



African Soldier

IWM London

21 September 2018 – 31 March 2019

Press View: 19 September 2018

Free exhibition

#MakingANewWorld

New artwork by John Akomfrah remembering the millions of Africans who served during the First World War unveiled at IWM London

African Soldier (21 September 2018 – 31 March 2019) is a new multi-screen installation by artist John Akomfrah that remembers the millions of African men and women who participated in the First World War, either as soldiers or carriers. Projected onto three screens, the artwork combines a powerful sound score, historic footage and newly created film, shot by Akomfrah in locations around the world that speak to the African experience of the First World War. The work is co-commissioned by New Art Exchange, Nottingham, Smoking Dogs Films and 14-18 NOW, the UK's arts programme for the First World War centenary.

The First World War was waged between empires that were global in their ambitions and reach. Between 1914 and 1918, millions of African soldiers served in long, colonial campaigns that spanned the whole of the African continent, contributing to victories throughout the First World War. In addition to this fighting, African soldiers from British, French and Dutch African territories were brought to Europe's western front, where they lost their lives alongside unknown, unheralded and undocumented African carriers. *African Soldier* seeks to commemorate these Africans who fought, served and died during the First World War.

John Akomfrah is best known for his multi-screen installations, such as *Purple* (2017), *Precarity* (2017) and *Vertigo Sea* (2015). Since founding the influential Black Audio Film Collective in 1982, his work has taken on a multi-layered visual style that fuses archival material and newly shot footage. Continuing this practice, *African Soldier* sees Akomfrah use historic film, including footage from IWM's extensive archive, to tell some of the lesser known stories of the First World War.

John Akomfrah, said: "We have obligations to the dead, historian Carlo Ginzburg once said. Honouring the untold sacrifices made by the many thousands of soldiers, labourers and carriers from a colonised Africa is an obligation. And I am proud to honour it."

African Soldier will be presented for the first time at IWM London as part of IWM's *Making a New World*, a season of exhibitions, installations and immersive experiences at IWM London and IWM North in 2018. The free season will explore themes of remembrance and how the First World War has shaped the society we live in today. Following its presentation at IWM London, *African Soldier* will be shown at New Art Exchange from September – December 2019.

Ends

For further press information and interview requests please contact:

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Notes to editors

Making a New World

Making a New World is a free season of exhibitions, installations and immersive experiences taking place at IWM London and IWM North in 2018. Through art, photography, film, live music, dance and conversations, the season will explore themes of remembrance and how the First World War has shaped today's society, bringing together five major exhibitions – *Lest We Forget?*, *Renewal: Life after the First World War in Photographs*, *I Was There: Room of Voices*, *African Solider* and *Moments of Silence*.

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; find out what life was like at home during the Second World War in [A Family in Wartime](#); delve into the world of espionage in [Secret War](#); 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
IWM London, Lambeth Road, London, SE1 6HZ.

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iwm.org.uk / @I_W_M / www.facebook.com/iwm.london

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 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**.

First World War Centenary

2014 - 2018 marks the centenary of the First World War, a landmark anniversary for Britain and the world. IWM is marking the centenary by leading a vibrant, four year programme of cultural activities across the world. For more information visit www.1914.org



New Art Exchange

New Art Exchange is the largest centre in the UK dedicated to culturally diverse arts. It is rooted in the local community and has a strong history of working with internationally renowned contemporary artists. It is committed to stimulating new perspectives on the value of diversity within art and society. Past exhibitors include: Hurvin Anderson, Yinka Shonibare, Zarina Bhimji, Christian Marclay and Elizabeth Price, Rashid Rana, Zineb Sedira, Leo Asemota, Larissa Sansour, J. D. 'Okhai Ojeikere and Hetain Patel. New Art Exchange is a National Portfolio Organisation and is supported using public funding by Arts Council England. www.nae.org.uk.



Skinder Hundal, CEO New Art Exchange said: “We are delighted to be working with all the partners to support John Akomfrah with what we anticipate to be yet another seminal work. The film will form the focus of a major season at New Art Exchange in 2019, which includes a pioneering international project to create new dialogues between artists and audiences in Nottingham, Africa and the UK. African Solider will act as the catalyst to generate contemporary perspectives on the value of diversity in the production of art, as well as new thinking around representation of marginalised cultures in art and society.”

Smoking Dogs

Smoking Dogs Films is the film and television production company founded in London, 1998, by three members of the acclaimed British cinecultural group Black Audio Film Collective. The founders of the company are film director John Akomfrah and producers Lina Gopaul and David Lawson. Smoking Dogs Films was conceived to produce works of imagination and innovation within the fertile worlds of film, television and new technologies. From its inception, Smoking Dogs Films has sought to produce challenging work on a variety of media, from 35mm to digital cinematography expanding upon the narrative possibilities of creative documentary, feature films, music videos, cross-platform and multimedia projects, virtual reality and art based films. Championing diverse stories from marginalised and underrepresented communities to the mainstream, Smoking Dogs Films has built a reputation for delivering thought provoking, stylised and captivating work to a variety of mediums.

14-18 NOW

14-18 NOW is a programme of extraordinary arts experiences connecting people with the First World War, as part of the UK’s official centenary commemorations. It commissions new work by leading contemporary artists across all art forms; the programme has included over 300 artists from 35 countries, with commissions taking place in 160 locations across the UK. Over 30 million people have experienced a project so far, including 7.5 million children and young people. 16.7million people took part in LIGHTS OUT in 2014, and 63% of the population were aware of Jeremy Deller’s 2016 work *‘We’re here because we’re here’*. The UK tour of the iconic poppy sculptures by artist Paul Cummins and designer Tom Piper have been seen by over 3.75 million people to date. 14-18 NOW has won many awards for its work, including the National Lottery Heritage Award 2017, a Museums Heritage Award and the Chairman’s Awards at The Drum Social Buzz Awards 2016. It is supported by the National Lottery through the Heritage Lottery Fund and Arts Council England, by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, and by additional fundraising.



Jenny Waldman, Director of 14-18 NOW said: “We are delighted to co-commission John Akomfrah to create this new work, a powerful reminder of the huge contribution and sacrifice made by millions of Africans during the First World War. This commission is a highlight of the final 14-18 NOW season, in which we continue to engage audiences in the centenary through the lens of art.”