

YERBA BUENA
CENTER FOR
THE ARTS

Art of Peace

JULY 23–AUGUST 25, 2019

2ND FLOOR GALLERIES

YBCA.ORG
#YBCA



Robby Poblete Foundation

UNITED
PLAYAZ



INTRODUCTION

Art of Peace is a collaborative exhibition that brings together three organizations—Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, the Robby Poblete Foundation, and United Playaz—and features art and artists raising awareness about the continued escalation of death due to gun violence in our country. The Robby Poblete Foundation and United Playaz are working to remove as many firearms as possible from our streets and communities and turn them into symbols of hope.

In 2014, Robby Poblete was killed at age twenty-three by gun violence in Vallejo, California. His death prompted his mother, Pati Navalta Poblete, to found the Robby Poblete Foundation, which aims to reduce gun violence by transforming guns into objects of healing and remembrance through art and vocational programs. United Playaz, founded in 1994 by Rudy Corpuz, is a violence prevention and youth development organization that provides youth with a safe and positive environment in which to grow. Their motto, “It takes the hood to save the hood,” underscores their commitment to working with those from similar backgrounds as the youth, fostering development from within the community.

United Playaz and the Robby Poblete Foundation work to end senseless gun violence through gun buyback programs and partnerships with local police departments. But they take the process much further by collaborating to create something positive and educational out of the guns—namely, art objects that serve as catalysts for conversation. *Art of Peace* focuses on the stories of the artists—most of whom have been affected by gun violence in some way—and the transformations made possible through their work. It offers hope, resilience, and a peaceful path forward.



Labor and Love
(Natasha McCray-Zolp and Shameel Ali)
Resurrection, 2019. Courtesy the artists.



Barbara Bryn Klare
RWB Targets, 2019. Courtesy the artist.

BARBARA BRYN KLARE ***RWB TARGETS***

RWB Targets is made of nine wooden gun stocks; each has a red, blue, or white circle on one side and a black-and-white target on the other. A stock, or gunstock, is the back part of a long gun (such as a rifle) that provides both structural support for the gun and physical support for the person using it, allowing them to aim the gun and brace themselves while shooting. By painting a target on the gun itself, Barbara Bryn Klare emphasizes her desire to turn the conversation around gun control back onto the guns themselves rather than those who are arguing: “We need to stop pointing fingers and look at where the guns are pointing.”

Klare is an artist and researcher based in the Bay Area and Ohio who uses thread and objects to reference contemporary culture and society. Through her work she aims to give voice and artistic solace to those who are silenced or overlooked. She envisions artists as vital contributors to society—a kind of creative response team reacting to the often confusing, troubling news of the day.

CLODY CATES AND GAIGE QUALMANN ***RETURN TO NATURE***

Return to Nature is a freestanding tree in “bloom” made of wooden rifle stocks, bullets, and shell casings. Beauty and violence intertwine in the tree’s elegant form: twisting branches and intricate flowers evoke the promise of spring, starkly contrasting with the deadly materials from which it is made. According to the artists Clody Cates and Gaige Qualmann, “Everything we’ve ever seen, touched, tasted, or felt started in nature as a rock or the trunk of a tree. Thousands of years of innovation gave us tools—and weapons. As humankind progresses and matures, we may realize that the beauty of nature is more important than any weapon, and that the end of the journey is surprisingly close to the beginning.”

Cates is a self-taught artist who loves to experiment with processes and techniques. For her, art is a limitless journey where she can create beauty from anything. Qualmann has been an artist all his life. As a self-taught craftsman, he considers nature his muse and his hands his allies. Both are based in Oakland.

JOHN TON **ROBBY'S ARC**

Robby's Arc is a memorial obelisk created in memory of Robby Poblete, namesake of the Robby Poblete Foundation. Artist John Ton created the work as a tribute to Robby and other children who lost their lives too soon. The sculpture includes a portrait of Robby as a welder, inspired by and memorializing Robby's dream of becoming a welder and opening his own shop. According to Ton, "Even in grief and loss, there can be hope. Of course Robby is gone forever, but we, the living, can look to the future, to the young people around us, to the grace and power of hope." The top of the obelisk is broken open and crowned with a shot-up piece of metal—unidentifiable because of the damage done to it—meant to represent the triumph of the human spirit even in loss.

Petaluma-based John Ton is a sign crafter, muralist, and creator of what he calls ammosaics—mosaics made from found shell casings. He also works in hand-lettering, large-scale layouts, billboard painting, gold leafing, sandblasting, woodcarving, welding, concrete casting, glass etching, and stone masonry. In his work with guns and gun-related paraphernalia, Ton attempts to transform something usually perceived as threatening, ugly, or dangerous into something beautiful and thought-provoking.

KEVIN BYALL **DOVES OF PIECE**

Doves of Piece is a mobile sculpture of a flock of doves made from handgun parts. Larger parts were used to create the bodies and wings, while smaller, yet still potent, parts such as triggers form the beaks. By juxtaposing a world-recognized symbol of peace with the violent form of the handgun, Kevin Byall hopes viewers will contemplate what it would take to balance gun usage with gun violence.

Byall is a sculptor and model maker who also works in computer graphics. He has been awarded a science and technology innovation award from the Smithsonian Institution for his collaborative work in computer graphics. He creates art to help people see things in a new way, by bringing fun and playfulness into his work. Last year he participated in the 2018 Alameda County *Art of Peace* exhibition.

LABOR AND LOVE (NATASHA MCCRAY-ZOLP AND SHAMEEL ALI) *RESURRECTION*

Resurrection captures a monarch butterfly emerging from its cocoon. For artists Natasha McCray-Zolp and Shameel Ali, this pivotal moment in its life cycle epitomizes transformation—from darkness to light, death to rebirth, a hard shell to a delicate creature capable of flight. Drawing parallels between the artworks in *Art of Peace*, the work of Robby Poblete Foundation and United Playaz, and this symbol of transformation, the artists hope *Resurrection* encourages people to put down their weapons and take up inspiration and love. The work incorporates rifle barrels, stocks, pins, triggers, various other firearm components, and shell casings.

McCray-Zolp and Ali are a husband-and-wife team based in the East Bay who love to give new life to old things. McCray-Zolp is a practicing visual artist and an art educator for Oakland Schools; she has run the ASCEND K-8 Art Integration program in Oakland's Fruitvale district for approximately fifteen years and has worked with the Museum of Children's Art in Oakland for nearly twenty years. Ali is an HVAC-certified maintenance engineer, carpenter, builder, welder, and audio specialist for cars. Together they own Labor and Love, maker of home goods with a modern twist, and are committed to working with and serving their communities. They also participated in the 2018 Alameda County *Art of Peace* exhibition.

DARRELL HUNGER *SILENT VIOLENCE*

Silent Violence is both a memorial for the thousands of lives lost to gun-related suicide in the United States each year, and a call to action. While firearm homicides attract more attention in the media, firearm suicides occur in far greater numbers—and are aided by easy access to guns. Comprised of three sections, *Silent Violence* poetically brings this often overlooked issue into the larger conversation on gun violence. Moving from darkness to light, the base is a jumble of gun parts representing disintegration and chaos. The center section is intended as a monument, with sixty-three casing ends symbolizing the number of people who end their lives with a gun each day in the United States. Finally, the top opens up into a flame of hope or remembrance—a guiding light to a brighter future.

Berkeley-based Darrell Hunger is a longtime Bay Area resident, designer, and artist who has been creating found-object sculptures for many years. His vision is to integrate art and design to solve problems creatively and aesthetically. He also participated in the 2018 Alameda County *Art of Peace* exhibition.

CONSTANTINE ZLATEV (MADE IN CONSTANTINE) AHIMSA

Ahimsa, made from a decommissioned Smith & Wesson revolver, pays tribute to leaders of nonviolent resistance throughout the world. The name *Ahimsa* comes from the Sanskrit word meaning “do no harm” and is an important concept of nonviolence toward all living beings in the Hindu, Jain, and Buddhist religions. The revolver functions as an automated slide projector with six slides embedded in its rotating cylinder. The slides show Mahatma Gandhi (1869–1948), the Indian politician and activist who, through nonviolent civil disobedience, led India to independence and inspired movements for civil rights and freedom across the world; Martin Luther King Jr. (1929–1968), the Baptist minister and activist who advanced civil rights in the United States through nonviolence and civil disobedience, becoming one of the most notable leaders in the civil rights movement; Ursula Franklin (1921–2016), a German Canadian scientist, pacifist, and feminist whose research helped end atmospheric nuclear testing; Desmond Doss (1919–2006), a US Army corporal who served as a combat medic in World War II and was the only conscientious objector to receive the Medal of Honor for his actions during the war; Eric Bogle (b. 1944), a Scottish folk singer-songwriter whose most famous songs tell of the futility and loss of war; and Muhammad Ali (1942–2016), a professional heavyweight boxer, philanthropist, and activist whose actions as a conscientious objector to the Vietnam War made him an icon in the US antiwar and civil rights movements.

Constantine Zlatev is a San Francisco-based artist who utilizes disabled armaments and industrial materials and processes to create conceptually driven sculptures and installations.

NICK FULLERTON SOLAR PEACE FOUNTAIN

Pushing back against the seemingly never-ending stories of gun violence and loss of life, Nick Fullerton’s *Solar Peace Fountain* is intended as a calming and peaceful presence in an otherwise chaotic world. According to the artist, “Guns are made for one purpose, and owning one indicates an often inevitable commitment to that end. I think we need more things like gardens and fountains, which encourage a sense of community, harmony, and cooperation.” Powered by the sun thanks to a solar panel installed on its top, the fountain has been temporarily reconfigured to function in YBCA’s gallery space.

Originally from Vermont, Fullerton has lived and worked in the Bay Area since 1979 and currently resides in Vallejo, California. He has studied art throughout the Bay Area and works in photography, sculpture, writing, music recording, painting, and welding, as well as making stringed instruments and furniture. He is also currently involved in e-waste recycling and gold refining.

TANYA HERRERA *AFTER STRIFE*

After Strife incorporates the Mpatapo knot symbol into a group of dismantled rifles hanging together like objects on a coatrack. The Mpatapo comes from the Adinkra culture in Ghana and represents peace and reconciliation after strife: when two enemies make peace, Mpatapo is the knot that binds them to a peaceful resolution. Looking at how each corner of the knot affects the other corners, artist Tanya Herrera notes, "If we affect each other, then we ourselves also have to be the solutions. This shows uniformity in the fight to find common ground, giving each person the ability to make a difference while simultaneously improving each other's lives."

Herrera is a first-generation Costa Rican American, born and raised in the Bay Area, and a lifelong artist. She focuses primarily on pyrography—the art of decorating wood or leather by burning a design into its surface—thereby keeping alive a handmade technique in an era of proliferating technologies.

TSUNGWEI MOO *OVER THE ALTAR OF LIFE*

Compelled to participate in *Art of Peace* after losing her fiancé to gun violence, Tsungwei Moo aims to turn acts of destruction into creation through her art. For *Home, Sweet Home*, a work she contributed to the 2018 Alameda County *Art of Peace* exhibition, Moo used gun parts to create homes for her paintings—sanctuaries around intimate portraits of familial tenderness. *Over the Altar of Life* was created to aid spirits on their journeys to the next life, helping those who have died find lasting peace. Taking from traditional Chinese rituals and traditions, the sculpture includes burnt incense to help the spirits in this journey as well as raw rice. The organ in the bottom of the sculpture plays silent music.

Moo was born in Taipei, Taiwan, and now lives and works in San Francisco. With a background in advertising art direction, she is now a full-time artist. She has exhibited extensively throughout the Bay Area and is currently an artist in residence at Yosemite National Park, where she also teaches pastel drawing.

PUBLIC PROGRAMS

OPENING RECEPTION

TUE, JULY 23, 6PM

Join Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, United Playaz, and the Robby Poblete Foundation to celebrate the opening of *Art of Peace*, a group exhibition that aims to raise awareness about the continued escalation of death in our country due to senseless gun violence.

Cover image:
Clody Cates and Gaige Qualmann
Return to Nature, 2018. Courtesy the artists.

YBCA exhibitions are made possible in part by Mellon/American Council of Learned Societies Public Fellows Program, with additional support by Kevin King and Meridee Moore.

Free youth admission to YBCA galleries is made possible through the support of Nicola Miner and Robert Mailer Anderson.

YBCA programs are made possible in part by Bloomberg Philanthropies and The James Irvine Foundation, with additional funding by National Endowment for the Arts, Grosvenor, and YBCA Members.

Yerba Buena Center for the Arts is grateful to the City of San Francisco for its ongoing support.

**Bloomberg
Philanthropies**



The James Irvine
Foundation

Expanding Opportunity for the People of California

NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
for the **ARTS**
arts.gov

Yerba Buena Center for the Arts (YBCA) is one of the nation's most innovative contemporary arts centers. Founded in 1993, YBCA's mission is to generate culture that moves people. Through powerful art experiences, thoughtful and provocative content, and deep opportunities for participation, YBCA is committed to creating an inclusive culture that awakens personal and societal transformation. YBCA presents a wide variety of programming year-round, including performing arts, visual arts, film/video and civic engagement. YBCA venues include the Forum, Screening Room, Galleries and the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts Theater. For tickets and information, call 415.978.ARTS (2787).

**YERBA BUENA
CENTER FOR
THE ARTS**

701 MISSION ST
SAN FRANCISCO
CA 94103
YBCA.ORG