

Maya Lin Quotes

On the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial

"The definition of a modern approach to war
is the acknowledgement of individual lives lost."

"I thought about what death is, what a loss is.
A sharp pain that lessens with time, but can never quite heal over. A scar.
The idea occurred to me there on the site.
Take a knife and cut open the earth, and with time the grass would heal it.
As if you cut open the rock and polished it."

"If we can't face death, we'll never overcome it.
You have to look it straight in the eye.
Then you can turn around and walk back out into the light."

"It was a requirement by the veterans to list the 57,000 names.
We're reaching a time
that we'll acknowledge the individual in a war on a national level."

"Memorials are never about the past for me,
I mean, memorials are there in a way to guide us to a different future."

On Art

"Sometimes I think creativity is magic; it's not a matter of finding an idea,
but allowing the idea to find you."

"My work originates from a simple desire to make people aware of their surroundings and this can
include not just the physical but the psychological world that we live in. This desire, at the time led me
to be involved in art works that are as much politically motivated as they are aesthetically based,
creating works that focus on sobering realities of our age."

"An artist fights to maintain the integrity of a work
so that it remains a strong, clear vision.
Art is and should be the act of an individual willing to say something new,
something not quite familiar.
It is that collection of singular personal visions, transformed within the mind's eye to the public
which is throughout time, throughout our history, come to form a definition
of who we are, and in a way, why we are.
It is a dialog with of not only our peers but with people and times before and beyond our time.
For although each of us can be defined by the brief physical time that we as individuals exist,
we have the ability to make that time extend far beyond our physical existence.
We are part of a collective unconsciousness, connected to one another
by our works, images, thoughts and writings.
We communicate to future generations

what we are, who we are and what we have been.
Hopefully influencing for the better, what we will become."

"A lot of my works deal with a passage, which is about time.
I don't see anything that I do as a static object in space.
It has to exist as a journey in time."

"I try to give people a different way of looking at their surroundings.
That's art to me."

"It terrified me to have an idea that was solely mine
to be no longer a part of my mind,
but totally public."

"You have to have conviction
and completely question everything and anything you do.
No matter how much you study,
no matter how much you know,
the side of your brain that has the smarts won't necessarily help you in making art."

"for the most part things never get built the way they were drawn."

"all my work is much more peaceful than I am."

"My goal is to strip things down
so that you need just the right amount of words or shape
to convey what you need to convey.
I like editing. I like it very tight."

On Her Youth

"The only thing that mattered
was what you were to do in life,
and it wasn't about money.
It was about teaching, or learning."

On Challenges

"To fly we have to have resistance."

On Our Legacy

"I believe that peace will only come when we learn to live on this planet in a way that allows all other creatures to exist alongside us."

"My hope for the future is that we actually come to care more about the future."

"If we forget what used to be,
then we've lost an ability to really be sensitive to our surroundings."

"Like every other species on the planet, we have been wired for immediacy --
our tools and approach to life have evolved for short-term gain."

"This instinct and our intellect have allowed us not only to survive
but also to succeed in overpowering the other species with which we share the earth."

"Unfortunately, it is fast becoming evident that what has benefited us for thousands of years
is proving disastrous for the planet."

"We find ourselves on the cusp of the earth's sixth mass extinction,
however this is the only one caused by a single species -- ours.
I am concerned about what it says about us --
that we are not very good at thinking beyond our immediate selves,
that we do not make our choices in terms of what our planet will be like for generations to come."

"What if you were to think of a place not as a still fixed point
but rather as a moving fluid site?
We have, I believe, a responsibility to live in a way that allows for generations to come."

"Until we have evolved to think not just one generation out, but three or four, or perhaps ten, we will
continue to overuse and abuse the earth's resources and threaten the very place we call home with
irreparable environmental degradation."

"My dream, my hope for the future is that we evolve into beings that care about the far distant future.
That we evolve to care not just about our own species, but also about the other living creatures with
which we share this planet. That will be the ultimate definition of selflessness."

"We have to think of peace not just as among our own species but as encompassing all species that live
on this planet. We must look at how our activities affect the natural world in which we live."