

A major international political cartooning event will be held in Wellington November 10-15.

Cartooning for Peace – Dessins pour la Paix, organised by Alliance Française, will bring together 20 cartoonists from 15 countries, including four New Zealanders, to show and talk about their cartoons, and how they have informed, and sometimes formed, public opinion on the issues that threaten peace internationally.

*Cartooning for Peace, a project developed by Plantu, political cartoonist for the French daily newspaper Le Monde, and former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, has resulted in a number of exhibitions and symposia in Europe, the Middle East and the United States. At the behest of Alliance Française, Plantu held public debates with local cartoonists during a visit to New Zealand last year, and the success of his tour convinced him to choose Wellington for the 10th *Cartooning for Peace* gathering, the first ever in the Southern Hemisphere. "Alliance Française has been honoured to organise the event," says director Olivier Pellenard. "We are proud to bring to Wellington audiences the biggest and most diverse group of cartoonists since *Cartooning for Peace* was launched at the United Nations, in 2006"*

The New Zealand Cartoon Archive, with its collection of 25,000 editorial cartoons at the National Library in Wellington, has also been involved. "There's no doubt that political cartoons get to the nub of issues in a way that can provide much needed clarity and illumination," says Ian F Grant, founder of the NZ Cartoon Archive.

A promotional campaign has been developed by M&CSaatchi, Wellington. Around 50 life-size images from the cartoonists' work have been built and will be staging peaceful 'demonstrations' around the City from Monday 10 November. The first demonstration will be held at lunchtime in the grounds of Parliament. Following the completion of the Wellington event, the characters - which have been signed by the cartoonists - will be auctioned with net proceeds going to Plantu's *Cartooning for Peace Foundation*.

The 20 cartoonists are Alan Moir (Australia), Caro (Switzerland), Cathy Wilcox (Australia), Ali Dilem (Algeria), Heng (Singapore), Guy Body (NZ), Izel Rozentel (Turkey), Jim Morin (USA), Malcolm Evans (NZ), Lat (Malaysia), Michel Kichka (Israel), No-rio (Japan), Plantu (France), Tom Scott (NZ), Willem (The Netherlands), Garrick Tremain (NZ), Nicolas Vadot (Belgium), Wiaz (France), Andrzej Krause (United Kingdom) and Gado (Kenya).

Their cartoons will be displayed at an exhibition in the foyer of the Michael Fowler Centre until Saturday, November 15, and until the end of December at Alliance Française (78 Victoria Street)

The cartoonists will take part in a two-day symposium – at the Wellington Convention Centre (Illot Chamber) on November 12-13 – with panel discussions ranging across issues from the global financial meltdown to the threat of climate change and the misuse of power by leaders, elections, and the art of controversy (where should cartoonists draw the line, in their respective countries ?) During panel discussions cartoonists will show transparencies of their work and some will produce 'instant' cartoons. One session will be devoted to David Low, New Zealand's most famous cartoonist and a leading 'cartoonist for peace' in the 1930s.

The genesis of '*Cartooning for Peace*' was a 1991 meeting in Tunisia, when Plantu met the late Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, who drew the Star of David for one of his drawings and signed it. The following year, Plantu travelled to Israel and convinced then-Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs Shimon Peres to sign the same drawing. The power cartoons can have was again reinforced when, in 2006, the world erupted over the publication of caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad. As Plantu said: "This sudden interest in political cartooning made me think that this polemic presented quite possibly an opportunity to cartoonists – above all, an opportunity to start an intellectual debate."

With the support of the Wellington City Council, M&CSaatchi, the NZ Cartoon Archive, the French Embassy, the New Zealand France Friendship Fund and many other partners, interested members of the Wellington public will be able to attend the two day symposium and the exhibition free of charge.

Alliance Française is one of Wellington's oldest and largest cultural organisations. The Alliance teaches French to about 600 Wellingtonians from the age of one (toddler classes) to adults, and organises *Cartooning for Peace – Des Dessins pour la Paix* as part of its centenary celebrations.

More information about *Cartooning for Peace* in Wellington and the programme are available on the Alliance Française website: www.french.co.nz

A selection of high-definition cartoons from participating cartoonists is available upon request

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