

War and Peace, by Portinari: A Brazilian Master Piece for the UN

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Upon delivering the monumental (14 meter high) panels "War" and "Peace", Brazil's gift to the United Nations Organization, in 1956, Portinari declared "I consider these panels, without a doubt, my best and most important work. I dedicate them to Humanity". The UN Secretary-General, Nobel Peace Prize winner Dag Hammarskjöld stated then that they represented "the most important monumental work of art donated to the United Nations." And Emily Genauer, art critic for the New York Herald Tribune, wrote: "...the strength and universality of Portinari's message, the sheer compassion of the greatest of Brazil's painters (and no doubt one of the greats anywhere in the world today) are the most memorable qualities ...". In this lecture we will present the history of Portinari's ultimate work, the final synthesis of his moving pictorial, ethical, and humanistic legacy. The duality always present in all his work is evident in this diptic that, at every point in Portinari's timeline, proposes a counterpoint between tenderness and fury, the lyrical and the tragic, poetry and drama. A drama that unfortunately becomes more and more current each day... We will also present the "War and Peace Project", where the Portinari Project (PUC-Rio), having been granted custody of the panels by the UN for the period 2010-2015, restored them in a studio open to the public, and then exhibited them in Rio (2010), in São Paulo (2012) in Belo Horizonte (2013), and at the "Salon d'Honneur" of the Grand Palais in Paris (2014), returning them to the UN with a ceremony-spectacle, entitled by the UN "The Second Unveiling," held in 2015 in the Grand Plenary of the United Nations General Assembly.