

Sally Linder and Cameron Davis, USA. A project descriptive essay which speaks to Principle 14 on promoting the arts in sustainability education

The Ark of Hope and The Temenos Books



Sally Linder is an artist/painter. She designed and painted the Ark of Hope and co-created the Temenos Books Project and the Earth Charter

celebratory event For Love of Earth. Accompanying the Ark of Hope on its memorable 350 mile walking journey to the United Nations, she continues to travel with it around the world, exposing educators and lay citizens to the Earth Charter through Temenos Bookmaking. Since returning from the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development, Sally has been painting the luminous people and land of Johannesburg, South Africa's informal settlements. Exhibitions of her art have been held in Indonesia, Africa, the United States, India, Canada, and The Netherlands.



Cameron Davis is an artist/painter who co-created the community arts project Temenos Books, Images for Global Healing, Peace and Gratitude, and the event

For Love of Earth: A Celebration of the Earth Charter, September 9, 2001, Shelburne Farms, Vermont, USA. Davis is on the faculty of Department of Art and Environmental Program at the University of Vermont in Burlington, Vermont. She has worked with graduate students developing curricula reflecting the Earth Charter principles, and continues to utilize the Earth Charter as a framework for content and assignments in her undergraduate interdisciplinary course, Painting and Issues of Ecological Perception.

Migrating butterflies rest on the Ark of Hope, their fragile wings covering the paintings on the large wooden chest; pictures of a bodhi tree wafting in the breeze, Nigerian yam beetles crawling underground, a blue hilal casting a shadow on the bowed head of a Vietnamese girl in a wheelchair. Whether in brushstrokes of spiraling spring waters, or vivid summer colors, the Ark's painted flora and fauna portray a harmony that reflects the Earth Charter's vision.

Lifting the Ark's lid reveals the Charter hand-scripted on papyrus paper. The papyrus ripples from the moisture of the rivers followed by people conveying the 500-pound Ark to the United Nations. Inside the Ark lie handmade Temenos Books of painted prayers and affirmations for a hopeful future. The Earth Charter story is enacted in these interwoven relationships of butterflies and Ark, Nigeria and Vietnam, rivers and people.

Hundreds of lap-sized Temenos Books nestled in the Ark form an imaginatively diverse community. The project title, "Temenos," indicates a protected circle where the extraordinary can occur. Each book, crafted from wood or cloth, wire or paper, holds pages of images and text reflecting each contributor's personal and tactile response to the Earth Charter. Together, the Ark of Hope and Temenos Books have awakened more than ten thousand people around the world to the promise of the Charter, warming their hearts to its principles and

energizing their imaginations with its tremendous potential.

The community art projects of Temenos Books, Images for Global Healing, Peace and Gratitude, and the Temenos Earth Masks, emerged from the conviction that envisioning an act of compassion is the first step to living it. From our experience, we knew that art has the capacity to engage inner dialogue with the external issues of the world. We facilitated contemplative gatherings using meditation bells, silence, ceremonies of deep time, and ecological awareness games. The Earth Charter principles guided the content as project participants worked with paints, scraps of colored papers, feathers, leaves, and pebbles to create images on individual pages, entire art books, or giant masks. Indeed, the extraordinary occurred. Deepest desires and dreams are embodied in each Temenos Book. The principles of the Earth Charter aided participants' emerging understanding of an interdependent world, generating a collective hope in attaining a sustainable and peacefully-shared Earth home.

Teachers from Indiana, USA, to Johannesburg, South Africa, embraced the project as a means to relate their curriculums to a global expression of sustainability and non-violence. One Temenos Book's accordion pages unfold in long trains of painted oceans and jungles teeming with endangered species; another has paintings of trees watered by clouds while birds fly amongst sari-, chador-, and jean-clad

Principle 14. Integrate into formal education and life-long learning the knowledge, values, and skills needed for a sustainable way of life.

children skipping rope. Its last page displays a huge hand touching big red lips with the caption, "Let Our Smiles Touch One Another." Crafting hand-dyed, felt-covered books, 900 children in one Vermont school witnessed their connection with farmers, sheep, wool, vegetables, and the world community. Older students added another link by using their Temenos Books to educate local governments about the Earth Charter, encouraging its endorsement by twenty-two Vermont towns. University students unleashed their own creative ways to introduce the Earth Charter – beating drums, wearing costumes, and zooming into schools and cafes on roller blades.



On September 9, 2001, the largest Temenos gathering took place at Shelburne Farms, Vermont. For over a year we planned the event, For Love of Earth, A Celebration of the Earth Charter. The day opened in silence as a half-mile ribbon of 2000 people followed a well-worn cow path in the early morning mist. We walked slowly, deliberately, tracing Earth's contours with our steps. Arriving at the massive barn, we entered a protected circle, fecund with scents of timber and hay. A parade of three hundred children surrounded us with giant Temenos Earth Masks of stars and sunflowers, bears and bumblebees. Musicians, speakers, dancers, and singers brought forth the Earth Charter principles. Cascading rice kernels "fed the world," yards of floating gossamer cloth brushed overhead, and large snow geese puppets called as peace gently sifted down and settled into our hearts. On tables graced with art supplies, participants painted their hopes onto Temenos pages. Nestled in a circle of straw lit by late afternoon light, the Ark of Hope was unveiled and the tiny book gifted to it. The Ark was envisioned as a protective holding place for a copy of the Earth Charter and the precious cargo of Temenos Books. When all had been sung and said and given, people returned home with an enriched understanding of the Earth Charter.

Two days later, 9/11 stunned the world. Grabbed by a powerful instinct, three of us picked up the weighty Ark of Hope and began a two-month, 350-mile walking journey to the United Nations. The simple act of walking, the strain of intention, and the depth of commitment grounded the thousands who joined the pilgrimage. Sweating hands left a golden patina on the carved wooden unicorn horns used as carrying poles. Traveling at three miles per hour gave plenty of time to discuss the Charter with farmers over fences, and car salesmen in parking lots. People can be wary of political brochures; yet walking a beautiful box filled with something unknown piqued curiosity, softened hearts, and initiated conversations. Through the power of grassroots' networking, families, schools, and faith centers hosted the Ark. Sidewalks and river banks provided ample surface for interested folk to color new Temenos pages. Four months later the United Nations opened its doors – exhibiting the Ark of Hope and Temenos Books.

In the summer of 2002, several of the Ark walkers traveled to South Africa to share the Ark of Hope and create more Temenos Books with youth from Johannesburg's informal settlements. In an official event at the World Summit on

Sustainable Development, the youth gifted the Ark of Hope to the world.

Grass-roots' networking and the website, www.arkofhope.org, continue the momentum of the Ark of Hope and Temenos Books by informing the public of the opportunity to host the Ark of Hope in their country's communities, thereby promoting a hands-on introduction to the Earth Charter. Website instructions on Temenos Bookmaking encourage organizations, schools, and individuals to create their own Temenos Books to add to the growing collection of books housed in the Ark.

Whether it is women of India twisting strands of silk into visual prayers of hope or Dutch families paddling the Ark down Amsterdam's canals, the Ark of Hope and Temenos Books are a living testament to a collective understanding of interdependence and shared responsibility. They carry hope, inspiration, and courage for the possibilities of the Earth Charter. ●