

NEW YORK METAMORPHOSIS

Lisa Conte, Head of Conservation at National September 11 Memorial & Museum

Introduction

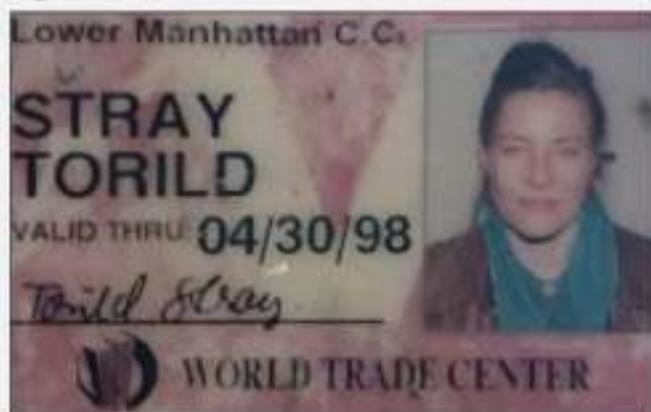
Fig. 1



New York Metamorphosis, Courtesy of Dwight Primiano

New York Metamorphosis, a large-scale charcoal drawing on paper created by Norwegian-born artist Torild Stray, was acquired by the 9/11 Memorial Museum in 2017. Stray created the 60 in x 168 in (152.4 cm x 427 cm) panoramic drawing of New York City while an artist-in-residence at the famed World Trade Center artists' residency program, *World Views*. The program was run by the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council in partnership with the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. The program provided artists with around-the-clock access to dedicated studio space in the Twin Towers, offering a rare opportunity to create work from high above the city traffic in one of the world's most renowned landmarks. Stray was among a group of 18 artists chosen for the inaugural year-long class of residents in 1997. More than 150 artists served residencies in the Twin Towers before the buildings' destruction on September 11, 2001 (see Fig. 2).

Fig. 2



Torild Stray WTC ID, Courtesy of Torild Stray

The residency provided artists free, but vacant and raw spaces, located on various floors in both towers, to create work inspired by the dramatic setting and sites they witnessed and to mingle with the archetypal nine-to-five

occupants. Stray spent her 12-month residency on the 85th and 91st floors of the North Tower admiring, painting, and drawing the grandeur of the city as seen through the floor-to-ceiling windows in her office-turned-studio (see Fig. 3).

Fig. 3



Torild Stray in her studio in the North Tower (floor unknown), Courtesy of Geraldine Bien

Stray made numerous preparatory studies for *New York Metamorphosis*, composing smaller vignettes of the larger scene in oil paint, pencil, and ink, to refine her ultimate composition—a semi-abstract portrait of the city looking north, anchored by its classic architectural features, including the Empire State Building and the Brooklyn Bridge. Stray used heavyweight Saunders cold pressed paper, a high-quality rag paper she valued for its unique texture, and worked with charcoal, chamois leather, and various erasers to create her highly expressive composition. Over the course of several months, she worked and reworked the surface—lines, forms, and tones were built-up over time to create extraordinary depth and dimension. Today, the drawing is significant not only for its composition and form, but also because it has become a historical record, offering a rarefied view of New York City that no longer exists.

Framing and Glazing

The drawing, when previously exhibited, was simply pinned to the gallery wall, as it had been at the time of its creation (see Fig. 4). This method of presentation provided an unmediated experience with the drawing, but did not offer much in the way of protection from physical damage, UV radiation, dust or other environmental hazards. Indeed, the repeated tacking was causing wear to many of the pin holes—some had grown in size and others had torn. The 9/11 Memorial Museum faced a dilemma—how could the drawing be safeguarded while on view and still be presented authentically? The drawing had to be framed.