

# VESSEL GALLERY

## LONDON



**Baldwin & Guggisberg (Wales - )**

### **The Arsenal of Democracy**

'The Arsenal of Democracy' is a unique artwork by the American and Swiss artists, Philip Baldwin and Monica Guggisberg, from the Existential Perspectives: Part 2 series of artworks.

Free blown, double overlay & carved glass with bullet blanks and metal stand (which is included in the height).

'Those who can make you believe absurdities can make you commit atrocities.' Voltaire, Questions sur les miracles, (1765)

In the artist's own words;

"We noticed a disparity in tone between the English translation in current circulation and Voltaire's original from his Questions sur les miracles (1765), and it piqued our curiosity – the English being much more emphatic than the French. Walter Olson from the Cato Institute attributes the translation to Norman Lewis Torrey's *Les Philosophes: The Philosophers of the Enlightenment and Modern Democracy* (1961) and adds that if you look back at the context of the Voltaire paragraph with its mention of 'crimes religieux' overrunning the world, then Lewis Torrey's punchier turn of phrase (and reference to the committing of 'atrocities') seems justified. (Walter Olson, *The Origins of a Warning from Voltaire*, Cato Institute, published 20 December 2020: <https://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/origins-warning-from-voltaire>)"

### **Artist description:**

Baldwin (1947, New York) and Guggisberg (1955, Bern) have been a collaborative team for over forty years. They share an instinctive appreciation for the subtle blending of art and design, functionality and abstract expression, combined with a love of material – especially glass.

The list of museums and collections which have acquired their works is long and impressive. Individual showings, as well as participation in group shows, have given them opportunities to present their works at leading galleries and in major museums in Europe, Japan and the United States and their works rank among the best to be found in the international glass art scene. Working freelance, they have also designed successful products for international glass manufacturers since 1985. Their clients have included renowned firms like Rosenthal, Steuben, Corning and Venini.

Over time their work has developed its own distinctive signature, based in Italian cold-working (battuto) combined with the Swedish overlay process for layering colours. They have been pioneers in adapting these techniques and in creating a distinct expression of their own. Colour, light, texture, pattern, and shape together reveal an undercurrent of meaning and value, adhering to the simplest of forms and clear lines.

Over the years they have become more sculptural in focus, while seeking to imbue their work with a deep connection to archetypal forms and shapes, and striving for the highest level of craftsmanship. They address eternal symbols of human culture and history, while embracing contemporary evolution in form and meaning.

In recent years large installations and major exhibitions in public spaces, such as Canterbury Cathedral, UK in (2018) and more recently The Glasmuseum Ebeltoft in Denmark (2020-2021) increasingly reflect their concerns for the shared world of our times, highlighting some of the challenges while continuing to express their love for beauty in form and object.

They now live and work in rural Wales.