of September. Also included will be books and magazines published on the occasion of September 11th and a computer with virtual memorials bookmarked.

WHY?
The idea for this show was born from a collective urge expressed during a Board of Directors meeting held shortly after September 11th. Given Boston’s connections to the events, the PRC’s very active Board felt we needed to do something. Responses in the Boston area have just begun to emerge and this show is only one of many. As a small alternative arts space, we could act quickly.

HOW?
The “authorship” coming from the artist’s voice is important to this show and to the PRC. The artists’ statements will adorn the walls as the wall text (an essay in our March/ April 2002 newsletter is available). Paying homage to these people and memorials, visitors will be able to add their own comments and mementos to a wall as a part of the exhibition. A companion online exhibition, including essay, statements, and links, can be viewed www.prcboston.org.

WHO?
Steve Aishman (Cambridge, MA), Ornit Barkai (Carlisle, MA), Zana Briski (New York, NY), Martha Cooper (Manhattan, NY), David Curry (New York, NY), Susan E. Evans (Syracuse, NY), Marcus Halevi (Somerville, MA), Liz Linder (Boston, MA), Robin Masi (Concord, MA), Margaret Morton (New York, NY), Matthew Nash (Boston, MA), Cheryl Sorg (Cambridge, MA), Erica Uhlenbeck (New York, NY), Daniel P. Younger (Mt. Vernon, OH), Albert L’Étoile, Kalman Zabarsky, and Sarah Zenewicz (Boston University Photo Services) as well as several collaborative projects. The website Flaggingspirits includes Karl Baden (Cambridge, MA), Leslie Ernst (Austin, TX), Marion Faller (Buffalo, NY), Melissa Shook (Jamaica Plain, MA), Sally Stein (Los Angeles, CA), Jim Stone (Albuquerque, NM), Margaret Wagner (Jamaica Plain, MA), and Morton. Another website project, FAITH, includes Svend Lindbaek (New York, NY), Claus Bonnellycke, Nancy Opitz, Kevin Cole, and LaDonna Myroth. A map developed as a project by New York New Visions: Coalition for the Rebuilding of Lower Manhattan’s Temporary Memorials Committee, Around Ground Zero includes Laura Kurgan, Janette Kim, Bethia Liu, with Rivka Mazar, Donald Shillingburg, and Morton.

SPECIAL ARTISTS’ RECEPTION
Thursday, April 25th, 2002, 6-8 pm. Free.
Join us for an evening honoring imagemakers who helped our community’s healing process by turning their lenses on these difficult events.

The Photographic Resource Center is a non-profit organization that exists to facilitate the study and dissemination of information related to photography. Operating from the campus of Boston University, it provides a highly acclaimed exhibition program, a bimonthly newsletter, lectures, workshops, special events, and a 4,000-volume resource library to our members and the general public. It is supported by grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Massachusetts Cultural Council, the Boston Cultural Council, as well as by numerous private foundations, and the ongoing generosity of its members. The Photographic Resource Center is located at 602 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, MA, 02215 (Blandford T stop on the B Green Line - ground level of the Morse Auditorium). Hours are Tuesday through Sunday from 12 to 5pm, and on Thursdays from 12 to 8pm. Admission is $3/general public, $2/students and seniors, and free on Thursdays. The PRC is always free to members and to school groups with appointments. The PRC is fully accessible. For more information, visit us online at www.prcboston.org or call 617-353-0700.