



Donovan Wylie: Vision as Power

24 October– 21 April 2014

Private View 23 October 6pm-9pm

Free Admission

"Vision creates a virtual architecture and is an essential component to the system of control"

Donovan Wylie

Donovan Wylie, one of Britain's leading contemporary photographers, explores the effects of modern-day military surveillance in *Vision as Power*. Straddling the lines between documentary and art photography, he presents a new perspective on how we view conflict and architecture. From British Watchtowers in Northern Ireland, to Outposts in Afghanistan and a Radar Station in the Canadian Arctic, Wylie reveals the impact of surveillance structures on landscapes, the environment, the observer and the observed.

Born in Belfast in 1971, in the midst of the Troubles in Northern Ireland, Wylie found himself drawn to photography from an early age. In 1989 he completed his first major photographic project published as a book, *32 Counties*, based on a three month tour of Ireland documenting the contrasting landscapes of his homeland.

Vision as Power brings together five separate projects of work: *The Maze*, *British Watchtowers*, *Green Zone*, *Outposts* and *Arctic*, demonstrating Wylie's interest in the subject of surveillance, points of change and the ways in which conflict shapes environments and lives.

As an artist, Wylie explores the concept of vision as power in the architecture of contemporary conflict, revealing striking and unexpected similarities in different conflicts and contrasting landscapes. Wylie's photographs are a testimony to the enduring impact of modern military observational structures, which continues even when the structures themselves have been removed.

The Maze (2002) depicts an abandoned prison in County Down prior to its demolition. Once used to house parliamentary prisoners during the Troubles and known for housing inmates such as Bobby Sands during the 1981 hunger strike, Wylie reveals new perspectives of a building that played a prominent role in Ireland's history. The disorientating repetitions of the prison's layout led Wylie to approach the work by creating a series of similar images, using a cool, neutral aesthetic. The resulting photographs highlight how the structure of the prison both contained and isolated its subjects, while allowing them to be continuously observed.

British Watchtowers (2005) documents British Army surveillance posts in South Armagh, weeks before they were decommissioned as part of the Northern Ireland peace protest. Wylie explores the connection between the watchtowers and the countryside they overlook.

In 2008 IWM commissioned Wylie to photograph the *Green Zone* in central Baghdad, at the point of the British and US forces departure. Wylie's observations of the heavily armored administrative centre, controlled by the American coalition forces since the invasion of Iraq in 2003, reveal imposing military structures as temporary fortifications. Paradoxically, the fortifications serve to both protect but also confine its occupants, due to its highly visible presence within a hostile community.

In 2010 IWM and the National Media Museum began a collaboration to embed Wylie in Kandahar Province, Afghanistan, at the point of the Canadian forces withdrawal, making him the first IWM official photographer to work in a war zone since the end of the First World War. His photographs of the Kandahar landscape, taken from the perspective of outposts, are juxtaposed with images of the structures themselves. Built on natural promontories with multiple lines of sight, these outposts form a protective visual architecture. Wylie's photographs show the vulnerability of these ostensibly powerful positions.

In contrast to military suppression, *Arctic*, 2013, shows points of observation as means of conflict avoidance. In a series of never before seen images, isolated and unmanned Canadian cyber radar stations, stand at vantage points overlooking the entrance to the Hudson Strait. As the competition for natural resources grows and Global Warming opens up new routes through the Northwest Passage, military presence in the north is steadily increasing. In this series Wylie undercuts the idea of vision as power, addressing a subject which is steeped in layers of invisibility. The station, when it can be seen, resembles the watchtowers and outposts in situation and purpose. However, it operates electronically, seeking to detect an invisible threat in an empty landscape.

Wylie's practice as an artist and photographer has allowed him to use his own power as an observer, to reveal mechanisms of control through understanding and communicating his vision to others.

**For further press information including interview requests and images, please contact:
Nina Dellow, Senior Press Officer: 0207 091 3069 ndellow@iwm.org.uk**

To download images please visit:

<http://extranet.iwm.org.uk/press>

Username: Press

Password: IWMpress

Coming Soon

IWM Contemporary: Mike Moore and Lee Craker from 24 October 2013

This exhibition, the second in our IWM Contemporary programme, contrasts two perspectives on the impact of war on the Iraqi people and American and British troops who served in Iraq 1991 - 2011.

Mike Moore's groundbreaking colour photography will be displayed next to Lee Craker's powerful sepia images in this striking exhibition of reportage and portrait photographs.

Free Admission

Ongoing Exhibitions

IWM Contemporary: Omer Fast Until 29 September 2013

Omer Fast is the first artist to feature in our new IWM Contemporary programme, presenting the London premiere of his film *5,000 Feet is the Best*. This 30-minute filmwork, based on interviews with a former drone operator in Las Vegas, details the operator's experiences guiding the unmanned planes to fire at targets in Afghanistan and Pakistan. *5,000 Feet is the Best* offers a subtle exploration of how the use of drones is rapidly changing the politics, ethics and personal experience of contemporary conflict

Free Admission

Architecture of War Until 5 May 2014.

Bringing together a range of highlights from IWM's art collection, *Architecture of War* presents artists' responses to the impact of warfare on our surrounding landscape and environments. Spanning almost a century of British art, from the First World War to the present day, the exhibition will explore themes such as construction, destruction, cities and interiors. Highlights include works by William Orpen, CRW

Nevinson, Edward Ardizzone, Ronald Searle and Langlands and Bell.

Free Admission

War Story: Supplying Frontline Afghanistan Until 27 April 2014

Camp Bastion, the huge British military base in the Afghan desert, exists to support troops fighting on the frontline. *War Story: Supplying Frontline Afghanistan* uses brand new material recently collected in Afghanistan by the War Story team – including photos, film, home videos and interviews – to reveal the challenges of supporting the armed forces on the frontline. Visitors can also put their skills to the test to see if they have what it takes to keep the frontline supplied in our interactive logistics challenge.

From keeping thousands troops hydrated in temperatures exceeding fifty degrees Celsius to the complexities of moving equipment, ammunition and supplies around the war torn Helmand Province this new display explores what life is like for soldiers living and serving in Afghanistan.

War Story: Supplying Frontline Afghanistan is part of IWM's War Story project, which offers British service personnel, their families and others involved in Operation Herrick in Afghanistan the opportunity to record their role in history by preserving their personal accounts of the current conflict in Afghanistan in IWM's unrivalled national collections.

Free Admission

– Ends –

Notes to Editors

IWM Contemporary

IWM Contemporary is a new programme of exhibitions and events by leading artists and photographers whose work is a response to war and conflict.

IWM and the National Media Museum Bradford

In 2010 IWM and the National Media Museum began a collaboration to embed Donovan Wylie, with the Canadian contingent of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Kandahar Province, Afghanistan. This subsequently led to the creation of *Outposts*, Wylie's second solo exhibition at the National Media Museum in 2011.

Donovan Wylie is the 15th Bradford Fellow. Established in 1985, the Fellowship in Photography is a partnership between Bradford College, the University of Bradford and the National Media Museum. Working with mid-career photographers, the partners support the culture of photography through a varied programme of exhibition and teaching activities.

www.nationalmuseum.org.uk

<http://photography.belfastschoolofart.com/staff/donovan-wylie>

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 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 award-winning *Holocaust Exhibition*; discover stories of bravery in *The Lord Ashcroft Gallery: Extraordinary Heroes*; see work by some of Britain's most significant 20th Century artists in our art galleries or take in our latest major temporary exhibitions. Our family learning sessions and events encourage debate and challenge people's perceptions of war.

IWM London is partially reopen July 2013 – summer 2014 while we continue to [Transform IWM London](#). The museum partially reopened on 29 July with the new major family exhibition *Horrible Histories@: Spies* and fully reopens in summer 2014 when we launch our brand new First World War Galleries to mark the 100 year anniversary of the start of the First World War and unveil a new atrium,

new shops and a park-side café.

Open Daily: 10am – 6pm. Last Admission 5.45pm. (Closed 24 - 26 December 2013).

IWM London, Lambeth Road, London, SE1 6HZ

T: 020 7416 5000

E: mail@iwm.org.uk

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 attract over 2 million visitors each year. [IWM London](#), our flagship branch, is transforming with new First World War Galleries and a new atrium with large object displays which will open in summer 2014 to mark the Centenary of the First World War (Please note IWM London is partially open, and in summer 2014 the museum will fully reopen). Our other branches are [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 will mark the centenary by leading a vibrant, four year programme of cultural activities across the country, including the opening of brand new First World War Galleries at IWM London in 2014. For more information visit www.1914.org

