

Camphill Foundation 'World Wide Weave' Exhibition On Tour

After more than a year of preparation, the World Wide Weave Exhibition has at last become a reality. By the time you read this it will already have completed a four-week showing at the Old Town Hall, Stroud, three weeks at The Island Gallery, Bristol, and four weeks in the glorious surroundings of Winchester Cathedral. From 25th March – 11th April it will be at the North Wall Arts Centre, Summertown, Oxford and from 21st April – 7th May at the National Wool Museum of Wales in Carmarthenshire.

The project has involved hundreds of people all over the Camphill Movement in 19 distinct nations and regions, with contributions created in 61 communities in Scotland, Northern Ireland, England, Wales, Ireland, Netherlands, France, Switzerland, Austria, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Estonia, Russia, USA, Canada, South Africa, India and Vietnam. Some places produced more than one, and the exhibition also includes a number of special pieces contributed by individuals. The 75 panels celebrate the 75th Anniversary of the Camphill Movement which began on 1st June 1940 when the first small group of pioneers moved into Camphill House by the River Dee near Aberdeen.

Every one of the 75 pieces is unique and has its own story to tell. To select a few examples, there is a beautiful felting of the Russian landscape from the Camphill day-centre Turmalin in Moscow, where at first they were not sure they could do anything at all and then completed and delivered a masterpiece in record time. There is an enchanting tapestry of Tapola in Finland, brimful of colour and details of the village and its life, and a similar brilliantly coloured creation from Kyle in Ireland. There is a matching pair of Spring and Autumn feltings from Corbenic in Scotland, breathtaking in their artistry, colour and detail.

From Camphill School Aberdeen comes panel number 1 (quite rightly), a tapestry which incorporates a wealth of archetypal Camphill imagery and symbolism in one richly coloured and textured composition. In some pieces, for example from Mountshannon (Ireland), Rotvoll (Norway), Oaklands Park (England) and Loch Arthur (Scotland) it is the actual woven texture which is paramount, as the background to a symphony of colour which constitutes a whole world of experience in itself. From California come two complementary semi-abstract pieces representing the wide panorama of the ocean and the majestic verticality of the redwood forest.

The World Wide Weave is an artistic endeavour, meant to be appreciated and enjoyed as such, but also it carries with it at least four messages. First of all, it embodies the principle of Unity in Diversity. Despite their huge variation in size, location and task and the incredibly rich mix of people who constantly interweave their lives and destinies in the network of Camphill communities, they all have the same set of core principles at heart. The exhibition expresses all the wonderfully varied and diverse characteristics of single communities coming together in one great artistic panorama of Camphill. Secondly, the exhibition carries a fundamental statement of equality regarding the potential of people with learning disabilities. The weavers, felters, tapestry-makers and embroiderers are artists and artisans in their own right and can place their work alongside that of mainstream artists and craftspeople.

A third element is that different individuals in a group have collaborated on a single piece of art, each contributing what they could towards the finished work. This has been a major feature in the development of the World Wide Weave. It has been a renewed experience of community cooperation and an example of social weaving along with the actual textile work. Many other people have also been involved in those pieces which incorporate other materials such as pottery, metal and wood, bringing together different workshops active in the community. A good example is the brilliant seaside image from Camphill Devon which has a colourful background of multi-textured weaving with felted and beadwork flowers, copper leaves, ceramic butterflies and wooden birds!

And fourth, most of the communities have used entirely home produced and in many cases also recycled materials in the World Wide Weave. A few of the exhibits are composed almost entirely of recycled materials. Caring for our natural resources, recycling and renewal is a special theme that runs throughout the exhibition.

The response to the exhibition from the general public has been extremely warm and positive. Many visitors are astonished that they had never heard of Camphill. Many also say that they had heard of it but are amazed by its breadth and internationalism. They show a deep respect for the ideals of community building which they divine through the images and text on view. They are deeply affected by the richness and variety of colour in the exhibits and the incredible variety and complexity of techniques on display. They experience what they describe as a joyful, uplifting and life-affirming message which they read in the exhibits, including the accompanying texts and photos. Last, but not least, they are deeply impressed by the skill and ability shown by the people who have created the exhibits and by the spirit of creative collaboration which is so much a part of that process. As one visitor expressed it, "the best thing of all is that it so clearly comes from a living experience of community, and that's something that we all need nowadays".

Please follow the progress of the tour on the website www.camphillfoundation.net which will have all relevant information about the various venues, and also updates appearing regularly on Facebook (Camphill Foundation UK & Ireland) and Twitter @camphillFD.

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Complete Tour Itinerary

13 th Dec. 2014 – 10 th January	Old Town Hall, High Street, Stroud, Gloucestershire
12 th January – 2 nd February	The Island Gallery, Bridewell Street, Bristol
5 th February – 3 rd March	Winchester Cathedral
25 th March – 12 th April	North Wall Arts Centre, Summertown, Oxford
21 st April – 7 th May	National Wool Museum of Wales, Dre-fach Felindre, Llandysul
11 th – 21 st May	Central Library, Cambridge
23 rd May – 13 th June	Leeds Corn Exchange
18 th June – 18 th July	London – Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn.
23 rd - 31 st July	<i>Edinburgh or Glasgow (TBC)</i>
3 rd – 11 th August	Newton Dee Camphill Community, Bieldside, Aberdeen
14 th – 27 th August	Haddo House (National Trust), Ellon, near Aberdeen
1 st – 10 th September	<i>Glasgow or Edinburgh (TBC)</i>

14 th – 18 th September	Scottish Parliament Members' Lobby, Holyrood, Edinburgh
19 th September – 3 rd October	Omagh Library, Northern Ireland
5 th – 12 th October	The Curve Gallery, Bangor Carnegie Library, Bangor, N. Ireland
13 th – 30 th October	Belfast City Hall, East Wing
1 st – 6 th November	Carroll Gallery, Sean Hollywood Arts Centre, Newry, N. Ireland
10 th November – 3 rd December	The Atrium, Civic Offices, Dublin, Ireland
5 th – 29 th December	Camphill Community Ballytobin, Callan, Co. Kilkenny, Ireland
1 st – 7 th January 2016	Museum in the Park, Stroud, Gloucestershire
January – February 2016	Camphill Perceval, St-Prex, Lake Geneva, Switzerland
February – March 2016	Sylvia-koti, Lahti and Helsinki, Finland
April – September 2016	North America: New York City, Hudson NY, Philadelphia PA, Chester County PA, and others.