



Imperial War Museums explores front line experiences of refugees and aid workers through 2020 season

Imperial War Museums (IWM) reveals its upcoming season of programming across IWM London and IWM North and plans to mark two key anniversaries in 2020. IWM's *Refugees* season will invite visitors to explore refugee experiences throughout history and the ongoing issues faced by those affected through two major exhibitions, a series of events and a new site-specific art commission at IWM London from world-renowned artist Ai Weiwei.

Through new collaborations, including a partnership with the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), networks and first-hand accounts from people on the front line, the season will explore the complexities of the ongoing crisis.



Left: © **Rob Pinney** Afghan teenagers play cricket against a shipping container in the Calais 'Jungle', in an area of the camp known as 'Afghan Square'. Right: © **ICRC/Hussein Baydoun** Lebanon, Baalbek district, Arsal refugee camp. The ICRC helps more than 600 families without enough bread and fuel to stay warm after heavy snowfalls. Most tents have been damaged by the weight of the snow. Mattresses, blankets and wood to rebuild the broken tents are provided.

Refugees, IWM London and IWM North

Every two seconds, someone is forced to leave their home as a result of conflict or persecution. This, however, is not a new phenomenon and throughout history war has drastically altered the limits of what many call home. Through two major exhibitions, a new artistic commission and a series of immersive events, IWM's *Refugees* season will unlock the personal stories of people forced to flee their homes and those who work to support them. With programming across IWM London and IWM North, *Refugees* will give visitors the space to consider their own responses to similar experiences and dilemmas.

Refugees: Forced to Flee **IWM London, 2 April – 29 November 2020**

Created in partnership with the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), *Refugees: Forced to Flee* will explore how and why conflict has forced people to leave their homes and seek to build new lives elsewhere. Objects, film and photography from IWM's rich historical collections will be presented alongside contemporary material, cutting-edge research and newly commissioned artworks to reveal the personal stories of refugees and displaced people, from the First World War to the present day.

History of Bombs, Ai Weiwei

IWM London, 2 April – 29 November 2020

Exploring international migration, conflict as a root cause of human flow, and the relationship between the individual, society and the state, *History of Bombs* is a new, site-specific artwork by the internationally renowned artist Ai Weiwei that draws on the artist's ongoing investigation into politics and power. Weiwei's takeover of IWM London's iconic Atrium will be the first time in its history that the space will be given over in its entirety to an artist.

Aid Workers: Ethics Under Fire

IWM North, 15 May 2020 – 10 January 2021

Aid Workers: Ethics Under Fire at IWM North will take as its focus the humanitarian organisations around the world who work to support, care for and protect vulnerable populations forced to leave everything they know behind because of conflict. Using personal stories and real-life objects from aid workers on the front line, the exhibition will explore the practical, ethical and emotional challenges each faces, highlighting the complexities of contemporary conflict. Alongside intimate encounters with aid workers describing real choices they have made, visitors will be challenged to face their own series of dilemmas and to explore the impact of their own decisions.

Season events

Complementing these exhibitions, the season will also include events at IWM London and beyond the museum walls in Manchester. Working with award-winning artists Anagram, these events will give visitors the opportunity to explore, through different lenses, personal stories and key issues around conflict and refugee experiences. In addition, the IWM Institute will host a day-long symposium, as well as panel events, screenings and live performances, exploring themes addressed as part of the season.

More across Imperial War Museums in 2020

In addition to the *Refugees* season, 2020 will see IWM mark the 75th anniversaries of VE Day and VJ Day and the 80th anniversary of the Battle of Britain, while also hosting its annual action packed line-up of air shows at IWM Duxford, further details for which will be announced in the new year.

Victory 75

From 8 May until 15 August 2020, IWM will mark the 75th anniversaries of Victory in Europe Day, Victory over Japan Day and the dropping of the atomic bomb with Victory 75, retelling the story of the end of the Second World War and the global aftermath in the months that followed. Victory 75 will reflect on a time of both celebration and trepidation in the summer of 1945 and interpret these key anniversaries in a unique and unprecedented way for a contemporary audience. At IWM London the meaning of victory will be explored through collections stories and a series of live events. Commemorations will continue in interventions that will see IWM take Victory 75 into public spaces across the UK.

Battle of Britain 80

From 6 July to 27 September 2020, IWM will mark the 80th anniversary of the Battle of Britain, retelling the extraordinary story of the Second World War aerial campaign during the summer of 1940, renowned for highlighting the heroism of the outnumbered British airmen in the fight against the Luftwaffe. Battle of Britain 80 will uncover the historical figures associated with this momentous event while also shedding light on the roles of the Women's Auxiliary Air Force and Allied pilots that joined the RAF. IWM Duxford will open redeveloped areas of the historic site which played a direct role within the aerial campaign. The anniversary programme will culminate in a commemorative Battle of Britain Air Show.

Ends

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Notes to editors

Exhibitions and events at IWM North and IWM London will all be free admission.

Conflict Now

Conflict Now is a strand of programming that was launched in 2017 to coincide with the museums' centenary. IWM will explore evolving issues across the world as a result of conflict. *Conflict Now* features opinions of individuals who have seen, experienced and worked in areas of conflict – including artists, photographers, refugees, citizen journalists and war correspondents along with exhibitions and events developed by IWM and partner organisations.

IWM

IWM (Imperial War Museums) **tells the story of people who have lived, fought and died in conflicts involving Britain and the Commonwealth since the First World War.** Our unique collections, made up of the everyday and the exceptional, reveal stories of people, places, ideas and events. Using these, we tell vivid personal stories and create powerful physical experiences across our five museums that reflect the realities of war as both a destructive and creative force. We challenge people to look at conflict from different perspectives, enriching their understanding of the causes, course and consequences of war and its impact on people's lives.

IWM's five branches which attract over 2.5 million visitors each year are **IWM London**, IWM's flagship branch that recently transformed with new, permanent and free First World War Galleries alongside new displays across the iconic Atrium to mark the Centenary of the First World War; **IWM North**, housed in an iconic award-winning building designed by Daniel Libeskind; **IWM Duxford**, a world renowned aviation museum and Britain's best preserved wartime airfield; **Churchill War Rooms**, housed in Churchill's secret headquarters below Whitehall; and the Second World War cruiser **HMS Belfast**.

UK Research and Innovation

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The Arts and Humanities Research Council

The Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), which is part of UK Research and Innovation, funds world-class, independent researchers in a wide range of subjects: history, archaeology, digital content, philosophy, languages, design, heritage, area studies, the creative and performing arts, and much more. This financial year the AHRC will spend approximately £98 million to fund research and postgraduate training, in collaboration with a number of partners. The quality and range of research supported by this investment of public funds not only provides social and cultural benefits and contributes to the economic success of the UK but also to the culture and welfare of societies around the globe. ahrc.ukri.org.

The Economic and Social Research Council

The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) is part of UK Research and Innovation, a non-departmental public body funded by a grant-in-aid from the UK government. For more information visit ukri.org. The ESRC is the UK's largest funder of research on the social and economic questions facing us today. It supports the development and training of the UK's future social scientists and also funds major studies that provide the

infrastructure for research. ESRC-funded research informs policy-makers and practitioners and helps make businesses, voluntary bodies and other organisations more effective.

Ai Weiwei

A global citizen, artist and thinker, Ai Weiwei moves between modes of production and investigation, subject to the direction and outcome of his research, whether into the Chinese earthquake of 2008 (for works such as *Straight*, 2008-12 and *Remembering*, 2009) or the worldwide plight of refugees and forced migrants (for *Law of the Journey* and his feature-length documentary, *Human Flow*, both 2017). From early iconoclastic positions in regards to authority and history, which included *Dropping a Han Dynasty Urn* and a series of middle-finger salutes to sites of power, *Study of Perspective* (both 1995), Ai's production expanded to encompass architecture, public art and performance. Beyond concerns of form or protest, Ai now measures our existence in relation to economic, political, natural and social forces, uniting craftsmanship with conceptual creativity. Universal symbols of humanity and community, such as bicycles, flowers and trees, as well as the perennial problems of borders and conflicts are given renewed potency through installations, sculptures, films and photographs, while Ai continues to speak out publicly on issues he believes important. He is one of the leading cultural figures of his generation and serves as an example for free expression both in China and internationally.