

DESCRIPTION OF THE FOUR “PEACE” WINDOWS,

PEACE MUSEUM

**CENTRE FOR PEACE AND CONFLICT STUDIES,
BATTAMBANG, CAMBODIA**

CAMBODIA’S JOURNEY FROM WAR TOWARDS PEACE AND A POSITIVE FUTURE

Windows imagined, designed, made and donated by Gerry Cummins and Jill Stehn 2018

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INTRODUCTION

The idea

The idea for this set of four windows began on the 10th February, 1965. At that time the American government was sending their troops to South Vietnam to fight against the communist backed North Vietnamese troops. Australia was an ally of the Americans, and also sent troops.

When more and more Australian troops were needed Australian men over 18 years old were chosen at random to join the army. Gerry, who was an art student at the time, had the very good luck not to be drafted into the army to fight in Vietnam.

The thought that he, an Australian diary farmer's son, could have been chosen to kill or be killed by an Asian rice farmer's son disturbed him throughout his life.

As the war spilled over into Cambodia and Laos and became increasingly violent, Gerry joined the millions of anti-war protesters around the world who helped stop the war.

He promised himself that one day he would do something personal to apologise for Australia's involvement in that war, and to imagine a prosperous future for Cambodia.

Gerry has kept his promise by imagining, designing, making and donating these four windows for the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies peace museum in Cambodia.

The windows would not have been possible without his wife Jill's co-operation, assistance and skill, and the welcomed suggestions from CPCS and the Cambodia Peace Museum team.

The design

The windows are a sequence of four, viewed from the same imagined place in rural Cambodia, and spanning seventy years. The recent history of Cambodia is symbolically expressed by what happened in and to that landscape in 1970, 1971, 1979 and imagine will happen by 2040.

Each window has the same elements....a sapling, a huge old fig tree, hills, a Khmer temple, a village, rice fields, and a playground.

The changes in each window become linking symbols and metaphors.

The technique.

Each window is 92 cm high x 72 cm wide.

They are four stained glass windows. They are made of coloured German mouth blown glass, painted with traditional kiln fired glass paints and enamels. The paints are made of clear crushed glass, to which are added metallic and mineral oxides for colour.

The paint is applied by hand to the surface of the pieces of glass. It is then fired in a kiln at 600°C. At that temperature the glass paint fuses to the surface of the glass. Sometimes five or six layers of glass paint are applied on top of each other each with a separate kiln firing between each layer. The finished pieces of glass are then assembled together using lead H shaped strips and made into a window. The glass should last for thousands of years, the glass paints for a thousand years, and the lead structure for perhaps 150 years.

Reference material.

As the windows are based on recent Cambodian history, we wanted the images to be historically accurate. Most of our reference material was researched while we were in Cambodia.

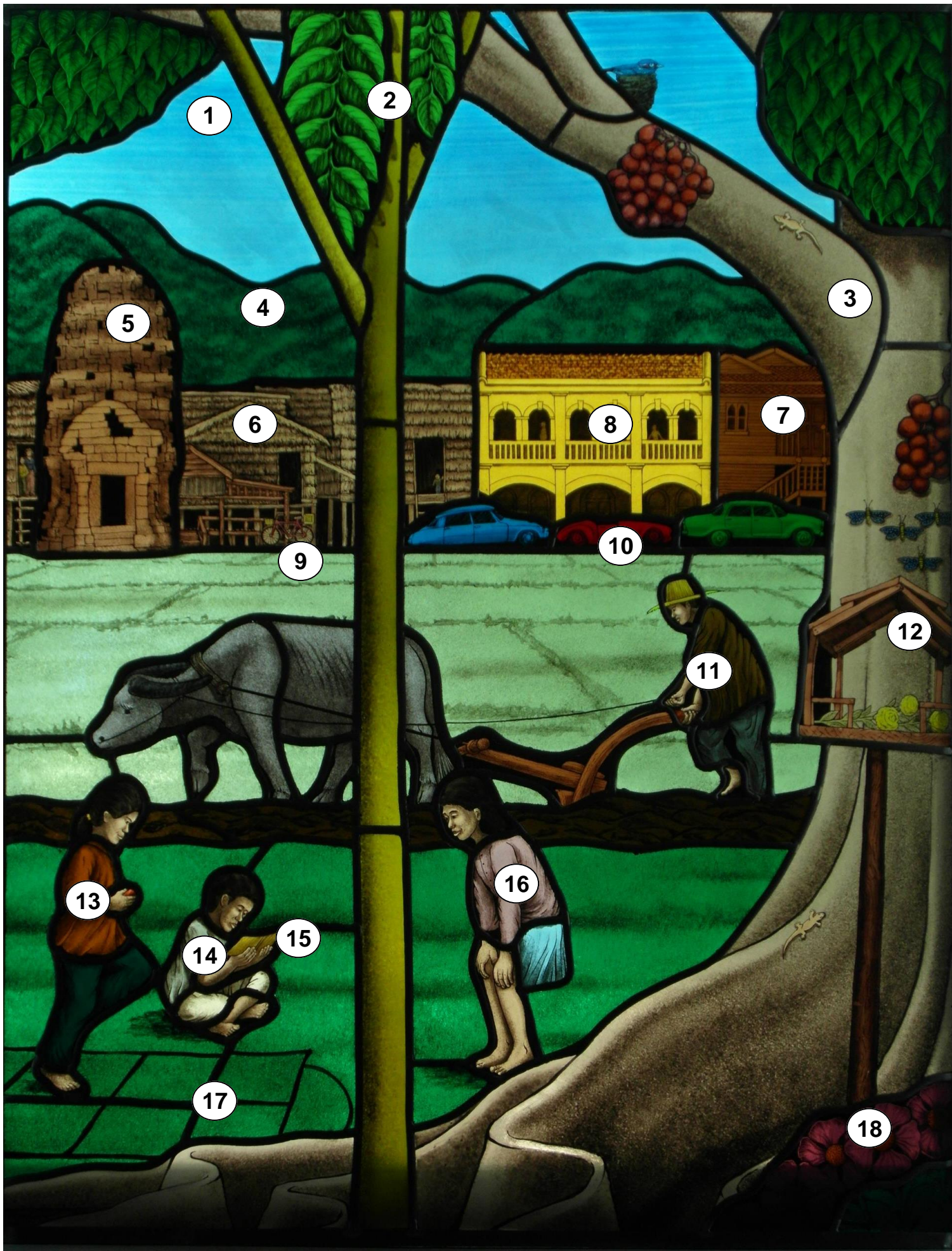
Some examples are.....

The temple repeated in the four windows is based on the Jayavarman VII hospital chapels at Ta Phrom Kel and opposite Ta Keo.

We studied the methods of construction of Cambodian farmers' houses and saw the 1970's Cambodian merchant's house near Banteay Samre. The French Colonial house is a building opposite the old market in Siem Reap.

The hospital, the offices and residential buildings in Window 4 are from Phnom Penh.

All of the people in the windows are real people who we photographed in and around Siem Reap. We often asked people to pose for us exactly in the positions in our preliminary pencil drawings.



WINDOW 1

Title “Calm”

Date “December 9, 1970, 8.45 pm”

Inscription taken from a conversation in the White House, Washington, United States of America.

US Secretary of State, Kissinger. “And I will get the bombing campaign laid on for tomorrow”.

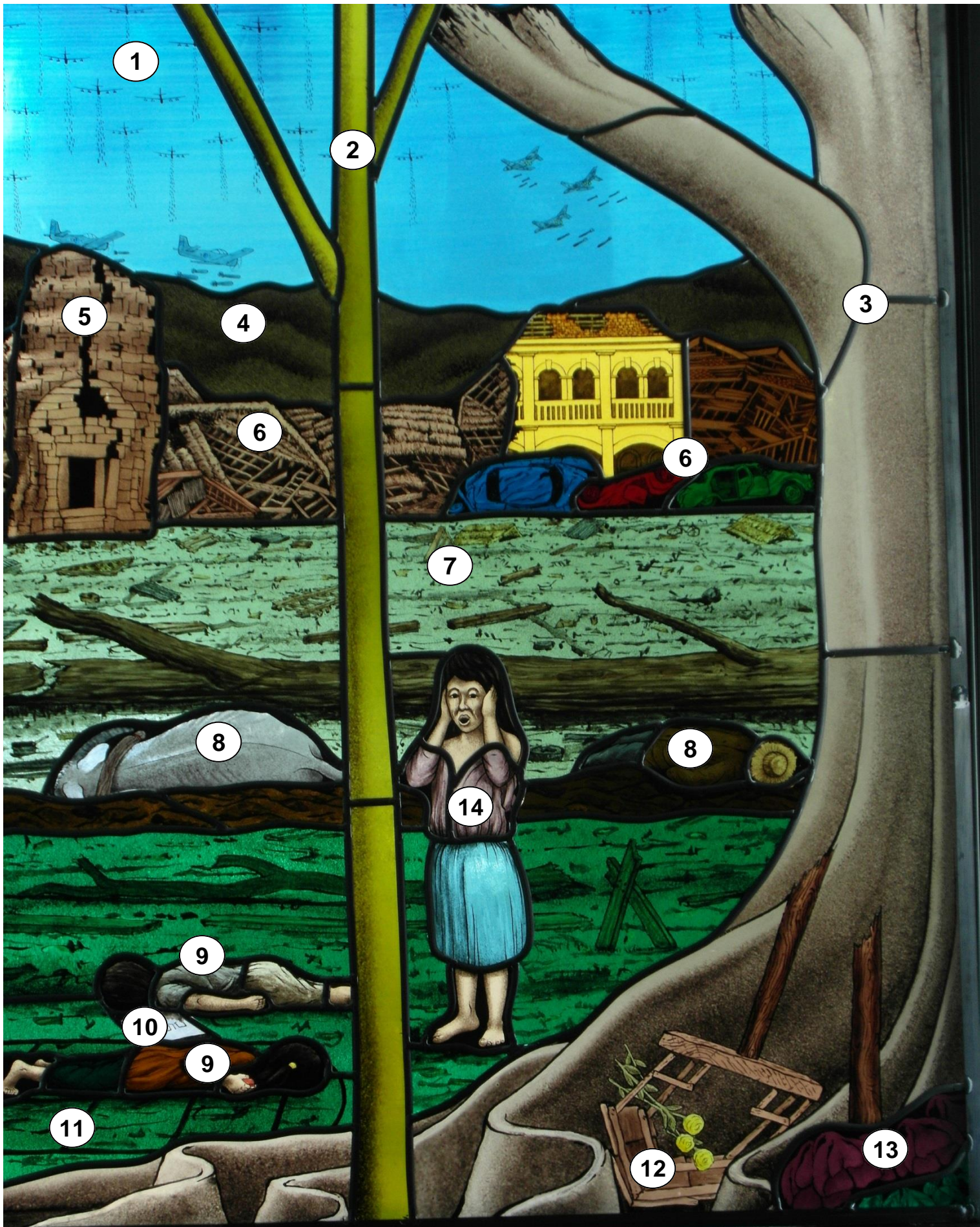
US President, Richard Nixon. “I want them to hit everything. I want them to use the big planes, the small planes.... and let’s start giving [the Cambodians] a little shock....”

Kissinger. “Absolutely”.

The first window depicts what appears to be a calm day in rural Cambodia. The farmer is ploughing his field, and the children are playing in the shade of the tree. There is, however, also an economic and social divide between the poor farmers, the rich merchants, and the French Colonials. This is expressed by the most successful farmer in the village proudly owning a bicycle, while the rich own modern expensive cars.

1. A beautiful clear Cambodian sky!
2. A vigorous sapling growing in the fertile Cambodian soil. It is a Star Gooseberry (*Phyllanthus acidus*) fruit tree. It symbolises youth and fruitful growth.
3. The right side of the window is dominated by a splendid, verdant, fruitful Sacred Fig tree (*Ficus religiosa*) with large buttress roots. It symbolises strength and permanence. It has an umbrella of leaves across the top of the window and is bearing fruit. It is home for nesting birds feeding their young, butterflies and geckoes, and symbolises nature and regeneration.
4. The nearby hills are covered by a dense forest.
5. An Angkorian hospital chapel built during the reign of King Jayavarman VII. It is based on the actual chapels of Ta Phrom Kel opposite Angkor Wat and the hospital chapel opposite Ta Keo. It symbolises Cambodia’s ancient culture, tradition and beliefs.
6. Cambodian houses and a wooden community hall. The reference material was found near Banteay Samre east of Siem Reap. They are typical 1970s thatched houses familiar to all Cambodians.
7. A rich merchant’s house made of timber and tiles. It symbolises the differences in lifestyle of the time. How did this happen?
8. A large French Colonial house built of stone and tiles. It symbolises how the colonial powers exploited both the farmers and the merchants. Their profits went back to France. This means that everyday Cambodians were suffering under a regime of double taxation.
9. The richest man in the village proudly owns a bicycle.
10. Meanwhile the merchants and foreigners were driving expensive European cars – a French Citroen “Goddess”, an English MGA and a German Mercedes.
11. A farmer with his sturdy buffalo is tilling the soil in the rice paddies with a traditional wooden plough, just as farmers have been doing for centuries. His major concern is to get the next season’s rice crop planted for food for his family.
12. There is an Animist shrine at the foot of the fig tree. It is very simple and made from local wood. Someone from the village brings fresh flowers for the shrine. This shrine has simple marigolds, which suggests that the villagers are poor. The shrine symbolises devotion and care for ancient beliefs.
13. A girl is playing hopscotch. This symbolises youth and innocence.

14. A boy is sitting on the grass reading while the girls play. He symbolises education and learning.
15. He is reading a book. What do you think the boy is reading?
16. An older girl is watching to see that the younger girl plays by the rules. Do you think the girl has put her foot over the line? Obeying the rules of this simple game teaches honesty, fairness and justice, which we learn as children – but do adults later remember those rules?
17. The hopscotch court is scratched into the earth.
18. Pretty flowers grow at the base of the fig tree. They symbolise nature's beauty.



WINDOW 2

Title “Destruction”

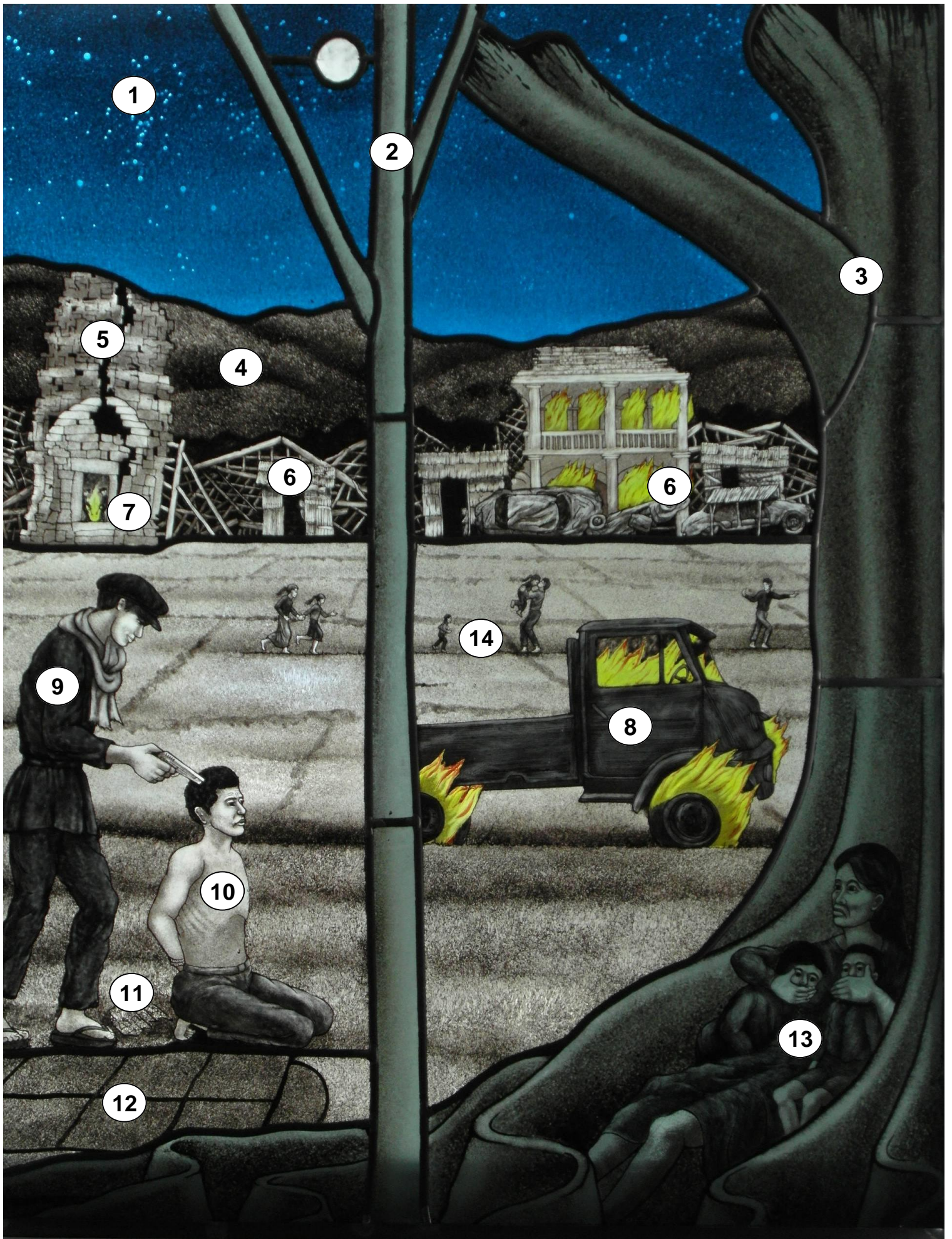
Date 1970

Inscription. Text taken from Wikipedia.

“Only the pilots and navigators of the aircraft (who had been personally briefed by General Gillem and sworn to secrecy) knew of the true location of the targets. The bombers then flew on to their targets and dropped their bombs”.

In the second window we see American B-52's have carpet bombed the landscape. The village is in ruins, the temple cracked, the farmer and the buffalo dead. Two children have been killed and the surviving girl is terrified. The tree is reduced to a battered trunk. We can see the text of what the same boy was reading in the first window before he was killed by the American bombing. It is Buddhist text written in Khmer saying “Do Not Kill”.

1. The blue sky is now full of evil. American B52 bombers secretly drop their deadly bombs indiscriminately on Cambodia. One bomber is not dropping its bombs. This symbolises a growing opposition around the world to the American war in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. The American pilots mutinied for two weeks because they could see the war was unjust. Such opposition amongst the Military, American students and millions of everyday people eventually helped stop the war.
2. The fruit bearing sapling has been stripped of its leaves.
3. The fig tree has been shattered. It has lost its leaves and branches and the fruit, the bird and the butterflies are gone.
4. The forest behind the village has been destroyed by bombs and herbicides.
5. The ancient hospital chapel has been cracked apart by the bombing. It is still standing but is heavily damaged. It symbolises how Cambodia itself has been split apart by the American war in Vietnam that has overflowed into Cambodia.
6. The village is ruined. Nothing has been spared by the indiscriminate American bombing. The thatched, wooden and masonry houses have all suffered the same fate. The cars are wrecks. Nothing escapes.
7. The rice paddies are now filled with debris.
8. The innocent farmer and his trusty buffalo both lay dead on the tilled earth.
9. The two younger children are dead.
10. We can now see what the boy was reading. He was reading his Buddhist text. It says “Do not kill”.
11. The playground has now become the graveyard.
12. The Animist shrine has been broken and now lies in ruins at the base of the tree. This symbolises that the ancient traditions also lay in ruins.
13. The beautiful flowers are wilted and dead.
14. The older girl is the only survivor of the bombing. Her clothes are in rags and she is screaming in horror. What is her future now? What is Cambodia's future now?



WINDOW 3

Title “Chaos”

Date 1979

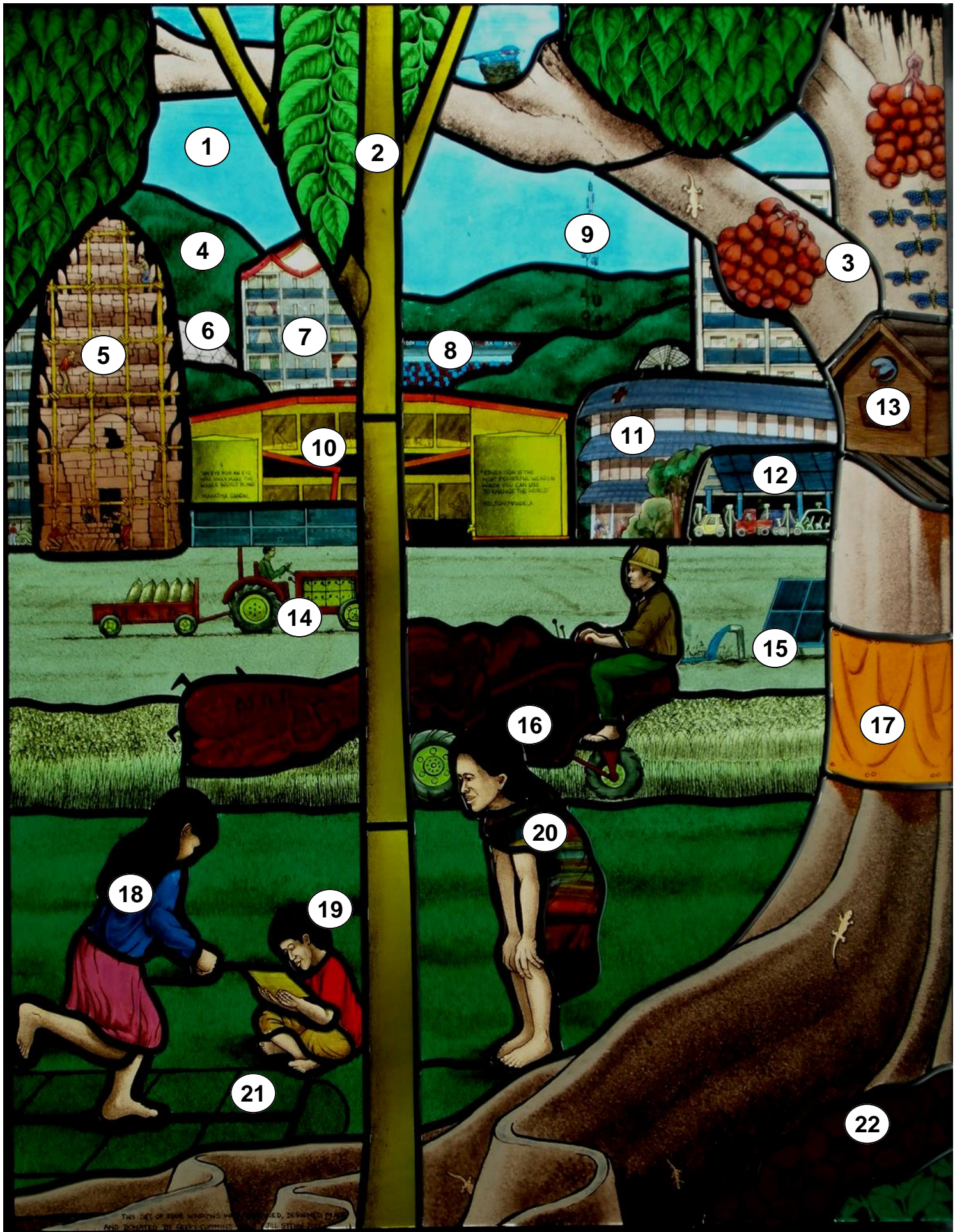
Inscription

“Better to arrest ten innocent people by mistake than free a single guilty party”. “No gain in keeping, no loss in weeding out”.

Khmer Rouge sayings.

The third window is dated 1979 when the Khmer Rouge lost power, and Cambodia is in ruins. It is now a dark and gloomy midnight landscape. The village has been minimally patched up. Two Khmer Rouge boy soldiers have lit a fire in the cracked temple. A prisoner is at the mercy of a young Khmer Rouge soldier. A terrified mother is sheltering and hiding her two children behind the trunk of the still battered trunk of the fig tree.

1. It is midnight. The sky and landscape are as dark and bleak as Cambodia’s plight.
2. There are still no leaves on the sapling.
3. The fig tree is still bare and bleak.
4. The forest has not been replanted and nothing grows there.
5. The Angkorian hospital chapel has not been repaired. However, some people have used timber to prop up the side of the temple to stop it falling over. This symbolises that even in their darkest hour some caring people were still trying to preserve and continue their ancient traditions.
6. People have built very small houses, as proscribed by the Khmer Rouge, out of materials from the bombed village. One person has turned a damaged car into the family’s home. Scared people peer from inside their houses.
7. Two Khmer Rouge boy soldiers with machine guns have irreverently built a fire inside the ancient hospital chapel. The boys symbolise the exploitation of childish innocence.
8. The Khmer Rouge have set a farmer’s very old truck on fire. How is he now going to transport his goods and support his family? How is this helping Cambodia prosper?
9. What is the fate of the kneeling prisoner with a pistol at his head? Will he escape? Will he be taken off to prison? Will he be set free? Will he be killed? Was the pistol loaded? Probably not, because by 1979 the Khmer Rouge were so short of bullets that they were saving all of them. So the prisoner will not be shot and the gesture of being threatened by an empty pistol becomes one of sheer terror and intimidation.
10. The prisoner stoically awaits his fate in a world overwhelmed by violence and uncertainty.
11. The Buddhist text is still visible but it has been trampled into the mud. It symbolises the loss of human value and traditions under the Khmer Rouge.
12. The playground has now become the prison.
13. A terrified mother saw the Khmer Rouge coming and hid with her two children amongst the roots of the fig tree. She has put her hands over the mouths of the children to silence them. No place for childish joy and laughter under this regime.
14. In the midst of all of this gloom and despair hope still survives. The Khmer Rouge system of enforced work camps is starting to break down. Under the cover of darkness a family joyfully reunites. The nervous guide urges them to hurry to safety.



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THIS SET OF IRON WINDOWS WAS DESIGNED, DESIGNED BY AND FOR THE PEOPLE OF THE WORLD.

WINDOW 4

Title

“Recovery”

Date “2040”

Inscription

“Peace is very precious. National unity is very important. You cannot build democracy in just one or a few years, it takes generations.” 2016.

His Excellency Mr. Ieng Mouly, Senior Cambodian Government Minister and Chairman of the National AIDS Authority.

The fourth window is dated 2040 and is an imagined prosperous, egalitarian and peaceful future Cambodia. There is a scaffold around the damaged Angkorian temple, which is being restored. The village has become a town, with a prominent hospital and a school, along with a communication tower. There are solar panels everywhere, maximising the use of free environmentally sustainable energy. The town is still surrounded by rice fields where rice harvesters are working. In the foreground children are playing again. The damaged trees have regenerated.

1. The blue sky has returned.
2. The Star Gooseberry sapling has grown new leaves.
3. The Sacred Fig tree is growing again. It has new leaves and fruit. The bird, the butterflies and the geckoes have returned. The old broken branches of the tree are still visible but new branches have regenerated in a different shape. This symbolises that the destruction from the war and the Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia will always be a part of Cambodia’s history, but that a new Cambodia can grow around its recent brutal history.
4. The surrounding hills have been replanted, and the forest is growing again. A parkland has been planted right into the centre of the town. It is a public area where people can sit in the shade, get together for a chat and watch the children play.
5. The ancient hospital chapel is being restored. Skilled Cambodian craftspeople are working on the tower while sculptors put the finishing touches to the lotus finial about to be lifted onto the top of the temple. This symbolises the restoration of Cambodian tradition, heritage and pride.
6. A modern geodesic dome has been built next to the domed 13th century Khmer Hospital Chapel. The corbelled arches used by Khmer builders severely limited spans. Khmer stone temples enclosed small interior spaces. A geodesic dome does the opposite – it encloses maximum space for minimum structure...the traditional and the new architecture side by side in modern Cambodia.
 Inside the dome is a climate-controlled water-saving hydroponic garden supplying vegetables for the town and nearby cities. It has a walk-through botanic garden with plants from around the world and includes an internationally famous aviary with birds from every continent. Many tourists come to visit it. It is the largest employer in the town.
7. People can now choose to live in modern apartments.
8. A sports ground with a stadium is located near the centre of the town. It can be used for sports activities, as well as for public meetings and parades.
9. The telecommunication tower symbolises a new educated technological and professional Cambodia where opportunities exist for young people.

10. A new specially designed school based on traditional Cambodian school architecture is symbolically placed in the centre of the window. It emphasises the great importance of education to any free and prosperous society. Water from the roof is collected in two large tanks, which have mosquito proof inlets to stop malarial, dengue and encephalitis mosquitoes.

The students at the school were given an assignment to select two inscriptions regarding Peace in the English language on the water tanks. They chose “An eye for an eye would only make the whole world blind” by Mahatma Gandhi, and “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world” by Nelson Mandela. Can you think of any better quotes?

11. The new public hospital is the pride of the town. Every Cambodian citizen has good health care at no cost, just as citizens in Britain, Australia and many other countries have free medical care.
12. No gasoline here! Cars, pick-ups and Segways re-charge their batteries under a roof made entirely of solar cells. Every building has as many solar power cells as possible to become energy self-sufficient.
13. The Animist shrine in the first window has now become a nesting box for endangered birds. The shrine and the nesting box are essentially the same shape. This symbolises that the ancient Animist beliefs in the sacredness of life have now joined together with modern environmental science.
14. No need for the driver of this solar powered tractor to wear a hat. The overhead solar cells protect him from the sun and the rain.
15. A solar powered pump irrigates the fields. When the sun rises the pump starts, and when the sun sets the pump stops. Too easy!
16. A rice harvester is working in the fields. It is still powered by gasoline because heavy machinery still needs extra power to work. The letters on the side of the harvester stand for “Village Farmers’ Co-operative”. The machines are owned and operated by the local farmers for their mutual benefit. People who used to work in the fields during harvesting are now employed in the hydroponic garden, replanting the forests, constructing new buildings and as knowledgeable local tourist guides.
17. Buddhist monks continue to shroud venerable old trees with orange cloth.
18. A girl wearing colourful clothes is again playing hopscotch. This symbolises the return of innocence and happiness to Cambodia.
19. A boy is again reading a Buddhist text but this time he is using a solar powered laptop computer!
20. An older girl is watching to see if the younger girl has gone over the lines of the hopscotch court. The children are once again learning about honesty and justice. Do you think she has gone over the line?
21. And now the playground is a playground again!
22. And the pretty cheerful flowers have returned as well.

Do you think this dream for a future peaceful and prosperous Cambodia can come true? What can you do to help make it come true?

The Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies in Cambodia has images of the windows and their supporting material on their Website: <http://www.centrepeaceconflictstudies.org/cambodias-journey-told-through-stained-glass/>

Gerry Cummins and Jill Stehn 2018