

Picturing Peace

In collaboration with the UCI Claire Trevor School of the Arts "ArtsBridge" Program and Seeds of Hope
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ArtsBridge and CPBP engaged the University of Ulster and two 4th grade classes in Belfast, Northern Ireland with two local Orange County Schools in a digital photography and writing project that focused on themes of collaboration, diversity, peace and understanding.

Picturing Peace built upon *Look Again*, a highly successful pilot project undertaken during the spring of 2003 in which pupils in Orange County schools used digital cameras to capture ideas and themes associated with peace, space and form, and qualities and emotions. The program also intended to engage young people in the cause of peace and motivate them to use photography to heighten consciousness of peace.

Might the power of children's visions stimulate adults to value peace also?

"This project may very well tear down the walls that separate groups of people -- it is a way that we can help children understand the nature of conflict and the emotions that surround it. We believe it is an important way to not only talk about peace but to promote it."

Would it be possible to use the same ArtsBridge model in Belfast and enable children on two continents to exchange their images of peace through the Internet?

Beyond fostering an exchange between American and Irish children, another aim of the program was to foster a connection between the two Northern Ireland schools. Despite their close proximity -- a Protestant and a Catholic school that share a soccer field divided by a fence to prevent violence -- the school children had had little contact, a fact of life generally operative in the divided city. By sharing their images and writings with one another and classrooms in Irvine and Santa Ana, using a project website that featured student exhibitions and electronic forums as well as opportunities for real-time discourse, these children explored their hopes and conflicts about peace emerging from the civil strife of Belfast. *Picturing Peace* culminated in several exhibitions of pupils' artwork and writings including at the Beall Center at UCI and at Belfast City Hall, as well as the development of a curriculum that can be used by other schools and universities to undertake similar projects.

A DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY & WRITING PROJECT THAT FOCUSES ON COLLABORATION, DIVERSITY, PEACE, AND UNDERSTANDING.

