

Leading experts question 'What Happens When Culture is Destroyed?' in a public symposium at IWM London

Whether carved in stone, painted on canvas or built on hallowed ground, our culture is what defines us. As a result, culture often finds itself a prime target during times of war and conflict. The motivations behind cultural destruction and the devastating impact on the societies it underpins are the basis of the Imperial War Museums' ground-breaking symposium. Organised by the IWM Institute in close partnership with Historic England with support from the UK Blue Shield, the symposium takes place on Saturday 7 September 2019 at IWM London as part of the critically acclaimed *Culture Under Attack* season.

The IWM Institute is Imperial War Museums' innovative hub to explore brand new ways of deepening knowledge of twentieth and twenty first century war and conflict. Combining IWM's own expertise with insights from related sectors, the IWM Institute helps make sense of today by drawing connections between past conflict and the contemporary world.

This day-long public symposium will seek to answer the question: *What happens when our culture is destroyed?* From the Baedeker Raids in the Second World War to ISIS' destruction of the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Palmyra, the event will unpick the complexities behind the targeting and destruction of culture around the world, questioning how we rebuild societies whose culture has been attacked. The IWM Institute, Historic England and UK Blue Shield will bring together panels of artists, academics, journalists and policy-makers, who will lend their unique perspectives and help reveal the wide-reaching effects of cultural devastation.

Experts confirmed to speak across the day include poet and author Lemn Sissay MBE; Channel 4's International Editor Lindsey Hilsum; Ariel Caine from Turner Prize nominated collective Forensic Architecture; UNESCO Chair Professor Peter Stone OBE; former Director for Counter-Terrorism at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and IWM Trustee Suzanne Nicholas; Lieutenant Colonel Tim Purbrick, Commander of the British Army's Cultural Property Protection Unit; and Natia Navrouzov, a representative from Yazda, an Iraq based NGO which works to protect the Yazidi community, with more to be confirmed. Panels will be followed by a screening of the award-winning documentary *The Destruction of Memory* and an accompanying Q&A session chaired by the director, Tim Slade.

The symposium complements *What Remains* (5 July 2019 – 5 January 2020), a new exhibition that explores why cultural heritage is attacked during war and the ways in which people save, protect and restore what is targeted. Curated in partnership with Historic England, the exhibition includes a display of over 50 photographs, oral histories, documents, objects and artworks, presenting both IWM and Historic England's extensive collections.

What Remains is part of *Culture Under Attack*, a free season of exhibitions, live music, performances and interventions at IWM London that explore how war threatens not just people's lives, but also the very things that help make lives worth living. Comprising three exhibitions and a series of events, which collectively tell stories spanning a hundred years, *Culture Under Attack* reveals why some people try to eradicate or exploit culture, while others risk everything to protect, celebrate or rebuild that which defines us as human beings.

Ends

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Notes to editors

Culture Under Attack Symposium: what happens when our culture is destroyed?

Saturday 7 September, 9.30am – 6pm, IWM London

Tickets are £30 full price (£20 for concessions) and are available to purchase from iwm.org.uk/events/culture-under-attack-symposium

Brought to you by the IWM Institute in close partnership with Historic England, with support from the UK Blue Shield

IWM Institute

The IWM Institute for the Public Understanding of War and Conflict is a hub to explore and experiment with innovative ways of deepening public understanding of the causes, course and consequences of war and conflict through research, public programming and digital innovation. Over the course of its pilot phase, the IWM Institute's mission is to help people make sense of today by having a deeper understanding of the connections between past conflict and the contemporary world.

The IWM Institute's broad range of activities, which cover 1914 to the present day, will combine Imperial War Museums' own expertise with insights from other sectors and will engage the public through a number of unique partnerships and challenging themes. The IWM Institute works with a network of IWM Associates, which includes experts from the fields of arts and culture, policy, academia and the charity sector. IWM Associates use their own informed perspectives to support the development of fresh and creative approaches to public engagement with war and conflict. The IWM Institute is currently in its pilot phase. For more information visit iwm.org.uk/iwm-institute

Culture Under Attack

Culture Under Attack (5 July 2019 – 5 January 2020) is a free season of exhibitions, live music, performances and interventions at IWM London that explore how war threatens not just people's lives, but also the very things that help make lives worth living. The season comprises three exhibitions – *What Remains*, a partnership project with Historic England, *Rebel Sounds* and *Art in Exile*, as well as a series of events that reveal why some people try to eradicate or exploit culture, while others risk everything to protect, celebrate or rebuild that which defines us as human beings.

#CultureUnderAttack

IWM London

IWM London tells the stories of those whose lives have been shaped by war through the depth, breadth and impact of our Galleries, displays and events. Explore the First World War Galleries and iconic Atrium; visit our *Holocaust Exhibition*; discover stories of bravery in *The Lord Ashcroft Gallery: Extraordinary Heroes* or take in our latest major temporary exhibitions.

Open Daily: 10am – 6pm. Last entry 30 minutes before closing. (Closed 24 - 26 December). Free Admission

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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**.

Historic England

Historic England is the public body that helps people care for, enjoy and celebrate England's spectacular historic environment, from beaches and battlefields to parks and pie shops. We protect, champion and save the places that define who we are and where we've come from as a nation. We care passionately about the stories they tell, the ideas they represent and the people who live, work and play among them. Working with communities and specialists we share our passion, knowledge and skills to inspire interest, care and conservation, so everyone can keep enjoying and looking after the history that surrounds us all.



Historic
England

Historic England is also the government's statutory advisor on international conventions, regulations and directives, including England's 19 UNESCO World Heritage Sites and other major developments. We collaborate with international organisations involved in heritage conservation such as ICCROM, ICOMOS, ICOM, the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, World Monuments Fund, the European Union, the European Heritage Heads Forum, and the Council of Europe.

UK Blue Shield

The Blue Shield is an international, voluntary organisation created in 1996 to advise UNESCO on the protection of cultural property in armed conflict. It works at both an international (for example with the International Committee of the Red Cross, UNESCO, and military organisations such as NATO), and national level. The UK national committee advises and works with Government Departments and national organisations, such as Historic England, the National Trust, and museums on matters relating to British efforts in this respect and, for example, worked closely with Members of both Houses of Parliament on the 2017 Cultural Property (Armed Conflicts) Act that enabled the UK to finally ratify the primary piece of relevant international legislation - the 1954 Hague Convention on the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and its two Protocols. It is working closely with the MoD over the establishment and training of the new Cultural Property Protection Unit. ukblueshield.org.uk

