



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE ON TUESDAY 8 FEBRUARY 2022

Imperial War Museum London to open UK's first art, film and photography galleries on war and conflict in 2023

Thanks to generous support from the Blavatnik Family Foundation, Imperial War Museums (IWM) is building new art, film and photography galleries at IWM London, opening to the public in late 2023. The Blavatnik Art, Film and Photography Galleries will be the UK's first to explore how artists, photographers and filmmakers together bear witness to, document and tell the story of conflict, and demonstrate how artistic interpretation can uniquely shape our understanding of war. Spanning the First World War to the present day, new acquisitions will be exhibited alongside renowned works from IWM's existing collection, including *Gassed* by John Singer Sargent, *They Shall Not Grow Old* by Peter Jackson and Steve McQueen's *Queen and Country*.

Dame Diane Lees, Director General of Imperial War Museums, said: *"Art, film and photography provide unique insight into conflict, and the interpretation of artists, filmmakers and photographers. They can dramatically enhance our understanding of war and conflict and also radically challenge it. Through our new Blavatnik Art, Film and Photography Galleries, visitors will be able to explore our fantastic visual media collections in greater depth and consider how these works and their creators have the power not only to shape our understanding of war and its wide-reaching impact, but to deeply move us. We are grateful to our supporters, in particular the Blavatnik Family Foundation, for helping us to make these visionary Galleries a reality."*

Sir Len Blavatnik, founder of the Blavatnik Family Foundation, the predominant funder of the project, said: *"I have long taken a special personal interest in the history of conflict, and the experience of war. I am delighted that my Family Foundation has been able to support this historic new development at the IWM, which confirms its importance as a world leader in this field."* The Blavatnik Family Foundation is an active supporter of world-renowned educational, scientific, cultural, and charitable institutions, and is headed by Sir Leonard Blavatnik, the global industrialist and philanthropist.

Covering up to 1000m² of IWM London's third floor, the Blavatnik Art, Film and Photography Galleries will reflect IWM's expansive remit of global conflict from 1914 to the present day and include a broad range of works from diverse artists, filmmakers and photographers. Artworks include John Singer Sargent's iconic six-metre-long painting *Gassed*, 1919, which moved contemporary audiences to tears as it brought home the reality of First World War fighting, as well as works by renowned artists Paul Nash, Dame Laura Knight and Steve McQueen. Highlights from IWM's film collection, one of the oldest in the world, will include Peter Jackson's award-winning 2018 film *They Shall Not Grow Old*, which reinterpreted original archive footage into an unprecedented, colourful depiction of the First World War. Also represented will be the original 'big battle' pictures from this conflict, with *The German Retreat and the Battle of Arras*, 1917, on display. The Galleries will also include images from the portfolios of renowned photographers and photojournalists, including Cecil Beaton, Olive Edis and Tim Hetherington, revealing the unique perspectives of photographers and the processes by which their iconic works resound through time.

A critical strand of the Galleries' narrative, visitors will be able to explore the artists' voices and perspectives held in the unparalleled IWM War Artist Archive, which offers insight into the day-to-day experiences of

artists on the front line. Since the World Wars, IWM has continued to commission new artistic responses and the evolving collection is a unique testament to the power of art, film and photography as witnesses to war.

As well as bringing treasures from IWM's existing collection out on public display, the development of these Galleries has offered a fantastic opportunity to present new acquisitions. With the support of Art Fund and the National Heritage Memorial Fund, IWM has recently acquired acclaimed Modernist artist Walter Sickert's painting *Tipperary*, 1914. Sickert painted several versions of *Tipperary*; this, however, is the only version which includes a soldier, reflected in a mirror and looking out of the window. Because so few artists broached the subject of the war as early as 1914, this is a highly significant acquisition for IWM and for these new Galleries, which will illuminate British cultural attitudes at the start of the First World War.

The development of these Galleries is the third phase in the dynamic transformation of IWM London and will enable IWM to share works from its exceptional art collection, one of the most important representations of twentieth century British art in the world. They will also showcase some of IWM's vast and era-defining film and photography collections, which include over 23,000 hours of footage and over 11 million photographs.

Like previous developments at IWM London, the Blavatnik Art, Film and Photography Galleries will be free to enter, making more of IWM's world-class collection available and accessible to all.

Ends

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Notes to editors

Transformation of IWM London

The first phase of IWM London's transformation concluded with the opening of First World War Galleries and a refreshed Atrium in 2014, and the second phase resulted in the opening of Second World War and The Holocaust Galleries in October 2021. The development of the Blavatnik Art, Film and Photography Galleries is the third phase in the transformation of IWM London.

IWM

www.iwm.org.uk

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**.

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;

extensive new [Second World War](#) and [The Holocaust Galleries](#); discover stories of bravery in [The Lord Ashcroft Gallery: Extraordinary Heroes](#) or take in our latest major temporary exhibitions.

Open Wednesday to Sunday: 10am – 6pm except during school holidays and half term, when we are open seven days a week. Also open bank holidays. 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

About the Blavatnik Family Foundation

The Blavatnik Family Foundation is an active supporter of world-renowned educational, scientific, cultural, and charitable institutions, and is headed by Sir Leonard Blavatnik, the global industrialist and philanthropist. The Foundation is the predominant funder for the Blavatnik Art, Film and Photography Galleries. For more on The Blavatnik Family Foundation see www.blavatnikfoundation.org

About Art Fund

Art Fund is the national fundraising charity for art. It provides millions of pounds every year to help museums to acquire and share works of art across the UK, further the professional development of their curators, and inspire more people to visit and enjoy their public programmes. In response to Covid-19 Art Fund made £3.6 million in urgent funding available to support museums through reopening and beyond, including Respond and Reimagine grants to help meet immediate need and reimagine future ways of working. A further £2 million has been made available in 2021 for Reimagine projects. Art Fund is independently funded, supported by Art Partners, donors, trusts and foundations and the 130,000 members who buy the National Art Pass, who enjoy free entry to over 240 museums, galleries and historic places, 50% off major exhibitions, and receive Art Quarterly magazine. Art Fund also supports museums through its annual prize, Art Fund Museum of the Year. The winner of Art Fund Museum of the Year 2021 is Firstsite in Colchester. www.artfund.org

About the National Heritage Memorial Fund

The National Heritage Memorial Fund (NHMF) was set up in 1980 to save the most outstanding parts of our national heritage, in memory of those who have given their lives for the UK
www.nhmf.org.uk [@NationalHeritageMemorialFund](#)

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