

Chapter VIII

Art and the Earth Charter

The Introduction and survey of art initiatives has been prepared by Mirian Vilela, followed by a separate essay by Sally Linder.

A) Introduction: Art and the Earth Charter

For centuries, artists have embraced their position as social critics and commentators. They have understood the power that songs and images can have to alter people's perspectives and to transform the world. As instigators of change, many artists today are responding to the ecological and social challenges facing the world by creating pieces that call for a more sustainable way of life. They are creating music and images that they hope will help people to see the flaws in the world and to work to change them.

Several artists have used the Earth Charter as inspiration for their work. Songs and paintings with Earth Charter themes have served both to allow the messages of the Earth Charter to reach a wider range of people and to inspire viewers, listeners, and the artists themselves to adopt a more ethical and sustainable way of life. The artists that have worked with the Earth Charter have ranged from international celebrities to art students in primary schools. These artists have been inspired to create pieces by a variety of factors, including: organized contests and activities; the words of friends and colleagues; and, most importantly, the message of the Earth Charter itself. Many of the artists that have created Earth Charter themed pieces have found that their artwork has been immensely well received. Art has played an important role in inspiring people to embrace the principles of the Earth Charter and to alter their lifestyles.

B) Art Initiatives using the Earth Charter

In an attempt to inspire efforts in this field, the Earth Charter Secretariat has put together an Art Section within the Charter's website displaying a variety of Earth Charter-related artwork. This section includes artistic interpretations created and inspired specifically by or for the Earth Charter. It provides a place for individuals—youth as well as adults—to express their thoughts and reactions to the Charter through a medium other than texts or speeches. The Art page can be found at <http://www.earthcharter.org/art>

Ark of Hope

The Ark of Hope is a large wooden chest beautifully decorated with images of the planet's cultural and biological diversity, and the Earth Charter is inscribed on papyrus parchment on the inside of its lid. It was designed and painted by Vermont, USA artist Sally Linder, built by cabinetmaker Kevin Jenness and lined by fabric artist Beth Haggart. The Ark is filled with

prayers, poems, and images expressing the hopes and aspirations of thousands of people. See www.arkofhope.org for photographs and stories about the Ark.

The Ark of Hope was created for a celebration of the Earth Charter held at Shelburne Farms, Vermont on September 9, 2001. On September 11, 2001 volunteers were cleaning up from the September 9th event when news came of the New York and Washington, DC terrorist attacks and tragedies. Sally Linder's immediate, spontaneous response to the horror was to begin walking the Ark of Hope to New York and the United Nations. Hundreds of walkers joined the pilgrimage to New York City, bringing with them hope and the vision of the Earth Charter to communities along the way. For two months the Ark of Hope was walked over 350 miles through four states. The last leg of the journey down the Hudson River was aboard the legendary sloop *The Clearwater*. It was met in New York City by *Clearwater* founder and folk singer Pete Seeger. In New York City, the Ark of Hope was placed on display at the Interfaith Center of New York City for several months. During that time it was put on display for three weeks in the lobby of the main building at the United Nations.

The Ark also journeyed to the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa. In Johannesburg, Sally Linder and her colleagues brought the Ark of Hope into the black settlements of Soweto, Zandsprite, and Diepsloot, where they spent over a week sharing with children and young people the vision of the Earth Charter and exploring with them through dialogue and art hopes and aspirations for the future. During the Summit twenty-two young people from Diepsloot marched with the Ark of Hope organizers to the Summit convention centre where they addressed delegates on the concerns of youth and the relevance of the Earth Charter.

Through the combination of artistic expression with the inspirational Earth Charter, the creation of the so-called "Temenos Books" is part of the process of engaging people in expressing their own values and wishes for the future. A Temenos book is a handmade book filled with pages of visual prayers/affirmations for global healing, peace, and gratitude. The purpose of the Temenos Project is to introduce the Earth Charter to educational and private sectors, with the belief that the artistic process can inspire people to a deeper commitment to Earth and to the Earth Charter principles. In the early stages of this project, over 5,000 Vermont (USA) artists, teachers, schoolchildren, university students and community members participated in the Temenos Project, making either books or masks of Earth elements. Teachers involved in the project engaged their students in discussion of the Earth Charter principles, generating the kind of internal reflection that can lead to a change in attitudes, values, and behavior.

The Ark of Hope continues to travel to different parts of the world, where workshops on the Temenos books are also offered. Schools, churches, museums, and various organizations, including the UN, have hosted the Ark of Hope since its creation. It is hoped that this will continue as an effort to introduce the Earth Charter to audiences globally, spreading hope and the recognition of the interdependence of justice, and economic and ecological integrity, which together build a culture of peace. It is anticipated that the Ark of Hope will be present

during the upcoming Earth Charter+5 celebration in the Netherlands, and Temenos workshops are also being planned.

This report on Art and the Earth Charter concludes with an essay by Sally Linder, entitled “Ark of Hope and Temenos Books” which provides additional information on the purpose and uses of the Ark of Hope.

Toulouse, France

The Toulouse Earth Charter Committee, led by Actions pour une Charte de la Terre (Actions for an Earth Charter), engaged in a project in 2000 in which they disseminated the Earth Charter in primary schools. Students were inspired by this project to create powerful drawings and paintings based on the Earth Charter. This artwork was exhibited at the Regional House of the Environment for two months. Drawings created by the children ranged from peaceful images of dolphins and trees to a frowning Earth and the globe saying “Stop.” A book containing the children’s art and the text of the Earth Charter in French was later produced. Considering that this has raised the interest of many and generated positive impact, “Actions for an Earth Charter” continues to bring the Earth Charter vision to youth and children by engaging them in expressing their understanding on the challenges humanity faces and the values for a more sustainable world through drawings.

Green Cross Youth Contests

Green Cross, in collaboration with UNESCO, FAO, and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, organized the international editions of three annual youth art contests titled “Images for the Earth” carried out in support of the Earth Charter. The inaugural contest took place in 1998. In 1999, almost half a million students took part in the second contest, entitled “Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energies.” In 2000, students from eight countries took part in the third contest, under the theme “Energy-Renewable Energies and Energy Efficiencies”. International prize ceremonies provided an opportunity to congratulate the winners of the contests and to show the work done. Through these contests, students involved in this initiative particularly in Italy and Burkina Faso, were educated about environmental problems and their solutions and about the role of the Earth Charter in achieving a sustainable future for the planet.

Graeme Payne, Australia

Australian artist Graeme Payne created an exhibition of sixteen paintings inspired by the principles of the Earth Charter. These paintings were originally used as a visual backdrop for the 2003 Theology and Philosophy Festival in Grafton, Australia. When creating the exhibition, Payne worked to paint images that would truly move viewers and would summarize the Earth Charter in a comprehensive way. Although all of his images are strong

in emotion, Payne states: “I didn’t want to project a feeling of total despair so I combined confronting paintings with more uplifting ones.”

The exhibition has been shown in numerous venues since the Festival and the response has been very favorable. According to Payne, the exhibition has truly succeeded in stimulating people to think more deeply about the Earth Charter. “Many people have contacted me to say how moved they were,” Payne states, “but probably the most gratifying comment is when they tell me it has helped them find more meaning in the Earth Charter and, like myself, they have been stimulated to think more deeply about the many issues facing our modern world family.”

Earth Charter Planner and Calendar

The Ministry of the Arts of the Sisters of St. Joseph LaGrange created a planner and calendar for 2003 with reflections from the Earth Charter and paintings inspired by the Earth Charter for every month. This calendar was the 2003’s edition of Sr. Mary Southard, CSJ’s project to create a yearly Earth Calendar. All of the artists who contributed to the calendar were art enthusiasts who shared a common vision and love for the Earth.

By creating an Earth Charter Calendar, the Sisters of St. Joseph LaGrange hoped that the themes chosen for each month would serve as little reminders during a busy day and would encourage and invite people to notice and be aware. The striking and beautiful paintings were intended to capture the words of the Earth Charter selected for each month. The Sisters of St. Joseph LaGrange were able to spread the news about the Earth Charter to thousands of people through their striking and beautiful calendars and planners. They sold out early in the season, and, as director Flo Christiano states, “We knew immediately that it was due to the Earth Charter theme.”

Earth Charter Songs

Several songs have been written for the Earth Charter movement by artists from around the world. In Paraguay, singer Alfredo Estigarribia Lopez was inspired by the Ecological Movement of Paraguay to compose and record an “Earth Hymn” in homage to the Earth Charter. This song was presented during a special event on September 24, 1999, at the headquarters of the National Commission for the Defense of Natural Resources. “Earth Hymn” is a tribute to the beauty of the world and of Paraguay.

In Venezuela, Sven Nehlin wrote “La Ultima Flor,” a song about the Earth Charter. This song, composed in 2000, offers the Earth Charter as an alternative to the destruction of the world and of the last flower of its kind, la ultima flor. Nehlin sent “La Ultima Flor” to hundreds of people as an Earth Charter promotion for the end of the millennium.

At the South Australia Earth Charter launch in 2000, students of Thomas More College sang an Earth Charter Song written by Nick Vall. This song was a call for peace, justice, and an understanding that nature can provide everything that we need if we stop abusing it. Additionally, an Earth Charter song entitled “Nous, les enfants de la Terre” was written in France by Eric Tudico.

Earth Charter Monument, Brazil

Artist Jonas Correa, inspired by the Earth Charter, created an Earth Charter Monument. The Earth Charter Monument, located in Mato Grosso, Brazil, was unveiled at the 1998 Continental Conference of the Americas. In the center of this monument, a large statue of Earth is balanced on the trunk of a tree. Five children, representing the five continents, surround the tree. They are holding hands as a human chain to symbolize the protection and security of the planet. This monument, intended to convey both the power and meaning of the Earth Charter, was presented to the public in a highly publicized ceremony. Through the statue, the Earth Charter’s message of the interconnectedness of humanity is powerfully conveyed.

Raffi

In the summer of 2003, Raffi, a famous Canadian children’s singer and songwriter, launched a music CD inspired by the Earth Charter. The CD, *Where We All Belong*, contains three songs inviting people to celebrate life and invokes the power of music to help promote the Earth Charter. The song “Where We All Belong”, sung on the CD as both a chant and a ballad, conveys the message of the Earth Charter by describing Earth as an abundant home and “circle where we all belong.”

In addition to creating the CD, Raffi has held Earth Charter themed concerts. In the winter of 2004, the 300-member Gettin’ Higher Choir accompanied Raffi for Earth Charter inspired benefit concerts held in Victoria, B.C., Canada. Everyone attending the concerts was given a copy of the Earth Charter and encouraged to endorse it and to find a way to promote it in their workplace or community. Raffi’s song has been used as an educational tool by teachers in many different educational spheres, from elementary schools in the Balearic Islands in Spain to St. Thomas University in the USA.

Pour la Terre – Earth Charter Unesco CD

Pour la Terre, a non-profit French environmental association, has engaged in a project to create a music CD to promote the Earth Charter. Initial discussion with Pour la Terre took place in early 2002; then a Memorandum of Understanding outlining this collaborative effort was signed with the Earth Charter Secretariat. In February 2004, UNESCO, the World Wildlife Fund, and the French Secretariat of Sustainable Development agreed to support this project. Partners have a shared understanding that the Earth Charter UNESCO CD is an important way to deliver the message of the Earth Charter to schoolchildren. It promotes the teaching of sustainable development fusing songs by international artists with Earth Charter

principles. UNESCO plans to use the CD/DVD to promote the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development.

The first part of the CD project, an international Earth Charter/UNESCO CD was completed in spring 2005. This CD contains twenty-one songs on two disks by independent artists from around the world, including: Maná with Carlos Santana, Youssou N'Dour, Chico and the Gypsies, and Naveen Kumar. In addition to the songs, the CD is composed of a school kit that includes a detailed description of each song, and also a Guide “The Earth Charter: an educational tool” which delineates the background information for the CD: the complete text of the Earth Charter and general information on the Initiative. The School kit has: a) song lyrics, with relevance of each to Earth Charter values and principles, b) biographies of the artists and their activities relating to sustainable development, and c) suggested educational exercises linked with the song and the associated theme(s).

The United Nations “Classic Live” Performing Arts Group, Japan

For nearly two decades, the UNClassic Live performing arts group has been successfully giving performances in Japan. In recent years it has created a stage performance based on the values and principles in the Earth Charter. In the fall of 2005, UNClassic Live will be traveling to New York City and presenting this Earth Charter production at the United Nations Auditorium, Carnegie Hall, and New York State University Art Theatre at Stony Brook. UNClassic Live has the support of Earth Charter Commissioner Wakako Hironaka.

C) “Ark of Hope and Temenos Books, 1999-2005” by Sally Linder

Since its unveiling on September 9, 2001 the Ark of Hope carrying the Earth Charter and Temenos Books: Images and Words for Global Healing, Peace and Gratitude, has significantly contributed to the Earth Charter Initiative. Over 12,000 people from four continents, ages five to elderly, have been introduced to the Charter through the Ark and its cargo of hundreds of Temenos Books. Every element of the Ark is an expression of beauty and a reflection of the Earth Charter principles. The Ark and books give a tangible, rather than abstract, experience of the Charter; as the Ark travels the globe and the images and messages accumulate they are a living, interactive symbol of burgeoning support of the Charter. Simply, beauty attracts, images speak a universal language, and due to the active and participatory nature of the Ark and Temenos Project, the Earth Charter takes on life.

Hope fuels art. How we imagine the future ultimately decides how we live the present. Quoting William James: “I will act as if what I do makes a difference”. Since 1999, thousands of children and adults have responded to the Charter through their participation in the Temenos Book Project. Fifty public and private schools in Vermont, USA alone participated, including one school with over 900 students creating Temenos Books. Schools

in New York, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Connecticut, and Montana, USA, and schools in South Africa and the Netherlands have further added books to the Ark of Hope.

Due to the momentum and exposure of the Earth Charter in preparation for the September 9, 2001 Vermont event, *For Love of Earth, A Celebration of the Earth Charter*, 22 towns in the state of Vermont endorsed the Charter in Town Meetings as a soft law guide to town and city planning. The mayor of Burlington, Vermont, Peter Clavelle introduced the Charter to the US Conference of Mayors where it received unanimous endorsement.

Articles on the Ark of Hope have appeared in over thirty national and international newspapers, four magazines in the US and Netherlands, in the Indian published book *Strength of a Woman*, and in over twenty internet articles. Faith communities have hosted the Ark and/or Temenos Books including the Interfaith Center of New York, Green Mountain Monastery, the Sacred Place at Ubuntu Village, World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, South Africa, Traprock Peace Center, Unitarian Universalist United Nations Church, and His Holiness Sri Sri Ravi Shankar at the International Art of Living Center in Bangalore, India. The State House of Vermont, and the United Nations have exhibited the Ark of Hope. Ohio's 2002 International Middfest, New York's 2002 Hudson River Revival Festival, South Africa's Global Footprints Festival, and the Food and Trees for Africa Celebration in Soweto, South Africa have also presented the Ark. Earth Charter Community Summits in three states included the Ark and Temenos workshops in their programs, as did the Vermont 2004 Sustainable Communities Conference, and the 2005 Earth Charter +5 Celebration in the Netherlands.

Five universities and colleges in the United States and three art museums in the Netherlands and US exhibited the Ark. Soka Gakkai International included the Ark in its exhibition space at the Ubuntu Village of the WWSD, and in its publication *Seeds of Change*. The 2001 *for love of Earth, A Celebration of the Earth Charter* in Vermont, the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa, and the 2005 International Women's Conference in Bangalore, India provided further exposure of the Charter through inclusion of the Ark and/or Temenos Books in their schedule of events.

In a spontaneous response to 9/11, leaving on that very afternoon, the Ark of Hope was walked 350 miles from Vermont to the United Nations in New York. For two months thousands of ordinary citizens accomplished an extraordinary feat. In a time of fear and mistrust The Ark of Hope's beauty provided a safe haven from which to share the Earth Charter's vision of global interdependence and shared responsibility. Being a box with something unknown inside, and walking the box, disarmed people. Traveling three miles per hour provided plenty of time to intimately share the Charter's vision. Carrying the Ark we discovered that walking was a form of prayer. Since that historical journey people in Johannesburg's informal settlements and towns and cities in the US have chosen to walk the Ark through their communities and hold impromptu Temenos workshops on sidewalks, river banks, and dirt alleyways.

The sheer number and age range of individuals from different cultures, faiths, and sectors of society introduced to the Earth Charter through the Ark of Hope and Temenos Project in the last five years clearly identifies the strength of the arts in promoting Earth Charter values. It also speaks of the successful emergence of a more participatory socially interactive framework for art. An individual's inner dialogue becomes engaged with the external issues of the world through art's hands-on approach. The heart as well as the head is engaged; the body is poised to pursue further physical actualization and implementation of the art object's content, in this case, Earth Charter principles.

Judging by the public's active and positive response to the Ark of Hope and Temenos Project people are indeed attracted to, pleased by and mobilized by works of art. Art and art-making inspires and promotes mutuality and attachment to vision. Too often the Earth Charter Initiative has not fully or actively embraced the power and inherent human need for art, for 'making special'. Most Earth Charter conferences, and other conferences that include Earth Charter sessions and events are not embellished with ceremony, ritual, or art. This also holds for Earth Charter brochures, promotional materials, newsletters, and other published materials such as yearly reports and books. Most of the Charter's outreach materials are dry and appeal largely to 'talking heads'. Ceremony and art-making provide time and place for feeling. Inherent in human behavior is the fundamental tendency to make art and the fundamental need to respond to 'specialness'.

The Earth Charter Initiative, of which I include the Ark of Hope, lacks significant and sustaining financial support. Similar to the Initiative, a constant hurdle for the Ark is funding; many organizations desire to promote the Earth Charter through hosting the Ark but have been unable to due to lack of funds. Furthermore, despite successful hosting organizations covering the cost of the Ark's transport to their venues, there are many hidden costs and hundreds of hours of time commitment in the managing and upkeep of the Ark and Temenos Books. Throughout a four year period several dedicated individuals have stepped forward to donate their time to further the visibility of the Earth Charter through the Ark of Hope, and this has been very gratifying. Because the Ark lacks the supportive umbrella of an organization there is no work force, and no financial or tax exemption benefits. This has certainly impacted the life of the Ark, particularly its future. Just as the Initiative needs more corporate involvement so does the Ark. The Ark has done no corporate outreach and this needs to be addressed. Judging by the Ark's appeal in educational, art and faith communities, I see no reason why the appeal would not be present in the business sector as well. The bottom line of the dollar would of course have to be usurped by the desire for good will.

The greatest strengths of the Initiative are the Earth Charter itself, and the vision's grassroots following. And let us not forget or diminish the greatest supporter of all: Earth. I strongly urge the Initiative to utilize Beauty and Art to their advantage. I challenge the Earth Charter Initiative to be the pioneer in the interdependent environmental, social/economic and peace movement in actively integrating the arts into every aspect of their work towards the ultimate goal of implementation of the Earth Charter principles.

The Earth Charter is a work of art. Just close your eyes. Listen to the song: “Let ours be a time remembered”. Stand in the presence of the beautiful painting: “of a new reverence for life”. Dance to the “joyful celebration of life”.