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Bowery Arts + Sciences Announces *Witness Downtown Rising Renga* Short Film *Poet/ Painter Collaboration Remembering 9/11 Premieres in Berlin*

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New York, NY

Executive Producers Bowery Arts + Science and Kathy Komaroff Goodman announce the completion of Nikhil Melnechuk's short documentary film, *Witness Downtown Rising Renga*. The film tells the story of how artist Todd Stone's paintings of his first-hand experience of the collapse of the World Trade Towers, on September 11th, 2001, and its aftermath, led Poet Bob Holman and a group of eleven celebrated poets to respond to the tragedy in verse. The film will have its European premiere at Berlin's Literatur Werkstatt ZEBRA Poetry Film Festival, October 18th to 21st, 2012.

Stone's series *Witness Downtown Rising* chronicles the changing nature of the World Trade Center over a decade. In 2010, Silverstein Properties, the developers of the World Trade Center Site, invited Stone to use the unfinished 48th Floor of World Trade Center 7 as a painting studio. Stone, responding colorfully to the rising towers in oils and watercolors, came to wonder how a Poet might respond with words. He went to Holman, acclaimed Poet and Founder of the Bowery Poetry Club to help give him an answer. Bob Holman suggested a "Renga."

The "Renga" is a Japanese group collaborative poem, where pen and paper are passed from poet to poet as each writes a *tanka*—a *haiku* followed by a couplet—and drinks *sake*. Holman and Melnechuk put together a group of eleven poets (including themselves), chosen to mimic the diversity of a New York City Subway car, to join them on the 48th Floor to reflect on Stone's paintings, the rising buildings outside, and their own memories.

Jason Blasso, Paolo Javier, Stephen Motika, Eileen Myles, Margaret Porter Troupe, Tahani Salah, Patricia Smith, Quincy Troupe, The Lazy Fleece Beast, Holman, and Melnechuk spent a night writing the "Renga." Two weeks later, on August 24th, 2011, they gave its World Premiere performance to a crowd of hundreds to commemorate the 10th Anniversary of the attacks.

The film *Witness Downtown Rising Renga* first introduces us to Stone and Holman, two master artists deeply and personally affected by September 11th, 2001, then brings us to a sense of closure with a group of New York Poets powerful reflections on a decade of falls and rises.

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