

THE MUSEUM OF
HUMAN VIOLENCE

Violent
Food Systems

March 2064

Darkness cannot
drive out dark-
ness; only light
can do that. Hate
cannot drive out
hate; only love
can do that.

- Dr Martin Luther King Jr.

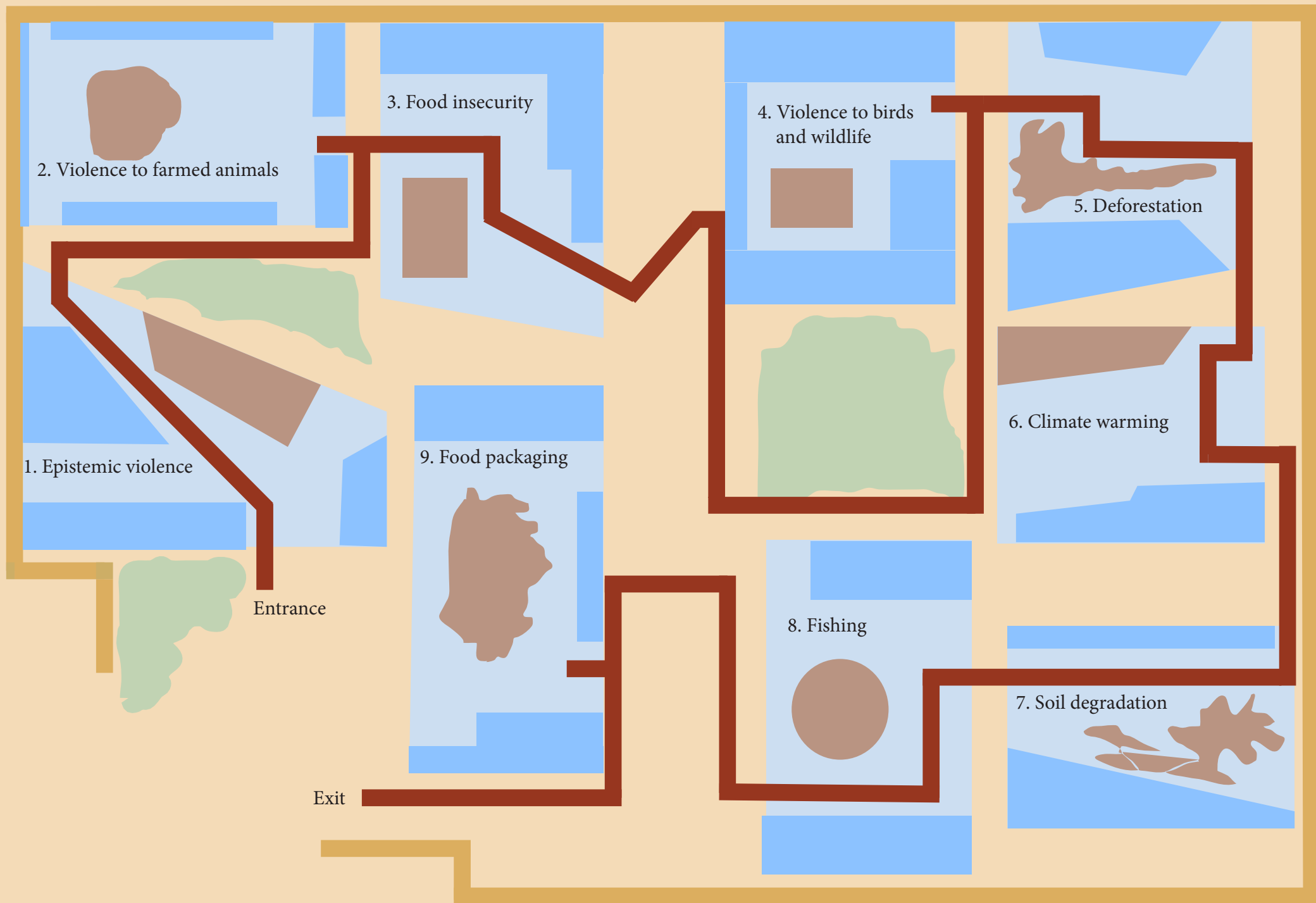
Text and images contributed by Susan Askew

VIOLENT FOOD SYSTEMS is the second gallery to open in The Museum of Human Violence.

Post Giant-Rupture we look back on food systems organised by humans, with horror: rather than nourising life, the primary aim was to make money. It was the most violent industry on Earth, Nonhumans were 'farmed' and billions slaughtered to be eaten by humans, mostly in the rich Nations. The drive for profit led to intensive agriculture methods that contributed to soil infertility, drought, desertification, deforestation, acidification of land and sea, climate warming and plastification of the Earth.

In some nations, because of war or poverty millions of humans starved to death, even before the Giant-Rupture. Perhaps surprisingly in rich Nations, too, many humans were 'food insecure' and malnourished. This gallery includes exploration of the anthropocentric, capitalist and colonialist views that underpinned this violence:

1. Epistemic violence
2. Violence to farmed animals
3. Food insecurity
4. Violence to birds and wildlife
5. Deforestation
6. Climate warming
7. Soil degradation
8. Fishing
9. Food packaging





1. EPISTEMIC VIOLENCE (Violent knowledge):

Pre-Rupture the food system was built on epistemic violence: knowledge itself was violent - only some ways of knowing were enforced and allowed, and only certain ways of gaining knowledge were sanctioned. Other ways of understanding or knowing were repressed and not legitimised. Epistemic violence was the foundation for a global anthropocentric culture that regarded humans as the most important element of existence, and the belief that only humans had intrinsic value.

Epistemic violence at the time produced a knowledge system that treated mass scale violence against nonhumans as natural, normal, necessary and benign (even for the nonhumans).

Specific groups of humans were also oppressed by related knowledge systems. For example the capitalist and colonialist knowledge systems that taught that it was inevitable that some people should be malnourished or starve. Or the knowledge system that taught that it was acceptable to take land from people to grow crops in one part of the world for other, more wealthy people in a different part of the world.

This 'spot' in the gallery explores these epistemic violences, or 'violent' ways of thinking and knowing, and why most people did not challenge them.

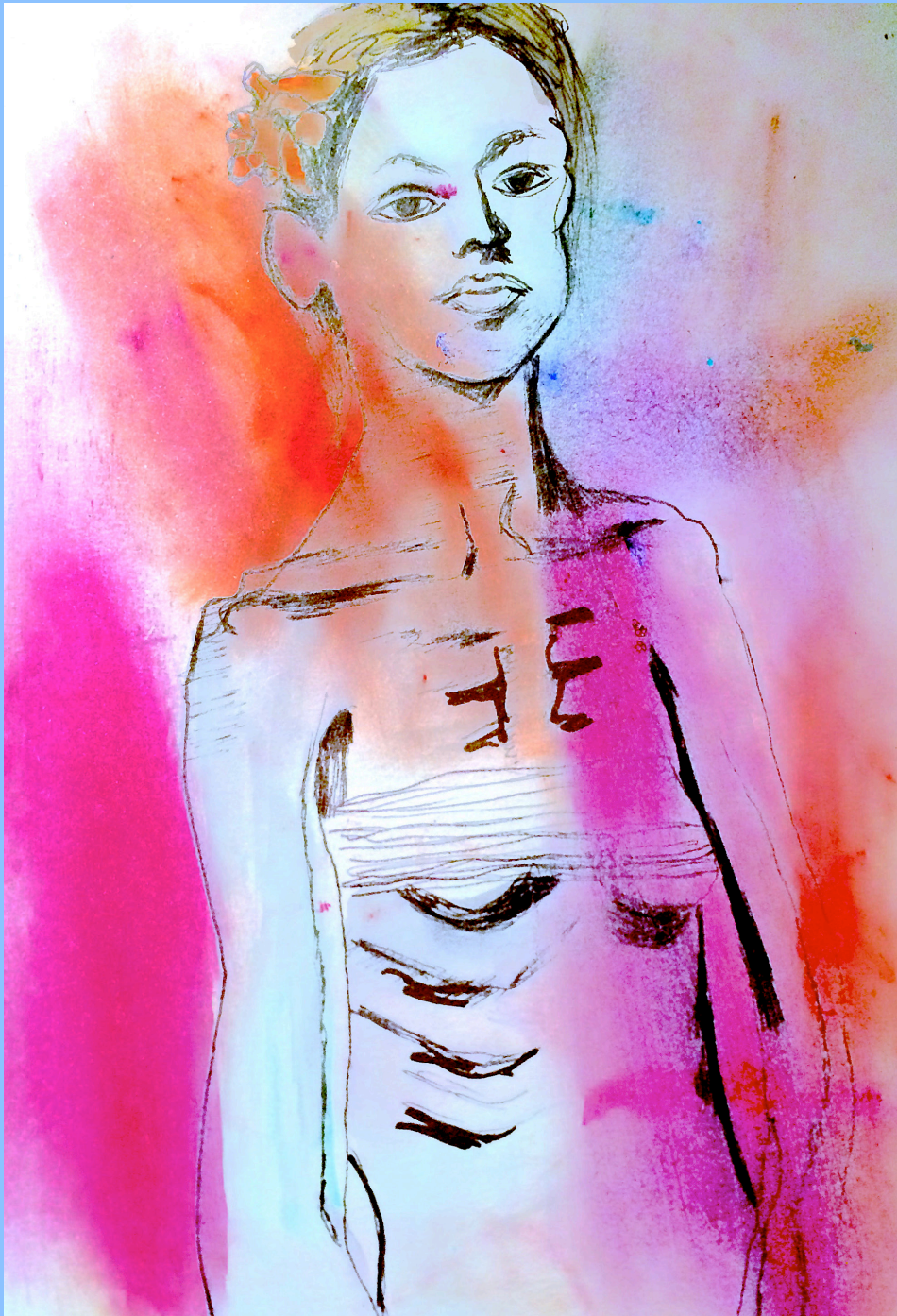


2. VIOLENCE TO FARMED ANIMALS

By the early 21st century, global net human consumption of nonhumans had quadrupled in 50 years: the human population had doubled and on average ate twice as many nonhumans as their grandparents. In the UK alone, ten years pre-Rapture, approximately 1.2 billion land nonhumans were killed annually for eating. Humans learned that this slaughter of nonhumans was normal. The 'dairy' industry was no less cruel. Many humans were convinced it was necessary to eat nonhumans and their excretions for their health, despite contrary evidence. Most humans turned away from the violence and terror involved for nonhumans.

Intensive farming conditions meant that, before slaughter, the majority of nonhumans lived in squalid conditions and were packed closely together, or restrained, so that movement was impossible. Family relationships were ignored and mothers and children were routinely separated at birth. Nonhuman's short lives were marked by stress and diseases. For example, their food was contaminated with toxic chemicals; overuse of antibiotics meant many were antibiotic resistant, and they were genetically modified so that they were more 'useful' to humans.

The intensification of nonhuman 'farming' led to increased emissions, land and soil degradation and water pollution.



3. FOOD INSECURITY

It is difficult to know how many humans were hungry pre rupture. One measure was food insecurity. Moderate food insecurity related to humans not knowing if food could be obtained in future, and so reducing the amount eaten. Severe food insecurity meant people ran out of food and went a day or more without eating. The United Nations estimated that in 2022 2.4 billion people were moderately or severely food insecure. Other measures assessed food insecurity in crisis hotspots e.g. during war. In 2022 there were 58 food crisis countries and territories in which 258 million people were so short of food that their lives were threatened.

Pre-Rupture, gross food inequality meant people in wealthy nations often threw unneeded food away and ate more than they needed to be healthy: 40% of food grown in the USA was wasted. In wealthy countries, poorer people spent a larger percentage of their income on food. for exmaple someone on a £10,000 income spent approx 25% on food, while someone on a higher income spent more overall on food than their poorer neighbour, but 10% or less of total income.

In wealthy nations Food insecurity had economic causes and was related to class and race inequalities. Other causes were conflict, climate events and political crisis. Food systems were unregulated, uncoordinated and run by private corporations for maximum profit.



4. VIOLENCE TO BIRDS AND WILDLIFE

Laws again cruelty to nonhumans were incomprehensible. There were laws protecting companion nonhumans, e.g. duty of care for a suitable home, and diet. But in the food industry, violence was legalised, industrialised and organised. The nonhumans in the food system were exempt from laws against taking another's life, and the conditions of life were often violently cruel.

This was nowhere truer than in the 'egg-laying' and chicken eating industries. In the egg-laying industry male and female chicks were separated at birth; males were gassed or ground alive, and used in 'pet' food. Females were fattened and used for laying eggs. Often they lived in cages all their lives. In the UK 'meat' industry more than 1 million hens were killed yearly. They were bred to grow so big and fast that their legs and organs could not keep up: they suffered heart attacks, organ failure and leg deformities.

'Wildlife' e.g. rabbits and pheasants could be shot and eaten by law if they were on land owned by the shooter, and if the killer had a gun licence.

Shockingly, to us now, even though killing happened on a vast scale, at the time, it was not perceived as violent. This killing was seen as the natural order of things. and the Nation may have even been described as 'peaceful'.



5. DEFORESTATION

Human domination pre-rupture extended to claiming 'ownership' of the earth itself, including forests. Pre-rupture, tropical rainforests were cut down at the rate of 2.5 football pitches per second: by the time of the Rupture 80% of the rainforests was cleared. One reason for felling the rainforests was to grow monocrops on huge plantations, like coffee, bananas, sugar and palm oil. But cattle ranching was the main culprit of deforestation. Cattle ranching was responsible for 340 million tons of carbon released into the atmosphere annually - 3.4% of global carbon emissions. Cattle ranching caused soil erosion, and degraded aquatic ecosystems. Fires were a huge problem in Amazon countries: some fires were started deliberately by ranchers to clear land for grazing.

In 2020 rainforests in South America covered parts of 9 countries - approximately 6 million square kilometers. In Africa at the same time, rain forests covered about 2 million square kilometers. Rain forests produced oxygen, vital to much life, and trapped carbon dioxide. At this time the world's rainforests trapped 250 billion tonnes of Carbon. Felling trees released this stored carbon into the atmosphere and contributed to global warming.

Rainforests were home to over 30 million species of plants and animals. Indigenous people lived in harmony with the forests. Often they were forced to move away from their homes and many were killed in the process of protecting their homeland.

6. CLIMATE WARMING

Food production was a big contributor to climate change. Pre Rupture, global greenhouse gas emissions were higher from the agriculture and forestry industry than from all transport combined, including flying. Yet policy and public attention was more focused on transportation.

The food system generated about 35% of total global man-made greenhouse gas emissions. 57% of this 35% of emissions came from nonhuman-based 'food' production: about twice the emissions of plant-based foods. Nonhuman-based 'foods' required both croplands and grazing land. Of all the land used for food production pre- Rupture about 77% was used for growing food for nonhuman or for nonhuman grazing. Methane, a highly problematic greenhouse gas, was produced both by nonhumans themselves, during digestion, and from the manure they produced.

Other greenhouse gas emissions in the food system came from pesticide and fertiliser use, product processing and transportation of food products and nonhumans themselves.

The image used on this page includes quotes taken from financial and business publications published pre-Rupture that highlight how climate warming was seen as a business opportunity rather than as a wake-up call to change the anthropocentric, capitalist and colonialist value systems.



7. SOIL DEGREDEATION

Soil is a vital living organism that sustains plants, nonhumans and humans. Without healthy soil, nothing grows. By the Giant Rupture 80% of soil in Europe was unhealthy. Without healthy soil Earth was becoming a lifeless rock.

Soil degradation is the decline in soil quality. It can be loss of organic matter, effects of toxic chemicals, soil fertility or structural issues like erosion or changes in acidity, alkalinity or salinity (salt levels changed because of irrigation methods),

63% of degradaton worldwide was caused by agricultural practices, and 35% of the 63% was from over-grazing. A further 30% was from deforestation. Soil degradation led to loss of habitat for many species and loss of biodiversity. For humans it meant loss of land for growing food, leading to malnutrition, disease, forced migration, floods and even war. The agricultural practices that led to this included monocropping - that is growing one crop on the same land repeatedly instead of rotating crops. Monocropping depleted the land of certain nutrients. Over-reliance on chemical fertilisers and pesticides and over-grazing also impacted health of the soil.

We are only now beginning to see the return of healthy soil by adopting methods used before intensification of agriculture: crop rotation, growing several crops side by side, organic fertilisation and reforestation.





8. FISHING

While National laws authorised violence to farmed nonhumans, and gave humans the right to kill them, the oceans were under no clear international authority and rampant criminality and exploitation of marine life existed. The illegal fish trade, (often called 'seafood' as if the fish only existed as food for the human) was worth billions annually. Along with the slaughter of fish, the high seas were also sites of human rights and environment abuses linked with the food system. 'Sea slaves' were migrants who were held captive on the fishing boats, some for many years, to work in dangerous conditions.

As well as taking fish from the ocean, fishing as a 'recreation' was also common. Here the fish were not usually caught to be eaten as a main source of food, but for 'fun' - some were eaten. Fishing, like the other examples of violence to nonhumans, was not recognised as violence pre-Rupture. Killing fish was seen as being for human pleasure and benefit. These practices perpetuated and repeated violence again and again. The violence was so complete and the inability to see it so complete, that it was invisible.

Pre Giant Rupture humans did not recognise that nonhumans fought to resist this violence. The challenge for the the Museum has been to document and narrate nonhuman resistance without showing violent images that further objectify nonhumans.



9. PACKAGING

The damaging legacy of the food packaging industry pre-Rupture is still a major problem post-Rupture, and likely to be so for a considerable time. The manufacture of this packaging generated greenhouse gases, heavy metals and particulates, as well as waste water and sludge containing toxic contaminants.

Forty years ago, it is estimated that 500 billion plastic cups were thrown away every year, after being used once. Plastic cups take about 500 years to disintegrate in the environment. Many plastic cups ended up in the oceans. Nonhumans and humans became plasticised: small plastic particles were present in their bloodstream from water they drank, food they ate, and even the air they breathed.

Plastic cups were the tip of the problem with plastic food packaging. Food packaging plastics accounted for the bulk of all plastic waste that polluted the environment pre-Rupture. Conventional plastics were derived from fossil fuels and also contributed to the depletion of petroleum reserves. 8 million tons of plastic was dumped in the ocean every year. Plastic sent to landfill sites was burned which released toxic pollutant and irritants into the air.

Violence being done by plastics to all life was well understood by the early 21st century, and yet still this violence continued right up to the Rupture.

The **MUSEUM OF HUMAN VIOLENCE** was opened 30 years after the Giant Rupture in 2063. It is dedicated to remembering, understanding and forgiving human violence in all its forms pre-Rupture, including physical, emotional and spiritual, and including all the seemingly inconsequential acts of violence that lead to normalisation of violence in that society.

The Museum adopts the International Community Pledge (ICP), borrowed from the Buddhist monk, Thich Nhat Hahn:

“When you understand you cannot help but love...practice looking at all living beings with the eye of compassion.”

The museum is dedicated to the loss of countless billions of nonhumans and humans, and destruction of the land, resulting from human violence before the Giant Rupture. In alignment with the ICP, it stands for the right to peace, protection and respect for all nonhumans, humans and land, everywhere on Earth.

The Museum of Human Violence is a House of Many Rooms including:

- * human exceptionalism
- * violent economic systems
- * violent food systems
- * violent political systems
- * wars

It also includes collections relating to how violence was normalised and learned, including:

- * learning violence: the home
- * learning violence: schooling
- * learning violence: the media
- * learning violence: entertainment
- * learning violence: the ‘beauty’ industry

OPENING HOURS: TUESDAY-SUNDAY. 10.00-17.00 DAILY. FREE