

**Key Note Address for the South African Museums Association Conference**

**“RELIGIOUS AND SACRED HERITAGE: THE DIVERSITY AND SENSITIVITIES IN AFRICAN CULTURAL TRADITIONS”, University of Stellenbosch Business School, Belleville Campus, Cape Town, South Africa.**

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**MUSEUMS AND THE SACRED:**

**ENGAGING WITH THE “OTHER”**

Prof. Martin Segger,

University of Victoria

President, Commonwealth Association of Museums

***Abstract:***

*The first part of this paper will chronicle thirty years of changing attitudes, and approaches, to treating spiritual issues (“the other”) in the conservation of heritage places, the restoration of monuments, and also collecting and exhibiting artifacts and art in western Canada. A series of case studies will provide critical perspective. These range from conserving the abandoned Haida village of Ninstints, Haida Gwaii, to restoring North America’s oldest synagogue in Victoria, British Columbia; from the pioneering First Nations exhibits developed at the Royal British Columbia Museum to a current exhibition of the contemporary shaman-artist, Norval Morrisseau, at the University of Victoria.*

*The second part will attempt to contextualize this experience within the current work of the Commonwealth Association of Museums, in particular its global focus on the role cultural institutions in strengthening civil society. Relevant to this dialogue is the Commonwealth Foundation’s recent international dialogue: “Engaging with Faith”, and the series of world museum conferences organized by CAM variously addressing how museums in contemporary society deal with fundamental issues such as alleviating poverty, promoting peace, democracy and good governance, celebrating cultural diversity, supporting freedom of belief and defending pluralism.*

*The paper will conclude with a personal reflection on future directions, and some possible lines of enquiry, that might assist museums and heritage institutions in accepting, and adapting to, the new reality of cultural pluralism of which faith-based societal values are an essential part.*





1. Temple Emmanuel Synagogue, Victoria, B.C. (Photo author).
2. First People Gallery, Royal British Columbia Museum, Victoria, B.C. (Photo courtesy of RBCM)
3. Betty Kovacic, "A Roomful of Missing Women", 2007. Three Rivers Museum, Prince George British Columbia (Photo courtesy of Three Rivers Museum).

## FINDING THE SACRED

Nicholas Shakespear in his biography of the very famous but compulsive world traveler and writer, Bruce Chatwin, retells Chatwin's account that places him the excavation pit at Swartkrans with archaeologist, Bob Brain. At that critical moment in 1984 humanoid bones were discovered showing evidence which pushed back the oldest use of fire by nearly a million years.

Chatwin's was to meditate on this event continually throughout his life. To quote from his notebooks:

*"Shamanism has always been connected with mastery over fire. "*

*"Aren't all true healers – from the prehistoric shaman on – all 'thundermen'?" ...."the feminized man, healer, songmaster etc. always set apart in every tribe ... Appeased. Honoured. Essential. The superior man."*

Chatwin called fire "a social facilitator". It promoted language.

*"Man is a talking animal, story telling animal. I would like to think that he talked it way out of extinction."*

These meditations ultimately became Chatwin's famous book on Australian aboriginal culture, ***Song Lines*** (1987).

Writing some years later in his 1996 book, ***One River***, explorer, anthropologist and ethnobotanist Wade Davis (by the way a former British Columbia parks warden) describes how he followed in the footsteps of his Harvard mentor, Richard Evans Schultes, into the far reaches of the Orinoco River. So Davis was able to describe in detail, first hand, Schultes experiences among the Yanonami Indian shamans some

forty years previous when he shared infusions of mind altering herbal preparations

*“At Puerto Limoacuten he (Schultes) drank an infusion derived solely from the bark of the liana Banisteriopsis caapi. The visions that came were blue and purple, slow undulating waves of color. Then, a few days later he tried the mixture with chagropanga. The effect was electric, reds and golds dazzling in diamonds that turned like dancers on the tips of distant highways. Ifyagé alone felt like the slow turning of the sky, the addition of chagropanga caused explosions of passion and dreams that collapsed one into another until finally, in the empty morning, only the birds remained, scarlet and crimson against the rising sun.*

*What Schultes had stumbled upon was a bit of shamanic alchemy .... these plants contain tryptamines, powerful psychoactive compounds that when smoked or snuffed induce a very rapid, intense intoxication of short duration, marked by astonishing visual imagery. The sensation is rather like being shot out of a rifle barrel lined with baroque paintings and landing on a sea of electricity.*

*The Indians naturally had their own explanations, rich cosmological accounts that from their perspective were perfectly logical. Sacred plants that had journeyed up the Milk River in the belly of anacondas, potions prepared by jaguars, the drifting souls of shamans dead from the beginning of time. As a scientist Schultes did not take these myths literally. But they did suggest to him a certain delicate balance. "These were the ideas," he would write half a century later, "of a people who did not distinguish the supernatural from the pragmatic."*

*“Magical and mystical ideas entered the very texture of their thinking. Their*

*botanical knowledge could not be separated from their metaphysics. Even the way they ordered and labeled their world was fundamentally different.”*

We know so much but we remember so little. In our western traditions we easily pass over the rich documentation of a similar kind of knowledge:

Western art history can produce for instance Gian Lorenzo Bernini's Baroque statue, *The Ecstasy of St. Theresa* in the Cornaro Chapel, Santa Maria della Vittoria (1645-52), in Rome. It depicts a mystical experience of the great Spanish Carmelite reformer, Teresa da Ávila. The sculpture represents a vision, during which an angel pierced her heart with a fiery arrow of divine love. This image of religious transport, what fundamentalist Christians would later call “the rapture”!

Or enter the pilgrimage church of Wies in the Bavaria foothills. Built in the 1740s by Dominikus Zimmermann it is the architectural equivalent to St. Theresa. Here we find ourselves transported in an ethereal dream world of apparitions, reincarnations, transfigurations, assumptions, resurrections.

So whether by communal stories, shared songs, ritualized memories, dreams, altered mental states by medical circumstance or the assistance of psychotropic medicinal preparations there is a rich tradition in every society of experiencing “the other”. The experience of the spiritual, the divine.

## **EXPERIENCING THE SACRED**

It is I think, this engaging with the “other” which has intersected my own career so many times. While obviously lacking the sheer physical stamina of a Richard Schulte, or the soaring mystical imagination of the Lorenzo Bernini, I want to now recount some of those instances.

First, I should point out that my own institution has a spiritual foundation.

The founder of the University of Victoria’s Maltwood Art Museum was Katherine Emma Maltwood. An English, Slade trained sculptor, antiquarian, writer and secular mystic her work was a testimonial to her diverse spiritual beliefs combining theosophy, eastern and western spiritual traditions with Celtic myth and folk lore.

Her own sculptures, and collections of over 1000 object documenting world religions were exhibited in her own time as artistic “studio-shrines” first in London and then in Canada. These sculptural works and her collection form the foundation of the University’s global decorative arts collection.

My first professional museum position with the Royal British Columbia Museum coincided with the planning of the First Peoples Galleries at the RBCM. This was the first Canadian attempt at an inclusive partnership with First Nations to present their cultures in a museum to the public. To quote a FN colleague, *“We have always been on the wrong side of the museum display.”*

Storylines, displays, text panels, songs and tribal stories... as well as objects ... were negotiated with elders, political leaders, and families. Installations, and parts of installations, were appropriately acknowledged with requisite permissions and rituals.

The result was an exhibition that made a first attempt at acknowledgment and “respect” of the cultural and spiritual context of the living traditions of British Columbia ‘s indigenous peoples.

Against the back drop of the development of the RBCM’s galleries is the story of dramatically changing attitudes, and approaches, to the preservation of First Nations heritage.

This is best illustrated by the Royal BC Museum’s lead role in the conservation program to preserve the abandoned village of Ninstints in the Haida Gwaii.

1,884 islands form this archipelago, a mixture of snow-topped mountains and fiords that plunge into the sea, mist-enshrouded forests and windswept sandy beaches... According to Haida legend, Haida Gwaii, as it is now known - is the place where time began. ( Xhaaidlagha Gwaayaaai - Islands at the Boundary of the World.) Evidence of human settlement goes back 7,000 years. Some 14,000 people have lived in over 126 known village sites at the time of early contact. By 1911 the population had plummeted to 589.

19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Century attempts at preserving the rich heritage of totem pole and house posts involved “collecting” and relocated these items to private collections, public museums or heritage parks around the world.

Consultations with Haida elders and families with connections to these ancient sites resulted in a conservation plan which saw the sites cleaned and maintained, but the poles themselves left to decay with dignity among the spirits of the ancestors. Visitation is encouraged, but controlled; guides must be members of the local Haida communities. The stories associated with the sites and monuments remain in possession of the families. Some of the poles have been replicated for museum use.



Temple Emanuel is the oldest Synagogue in continual use in Canada. The building was designed by John Wright, the first professional architect to practice in Victoria. The cornerstone-laying ceremony took place June 2, 1863. The Synagogue went through some difficult times in the 1940s when the number of Jewish families dwindled to between 10 and 15. In an effort to prevent it from being condemned, the exterior brick-work was covered in stucco and the windows were blocked in. A false ceiling was installed to allow the building to economize on heating.

In 1978 a restoration program funded in part by the BC Heritage Trust brought the building back to its 1863 glory. The conservative nature of the local Jewish congregation easily mandated a ceremonial use, and an authentic period aesthetic, which comfortably brought the building back as a fully functional ritualistic space for worship and community Jewish social life.

Saint Andrew's Roman Catholic Cathedral in Victoria, now on the national heritage registry, is the largest and most impressive 19<sup>th</sup> Century gothic-revival church in British Columbia.

In the early 1970s, in the enthusiasm for the radical changes in liturgical ritual mandated by Vatican II, the elaborate gothic revival interior was gutted in favour of a minimalist modern aesthetic. A more considered approach was taken in the process of a major renovation in the 1990s. The exterior was restored to its 1890s original fabric. However the interior treatment allowed for a reordering of the seating and sanctuary to accommodate modern liturgical requirements. A richer, but Victorian inspired Celtic decorative scheme, was applied to the wall surfaces.

However in the interests of a major Roman Catholic reconciliation initiative with Vancouver Island First Peoples, aboriginal artists were

commissioned to undertake the production new furnishings and windows. One example is the main altar which consists of two North West Coast bentwood-like boxes. Each of these boxes is designed to rotate so that four different designs may be employed for liturgical seasons and feasts. The designs are based on Coast Saalish myths that parallel biblical stories.

Built in stages between 1871 and 1903 St. Ann's Academy was the western motherhouse for the Montreal-based Sisters of St. Ann, a Roman Catholic teaching and nursing order. From this Victoria base they ran a network of schools and hospitals located through British Columbia, the Yukon Territories and Alaska.

Sold to the Provincial Government in the 1974, by 1990 the building was abandoned. A full restoration was undertaken by the Provincial Capital Commission in 1995. This was the first major historic monument where the restoration program was developed on a comprehensive community values based program developed through a lengthy articulation process.

The result was an overall theme of preservation to produce *"an oasis of peace and contemplation in Victoria's downtown urban setting"*. The exterior is a comprehensive period restoration; the interiors of the main blocks were renovated for government office use (client: Ministry of Education); the centre block contains an interpretive centre on the contribution of the sisters of St. Ann to the history of British Columbia; the 1858 chapel, originally the first Roman Catholic cathedral, was restored to its original Tridentine fabric, but deconsecrated for use as a secular wedding chapel and recital hall. The 1910 Edwardian auditorium was restored for community use. The gardens were recreated to reflect a mature version of the 1913 landscape scheme, with the original "novitiate garden restored as a secluded, but public, contemplative garden

The final scheme, I just want to touch on, is perhaps the most unusual. The Queenswood Centre for Spiritual Growth occupies what was the Queenswood House of Studies built in suburban Victoria for the training of the same Sisters of St. Ann in various professions. The centre piece of the 40 acre suburban forest is a 1960s chapel, educational and residential complex designed by one the foremost pioneers of West Coast Modernism, Victoria architect John Di Castri.

An independent board is in the process of assuming ownership to restore and preserve the forested landscape, gardens and buildings. However the intention is also to continue the traditional use the by expanding its role to become a multi-faith based centre for spiritual renewal, in particular in the service of the caring and healing professions. The planning began with a wide-ranging public consultation process. It is a wholistic approach to heritage conservation. Based on a natural ecological systems inventory, and a full sustainability audit, the conservation program will be guided by a community based articulation of local heritage values and a contemporary reinvention of its traditional use.

## **SOCIETY AND THE SACRED**

So, from the hallucinatory pharmacopia of the steaming Amazon jungles to sacred sites of the Canadian West Coast rain forests, what is going here?

Well, here are a couple of things.

Canadian public intellectual, John Ralston Saul, in his recent book ***The Collapse of Globalism and the Reinvention of the World*** (2005) documents the collapse of the western enlightenment project over the last 20 years. Simply put, people and governments have stopped believing

in the ideology of progress, and in particular the so-called “science” of free market economic inevitability and rational management theory. And among other things, to quote Ralston Saul directly *“God, a spent force, in fact one thought to have been dead since the mid-nineteenth century, abruptly reappeared and began to win back ever larger numbers of true believers”*. At the same time he noted the rapid rise of another organizational system, the *Non Governmental Organization*. From the almost fanatical dedication of the doctors of *Medecins san frontieres* to the media-savy mariners of Green Peace, thousands of supporters worldwide are challenging, and indeed toppling, traditional power structures and linguistic boundaries. David Berlinski in his popular new book, *The Devil’s Delusion: Atheism and Scientific Pretensions*, mounts a withering assault on the arguments of so-called “new atheism” the rather tired recall of scientific materialism under the Dawkin/Hitchens faction.

As Ralston Saul notes:

*“We do know that God is once again among us and available to be on our side, if we so declare it. He is an unlikely partner for the NGO. But the two have this in common: they refuse the idea of civilization viewed through the prism of economic rationalism).”*

In recent times we have come to identify this phenomenon as the rise of civil society.

Before going further I want to introduce the role of the Commonwealth Association of Museums. CAM defines its mandate in terms of the Commonwealth Foundations’ three pillars of civil society:

**First:** peace & democracy,

**Second:** sustainable development,

**Third:** culture and diversity.

Our projects and meeting programs provide for collaborative events that bring together museum professionals from developed and developing English-speaking countries around the world.

Current Commonwealth Association of Museums projects derive from a series of consultations in 2000 and report lead by Nobel laureate, Amartya Sen, on role of civil society within the Commonwealth. The report is entitled ***“Respect and Understanding”***:

A follow-up study on the role of religion in civic life was entitled ***Engaging with Faith, the Commonwealth Foundation project on Improving Understanding and Co-operation between Different Faith Communities, 2005-2007.***

Its findings can be summarized in the words of the Commonwealth Heads of State, ***Valetta Communiqué***, as follows:

*‘Heads of Government affirmed the importance of promoting tolerance, respect, enlightened moderation and friendship among people of different races, faiths and cultures. In this regard they commended various initiatives at the national, regional and international level and encouraged the Commonwealth Secretariat to strengthen its interaction with other bodies that seek to build a common platform of unity against extremism and intolerance. Heads of Government also requested the Secretary-General to explore initiatives to promote mutual understanding and respect among all faiths and communities in the Commonwealth.*

The Commonwealth Association of Museums (CAM) has worked towards raising awareness of global thinking and local action and stimulating action through a number of conferences and programmes. Papers have sought to share the practical experiences of individual museums that want to make a difference in facing the issues in their communities. Themed conferences have included:

- *Museums and the National Identity: Ideas, Issues and Applications, Botswana & South Africa (1995)*
- *Museums, Peace, Democracy and Governance in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (1999)*
- *Museums in the Commonwealth: Global Vision, Local Mission, U.K. (2003)*
- *Museums and Diversity: Museums in Pluralistic Societies, Guyana (2008)*

It is interesting that an early and seminal workshop organized by CAM in Victoria in 1994 as *Curatorship: Indigenous Perspective in Post-Colonial Societies* was critical in formulating the civil society based concept of recognition and respect for “*first voice*”. Dr. Amar Galla, in a recent edition of the *International Journal of Intangible Heritage* defines this as “the voice, both literal and metaphorical, of the actual carriers and custodians of cultures”. It is the idea of “**first voice**” which underpins the concept of intangible heritage where in a post-colonial world museums shift from a concentration on objects to a position where “*the tangible can only be understood and interpreted through the intangible*”

What we have been witnessing here, over past twenty years, has been nothing less than the overthrow of the enlightenment rationalist idea of the museum exclusively in the service of scientific determinism bereft of human value systems.

## REFLECTING ON THE SACRED

Our need to respect “other”, includes other ontologies (realities of existence) and epistemologies (theories of knowledge and relationship to truth and belief). Here are some examples.

### **1. First Nations Learning Tree. The reinvention and rediscovery of “other” knowledge systems:**

What this might mean for museums can be glimpsed at through the works of some parallel agencies. Recently the *Canadian Council on Learning* was faced with developing literacy programs for Inuit, Metis and First Nations communities across Canada. Literacy rates among these populations are drastically below the national average and numerous previous initiatives had failed to markedly improve the situation.

The CCL decided to take a different approach. Through a year- long program of intensive community based consultations a set of learning models was developed, unique to the values and knowledge systems of each group. One tool was to use the consultations to develop a visual graphic to represent these systems. Each result attests to the cyclical, regenerative power of holistic life-long learning and its relationship to community well being.

It is informative that each model lives within a social and spiritual referential landscape.

First Nations: A living tree with first principals of honouring and protecting the earth, ancestor and elders.

Inuit People: A celebratory blanket toss and a circular path of community well being.

Metis Peoples: A living tree depicts the “Sacred Act of Living a Good Life” which illustrates sacred laws governing relationships within the community and the world at large – that comes from the Creator.

As soon as we make the shift from museums as rationalist authorities to museums as conveners of collective voice, *first voices*, the institutional dynamic changes. For instance, museums are not “educational institutions”; we are “learning institutions”.

Listening to, and accommodating the first person, prompts us to redefine our audience. To look beyond, for instance, statistics-based market demographics, German sociologist Volker Kirchberg has suggested instead the application of social “scene theory”. He notes that during a day or event or a moment people shift through sets of identity relationships (thematic voluntary collectives) either actually as in circles of friends or colleagues... or conceptually as they engage in mental conversations as a response to external stimuli... such as when visiting an exhibition. Engaging with a museum exhibition or even an object might involve any number of scene shifts and an understanding of these could greatly assist more responsive exhibition design.

A philosophical basis for this might be found for instance in Heidegger’s theory of personhood, as a kinetic transformation of successive entities.

## **2. Betty Kovacic’s installation “A Roomful of Missing Women”, 2007**

As an example, place yourself in the northern British Columbia, the Prince George Three Rivers Art Gallery. An exhibition which probably drew its largest every audience.



Betty Kovacic's installation "A Roomful of Missing Women", 2007, was a successful mixed media installation.

***A Roomful of Missing Women*** confronted the issue of 50 women who disappeared from Vancouver's East Side. Many were from local aboriginal communities. The exhibition comprised sound, music, portraits of each of the missing women, and an installation of shrouded blow-up dolls.

I read from a local newspaper review:

*There is a dark side to our communities that we push to the sides: the seedy or rough areas of town that we avoid and even seek to abolish. These communities are populated by survival sex workers, substance abusers, street people and others; these are the fringes of our society. We forget that these areas are inhabited by our sisters and brothers who were children once, possessed of dreams; whose lives took a tragic twist, through circumstance or misfortune.*

*More than fifty women, many of whom left smaller communities like Prince George and surrounding locations to seek better lives in Vancouver, instead, lost their lives in a terrible manner. All but socially abandoned it has taken the grief of their friends and families, to awaken much of society to the human tragedy of their circumstances and begin to challenge the ongoing marginalisation of those that we, as a society, have failed.*

The exhibition proved so powerful that a separate "decompression" room had to be provided with chairs, and a curtained area, for personal and private recuperation.

The body of theory which underpins the study of museums as a phenomenon is in constant need of adjustment. In the past museology has derived its inspiration and methodologies from a wide range of fields of

theoretical thought: cultural history, political ideologies, social philosophies and science-based theories of knowledge and communications. So into what disciplines might our theoretical museologist wander for inspiration and illumination in these times of massive change to world-view and social structure.

It might be of some surprise that I am going to suggest theology.

A new and adaptive museology might well be informed by recent thinking in subject areas such as applied theology.

Museum historian Kenneth Hudson and others have noted the religious underpinnings of museums: as secular pilgrimage sites; as inspirational monuments themselves, and the iconic value of collections. However I am suggesting we move beyond this. Theologies attempt to answer the big fundamental questions. Where do we come from? Why do we do what we do? Where are we going?

At the core of spiritual life is the transformational experience. It is the experience of the “other”. Having experienced the “other” the believer, the pilgrim, the devotee, the catechumen, the museum goer... changes. Becomes other!

Religions are founded on belief and trust. These values are also the foundation of civil society. Museums may be artefact grounded, but we are essentially values-based enterprises. And we have a special relationship of trust with our users. So I would like to close with two brief case studies.

Ojibway artist Norval Morrisseau, is probably Canada’s best known First Nations artist. His major influence, and mentor, was his grandfather, and Ojibwa shaman.

Morrisseau was the first to paint the ancient myths and legends of the

Eastern Woodlands, stories previously passed down by the oral tradition. He spent his youth in remote isolation in northern Ontario where his artistic style developed without the usual influences of other artist's imagery although he widely read and studied art books. He originated the "Woodland" school, becoming an inspiration to three generations of artists.

Norval was brought up by his grandfather who introduced him to Ojibwa shamanism and told him the stories and legends passed down amongst the Ojibwa people. While seriously ill he was subjected to a powerful dream experience. He was visited by a medicine woman who cured him by giving him a powerful new name, "Copper Thunderbird". This is how he signs his paintings.

What Morrisseau did was break the ancient taboos which controlled access to shamanistic law and forbade imaging of the tribal stories outside of controlled ritualistic settings. Beyond that, drawing on ancient petroglyphs and closely-held birch-bark scroll drawings, he developed a contemporary abstract vocabulary of images, forms and colours to give expressions to the world view of the Woodlands people.

Describing himself as a shaman artist he was both criticized and praised by own people. He was also an incredible hit in commercial art world.

Morrisseau claimed his paintings were real representations of his visions and dreams, a record of his travels to "the other side". He talked of how he channeled powerful healing influences through his art, influences of both physical and spiritual therapeutic value to all people.

Morrisseau's work now hangs in Canada's major museums. He was appointed to the the Royal Academy of Arts and is a member of The Order

Of Canada, our highest civilian honor. In 1989 he was the only Canadian Painter to be invited to participate in the "Magicians Of The Earth" exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in Paris, France.

Yet his life, almost to the end, was turbulent. He constantly battled alcohol and drug abuse. He broke with his family. His substantial income from his paintings quickly evaporated, given away to friends and acquaintances. In and out of prison for various misdemeanors he moved across the country, living on the streets. At the end he was taken in by a reformed Vancouver street person who cared for him until his death last year.

The exhibition of Morriseau's work at the University's new downtown Gallery will explore the relationship between Morriseau, his life, his work and the costume and scenography of a recent biographical stage play at the National Arts Centre.

The exhibition complements the cultural program for the North American Indigenous Games being hosted on southern Vancouver Island this summer. A particular challenge of this exhibition, as part of the public programming now in the planning stage, is the engagement of the Victoria homeless and street people, the prison population, those undergoing treatment for drug and alcohol abuse.

In my final example this morning, because I have not mentioned sacred song, let me close with this example of the secular sacred. And you can image the tune, and the words.

The Wall Street Journal recently reported on the "*Appearing for Peace*" tour of Beatle John Lennon's Steinway piano. It is the piano on which he

composed his famous ode to peace, "*Imagine*". Called the "Imagine Piano Peace Project" the Steinway is exhibited with little fanfare in places as diverse as the Odgen Museum of Southern Art in New Orleans to the Ford Theatre Washington where Lincoln was assassinated. The tour idea grew out of the piano's exhibition at the Dallas, Texas, Goss Gallery where it accompanied a war photography exhibition. Its positioning there was based on the last minute decision: the need for "decompression" after viewing the brutal realism of the photographs. From Dallas the piano continued on alone. In all it visited some thirty U.S. locations noted for horrific violence, death and destruction, including Waco Texas, Virginia Tech Campus and its last stop, outside the Dakota apartment building, New York, where John Lennon was assassinated. At every venue it attracted venerating crowds.

Almost without exception they just stood in silence.

A Ph.D. biology student at Virginia Tech, where 32 science students were massacred by a lone gunman, claimed the experience was "*symbolic and healing*". In Waco, where in 1993 eighty members of the Branch Davidian sect self-imolated, tour director Caroline True noted "*It gives people a distraction from grief and it's been a silent peace protest of sorts*".

At its core the museum experience is transformative. The mythic, and perhaps some would say mystical, power of artefactual authenticity is as alive today as it was in medieval Europe where a splinter from the true cross would cause people to pilgrimage miles to experience its physical and spiritual healing properties. Theologies document this powerful human experience of the *self-becoming-other*, over time and across belief systems, cultures and populations. We would do well to examine it closely.

And I am sure you will do this over the forthcoming days.

Thank you.

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