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## Baptist Coelho. Saint-Severin Gallery

"You will never understand what we have gone through, 2021". A painful and shifted installation compared to Christmas time, but very current in a context of world conflicts. A visual archeology of the suffering experienced.



The Galerie Saint-Séverin is once again distinguished by the unique work that occupies its window. In this time of Christmas 2021, it is lit like those of the places of consumption. But it is not stories for children that are staged, it is not beautiful clothes that we aspire to wear or gifts that we are about to give, it is not peace of hearts that is whispered. If everything is neatly arranged and very clean, the objects are intriguing and uncomfortable. Like this coat bristling with perfectly aligned spikes, or this cushion in which circular saw blades are inserted instead of embroidery, these are hybrids, chimeras, which speak of situations of violence,

express suffering experienced by who knows who.

Behind, a short film gives the explanation: letters from Indian soldiers, taken from a book of epistolary exchanges with the families, men, sent, during the Great War of 14-18, to fight in the West as soldiers of the British Empire. In the memory of this new suffering, the discovery of the cold occupies a large place and is combined with the wound. Cold, wound of the realities to which Christmas opposes another story: the warmth of a home, even precarious, the care given to the newborn, weak by nature, under the tender gaze of the shepherds. "You will never understand what we have been through" is an installation for Christmas, an anti-Christmas speech, and paradoxically in resonance with the Gospel narrative since it speaks of the brutal reality experienced by uprooted people, far from home, hope of surviving.



It is not surprising that the reference artists of Baptist Coelho are artists of collective and violated memory, like Amselm Kiefer or Joseph Beuys, of individual trauma, like Louise Bourgeois.

This installation is part of multiple research conducted by Baptist Coelho on cultures, geographies and on cultures, geographies and individual and collective histories concealed in conflicts. Thus, in 2018, after having studied the situation of combatants between India and Pakistan around a glacier in the Himalayas, he had already been invited by the Center Georges Pompidou to make a projection and a performance on the situation in 14-18. A work unlike the previous work presented at the Gallery on the nostalgia of childhood.

John Deuzemes

Presentation by the curator

### Biography



The artist, Baptist Coelho, born in 1977, lives and works in Mumbai, India. In 2021-22 he is in residence at the Fiminc Foundation in Romainville and at the In Flanders Field Museum in Ypres, Belgium.

For several years, Baptist Coelho has started a form of archeology of violence and wars, and particularly those concerning the Indians. His work reveals both physical and psychological repercussions. His works are developed and articulated from different stories passed over in silence that he unearths and interprets. His research is based in particular on ethnography and the study of archives. Through encounters, he investigates narratives related to armed conflict, conscription, commemoration, heroism, giving visibility to emotions such as fear, and issues related to the body, gender, The healing.

À partir d'investigations multiples, de collaborations, il entreprend de déconstruire les récits qu'il recueille. Il les restitue. tout en y injectant une part a part of imagination, and confronts them with forms of power.

His artistic practice is interdisciplinary; it includes photography, performance, video and sound. In 2006, Baptist Coelho obtained a Master's degree at the Birmingham Institute of Art & Design, in the United Kingdom. He has, among others, received the Indian Prize "Promising Artist Award" in 2007 or the "Sovereign Asian Art" prize, Hong Kong in 2016. [.]

### You will never understand what we have gone through, 2021



« La plupart du temps, Baptist Coelho récupère des traces (textes, images ou sons) que le temps a effacées et qu'il réactive. C'est à partir d'un recueil de lettres envoyées à leurs familles par des soldats indiens embarqués dans la Première Guerre mondiale, qu'il a élaboré son installation, - tel un autel mémorial - à la Galerie Saint-Séverin. Il réhabilite ainsi l'effacement que l'Histoire a imposé aux efforts de guerre menés par l'Inde qui envoya 1 100 000 hommes au combat.

Instruments de la violence de l'État, les of combatants (who were mostly victims) have long since disappeared. Their writings however remain and although censored by the military authority, they bear witness to the hardships endured by the enlisted men. The suffering and the sacrifices, the disarray, the anger were expressed in their letters. The artist brings together these elements that testify to the feelings and feelings experienced by the soldiers, and projects excerpts from the missives on the wall\*\*. Inspired by the watercolor portrait of a conscript, two photogravure prints are added to what looks like a cabinet of curiosities.

Le radiateur, trouvé par l'artiste, emballé avec des bandages, évoque les températures glaciales qui saisissent les corps. Vêtus de simples uniformes de fin coton, les recrues sont saisies par la froideur du climat. Les aiguilles plantées dans la manche de l'uniforme, la couronne funéraire, les objets extraits du monde médical rappellent les blessures endurées, la cruauté, l'indifférence. Les bandes de here as if to make them invisible. They materialize the medical care provided to injured men, but also their psychological distress. The Gallery becomes a place of memory, which pays homage to courage, and denounces the absurdity of wars. »

Odile Burluroux, curator

Excerpts from letters  
In David Omissi, Indian Voices of the Great War: Soldiers' Letters, 1914-18. (Indian Voices of the Great War: War Letters, 1914 -1918), Penguin, Viking,

2014

'Letter from Mozafar Ahmed Khan (Pathan) to Ashuraf Khan (Hazara District, NWFP) 9th Hodson's Horse [9th Bengal Lancers] [Urdu] November 13, 1916

Tout le plaisir que j'ai eu dans la vie était lié à Ali Akbar. Soyez patient. Cette calamité ne s'est pas seulement abattue sur nous, mais sur le monde entier. De beaux jeunes hommes, chéris de leurs parents, d'une beauté étonnante, que j'ai si souvent vu nus sur le champ de bataille. Dieu merci, notre cher frère a eu un enterrement digne. Il y avait un cercueil, une tombe appropriée et une pierre tombale qui lui servira de mémorial aux yeux du monde. Quiconque la verra dira : "Voilà le genre de tombe qu'on construit durant cette grande guerre pour les vaillants morts". »

Samedi 5 février 2022. 17h. à la veille de la clôture de son exposition. Baptist Coelho vous invite à vous y attendre a performance of his work.

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