

VESSEL GALLERY

LONDON



Baldwin & Guggisberg (Wales -)

Harappan Mistery

Handblown & sculpted glass with steel
46.5 x 28.5 x 28.5 cm (18 1/4 x 11 1/4 x 11 1/4 inches)

'Harappan Mistery' is a unique artwork by the American and Swiss artists, Philip Baldwin and Monica Guggisberg.

Free blown, double overlay & carved glass with metal stand (which is excluded in the dimensions above).

The Harappans, circa 3300-1300 BCE, Indus Valley.

'Why do we assume that people who have figured out a way for a large population to govern and support itself without temples, palaces and military fortifications – that is without overt displays of arrogance, self-abasement and cruelty – are somehow less complex than those who have not?' David Graeber and David Wengrow, *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity* (2021)

In the artist's own words;

"It was a single breathtaking photograph that led us to the Harappans. We hadn't been looking for them per se, but were greatly impressed. So much so that they became the inspiration for this installation. Archaeologists had discovered the cities of Harappa and Mohenjo-daro in the Indus River Valley in 1922, just a century ago, and they inspired a serious rethink of the stock narrative informing our understanding of our past. The well-known civilizations to the west during the same period – Egypt, Sumer, Mesopotamia – were all classically hierarchical and authoritarian, and usually buttressed by a ritualised state religion. However, the evidence now suggests that such behaviours were far from universal, and many archaeologists believe the Harappan civilisation, as it became known, actually eschewed such tendencies. The findings show little sign of personal aggrandisement, and no evidence of charismatic authority figures, priests, kings or warrior nobility. Indeed, the Harappan culture appears to have been essentially egalitarian, mirroring so many of the Paleolithic (today indigenous) societies in preceding millennia."

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.