

An Invitation

This is an open invitation to any individual or group of individuals interested in having their reflections held in our repository. And to any individual or group who would like us to help them record their experiences of conflict here in their own words or images.

But why is it important to weave together the disparate, individual testimonies of the people of the 'Troubles' at all? That we might know, by feeling, what has been going on here. That we might be threaded onto the human detail of it.

Or - to be more straightforward about it - it is important for us to know what has been happening to people here, because we are people. It is our hope that the stories we gather will resonate across divisions.

This project has little meaning without involvement and contributions from all sections of this community and from people in other parts of the world who have been marked by the conflict here.

The terms of those contributions are up to you. And the tone is up to you. It can be deeply serious, deeply concerned, serious, light, ironic.

This is an invitation to people to be their own media. For their own sakes, and for all our sakes.

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An Crann / The Tree



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An Crann/The Tree



Helping people
to tell and to hear
the stories of
the 'Troubles'

Mission Statement Of An Crann/The Tree

It is the purpose of **An Crann/The Tree** to attempt to piece together the story of the 'Troubles' in human terms - the terms of anyone willing to contribute.

Filmed testimonies, written testimonies, paintings, photographs, songs, artefacts and any other piece of witness will be welcome.

In gathering contributions for **An Crann/The Tree** we will strive to be genuinely inclusive, helpful and sensitive to people who may be relating or re-living hurtful times.

We will consider that we hold all contributions in trust.

From some contributions, and with the involvement of sympathetic artists and others, we will seek to fashion the permanent exhibition of **An Crann/The Tree** - a multi-media exhibition telling the story of our 'Troubles' in a passionate, various way we can all respect.

As well as housing this - and other, temporary, exhibitions - we will seek to make **An Crann/The Tree** a place where anyone damaged or affected by the 'Troubles' in any way can feel welcome.

We will strive to make sure that this story-telling museum of the 'Troubles' is beautifully well done; we will work to make it an instrument of hope and transformation for the people of Northern Ireland, and any other people who may come.

A Place For All

Because Northern Ireland is the way that it is, there is no one who speaks for us all. There is no one who embodies the soul of the place and can tell its true story, for it is a splintered story. We all carry shards of it with us.

We are proposing to work towards the establishment of a living museum in which the story of the 'Troubles' can be told - told on film, on audio tape, on the very walls of the building, in a passionate, various narrative we can all respect.

Through a process of encouraging, listening, writing, talking, meeting, thinking, empathising, understanding, communicating with as many people as possible, we can create this special place which will tell the story of the 'Troubles' in a variety of forms and locations.

By the end of this century, and to mark the beginning of a new millennium, **An Crann/The Tree** will become a significant feature in the lives of the people of Northern Ireland.

We also believe that this has significance for everyone - people on both sides of the border have suffered, and there are people in Britain and Europe who also have their stories to tell.

Developments

An Crann/The Tree was founded in 1994 to gather and house individual experiences, feelings, testimonies, relating to the 'Troubles' from as wide a range of people as possible. The process we are engaged in is open to absolutely anyone who wants to record - in words, images or any creative medium - what they have been feeling during this time in all our lives.

Although we have been engaged in this process for over two years, it is still early days. But there is no rush to this. Much of our work has been with people who have borne more than their share of suffering and we have taken the rhythm of the project's growth from them.

In January 1997 we entered a new phase, with the opening of our own office in central Belfast. It has always been our intention to house what we eventually gather in a place of reflection, of truth, of welcome. We are a long way from having a full archive to house, but we have a lot of work to do. Now we have our own space to do it in.

We have core funding for the next two years from the Community Relations Council and the Central Community Relations Unit. Of course we are grateful for this, for it will enable us to realise many of the projects in our Development Plan - including the establishment of an archive of videotaped reflections and various visual arts initiatives, among them the beginnings of the **Ulster Mural** project.

We will continue to gather written testimonies, and have just begun work on a suite which will tell the story of our conflict in the language of music. A music which has an ear to all of the musics we make here.

Any resources we have - of effort as well as finance - will be put towards working, through the arts, with people wishing to contribute to the repository. We feel that their own factual or creative accounts of their experiences - *whatever those experiences might be* - will amount to a great resource for us all. A resource of insight, of memory, of warning.