

My email to the Nobel Peace Center from 1 May 2018, 20:16

Hello,

I'm writing to inquire about one of the exhibitions I recently saw and to give some feedback about another that are currently open at the centre.

My best friend and I were at the centre this past weekend and enjoyed our time at the exhibitions immensely. I found Generation Wealth and Ban the Bomb both to be extremely engaging, relevant, and thought provoking.

First my inquiry:

In the Ban the Bomb exhibition, there was some music playing in the video installations (the larger one of the nuclear testing footage compilation, and the video diptych of the two mountains with some voice overs about nuclear warfare). If I recall correctly they both had the same or similar music playing, and I'd like to know if there is somewhere where I could find out what the music is (for both installations if it's not the same music)? I found it extremely moving and appropriate, and would like to be able to listen to it again.

And then some feedback:

My companion and I found it a bit disappointing that there was a warning blocking the entrance to section of Generation Wealth that discussed sex work, describing it as "graphic" and symbolically restricting free access to it. The section, as far as I can recall, discussed only stories of women (including trans women if I recall accurately), and I can only remember one instance of (partial) nudity in the photos where a woman's breast was at least in part visible. I didn't find the imagery in that room particularly pornographic in nature, if perhaps a bit direct for those with the most conservative of leanings. In addition in the texts, there wasn't (at least in the English translations) much of anything explicitly sexual. However, much to my surprise, towards the end of my tour through the exhibition, there was a section on plastic surgery that included images such as a facelift being carried out in which part of the patient's face was peeled away, a woman getting a butt-lift whilst fully conscious, and penis enhancement prosthetic being held by a man that at indirect glance could look rather like a real penis to some observers. This section of the exhibition did not have a graphic content warning.

I find it hard to reconcile that a part of the exhibition in which women were telling their stories of taking their economic responsibility into their own hands — by the only means possible, for some though this shouldn't necessarily be a deciding factor — and taking a degree of control in the economic actualisation of their education, support of their families and other important subsistence activities should be subject to a degree of soft censorship. In contrast, what could be considered a physically violent or visually shocking surgical procedures, or imagery of superficial genital enhancement for a gender that already has a controlling stake in most socioeconomic activities is shown without warning or the hints of shame that come with the "graphic content" warning that were present in the sex work section of the exhibition.

This has been bothering me since I saw it, we have discussed it at length and I find I'm most disappointed because I expected better from an exhibition put on by the Nobel Peace Center. Seeing as a germane issue is the relatively low numbers of female nominees and winners of the Peace Prize (and the stated aim of

being an "arena for debate about important social issues", I found the differing treatment of these two sections of the exhibition troubling and in opposition to being such an arena of debate. By othering the one area, by segregating the stories and representations of a group of women that are already othered by society, has the net effect of muting their visibility and voice — a visibility and voice that they often do not get.

What message does this send to the observer? What are the conclusions that are meant to be drawn from it? Its arguable message is that women who engage in sex work are worthy of stigmatisation in the form of such microaggressions, however inadvertent and unintentional they might be. Another message may be that their stories and realities are optional, and not a product of our contemporary socioeconomic realities. That their existence is conditional and opt-in only, and not subject to the same right to be seen, documented, and presented to others.

I urge you reconsider the double standard that is being supported by the content warning in the exhibition, and the diminishing effect it has on the legitimacy of the stories told therein.

Kind regards,