



People Power: Fighting for Peace

IWM London

23 March 2017 – 28 August 2017

Press View: 21 March 2017

#FightingForPeace

IWM London presents *People Power: Fighting for Peace*, the UK's first major exhibition to explore the evolution of the anti-war movement from the First World War to the present day.

Rare items such as a handwritten poem by Siegfried Sassoon and original sketches for the peace symbol* go on display in *People Power: Fighting for Peace*, a major exhibition exploring one hundred years of the anti-war movement in Britain. The exhibition tells the stories of individual and collective acts of anti-war protest, and the varied forms of creative expression used to campaign against war.

A unique combination of more than three hundred items will take visitors on a journey from the First World War to the present day, looking at how peace activists have influenced perceptions of war and conflict. Paintings, literature, posters, banners, badges and music reveal the breadth of creativity generated by those who have opposed war and how anti-war protest has been inextricably linked to the cultural mood of each era.

Highlights of the exhibition include *Wire* (1918) by Paul Nash and C R W Nevinson's *Paths of Glory* (1917), artworks depicting the destructive nature of the First World War; a holograph manuscript of Siegfried Sassoon's poem *The General* on display for the very first time; a hand-written letter by Winnie the Pooh author A A Milne outlining his struggle to reconcile pacifism with the rise of Hitler; the original sketches of the nuclear disarmament symbol (now widely regarded as a general peace symbol) by Gerald Holtom; and Peter Kennard and Cat Phillip's iconic photomontage *Photo Op* (2007) which depicts Tony Blair taking a selfie against the backdrop of a devastating explosion.

Matt Brosnan, Historian and Curator of *People Power: Fighting for Peace* at IWM says:

"This exhibition is the first of its kind and displays a number of fascinating items which have never been exhibited before. In IWM's Centenary year, this major exhibition continues our mission to explore war and conflict from multiple perspectives – highlighting the peace movement and its important role in British history."

Objects are drawn from IWM's rich collections, alongside significant loans from a range of organisations and individuals, which help to explore the complex and evolving nature of the peace movement. Comprising four main sections - and featuring items ranging in scale from a tiny pin badge to a 30ft banner - *People Power: Fighting for Peace* tells the stories of passionate protesters over the past one hundred years and the struggles they have endured for the anti-war cause:

- **First World War and 1920s** The exhibition begins with the birth of the modern peace movement which was kick-started by the First World War and the introduction of military conscription in 1916. Personal items and emotional letters reveal the harrowing experiences of conscientious objectors who faced non-combatant service, forced labour, imprisonment and hostility from wider society. This section also explores the impact of the First World War on poets and artists in shaping perceptions of war, vividly depicting the hellish conditions on the Western Front.

*The peace symbol, as it is now often thought of, was designed by artist Gerald Holtom as a symbol for nuclear disarmament, specifically for the first major Aldermaston march organised by the Direct Action Committee in 1958. It later came to be adopted by anti-nuclear groups including the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) and the Committee of 100, before being adopted as a wider symbol of peace.

- **1930s and Second World War** The devastation of the First World War led to pacifist and anti-war views entering the mainstream to a greater extent. This section charts the creation of a more visible pacifist presence and the famous faces that supported it, such as A A Milne and Vera Brittain. However, the rise of Hitler and Nazi Germany in the late 1930s presented a moral dilemma for many pacifists. Diaries, letters and photography reveal the personal struggles faced by these anti-war campaigners. The section also looks at the experiences of conscientious objectors and those who performed alternative service during the Second World War.
- **Cold War** The largest section of the exhibition explores the dawn of a new age, dominated by the fear of a nuclear apocalypse. The 1950s and 1960s saw the establishment of a number of anti-nuclear organisations, most famously the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND). Visually represented by the nuclear disarmament symbol designed by Gerald Holtom, the movement became heavily intertwined in the counter-culture and anti-establishment attitude of the 1960s. This section includes a variety of items that illustrate this connection with popular culture, such as flyers, badges and other ephemera emblazoned with the iconic symbol and supported by figures such as Joan Baez, John Lennon and Yoko Ono.

This part of the exhibition also focusses heavily on the upsurge in demonstrations during the 1980s, featuring items and images relating to one of the most prominent protests of this period at Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp, established in 1981.

- **Modern Era** The Gulf War (1990-91), Balkan Wars (1991-5), the war in Afghanistan (2001-2014), the war in Iraq (2003-2011), and continuing conflict in the Middle East have all triggered anti-war activity. This section of the exhibition features banners and other items from Brian Haw's protest camp in London's Parliament Square, which he created in 2001 and which remained there for more than ten years. This section also includes the original 'blood splat' artwork and posters by David Gentleman, designed for the Stop the War Coalition. These include his 'No More Lies' and 'Bliar' designs, as well as his original designs for the largest protest in British history, when between 1 and 2 million people protested in London on 15 February 2003 against the Iraq War. Continuing the journey right up to the present day, the exhibition features placards from the 2016 Stop Trident demonstrations, backed by Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn.

People Power: Fighting for Peace features rich audio-visual displays including film clips and newly conducted interviews with individuals involved in anti-war protest. The exhibition is also accompanied by an immersive soundscape, evoking the atmosphere of protest as visitors explore the exhibition.

Tickets are available at <http://www.iwm.org.uk/exhibitions/iwm-london/fighting-for-peace>

Adult £10, Child £5, Concessions £7, Members Free, Art Fund Members £5

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– Ends –

Notes to Editors:

The accompanying book, ***People Power: Fighting for Peace From the First World War to the Present*** by Lyn Smith, with a foreword by Sheila Hancock, will be published by Thames & Hudson in partnership with IWM on 23rd March 2017, £24.95.

To request copies of the book please contact Kate Cooper at Thames & Hudson on k.cooper@thameshudson.co.uk / 0207 845 5102

A product line inspired by the exhibition will be available from the IWM shop online and in store when the exhibition opens <http://www.iwmshop.org.uk/>

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**.

IWM Centenary

2017 marks Imperial War Museums (IWM) centenary. IWM was established while the First World War was still being fought. Since its establishment people have entrusted IWM with their stories of war from 1917 to the present day, in the knowledge it will continue to share these stories with future generations. IWM will commemorate its 100 years through a centenary of stories from its rich collections across its five branches (IWM London, IWM North, IWM Duxford, Churchill War Rooms and 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

