“What does it mean to preserve sacred remnants? How do we allow the fire of life to burn away that which we need to and must let go of? How do we become the warrior who can walk through the fire of battle and come out the other side ready to fight? What is it I need to fight for?” I approached this residency with the idea of becoming a peaceful art warrior and the hero of my own story.

“I will create, make creations even out of the waste, the burnt, the broken. I will find the beauty in everything and invite others to do the same. I will sit and hope for peace and love in a time where all our lives feel like they have been burnt to the ground.“

This visual hero’s journey contains memories, found objects and creations that speak to fragility and strength, joy and sorrow, life and death. The large photos are of days long past that are etched in my heart where I explored the woods with my brother John and a camera, thus discovering my love of photography. This same brother became a marine fighter pilot and died in a plane crash 18 years ago. A silent video shows a sacred performance art piece practiced on his birthday 15 years ago where I shaved my head as a practice of mourning, bravery, and learning to become a warrior in my life.

I invite you as the viewer to walk your own hero’s journey around this exhibit. From home, to the call to your own adventure, into an imaginal realm where a sacred Guardian leads you into the unknown, to the burnt and burning places in your life, into the abyss where there is death and rebirth, leading to transformation and a return to find the gifts of your journey. (You are invited to take one of the small feather filled jars next to this statement as a gift of beauty on your journey. These feathers were collected as a daily practice of finding beauty these last two years.)

This art installation is a prayer for each one’s journey in life as you face your sorrows and learn to find your joy. Here I share my path through the forest of this time and the sorrows of the past, calling each person to remember what you wanted to be when you grew up. My brother John (pictured as a child on the large wall) wanted to be a pilot and I wanted to be an artist. And I am!

Kimberly Hocking – December 2021

I would like to give special thanks to my husband David, artist Katie Stubblefield and to Jessie Dean for their support.