

# ***HOW MANY TEARS ARE ENOUGH?***

**A site-dependent art installation addressing the aftermath of gun violence.**

This installation was motivated by the horrific mass shootings in 2018 in Parkland, Florida; Squirrel Hill, Pennsylvania; and other recent incidents of gun violence in the United States. Each one of these tragic events reminds me of the unimaginable 2012 shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut—my home state.

As an artist, I feel the need to use my visual voice to express my outrage about these cumulative disasters and honor the victims and those left with empty hearts. Through my work, I contemplate our experience of loss and mourn the potential contributions of lost generations, while recognizing that memories can sustain us.

Rejecting the perhaps-expected shapes of guns and bullets to create this installation, I have chosen to use the forms of flowers and vines, thorns and knots, joined in a symbolic garden. Thorns and knotted vines express the pain that so many have experienced when losing a loved one, while flowers represent hopefulness and life. Here I have created the essence of flowers with a variety of wires, which are long lasting and virtually indestructible. The flowerlike shapes hang from the ceiling, allowing viewers to experience their individual uniqueness like the victims they represent.

While victims of gun violence may be gone in an instant, memories survive and remain imprinted on our lives. Here a Mylar floor reflects the hanging flowers and thorny vines, multiplying the opportunity—and hopefully intensifying the desire—to honor and respond. The shadows created by the flower shapes, thorns and knots may resemble a river of flowing tears but also symbolize renewal, nourishing our hearts and minds amid the reality of absence and loss.

My hope, in sharing these emotions, is that you be drawn into an ever-deeper commitment to demand change in both gun and mental health laws.