

PRESS RELEASE

Canadian artists censored at the Vienna International Centre (VIC)

Artists **Sandra Bromley and Wallis Kendal** set up *The Gun Sculpture*, in the rotunda of the VIC at the end of May, 2010. *The Gun Sculpture* installation includes a five ton welded sculpture composed of over 7000 guns and other weapons gathered from conflict zones around the world and a mural with pictures, detailing the stories of victims of violence. The opening reception on June 3rd was attended by a distinguished crowd of staff and visitors and **Hans Blix gave the opening remarks, aptly commenting “that small arms are weapons of mass destruction”**. The opening coincided with the annual conference of ACUNS (Academic Council on the United Nations System).

The exhibit was well received; it was drawing considerable attention and provoking informed discussion. **All this changed at the end of June. The artists were notified that there had been a complaint by the Chinese delegation to the VIC regarding the inclusion of a Tibetan nun in the victim’s mural portion of the exhibit. They demanded that the entire artwork be immediately dismantled and removed**. Wallis and Sandra understood that the complaint would go through due process and were shocked and offended to hear on July 5th that “someone” had **dismembered and removed a portion of the Gun Sculpture installation**. The entire victim’s component was removed, kidnapped. No one authorized to deal with the exhibit knew where the dismantled artwork was.

The artists were contacted two days later, saying the work was located and now was in safe keeping – but still, and to this day, only half of the exhibit is on display.

The artists feel this is censorship in the most aggressive form.

The Victims component of the Gun Sculpture installation honours the victims of violence by sharing their images and stories. Not only has this important voice been physically removed, damaging the integrity of the installation, but it has also re-victimized, made voiceless 114 victims of violence. The whole intent of the Gun Sculpture is to unmask the culture of violence, to show the tragic human cost of war, crime and other forms of violence. It is ironic that an institution dedicated to protecting human rights should so quickly sacrifice the artist’s creative freedom, the right to “speak” in the memory of those unable to defend themselves from abuse.

www.gunsculpture.com