

# Walls of Hope

ART SCHOOL AND OPEN STUDIO

PERQUIN, EL SALVADOR



“Lo que el arte ha podido conseguir en Perquin, la politica nunca pudo.”

*“What art has been able to accomplish in Perquin, politics was never able to do.”*

— Carmen Elena Hernández

# Tragedy, Hope, And Resurrection

## The Story Of Three Women

### Rufina Amaya

Rufina Amaya is the only woman to survive the infamous massacre of more than 760 men, women and children that took place at the village of El Mozote in December of 1981, early in the civil war in El Salvador that raged from 1980 – 1992.

### Marta Amaya

Marta Amaya is the daughter of Rufina Amaya. She was born several years after her mother Rufina witnessed the horrors of the massacre at El Mozote. Marta wants to bring healing to Perquin by becoming a physician. Her hope was realized when donors from the United States allowed her to begin medical school at the Evangelical University in San Salvador in January 2006.

### Claudia Bernardi

Claudia Bernardi is an internationally acclaimed Argentine artist who works in the fields of environment, human rights, and social justice. She has exhibited her work in over 40 solo exhibitions. She has taught art for many years at major colleges and universities of the San Francisco Bay Area, and has worked extensively as artist with the Latin American community of refugees from war and torture. She founded the Walls of Hope Art School and Open Studio in 2005 in Perquin in response to the social and spiritual devastation created in the area by the massacre at El Mozote.

*overleaf, top to bottom: Rufina, Marta, Claudia*



# The Story

## The Massacre at El Mozote

Early in the course of the civil war in El Salvador more than 760 men, women, and children were massacred at the village of El Mozote.

From the evening of Thursday, December 11, 1981, until the evening of Saturday, December 13, 1981, soldiers from the Salvadoran army slaughtered entire families not only from El Mozote, but also from surrounding communities who had sought safe-haven there.

Army leaders had told the inhabitants they considered El Mozote a non-hostile village, because of the unusually high proportion of Evangelical Seventh Day Adventist Christians living among the majority of Catholics there.

Evangelicals during the civil war, by and large, maintained a stance of fundamental Christian neutrality towards "the things that are Caesar's", including the military activities of the government during the civil war.

Despite the assurances given, the soldiers of the Atlacatl Battalion spared no one in two days of carnage.

From any perspective, Humanist, Religious, or specifically Christian, those who died at El Mozote are martyrs.

From El Mozote: 370 martyrs, including Amílcar Pereira, 2 months, and Cosme Díaz, 80. From La Joya: 190 martyrs, including Child, 8 days old, and Tomasa Martínez, 70. From Los Toriles: 62 martyrs including Child, 8 days old, and Simeona Vigil, 90. From Jocote Armirillo: 16 martyrs, including Child, 10 months old, and Genoveva Díaz, 60. From Cerro Pando: 112 martyrs, including Child, 15 days old, and Jesús Luna, 78. From Joateca: 24 martyrs, including Child, 3 days old, and Carlos Ortíz, 48.

*overleaf: the village of El Mozote as seen from the outskirts of town.*





## Rufina Amaya

Rufina is the only woman who survived the massacre at El Mozote.

She lost -

Her husband, Domingo Claros, 29, wood cutter,  
Her son, Cristiano Amaya Claros, 9,  
Her daughter María Dolores Amaya Claros, 5,  
Her daughter Marta Lilían Claros, 3,  
Her daughter María Isabel Amaya Claros, 8 months.

She told the story to the world.

She demanded justice.

*overleaf: Rufina Amaya*



## The Bones Of Martyrs Cry Out For Justice

Murderous civil wars raged through out Latin America during the 1970's and 1980's. Tens of thousands of adults, child, and infants were slaughtered and disappeared.

The traumatic memories of those days continue to scar the memories, minds, and hearts of hundreds of thousands of people in Argentina, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador to this day.

Rufina Amaya's demand for justice went unanswered. In the settlement of the civil war, the case against the perpetrators of the massacre was closed and they were granted amnesty.

The internationally acclaimed Argentine artist Claudia Bernardi was invited to participate in the exhumation of the remains of El Mozote in November 1992.

Disturbed by the horrors her very hands were digging from the earth of El Mozote, and moved by compassion for the sufferings and losses of Rufina Amaya and the people of the region surrounding El Mozote, Claudia returned to Berkeley, California, where she was teaching.

Enraged at justice denied the martyrs and survivors of El Mozote, she expressed her experience in a powerful series of prints.

*overleaf: the church in El Mozote where many were killed during the massacre.*





## A Beginning : Murals Of Hope - 2001

Claudia became increasingly convinced that art can bring healing to even the most horrendous emotional and social wounds still being experienced by the people of the villages and towns of the region around Perquin. The horrific memories may never go away, but art can bring hope, joy, and vision of a better future.

She was also convinced that art can resurrect communities of justice where entire villages have been obliterated and annihilated.

Armed with only the fierce poetic heart of the artist, armed only with paints and brushes, Claudia set her face like flint once again toward the town of Perquin, a few miles from the ruins of El Mozote.

Together with her Argentine artist friend Valeria Galliso, she spent four months in Perquin teaching children and adults how to paint.

For the first time ever in Perquin art is being taught. The children learn quickly and paint murals on the walls of buildings in Perquin. The people and the Mayor of Perquin, seeing art transforming their community beg Claudia to return and establish an art school.

*overleaf: children at work painting the walls of Perquin.*



## Walls Of Hope: The First Year 2005

After the success of the four month mural project Claudia returned to San Francisco with a burning desire to establish an art school and open studio in Perquin to be called Walls of Hope.

After four years of planning for the school, Claudia held a huge auction of the entire inventory of her art work at Intersection for the Arts in San Francisco in May of 2004 to fund the school.

She used the proceeds to fund the first year of operation of the Walls of Hope Art School and Open Studio. Private donors and foundations also joined their generosity to Claudia's and allowed her to begin her work.

Claudia and Valeria arrived in Perquin in March of 2005 and the work of healing through art began in earnest.

Free classes and workshops in drawing, painting, sculpture, and print-making, taught by Claudia and Valeria, have been offered to the children, teenagers, adults, and elderly of Perquin and surrounding villages. Three paying positions for art assistants have been created.

Guest artists from the US and Latin America come and teach specialized workshops in weaving, art history, and video and photo documentation. Art students from the California College of Arts come in the summer and teach, bringing supplies and equipment with them to donate to the school.

*overleaf: Claudia teaches a class in printmaking to students in Perquin*





## Walls Of Hope: The First Year 2005

Through Rufina Amaya's witness and Claudia's response art becomes, in Claudia's words, "an effervescent presence" in Perquin.

Art also becomes a healing, subversive, social presence. Collaborations begin to flow among existing civic and religious groups. A chalk street mural is created for the Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, the patron saint of Perquin. Women are thrilled to learn to weave. They decide to sell their work as art and not as handicrafts, and return to their villages to teach other women.

The new-born artists watch a documentary Artist of Resistance by Penelope Price. Penelope is in Perquin with them. The film is about Claudia. It is about them. It is about their heart-ache for all they have loved and who perished. It is about art creating hope and resurrection out of tragedy.

Rufina Amaya is there. She weeps throughout the film. At the end of the screening she speaks. She thanks Claudia and Valeria and Penelope for being the bearers of the story of El Mozote through art.

Others weep and share stories bottled up inside for years. Healing happens. People there thank the people from the outside, the internacionales who want to remember and bring hope and healing to the tragedy.

Later, Carmen Elena Hernández, a leader of the religious base community of Perquin declares:

*"Lo que el arte ha podido conseguir en Perquin, la politica nunca pudo".*

Art has been able to accomplish in Perquin what politics was never been able to do.

*overleaf: Valeria and a student at work in one of the classes*



## Walls Of Hope: Marta Amaya

Marta Amaya was born to Rufina Amaya three years after she survived the horrors of El Mozote.

Now a young woman of eighteen, the strongest desire of her heart is to become a physician to heal the bodies and minds of those who suffer from the memories of El Mozote.

In the desire of Marta's heart is reborn the desires for peace, justice, creativity, and love of all who perished as martyrs at El Mozote.

*overleaf: Marta Amaya, the daughter of Rufina Amaya*



## Walls Of Hope: 2006 and beyond

Walls of Hope Art School and Open Studio has brought social and economic transformation and spiritual and emotional healing to the people of Perquin.

2005 has been the year of founding. 2006 marks the beginning of the development phase of the project. The school and the community will continue to develop new projects, and most importantly, to train local artists to take over the running of the school in the next four years.





# La Última Cena De Morazán

## The Last Supper Of Morazán

The members of the Catholic base community of Perquin (CEBES) asked that the artists of Walls of Hope create a mural for their meeting place and that the mural include heroes beloved of the community.

Included in the mural are the martyred Archbishop of San Salvador, Monseñor Oscar Romero; survivor of the massacre at El Mozote, Rufina Amaya; the martyred Bishop of Guatemala, Monseñor Gerardi; American civil rights martyr, Martin Luther King Jr.; Sister of Providence, Hermana Silvia Troncoso; 1883 Nonualco rebellion leader, Anastasio Aquino; Father Octavio Ortiz, martyred in 1979 for his work with the poor in San Salvador; and selected beloved people from Morazán who have lived and died for their ideals. In this mural, collaboratively conceived and executed, many people took place in an active role as artists: California College of Arts students: Daniel Panko, Christina Samuelson, Thia Jennings, Barbara Denier, Samantha Sage, Amelia Bureman, Benedict Flanigan, and Juliette Oken.

In this mural, collaboratively conceived and executed, many people took place in an active role as artists. Claudia Bernardi and Valeria Galliso worked with School of Art students Rigo Rodriguez, Rosa del Carmen Argueta, David Claros, Felix Gonzalez, Nora Claros, and Aristides Argueta. They were joined by California College of Arts students Daniel Panko, Christina Samuelson, Thia Jennings, Barbara Denier, Samantha Sage, Amelia Bureman, Benedict Flanigan, and Juliette Oken.

*overleaf: the mural at CEBES*





## Walls Of Hope: The Invitation

The most urgent funding need for Walls of Hope is to raise \$35,000 to meet our goal of \$56,000 for the 2006 budget.

You can help by letting making your Tax-deductible donations to Walls of Hope. Your donation may be made either by check or on-line through our fiscal sponsor Intersection for the Arts. On-line donations can be made on-line at the Walls of Hope website: <http://www.wallsofhope.org/donate/>

Donations by check for Walls of Hope should be made out to “Intersection for the Arts” with the memo line reading “Walls of Hope” and mailed to Michael Barger at the address below. (Please use the enclosed donation card)

Walls of Hope  
c/o Michael Barger  
488 30th Street  
San Francisco, CA 94131

Fiscal Sponsor: Intersection for the Arts [<http://www.theintersection.org>] is a 501(c)(3) non-profit arts organization which envisions the Walls of Hope project as a pilot program and model to serve other world communities who have witnessed the atrocities of violence caused by war.

Additionally, you can help the Walls of Hope Development Committee by letting us know of any individual donors or foundations who might be moved by the story of Walls of Hope, Rufina, Claudia, and Marta and might be interested in helping to fund Walls of Hope.

For more information please feel free to contact members of the Walls of Hope Development Committee –

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Information on Walls of Hope may be found on its website:  
<http://www.wallsofhope.org/>.

Additional information on Claudia Bernardi’s work as an artist and her life-transforming experience working on the exhumation at El Mozote may be obtained from the website of the documentary by Penelope Price, Artist of Resistance:  
<http://www.artistofresistance.com/artist.htm>

*overleaf: Marta Amaya, Julisa Amaya, Valeria Galliso, Rufina Amaya, Claudia Bernardi, and Tatiana Reinoza. backcover: Claudia Bernardi teaching a printmaking class in Perquin.*





