

Jane Hammond's **Fallen**

Text by the Artist

There is something about leaves in the autumn, at the zenith of their coloration that is transcendent: they are both dematerializing and intensifying simultaneously. As their bodies become lighter, their color is becoming more and more intense. I've tried to gather leaves just at this moment when the chroma is so strong it transcends the body of the leaf and becomes a kind of pure light. It does rhyme with the idea of "the spirit" but I think in a way that is accessible and earthly. It's more Emerson than Aquinas.

One of the things that has been interesting for me is how much more particular leaves have become for me—like the lives themselves. I see them now as such individuals. It is a kind of miracle how attention to something makes it so much more interesting.

Besides thinking about leaves, both in the general and in the particular, it is also useful to think a moment about the nature of numbers. Numbers were invented for agricultural record keeping. They served a useful function of distilling the manyness of hundreds and thousands of sacks of wheat into a unitary phenomenon—a single number. Sometimes I think we have grown up so completely with the abstraction that is numbers that we forget the manyness and multitude that they actually represent. Every person whom I have heard say of "Fallen," "Oh My God, it is so many" also knows, intellectually, what four thousand is, but there is something about seeing the number concretized that undoes a lifetime of thinking in the abstract.

It started out as something specific and concrete—the equation in my mind between lives and leaves. But more and more time has entered into the equation. The ongoingness of the piece is really

its essential nature. It is a work of art in which the artist is not in control of when it is finished nor how large it is. I am something between an author and a witness. It has a performative quality but it is not a script I wrote.

I suppose it also has a performative nature in the sense that it is not a fixed arrangement of leaves. So far, everywhere the piece has gone, I go and arrange the leaves and in a sense “make” the piece. It’s hard for me to imagine not doing this myself.

Three concepts that inform most of my work are collecting, collage and collaboration. The gathering of the leaves themselves has now extended over several Autumns and in places as far apart as Hawaii, Texas and Vermont. The marriage of each name and leaf is a kind of collage and while I don’t know how to perfectly extend the “collaboration” metaphor the piece definitely feels bigger to me than my ideas or my craftsmanship or my authorship. It has at its heart our collectivity.