

Biblical Museum of Canada – Quest Exhibits

INTRODUCTION

“The road to tomorrow leads through yesterday”

John A. MacKay, Princeton University, NJ

In an increasingly materialistic society where isolation and loneliness are epidemic, there is an unheard cry for meaning (Viktor E. Frankl). This teaching museum project offers help to people to find meaning for their lives, inspiring them to live to their full potential.

With this in mind, this teaching museum leads the visitors on a pilgrimage, from Stone Age to Space Age, offering a fresh and unparalleled documentation of the history of civilization and culture. According to the British historian Paul Johnson, “History is the most important thing to learn. It’s more important than almost any other discipline if you’re involved in high-level decisions.”

The Twentieth Century, in spite of an explosion of technological inventions, was the worst of centuries for the number of people who have died horrible, cruel and brutal deaths. These are just a few of the unpleasant facts of life. Sin and evil are seldom mentioned in dealing with the world’s problems, but it is a sad fact that most of the suffering is caused by people. The world needs love and compassion and it needs the transforming power of Biblical influence to change lives. The twenty-first century, predicted Malraux, will be spiritual or it will destroy itself.

Drawn from the collections of more than eighty museums throughout the world, it is our aim to display in one geographical location high quality reproductions some of the most important landmarks and artefacts in the various cultural traditions, and to portray the inspiring examples of individuals. The Quest Exhibit is a unique treasure house of authentic museum reproductions. It is our hope that eventually this documentation will be available on a wider basis for educational institutions through satellite Quest Exhibits.

MISSION STATEMENT

The *Biblical Museum of Canada — Quest Exhibits* presents accurate facsimiles of historical artefacts of cultures and civilizations that provoke memory and inspire vision. In this unique museum — we see the entire flow of human history, both good and evil events along with their meaning. This includes some outstanding examples of persons whose positive achievements range over many different fields of endeavour. These are role models to inspire visitors to become part of the history of those who transcend self to serve others and so to make this a better world.

BASIC PRINCIPLES

After thirty-five years of research, the selection of the material is being carried out on the following principles:

(1) The teaching museum exhibit presents history on a **CHRONOLOGICAL BASIS**. We begin with the Stone Age, Sumer, Mesopotamia and Egypt, and trace our cultural roots through the Semitic, Greek and Roman experience, not forgetting the genius of the emerging Chinese culture. Subsequently the rise of medieval society is exemplified in the Byzantine and Carolingian periods, the rise of Islam and the High Middle Ages, leading up to the Reformation and the Renaissance. The Renaissance period is traced to its sources both in Rome and the North. The treatment deals with the interaction of the Renaissance and the Reformation, both Protestant and Catholic. The next sections treat the Baroque, neoclassical, and revolutionary-romantic periods of Europe and America. The worldwide age of exploration and missions, as well as America and Canada's cultural heritages are integrated into this chronological tapestry. The final dramatic part describes the times between the two world wars and the entry into the Space Age, portraying the conflict between the West and the Third World.

We thought it important to present history as an unfolding movement, with constant references back to the past and pointers to future developments. Chronological tables support this approach — one at the beginning of each section — that enable the visitor to see at a glance what cultural events were taking place at a particular time. Maps that reflect the changing face of the world reinforce the chronological approach.

(2) The second principle in this presentation of history is on an **INTERACTIVE BASIS**. In culture the various disciplines interact. Therefore, we attempt to integrate art, science, philosophy, theology, history, literature and music. We are attempting to show the various disciplines interacting and influencing one another, not flowing in separate channels.

(3) The third principle is on an **EXPERIENTIAL BASIS**. In his essay, "Three Domains of Creativity," Arthur Koestler, one of the more important writers on conceptualization, identifies the "domains" of experiential learning as artistic originality (which he calls the "ah!" reaction), scientific discovery (the "aha!" reaction), and comic inspiration (the "haha!" reaction). He suggests that such experiential learning results in creative acts because the previously unrelated structures blend in such a way that one gets more out of the emergent whole than one has put in. It is our hope that a visit to the museum will provide such a creative audio-visual experience of history in its totality and encourage the visitors to find deeper meaning for their lives.

(4) The fourth principle is on a **SELECTIVE BASIS**. Any survey of the humanities risks an overload of information. *Quest Exhibits* attempts to cover those indispensable works, events and persons that throw light on their own period and are relevant and illuminating for ours. "One of the recurring joys of studying the humanities is the shock of recognition when a poem or painting leaps across the centuries and speaks directly about an experience which we had thought uniquely our own" (John Reich). We realize that no final selection in any of the disciplines will please everyone. Our consolation is that this exhibit is

not meant to replace instructors but rather to serve as an adjunct and an aid as they go about their task of teaching.

It is our intention to provide a Visitor's Guide that will cover the content of the Exhibits.

Any project on this scale necessarily involves many people whose ideas, suggestions and contributions will need to be acknowledged when the venture comes to completion.

Your response to and comments on this teaching museum project will be gratefully received.