

Guide our feet into the way of peace

JULIA KRAHN – „ST. JAVELIN“
Ukrainian women who fled to Italy

February 22 – April 9, 2023

Against war - for human dignity

Two pictures of Ukrainian women, 19 meters high, wrap the scaffolding of the church tower like a large cloak: Marina carries a child in her arms, while Gaia holds a shovel tightly in her hand. The entire series of portraits by Julia Krahn can be seen on the construction fence along Breite Straße. The stories of the refugee women that Julia Krahn has staged and portrayed can be read at www.stjavelin.art.

The portrayed women suffer from the war, have lost everything and had to flee. With her photo series, Julia Krahn interrupts the media's and society's focus on weapons. Her portrait series shows us the vulnerability and powerlessness of concrete people. We look at their lives and their dignity.

Quite deliberately, the artist chose the title 'St. Javelin' for the exhibition: In the horror of war, the Javelin anti-pan missile has become a symbol of Ukrainian resistance as a deadly weapon.

The only 'weapons' the artist uses are art and in it empathy. Julia Krahn's portrait photographs tell of the powerlessness of defenseless women. At the same time, they convey an inner strength and wisdom. They look at us and show us their existence with self-confidence despite the suffering they have experienced.

During Lent, the portraits of Gaia and Marina express all the ambivalence of our present life: There is war in Europe. Suffering and death have moved perceptibly closer. Lamentation alone helps as little as repression. At the same time, children are born into this world - life goes on. Somehow. In the tradition of Christianity, this time is particularly concerned with life and death, human suffering and hope - in short, with endings and new beginnings. Passion time is considered a period of fasting and reflection on the essentials of life.

Julia Krahn is neither a politician nor a military strategist. She does not know how and when the war will end. But as an artist, she directs her gaze to 12 women – from six-year-old children to grandmothers – and is able to encounter people with great empathy in her photographs. In this way, the power of the weak can be felt, which can become the energy of peace.



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With her pictures, she reminds us of the endless suffering caused by war and its effects all over the world – as in Iran, Afghanistan, and Yemen.



Quotes

"I am not talking about war, its impossible reasons for existence or who is keeping it on fire, but about the people who suffer from it. Regardless of political position, faith or status, they are fleeing to save their children, leaving their husbands behind. In addition to what we see in the media from afar, there are real people close to us, each with their own story. I welcome those in the studio who tell their stories and thus share their history with us." (Julia Krahn)

"I would like to thank Julia Krahn for her view of the people affected by war and for allowing us to show her work here in Potsdam. We would like to support hope and, in accordance with our triad, also remember current history in order to learn from it our own responsibility to work for peace to be lived." (Wieland Eschenburg, Stiftung Garrisonkirche Potsdam)

"Everyone talks about weapons. We want to talk about people and turn to them and their story of suffering, especially during the Passion season." (Martin Vogel, Theological Director of the Garrison Church Foundation)

The Garrison Church Foundation Potsdam

On February 24, 2022, the large-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine began. Millions of people, especially many women and children, fled the war and had to leave their homes. Many of them found humanitarian admission in Germany. In Potsdam alone there are about 3,000 war refugees from Ukraine.

Politically, Germany and Europe are facing completely new challenges. The term "turning point" sums up this situation.

For the Garrison Church Foundation Potsdam, which is rebuilding the tower of the Garrison Church as a historical learning site and developing peace and reconciliation work as its future profile, the question is what the "turn of the times" discussed everywhere means for its project. In essence, it sees itself reinforced in the fact that it needs places of learning and debate more than ever. More attention is needed in order to work towards the goal of a peace order that is in accordance with the applicable principles of international law. The completed Garrison Church Tower should become a place of active peace work.

"Direct our feet into the way of peace," this verse from the Gospel of Luke is engraved in the sandstone base of the Garrison Church Tower

as a circumferential dedicatory inscription in German, English, French, Polish and Russian.

Acknowledgements

Julia Krahn's series of photographs recently received a strong response in Florence, Rome and Montreal. The Garrison Church Foundation thanks her all the more for allowing her work to be shown in Potsdam.

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www.stjavelin.art

www.juliakrahn.com

