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ABSTRACT

Societies all over the world have museums to commemorate war and war heroes. A world-wide growth of peace museums addresses the issue of museums to celebrate peace. These museums, grounded in the activities of nationals, have a regional base but embody a larger international quest for peace education through the visual arts. The original type of peace museum is the anti-war museum. A second type is the issue-based museum such as in Hiroshima and Nagasaki that developed as a response to atomic bombs and the nuclear age. A third strand of peace museum focuses on the celebration of humanitarian work. Modern peace museums have a multi-faceted approach that encapsulates the world-wide quest for peace. These museums constitute a vital force for non-formal peace work and an opportunity for peace educators. (CK)

# AN ENVIRONMENT FOR PEACE EDUCATION: THE PEACE MUSEUM IDEA

Terrence Duffy

Societies all over the world have constructed museums to commemorate war and war heroes. The question is increasingly being asked, why not museums to celebrate peace? The answer to that question is being found today in the world-wide growth of peace museums. They enshrine a fundamental concept of peace environment, creating a "culture of peace". At the International Conference on Peace Museums which met in Bradford, UK, in September 1992, museum facilities from all over the world were represented. The network which originated from that conference has yielded news of many other museums for peace. These museums constitute a vital force for non-formal peace work and an outstanding new opportunity for peace educators.

# AN ENVIRONMENT FOR PEACE EDUCATION: THE PEACE MUSEUM IDEA

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Societies all over the world have constructed public museums to commemorate war, gathering their memorials to historic conflicts and venerated war heroes. The question is increasingly being asked, why not a museum to celebrate peace? The answer to that question is being found today in the world-wide growth of peace museums. These museums, grounded in the activities of nationals, have a regional base but they embody a larger international quest for peace education through the visual arts. They also enshrine a fundamental concept of peace environment, thereby creating a true 'culture of peace'. The peace museum idea has now reached fruition and is reflected in the expansion of the concept in cities as diverse as Chicago (USA), Londonderry (Northern Ireland), Berlin (Germany) and Tokyo (Japan). At the International Conference on Peace Museums which met in Bradford (UK) in September 1992 over fifty museum facilities from all over the world were represented. The network which originated from that conference has yielded news of many other 'museums of peace'. These museums constitute a vital force for peace education. Their role as a potent mechanism for non-formal peace work has barely been recognized and constitutes an outstanding new opportunity for peace educators.

## 1 The Origins of the Peace Museum Idea

One is frequently asked the blunt question 'what exactly is a peace museum?' It is difficult to reply with an equally succinct answer. The origins of such a disparate trend in the museum world are complex and the range of institutions which might be incorporated under the 'peace museum banner' are diverse. However, a common thread in such facilities is a shared concern with peace education through the arts. Starting before the first world war, the idea of museums which would preserve a history of peacemaking (not just of warmaking) took root and in the course of the century many museums have embraced this theme. In the past twenty years (especially in Japan, Europe and America) there has been considerable

interest in the peace museum idea and in a range of countries, museums have opened to considerable public interest and popularity (Duffy, 1993).

Peace museums are now emerging as a global trend in museum development. The product of state, group or individual efforts – these museums have attempted to explore the relationship between conflict and the visual arts. They have endeavoured to act as vehicles of peace education by preserving the heritage of peacemaking and peace culture and by promoting an informed understanding of the origins of conflict. Such developments enshrine the broader concept of UNESCO's concern in building a 'culture of peace'.

The portrayal of conflict for purposes of 'peace education' is an old idea but one which has continuing importance in the exploration of the relationship between the visual arts and conflict. On their own, commemorations of war are inadequate as educational vehicles. So while there is potency in the memories evoked by war paraphernalia the hope that such memorials will bind people together to prevent the recurrence of war is a futile one. In comparison, the past century has witnessed the growth of museums dedicated to furthering peace.

In the development of the idea there has been neither a set formula nor a typical institution. The establishment of peace museums in particular countries has reflected regional peculiarities and political factors as well as individual personalities and issues. There are (however) a number of specific types of facility. There are galleries which describe themselves as 'peace museums' as well as political entities whose origins lie in specific events. In the latter category one would include museums which explore particular catastrophes like nuclear war, genocide or holocaust. Many of these museums are strongly political in their treatment of particular subjects and (in some cases have been constructed for particular ends) but nevertheless might be categorised within the broad 'peace museum' family. Then there are museums which focus on the general humanitarian nature of individuals or groups of individuals. Finally, it can be argued that any gallery's programming might allow potential as a 'museum of peace'. So the peace museum notion has enormous capacity for expansion if only it can be 'sold' to galleries which have relevance to its concerns. To that extent at least, the peace museum idea is a constantly growing one.

In sum, there are essentially four strands: distinct peace museums; museums which are devoted to particular events (such as Hiroshima's Memorial Peace museum); museums which are celebrations of peace exemplified through international humanitarian law (such as the

International Red Cross and Red Crescent Museum, Geneva); and gallery projects which while not currently 'full blown' have the potential to evolve as functional 'museums of peace'. The first and last of these categories require some further elaboration. When one speaks of a 'distinct' peace museum one is generally referring to a facility which has dedicated itself as a 'peace museum' – adopting that title and concerning itself first and foremost with exploring issues of peace and peace culture in the museum context. The central theme of such a museum's exhibition is the issue of peace. Such facilities are only a small proportion of the total number of centres and museums which make a contribution to exploring issues of peace and conflict through the visual arts. This is why a strong argument must be made in support of the activities of the many museums and galleries whose programming focuses on these issues indirectly or periodically. Peace (and the absence of peace) are fundamental aspects of our society and by recognising the criticality of these themes many facilities have made important contributions in peace education without becoming distinct 'peace museums'. A good example would be the activities of the Peace Museum Project in Northern Ireland which persuaded many Ulster galleries to focus on peace issues. In time, such facilities may develop so that they become *de facto* 'museums of peace'. The most important thing is that all of these *four* different strands make a vital total contribution to the creative exploration of peace issues and hence to peace education.

## 2 The Growth of Peace Museums

The Hague Peace Palace, founded by Andrew Carnegie in the early 1900s represents the first effort to create a museum dedicated solely to peace. It is in some sense a 'living museum' with paintings, sculptures and busts of important international figures. In this manner the Peace Palace focuses on peace through demonstrating the growing importance of international law (The Peace Palace, 1989). However, aside from the Peace Palace, the earliest peace museums were essentially anti-war museums. The first of these was created by Jean de Bloch in 1902 in Lucerne, Switzerland (Duffy, 1993, p. 3). Ironically it swiftly became the casualty of war.

A second museum, founded by Ernst Friedrich in Berlin in 1923 was also destroyed by the forces which led to the Second World War (Friedrich, 1987). Jean de Bloch's 'International Museum of War and Peace' operated on the thesis that war itself testified against war. Only two

of his exhibitions dealt specifically with peace: the first demonstrated the economic costs of war. The second displayed the texts of major international treatises. Ironically because of the scanty treatment of peace issues *per se* the museum was initially applauded by military officers and deplored by the peace movement. In comparison, Friedrich's Berlin-based museum had a more explicitly anti-war bias. Lectures and public debates were organised and there were plans to create a peace academy within the museum. By demonstrating the 'reality of war' through photographs of mutilated soldiers, Friedrich hoped the younger generation might be educated in an anti-militarist spirit. Not surprisingly the military viewed such goals as subversive. As the Nazi government's power increased, the museum was destroyed. Ironically, Friedrich fled from Germany only to have the mobile peace museum he established in Brussels sacked during the 1940 German invasion.

The inter-war period thus witnessed not only the downfall of these scattered initiatives but also the critical establishment of the peace museum idea. Other notable initiatives during these years included the 'Peace and League of Nations Exhibition' organised at The Hague in 1930. It is with the background of these early precursors of the peace museum idea in mind that we can understand the emergence of modern facilities building upon this tradition.

Of particular interest is the Lindau Peace museum, founded in 1976 by the architect Thomas Wechs and which opened in 1980 with the support of Pax Christi. Located at the meeting point of three countries (Austria, Germany and Switzerland), the museum portrays world history as not merely a history of wars but also of peacemakers (Duffy, 1993).

Another good example is the Peace museum, Chicago which opened in November 1981 'dedicated to exploring issues of war and peace through the visual, literary and performing arts' as 'there has never been a museum in the US dedicated to raising the public consciousness about the issues involved in building peace' (The Peace Museum, 1990). So far its major exhibitions have included 'Give Peace A Chance' (the campaigns of leading rock and folk musicians) and 'The Unforgettable Fire' (drawings by survivors of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings.) Significantly, the work of the Chicago museum has inspired other projects such as the Peace Museum Project, Northern Ireland which started in 1989. In seeking to preserve the 'past of peacemaking' in Northern Ireland, this project works in association with local art galleries and reconciliation centres. The Chicago museum has also influenced the 'International Peace museum'

venture which was launched in 1986 in Washington D.C. by Helen Bailey but which recently dissolved its non-profit status for lack of funding.

## 3 Issue-Based Museums

Just as the battlefields of Flanders became equated with the dawn of a new era in war so too have Hiroshima and Nagasaki assumed a symbolic place in the nuclear age. It is not surprising that today the most extensive collection of peace memorial buildings constructed in response to a particular issue is to be found in Hiroshima. Within a year of the dropping of the atomic bomb its citizens had preserved the area as a peace site and on the fourth anniversary (6 August 1949) legislation enshrined Hiroshima as 'a peace memorial city'. Its monuments include an A-bomb Cenotaph (with a register of victims), the Flame of Peace (which will burn until all nuclear weapons have disappeared from the earth) and the A-bomb dome. The Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum and Memorial Hall opened in 1955. Annual visitors to the Museum numbered more than 1.3 million by 1980 (Kosakai, 1980, p.15).

A still more popular-based and politically more radical campaign underlines the Japan Peace Museum Project which is currently evolving in Tokyo. At the end of 1983 the Committee to establish the Japan Peace Museum was formally created and launched the 'Peace Tile campaign' as a fund-raising effort. Featured in the building will be photographs, films and other educational events.

In fact Japan is today probably the most exciting region in the growth of the peace museum idea. Almost every sizable Japanese city has its own peace museum (devoted primarily to dialogue on the nuclear holocaust) and there are many substantial new projects. Just three examples are the activities of the Osaka International Peace Center which details the destruction of Osaka by B-29s; the Kyoto Museum for World Peace of Ritsumeikan University which looks more broadly at war and peace since 1945; and the Himeyuri Peace Museum, Okinawa which centres on the battle of Okinawa. It is significant in terms of the growth of the peace museum idea in Japan that at the International Conference of Peace Museums held in Osaka in September 1991 a host of Japanese museums and peace foundations were represented (Report, 1991). Today, Japan constitutes probably the single most responsive environment for the peace museum idea.

Several other peace museum initiatives have sprung up in the past decade as a response to political events. A combined 'anti-war museum and peace library' was established in Berlin-east in 1982 and west Berlin has housed a modest 'peace museum' and 'anti-war museum' – all with strong political emphases (Spree, 1990). In 1986 the 'Museum of Peace and Solidarity' opened in Samarkand, Uzbekistan by members of the international friendship club, 'Esperanto' (MAPW Newsletter, 1990). In recent years the National Museum of Australia, in Canberra, has created a special 'peace collection' which includes material from the Australian peace and disarmament movements (Hansen, 1991). The 'Caen Normandy Museum' commenced in 1988 on the site of the eighty-day battle in 1944. In 1993 a new Peace museum opens at Verdun where an estimated 700,000 French and German soldiers lost their lives in the First World War. It is encouraging that amongst the newest peace museums are institutions which typify positive change in the international order. These include the Museum of Independence in Namibia which celebrates the Namibian struggle; the Tashkent Peace museum in Uzbekistan which treats regional identity and culture in Central Asia, and the Japan Peace Museum Project (mentioned above) which articulates a broader approach to peace issues than previous institutions in contemporary Japan.

New candidates are constantly coming on stream with concerns as diverse as the Cambodian Genocide museum, a Danish museum on UN peacekeeping, and a holocaust museum in Detroit, USA. The Cambodian Tuol Sleng Museum (with its stacks of photographic and documentary evidence) serves as a testament to the crimes of the Khmer Rouge. It has been forcefully used by the Phnom Penh administration as an instrument of propaganda to boost its own legitimacy by focusing hatred on its predecessor. This is all the more disconcerting since most of the leaders of that Vietnamese-installed government (including Hun Sen and Heng Samrin) were at one time Khmer Rouge officers themselves (Robinson & Wheeler, 1992, p. 67).

## 4 Humanitarian-Orientated Museums

The third strand of peace museums is those dedicated to celebrating humanitarian work.Two major examples of this type of entity include the physically impressive International Red Cross and Red Crescent Museum in Geneva and the Florence Nightingale Museum in London. The Geneva

museum serves a dual-role in documenting the creation of the Red Cross and paying tribute to the human spirit as it has emerged throughout the centuries. It features a panoramic audio-visual show of the Solferino battle and documents Henry Dunant's pioneering work. Included in the exhibitions are enormous cases containing the First World war index files of the International Prisoners of War Agency. In comparison, the Nightingale Museum has an unassuming exterior. Its medium includes pictures, relics and an audio-visual presentation on Nightingale's life. Another example of this category of museum is the House of Anne Frank in Amsterdam which documents the Frank family's experience under German occupation.

## 5 Creative Programming for Peace

Modern peace museums go beyond the idea of espousing the 'anti-war message' – positing instead a multi-faceted approach which encapsulates the world-wide quest for peace. Many galleries and museums have in recent years chosen to prioritise their exhibitions around peace themes. This raises the question, what does a facility have to be to constitute a peace museum? It also begs a second question, when is a peace museum not a peace museum? To these inquiries there can be no easy reply. The answer is always (of necessity) a matter of interpretation. One person's definition of peace is another's 'propaganda'. This is particularly obvious over sensitive issues such as the Jewish holocaust where institutions such as Israel's Yad Vashem present a strong political edge in portraying human tragedy (Yad Vashem, 1989). In that way what could be potential education for peace threatens to become an element in the complicated Arab-Israeli conflict.

A good example of a gallery not avowedly a 'peace museum' but which contributes significantly to peace education is the Nicholas Roerich Museum which preserves the work of the veteran peace campaigner. Another case in point is the Alternative Museum which has pioneered a number of controversial exhibitions on peace issues such as its Belfast/Beirut exhibition of 1990. Both galleries are in New York city. Also innovative are the efforts of Ulster's Peace Museum Project encouraging an agenda for the artwork of peace in N.Ireland galleries. There is much that can be done in this way with relatively limited resources.

An interesting new project is the Prairie Peace Park and Maze which hopes to open in Lincoln, Nebraska in 1993. It models the concepts of

international cooperation and environmental commitment with exhibitions which include anti-war themes and an 'Earthship House' made from recycled materials. Since world peace includes both protecting the people of the planet and preserving the planet itself, a strong focus in the Prairie project is environmental consciousness. These ideas of alternative environmental and international relations strategies should not be dismissed as naive, a fact all the more salient in the wake of the appalling ecological destruction caused by the Gulf war. Metaphors from the prairie (diversity, cooperation, respect for First Nations) can lead to change if people come away with new ideas about an alternative world order.

## 6 Peace Museums: Past, Present and Future

In September 1992 at the University of Bradford an international conference on peace museums was held under the auspices of the Give Peace A Chance Trust. The Trust is committed to the establishment of a national peace museum in the U.K. This event should do much to foster the growth of peace museums and the increasing acceptance of the idea. Peace museums have come a long way from the passionate anti-war message of de Bloch and Friedrich – although these impulses are still present in many facilities one would call 'peace museums'. More striking as an indicator of change has been the potential of peace museums to articulate new concerns about the highly violent realities of the late twentieth century world. A good example of this trend is the Prairie venture with its futuristic portrayal of the catastrophic human and environmental consequences of conflict.

It should not be forgotten that peace museums have never been remote from the highly political arena in which they have developed. This is reflected to some extent in the resistance to peace work in various parts of the world. Unfortunately peace museums still face difficulty in gaining 'credibility' outside the peace activist community. Of course these developments are also influenced by the wider international political milieu. In 1990 Libya requested UNESCO's technical assistance in the preparation of a peace museum initiative. This would have represented an important development following UNESCO's involvement in the planning of the Jamahiriya's Museum (Bouchenaki, 1988). This case illustrates just how far past, present and future peace museum development is embroiled in the *Realpolitik* of regional and international affairs. Be that as it may, peace museums constitute a compelling force for peace education. The peace

museum concept constitutes no less than a total environment for peace education which can only be ignored at their cost by peace educators. The potential in using peace museums as vehicles of peace education with a wide variety of audiences is enormous. Alone, they represent probably the most valuable tool in working with non-formal and adult groupings that we have available. The peace museum idea is an outstanding new opportunity for peace educators and constitutes a vital challenge in working towards a global environment of peace education.

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