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# Baptist Coelho in the Department of War Studies

**Baptist Coelho was the Leverhulme artist in residence for 2015–16 in the Department of War Studies, exploring aesthetic expressions of conflict and emotion through multimedia installations.**



A key focus of Baptist's practice is to uncover how conflict affects and relates to everyday life. In his artistic process, fact-finding and engagement with military and civilian personnel in conflict zones lead to works in various media, including installation and video. These explore aesthetic expressions of conflict, emotion, and the past and present of the experience of war.

interpretation which often creates new ideas and outcomes. During this process of research collection and documentation, Baptist remains conscious of the physical and emotional responses of his audience and employs the use of atmospheric stimuli and residual work, such as found objects, to engage the viewer into the story and allow them an interactive space to reflect on their own surroundings and predicaments.



The social and personal contexts of these experiences Baptist has with other people often inspires inquiry and becomes the foundation for long-term projects. As artist in residence, Baptist's contribution to the [Department of War Studies](#) culminated in an exhibition entitled *Traces of War*, where Baptist exhibited alongside two other internationally renowned artists, Jananne Al-Ani and Shaun Gladwell.

Working with [Professor Vivienne Jabri](#), Professor of International Relations in the Department of War Studies, and curator Cécile Bourne-

Farrell, Baptist's work contributed to the exploration and conceptualisation of the intersection of war and the everyday, and investigated how the material, discursive, and psychological dimensions of one temporality may come to permeate and affect the other.

### Traces of War



The *Traces of War* exhibition ran from 26 October 2016 to 18 December 2016 in the Inigo Rooms. The exhibition sought to reimagine war beyond its exceptionality, locating it in spaces where it would be least expected. At the same time, the art works revealed the sheer power of the everyday, as life itself and in its most ordinary makes its presence felt in the most dangerous locations of war.

roar of battle to the gallery space so that audiences might understand its dynamic and its imprint upon the body politic and upon the subject of (international) politics. The exhibition created a space for an exploratory dialogue between academic research into the subject of war and its intersection with the everyday, as well as artists' encounters with war and the conceptual schema that render it both comprehensible and strange.



The silent roar of battle is differently seen in Baptist's multimedia installations. He realises the everydayness of war by making use of what he has referred to as the 'fabric' of war, literally the materials of a life lived in battle zones where no battle as such takes place and where there is much waiting in the lives of soldiers mobilised in India's farthest mountain reaches. Various objects such as jars of food, bandages, soldiers' uniforms, and backpacks sent to unlikely spaces are on display so that the audience is never quite sure of the measure of distance between home and the war front. Baptist's contribution to the exhibition reveals

life in zones of war and in the most extreme conditions, respectively the Iraq war and its implications for familial and everyday communications and the Siachen glacier in India which is brought to audiences through everyday objects.



Professor Vivienne Jabri, professor in the Department of War Studies and co-curator of the exhibition, noted: 'The Department of War Studies has succeeded in winning two Leverhulme artist in residence awards, the first for Dr Lola Frost, our artist in residence in 2014-15, and the second for Baptist Coelho for the year 2015-16. The awards have been invaluable in establishing collaborative research with practicing artists working on themes relating to conflict, war, crisis, and how these relate variously to political subjectivity, identity, language, corporeality, landscape, and the materiality of war. Working at the intersection of critical social/political theory, international relations, and the arts has, through these collaborations, enabled us to establish a mutually beneficial and challenging

dialogue between social science research on war, security, and international politics and arts practice. The impact value of the residency programme was clearly evident in the recent exhibition, *Traces of War*: The exhibition was widely reviewed and raised much interest in the arts community. The Department of War Studies has now established an Arts and Conflict Hub as a direct consequence of these collaborations.'

Watch a video of Baptist discussing his artist practice below:



### About the artist

In 2006, [Baptist Coelho](#) received his MA from the Birmingham Institute of Art & Design (BIAD), UK. He was awarded the Sovereign Asian Art Prize (2016) by The Sovereign Art Foundation, Hong Kong; Façade Video Award (2011) by Art Today Association, Plovdiv-Bulgaria; Promising Artist Award (2007) by Art India & India Habitat Centre, Delhi-India and Johnson Prize Fund (2006) by BIAD, UK.

Solo Exhibitions include, Goethe-Zentrum, Hyderabad, India (2015); Project 88, Mumbai, India (2015 and 2009); Ladakh Arts and Media Organization in Leh, India (2015); Pump House Gallery, London, UK (2012); Grand Palais, Bern, Switzerland (2009); Visual Arts Gallery, Delhi, India (2009) and the Birmingham Institute of Art and Design (BIAD), Birmingham, UK (2006).

Baptist has exhibited at institutions including the Arab-Jewish Culture Center, Haifa, Israel (2015); Museo de la Ciudad, Cuernavaca, Mexico (2013); Jönköpings Läns Museum, Jönköping, Sweden (2013); CASS Sculpture Foundation, Goodnowa, UK (2012); Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing, China (2012); Museo nazionale delle arti del XXI secolo (MAXXI), Rome, Italy (2011); Musée d'art contemporain de Lyon (MAC), Lyon, France (2011); Zacheta National Art Gallery, Poland, Warsaw (2011); Essl Museum, Klosterneuburg, Austria (2010); HEART - Herning Museum of Contemporary Art, Herning, Denmark (2010); Gwangju Museum of Art, Gwangju, South Korea (2010), amongst others.

Baptist has also participated in various artist residencies and has conducted workshops, artist talks and panel discussions across Asia, Europe, UAE and South Africa. He lives and works in Mumbai.

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