



PRESSRELEASE

Janet Cardiff

The Forty Part Motet

Auckland Castle, County Durham



Throne Room, Auckland Castle, County Durham and *The Forty-Part Motet*, 2001, Kunsthaus Bregenz, Bregenz, Austria

27 May - 11 September 2016

Auckland Castle are delighted to present internationally celebrated sound-installation *The Forty Part Motet* by Janet Cardiff

- Janet Cardiff's critically acclaimed installation *The Forty Part Motet* will be on public display from 26 May to 11 September 2016 at Auckland Castle in County Durham
- The exhibition is the second contemporary exhibition to be hosted in the historic grounds of Auckland Castle as part of an ambitious plan to create a permanent series of galleries that contemplate the role of Faith within the British Isles
- Cardiff's moving sound installation will be played in the Throne Room of the Castle, a grand, impressive setting that has played host to the Prince Bishops of County Durham for over 900 years
- This contemporary exhibition is part of a wider £60m development plan to transform one of Britain's most important historical sites into a major new art and heritage destination for the UK
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Auckland Castle is delighted to present a world-class sound installation from acclaimed artist Janet Cardiff this summer; *The Forty Part Motet* which will take place in the Castle's Throne Room from 26 May - 11 September 2016. Displayed in the heart of the historic home of the Prince Bishops of County Durham, this immersive sound-sculpture is largely regarded as one of Cardiff's most seminal works.

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The exhibition is the second contemporary installation to be hosted in the historic grounds of Auckland Castle as part of ambitious plan to create a permanent series of galleries that contemplate the role of Faith within the British Isles. The installation is part of ambitious plans and a £60m development strategy to transform one of Britain's most important historical sites into a major new art and heritage destination for the UK. Closing on 30 September for the development to commence, the installation represents the last opportunity to visit the Castle before an 18 month reconstruction project begins.

The Forty Part Motet is a contemporary reinterpretation of a 16th century composition, “Spem in Alium” by English composer Thomas Tallis. Sung by the Salisbury Cathedral Choir in a forty part choral performance, individually recorded voices are played in a 14-minute loop through forty speakers, creating a palpable, layered experience for visitors. Encircled by a ring of speakers, visitors can choose to listen closely to individual voices, or to experience the polyphony as a whole.

The work, which has been exhibited internationally, returns to the North East where it previously appeared at the BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead, in 2012, and represents a rare opportunity to appreciate this transcendent and critically-acclaimed work. In the setting of Auckland Castle’s historic throne room, this nomadic piece becomes a site-specific installation that reflects and responds to the history of the building.

Updating a classical composition, Cardiff’s intimate sound installation creates a bridge between past and present. Within the context of the episcopal palace, occupied by successive Bishops of Durham for over 900 years, Cardiff’s work reminds visitors of the role of music in the individual experience of faith across the centuries.

Voices drift into polyphony as the work builds to a crescendo, evoking the sculptural potential of sound, and immersing visitors in an emotive and memorable experience as they explore the historic buildings at Auckland Castle. Before the Castle closes to the public for a substantial redevelopment, Cardiff’s work heralds a significant development of the museum’s programme, and brings a contemporary perspective to this historic site.

Clare Baron, Auckland Castle’s Curator of Temporary Exhibitions, said:

“Janet Cardiff’s Forty Part Motet is a work of extraordinary and overwhelming beauty. The installation unlocks the full emotive potential of Tallis’ choral arrangement, composed over 400 years ago, to offer visitors a truly immersive and transcendental experience. By nature this experience is difficult to express in words; music has the power to transport the listener beyond the ordinary world we inhabit, to connect us with something larger than ourselves.

For centuries, music has served to bring the faithful closer to the divine. Tallis’ Spem in Alium is no exception, considered to be one of the most important pieces of English sacred music. The words

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sung by the choir – ‘I have never put my hope in any other but in You, O God of Israel’ – are a prayer of thanks and praise intended to glorify God. It is such personal expressions of faith – be they historic or contemporary, public or domestic, grand or humble – which we intend to explore in the permanent faith galleries at Auckland Castle.

We are delighted to have the opportunity to present The Forty Part Motet at Auckland Castle this summer. Exhibited across the world, the installation continues to resonate with people of all ages and backgrounds. Janet Cardiff uses the universal language of music to address each listener in person, as they weave a path through the speakers to hear the individual voices of the choir. We hope that Janet Cardiff’s work will offer an intimate and contemplative experience for our visitors.”

Janet Cardiff commented:

"While listening to a concert you are normally seated in front of the choir, in traditional audience position. With this piece I want the audience to be able to experience a piece of music from the viewpoint of the singers. Every performer hears a unique mix of the piece of music. Enabling the audience to move throughout the space allows them to be intimately connected with the voices. It also reveals the piece of music as a changing construct. As well I am interested in how sound may physically construct a space in a sculptural way and how a viewer may choose a path through this physical yet virtual space.

I placed the speakers around the room in an oval so that the listener would be able to really feel the sculptural construction of the piece by Tallis. You can hear the sound move from one choir to another, jumping back and forth, echoing each other and then experience the overwhelming feeling as the sound waves hit you when all of the singers are singing.”

NOTES TO EDITORS:

Janet Cardiff (b. 1957) lives in British Columbia where she works in collaboration with her partner George Bures Miller. The artist is internationally recognized for immersive multimedia works that create transcendent multisensory experiences and draw the viewer into often unsettling narratives. Cardiff and Miller’s work has been included in recent group exhibitions and biennales such as Soundscapes at The National Gallery, London, the 19th Biennale of Sydney in 2014, and dOCUMENTA (13). Representing Canada at the 2001 Venice Biennale, Cardiff and Miller received the Biennale’s Premio Prize and Benesse Prize. Recently, the artists debuted new site-specific commissions for Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris, The Menil Collection, Houston, TX, and the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid, Spain. *The Forty Part Motet* is widely considered one of her most important pieces.

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Auckland Castle - Auckland Castle is one of the most important episcopal palaces in Europe, and the magnificent home of the Prince Bishops of Durham, England's only Prince Bishop. Between 1832 and 2011, the castle was the official residence of the Bishops of Durham, and the Bishop of Durham still works there today. After Vatican City and Avignon, Auckland is described as the best working medieval Episcopal complex in Europe. Its Grade I listed architectural structures and features tell the history of our nation, in a building that has been created and recreated over the centuries by some of the leading architects of each age, including James Wyatt, architect to George III. No architectural work has been done on the castle since the 1790s, and it is expected that careful conservation work should reveal its hidden past. Together, the buildings and landscape form a nationally significant heritage site, with highest Grade 1 level. Auckland Castle is also home to one of the most significant treasures of European religious art: in 1756 the then Bishop of Durham bought 13 paintings by Francisco de Zurbarán (1598-1664), depicting Jacob and his 12 sons, representing the 12 tribes of Israel. Auckland Castle is open from 10am daily except Tuesdays. Last admission 4pm.

The Auckland Castle Capital Project - The Auckland Castle Trust was established in the summer of 2012. The castle itself, with its deer park, derelict walled garden and paintings, including the internationally famous works of Jacob and his 12 Sons by the Spanish master Francisco de Zurbarán, formed the nucleus of the original holding.

The restoration of Auckland Castle will create a major new art and heritage destination in the North East of England and for the UK and an important culture-led social economic regeneration initiative for the North East of England. The Castle will be the setting for a nationally significant permanent exhibition of religious art in Britain with an extensive collection that includes one of the most important treasures of European religious art. A permanent collection of key works from the Spanish Golden Age will be supplemented with loans from the UK's leading institutions to create an exhibitions programme of genuine international significance. The restoration of one of the country's more important heritage sites will drive economic and social regeneration in Bishop Auckland, aiming to attract 120,000 visitors and generate £3 million of annual revenue per year to the area.

Credits

The Forty Part Motet Credits:

Sung by: Salisbury Cathedral Choir

Recording and Postproduction by: SoundMoves

Edited by George Bures Miller

Produced by Field Art Projects

Materials: 40 loud speakers mounted on stands, placed in an oval, amplifiers, playback computer

Duration: 14 min. loop with 11 min. of music and 3 min. of intermission

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