

January 15, 2004  
For Immediate Release

**THE AXA GALLERY PRESENTS  
DRAWINGS BY CHILDREN IN TWENTIETH CENTURY WARTIME**

**“They Still Draw Pictures:  
Children’s Art in Wartime from the Spanish Civil War to Kosovo”**

**February 19 through April 3, 2004**

**New York, NY** – Of the 600,000 refugees who sought shelter from Generalissimo Francisco Franco's tyranny in the relative security of Republican-controlled eastern Spain, more than 200,000 were children. The Republic responded to this crisis by establishing *colonias infantiles* (children's colonies), often in country estates and mansions that had been abandoned by fascist sympathizers. In these colonies, the young refugees - many of them orphaned or sent by their parents to safety - received schooling and medical care, kept each other company, and produced thousands of drawings that serve as a moving, collective testimony of the experience of being a child

in wartime.



Recto: (Stamp) Ministerio de  
Instrucción Pública,  
Colonia nº 10, Elda (Alicante).  
[The land is for he who works it.  
P. Morante]

*They Still Draw Pictures* collects and comments on a cross-section of the children's art produced in the *colonias infantiles* – as well as a selection of drawings from later wars, from the Holocaust to Kosovo – that bear a tragic and uncanny resemblance to their Spanish counterparts. Born of the trauma of exile and separation, the drawings are invaluable historical

documents, giving physical form to the children's experiences of air raids, brutality, destruction, and homelessness. These pictures also represent daily life in the colonies and preserve the children's clear memories of life before the war and hope for life after it.

*They Still Draw Pictures* is curated and organized by Anthony L. Geist and Peter N. Carroll for the Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives and the Mandeville Special Collections Library at the University of California, San Diego. The AXA Gallery is sponsored by AXA Financial and its subsidiary The Equitable Life Assurance Society of the United States. Additional assistance has been provided by AXA Art Insurance Corporation.

The exhibition of more than sixty drawings is displayed in five parts: **Before: Memories of Loss**, drawings of life without war; **War**, drawings of destruction to cityscapes and the countryside, including aerial combat and bombing; **Displacement**, drawings of evacuation, exile, separation; **Camps**, drawings of homelessness, life in the *colonias infantiles* (children's colonies); and **Peace**, drawings of visions of the future. "The pictures spoke to me with a vibrancy and emotional power that spanned the more than sixty years that had lapsed since they were drawn" says curator Geist.

"... in selecting the Spanish drawings we found most expressive of the children's representation of their experience of war, one of the things that deeply moved us was our awareness that these little works of art constitute a contemporary as well as historical problem: that children will suffer the savagery of war and still leave a record of their suffering in pictures."



Hrvoje  
Age Unknown (Grade 8)  
Zagreb (Croatia)  
1992  
(Courtesy of the San Francisco Int'l.  
Children's Museum)

A book accompanying the exhibition, **They Still Draw Pictures: Children's Art in Wartime from the Spanish Civil War to Kosovo** by Anthony L. Geist and Peter N. Carroll, includes a forward by Robert Coles. (80 pages, 8 x 10 1/2" with essays, photographs and images. ISBN 0-252-07026-7. Distributed by University of Illinois Press). The book retails for \$19.95 and is available at Gateway Newsstand in the Equitable Atrium, 787 Seventh Avenue.



Tanforan, California c. 1942. Author unknown.  
Courtesy of the National Japanese  
American Historical Society

"A drawing or a painting is a soul's message eagerly sought by us watchful onlookers. Whether the artist be grown up or a boy or a girl, the point is to demonstrate what has been imagined or, yes, witnessed - in peace or, alas, here in war. The point, further, is for us to be shown something by certain boys and girls who become our teachers; thereby we are broadened and deepened responsively in our minds and hearts." – Robert Coles, foreword to the catalogue.

**Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives (ALBA)**, housed in the Tamiment Library at New York University, is a living archive, devoted to preserving and spreading the legacy of the nearly 3,000 young Americans who volunteered to defend Spanish democracy in the late 1930s. In addition to this exhibition, ALBA has sponsored numerous educational outreach programs as well as two successful traveling art exhibitions.

**AXA Gallery** presents works from all fields of the visual arts, with a special emphasis placed on exhibitions that would not otherwise have a presence in the city. The AXA Gallery is located in the atrium lobby of Equitable Tower, 787 Seventh Avenue at 51st Street, in New York City. Gallery hours are Monday through Friday, 11am - 6pm, and Saturday, noon to 5pm. The Gallery is closed on Sundays. Admission is free.

For reproductions and further information, please contact:

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Payam Napelani  
Age Unknown  
Iraq, 1988  
Courtesy of the San Francisco International Children's Museum