



INTRODUCING PEACE MUSEUMS

JOYCE APSEL

Introducing Peace Museums

This volume examines peace museums, a small and important but often overlooked series of museums whose numbers have multiplied world-wide in recent decades. They relate stories and display artifacts—banners, diaries, and posters, for example, about such themes as: art and peace, antiwar histories, protest, peacekeeping and social justice and promote cultures of peace. This book introduces their different approaches from Japan, which has the largest number of sites, to Bradford, UK and Guernica, Spain. Some peace museums and centers emphasize popular peace symbols and figures, others provide alternative narratives about conscientious objection or civil disobedience, and still others are sites of persuasion, challenging the status quo about issues of war, peace, disarmament, and related issues.

Introducing Peace Museums distinguishes between different types of museums that are linked to peace in name, theme or purpose and discusses the debates which surround peace museums versus museums for peace. This book is the first of its kind to critically evaluate the exhibits and activities of this group of museums, and to consider the need for a “critical peace museum studies” which analyses their varied emphasis and content. This welcome introduction to peace museums considers the challenges and opportunities faced by these institutions now and in the future.

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Acknowledgments

In many respects, this volume began in 1998 at the Third International Conference of Peace Museums, titled “Exhibiting Peace: The Contribution of Museums to World Peace,” that took place at Kyoto, Japan, followed by a trip to Nagasaki Peace Museum and Garden (other participants visited peace museums in Hiroshima and Okinawa). At Kyoto Museum for World Peace at Ritsumeikan University, one of the sponsoring institutions, I was able to view the museum and hear about its peace projects from the voices of trained volunteer docents and staff, and learn about issues of war and peace through new perspectives. In fact, viewing the exhibits and poster displays, listening to presentations and exchanging viewpoints with participants was transformative. At the time, I was director of education at the Anne Frank Center USA. While I continued to teach and research issues of comparative genocide and other atrocities, I began to emphasize the connections between issues related to negative and positive peace. And increasingly, I realized the possibilities that linking human rights and wrongs and peace histories and cultures opened up in the classroom and beyond. At the same time, the conference and International Network of Museums for Peace (INMP) introduced me to people who would become colleagues and friends over the following years, and whose museums and institutions I would have the opportunity to visit. Over the last fifteen years, I have enjoyed working with and learning from the insights of INMP board members, and serving as Non-Governmental Organization/Department of Public Information delegate to the UN. I also want to thank the group of dedicated educators who make up the Committee of *A Curriculum of Hope for a Peaceful World Newsletter* and whose remarkable founder, Jeanne Morascini, continues as a model and source of inspiration for how to create a culture of peace in one’s life and community.

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Abbreviations

CDMPI	Centro di Documentazione del Manifesto Pacifista Internazionale (International Pacifist Documentation Center)
CND	Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament
CO	conscientious objector
DIPM	Dayton International Peace Museum
ETA	Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (Basque Country and Freedom)
ICSC	International Coalition of Sites of Conscience
INMP	International Network of Museums for Peace
NGO	nongovernmental organization
SDF	Self-Defense Forces (Japan)
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
WRI	War Resisters' International

1 Introducing Peace Museums

Peace Matters

This volume introduces peace museums as a distinct group of museums whose content and activities focus on cultures and histories of peace, and include antiwar and antiviolenence messages. Peace museums are the repositories of the material culture of peace, including art, banners, and petitions, as well as of antiwar and social justice movements fostering nonviolence, disarmament, and conflict resolution. Hence, they bring to light complicated and largely unknown or ignored peace histories. Such histories appear in various forms, spaces, and times, and peace museums have a significant role to play as recorders and exhibitors of peace cultures and narratives.

Peace museums come in different shapes and sizes, but all share a purpose: promoting understanding peace as an ongoing, significant part of human history. While exhibits may be taken up with the suffering and destruction of war, peace museums in this book are more than such classic antiwar sites; they display peace cultures and movements, including artistic work, non-violent actions, and reconciliation ceremonies. In a number of respects, the range and types of exhibits mirror what one finds in history museums: living history formats, artifacts on display, interactive media, traveling exhibits, and so on.

Clearly, war and military museums predominate in every country in the world and often are supported through government funds. Local, state, and national history museums rely on various sources of government funding, or on a mixture of public and private support, and, therefore, enjoy some stability and continuity (although we are all aware that cultural institutions are among the first to be cut back during times of fiscal austerity). In contrast, peace museums are generally private and face an ongoing struggle to keep afloat fiscally. After all, peace is political, and peace museums challenge popular and government “just-war” narratives.

Interestingly, while museum literature and museum degree programs have multiplied since the 1980s, relatively little has been written or studied about peace museums. In fact, the very existence of peace museums as a distinct category of museum is largely overlooked. Perhaps even more surprisingly, this is also the case with regard to writings within peace studies, with a few notable exceptions: conference materials and edited volumes by

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the International Network of Museums for Peace, entries in several editions of peace encyclopedias, and a small number of peace historians, educators, and activists, particularly in Japan, which is the site of the majority of peace museums worldwide. Why is this? In part, peace studies have been subsumed within programs that focus on conflict, violence, war, security, genocide, and development studies. For example, a number of peace studies programs are now part of peace and conflict studies, international relations, or security studies divisions, in which the emphasis is on studying human violence and destructiveness. Furthermore, peace museums have been overlooked in the enormous growth in both number and size of atrocity and war sites, memorials, and museums. Museums that focus on tolerance, human rights and civil rights, humanitarianism, and other peace-related subjects rarely identify themselves as peace museums.

Different “categories” of museums overlap; and museums as institutions, and even more frequently through new exhibits, may shift direction and emphasis. This is sometimes to meet audience interests and other times in response to funding, political pressures, and the evolving expertise and interest of curators and directors. This volume describes a group of museums that specifically *identify* as peace museums. They are distinguished not only by their continuing to display the human cost of war and other violence but also by their desire to promote cultures of peace through art, dialogue, protest, reconciliation, and other means.

REPRESENTATIONS OF PEACE AND WAR IN MUSEUMS

Historian Jay Winter argues in *Museums and the Representation of War* that war belongs in “museum[s] because they have a semi-sacred aura. They are the repositories of the stories we tell ourselves about who we are and how we have come to be who and where we are.”¹ Hence, war museums “were intended to be tributes to the men and women who endured the tests of war. They have little room for recording the history of anti-war movements, and in their presentation of weapons and battlefield scenes, they do tend to sanitize war.”² Certainly military, war, armaments, and many national museums worldwide display war-related weapons of all types and sizes (from spears to tanks to bombs), military uniforms, medals, and replications of battle scenes, and they narrate stories about “necessary” and “just” wars. Exhibits describing “great patriotic wars,” “framing the military-nation,”³ and depicting national heroism often contribute to public fascination with violence and the thrill of war.

It may seem contradictory that peace museums, too, exhibit war. However, there is a stark contrast between peace museums and war museums in their approach to the war narrative. A starting assumption of peace museums is not to exhibit war and its weaponry in a positive and simple light, but rather to illuminate the complexities of war by including the short- and long-term

causes, what considerations went into the decision to go to war, and the after-effects of the conflict. Indeed, many peace museums are spaces that counter the romantic depiction of war by conveying “the neglected realities of daily life in wartime, such as diet, clothing, housing, and work routines,” and “hardships suffered by ordinary people and soldiers under the constant threat of war.”⁴ Rather than sanitize and cordon off the effects of violence during conflicts, peace museums emphasize the ongoing damage—physical, psychological, environmental, and so on—that continues to have an impact on people’s lives long after the official end of hostilities.

A number of sites include antiwar art created in response to violence and conflicts: Goya’s famous etchings *The Disasters of War* (French occupation of Spain); Kathe Kollwitz’s prints (World War I and the loss of her son); Picasso’s *Guernica* (the aerial bombing in 1937); and Toshi and Iri Maruki’s *Hiroshima Panels* (the atomic bombings of 1945). These are among the best-known examples of a much larger series of works, from paintings to photographs (what Susan Sontag described in *Regarding the Pain of Others*), that depict the terrible toll of war and violence. And early peace museums, such as Ernst Friedrich’s Anti-Kriegs-Museum in Berlin in 1925, exhibited photographs and other images of World War I focused on documenting the horrors of war. Friedrich had published *Krieg dem Krieg!* (*War against War*) a year earlier, composed of graphic images of the brutality of the battlefield framed with a series of ironic titles (a technique also used in Goya’s *Disasters of War*). A socialist and pacifist, Friedrich was imprisoned in a mental institution for resisting military service in 1914. The Nazis looted the museum and Friedrich fled the country in the 1930s. Interestingly, in 1981 his grandson Tommy Spree opened a new antiwar museum in Berlin, in part as testimony to his grandfather’s work. This genre of “waging war on war” through depicting the human costs of conflicts continues as a theme in a number of peace museums.

Unlike war museums, peace museums provide space for the stories of antiwar movements and individual conscientious objectors or protestors, and make available materials (works of art, song lyrics, photographs, pamphlets, banners, and so on) that invite visitors to learn about past and present antiwar and peace movements and themes.

Just as definitions of peace vary widely, so, too, do definitions of peace museums. In fact, a significant number of the museums around the world that include the word *peace* in their name valorize war, sacrifice, and glory, and subscribe to popular and national war narratives. There are a range of ways peace-titled museums and memorials address issues of war, memory, and identity. For example, the Caen-Normandy Mémorial Centre for History and Peace has a large, permanent exhibit on World War II and its battles, and depicts the terrible human toll of modern warfare. Although this very popular and widely visited museum has kept the word *peace* in its name and has a section on Nobel Peace Prize recipients, its early plans of including a large space for images and information about peace and human

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rights issues largely have been put aside. Some peace-titled or self-described peace museums and memorials depict destruction and atrocity; and they serve to memorialize events that have been overlooked or are not widely known about. For example, in 2011, the No Gun Ri Peace Memorial (and Park) was opened in Korea to memorialize the civilian victims of the massacre that took place there during the Korean War. Part of its goal is to send a strong warning to prevent future wars and, as South Korean Minister of Security and Public Administration Jeong Jong-Seop stated, to “become a mecca for peace and human rights.” Other sites are dedicated to remembering the victims and recording the ongoing toll on survivor communities; some sites include reconciliation, while others do not. And there are museums that display such graphic images of damages to bodies and repeated descriptions about the national background and character of the perpetrators that they reinforce visitors’ feelings of victimization, promote stereotypes against perpetrator peoples, and encourage attitudes of hatred and revenge.

MUSEUMS FOR PEACE

At their fifth international conference—Peace Museums: A Contribution to Remembrance, Reconciliation, Art and Peace—held in Guernica, Spain, in 2005, members of the International Network of Peace Museums changed the name of their organization to the International Network of Museums for Peace (INMP).⁵ This reflected an initiative to strengthen the organization by broadening membership to sites and projects for which peace was a part but not necessarily the primary theme. The International Coalition of Sites of Conscience (ICSC) is a large network with more than 190 members in fifty-three countries; the coalition includes emerging memory initiatives and historic sites that “promote civic action” and use “the lessons of history to take action on challenges to democracy and human rights today.”⁶ Thus, both the INMP and the ICSC serve as networks for the broad category of museums for peace. Most members represent histories of war, atrocities, and other human rights violations and of resistance to them (the terms *memory*, *memorial*, and *resistance*, for example, appear in the names of many sites of conscience). Narratives of specific events and memorialization often play a key role through programs commemorating anniversaries, and so on. In general, the emphasis is on negative peace; that is, on learning lessons from narrating past histories about conflicts, slavery, famine, political terror and torture, disappearances, incarceration, and other crimes. A chief characteristic of museums for peace is displaying histories of war and atrocity, usually at the site where these events took place. What distinguishes such memorials, history and atrocity museums, and sites of suffering (also sometimes described as sites of trauma) is that exhibits and education programs link to peace-related themes of civic education and of recognition, reconciliation, repair, and learning from the