

Gettysburg in 2016



WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO US TODAY?

Visual Essay & Installation
by Lisa Chu

November 13 - December 21, 2016
Half Moon Bay Library
Half Moon Bay, CA

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Gettysburg in 2016: What does it mean to us today?

Visual essay & art installation by Lisa Chu

EXHIBIT COMPONENTS:

"Mourning Map" - yarn, ink, and watercolor on muslin panel, 36"x approx. 72"

"The Unfinished Work" - ink, acrylic paint on muslin panel, 36"x approx. 72"

Community Quilt interactive art to accompany "The Unfinished Work" - acrylic on muslin squares, Sharpie pens

"Before 10am" - giclée prints of illustrated journal pages mounted on panel, 8"x10" each (thirteen panels on display)

EVENTS:

Artist talk/slide presentation & reception, November 13, at 4pm-6pm

Illustrated journal workshop, December 12, 3:30pm-4:30pm

ARTIST STATEMENT:

My intention for this exhibit is to invite viewers to reflect upon the current relevance of the historical events that took place at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, during the American Civil War: the three-day battle of July 1863, and the cemetery dedication, known as "The Gettysburg Address", given by then-President Abraham Lincoln in November 1863. I hope the exhibit provides multiple points of entry for contemplation, reflection, and expression of our own unique learnings from history.

ABOUT THIS PROJECT:

In September 2016, I traveled to Gettysburg National Park in a self-created Artist Residency, inspired by an opportunity presented by the National Parks Arts Foundation. I spent thirty days in residence within one mile of the National Park boundary, visiting the park each day and interacting with members of the Gettysburg community. My creative practices included plein air sketching with ink, watercolor, and acrylic, studio mixed media illustration, and daily illustrated journal pages capturing a mini story in words and drawn images. As an unexpected delight, my "landlords" for the month were very active in supporting land conservation and farmers' markets in the community, and offered me introductions to their network of community-minded friends. They hosted a reception for me in their home, which was an artist talk and open studio type show of my works in progress after twenty-one days of residency.

At the end of the thirty days, I traveled to Richmond, Virginia, and visited Belle Island, Tredegar Iron Works, The American Civil War Museum, Museum of the Confederacy, White House of the Confederacy, Virginia Historical Society, and the Richmond Folk

Festival, as well as Appomattox Court House, Manassas National Battlefield, and Monticello.

I mention the scope of my travels because I believe it is important to try to understand the context of this work, and the attempts I made to understand the significance of Gettysburg in our lives today, in California, in 2016. As I write this, and as I have been assembling the components of this exhibit, I feel this is a larger work-in-progress, much like the “unfinished work” Lincoln refers to in the words of his Gettysburg address. The pieces on display here represent a first attempt to convey the feelings I had during my encounter with Gettysburg, and invite viewers to engage with their own impressions after the process of meditating, even for a brief moment, on the question, “What does it mean to us today?”.

I intended for this show to open in November 2016, in order to coincide with both the presidential election, which, regardless of the outcome, was going to mark a time of national reflection and reconciliation, and the anniversary of the Gettysburg address, originally delivered on November 19, 1863. In Gettysburg, this is observed as “Remembrance Day”, with a parade through town and ceremony at the National Cemetery where Lincoln originally gave the short speech.

Why Gettysburg? Why 2016?

My original inspiration for seeking an artist residency in a U.S. National Park was the centennial of the National Park Service in 2016. I fell in love with nature and with National Parks relatively late in life, only five years ago, when I completed the challenge of training and hiking Half Dome at Yosemite. Since then, I have found great solace in wilderness backpacking and visiting National Parks in the western U.S. The Gettysburg opportunity came into my awareness, and I began thinking about a proposal for creating art there. As I researched the Civil War, our current presidential campaigns progressed and public conversations evolved. It became clear to me that there was something to be gained from contemplating what unfolded so long ago (and yet not so long ago) on a series of wheat fields and peach orchards in rural Pennsylvania, and how the words spoken there by then-President Abraham Lincoln came to be etched in stone as expressions of the highest of America’s aspirations as a nation.

ABOUT THE ARTIST, LISA CHU:

I was born in 1975, in Waukegan, Illinois, and raised in Libertyville, Illinois, both suburbs of Chicago. My parents are immigrants from Taiwan, having come to Chicago in 1964 to earn their PhD's in pharmacology-related sciences. I have one older brother, who is an ophthalmologist in private practice in Minneapolis, Minnesota, with a wife and daughter. I studied classical piano and violin starting at age three, and traveled around the world performing in places such as Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center, the Vatican for Pope John Paul II, and in Moscow for Boris Yeltsin, throughout my childhood and early teens. I received my undergraduate degree in Biochemical Sciences from Harvard University, and my medical degree from University of Michigan Medical School. I have never practiced medicine, but instead chose to pursue my own path of discovering and creating a life of authentic expression, reverence, and vibrant health. This has involved brief careers as a venture capital investment professional in Minneapolis and Cleveland, and owning my own violin school for young children in Palo Alto. Visual art came into my life only recently, in 2013, about a year after moving to Half Moon Bay, and about three years after making a major transition from classical music to improvisation.

My visual art projects have included the juried exhibition 50|50 at Sanchez Art Center in Pacifica, serving as Half Moon Bay creator of "The World We Want" global public art project, graphic facilitation of the "Let My Doctor Practice" Summit in Keystone, Colorado, creating a photo essay documenting an international volunteer ophthalmology mission to Myanmar, and self-publication of the illustrated storybook, *Too Late For Pie*. I am grateful for the opportunity in my art to continue weaving together my interests in the various ways we humans directly experience beauty, awe, wonder, and mutual understanding.

To connect with me:

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Become a patron of my work with a monthly donation at patreon.com/lisachu

"Mourning Map" - yarn, ink, and watercolor on muslin panel, 36" by approx. 72"

I first saw a portion of the "Elliott Map" enlarged on a wall of the museum at Gettysburg National Park Visitor Center. I took a photograph of it, and later made a sketch of it. It was already several weeks into my residency, so I had walked so many of the fields and roads that were on the map. I knew the terrain, and I had felt it beneath my feet at many different times of day, on different days. The map gave new meaning and fueled my imagination of what those same fields were like during and after the battle. The legend, explaining the symbol for "Dead Horses", struck me in particular, as it is seldom talked about, and there is no monument (as far as I know) to the dead horses of Gettysburg.

For this exhibit, I wanted to create a single image that would orient viewers to the terrain I got to know quite well during my thirty days there. A map seemed appropriate, and the Elliott Map told the story in many layers. By choosing muslin and wool yarn, I stayed with the natural materials of the Civil War era (all military uniforms and blankets were made of wool). The stitching is a reference to the common mid-1800s practice of "mourning samplers", which were embroidered tributes to the dead, created by the families of the deceased and often containing personal expressions and symbols.

"The Unfinished Work" - ink, acrylic paint on muslin panel, 36"by approx. 72"
Community Quilt interactive art to accompany "The Unfinished Work" - acrylic on muslin squares, Sharpie pens

"It is for us the living...to be dedicated here to the unfinished work..."

"It is ...for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us"

The above are excerpts from President Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, delivered on November 19, 1863, at the dedication ceremony for the National Cemetery in Gettysburg. Thousands of dead Union soldiers remained in shallow graves across the battlefield, awaiting identification and proper burial.

The complete text of Lincoln's address is engraved on the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., and is provided for reference here.

For the Community Quilt project, viewers and anyone from the public are invited to choose a piece of fabric and write (or draw) your thoughts and reflections on these words today. Some prompts are provided below, but **any response to Lincoln's words, or to this exhibit, are invited.**

Prompts:

"My unfinished work is..."

"My great task is..."

"I want people to know..."

"Before 10am" - giclée prints of illustrated journal pages mounted on panel, 8"x10" each (thirteen panels on display)

A total of seventy-three "Before 10am" illustrated journal pages were created during the artist's residency in Gettysburg and Richmond. Thirteen of those pages are on display here. The pages, along with other sketches and text from my notes during residency, are being compiled into a book on this project.

ADDITIONAL REFERENCE MATERIALS:

Various prints of Elliott's Map of the Battlefield of Gettysburg, published by H.H. Lloyd & Co., 1864. Source: Library of Congress.

Full text of Lincoln's Gettysburg address

Full text of Lincoln's first and second inaugural addresses

Timeline of relevant historical events

Timeline of relevant historical events

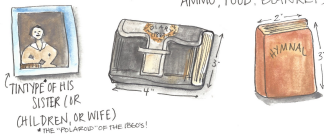
6 Nov 1860	Abraham Lincoln, a Republican, elected President of the United States with 40% of the popular vote
20 Dec 1860	South Carolina is the first state to secede from the Union
4 Mar 1861	Lincoln's first inaugural address
12 Apr 1861	Confederate shots fired at Fort Sumter in South Carolina, signaling the beginning of the Civil War
1-3 Jul 1863	Battle of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania
19 Nov 1863	Lincoln dedicates National Cemetery with address at Gettysburg
8 Nov 1864	Lincoln re-elected, with 55% of popular vote
4 Mar 1865	Lincoln's second inaugural address
4 Apr 1865	Lincoln visits Richmond, Virginia
8 Apr 1865	General Lee surrenders Army of Northern Virginia to General Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox Court House, Virginia
14 Apr 1865	Lincoln assassinated

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WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO US TODAY?

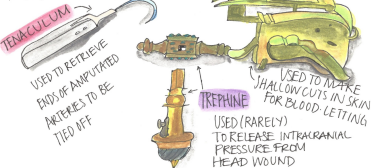
WHAT A SOLDIER CARRIED: (IN ADDITION TO WEAPON, AMMO, FOOD, BLANKET)



THE DRESSER FROM CATHERINE TROSTLE HOUSE & FARM:



MEDICAL INSTRUMENTS:

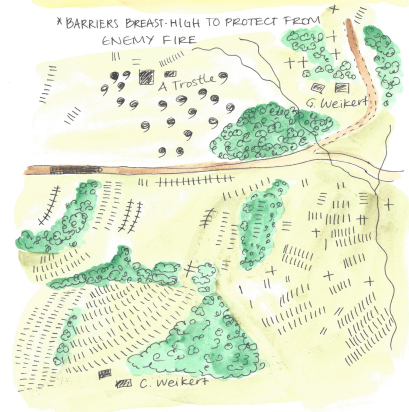


BEFORE 10AM...
IT'S COLD, SO
I GO WALKING
CROSSING PICTON'S CHURCH



ELLIOTT MAP LEGEND:

+++ OR + UNION GRAVES
||| OR | CONFEDERATE GRAVES
○○○ OR ● DEAD HORSES
BREASTWORKS*
ARTILLERY BREASTWORKS
RIFLE PITS



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Artist Talk:
November 13, 2016, at 4pm

Half Moon Bay Library
Shoreline Station - 225 Cabrillo Hwy, #104B
Half Moon Bay, CA
(650) 726-2316

Half Moon Bay artist Lisa Chu recently completed a forty-day artist residency focused on Gettysburg National Park and surrounding Civil War battlefield sites, museums, and monuments. Viewers will be invited to revisit the significance of Gettysburg, the American Civil War, and Lincoln's Gettysburg address in our current lives — as individuals, as a community, and as a nation of diverse people — using whimsical illustrations and visual journals of a traveling artist.

Join Lisa for a talk and video presentation of additional images from her research on **Sunday, November 13, 2016, at 4:00pm**. This event is free and open to the public. Light refreshments will be served.

Art installation will be at the library through December 21.