

Ways of perceiving

The psychological effects of war

In this exhibition I want to bring awareness to the psychological effects of war and the scars that it has left on soldiers, civilians and future generations. The support for soldiers dealing with mental health issues due to the conflict of war has massively increased since World War One, when people didn't know about the long-lasting issues they would have to deal with for the rest of their lives.

I will be showcasing several artists, with their interpretation of psychological effects of war, some of these works of art have been produced on the front line first hand which shows the realism of what soldiers experienced, most scenes being harrowing, scary and bloodshed. Due to these traumatic experiences soldiers have suffered the effects of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), depression and anxiety, moral injuries and many more. I will be discussing the study of these mental illnesses to truly understand what soldiers went through.

The artists I have chosen to include in this exhibition (see list below showing a synopsis), clearly demonstrate through their work the brutality and devastation war brought to the world. From research it is plain to see some artists have chosen the exact same memory to draw upon.

John Nash, Paul Nash (*brothers*)

John Singer Sargent and Henry Tonks (*commissioned artists who were in the trenches together*)

Tom Lea (*shows the PTSD effect of war*)

Kathe Kollowitz (*lost her son in war depicts a grieving mother's devastation*)

Section One

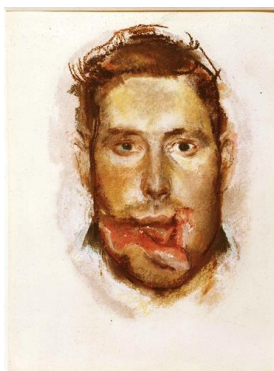
The first room of my exhibition focuses on the mental and physical scars soldiers endured during war. World War One was the first time many soldiers went to war, it was considered a test of national strength and manhood and was even thought to be exciting to fight for your country, instead it turned out to be one of the most horrific and catastrophic events in history. **A study on 'Health in returning veterans of the First**

World War': by Dr Hodgkinson (N.D) *"over 41,000 men had limbs amputated during the war and 272,000 suffered limb injuries that did not require amputation".* The injuries soldiers endured would have had a life changing effects and many did not get support after they had fought in war.



John Singer Sargent - Gassed (1919)

One of the first pieces of art you will see in the exhibition is a moment captured on the front lines after a new weapon of gas hit the soldiers. John Singer Sargent was a war artist who was commissioned by the government to record the terrors of war through art. In this scene you can see a line of soldiers who endured irritation to the eyes caused by mustard gas. With their eyes bandaged, their only means of walking safely is by the placing of hands on each other's shoulders to guide them through the way. You can see one soldier turn away from the viewer to vomit, others have collapsed all around the painting creating chaos. Soldiers can suffer long lasting consequences due to exposure of Sulphur Mustard gas (SM) it has a risk of damaging organs. (Health Qual life outcomes, 2013).



**Henry Tonks, Surgical Sketches
Before treatment, (1916)**



**Henry Tonks, Surgical Sketches
after treatment, (1916)**

Henry Tonks was a plastic surgeon in WW1 and had served with commissioned artist John Singer Sargent on the front line. Before being drafted for the war Henry Tonks was a surgeon and an artist whose aim was to document and fix the facial deformities inflicted on soldiers. At just twenty-five years of age private Charles Deeks was caught in an explosion causing his upper right cheek and lip to be blown off.

In the before sketch Deeks has a detached and numb expression, still in shock and trying to comprehend the events that just happened and realising what war has done to his life. Deeks is sat upright looking frozen suggesting that not only is he in physical pain but also in a psychological shut down. In the 'after' portrait you can see using his artistic skills Tonks has fixed the facial deformities of Deeks and transformed him. In this portrait Deeks has a different presence about him, he is wearing a suit and has combed hair trying to fit into the society outside of war and reclaim some humanity despite his facial scars. Although he still has a no facial expression as though he is looking into the abyss indicating he could have (PTSD).



Thomas Lea, The two-thousand-yard stare (1944)

The two-thousand-yard stare shows how war can hollow out a person from the inside leaving them vulnerable and fragile while facing a lifetime consequence of (PTSD). The soldier's eyes appear hollow gazing beyond the physical world, as if his soul has left his body. There is chaos all around him making him feel even more frozen and trapped.

Thomas Lee was asked to illustrate the war events as a sketch artist and ended up creating one of the most impactful war paintings. September 1944 the US Marine division invaded **Peleliu**, Tomb Lee was present during the battle and witnessed the two-thousand-yard stare. The soldier was in shellshock now known as (PTSD), back then there was barely any help for psychologically effected soldiers and would have to deal with it on their own, leading to mass amounts of suicide.

Section two

In the second part of my exhibition, I will be demonstrating how war affected the landscapes around the soldiers fighting. With fallen trees, spiralling barbed wire, and flooded trenched, made the battlefield dead and nightmarish making soldiers depressed and miserable. This piece shows the battle in live action; the battlefield getting destroyed more and more.



John Nash, over the top (1917)

Over the top also known as 'Pure Murder' is a snowy landscape painting of a battle in Marcoing (France) where numerous fatalities took place, it captures the moment terrified soldiers were ordered to climb 'over the top' of the trenches across no-mans-land, where dead bodies were surrounding them, many lost their lives.

This tragic event took place on the morning of 30 December 1917, almost 90% of the soldiers died in the battle. Luckily John Nash survived the incident and lived to tell this devastating tale, depicting his events through his artwork for us all to see, drawing on these events helped to understand that war was not a heroic place but a death trap.



Paul Nash, Wire (1918)

Paul Nash, brother of John Nash, focused more on the landscapes of war and how it destroyed and took the life out of them, He creates a scene that is trapped and broken. The spiralling of wire represents the chaos soldiers would have felt on the battlefield, and the mental spiral of feeling trapped in between it.

According to Robert (N.D) Paul Nash was increasingly influenced by surrealism and abstract art, a potent combination with his stark landscapes. But as of the dark scenes Paul Nash created there were restrictions placed upon his work stopping the public from seeing the true horrors of war.

The broken-down tree represents the soldiers, the way war has broken them. Paul Nash sadly died in battle on 11th July 1946; he had a history of asthma possibly caused using gas and other deadly chemicals in war.

Section 3

In this final part as you reach the end of the exhibition, I will be covering the topic of death, grief and how people outside of war were deeply affected. People outside of war struggled with separation anxiety, and financial issues as there was not as much income due to partners and spouses being at war.



Kathe Kollwitz, The volunteer (1922)

Kathe Kollwitz is a female artist who expresses grief and suffering through her work. She focuses on showing these ailments didn't only affect soldiers but everyone in the world. Kathe Kollwitz had two sons in WW1 and on 22nd October 1914 her son Peter who was a volunteer got killed whilst fighting in battle in Belgium. Because of this life changing and devastating news Kathe Kollwitz decided to dedicate all her artwork to the brutality and grief war brought.

Kathe Kollowitz once said *“I felt that I have no right to withdraw from the responsibility of being an advocate. It is my duty to voice the suffering of men, the never-ending suffering heaped mountain high”*. **Moma.org (N.D)**

By using a woodcut technique, the volunteers depict a line of young soldiers including Kathe Kollowitz son Peter, marching behind a skeletal figure of death playing a war drum. The way that she includes her own son in her work shows how much pain and loss the war brought her even though she did not go to war herself.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, every piece shown in the exhibition is in some way or another demonstrating the psychological effects of war and the aftermath; the destruction it left on the landscape. These vital pieces of art in history have been shared globally for us all to reflect, recreating the vision the artists and soldiers endured at war.

We have since learnt how these traumatic experiences affected soldiers, leaving some with PTSD, depression and anxiety, as well as life changing injuries. I am hoping my expedition will demonstrate how artists played such a vital role in capturing these gruesome events in history. Through their eyes by creating these amazing pieces we can empathise, experience and appreciate just what our war heroes went through for us to be standing here today.

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