

THE TEMPORARY SOLUTION PRESENTS  
IN MEMORY: A MOBILE MEMORIAL

By

MARK S. ZIMMERMAN

SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE

WES KLINE, CHAIR  
SEAN MILLER, MEMBER

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Abstract of Project in Lieu of Thesis  
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THE TEMPORARY SOLUTION PRESENTS  
IN MEMORY: A MOBILE MEMORIAL

By

Mark S. Zimmerman

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Chair: Wesley Kline

Major: Art

My project celebrates the memorial: past, present, and future. The roadside memorial has and always will be part of our roads and part of the landscape our roads lead us through. One can expect to come in contact with one of these shrines on a typical drive. Although their appearance might be changing, we can always count on them to exist in some fashion. It seems as if every state's Department of Transportation is seeking a solution to appease the institution and the public. The issue is simple. People still want to construct these handmade, public structures while others find them dangerous, a distraction. I propose that the answer lies within mobility and the road itself. These structures are for the people: why not give the people a better, more convenient system to work with, a system built on mobility?

My project identifies hand-made memorials as an icon in mobility, a marker that stands for a life lost while traveling along America's roads. Mobility is a way of life that will always exist and must be taken advantage of. By identifying each state's view of and occasional solution for the existence of roadside memorials, I have formed my own solution, and that solution is *In Memory: A Mobile Memorial*.

Each state has a different opinion for whether or not roadside memorials should exist on American roads, and if they do, how much control does the public have? It is my goal to find a solution for a more publicly accepted memorial. By acknowledging the history and structure of the roadside memorial I was able to transform a basic trailer in to a mobile memorial. *In Memory* is at first glance a yellow trailer, but when we go inside we find the tools necessary to create a spontaneous memorial or adhere an object to the space for a semi-permanent exhibition. I am present for each interaction, some of which are publicized while others are unannounced. It is important to be public. I have made many stops throughout my travels thus far, including rest stops, the Oaks Mall in Gainesville, Florida, the flea market in Waldo, Florida, numerous intersections, and so on. At each stop it is my full intention to engage with the public, to discuss the contributions as well as the project itself.

When someone decides to participate they are photographed with contribution in hand. This object stands for the life once lived by the person the contributor has chosen to remember in this way. I am by no means limiting the memorial to victims of car accidents; instead, I am expanding the concept of roadside memorials to any individual regardless of the method of their passing. It is my hope that the image will hold its value, similar to post-mortem photographs from the late 1800s and early 1900s. The photograph becomes a memorial in itself. Photographs act as triggers to remember a time, a place, and most importantly the people that were part of our lives. I am utilizing a variety of artistic strategies from photography to installation to propel this memorial into the next century.

## CHAPTER 1 DEFINING THE ROADSIDE MEMORIAL

The Temporary Solution is a self-operated, self-created, self-established, self-publicized organization built on the notion of making art accessible by and for the public. Currently operating alone, but looking to expand in the near future, The Temporary Solution strives to be mobile and be in front of as many people as possible, consistently, productively, and pro-actively.

It is time we celebrate the memorial; past, present and future. My recent work explores new methods of creating roadside shrines, while focusing my research on the temporality and fragility of these creations that stand for a life that has been lost.<sup>1</sup> It is not uncommon to come in contact with one of these shrines on a typical drive. Although their appearance might be changing, to some extent we can always count on them to exist in some fashion. It seems as if every Department of Transportation is seeking out a solution to appease the institution and the public. Maybe the answer resides within mobility and the road itself? What happens when the memorial becomes mobile, when the memorial stops for the public rather than the public slowing down for the memorial? These structures are for the people; why not give the people a better, more convenient system to work with?

Typically roadside memorials are constructed by friends or family members related to the deceased. At one of these shrines one can expect to come across objects that were important to the one who died, such as stuffed animals, jewelry, music, and so on. Notes or photographs also may begin to appear. It is not uncommon for a cross to be placed at the location, as a centerpiece to the memorial itself. As we continue to travel the American roads, one may notice these roadside shrines are beginning to look a little

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<sup>1</sup> For my purposes, I am not limiting the contributions to be in the name of someone who died on the road or in a vehicle.

different. That cross that once signified the loss of a life may be replaced with a sign made of similar material as a street sign. Many states have adapted to a new set of rules and the state of Florida is a good example.

According to the State of Florida Department of Transportation (DOT), one year is a sufficient amount of time to publicly memorialize our loved ones (who have died in result of a car accident) with a roadside shrine. Roadside memorials have existed in our landscape for many years (Figure 1-1). Who decided that it is time for the identity of these roadside shrines to go through such a transition? Florida's DOT is willing to create a sign made of a piece of aluminum, fifteen inches in diameter, along with a five-foot steel u-channel post to commemorate the sudden death of a friend or family member who died on a public road or highway (The Florida DOT has a website dedicated to the Memorial Markers Program containing more information about their process).

This is a productive use of tax dollars by the state of Florida, a very nice gesture: simple but nice. The round sign simply states, "Drive Safely In Memory (below the person's name is inscribed)." The people of Florida have put forth the effort to find equal ground between the public and the institution; in this case, the DOT. Other states (including Alaska, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wyoming) are running similar programs in an effort to control the construction of roadside memorials (Figure 1-2). It is obvious that mass produced markers like these are focusing on safety first, the loss of the life second. The hierarchy is no secret, "DRIVE SAFELY" dominates the sign, and "in memory" barely exists. <sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The Temporary Solution is a strong advocate for safety, especially on the roads. Safety should be first, but the life that has been lost should not be pushed off the aluminum sign.

The decision to make the notion of memorializing simpler and mass-produced could work for someone interested in the gesture but not the act of memorializing itself. The value of a memorial exists in the making and the time spent remembering. When someone dies, friends and family members gather to tell stories, laugh, and cry; to give the dead one final breath. The time spent with that person is priceless; creating a memorial can allow that time to be relived through memory. Sending a copy of the death certificate to the Florida DOT is far from the same thing.

Before seeking a solution, I had to undertake the difficult task of defining the idea and aesthetic behind roadside memorials. I thought, how small a gesture, how temporary a structure could warrant one's consideration as a memorial? Roadside memorials obviously vary in scale, materials, and length of time they persist. It truly is the thought that counts. Taking the time to remember is the most important factor: whether something large in scale or something small is conceived makes no difference. A woman told me she could not physically participate, but she would pray for the people being remembered and pray for The Temporary Solution. What she has done for the memorial may be the smallest physical act; it is no less sincere than any other contribution.

These spontaneous structures that make up our landscape are limited by legislation in all but 6 states. Many publications, including dictionaries, have attempted to define the roadside memorial. I want to describe the difference between the public memorial and the headstone. That difference is simple and important to my thesis: the roadside memorial is where the life was taken; the last breath, or the place where the event happened that led to that last breath. The final resting place for that person is the gravesite, another aspect of memorializing that is in flux.

It is my opinion that the gravesite, although more stable than other forms of memorials I speak of here, is less stable today than ever before. Cemeteries seem to get in the way of progress, forgotten in the grand scheme of life. We can look at a cemetery as a kind of contained memorial, a memorial with walls, with boundaries. It is expected that people will visit their loved ones, and pay their respects, but nothing more. The walls will not be penetrated. But we will eventually come close to penetrating a sacred place once considered permanent (Figure 1-3). Lucy Lippard writes, “Cemeteries are symbolic ruins.” She goes on to say, “Graveyards symbolize both loss and celebration of individual lives (Lippard 103-04).” It is the celebration that I want to focus on, and that celebration comes with life. There is something impersonal about cemeteries that cannot be overlooked; an aspect of the public memorial that continues to have a living presence.

David Busch defined the roadside memorial on the radio telecast *Encounter*, part of Radio National in Australia, titled *White Lines, White Crosses*: “Simple or elaborate, makeshift or permanent, these memorials are public markers of private grief, and turn public land into private sacred space.”

The American landscape is changing: it has been for some time. Roadside memorials are an invaluable part of our landscape that should remain. Lippard goes on to define landscape thus: “On the most basic level, landscape is everything you see when you go outdoors-if you’re looking. It’s what you see from a single (static or mobile) point of view-a set of surfaces, the pictorial or the picturesque, “as far as the eye can see” (without aid of a microscope or telescope) (Lippard 8).” As she said, “if you’re looking.” That is a big “if.” The Temporary Solution wants to be seen, but it is still up to the traveler to participate; to look.

As I mentioned before, the gesture is important, but the act of memorializing is what fuels the memory. With solutions such as the aluminum signs Florida has put beside the roads, the personal touch has been removed. The container for memory cannot exist within a mass-produced piece of aluminum. My feeling is that being in memory is adopting the fact that someone has died and that person can still exist in the presence of the people the deceased came in contact with. The personal touch, the time spent, the memory, exists in the self-proclaimed memorial; not the state approved-signage or headstone.

The Temporary Solution wants to make that feeling possible; the act of memorializing. Arthur Jipson is the director of the Criminal Justice Studies Program at the University of Dayton and has been studying roadside memorials for many years. His research and presentation titled *Roadside Memorials in the Community*, which involved interviewing 309 people who had constructed roadside memorials, led to this quote: “For every single person involved in erecting a memorial that I have interviewed, all of them stated that the roadside memorial was more meaningful to them than a gravestone in a cemetery.”

No two roadside memorials are the same. However, the cultural importance and popularity of these structures is obviously strong enough to generate business. Now, one may purchase these structures and have them prefabricated by someone else. According to Ian Urbina of the New York Times, “The popularity of the memorials has spawned a cottage industry on the Internet, with Web sites like [www.roadsidememorials.com](http://www.roadsidememorials.com) selling mail-order crosses to families that do not want to construct their own (Urbina 2006).”<sup>3</sup>

While the aforementioned company seems to no longer be in business there are several others. One, [www.memorial-cross.com](http://www.memorial-cross.com), introduces the products with this sales pitch: “Remember your loved one with a beautiful Memorial Cross. Place your Memorial Cross in that special place that will let you always have a time to remember your loved one.” The company does allow some customization, specific paint job and engraving, all for an additional charge. As a bonus, [www.memorial-cross.com](http://www.memorial-cross.com) does provide a “FREE mounting rod” (Figure 1-4).

The other company that seems to be doing okay is [www.victorystore.com](http://www.victorystore.com). This organization is much more elaborate and fully understands the benefit of customization. Their slogan is “Memories of loved ones carry on with roadside memorials and grave markers.” The time spent creating the memorial in honor of the person who passed was the element that made these structures seem special to me: more personal, more unique. Although many reflect the Spanish, Catholic heritage they were built on (I am referring to the cross many roadside memorials bear), they are all different in their individual intent (Figure 1-5 a-b).

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<sup>3</sup> As of April 2010 this website seems to be under construction, I guess mail-order memorials are not the hit today they were back in 2006.

Roadside memorials could be considered a direct descendent of what the Spanish call “descanso.” This act of remembrance preexisted a world committed to interstate travel; specifically, a society dependent on motor vehicles such as cars, scooters, or motorcycles. Originally “descansos” were intended to remember someone who lost his or her life while traveling, but by foot: more treacherous adventure than we might know today. This tradition should not be wasted: it is something we should not just throw out the window.

The Western Australian Government seemed to define roadside memorials best in the document *Mainroads Western Australia: Roadside Memorials Policy and Guidelines*, published in May 2008: According to this document, “an object or image constructed, erected, planted, painted or placed within the road reserve (rights-of-way) in honour of family or friends whose lives have been lost on the road or road reserve.”

A memorial is an object that acts as a container for emotions; an object or collection of objects that exists at or around the place the deceased took his or her final breath. These objects reference memory in a way that is invaluable. It is important to remember the past, and memorials give us that opportunity. Acknowledging the significance of location gives the assemblage a place to rest; a place where a sort of public remembrance can occur. The moments we have in life only reside in our memory. Allowing those moments to become public will allow the story and memory of the one who died to carry on.

John Anderson (Miami New Times) stated, in the film, *Police Drawing* by John Baldessari, “People try to draw someone who enters a room and leaves again, like a police drawing from memory.” “The Police Drawing Project” is more interesting than

that. It was created in 1971 as a performance piece in front of a class of art students, in which the artist walks into the room, only to leave shortly after. Some time passes and a police sketch artist enters the room and asks the students to begin describing the man who just left. The officer sketches an image based on that description by the students.

It is important to tap into our memory. There is no wrong answer. How one chooses to remember is of no greater or lesser value than the next to offer his or her voice. By making a public gesture, it is possible for someone else in a similar situation to realize, "Maybe I am not alone."



Figure 1-1. "Florida, #1." 2009. Vinyl Print, (48 inches x 36 inches) from "Resistance."



Figure1-2. "Florida, #3." 2010. Vinyl Print, (48 x 36 inches) from "Resistance."



Figure1-3. “Louisville, KY.” 2008. Ultrachrome Print, (28 inches x 34.5 inches) from “Lost Burials.”



Figure1-4. “Roadside Memorial Cross.” [www.Memorial-Cross.com](http://www.Memorial-Cross.com) catalogue.



## CHAPTER 2 THE TRAILER

The trailer component of my work is titled, *In Memory: A Mobile Memorial* (Figure 2-1). We depend on memory to allow us to remember how life is, but more importantly how we got to this point. In *Police Drawing*, it seems as if Baldessari is calling for collaboration between students and sketch artist. This act can begin to resemble a memorial to a time past or possibly to himself. How is this different from a wake? Sit around and describe a person. Tell stories. Try to describe an individual's demeanor. Make an audience know the person you speak of. The objects that become part of this mobile collection I am creating can also begin to tell the story of a time past, a life lost.

There was always something wonderful about the event (the wake) that took place after all the formal aspects surrounding a funeral had concluded. It was an opportunity to surround oneself with family and friends, have a couple drinks, eat some great home-cooked food, and tell stories about the deceased. These moments, these stories, allowed the deceased to live on: a living memorial, an aspect of *In Memory* that cannot be ignored.

The Trailer I created is four feet wide, four feet tall, and six feet long from front to back (Figure 2-2). It stands on two wheels when connected to the truck; three when the trailer sits still. It has a door on the back and a window on the side, without glass: an ideal container to act as a shelter for the mobile memorial. I painted the trailer yellow so it would match the truck; a yellow, 2001 Ford Ranger Edge. The truck is the apparatus that determines the parameters in which I am able to work.

It is important to acknowledge the text that has been placed on the outside of the trailer itself. The text is on both sides of the trailer and simply states, “In Memory, A Mobile Memorial” (the blog address is written across the top on both sides of the trailer). I wanted to reference a new trend in memorializing (Figure 2-3). It has become common to place vinyl lettering on vehicles in memory of someone who has passed. As the public memorial continues to exist, the vehicle becomes a public stage for the memorial: a longing for a life lost.



Figure 2-1. “In Memory: A Mobile Memorial.” 2010. Installation, with truck. Rest stop off I-75 South in Gainesville, Florida.



Figure 2-2. “In Memory: A Mobile Memorial.” 2010. Detail with truck, ready for travel.



Figure 2-3. "In Memory: A Mobile Memorial" Detail of text. 2010.

### CHAPTER 3 REFRESHING THE CONCEPT OF ROADSIDE MEMORIALS

Objects have continued to be the most common trigger for memory and I have no desire to think otherwise. Dirk Van Tuerenhout, Curator of the Houston Museum of Natural Science, wrote, “Egyptians believed that after they died, they would live forever in another world. In their burial process, they gathered everything from this world that they might need in the next life. These objects provide information not only about death, but also about life in ancient Egypt” (Tuerenhout). I hope the solution presented in my work opens the door for a kind of transmission that allows the life of the people memorialized to continue to exist.

When someone passes or a traumatic event takes place, the community surrounding that moment in time begins to bring objects to the location that carries the weight of the event. This kind of memorializing is called a spontaneous memorial (Figure 3-1 a-b). Some of the more notable, recent spontaneous memorials would be from the events of 9/11 or the sudden death of Michael Jackson (leading to the sea of photographs, flowers, candles and so on, outside the Staples Center in Los Angeles). These objects can begin to explain the story that led up to this defining moment and give the public a place to go where they are not alone; everyone is equal and they equally have the opportunity to grieve.

By combining the ideology and aesthetics of roadside memorials and spontaneous memorials, I can put my mobile memorial in motion. The goal of the trailer is similar to the goal of the United States Government when they decided to make Abraham Lincoln the first president to be embalmed, so that his remains could travel on a national tour of America as a passenger on a funeral train.

The intent of the funeral train was to follow the route taken by Lincoln when he became President, with a few alterations. The trip, which totaled more than 1,600 miles allowed Lincoln to return home from Washington, D.C., to Springfield, Illinois, for his burial, making stops along the way to allow mourners to pay their respects (Figure 3-2). This 1,600-mile parade brought thousands of viewers in contact with Lincoln's body (Trostel, 18-38). Some stops had audiences reach a half a million people. The trailer is the stage, the opportunity to make a contribution, to memorialize. I want to give the public the tools necessary to accomplish something meaningful and sincere. I want to take control, to allow the memorial the opportunity to let society remember the lives lost. To grieve is to move on: not to forget, but to understand and remember.

Part of the American dream is to be mobile, to travel; to see it all from behind the dashboard and to occasionally stop at the roadside attractions between here and there. This dream has been diminished. Americans have had to make adjustments, cut corners, and change plans. It is obvious the American people, particularly families, do not vacation as they once did.

It is not easy to move on after someone dies. It is even more difficult to travel to the location where that individual is buried. Among the benefits of remaining mobile, when The Temporary Solution believes it is time to move on to a new location, a new people, nothing is holding us back. One of the most common issues with larger memorials such as Maya Lin's Vietnam War Memorial is that when it causes controversy, the public is still stuck looking at it, whether or not they approve of the structure and/or what it may stand for. The Temporary Solution is offering the world a public service, an opportunity to remember someone in a permanent, mobile way.



Figure 3-1 a.



Figure 3-1 b.

“In Pictures: ‘Fans of Michael Jackson Mourn his Death’.” June 27, 2009. Spontaneous memorial to Michael Jackson outside the Staples Center in Los Angeles, California. Photographer James Wray.

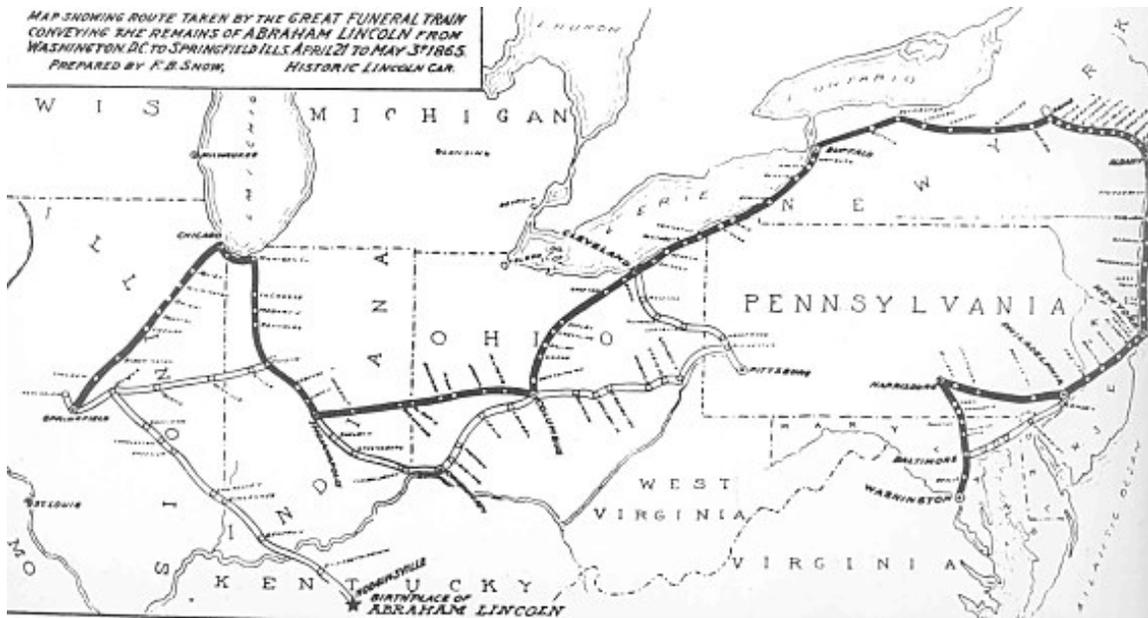


Figure 3-2. “Map showing route taken by the Great Funeral Train conveying the remains of Abraham Lincoln from Washington, D.C. to Springfield, IL. April 21 to May 3<sup>rd</sup> 1865.” Prepared by R.B. Snow.

## CHAPTER 4 THE TEMPORARY SOLUTION

Making an object mobile gives that object an opportunity to engage with a more diverse people, a larger public, or a more specific audience at a specific location. To date, The Temporary Solution has had the opportunity to take the trailer on visits to strip malls, rest stops, and community gathering spots, such as Gainesville's own Downtown Plaza; the Oaks Mall; the flea market in Waldo, Florida; and numerous intersections, setting up the way a vendor would set up with a fresh crop of oranges.

The trailer is full of objects from people who have chosen to participate by contributing an object on behalf of someone who died (Figure 4-1). The objects in the space include photographs, notes, drawings, stuffed animals, paintings, letters and so on. As this happens, the appearance may become more aesthetically comparable to a kind of collection or archive.

The object struggles to stand on its own. The text is there as an attempt to explain the object to the viewer. I believe the photograph can begin to emotionally depict the event: the moment shared between the life of the contributor and the life lost. The trailer can allow that life to have one more breath: breath that will carry on as long *In Memory* continues to be mobile.

These portraits of the contributors holding the contribution become a visual documentation of the event that has taken place. This experience allows the participant to think about the life of someone else, to be sentimental, to act on behalf of the memorial; not just perform a simple gesture. The expression on the face of the contributor can begin to resemble the relationship the individual had to the deceased. Whether a smile or simply a deadpan expression, it is my feeling that the one being memorialized is coming through in each photograph.

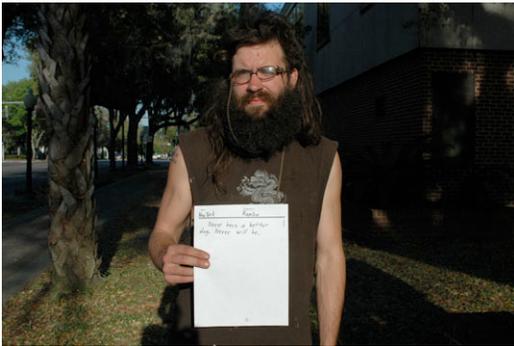
Lucy Lippard once said, when speaking of photographs as triggers of memory, “Photographs are about memory-or perhaps the absence of memory, providing pictures to fill voids, illustrating our collective memory. So they are an excellent means with which to trigger concern and soothe anxieties about history and place” (Lippard 20.) These images can begin to function like post-mortem photographs once did in the late 1800s. It could be expected that the first picture ever taken of an individual was post-mortem, therefore their last. I hope these images resurrect a feeling of presence; a way for the one who has died to have another kind of existence, an embodied future through the living experience (Figure 4-2).

I have attempted to contact as many people as I can, to gain more access to the public I currently reside within. On the side of the truck are magnets: in large font, the magnets contain the words, *The Temporary Solution*, along with the blog address ([TheTemporarySolution.blogspot.com](http://TheTemporarySolution.blogspot.com)). The blog is updated regularly and allows the memorial to gain public access that cannot be achieved on the side of a highway in a permanent manner (roadside memorial) or from a spontaneous, temporal approach. I want to believe that kind of advertising would work as well as it would for a local carpenter or a painter who cannot afford commercials on cable television.

The Temporary Solution also has a Facebook group page where social networking can lead *In Memory* to more successes regionally and eventually nationally (Figure 4-3). Those concerned can also follow *tempsolution* on [twitter.com](https://twitter.com) or join the mailing list. This net-based mailing list allows the public the opportunity to engage with up-to-date contributions, see what is happening, and see where the trailer has gone or might be going with occasional newsletters.



Figure 4-1. "In Memory." Detail: Interior of trailer.



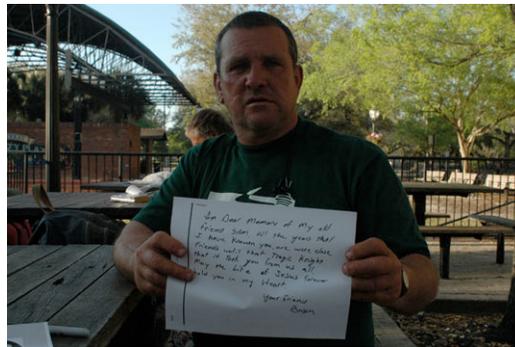
"In Memory of Rambo"



"In Memory of Annie"



"In Memory of Christina Marciano"



"In Memory of Sam"

Figure 4-2. "Documenting In Memory." Projected image and 4 x 6 inch print.



Figure 4-3. “The Temporary Solution on Facebook.” 2010. Screen shot of the Facebook Group page.

## CHAPTER 5 NEW COMMUNITY

I want to create the opportunity to form something more meaningful, something more sentimental, something participatory: new community stemming from a diverse collection of objects and handmade two-dimensional gestures via the written form. Each person has an identity and each identity adds something different to this community that inhabits the trailer.

When speaking of the work by Chinese artist Bai Yiluo, Jacques Ranciere states, “Art is supposed to ‘unite’ people in the same way the artist had sewn together the ID pictures that he had previously taken in a photographer’s studio” (*Emancipated Spectator*, 77). Disaster allows for a sort of community to develop.<sup>4</sup> Death, whether expected or not, is a kind of disaster that creates the need for togetherness. At our weakest, most fragile state, people can come together, stand up for each other and find a way to prevail.

I want to give anyone who happens to come across the trailer out in the world the opportunity to participate. While stopped, I will personally engage with the public, telling stories about contributors, about donations and about the mission itself. These spontaneous contributions could be in the form of a letter (a note, a drawing, a poem, etc.); anything goes. No memorial is too small. Standard sheet paper, crayons, colored pencils, pens, and sharpies will be provided for a more spontaneous experience.

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<sup>4</sup> Let us take, for instance, a ‘tapestry’ called *The People* and made by the Chinese artist Bai Yiluo out of sixteen hundred ID pictures sewn together. The Tapestry intended to evoke ‘the delicate threads which unite families and communities’. So the work presents itself as the anticipated reality of what it evokes. Art is supposed to ‘unite’ people in the same way the artist had sewn together the ID pictures that he had previously taken in a photographer’s studio. The photograph also leans toward the status of a sculpture that makes present what it is speaking of. Jacques Ranciere, *Emancipated Spectator Aesthetic Separation, Aesthetic Community* published by Verso: London 2009 p77

## CHAPTER 6 EMPOWERING THE PUBLIC

I typically set up parameters, then see what happens; see how the audience reacts. Much of my work could be looked at as social experiments. *In Memory* is less of an experiment. I have more control, but a lot is still left up to chance.

In fall 2008, I was given an opportunity, which began with this short statement being sent out to every attendee and participant of the proposed event in the arts community at the University of Florida:

This is a call out to society, specifically our society to be part of a temporary collaborative piece during Art Bash, this upcoming Friday, November 14th from 6-10. We as a collective are asking everyone to bring something to the space that will possibly be utilized within this piece. All that we ask is that all the materials that are donated are simply usable when they enter the space please do not bring your trash. We hope the materials are quite various, clothing, wood, ribbon, plates, televisions, cd's, book's, toys, are just examples of the variety we hope to achieve. Anything that is still usable but possibly lacking purpose in your life but could find purpose within this piece.

It was extremely important to the piece that everyone who might experience the event would have the opportunity to contribute (Figure 6-1).

The piece (Figure 6-2) consisted of a 9-foot x 9-foot x 6-foot square frame constructed with 2 x 4s and 2 x 6s. I assembled this space in the courtyard outside the arts buildings, the afternoon before Art Bash, a festival held to showcase the talents of art students of the University of Florida. Four individuals were asked to make a structure out of materials donated by the attendees of the festival. With their identities concealed, the individuals were asked not to speak to the attendees, but to only accept what was offered and reciprocate with a hug.

The individuals within inhabited the space for four hours, while constructing a sort of shelter that separated the entity within from the community that attended Art Bash. They wore white jumpsuits, white ski masks, and white socks, along with a battery-powered headlamp. The process became about the public and therefore society, who were the only present, identifiable subjects.

This role of supervisor is an element I want to embrace in much of my work. Whether this element is apparent through the instruction of an act or setting up the parameters as I did in this piece, there is no concealing my desire to have control or be in charge (Figure 6-3).

By giving the audience the opportunity to experience, engage and participate with the physical object regularly can lead to success. Forming a dialogue is most important: a contribution is icing on the cake. I want to make people aware of the issues I am interested in related to public memorials. Allan Kaprow spoke heavily about the idea that audience should not exist but rather be a part of the action. Kaprow regularly avoided the use of a stage as his career developed, which I am not avoiding at all. The trailer is the stage that allows the experience to occur. It is my hope that everyone would participate, without a contribution the experience can be participation enough. When speaking of the work of Allan Kaprow, Jeff Kelley said, “The job of the artist, in other words, was to play, and the payoff for playing in, and with, the world was to feel a part of it” (Kelley 158).

In the book, *The Conversation Series, Number 10* (A conversation between Thomas Demand and Hans Ulrich Obrist,) the topic of audience arises. Hans Ulrich Obrist references Marcel Duchamp and states, “Duchamp said that the audience does

fifty percent of the work.” He says to Thomas Demand, “I’d like to ask you what you think the percentage is.” They bounce the question around for a moment, attempting to understand the question before Demand fully unleashes his epic answer, “you can’t make soup without a fire. I can put it on the stove, but it will never become a soup if there’s no fire (Obrist 114)”. I want to treat my audience in a similar way; comfortable and open to the experience. There is no doubt that I set the parameters, I make the rules: but without the audience, the rules can never be broken. Without the audience, the trailer is just a trailer.

*In Memory* will, to an extent, provide the public with something new, something more convenient than fast food; a sort of mobile memorial meeting spot. It will provide a place where the public can tell a story and publicly remember/memorialize a friend or family member who passed. The trailer will go anywhere it is welcome and welcome anyone willing to contribute to the memorial.

I attempted to construct a sort of photographic memorial to myself in 2008 with the piece, *A Spontaneous Memorial to Myself*. The project began with a general letter, explaining my idea of creating a living memorial, exemplifying the desire to be remembered this way (Figure 6-4).

*A Spontaneous Memorial to Myself* began by sending a letter to the people I chose to participate, friends, parents, aunts, uncles, and so on had to first acknowledge the obituary that had been written by a friend of mine, Christina Marsteller (Figure 6-5). An artist in her own right, she had known me for years, maybe better than anyone at that point of my life. The chosen participants began sending me objects: objects they felt could stand in my place after I died, as reminders of my life. I received numerous garden

gnomes (a figure I have collected for some time), photographs (some recent and some from a long a go past I am not even sure if I remember), University of Louisville memorabilia, a carnival mask, and a bandana: the list goes on and on. Each object came with a story. Some called to tell me the story behind what they sent. Others wrote notes. Some did not want to talk about it.

Throughout the progression of *In Memory* I have had the opportunity to watch it grow with each object, drawing, letter, etc. as well as listen to each story that has been told to me. One person told me that they could move on now. She told me it was tough when her grandmother died because it was impossible to go home for the funeral service. This experience, in her words gave the end of her grandmother's life some closure. Others have told me that it is just nice to think about that person again, talk about that person, and tell the story about that person.

When speaking of his work, *Jumbo Spoons and Big Cake*, Thomas Hirschhorn stated, "The world cake will be divided, stolen, conquered, cheated, protected. It is decorated with world problems: famine, wars, undivided wealth, the war men, the lack of water. [...] Under the big cake there are buckets collecting the leftovers of the world (Belisle 11)." I want *In Memory* to be one of those buckets, collecting the leftovers, to tell the story of the objects, of the people, of the world, to the world.<sup>5</sup>

We cannot be defined by our objects, to some extent we are consumed by our objects, our collections. Although it is common to attach a sort of sentimental value to an object as it relates to someone in our life. When that person dies, that object becomes a container that withholds what that individual meant to its possessor. Something similar

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<sup>5</sup> This cake Hirschhorn is referring to is an overarching world consuming and creating each and every utopian world.

can be accomplished through a letter (a note or a drawing, etc.) that relates to the deceased. I want to take some of that burden off the shoulders of the one who is grieving. Allow this experience to give people the opportunity to be in memory, not to forget but to move on.

Can the object stand in for a self that lacks presence post-mortem? Is there a kind of presence that resides within absence? As these objects accumulate within the trailer, a new collection is formed: collection that represents a time past, a time in which the people we remember here once lived. Creating some sort of cultural memory is important to my project.

Walter Benjamin once said, “Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be. This unique existence of the work of art determined the history to which it was subject throughout the time of its existence (Benjamin 3).” It is true, I am trying to reproduce an artifact, a memory that allows presence to be recreated. But it is the event, the existence that I am documenting here, one of the reproduced memories. A new existence that can live through the projected image and the reproduced physical object, the photograph, can allow the action to exist as a representation of an experience that has already transpired.

Everyone deals with death differently. Taking the time to remember someone who died is easier said than done. I want to give people the chance to remember, to tell a story, to make a public gesture more meaningful. Many people along my journey through Gainesville and its surrounding cities offered guidance, advice, and other solutions. All that said, it still appeared as if the contribution was occasionally too much to ask for. When all was said and done, it is difficult to discuss the death of a loved one with an outsider.

Each donation is a gift; a gift of time and a gift of thought; an opportunity to engage with one who has passed. All the tools are here; the only thing missing is the action (Figure 6-6 a-b.) According to Jacques Ranciere, “Art no longer wants to respond to the excess of commodities and signs, but to a lack of connections. As the principle theorist of this school writes: ‘by offering small services, the artist repairs the weaknesses in the social bond’” (Bishop 90). I want to believe this “lack of connections” can be repaired simply by the artist’s touch, but I know there is more to it than that.

A disconnect has developed in our communities. It is uncommon to see a bunch of kids playing kickball at the end of street like it was when I was child back in the 1980’s. The sense of community that I was once accustomed to seems to be fading. This “lack of connections” Ranciere speaks of is surrounding us like never before. Maybe this disconnect has placed fear in the eyes of this generation. It is my hope that by giving people the opportunity to step forward and act on their will to memorialize that others will follow and a new community can begin to develop. A community that can help others realize that no one is truly alone.

With each solution there must be a problem worth solving and there are two problems worth acknowledging in terms of the public, handmade memorial. Society is interested in the idea, the gesture, the function of the hand-made, self-proclaimed memorial but not all of society is interested in the act. If each person I spoke with on my journeys was to participate it would be safe to assume there is no issue, but that was/is far from the case. There is no doubt this is not a simple act, it is a serious, thoughtful, meaningful act that should be appreciated. If I am able to remind people of the importance that comes along with this act maybe we can reverse the trend that is taking place throughout the landscape. The aluminum signs that appear on our roads are a great reminder to be careful while traveling but the person who lost their life is forgotten in the fine print (Figure 6-7.)



Figure 6-1. "9x9x6." 2008. Performance/Installation. Detail of exchange between performer and participant. Fine Arts Courtyard, University of Florida.



Figure 6-2. "9x9x6." 2008. Performance/Installation. Group Photograph of performers at the conclusion of the piece. Fine Arts Courtyard, University of Florida.



Figure 6-3. "9x9x6." 2008. Performance/Installation. Image of two of the four sides after performance. Fine Arts Courtyard, University of Florida.



a) "Dad"



b) "Ryan Riddel"



c) “Christina Marstiller”

Figure 6-4. “A Spontaneous Memorial to Myself” 2008

#### Mark Stuart Zimmerman

Mark Zimmerman, 26, passed away in the early morning on March 15, 2008 in Gainesville, Florida. Born February 22nd, 1982, he was still a young man with a lifetime of achievements ahead of him. Mark had a passion for photography but was entirely an artist. He also enjoyed the outdoors, sports, and being in the company of friends. Originally from Louisville, Kentucky he moved to Savannah, Georgia where he attended The Savannah College of Art and Design. He graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in photography and moved back to Louisville, where he was a proud fan of his home team the U of L Cardinals. From there he made his way to the University of Florida in Gainesville where he had been working towards a Master of Fine Arts degree in photography. Mark was an extremely creative artist with so much enthusiasm for life. A great friend with a warm heart and a loving son with so much appreciation for his parents, Terry and Sue Zimmerman, and the wonderful life they provided him. He leaves behind not only his parents and family of aunts, uncles, and cousins; but also a large group of friends who have been influenced by his strength, bright smile, high energy and kind soul. There will not be any visiting hours but services and burial will take place graveside March 18th at 7 p.m. in Gainesville, Florida.

Figure 6-5. “Obituary” 2008 19 x 13 inches.



a



b

Figure 6-6. Detail of trailer counter installed 2010.



Figure 6-7. "In Memory" Installed at Oaks Mall, Gainesville, Florida 2010.

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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Mark Stuart Zimmerman was born and raised in Louisville, Kentucky, a place he still calls home. Mark received his Bachelor of Fine Arts in photography from the Savannah College of Art and Design in 2004. Between undergrad and graduate school Mark worked in numerous facets of photography while living back in his hometown of Louisville. In 2007 Mark came to Gainesville, Florida, in pursuit of a Master of Fine Arts degree in creative photography from the University of Florida. Since arriving in Gainesville, Mark has been part of many regional and national exhibitions, as well as showing in Pingyao, China, at the International Photography Festival, *Breaking Boundaries II*. Most notably, Mark also received an Honorable Mention award from juror Dan Addington for his photograph, “*Lost Burials: Radcliff, KY*,” Baker Arts Center, Liberal, Kansas; and a ‘Best in Show Award’ for the Photograph, *Red Heels*, juror Kathy Murphy, from the exhibition, *NEVER THINK small!!* Climate/Gallery, Long Island, NY.