



Immediate Release

Catalyst: Contemporary Art and War

Major New Exhibition

12 October 2013 – 23 February 2014, IWM North Special Exhibitions Gallery

Free Entry, Donations Welcome

IWM holds an unrivalled collection of twentieth and twenty-first century British art. Now, IWM North, part of Imperial War Museums, in Manchester is presenting the first major exhibition of IWM's collection of contemporary art produced since the First Gulf War - placing more than 20 years of work by over 40 artists in this national collection - on public display together for the first time.

The exhibition includes Steve McQueen's *Queen and Country*, an installation of facsimile stamp sheets bearing photographic portraits of British service personnel killed in Iraq, and *Photo Op*, Kenneth Phillips' very different comment on the war in Iraq, showing Tony Blair taking a 'selfie' in front of an explosion. This large-scale, free exhibition features responses to conflict since the First Gulf War by some of the most significant artists exploring war and conflict today - such as Langlands and Bell, Miroslaw Balka, Willie Doherty, Paul Seawright, Ori Gersht, Jananne Al Ani and Edmund Clark.

Catalyst: Contemporary Art and War reveals how war has been crucial subject matter for contemporary artists in the last two decades. Visitors will explore the rich, varied and moving artistic response to conflict in a media age. Hear from the artists themselves and discover what motivates people to create art about conflict. Explore the ways in which art can prompt us to think more deeply about current events, their immediate impact and their long-term implications.

Through more than 70 works, the exhibition will show the broad range of approaches artists use to explore this vast and complex subject. The exhibition showcases installations, photography, film, sculpture, oil paintings, prints and book works; varying from the highly moving to the humorous, philosophical or outraged.

In recent years the media has become an acknowledged weapon of battle. At a time when our understanding of war is increasingly shaped by the media and the internet, discover how art can prompt us to consider the way the media not only influences our current perceptions of conflict, but how it shapes the way history is written. Rasheed Araeen's *White Stallion* explores the role of the media by questioning the nature of propaganda during the First Gulf War, while Paul Seawright seeks an alternative way of photographing war through his images of empty, but lethal minefields in Afghanistan.

Artists are often driven by their own experiences, political views or a desire to protest. Taysir Batniji's series of estate agent details for destroyed homes in Gaza is a tongue-in-cheek comment on the situation in Palestine. Some artists aim to counter common opinions, while others explore the legacy of their own family history, or the long-term impact of conflict. Willie Doherty's photograph *Unapproved Road*, showing a rural makeshift roadblock, suggests a violent past event and reminds us of the significance of land and territory in Northern Ireland during the Troubles.

Langlands and Bell's interactive installation, *The House of Osama bin Laden*, where visitors perform an inconclusive search for bin Laden, or Edmund Clark's photographs of Guantanamo, both reflect on points in time where the traditional boundaries and ethics of conflict are called into question.

Accompanying the work on display there will be a series of new interviews, specially commissioned by IWM, with artists whose work is on display, including Langlands and Bell, kennardphillips and Paul Seawright.

Catalyst: Contemporary Art and War presents a unique opportunity to view new and recent acquisitions to IWM's Collections, including works by Taysir Batniji, and Edmund Clark, films by Kerry Tribe and Ori Gersht, and a print series by Mirosław Balka. The exhibition presents some of IWM's official commissions: *Queen and Country*, Steve McQueen's response to the war in Iraq; Paul Seawright's photographs of Afghanistan and Langland and Bell's unnerving interactive installation: *The House of Osama Bin Laden*.

IWM North itself – designed by world renowned architect Daniel Libeskind to represent a globe shattered by conflict – is a contemporary response to war. A major season of events will accompany the exhibition.

Coinciding with this major exhibition at IWM North, IWM London are hosting IWM Contemporary in autumn 2013 – a new programme of free contemporary art and photography exhibitions and public events.

Connect with IWM North and share your thoughts on Twitter via @I_W_M #SeeArtHere or on Facebook at Facebook.com/iwm.north

Catalyst: Contemporary Art and War is supported by The Little Green Paint Company.

Graham Boxer, IWM North Director, said: 'IWM North is a venue for challenging exhibitions; a place for visitors to discuss big questions relating to war and conflict and our lives today. *Catalyst: Contemporary Art and War* contains some of the most important artworks on this theme of the past 25 years – on display together for the first time - and explores why war has inspired such creativity.'

– Ends –

For further press information please contact:

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Notes to Editors

IWM North

The multi award winning IWM North is designed by world-renowned architect Daniel Libeskind to represent a globe shattered by conflict. The iconic building, innovative and dynamic exhibitions, use of digital media through hourly Big Picture Shows and public events explore how war shapes lives and inspire and encourage debate.

Open Daily: 10am - 5pm with FREE admission (except 24 – 26 December)

IWM North, The Quays, Trafford Wharf Road, Manchester M17 1TZ (close to MediaCityUK Metrolink and Junction 9 of the M60)

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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 are **IWM London**, IWM's flagship branch with six floors of exhibitions and displays; **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

