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State of the Taubman Current Exhibitions

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By John Carlin, Anchor - email

The Taubman Museum of Art aspires to be not just an art museum – but a community gathering place. The staff tells me they want the Taubman to be cool – where you go to hang out – get some stimulation, and maybe a cup of coffee. When they have an exhibit, they want it to be what EVERYONE is talking about. As we continue to examine the state of the Taubman, let's see how the two current exhibits measure up.

"It said over there that they walked to church barefooted and carried their shoes. It's just amazing," said Judy Hayeson as she walked through the Taubman one day last week.

Judy Hayeson, and her sister Katha Williams, are visiting from Iowa, and were mesmerized by the Taubman's exhibition called This Light of Ours.

"This Light of Ours organized by the Center for Documentary Expression in Art. It has the voices of the nine civil rights movement photographers. Photographers that lived through the movement, explained Cindy Petersen, deputy director for education.

And the images are haunting, showing the terror of the times. Petersen took us on a tour.

"Where you can see the demonstrators on the wagons and being arrested and being dragged by the policemen and stomping and going through. You can feel what's happening and as you listen to the audio guide you can feel that," she said.

An audio guide is adds another layer – allowing you to call a number and listen on your phone to the voices of the photographers who captured the images.

A four photo set shows five year old Anthony Quinn's altercation with a police officer.

"You can see how he is holding onto the American Flag and it's being taken away and the mother is saying please hold on to that. And the photograph is a winner of the 1965 World Press Photo contest where you see Anthony refusing to give up the flag even though the patrolman is wrenching it out of his hands," said Petersen.

Yet in the gallery next door, the word is, "Peace" as espoused by Yoko Ono.

"Welcome to Yoko Ono Imagine Peace," says Amy Moorefield, deputy director of exhibitions. "... and I'd like to start off with these little giveaways," she said handing me a round button with black letters on a white background that said simply, "Imagine Peace."

Moorefield walked us through the exhibition, including Light House where a beam of light strikes a group of prisms to light the walls, and a large gallery that explores Ono's early peace efforts with husband John Lennon, including their "bed-in" to promote peace.

"You are seeing swarms of different radio and TV stations worldwide that spent time with them during their seven day honeymoon," she explained.

There is a "wish tree" where patrons anonymously write their wishes on tags and hang them on the tree, later to be sent to Ono. Eventually they will be placed beneath a huge spotlight and all the wishes will be symbolically projected to the heavens where presumably they might

come true.

There's also a stamp where visitors choose where in the world they imagine peace

And also a chess board where there are no opponents.

Moorefield: "What do you notice about this chess board?"

Carlin: "They are all white pieces."

Moorefield: "So in essence the notion of playing together and interacting together is more important that actually who wins the game."

And there is Ono's peaceful version of Morse code called Onochord, which Moorefield demonstrates with a flashlight. "She is teaching a variation of Morse code which is, I love you in Onochord. And how you do that is, one is I. Two is love, three - you.

Two very different exhibits, both with their own version of stimulation. Our out-of-towners found the Exhibitions amazing.

Katha: "Very neat building. It really stands out."

Judy: "I'd recommend it to anybody."

Katha "You bet."



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