

# UNDER AN EQUAL SKY

## **Under an Equal Sky**

**A series of installations by Philip Baldwin & Monica Guggisberg for Canterbury Cathedral  
26 May–11 November, 2018**

This year represents the 100th anniversary of the end of the First World War. But there are no living veterans of that war now, no one to relate the full horror of the Somme. With every passing generation the so-called 'Great' war has become more and more abstract. And yet the consequences of the wars the 20th century spawned are all around us – in the more than twenty-two million refugees who have been forced to seek safety abroad and the ever-increasing numbers of civilian casualties (what governments euphemistically call 'collateral damage').

Artists Baldwin & Guggisberg's exhibition 'Under an Equal Sky' expands on the theme of war and remembrance, centring our attention on the non-combatant victims of war. Their series of installations takes the viewer on a journey that starts with one hundred glass amphorae suspended in the shape of a ship in the Cathedral's Nave and ends with a glass wall of multicoloured vessels, each sharing space with, and yet distinct from, its neighbour. The artists' use of glass as their principal medium points up the fragile nature of the human story, a story movingly contained within Canterbury Cathedral itself, which for centuries has been a place of refuge and is thus a powerful reminder of the devastation wrought by the cycle of war.

Using the symbolism of boats and empty vessels, which crosses cultures and language barriers, Baldwin & Guggisberg's work brings to mind the familiar imagery of our times – desperate refugees packed precariously into boats, fleeing for their lives – and poses the implicit question: have we learned nothing from a century of hostilities, and, crucially, are we not all accountable? Together can we not break this cycle?

Their repetition of simple forms, of cargo-laden boats and massed amphorae, invites contemplation and self-examination, as does the Cathedral context in which they are shown. Isn't our task, they appear to ask, to transform ourselves from mere citizens of territorial states to community-minded citizens of the world? For if war and the resulting influx of migrants have taught us anything, it's that we are all bound together; that our differences enrich one another's lives. Instead of seeing our fellow humans as 'other', the artists urge, instead of courting fear, hostility and fruitless politicking, our task is to temper self-interest and nativism with empathy and compassion. Without such change war becomes inevitable.

Philip Baldwin and Monica Guggisberg are themselves a melting-pot of different cultures (he is American; she of Swiss and Italian heritage), as is their work, which has been shaped by influences from Scandinavia and Italy and benefited from the collaboration of people of many nationalities. Having spent decades making objects of beauty and, in their own words, in search of 'simplicity and clarity, harmony and balance in a world of chaos and complexity', they are now at a point where they feel the need to stand up and be counted – to allow their artistic practice, with its synthesis of ideas and influences, to take on a more political intent.

The context of Canterbury Cathedral as a staging post for their new body of work is significant; the Cathedral isn't just a diverse working community but a historic building often referred to as 'England in stone' because its 1400-year history is so inextricably linked to that of England. Equally relevant is the Cathedral Crypt's role as a vital place of sanctuary, notably for the Huguenots in the 16th and 17th centuries, who fled to England to escape persecution and whose descendants still worship every day in French in the Cathedral's Huguenot Chapel.

As Baldwin & Guggisberg's exhibition makes clear, the Huguenots' story – of flight, refuge and assimilation – is still being played out today.

### **About the artists**

Philip Baldwin (b1947) was born in New York; Monica Guggisberg (b1955) in Bern, Switzerland. Both artists are old enough to have been born in the shadow of the Second World War. While Monica grew up in a country that has the honour of being the oldest neutral country in the world, Philip's early memories are filled with the stories of relatives who never returned from the front line. They have worked as a team since 1980 after learning to blow glass in Sweden, and lived and worked in Sweden, Switzerland, France and now in rural Wales. Describing themselves as 'migratory creatures', they exhibit all over the world and are represented in numerous private collections and museums. They have always travelled, absorbing new thinking as they go, taking their culture, skills and ideas for new work with them.

**For press information, please contact Iliana Taliotis on +44 (0)7931 341 112  
or [mail@ilianataliotis.com](mailto:mail@ilianataliotis.com)**

**[bgnonfoux@bluewin.ch](mailto:bgnonfoux@bluewin.ch)  
[www.baldwinguggisberg.com](http://www.baldwinguggisberg.com)**