



July/August 2004

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Service Committee**

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The Vomitorium: DisG(e)orge Art

Wendy Tremayne & Marina Potok are independent artists who produce works in the New York City area. For more information on the artists and on this project, visit <http://vomitorium2004.org>.



During the performance, the walls will be decorated with art, including this painting, and inscribed with pieces of moral advice addressed to the guests, <http://vomitorium2004.org>

The world of the Roman Empire in the first two centuries of the common era is almost frighteningly similar to ours in its excesses and its wealth, and above all in its devotion to materialistic success at the expense of the

spiritual and the intellectual.

What's a Vomitorium? The word orgy comes from the Roman practice of having enormous parties, where dinners ranged anywhere from three to ten courses. Guests, reclining in couches, gorged themselves on delicacies. Once full, wealthy Romans would retreat to the vomitorium to induce vomiting and rejoin the party to continue eating. Seneca commented, "they vomit so that they may eat and eat so that they may vomit." The two-class system, with gross disparities between the very rich and the poor, contributed to the collapse of the Roman Empire.

We are producing a participation-performance event, a modern-day vomitorium. The project is designed to transport us, the current residents of the American Republic, back to the days of the Roman Empire. Magnifying certain lessons of our past reminds us where we are and where we may be headed.

Guest-participants will begin the event with a formal dinner party. The room and tables will be lavishly decorated to convey the affluence of those in attendance. Nude performance artists will serve as table decorations upon which the food will be displayed. Jugglers, acrobats, and dancers will perform during and after the meal.

Peacework has been published monthly since 1972, intended to serve as a source of dependable information to those who strive for peace and justice and are committed to furthering the nonviolent social change necessary to achieve them. Rooted in Quaker values and informed by AFSC experience and initiatives, Peacework offers a forum for organizers, fostering coalition-building and teaching the methods and strategies that work in the global and local community. Peacework seeks to serve as an incubator for social transformation, introducing a younger generation to a deeper analysis of problems and issues, reminding and re-inspiring long-term activists, encouraging the generations to listen to each other, and creating space for the voices of the disenfranchised.

Views expressed are those of the authors, not necessarily of the AFSC.

The rich Romans (aka modern Americans) will be fed food and fanned by servers while they kick back and relax. When properly stuffed they will vomit in troughs. (Note: EMTs will be on staff. Educational materials about the dangers of bulimia will also be distributed as part of this performance).

Servers will fan the Romans and hold back their hair and cater to them while they vomit. Dress for the Romans is black tie for men, and for women, dressy. Dress for the servers is toga/roman style.

Volunteers performing the role of the poor will grovel outside the event seeking crumbs from the meal. Poor people are welcome to carry signs that carry messages of complaint about how they're being treated.

We hope that by showing the gross gluttony of the Roman Empire we can shine a light on the gluttony of today as seen in consumerism, our growing landfills, and the damage US consumption causes around the world. In this piece, the wealthy Romans represent the American wealthy who currently control our country. By inviting modern Americans to examine their own roles as consumers, we hope we'll more clearly see the decisions that were made to create the system that has brought us to this point of disgorgement.

The vomitorium will be staged in the run-up to the Republican National Convention on August 17, 2004, 7 pm, at St. Marks Church in Manhattan in the enormous church garden. The audience views the piece from the fences along three sides. Volunteers are still needed to fill theatrical, entertainment, fine art, and logistical roles.

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