

Preface

As part of the International Year of Volunteers, 2001, the United Nations Volunteer Programme in Georgia together with the artist community in the Caucasus presents 'Art for Peace'. This exhibition is a pilgrimage through the imagination and dreams of artists on the theme of peace. The paintings intend to enrich and expand our understanding of this complicated process. As unique images in their own right they have the possibility to promote the process as well as reflect it. The campaign is largely supported and motivated by the artists themselves - whose desire for peace has translated into their work.

No celebration could be more appropriate for the Year of Volunteers than Art for Peace. Volunteerism has always played a vital role in preserving peace. Volunteers the world over have been highly active in post-conflict nations. A network of cost-effective qualified personnel have been deployed in countries like Bosnia, Kosovo, Cambodia Sierra Leone and Rwanda with remarkable success. United Nations Volunteers has been at the forefront of this campaign.

In Georgia UN Volunteers have promoted peace since 1994. Their activities have been instrumental in facilitating peace dialogues, mediation and conflict resolution. The programme has worked on the return of conflict victims, internally displaced people and refugees. Volunteerism remains a challenge for every human being and an important element in building cohesive and stable communities.

The exhibition Art for Peace comes as a result of support from different sources. The idea was born by accident in the tiny workshop of the master-cameo-carver Besarion Darjanian in Tbilisi's old town. Besarion invited me into his studio after seeing me peer in through his window. During our discussion he said that despite all the conflicts engulfing his country, the mood and relationships among artists has never been lost. His words played straight into my idea for a peace mission. He introduced me to the Georgian Union of Artist, and through them the whole idea of Art for Peace materialised. During the discussions which followed, I was able to convince the union to offer up some of their best paintings for the exhibition. The concept also included different ethnic groupings - when, as negotiations progressed this seemed possible, the opportunity was too important to miss. This demonstrates more than anything else the ability of art to convey messages that cut across ethnic, religious, age and gender boundaries.

There are many who have helped create this collection and organise the exhibition. We are very grateful to all the artists whose work we are exhibiting. Their offer to donate some paintings for the peace process is very noble. We would like to especially mention Nino Zaalishvili without her unselfish efforts this exhibition would never have been possible. We are grateful to Peter Nasmyth for agreeing to read the proof and for providing a good editorial counsel. A very special thanks must also go to the following people; Tamar Nasaridze for her translations and interpretation work, Lela Bakradze and Ketii Gioshvili for their wisdom and tireless contribution. We must also thank all those who have helped and contributed in different forms - whose names have not been mentioned. Help has been generous from many quarters and in all cases given freely. It is our wish that this catalogue and exhibition will foster awareness and appreciation of this important work - as well as encourage the vital process of promoting peace through volunteerism.



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Co-chairman organising committee
Art for Peace