GRESHAM COLLEGE

EST. 1597

Peacebuilding through the Visual Arts
Professor Jolyon Mitchell, FRSA
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Summary

How can the visual arts be used to promote peace? Professor Mitchell investigates how the visual arts can not only incite violence, but also bear witness, reveal dangerous memories, transform violence, contribute to healing trauma and imagine more hopeful futures. Examples are taken from both current conflicts (Russia-Ukraine, Israel-Palestine) and past wars (e.g. Paul Nash and Otto Dix in the First World War, and the 1984 Rwandan genocide). Professor Mitchell analyses the ambivalent role of the visual arts in building peace.

Lecture Outline

Introduction

Representing Heartbreak, Grief and the Pity of War

1. Art that Bears Witness

i)   Dangerous Memories (The Killing Churches)
ii)   Current Conflicts
iii)   Religious Beliefs

   The Ambiguities of Bearing Witness

2. Art that Transforms Violence

i)   On Stage
ii)   After a Civil War
iii)   Turning 'Swords Into Ploughshares'

   The Ambivalence of Transforming Violence

3. Art that Imagines Hopeful Futures

i)   Painting on Walls
ii)   Sculpting Hope
iii)   Reaching for Peace

   'Hope is a Dangerous Thing'

Conclusions: Art that Heals and Grows Peace?

Relevant Readings Include:

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Ramsbotham, Oliver, Tom Woodhouse and Hugh Miall. *Contemporary Conflict Resolution.* 3rd Edn. London: Polity Press, 2011.

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