

Flowers of war

Floral offering to the dead or for remembrance is a common practice worldwide. Flowers are synonymous with our tender feelings, our tryst with nature, and most importantly is the symbol of rebirth and hope after horror and holocaust.

Poppy, Laurel, Rosemary, Gladiolus, Lily, Carnation, and Violet are popular choices for traditional commemoration events. “Flower of Remembrance” is a special category attached with war tragedies. These special flowers remind us of those lost soldiers who bravely fought for their beloved countries and sacrificed themselves. The idea gained its ground after the First World War (WWI) which costs 40 million lives. The red poppy comes first in the remembrance ritual due to its wide appearance in the European fields, many of those were ironically battlegrounds, and its resemblance with human blood. However, the list is now expanding with new entrants like blue cornflower (France), forget-me-not (Germany), daisy/poppy (Belgium), marigold (India), and many local members.

Recently, in the year 2018, the centenary of the end of World War I (formally 11th November 1918) was celebrated globally through exhibitions, conferences, restoration work, movies, etc.. Artists joined in and explored their skills. In a collaborative project to commemorate the end of the World War I, artists from New Zealand, Australia, and England built the commemorative wreath, “Flowers of war”. This unique wreath was made by assembling painstakingly crafted four hundred and eighty brooches either in floral or leaf forms.

The brooches themselves are worthy of mention. While some depict fragmentary parts of a soldier's life, others display the natural beauty of the flower and leaf forms. The flower and leaf specimens were collected from Europe and Middle East, specifically from the abandoned battlefields to show the geographical links of the war to the present generation. Both native as well as remembrance flowers from different countries become parts of this endeavor. Interestingly, the wreath symbolized both separation and union through war. Assembling flowers, leaves, and stories from different regions depicts people's displacement from their homeland, separation from dear ones, suffering in foreign soils, and the death of their teammates. On the other side, it also embodies the union of people from divergent cultures and societies to fight for truth and justice, a pertinent issue, even today.

Floral examples like this continuously remind us about the dynamic nature of the life and world around us. Like the flowers on the abandoned battlefield, our hope always pop out from the wreckage of the war and prompt us to move forward.

Image courtesy: <https://www.shrine.org.au/flowers-war>

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