

For Immediate Release

BETTINA WITTEVEEN'S *5 WOUNDS* ON VIEW
AT CATHEDRAL OF ST. JOHN THE DIVINE
AS PART OF *THE CHRISTA PROJECT*



Portraits of Rosa Luxemburg (left) and Petra Kelly (right) from *5 Wounds* by Bettina WitteVeen as part of *The Christa Project* at St. John the Divine. Photos by Jeffrey Sturges.

NEW YORK, NY – *5 Wounds*, an installation by artist Bettina WitteVeen, is part of the groundbreaking *The Christa Project: Manifesting Divine Bodies* on view at the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine in New York until March 12, 2017. Co-curated by Eiko Otake and Hannah Wolfe Eisner, *The Christa Project* presents the work of 22 artists, who explore the language, symbolism, art, and ritual associated with the historic imagery of the Christ and the divine as manifested in every person—across all genders, races, ethnicities, sexual orientations, and abilities. WitteVeen will do an artist tour of her installation on November 15, 2016 from 10 am to noon.

5 Wounds transforms a side chapel of the cathedral with five life-sized cruciform photo-sculptures that form a phalanx in front of a bronze sculpture of St. Michael (the most militant of the seven archangels). WitteVeen's compelling installation pays tribute to the sacrifices that five women activists made for freedom, truth, and justice. A portrait of each woman surmounts the cruciform sculptures, manifesting the symbolic bodies of the resistance fighter **Sophie Scholl**, the Civil Rights activist **Viola Liuzzo**, the Native American Rights activist **Anna Mae Aquash**, the co-founder of the world's first Green Party **Petra Kelly**, and the Pacifist and social theoretician **Rosa Luxemburg**. These visually and emotionally arresting sculptures return to the origin of the cross as an African symbol, the Tree of Life, later appropriated by Christianity, and form a visually poetic grove of hope and resurrection in the chapel.

The iconological and symbolic significance of WitteVeen's *5 Wounds* is the way that it inverts the gender bias of the traditional Christian narrative. Sophie Scholl, Viola Liuzzo, Anna Mae Aquash,

Petra Kelly and Rosa Luxemburg are the redeemers who died for our sins. As WitteVeen comments,

"It is my belief that the five stigmata of contemporary society—totalitarianism, racism, greed, militarism and nuclear armament—can be cauterized by a concerted effort that comprises service to nature, activism on behalf of others, establishment of just institutions, and an empathetic mind. However, the body politic cannot be healed nor dignity restored for all until we have rid the world of atomic weapons."

While art will always have its timeless dimension, and WitteVeen's source materials draw upon history, there is an alarming sense of the present raised by the installation. At a moment when human rights violations are in the news not just from distant lands but in our own backyard, the sacrifices of the five fearless advocates have particular resonance. The vivacity of their portraits and the immediacy of the images made by the artist recently at the sites where their lives ended give the art a feeling of immediacy.

WitteVeen's earlier installations of photographs and sculpture have garnered critical acclaim and reached broad audiences in Germany, France and New York. A year ago at the Brooklyn Navy Yard, her epic work *When We Were Soldiers... once and young* was called by one critic "brave and brilliant."

About Bettina WitteVeen

WitteVeen is a photographer and conceptual artist. She is a practicing Buddhist and adherent to the principal of Metta, the pursuit of Enlightenment through compassion and social activism. She graduated from Wellesley College with a Bachelors Degree in American Studies/History.

In her work, WitteVeen explores a wide range of subjects from mythology in *Sacred Sister* to the impact of historical events on the individual in the collectively titled *The Heart of Darkness*, a worldwide installation project and photographic poem of epic scale. In a series of exhibitions in historically significant locations, WitteVeen traces collective trauma and other contributing factors to human destructiveness as it finds its expression in war and genocide. *The Heart of Darkness* premiered in 2005 with *Dulce et Decorum Est Pro Patria Mori* as part of L'Eté de photographie de Lecture in France. WitteVeen's next installation was *Brüder, Zur Sonne, Zur Freiheit and the beat goes on* at the Goethe Institute in New York in 2006. *Death and the Maiden*, part of *The Heart of Darkness* project, is comprised of over a hundred photographs and was exhibited in a vast subterranean space in Berlin in 2008 to great acclaim.

Bettina WitteVeen's photographs are in several private and corporate institutions, including the Whitney Museum of American Art. www.bettinawitteveen.com

For more information about *The Christa Project* at The Cathedral Church of Saint John the Divine, [click here](#).

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