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## What is the Meditation Room?

The Meditation Room, located on the west side of the public lobby in the United Nations General Assembly Building, is a quiet room dedicated to world peace for peoples of all faiths and religions. Opened in October 1952 and remodeled and enlarged in the winter of 1956, this room has been viewed by hundreds of people who have registered their support for world peace in a guest book.

Such a room was envisioned by UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld who believed that the UN, dedicated to work and debate in the service of peace, "should have one room dedicated to silence in the outward sense and stillness in the inner sense." Mr. Hammarskjöld planned and personally supervised the creation of the Meditation Room.

The V-shaped room is off-white and has a projecting panel at its narrow end covered with a fresco by the Swedish artist Bo Beskow. The 9 x 6½ feet fresco consists of blue, white, gray and yellow geometric forms with the light, pure colours intersecting to form deeper shades. In the center of the room is a great slab of raw iron ore, millions of years old, in its purest form. This was chosen to symbolize qualities of timelessness and strength. This rock, a gift from Sweden, is about 4 feet high, oblong-shaped, and weighs six tons. A shift of light strikes the stone in a room of utter simplicity and there are no other symbols.

Mr. Hammarskjöld, who himself was from Sweden, said about the iron ore: "The material of the stone leads our thoughts to the necessity for choice between destruction and construction, between war and peace. Of iron man has forged his swords, of iron he has made ploughshares. Of iron he has constructed tanks, but of iron he has likewise built homes for man. The block of iron ore is part of the wealth we have inherited on this earth of ours. How are we to use it?"

The Secretary-General knew exactly what use this quiet room would have for people in years to come: "There is an ancient saying that the sense of a vessel is not in its shell but in the void. So it is with this room. It is for those who come here to fill the void with what they find in their center of stillness." Mr. Hammarskjöld died on 18 September 1961 in a plane crash in Zambia while on a peace mission in Africa.



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