

Community Connection

Find out what's going on in Hiroshima

3 things to look out for in the now fully reopened Peace Memorial Museum

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On 25th April, the Main Building of the Peace Memorial Museum reopened after 5 years of renewal work. Although continuing earthquake-proofing work may make it seem from the outside like nothing has changed, the whole museum is now fully open to visitors. In this month's column I'd like to introduce three aspects of the new-and-improved museum and my feelings after visiting.

1. Remnants of the destruction

The aim of the section "Devastation on August 6th" is to make visitors feel as if they are stood in the ruins of Hiroshima just after the bombing. The focal point is a large central case (pictured), the base of which is scattered with work clothes worn by schoolchildren killed in the bombing. I had the sense that the case is intentionally oversized, with a striking space left between the clothes as if they still lay undisturbed.

Many of the displays surrounding the central case contain objects damaged by the bomb. These include everyday items that we normally think of as sturdy and brittle, such as coins, bottles and iron girders, which were distorted by the blast and fused together by the heat. These bizarre sights conveyed to me the horrifying force and painful tragedy of an atomic bomb.



写真：広島平和記念資料館所蔵

2. Human stories



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"Cries of the Soul" and "To Live" are two sections of the Main Building that deal with victims and survivors respectively. "Cries of the Soul" displays belongings left behind by victims together with photographs and the words of their family members. When I visited, I felt that it was important for all three of these to be displayed together. Each heartbreaking story was made more real by seeing the face of the victim, and even more so by having an actual object from that person's life in front of me.

On the other hand, the focus of "To Live" is the stories of survivors who had to live on with the physical and emotional consequences of their experiences, such as being forced into poverty by the inability to work. It occurred to me that those of us from outside Japan still do not know enough about this part of Hiroshima's history.

3. Temporary exhibition: drawings of the bombing

Expected to run until the end of December, this temporary exhibition can be found in the Special Exhibition Room on the East Building's first floor, and features pictures created by survivors of the atomic bombing to visually tell their stories. There are 75 pictures on display, but there are actually over 5000 such pictures in existence, created by over 1000 people. Because of this, the exhibition also features ultra-high definition (UHD) screens showing a 10 minute version of the NHK documentary *Stories Told Through A-Bomb Drawings by Survivors: Hiroshima* (with English subtitles).

Next year will mark 75 years since the atomic bombing, and Hiroshima is still thinking of new ways to commemorate the bombing and educate visitors on the realities of what happened on 6th August 1945.

For more information, see the Museum's website: <http://hpmuseum.jp/?lang=eng>