

Press Release

From Cairo to London: 25 life-size painted donkeys arrive at St Pauls from Egypt

Date: 10 August 2013

A major art exhibition at St Paul's will see 25 life-size painted donkeys arrive at the Cathedral having travelled from Cairo in the name of peace and compassion.

As Egypt continues to seek its path into the future, St Paul's will host the unique interfaith exhibition, *In Peace and with Compassion*, from August 30 - September 23.

PRESS, PHOTO, BROADCAST CALL

25 painted life-size donkeys on display in St Paul's Cathedral

Various interviewees available

When: Friday 30 August 2013, 10am - 11am

Where: St Paul's Cathedral, EC4M 8AD

To attend: Contact ed@stpaulscathedral.org.uk

Sponsored by the [Embassy of Switzerland in Egypt](#), and supported by the [British Council](#), the [CARAVAN](#) interfaith art exhibition sees the work of Western and Egyptian artists, both Muslim and Christian, who were each asked to decorate a life-size fibreglass donkey that was sculpted by the noted Egyptian artist [Reda Abdel Rahman](#).

The donkeys were first exhibited at the Anglican [Church of St John the Baptist in Cairo](#), a centre for interfaith dialogue for over 80 years. They were then placed in strategic public locations throughout Cairo, where they achieved huge amounts of interest. They will now come to St Paul's before being auctioned by a [Sotheby's](#) auctioneer, with all profits going to charities in Egypt that serve the poorest of the poor, regardless of their creed.

The CARAVAN exhibition follows in the footsteps of a number of public art displays that have featured painted animals, yet with an added depth in its symbolism, intention and message. The donkey symbolises peace in both Christianity and Islam, and is found in both the Bible and in the Qur'an. Examples are numerous, such as both Jesus and Omar Ibn El Khattab, the second caliph, each riding donkeys when they entered Jerusalem. The donkey also represents the poor, as it is an animal of burden, and this is especially the case in Egypt.

[The Reverend Paul-Gordon Chandler](#), Rector of Cairo's Episcopal Church of St John the Baptist from 2003-2013 and Founder of CARAVAN, said: "Believing that the arts can be one of the most effective mediums of building bridges of understanding, respect and friendship between East and West, their creed and cultures, the exhibition seeks to communicate the important message of tolerance between Christians and Muslims, living together in peace and with compassion, a message that comes 'out of Egypt' for the world.

The Reverend Canon Mark Oakley, Chancellor of St Paul's, said: "There are over 40 million donkeys on this earth and 96% of them live alongside the poorest people of the world. They are known and loved for their hard work, resilience, loyalty and stubbornness. They have been used for the best and worst of human intentions: from carrying the war wounded to medical help at Gallipoli, to bearing explosives to kill in today's war zones. Jesus chose a donkey to symbolise the divine humility. Similarly in the Islamic tradition, the Prophet was carried by Ya'fūr. This exhibition, by both Muslim and Christian artists from Egypt, calls us to remember the peoples of

that country today and what can be achieved together rather than apart. It also, at a time when both Muslims and Christians suffer persecution for their faith in many places, reminds us that just as the donkeys journey together in the Cathedral towards the Holy, so humans only become spiritually alive when they travel together in peace and with compassion.”

The Honorable Dominik Furgler, Ambassador of Switzerland to the United Kingdom (and formerly Swiss Ambassador to Egypt), said: “I am particularly delighted to be directly associated to this wonderful initiative. In a world and time where sectarian tension, prejudice or ignorance seem to prosper, we must do whatever we can to further dialogue and the mutual knowledge about our religious traditions and convictions. This exhibition is doing just that, with the arts uniting us as a language of love and peace.”

Mark Stephens, British Council Country Director, Egypt, said: “We are delighted that the CARAVAN Festival of the Arts has forged this link with St Paul’s Cathedral to bring these beautiful decorated donkeys to a London audience. One of the British Council’s goals is to connect people through the arts, which is why we have supported the festival, which aims to use the arts to bridge cultures. We hope these artworks will generate as much interest in London as they did in Cairo.”

EXHIBITION DETAILS

The CARAVAN installation will be situated in the south nave aisle of the Cathedral. The exhibition is free to view, but entry to the Cathedral is subject to [usual sightseeing charges](#). All those attending services at the Cathedral (for which there is never any charge), will have the opportunity to view the exhibition.

ENDS

Participating artists

Egypt: Adel Naseef, Adel Tharwat, Ahmed El Kut, Ahmed Kassim, Ashraf Reda, Ayman El Semary, Carelle Homsy, Farid Fadel, Gamal Ez, George Bahgory, Hayam Abdel Baky, Hend Adnan, Ibrahim El Dessouky, Karim Abd EL Malak, Khaled Hafiz, Marwa Adel, Moataz Nasreldin, Mohamed Abla, Mohamed Talaat, Rania Fouad, Reda Abd El Rahman, Sabah Naim, Sameh Ismail
Western: Anne-Francoise Giraud (Fr), Claire Marie Pearman (UK)

For more information please contact Ed Holmes, Press and Communications Manager, St Paul’s Cathedral on 020 7246 8321 or email ed@stpaulscathedral.org.uk

St Paul’s Cathedral

St Paul’s is the Cathedral church of the diocese of London, which it has served for over 1,400 years. The current building has become a potent symbol of the life of a nation and is one of the world’s most beautiful buildings. Designed by Sir Christopher Wren in the late seventeenth century, its stones have absorbed the hopes, fears, sorrows and joys of generations and stand as an enduring symbol of our communion with those gone before and those still to come. Each year nearly two million people flock to the cathedral for services, concerts, debates, educational events, performing arts and sightseeing. All are most welcome.

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