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# Imagining and Remembering the Soldier at the Imperial War Museum (1980-1995)

Buchanan, Jayne

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University of Plymouth

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**UNIVERSITY OF  
PLYMOUTH**

**Imagining and Remembering the Soldier at the  
Imperial War Museum**

**(1980-1995)**

by

**Jayne Buchanan**

A thesis submitted to the University of Plymouth in partial fulfilment for  
the degree of

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

School of Humanities & Performing Arts

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## Authors Declaration

At no time during the registration for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy has the author been registered for any other University award without prior agreement of the Doctoral College Quality Sub-Committee.

Work submitted for this research degree at the University of Plymouth has not formed part of any other degree either at the University of Plymouth or at another establishment.

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National Army Museum, London.

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## **Abstract**

### **Imagining and Remembering the Soldier at the Imperial War Museum (1980-1995)**

My research addresses the contemporary representation of the soldier in art by focusing on the work commissioned by the Imperial War Museum (IWM) over the period 1980-1995, this includes Linda Kitson (b. 1945), for the Falklands War in 1982, John Keane (b.1954) in the Gulf War in 1991, and Peter Howson's (b. 1958) work in Bosnia between 1992–1994.

From a foundation of existing academic research on the representation of the soldier in art, which has informed a framework of investigation into imagery of the soldier as hero, as masculine ideal and as a symbol of nationalism, I examine how the soldier has been imagined, interpreted, modified and depicted by these contemporary artists. My thesis also considers how their work presents an alternative narrative to these wars and the soldiers who are part of it, to that of other artists and photographers.

The soldier is a central icon in the representation and remembrance of war in art, but it is an area of research that has not been fully considered in the contemporary collection of the IWM. Of the many institutions in Britain to house art relating to war, the museum owns the most extensive national collection thereby making it significant in the history of patronage of war art. Reflecting on the changing scope of the IWM, I consider the impact the collection, has on the way soldier can be remembered.



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## **Abbreviations**

AHRC	Arts and Heritage Research Council
ARC	Artistic Records Committee
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CND	Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament
DCMS	Department for Culture, Media and Sport
HMS	Her Majesty's Ship
IRA	Irish Republican Army
IWM	Imperial War Museum
FWD	Falklands War Diary
MoD	Ministry of Defence
MP	Member of Parliament
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
QE2	Queen Elizabeth II cruise ship
RAF	Royal Air Force
TV	Television
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNPROFOR	United Nations Protection Force
US	United States (of America)
WAAC	War Artists Advisory Committee

## Introduction

This thesis presents my research on the depiction the soldier by three artists Linda Kitson (b. 1945), John Keane (b.1954) and Peter Howson (b. 1958), who were commissioned by the Imperial War Museum (IWM) over the period 1980 to 1995. The originality of this investigation is achieved through the new interpretation of their works as I consider the depiction of the soldier: a central icon in the representation and remembrance of war in art. Kitson travelled with the forces to record the events of the Falklands War in 1982, Keane the Gulf War in 1990 and 1991, and Howson the United Kingdom's (UK) involvement in Bosnia between 1992–1995, in the tradition of war artists in the First and Second World War.<sup>1</sup> The only extant publication to focus solely on these artists is the eight-page booklet by the IWM, *Contemporary War Artists* (1997), which gives a summary of the work commissioned by the museum.<sup>2</sup> While there are a number of publications relating to the IWM and its collection of art, spanning from the First World War, my research approaches the topic of the soldier from the perspective of the artist, rather than the institution.<sup>3</sup> However, that is not to say I will overlook the role of the museum in the commissioning of these works. My thesis also questions the significance of the official war artist in these late twentieth century conflicts, and considers the relevance of the IWM as in commissioning art during this period.

As a foundation for this study, I bring together primary archival research on the IWM and extant scholarship on the representation of the soldier, from which I have identified

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<sup>1</sup> Gaynor Kavanagh, *Museums and the First World War: A Social History* (London and New York: Leicester University Press, 1994).

<sup>2</sup> Angela Weight, *Contemporary War Artists*, IWM LBY K.97/1388, (London: Imperial War Museum, 1997), 1.

<sup>3</sup> See Sue Malvern *Modern Art, Britain and the Great War: Witnessing, Testimony, and Remembrance*. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004) and Chapter Two, which presents a background to the IWM based on existing scholarship.

three themes: the soldier as hero, as masculine ideal and as a symbol of nationalism. I then apply this framework to an iconographical investigation of the works produced by Kitson, Keane and Howson, supplemented by my own interviews with the artists.<sup>4</sup> My thesis examines how the soldier has been imagined, interpreted, modified, depicted by these artists and how their works differ from that of other artists who focused on the same conflict. Through this investigation, my work extends knowledge into the role of war art commissioned in the late twentieth century and provides new insight into its effect as a lasting memorialisation of conflict.

My focus on the contemporary works produced for the IWM is significant because, of the many institutions in the UK to house art relating to war, the museum owns the most extensive national collection and therefore has the most scope to create a national record of war. Their history of patronage also makes the museum unique concerning its impact on art that is created in response to conflict. Early in the First World War, the government set up the Ministry of Information to manage the flow of information and images relating to the war and to strengthen public support.<sup>5</sup> In 1917, the War Cabinet approved a proposal for the creation of a National War Museum, which would later be renamed the IWM. The initial scope of the museum, as “a record and memorial of the war” as defined by the Director General Sir Martin Conway (1857-1937), is focal to my thesis.<sup>6</sup> In commissioning the artists Kitson, Keane and Howson the IWM continued its efforts in memorialising conflicts and those who are involved in them, but it also begs the question whether the role of the museum in commissioning war artists is still relevant and justifiable.

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<sup>4</sup> Note these themes are not the only frameworks available to the art historian when examining the image of the soldier in art, however I will demonstrate that the academic literature I consulted highlighted their significance in the art of the First World War.

<sup>5</sup> Kavanagh. *Museums and the First World War*, 121.

<sup>6</sup> Memorandum on the Scope of the National War Museum. Sir Martin Conway to the First Commissioner, HM Office of Works, June 1917. IWM Central Files AI/3.

My thesis builds on extant scholarship on representations of wartime masculinity and brings together primary archival research from the IWM, official government correspondence, interview with the artists and close iconographical readings of the artists' works, with a specific focus on their depiction and representation of the soldier. The main three chapters in my thesis comprise research into the image of the soldier in the works produced by the artists Kitson, Keane and Howson for the IWM.

Kitson was the first female to go to a conflict zone as an official war artist. She produced nearly one hundred sketches while on the trip, of which sixty were selected by the IWM and forty were donated to the Fleet Air Museum.<sup>7</sup> I argue that although her commission was ground-breaking in terms of a female war artists, Kitson's work continued the tradition of the portrayal of the soldier as unharmed by war. The immediacy and intimacy of her drawings is seen in works such as *Mustering the Troops* (Figure: 1), which shows the individual soldier within the group waiting to disembark ship for the Falklands. Having spent the long journey to the Falklands on board ship with the soldiers, Kitson faced a personal dilemma of how much of the bodily cost of war she felt able to depict. In *Contemporary War Artists* Angela Weight notes that Kitson was three or four days behind the action and "witnessed little of the fighting or its consequences," but my research evidences she did experience the death and injury of many soldiers.<sup>8</sup> Kitson indicates a level of self-censorship, deliberately not recording injured soldiers, ostensibly because the photographer recorded this more effectively.<sup>9</sup> While her work does not present the soldier in exaggerated heroic terms, it informs the memorialisation of the Falklands soldiers as victorious heroes of war, who suffered

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<sup>7</sup> Shelley Saywell, *Women in War* (London: Viking, 1995), 259. Notes the Canadian, Kit Coleman was the first accredited female war correspondent, covered the Spanish–American war 1898.

<sup>8</sup> Angela Weight, *Contemporary War Artists*, IWM LBY K.97/1388, (London: Imperial War Museum, 1997), 3.

<sup>9</sup> Weight, *Contemporary War Artists*, 3.



neither injury nor death. I shall consider if her method of working directly onto paper was significant in shaping her decisions on which subjects to include in her work.

Keane used different working methods to Kitson during his 1990 commission in the Gulf, using a camera and notebook to record what he saw, then going on to construct paintings in the UK on his return. It is noteworthy that he was initially given the label 'official recorder' rather than a war artist, as the use of the term 'war artist' was discouraged in August 1990 when Britain and America were not yet at war with Iraq.<sup>10</sup> Keane spent time with different troops at a number of locations and he included soldiers in a many of his works, despite not experiencing the same close relationship to the forces as Kitson. My thesis maintains that Keane depicted a soldier who was a small part of a much larger war machine, but one who had his own agency. Keane also omitted the death and injury of soldiers; he was on board ship when much of the battle took place so he did not witness it directly. However, *Death Squad* (Figure: 2), showing soldiers carrying the dead in a body bag, was developed from television reporting after Keane returned home. This evidences that there was opportunity for Keane to create works showing the bodily cost of war on the soldier, which he did not choose to do. Keane's only images of death is of an Iraqi soldier he saw at the end of the war, which he created from his own photographs.

Howson was commissioned by the IWM to work in Bosnia in 1993. The Bosnian war presented a very different role for the forces, who attended the site of a violent civil war as part of humanitarian effort. This is evidenced in the work *Three Miles from Home* (Figure: 3) which shows the scene of a bomb attack on a group of buses that had been transporting refugees. During his early career, Howson briefly spent time in the army, where he experienced violence and bullying which would inform his later works and

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<sup>10</sup> Weight, *Contemporary War Artists*, 5.

his recurrent images of the soldier as vindictive bully. Although the predominant focus of criticism and reflection on his works was on the violent depiction of the civil war, I argue that, through his two visits to Bosnia, Howson produced a new insight into the role of the soldier. After having difficulty in producing sketches during his first trip, on his second trip he used a video recorder to film the events he witnessed, which was then used as a source for the paintings on his return. Howson also developed works from conversations and reports of the violence in the region, which provoked new debate in the press about the validity of painting events not actually witnessed. Media reporting and literature on his art during this period focused the visceral torture and rape scenes that were reminiscent of Goya's *Disasters of War*.<sup>11</sup> My thesis presents an alternative focus on his works by examining his relationship with the soldiers who served in the conflict and his depiction of them as guardian forces, there to assist the country to return to peace.

The scholarly contribution of my thesis originates from the comparatively unexplored war art in my corpus. In addition, my focus on the soldier within the works of this period presents new research in the field of art history. The nature of warfare has changed radically between the First World War and the conflicts that are the subject of this thesis. My research also presents a fresh exploration of the IWM as a commissioning institution as I question if their role is incompatible with the issues and understanding of the image of the soldier.

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<sup>11</sup> Francisco José de. Goya and Elie Faure, *The disasters of the war*, (Vienna: Phaidon Press and London : G. Allen & Unwin, 1937).

## Literature Review

The body of existing literature that is pertinent to my thesis can be organised into four main areas; research on the image and representation of the soldier, memorialisation of the soldier, the history and collections of the IWM, and the artists in my corpus. While none of the publications I consider in this literature review focus on the depiction of the soldier by the artists Kitson, Keane and Howson, the themes explored are equally pertinent to my research focus, either as a comparison to the artists in my corpus, or in relation to definitions of masculinity and highlight the originality of my research focus.

## The Soldier

In 2007 Gabriel Kouras considers “memory, both personal and collective, and definitions of masculinity” in his book *Memory, Masculinity, and National Identity in British Visual Culture, 1914-1930: A Study of "unconquerable manhood."*<sup>12</sup> Kouras illustrates his argument through memorials to the First World War relative to other forms of visual culture and examining how the first IWM exhibition was used to promote an ideal masculinity. My thesis critically examines his argument of homogeneity of male representation in the art commissioned and collected by the IWM during the Falklands, Gulf and Bosnian Wars. Kouras also argues that in the First World War the concept of mourning and commemoration is, “...embedded in middle and upper-class sensibilities.”<sup>13</sup> I will evidence that the background of each of the artist and their work prior to the commission is relevant to their selection by the IWM, and in turn the museum’s national collection. Kitson and Keane were educated at boarding school and the artists’ reputation was relevant to their selection. Kouras also notes existing studies have not examined, “...the relationship between those ideal versions of masculinity

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<sup>12</sup> Gabriel Koureas, *Memory, masculinity, and national identity in British visual culture, 1914-1930: A Study of Unconquerable Manhood* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2007).

<sup>13</sup> Koureas, *Memory, masculinity, and national identity*, 4.

projected in the commemoration of war and the masculinities they attempted to erase from any memories of war”.<sup>14</sup> My thesis critically examines this argument of homogeneity of male representation in the art commissioned and collected by the IWM in the art created in the Falklands, Gulf and Bosnian Wars.

In the 1996 publication *Dismembering the Male: Men's bodies, Britain and the Great War*, Joanna Bourke contends that the traditional methods of remembering soldiers in the First World War have been unrepresentative and over simplistic.<sup>15</sup> Bourke's chapter on the injury and mutilation experienced by many soldiers who survived the war examines social and political reactions. She also introduces the idealised concept of the soldier as a perfect and healthy specimen of manhood. This highlights a challenge in my research to observe the characteristics of the soldiers depicted in art. The traditional reason for remembrance of the soldier is after his death, and in Bourke's final chapter, she brings together art, photographs and literature on the subject of the fallen soldier in the First World War. Bourke considers that the male was literally and figuratively the embodiment of war. Her publication therefore provides a strong case study paradigm of the way in which the imagery of the art of the late twentieth century can be viewed in terms of documenting and visualising society in time of war. The only aspect of the publication which I have difficulty with is the chapter "Bonding" which looks at the unwillingness of society to examine the relationships between soldiers as anything but heterosexual. While she makes valid points around the expectations of sexuality in soldiers, my lack of evidence on the subject leads me to omit it from the scope of my research. She concludes every man saw the impact of war: that the injured, the dead, or those who were not good enough to fight, however during

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<sup>14</sup> Koureas, *Memory, masculinity, and national identity*, 4.

<sup>15</sup> Joanna Bourke, *Dismembering the Male: Men's Bodies, Britain and the Great War* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 1996).

the period of my research the wars did not have such a large social impact as the First World War.

Four years later, in 2000, Michael Paris returned to the discussion of the image of the soldier in art and media, with the publication *Warrior Nation: images of war in British popular culture, 1850-2000* by in 2000.<sup>16</sup> In this book, Paris examines representations of the soldier in publications aimed at boys and how went on to influence society. Paris concludes that the idea of a war as an exciting adventure reinforces its legitimacy, ensures recruitment and is an important model of masculine identity in the UK.<sup>17</sup> While the reasons behind many of the images of soldiers on posters in the First World War were to encourage recruitment, once mandatory conscription was decided the role of the image and its links soldier numbers might be thought to be reduced. Paris evidences this is not the case. Likewise, the image of the soldier in the contemporary IWM collection is part of the marketing of war. As I explore some of the issues the artists faced in the reception of their art, I consider if the strength of feeling was due to incompatibility between expectations of the heroic image of the soldier and the works produced by Kitson, Keane and Howson.

The artistic representation of the body in wartime is also explored in *Reconstructing the Body: Classicism, Modernism and the First World War* (2006) by Ana Carden-Coyne.<sup>18</sup> This publication is a wide investigation into the artistic representation of the body, where Carden-Coyne argues that the use of the visual and literary language of classicism softened the visceral blow of the shocking truths of war, most notably in memorial monuments. In the chapter “Culture Shock” she explores the reuse of the

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<sup>16</sup> Michael Paris, *Warrior Nation: Images of War in British Popular Culture, 1850-2000* (London: Reaktion Books, 2000).

<sup>17</sup> Lucy Noakes, review of *Warrior Nation Images of War in British Popular Culture 1850-2000*, (review no. 317) <http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/317>,

<sup>18</sup> Anna Carden-Coyne, *Reconstructing the Body: Classicism, Modernism, and the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

icon of the wounded soldier, observing the public's voyeuristic desire to see images of disfigurement as "Militarised bodies were transformed from the private to the public sphere".<sup>19</sup> She writes that war art testified to the violence and suffering experienced by soldiers and that exhibitions of art allowed the public to be "surrounded by the bodily drama of war".<sup>20</sup> War artists during the First World War did depict the death of soldiers, sometimes heroic and idealised, but also showing the bodily remains abandoned unceremoniously in muddy trenches. Despite the efforts of the Ministry of Information in ministry censoring works, they did not succeed in completely sanitising the depiction of war. Those in control of the IWM in the late twentieth century had the opportunity to shape the collection of war art through their selection of artists and the art they produced. I will also show that sensitivities over the museum's role as a family destination guided some of the selection decisions.

Bourke, Kouras and Carden-Coyne debate the representation and memorialisation of the body in the First World War, but a more contemporary reflection on images of soldiers in war is explored in the 2017 book *Portraits of Violence: War and the Aesthetics of Disfigurement* by Suzannah Biernoff.<sup>21</sup> She compares the pastel sketches of Henry Tonks (1862–1937), from the period he worked with reconstructive surgeon Harold Gillies (1882-1960), to more recent images of disfigurement, such as the photograph "Marine Wedding" by Nina Berman (2006). In the chapter "Aversion: A History" Biernoff examines the "stigma of disfigurement" in First World War Britain she maintains that artworks created were limited to clinical medical collections; politically charged reminders of the cost of war which were set aside to be forgotten.<sup>22</sup> Tonks was employed as a war artist by the Ministry of Information and his works are

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<sup>19</sup> Carden-Coyne, *Reconstructing the Body*, 75.

<sup>20</sup> Carden-Coyne, *Reconstructing the Body*, 91.

<sup>21</sup> Suzannah Biernoff, *Portraits of Violence: War and the Aesthetics of Disfigurement*. (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2017).

<sup>22</sup> Biernoff, *Portraits of Violence*, 18.

still part of the IWM collection, however his facial disfigurement studies are held by the Royal Institute of Surgeons. Beirnoff admits that this book is a “study of visual culture rather than a study of art” and she draws her research from a number of sources creating valid arguments around the human cost of industrialised war and society’s reactions to it.<sup>23</sup>

In 2008, Paul Gough examined the representation of the soldier in art in the paper ‘Exactitude is truth’: Representing the British military through commissioned artworks.<sup>24</sup> Gough presents his research on artists who work for the British Armed Services, focusing on David Rowlands. He concludes that the difference between the official war artists, who are the subject of my thesis, and artists commissioned by the Army, is due to their requirement to produce a very specific record of an event that happened, one that recognises the individuals and the unit taking part. He notes that the aim is “Through the transformational act of picture-making it can be brought back from obscured memory”.<sup>25</sup> This objective stands in contrast to the official war artists of the IWM who I argue are in the position of being able to define what is remembered about the conflict and the soldiers serving within it, based on their own experiences.

## Remembrance

My thesis examines contemporary art commissioned by the IWM in relation to the historical themes with a view to understanding how the role of the artists fits in with current theories of remembrance. A number of scholars have discussed the means through which society memorialises the events of war. Of these Fussell’s *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975), despite its focus on the literary means by which war

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<sup>23</sup> Biernoff, *Portraits of Violence*, 5.

<sup>24</sup> Paul Gough, “‘Exactitude is truth’: Representing the British military through commissioned artworks”, *Journal of War and Culture Studies*, 1 No 3 (2008): 341-356.

<sup>25</sup> Paul Gough, “‘Exactitude is truth’, 342.

is remembered and mythologised, provides an enduring insight into concepts of the imagined and realities of war.<sup>26</sup> In writing on the impact of these artists' works in the remembrance of the soldier, it would be remiss of me not to draw on Jay Winter's 1995 book *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History*.<sup>27</sup> This expansive work focusing on the methods by which communities have mourned the dead from the First World War, from the history of spiritualism and its role in visual and written culture, to the "film as a language of aesthetic redemption", provides a grounding for my thesis.<sup>28</sup> Winter does not define this book as a study of the representation of the soldier, but the soldier in death is a persistent theme. His 2006 work *Remembering War: the Great War and Historical Memory in the 20th Century* develops his study into the means by which the war is remembered, and sometimes subverted.<sup>29</sup> Although he notes that, "Memory is a process distinct from history", his definition of collective and individual memory, and his exploration of the term "witness" is significant in framing my investigation into the role of the contemporary war artist.<sup>30</sup> In my thesis, I propose that the official war artists built a representation of the conflict through their own experiences and interactions. The act of witness is personal and by no means the complete history of the conflict, likewise the depiction of the soldier by Kitson, Keane and Howson can never purport to be an image of *all* those who served in the conflict.

In Michael Walsh's chapter of the 2013 publication *The Silent Mourning: Culture and Memory After the Armistice*, which addresses issues around culture and memory, he notes the important role art has played in memorialising the First World War. Walsh

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<sup>26</sup> Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975).

<sup>27</sup> Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

<sup>28</sup> Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning*, 7.

<sup>29</sup> Jay Winter, *Remembering War: The Great War and Historical Memory in the 20th Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

<sup>30</sup> Winter, *Remembering War*, 7.



explores the "ethical, theoretical and practical considerations associated with the anticipation, and the creation of memory in painting".<sup>31</sup> After first giving a summary of the official artists' scheme in Britain he goes on to consider the contrasting priorities of the IWM and the Ministry in the First World War, one to create a permanent record of the war and the latter trying to memorialise it.<sup>32</sup> He also discusses the guidance that artists were given on the topics of the paintings, noting that the "...less palatable issues of filth, boredom, injury, mutiny, execution and so on were understandably not addressed".<sup>33</sup> This is relevant to my thesis as I examine some of the factors that affect the artists' choices in what to depict. The sentiment of Walsh's work is an example of the development of debate about the importance of war art in society. He illustrates his introduction to the topic with the bombing of at Enniskillen in 1987 when civilians were killed on Remembrance Sunday at the war memorial "the violation of both the sanctity of time and place...which triggered international disgust".<sup>34</sup> The act of terrorism at a site of memorialisation was viewed more seriously than other similar events that had gone before. He notes that to have a society who accepts military force is a necessity, requires the soldier to be presented and memorialised in a positive way, any desecration of this image is identified as an attack on the people the soldier served. My thesis considers if the artists in my corpus deviated or challenged the accepted representation of the soldier.

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<sup>31</sup> Michael Walsh, "Remembering, we forget, British Art at the Armistice," Tate, T and Kennedy, K (eds). *The Silent Mourning: Culture and Memory After the Armistice*. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2013, 264.

<sup>32</sup> Walsh, "Remembering, we forget, British Art at the Armistice", 260.

<sup>33</sup> Walsh, "Remembering, we forget, British Art at the Armistice, 271.

<sup>34</sup> Walsh, "Remembering, we forget, British Art at the Armistice", 362.

## The IWM and war art

The IWM has a significant historical role as a collector of art relating to war for the UK since 1917 and has been the subject of a range of scholarship, which are an important grounding for my investigation of the role of the institution. The 1994 publication *Museums and the First World War* by Gaynor Kavanagh places the inception of the museum within other exhibitions relating to war.<sup>35</sup> Kavanagh identifies that the initial purpose of the IWM was the propaganda drive to maintain public support in the war effort writing, “something had to be done to re-focus the nation on the war effort and convince people that the war was worthwhile. Propaganda, therefore, became an integral part of the Prime Minister’s ‘total war’ policy”.<sup>36</sup> My thesis examines the focus of the IWM on both nationalism and imperialism in these early years, as I look to the driving forces behind the commissioning of contemporary artists for these contemporary conflicts. Kavanagh highlights that during establishment of the museum, the collection policy specified that they acquire only eyewitness, as opposed to studio artwork.<sup>37</sup> This sentiment on the importance of art created following or during visits to the war-zones has continued with the artists that are the focus of my research. Kitson, Keane and Howson all experienced conflict first hand, but while Kitson produced all of her works in the field, Keane and Howson used technology to record events and then developed works from these. Howson also used the stories told to him about the atrocities to create works, which created a tension between the artist and the IWM. As the museum also purchased works by artists who had not visited the conflict, my thesis will compare the driving forces behind the art collection of the IWM in the late twentieth century with the goals of the museum when it was created. Kavanagh also

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<sup>35</sup> Gaynor Kavanagh, *Museums and the First World War: A Social History* (London and New York: Leicester University Press, 1994). The book is based on Kavanagh’s MPhil thesis at Leicester University in 1985, following her study into the history of museums.

<sup>36</sup> Kavanagh, *Museums and the First World War*, 122.

<sup>37</sup> Kavanagh, *Museums and the First World War*, 138.

introduces the means by which museums represent a 'broad cultural identity' a place of 'Britishness'.<sup>38</sup> This theme is evident in many works of war art during the First World War.

In 2000, Sue Malvern questioned the intentions of the IWM in light of its diverse role as a war museum in the journal article *War, memory and museums: Art and artefact in the Imperial War Museum*.<sup>39</sup> While the museum includes both art and the machines and objects of war, Malvern comments on the importance of war art in the reframing of understanding of conflict, noting, "Rituals of remembrance in post-war Britain emphasized sacrifice and resurrection, suggesting that the dead had died in a state of grace and that their deaths could redeem the living".<sup>40</sup> This affirms the role of Kitson, Keane and Howson in producing art relating to the conflicts, one that will go on to stand as a permanent record of the wars for which they were commissioned.

Malvern also published *War Tourisms: 'Englishness', Art, and the First World War* (2001) where she argues that the view of the otherness of the battleground was anglicised by the war artists in the First World War.<sup>41</sup> She maintains that the method artists used to depict the landscape in this conflict was symbolic of the soldier. The destruction of the landscape during the war analogous to the death and injury that the soldier was experiencing. In addition, she comments that an anglicisation of the foreign land was a necessity to make it easy for the English viewer to empathise with the conflict. I shall consider this argument in my thesis, examining how the artists have used the landscape in which the soldier is placed. Malvern also notes that stoicism is another national characteristic that was used in the First World War to depict the

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<sup>38</sup> Kavanagh, *Museums and the First World War*, 171.

<sup>39</sup> Sue Malvern, "War, memory and museums: Art and artefact in the Imperial War Museum". *History Workshop Journal* 49 (2000): 177-203.

<sup>40</sup> Malvern, "War, memory and museums," 185.

<sup>41</sup> Sue Malvern, "War Tourisms: 'Englishness', Art, and the First World War," *Oxford Art Journal* 24, no. 1 (2001): 47-66.

soldier. She notes; “Being a soldier, risking death, is a test, not of people in general, but specifically of manhood. War, it might be said, makes men of boys as childbirth makes a woman of a girl”.<sup>42</sup> While many soldiers would undoubtedly experience fear, my research will establish if and how the artists in my corpus have portrayed this.

Malvern went on to publish a key source relating to the commissioning of war art in the First World War: *Modern Art, Britain and the Great War* (2004).<sup>43</sup> Here she highlights the links of modernism and masculinity, illustrating the argument by using the early work of C. R. W. Nevinson (1889-1946) and Jacob Epstein (1880-1959). Malvern subsequently documents the involvement of artists in the First World War, the creation of the government bodies overseeing this relationship; the Propaganda Bureau and the Ministry of Information, and highlights issues of censorship and truth within works. She examines the different representations of war and remembrance during this period, from the civic memorials developed by the Memorials Committee to the newspaper coverage of the war through photography and illustration and within posters. In a number of detailed case studies, she demonstrates the variety of works produced, arguing that modernism in art flourished in the First World War. While I agree that the war enabled artists to work with new and challenging subjects, not all produced modernist works, as can be evidenced in the works of artists such as Muirhead Bone (1876-1953), the first war artist to be commissioned. Malvern’s publication is a key source for my research primarily because of on the depth of archival investigation into the early years of the IWM.

In mapping the change in commissioned art at the IWM from the First World War to the conflicts at the end of the twentieth century, it is also important to consider the art

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<sup>42</sup> Malvern, “War Tourisms,” 62.

<sup>43</sup> Sue Malvern *Modern Art, Britain and the Great War: Witnessing, Testimony, and Remembrance*. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004).

produced in the Second World War. Key to this understanding is the 2007 work by Brian Foss's *War Paint: Art, War, State and Identity in Britain, 1939-1945*, which documents the organisation and involvement of war artists, the work produced and the social changes that affected the whole country as well as producing a summary of the artistic themes.<sup>44</sup> Many of the works during this period focused on the impact of the war in the UK as German forces bombed population centres such as London, but there were also a large number of artists present in other areas of Europe and the Middle East.<sup>45</sup> Foss notes that the in the Royal Air Force portraits of British personnel made up a large proportion of the subjects, which reinforced the "cult of self-sacrificing hero".<sup>46</sup> He comments that this was not the only depiction of the soldier in Second World War art as other artists such as Edward Ardizzone (1900-1979) presented a naval force engaged in routine duties.<sup>47</sup> While the scope of my thesis does not allow me to present an exhaustive comparison of the works of Kitson, Keane and Howson with those in the Second World War, I will draw on Foss's extensive research in informing my argument on how these artists have been grounded or extended earlier war art. In his chapter 'State Patronage and National Culture', Foss argues that Kenneth Clark attempted to curate a move away from traditional representations of war to that of a more modernist and contemporary style.<sup>48</sup> When the IWM reinstated their work in commissioning artists they carried forward this heritage of deciding whom and with what style would create art for the public collection. My archival research into the commissioning of Kitson, Keane and Howson will examine the decisions made by the IWM and compare their works with others who were not commissioned. I argue that the agency of the IWM is still evident in these decisions, and even though they had no control over what

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<sup>44</sup> Brian Foss, *War Paint: Art, War, State and Identity in Britain, 1939-1945* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007).

<sup>45</sup> Foss, *War Paint*, 117.

<sup>46</sup> Foss, *War Paint*, 120.

<sup>47</sup> Foss, *War Paint*, 123.

<sup>48</sup> Foss, *War Paint*, 197.

the artist would produce, the act of selection from the works further evidences the power of the institution in shaping what is represented of the soldier in the public collection.

In 1993, Ziva Amishai-Mailsels produced the extensive publication *Depiction and Interpretation: The Influence of the Holocaust on the Visual Arts*.<sup>49</sup> In this, she examines the issues around creating art from the violence experienced in war. Amishai-Mailsels introduces five reasons for creating art in response to such abhorrent tragedy: official art; spiritual resistance; affirmation and commemoration of life; art as witness; and catharsis.<sup>50</sup> I argue that although Kitson, Keane and Howson were commissioned to document war by the IWM they also had other personal drivers in their work, which I will explore further in each chapter. The artists were immersed in the landscape of war and had direct contact with the soldiers they were depicting and each saw death first hand. Therefore, while they were employed as witness to war, this is not without complexity, for they "...must choose not only what to depict but how to depict it".<sup>51</sup> Building on this concept, my thesis examines the commissioned art produced in the context of reportage, documentary and protest. My research extends the reading of the works in my case studies by examining the intent the artists, their opinions of the conflict and their relationship to the soldiers.

Laura Brandon presented a wider view of the history of art relating to conflict in her 2012 book *Art and War*.<sup>52</sup> This publication chronicles an expansive history of war art, in which she places Kitson, Keane and Howson within a summary of the history of the conflicts, the reception to the works and contextualises their work within other artist of

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<sup>49</sup> Ziva Amishai-Mailsels, *Depiction and Interpretation: The Influence of the Holocaust on the Visual Arts* (Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann Ltd, 1993).

<sup>50</sup> Amishai-Mailsels, *Depiction and Interpretation*, 3.

<sup>51</sup> Amishai-Mailsels, *Depiction and Interpretation*, 6.

<sup>52</sup> Laura Brandon, *Art and War* (London, New York: I. B. Tauris, 2012).

the time. However, my thesis develops this further and considers what characterisation of the soldier the artists are asking the viewer to remember in their work. Brandon includes a summary of the events leading the establishment of the IWM but also examines events in art in Germany at the same time. The scope of Brandon's publication includes all forms of art relating to war: from the photograph and poster to sculpture and architecture. This wide-reaching remit does of course mean that artists are not investigated in depth but she does question the links war art has with propaganda, commissioning and use. On the subject of art and truth she comments: "We expect war art to be truthful – in so many cases, after all, the artist was there – and it is sometimes hard to accept that a piece may not be an eyewitness account as much as a synthesis of things seen, remembered and read about".<sup>53</sup> She later voices some issue with Howson's work in Bosnia, such as that showing rape not actually witnessed: "...was it a wish to bring home the almost unimaginable brutality of war by transforming that same level of horror to the imaginable?"<sup>54</sup> In chapter nine, "War Art as Memorial, War Art as Memory" she applies concepts from Susan Sontag on the relationship between image and memory to the subject of war. Brandon describes the activities around the anniversaries of the First and Second World Wars "a culture of remembrance" and the war art and memorials becoming "'sites of memory' for a public eager to reflect on war".<sup>55</sup> In her chapters on the twentieth century Brandon summarises the conflict events and the war art created in Britain, USA, Canada and other nations highlighting the way artists are able to provide social comment on war. Brandon defines war art as "humankind portrayed at its best and at its worst...the record of civilization when life takes second place to death. It is the place where we reflect and

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<sup>53</sup> Brandon, *Art and War*, 7.

<sup>54</sup> Brandon, *Art and War*, 97.

<sup>55</sup> Brandon, *Art and War*, 102.

remember”.<sup>56</sup> It is notable that, although the soldier is not central in her research, it is central in the works she uses as case studies.

The 2015 publication, *Art from Contemporary Conflict* by Sara Bevan catalogues some of the important artists and works created from 1980 to 2015, held by the IWM, and provides a useful starting point for investigation into the decisions at the museum behind the commissioning of the war art.<sup>57</sup> Bevan’s publication includes an overview of a diverse collection of more than sixty contemporary artists in the IWM collection: filmmakers, painters, sculptors and installation artists, which includes Kitson, Keane and Howson. She argues, “Working away from the limitations and pressures of journalism artists can propose ideas, urging the viewer to think more deeply about what war is, about its immediate impact and its long term repercussions”.<sup>58</sup> On Kitson, she comments on the critics of her work but notes, “her loose sense of drawing conveys an immediacy and intimacy with which she distances herself from press sensationalism”.<sup>59</sup> The book gives a summary of Howson’s experience in creating works related to this conflict, stating he “initially struggled to create images that he felt adequately reflected the particular horror”.<sup>60</sup> For Keane she recounts the criticism faced by the artist from the newspaper press, and comments: “The ensuing furore highlighted the discrepancy between the public expectations of the war artist’s role, and the artist’s compulsion to reflect on his own experience”.<sup>61</sup> Bevan notes the role of the IWM is to raise debate around issues of conflict, but it is her comment on the one of the strands of the

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<sup>56</sup> Brandon, *Art and War*, 131.

<sup>57</sup> Sarah Bevan, *Art from Contemporary Conflict* (London: Imperial War Museum, 2015).

<sup>58</sup> Bevan, *Art from Contemporary Conflict*, 4.

<sup>59</sup> Bevan, *Art from Contemporary Conflict*, 72.

<sup>60</sup> Bevan, *Art from Contemporary Conflict*, 70.

<sup>61</sup> Bevan, *Art from Contemporary Conflict*, 29.



collections being as “a meditation on the nature of memory” which is relevant to my thesis.<sup>62</sup>

Also produced by the IWM is *Contemporary War Artists*, (1997), which due to its summary of the three artists in my corpus, is central to my thesis.<sup>63</sup> In the introduction, it is noted that the commissions and subsequent exhibitions of all the artists “provoked substantial press reaction and promoted a new awareness of the existence of war artists.”<sup>64</sup> My research presents the findings of archival research into the reception of the war art produced by Kitson, Keane and Howson, and compares the expectations of the role of the war artist with the outputs. *Contemporary War Artists* draws no parallels between each of the artists, and does not make any attempt to discuss the selection process, the implications of the art, the treatment of the subject of war or indeed the soldiers which were depicted in the works.

Linda Kitson

Kitson was the subject of *The Falklands War: A Visual Diary*, which was published in 1982 by the IWM to support the exhibition of her work.<sup>65</sup> In this book, the artworks are accompanied by short descriptions by the artist explaining the context of the drawing. The foreword written by Fredrick Gore, Chairman of the Artistic Records Committee at the IWM and an introduction by Kitson describes the activities on the trip to the Falklands, Kitson’s relationship with the troops and reflection of the work from the long journey to the Falklands with the British forces. While the content of the book shows the range of works she produced and considers some of the challenges faced by

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<sup>62</sup> Bevan, *Art from Contemporary Conflict*, 4.

<sup>63</sup> Angela Weight, *Contemporary War Artists*, IWM LBY K.97/1388, (London: Imperial War Museum), 1997.

<sup>64</sup> Weight, *Contemporary War Artists*, 1.

<sup>65</sup> Linda Kitson, *The Falklands War: A Visual Diary* (London: Mitchell Beazley in association with the Imperial War Museum, 1982).

the artist during the commission, Kitson felt this hurriedly published book had a negative effect on the reception of her art, due to the scrapbook style.<sup>66</sup> However as it is significant in being the only extensive publication on her works, it remains important to my thesis.

A more critical viewpoint of the role of visual culture in the Falklands war is found in *Framing the Falklands War: Nationhood, Culture and Identity* (1992), edited by James Aulich. This collection of essays investigate areas of cultural practices from media reporting, film and art in the context of the Falklands War.<sup>67</sup> The only chapter to place Kitson's work in the context of other art produced at the time is that by Tim Wilcox "We are All Falklanders Now': Art, War and National Identity". While commenting, "...artists [from the First World War] were sent to fulfil what was essentially a propaganda function", he goes on to introduce the employment of Kitson against a tide of nationalistic visual imagery that was prevalent during this period.<sup>68</sup> He implies that she was a choice that was uncontentious, and it was expected her works would not be critical of the war.<sup>69</sup> Wilcox goes on to conclude that that Kitson was the only artist to have "privileged access" to the conflict, being selected because she was "officer class by birth".<sup>70</sup> He notes there was also a media expectation that Kitson "...would be able to display some form of unique, almost magical insight into the grim reality of combat which they had been denied in the press through censorship", but that she produced work that neither showed the horrors of war or any "oppositional statement to the Thatcher government".<sup>71</sup> Wilcox maintains that her drawings are in the tradition of the

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<sup>66</sup> Linda Kitson interview with Jayne Buchanan (17 May 2017).

<sup>67</sup> James Aulich, ed. *Framing the Falklands War: Nationhood, Culture and Identity* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1992).

<sup>68</sup> Tim Wilcox, "We are All Falklanders Now': Art, War and National Identity," *Framing the Falklands War: Nationhood, Culture and Identity*, ed James Aulich, (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1992), 59.

<sup>69</sup> Wilcox, "We are All Falklanders Now': Art, War and National Identity," 60.

<sup>70</sup> Wilcox, "We are All Falklanders Now", 59.

<sup>71</sup> Wilcox, "We are All Falklanders Now", 59.

war artists as reporter and lack the cultural and ideological debate that was demonstrated by artists who were not present at the conflict, such as Jock McFadyen (b.1950).<sup>72</sup> He notes the media response to the subsequent exhibition at the IWM focused on the physical characteristics of the artist and the difficulty of working in the conflict, the art not fitting the expected stereotypes of war art.<sup>73</sup> As Wilcox did not include any detailed iconographical analysis of Kitson's work, or consider the role of the soldier specifically, my thesis shall extend his consideration of Kitson's work. The preconceptions of what a war artist, and especially what a female war artist, might depict, went on to frame expectations of what Kitson would create during her commission in the Falklands. As Wilcox (1992) comments: "neither she nor her artistic production were assailable within the stereotypes of either women or artistic images of war".<sup>74</sup> I will discuss if the media preoccupation with gender stereotypes went so far as to trivialise her work through newspaper reporting. My research will extend the work by Wilcox by focusing on the soldier in Kitson's art in the milieu of other artists responding to the conflict, from the photographers who travelled with the troops in a similar way to Kitson, to those such as Michael Peel (b.1940) and Jock McFayden (b.1950) who did not visit the Falklands.

My thesis does not feature discussion on the role of women in war art, outside that produced by Kitson. She has been included in the 2011 IWM publication *Women War Artists* by Kathleen Palmer, where she is situated in the context of the artists from the twentieth century.<sup>75</sup> While the focus of the book is wide ranging with only a small section on Kitson, Palmer notes that "in the absence of much independent media coverage, [her works] form an important record of the events."<sup>76</sup> Shelley Saywell's

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<sup>72</sup> Wilcox, "We are All Falklanders Now," 63.

<sup>73</sup> Wilcox, "We are All Falklanders Now," 63.

<sup>74</sup> Wilcox, "We are All Falklanders Now," 62.

<sup>75</sup> Kathleen Palmer, *Women War Artists* (London: Tate Publishing, 2011).

<sup>76</sup> Palmer, *Women War Artists*, 19.

1995 book *Women in War*, presents a smaller selection of case studies of women's experience in wars from around the world from a biographical viewpoint. In the chapter on the Falklands, her interview with Kitson does not appraise her role as a war artist, but it is an insight into the events around the commission and Kitson's thoughts on the impact of her work. Notable is Kitson's comment when asked what she would like to have done differently, that she wished she had done more to "counter all the films, which are so successful in portraying war as a grand venture, thrilling exciting."<sup>77</sup> The AHRC funded doctoral student Clare Carolin also produced a paper in 2016 comparing the depiction of Kitson in the media with other women at the time, such as the women who demonstrated at Greenham Common against nuclear sites in Britain had impact on her reception in the media and ultimately the reaction to her art.<sup>78</sup> I have drawn on this content in my chapter on Kitson, specifically where considering the ways in which the media represented the artists following her commission. Carolin is currently working on a Doctoral thesis notionally titled "*Bring the War Home: Civic Participation, Citizenship Rituals and the Representation of Conflict in Contemporary Art*", which will include Kitson's work, examining IWM's programme of commissioning contemporary artists, however, she omits to consider the representational implications of Kitson's work in relation to the soldier specifically.<sup>79</sup>

My investigation of the portrayal of the soldier during this contemporary period include comparison of Kitson's depiction of the soldier with the representation of the army in the national press as they played an important role in presenting a narrative of the conflict to those in the UK. As Kevin Foster notes in *Fighting Fictions* (1999), the

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<sup>77</sup> Shelley Saywell, *Women in War* (London: Viking, 1995), 277.

<sup>78</sup> Claire Carolin, (University of Oxford), *Women, War and the Transformation of Britain: Linda Kitson and the Falklands Conflict*. Paper delivered at the conference *Canon (es) in dispute: The narrations of modernity and its conflicts*, Aula Magna of the Faculty of Geography and History, University of Barcelona November 23, 2016

<sup>79</sup> Summary of her work found in the Ruskin website: <http://www.rsa.ox.ac.uk/people/clare-carolin>.

taking of the Falkland Islands by the Argentine forces “marked a new low in Britain’s Post Imperial history of disentanglement”.<sup>80</sup> Foster argued that the hero figure was fundamental in the media representation of the conflict, as he explains: “The war in the Falklands consecrated the soldier hero as both the agent of the Nation’s return to its ‘rightful and necessary identity’ and the embodiment of that identity”.<sup>81</sup> This view of the soldier as hero is in contrast to Joanna Bourke’s examination of the representation of the male in the First World War in *Dismembering the Male: Men's Bodies, Britain and the Great War* (1996).<sup>82</sup> As Kitson resisted depicting the burnt, injured and dead soldiers she saw during the Falklands war, I will explore Kitson’s depiction of the injured soldier with reference to Suzannah Birenoff’s excellent book *Portraits of Violence: War and the Aesthetics of Disfigurement* and Gabriel Koureas’s book *Memory, masculinity, and national identity in British visual culture*, (2007).<sup>83 84</sup>

The work of Michael Paris in the book *Warrior Nation* (2000) is pertinent to my thesis, as he considers the Falklands conflict in light of the exciting action and pleasure culture that surrounds the representation of war.<sup>85</sup> He notes,

although the Falklands War provides an interesting case study of a conflict, initially enjoying considerable support as a justified military action, and containing all the elements for entertainment purposes, is not automatically subsumed into the pleasure culture of war.<sup>86</sup>

He goes on to comment that the expectations of war were compounded by the technological restrictions of the conflict, “The absence, or delayed screenings of images

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<sup>80</sup> Kevin Foster, *Fighting Fictions: war narrative and national identity* (Michigan: Pluto Press, 1999), 9.

<sup>81</sup> Foster, *Fighting Fiction*, 82.

<sup>82</sup> Joanna Bourke, *Dismembering the Male: Men's Bodies, Britain and the Great War*. (London: Reaktion, 1996).

<sup>83</sup> Suzannah Birenoff, *Portraits of Violence: War and the Aesthetics of Disfigurement* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2017).

<sup>84</sup> Gabriel Koureas, *Memory, masculinity, and national identity in British visual culture, 1914-1930 : a study of "unconquerable manhood"* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2007).

<sup>85</sup> Michael Paris, *Warrior Nation: Images of War in British Popular Culture, 1850-2000* (London: Reaktion, 2000).

<sup>86</sup> Paris, *Warrior Nation*, 244.

from the Task Force enabled the war to be presented as a replay of World War Two”.<sup>87</sup> This is a viewpoint that highlights the importance in examining the reception of Kitson’s depiction of the conflict, and asking if the works were viewed through the frame of art created in previous wars. My thesis applies this notion and examines how Kitson’s representation of the soldier compared to the public expectation of entertainment and their ultimate disappointment at the realities of a conflict where lives were lost despite a victory for a nation.

As part of the research for my thesis, I was also able to consult the interviews with Kitson held at the IWM archives, which provides a source of her reflection on the events during her commission, and any motivations she had in producing the drawings and compare this with my own interview with the artist.<sup>88</sup>

### John Keane

Existing literature on Keane is limited to a few publications, three of which are published through Keane’s agent, Flowers Gallery, who have a role in ensuring promotion of the artist, likewise the IWM publication was designed to support their commissioning decisions.

The book *Gulf* (1992) was produced by the IWM and the Flowers Gallery to support the exhibition of these works.<sup>89</sup> It contains an introduction by Alan Borg, Director General of the museum and a narration of the works by Angela Weight, Keeper of the Department of Art. As Weight notes, Keane’s interest in art about conflict was clear, “If Keane had never gone to the gulf he would have still made paintings about war”.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Paris, *Warrior Nation*, 246.

<sup>88</sup> IWM 13727.

<sup>89</sup> John Keane and Angela Weight, *Gulf* (London: Imperial War Museum, 1992).

<sup>90</sup> Keane and Weight, *Gulf*, 10.

Although this publication provides an insight to Keane's commission, her contemplation of his works rarely includes the soldiers featured.

Mark Lawson produced *John Keane: Conflicts of Interest* in 1995 through Mainstream Publishing, but in conjunction with Flowers Gallery.<sup>91</sup> This book gives a chronological overview of Keane's work and a more expansive examination of the work during the Gulf War, providing an insight into the events and emotional response of the artist as he worked in the conflict zone. Lawson, a journalist for the *Guardian* newspaper, reported on the Gulf War and knew Keane socially prior to writing the book. It could be argued that this is more an objective work, however as it was jointly funded by Flowers Gallery and has been written by a friend it contains no critical comparison with other artists work during this period.

In 2004, Joan Bakewell published a book *John Keane: Back to Fundamentals* with the Flowers Gallery, in support of an exhibition in the same year.<sup>92</sup> The textural contribution of this book is an interview with Keane where he discusses his art and his career up to 2002. This book is again a form of advertising for both the artist and the gallery, although it does provide background to the motivations for his work.

Lawson produced another publication on Keane in 2015, this time published by the Flowers Gallery, *Troubles in my Sight: The Art of John Keane*, which provides more background on earlier works by Keane but does not extend investigation into the image of the soldier.<sup>93</sup> The publication is organised thematically, and as with the other publications I have mentioned, is built around interviews with Keane, and involves no

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<sup>91</sup> Mark Lawson, *John Keane: Conflicts of Interest* (Edinburgh, London: Mainstream in conjunction with Angela Flowers Gallery, 1995).

<sup>92</sup> Joan Bakewell, *John Keane: Back to Fundamentals* (London: Flowers East, 2004).

<sup>93</sup> Mark Lawson, *Troubles My Sight: The Art of John Keane* (London: Flowers East, 2015).

comparisons with other artists. The impact of Keane's work in documenting the Gulf War is stressed in the foreword to this publication where Brian Eno notes,

Something of that ominous charge is present in many of John Keane's paintings. Although their subjects are often horrific, what is more unsettling about them is the sense of *having been present*. They don't feel like pictures *about* the scenes they show; instead they seem to come right out of those scenes as if there were there as they were happening... In a time of increasingly explicit detail, Keane realises that it's the *distillation* of detail that catches imagination, that makes us engaged.<sup>94</sup>

These biographies provide a rich source of information on the events relating to his early career and during the commission, which I will supplement with my own interview with Keane, archival research and case study investigation of the works he produced.

Laura Brandon mentions Keane in the publication *Art and War* (2012), although she focuses predominately on *Mickey Mouse at The Front* (Figure: 123), which does not contain soldiers, and the reaction in the press to its perceived insult to America.<sup>95</sup>

Keane is also included in the IWM's *Art from Contemporary Conflict* (2015) by Sarah Bevan where the same image is included.<sup>96</sup> In 2011, Paul Gough wrote the article *The artist at war: 'A very dangerous type of spectator'* for the National Army Museum, New Zealand where he includes a brief summary of Keane's commission, methods and the reception to his work in the context of war art more generally.<sup>97</sup> He comments on the ability of Keane's work to transcend preconceptions of war art,

Keane's provocative paintings teeter cannily between polemic and portrayal, between reportage and rasping commentary. They mimic the clean graphic language of 24-hour media coverage, seducing us into accepting the imagery as irrefutable fact, but by using a rich menu of techniques – collages of battlefield detritus, photographs of bomb patterns, dollar signs 'framing' the action - he

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<sup>94</sup> Lawson, *Troubles My Sight*, 7.

<sup>95</sup> Laura Brandon, *Art and War*, (London, New York: I. B. Tauris, 2012).

<sup>96</sup> Sarah Bevan, *Art from Contemporary Conflict* (London: Imperial War Museum, 2015).

<sup>97</sup> Paul Gough, *The artist at war: 'A very dangerous type of spectator'* (New Zealand: National Army Museum, 2011). Uploaded to Acedemia.edu, accessed 01/09/2018.

[http://www.academia.edu/412499/The\\_artist\\_at\\_war\\_A\\_very\\_dangerous\\_type\\_of\\_spectator](http://www.academia.edu/412499/The_artist_at_war_A_very_dangerous_type_of_spectator)



constantly reminds us of the materiality of war, and the underlying cause of conflict – territory, financial sovereignty, resources, power. Combining ocular authority, irrefutable proof with savage commentary, Keane has become that most potent of painters.<sup>98</sup>

As Gough notes, Keane utilised a technique of developing works from sketches, photographs and found objects once he had returned home. Allowing him to reflect and produce paintings that included textural forms that commented on the events he had witnessed. I will show that this method allowed Keane to produce compositions that depicted the soldier as part of a larger system of war.

Keane's use of photography during his commission, as a source from which to derive his paintings, makes these works important to consider in addition to his depiction of soldiers. Although there are no academic publications which examine photography during this period, PhD candidate Erica Payet is working to address this omission through her thesis *The legacy of the First Persian Gulf War in the history of photojournalism*. While her focus is on photojournalism and not war art, it may serve to provide an adjunct to my appreciation of Keane's paintings.

#### Peter Howson

Early comments on Howson are limited to newspaper reports and exhibition publications during his time spent at the Glasgow School of Art from an exhibition with Steven Campbell, Stephen Conroy, Ken Currie and Adrian Wiszniewski in the 1980's. The press labelled this group of artists as the "New Glasgow Boys" due to their attendance at the Glasgow School of Art and their dynamic figuratism.<sup>99</sup> Howson was also among seventeen artists featured in, *The Vigorous Imagination: New Scottish Art*

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<sup>98</sup> Gough, *The artist at war*, 2011.

<sup>99</sup> Although this was a term used to describe earlier male artists from Glasgow who had an interest in rural realism, as noted in the 1968 publication *The Glasgow Boys: An Exhibition of Work by the Group of Artists who Flourished in Glasgow 1880-1900*, Scottish Arts Council, 1968. The term was appropriated in the press as the New Glasgow Boys. Recent exhibition (2017) *The Vigorous Imagination: Then and now* at The Fine Art Society in Edinburgh, and *The Vigorous Imagination – Revisited* at Roger Billcliffe Gallery in Glasgow returned to the artists, including Howson.

presented at the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art in 1987, where he is noted for masculine focused works depicting the homeless and rough sleepers of Glasgow. It notes Howson's works are full of "futility and tragedy...weighed down by the constant struggle to survive".<sup>100</sup>

In the 1991 catalogue, which supported the exhibition *Blind Leading the Blind*, Robert Heller comments that Howson "belongs to the great tradition of figurative painters, in love with paint, colour and line, who use their imaginative and descriptive power to create worlds of their own drawn from and illuminating all human life".<sup>101</sup> The concept of hero is evident in some of these early works, as Heller notes Howson has the ability to elevate those overlooked in society, living in "the violent, dark underworld" to heroic figures.<sup>102</sup>

Robert Heller also published *Peter Howson* in 1993, documenting Howson's background and early years.<sup>103</sup> He presents Howson's work thematically in chapters including *Expressionism*, *The Common Man*, *Patriots* and *Portraits*. While the chapter called *Turning Point* features drawings and paintings produced in response to his brief time in the army, this book was published prior to Howson's commission in Bosnia, so features no exploration of the continuing theme of the soldier.

The IWM exhibition publication, *Peter Howson: Bosnia* (1994) contains an introduction by Alan Borg, Director General of the IWM, a foreword by Peter Stothard, who was editor at *The Times*, and essays by Robert Crampton and Richard Cork.<sup>104</sup> The publication explores the works Howson produced during the commission and attempts to interpret Howson's response to the traumatic events he witnessed. It also contains

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<sup>100</sup> *Vigorous Imagination: New Scottish Art*, (Edinburgh: Scottish Gallery on Modern Art, 1987).

<sup>101</sup> Robert Heller and David Kiehl, *Blind Leading the Blind* (London: Flowers Gallery, 1991), 4.

<sup>102</sup> Heller and Kiehl, *Blind Leading the Blind*, 4.

<sup>103</sup> Robert Heller, *Peter Howson* (Edinburgh and London: Mainstream, 1993).

<sup>104</sup> Peter Howson, *Bosnia* (London: Imperial War Museum, 1994).

extracts from interviews with Howson, which are an important opportunity to acquire Howson's viewpoint on the conflict. Although this book provides details on the activities of the artist in Bosnia and the reception of the works in the media, any critical evaluation is based on supporting the works created.

Two years after Howson's commission in Bosnia Alan Jackson published , *A Different Man: Peter Howson's art, from Bosnia and Beyond* (1997). This places Howson's time in Bosnia within the context of his life and gives "insight into the personality and motivation...the story of one man's attempt to make sense of the world".<sup>105</sup> Jackson portrays Howson's brief period as an enlisted soldier as significant in the violent content of Howson's art, as he notes it was "one of the most formative experiences of his life".<sup>106</sup> However, there is no comprehensive examination of the image of the soldier against general themes in art history. Jackson's publication omits any critical evaluation of the artworks in Bosnia and provides no comparison with other art during the conflict.

It is noteworthy to comment that Heller is the husband of Angela Flowers (Director of Flowers Gallery and Howson's agent), which might explain why in 2003, Heller returns to the subject of Howson, extending his 1993 publication and presenting the artist's works chronologically.<sup>107</sup> Despite Heller's recognition that the image of the soldier was significant in early works, he does not refer to the changing depiction of the soldier when considering the Bosnian war art. Instead, his focus on the transition "from Bosch to Goya", "the nightmares made of flesh", overpower any consideration of the soldiers who are present in many of the Bosnian works.<sup>108</sup> I will show in my thesis that

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<sup>105</sup> Alan Jackson, *A Different Man: Peter Howson's art, from Bosnia and beyond* (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 1997).

<sup>106</sup> Jackson, *A Different Man*, 12.

<sup>107</sup> Robert Heller, *Peter Howson* (London: Momentum, 2003).

<sup>108</sup> Robert Heller, *Peter Howson* (London: Momentum, 2003), 99.

despite Howson's own negative experience in the Army, he represents the UK forces in the Bosnian War positively.

Paul Gough comments in an article for the National Army Museum in 2011, that Howson's "mental anguish at the horrors of war were brilliantly translated into stark figurative images of its aftermath."<sup>109</sup> Gough goes on to consider the requirement of the war artist to "balance between objective fact and subjective comment" as he draws comparisons between Howson and some of the artists of the First World War.<sup>110</sup> However, the significance of my thesis is asserted as he does not discuss the depiction of the UK soldier's in Howson's works.

Laura Brandon refers to Howson in the publication *Art and War* (2012) noting Howson was one of many artists to explore "The brutality of the Yugoslav wars" and "humanity's relationship with violence."<sup>111</sup> Brandon's focus is in the validity of a war artist depicting scenes of violence that the artist has not witnessed. She observes some of his works were of "rumoured atrocities", where there was an expectation that works should be "in some degree truthful".<sup>112</sup> Brandon does not remark on the image of the soldier in his works, but instead focuses on the debate over the validity of depicting known, but unseen images – implying a lack of sensitivity.

The painting *Cleansed* is featured in the 2015 book *Art from Contemporary Conflict* by Sara Bevan and is accompanied by text which notes he initially "struggled to create images that accurately reflected the particular horror of that war" and that this image of refugees is "almost grotesque...reminiscent of the crowds in early medieval

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<sup>109</sup> Paul Gough, P. *The artist at war: 'A very dangerous type of spectator'* (New Zealand: National Army Museum, 2011).

<sup>110</sup> Gough *The artist at war*, 7.

<sup>111</sup> Laura Brandon, *Art and War* (London: I B Tauris & Co Ltd, 2012).

<sup>112</sup> Brandon, *Art and War*, 96.

paintings”.<sup>113</sup> This is a reference not without precedence as in 1991 Howson created a series of works titled *Blind Leading the Blind* that was inspired by Pieter Bruegel the elder (c.1525–1569).

While many of the publications I have included in my literature review do not attempt to contextualise the works of the three artists within the milieu of art at that time or within the setting of war art that has gone before, they do provide some insight into the reasons motivating the artists. As Howson notes, “I hoped I could use what skill I had to try and draw attention to the plight of those faces in the news. But...I was driven more by a need for adventure”.<sup>114</sup> For Kitson she states the reason for agreeing to the commission was “to see and experience new drawing opportunities”.<sup>115</sup> Keane had already worked in Nicaragua and Northern Island, so had experience of being in conflict zones but this work gave him the opportunity to “redefine what being a war artist was”, without the requirement to reproduce a mere record of events or work for propaganda.<sup>116</sup> The voice of the artist is also present in these publications, albeit mediated through the interpretation of the author. The lack of art-historical investigation into the works of these three artists provides me with an opportunity to contribute to debates about the depiction of the soldier and the role of contemporary war art in society and of memorialisation of war.

### Research Questions

The epistemological groundings evident from the extant scholarship on which this thesis is based has raised a number of questions. How do the artists in my corpus

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<sup>113</sup> Sarah Bevan, *Art from Contemporary Conflict* (London: Imperial War Museum, 2015), 20.

<sup>114</sup> Richard Cork and Robert Crampton *Peter Howson: Bosnia* (London: Imperial War Museum, 1994), 8.

<sup>115</sup> Linda Kitson, *The Falklands War: A Visual Diary* (London: Mitchell Beazley in association with the Imperial War Museum, 1982), 10.

<sup>116</sup> Mark Lawson, *John Keane: Conflicts of Interest* (Edinburgh; London: Mainstream in conjunction with Angela Flowers Gallery, 1995), 64.

represent the soldier in art and how does this compare with the existing scholarship on the representation of the soldier? What are the external influences, such as use in propaganda, the commissioning client or the methods of working? What are the internal influences, such as reasons for creating war art, self-censorship, political viewpoint or proximity to war, which affect the final works? How does the original goal of the IWM apply to the wars in the late twentieth century? Finally, how do these artists work inform understanding of the conflict and act as a way of remembering and memorialising the soldiers who served?

### Methodology

To address these questions, and thereby the gaps in existing literature, I draw on a number of sources: the art produced prior to and during the conflict, archival records held at the IWM and interviews with the artists. My research is structured in three areas: a review of scholarship on the representation of the soldier in war art from the First and Second World Wars, a history of the development and patronage of the IWM, and an in-depth exploration of the works created by Kitson, Keane and Howson under commission of the IWM.<sup>117</sup>

The initial chapter, 'Imagining the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Soldier', explores the current scholarship on the representation of the soldier in art. I review of the iconography of the soldier in terms of secondary literature and general interpretative frameworks on the figure of the soldier in the twentieth century, and from these present the themes that inform my analysis of the works in my corpus. While it can be argued that there are a number of perspectives from which to examine the representation of the soldier, my thesis considers three themes which recur in existing literature; that of the soldier as

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<sup>117</sup> Does not include investigation on the exhibition of the works at the IWM, for further information on this see Clare Carolin's thesis (currently being written).

hero, the soldier as a symbol of masculinity and the image of the soldier as a cipher for the nation.

The second chapter, 'A legacy of representation: Art and the Imperial War Museum before 1980' consists of a review the development of the IWM as an institution of patronage of war art, considering how the museum embodies these themes of the soldier in art. I inform this chapter using primary archival resources, letters, publicity, newspaper cuttings, committee minutes and correspondence with artists held by the IWM and consolidating existing literature on the museum. I also consider changes in the collection and commissioning policies at the museum by bringing together archival resources to present a foundation for the commissioning of the artists who are the focus of my thesis.

In the chapters on the artists, Kitson, Keane and Howson, my methodology comprises of a chronological investigation into their work, presenting their development as an artist in relation to their representation of the soldier. Drawing on archival research, interview, existing literature and an iconographical analysis of selected works, my thesis generates new understanding of their significance in relation to the framework of the representation of the soldier defined from my examination of existing scholarship. I will evidence that the role of these war artists was not a simple task of drawing or painting what was seen. Each artist had a different preconceptions of the conflicts they were attending, but their relationship to the soldiers serving in the war significantly informed their works.

After a summary of the artistic background and influences of each artist, I briefly outline the conflict and explore the commissioning process each artist went through. Using primary archival resources at the IWM, I examine if any direction to the subjects of the finished works were given. My exploration of the works reflects on the methods

used and any challenges they experienced during their visit to the conflict zones. Existing literature, archival resources at the IWM and interviews with the artists are used to compile these chapters. My in-depth visual analysis of a number of works from each artist focuses on the depiction of the soldier, employing formal, iconographical and semiotic methodology in the reading of the works. The image of the soldier expressed across these conflicts is compared to the themes of representation evidenced in the First World War. In addition, I shall consider the body of works created as part of the commissioned period and from that, which of the artists' works were selected to become part of the IWM permanent collection. My thesis includes the reasons behind the choices made by the selection committee, based on archival records. Finally, for each artist I shall examine the display and public reception to the works. Using exhibition publications, press releases and other primary archive material held by the IWM, I consider how the museum presented the works to the public and examine media critics and commentators reporting on the works from newspaper and television archives. I shall also compare the reception of the works to the media reporting of the conflict in general and evidence how receptive and supportive the media were to each artists' work. I then contrast these works with other artistic responses to the conflict and examine any iconographical differences, the reasons for creating the works and contrasts in the representation of the soldier. Through this, I consider how the art of Kitson, Keane and Howson contributed to, questioned, challenged or supported the dominant ideology relating to the conflict and the depiction of the soldier.

In my focus on the soldier in the war art, I address the concerns in Peter Burke's 2001 book *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence* and his note that "historians still do not take the evidence of image seriously enough".<sup>118</sup> My thesis shall

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<sup>118</sup> Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2001), 9.



attempt to overcome the issues Burke raises due to historians ignoring the artists intended message, by drawing on interviews from the artists.<sup>119</sup> However, unlike many of the works Burke includes in his book, the work of these war artists were created with the knowledge, and perhaps heavy responsibility, that they would become historical records of the conflict they were commissioned to attend.

My concluding chapter, 'The Soldier Remembered' summarises my findings on the representation of the soldier within the works of Kitson, Keane and Howson, highlighting the importance of both *what* was produced by the artist in remembrance of the soldier and *how* they achieved it. Considering these artists through the theoretical framework and prevalent themes identified in the secondary literature on the soldier in the twentieth century, I argue the emotional impact of being present in war and the scope of what the commissioned artist sees or is allowed to see is relevant to the work produced. I also conclude the depiction of the soldier depends on their relationship and experiences. The works produced are 'traces' of the soldier, to use Gustaaf J Reniers concept on historical sources, but also traces of the artist's *relationship* to the soldiers.<sup>120</sup>

Kitson had the opportunity to get to know individuals on the long journey to the Falklands and was able to present an image of the soldier who, although part of a team, was an individual. The close association she had with the soldiers – eating the same food, experiencing the same conditions and wearing the same clothes, prevented the necessary distance from her subjects to depict their mortality. I argue that because of Keane's experience of working in warzones, he was better prepared for his commission in the Gulf. He was accommodated with the press and was never able to obtain the close relationship experienced by Kitson. His images of the soldiers were

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<sup>119</sup> Burke, *Eyewitnessing*. 14.

<sup>120</sup> Gustaaf J Renier, *History, its Purpose and Method* (London, 1950).

also less immediate as he developed them from his own photographic sources, found objects and the media, which allowed him a chance to reflect on the content, composition and message of his works much more than Kitson. Keane's soldier is a part of the weaponry of war, a masculine force with individual personality, but one that is ultimately without power. Howson had a personal history in the Army that resonates through his work in Bosnia and his depiction of the soldier. However, where in his early years he depicted the UK soldier as vindictive and violent, he translates this imagery to describe the Bosnian forces. During his second trip to Bosnia, his close relationship with the UN forces resulted in images of a soldier who was the protector of the weak, and the guardian of law and order.

These themes of the representation of the soldier in art build on and extend the framework in current literature, and highlight the significance of the commissioning process by the IWM. However, I attest that the museum's role in collecting and display is not inert. Its role in memorialising conflict and those who are part of war has changed very little since it was established in 1915. The commissioning, selection and exhibition process of the IWM continues to affect the representation of the soldier, through which artists it selects, what art is selected, how it is displayed and what information it presents to interpret the works. Although this will not be the last word on the interpretation of contemporary war artists and their means of remembering the soldier through art at the IWM, my thesis provides a viewpoint currently missing from academic investigation, which in the future others may extend.

## Chapter 1: Imagining the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Soldier

This chapter appraises the central themes on the depiction of the soldier in the 20<sup>th</sup> century within existing scholarship to provide a framework for comparison and iconographical interpretation for the works of Kitson, Keane and Howson produced under commission of the IWM. Following an extensive appraisal of literature on the subject of the soldier in art, the themes I have chosen to focus on are: the soldier as hero, the soldier as a representation of ideal masculinity and the soldier as a cipher of society and nationalism. While these are not the only critical discursive frameworks that have been considered in the consideration of the soldier, the quantity of debate on the subject highlights their importance as methodologies within art history. The structure of this chapter will therefore present current academic debate on each of these topics.

### The soldier hero

The concept of the soldier as a heroic figure in art is one with an enduring legacy. In 1934, Lord Raglan delivered a paper *The Heroes of Tradition* that presented his findings on the parallels between classical Greek heroic tales and other heroic tales.<sup>1</sup> Raglan defined twenty steps that the classical hero was prone to endure on his quest to become a hero. These were loosely grouped as; birth, initiation and death. Although many of the steps Raglan described do not apply to soldier heroes, there are the parallels in the narrative of war art to these classical stories, such as in ‘the departure’, ‘the initiation’ and ‘death’, which have been incorporated into war art. Raglan notes “on reaching manhood the hero sets forthwith on a journey from the land of his upbringing to the land where he will reign”, not as a leader or commander but as a man

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<sup>1</sup> Lord Raglan, “The Hero of Tradition” *Folklore* 45, No. 3 (Sep.1934): 212-231) Published by: Taylor & Francis, Ltd. on behalf of Folklore Enterprises, Ltd.

against mythical enemies. The hero does not win the battle but returns unscathed to rule the land. Another parallel with the depiction of the soldier is in death, when the remains of the hero are laid within a shrine of remembrance. In 1949, Joseph Campbell returns to the topic of the hero in his book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*<sup>2</sup>. He presents a composite of the hero through tales from many religions and societies over history. Campbell notes that a feature of the hero is that he is that “the individual becomes dedicated to the whole of society”. In the case of the soldier-hero, this is evidenced through traits of selflessness; risking or giving your life for your country or others. While there is some debate over the usefulness of the definition of the hero, which is replete with meaning in popular culture, I will show it is a theme included in a number of art history publications in relation to the soldier in art. Of these, Graham Dawson (1994) considers the hero with reference to the soldier.<sup>3</sup> Highlighting the importance of the term, he states,

The soldier hero has proved to be one of the most durable and powerful forms of idealized masculinity in Western cultural traditions since the Ancient Greeks. Military virtues such as aggression, strength, courage and endurance have repeatedly been defined as inherent qualities of manhood, whose apogee is attainable only in battle.<sup>4</sup>

Dawson examines the narrative of the soldier hero and masculinity through a series of case studies illustrating how closely tied Britain’s imaginings of the soldier is to nationalism, another of the themes I will discuss in this chapter. He concludes that this prevalence of hero narratives in the reporting and retelling of war continues because “they offer the psychic reassurance of triumph over the sources of threat, promising the defeat of enemies and the promise of the return of what is lost”.<sup>5</sup> The soldier heroes

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<sup>2</sup> Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (London: Paladin, 1988).

<sup>3</sup> Graham Dawson, *Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire and the Imagining of Masculinities* (London: Routledge, 1994).

<sup>4</sup> Dawson, *Soldier Heroes*, 1.

<sup>5</sup> Dawson, *Soldier Heroes*, 282.

become “idealized vessels, preserving all that is valued and worthwhile”.<sup>6</sup> The theme of the soldier hero is also considered by Jessica Meyer (2009), who comments on the prevalence of the domestic and heroic masculine identities.<sup>7</sup> Although Meyer’s analysis is achieved through letters and diaries, I argue that the hero is present both in the art of the First World War and the contemporary representations by Kitson, Keane and Howson.

In *Dismembering the Male: Men’s bodies, Britain and the Great War* (1996), Joanna Bourke builds on Dawson’s (1994) theories, using art, photographs, letters, diaries and oral histories from the First World War to explore how unrepresentative and oversimplistic the representation of the soldier has been.<sup>8</sup> She examines the idealised concept of the soldier as a perfect and healthy specimen of manhood against the social and political reactions to injury and mutilation, concluding that the male was literally and figuratively the embodiment of war.<sup>9</sup> In the fifth chapter ‘Re-Membering’, Bourke considers death; the final step of the hero using a case study of *The Unknown Warrior*, who was buried with ceremony at Westminster Abbey on 11<sup>th</sup> November. She contrasts this memorial with the undignified deaths and burials (or abandonment) of soldiers on the battlefields, and notes that the body belonged to the state not to the family. Bourke writes “Heroic sacrifice was commonplace in war...Sacrifice of the body was expected” and “In war the mere fact of dying was ennobling”.<sup>10</sup> Yet, the contrast of the heroic death depicted in art and the reality seen by servicemen was striking “the

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<sup>6</sup> Dawson, *Soldier Heroes*, 282.

<sup>7</sup> Jessica Meyer, *Men of War: Masculinity and the First World War in Britain*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave, Macmillan, 2009). See also Tracey Loughran, review of *Masculinity, Shell Shock, and Emotional Survival in the First World War*, (review no. 944) <http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/944> Date accessed: 19 December, 2017.

<sup>8</sup> Joanna Bourke, *Dismembering the Male: Men’s Bodies, Britain and the Great War* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 1996).

<sup>9</sup> Bourke, *Dismembering the Male*. 33.

<sup>10</sup> Bourke, *Dismembering the Male*, 248.

unsightliness of their deaths was matched by the indignities of their burial”.<sup>11</sup> The paintings and illustrations commissioned did little to represent this reality. In war art, Bourke maintains, death was clean and respectful, represented as a justifiable martyrdom akin to the death of Christ.<sup>12</sup> In “glorious” death, the soldier is still ‘whole’ is still recognisable as human. Bourke contrast this depiction with the realities of war where, “All parts of the body were at risk: head, shoulder, arm, chest, intestines, buttock, penis, leg, foot. Over 41,000 men had their limbs amputated during the war...Sixty thousand, five hundred were wounded in the head or eyes”.<sup>13</sup>

In 1985, Joan Hichberger completed her PhD *Images of the army: the military in British art, 1815-1914*, in which she notes “popular forms for the representation of soldiers in nineteenth century art were recruitment and desertion themes; veteran pictures and depictions of the Volunteer forces” but that the largest category was the representations of soldiers in contrast to civilians.<sup>14</sup> She concludes that the theme of soldier as hero within society could be observed in the art of this period as “not constructed as resulting from a “warlike” spirit, but as the exercising of a God-given role as arbiter of justice”<sup>15</sup>

Michael Paris (2000) considered images of war in British popular culture from 1850 to 2000, where he argued that the soldier at war has been presented to the public as a heroic figure.<sup>16</sup> He notes that even in 1918, after the realities of deaths in France, war was still portrayed as “a great adventure, a not to be missed experience for the young

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<sup>11</sup> Bourke. *Dismembering the Male*, 215.

<sup>12</sup> Bourke. *Dismembering the Male*, 232.

Also the heroic sacrifice can be seen in comparisons of the works *The Dead Christ* (1927) by Peter Alfred Brooker and *The Last Message* (1917) by Fortunino Matania (1881–1963) with photographs of the battlefield that were taken of the dead and decaying soldiers during the First World War

<sup>13</sup> Bourke, *Dismembering the Male*, 33.

<sup>14</sup> Joan Hichberger, *Military Themes in British Painting 1815 - 1914*. PhD University College, London. 1985. (Published under the same title by Manchester University Press, 1988), 240.

<sup>15</sup> Hitchberger, *Military Themes in British Painting*, 12.

<sup>16</sup> Michael Paris, *Warrior Nation: Images of War in British Popular Culture, 1850-2000* (London: Reaktion, 2000).

combatants”.<sup>17</sup> The heroic characteristic of chivalry was also drawn upon in literature to frame the nature of the soldiers; giving the role a higher purpose, a fight between good and evil.<sup>18</sup> He highlights the use of posters as a method of propaganda used instil nationalism and to encourage support of the war effort in the public. This enforced the need for doing ones duty in volunteering. Mythological imagery was used in art as Britain was portrayed as an armour clad St George slaying the dragon of the enemy, or valiantly protecting the weak.<sup>19</sup> In her review of Paris’work, Noakes (2003) concludes,

...the image of the brave and chivalrous British soldier has long been a familiar characteristic of popular culture...the heroic, brave and daring British soldier is an easily recognizable figure in many popular representations of war.<sup>20</sup>

This, she believes, has gone on to “ensure the longevity of a militarised masculinity as an important model of British masculine identity”.<sup>21</sup> I will examine if this is the case in the contemporary war art within my corpus.

An aspect of obvious heroic iconography in propaganda is explored in more depth by Peter Stanley in the 1983 book *What Did you do in the War Daddy? A Visual History of Propaganda Posters*.<sup>22</sup> This is further discussed by Nina Kruglikova, as she explores the relationship between the need to recruit more soldiers and the visual imagery used in the posters during this period.<sup>23</sup> The imagery used in the posters did not give any indication of the actual peril those enlisting would be subjected to, the wounds inflicted by explosions or gas, even actual fighting was rarely seen.<sup>24</sup> An example of the

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<sup>17</sup> Paris, *Warrior Nation*, 117.

<sup>18</sup> Paris, *Warrior Nation*, 133.

<sup>19</sup> Paris, *Warrior Nation*, 140.

<sup>20</sup> Lucy Noakes, review of *Warrior Nation: Images of War in British Popular Culture 1850-2000*, (review no. 317) <http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/317> Date accessed: 19 December, 2017

<sup>21</sup> Noakes, review of *Warrior* <http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/317> Date accessed: 19 December, 2017

<sup>22</sup> Peter Stanley, *What Did You Do in the War, Daddy? A Visual History of Propaganda Posters* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1983).

<sup>23</sup> Nina Kruglikova, *Weapons of Mass Persuasion: The First World War in Posters* Accessed 29/12/17 (<http://www1centenary.oucs.ox.ac.uk/?p=3920>).

<sup>24</sup> Paris, *Warrior Nation*, 117.

depiction of the soldier as hero is evidenced in the painting for the poster *Forward to victory* (Figure: 4) by Lucy Kemp-Welch (1869-1958) which shows a General riding into battle on a horse. The work emphasises the idea of combat as being a heroic quest, and borrows iconography from images of battle as seen in works such as *Cromwell at Marston Moor* (Figure: 5) by Abraham Cooper (1787-1868).

Brian Foss (2007) argues that during the Second World War, art projected an image of a “population that was ultimately united in heroism of various descriptions”.<sup>25</sup> Even the depiction of ordinary people involved in the war effort was raised to a heroic level. On the rare occasion when a woman from industry became the subject of a life size portrait it was usually because she had proved unexpectedly remarkable within a world gendered masculine, either by being decorated for heroism or by having demonstrated extraordinary skill”.<sup>26</sup>

#### The soldier as masculine ideal

When examining the soldier in art, the soldier as a masculine ideal could be argued as being no more than an extension of the soldier as hero. However, where the virtuous cause in the fight of good over evil is a prime factor for the hero, the image of masculinity focuses on attributes such as strength of the body, heterosexual prowess and the ability to kill. Although Gabriel Koureas’ publication in 2007 “concentrates on ‘sites of memory’: memorials and architecture, photographic images and albums, the museum space”, but not specifically on art, his book focuses on two main concerns “memory ... and definitions of masculinity”.<sup>27</sup> His work highlights the way “...ideal versions of masculinity projected in the commemoration of war” and considers how the

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<sup>25</sup> Brian Foss, *War Paint: Art, War, State and Identity in Britain 1939-1945* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007), 65.

<sup>26</sup> Foss, *War Paint*, 108.

<sup>27</sup> Gabriel Koureas, *Memory, masculinity, and national identity in British visual culture, 1914-1930: A Study of Unconquerable Manhood*. (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2007).



first exhibition at the IWM was used to promote this ideal masculinity.<sup>28</sup> A theme within Koureas' book explores way the sanitised interpretation of war seen in monuments omits the realities of "the trauma of war".<sup>29</sup> In this form of remembrance, "the perfectly formed spectacle of the unveiling ceremonies" presented an appealing and picturesque soldier where "mutilated bodies were absent".<sup>30</sup> One case study used in the book is the figure of the "Boy David" featured in the Machine Gun Corps Memorial in London (Figure: 6). Created by Francis Derwent Wood (1871-1926), it consists of a naked male on a plinth, a mythical figure of the youthful David who slayed the giant Goliath. While the inscription that reads; "Erected to commemorate the glorious heroes of the machine gun corps who fell in the Great War" reinforces the depiction of the soldier hero, it also depicts a young and virile man at the prime of his masculinity. Two 'Vickers' machine guns, masculinised weaponry, on either side of the sculpture contrast with the David, vulnerable in his nakedness. Koureas also goes on to comment on how this idealised beauty contrasts with the reality of the many facial reconstructions that Derwent Wood worked on at the Royal Army Medical Corps in 1916.<sup>31</sup> This mythical hero David represents all the men who fought in the First World War, despite the reality of torn flesh, broken limbs and death. Koureas concludes the book by highlighting the continuing boundaries for acceptable representation of the male body in war.<sup>32</sup> In the First World War "only the sanitised aestheticised body was present in monuments for remembrance" and that despite their protestations of inclusivity, this was an "idea that was embedded in middle class sensibility".<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Koureas, *Memory, masculinity, and national identity*, 4.

<sup>29</sup> Koureas, *Memory, masculinity, and national identity*, 184.

<sup>30</sup> Koureas, *Memory, masculinity, and national identity*, 186.

<sup>31</sup> Koureas, *Memory, masculinity, and national identity*, 138.

<sup>32</sup> Koureas, *Memory, masculinity, and national identity*, 186.

<sup>33</sup> Koureas, *Memory, masculinity, and national identity*, 186.

The depiction of the injured soldier, notably in contrast with the images of the masculine ideal, were portrayed by Henry Tonks (1862-1937) who worked with Derwent Wood and the plastic surgeon Harold Gillies on the facial reconstructions of soldiers at the Third London Hospital. In 2014, The Royal College of Surgeons hosted the exhibition, *War, Art and Surgery*, featuring a collection of works by Tonks, who drew the soldiers through successive operations towards a normalised appearance (Figure: 7). The book that accompanied the exhibition highlighted the importance of his works, noting they were too unpalatable for public display until many years after the war.<sup>34</sup> Tonks is also considered in Suzannah Beirnoff's 2017 publication *Portraits of Violence: War and the Ethics of Disfigurement* where she examines the representation of the damaged soldier in art.<sup>35</sup> Beirnoff focuses on the disfigurement to the face in war wounds because the face "most visible, most public part of human anatomy", and one which is used by others to gauge social indicators such as race, class, gender and age".<sup>36</sup> She goes on to note, "Faces register emotion and identity, but they are also conventional markers between the human and nonhuman".<sup>37</sup> Beirnoff also argues the facial injuries of the soldier were concealed or 'repaired' by the work of surgeons because "disfigurement and disability become politically charged when they connote a loss that cannot be overcome or compensated".<sup>38</sup> The works by Tonks are also an admission that war not only strips men of their lives but also their masculinity. The successive operations on the soldier are an attempt to rebuild not just the ability of the

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<sup>34</sup> Samuel Alberti (eds), *War, Art and Surgery: The Work of Henry Tonks and Julia Midgley*, (London: The Royal College of Surgeons, 2014).

Also see review of the exhibition by Kneebone, R. "The art of war" *The Lancet* 384, (Nov 2014) accessed 27/12/2017

<sup>35</sup> Suzannah Beirnoff, *Portraits of Violence: War and the Aesthetics of Disfigurement* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2017).

<sup>36</sup> Beirnoff, *Portraits of Violence*, 10-12.

<sup>37</sup> Beirnoff, *Portraits of Violence*, 13.

<sup>38</sup> Beirnoff, *Portraits of Violence*, 19.

soldier to eat or drink, but in effect, they are rebuilding his humanity, bringing them back to the recognised ideal of masculinity.

Images of masculinity are also explored by Ana Carden-Coyne in 2006, where she states that, in war, the body of the wounded soldier was “transformed from the private to the public sphere” as the public’s voyeuristic desire to see images of disfigurement increased.<sup>39</sup> Art testified to the violence and suffering experienced by soldiers and that exhibitions of the works allowed the public to be “surrounded by the bodily drama of war”.<sup>40</sup> Carden-Coyne produces a wide investigation into the artistic representation of the body in the First World War from sources in Britain, Australia and the United States “through the dual lens of classicism and modernism”.<sup>41</sup> However, she ignores the prevalence of traditional portraiture and heroic artistic narratives and instead comments; “Writers, artists and film-makers responded to the war with a commitment to articulate its shocking visions”.<sup>42</sup> She goes on to argue that the representation of the dead or wounded soldier “stimulated artistic responses that permeated visual memories...reinforced the idea of the male body as a site of pain”.<sup>43</sup> Carden-Coyne considers the damaged body was “the dominant mode of remembering” and became the “cultural memory of war”.<sup>44</sup> She goes on to explore the way the artistic language of classicism was used after the war to “attempt to heal or institutionalise forgetting...the

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<sup>39</sup> Anna Carden-Coyne, *Reconstructing the Body: Classicism, Modernism, and the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) 75. An argument also supported by the large numbers of the public who wanted to see the British War art Collection (exhibition) in 1919 by the IWM which drew in ‘unprecedented crowds’ and which then travelled to Washington and New York. Carden-Coyne, *Reconstructing the Body*, 89.

<sup>40</sup> Carden-Coyne, *Reconstructing the Body*, 91.

<sup>41</sup> Carden-Coyne, *Reconstructing the Body*, 20. See also Maurice Berger, Brian Wallis and Simon Watson (eds), *Constructing Masculinity*. (London and New York: Routledge, 1995). For selected essays on masculinity (inc. Judith Butler’s framework of gender being performative)

<sup>42</sup> Carden-Coyne, *Reconstructing the Body*, 59.

<sup>43</sup> Carden-Coyne, *Reconstructing the Body*, 88.

<sup>44</sup> Carden-Coyne, *Reconstructing the Body*, 108.

war-wrecked body”, citing Charles Sergeant Jagger’s Royal Artillery Memorial in Hyde Park, London and The Machine Gun Corps Memorial by Francis Derwent Wood.<sup>45</sup>

Sue Malvern (2004) argues it was the First World War that provided the impetus towards a modernist style of art, highlighting the link between modernism and masculinity.<sup>46</sup> Malvern presents examples to support her argument from the early work of C. R. W. Nevinson (1889-1946) and Jacob Epstein (1880-1959). In 1915, Epstein created *Rock Drill*, a sculpture depicting a masculine modernist figure. Malvern employs this artwork as “icon for potent and phallic masculinity...[which] represents British war experience” and that when it was reduced and modified by Epstein in 1916 it was as if symbolically the “male body was cut short, dismembered, victimised and rendered defenceless”.<sup>47</sup> Evidence that the drive for propaganda images in the First World War did not limit the soldier’s depiction to the heroic figure is seen in the work of Nevinson. Trained at The Slade School of Art under the tutorage of Henry Tonks, Nevinson volunteered with the Red Cross where he assisted in the care and treatment of the wounded and served with the Royal Army Medical Corps before he was employed as an official war artist.<sup>48</sup> Prior to the war, Nevinson had been actively involved in the Futurist Movement who were in support of the war as a ‘purifier’ of society but he turned his back on the group when faced with the realities of injuries caused on the battlefield.<sup>49</sup> *The Doctor* (Figure: 8) is one his works depicting the “horrific conditions of the make-shift hospitals”.<sup>50</sup> The painting *The Doctor* illustrates a facility without compassionate care. The soldiers are depicted as woeful examples of masculinity.

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<sup>45</sup> Carden-Coyne, *Reconstructing the Body*, 109.

<sup>46</sup> Sue Malvern, *Modern Art, Britain and the Great War: Witnessing, Testimony, and Remembrance* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004).

<sup>47</sup> Malvern, *Modern Art, Britain and the Great War*, I.

<sup>48</sup> For further information on the life of Nevinson see Nevinson, C.W.R. *Paint and Prejudice*. London: Harcourt, 1938.

<sup>49</sup> David Boyd-Haycock, *D. Nash Nevinson Spencer Gertler Carrington Bomberg: A Crisis of Brilliance, 1908-1922* (London: Scarla Arts & Heritage Publishers Ltd, 2013), 28.

<sup>50</sup> Boyd-Haycock, *A Crisis of Brilliance*, 29.

Malvern notes, “As the war progressed, orthodox and traditional modes of depiction, such as academic battle pictures...looked less and less persuasive. In the contestation of authenticity, Nash and Nevinson came to stand for different kinds of truth about the war”.<sup>51</sup> As I have shown, the masculine ideal, originally shaped by Bone and other artists, was contested by some artists but remained a pervasive theme due to its ability to inspire recruitment and support the propaganda of war.

#### The soldier and nationalism

In *War Paint: Art, War, State and Identity in Britain 1939-1945* (2007) Brian Foss introduces a persistent thread of national identity and culture throughout the Second World War.<sup>52</sup> Primarily focused on the institutional history of the War Artists Advisory Committee (WAAC), Foss examines the portrayal of military personnel and activities, examining “how the military themes documented in the war art collection composed a visual history attuned to expectations of the day”.<sup>53</sup> He defines the term “Englishness” and “Britishness” as expressed in Samuel Raphael’s book *‘Unravelling Britain’, in Theatres of Memory Vol.2*.<sup>54</sup> He also calls upon Benedict Anderson’s 1983 work *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*.<sup>55</sup> Through this framework, Foss introduces state patronage of art during this period and its role in defining a national art. He argues that the portrait becomes a “national self-portrait”, showing the unpaintable horrors of modern war. In the introduction Foss writes, “The war art collection was presented in exhibitions and publications as an expression of the nation’s respect for the individual”, or for individualism as forty

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<sup>51</sup> Malvern, *Modern Art, Britain and the Great War*, 67.

<sup>52</sup> Brian Foss, *War Paint: Art, War, State and Identity in Britain 1939-1945* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007), 5.

<sup>53</sup> Foss, Foss, *War Paint*, 4.

<sup>54</sup> Samuel Raphael, *Island Stories: Unravelling Britain: Island Stories, Theatres of memory Volume 2* (London: Verso, 1998). See also Richard Weight, *Patriots: National Identity in Britain, 1940-2000* (London: Macmillan, 2002).

<sup>55</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

percent of RAF themed war art consisted of portraits compared to twelve for the War Office and Admiralty.<sup>56</sup> Within this topic there were “glamorous flying officers” as well as portraits of “ordinary servicemen as reliable and conscientious figures whose anonymity did nothing to obviate their stature as everyday heroes carrying out the orders given by their officers”.<sup>57</sup> Foss argues that the military portraits provided a humanising aspect of the warrior; “an engaging and effective balance between strict hierarchy and the closely observed individuality that defines each cameo and that opposes the facelessness of modern warfare”.<sup>58</sup> During the Second World War, Henry Lamb (1883-1960) produced a many painted portraits such as *Portrait of Major-General R F E Whittaker*, 1949 (Figure: 9). The direct gaze of the general in this work and his military uniform embodying both the attitude and intent of the country at war. However, Foss notes, art’s ability to obscure the realities of war was challenged when they were met with scenes such as those at the Bergen-Belsen concentration camps; “...artists could not soften or disguise violence and death through analogies and metaphors or by aestheticising the war”.<sup>59</sup> In response to this dilemma, artists focussed on the women prisoners – “Their visual records reiterate the long-standing gendering of war’s victims as female (innocent and defenceless). This is especially striking in relation to the drastic under-representation of injured or dead troops by other artists”.<sup>60</sup> The selection of women subjects by the artist and the omission of male victims also reinforced the notion of healthy soldiers, as there was a “lack of representation of dead or dying or even badly wounded men”.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Foss, *War Paint*, 120.

<sup>57</sup> Foss, *War Paint*, 120-121.

<sup>58</sup> Foss, *War Paint*, 121.

<sup>59</sup> Foss, *War Paint*, 144. In April 1945 the camp was visited by four artists whose work was included in the WAAC collection; Leslie Cole, Mary Kessell, Sergeant Eric Taylor and Doris Zinkeisen.

<sup>60</sup> Foss, *War Paint*, 146.

<sup>61</sup> Foss, *War Paint*, 146.

Laura Brandon examines the changing depiction of war in *Art and War* (2012).<sup>62</sup> She prefaces her chronological consideration of war art noting the difficulty in defining war art as a genre in purely art-historical terms.<sup>63</sup> Brandon asserts that it is useful to view war art as an “expression of culture” which encompasses many other genres.<sup>64</sup> In adopting Brandon’s viewpoint, the depiction of the soldier in war art can be seen as an indicator of how society views soldiers but also how a culture views itself. She notes that in early works from Mesopotamia, Greece and Egypt war art depicted victories and featured triumphant soldiers.<sup>65</sup> In contrast to this, an anti-war rhetoric is highlighted in the etchings of Jaques Callot (b? 1635) in his series of works *Miseries and Misfortunes of War* (1633), Rubens with *The Horrors of War* (1637-1638) and Fransisco De Goya’s Lucientes’s *Disasters of War* all of which depict soldiers as merciless, violent perpetrators of horrific acts. These works stand outside the traditional painting in the eighteenth century, which were either heroic paintings or historical representation of the actual battle.<sup>66</sup> In the chapters on Kitson , Keane and Howson I shall examine if there is any contrast between the works they produced and other interpretations of the war and the soldiers.

Sara Beven’s IWM retrospective, *Art from Contemporary Conflict* (2015), she highlights national identity as one of the prevalent themes of works during the last 40 years;

...the roles of the media and technology in war, national identity, the long term impact of events, the fetishism of weaponry and violence, the ubiquitous themes of loss and death and finally, the role of the artist in responding to these issues.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Laura Brandon, *Art and War* (London: I B Tauris & Co Ltd, 2012).

<sup>63</sup> Brandon, *Art and War*, 4.

<sup>64</sup> Brandon, *Art and War*, 5.

<sup>65</sup> Brandon, *Art and War*, 13-25.

<sup>66</sup> Brandon, *Art and War*, 29.

<sup>67</sup> Sarah Bevan, *Art from Contemporary Conflict* (London: Imperial War Museum, 2015), 3.

Bevan notes that while the artists of the First and Second World Wars were commissioned to create work of a “broadly figurative or documentary nature”, recent expectations is that art is increasingly “probing challenging and thought provoking”.<sup>68</sup>

Kevin Foster also considers the representations of nationalism during the Falklands War in *Fighting Fictions* (1999) which were particularly prevalent in media reportage and photography.<sup>69</sup> He notes that coverage of the conflict “concentrated on the soldier hero as both the agent of the Nations return to its ‘rightful and necessary identity’ and the embodiment of that identity, a reification of the ‘national essence’”.<sup>70</sup> Soldiers became “...a living link back to the nation’s glorious past”.<sup>71</sup>

This chapter has surveyed a number of important publications relating to war art and has presented a summary of the key themes in respect to the depiction of the soldier. As I have demonstrated, the soldier hero, the masculine ideal and the symbol of the nation are all themes that have been identified in existing literature. While images of the heroic soldier riding into battle or fighting to protect the nation were evident in posters designed to encourage enlistment, they were not the only art that depicted an idealised male form. When war artists were faced with first-hand experience of the realities of war, some sought to depict this in their works, but the image of the soldier, steadfastly war-ready, continued in works of portraiture. In the next chapter, I will examine the general theories on the iconography of the soldier in the twentieth century, in terms of secondary literature, to provide a basis to the reflection of the contemporary artists and how the soldier has been represented in the works of Kitson, Keane and Howson at the IWM.

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<sup>68</sup> Bevan, *Art from Contemporary Conflict*, 5.

<sup>69</sup> Kevin Foster, *Fighting Fictions: War, Narrative and National Identity* (London: Pluto, 1999).

<sup>70</sup> Foster, *Fighting Fictions*, 82.

<sup>71</sup> Foster, *Fighting Fictions*, 5.



## **Chapter 2: A legacy of representation: Art and the Imperial War Museum before 1980**

In understanding the significance of the IWM in the role as a collector and curator of war art, and their impact curating a representation of the soldier in Britain during the late twentieth century, it is important to have some grounding of the history of the museum between the start of the First World War in 1915 and 1980. To this end, this chapter presents an overview of the inception of the IWM and an explanation of the processes and procedures at the museum that led to the commissioning of art for the collection. I will evidence that, from the outset, the museum valued the artist who had actually witnessed and been part of the conflict over those who created works from the UK about war. The research which informs this chapter brings together academic studies by other scholars and my own archival research to inform the IWM's continued role in the patronage, collection and display of war art. The fact that the museum has now been in existence for over a hundred years would have been a surprise to those who first planned the museum as a collection of First World War art and artefacts. I will briefly explore changes in its role as holder of the national collection, which will provide a foundation for the study of the influence of Kitson, Keane and Howson in remembrance of the soldier. The creation of the museum it is well documented by other scholars, so my thesis will not include a detailed summary of the art collected by the museum but I present a brief history derived from these sources and refer to selective works that I believe have relevance to the legacy of war art and the representation of the soldier.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Malvern, S. *Modern Art, Britain and the Great War: Witnessing, Testimony, and Remembrance*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004 for detailed research on the First World War and Foss, B. *War Paint: Art, War, State and Identity in Britain, 1939-1945*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007 for the collection during the Second World War.

Although the IWM was not formed until 1917, the art that was included in the initial collection resulted from the efforts of the British Government, who saw the importance of collecting a lasting record of the conflict derived from first-hand experience. They also identified art's usefulness in the press and propaganda departments, as although cameras were generally available, in 1911, the Defence of the Realm Act had curtailed the use of photography on the battlefield.<sup>2</sup> This prohibition of photography was primarily to stop information being released to the enemy, but also to ensure recruitment was not discouraged.<sup>3</sup> Newspapers such as the *Illustrated London News*, frequently used artists based in the UK to illustrate the war news. The works were often unrealistically simplified, heroic and a romanticised view of war as in *Britain's Roll of Honour, Return from the Charge* (Figure: 10), which was on the front cover of the paper in September 1914. This work by Richard Caton Woodville (1856-1926) presents a group of chivalrous soldiers returning after battle, and is replete with iconography of the just soldier. In May 1916, Wellington House, which was part of the Propaganda Bureau, established in August 1914 and run by Charles Masterman (1873-1927), sought to address the lack of reality by employing of the first war artist Muirhead Bone (1876-1953).<sup>4</sup> Bone who was an artist, illustrator and painter from Glasgow, was recommended to Wellington House by Campbell Dodgson (1867-1948), Keeper of Prints and Drawings at the British Museum. By August 1916, Bone was in France, attached to Intelligence GHQ and tasked to make drawings for use in propaganda and as a historical record for the future.<sup>5</sup>

During his first visit, Bone completed over 150 drawings, some of which were published by *Country Life* magazine later that year in a series called *The Western*

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<sup>2</sup> Sue Malvern, *Modern Art, Britain and the Great War: Witnessing, Testimony, and Remembrance* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004).

<sup>3</sup> Malvern, *Modern Art, Britain and the Great War*, 23.

<sup>4</sup> Malvern, *Modern Art, Britain and the Great War*, 13.

<sup>5</sup> Malvern, *Modern Art, Britain and the Great War*, 13-14.

*Front*.<sup>6</sup> Their selling over 12,000 copies per issue evidencing their popularity. In the introduction to the publication, General Sir Douglas Haig comments on the importance of art in recounting the events of war: “the conditions under which we live in France are so different from those to which people at home are accustomed, that no pen, however skilful, can explain them without the aid of a pencil”.<sup>7</sup> The drawings by Bone included in the publication featured the landscapes and studies of soldiers. In *Waiting for the Wounded* (Figure: 11), Bone has produced a work containing detail and a thoughtful composition, a quiet war with contemplative moments; a war in which there was still time to rest, and have tea. The text for *Waiting for the Wounded* highlights the heroic nature of such a simple inactive scene;

A British advance has just begun, and the Surgeons of the Divisional Collecting Station near the Somme are waiting for the arrival of the first laden stretcher-bearers. In a few minutes the three officers will be at work, perhaps for twenty-four hours on end. At one Casualty Clearing Station a distinguished surgeon performed, without resting, nineteen difficult operations, each lasting more than an hour, in the case of abdominal wounds, where delay would have meant loss of life. In almost every case the man was saved. Another surgeon operated for thirty-six hours without relief. Such devotion is not exceptional in the R.A.M.C.<sup>8</sup>

In a review of *The Western Front*, Charles Marriott comments on the importance of the image of the soldier in Bone’s drawings, “There is not a phase of the soldier’s life that he has not touched upon with full sympathy”.<sup>9</sup>

The Ministry of Information replaced Wellington House in February 1917, headed by John Buchan, and the number of war artists appointed steadily increased. Some artists such as Paul Nash (1889-1946) were soldiers who had produced works prior to their commission but many were given employment and sent to France with Officer status

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<sup>6</sup> *The Western Front Drawings by Muirhead Bone* (London: Country Life and the War Office, 1916).

<sup>7</sup> *The Western Front Drawings by Muirhead Bone* (London: Country Life and the War Office, 1916).

<sup>8</sup> *The Western Front Drawings by Muirhead Bone* (London: Country Life, 1916), 7.

<sup>9</sup> Charles Marriot, “‘The Western Front’, Mr Muirhead Bone’s Drawings,” *Country Life*, (16 December 1916), 725-28.

with the goal of producing art<sup>10</sup>. By the end of the war, this government body had enabled the generation of over three-thousand paintings, drawings and sculptures by many artists. Following the success of Bone's publication, work commenced on a four-part publication *British Artists at the Front* containing work by C.R.W. Nevinson (1889-1946), John Lavery (1856-1941), Paul Nash and Eric Kennington (1888-1960).<sup>11</sup> Although the task of commissioning art during the First World War began as an attempt to assist in the propaganda work of the Ministry of Information, the final home for the collection was to be the IWM. The importance of the IWM in creating a lasting site of memory for the war is reiterated in by Kavanagh (1988), who notes that one of the key reasons for the museum was the "the need and anxiety ... for the conflict to be chronicled and remembered".<sup>12</sup> Though the collection was to include art, exhibits and artefacts from many different aspects of the war, it is the representation of the soldier that I believe is the most enduring legacy in the museum.

A letter held at the IWM recounts Major Charles ffoulkes (1863-1947) initially raised the concept of the museum to Viscount Harcourt, and suggested feedback to the concept should be sought through *The Times*.<sup>13</sup> On the 27<sup>th</sup> February 1917, the MP Sir Alfred Mond (First Commissioner of His Majesty's Office of Works) submitted a memo to the government suggesting that a collection of items relating to the war should be created and hosted in a national war museum.<sup>14</sup> This proposal was agreed to by the government on 5<sup>th</sup> March 1917. The museum's initial responsibility was to collect

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<sup>10</sup> For further information on the work of Paul Nash during wartime, see my unpublished Masters thesis *Paul Nash: Responses to War through Art* (2015).

<sup>11</sup> ART/WA1/487/01 contains correspondence relating to the publication. ART/WA1/487/02, ART/WA1/487/03, ART/WA1/487/04, ART/WA1/487/05 are copies of the publications held by the IWM.

<sup>12</sup> Gaynor Kavanagh, "Museum as Memorial: The Origins of the Imperial War Museum," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 23, No. 1 (Jan. 1988): 77-97.

<sup>13</sup> IWM Art/WA1/067.

<sup>14</sup> IWM Art/WA1/067.

items that would commemorate the events of the First World War and be representative of all those involved.<sup>15</sup>

A committee was set up to facilitate the museum with Sir Martin Conway (1856-1937), as Director General, Mond as Chairman, Charles ffoulkes as secretary, curator and accounting officer, with Ian Malcom in the role of management of The Art Committee. Conway summarises his objective for the museum to be a monument to the soldiers who had fought in the war,

When peace returns and men are back at home, the years will pass and memory of the great days and adventures through which they lived will grow dim. It is the purpose of the Museum to be a place which they can visit with their comrades, their friends, or their children, and there revive the past and behold again the great guns and other weapons with which they fought, the uniforms they wore, pictures or models of the ships and trenches and dug-outs in which weary hours were spent, or of positions which they carried and ground every yard of it memorable.<sup>16</sup>

In the first year they met thirty-eight times as the collection was progressed. It was during this time that the title of the museum was changed from the original “National War Museum” to the “Imperial War Museum” at the request of the Dominions Subcommittee; so that it might represent those not just on British soils. On the 7<sup>th</sup> January 1918 the IWM held their first exhibition of a selection of the war trophies, photographs and paintings they had collected at the Royal Academy in Burlington House.

Although the war artists were able to paint and draw whatever they wished, it was ultimately the committee, through their selection process, who created the record of the war in the national collection today. The criteria for the selection of works is indicated in the minutes of one of the first meeting in October 1918, when they resolved to buy pictures that were:

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<sup>15</sup> IWM Art/WA1/067.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, p88 from National War Museum, (B72 7 9) 24 4/17: IWM C/1.

...essentially of the nature of records; and though they consider artistic merit a most desirable accompaniment of such records, they prefer the accurate representation of an incident to a more artistic and equally more imaginary composition.<sup>17</sup>

The validity of first-hand experience of war is further indicated in the First Annual Report of the Committee of the IWM where it states that: “Works of art acquired for the museum have been restricted to those produced by artists actually present at the event depicted”.<sup>18</sup> Art was believed to be an important inclusion in this new museum, but only where the artist had actually visited the battle scenes depicted. This focus on the firsthand experience of the artist is an ethos that continues at the museum later in the twentieth century, as I will show in my investigation into the work of Kitson, Keane and Howson. The IWM report notes that over 500 oil and watercolour paintings, pastels, drawings and prints had been collected by 1918 and that they were still “actively engaged in collecting works of art dealing with the war”.<sup>19</sup> There had also been a number of artworks donated, such as detailed portraits of soldiers by William Orpen (1878-1931), which he had produced while serving in the army.

Another government body who had a role in the commissioning of artists was the The British War Memorial Committee who met for the first time in March 1918. The campaign was headed by Lord Beaverbrook (1879-1964) and was renamed the Pictorial Propaganda Committee in July 1918. They intended to assemble seventeen large history paintings, two sculptural reliefs and twelve smaller canvases as a legacy of events. These works went on to be part of the IWM collection in 1919. While Malvern (2004) notes the committee was in conflict with the IWM she does also identify the significance of this first patronage of modern history paintings and that the process

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<sup>17</sup> IWM, Central Files AI/4, 'Committees Internal - Art Committee', Memorandum by Secretary to Conway, 28 Oct. 1918.

<sup>18</sup> Sir Alfred Mond *First Annual report IWM*, April 1918 IWM ref ART/WA1/526/1.

<sup>19</sup> Sir Alfred Mond *First Annual report IWM*, April 1918 IWM ref ART/WA1/526/1.

“established a canon of British art that remains cogent to the present”.<sup>20</sup> The paintings collected went on to become part of the IWM collection after the war.

In 1920, the Imperial War Museum Act was amended to incorporate a board of trustees for the management of the museum. The preservation of a war museum in peacetime was met with some debate when the Act was debated in Parliament, as there was some concern whether the museum would perpetuate the spirit of war in the youth.<sup>21</sup>

However, following the success of exhibiting the works at Royal Academy in Burlington House, an exhibition on a much larger scale was developed in 1920 at Crystal Palace, where it contained over one hundred thousand items, from guns and other weapons, uniforms, paintings and photographs. The image of the soldier was not only present in many of the works included in this exhibition but also in the rhetoric in the catalogue that supported this exhibition.<sup>22</sup> Koureas (2007) considered the exhibition highlighted “the correlation that existed between nation and masculinity” as well as the anthropomorphism of the nation in the associated rhetoric.<sup>23</sup>

On the 9<sup>th</sup> June 1920, King George V presented an opening speech, which commented on the purpose of the museum and its impact on future generations;

We cannot say with what eyes posterity will regard this museum, nor what ideas it will arouse in their minds. We hope and pray that as the result of what we have done and suffered they may be able to look back upon war, its instruments, and its organisation, as belonging to a dead past. But to us it stands not for a group of trophies won from a beaten enemy, not for a symbol of the pride of victory, but as an embodiment and lasting memorial of common effort and common sacrifice, through which, under the guidance of Divine Providence, Liberty and Right were preserved for mankind.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Sue Malvern, *Modern Art, Britain, and the Great War: Witnessing, Testimony, and Remembrance* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004).

<sup>21</sup> Gaynor Kavanagh, *Museums and the First World War: A Social History* (London and New York: Leicester University Press, 1994), 145.

<sup>22</sup> Imperial War Museum Catalogue (Papers relating to the Imperial War Museum) ART/WA1/362.

<sup>23</sup> Kavanagh, *Museums and the First World War*, 143.

<sup>24</sup> IWM EN1/ 1/MUS/3/2.

The idea of the museum as a lasting memorial, and thereby the objects within it, as forms of remembrance is central to my exploration of later works. As I look at the works produced under commission by the IWM by Kitson, Keane and Howson and consider to what extent their depiction of the soldier aids understanding and remembrance of the soldier.

The exhibition at Crystal Palace received over two million visitors in the first year, many of which were ex-servicemen. The importance of the art collection on display cannot be understated, as Sue Malvern (2000) notes, between the wars the IWM held the most “significant and important collection of modern British art in the country”.<sup>25</sup> However, the location was not without its problems, as the extreme temperatures in the glass building on sunny days resulting in damage to paintings and frames.<sup>26</sup> When the lease at Crystal Palace expired in 1924 the museum moved to a new site in a small building in South Kensington where it occupied two small galleries. The size of the display space available was significantly reduced and many objects previously displayed either went into store, were loaned to other museums or had to be disposed of.

IWM moved into its present site in Lambeth Road building South London in 1936.

The Duke and Duchess of York (later to become King George VI and Queen Elizabeth) opened the galleries on 7<sup>th</sup> July 1936 with far less ceremony than seen at its previous home. The Duke did not give a speech, but a large number of the public attended along with a number of dignitaries. The press was mostly supportive of the new location for the museum, with *The Times* noting, "The importance of this aspect is much more readily grasped now that the works of art are arranged in galleries specifically planned

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<sup>25</sup> Sue Malvern, “War, memory and museums: Art and artefact in the Imperial War Museum,” *History Workshop Journal* 49 (2000) 177-203.

<sup>26</sup> Letter from Mr Adams, keeper of pictures and photographs, to ffoulkes 20/7/21 IWM archives.



for them”.<sup>27</sup> *The South London Press* noted that “The Duchess said she was very pleased that the museum did not glorify war. ‘It is a very good thing’, she said ‘that people should know and realise how horrible war is’”.<sup>28</sup> However, there was some amusement that the location of the museum was now in the former Bethal Hospital, colloquially known as Bedlam, as *The Manchester Evening News* reported “Home of Madness”:

The new home of the Imperial War Museum opened with due ceremony and an appropriate display of royal and popular interest to-day, was formerly known as Bedlam, the tragic dwelling place of minds changed. Rarely, if ever before, has there been a more appropriate succession of tenancy. Our forefathers went to Bedlam to see what madness could do to men. We and our children may go there now to see what the greater madness does for nations.<sup>29</sup>

During the interwar period, as the UK endured the cost of the war both personally and financially, the IWM continued to receive funding from the government to maintain its collection and keep curators and museum staff employed. However, this funding did not extend to expansion of the collection, as Kavanagh (1994) notes, “there was not sufficient political or social purpose to facilitate growth”.<sup>30</sup> The museum was considered controversial by some, with opposition in the press but L. R. Bradley, the Curator of the museum during this period, who had served in the First World War, noted that the purpose of the museum was to show that war was senseless and “that its heroism is bought at all too dear a cost”.<sup>31</sup> Kavanagh (1994) comments there was also a lack of recognition in the government of the educational possibilities of war museums teaching future generations about the impact of war; “Museums had proved their usefulness in time of war, but in times of peace their purposes became much less

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<sup>27</sup> *The Times* newspaper cutting dated 7 July 1936 and *South London Press* cutting dated 10<sup>th</sup> July 1936 from EN1/1/MUS/13/4.

<sup>28</sup> *South London Press* cutting, dated 10 July 1936 from EN1/1/MUS/13/4.

<sup>29</sup> *Manchester Evening News* cutting dated 7 July 1936 from EN1/1/MUS/13/4.

<sup>30</sup> Gaynor Kavanagh, *Museums and the First World War: A Social History* (London and New York: Leicester University Press, 1994), 174.

<sup>31</sup> Sue Malvern, “War, memory and museums: Art and artefact in the Imperial War Museum,” *History Workshop Journal* 49 (2000): 193.

certain”.<sup>32</sup> The museum did not extend its collection to cover the Spanish Civil War (1938 – 1939) but during this period, visitor numbers began to increase as visitors to their highest levels yet, as Malvern (2000) comments this may have been due to those “seeking to revive memories of war in the hope of it never happening again”.<sup>33</sup>

At the start of the Second World War in 1940, the museum closed its doors to the public due to the threat of damage to the artefacts, and did not reopen until in 1946. There was doubt voiced by the IWM committee around the continuance of collecting material during the conflict due to “the propriety of detracting from [the 'war effort'] by the acquisition of museum material during it”.<sup>34</sup> There were also fears that extending the collection would “create a vast mausoleum of engines of destruction”.<sup>35</sup> However, the continuance of war art was ensured by an important advocate of art in the Second World War, Kenneth Clarke (1903-1983), who had previously held the roles of Keeper of Fine Art at the Ashmolean Museum in 1930’s, Director of the National Gallery in 1934 and the Surveyors of the King’s pictures.

At the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 Clark became a driving force in the commissioning of war art for this conflict when he approached the Ministry of Labour to recommend the retention of artists as a skilled sector of the British workforce.<sup>36</sup> Initially artists were employed in the areas of camouflage and propaganda but Clarke was inspired by the success of Lord Beaverbrook, Minister of Information, in the First World War and the quality of works accumulated by the British War Memorials Committee.<sup>37</sup> In August 1939, Clark made a recommendation to the Ministry of

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<sup>32</sup> Kavanagh, *Museums and the First World War*, 175.

<sup>33</sup> Malvern, “War, memory and museums,” 193.

<sup>34</sup> IWM, Central Files B6/1, IWM Minutes, 22 January 1942.

<sup>35</sup> IWM, Central Files B6/1, IWM Minutes, 4<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1943, 8 May 1945.

<sup>36</sup> Brian Foss, *War Paint: Art, War, State and Identity in Britain, 1939-1945* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007), 16.

<sup>37</sup> Foss, *War Paint*, 18.

Information for the formation of the War Artists Advisory Committee (WAAC). Clark presented the Ministry of Labor with the names of fifty-one artists who would be approached to be employed by the WAAC.

The importance of art in the act of remembrance is noted in Clarke's definition of the purpose of the WAAC "to provide a memorable record of the war and all its associated activities ... the war can only be given permanence through the medium of art."<sup>38</sup> The WAAC provided commissions and short-term contracts to many artists, as well as encouraging artists to submit work on speculation, for possible purchase. In response to the scheme, more than 400 artists had created nearly 6000 items in a variety of media by the end of the war.<sup>39</sup> The ability of art to evoke feelings over the medium of photography was an important factor for Clark. As Foss (2007) observes:

Clark insisted that painters, draught persons and sculptors differed from photographers because they could produce visual records that combined historical documentation with the subjective 'feel' of the war... Art could also resort to metaphors and similes to make contemporary events more comprehensible.<sup>40</sup>

However, Malvern (2000) notes these official war paintings "lacked the large-scale canvases of the failed Memorial scheme" in the First World War.<sup>41</sup> She comments that the exhibition of the works in at the Royal Academy in 1945 were not well received because "the war itself was experienced as a necessary repetition, and an intensification, of something already known."<sup>42</sup> Whether this was war fatigue or just due to the setting and content of the exhibition she does not discuss.

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<sup>38</sup> Boyd Haycock, D. *Paul Nash*, London: Tate Publishing, 2002, 64.

<sup>39</sup> Foss, *War Paint*, 1.

<sup>40</sup> Foss, *War Paint*, 19.

<sup>41</sup> Sue Malvern, "War, memory and museums: Art and artefact in the Imperial War Museum," *History Workshop Journal* 49 (2000): 195.

<sup>42</sup> Malvern, "War, memory and museums," 195.

At the end of the Second World War the collections policy of the IWM was enlarged to incorporate art from the Second World War. The museum experimented in including art from the Second World War alongside guns and art from the First World War. In Malvern's article *Art and Artefact at the Imperial War Museum* in 2000, although she does not specifically talk about the soldier, she defends the importance of the art in the museum collection, noting, "It has been the museum's art collections...which have at various times allowed contemplation of another and sometimes contrary version of events".<sup>43</sup>

The Korean War (1950-1953) led to a further redefinition of IWM's terms of reference to include all conflicts in which British or Commonwealth forces had been involved since 1914.

The governance of the museum, originally established by the Imperial War Museum Act 1920 and amended in 1955, is the responsibility of a Board of Trustees.<sup>44</sup> The trustees consist of a President and twenty-five other members, which include the Director and Principal Librarian of the British Museum, with the remainder appointed from the Admiralty, the Treasury and Secretary of State for War and well as representatives from other Government departments and past Imperial countries.<sup>45</sup>

The links between the museum and the UK Government were not limited to the appointment of trustees, but also in the financial support received. In 1983 the museum closed for six years to allow for a significant redevelopment of its exhibition space. The Minister for the Arts (Mr. Richard Luce) noted on 17<sup>th</sup> July 1989 in Parliament that the

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<sup>43</sup> Malvern, "War, memory and museums," 198.

<sup>44</sup> Imperial War Museum Act 1920 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo5/10-11/16/contents> , Imperial War Museum Act 1955 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Eliz2/3-4/14/contents> Accessed 20/12/2019.

<sup>45</sup> <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Eliz2/3-4/14/schedule> Accessed 20/12/2019.

Government contributed just over £12 million of the £16.7 million the project.<sup>46</sup> The museum was reopened by The Queen on 29<sup>th</sup> June 1989 with a second stage of work being completed in 1994 while the museum stayed open.

The Director General of the museum is answerable to the trustees. Sir Martin Conway was the first director (from 1917 to 1937), followed by Leslie Bradley (from 1937 to 1960), Dr Noble Frankland (from 1960 to 1982). In 1972, the museum set up the Artistic Records Committee (ARC) and the programme of commissioning artists was restarted with the commissioning of Ken Howard (b.1932) in Northern Ireland. The IWM underwent a period expansion during the 1970s and 1980s, with the establishment of three new branches – IWM Duxford in 1976, HMS *Belfast* in 1978 and Churchill War Rooms in 1984 providing other locations in which to house the collection.

The director during the scope of my research was Dr Alan Borg who had previously been at the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts and who held the post until 1995. In 2014 Borg, commented that he sought to humanise the museum during this period,

It seemed to me that, provided we didn't have another immediate world conflict, the role of the museum would have to change as there wouldn't be veterans around...and the way in which we attempted to change it was to get across the idea that the museum was actually about people. We had lots of large bits of hardware – tanks, aeroplanes and so on – but the real subject is people.<sup>47</sup>

This is significant in informing the decisions of the IWM to select of both the artists and works in my corpus. The Artistic Records Committee (ARC), chaired by Fredric Gore, decided which artists were commissioned during this period. Committee members included Field Marshal Lord Carver, Leonard Rosoman, and Angela Weight,

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<sup>46</sup> [https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1989/jul/17/imperial-war-museum#S6CV0157P0\\_19890717\\_HOC\\_91](https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1989/jul/17/imperial-war-museum#S6CV0157P0_19890717_HOC_91) Accessed 20/12/2019.

<sup>47</sup> Stephen Moss review of the opening of the IWM in the Guardian newspaper, 10 July 2014. <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2014/jul/10/imperial-war-museum-reopens-first-world-war>

who became the new Keeper of Art in 1982. As I investigate the commissioning of each of the artists in my corpus, I will use archival documents to identify the processes this committee used to develop the collection.

Britain has experienced many conflicts during the twentieth century, most of which have been represented in the IWM's ever expanding terms of reference and collection's policy. While there has been nuanced changes in the details, I have evidenced that the continuing emphasis of collecting and commissioning war art at the IWM has been to support the generation of works where the artist has actual experience of the conflict. The image of the soldier is prevalent throughout the long history of collecting art, and while there has been a significant quantity of research on the representation of soldiers in the early collection, the comparative lack in the late twentieth century signifies the originality of my research. The 2015 IWM Collections and Development Policy stresses its role as a museum rather than a memorial that concentrates on people's experience of war and its impact on society. It states the purpose of the museum is to "enrich people's understanding of the causes, course and consequences of modern war and conflict; to explore world conflict from contemporary perspectives with a focus on Britain and its former empire."<sup>48</sup> As is evidenced from this policy, while the use of the term 'memorial' continues to be used in relation to the IWM in literature, it is now contested by the institution. In my research, I argue that the origin of the word memorial: memorialis, 'to serve as a reminder', is compatible with the intent of the museum collection and the depiction of the soldier in the art in the collection.

In the next three chapters of my thesis, I consider the representation of the soldier in the work of Kitson, Keane and Howson. I will examine their works through the framework

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<sup>48</sup> Collections and Development Policy, Imperial war Museum, The Trustees of the Imperial War Museum. 2015.

of the history of the representation of the soldier identified in Chapter 1 and consider how the IWM effected the commissioning, selection and reception of their works and how the museum, through the process of patronage, has defined the image of the soldier.

## Chapter 3: Linda Kitson: The Soldier Unharmed by War

### Introduction

The Falklands War in 1982 was the first time since the World Wars that British soldiers were sent to defend sovereignty overseas.<sup>1</sup> As I examine the representation of the soldier during the conflict by Linda Kitson (b. 1945), I will consider the importance of the legacy of war art to the reception of her work. During the long journey to the Falklands by ship with the troops, Kitson built a good relationship with the officers and staff she accompanied. This had the benefit of allowing her access to alternative views of the soldier to that in the press, but it also meant that when faced with the death and injury of the soldiers later in the conflict she was not able to respond artistically. The omission of bodily trauma to the soldier in her works implied a sense of invincibility and supported the theory of the soldier as hero, which is also observed in war art from the First and Second World Wars. The soldier was central to the many drawings that Kitson produced, and while they were met with an expectation of images of heroic masculinity and the tide of nationalist sentiment portrayed in the media, her depiction of the soldier focused on the humanity of the individual. I contest that despite Kitson's omission of the bodily cost of war, she produced a significant alternative image of the soldier, one where heroism was in the quiet moments between the battles and where any indication of the soldier as a nationalist icon is subtle and understated.

The IWM had established the Artistic Records Committee (ARC) in 1972 with a remit to continue the investment into war art by commission and by acquisition, a role started

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<sup>1</sup> For further information on the conflict see; Admiral Sandy Woodward, *One Hundred Days* (London: Harper Collins, 2012) or Max Hastings and Simon Jenkins, *The Battle for the Falklands* (London: Pan Books, 1983).



by the Ministry of Information in the First World War and continued by the War Artists Advisory Committee in the Second World War.<sup>2</sup> Using IWM archival records and oral history, my own and other interviews and close reading of her works, this chapter brings together information on Kitson's appointment as official war artist in the Falklands War, on 30<sup>th</sup> April 1982, her time travelling to the Falklands and on the island and her methods of working.<sup>3</sup> Building on a small number of articles, interviews and publications on Kitson and on the legacy of commissioning war artists in the UK, I shall include a brief biography of the artist, an outline of the events which lead up to her appointment and the media responses to her commission from newspaper archives. Kitson was the only artist commissioned by the IWM to accompany the British troops to the Falklands and she was also the first female to go to an active war zone as an official war artist.<sup>4</sup> Although her experience of producing rapid drawings at festivals, events and in unfamiliar industry had refined her skill, she had no understanding of working in sites of conflict. Her recommendation for the role came from Fredric Gore, Chair of the ARC and committee member Leonard Rosoman who had known her at Art College and following an exhibition of her drawings of *The Times* newspaper offices.<sup>5</sup>

During the war, Kitson created over 400 works, many of which were given away or sold to servicemen. As this would be too vast a remit to consider in this chapter of my thesis, I have limited my investigation to those that have relevance to the representation of the soldier within the artworks held by the IWM and included in the publication *The Falklands War a Visual Diary*.<sup>6</sup> The Fleet Aircraft Museum also hold forty works that I

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<sup>2</sup> Sarah Bevan, *Art from Contemporary Conflict* (London: Imperial War Museum, 2015).

<sup>3</sup> *Britain and the Falklands Crisis, A Documentary Record*. (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1982).

<sup>4</sup> Linda Kitson, Falklands Conflict File, ENG/2/ACC/6/4/1-3.

<sup>5</sup> Linda Kitson, *The Falklands War: A Visual Diary* (London : Mitchell Beazley in association with the Imperial War Museum, 1982), 9.

<sup>6</sup> Kitson, *The Falklands War*, 9.

have viewed as part of this research. My analysis of the drawings will focus with reference to theories of the soldier as hero, an icon of nationalism and as an exemplar of masculinity, which I identified as significant in the previous chapter. I will also consider her background, the reception, exhibition and interpretation of her work both at the time and more recently as a remembrance of the events of war. In addition, this chapter includes a summary of other artistic interpretations of the war, by photographers and artists, as these provide an important comparison to Kitson's work.

While the press notice that preceded Kitson's Falklands exhibition commented, "The high quality of the drawings is a testimony of Linda Kitson's skill as an artist and a validation of the artist's role in wartime", there continues to be mixed critical reception to her omission of the bodily cost of war in the works she produced.<sup>7</sup> I argue that the duration of her time with the soldiers on the crossing to the Falklands resulted a depiction of the soldier that was led by her lack of objectivity and works which did not challenge the image of the soldier hero as undamaged by war. Kitson's drawings also raise the question of the goal of the war artist. I will examine any evidence of intention by Kitson and also consider if, in commissioning art for the national collection, the IWM has expectations on what is included and what is omitted by the artist. Within the scope of my thesis, I contest that although the importance of her works as a tool of remembrance is reduced by not including the trauma of war, they continue to provide a significant insight and form of remembrance.

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<sup>7</sup> IWM ENG/2/ACC/6/4/1-3 Press Notice "The Falklands War", Oct 1982.

## Early Years

Kitson was born in 1945 and, as she notes in the oral records at the IWM, despite her parents divorcing when she was very young, her upbringing was one of affluence.<sup>8</sup>

Although the press made frequent reference to the military connection in her family, with a cousin Frank Kitson who was “one of the most outstanding generals in the British Army” and other relatives who served in Gallipoli, Kitson hardly knew them and commented, “my knowledge of anything to do with any of the forces was zero”.<sup>9</sup>

As a child, Kitson would spend time with family in their many properties located around the country and abroad. She attended boarding school from an early age, where she enjoyed the comradeship and order of school life compared to a more erratic time with her parents. In a recent interview, Kitson notes how boarding school was a “crash course” for her time with the army in the Falklands as it provided an example of the rigid structure that the forces operated.<sup>10</sup> Her family had no expectations that Kitson would have a career on leaving school, however she enjoyed art and so she was encouraged to enrol into art school. She attended Ecole de Beau Arts in Lyon France, and then in 1963, through a combination of ability, luck and family connections she gained a place at St Martins school of Art in London to study Graphic Arts.<sup>11</sup> Kitson went on to the Royal College of Art in 1965 where she took a BA in Illustration. One regret she notes was that she did not study fine art.<sup>12</sup> Kitson felt constrained by this early specialism, and the focus on commercial art, which did not suit her method of

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<sup>8</sup> IWM Oral history tapes, IWM 13727, were the source of the majority of this section unless otherwise referenced.

<sup>9</sup> Julian Thompson, “Drawing the Falklands” *RUSI Journal* 162, No. 2 (April/May 2017), 60–66.

<sup>10</sup> M. K. Palomar, “*Linda Kitson: [Mine is] ‘a reactive sort of work – it’s a reaction to, rather than ... a preconceived idea ...’*” (New York: Studio International, 27/04/2017).

<sup>11</sup> In my interview, she commented that it was due to someone dropping out of the course that she got a place at St Martins.

<sup>12</sup> IWM Oral history tapes, IWM 13727.

working. She went on to complete a Masters in Illustration in 1970 and became a tutor at the Royal College of Art.

One of Kitson's first appointments after graduating was with Mel Calman (1931-1994), who was a cartoonist for *The Times* and the owner of a gallery in London focusing on cartoons and printmaking called "The Workshop". Calman employed Kitson to sit in the window of the gallery and draw the people and street. These fast working pictures were to be a style she would go on to use in her work as a war artist in the Falklands. Kitson was then offered an open contract to produce illustrations for the paper *The Illustrated London News*, which had a notable history of using illustrators in the First World War. Kitson produced in the region of fifty drawings each week, from which they would select works for inclusion in the paper. Her contract from the publishing house allowed her to choose her own subjects and locations; attending events such as the Cheltenham Literary Festival, Harrogate Festival and other music and literary festivals around the country. Kitson enjoyed working amongst the staff during rehearsals, readings and performances, where she produced simple line studies of musicians such as this work from 1971 (Figure: 12). In this work, Kitson has drawn the faces in detail, adding expressive character, while the bodies of the subjects in her work are drawn simply. Another feature of these works is her lack of constraint in the composition; elements such as the bag are included because they add to the narrative of the work, despite the impression that its placement is on impulse rather than a faithful representation of what she saw.

In 1972, the BBC commissioned Kitson to produce artworks to support their 50th anniversary celebration.<sup>13</sup> She worked amongst the production crew using a confident

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<sup>13</sup>The Queen opened the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Exhibition at Langham Place, London on 1/11/1972. "The Queen pays warm tribute to BBC for its integrity." *The Times* (London) 2 Nov. 1972: 5. The Times Digital Archive. Web. 4 Dec 2017.

linear style to capture events and activities of the staff at the BBC, employing a monochrome palette and working in pencil with a variety of line strengths, as can be seen in *Camera Rehearsal for BBC War and Peace* (Figure: 13). The drawing depicts the camera crew and equipment in the foreground and she adds notation to the drawing to provide information on the participants of the recording. Kitson directs the gaze of the viewer in this work by omitting elements of the background and a low viewpoint to emphasise the contrast between the camera crew and the actors. This composition adds to the clandestine nature of these works as she is presenting a view of television usually not shown to the public.

In her next role at literary and arts festivals in the UK, Kitson continued to work using the technique of line drawn of studies of people in activity. Her mode of work was to be part of the activity she was drawing and with a goal of showing the best in people.<sup>14</sup> This is an element of her work that I will revisit when I appraise Kitson's drawings from the Falklands, which were criticised for not showing the brutal aspects of war. Kitson was able to travel extensively while working during this time, from the UK at the Young and Old Vic to Africa, living and working with the actors. The festivals resulted in small exhibitions from which she gained new commissions through recommendation. In the oral history held by the IWM, she notes that it was her obsessiveness that allowed her to fully immerse herself in these different environments.<sup>15</sup> This trait became useful during her commission as a war artist because she was able to cut herself off from the noise and events going on around her and fully concentrate on the subject of her work.

Kitson travelled to France in 1978, and in a change to the style of her previous years, started drawing landscapes and buildings. She noted her enjoyment in creating these

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<sup>14</sup> Linda Kitson IWM Oral history tapes, IWM 13727.

<sup>15</sup> Linda Kitson IWM Oral history tapes, IWM 13727.

works due to their ability to, "...touch people's lives".<sup>16</sup> The landscapes are unusual in her body of work due to the omission of figures and her expressive use of watercolour and coloured pencil as can be seen in *Chateau dangles-sur-L'Anglin, Vienne, France* (Figure: 14). Kitson returned to London in January 1982 and taught art at the Royal College of Art, Camberwell, Chelsea, and Saint Martin's. Kitson was also appointed by *The Times* to produce artworks at the Fleet Street newspaper printing factories. During this commission, she spent a number of days and nights drawing the workers and machines for the exhibition *Newspapers and Newspeople*. In *Machine Room at the Times* (Figure: 15), she shows an example of the closeness of proximity to the staff that her work required. The drawing emphasises a claustrophobic atmosphere as she places the viewer amongst the machinery of the newspaper production. The subjects are not posed or facing Kitson, they are perhaps not even aware of her presence as they carry out their tasks. She produces an impression of the machines that are used by the staff, rather than an accurate study, this gives the machines an unworldly quality; highlighting this as an alien landscape to those who are not familiar with the tools or jobs she is drawing. Kitson used a similar artistic technique for these works to that in the *BBC*, and contrasts heavy line and loose hatching in the foreground with lighter lines in the background. Her annotations add humour and insight to both the tasks carried out by the workers and her feelings. "2.45 am! I really think I'm the only one awake here" and "papers going upstairs for packing". While the drawings contain a lot of movement of line, the resulting work contrasts this with an impression of stillness, of inactivity, which is enhanced by the knowledge that it is so early in the morning. The drawing *Lorries unload paper under the News of the World clock* (Figure: 16) of the road outside *The News of the World* highlights Kitson's artistic ability in capturing the complexities of perspective, architecture and vehicles. In the work depicting the paper

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<sup>16</sup> Linda Kitson IWM Oral history tapes, IWM 13727. Reel 1.

being unloaded from trucks, Kitson used darker and more confident lines more readily than in the previous example from the commission, which could be both to a deeper understanding of what she was drawing and because she had more time to complete this work. Kitson notes that although the newspaper room was a very different working environment to the festivals, she quickly became comfortable in the new environment, "Once the journalists and printers realised I wasn't part of some new time and motion study, they accepted me".<sup>17</sup> At the start of the Falklands War, in March 1982, Kitson was exhibiting her drawings of *The Times* at the Workshop Gallery. Her lack of awareness of the conflict in the Falklands was noted by her as although it was being mentioned in increased frequency in the newspapers at this time, it was not until she was approached by the IWM that she had any awareness of it.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Mel Lewis, "Captured on paper, the 'street of ink'," *The Times* (London, England) 16 Apr. 1982: XI.

<sup>18</sup> Linda Kitson IWM Oral history tapes, IWM 13727.

## The Falklands Commission

Kitson's work prior to the war in the Falklands centred on images of people at work or leisure and rural landscapes, and not of conflict in the UK or aboard. Many books have been published on the history of the Falklands War and the island, which can be consulted if a comprehensive history of events is required, but as the detail is not pertinent to my thesis I shall merely summarise for context before considering Kitson's appointment by the IWM.<sup>19</sup>

The lead up to the Falklands War was initially regarded by the UK as a minor error in diplomatic process. On the 19<sup>th</sup> of March 1982, a group of Argentines landed on Leith Harbour on South Georgia to carry out salvage works. Although South Georgia is over 900 miles from the Falklands Islands, they are recognised as part of the British principality. For many years prior to the Falklands War, Argentina had been in discussions with the UK regarding the ownership of the islands due to their close geographical proximity.<sup>20</sup> Despite being over eight thousand miles away from the UK in the South Atlantic Ocean, the Falklands Islands had been identified as a British Imperial colony since 1690, when the navigator Captain John Strong made the first recorded landing. The Islands were fought over by the Spanish, French (who had a settlement there in 1764) and the English. In 1833, the Falklands became a British Overseas Territory. They were strategically important to the UK and were the site of one of the battles of the First World War in 1914 when Britain fought to secure the Cape Horn passage. In 1947, the Falkland Islands were listed at the United Nations (UN) as a Non-Self Governing Territory (NSGT) subject to the UN's decolonisation

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<sup>19</sup> See for example: Adams, V. *The Media and the Falklands Campaign*. (London: Macmillan Press, 1986) and Hastings, M and Jenkins, S. *Battle for the Falklands*. (London: Michael Joseph, 1982).

<sup>20</sup> Falklands know by the name of Islas Malvinas by the Argentinians, located 300 miles from southern Argentina.



process. In 1960 a UN Resolution granted the right of Self-Determination to all peoples of NSGTs.

Following the landing of Argentines on South Georgia in 1982, the British Government contacted the Argentine Government to determine the reasons for not completing documentation or complying with immigration procedures. After receiving no response, British Government concerns increased when further equipment was transported to the island accompanied by a Navy vessel causing Lord Carrington to note in Parliament that, “the question of security in the area is being reviewed”.<sup>21</sup> In response to moves by the Argentine Government bringing in a number of vessels and their C130 transport aircraft, the UK ordered the *HMS Endurance* to move into the area. British government fears of Argentine hostilities were confirmed when, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1982, an Argentine flag was hoisted on the island of South Georgia, swiftly followed by a full-scale Argentine invasion of the Falkland Islands. During this time the Falklands was home to 1,900 people of British origin, who were mostly engaged in farming, and a lightly armed garrison of under one hundred soldiers. The small British military force was quickly overcome and the Governor, Rex Hunt, was flown out of the island and returned to London. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> April the Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, announced to the House of Commons that a large task force, led by *HMS Hermes*, and would launch the following week.

At the news of war, the ARC at the IWM began compiling a shortlist of suitable artists who would be able to attend Falkland’s conflict in the role of official war artist.

Leonard Rosoman, Angela Weight and Field Marshal Lord Carver, who were on the ARC selection committee, along with Freddie Gore, were able to visit Kitson’s exhibition for *The Times* and observed her ability to depict people at work surrounded

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<sup>21</sup> *Britain and the Falklands Crisis, A Documentary Record* (London: Her Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1982), 18.

by the machinery of their trade and Rosoman knew Kitson from the Royal College of Art and was happy to vouch for her work. She was interviewed at the IWM on 18<sup>th</sup> April 1982 by Nobel Franklin, Angela Weight, Johnathon Chadwick.<sup>22</sup> In addition to her skill at working quickly and in difficult conditions, Kitson was young, fit and had no dependents. The IWM file on the artist notes that of the short-list of three, two of which were from the Royal Academy, only Kitson was available to leave at short notice.<sup>23</sup> While the selection committee at the IWM were confident in Kitson's artistic abilities, the appointment would be breaking new ground in the use of a female war artist in a combat area. As the Secretary to the Director of the IWM comments in a memo on 28<sup>th</sup> April 1982, it was "...exceedingly unlikely that a female artist would be admitted to HM ships in a potential war zone".<sup>24</sup> The legacy of commissioning female war artists in the UK began in the First World War when a small number of works were produced under commission of the IWM; however, they were predominately through the Women's Work section and focused the role of women in the war effort.<sup>25</sup> It is worth noting that women were not sanctioned for active combat roles in Britain until 2017, so it was rare for a female of any role to be accompanying troops into battle. The IWM committee persevered with the request and went on to gain permission for Kitson. An indication of the power the IWM selection committee have on the national legacy of war art, is evidenced in memo later that month, where they comment another artist (who was recommended by Fleet Air Arm), "...would, in the aesthetic and artistic

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<sup>22</sup> IWM ENG/2/ACC/6/4/1-3.

<sup>23</sup> IWM ENG/2/ACC/6/4/1-3: Internal Memo, 28 4 1982, From Secretary to Director IWM.

<sup>24</sup> IWM ENG/2/ACC/6/4/1-3: Internal Memo, 28 4 1982, From Secretary to Director IWM.

<sup>25</sup> See Sue Malvern *Modern Art, Britain, and the Great War: Witnessing, Testimony, and Remembrance* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004). Has an excellent listing of women war artists, also see Lee, C (Ed) and Strong, P (Ed) *Women in War*. York: Pen and Sword, 2012. Shelley Saywell, *Women in War* (London: Viking, 1995). Kathleen Palmer, *Women War Artists* (London: Tate Publishing, 2011).

judgement of those qualified to give it, dilute the quality of the museum's collections".<sup>26</sup>

The commission for Kitson's work was funded jointly between the IWM and the Fleet Air Arm Museum. A letter dated 30<sup>th</sup> April 1982 from IWM to Kitson indicates the amount paid to her was £1,500 commission plus expenses. Correspondence with Kitson notes that the journey would be undertaken at the risk of the artist. It goes on to say, "...the Committee reserves the right to accept or reject any works submitted to them", but reassures her that "We are enthusiastic about your commission and your ideas... so that no rejection seems likely to us".<sup>27</sup>

Despite never previously producing art in relation to conflict, Kitson notes that she was at a point in her career where she questioned the social significance of her art; reflecting, "...how are you helping society...by drawing vineyards?"<sup>28</sup> The Falklands commission was a chance to do something different and potentially more important. As she comments;

I wanted to bring back a record which was not going to be purloined, edited, mucked around and abused or exploited as the case with the press...I would be able to do it, not dispassionately, but my rule...I would go without preconception.<sup>29</sup>

As soon as the commission was announced, the newspaper and television press were eager to cover the story and made Kitson's life very difficult, as she commented, "I didn't realise being a woman would cause such a fuss".<sup>30</sup> She notes there were also some adverse reactions from her friends to her taking the commission;

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<sup>26</sup> Linda Kitson, Falklands Conflict File, ENG/2/ACC/6/4/1-3

<sup>27</sup> Linda Kitson, Falklands Conflict File, IWM ENG/2/ACC/6/4/1-3.

<sup>28</sup> Linda Kitson, Falklands Conflict File, IWM ENG/2/ACC/6/4/1-3. Also see Tim Wilcocks, "We are all Falklanders now: Art, War and National Identity", ed. James Aulich, *Framing the Falklands War: Nationhood, Culture and Identity*. (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1992), 59 for comment on the lack of anti-war rhetoric in her works.

<sup>29</sup> Linda Kitson Oral History tapes, IWM 13727.

<sup>30</sup> Linda Kitson Oral History tapes, IWM 13727.

I lost any number of friends on return because they confused the joining with armed forces with condoning it, well that is exactly what it wasn't about, in my view it was to shed light on what life is like, remember it was 8,000 miles away, and we haven't had anything like it in our lifetime, an all force engagement with a foreign enemy, 8,000 miles away, and I just thought it was imperative that an artist should be there.<sup>31</sup>

A press conference on the 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1982 resulted in a number of articles on her appointment. In *The Daily Mail*, "War artist Linda will paint scene" reported, "Linda Kitson, 37, a petite brunette, with a short 'punk' hairstyle" would be the first war artist since 1945.<sup>32</sup> Her lineage for the role was emphasised by *The Daily Mail* as "descended from a long line of naval officers" whereas Angela Weight underplayed her selection saying, "It was very difficult to find anyone who could drop everything and go".<sup>33</sup> The idea of art as a weapon was used as a pun in a number of headlines reporting Kitson's commission. In the *Daily Mail* they note she was "armed only with an easel, inks and water colours".<sup>34</sup> Although Wilcox (1992) comments there was an expectation in the press of "either condemnation or sensationalism" in her work, there was no evidence that Kitson planned use her art to support a particular message in the war.<sup>35</sup> This expectation was led by the heritage of nationalist themes in art in the First and Second World Wars. As Laura Brandon (2012) comments in her book that art's use "as a political tool is a constant," not just by the government of the day but also "...by the opponents of war who have used it to publically critique military operations and interventions".<sup>36</sup>

In *The Sun* newspaper, the language used to describe Kitson's involvement in the conflict was evocative of the text used for the "Page Three girls", in what Zoe

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<sup>31</sup> Linda Kitson Oral History tapes, IWM 13727.

<sup>32</sup> *The Daily Mail* (3 May 1982).

<sup>33</sup> *The Daily Mail* (3 May 1982).

<sup>34</sup> *The Daily Mail* (3 May 1982).

<sup>35</sup> Tim Wilcocks, "We are all Falklanders now: Art, War and National Identity", ed. James Aulich, *Framing the Falklands War: Nationhood, Culture and Identity*. (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1992), 63.

<sup>36</sup> Laura Brandon, *Art and War* (London: I B Tauris & Co Ltd, 2012), 139.

Anderson describes as a “sexualized nationalism”.<sup>37</sup> The ‘girls’ (Figure: 17) were shown to be supporting the war effort by their display of specially made underwear embroidered across the front with the proud name of the ship on which a husband or boyfriend was serving.<sup>38</sup> This contrasted with the photographs of Kitson (Figure: 18), which could be more easily argued to fit the image of the female activist, as seen on Greenham Common, than those on Page 3 of *The Sun*.<sup>39</sup>

A press release from the IWM on 10<sup>th</sup> May 1982 announcing that Kitson had been approved for travelling on the requisitioned Queen Elizabeth II (QE2) as an official war artists with the forces was followed by a press conference the next day. *The Times* swiftly published a small article entitled “The Thin Black Line”, noting that she was chosen on the strength of her drawings from the “Newspapers and Newspeople” exhibition.<sup>40</sup> The gung-ho attitude to war reporting which had been used by journalists reporting the preparations for war continued in reports of Kitson’s commission as she was described as to have “got what it would take to capture the task force on paper” by Angela Weight.<sup>41</sup>

The heightened media interest in Kitson had a negative impact on her last few days in the UK, as she became virtually a prisoner in her home while she waited for departure. Journalists were camped outside her house and attempted to get photographs and obtain quotes at any opportunity. Kitson was desperate not to jeopardise the commission by leaking information to the press during this enforced confinement. She notes “It could have stopped me going ...it was a psychological ...it was a known form of torture”.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Zoe Anderson, “Empire's Fetish: Sexualised nationalism and gendering of the Falklands War”, *National Identities* 13:2, (2011):189-204.

<sup>38</sup> *The Guardian* (7 Apr 2002). See also Chris Horrie, Peter Chippindale, *Stick It Up Your Punter!: The Uncut Story of the Sun Newspaper* (London: Faber and Faber, 1990).

<sup>39</sup> Note: for further information on the Womens Peace camp at Greenham Common in 1982 see David Fairhall, *Common Ground: The Story of Greenham* (London: Tauris, 2007).

<sup>40</sup> PHS, “The Times Diary.” *The Times* (London, England, 12 May 1982).

<sup>41</sup> PHS, “The Times Diary.” *The Times* (London, England, 12 May 1982).

<sup>42</sup> Linda Kitson Oral History tapes, IWM 13727.

During this time, Kitson occupied herself packing for the three months away. She had been briefed by the military to be prepared for both arctic and tropical weather conditions, to take dark coloured clothes or as near to camouflage as possible.<sup>43</sup> She also took gun boots, fishing jumpers and many warm under-layers, gloves and long johns for working in the cold conditions as well as smarter clothes for the officer's dinners where formal dress would be required. She reflected afterwards how important the layers of warm clothes had been to allow her to work.

Kitson packed drawing equipment, which could be transported easily and could survive in the extreme conditions; a limited colour pastel and watercolour pencils and wax based pencils. This was the media she was most experienced in using and it provided a flexible way of recording events quickly.<sup>44</sup> Although Kitson was practiced in working outside and familiar with the issues faced with the weather, she had never worked in arctic conditions. Her kit also included a large amount of paper, with hardboard and clips to allow her to work in windy conditions, a bucket, a parasol, a stool, and plastic bags for sitting on, all packed into a large tin trunk, which she waterproofed to protect the contents. On 12<sup>th</sup> May 1982 these belongings were loaded onto the QE2 and she began her journey to the Falklands Islands, one of a handful of women on the QE2 along with over 3,000 military personnel.

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<sup>43</sup> Linda Kitson, *The Falklands War: A Visual Diary* (London: Mitchell Beazley in association with the Imperial War Museum, 1982), 10.

<sup>44</sup> Linda Kitson Oral History tapes, IWM 13727.

## The Falklands War

### The Journey

The first interaction Kitson had with the soldiers, who would feature so centrally in the works she produced during her commission in the Falklands, was when she boarded the requisitioned QE2, a Cunard Line ocean liner, for the eight-thousand mile journey. The ship had a capacity of over two-thousand crew but for the purposes of the requisition, it carried over three-thousand personnel and their equipment. The ship had been chosen not only for its size but also because it could travel at a speed of twenty-eight knots, making it fast compared to other vessels of the size. Prior to departure the ship was modified to become a floating training ground for the troops and to hold Sea King helicopters on the forward deck. The swimming pool at the aft was covered to create two other helicopter-landing pads and the many miles of carpet were covered with hardboard. The juxtaposition between the former luxurious purpose of the ship and its use as a transporter of military is highlighted in many of the drawings Kitson produced on the journey.

The QE2 sailed from Southampton on the 12<sup>th</sup> May 1982 accompanied by a large crowd on the shore and many smaller vessels on the water. Kitson's last press interview before leaving was on, on 11<sup>th</sup> May. The *Daily Express* ran an article titled "Ladies of War", which showed an image of Kitson "posing" in front of the First World War guns at the IWM.<sup>45</sup> The article's feminisation of the gun implies patriarchal ownership, which they extend to Kitson; both are there to serve the war effort. Her feelings about the commission are reported, as she confessed, "I shall be absolutely terrified. I've had second and third and fourth thoughts about it but I still want to go".<sup>46</sup> The article goes

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<sup>45</sup> *Daily Express* newspaper, (11 May 1983).

<sup>46</sup> *Daily Express* newspaper, (11 May 1983).

on to quote her thoughts about conflict, which are in contrast to the general narrative of this 'just war' reported in the press at the time. This was a sentiment which has echoes of Paul Nash in the First World War; "War horrifies me. I would like to think I could bring back drawings which would make people think we should never fight again".<sup>47</sup> The article resulted in a letter of complaint from Sir John Landford Holt MP, objecting to her sentiment. He commented, "I cannot believe that a war artists duties are to try to cause disaffection among soldiers, sailors and airmen. I would like to know how this lady was chosen".<sup>48</sup> His disapproval was met with a mollifying letter from the IWM stating "...it was not part of the artist's duties to cause disaffection amongst service people...possibly over-excited atmosphere of the press and photo call...on the day of the artist's departure".<sup>49</sup> As I evidenced earlier in my thesis, the war artists in the First and Second World wars, were initially employed to assist in the war effort, and aid propaganda. This response from the IWM shows that Kitson was also managed as part of the expectation and propaganda in support of the war initiative, and any debate around the validity of sending soldiers to kill and be killed was suppressed. While the anti-war sentiments voiced by Kitson prior to her departure might give rise to expectations of works that presented a negative view of the conflict, I will show through case studies of her works that this was never realised. Her close relationship with the soldiers resulted in a self-censorship which she continues to question today. Kitson did not complete any drawings of the departure of the QE2, but the media photographic evidence shows a carnival atmosphere, as indicated on the front cover of the *Soldier Magazine* (Figure: 19), which shows troops waving from within the ship. A regimental band accompanying the departure and the *Getty* image (Figure: 20) also

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<sup>47</sup> *The Daily Mirror* (12 May 1982), 4 and Paul Nash, *Outline: An Autobiography and Other Writings* (London: Faber, 1949), 211.

<sup>48</sup> IWM Linda Kitson File: Letter to IWM from Sir John Landford Holt MP 08/06/1982.

<sup>49</sup> IWM Linda Kitson File: Letter from M Webb-Ingall Office of Arts and Libraries to Sir John Landford Holt MP 15/06/1982.



presents the soldiers smiling as they depart, and the accompanying boats and the crowds shown from the shoreline in another image (Figure: 21). Views of the public were also used in the press, such as the image of a weeping woman (Figure: 22). This was used as an emotive cipher for the impact of war on the family unit, but also implying the role of women in conflict was to stay behind and weep for the men. Although Kitson was one of only a few women on-board the QE2, she was not daunted at the prospect or of being in the position of the first female war artist sent into conflict, as she said; "...one's used to women appearing in all walks of life with varying degrees of grumbling, but I'm a product of my time".<sup>50</sup> Despite carnival atmosphere to the departure of the QE2, Kitson noted it was a very emotional departure. The "atmosphere changed dramatically" as they sailed from port as there was an understanding that they might not be coming back.<sup>51</sup> As she commented in in her oral history tapes, she was near to tears, despite not leaving anyone in particular behind; she was now in a completely alien environment with an unknown task ahead.

Kitson was given officer status during her commission and was tasked with drawing the activities of the soldiers and other personnel on-board ship during the crossing to the Falklands Islands. Her itinerary, which stated where she should visit to record events on ship (Figure: 23 and Figure: 24), meant she did not have complete autonomy over what she could draw. There also were other rules and regulations that restricted her freedom of movement; for example, as with others of her rank, she could not appear at the sergeant's mess or the private's mess unless invited. These rules set boundaries to social interaction with the troops and formalised her social engagement were customary in life aboard ship, but were a new experience to Kitson. The soldiers were interested in her and what she was doing but courteous and polite; it was easy to pass among them.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Linda Kitson Oral History tapes, IWM 13727.

<sup>51</sup> Linda Kitson Oral History tapes, IWM 13727.

<sup>52</sup> Linda Kitson Oral History tapes, IWM 13727.

She noted there was a duality in this relationship, as although being female made the men “more likely to talk openly and tell her confidences”, her gender was also the source of some amusement, such as the commander assigning her the acronym F.G.G. – Flight Deck Groupie when addressing her over the tannoy.<sup>53</sup> Nevertheless, being a woman in this male environment did not cause her any concern, as Kitson related in an interview for the IWM, “...that at the age of 37 she wasn’t fanciable to the troops so she didn’t get any difficult situations”.<sup>54</sup> Kitson’s intentions during her commission was also recounted in this interview,

I view the job as being not judgemental, if my feelings had been ‘I’m anti-war, I think this is a disgusting machine, I’m not having any part of it’ It wouldn’t be on record. And my role as I see it is to be a catalyst. You draw that machine and you allow people to come to their own conclusions...The importance of the role of a war artist is inestimable.<sup>55</sup>

Despite this recollection of her intention being at odds with her quote prior to departure, I argue that, as with any artist, it is impossible not to introduce judgement into the creation of art. As Amishai-Mailsels noted (1993), “Being a witness is not as simple as it sounds...he must choose not only what to depict but how to depict it”.<sup>56</sup> Kitson did not produce drawings that were obviously against the war effort, her relationship to the soldiers resulted in a bias that strived to support the conflict and show the soldiers in the best possible way.

A number of the works created on the QE2 were on the flight deck. In these drawings, Kitson depicts the professionalism of the soldiers as they work with the machinery of war, the helicopters, firefighting equipment and guns. These soldiers are frequently anonymised as Kitson omits detailed facial features or shown in protective garments

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<sup>53</sup> Linda Kitson, *The Falklands War: A Visual Diary* (London: Mitchell Beazley in association with the Imperial War Museum, 1982), 15.

<sup>54</sup> Linda Kitson Oral History tapes, IWM 13727.

<sup>55</sup> Linda Kitson Oral History tapes, IWM 13727.

<sup>56</sup> Ziva Amishai-Mailsels, *Depiction and Interpretation: The Influence of the Holocaust on the Visual Arts*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 6.

that obscure their features or unites them with the equipment. This generalisation of character might have been because it was early in her journey to the Falklands and she had yet to know the soldiers as individuals, but it also hints to the role of a uniform in obscuring individualism. Following the theme of soldiers as masculine ideals, these drawings also show a soldier who is both master of these weapons of war and part of the weapon themselves.

In the work, *May 13: The QE2's Newly Constructed Flight Deck with 825 Squadron and Landing Crew* (Figure: 25) four men are shown standing in front of a helicopter on the ground. The figures are loosely drawn with either no discernible facial features, with their back to the viewer, or their faces covered with protective headgear. The stillness of some of the crew is contrasted to action by Kitson as she draws one of the flight crew walking mid-stride and in her treatment of the helicopter rotor; using a combination of dark hard lines and softer strokes. Another figure looks unworldly like an alien or a spaceman as he is depicted fully covered by a protective suit with large gloves, and a helmet. She includes textural records in the work, such as "Warning" on the helicopter; text is also visible on one of the flight crew's helmet and jacket. The composition seems well balanced with the central character not the helicopter but the man with his back to the viewer. Her viewpoint for this drawing is low which gives an overall feeling is of being within the team. Although Kitson does not give her works specific titles, preferring instead to give them descriptive notation, the use of title here is important because, without a background or horizon in this work, it is the only way for the viewer to understand the context.

A soldier at work with firefighting equipment on the flight deck is shown in another drawing, *Firefighters on the flight deck* (Figure: 26). In this work, the face of the person in the foreground is drawn in detail despite the cover of the helmet; the eyebrows, eyes and nose are formed with details. Kitson's method becomes looser as

she moves from the head down the body, but she works into the boots with vigorous, dark strokes. The firefighting machinery is an amalgamation of a gas bottle pipes, wheels and cables, but the looseness of the drawing makes it difficult to comprehend what it is or how it would work. In an attempt to humanise the subjects in the drawing one figure is annotated with his name, this is a technique she uses in a number of her works. Adding the name of the subject has the effect of personalising the drawings and separating them from works of imagination in the same way that a photograph editorial text might. Although smaller than the other person, this character has been drawn in some detail. His back and arm has been defined with heavy dark strokes and, although he wears a helmet and goggles, the profile features are drawn finely without shading. In *Sea King 97 Prepares to Land* (Figure: 27), the movement of the Sea King helicopter landing on the flight deck contrasts with the stillness of the four crew members waiting. Kitson has drawn this scene from a more elevated viewpoint than the other works on the landing deck. Her emotional response to the helicopters is recorded in the notes added to the work; “close up they looked huge; in the air more like oversized insects”.<sup>57</sup> Kitson uses varying strokes and marks of the pencil to describe the motion of the rotors on the helicopter. The figures are drawn loosely with little detail as they stand in relaxed poses, with hands in pockets and on their hips. The equipment and the two of the crew in this drawing overlap and seem fused together making it difficult to distinguish human from machine. In contrast *Routine Maintenance on the Flight Deck* (Figure: 28) is a more intimate study of the men completing this daily task of repair and repainting, being drawn from closer proximity to the subjects than when the flight deck is in operation and from a lower viewpoint. In the foreground, two men sit painting the deck underneath the dark and somewhat ominous shape of the rear rotor of

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<sup>57</sup> Linda Kitson, *The Falklands War: A Visual Diary* (London: Mitchell Beazley in association with the Imperial War Museum, 1982), 24.

a helicopter. The word “Danger” is visible in large letters, “Sea King” in smaller text below. Although the men are depicted with little detail it is possible to see they are dressed casually rather than in in combat gear, challenging the notion of soldiers being only on duty when in uniform. The role if the soldier as protector is indicated the group of men standing with packs and guns visible at the rear of the work. The armed soldiers being the also the only indication that this drawing is of a military scene, despite not being postured aggressively or displaying exaggerated masculinity.

The juxtaposition of soldiers’ activity and inactivity, of war and leisure, in Kitson’s work is depicted in *Flight Training and relaxation: 2nd Battalion Scots Guards and Others* (Figure: 29). Central to this work is a detailed drawing of a helicopter being loaded with equipment. The men on the right of the work, in full kit, with guns, boots, helmets and camouflage uniform contrast with the men seated to the left of the work wearing shorts relaxing in the sun. Kitson’s annotation to the drawing; “sorry gentlemen it’s not very comfortable”, further emphasised the role of the soldier on and off duty.<sup>58</sup> This representation of the soldier stoically suffering uncomfortable situations reinforces the idea of the soldier as different to the civilian, and the men sunbathing indicate that this transformation in one which she is witnessing first hand. She contrasts the traditional image of the soldier, ready to fight, with an alternative view of the soldier who, stripped of his uniform, is vulnerable and unremarkable.

Physical prowess was another of the themes in relation to masculinity that I identified in my research on the depiction of the soldier in art. An instance of this is Kitson’s drawings of the frequent Physical Training (PT) exercises she witnessed as they travelled to the Falklands. In the three drawings titled *PT on the Boat Deck* (Figure: 30), Kitson depicts the active motion of the soldiers exercising around her. Carrying

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<sup>58</sup> Linda Kitson, *The Falklands War: A Visual Diary* (London: Mitchell Beazley in association with the Imperial War Museum, 1982), 24.

full packs and in a temperature of 29°C this is a trial of heroic measure. The blur of action is framed by the static structure of the ship, the riveted steps the balustrades and machinery, while the soldiers are indistinguishable from each other and merge into one warrior mass. This attempt to capture both the action of movement and the uniformity of the soldier is reminiscent of the 1913 work *Column on the March* (Figure: 31) by C.R.W. Nevinson (1889-1946). As with Nevinson's work, the soldier depicted by Kitson infers a dehumanised and homogenous instrument of war, but in Kitson's works there is a sense of awe at their ability to train so rigorously in such hostile conditions. Kitson voiced her high esteem for their professionalism in a number of interviews.

While the size and speed of the QE2 made it ideal to transport troops to the Falklands, it also made it a noticeable target to the enemy. Kitson recalled that there was a change in the atmosphere in the crew as they travelled closer to the islands and became at risk of attack, "As soon as the QE2 became a target from the air as well as from submarine and surface ships, Brigadier Wilson ordered the assembly and manning of defensive positions".<sup>59</sup> This change was shown by Kitson in the angular drawing *Air Defence on the Bridge* (Figure: 32) where she has drawn a soldier almost completely enveloped by a Browning machine gun. She uses dark conte pencil to emphasise the solidity of the gun and adds to the impact by drawing from a low vantage point. The weapon seems part of the soldier; the soldier is part of the weapon. This synchronisation of man and machine is further underlined as the gaze of the gun and the soldier as the gun are mirrored, both are angled to the right of the drawing. Despite this powerful imagery of war, this work is an instance of Kitson's work highlighting the vulnerability of the soldier through her accompanying comment; as she notes he needed to stand on an ammunition box to reach the controls. Rather than the masculine ideal of the tall

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<sup>59</sup> Linda Kitson, *The Falklands War: A Visual Diary* (London: Mitchell Beazley in association with the Imperial War Museum, 1982), 29.

muscular soldier, she pictures him as small part of the war machine. The First World War artist Jacob Epstein (1880-1959) explored the combined imagery of man and machine. Epstein's soldier in the "The Rock Drill" (Figure: 33), was "...the armed, sinister figure of today and tomorrow. No humanity, only the terrible Frankenstein's monster we have made ourselves into".<sup>60</sup> In Kitson's work, although there are parallels with the angular nature of Epstein's sketches, here I argue that rather than the soldier as master of the weapon, powerfully standing over it, soldier is consumed by it. Kitson does not depict an equal relationship; the soldier is weak flesh, and the gun is strength and power.

I have discussed Kitson's drawings of the men in their duties outside on the QE2, but she also produced a number of works from inside the ship. In *The 'Steering' wheel on the QE2's bridge* (Figure: 34), the Cunard Captain, Malcolm Scanlon, appears to be the subject of the work, as he is drawn centrally and in some detail seated at the control of the ship. Kitson has also identified him by annotating the work with his name on the chair. In this work, she shows a juxtaposition of the commonplace amongst the trappings of warfare as another man is pictured at work at a desk, partially obscured by a kettle, teapot and some mugs on a table. Kitson's viewpoint in this drawing is low, looking up at the crew and indications of the context of the work are included by the presence of a box annotated with "Hoopers Signal Main electronics unit", a box and a book "Nories Nautical Tables". As with many of her drawings, this is both a record of war and a portrait of the individual in the war. In contrast to traditional portraits, however, there is the impression that the subject is not conscious of Kitson's work. Malcolm Scanlon is shown in a seat of power at the helm of the ship in this work,

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<sup>60</sup> Jacob Epstein, *Epstein: An Autobiography* (London: Hulton Press, 1955).

attentive and complete. There is a sense he is on guard, watching for the danger that is commonplace in war.

Other works produced by Kitson in the interior on the QE2 contrast with the ship's previous use as a pleasure vessel and with its masculine occupants and new use as a transporter to the site of conflict. In these works, the close proximity of the guns and other weapons in the confined spaces further highlight their dominance over the soldier. The detail in *Gurkhas at Weapon Training* (Figure: 35) indicates Kitson had a long period to work on the drawing. It is situated in the dance floor of the upper deck and depicts the underneath of a spiral staircase, a soldier in full kit in the foreground and a row of guns. The scale of the room is shown through her inclusion of a number of people at a table beyond the soldier and a brief is being carried out in the distance on the left. Kitson was often unsure of the purpose of the machinery she was drawing, but here she has confidently depicted various tasks being carried out. The quantity of weapons in this elegant interior emphasises contrast of roles and show the soldiers as being in an alien landscape.

A number of Kitson's works show the contrast of the previous glamour of the ship and its use in wartime. In *Anti-aircraft Gun in the QE2 Shopping Parade* (Figure: 36) a Rapier Missile tracking unit is set against the entrance to the perfumery boutique. One soldier is drawn in the process of setting up the machine while others are standing slightly away from it. She depicts the weapon with heavy dark strokes of the pencil compared to the lighter rendering of the figures who are dressed in shorts. As Wilcox (1992) notes, her works such as *In Brownings in QE2's Shopping Arcade* (Figure: 37) are humorous because they "bring together the extremes of socially structured male and



female domains”.<sup>61</sup> The soldiers are located in the ‘Costume and Jewellery’ section of the ship as they work on a large alien machine of war that dominates the drawing and contrasts with the glamour of a lit mirror and the suburban chairs.

In *The Quarter Deck Information Map* (Figure: 38), Kitson has drawn a group men meeting in front of a large map of the Falkland Islands. On either side of the map, other information panels, such as ‘BBC world Service Reports’ and ‘Argentine casualty list’, highlight the peril and reality of the war. Although this work has no sense of stress, she noted, “I was given a licence to draw anywhere, but my attempts to capture the urgent atmosphere of the pre-flight briefings never satisfied me”.<sup>62</sup> The significant size of the map in the war planning room is a recognisable image from previous wars where it implies British control and management of the war. Following the theme of the soldier as hero, it suggests the men who stand in front of the map are professionals, and because of this, they will succeed.

A greater sense of anticipation is achieved in *Bridge Headquarters in the QE2 Card Room* (Figure: 39), which Kitson drew “crouched in a corner” while they were working on plans for deployment onto the Falkland Islands.<sup>63</sup> It is a closely cropped scene comprising almost totally of soldiers. The nine men who fill the space are depicted in some detail; some working with their heads down, or with hands in their heads with an atmosphere of seriousness. She adds further evidence to the individualism of the soldiers, by adding details to their facial features such as a moustache, different

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<sup>61</sup> Tim Wilcocks, “We are all Falklanders now: Art, War and National Identity”, ed. James Aulich, *Framing the Falklands War: Nationhood, Culture and Identity*. (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1992), 61.

<sup>62</sup> Linda Kitson, *The Falklands War: A Visual Diary* (London: Mitchell Beazley in association with the Imperial War Museum, 1982), 20.

<sup>63</sup> Linda Kitson, *The Falklands War: A Visual Diary* (London: Mitchell Beazley in association with the Imperial War Museum, 1982), 33.

hairstyles and shoulder 'badges' and the man at the front of the group who is working on a typewriter is labelled "poor Private Sargent!"

Kitson noted that the mood of the troops changed on the QE2 as they started to sail south from the Ascension Islands. The weather changed from warm sunny conditions to winter and the increased sea swell meant they could not have the stabilisers on the ship.<sup>64</sup> The QE2 was a conspicuous target as it neared the islands and an increased frequency of air reports added to the atmosphere of emergency on board. Due to this threat, the troops disembarked from the QE2 to the smaller *Canberra*.<sup>65</sup> During this time Kitson witnessed the Meridian dining room of the QE2 transformed to the exit for the cross decking to the smaller vessel. The plan was initially that men would pass by lifeboat but the first time they tried this Kitson witnessed tragedy as a young soldier was caught between the ship and the lifeboat and injured both legs. Following the accident, they set up an open box 'bucket' across link to the other ship to transfer kit and the men more safely.

Kitson had been worried that she would be left on the QE2 and miss a chance to get nearer to the conflict to complete her commission. However, she was transferred on the 28<sup>th</sup> May. Leaving behind 100 drawings with instructions that they be sent to the IWM, she was concerned that they would be forgotten or overlooked, so was relieved sometime later when she received a telegram informing her that the drawings had arrived safely in London. Kitson spent five days on the *Canberra*, whose size was a shock after the enormity of the QE2. It was also more uncomfortable due to decreased stability on the rough seas around the Falkland Islands. This resulted in a need to take medication against seasickness and to wear life jackets at all times as well as full clothing. The temperature outside was very cold so the ship was kept warm, but her

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<sup>64</sup> Linda Kitson Oral History tapes, IWM 13727.

<sup>65</sup> Linda Kitson Oral History tapes, IWM 13727.

clothing made even the simplest of activities very uncomfortable. Since transferring to the *Canberra*, the crew were on amber alert, which heightened the anticipation of conflict and increased the tension aboard ship. Kitson was very conscious of the vulnerability of the ships approaching the islands and even in moments of calm, there was an underlying terror of what might happen at any moment.<sup>66</sup>

While on the QE2 Kitson had enjoyed feeling part of the military team but on *Canberra* she was accommodated in a small room on Deck 2 at the bottom of the ship along with the domestic staff where she could not even hear the communications tannoy. The frequent boat drills added to the intensity of the situation but Kitson's biggest worry was that when they disembarked to the smaller landing boats she would be forgotten.<sup>67</sup> She did however continue to work, as can be evidenced by the drawing *Intelligence Headquarters in the Rudolf Steiner Beauty Salon* (Figure: 40), which shows the curious contrast of the feminine hairdressing salon, complete with hairdryers and washbasins, which was requisitioned as an operations room full of army personnel with almost comic effect. The faces of the soldiers are drawn with detail, some labelled with their names, but as with many of her works, they are oblivious to her activity as an artist as they complete their tasks.

On 2<sup>nd</sup> June the *Canberra* arrived at the Falklands. *Mustering of the Troops on S.S. Canberra* (Figure: 41) shows the men Kitson had lived with for the eight-week journey to the Falklands transformed into soldiers in preparation to go war. This is a significant work, for as she recalled "in battle dress they look dehumanised" the soldiers looked larger and intimidating and had turned from men she knew into "part of a war machine".<sup>68</sup> The drawings of this event show none of the relaxed tone of earlier works.

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<sup>66</sup> Linda Kitson Oral History tapes, IWM 13727.

<sup>67</sup> Linda Kitson Oral History tapes, IWM 13727, Reel 9.

<sup>68</sup> Linda Kitson Oral History tapes, IWM 13727.

The pensive scene shows a quiet moment before the soldiers disembark, Kitson notes, "...it gave me time to record and feel atmosphere".<sup>69</sup> The men are drawn by Kitson waiting in groups in full kit with guns and packs. Most are not interacting with each other but an important element in considering the representation of the soldier is the figure in the background shown with an arm around one of his comrades in conciliation. The work highlights the emotional effect of the prospect of battle on the individual and in opposition to the idea of the soldier as an unfeeling warrior, unaffected by war. One of the soldiers in the foreground is drawn in detail with his head in profile. As with many of the detailed portraits Kitson produced, his name and group has been recorded by Kitson on his arm, "Dave Good, Scots Guards". His eyes are cast down, perhaps in contemplation of the events to come. Kitson recalls how she felt like a "tiny particle" during this period, and experienced the fear and nervous anticipation of the soldiers as they prepared to disembark, commenting, "It was a frightening 5 days."<sup>70</sup> They knew they were going into very close contact fighting. Kitson was able to see the human characteristics beneath the uniform and she felt a connection with the men.<sup>71</sup> Her ability to depict the fragility of the soldier in this work is in contrast to the general narrative of the heroic soldier waiting to go to battle in the First World War. It has an impression of more sincerity than the images of grinning servicemen depicted in the press on their departure to the islands, which show the war as a great adventure.

The increased anxiety during the transfer was also due to the vulnerability of the soldiers when disembarking.<sup>72</sup> The perils of moving the troops from the *Canberra* to the landing craft are shown in the two drawings *Disembarking Troops to San Carlos*

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<sup>69</sup> Linda Kitson, *The Falklands War: A Visual Diary* (London: Mitchell Beazley in association with the Imperial War Museum, 1982), 43.

<sup>70</sup> Linda Kitson Oral History tapes, IWM 13727.

<sup>71</sup> Linda Kitson Oral History tapes, IWM 13727.

<sup>72</sup> Linda Kitson Oral History tapes, IWM 13727.

*Settlement* (Figure: 42) which is drawn from a high viewpoint looking out over the side of the ship down onto the men packed into the landing craft. The complex machinery, contrasts with the calmer view of the sea, a lone ship and the distant view of the Falklands landscape. A loosely worked helicopter is in the sky, but does not dominate the composition as seen in her drawings on the QE2. While this work demonstrates the military power of the UK, it also emphasises how exposed the soldiers are during the transport to land.

Kitson remained on-board the *Canberra* and continued to draw the Argentine prisoners who were being moved off the island. Although she was keen to follow the soldiers who had been her companions on the QE2, she felt her role in drawing the Argentine prisoners was important. The military had requested that she draw this area as a record that the injured Argentine prisoners were receiving good care but Kitson indicated her intention in these works was to show how young and frightened the Argentine prisoners were. She comments on the realities of meeting the Argentine soldiers,

They were very young, 16-18 at most...Frightened by their superiors into believing that, if captured by the British, they would be eaten, some of them didn't stop shaking for days...I had to remind myself that these men had been responsible for booby-trapping their own ammunition containers, which had blown up several of their men.<sup>73</sup>

As the ship was turned into a medical ship, the works titled *The Hospital in SS Canberra's Meridian Room* (Figure: 43) are the first time there is any specific identification of the perils of war to the soldier in Kitson's works. She shows the soldiers in the makeshift ward with saline bags, needles, tubes and other machinery all around them. The soldiers are not engaged with the artist; their faces in profile or turned away. While in other works this gives the sense that the soldiers are working despite her presence, in the ward there is the impression that the men are contemplating

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<sup>73</sup> Linda Kitson Oral History tapes, IWM 13727.

their experiences of war. Her work *Argentine Casualties receiving hospital treatment* (Figure: 44) presents a similar scene of the aftermath of war. While these works indicate soldiers from the different forces were housed separately, she commented that both UK and Argentine soldiers were treated together, although the UK soldiers kept their guns.

Wilcox (1992) notes her work on board ship describes “an operation of patriarchal control”, but I argue Kitson’s work also indicates a humanity beneath the traditional representation of the uniformity of soldier’s interpretation and life.<sup>74</sup> Kitson found it strange that many of the drawings she completed of the injured were bought by the sitter, but she was pleased when they told her how important it was for them to have a remembrance of this time, as if the drawings were evidence of their part of the war.<sup>75</sup> As well as the general scenes of life in the military, Kitson also produced many portraits for the individuals she worked with during the commission. These were either gifted for sold to the subject. *Portrait of Major Mike Forge* (Figure: 45) is particularly poignant as he was a friend of Kitson who was killed a few days after it was completed. Drawn from a low angle, it shows the Major completing paperwork from a case on the table in front of him. He wears a simple military uniform. The detail of his features and clothes show that she had some time to draw him. It has none of the formality of traditional portraiture but does indicate a level of stoicism in its lack of emotional indication.

### The Falkland Islands

Kitson experienced a third change of environment when she was transferred from the *Canberra* to land on the Falklands on the 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1982 along with her tin trunk of

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<sup>74</sup> Tim Wilcocks, “We are all Falklanders now: Art, War and National Identity”, ed. James Aulich, *Framing the Falklands War: Nationhood, Culture and Identity*. (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1992), 61.

<sup>75</sup> Linda Kitson Oral History tapes, IWM 13727.

equipment. On being taken to Stanley, which is the largest settlement on the Falklands but with only four streets, Kitson “felt a sense of dismay at having to pay such a price for what is a very hostile Island”, the town appeared run down and “barely fit for human habitation”.<sup>76</sup> Kitson notes that it was “so cold bleak and lifeless...fighting against such climate and terrain wasn’t inspiring either...didn’t seem to hold a lot of magic”.<sup>77</sup> She was given simple accommodation in the manager’s house, which was luxury in contrast to her room in the *Canberra*.

Any chance for Kitson’s to maintain emotional detachment to the conflict was shattered when, on the first morning in the Stanley, she was told about the death of someone she knew from the Canberra. His death in ‘friendly fire’, having been mistaken for the enemy, at odds with any notions of valour in death in wartime. Kitson noted how from this point she began to become hardened to the realities of war, noting it “doesn’t affect you ever again in the way it does that first time...thereafter it became more normalised - people you had been having tea with all dead later that day.”<sup>78</sup> Kitson continued to work on her commission despite a high level of emotional stress,

...you sort of got used to feeling incredibly sick, you got used to it. Because you could always hear it, you know. It was very close in the area and you could hear the helicopters shot down, and the noise of the artillery and that sort of thing, from us I hate to say, it was a very noisy business: war.<sup>79</sup>

Kitson was keen to be able to cope with the challenging Arctic conditions on the island, but the cold, snow and mud made it very difficult for her to work. The troops were also inexperienced in operating in these conditions, so there was an impression that they were all having to adapt to survive. She would ask what the soldiers would like her to draw however, as a civilian, she had limited understanding of warfare and much of

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<sup>76</sup> Linda Kitson Oral History tapes, IWM 13727.

<sup>77</sup> Linda Kitson Oral History tapes, IWM 13727, Reel 11.

<sup>78</sup> Linda Kitson Oral History tapes, IWM 13727.

<sup>79</sup> Linda Kitson interview with Jayne Buchanan. London, (17 May 2017).

what she saw was confusing and needed explanation by the soldiers. The choice of what she could draw was also limited by the lack of safety on the island. Kitson would take up a position to work with soldiers near should she need help. She was not able to walk out alone because there was the fear that if she fell in the snow she would be injured and there was the risk of mines, and even that she might be kidnapped. The threat of injury or death during the commission was very real, as she found out when on one occasion that a trench she had been drawing in had contained an unexploded mine. Later in the conflict, it exploded and killed a soldier in the same trench. On another occasion when she continued working too long in cold conditions until after dark she collapsed with hypothermia at the camp and was taken to hospital, where she remained until discharging herself the next day.

Kitson produced a number of landscapes during her time on the islands, but *San Carlos: Blue Beach 2* (Figure: 46) is the first view from land out to sea rather than from ship to land. It depicts the landing pier and helicopters transporting goods to shore. The enormity of the task ahead is shown by her placement of the soldiers, who appear small against the vast and rugged landscape. In the foreground, parts of a tractor are drawn in detail, acting as a reminder of the pastoral and peaceful landscape before the conflict. The reality of the impact on the lives of the Falkland Islanders is seen in *Molly Clasan's Home: June 12* (Figure: 47) where Kitson contrasts residential architecture against captured anti-aircraft guns, missile positions, trenches and Molly Clasan's washing line. Kitson also depicts the soldiers' activities in their rest time playing in a game of cricket. In *Goose Green. Royal Artillery playing French Cricket with Falkland Islanders near Gurkha Trenches* (Figure: 48) she has drawn a cricket game amongst piles of decommissioned weapons with a backdrop of housing and gently sloping countryside. She notes "The game was disrupted continuously" yet they played despite



the "...agony of the cold".<sup>80</sup> Showing that the British troops are still playing cricket, despite the war, feeds into the nationalistic sentiment seen in the press. It also presents a soldier who is unafraid of conflict by showing him playing sport in the midst of such destruction.

Kitson adds to the understanding of the life of the soldier by her portrayal of their living conditions. *Living Quarters in 40 Commando Valley* (Figure: 49) shows how basic the soldiers' dugouts were. The trenches provide an easily understandable shorthand of conflict conditions, reminiscent of those in the First World War. Further similarity is indicated through the naming of the trenches which refer to familiar places in the UK; in this work she includes signs marking their land – "Hobbit Hole" and "Buckingham Palace".<sup>81</sup> The drawing is broadly constructed in three zones; the sky and hills in which the helicopters are flying, the middle distance showing a road, men in silhouette, a few tents, and the darker foreground where the dugouts are drawn. A gun lays on the ground outside one of the dugouts. Kitson's use of annotation of her work, "C. Sgt Atkinson lives here" remove ambiguity from the drawing and highlight that she is asking the viewer to consider that soldiers are living in this hostile landscape. The interior of these dugouts can be seen in the drawings *Command Post: 40 Commando Valley, San Carlos* (Figure: 50). These are detailed drawings indicating she has had time to work on them without distraction. There is a sense of claustrophobia in the room, which is increased by the wooden posts that bisect the space where the soldiers are working and the low shuttered roofs. Kitson has included other paraphernalia of war in this drawing such as books, maps; although this is a relaxed scene, the threat of violence is heightened by the depiction of one shirtless

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<sup>80</sup> Linda Kitson, *The Falklands War: A Visual Diary* (London: Mitchell Beazley in association with the Imperial War Museum, 1982), 60.

<sup>81</sup> The irony of the use of the term "Hobbit hole" which comes from Tolkien's book *The Hobbit*. This was written after he returned from WW1. Tolkien fought in the battle of the Somme and his description of middle earth was inspired by the landscape of the battlefield.

soldier holding a knife and the guns hanging with coats and leaning next to the men. The annotation of the names of the men in these drawings show her relationship with them is not just as an observer.

Another landscape drawing that shows what at first seems like a rural scene is *The 40 Commando Valley* (Figure: 51). This contains objects of rural life, traditional gates, the row of tractors, contrasting with an armed soldier is standing by the wooden fence. An Anderson shelter, reminiscent of the Second world war, is to the side of the tractors and as you follow the road up the hill, jeeps, helicopters and more men are among the farm houses. The pastoral scene is made more ominous by dressing with the tools of war, in a similar way to Peter Kennard's *The Haywain with Cruise Missiles* (Figure: 52). The invasion of war on the island is not just from the enemy but even the UK soldiers and their equipment affect the environment. In the notes on the work, Kitson comments, "The valley was taken over by the 40 Commando... One of the two huts known as the Red Hut was a landmark for them. Both of the huts were riddled with holes from shrapnel."<sup>82</sup> In this comment, she reinforces the idea of the soldier as heroically continuing with the battle despite adversity and peril.

Kitson produced a number of works featuring soldiers stationed in trenches. In *June 13: Blowpipe Position (Royal Artillery) Goose Green* (Figure: 53) she has drawn of two soldiers in camouflage gear and helmets from the rear as they stand in a shallow trench. The foreground depicts the tubular shapes of the Blowpipe, boxes and other equipment. The work has a feeling of vulnerability, isolation and stoicism as the men stand alone with their heads literally above the parapet, looking out to the horizon. No other habitation is drawn behind them on the distant hills, which increases the sense of desolation. In contrast intimacy is achieved in *Gurkha Trenches 1* (Figure: 54) through

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<sup>82</sup> Linda Kitson, *The Falklands War: A Visual Diary* (London: Mitchell Beazley in association with the Imperial War Museum, 1982), 60.

close framing of the subject. The work shows a soldier facing us and while there is some detail on the clothes, the face is the focal point, being drawn in detail. He is seated in a relaxed pose, with his head below the top of the trench. Kitson has annotated the drawing with the soldier's name and unit. The soldier's uniform and the row of machine guns behind him are visual references to his role in the conflict but his pose is not active or aggressive as would be expected in a war work extolling the warrior image. In contrast *Gurkha Trenches 2* (Figure: 55) shows another of the Gurkha soldiers in a more active role. This work is tightly composed with again much of the detail in the face of the soldier, but in this drawing he holds his weapon in hand and finger on the trigger. The gaze of the soldier matches the angle of the gun to the left. His face is detailed and closely observed, but passive.

Kitson depicts an alternative view of war in her office based scenes such as *Command Post Goose Green* (Figure: 56), which shows a group of soldiers seated in an internal room. The soldiers seem unaware and unaffected by Kitson's presence. One figure at the rear of the scene is sitting, with his body slumped back in the seat, talking on the telephone. The guns leant on the rear wall underneath a map of the islands highlight the military context of the work. Kitson notes in her accompanying text that this work depicts "Comparative peace" among the constant stress of the warzone. Kitson demonstrates in this work that there can be as much meaning in these quiet moments as in those showing activity. Another view of the command centre is *A Hard Day at Command Post Goose Green* (Figure: 57), in which she draws six men seated in a small area of a room. Brigadier Tony Wilson is central in the work in a contemplative pose, while others, some in full battle dress, are drawn seated behind him. The detail that she has added to this drawing indicates that the soldiers remained in the room for some time. Works such as these by Kitson, are significant as they demonstrate that war

is much about heroic acts of bravery as it is about the time planning, contemplating and waiting expectantly for engagement.

The clearing of mines was one of the dangerous roles which Kitson witnessed as she worked with soldiers from different departments. *Mine Disposal by 9 Para Squadron on the Beach alongside Stanley Airport* (Figure: 58) shows two men working alongside each other, laying on the ground searching for mines. Kitson notes in *The Falklands War* (1982) this was, “Brave, dangerous work; and all the more hazardous for the conditions,” perilous because although the Geneva Convention requires a record of where mines are laid, the records kept by the Argentine forces were sparse.<sup>83</sup> In this work, the soldiers are framed by the barbed wire, which prevents others entering the area, and the distant arc of the beach. The tension of the scene is increased by the depiction of large angry waves out to sea. Although the soldiers are alone, she has included the rising prow of a ship in the waves; highlighting that they are working amongst a range of disciplines within this war against adversity. She demonstrates in this drawing that there are different types of heroes; those battling at sea and those with their faces in the mud, centimetres away from a mine. The wrecked bulldozer on the shoreline had hit a mine on the beach the previous day. Its inclusion in the work situates the conflict within the wider environment and the peaceful farming community.

Kitson adds context in many of her works by either writing directly on them, or in the information included in the book that supported the exhibition. Alongside *4 Field, Royal Artillery* (Figure: 59) she comments on the soldiers' conditions, “They had left the snow covered mountains now and were based at Fitzroy with too few tents, mud, freezing rain and nowhere to stretch out and relax”.<sup>84</sup> Kitson depicts the men in arctic weather gear, but rather than highlighting their struggle in the difficult conditions, she has

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<sup>83</sup> Kitson, *The Falklands War: A Visual Diary*, 73.

<sup>84</sup> Kitson, *The Falklands War: A Visual Diary*, 74.

drawn them seated on boxes drinking tea. This conforms to notions of nationalism, tea being a typically British drink, and also to the idea that despite adversity the soldiers are stoically continuing their tasks, fortified only by this drink. Their features are obscured but she has drawn them smiling despite the indicated temperature of -5°C which also supports her purpose of representing a soldier who persists with high spirit despite the adverse conditions. Kitson reinforces the theme of the soldier as a masculine exemplar, as these soldiers are able to separate themselves from their feelings of discomfort.

The two works entitled *Essential Services: 9-Para Squadron (Royal Engineers)* (Figure: 60) show a soldier standing formally as if on duty and give a detailed study of the uniform and equipment worn by the royal engineers. Kitson was not familiar with the uniform and equipment of the soldier, so this was carried out as part of a study to enable her to work more accurately as well as to emphasise how well equipped the soldier was. She has annotated the large amount of kit with notes indicating the equipment carried; a fork, spoon, mirror and a needle in one pocket in another was a notebook, spare laces, matches. The threat of capture and evasion is also eluded as she documents concealed items such as a small compass, snares and fishing tackle among the items which would only be needed should the soldier be separated from his unit.<sup>85</sup>

The drawings Kitson completed in the Falklands evidence how her determination to produce a record of the different aspects of the soldier's life during the conflict required her to overcome physical and mental trauma in the same way as the soldiers. This proved the most difficult for Kitson in the final days of the conflict, when UK soldiers became the target of attacks, and she was forced to consider what she should depict of the injury of soldiers in wartime. Kitson had formed close relationships with the

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<sup>85</sup> Kitson, *The Falklands War: A Visual Diary*, 76.

soldiers during the trip to the Falklands on the QE2 and on the *Canberra*. She also spent a lot of time with the troops on the island. The extended period of time with the men increased her emotional attachment to the soldiers, which affected how she represented injury and death during the conflict. The Battle of Goose Green on 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> May 1982 was the first land engagement on the Falklands and resulted in the deaths of eighteen UK soldiers and the wounding of sixty-four more. The Argentinians lost over forty of their soldiers and the battle resulted in the capture of over a thousand prisoners of war. Further information on the details of the engagement can be found in a number of publications relating to the conflict, such as *Battle Story: Goose Green 1982* (2002).<sup>86</sup> Kitson was not present at the location during battle, but was taken there soon after the capture of the area and spent six days working on drawings. The dilemma of what to record and what to omit during this period was noted by her in *The Falklands: A Visual Diary*;

At Goose Green I had to make a decision about what aspects of war I could record. My brief was to record the sights that might be recognised as common experiences. I decided that the horrifying sight of parts human bodies, a helmet with the head still in it – pictorially sensational and relevant though they were – were not part of my brief: neither were the war graves, which were recorded on news film and in photographs. I still question that decision. Would it have been a stronger cautionary record if I had used such shock tactics?<sup>87</sup>

The drawing *Argentinian Pucarás on the Airstrip at Goose Green*, (Figure: 61) shows the jagged remnants of destroyed Argentine aircraft against a dark sky, but no soldiers or bodies of those killed. *Goings on at Goose Green* (Figure: 62) focuses on the activity that was necessary after the battle. Many figures are in this work, including a soldier in the foreground who is walking towards the scene of houses and a farm with soldiers, vehicles, weapons helicopter and the black acrid napalm smoke burning in the distance.

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<sup>86</sup> Gregory Fremont-Barnes, *Battle Story: Goose Green 1982* (Stroud: The History Press, 2013). Spencer Fitz-Gibbon, (ed). *Not Mentioned in Despatches: the History and Mythology of the Battle of Goose Green* (Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, 2002).

<sup>87</sup> Kitson, *The Falklands War: A Visual Diary*, 65.

Kitson mainly worked outside, sitting in the extreme cold conditions, but *Napalm* (Figure: 63) is drawn through a curtained window. Her focus in this work is the buildings holding the Argentine prisoners and the sky filled with a dark plume of smoke. The eye is drawn to the vertical posts that mark the boundary of freedom and captivity and the buildings beyond. The Napalm had been seized by the UK forces and the image depicts a controlled explosion. I would suggest that the use of the chemical's name in the title of her work leads the viewer to judge the Argentinian army as potentially waging a war without honour. They had stockpiled this chemical, ostensibly for use in the conflict, which demonstrates a lack of morality, whereas the UK forces who are taking part in an honourable war, destroy it rather than using it.

Further deaths were witnessed by Kitson on the 8<sup>th</sup> June when the ship RFA *Sir Galahad* came under attack by Argentine A-4 Skyhawks as it was unloading troops and equipment in Bluff Cove along with the *Sir Tristram*. The *Sir Galahad* was badly damaged and quickly caught fire, causing the deaths of 48 the troops and the injury of many more. The scene resulted in one of Kitson's most powerful, and frequently used, drawings of her commission, *The Sir Galahad, moored at Fitzroy* (Figure: 64), which shows the burning ship. The significance of this work is highlighted by the fact that it is still on display at the IWM in 2019. The wreck went on to burn for over a week and became reminder and signifier of death. This drawing is important to consider in the scope of my thesis because of its omission of the many men who died and were injured. It contains only the shadowy outlines of these men against the broken and burning hull of the ship, instead focusing on the destruction of the ship rather than the loss of life. The work is drawn from a distance and a high vantage point, with the ship shown by Kitson as the focus of the work by its central positioning and its size on the page. The bare 'ribs' of the ship and the dark billowing smoke stand out on the white paper as Kitson has worked the pencil in heavy swirls and lines, while the other features of the

work are more lightly rendered. The absence of indications of loss was a technique used by Paul Nash in his First World War work *We Are Making a New World*. For Nash, it was the destruction of the landscape that became a cipher for the bodily destruction he witnessed as a soldier and as an Official War Artist. In the exhibition press release in 2014 for the IWM *We Are Making a New World* is described as a “violation of the landscape as a metaphor for the force of war and the cost to humanity.”<sup>88</sup> In Kitson’s work, the ship *becomes* the representation of the bodies she saw, burned and injured. Like Nash, Kitson’s work also has the impression of being a message of portent, warning those who would view the war as a heroic quest of the sacrifice required. As Nash famously wrote in a letter to his wife prior to his return;

I am a messenger who will bring back word from the men who are fighting to those who want the war to go on for ever. Feeble, inarticulate, will be my message, but it will have a bitter truth, and may it burn their lousy souls.<sup>89</sup>

As Kitson knew many of the men who had been injured, from her journey on the QE2 the loss she felt at this time was very personal and went on to affect her after the war. She noted, “The suffering in Fitzroy was pervasive. The saddest memory I have of that time was after the memorial service at Fitzroy Settlement with all the units and islanders present...was almost more than I could stand”.<sup>90</sup>

I have shown that Kitson witnessed the injured and dead at first hand but did not include them in any of her works, however, the drawing, *16 Field Ambulance, operating table* (Figure: 65) is an alternative method Kitson uses to record the bodily damage to soldiers. This work is a very detailed drawing of the emergency facilities set up to treat the wounded. An operating table, sheets, boxes and other equipment are her primary focus for the work that includes no people. It has an atmosphere of stillness as

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<sup>88</sup> IWM Press Release, [http://www.iwm.org.uk/sites/default/files/press-release/IWML\\_Truth\\_and\\_Memory.pdf](http://www.iwm.org.uk/sites/default/files/press-release/IWML_Truth_and_Memory.pdf). Accessed 15<sup>th</sup> Sept 2014.

<sup>89</sup> Paul Nash, *Outline: An Autobiography and Other Writings* (London: Faber, 1949), 211.

<sup>90</sup> Kitson, *The Falklands War: A Visual Diary*, 84.



if the activity had just finished. Lights wires and tubes snake across the ceiling and contrast with the previous use of the room, which feature floral curtains and the dartboard. Her notes with the drawing explain the activities that had taken place in the room:

...one of the two operating tables where Lt. Col. John Roberts...and his staff dealt with their casualties. These men never stopped working...It was hard to remember these men were soldiers, too. They had come off the burning Sir Galahad with the troops”.<sup>91</sup>

Indications that she felt the surgical staff were heroic is emphasised by her comment: “they did not lose a single man who passed through their care”.<sup>92</sup> Kitson maintained her decision not to draw events where the soldier is weak or injured as, although this work shows the traces of the activities that had taken place, I also know from my interview with her that she had been present for some of the surgery but did not complete any drawings. However, despite not showing the soldiers in theatre Kitson did draw them recovering from their injuries. *A Ward in 16 Field Ambulance* (Figure: 66) is a detailed drawing of group of four men in a ward tent. The ceiling is hung with lights and canvas. There is an impression of stoicism, of comradeship, but not of pain or suffering. Of the two men who are seated, one is shirtless and wears a ‘dog-tag’ around his neck indicating he is a soldier. In the foreground, another is lying in bed in a relaxed pose, reading. It is a peaceful scene without any resonance of trauma.

The reality of death in war is shown by Kitson *W.G Echelon: Stanley* (Figure: 67) which records the sorting and packing of the belongings of those who had died. Kitson has annotated the drawing in some places with arrows informing the viewer of birth certificates and passports. Suitcases and boxes are stacked up in the rear of the work.

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<sup>91</sup> Kitson, *The Falklands War: A Visual Diary*, 86.

<sup>92</sup> Kitson, *The Falklands War: A Visual Diary*, 86.

However, an understanding of the scene is only obtained when reading Kitson's notes which comment on the activity taking place,

...the soldiers were involved in the sad business of sorting the belongings of the dead from Sir Galahad. There were rows of suitcases – the contents of each being listed and filed – passports and certificates...A lot of distress was caused by the news reports not having full information on who or how many had died, and letters informing families at home were not able to leave the island for some considerable time.<sup>93</sup>

The man in the foreground is contemplative with hand on chin but all others are efficiently caring out their tasks, and not allowing their emotions to impact on the activity. In my interview with Kitson she noted that she was originally going to go into the room where the bodies of the Welsh Guards were waiting for transportation;

...the Commanding officer ...said at the time, in order to spare me 'oh I wouldn't do that, go to the hanger where all their belongings are and you can signify the same message like that'. And I entirely agreed because I just didn't want to offend anybody, but perhaps I should have demanded the question was indicated, perhaps I should have done. And I could have said at the time 'but actually it's my job here; I'm entrusted to do whatever I see fit', obviously within reason subject to your approval, but everything I draw will go back to the MOD and it won't go any further...But I didn't do that out of deference to the people.<sup>94</sup>

This highlights the dilemma Kitson had over the level of injury and death to include in her works and the effect the guidance from the other soldiers had on her. She was steered to work on this more sensitive and poignant composition out of concern of the trauma of seeing the dead would have on her, but on reflection, Kitson believed showing their sacrifice would have been justified.

The British forces liberated Stanley after the surrender of the Argentine forces on 14<sup>th</sup> June 1982. The Falklands War officially ended seven days later but Kitson stayed on the island for a number of weeks. The drawing *The Battlefield Tour July 12-13* (Figure: 68) was completed during an official tour of the island. As Kitson comments "It was

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<sup>93</sup> Kitson, *The Falklands War: A Visual Diary*, 100.

<sup>94</sup> Linda Kitson interview with Jayne Buchanan, (17 May 2017).

impossible to capture any real detail on paper”.<sup>95</sup> The work depicts a group of men, with one holding his hands in motion, as if recounting events. Although the men are in uniform they hold relaxed poses. In the background, there are more men and on the horizon the jagged shapes of Goat Ridge, Tumbledown and Mount William are annotated by Kitson. Unlike in earlier works when the war was ongoing, there are no weapons in this drawing, this is a quiet image of victory which contains none of the flag waving or posturing perhaps expected. This is the last image in the book that accompanied the exhibition of the works and she uses the last paragraph to comment on how highly she regarded the men she was with in the conflict. She also notes how much more she had seen but not included in her works, which highlight the high regard she had for the soldiers,

...there are other aspects that the men who fought did not reveal...the extraordinary bravery that came to light; the totally unexpected odds against which they'd fought...the instances of hand to hand fighting...the ever present Arctic weather conditions and the toll of casualties...I shall never now be persuaded that soldiers are like the rest of us – how can they be? ...I felt privileged to have been with them.<sup>96</sup>

I have shown in this section how Kitson witnessed many different aspects of the soldier's life; on the QE2 crossing to the Falklands where she got to know the troops, on the island as they engaged in warfare in extreme conditions, and in death and injury. However, Kitson found the reality of trying to create work that depicted the reality of war was complicated by her respect and closeness to the troops and also by a desire to uphold the traditional narrative of the soldier as a hero who is unharmed by war. This was evidenced most notably in the absence of death and injury, which was at odds with the press coverage she would be greeted with on her return. In the next section, I will

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<sup>95</sup> Kitson, *The Falklands War: A Visual Diary*, 106.

<sup>96</sup> Kitson, *The Falklands War: A Visual Diary*, 106.

examine the media reception to her record of war when she returned to the UK and the role of the IWM in the exhibition and marketing of her work as a war artist.

## Return to the UK and exhibition of works

Kitson left the Falklands on the 17<sup>th</sup> July 1982 and was transported home on board ship for eleven days, which “seemed like an eternity”.<sup>97</sup> She only did one drawing on the journey, partially because she was exhausted but also because of the realisation that as the war has ended her work was now complete.<sup>98</sup> Paul Nash had experienced a similar sense of loss at the end of the First World War as noted in his autobiography his, “Struggles of a war artist without a war”.<sup>99</sup> Whereas Kitson had enjoyed friendship with the soldiers during the journey over to the Falklands, she now felt isolated from the rest of the crew. As she notes; “I’ve never felt so lonely, lonely in a crowd. I didn’t have anybody, anybody that I could talk to, even after such comradeship...back to peacetime protocol...”<sup>100</sup> Part of this isolation was due to the lack of information on what was happening in the Falklands to the soldiers left behind, she also had no knowledge of what was happening home in the UK. Kitson spent many days in her cabin with no one to speak to and nowhere to go. Her role as a war artist had also affected Kitson physically. Towards the end of her time in the Falklands she had rarely undressed fully and there was no chance to look in mirrors. It was only when she had opportunity to change clothes on-board the ship home that she saw how much weight she had lost. There was also the psychological impact of the end of the conflict, Kitson found it difficult to come out of the despair of leaving those behind, as she comments, “it was a sad return”.<sup>101</sup> She understood that the soldiers were also feeling the emotional trauma. There were the issue of guilt, which lead to a number of attempted

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<sup>97</sup> Linda Kitson Oral History tapes, IWM 13727.

<sup>98</sup> I have not been able to locate this image and have no other information on it but it was referenced in conversation in IWM 13727.

<sup>99</sup> Paul Nash, *Outline: An Autobiography and Other Writings* (London: Faber, 1949), 218.

<sup>100</sup> Kitson Oral History tapes, IWM 13727.

<sup>101</sup> Kitson Oral History tapes, IWM 13727.

suicides on board. She recounts that during the night was the worst time; soldiers would often have to fight men off the rails of the ships otherwise they would have thrown themselves overboard. Individuals were bereft, they felt responsible to for the deaths of others, that they did not do enough or that they should have done things differently. Kitson mentions the lack of activity during the crossing home resulted in her remembering and replaying of events that she experienced; “one can’t underestimate the terror of the action replays...”.<sup>102</sup> Her thoughts were so occupied with what had happened over the previous months that there was little thought of what her reception would be like on the return to Britain.

They reached Ascension Island on 30<sup>th</sup> July 1982, where Kitson and the casualties from 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Welsh Guards were transferred to an aircraft for a half day flight to Brize Norton airbase in the UK. She was at met by her close friend Quentin Blake, an IWM photographer and an Army photographer who was tasked with obtaining a photograph of Kitson and the Prince of Wales (Figure: 69). This was followed by a press conference where seventeen drawings were selected by the IWM for showing to the press.<sup>103</sup>

In a recording of the event by the London Broadcasting Corporation, *Falklands war ends - Welsh Guards return* the interviewer notes “the men were understandably tight lipped about their experience” although it did not stop the interviewer asking how they felt about losing friends.<sup>104</sup> Kitson’s interview responses highlight how disorientated she was to return home. When she was asked how she coped with the “sheer terror of war”, she replied, “When you are in danger is when you are not thinking about it, if you get left on your own...and my god well I actually was in a mine field”. Another member

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<sup>102</sup> Kitson Oral History tapes, IWM 13727.

<sup>103</sup> Memo from Angela Weight to Jonathan Chadwick 4 Aug 1982 ENG/2/ACC/6/4/1-3.

<sup>104</sup> LBC/IRN, "Falklands war ends - Welsh Guards return".

<http://bufvc.ac.uk/tvandrado/lbc/index.php/segment/0015800124007> (Accessed 03 Apr 2018).

of the press asked her to recall a most significant and memorable drawing, rather than answer directly she commented, "...the heroism of the fellows who come off battle mountains, and the patience and the keeping up of the moral – absolutely incredible".<sup>105</sup> Although this description of the soldiers as heroes confirms her relationship to the soldiers, the resultant works contain few of the tropes of the hero seen in First or Second World War art.

While much of the press coverage was focused on the return of the soldiers, *The Times* included a small photograph of Kitson in a larger article, where she is quoted saying, "many times she wished she could have been of more help rather than just standing and drawing".<sup>106</sup> This highlights the contrasting feelings on being with the soldiers; due to her lack of training and physical ability she was unable to help or care for those she accompanied; her art was her only tool. When Kitson reflected on the return to the UK and the press conference, she comments,

The barrage of press was mostly not concerned with art, or what I'd done...it was all about a woman artist who had come back. It was sensational. But I didn't give them anything that they could get their teeth into. So it had to be headlines because it hasn't happened before but they couldn't reach me on art...or on breach of any protocol...I made the whole thing so light hearted. It was front page and headlines immediately. And it went on and on.<sup>107</sup>

The light-heartedness she refers to in this quote was met with confusion by the press, this included her the unfortunate use of the term "squiggles" to describe her drawings. A number of newspapers focused on this in their reports the next day such, as in the headline from *The Daily Telegraph* "Scribbles' capture war life" and from the *The Daily Star*; "Artist Linda must brush up 'Squiggles' ".<sup>108</sup> Having seen the works, *The Daily Star* questioned the usefulness of sending an artist to the Falklands as it

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<sup>105</sup> LBC/IRN, "Falklands war ends - Welsh Guards return".  
<http://bufvc.ac.uk/tvandrado/lbc/index.php/segment/0015800124007> (Accessed 03 Apr 2018).

<sup>106</sup> Arthur Osman, "Prince welcomes home Bluff Cove troops," *The Times* (30 July 1982): 3.

<sup>107</sup> Kitson Oral History tapes, IWM 13727.

<sup>108</sup> *The Daily Telegraph*, (4 August 1982) and *The Daily Star*, (4 August 1982).

commented that, "She has apologised for the quality of her work, done in "appalling conditions".<sup>109</sup> However other papers were more supportive, such the headline in the *The Daily Express* "Our Gallant troops by war artist Linda".<sup>110</sup> Generally though, the reaction to the works was not complementary, as Wilcox (1992) comments that Kitson's record of war which "avoided both acts of heroism or images of blood and guts was considered drastically uninformative".<sup>111</sup> I argue that Kitson's works, completed as part of this commission, should not have been a surprise to anyone who knew her style of work, as she used drawing techniques developed over her years as a student and in her various subsequent commissions. However, the press had framed their expectations of war art based on the large heroic oil paintings of the First World War.

The Ministry of Defence originally asked to see Kitson's works prior to them going on display, but I can find no record that they objected to any of her drawings..<sup>112</sup> There was a desire by the IWM to exhibit the drawings as soon as possible after her return, to capitalise on the interest in the conflict, especially due to the large number of casualties during the war. Between July and November 1982 Angela Weight prepared the exhibition, which was opened with speeches from Sir John Grandy, Marshal of the Royal Air Force, Paul Channon MP and Alan Borg, Director General of the IWM.<sup>113</sup> In the press notice for the event Angela Weight explains the importance of Kitson's work but also implies the significance of the museum in commissioning war artists,

These immediate eyewitness accounts were drawn under pressure of time, changing events and extreme weather conditions. Nor was there a cosy studio to return to in the evenings. These were conditions that even artists in the

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<sup>109</sup> *The Daily Star*, (4 August 1982).

<sup>110</sup> *The Daily Express*, (4 August 1982).

<sup>111</sup> Tim Wilcocks, "We are all Falklanders now: Art, War and National Identity", ed. James Aulich, *Framing the Falklands War: Nationhood, Culture and Identity*. (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1992), 63.

<sup>112</sup> Memo from Secretary to Keeper of Art 6 Aug 1982, Linda Kitson Falklands Conflict File ENG/2/ACC/6/4/1-3.

<sup>113</sup> IWM Cat. 6381.



Second World War did not usually have to face. ... The high quality of the drawings is a testimony of Linda Kitson's skill as an artist and a validation of the artist's role in wartime.<sup>114</sup>

Kitson had very little input on the exhibition. She recounts in the oral history account that it took her a long time to recover from the physical and mental exhaustion of the trip. The book that supported the exhibition was hurriedly put together and required copy from her. She noted, "I was very vulnerable... The idea was to elucidate the drawings with elongated captions, but editors are greedy and they kept me writing so that I went right through several nights".<sup>115</sup> The text was then cut back, much to her dissatisfaction. This evidences the control the IWM had on the presentation of the commissioned art and the supporting literature.

Because Kitson had completed double the amount of artworks initially commissioned, her fee was raised to £3,000, half of which she donated to Haslar Royal Navy Hospital in Hampshire. Her thoughts on profits from sale of the works is noted in the IWM tapes,

"It would disgust me to calculate a big thundering profit on what is an international catastrophe involving the life and death injury. Almost vaguely criminal... Didn't see fit to keep the money because... I began to think of it as profiteering from the war and I really didn't like that."<sup>116</sup>

Sixty works were selected for the exhibition by the IWM and thirty-five still owned by Kitson would be for sale.<sup>117</sup> Despite being advised that setting high prices for the sale of the drawings would have made them collectible, she instead set prices that would be affordable to the men who had served in the war.

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<sup>114</sup> IWM Falklands Conflict File ENG/2/ACC/6/4/1-3.

<sup>115</sup> Kitson Oral History tapes, IWM 13727, Reel 30.

<sup>116</sup> Kitson Oral History tapes, IWM 13727.

<sup>117</sup> IWM Falklands Conflict File ENG/2/ACC/6/4/1-3.

The commission had a big emotional impact on the way she regarded the world when she returned, as she notes “...nothing mattered much to me after the Falkland’s...I just felt it would never again be worth doing any work that wasn’t for a cause”<sup>118</sup>

While other the artists, John Keane and Peter Howson, I consider in this thesis produced most of their finished works after a period of reflection when back in the UK, working from notes and photographs, Kitson only reworked a couple of the drawings after her return. She was not satisfied with the results of adding colour, as she notes, “...I diminished them by trying to do it, it just didn’t look authentic”.<sup>119</sup>

I have evidenced from newspaper archives and interviews with Kitson, that the return to the UK was a difficult time for her; she was physically and mentally exhausted from the commission, the press was unappreciative of her works, and the exhibition took place very soon after her return. The representation of the soldiers was generally overlooked in these reports as they focused on the artist and her ordeal in the war. A view voiced by Kitson in a number of interviews was that a more nuanced view of the Falklands war world have been achieved had the IWM been able to send out more than just one artist, as had been done in the First and Second World Wars.<sup>120</sup> In the next section of this chapter, I shall review some of the other interpretations of the conflict in art and consider how their depiction of the soldier differed from Kitson.

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<sup>118</sup> Kitson Oral History tapes, IWM 13727.

<sup>119</sup> Linda Kitson interview with Jayne Buchanan. London, (17 May 2017).

<sup>120</sup> Linda Kitson interview with Jayne Buchanan. London, (17 May 2017).

## Other images of the Falklands War

Although Kitson was the only artist commissioned by the IWM at the time of the Falklands war, other artists responded to the conflict either because they were part of the army press coverage, the general press who were allowed to accompany troops, or because they had a desire to comment on this significant event in UK history.

The role of the media during the Falklands War was considered in *War and the Media* (1997).<sup>121</sup> It was noted there was a reluctance in sanctioning the press to accompany troops to the conflict.<sup>122</sup> Despite this, twenty-nine representatives of the media were allowed on a number of vessels. Each ship where the media staff were present was also assigned a civilian public relations manager “to work with and ‘vet’ any copy which they wished to send home”.<sup>123</sup> The images sent back to accompany reports were also managed, as Kevin Foster (1999), the first tabloid photograph of the landing was not of the destruction of British ships, but a soldier having tea with a smiling family of Falklanders against a picket fence (Figure: 70).<sup>124</sup> Although Foster argues the photograph “implied the vulnerability of the islanders” he also goes on to consider “The picket fence and the cup of tea are both metonyms of domestic and family identity, as well as symbols of national identity”.<sup>125</sup> This was an obvious form of nationalism that was rarely evident in Kitson’s drawings. An exception was in the work *Port Stanley from sapper Hill, the Bombardier’s flag* (Figure: 71), where she has depicted a union Jack is shown flying on a rocky outcrop alongside a silhouetted figure. While this emblem of Britain should stir nationalism at the sight of this victory pose, the drawing of the exposed soldier evokes loss and loneliness.<sup>126</sup> The photograph by

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<sup>121</sup> Miles Hudson and John Stanier, *War and the Media* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing Ltd, 1997).

<sup>122</sup> Hudson and Stanier, *War and the Media*, 169.

<sup>123</sup> Hudson and Stanier, *War and the Media*, 170.

<sup>124</sup> Kevin Foster, *Fighting Fictions: war narrative and national identity* (Michigan: Pluto Press, 1999).

<sup>125</sup> Kevin Foster, *Fighting Fictions*, 30.

<sup>126</sup> Although this work was included in the IWM publication *Falklands War: a Visual Diary*, it is not part of the IWM collection.

Petty Officer Peter Holdgate, who was the Commando Forces Photographer: *45 Royal Marine Commando marches towards Port Stanley during the Falklands War, 1982*

(Figure: 72) is much more successful in supporting a viewpoint of nationalist pride.<sup>127</sup>

This photograph shows the rear of a line of soldiers walking down a track, with the last soldier carrying a Union Jack on his pack. The work provides a simple narrative indicator to the viewer that these are soldiers of the UK army and supports the heroic trope of the profession and the comradeship and strength of the team. The photograph by Holdgate was deemed so significant in representing the actions of the soldiers during the conflict that it was transformed into a memorial in 1992. The twice life-size statue, *Yomper* by Phillip Jackson is positioned at the Royal Marines Museum in Southsea (Figure: 73). The inscription plaque, which reads “...To commemorate all the Royal Marines and those who served with them...” informs the significance of the image in the remembrance of the conflict and supports the popular narrative of the superiority of the nation and its soldiers.<sup>128</sup>

The journalist Alistair Campbell also includes the Union Jack flag in his photograph *Marines of 40 Royal Marine Commando raise the British flag on West Falkland after the Argentine surrender* (Figure: 74). In this work, the soldiers are more obviously aware of the photograph being taken and are shown joyous and jubilant in victory.<sup>129</sup>

The flag composes nearly half of the image, implying its importance to the soldiers and audience. This posed shot shows the soldiers still baring arms in readiness of future conflicts but its purpose is to show the victory without any focus on the loss or injury of soldiers. When Kitson was asked if a camera would have helped complete the drawings in the Falklands, she commented that cold conditions would have made it very difficult

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<sup>127</sup> IWM FKD 2028.

<sup>128</sup> See record on <https://www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk/memorial/141806> and also in publication Derek Boorman, *A Century of Remembrance: One Hundred Outstanding British War Memorials*, (Barnsley: Pen and Sword Military, 2010).

<sup>129</sup> IWM FKD 435.

to use. She also believed that, despite allowing her to add more detail to the works, it might also have stifled some of the spontaneity and led to a very different output of drawing.<sup>130</sup> On her return to the UK Kitson commented on the difference "...the needs of the artist were almost the opposite of those of the photographer. I did not want to draw the big bang, the explosion, the fire, the dramatic moment of action but the people and the background".<sup>131</sup> She also questioned whether the camera would have been prohibited in some of the sensitive areas, such as headquarters, command posts, prisoners of war camps, the echelons where the personal effects of the dead soldiers were kept and field hospitals. This viewpoint was based on the mistrust felt by the military towards the press, "...a camera would have been unthinkable on its own" and would "have been viewed with suspicion even in my hands".<sup>132</sup>

In considering the image of the soldier during the Falklands War, one of the most pervasive icons is that of the damaged soldier. Simon Weston was a member of the Welsh Guards. Weston received forty-six percent burns to his body during the attack on the Sir Galahad and was awarded a medal for his bravery alongside the other soldiers. This image of him receiving the medal from Prince Charles (Figure: 75) shows a marked contrast between the uniform and the damaged skin and was used in a number of newspaper reports. As Suzannah Biernoff considers in the book *Portraits of Violence* (2017),

Valour, heroism, patriotism, courage; these concepts assume visible form and do their cultural work, when they are personified and embodied. Mutilated or disabled, the veteran's body cannot condone the hollowness or corruption of these ideals.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Linda Kitson Oral History tapes, IWM 13727.

<sup>131</sup> Philippa Toomey. "An artist's view of Falklands campaign," *The Times* (4 Aug. 1982): 2.

<sup>132</sup> Linda Kitson Oral History tapes, IWM 13727.

<sup>133</sup> Suzannah Biernoff, *Portraits of Violence: War and the Aesthetics of Disfigurement* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2017), 4.

Photographs of Simon Weston such as this contrast with the work of Kitson who did not depict the injury she witnessed. In doing so she reinforced the idea that war did not damage the soldier.

In 1983, Jock MacFadyen (b.1950) produced the work *With singing Hearts and Throaty Voices*, (Figure: 76). The painting shows a claustrophobic view of a crowded quayside at the return of a ship from the conflict. A Union Jack flag draped over a coffin highlight the cost of war; this is compared with the nationalist fervour of the crowd's victory 'V' signs. In *Art from Contemporary Conflict* (2015) it is noted, "The painting evokes an empty excess, critical of the surge of bombastic nationalist rhetoric surrounding the conflict".<sup>134</sup> Although agreeing with this reading of MacFadyen's critique on the nationalist sentiment, Wilcox (1992) adds that the painting "...fails to penetrate the deeper workings of the ideological system which creates such spectacular events".<sup>135</sup> It contrasts with Kitson's work both in technique and in the focus on the social changes war creates. Kitson experienced some of this nationalist groundswell both when she left aboard the QE2 and on her return to the press and public response to her work. While MacFadyen, does not ask the viewer to consider the soldier specifically in this work, it does also highlight the disparity between the civilian response to the end of the conflict and that of the soldier.

Michael Peel's (b.1940) diptych *Rejoice Rejoice* (Figure: 77) uses photo-collage to construct a Union Jack flag from body parts, cables and film above the words "Next of kin will be informed". As Bevan (2015) notes, this is an unambiguous anti-war work that focuses on the human cost of war and the role the media play in glorifying it, "it questions what is done and what is lost in the name of nationalism and heroism".<sup>136</sup> In

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<sup>134</sup> Sarah Bevan, *Art from Contemporary Conflict* (London: Imperial War Museum, 2015), 63.

<sup>135</sup> Tim Wilcocks, "We are all Falklanders now: Art, War and National Identity", ed. James Aulich, *Framing the Falklands War: Nationhood, Culture and Identity*. (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1992), 63.

<sup>136</sup> Sarah Bevan, *Art from Contemporary Conflict* (London: Imperial War Museum, 2015), 22.

using bare body parts in this construction of the Union jack flag, disassociated from the trappings of war such as army clothing or guns, Peel also indicates the frailty of the human form and the way soldiers are utilised as commodities in war; a subject not explored by Kitson.

The loss of life resulting from the destruction of ships in the Falklands war was the focus of a number of artists. A photograph showing the destruction of the ship the HMS *Antelope* on May 24<sup>th</sup> 1982 by Martin Cleaver was used in many press reports of the events (Figure: 78), as Wilcox (1992) comments “to fit in with a glamourizing narrative of conflict”.<sup>137</sup> Evidence of this use is observed in *Navy News*, which placed it alongside a role of honour, listing those who had died (Figure: 79). Peter Kennard (b.1949) repurposed this image to produce to photo-collage *Decoration* (Figure: 80). Kennard used the symbol of the medal, a recognition for bravery in combat, critically against the photograph to highlight the cost of war on the individual.

In 1985, Bruce McLean (b. 1944) produced the dyptich *Broadside* (Figure: 81) as part of a performance to evoke the events of the Falklands conflict. The IWM label associated with the work comments “the style of the painting echoes the dramatic, much-reproduced photograph of HMS *Antelope* exploding”.<sup>138</sup> Although less obvious in its iconography than Kennard, McLean’s use of a red background is evocative of the blood spilled in war, it also features a loosely depicted figure seemingly in distress in the bottom right of the work.

While McLean, Peel and McFadyen’s works have all been purchased for the IWM collection related to the Falklands War, other more traditional artists such as David Cobb (1921-2014) are not. Cobb was a successful marine artists who visited the

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<sup>137</sup> Tim Wilcocks, “We are all Falklanders now: Art, War and National Identity”, ed. James Aulich, *Framing the Falklands War: Nationhood, Culture and Identity*. (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1992), 63.

<sup>138</sup> IWM ART 16395.

Falklands in late 1982 after the conflict had finished. His works focused on the machinery of war were imaginings of the events that had occurred, as Gough (2019) comments, “rendered in a breezy impressionistic style as if sketches in real time...often signed with the date of the event rather than the date they were completed.”<sup>139</sup> *Green Beach 31 May 1982* (Figure: 82) is one of the few of his works from land. The soldier and tanks are depicted as equal part of the war effort in a pink-tinged landscape that shows no evidence of the difficult conditions Kitson and the troops had to endure during the real conflict. Despite also being a work constructed after the event, the loose sketch *58 (Eyre's) Battery Royal Artillery (23 Bravo) Rapier Fire Unit with a DN 181 Radar, San Carlos Bay, Falkland Islands* (Figure: 83) attests further to the reality of the scene, through its unfinished loose presentation of soldiers on a hillside. Despite the lack of first-hand account, Cobbs works are included in a number of national collections, notably at the Fleet Air Arm Museum who also hold a number of Kitson’s works.

While the majority of the works by Kitson focused on the daily routines of the soldiers she had grown to know over the long journey to the islands, I have shown the war resulted in a number of artists producing interpretations and responses to the Falklands war, many of which were more critical of the concept of war and loss. In the next section, I shall present a conclusion on the significance of her representation of the soldier during the Falklands War.

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<sup>139</sup> Paul Gough, “‘Re-membling’ the Past: Eye Witness and Post-battle Accounts of the Falklands War” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Artistic and Cultural Responses to War since 1914: The British Isles, the United States and Australasia* eds. Martin Kerby and M Baguley, and Janet McDonald (London: Palgrave: 2019), 381.



## Conclusion

This chapter has comprised of an examination of Kitson's representation of the soldier during the Falkland's War, the events around her commission, her time with the soldiers and the reception of her work. I have examined Kitson's portrayal of the soldier in comparison with the legacy of war art and with other artists who responded to the Falklands War.

It is without question that Kitson extended the gender boundaries in her role as a female war artist. She was highly experienced in drawing techniques and was practiced in working amongst groups of people, going unnoticed in the background, and therefore produced work that showed the soldiers virtually unaware of her focus. This trust allowed her to produce a unique view of the conflict. However, despite notions that Kitson was a free agent in covering the Falklands War, she was subject to a number of defining pressures. The rigid structure of the forces meant that she could not go anywhere she wanted on the QE2, or on the islands. Kitson was escorted to her scheduled points of interaction and 'interest' by those in command. She could decide what to draw and how to draw at these positions, but I have evidenced there were elements of self-censorship as she had concerns about the vetting of works by the army and by the IWM as well as the reactions of the soldiers who were the subjects of the works.

Archival research has shown that despite an initial goal to produce a message against the concept of war she instead produced works that presented the soldier for the best qualities she had witnessed in them. She noted this loss of objectivity resulted in a positive bias towards the soldiers, "I developed a terrific empathy towards them. We faced the same dangers and I came to respect the way they ...overcame their fears."<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Steve Boggan, "Scarred by the art of war," *The Independent* (9 Oct 1991).

There is also a sense that some of the images she omitted from her drawings was due of the shock events witnessed, as she notes,

The first time I saw someone killed I thought I would never recover. But then it happened every day and it's quite frightening how quickly you get used to it, in the middle of war 8,000 miles away, it seemed almost normal...I am still hysterical about it. For a long time afterwards, you find it difficult to live a normal civilian life.<sup>141</sup>

What Kitson depicts in place of the chaos of death is orderliness, comradery and stoicism in the soldiers. She draws them at work, in social interactions and in the prospect of battle. Even after the loss of life on the *Sir Galahad* the soldier is not shown weeping, but carefully and unemotionally sorting the possessions of the dead. Kitson does not depict them broken by the physical impact of war on the journey home to the UK and she does not draw the effect of the war on their bodies. Despite the army structure that separated her from some aspects of the life of the soldier, Kitson had lived alongside them for months, she had sat in muddy trenches and eaten the same rations and had felt the same continual fear of imminent death they felt. Kitson comments that in depicting the soldiers at less than their best would be a form of betrayal.<sup>142</sup> As Biernoff (2017) notes regarding the First World War portraiture of facial reconstructive surgery by Henry Tonks (1862-1937), his work showed “the fragility and humanity of his patients”, this was something Kitson could not contend with.<sup>143</sup>

After the war had ended, Kitson struggled to return to normal civilian life and felt changed by the role,

... there was no one to talk about with about it. I stayed in the company of soldiers for quite a while afterwards... It was another experience. And actually from the point of view of my work it was almost detrimental...because people didn't see me as someone they could commission for landscapes. They saw a 'war artist' who was outside the realm of what we call art, so it was a hard act to

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<sup>141</sup> Steve Boggan, “Scarred by the art of war,” *The Independent* (9 Oct 1991).

<sup>142</sup> Linda Kitson Oral History tapes, IWM 13727.

<sup>143</sup> Suzannah Biernoff, *Portraits of Violence: War and the Aesthetics of Disfigurement* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2017), 166.

follow. Also of course, in the opinion of many artists they didn't like one going to war<sup>144</sup>.

The legacy of her work as a form of remembrance was seen in a number of ways. In 1983, Kitson's Falklands drawings were the subject of one of a seven part series by the BBC called "Images of War" which highlighted her importance both as a war artist in the Falklands war and the ground-breaking role she played as the first female war artist.<sup>145</sup> She was featured in and an exhibition at the IWM entitled "Women War Artists", at IWM North in 2009 and London in 2011.<sup>146</sup> The press release from IWM explains the focus of the collection of works, which placed Kitson's alongside contemporary women artists, as well as those from the First World War and Second World War, noting "The importance of women artists as eyewitnesses, participants, commentators and officially commissioned recorders of war".<sup>147</sup> At the Fleet Air Arm museum, two works by Kitson are placed within an exhibition containing artefacts, video, photographs and interpretation panels (Figure: 84). At the IWM in 2018, six works are hung against a dark wall in the section on contemporary conflict next to tanks and other vehicles and weapons of war (Figure: 85). However, in both cases the impact of Kitson's delicate drawings are lost in the visual noise.

While there is a sense of Kitson admiring the heroic tendencies of the soldiers, there are no tropes of the hero in her work. Kitson respected the way the soldiers were trained to work as a team, "They look after their group. In any unit, the youngest or the weakest, they will always look after them...it's the best thing in human nature".<sup>148</sup> Formal analysis and archival research has shown that Kitson's close relationship with the soldiers led to Kitson's omission of the severely wounded or dead, an omission which

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<sup>144</sup> Linda Kitson interview with Jayne Buchanan. London, 17 May 2017.

<sup>145</sup> BBC TV 1983, *Images of War*, eds. Eric Brown Producer Tom Conway.

<sup>146</sup> Rachel Aspden, "War through Women's Eyes," *New Statesman* (16 March 2009), 44-46.

<sup>147</sup> IWM London Press Release, (7 April 2011).

<sup>148</sup> Linda Kitson interview with Jayne Buchanan. London, (17 May 2017).

presents them as untouched by conflict. Instead, the burning ship is portrayed as a metaphor for those soldiers who died or were injured in the attack on the *Sir Galahad*. In Kitson's depiction of the soldier, we see men as a living part of the war machine. The individual, in full battle gear, literally camouflages the soldier's identity into a homogenised weapon, yet in her notes indicating the name and rank of the soldier she challenges the viewer to recognise the individual humanity within the war.

Kitson does not focus on the soldier as a masculine ideal. She does not focus on or accentuate strength, muscles or vigour, but shows his strength through the clothes and weapons of war. Underneath this, they are just fragile and vulnerable men. Nationalism was not a focus of Kitson's representation, as was seen in in press photography. Her use of emblems of the nation, such as the flag was not overt. When she drew the captured Argentine soldiers, she showed them equal to the British soldiers in the hospital. Instead of vilifying them she recounts how frightened and how young and inexperienced they were.

Those who were not part of the conflict viewed Kitson's works in hope of seeing a justification of war, and a meaning in loss of life, but Kitson's works reinforced the traditional narrative of the soldier as protected by the system, uniform and weapons used. Therefore, when the soldiers came back traumatised, injured or not at all there was a disparity between the reality of the personal cost of conflict on the soldier and their families and the artworks. While the role Kitson as a war artist guaranteed that work would be included in the national collection as part of the IWM's archive of war, for Kitson the audience was the soldiers. As she notes, "...it was my promise to the boys, when we were in the Falklands together, that there would be a show and they could finally see some record of their actions".<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Shelley Saywell, *Women in War* (London: Viking, 1995), 279.

In the next chapter, I will consider the artist John Keane who the IWM commissioned in 1991 during the first Gulf war. His work was radically different to Kitson in both his method and the materials he used, but I will show the image of the soldier continued to be an important inclusion in the war art he created.

## Chapter 4: John Keane: The Soldier as Machine of War

### Introduction

The works produced by John Keane (b. 1954) for his commission in the Gulf War were not as obviously focused on the soldier as Kitson's were during the Falklands War; however, in this chapter, I argue that his depiction is no less significant. I will evidence that Keane portrayed a soldier who retained a sense of individuality and agency, despite being part of the war machine, and that his works critique the war but not of the soldiers who were active in it. Keane's method of working and the outputs he produced were significantly different from the war artists who he preceded, utilising camera like a sketchbook to record events and then creating art in his studio in the UK using the photographs as inspiration, combined with found materials, newspaper and other textuality. As Lawson (1995) noted, he was "able to be a bit of a maverick".<sup>1</sup> I will show that Keane's work is a counterpoint to the traditional image of the soldier. He shuns any reference to nationalistic pride, he does not portray the soldier as an ideal masculine icon, and the hero figure seen in the First and Second World Wars is replaced by the image of the soldier as part of the machine of war. Despite this difference in both style and approach, and while this was perhaps the first war where machines, such as guided missiles, overshadowed the use of troops, I contest Keane's representation of conflict is one that continued to consider the soldier important. Of the four works selected by the IWM to add to their permanent collection, two contain the image of the soldier. Controversially one of these, *Death Squad* (Figure: 2), was not created directly from his experience in the Gulf, but from television reporting of the war. The heritage of the war artist deriving content from being present in the conflict was an important requisite originating from the formation of the IWM, however I will show the significance of this alternative source material was lost as critical debate on

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Lawson, *John Keane: Conflicts of Interest* (London and Edinburgh: Mainstream, 1995), 66.

Keane's work focused on another painting which appeared to be hostile to the involvement of the USA in the war.

On 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1990, the invasion of Kuwait by its larger and more powerful neighbour Iraq, was reported around the world. The UK government swiftly began plans to send forces to defend the country as part of a coalition that included the USA. As I have discussed earlier in my thesis, the employment of war artists by the IWM, which had been successful in creating a legacy of remembrance in the First and Second World Wars, had been restarted in 1979 and was followed by Linda Kitson's commission in 1982 during the Falklands War.<sup>2</sup> The importance of the conflict to the records of war at the IWM are in part due to the large numbers of UK forces involved. This was the largest deployment of UK forces since the Second World War with nearly 35,000 British service personnel sent to the region. The IWM proposed to commission an official war artist to go to the Gulf in January 1991. This chapter will evidence that the ARC selected Keane directly rather than contemplating other artists for the commission and that, although Kitson had also applied to work in the Gulf, the IWM committee

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<sup>2</sup> In the period between the end of the Falklands war and the commission of Keane other artists were employed by the IWM but due to the scope of their work, they are excluded from this investigation. In 1983, Patrick Procktor (1936-2003) produced works in the former British Colony of Belize as it was transitioning to an independent member of the Commonwealth. The IWM commissioned Procktor "with the aim of recording various aspects of military life...however in the end the dominant subject matter of Procktor's work in Belize consisted of portraits of various members of the armed services" (ART 15729 *Gurkha in Belize*). While the watercolourist works do show representations of the soldier this was not an active combat zone. In 1984, Sonia Lawson's (b. 1934) commission from the IWM took her to Westphalia, Germany to record the British Army's participation in the exercise "Operation Lionheart". She produced a number of highly colourful works in oil, some of which focused on the soldier. Lawson is not included in this research because, like Procktor, she did not attend an ongoing conflict, but due to their representation of the soldier, they would be interesting to consider in future research. A conflict closer to home was the 'Troubles' in Northern Ireland which required the active involvement of the British army. This unrest was the subject of a number of artists whose work is at the IWM. In 1986, Anthony Davies (b.1947) produced the *Wasteland* works, held by the IWM. The conflict in Northern Ireland was marked by the presence of troops on the streets of places like Ulster. Davies depicted the uncomfortable relationship between violence and the community of the area. In 1989, the IWM commissioned Shanti Panchal (b. circa 1955). He produced the work *The Scissors, The Cotton and the Uniform* (IWM ART 16314), showing the work of three Indian tailors making army uniforms. While this work does comment on the soldier, it is also outside the scope of my research.

chose Keane based on his reputation as a young and dynamic “history painter” who had experience of working in sites of conflict, to be official war artist.<sup>3</sup>

This chapter will comprise a brief biography of Keane and outline the events that led to his appointment as an official war artist. I will reference existing literature to present a summary of Keane’s early years with specific focus on his representation of the soldier, which is not present in other research. I will demonstrate that Keane’s interest in art related to conflict began during the Falklands War, a theme he continued by visiting Nicaragua and Northern Island. His early work was influenced by Pop Art, notably the artist Andy Warhol (1928-1987). Many of his early works considered the role of the media in shaping culture and included textuality from newspaper images, a technique that was continued in the Gulf War.

Keane produced works based on his photographs and notes rather than sketches produced in the field. In addition, Keane included items and photographs found at the site of battle. I will reflect on the significance of his method of working. His works were developed over a number of months on his return to his studio in London, a reflective position that also allowed him to incorporate news and television responses to the conflict that he had not witnessed. He noted that the scope of his view of the Gulf War was limited due to his location.<sup>4</sup> Keane was not present on land for any of the fighting that took place in Kuwait; this resulted in works that focused on the preparation for battle, celebration of the Kuwaiti people at the end of the war and the aftermath. Despite Keane not witnessing injury to soldiers serving in the conflict, I will show he included the bodily cost of war through a number of works. The scope of my thesis directs me to limit my investigation to paintings that include reference to the soldiers and other forces who were in the Gulf, unless they have specific importance in

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<sup>3</sup> *The Times* (London, England), (10 March 1988): 22, Issue 63025.

<sup>4</sup> John Keane interview with Jayne Buchanan, (11 September 2018)



the reception of his commission. Many critical responses to his Gulf works focus on the outrage resulting from works he produced. The painting *Mickey Mouse at the Front* (Figure: 123), which showed a children's play area that had been used as a toilet by the invading Iraqi army against the backdrop of the destroyed city, gained a notoriety that overshadowed appreciation of other paintings due the inclusion of a Mickey Mouse ride in the work. The press responded with shock at the painting, in the belief he was presenting a negative critique of America's role in the conflict. In this case, the painting was derived from photographs he had taken in Kuwait after the end of the war. Significant in the debate around war art as a form of reportage, the photograph served as a proof that the work was not derived from imagination but a true representation of events.

My thesis examines Keane's depiction of soldiers against his photographs of the coalition forces and considers how these source materials were used in the development of paintings. I will also compare Keane's work with other art responding to the Gulf War, considering the different viewpoints from artists at home in the UK and those who were connected to the military.<sup>5</sup> There was significant interest from the media in both Keane's employment as a war artist and his works, so I will also reference newspaper archives in my consideration of the wider reception and debate on his works. My own detailed analysis of his art using formal methods and an iconographical viewpoint, with explicit focus on how his representation of the soldier relates to existing theories presents new understanding of his works.<sup>6</sup> As with the other artist in the scope of my research, I will examine the role of the IWM in commissioning an exhibiting his work. The chapter concludes with a reflection of how the selection of his works by the IWM

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<sup>5</sup> The medium of film is not considered in this thesis. For examples of film responses to the Gulf War see: *Bravo Two Zero* (1999) and *Jarhead* (2005).

<sup>6</sup> See Chapter 1 of this thesis for more information.

from those created for the commission is significant in shaping understanding and remembrance of the soldier in this conflict.

## Early Years

Keane's early career has been documented in three publications, *John Keane: Conflicts of Interest*. (1995) and *Troubles My Sight: The Art of John Keane* (2015) by Mark Lawson and *John Keane: Back to Fundamentals* (2004) by Joan Bakewell, which are based on interviews with the artist. In this section, I will draw on these publications to give an overview of his early life and the impact of conflict on his development as an artist, to which I will add my own findings on his early works with reference to the representation of the soldier.

Keane was born in 1954 in Harpenden, Hertfordshire, UK. The biographies note that war was an undercurrent in Keane's family history. His father had spent three and a half years in a Japanese prisoner of war camp, two of his uncles were killed in the war in the Second World War and Keane's mother had lost her first husband in Deauville, Normandy during the Second World War when he served in the Royal Ulster Rifles.<sup>7</sup> Conflict also affected his childhood, when holidays to visit relatives in Northern Ireland were curtailed due the civil violence in the area in 1969.<sup>8</sup> Despite this, there is no evidence that his family history inspired an interest in subjects of conflict. Keane was educated at boarding school, at the Cheam Preparatory School and then at Wellington College in Berkshire. Keane notes in Lawson (2015) that boarding school broadened his outlook on the world, "...To be honest I wouldn't be doing what I am doing now if I'd been at home all the time".<sup>9</sup> With the support of teachers, it was during this period that Keane became serious about art. His early work was surrealist in nature, taking inspiration from the likes of Dali and Magritte, but he "worked his way rather rapidly through most of the major art movements of the 20<sup>th</sup> century...by the last year he was

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<sup>7</sup> Mark Lawson, *Troubles My Sight: The Art of John Keane* (London: Flowers East, 2015), 25.

<sup>8</sup> Lawson, *Troubles My Sight*, 39.

<sup>9</sup> Lawson, *Troubles My Sight*, 25.

heavily into abstract painting”.<sup>10</sup> He left school with A levels in English, Maths, Physics and Art History, but it was art which inspired him the most and which lead him to choose a direction of further education.

In 1972 Keane started at the Camberwell School of Art, he notes the relaxed atmosphere of the school was very different to the regimented life as a boarder, “Art school was a complete upheaval after the background of public school...I was fairly disorientated and rather in turmoil”.<sup>11</sup> He graduated with a lower second degree in 1976, which left him disillusioned with pursuing a career in art, leading him to take a job as a clerk in the Inland Revenue Sorting Office in Kew. However, his determination to continue to make art led him to set up his own studio in Clerkenwell, London 1977.<sup>12</sup>

Keane’s main artistic influences during this period were Andy Warhol, David Hockney and Richard Hamilton, “most obvious in the use of pre-existing images, particularly of newspaper photographs”.<sup>13</sup> In 1979, Keane produced the work *Monday Blues* (Figure: 86) utilising media images of Brenda Spencer, who shot dead eight children, a principal and an assistant and injured a police officer at her Cleveland Elementary School in America. In this work, Keane has used a newspaper photograph (Figure: 87) showing a police officer leading a handcuffed Spencer as source for *Monday Blues*, as can be seen from the general composition and the details such as the pens in the police officer’s pocket, his moustache and hand restraining her. He has applied the image simplification and colouring techniques of Andy Warhol to create a dramatic work. As Robert Rosenblum notes in *Pop Art a Critical History* (1997), “The authentic Pop artist offers a coincidence of style and subject...he represents mass-produced images...based

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<sup>10</sup> Lawson, *John Keane: Conflicts of Interest*, 10.

<sup>11</sup> Lawson, *Troubles My Sight*, 30.

<sup>12</sup> Lawson, *Troubles My Sight*, 31.

<sup>13</sup> Lawson, *John Keane: Conflicts of Interest*, 13.

upon the visual vocabulary of mass production.”<sup>14</sup> Keane’s use of striation of colours, reminiscent of the lines of interference on a television screen, add interest and texture to the work. The background pattern of televisions remind the viewer of the impact of the mass media in covering events such as this. Keane is possibly referring to the glamorisation of violence in the media as he depicts Spencer’s long blond hair, sunglasses and hat looking like a fashion shoot. Keane has raised the simple photojournalistic shot into art, as Lawson (1995) comments, “suggesting the importance of modern media fame in disseminating, and perhaps even motivating the girl’s act”<sup>15</sup>.

By 1982, when the war in the Falklands took place, Keane had produced a number of works using the same techniques as *Monday Blues*, although he was only “interested in politics in an oblique way,” this changed with the Falklands war.<sup>16</sup> He noted that the reporting of the conflict had a significant effect on his work; “The Falklands pictures were a turning point from the rather detached and ironic stance I’d had towards my subject-matter and towards a more direct engagement...it marked a change of attitude”.<sup>17</sup> He comments on the Falklands War in the book *John Keane: Back to Fundamentals* (2004), noting, “It was a shock...It brought out atrocities I found quite extraordinary. I was appalled and that shook me from complacency. The only way I could express myself was to try and find a way to translate that into...painting.”<sup>18</sup>

Rather than focusing on the soldier in his Falklands works, Keane used the image of the penguin, of which there was a large colony on the island, as a motif in his art. In *The Individual in Relation to the Masses 1982-1983* (Figure: 88) he shows much bigger

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<sup>14</sup> Robert Rosenblum, “Pop Art and Non-Pop Art”, Henry Madoff (eds), *Pop Art a Critical History* (London and Berkley: University of California Press) 131.

<sup>15</sup> Lawson, *John Keane: Conflicts of Interest*, 15.

<sup>16</sup> Lawson, *John Keane: Conflicts of Interest*, 17.

<sup>17</sup> Lawson, *Troubles My Sight*, 34.

<sup>18</sup> Joan Bakewell, *John Keane: Back to Fundamentals* (London: Flowers East, 2004), 3.

penguins in frames beside smaller ones, In *Learning to Fly* (Figure: 89) Keane compares the innocent penguin with the machinery of battle as he depicts two penguins overshadowed by a jet fighter plane and a helicopter. The Falklands works show a development in style from a measured graphic style to more confident use of loose brushwork. The news coverage of the Falklands conflict was also something new to Keane, as he notes in Lawson's book (1995), "He was appalled by the apparent jingoism... in the tabloid press" and while his works do not critically attack this sentiment, they are an alternative viewpoint to conflict.<sup>19</sup> Keane's paintings were exhibited under the title *War Efforts* at the Pentonville Gallery (1984). The IWM recognised the potential of the young artist and purchased *Learning to Fly* and *Sunset Over the Aircraft Carrier* (no illustration included). The exhibition was a great success and led to Keane being signed up by Angela Flowers Gallery.

Following on from the Falklands War, Keane's work continued to have a political focus. In 1979 Nicaragua had undergone a socialist revolution, Keane says; "The country had become a kind of focal point of world history... In the end I felt it was a conflict I could get my mind around. I understood the issues."<sup>20</sup> Keane approached The Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign arranged his transport and spent six weeks there in the summer of 1987.<sup>21</sup> It was during this project that he first developed the way of working he used in the Gulf. Keane took photographs in the field, collected objects and wrote notes, which he would then use to create works back in the studio.<sup>22</sup>

The paintings from Nicaragua culminated in an exhibition in 1998 at the Angela Flowers Gallery, called *Bee Keeping in the War Zone*, do not contain any UK soldiers, as they were not involved in this conflict, but do show civilians who were involved in

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<sup>19</sup> Lawson, *John Keane: Conflicts of Interest*, 18.

<sup>20</sup> Lawson, *Troubles My Sight*, 82.

<sup>21</sup> Lawson, *John Keane: Conflicts of Interest*, 37.

<sup>22</sup> Lawson, *Troubles My Sight*, 82.

the conflict. The painting of the same title (Figure: 90) shows the contrast and conditions of civilians living in a militarised zone. An adult stands in army green clothing next to a boy in a white shirt, blue shorts and trainers who is holding a gun almost as large as he is. The stance is alert, but not menacing, as they appear to be guarding what is behind them: a white painted house, out buildings, a dog and a woman with her hands on her hips, wearing an apron over a pink skirt. The feminine colour contrasting to the predominance of greens and browns of the work. The lush green foliage presents an impression of a Garden of Eden, fiercely guarded by the father and son. While other works do not draw on the violence in this region, the painting *A Portrait of the Artist Pretending to be a Cultural Guerrilla* (Figure: 91) shows an ominous Keane holding a gun, which was a wooden toy purchased in Managua affixed to the painting and painted over to become part of the work. In this depiction of the artist as militarised and weaponised, Keane reinforces his presence in the conflict zone, not as an outsider, but affected by and affecting the conflict through his art. Keane has used not used tropes of the soldier in this work, he is not depicted in military clothing, but with an open shirt, and the gun held protectively across his chest. The picture, which also clearly refers back to the armed boy in *Bee Keeping in a War Zone*, as Lawson (2015) notes, “displays a self-consciousness about political art and the idea of a painter going to war-zones”.<sup>23</sup>

Interest grew in Keane’s work following the Nicaragua exhibition; he was featured in a BBC2 program *Review Special* alongside Jock McFayden and Peter Davis in March 1988.<sup>24</sup> In 1989, Keane visited an exhibition of Falkland works in Manchester, *The Falklands Factor Representations of a Conflict*.<sup>25</sup> In an article for the *Sunday*

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<sup>23</sup> Lawson, *John Keane*, 39.

<sup>24</sup> *The Times* (London, England), Wednesday, March 09, 1988; pg. 21; Issue 63024.

<sup>25</sup> *The Falklands Factor: Representations of a Conflict* was organised by Manchester City Art Gallery in association with the History of Art and Design Department of Manchester Polytechnic, 1989. Comprised

*Correspondent* newspaper in 1990, he commented, “When you put the paintings alongside the photographs they paled into insignificance”.<sup>26</sup> The exhibition inspired him to create “an equivalent in paint, using images from films, plays and books about the war as inspiration...”<sup>27</sup> The resulting work was *Old Lie Café* (Figure: 92). This is an important work by Keane to consider in the scope of my thesis due to the inclusion of images of soldiers and the critique of war. While at first glance, the work resembles a simple scene from a bar or café, the different elements unfold a darker narrative, placing the violent and disconcerting alongside the mundane and ordinary. A barman stands at the rear of the painting with two customers who are oblivious to a man in a wheelchair and another wearing no shirt, slumped onto the bar, head laying on his arm. These figures refer to the mental and physical trauma of the returning soldiers. Keane includes an operation in progress adjacent to the bar, showing two surgeons in green gowns and masks, blood up to their elbows, as they work on a patient. Each of the tables in the foreground refers to a different aspect of the Falklands War. The commercial gains made by conflict are shown with a man in a business suit shaking hands with a military man. The media coverage of the war made a large impact on Keane. In the painting, he shows a family watching the television and on the table a newspaper contains the headline “The heroines who were left behind”. A young couple sit alongside a man hidden behind a newspaper and an older man, who resembles the media mogul Robert Murdock, who uses a magnifying glass to search in the region of the Falklands on a map of the world. Opposite him, a soldier in combat uniform holds a Union Jack Flag. The soldier is slumped to one side, his face covered in blood, his features indiscernible. Keane’s reference to the bodily cost of war is also demonstrated his depiction of a naked man at the rear of the work. He stands with his right arm over

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photographs, cartoons, graphic work and paintings. A copy of the catalogue is held by IWM Ref: LBY K. 89 / 28.

<sup>26</sup> “The Art of War,” *The Sunday Correspondent* (24 August 1990).

<sup>27</sup> “The Art of War,” *The Sunday Correspondent* (24 August 1990).



his heart and the other covering his genitals. The crown on his head, perhaps a reference to fighting for Queen and country, covers his eyes and his face is a disturbing mess of flesh. It can be without question that this work is critical of both the war and its impact on the soldier. It is also notably disapproving of the way in which the media packages war for television and newspaper consumption, as Keane brings the horrors of war figuratively and literally to the dining table.

One of the features of Keane's works that contrast to Kitson's Falklands works is his use of ironic or playful titles. In the book *Troubles in My Sight* (1995), Keane comments "I like jokes. And puns really make me laugh...I love things with multiple meanings".<sup>28</sup> In the earlier book Lawson also writes about Keane use of titles,

...wordy, editorial, polemic and generally punning...rather more in the manner of a novelist than a painter, his works usually begin with a phrase or title scribbled in a notebook. While some painters may resent any suggestion that their works might be 'read' in a sub-verbal way...Keane intends his titles to be part of the viewing experience.<sup>29</sup>

*Old Lie Café* comes from lines of the poem of Wilfred Owen's *Dulce et Decorum Est*

...To children ardent for some desperate glory,  
The old Lie; Dulce et Decorum est  
Pro patria mori.<sup>30</sup>

The Latin roughly translating to "It is sweet and proper to die for the land of your fathers". In the title Keane is commenting on the repercussions of pledging your life for your country, as well as presenting a link to works of war art from the First World War.

Keane also included the image of the soldier in the painting *Murphy's Law, Enniskillen* (1989) (Figure: 93), which was produced in response to a bombing on Remembrance Sunday in 1987 in the town of Enniskillen in Northern Ireland that resulted in the death

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<sup>28</sup> Lawson, *Troubles My Sight*, 28.

<sup>29</sup> Lawson, *John Keane: Conflicts of Interest*, 18.

<sup>30</sup> Title comes from an even older work by the roman poet, Horace (Born around 65 BC), This sentiment inscribed at, of the Royal Military College, Sandhurst and at other memorials around the world.

of eleven people and injury of sixty-eight. The First World War statue of the fallen soldier stands with head bowed amid a chaotic landscape of metal hoardings and destroyed buildings. Splashes of red interrupt the tones of grey blue and ochre, in the red of the remembrance poppy wreath at the foot of the statue. Red is also included in splashes on the newspaper pages added to the work and on a poster explaining Murphy's law: "Nothing is as easy as it seems, Everything takes longer than you expect, And if anything can go wrong it will, At the worst possible moment". The newspapers not only add texture to the painting, but also place the work within the reporting of the time. The headlines "My angel's gone to heaven", "Defiant IRA nuts blame...the army" recount some of the feeling after the bombing and assert the fact that this work is based on actual events.

This work was part of Keane's Northern Ireland project, which culminated in the exhibition at the Flowers Gallery *The Other Cheek* in 1990, and was a chance for him to further explore and respond to the events of unrest in Northern Ireland. The exhibition was noted by *The Times* newspaper as "A series of works inspired by 'The Troubles' in Ulster, by a seductively fluent brilliant painter, who resists slogans and is one of few visual artists who can be considered an insightful interpreter of modern history. A show to see".<sup>31</sup> Lawson (2015) called the works "visual journalism".<sup>32</sup> *The Other Cheek* (Figure: 94), presents a view of Ulster as a war zone. It is significant to my thesis due to his inclusion of a soldier, caring for a wounded colleague who is lying on the ground over a puddle of red blood. On the left of the work, the anguish of a mother holding her dead or injured child in her arms is clear. Her face contorted in loss, as she holds the child, asking the viewer to bear witness. In contrast on the right of the work, a man in a raincoat, briefcase in hand, stands over the body of woman, her bare

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<sup>31</sup> *The Times* (London, Saturday, March 24, 1990): 48.

<sup>32</sup> Mark Lawson, *Troubles My Sight: The Art of John Keane* (London: Flowers East, 2015), 40.

legs and arm visible beneath her blue dress. Unlike the mother and child, there is no emotion shown towards this injury. Keane even includes a priest and a marching man nearby and uncaring. Through these figures, Keane indicates the complexity of the Northern Ireland conflict, and that there are no winners on either side. As with *Murphy's Law* newspapers are included in this work, littering the floor around the people, with headlines and text visible. Behind the multiple representations of the bodily impact of conflict, Keane includes representations of the murals in Belfast. One mural from the nationalist IRA showing soldiers (paramilitaries) with guns held high and the other of the Protestant William III, Prince of Orange riding a white horse, which is rearing over an injured Catholic man. Keane used a camera and notebook to gather source material for his paintings and added newspaper cuttings and metal sheets dividing and blocking the central portion of the work. Behind the barricade, he paints the urban landscape of Belfast and its terraced houses leading to a dark rural horizon and a grey sky. Title of the work and exhibition is a phrase from the Sermon on the Mount in the Bible; "But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also."<sup>33</sup> It refers to non-retaliation against violent acts, and Keane's use of the phrase is an ironic comment on the many retaliatory acts that took place.

In this section, I have shown Keane has demonstrated artistic development in the theme of conflict in the years preceding the Gulf War. The soldier has been included in some of these works, such as that *Old Lie Café* (Figure: 92), *Murphy's Law*, *Enniskillen* (1989) (Figure: 93) and *The Other Cheek* (Figure: 94). Keane shows no precedent for depicting the soldier as a heroic nationalist figure in these early works, but shows him as damaged by the war he is involved in.

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<sup>33</sup> From Matthew 5:39, The Gospel of Matthew in the New Testament, part of the Sermon on the Mount. King James Bible.

In the next section, I will outline the events that led up to his commission in the Gulf War, the works he produced and the media reaction to them. As with the other artist in my thesis, Keane was present during the ongoing conflict alongside UK soldiers, but he never achieved the closeness of relationship that marred Kitson's objectivity, as such his work was fundamentally different both in technique and in the depiction of the soldier.

## Gulf Commission

Although I have shown that many of Keane's early works featured soldiers and sites of conflict, the Gulf War in 1990 was the first time Keane depicted the soldier in active service. The events leading up to his commission and the media reporting prior to Keane's departure are important in informing his view of the conflict and the interpretations of his works. For completeness, I will initially give a brief overview of the conflict, prior to considering Keane's commission by the IWM.<sup>34</sup>

Kuwait had originally been part of the Ottoman province of Iraq, but was detached by the British after the First World War. Ostensibly, the Gulf War was an attempt for Iraq to gain more oil and wealth, as although Kuwait was small, its access to the sea, its oil rich land and the wealth that that generated meant it was a wealthy neighbour.

Although an in-depth history of the area is beyond the scope of this thesis it is generally agreed that Iraq's inability to pay off debts after the Iran-Iraq war of 1980-1988 was one of the contributing factors to the invasion.<sup>35</sup> Iraq had never recognised Kuwait's independence and Iraqi president, Saddam Hussein, annexed it on 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1990, sending Iraqi tanks and aircraft over the border into Kuwait. The invasion was not initially classified as a war, but the United Nations identified the risk to the Kuwaiti people, and began negotiations with Iraq to remove their forces from Kuwait. The US government, led by President Bush, were concerned that Saddam Hussein would go on to target Saudi Arabia, went on to lead Operation Desert Shield, which combined a multinational defence force including Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Egypt and Syria as well as a small input from Britain. In an attempt to force Iraq to leave Kuwait 230 thousand

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<sup>34</sup> Further information on the events leading up to the Gulf War can be found in a number of publications including; Brian MacArthur, *Despatches from the Gulf War* (London: Bloomsbury, 1991), David E. Morrison, *Television and the Gulf War* (London: Libbey, 1992) and Philip Taylor, *War and the Media: Propaganda and Persuasion in the Gulf War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992).

<sup>35</sup> Hiro, Dilip. "Chronicle of the Gulf War." *MERIP Reports*, no. 25/126 (1984): 3-14. Accessed February 1, 2020

troops were sent to Saudi Arabia to defend the area. After six months with no progress or retreat of the Iraqi forces from Kuwait by the deadline of 15th January 1991 the active phase, Operation Desert Storm began with air attacks on Kuwait. Evidence of the success of the bombing raids was from photographs by reconnaissance planes, which were shown on television in the UK and US.<sup>36</sup> The public did not wholly support involvement in the conflict and there were demonstrations outside the Whitehouse in Washington and in London. Operation Desert Storm was followed by the ground offensive, Desert Sabre, which began on 24 February 1991. Kuwait was finally liberated on 26 February 1991, although during the Iraqi retreat their army targeted oil wells, setting fires that Keane would go on to include in his paintings. Keane would also witness the aftermath of the targeting of the fleeing Iraqi forces on Basra road by air attack. By 3 March Iraq agreed to abide by all of the UN resolutions and peace was finally signed on 6 April.<sup>37</sup>

The IWM took the decisive step to commission an artist to go to the region soon after the seizing of Kuwait. Keane's successful Falklands War exhibition and his outputs from Northern Ireland and Nicaragua had made him a strong choice by the museum. In a review of a joint exhibition in 1990 *The Times* described Keane as producing "quietly acerbic modern history paintings".<sup>38</sup> Rather than an interview process, research indicates that Angela Weight called Keane and offered him the job following an IWM committee meeting. Keane noted, "...you probably don't get asked this sort of thing twice, so I accepted straight away".<sup>39</sup> The museum agreed to pay Keane £10,000 for first choice on one or more works he would produce resulting from the trip. When I interviewed Keane in 2018, I asked him if there was ever any direction about what they

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<sup>36</sup> BBC Morning News, *The BBC* (17 January 1991).

<sup>37</sup> Taylor, Philip M. "The Gulf War of 1991." In *Munitions of the Mind: A History of Propaganda*, 285-97. Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 2003: 295-296.

<sup>38</sup> "Where's the discord," *The Times* (London, 30 April 1990), 22.

<sup>39</sup> Mark Lawson, *John Keane: Conflicts of Interest* (Edinburgh; London: Mainstream, 1995), 63.

would like him to produce, he noted, "...the only brief was that I was to spend time with the Army, Navy and the Air force. Outside of that no. There was a very loosely worded contract, but it was deliberately loose".<sup>40</sup>

Although Keane had experience in working in areas of political upheaval, he had no predefined ideas of the type of work he wanted to create,

All I wanted to do was put aside the whole, you know, official nature of it and treat it as something of mine...a project of my own that I would approach from my own way, learning from my previous experience...<sup>41</sup>

The *Daily Telegraph* ran a small article on August 14<sup>th</sup> 1990 titled "Who will brush with danger?" in which the gravity of the situation in the Gulf was highlighted by the IWM's consideration of an artist.<sup>42</sup> They noted that while Linda Kitson "would seem like the obvious choice...[she] appears to have been overlooked this time", the article goes on to quote Angela Weight, Keeper of Art at the IWM, as saying "Linda has had her stint...a fresh eye is preferred for the newest theatre of war".<sup>43</sup>

The *Evening Standard* spoke to Weight in more detail about the selection process and quoted her as saying, "A lot of people volunteered – mostly artists who would have been good at painting sunsets over Dubai – but John was the unanimous choice. His was the name that immediately sprang to mind as we knew he could handle himself in difficult situations".<sup>44</sup> Her response indicates that the selection committee were making the choice of artist in order to curate a particular anticipated response to the conflict, one that might challenge the UK role. In the article, Keane confirms the commission and discusses his reaction to it,

I've been in places where there were states of conflict, but this is potentially more dangerous than anything I've done before... The Falklands had a great effect on me. It did shock me how easy it was to go to war and one way of

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<sup>40</sup> John Keane interview with Jayne Buchanan, (11 September 2018).

<sup>41</sup> John Keane interview with Jayne Buchanan, (11 September 2018).

<sup>42</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, (14 August 1990).

<sup>43</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, (14 August 1990).

<sup>44</sup> Lucinda Bredin, "A Fighting Chance," *Evening Standard* (20 August 1990).

dealing with it was putting it into my work. I am by nature drawn to pacifism, but the concept of war is appalling yet fascinating. One can't ignore it and pretend it doesn't exist. I have to address it somehow by confronting it.<sup>45</sup>

The article from the *Evening Standard* questioned Keane's views on the soldiers he would be accompanying. Keane demonstrates that prior to the war his feelings towards them are negative, so much so that one would expect works that depicted the soldiers differently to that which was ultimately produced:

What you are effectively doing when you become a soldier is to remove yourself from responsibility because you are following orders. The sight of a whole load of squaddies marching 'left right' really depresses me. It depresses me that these people want to look exactly the same and move exactly the same time and to respond only to outside control. They are being turned into machines and they don't exercise any moral judgement. It's removing a moral layer of your personality.<sup>46</sup>

He is also shown to have been thinking about his methods of working in the field,

"What interests me is the absurdness, the ironies, the quirks. And because a lot of my work is to do with metaphor and allegory, I want to find imagery that somehow resonates and says something about the whole situation. That's what I will be looking for".<sup>47</sup>

In an article in for *Guardian* a few days later, Keane hints that his works will be confrontational and critical of the war, noting he would not "take a tame Establishment view of what happens".<sup>48</sup> Keane goes on to say that this should not be a surprise to the IWM,

They know who I am and what my work is about...If they wanted that kind of artist, they would not have chosen me...I hate political art that is sloganizing or tub-thumping. I shrink from that...What I will be doing is essentially a subjective viewpoint of a given situation. I don't want to pretend otherwise.<sup>49</sup>

The museum held a press conference and photoshoot with Keane in front of the large guns at the entrance at the IWM London. In an interview resulting from the conference Keane admitted his feelings about the trip "...I imagine it will be fairly arduous, not

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<sup>45</sup> Lucinda Bredin, "A Fighting Chance," *Evening Standard* (20 August 1990).

<sup>46</sup> Lucinda Bredin, "A Fighting Chance," *Evening Standard* (20 August 1990).

<sup>47</sup> Lucinda Bredin, "A Fighting Chance," *Evening Standard* (20 August 1990).

<sup>48</sup> Dennis Barker, "Keane to present his own viewpoint," *The Guardian* (24 August 1990).

<sup>49</sup> Dennis Barker, "Keane to present his own viewpoint," *The Guardian* (24 August 1990).



least because of the heat. I am nervous. I think it's a very frightening situation", he also added that he felt "honoured to be considered for a job which has such notable predecessors."<sup>50</sup>

The *Daily Telegraph* noted how his political views might affect his work in their article, writing,

Left-wingers who take a dim view of official war artists should not find too much to grumble about in yesterday's appointment of John Keane. As it turns out, Keane possesses radical credentials which should make him the very last man to glorify war.<sup>51</sup>

The prospect of being involved in the conflict is also contemplated and Keane is quoted saying, "I've never seen a shot fired in anger and I hope I never do".<sup>52</sup> The article concludes with a reference to Kitson who offers her best wishes for his commission.

While she notes his sentiment to the forces, Kitson comments, "It's easy to be radical when you are sitting in your studio...I had my doubts when I went out there but I came back revering the armed forces".<sup>53</sup>

Many newspapers from around the country featured the story of Keane and his commission, The *Daily Post* in Liverpool quoted Keane as saying "It's impossible to tell what I will be doing until I am out there".<sup>54</sup> The *Evening Ledger* in Wrexham commented on his nervousness at going to the Gulf, but also his sentiment that, "I will be producing a more thoughtful record over a period of time in response to my experiences, hopefully make some comment on the situation".<sup>55</sup>

Despite the IWM being quick to secure Keane's commission he was still waiting to go to the Gulf three months later. The home office had issue with insuring Keane to travel

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<sup>50</sup> *The Scotsman*, 24 August 1990.

<sup>51</sup> "Keane to keep his cool," *Daily Telegraph*, (24 August 1990).

<sup>52</sup> "Keane to keep his cool," *Daily Telegraph*, (24 August 1990).

<sup>53</sup> "Keane to keep his cool," *Daily Telegraph*, (24 August 1990).

<sup>54</sup> "His only weapon a palette," *Daily Post*, Liverpool (24 August 1990).

<sup>55</sup> "Nervous' war artist being sent to the Gulf," *Evening Ledger*, Wrexham (24 August 1990).

as well as the term 'War Artist', when there was no actual war taking place. Keane's re-branding an 'Official Recorder' was picked up in an article in *The Independent* who commented,

His title 'official recorder', reflects the view that war is not inevitable, and the difficulties he would face recording the high-speed action of a modern war if it happened. If conflict breaks out, he will be the official 'war artist' but not for the moment.<sup>56</sup>

Keane explains his planned method of working in the article as being,

...much the same way a journalist does, gleaning information, taking photographs. I paint after a kind of mental process in which I decide what is important, what isn't important. Many of the photographs will be discarded as not being relevant. Rather than a sketchbook, I find a camera is much more useful for what I want to do. You can't stop in many situations, so you freeze it...I work essentially in retrospect, with the filter and benefit of hindsight"<sup>57</sup>

Keane had attended an anti-war rally in London, was a member of the CND and the Labour Party, which might go some way to explaining why the Ministry of Defence (MoD) were reluctant to support the commission. This photograph by Keane, from the IWM archives, shows his proximity to the events (Figure: 95). As with many of the commissions from the IWM, lack of funds required the museum to get financial partners to cover the costs of sending an artist to an area of conflict.<sup>58</sup> For Keane this was *The Guardian* newspaper. In December Nicholas de Jongh wrote an article *Artist after a piece of the action* for the newspaper where Keane discusses his feelings of trepidation at going to war,

In my quiet moments I'm nervous. I'm nervous for the whole world. Everyone I talk to makes me more nervous...I've never witnessed a shot being fired in anger. I'm a physical coward. Mustard gas and chemical weapons are never far from my thoughts...It's potentially far more dangerous than anything I've ever done before. But I'd have regretted it if I'd have turned it down. It represents an opportunity to be at the sharp end where history is happening.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Christopher Bellamy "'Official recorder' of Gulf build-up poised for action," *The Independent* (29 November 1990).

<sup>57</sup> Christopher Bellamy, "'Official recorder' of Gulf build-up poised for action," *The Independent* (29 November 1990).

<sup>58</sup> Kitson was co-funded by the Fleet Air Arm Museum.

<sup>59</sup> Nicholas de Jongh, "Artist after a piece of the action," *The Guardian*, (6 December 1990).

As *The Times* reported the return of Gulf hostages on the 10<sup>th</sup> of December 1990, an article, *Gulfs Apart*, notes the frustration from the IWM's Director, Alan Borg on Keane's delay at going to the region. Borg had written to the defence secretary, Tom King, on the subject saying, "We have pursued every channel and have had total non-response from the ministry. It is frustrating for the artist, who is understandably fed up. It is a great shame that he is not out there producing work that will be valuable to historians in the future".<sup>60</sup> The article notes the lack of support from the MoD, who commented "there isn't an immediate need for a war artist".<sup>61</sup>

In January as Keane was still in the UK, *The Times* noted that Major Robin Watt of the Royal Hussars, an amateur artist better known for his paintings of wildlife, had been given permission to work in Saudi Arabia to sketch and paint with the 7<sup>th</sup> Armoured Brigade.<sup>62</sup> The IWM continued to be frustrated with the delay, which seemed in part to be due to the MoD not instigating Keane to attend the conflict.<sup>63</sup> The Guardian reported Alan Borg's annoyance, "I think he could have been producing a valuable record of the British build-up which is now too late to do. It is sad that chance has been missed".<sup>64</sup>

Three days later a solution to Keane's problem with insurance had been found when *The Guardian* paid the £3,000 bill.<sup>65</sup> However, he still had to wait for a date from the MoD who controlled all flights and visas to Saudi Arabia. In an article from *The Times* reports that the MoD also raised questions about the "value for money" for the nation as the payment agreed to Keane seemed too extravagant, especially as Kitson had volunteered to go out at her own cost.<sup>66</sup> This highlights the intent of the museum in

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<sup>60</sup> "Gulfs apart," *The Times, Diary* (10 December 1990).

<sup>61</sup> "Gulfs apart," *The Times, Diary* (10 December 1990).

<sup>62</sup> "Drawing the front after all," *The Times Diary* (5 January 1991).

<sup>63</sup> *The Mail on Sunday* (13 January 1991).

<sup>64</sup> *The Guardian* (16 January 1991).

<sup>65</sup> "War Artist's trip to gulf secured," *The Guardian* (19 Jan 1991).

<sup>66</sup> Geordie Greig, "Battling to keep in the picture," *The Sunday Times* (20 January 1991).

sending their preferred choice of artist was not influenced by the cost of the commission, but by their stylistic choice. The *Independent on Sunday* joined the conversation over the delay, noting that the delay was the fault of the IWM for selecting such a contentious artist and that Paul Nash or Linda Kitson would never have had so much trouble.<sup>67</sup> While it was believed his membership of the Labour party was to blame, they asked "...Why on earth are Mr Keane's politics relevant?...Is it perhaps that some in the Imperial War Museum believe that a member of the Labour Party will somehow be better equipped to achieve great artistic truth?"<sup>68</sup> This article was not just critical of the museum but also of Keane and his methods, noting, "...he is taking a camera to capture images which he will use in compositions painted at home. This will not produce very interesting pictures. Spontaneity and freshness which are part of Nash's work are the result of his sketches made on the Western Front and not laborious refining and reflection of studio work."<sup>69</sup> They conclude by questioning whether the museum's role in commissioning war artists is an outdated tradition, and that any works could be composed from the safety of the UK, "...to send an artist to the Gulf at all seems to misunderstand the nature of this war. It is being conducted at great distances by remotely controlled weapons...The war artist is a quaint old-fashioned idea...It should now be abandoned and Mr Keane given a subscription to CNN."<sup>70</sup>

The *Sunday Telegraph* engaged in further debate as to whether Kitson should have been chosen for the commission following an interview with her on January 20<sup>th</sup> 1991.<sup>71</sup> In this article, Kitson does not denigrate the work of Keane, but argues for more than one artist to be sent to the conflict, "A quorum of artists is needed". Kitson continued,

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<sup>67</sup> "Anything but a watercolour war," *The Independent on Sunday* (20 January 1991).

<sup>68</sup> "Anything but a watercolour war," *The Independent on Sunday* (20 January 1991).

<sup>69</sup> "Anything but a watercolour war," *The Independent on Sunday* (20 January 1991).

<sup>70</sup> "Anything but a watercolour war," *The Independent on Sunday* (20 January 1991).

<sup>71</sup> Lesley Garner, "Drawn to do battle once more," *The Sunday Telegraph* (20 January 1991).

We should try to get as many elements of the conflict portrayed as possible. We can only hope that what we do will help towards it not happening again. I view the artist as a catalyst. You offer up a vision and people like it. I couldn't be in a better position to know how many people are touched by it. They want to be commemorated.<sup>72</sup>

This highlights the different attitudes to war held by Keane and Kitson. While Kitson talks of commemoration, Keane's remit was about finding a truth within the chaos, even if the result is unpleasant. In an article for the *Islington Chronicle* a few days later, Keane expresses his sentiment to the war,

I think the war should not have been started...I'm not pro-war, I'm not a jingoistic person and I don't necessarily support it...It is very depressing for mankind that the situation has come to this when other means could have sorted it out. I would have liked more time for sanctions.<sup>73</sup>

The article shows that Keane is visiting the area with some level of trepidation, as the risk to the military, journalists and the civilians had been well documented in the press, and it highlights the lack of nationalist stance which will he believed would be evident in his works.

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<sup>72</sup> Lesley Garner, "Drawn to do battle once more," *The Sunday Telegraph* (20 January 1991).

<sup>73</sup> "John's on his way to paint war pictures," *Islington Chronicle* (23 January 1991).

## The Gulf War

When Keane finally left for the Gulf on 4<sup>th</sup> February 1991, he had made it clear that there should be no expectations of a pro-war stance in his works. In this section of the chapter on Keane I will examine the methods and subject of the works created, focusing on those works that included the soldier using iconographical methodology and close visual inspection to consider how Keane's works extended the representation of the soldier. I have demonstrated that Keane was critical of the way government actions affected the soldier in the Falklands War and that his previous works showed a soldier damaged both physically and mentally by war. In the Gulf works, Keane developed his representation of the soldier as individuals who managed to assert their own individuality in wartime, but were ultimately powerless. As his works were derived from his photographs, these will be also comparatively considered.

The first news report about Keane's time in the Gulf was from the artist himself. As part of the agreement with the *Guardian* for funding his insurance, Keane agreed to send in regular diary entries for publication in the paper. He noted that this "really excited me, because as well as being an artist, other ambitions of mine were to be a journalist...so the idea of actually writing for a national newspaper was quite appealing".<sup>74</sup> In the article, Keane describes his departure, from saying goodbye to his partner to getting inoculations and being allocated a chemical protection suit. He writes of the surreal atmosphere of his role as a war artist on arrival at Dharam International Hotel where "journalists sit around watching CNN...like stepping into fiction."<sup>75</sup> The perils of war he had anticipated are shown to be confusingly absent in this article as Keane is assigned a comfortable bed in a room with a television and a fridge and he is taken on a tour of the base by RAF personnel. The next day Keane attends a photo call

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<sup>74</sup> John Keane interview with Jayne Buchanan (11 September 2018).

<sup>75</sup> John Keane, "Gas masks and sun lotion in a holiday village," *The Guardian* (6 February 1991).

on the airbase for British journalists where he recalls US, British, Saudi and Kuwaiti pilots posing by a jet for photographers and TV crew. Keane used the photographs he took of this scene to develop the painting *Photocall* (Figure: 96). The work is framed from a high viewpoint looking out over the group of Kuwaiti troops, sitting in rows in a traditional posed formation in front of the aircraft. A number of press journalists are taking video and photographs of the Kuwait troops. They are overseen by a military presence on the right of the scene, where a soldier is standing with his arms crossed. The painting indicates the order and obedience required of soldiers as they sit in for the photograph and the performative nature of war, where images are required for the next day's news. On the horizon, other aircraft are silhouetted beneath hangers, indicating the portent of further battle. The speed of news reporting home was far greater than in the Falklands war, as Keane commented,

News people are fulfilling a role that has to do with conveying information for tonight's news or tomorrow's breakfast table. In a way I'm liberated by that, I could try to redefine what a war artist was... I didn't have to merely record what happened and I had no obligations to produce propaganda.<sup>76</sup>

Keane's first report was to be the only one sent to the *Guardian*, as he explained in my interview with him, soon after publication he received a summons from the military Public Relations team. Keane explained, "they said "either you are an accredited artist or you are an unaccredited journalist". It was pretty clear - cease and desist. I was told in no uncertain terms that if I continued, that would be that."<sup>77</sup> The following week the *Guardian* reported that due to restrictions placed by the MoD there would be no further diary reports published from Keane until after the conflict had ended.<sup>78</sup> The MoD reasoned that, "...as an official war artist Keane would be given access and facilities not provided to other journalists. The suggestion is that it would be unfair to other

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<sup>76</sup> Mark Lawson, *John Keane: Conflicts of Interest* (Edinburgh; London: Mainstream, 1995), 64.

<sup>77</sup> John Keane Jayne Buchanan, interview with, (11 September 2018).

<sup>78</sup> "An artist in the wars," *The Guardian*, (14 February 1991). No further reports were published.

newspapers”, was probably just part of the problem.<sup>79</sup> Perhaps something in the tone of the end of his first article caused consternation, as Keane wrote, “Through the window, off-duty pilots lounge by a swimming pool in Ray-bans and sun lotion as palm trees sway in the breeze. It could be a holiday village in Spain.”<sup>80</sup> A description that did not fit well with the general narrative of the soldier in times of war.

While Kitson had been in close contact with the troops on the journey to the Falklands, Keane did not get the same opportunity to develop relationships with those serving in the conflict. He was part of the large contingency of press in the Gulf, “just basically tagging along with them” as there was a whole system of looking after reporters and photographers, he notes “They were used to dealing with journalists and I was sort of slightly outside of that. So there was a slight difference”<sup>81</sup> In an interview with the artist in 2018, I asked Keane about his arrival to the Gulf and his relationship with the troops.

In contrast to the MoD, everyone on the ground with very few exceptions were enormously welcoming and accommodating, I mean they, I was a bit of a novelty frankly, and anyone who wasn't a either a soldier or military or a journalist, which is the other category, was of interest, and they had. So they were in the most part extremely friendly.

He noted the lack of structure during most of his time in the Gulf especially when he was in Basra after the ceasefire had been agreed.

Occasionally there were people looking after me, mostly I was with a group. Very much under the auspices of the military PR. There were the odd moments, And certainly after, in Kuwait, when I was slightly out of that sphere again, and I was just with journalists, rather than, I wasn't with any military people particularly. I was with two guys who were with Kuwaiti resistance who drive me around with them. I was with another American Military journalist as well. The four of us would drive, that was the Basra road and all that. And then I was with a guy for the Independent...But most of the time I was in geographical

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<sup>79</sup> “An artist in the wars,” *The Guardian*, (14 February 1991).

<sup>80</sup> John Keane, “Gas masks and sun lotion in a holiday village,” *The Guardian* (6 February 1991).

<sup>81</sup> John Keane interview with Jayne Buchanan, (11 September 2018).



situation where it wasn't possible to leave the fold of the camp or whatever. But in Kuwait I had more independence.<sup>82</sup>

Keane initially spent time at an RAF compound in Dhahran in Saudi Arabia and went to Bahrain.<sup>83</sup> During this period, he took photographs of the preparations for war at the airbase.

Keane's use of a camera during his commission in the Gulf was unusual for a war artist, as Angela Weight noted that "there is little evidence that artists in either of the two world wars used a camera when at the front, although some made use of military photographs as reference material".<sup>84</sup> In *Troubles My Sight: The Art of John Keane* (1992), Keane discusses his method using a camera and notebook,

It rather depends on what you want to do. I think in situations like those I've put myself in, to get the information I want to use in a painting, apart from anything else, the utter impracticality of sitting down and sketching something would be absurd. For a start, the situation might be changing very quickly and the information you can get down in that time for use later is very limited. And I'm not just interested in making sketches; if I was that would be the thing to do. But I'm interested in something more reflective and considered and done retrospectively if you like. For me the camera is the most obvious and sensible way of approaching that. So I don't see any kind of conflict. It's not as if I was transcribing the photographs that I get literally in any sort of photorealist way. They are a source of reference. Working from memory with the use of photographs because they are *my* photographs of a situation I have been in.<sup>85</sup>

In an earlier book by Lawson (1995), he quotes Keane on his method,

For me the camera is simply serving as a sketchbook of an instantaneous kind. Given that I want to make paintings – and paintings are essentially a reflective form, not an observational record...photography is simply the most practical way of recording information I may want to use later.<sup>86</sup>

Some of Keane's photographs taken in the Gulf are part of the IWM collection. Keane took some photographs in the RAF compound which were then used as source for paintings, such as GLF 28 (Figure: 97) which shows of a Laser Guided bomb being

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<sup>82</sup> John Keane interview with Jayne Buchanan, (11 September 2018).

<sup>83</sup> Mark Lawson, *Troubles My Sight: The Art of John Keane* (London: Flowers East, 2015), 55.

<sup>84</sup> John Keane and Angela Weight, *Gulf* (London: Imperial War Museum, 1992), 11.

<sup>85</sup> John Keane and Angela Weight, *Gulf* (London: Imperial War Museum, 1992), 11.

<sup>86</sup> Mark Lawson, *John Keane: Conflicts of Interest* (Edinburgh; London: Mainstream, 1995), 64.

loaded onto an aircraft. It is possible to see the missile has been painted with a message reading, “This bomb is the same as Saddam, it has a yellow streak down the back!” The other photograph GLF 29 (Figure: 98) highlights the scale military firepower being prepared. As with the previous photograph, some of the missiles have the personal messages, “Love from Alyson xxxx” and “I would not give a XXXX for anything else Bob xx”. In both cases, the addition of writing on the guided missiles adds a personal sentiment to the relationship of the troops to the war which Keane has emphasised in his works *Payload* (Figure: 99) and *Laser Guided* (Figure: 101).

*Payload* shows a bright blue sky overpainted loose style. The Tornado aircraft in background is ready for combat and are depicted with the cockpit hatch open. Buildings, missiles and men in army green are in background of the work. In the foreground, a soldier is bent over a missile, working on it. The soldier is not depicted with any obvious exaggerated masculinity, such as strength or muscle prowess. The missile behind the soldier is painted with the words “DON’T FUCK WITH THE WONGS”, the one worked on by the soldier reads “TO SADDAM LOVE SHARON XXXX”. Keane has painted this scene onto front pages from the *Daily Mirror*, being selective about where the paint covers the text and images so that it is possible to see a photograph of John Peters, who was one of the UK pilots captured by Iraqi army. The image of the damaged pilot reiterates the theme of the soldier as human and liable to injury in the war. John Peters commented on the significance of the photograph in an interview in 2015, “I was treated very specially because of that photograph...I can never live up to the attributes people think I’m meant to have and I can’t escape that photograph.”<sup>87</sup> By including the image in the painting (Figure: 100) Keane not only asks the viewer not to forget the image of the tortured RAF pilot, but also to consider the sentiment and feelings of the men preparing the missiles for launch, whose

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<sup>87</sup> Tony Padman, John Peters interview, *The Express* (21 March 2015).

colleagues have been injured. He also adds to the justification of the damage that the missiles will do. This is a feeling reiterated in a headline from *The Mirror* which is visible at the bottom of the painting says, “You’ll pay for this”. The title *Payload* is a term traditionally used to describe the part as a vehicle’s load from which revenue is derived, but also in military terms the firepower it carries. While this might seem a more descriptive rather than ironic title, the Gulf War was notably discussed as a war over oil and the money generated by it. The ‘payload’ thus becomes a means of securing this money.

The work *Laser Guided* (Figure: 101) is similar to *Payload* in that the main subject of the composition is the missile and a soldier. It differs in that the soldier’s face is not painted in detail and is partially obscured by shadows as he is bent over working on the missile, which has the phrase “To Saddam Suck this luv Zelda” written on it. In the background there is more activity as another soldier is painted in profile, perhaps in the process of being interviewed near another missile on a wheeled trolley. On the horizon, under a bright blue sky, other aircraft are shown in hangars. There is a feeling of heat in the bright colours used and the distinct shadows contrasting with the white ground.

Further behind the soldier a journalist in civilian clothing, is filming or photographing a fighter jet. The pilot is in the cockpit but the roof is up. Near to the aircraft a group of people are standing, some filming the aircraft. Through this work, Keane is commenting on the performative aspect of war as it is recorded for the television.

Angela Weight commented on *Laser Guided* in 1992, “no glamorous weaponry, just a bloke ignoring the media circus and getting on with his job”.<sup>88</sup> However, through the work Keane gives the viewer an alternative insight into the ways the soldier can show his personal feelings on the conflict via the written messages on the weapons. While Keane records a number of activities in this painting, the missile is the most prominent

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<sup>88</sup> John Keane and Angela Weight, *Gulf* (London: Imperial War Museum, 1992), 12.

feature. These missiles were a key feature in the Gulf War as was noted in an article for the *New York Times*, “For the first time in history, precision-guided bombs and missiles have played a decisive role in war, paving the way for the invasion of Kuwait and Iraq.”<sup>89</sup> *Airforce* magazine reflected, “The smart weapons most widely used were Paveway IIs and IIIs, and they achieved some of the most spectacular hits...use infrared sensors to deliver Laser Guided Bomb.”<sup>90</sup> The photographs taken by Keane and the resultant paintings of the missiles show that Keane had recorded the details of the Paveway missiles accurately. The yellow markings on the bomb shows that they were RAF (UK) not US munitions. As with *Payload*, *Laser-Guided* asks the viewer to consider the emotions of the soldiers, they are not unfeeling machines but demonstrate humour, derision and anger at the enemy. In writing on the laser guided missiles, they are weaponising these sentiments.

The dangerousness of the conflict was highlighted when Keane was travelling by truck between Bahrain and the Saudi desert. News of an attack in a nearby town alerted everyone to put on their chemical weapons suits, but having received no training for this emergency, he was understandably frightened. However, after putting on the protective gear he had the foresight to record himself on his video camera. The film went on to be used to create the painting *An Ecstasy of Fumbling (Portrait of the Artist in a Gas Alert)* (Figure: 102). He notes the source of the work,

It was a selfie on which the painting was based. We were in this Landover in this gas alert, I was feeling very uncomfortable sitting in the back with this clobber on , which I'd never ever been given any training in in putting on. Everyone else had- I was the only one. I was the only person for hundreds of miles in civilian clothing. So there I was not knowing if the outside world was poisonous and I fumbled for my camera, video camera, and just pointed it at me and pressed record.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Malcolm W. Browne, “Invention That Shaped the Gulf War: the Laser-Guided Bomb,” *New York Times* 26 February 1991).

<sup>90</sup> John T. Correll, “The Emergence of Smart Bombs,” *Airforce Magazine* (March 2010).

<sup>91</sup> John Keane interview with Jayne Buchanan, (11 September 2018).

In the painting Keane shows himself wide-eyed with fear, cocooned in the military clothing. The painting includes pages from *Survive to Fight* – the army’s manual on how to use a chemical protection suit in an emergency - a glove, nerve agent pre-treatment tables and detector paper for dangerous substances. Keane has also included a reproduction of the painting *Gassed* by John Singer Sargent which depicts the trauma of a gas attack on a group of soldiers in the First World War. I asked him about his reasoning behind using this image,

I had, years before, I can’t remember when, wandered into the Imperial War museum and found myself looking at *Gassed* by Sargent. I was just blown away. I don’t recall having encountered it before. Anyway, it left quite a profound impression on me. And of course at that time, of course this was from the First World War then, many years before, never ever supposing that at some in the not too distant future that I might find myself in a situation where there is that threat of chemical warfare. So it was a reference to that and a sort of tribute.<sup>92</sup>

The title of the painting, which also refers to the First World War, is from a line in Wilfred Owen poem of called *Dulce et Decorum Est*, one of the lines being “Gas! Gas! Quick, boys! – An ecstasy of fumbling”. In my interview, he commented how he was drawing attention to the fact that, despite the passing of time and the changing of technology “this is still a threat”.<sup>93</sup> The use of the image of the First World War soldiers and the use of the poem alongside the wide-eyed fear shown on his face also highlights the continuing vulnerability of the individual in war.

After this frightening experience, Keane decided to transfer to one of the Navy ships waiting for orders in the Persian Gulf. In Lawson’s book (1995) Keane notes the danger he felt he was in at the time, “At least a couple of journalists told me that it was widely expected that the media would be among the casualties.”<sup>94</sup> The photographs taken by Keane on board ship, such as GLF 176 (Figure: 103) show forces waiting for conflict to

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<sup>92</sup> John Keane interview with Jayne Buchanan, (11 September 2018).

<sup>93</sup> John Keane interview with Jayne Buchanan, (11 September 2018).

<sup>94</sup> Mark Lawson, *John Keane: Conflicts of Interest* (Edinburgh; London: Mainstream, 1995), 65.

commence, none of these were developed into paintings. The Navy was not called on to fight and Keane was stranded on board while the 100 hours of warfare took place on land.

When Keane returned to Kuwait City after the war had ended, buildings had been destroyed, oil fields were burning sending black smoke into the sky, and while the bodily cost of war had been mostly cleared, reminders of people's lives remained in belongings left behind. Basra was perhaps the worse scene of destruction witnessed by Keane, where burnt out vehicles littered the main road, following the controversial helicopter bombardment of retreating Iraqis.

One of the photographs taken by Keane during this time, GLF 248, (Figure: 104) shows a smiling black American soldier standing in front of a military checkpoint. Although the IWM information about the photograph describes him as standing "menacingly", his relaxed pose and wide smile leads me to read the work differently. It shows how leading museum interpretations of works can be. The soldier is caricaturised as being weaponised and violent, but it is possible that he is just smiling at the camera having been asked for his photograph. Perhaps the more interesting point is that he is smiling in the site of such destruction, the normality of having your photograph taken – the lack of concern, or empathy at the loss of life. As they were taken after the end of the war, many of Keane's photographs during this time show smiling jubilant faces. The soldier is in full uniform, holding a gun. Behind him is a tented area with a British flag and two soldiers looking over. The road behind him is empty, but in the distance there are abandoned cars and smoke fills the sky.

Keane uses this photograph as a source for the painting *We Are Making a New World Order* (Figure: 105). Comparing the painting with the photograph gives some insight to his creative process. Keane has removed any link to nationalism by not including the

British soldiers and the flag in the painting. The pile of destroyed vehicles is emphasised and enlarged and is combined with a black burning sky to create an ominous landscape. The soldier stands confidently, his shirt unbuttoned and sunglasses on, looking like something from a Hollywood movie. The work is an example of Keane's depiction of the soldier as a masculine ideal but on comparing to the photograph (IWM GLF 248), Keane has changed him subtly. In the painting, the soldier is smiling more and holds his gun higher across his body, protectively and more actively than the relaxed pose in the photograph. The skin on the soldier's chest is also more exposed in the painting, possibly indicating the vulnerability of the flesh behind the weapon.

Keane has contrasted the soldier with the addition of a red car and the figure of a man in Arab clothing to the painting. The Arab looking not at us the viewer, but at the destruction of his land. The man pictured was a member of the Kuwaiti Resistance and a construction engineer. He owned the red Mercedes and was Keane's guide for a number of days.<sup>95</sup> Lawson (1995) noted that the red car had been included in a number of previous works by Keane "always an important presence in Keane's paintings, standing for technological beauty and ugly consumerism".<sup>96</sup> The money added beneath the front tyre seems to support this theory. The contrast of the two figures in the works is noted by Weight, "The black American soldier facing us looks victorious enough, but the Arab contemplates the ruin of his country as the oil wells burn and the desert becomes an oil lake."<sup>97</sup>

Keane adds a textuality to the painting with the addition of family photographs he found on the Basra road. These photographs ask the viewer to consider where these

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<sup>95</sup> John Keane and Angela Weight, *Gulf* (London: Imperial War Museum, 1992), 24.

<sup>96</sup> Mark Lawson, *John Keane: Conflicts of Interest* (Edinburgh; London: Mainstream, 1995), 72.

<sup>97</sup> John Keane and Angela Weight, *Gulf* (London: Imperial War Museum, 1992), 24.

families are now and the human cost of war. He has also included a symbol of American interference in Arabic culture in the crushed can of Pepsi Cola can labelled in Arabic. American dollars and Arab Riyals frame the painting in another reference by Keane to the commercial aspect of conflict. The addition of money in the work was a technique used by Keane in Nicaragua, here it refers accusingly to some of the motivations of this war. While Keane has painted the figures and the car in detail, the application of paint in the landscape is loose and runs down the canvas in dark rivers, looking like oil on the sand.

I asked Keane about his use of materiality in his works,

It's contextualising the media coverage of events, incorporating it in and seeing it as part of the whole. Also, no getting away from for kind of aesthetic reasons as well. My work is...about texture, and paint and materials of one kind and another. So introducing this presents interesting surfaces and so on but there is, hovering in the background, what are these things, you know the *Financial Times* or whatever, or Page 3 of *The Sun* or something like that. Those things are not without some layer of meaning. They are not just a piece of paper.<sup>98</sup>

The title of the painting refers back to a painting by the British war artist Paul Nash (1889-1946) who created *We Are Making a New World* in 1918 (Figure: 106). While the composition of Nash's and Keane's works show little similarity, both depict a war-torn landscape. Angela Weight of the IWM wrote in the *Gulf* publication (1992) noted that *We are Making a New World Order* "reflects a much greater cynicism about a political concept (the New World Order)" than the painting by Paul Nash, *We Are Making a New World* from which the title refers.<sup>99</sup> Despite both showing the destruction caused by war, I would argue Keane successfully takes the complicated concept and motives and brings them together in this work.

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<sup>98</sup> John Keane interview with Jayne Buchanan, (11 September 2018).

<sup>99</sup> John Keane and Angela Weight, *Gulf* (London: Imperial War Museum, 1992), 25.



When Keane arrived at Basra road, the destruction from the attack on the convoy and the many dead had been largely cleared. *Oil Painting* (Figure: 107) depicts the only dead body Keane saw during his commission. He notes,

In the whole episode I literally only came across a single corpse, and that was the corpse that appeared in the painting, *Oil Painting*. The evidence of it, or what must have happened, was very much my experience...Before that, I'd been very much at the delivery end. Of aeroplanes and shelling and the like and not on the receiving end.<sup>100</sup>

The IWM archives hold some of the photographs Keane took of this dead Iraqi soldier, GLF163 (Figure: 108) and GLF164 (Figure: 109), demonstrate how close Keane was able to get to the body which was lying on the ground with no obvious injuries. The gun was a toy placed on his chest after death by an American journalist filming the soldier. Its presence on the corpse is unsettling, because it refers to the skills of the Iraqi army, but also because of an implied element of humour in the concept of a soldier with a toy gun.

Keane's painting of the body is uncluttered and without the creative layering and collaging that he uses in other works. It is a large, forthright and blatant in its subject of the death from war, *making* the viewer look. While the image might be unpalatable, it does not present a view of death that is unnecessarily violent and as such does not force the viewer to turn away. Keane uses a representational style with the man's features depicted in detail and has applied the paint thickly and vigorously, especially in the sand surrounding the body. In a few places, it is possible to see army boot-prints in the sand, perhaps added as a reminder that the body was not alone, that other soldiers were the cause of death, or to link the Keane to the work. His footsteps in the sand indicate the validity of the work as a record of witness.

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<sup>100</sup> John Keane interview with Jayne Buchanan, (11 September 2018).

The title *Oil Painting* has multiple meanings, asking the viewer to consider the ‘high art’ nature of the oil painting and in the colloquial nature of the phrase, meaning something that has beauty. In the scope of the conflict, the title also refers to the war over oil, being responsible for the death.

In *Gulf* (1992) Angela Weight said of the painting,

Keane has suppressed his normally expressionistic style in the painting of the dark, moustachioed face and rendered it quite carefully as a portrait...To Keane this unidentified Iraqi represents the unknown soldier, who by definition has no nationality.<sup>101</sup>

The body of this unknown soldier and toy gun was also used in a painting *Scenes on the Road to Hell 5* (Figure: 110). The photograph GLF 162 (Figure: 111) by Keane shows a man in combat uniform videoing the corpse, in the IWM collection this is labelled as being an American soldier, but in my interview Keane said,

I was with these two Kuwaitis and this Americans, he was working for some combat magazine, you know some military magazine. and he had a camera. I photographed him videoing the corpse because it seemed that that, you know, it said quite a lot.<sup>102</sup>

The painting, *Scenes on the Road to Hell 5*, shows a similar composition to that of the photograph GLF162, but perhaps to avoid the journalist being mistaken for a soldier the figure is depicted in civilian clothes. The act of filming post mortem is a comment on the newsworthiness of death, where bodies are manipulated for the best possible impact for the paper or television. Keane increases the feeling of the commonplace nature of death in wartime by adding another figure to the work, who walks past unconcerned.

Keane took a number of photographs of the UK and American soldiers during his time in the Gulf. They ranged from artistic silhouettes in the sunset (Figure: 112 and Figure:

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<sup>101</sup> John Keane and Angela Weight, *Gulf* (London: Imperial War Museum, 1992).

<sup>102</sup> John Keane interview with Jayne Buchanan, (11 September 2018).

113) to portraits (Figure: 114). Keane did not choose to develop these aesthetic images of into paintings but depicted soldiers as they went about daily tasks. In *Draughts* (Figure: 115) Keane has produced a complex observation of two soldiers playing the board game under camouflage cover. The checkerboard of the draughts table is repeated in the distortion of the light through the shading, the light and dark obscuring the features of the men playing the game. On one level, this is a work without the traditional peril of a war painting, showing the soldiers at rest. Alternatively, the work could be read as a comment on the game of war, and how the use of remotely targeted munitions allowed those in control to plan and implement strategies from a distance.

The painting *Mask* (Figure: 116) shows another two soldiers, sitting in the desert, wearing gas masks. They have a relaxed pose and do not display the fear depicted in Keane's self-portrait *An Ecstasy of Fumbling* (Figure: 102). In this work the danger and the reaction to danger is commonplace. The inclusion of a tank and other soldiers walking behind the two soldiers adds to the atmosphere of calm.

Keane was also able to photograph the army briefings that took place during the conflict, as seen in photograph GLF 53 (Figure: 117). *Blackout* (Figure: 118) focuses on a group of uniformed men intently gathered around a screen. Other soldiers sit in the small space; one with his back to the screen working on papers, a seated man with a bare chest and the bare feet of another who is lying on a camp bed. Keane's use of dark colours and the crowded composition of soldiers results in a more claustrophobic atmosphere than his paintings of soldiers in the desert. The attentive way some of the men are watching the screen increases the tension. The title of the work may refer to the news blackout, which occurs when a country does not want to release information about their plans to the enemy. Keane was prevented from sharing stories of his time in the Gulf with *The Guardian* newspaper and had previously created works on the power of the media in other conflicts. The title may also refer to the blackouts typified in the

Second World War in the UK, when civilians would use coverings on windows at night to prevent light from being seen outside by the enemy.

When Keane returned to the UK after a month in the area, he left with knowledge of the destruction that war brings to people and their country, a greater understanding of the role of the military during wartime and the reality of fear of being in a war. His first-hand experience as an official war artist also allowed him to record around ten hours of video and nearly sixty reels of camera film. Over the next ten months, he developed this source material into thirty-five works that would form the exhibition at the IWM in 1992. In the next section I examine this process, the works and their reception.

## Return to the UK and exhibition of works

Keane's task on returning home was to bring his photographs, video and collected material together to create works for the commission. Unlike Kitson, whose drawings could be exhibited soon after her return, Keane's exhibition was in the year following the end of the war. This was because his method in the Gulf was to record things he thought might be interesting but without any fixed ideas on what the end product would be,

That happened after the event, I mean there are things I come across and see or witness. But it only becomes apparent in retrospect. After the event. And sometimes you think something will be interesting, you know, or useful and other things emerge that you hadn't first thought.<sup>103</sup>

Back home he reviewed this material "...which then I somehow had to make sense of. Looking at the material, I have, making notes...thoughts, just trying to focus some of it into what might coalesce into a painting."<sup>104</sup> This was very different to the expectations of the war artist in the media, as Lawson (2015) noted, it was not the "romantic image of the military artist hunched over an easel illuminated by the rocket's white glare", in working retrospectively, there was a feeling that Keane was somehow cheating.<sup>105</sup> Keane used his photographs in the same way other artists used a sketchbook, but for him it was "...simply as a sketchbook of an instantaneous kind...photography is simply the most practical way of recording information I may want to use later".<sup>106</sup>

Keane also discussed how the paintings developed from his photographs with Jean Bakewell (2004),

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<sup>103</sup> John Keane interview with Jayne Buchanan, (11 September 2018).

<sup>104</sup> John Keane interview with Jayne Buchanan, (11 September 2018).

<sup>105</sup> Mark Lawson, *Troubles My Sight: The Art of John Keane* (London: Flowers East, 2015), 51.

<sup>106</sup> Lawson, *Troubles My Sight*, 51.

As I begin to find my subject, the way of working materialised alongside it. It's a learning process...It has been and remains to be important to me what the surface of the painting is. I want to play with it, exploit it and explore it. It's part of my primary motivation...At the end of the day I'm making an object which is a painted surface. The joy, the pleasure, the indulgence of it, is part of the picture making. You put aside the topic once you're painting. Of course, it's still there. But picture making has it's own demands and preoccupations.<sup>107</sup>

*The Times* was the first paper to report Keane's return to the UK. Their article on March 22 1991 showed Keane with some of the photographs he had taken in the Gulf (Figure: 119) and noted "...he will now take a year to produce the paintings required under his agreement with the Imperial War Museum. He has yet to put paintbrush to canvas and is feverishly cataloguing his 62 rolls of film and six hour of video."<sup>108</sup> Keane indicates painting will not commence for a couple of weeks, but the article is generally positive and supportive of the delay.

Some of the photographs he took are in the collection at the IWM, "They sifted through what I had done and selected the ones they wanted. But there was a darn site more than what they actually chose for the archive".<sup>109</sup> The photographs are a useful comparison to the works, not just regarding what was used and how it was used to produce the finished works, but also what was not used.

While there is emphasis from the IWM regarding the importance of the war artist creating works from first-hand experience, Keane he was also aware there was much about the conflict he had not seen. In an attempt to fill this knowledge gap, he reviewed newspaper and television coverage of the conflict, "I wanted to see as much as possible about what was on film that I had missed because I was only in one place and this was happening all over, so I scanned a lot of material".<sup>110</sup> The work *Death Squad* (Figure: 2) was one of Keane's works that used the method of reviewing television and film

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<sup>107</sup> Jean Bakewell, *John Keane: Back to Fundamentals* (London: Flowers East, 2004), 5.

<sup>108</sup> *The Times* Diary *Still life with a brush*, 22 March 1991.

<sup>109</sup> John Keane interview with Jayne Buchanan, (11 September 2018).

<sup>110</sup> John Keane interview with Jayne Buchanan, (11 September 2018).

coverage and using as a source for works. The painting is closely cropped around the four soldiers carrying a body bag. They are not only in full uniform with long gloves, but also indistinguishable and anonymous due to the scarves and goggles covering their faces. While three of the men hold their heads high, the leading soldier has his head lowered. This gives the impression of a struggle with the weight of the body and of deference and solemnity in the task. The soldiers covered faces may have been common practice in this task, but Keane's choice to depict it is significant. The soldiers complete their uncomfortable task with dignity but the duality of the role of the soldier is evidenced here – they are individuals who would ordinarily not want to be transporting the dead, but as soldiers, part of the group, they are professionals who follow the orders given to them.

When I spoke to Keane about his relationship with the military during his time in the Gulf, he reflected on their professionalism,

Everyone you speak to would talk about 'the job' they were doing a job...and they were doing it to the best of their ability, as cogs in the machine and they wanted to be as efficient as possible, but they are a tiny piece of a huge machine obviously the results of which we see... But individually their professionalism and their dedication and competence and so on was really what was foremost in their minds...Everything else I think is beyond their horizon. Beyond their control. Certainly of the ordinary soldier.<sup>111</sup>

Behind the main group, other soldiers are also moving a black body bag. Keane has produced a painting that contains a sharp contrast of shadows on the soldiers and their uniform; this gives the work a different impression from the other works in the brightness of the desert. This is a dark work, made further ominous by a dark red sky overpainted with dark and light blue. Although this work contains no materiality, as seen in his other works, the paint is applied using impasto technique, which gives it a richness of form.

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<sup>111</sup> John Keane interview with Jayne Buchanan, (11 September 2018).

Keane also created the three works *Ashes to Ashes* from television coverage of the burnt bodies of Iraqi soldiers.<sup>112</sup> These extremely obscured images of a torso and head show a figure as part of the sand of the Gulf. In *Ashes to Ashes I*, the head is encased in a helmet which is smoother and more glassy than the surrounding areas. Earthy colours of ochre, soot, cream and black are punctuated with red and pink. The colour of blood and flesh. While it is easy to distinguish a figure in *Ashes to Ashes I* (Figure: 120), in *Ashes to Ashes 2* (Figure: 121) this is more abstract, as if the body had started to decompose and return the earth and sand. *Ashes to Ashes 3* (Figure: 122) shows the torso of a person with an arm outstretched. The watch on his wrist is still visible. On the *Ashes to Ashes* works Keane says, “I wanted to do a painting about the effects of modern weapons on the human body and that was it. What happens to the human body when burned and shrivelled and vaporised by high technology weapons”.<sup>113</sup> The title of the works comes from *The Book of Common Prayer* where it is part of the burial service for the Church of England,

For as much as it hath pleased Almighty God of his great mercy to take unto himself the soul of our dear brother here departed: we therefore commit his body to the ground; earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust; in sure and certain hope of the Resurrection to eternal life<sup>114</sup>

Therefore, in these works Keane might also be referring to the belief that there can be purpose in death. Angela Weight appears to confirm this as she described the works as an “homage to the dead” in the exhibition book *Gulf*.<sup>115</sup> The materials, oil, sand and coal, Keane has used in these paintings have a strong relevance to the conflict in the Gulf, as Kuwait is a desert country who had grown wealthy from oil.

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<sup>112</sup> John Keane interview with Jayne Buchanan, (11 September 2018).

<sup>113</sup> Jean Bakewell, *John Keane*, 5.

<sup>114</sup> <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/worship-texts-and-resources/book-common-prayer/burial-dead>

<sup>115</sup> Keane and Weight, *Gulf*, 30.



The IWM exhibited the Gulf works on 26<sup>th</sup> March to 26<sup>th</sup> May 1992 sponsored by *The Guardian* newspaper. In the preface to the book which was produced to accompany the exhibition, *Gulf* (1992), Angela Weight asserts the importance of his role, noting that Keane's works are "clearly based on the evidence of his own eyes, but it has been assimilated, transformed and rearranged. Keane is adamant that he is not a recorder but a commentator – he is not making an 'eye-witness account'...He reserves the right to interpret his evidence and choose his subject matter".<sup>116</sup> This is in contrast to the role of the war artist in the First World War, who were tasked with producing alternatives to the illustrators imagined depictions of conflict.

Publicity for the much anticipated exhibition did not go as expected due to being overwhelmed by two works, *Mickey Mouse at the Front* (Figure: 123) and *Alien Landscape* (Figure: 124). *Mickey Mouse at the Front* caused problems before the exhibition had even opened because of its interpretation by the press. While this work does not contain soldiers, it is important to include in my thesis because it points to the media's role in reception of works and the way the media turned this work into a slight on the soldiers who served. The work depicts a post war landscape using a restricted palette of earth colours, which are punctuated by the bright colours of the Mickey Mouse children's ride central to the work. It also features a shopping trolley adorned with bunting and filled with missiles, and the Kuwaiti flag unceremoniously crushed beneath the trolley's wheel. While not containing any reference to the soldiers who caused this destruction, their actions are marked by the faeces on the floor, and the broken trees. The shoreline arcs away into the distance, the border between sea and land marked by defensive structures as well as the surf on the waves. Tall buildings sit not far from the beach. They are dull and lifeless reaching tooth-like into the grey smoking sky. Keane's work is like a modern version of Paul Nash's First World War

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<sup>116</sup> Keane and Weight, *Gulf*, 10.

landscapes of broken trees. As with Nash, Keane's work shows no humans, only the desolation which is caused in their wake. The book *Gulf*, which accompanied the exhibition of Keane's works, called *Mickey Mouse at the Front* "the quintessential Keane painting, a transmogrification of culture, topography, an allegory of a city that had been raped, abused, shat upon and abandoned."<sup>117</sup>

The *Gulf* publication goes on to note,

There is no glory, still less a sense of cathartic tragedy, in this painting; rather it conveys shame and degradation, feelings that humble rather than inspire. Mickey Mouse at the Front is an image that epitomises the end of all wars – the sheer bloody mess that is left behind when it's all over, with the added reminder from the weeping palms that the terrible environmental crime has also taken place.<sup>118</sup>

Mark Lawson described the work as a "surreal seascape" while "a maniacally smiling Mickey Mouse perches on some kind of plinth, which is surrounded by twists of shit."<sup>119</sup>

Prior to the exhibition, *The Evening Standard* published a report on the *Gulf* exhibition at the IWM, which included a reproduction of *Mickey Mouse at the Front* and an interview with Keane.<sup>120</sup> Neither the IWM nor Keane quite expected the response to the interpretation of the faeces strewn children's play area and the icon of America. On 14<sup>th</sup> January 1992, the *Daily Express* ran an article with the title "Gulf artist accused of insult to the troops, noting that Keane was unavailable for comment but that Angela Weight of the IWM had said it "symbolised American effort in Operation Desert Storm".<sup>121</sup> The next day *The Daily Mail* ran an article titled, "Outrage at war artist's view of tragedy", writing that the work had been called "an insult to the troops," by the father of a young soldier who died.<sup>122</sup> The *Today* newspaper gave Keane an opportunity

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<sup>117</sup> Keane and Weight, *Gulf*, 24.

<sup>118</sup> Keane and Weight, *Gulf*, 24.

<sup>119</sup> Lawson, *Troubles My Sight*, 55.

<sup>120</sup> Lawson, *Conflicts of Interest* (Edinburgh; London: Mainstream, 1995), 68.

<sup>121</sup> "Gulf artist accused of insult to the troops," *Daily Express* (14 January 1992).

<sup>122</sup> "Outrage at war artist's view of tragedy," *The Daily Mail* (14 January 1992).

to explain his methods, and Keane is quoted as saying, “These are the kind of images I look for as powerful metaphors of a situation which can hardly be expressed in words”.<sup>123</sup>

*The Independent* reported on how the painting was criticised by the armed forces minister Archie Hamilton and included an explanation from Keane who commented that the work was based on photographs he had taken in Kuwait.<sup>124</sup> The article also quotes the director at the IWM Alan Borg,

We were all impressed by the range and seriousness of Keane’s work, and we were unanimous in choosing *Mickey Mouse at the Front* for inclusion in our collection. His picture is part of the tradition of war painting represented in our museum, for example by Paul Nash’s painting of devastated and shattered battlefield in the First World War which is entitled *We are making a new world*. Keane’s paintings are not concerned with the bravery of the individual soldiers. His view is that war is foul. But that attitude is not shared by everyone.<sup>125</sup>

Keane reiterated the reality of the work in an article in *The Guardian* on the same day saying “The paintings are my response to what I witnessed when I was there...I found it a profoundly disturbing experience”. Borg is quoted saying the painting “summed up the disaster that is left at the end of the war...they are undoubtedly anti-war pictures...tradition of war artists”, while Keane “challenged his critics to see his full exhibition before condemning his work”.<sup>126</sup>

By the time other regional newspapers had got hold of the story Keane had stopped explaining and was more matter of fact about the reproduction of the image they were basing their outrage on. In an article in the *Yorkshire Post* Keane said his critics had “missed the point” and that there was no reason for anyone to be upset”.<sup>127</sup> He goes on to note,

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<sup>123</sup> Neville Thurlbeck, “War is...Mickey Mouse on a toilet,” *Today Newspaper* (14 January 1992).

<sup>124</sup> “Gulf artist defends scene of war,” *The Independent* (15 January 1992).

<sup>125</sup> “Gulf artist defends scene of war,” *The Independent* (15 January 1992).

<sup>126</sup> “War artist denies taking the Mickey out of Gulf troops,” *The Guardian* (15 January 1992), 3.

<sup>127</sup> “Artist panned Mickey goes to off to war,” *Yorkshire Post* (15 January 1992).

This is just one painting among 50 or so I produced. If unfortunately, people get upset by it I can only say there is no reason for them to be upset. It is not intended to provoke or upset. The paintings are in response to what I witnessed when I was there. I am merely putting down an expression of my own feelings to what I witnessed. I found it a profoundly disturbing experience. It is not something I would care to repeat but I would not have missed it.<sup>128</sup>

Keane even made front-page news in *The Sun* newspaper as they reported “Fury at ‘sick’ Gulf War art” as “Grieving families were up in arms”, they go on to quote the father of a 19 year old soldier who was killed by friendly fire in the war as saying it was “depraved”.<sup>129</sup>

Rather than being derived from his imagination, *Mickey Mouse at the Front* Lawson notes the inspiration of the work,

In fact, it was an extraordinary objet trouve. On his last morning in the Kuwaiti capital, he had visited a supermarket that had been used as an armoury by the invaders: a trolley had become a weapons carrier and an amusement arcade, including a rocking toy of Mickey Mouse for children, had been commanded as a latrine...the message that Keane’s detractors inferred – America (Mickey Mouse) shitting on Kuwait was actually the reverse: Iraqis had literally shat on a symbol of the US.<sup>130</sup>

What I find interesting is that even though this work portrays no soldiers, the media linked the imagery back to a slight on the reputation and memory of the British soldiers who fought and died in the conflict.

However, the reaction to *Mickey Mouse at the Front* did not overshadow all coverage of the exhibition. On January 15<sup>th</sup> 1992, *The Times* ran an article by Richard Cork, *Artist Defends Mouse in the Gulf* followed by the subtitle ‘Coward’ conveys bitter vision of conflict’s human cost.<sup>131</sup> Cork asks visitors to consider the works and not the headlines as he gives a short summary of some of the works alongside comments from Keane “I am not a pacifist, I am a coward”. Cork quotes Keane’s reaction to the one

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<sup>128</sup> “Artist panned Mickey goes to off to war,” *Yorkshire Post* (15 January 1992).

<sup>129</sup> “Fury at ‘sick’ Gulf War art,” *The Sun* (15 January 1992).

<sup>130</sup> Mark Lawson, *Troubles My Sight: The Art of John Keane* (London: Flowers East, 2015), 61.

<sup>131</sup> Richard Cork “Artist Defends Mouse in the Gulf,” *The Times* (15 January 1992).

dead Iraqi soldier he saw in the desert, noting, "...it was enough to sum up the war's human cost", Cork concludes, "Keane's impassioned work will retain relevance long after the events he recorded have receded into history".<sup>132</sup>

The sensitivity of the public to works of art which infer a soldier is not heroic is not lost on Alan Borg, the Director of the IWM as he comments in an article for *The Guardian* on the same day. He notes the works "...are undoubtedly anti-war pictures, which is very much in the tradition of war artists in the 20<sup>th</sup> century; I don't think they are making any comment on the bravery of the soldiers involved."<sup>133</sup>

The day before the opening of the exhibition, *The Evening Chronicle* joined the outrage at the yet unseen painting, commenting on both the role of the IWM in commissioning artists and the resulting works,

Why on earth, can someone tell me in this day of instant communications, do we bother sending someone to the battlefield with a paint box and brushes at all – especially if the result takes 12 months to materialise and then turns out to be Mickey Mouse<sup>134</sup>

If the museum thought they were through the worse with the controversy, they were wrong. The painting *Alien Landscape* (Figure: 124) had already been hung at the exhibition in London when concerns about its capacity to offend were raised. Lawson (2015) noted,

Keane had not depicted the most sacred figure in Islam [the Prophet Mohammed] but he had used in a border of *Alien Landscape* 34 pages from the Koran, which in another startling found image, he had discovered scattered in the Basra Road...<sup>135</sup>

The decision to remove *Alien Landscape* from the exhibition prior to opening is discussed in *The Guardian*, "Dr Zaki Bedawi of the Muslim College complained to the

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<sup>132</sup> "War artist denies taking the Mickey out of Gulf troops," *The Guardian* (15 January 1992).

<sup>133</sup> "War artist denies taking the Mickey out of Gulf troops," *The Guardian* (15 January 1992).

<sup>134</sup> *Evening Chronicle* (25 January 1992).

<sup>135</sup> Mark Lawson, *Troubles My Sight: The Art of John Keane* (London: Flowers East, 2015), 64.

Museum's director, Dr Alan Borg, who promptly had the painting removed". He quotes Borg as explaining, "Dr Bedawi's view was that there were quite a large number of the Muslim community who would be offended by this work; and I took the view that we are not in the business of offending people".<sup>136</sup> Bussman goes on to consider the sentiment, "Now there's a novelty: a War museum that's not in the business of offending people" he goes on to consider the offence of the German tourists in the Belsen exhibit, of the Japanese being worried by the drawings of Ronald Searle from his time in Changi prisoner of war camp.<sup>137</sup> The issue with this painting highlights the museum's difficult task in curating the history of contemporary conflicts and trying to please everyone. The removal of the work shows how important the IWM felt it was not to offend or get negative coverage that would affect visitor numbers.

The Daily Telegraph printed a small article just before the opening of the exhibition, reporting that *Alien Landscape* had left Keane so "fearful of his life" that he "has forbidden it to be reproduced on postcards, posters or in the press".<sup>138</sup> Although IWM removed the work from the London exhibition, they decided to include the painting when it toured Sunderland, Sheffield and Aberdeen, albeit in a booth with a warning outside.<sup>139</sup>

The significance of this work to my investigation on the representation of the soldier is due to the twelve smaller paintings featuring a narrative of the war around the large central image. The work in the top left corner features a soldier in the desert in progress of firing a missile or gun. There are of three tanks on the horizon, and the blue sky is tinged with smoke. In another, a soldier is shown holding a gas mask onto his face. While this contains none of the wide-eyed panic of Keane's self-portrait in the gas

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<sup>136</sup> Tom Bussmann, "Gallery that's tiptoeing over the top," *The Guardian* (28 March 1992).

<sup>137</sup> Tom Bussmann, "Gallery that's tiptoeing over the top," *The Guardian* (28 March 1992).

<sup>138</sup> "Another Blot on the Desert Landscape?" *Daily Telegraph* (20 March 1992).

<sup>139</sup> John Keane interview with Jayne Buchanan, (11 September 2018).

attack, the close cropping of the work gives a feeling of claustrophobia. Keane highlights the different religious beliefs of the soldiers with the inclusion of a priest with the soldiers, while other images depict their different roles: on lookout, working on a row of missiles and resting under camouflage netting. In the bottom left corner soldiers are in a darkened room, some are working on paperwork while others are watching an image on a television set, a photograph that has been added to the painting. In addition to the soldiers, Keane has included a helicopter, the trail of a missile arcing through the sky and camouflage netting. Journalists stand in the desert with a communications satellite dish at the bottom of the work, the importance of sending the story home not lost on Keane.

The central panel of a desert landscape view with the horizon at three-quarters up. Below this, a tent of camouflage netting is shown as a dark triangle. A long shadow of a person in the right hand of the work and an ochre shape that might be a bomb is in the foreground. The white trail of a missile arcs in the blue sky, which is overpainted onto tabloid front pages. "Clutch of the devil", "A caress of evil" are the headlines of the newspapers which can be seen through the paint. The addition of the newspaper not only situates the work within a historical timeframe, but also within the emotional resonance of the time. The journalist John Snow interviewed Keane about *Alien Landscape* in 2010 for the Channel 4 program *The Genius of British Art*. Keane commented on their inclusion of pages from newspaper in the work, "...as we know the tabloid press were great supporters of the whole action."<sup>140</sup> One of the pages included is Page 3 from *The Sun* newspaper, which Snow considered a contradiction to the "very puritanical Saudi landscape" The female form has only partly been painted over, leaving a breast and nipple, when questioned whether the female nude was deliberately left visible Keane responds "Maybe deliberate. Do you know? It's probably

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<sup>140</sup> John Snow "The Genius of British Art," *Channel 4* (7 Nov 2010).

deliberate.”<sup>141</sup> This demonstrates that while the brushwork might first appear loose and without definition, there is forethought in every aspect of Keane’s work.

Lawson (1995) considered the censorship of Keane’s work as, “evidence that war art can still make a political impact”.<sup>142</sup> However, I believe the removal of this considered and evocative summary of the Gulf War was a loss for those attending. This work is Keane is at his best, interweaving the subtle with the obvious, the contrasting cultures, the drivers and profiteers from war and importantly his presence as having been there, evident in the shadow, which ties both Keane to the location and the viewer of the work. He notes,

It’s very much as a reminder of me that this is me, this is my take, I was here, it’s my presence, a reminder of my presence in whatever it is, in the work. So that ...Alien landscape is very much about my personal disquiet about where I was and what I was doing.<sup>143</sup>

It is worth noting that at his latest exhibition at the Summerhall in Edinburgh (2018) the painting has not been treated with such concern for offence and it has been shown without warning, incident or complaint.<sup>144</sup>

Of the works created from Keane’s commission in the Gulf the IWM retained three for their permanent collection. These were *Mickey Mouse at the Front*, *Death Squad* and *Scenes on the Road to Hell*. I will discuss the impact of these choices with reference to the representation of the soldier in my concluding section of this chapter after first considering the other artists who responded to the Gulf War.

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<sup>141</sup> John Snow “The Genius of British Art,” *Channel 4* (7 Nov 2010).

<sup>142</sup> Mark Lawson, *John Keane: Conflicts of Interest* (Edinburgh; London: Mainstream, 1995), 72.

<sup>143</sup> John Keane interview with Jayne Buchanan, (11 September 2018).

<sup>144</sup> John Keane interview with Jayne Buchanan, (11 September 2018).



## Other images of the Gulf War

Keane was not the only artist who created works relating to the Gulf War in 1991, in this section, I will consider works created by military artists, other artists and photographers and reflect on their significance within the theme of the representation of the soldier and in relation to Keane's works.

In January 1992, one year after the war and prior to Keane's exhibition, *The Independent* featured a report on an exhibition of Gulf War art.<sup>145</sup> The article included a review of the performance artist John Jordan who created a work in London's Trafalgar Square featuring a map of the Gulf smeared with blood. Although Jordan had only seen the war through television coverage he aimed to depict the gruesome reality of war, and "...wanted to show that the Gulf War was not a sanitised war about technology, but human life".<sup>146</sup> Also in the exhibition was Tony Carter's (1943-2016) conceptual art of bronze bottles "lined up in regimental rows...a metaphor for wine and blood [suggesting] death by fire and desert heat". Although the regimental rows of bottles are evocative of soldiers, Carter was examining the motives for war and denied making any comment on the individual soldier.<sup>147</sup> The abstraction of the form, from the body to the bottle was a deliberate shift, "He felt that we had been bombarded with so many images of the war, art had to go further", Carter explained, "We know what dead bodies look like. It was hard to heighten the horror of the photographic records...I certainly couldn't add to the shock of war".<sup>148</sup> The other artists included were Mike Stubbs, who created a video installation in Manchester, Mike Peel, a photomontage artist who "examined the tabloids' jingoism and televisions "distorted imagery" in a work called

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<sup>145</sup> "Art Under Attack," *The Independent* (28 January 1992).

<sup>146</sup> "Art Under Attack," *The Independent* (28 January 1992).

<sup>147</sup> "Art Under Attack," *The Independent* (28 January 1992).

<sup>148</sup> "Art Under Attack," *The Independent* (28 January 1992).

*Prisoner*, the conceptual artist Jaqueline Morreau and Jock McFayden (b.1950) who created *Dogs of War* and *Fighterpilots*.<sup>149</sup>

The following month *The Times* ran an article “Orderly salutes to the fallen” where they compared John Keane “whose provocative paintings of the Gulf War ignited such bitter controversy” to Tony Carter’s work.<sup>150</sup> The article notes that Carter’s installation “could hardly be further removed from Keane’s paintings. Where Keane hits out with red-hot impulsiveness stemming from first-hand experience of the conflict, the home-based Carter prefers cool, orderly contemplation...not to be mistaken for emotional detachment”.<sup>151</sup>

The IWM selected four of Keane’s works for their permanent collection, *Mickey Mouse at the Front*, *Enemy*, *Scenes on the Road to Hell* and *Death Squad*. In addition to these works, the IWM collection features a number of artworks relating to the conflict from other artists. Jananne Al-Ani produced a series of series of 20 works featuring arrangements of photographs (Figure: 125). As the IWM label notes, “she explores her reaction to the Gulf War in 1991, watching events develop through the media, and simultaneously as someone directly affected through her personal links to Iraq”. She juxtaposes images of her family with images from the media. As with Keane’s use of found photographs in some of his Gulf works, Al-Ani’s work has the effect of reminding viewers of the human cost of war. The media images show soldiers alongside the images of her family.

While Al-Ani’s work is a subtle consideration of the soldier in the scope of war, P J Crook’s 1991 *Other Mothers’ Sons* (Figure: 126) is a work in the IWM wholly centred on the representation of the soldier. The work shows a mass formation of soldiers

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<sup>149</sup> “Art Under Attack,” *The Independent* (28 January 1992).

<sup>150</sup> “Orderly salutes to the fallen,” *The Times* (19 February 1992).

<sup>151</sup> “Orderly salutes to the fallen,” *The Times* (19 February 1992).

filling the canvas. Where at first the effect of the soldiers in desert uniform is of uniformity in the repeated image, closer inspection shows the soldiers are different, with different helmets and headgear and different nationalities. P J Crook asks the viewer to look at the similarities as well as the differences and to ask who is the enemy.

Two works in the collection, for which I have only the description, are Nicola Lane *Sunbathing Sergeants* and *The Three Graces* 1991.<sup>152</sup> The caption related to these works describe the first as “two female US Army sergeants both wearing sunglasses, one lying down on a camp bed, sunbathing in a bikini, the other is topless and stands smoking a cigarette. The sky in the background is black from the smoke of oil fires, and two orange plumes of flames from destroyed oil wells rise on the horizon.”<sup>153</sup> Her other work *The Three Graces* from Botticelli's 'Primavera' shows women “sited in a desert, their robes made up of newspaper cuttings relating to the Gulf War. The sky is a deep black from the burning oil wells seen on the horizon”.<sup>154</sup> These descriptions indicate that Lane is contemplating the representation of the soldier in the media in her works.

Major Robin Watt was the artist who had preceded Keane to the Gulf, working with the 7<sup>th</sup> Armoured Brigade. Watt was a retired soldier who had seen active service in Northern Ireland and Oman, known for his sporting and equestrian works, he accompanied the unit and made sketches in the field. While a number of his works were depictions of tanks, *'Private Graham' - Nufayl*, (Figure: 127) shows a soldier sitting in a relaxed pose with his back to the viewer. This detailed painting also contains notes reminiscent of those used by Kitson in the Falklands, as they give further information about the work rather than any message from the artist. In this work Watt records the

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<sup>152</sup> IWM ART 16455 and IWM ART 16455.

<sup>153</sup> <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/16186>

<sup>154</sup> <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/16187>

subject and date of the work and adds for clarity “Note: the American Helmet cover and the 762 self-loading rifle”. This information is directed at a military viewer who might notice the different camouflage pattern or be interested in the weapon used. The contrast of subjects chosen by Watt is curious, from detailed studies of flowers and butterflies in the desert to *Air Power* (Figure: 128), which depicts a destroyed, enemy tank. While Watt is expert at rendering his subjects with clarity and detail, he does not debate or enquire to the impact or human cost of war.

Military Artist David Rowlands notes on his website that he “...was the only professional artist who was in the theatre of war in the Gulf at the invitation of the British Army...shared the experience of the soldiers in the front line.”<sup>155</sup> He sketched while in the Gulf and then developed the works in the UK from the sketches and through his own research. Despite these impressive credentials, all the watercolours follow a similar composition. The horizon placed three-quarters down the work, which gives the viewer a sense of elevated viewpoint. The viewer is detached from the scene, for example in *32 Regiment Royal Artillery in the Gulf War* (Figure: 129), the group of soldiers firing the gun are placed back into the work. Where Keane has left his footprints and shadows in his works, Rowlands observes war without impact or emotion. This is also observed in *Guarding Prisoners of War* (Figure: 130), where Rowlands contrasts the army, the tanks and guns against the rows of prisoners, seated uncomfortably submissively in the heat of the desert. Rowlands shows them dehumanised in their uniformity, small against the soldiers and machines. While his website notes the authenticity of the works, I argue his work lacks the emotional connection to the subject and implications of war seen in Keane’s paintings.

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<sup>155</sup> [http://www.davidrowlands.co.uk/the\\_artist/artist\\_1.html](http://www.davidrowlands.co.uk/the_artist/artist_1.html)

The number of American and UK journalists in the Gulf War was far greater than in the Falklands War, as such there were many images produced for television and newspaper. The IWM collection contains photographs from the Gulf and although the scope of my thesis restricts me from a full evaluation of war photography, I will draw on two photographers who I believe were significant in the Gulf War because of their ability to memorialise events and their relationship to the soldiers that fought.

Mike Moore was a newspaper photographer whose work went from the front pages of newspapers to London galleries.<sup>156</sup> In June 1991, Moore's work was published in *Desert Rats at war in the Gulf*.<sup>157</sup> In the foreword of the book, Richard Kay noted, "as a photographer and correspondent at the front, Mike Moore and I had been permitted to join a very exclusive club."<sup>158</sup> Photographs in the book are arranged into sections detailing the life of the soldier; 'Waiting' is the section of photographs showing the soldiers at rest before the active phase of the war. Moore includes images of the soldier Vincent (Figure: 131), a seventeen-year-old soldier "too young to vote, too young to serve in Northern Ireland."<sup>159</sup> The portrait of this very young soldier, with bayonet raised, in a hat that looks too large for his head, with smooth skin that has only just started shaving is poignant in its message of innocence corrupted by war. 'Daily Life' shows soldiers eating, grooming washing, getting immunisations and 'Training' shows military exercises, from the battle cry to weapons training. In this narrative of war, there is no doubt that Moore was working closely with the soldiers; he is able to photograph them at close range in very intimate activities. As Richard Kay notes in the introduction to the book,

We lived as soldiers did, sleeping in shell-scrapes with them, eating the same reheated Army food. We were also volunteers, who wanted to be there with

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<sup>156</sup> "What's on and Where to - Go Desert War," *The Times* (5 June 1991).

<sup>157</sup> Mike Moore, *Desert War: a unique photographic record of the Desert Rats at war* (London: Penguin, 1991).

<sup>158</sup> Moore, *Desert War*, 1.

<sup>159</sup> Moore, *Desert War*, 14.

them – and that seemed to count. The camaraderie extended to us by the soldiers...was a source of both inspiration and immense.<sup>160</sup>

In 'Forming Up' soldiers are shown marching and receiving orders in large groups. The photographs highlight their uniformity; they are no longer the individuals pictured earlier in the book, but a warrior mass. Unlike Keane, Moore was present for the active stage of the war. Soldiers are shown firing on the enemy (Figure: 133) and capturing prisoners amid an explosive landscape. The closely cropped photograph of Major John Potter with sweat running down his face went on to be reused in the press as an anti-war cry on the front page of the *Daily Mirror* in 2003 (Figure: 134).

Moore documented the realities of death in his photographs in the section 'The Price'. Where Keane only saw one dead body when he arrived in Basra at the end of the war, Moore pictures many of the dead. He shows them where they fell and also as the UK and US soldiers moved and buried them. The photographs highlight the lack of ceremony of death or burial as piles of bodies are moved with diggers. Unlike the soldiers in Keane's *Death Squad* (Figure: 2), these soldiers are not wrapped and anonymous in their protective clothing, they have bare arms and faces, they wear white gloves and carry spades. While the images are not as visually striking as Keane's work, the reality of closeness to death increases the unease in viewing the activities.

The introduction to the publication notes, "Mike Moore has assembled a remarkable portrait of a modern army at work".<sup>161</sup> While I agree with this sentiment, Moore's works do contain some omissions. In the section 'The End', amid photographs of soldiers celebrating, there is an image of an unused field hospital. The fact that UK soldiers were injured and some died in the Gulf War is missing from Moore's record, as it was with Keane's work. Moore was proud of his war photographer status and

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<sup>160</sup> Moore, *Desert War*, 1.

<sup>161</sup> Moore, *Desert War*, 3.

close relationship with the soldiers he photographed. His comment on the opening of Keane's Gulf exhibition, "I doubt if most of the pictures will mean anything to the wives, mothers and girlfriends of soldiers who were serving out there" indicates that Moore's intended audience was very different from that of Keane.<sup>162</sup>

The other photographer whose image became significant in the memorialisation of events in the Gulf War was the American photojournalist Ken Jarecke (b. 1963). He discussed his photograph of a burned Iraqi soldier (Figure: 134) in a destroyed truck in an interview with the BBC in 2005. Jarecke was with a Public Affairs Officer with the US Army travelling towards Basra when they came across the truck. While the officer expressed distaste at taking a photo of the scene, he recalled saying "If I don't make pictures like this, people like my mother will think what they see in war is what they see in movies."<sup>163</sup> In the interview, he went on to describe the scene,

...he might have been the driver of the truck, he might have been the passenger, but he had been burned alive and it appears as though he's trying to lift himself up and out of the truck. I don't know who he was or what he did. I don't know if he was a good man, a family man or a bad guy or a terrible soldier or anything like that. But I do know that he fought for his life and thought it was worth fighting for. And he's frozen, he's burned in place just kind of frozen in time in this last ditch effort to save his life. At the time it was just something... well, I better make a picture of this. I thought there might have been better pictures. I literally shot two frames and moved on to other things and I didn't really think a whole lot about it.<sup>164</sup>

The image was initially deemed too graphic for the Associated Press Association to include in their submission to US editors, "too graphic even for the editors to see, not even to let them make the decision of what the market they served could see".<sup>165</sup> The *Observer* in London first published the photograph, "It caused quite a controversy in London, which is what images like that are meant to do. They're meant to basically

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<sup>162</sup> "War artist denies taking the Mickey out of Gulf troops," *The Guardian*, (15th January 1992).

<sup>163</sup> "Picture Power: the Death of an Iraqi Soldier," *BBC World Service* programme, *The World Today* (6 May 2005). Accessed 18/09/2018 via [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle\\_east/4528745.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/4528745.stm)

<sup>164</sup> "Picture Power: the Death of an Iraqi Soldier," *BBC World Service*, *The World Today* (6 May 2005).

<sup>165</sup> "Picture Power: the Death of an Iraqi Soldier," *BBC World Service*, *The World Today* (6 May 2005).

cause a debate in the public”.<sup>166</sup> When I interviewed Keane this year about the power of art to change opinions, he expressed a similar sentiment, “ever the optimist...I think it does have the power to focus people’s thoughts and opinions and reflect on these matters quite profoundly”.<sup>167</sup> Despite the power of these and other photographs, Keane’s paintings depict an alternate reality, one which is based on his time in the Gulf. As press photographer Ken Lennox noted, “Each of John’s paintings captures the surreality of the Gulf like 100 of the best press photographers together never could. Only people who were not there will criticise them”.<sup>168</sup>

I shall conclude my exploration of Keane’s commission by the IWM to the Gulf War by reflecting on how his works have extended or modified the representation of the soldier and consider how they add to the legacy of understanding of the conflict.

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<sup>166</sup> “Picture Power: the Death of an Iraqi Soldier,” *BBC World Service, The World Today* (6 May 2005).

<sup>167</sup> John Keane interview with Jayne Buchanan, (11 September 2018).

<sup>168</sup> “Alien Landscapes,” *New Statesman and society* (20 March 1992).



## Conclusion

In this chapter, I have considered Keane's representation of the soldier and the reception of his art from the Gulf War commission in 1991. Despite Borg's comment in *Gulf* (1991) that, "...Keane's paintings are not concerned with the role of the individual soldier in battle and are not commenting on the bravery or patriotism of those who fought."<sup>169</sup> I have argued that Keane *was* commenting on the soldier by their very inclusion in his works, but that the bravery and patriotism Borg writes of was a construct performed to meet media expectations. In his commission for the IWM, Keane shows the soldier is complex icon, not a hero, but an individual beneath the uniform who has his own opinions and intentions but one who is ultimately part of the war machine. Any critique of the soldier's role which he initially had was not translated to the paintings he produced. However that is not to say Keane's work was not without critique of the war, which he showed as having a devastating effect on the land and people involved.

When Kevin Foster (1999) wrote that the "nationalist revival in Britain provoked by and promoted through the Falklands War provided the moral, political and discursive frame within which the nation's involvement in the Gulf War...was explained and promoted", he might well have included war art in the comparison.<sup>170</sup> The work created by Keane during this new war was frequently compared to responses of the Falklands War, Linda Kitson's art, as well as the First World War artists such as Paul Nash. In the *Eastern Daily Press*, Ian Collins commented on the criticism of Keane for the realism in his work,

...His responses to the Gulf conflict are admirably complex and his considered and difficult pictures are far more vivid than Linda Kitson's cartoon-like

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<sup>169</sup> John Keane and Angela Weight, *Gulf* (London: Imperial War Museum, 1992), 3.

<sup>170</sup> Kevin Foster, *Fighting Fictions: war narrative and national identity* (Michigan: Pluto Press, 1999), 155.

sketches from the Falkland's War. He shows us that war, even if necessary, is always hideous."<sup>171</sup>

Keane not only worked differently from Kitson, developing works retrospectively from photographs and film and with the incorporation of found objects and newspaper headlines, he also addressed the subject from a different perspective, with a desire to comment on war. Keane had already been involved in conflict situations. As he noted in an interview in 1991 "War is an extreme of life, and I felt it was something I wanted to address through the medium of my work".<sup>172</sup> Although Keane was politically engaged he did not set out with an agenda on what he would depict, but as he commented in Lawson (1995) there were less restrictions on his outputs than the war artists of the First and Second World Wars,

I didn't have to merely record what had happened and I had no obligation to produce propaganda. In fact, I could address such questions as the political constraints on the other media. I saw myself being outside that.<sup>173</sup>

Conflict was a theme of Keane's work since he had seen reports of the Falklands War through the television and newspaper coverage in 1982. It was only when he returned to the subject in 1989 with the work *Old Lie Café* (Figure: 94) that he comprehensively addressed the image of the soldier in that war. However, the soldier as broken and injured figure of nationalism was not a theme he carried through to his Gulf War commission. In *We are Making a New World Order* (Figure: 107), the photographic source contained a UK flag but this was omitted from the painting. Instead of focusing on either the nationalist symbol of the flag or exaggerating the posturing of the American soldier, Keane frames the work with US and Arab money. His comment and critique of war is in the financial gain as a driver of conflict. Where he includes the Kuwaiti flag, it is shown beneath the shopping trolley full of missiles in *Mickey Mouse*

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<sup>171</sup> Ian Collins, "Artists View of War," *Eastern Daily Press* (30 March 1992).

<sup>172</sup> "Taking an Easel to war," *New Arabia* (5 June 1991).

<sup>173</sup> Mark Lawson, *Troubles My Sight: The Art of John Keane* (London: Flowers East, 2015), 51.

*at the Front* (Figure: 123) indicating a nation crushed beneath the onslaught of war and consumerism. Although the Gulf War was a multinational effort led by the US against an invading country, there is no indication that Keane is commenting on the involvement of the UK forces in the war, instead he focuses on motives of oil and money, and the role of the media in reporting events.

In this chapter, I contested that the works created by Keane, while different in method from those created during the First World War, retained a strong link to these earlier wars. Keane did not present the soldier as a hero, but as with Paul Nash, who famously depicted the destroyed landscape of the Western Front as an analogy for the destruction of the soldiers who served in the war, Keane shows the soldier amid the destruction. His works ask the viewer to consider the role of earlier war artists from the First World War, in his use of the title *We Are Making a New World Order* and *Ecstasy of Fumbling* and in his inclusion of John Singer Sargent's *Gassed* in the latter work. Keane is not only reasserting that his work is war art, but also commenting on how little war, and the soldier, has changed.

Prior to his commission Keane had preconceptions about working with the troops. In August 1990, he spoke to the *Evening Standard* about how depressing he found the idea of soldiering noting their lack of moral judgement and personality.<sup>174</sup> In another interview he conceded, "The military aren't the sort of people I'd choose to be in company with".<sup>175</sup> However, when Keane was in the Gulf, the reality of soldiers was very different to his preconceptions, as he commented in my interview with him, they worked "to the best of their ability" with professionalism and dedication.<sup>176</sup> Keane's change of attitude is shown in his depiction of the soldiers he met. Rather than

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<sup>174</sup> Lucinda Bredin, "A Fighting Chance," *The Evening Standard* (20 August 1990).

<sup>175</sup> Nicholas de Jongh, "Artist after a piece of the action," *The Guardian* (6 December 1990).

<sup>176</sup> John Keane interview with Jayne Buchanan, (11 September 2018).

unthinking killing machines, he has represented their personality within the uniform, a “bit of their self-expression”.<sup>177</sup> As I have shown in my analysis of works such as *Payload* (Figure: 99) the graffiti on the missiles echoing the sentiment of the popular press headlines of the time. Keane resists the tropes of sacrifice seen in First World War art. The only injured UK soldier he includes is the newspaper cutting of the tortured pilot John Peters. The omission of injury in the works reinforces the ideal that the soldier as hero and unaffected by the war; he depicts no injury or anxiety in the soldiers, just a dogged determination and stoicism to complete the tasks required his works are not blatantly heroic. Keane highlights the bravery of the soldier through his own depiction in *Ecstasy of Fumbling: A Portrait of the Artist in a Gas attack* (Figure: 104), where the artist is wide-eyed and terrified, out of his depth in the reality of war. While *Death Squad* (Figure: 2), which was inspired by television news reporting of the aftermath of war, shows the soldier cocooned in military clothing weighed down with the responsibility and consequences of war.

In the First World War CRW Nevinson’s (1889-1946) work *Paths of Glory* was censored from the exhibition *War* in 1918 for depicting the unceremonious death of UK soldiers. Keane reserved the portrayal of death for the enemy, as he asks the viewer to contemplate the cost of the war in the Gulf. The death of the Iraqi soldier depicted in *Oil Painting* (Figure: 109) has a quietness which allows the viewer to look without feelings of voyeurism. Unlike Nevinson, who shows the indignity of the soldier’s end, face down in the mud, Keane’s painting asks the viewer to see the face of the enemy in death. He contrasts this with the almost unrecognisable remains in the *Ashes* works, closer to the reality of death for the Iraqi forces as seen in the photographs of Mike Moore, where heaps of bodies are unceremoniously buried in mass graves. As Sontag noted in *Regarding the Pain of others*, “Harrowing photographs do not inevitably lose

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<sup>177</sup> John Keane interview with Jayne Buchanan, (11 September 2018).

their power to shock. But they are not much help if the task is to understand. Narratives can make us understand”.<sup>178</sup> Keane provides the narratives with the Gulf works, requiring the viewer to linger on the complexities of his art, unpeeling the different layers; the found photographs, newspaper cuttings and images from other artists. When asked about the incorporation of other media Keane said,

It’s contextualising the media coverage of events, incorporating it in and seeing it as part of the whole...for kind of aesthetic reasons as well ...You can’t get away from the fact that my work is about texture, and paint and materials of one kind and another, So introducing this presents interesting surfaces and so on but there is, hovering in the background, what are these things, you know the Financial times or whatever, or Page 3 of The Sun or something like that. Those things are not without some layer of meaning. They are not just a piece of paper.<sup>179</sup>

I have shown the importance of the choices Keane made in selecting photographs used to inform his works. He took many visually aesthetic photographs of soldiers at sunset, candid photographs of soldiers waiting, smiling to camera, and images of injury and destruction. After the conflict, Keane selected which images to use to tell the story of the war. Mindful of his notion that “art is...the prism through which we see much of our history...and it is very much a reference point”.<sup>180</sup> He did not set out to create works featuring the power and might of the UK or US army; he did not ponder the dead or injured soldiers, but instead chose to show them as upstanding in the chaos of war.

Keane’s early work during the 1980’s focused on the role of the media in shaping social viewpoints. In the Gulf War, he introduces the notion of the performance of war within the role of the soldier. Keane highlights the multiple roles of the soldier, one of which is their presentation to the media. An the exemplar of masculinity is standing tall for the press as shown in his depiction of the press photograph and interview of the soldier in *Photocall*, *Laser Guided* and *Scenes from the Road to Hell V*. Keane’s

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<sup>178</sup> Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (London: Penguin, 2004), 80.

<sup>179</sup> John Keane interview with Jayne Buchanan, (11 September 2018).

<sup>180</sup> John Keane interview with Jayne Buchanan, (11 September 2018).

imagining of the soldier contains none of the futility seen in P J Crook's work *Other Mothers' Sons*, but also none of the heroism seen in works by David Rowlands or Major Robin Watt. Keane frequently compares his work to that of the journalist, as noted in August 2018, when he was interviewed as part of the exhibition *Life During Wartime* at the Summerhall Gallery,

An artist, to my mind may be processing similar material, information, or events or so on, but it's to a different end. It's not for me to work to a news deadline, not even try to necessarily be objective about it, but it's something that stands aside from journalistic coverage – fulfilling a different function. I look at it ...if you can call journalistic coverage 'the truth' I think art is more about 'truthfulness' which is a sort of different concept, but about...It's more poetic and subjective... but nonetheless hopefully puts its finger on something that is nonetheless important and indeed in the end true.<sup>181</sup>

Keane did not describe himself as an impartial artist, but one who challenged the viewer; an artist who tried to “address: the absurdities, the contradictions, the things that confound your expectations.”<sup>182</sup> The result is a subtle redefinition of the representation of the soldier. The importance of first-hand experience for the artist in war is shown by the change in Keane's relationship with the military during his commission in the Gulf, where initially he was disdainful of the profession, he grew to respect them. The resultant works depict the soldier as a reluctant but necessary part of war, performing dutifully when required but never losing their individualism.

In the next chapter, I will examine the representation of the soldier and the role of the war artist in the Bosnian War, when the artist Peter Howson was commissioned to join UK forces in their peacekeeping efforts during this very violent and bloody civil war.

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<sup>181</sup> Interview with John Keane for *Life During Wartime* Exhibition at Summerhall Gallery Edinburgh, *Arts News* channel on Vimeo: <https://vimeo.com/283456829>.

<sup>182</sup> Jean Bakewell, *John Keane: Back to Fundamentals* (London: Flowers East, 2004), 5.

## Chapter 5: Peter Howson: The Soldier as Peacekeeper

### Introduction

Peter Howson (b.1958) was commissioned by the IWM in 1993 as a war artist for the Bosnian War during the break up of Yugoslavia. Britain became involved in the conflict in 1992 when the United Nations stepped in to provide peacekeeping support following a civil war in the former Yugoslavia.<sup>1</sup> However, the role of soldiers in this conflict was not without criticism from both those in the countries of the region and outside. Some felt their neutral role left them impotent in the war between different religions in the country, which resulted in atrocities and ethnic cleansing. As it was noted by Swanee Hunt in 2011, “Humanitarian relief in Bosnia was not as it appeared. We constantly had to ask ourselves if our actions, however we intended them, were more destructive than helpful”.<sup>2</sup>

At the time of his selection, Howson was considered “one of Britain’s finest contemporary artists”, with works that exemplified masculinity and violence in society, many informed by his experiences in the Army and at school.<sup>3</sup> In this chapter, will show that Howson’s time with the UK soldiers in Bosnia, would reframe his earlier relationship to the forces and compel him to present a perception of the soldier as a guardian of the weak and protector of the fallen. This viewpoint of the soldier also diverges from the heroic narrative of the soldier discussed in academic discussion of the depiction of the military during the First and Second World Wars but is also problematic due to the forces inability to resolve the conflict. Howson does not perpetuate the idea of the soldier unaffected by war, instead he reimagines the stories

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<sup>1</sup> Further background on the history of the war can be found in Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia: A Short History* (New York: New York University Press, 1994) Mark Thompson, *A Paper House: The Ending of Yugoslavia*, (London: Vintage, 1992) and Allan Little and Laura Silber, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation* (London: Penguin Books/BBC Books, 1996).

<sup>2</sup> Swanee Hunt, *Worlds Apart: Bosnian Lessons for Global Security* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011), 18.

<sup>3</sup> Richard Cork and Robert Crampton, *Peter Howson: Bosnia* (London: Imperial War Museum, 1994), 5.

he is told and applies his own emotional reaction to the traumatic events to depict a soldier who is not stoic or indifferent to the plight of the people. I will evidence that the persistent theme of violence in Howson's work reaches a crescendo in this commission, as he strives to assert the bloody and unpalatable truths of war in images of rape and torture. I will show that Howson repurposed the violent and vindictive image of the soldier, who featured in his early works, into the Bosnian, Serb and Croat military who rendered such atrocities on their neighbours during this conflict.

Howson's appointment as an official war artist followed the tradition of those employed in the First and Second World War, and Linda Kitson and John Keane, who I have discussed earlier in this thesis. He visited Bosnia twice as part of his commission with the IWM, once as a civilian and the second time when he was able to work closely with the military in helping refugees. The Bosnian War differed from the other two conflicts I have considered in this thesis, as the UK was involved in the region not to defend a country from invasion, as with the Falklands and the Gulf war, but to prevent war escalating. Howson's work is important in the scope of my research due to his inclusion, along with the other artists in this thesis, in the IWM publication *Contemporary War Artists* (1997), but each had a different relationship to soldiers in the war.<sup>4</sup> I have established that Kitson accompanied soldiers on the 8,000-mile trip to the Falklands and became close friends with many she would draw. Keane was stationed with the journalists and photographers, and depicted soldiers among his images of destroyed landscapes, not as active aggressors, but as individuals working within a bigger system. Howson also became close to the soldiers who he accompanied in the conflict, but he was never faced with the decision Kitson had of whether to record their injury or death. I will show the Army provided a point of safety from

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<sup>4</sup> Angela Weight, *Contemporary War Artists*, IWM LBY K.97/1388, (London: Imperial War Museum), 1997.



which Howson was able to experience and record the horrors of war, initially with a sketchbook and then on his second trip using a video camera.

The IWM selected Howson based on his reputation as an established artist with a portfolio depicting violent scenes. Even though he had never been to an area of conflict before, he had spent a few months as a soldier in 1977, which was to prove formative in his early style. Howson maintained he had a hatred of violence but his work explored the concept and depicted a violent world in which “every one, no matter how gentle they think they are, has the capacity for it within them.”<sup>5</sup> Hundreds of thousands of people were killed in the civil war in Bosnia and many more were displaced. While each of the artists in this thesis experienced peril, Howson was exposed to the remains of atrocities on a greater scale. He produced nearly three hundred sketches and paintings, of which the IWM selected four for their collection. One of these was the oil painting *Three Miles from Home* (Figure: 3), which depicts a number of soldiers attending the site of a bomb attack on coaches containing refugees. I shall consider this work in more depth from an iconographical viewpoint, along with other selected works he produced, later in this chapter.

I will preface my investigation into Howson’s time in Bosnia, by introducing Howson’s early years, building on the existing literature, interviews and archival sources. I will consider the impact of Howson’s successful career as an artist and I will evidence that the inclusion of the military in Howson’s work is important in extending the academic understanding of the memorialisation of soldiers in this conflict, and also in extending the representation of the soldier in contemporary art. Soldiers were not the focus of the majority of his paintings, but their presence and depiction is significant, especially when situating the work in Bosnia within his earlier works. As with the other chapters

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<sup>5</sup> Alan Jackson *A Different Man: Peter Howson's art, from Bosnia and beyond* (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 1997), 15.

of this thesis I will consider the representation of the soldier using the theoretical framework of hero, masculine ideal and symbol of nationalism, which I have derived from examination of research on the soldier in the First and Second World Wars. I will also compare Howson's work with other artistic responses to the conflict.

Prior to the commission with the IWM, Howson's paintings often depicted violence that was informed by his childhood experiences of bullying and his short time in the army. Howson was aware of his own fascination with conflict, as he noted in 2003, "A lot of artists have this thing of abhorring violence, but at the same time of being drawn to it and that seems to apply to me more than most."<sup>6</sup> Howson frequently portrayed muscle-bound patriots and aggressive caricatures of masculinity in his early work, but Howson's soldier in Bosnia is a point of stability amid the chaos of war. While his exposure to the harrowing scenes of war resulted in him suffering psychological and physical trauma, which caused his early return to the UK, he was able to return a few months later to complete the task with renewed confidence, accompanied by his friend Ian McColl. First-hand experiences informed some of the works he created, but other brutal content was developed from imaginings based on stories he had heard. The critical debate on Howson's art focused on which works should be selected for the national collection at the IWM and on whether the museum should only restrict itself to works that were dependent on the war artist actually being there, or if museum had a duty to include images of the rape and torture, which Howson did not see. I will consider the issues raised by the choices made by the IWM, which led some to question the fundamental reason behind the employment of the war artist, and to speculate that the museum was guilty of trying to curate a sanitised view of war in its collection.

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<sup>6</sup> Jackson *A Different Man*, 10.

## Early Works

The biographical references I will use for Howson's early career originate from the 1993 and 2003 publications by Robert Heller and the Andrew Jackson publication in 1997, further depth to any understanding of his early years can be gained by consulting this secondary literature, but a brief biography is included in this thesis for completeness.<sup>7</sup>

Howson was born in London in 1958 but his family moved to Prestwick in Scotland when he was four years old. He started to paint and draw when he was very young and was fascinated by war from an early age, as he commented in an article for *The Times* in 1994 "I used to do war paintings when I was five, six years old. Custer's last stand, 1066 and all that kind of stuff."<sup>8</sup> Francisco Goya (1746-1828) who produced the "The Disasters of War" etchings, was also noted as having a "long-lasting influence" on Howson's art in Heller's (1993) biography.<sup>9</sup> Howson's teachers identified his artistic potential during these early school years, which resulted in him being selected for additional lesson time in art classes.<sup>10</sup> However, his enjoyment of school life was marred by bullying. This had a direct effect on his the subjects and tone of his art, as Robert Heller notes (2003), "At least one of his recurrent, potent images can be traced back directly to childhood: the figure tied to a post. On the beach one day, bullies tied one of Howson's friends upside down in this manner".<sup>11</sup>

In 1975, Howson began studying at the Glasgow School of Art. He initially failed the first year through frustration at the rigidity of the curriculum. His "determinedly

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<sup>7</sup> Robert Heller, *Peter Howson* (Edinburgh and London: Mainstream, 1993), Robert Heller, *Peter Howson* (London: Momentum, 2003), and Alan Jackson *A Different Man: Peter Howson's art, from Bosnia and beyond* (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 1997).

<sup>8</sup> Robert Crampton, "Blood and Guts," *The Times Magazine* (3 September 1994):11.

<sup>9</sup> Heller, *Peter Howson*, 11.

<sup>10</sup> Heller, *Peter Howson*, 9.

<sup>11</sup> Heller, *Peter Howson*, 10.

figurative” style was met with disapproval by the staff who wanted him to explore different methods and subjects.<sup>12</sup> Howson’s unhappiness led him to neglect lessons, instead preferring to go drinking with his close friend and fellow student Donald MacLeod. In 1977 after the cancellation of a lesson, he and MacLeod decided on impulse to follow their romantic notions of joining the British Army, a decision they quickly regretted.<sup>13</sup> The short period in the army was formative in the direction of Howson’s work, as noted by both Heller (2003) and Jackson (1997) it was during this time that he witnessed violence and bullying on a scale that far out-stripped that seen at school. Howson’s experiences in the Army would go on to inform works up to and including those in Bosnia. The sadistic environment he experienced drove Howson to look for a way out of the Army. His inclination toward pacifism highlighted in an interview published in *The Times* in 1993 where Howson conceded that he was, “so desperate for escape that he locked himself in a lavatory cubicle and tried to damage his hand by punching the tiled wall...rather than be fit to attend rifle practice”.<sup>14</sup> With the support of his family, he decided to buy himself out of the Army after nine months. He left with the resolution that he “didn’t want to fire another gun as long as I lived”.<sup>15</sup>

In the year that followed, Howson did not return to art. He worked in a supermarket warehouse and then as a bouncer in a nightclub of which he recalls, “was like the Wild West, with lots of long running vendettas between rival farmers.”<sup>16</sup> It was during this time that Howson became obsessed with bodybuilding.<sup>17</sup> However beneath his reliance on alcohol and feelings self-loathing Howson still had the dream of being an artist.<sup>18</sup> He returned to Glasgow School of Art between 1979 and 1981 under the tutorage of Sandy

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<sup>12</sup> Jackson *A Different Man*, 10.

<sup>13</sup> Jackson *A Different Man*, 10.

<sup>14</sup> Alan Jackson, “The Human face of war,” *The Times Magazine* (1 May 1993).

<sup>15</sup> Alan Jackson, “The Human face of war,” *The Times Magazine* (1 May 1993).

<sup>16</sup> Jackson, *A Different Man*, 13.

<sup>17</sup> Jackson, *A Different Man*, 15.

<sup>18</sup> Robert Heller, *Peter Howson* (London: Momentum, 2003), 22.

Moffat, who guided Howson to use his own experiences in the Army to inform his work. Howson commented on the impact of Moffat's support,

He proved to be the catalyst I had needed. Looking through my work one day, he came across some drawings I had done of army life – very basic things, people doing press-ups in puddles, things like that. I was a bit embarrassed about them, didn't think they were that good, but he seized upon them and said 'This is what you should be doing. Here you've discovered something that nobody else has'.<sup>19</sup>

On his return to art school Howson was able to start enjoying his art again, and with support of Ken Currie of the Figurative Movement in Glasgow, he began to gain recognition as a contemporary artist. Many of the works he produced during this period were recollections of his time working and in the Army focusing on different images of masculinity. In the work *Man with Cigarette* (Figure: 135) from 1980, Howson shows a lightness of method, which is not seen in his later oil paintings, and a restricted pallet of monochrome blue and brown. The central figure of a young man in a jacket, shirt and tie is contrasted with an older male in the background who has his hands in his pockets and head lowered as he walks along a lit street. Images of industry are also included in the work, the chimney and facade of an industrial building, a car and an aeroplane.

In contrast to *Man with Cigarette*, is the work *Log Race* (Figure: 136), which was developed from recollections of his time in the Army where he was subjected to ordeals that were designed to build obedience to the group. The monochrome oil work depicts a group of men with crew cut hairstyles and bulging muscles, performing a trial of masculinity. Another man standing against a brick wall overlooks the men struggling with their task, holding a stick or baton, inferring the threat of violent encouragement to complete their task. Howson displays a confidence in this work, using thick brushwork to depict the bulging muscles of the soldiers. He adds stark shading to the logs and figures, and to bring forward the figure at the rear of the work. The image of the soldier

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<sup>19</sup> Alan Jackson, "The Human face of war," *The Times Magazine* (1 May 1993).

in *Log Race* is one without individualism or kindness of character, musclebound with identical haircuts and clothing. The gaze of one of the men at the front is challenging, with almost a smirk as if enjoying the pain experienced by the man next to him, inferring the violent and hostile relationships between these individuals. Howson uses similar brushwork technique in the self-portrait *Barracks*, from 1982 (Figure: 137), which depicts his accommodation while in the Army. Although this self-portrait lacks any of the violence associated with of works, the contrast between the clothed Howson and the pictures of naked and partially naked women in sexual poses, are noteworthy due to the works showing sexual violence to women he will later include in his Bosnian commission. The young Howson looks sideways at the sexualised images, perhaps asserting his virility. In his 2003 book, Heller notes that *Man with Cigarette*, and the style and reduced colour pallet of *Barracks* shows influence of the French artist Fernand Ledger whose work in the 1920's was seen as a forerunner of pop art.<sup>20</sup> As can be observed in Ledger's 1930 work *Les trois musiciens* (Figure: 138) the naïve style, simplification of form and reduced colour palette is evident in both works. More striking is the comparison of the depiction of the male in these two works, in the artists' use of shading and the structure of the face. Where Ledger went on the produce increasingly more stylised and abstracted forms, I will show in this thesis that Howson development was to a more figurative style. Also significant is the link between Hoswon and the Pop Art movement, which became popular in the 1960's in the US and UK as a reaction to abstract expressionist such as produced by Jackson Pollock (1912-1956) or Rothko (1903-1970).<sup>21</sup>

In 1983, Howson exhibited at the Maclaurian Gallery with Frances Nevay. Howson demonstrates his continued use of the military theme in a small work from this year

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<sup>20</sup> Robert Heller, *Peter Howson* (London: Momentum, 2003), 29. Nicholas Serota and Joanna Skipwith (eds) *Fernand Leger: The Later Years* (London: Prestel, 1988).

<sup>21</sup> Madoff, S. H (ed) *Pop Art: A Critical History* (London: University of California Press, 1997), 131.

called *Marine* (Figure: 139). The technique in this work differs from previous, more considered works, in his use of energetic pastel mark making and a greater palette of colours. The Marine is bareheaded and bare chested and looks harsh and muscular, with large forearms and shoulders. The trousers patterned with camouflage green refer to the subject's occupation in the forces. He stands in an unnatural pose with one arm over his chest, the other behind his back. Howson recreated this scene a number of times, and sometimes included another man to the right of the marine tied upside down to a post. This addition refers to the incident of bullying Howson witnessed as a child when one of his friends was tortured in this way. The reuse of imagery highlights how closely connected the memories of the school bullies were to the memories of his time in the Army, and that these memories were still affecting the artist.

In 1985 Howson was invited to be Artist in Residence at St. Andrews University and to exhibit as part of "New Image, Glasgow" at the London Gallery. During this year, he created *Regimental Bath* (Figure: 140), another work that refers back to his time in the army. While previous works have inferred the bullying and violence he witnessed, this large work is a detailed portrayal of an act of torture. Howson depicts soldiers as cruel and merciless individuals, who used their own strength and a pack mentality to prey on the weak. As he notes, "The Army provided little else except a level of bullying behaviour that made school thugs seem trivial" with a level of military training that he described as sadistic.<sup>22</sup> In *The Regimental Bath*, Howson uses rich earth colours in brown, red, ochre and white using oil. The painting is tightly framed around a group of men surrounding another in a bath. He uses the solidity of walls and doorways to contrast with his treatment of flesh. The men in the foreground of the painting are naked, but not vulnerable. Their nakedness highlights their physical strength through

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<sup>22</sup> Robert Heller, *Peter Howson* (London: Momentum, 2003), 17.

the depiction of their muscles. Another man holds the victim down in the water with his hands around his neck, while a bare-bottomed soldier sits on his arm to hold him in place. A claw-like hand reaches towards the victim's genitals and a bottle of Brasso cleaning product on the edge of the bath, indicating the impending torture. Others observe the act in amusement, even the uniformed officer walking past looks unconcerned, inferring the habitual nature of the behaviour in the Army. Howson places the viewer of the work amid the scene, as if from around the edge of a door, an observer and accomplice on the affray. The victim looks upwards despairingly and reaches one hand out towards us. Howson's brushwork technique is thick, painterly with a palette of black white, and brown. The only other colours used are the green of the army uniform. One man looks of Afro-Caribbean descent, but this work is not about race, the bully is indiscriminate as all the individuals have similar features, inferring the victim could be anyone. A light on in the background shows it is happening in the dark. Howson also produced *The Great Log Race* (Figure: 141) during his period at St Andrews. In this reworking of an earlier image derived from experiences in the Army, Howson uses similar artistic techniques to *Regimental Bath* and completes the work in oils. While the image in 1980 focused on the pain of the individuals carrying the logs, this work emphasises the figure standing over the men.

There is no indication that the Falklands War in 1982 was significant to Howson, as he produced no works inspired by the conflict. Between 1986 and 1988, the topics covered by Howson moved away from his recollections of violence in the army, to works inspired by the overlooked people in Glasgow. *The Heroic Dossier* (Figure: 142) was one of the paintings which were acclaimed in reviews where they noted, "Howson looks for dignity in the poverty and suffering of his subjects".<sup>23</sup> Howson's portrait of

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<sup>23</sup> Heller, *Peter Howson*, 22.



the elderly man standing at a railing focuses on his imposing size. The oil paint in this work is richly coloured and blended to produce a smooth finish. In contrast to the muscle-bound figures of the army recruits, *The Heroic Dossier* wears a long coat, trousers, scarf and boots. Howson depicts masculinity in a face that is chiselled with cheekbones clearly visible, his hair is receding but long and blowing in the wind from his face. Howson has emphasised the man's hands, which are large and bony, indicating someone who has worked in manual labour. The industrial building to the background of the portrait reaffirms this is a working-class man, and the light emanating around him and the low viewpoint confers the subject with biblical imagery, which is reinforced by the large scale of the work. This is not a drunken down and out but a person with dignity despite the lack of wealth.

Howson was among seventeen artists featured in, *The Vigorous Imagination: New Scottish Art* presented at the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art in 1987.<sup>24</sup> The exhibition catalogue makes specific reference to the men in Howson's works,

The world that Howson depicts is a decidedly masculine one: soldiers, boxers, body-builders, sportsmen. But his attitude is not celebratory or triumphant, although it might seem so at first sight. On the contrary, Howson sees this overweening masculinity as flawed. Bulging muscles, posturing an aggression are seen as futile and destructive...soldiers become mere sadomasochistic thugs, boxer's mindless aggressors.<sup>25</sup>

These comments on Howson's depiction of the male form, especially the soldier, is relevant to my research into his work for the Bosnian commission. While it is noted in the catalogue that the soldier is one of those flawed images of masculinity in his early works, I will evidence that in Bosnia Howson depicted the soldier with more positive characteristics.

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<sup>24</sup> Scottish Gallery on Modern art, *Vigorous Imagination: New Scottish Art*, Edinburgh: 1987.

<sup>25</sup> Heller, *Peter Howson*, 78.

In 1989, *The Times* reported Howson was one of the artists responsible for the “soaring prestige” of the Glasgow School of Art, as one of “a large band of impressive figurative artists”.<sup>26</sup> The following month he was listed in “The names of Fame from the colleges of art”, for his works of “Heroic, if redundant, Dockers”.<sup>27</sup> Such exposure assisted Howson’s career as an artist, and his involvement in solo and group exhibitions. The success of Howson’s figurative work resulted in an increase in sales and an escalation in commissions and deadlines to produce work. Howson noted in Jackson’s publication (1997) that during this period he began to feel like his work was becoming too formulaic and he was losing enjoyment and confidence in painting.<sup>28</sup> *The Herald Scotland* included an article on Howson in October 1989, which coincided with Howson’s London exhibition at the Flowers Gallery.<sup>29</sup> It was noted how Howson was “one of the hottest properties in the international art world” with paintings that focused on the violent undercurrents of society in Glasgow.<sup>30</sup> Howson’s suggested even in the darkest of paintings there was a narrative that supported redemption.,

I want to show the dangers of alcohol abuse, the pitfalls of blind ignorance and misguided power, yet also the underlying dignity of humanity. Each of my paintings, however savage, contains a symbol of hope even if it's only a distant lighted window.<sup>31</sup>

This moralistic viewpoint combined with high profile and the status within the artistic community indicate one of the reasons Howson was selected for the commission in Bosnia, perhaps indicating the desire of the IWM to capitalise on his popularity.

In 1991, Howson exhibited a series of works under the exhibition title *Blind Leading the Blind*. The title of the ten canvases was taken from the work after Pieter Bruegel the

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<sup>26</sup> *The Times* (London, England, 3 June 1989), 14.

<sup>27</sup> *The Times* (London, England 14 July 1989), 15.

<sup>28</sup> Alan Jackson, *A Different Man: Peter Howson's art, from Bosnia and beyond* (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 1997), 22.

<sup>29</sup> “Portrait of the artist as a hard man,” *The Herald Scotland* (7 October 1989).

<sup>30</sup> “Portrait of the artist as a hard man,” *The Herald Scotland* (7 October 1989).

<sup>31</sup> “Portrait of the artist as a hard man,” *The Herald Scotland* (7 October 1989).

Elder (c.1525–1569), *The Blind Leading the Blind* (Figure: 143), which was seen by Howson as a reproduction. The work depicts a scene from a parable in the bible in the gospel of Saint Matthew which notes, "If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch".<sup>32</sup> Howson translates this parable to modern-day Glasgow. As Keihl notes in 1991, the subjects of the works can see but "they may be morally blind. They no longer think, they just do. There is a jingoistic quality to their every action".<sup>33</sup> The view of national identity produced by Howson is one which critiques and returns to undercurrents of violence and danger in society. In *Blind Leading the Blind II* (Figure: 144), Howson depicts a composition of four figures on a large-scale oil painting with brightly painted distinct graphic forms. The group consists of two muscular men, a woman and an opaquely spectacled child holding out a toy ship, standing by the water's edge. The woman looks out to sea, her neck elongated uncomfortably, while the standing male points away from the sea holding a bottle, as if a weapon, in his other hand. In the middle distance, behind the group, Howson has included a red wooden pier and a white cross. A menacing hood or balaclava tops the cross, the holes for eyes of which look over the group is a reference to Christ and religion, but not a benevolent god. Kiehl (1991) notes, "These are not pretty pictures" referring to the uncomfortable compositions, in Howson's pessimistic view of society world.<sup>34</sup> Howson depicts his subjects without beauty; their bodies are enlarged and grotesque, caricatures of hostility. *Patriots* (Figure: 145) continues the theme more aggressively, Howson creates a sense of unease and impending violence in these figures who are prepared to fight for their country. The nationalist suburban nightmare includes distorted pig faced men in mid-chase, accompanied by snarling dogs who pull enthusiastically at their leads, aggressive and dangerous. Cudgels and a broken bottle are the men's weapons

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<sup>32</sup> Gospel of Saint Matthew XV:14.

<sup>33</sup> Robert Heller and David Kiehl, *Blind Leading the Blind*, (London: Flowers Gallery, 1991), 22.

<sup>34</sup> Heller and Kiehl, *Blind Leading the Blind*, 26.

and their scarves elegantly blowing in the wind as battle standards. While it could be argued that Howson is creating caricatures of the people in Britain, Peter Jenkins comments in the exhibition catalogue for *Blind Leading the Blind*, the works are evidence that Howson is capable of "...something more than painterly journalism."<sup>35</sup> As Peter Jenkins notes in the catalogue supporting the exhibition, Howson's art is "an artistic vision created from the realities of violence and squalor".<sup>36</sup>

In the same publication, David Kiehl notes that Howson's technique is,

moving still further beyond the raw expressionism of his early work...towards a more classical style...His palette has lightened, his colouration more restrained ...compositions grown more elaborate and more formally controlled...Caricature is receding.<sup>37</sup>

While none of the critical considerations of his work during this period mention parallels with the German artist George Grosz (1893 - 1959), Howson's view of society as corrupt, depraved and without intelligence is comparable with Grosz's work. During the post-war period the German art movement, *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity) saw artists such as Grosz and Otto Dix (1891-1969) move to depictions based on close observation of people and the issues with society. Grosz used caricatures in works such as *Die Besitzkröten (Toads of Property)*, (Figure: 146) from 1920, which shows those in control of money in German society contrasted with the poor, in a similar way to Howson's *Blind Leading the Blind* series of works.

Howson's success as an artist continued during this period, however, as he remarks in Jackson's 1997 publication, the celebrity success as an artist was not providing the satisfaction he had hoped for and "the whole lifestyle had turned into a trap", he comments; "I was in danger of turning out a Walt Disney version of my own art."<sup>38</sup> In

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<sup>35</sup> Heller and Kiehl, *Blind Leading the Blind*, 14.

<sup>36</sup> Heller and Kiehl, *Blind Leading the Blind*, 18.

<sup>37</sup> Heller and Kiehl, *Blind Leading the Blind*, 12.

<sup>38</sup> Alan Jackson, *A Different Man: Peter Howson's art, from Bosnia and beyond* (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 1997), 22.

the malaise he speaks of at this time, the opportunity of a commission in Bosnia was “almost like a lifeline thrown by god...It was my turning point – spiritually, personally and artistically.”<sup>39</sup> My analysis of his Bosnian works will show that the influences of the Grosz and Dix would reassert themselves alongside his memories of time in the Army, when he was chosen for the IWM commission.

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<sup>39</sup> Jackson, *A Different Man*, 22.

## Bosnian Commission

Howson was selected for the commission as the official war artist for Bosnia by the IWM in April 1993, jointly funded by *The Times* newspaper. The choice of Howson by the ARC was controversial, and my research shows there was little consideration of other artists for the role. As I have noted in the previous section, Howson was at a point in his career where he felt the need to try something new. When he reflected on his feelings on the opportunity to go to the region, he noted it was “not simply out of curiosity or bravado” but because of the opportunity to “discover some of the emotional stimulus on a grand scale”.<sup>40</sup>

The breakup of Yugoslavia and its impact on Bosnia has been covered in a number of books, but for the purposes of completeness, I will briefly summarise with main reference to the summary in Miles Hudson and John Stanier’s 1997 book *War and Media*.<sup>41</sup> Yugoslavia had been under a fragile peace since the end of the Second World War, when a federation of six republics: Serbs, Croats, Bosnian Muslims, Albanians, Slovenes were under the communist control of President Tito. When Tito died in 1980 tensions between the different groups started to escalate. In 1991, Croatia and Slovenia declared a bid for independence that led to fighting and the deaths of thousands of people. Muslims, Croats and Serbs lived in Bosnia with no single ethnic majority, and this was to become the next battleground as the different groups sought to gain control of the country. The “highly ambitious and nationalistic” Serb, Slobodan Milosevic, who was the President of Serbia and sought to enlarge the Serbian republic.<sup>42</sup> After

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<sup>40</sup> Jackson, *A Different Man*, 23.

<sup>41</sup> Miles Hudson and John Stanier, *War and the Media* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing Ltd, 1997). Also see the article in *The Telegraph* By Barbara Demick 18 Apr 2012 which notes that Misha Glenny’s *The Fall of Yugoslavia* (1996) and *The Death of Yugoslavia* (1996) by Allan Little and Laura Silber are a good introduction to the conflict. While Brendan Simms, *Unfinest hour: Britain and the destruction of Bosnia* (London: Penguin, 2002) presents a critical exploration of the UK Government judgement to delay action.

<sup>42</sup> Hudson and Stanier, *War and the Media*, 265.

inciting racial hatred in neighbouring Kosovo, Albania and Croatia, where small populations of Serbs lived, he encouraged a surge of nationalism and ethnic hatred, which resulted in bitter fighting.<sup>43</sup> The Bosnian Serbs “...were determined to gain control of as much of the country as possible and then to purge all non-Serb inhabitants.”<sup>44</sup> European journalists went to Bosnia to report on the unfolding events. During the spring and summer of 1992 the world’s television news covered the scenes of death and destruction in the region accompanied by reports of death camps and ethnic cleansing on all sides.<sup>45</sup> It was not until August 1992 that the Prime Minister, John Major, agreed to despatch 1,800 troops to Bosnia as part of a United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR), and there is some indication that it was the role of journalists reporting which triggered this decision.<sup>46</sup> It was later estimated that around 1.3 million people were killed during the period of the conflict.<sup>47</sup>

Photographs that illustrated the stories of ethnic cleansing and refugees trying to escape the danger, such as these from Getty and Reuters, focused on the trauma to the individuals caught up in the war (Figure: 147). Kate Adie was one of the British reporters in Bosnia in this period. In her autobiography she notes,

...so many of the pictures which subsequently came to symbolise Bosnia were of rural village people, many of them elderly, the women in headscarves and their baggy divided skirts, the men gnarled and toothless...the cameras loved these scenes: the depressed peasants...<sup>48</sup>

Like many in the UK, Howson had seen the news coverage of the conflict in Bosnia, which showed the terrors facing the people living there. He had been experiencing a dissatisfaction and lack of direction with his work for some time, which he described as

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<sup>43</sup> Hudson and Stanier, *War and the Media*, 267.

<sup>44</sup> Hudson and Stanier, *War and the Media*, 277.

<sup>45</sup> Hudson and Stanier, *War and the Media*, 278.

<sup>46</sup> Hudson and Stanier, *War and the Media*, 283.

<sup>47</sup> Hudson and Stanier, *War and the Media*, 293.

<sup>48</sup> Kate Adie, *The Kindness of Strangers: the autobiography*, (London: Headline, 2002), 257.

“a kind of sickness of the soul” and became “obsessed with the idea of going there...to try and draw attention to the terrible plight of these faces on the news”.<sup>49</sup> Despite being advised to expect unpredictability and violence in the region, Howson was optimistic about the commission, the prospect of adventure and the effect it would have on his art,

I needed to start over again, clear out my life of all the things I no longer needed...This was my opportunity for rebirth...I believe 100 per cent that I was meant to go to Bosnia...even though I knew it would be my most traumatic experience ever, and that it would forever change my life and work. I was incredibly excited about that aspect of it all. It was a decision I was making for my soul.<sup>50</sup>

Howson’s appointment as an Official War Artist in 1993 was reported both locally in Glasgow and by the national press. The *Glasgow Herald* called him, “one of Scotland’s finest contemporary artists” and well suited to the role due to the violent content of his previous works.<sup>51</sup> The article noted Howson’s ability to bring a different interpretation to the conflict through his art, “to depict heroism in the face of adversity.”<sup>52</sup> As I will demonstrate through a series of case study examinations of the works produced in Bosnia, Howson subtly implied the concept of the hero figure in his depiction of the soldier, this diverged from the model of the soldier as bullying thug as seen in his earlier works.

In April 1993, *The Times* ran a small article noting their collaboration with the IWM and that Howson had been “chosen from a shortlist of ten artists who volunteered to record their impressions of the war in the former Yugoslavia.”<sup>53</sup> No evidence of his selection from a short-list of artists was found in the archival documents in the IWM,

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<sup>49</sup> Jackson, *A Different Man*, 8.

<sup>50</sup> Jackson, *A Different Man*, 28.

<sup>51</sup> Clare Henry and Callum MacDonald, “Glasgow boy is enlisted as war artist in Bosnia,” *The Herald* (21 April 1993).

<sup>52</sup> Henry and MacDonald, “Glasgow boy is enlisted as war artist in Bosnia,” (21 April 1993).

<sup>53</sup> “Times posts war artist to Bosnia,” *The Times* (22 April 1993).



indicating perhaps that any debate around selection was not conducted in formal meetings. The article gives some insight into the preconceptions of the work that Howson would produce, as the commissioning committee was "...particularly impressed by his portrayal of pain and anguish in the human form."<sup>54</sup> The IWM were not expecting works depicting the valour to the soldiers he was to accompany but something more representative of the gruesome photojournalism seen already in the press.

On 1st May 1993, *The Times* magazine produced a large feature article written by Alan Jackson on Howson's commission, recounting the selection process.<sup>55</sup> His contract with the trustees of the IWM gives some indication of the psychological impact they perceived possible in the commission, as it allowed for termination "if before completion of the work...he shall die or be adjudged incapable of managing his property and affairs within the meaning of Part VII of the Mental Health act 1983".<sup>56</sup> While Jackson summarises Howson's art as "full of hulking, often threatening and almost always unlovely life: his predominantly male subjects...portrayed from memory with a vivid muscularity", the article goes on to say that his skill is the "ability to invest very ordinary men or women with something approaching heroic dignity". When Howson was asked what he believed would be the challenges of the commission, he reflected on the impact of the ongoing television and newspaper coverage in shaping his expectations,

...the huge suffering that is evident...I've always been interested in the human face, and I have never seen as much anguish in all my life as in those faces in the pictures coming back from Bosnia.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> "Times posts war artist to Bosnia," *The Times* (22 April 1993).

<sup>55</sup> Alan Jackson, "The Human face of war," *The Times Magazine* (1 May 1993).

<sup>56</sup> Jackson, "The Human face of war."

<sup>57</sup> Jackson, "The Human face of war."

Howson displays an understanding of the complexities of being a war artist in a conflict outside his own country and culture, as the “ethics of being a passive presence on the side-lines of somebody else’s war” and the difficulty in painting a people who have “lost their entire culture and now they’re just struggling to stay alive.”<sup>58</sup> While Howson had reflected on his desire to go to Bosnia and move away from the work that he had become famous for, he was anxious the commission was not interpreted as a profiteering from the misfortune of others. The article also evidences an awareness by Howson of the impact his earlier military works depicting “victims and victimisers” will have on his commission, but he does not provide any detail on how he this will be evident in his works.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Jackson, “The Human face of war.”

<sup>59</sup> Jackson, “The Human face of war.”

## Bosnian War

### First Visit

Howson finally left the UK from RAF Brize Norton in Oxfordshire in early June 1993 accompanied by the BBC film crew who were making a *40 Minutes* television program *War Artist*.<sup>60</sup> This section of the chapter on Howson's commission during the Bosnian war will examine the details of his time in the country, his method of working and consider how his relationship with the UK soldiers informed his works. The itinerary began with four days of acclimatisation at Divulje Barracks in Split. This was Howson's first experience of the UK soldiers who were part of the UN peacekeeping effort. Although they organised a welcome barbeque in Howson, some of the soldiers were vocally critical of his work and his ability to cope in the warzone, and took delight in recounting tales of the carnage they had seen. Howson also felt "completely hounded" by the media interest in his commission when he first arrived, as he reflected in Jackson's 1997 publication, "I felt the pressure of being followed, of people wanting my instant reaction to whatever I saw".<sup>61</sup> Howson's war-torn lodgings with the Croatian militia, "menacing and drunk, their guns splayed across table tops", amplified his feeling of unease during his first nights, so he requested a transfer earlier than planned.<sup>62</sup> The army were able to modify his schedule and he left the next day with a convoy for the hundred-mile journey to Vitez.

The sketch *Road to Vitez* (Figure: 148) gives some indication of the methods Howson used on this journey. It shows four images on one sheet, a checkpoint guard, a convoy of UN vehicles, a wooded and potholed scene and a group of refugees. Howson used confident strokes in pencil to complete the small sketches, which include figures and

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<sup>60</sup> *War Artist* was directed by Michael Houldey, the Production Company was Unicorn Productions under commission from BBC Television (Series Editor Paul Watson).

<sup>61</sup> Alan Jackson, *A Different Man: Peter Howson's Art, from Bosnia and beyond* (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 1997) 33.

<sup>62</sup> Jackson, *A Different Man*, 31.

landscape views. They encountered many checkpoints on the trip through wooded mountains, which were "...manned unofficially by unstable looking groups of men, noisily drunk and brandishing machine guns and bazookas".<sup>63</sup> During the journey, one of the convoy vehicles skidded and overbalanced in a ditch at the side of a wooded road.<sup>64</sup> Howson has depicted this event in *M.F.U.* (Figure: 149), which is a significant in emphasising his depiction of UK soldiers. The work is sketched on mid-tone brown paper using pastel. The trees are drawn loosely and the jagged mountains in the distance reinforce a feeling of enclosure in the landscape and danger, as the group of soldiers work to recover the vehicle. Howson has highlighted the truck and tank using white, which shows up brightly due to the choice of brown paper. Other colours used are blue for the UN helmet covers on the army personnel and green and yellow on the camouflage clothing. Attached to the front of the truck is a small Union Jack flag, informing the viewer that this is UK soldiers in the work, but nationalism is not Howson's focus. A soldier drawn from the back is in full camouflage gear and wearing a helmet and a large gun, has his head lowered as if reading something held in his hands. Two other partially drawn soldiers are also in the foreground, one wearing a white balaclava and with goggles attached to his helmet, his jacket open at the collar and his hands on his hips. The truck is depicted in detail as it is balanced precariously at an angle with one large tyre in the air. Howson emphasises the protective team nature of the soldiers in this work by his inclusion of a tank on the road with three other soldiers in the middle distance who look over towards the stranded vehicle. Another soldier with a gun stands on lookout on a small hill behind the tank. Despite the detail Howson has included on the truck and on the soldier's clothes, all of the soldiers in this work are faceless, either due to their position, their distance or due to their clothing.

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<sup>63</sup> Jackson, *A Different Man*, 33.

<sup>64</sup> Jackson, *A Different Man*, 33.

Although the soldiers must be feeling concern for their safety that in this situation, they are not depicted as aggressors. Only the single figure on the hilltop indicates an active warfare situation. His exposure refers back to theories of the soldier as a figure of heroism, and reinforces the idea of the army as protectors. Howson has constructed the picture with strong diagonals, as the lines of the truck, the road, the tank and the mountain in the distance all converge on the soldier in the near centre with the gun. This heightens the sense of peril in the work and perhaps indicates the importance of this one man in getting the problem resolved. The overall impression is one of professionalism, not chaos, despite the problem the soldiers are trying to overcome.

When this work is compared to Howson's depictions of the soldier from the Bosnian army in *Checkpoint Guard with Frightened Boy* (Figure: 150), who has an hostile posture, is unkempt and unprofessional looking, with a dirty vest and a bandanna over uncut hair, the UK soldiers are calm, professional and neatly dressed. The pastel work depicts the guard striding towards the viewer in a purposeful way, with a can held menacingly in one of his gnarled and boney hands, and his weapon on his back. His smile is almost a leer, and does not give the impression of friendliness. Behind him, a child is more loosely drawn, running with arms waving, it is hard to tell whether in greeting or warning. Although the UK and Bosnian soldiers are both armed, it is the impression of unpredictability indicated by the depiction of the Bosnian man which is most notable, and gives the impression of danger. While the weaponry power of the UK soldiers is greater, their orderliness indicates restraint and logic, which is more reassuring.

As the convoy travelled to Prozor, Howson noted the scene of destruction,

...evidence of internecine murder was seen for the first time...Everything you could see was destroyed or in ruins. There had been a great deal of fighting

there... There was the unmistakable smell of blood and death hanging over the place".<sup>65</sup>

The civilians who line the roads feature in a number of Howson's sketches and finished works. There were hungry children, orphaned by the conflict and some adults "but they didn't acknowledge us and their eyes were blank... it was as if there was a curse on the place..."<sup>66</sup>

Travelling on through Prozor to Gornji Vakuf, the work *Entering Gornji Vakuf 1993-1994* (Figure: 151) shows the terrain on the journey. The painting produced on his return to the UK depicts the vehicles travelling in a convoy through a richly green and deeply wooded valley. Howson includes the blue flag of the UN peace force and the blue helmet of a soldier on the Warrior tank, which is supporting the convoy of Red Cross trucks at the rear, as an indication of the identity of the troops. In an interview in 1994, Howson commented the significance of this work,

If you show everything, you take away the horror. I leave most things to the imagination. For me, the small landscape... is the most haunting. Because you know terrible things are going on in there. I was never in Sarajevo or Mostar. I concentrated on the tiny villages in the countryside. It's a different type of war out there, governed by a basic mentality: a raw ruthless psychology of hatred. You don't get atrocities in Sarajevo like you do in villages.<sup>67</sup>

Howson highlights the peril of this journey by his accentuation of the tank gun and the high vantage point from which the scene is depicted. He has also added a dark figure in the foreground of the work, as if someone is hiding waiting to ambush the convoy. When Howson arrived in Gornji Vakuf he received a briefing on the "dangerous nature" of the area.<sup>68</sup> He was told one of the first of many stories of which would inform later works as was recounted in Jackson's book (1997),

...a group of Italian aid workers had been ambushed by Muslim bandits... beaten and robbed and taken to a quarry where they were told to run for

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<sup>65</sup> Jackson, *A Different Man*, 35.

<sup>66</sup> Jackson, *A Different Man*, 35.

<sup>67</sup> Clare Henry, "Brushes with the truth," *The Herald*, (19 September 1994).

<sup>68</sup> Jackson, *A Different Man*, 37.

their lives. Three of the five had been shot dead within minutes, almost as sport...When Allied troops found them they were horribly lacerated by their panicked flight through the dense forest, and so traumatised that they were subsequently referred for psychiatric treatment.<sup>69</sup>

Because of this event, Howson and the BBC were transported in armoured tanks, but during the journey a group of about ten armed men burst out of the forest. Howson notes,

They were smiling, but still looked like something out of *Apocalypse Now*, with their beards, rolled up trousers and bandanas. They had rounds of ammunition slung over their bodies, and were backed by 50 or so men under cover in the fringes of the woods. Their intention was to split the convoy and, I'm sure they would have succeeded were it not for the Warriors [tanks], which fixed them with their gun turrets. We knew without being told that we could have been killed there and then.<sup>70</sup>

In another incident, when a sniper jumped out of the trees and pointed a gun at the group, a soldier demonstrates his role as protector. Howson recalls, "The soldier with me – he was from Glasgow – aimed back and said: 'point that thing at me and I'll write my name all over your forehead.' The guy must have understood because he put his gun down."<sup>71</sup>

Despite this new relationship with the soldiers in the Army, when they reached Vitez Howson still felt isolated. Although the soldiers were protecting him, he comments, "I wasn't able to feel totally part of something as big and faceless as the army at that point, and I'd come to feel close to the film crew."<sup>72</sup> After one night there, he decided to move from his single room to where the BBC crew were staying in a nearby village. The accommodation he moved into for two nights was the house of a Croatian family who rented them some space. Howson reflected,

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<sup>69</sup> Jackson, *A Different Man*, 37.

<sup>70</sup> Jackson, *A Different Man*, 37.

<sup>71</sup> Richard Cork and Robert Crampton *Peter Howson: Bosnia* (London: Imperial War Museum, 1994), 10.

<sup>72</sup> Jackson, *A Different Man*, 39.

...it was lovely to be able to observe ordinary life...going on around me. There were children playing, cows with bells around their necks grazing in the fields, women hanging out their washing – but always accompanied by gunfire...<sup>73</sup>

However, Howson also notes his fear during this time

I was lying in bed with my flak jacket and helmet on...I kept imagining the door being kicked open and these guys wearing balaclavas coming in and cutting my bollocks off or kidnapping me. That happens to a lot of people, masked men coming in the middle of the night and killing them or torturing them.<sup>74</sup>

The works depicting soldiers I have covered so far show a faceless but protective soldier, however Howson went on to create a painting that highlights the emotions experienced by soldiers in the conflict. *T.S.G.* (Figure: 152) was based on the description told to him by an Army Padre of British Sergeant Major "...who needed psychiatric help after a screaming woman...thrust her baby into his arms, its head blown apart from its body by random gunfire."<sup>75</sup> In Howson's imaginings of this event, a woman hands the soldier a bloodied bundle with small limbs hanging limply. The soldier stands clearly upset by the injured child, with his helmet placed over his chest, his other hand holding a gun. To the right of the woman another soldier in camouflage gear, and with goggles over his blue helmet, kneels oblivious to the effect the situation. The woman wears a blue dress, a colour used to denote the virgin mother in Christian art. Her hair blows wildly off her face, Howson has emphasised her features. Her plight is further emphasised by her feet, one foot lifted out of her shoe, the other with a sock or bandage.

While Howson was later criticised for creating work from events he had not witnessed, he did also see some of the effects of war first-hand. In *Three Miles from Home* (Figure: 3) Howson has depicts a scene near Travnik where the army had taken him to see the wreckage of three coaches attacked with mortar fire as they were transporting

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<sup>73</sup> Jackson, *A Different Man*, 39.

<sup>74</sup> Richard Cork and Robert Crampton *Peter Howson: Bosnia* (London: Imperial War Museum, 1994), 10.

<sup>75</sup> Jackson, *A Different Man*, 29.



refugees. The first dead body seen by Howson was the driver of the bus who was so badly mutilated that there was nothing left of his face. The soldiers had removed the remains of other bodies from the road, but he notes in Jackson's 1997 book,

...you could still see everything that had fallen off the spade – the brains and intestines, studded with fragments of bone and shrapnel. And I remember the afternoon heat and the flies and the terrible, terrible smell.<sup>76</sup>

The soldiers in the painting are depicted efficiently working around the scene, but not affected emotionally as the soldier had been in *T.S.G.* Howson noted how transfixed he was by the scene of devastation; he recalled staring at the remains of the bus driver for a long time before a soldier covered it with a blanket, "his matter-of-factness leaving me in awe".<sup>77</sup> This interaction highlights the habitual nature of the events to the soldiers compared to Howson's viewpoint.

A sketch of the scene from *Three Miles from Home* was recently sold at auction in Scotland, titled *Brains* (Figure: 153). It depicts the coaches from a different angle and with the soldiers in much more detail, which indicates he had a longer period to work on the sketch than those of the roadside civilians. The work shows a group of three soldiers positioned near a dark mark of the ground. Their heads are lowered and one soldier is down on one knee, giving the impression of respect. Howson has drawn the profile of another soldier in the foreground of the work, his face hardened and without emotion. In contrast to the respectful consideration of the dead by the soldiers, the remains are filmed by a cameraman and observed by a crowd of faces from the back of the bus.

During this time, Howson felt his reactions to the atrocities of war were being constantly observed, he noted, "Everywhere I went in Bosnia, people were waiting to feed off my reactions. And the more horrified I admitted to being, the more they liked

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<sup>76</sup> Jackson, *A Different Man*, 41.

<sup>77</sup> Jackson, *A Different Man*, 41.

it”.<sup>78</sup> A work that embodies his relationship with the media is *40 Minutes* (Figure: 154) which uses a different technique from Howson’s normally dark palette of colours and shows a finer brushwork and watercolour style. The work depicts Howson surrounded by the BBC film crew for the *40 Minutes* programme sitting on a pile of sandbags with a dark red mass at his feet, which is presumably blood. The crew, who focus on Howson or their equipment, look bored and unaffected the remains and the devastation around him. A soldier in full combat gear and with an automatic weapon stands behind Howson looking on slightly amused. Behind the group, the broken buildings and boarded up door show the marks of war on the landscape.

I have been unable to obtain a copy of the film made by the BBC for the *40 Minutes* program, but in the exhibition catalogue *Bosnia* (1994), Robert Crampton notes that Howson was filmed “ducking as a shot cracks overhead, while his army minders continue to chat.”<sup>79</sup> This demonstrates the different reaction to the dangers of war by the soldier and the civilian, and supports the narrative of the soldier as in control of his emotions, but its inclusion in the film also emphasises a criticism of Howson’s preparedness to take on the task of war artist. The physical and emotional impact of the war on Howson was confirmed soon after his visit to Travnik, when he was forced to return home early due to ill health. When he reached Tomislavgrad Army medics identified he was dehydrated and had dysentery, so organised early his transfer back to Split and onward to the UK for recovery.<sup>80</sup>

### Return from Bosnia

Back in the UK, Howson received scathing criticism on his early return. The *Daily Record* reported, “War artist flees war! Don’t shoot – I’m only the painter” The report

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<sup>78</sup> Jackson, *A Different Man*, 43.

<sup>79</sup> Richard Cork and Robert Crampton *Peter Howson: Bosnia* (London: Imperial War Museum, 1994), 9.

<sup>80</sup> Jackson, *A Different Man*, 45.

went on to say that Howson “bristled with pride” when he was made an official war artist, but “That was until the first shots whistled round his ears. Now he has sensationally quit...after just FOUR DAYS in the war zone” despite the inaccuracy of the report and Howson actually being there for two weeks.<sup>81</sup> The article went on to describe the events in Travnik, and although it focuses on the terrible conditions Howson had faced, there is an insinuation that “Howson – one of the renowned Glasgow Pups, young artists who have achieved international recognition” was heading home due to cowardice.<sup>82</sup>

In a more factual article, Eric McKenzie from *The Scotsman* interviewed Howson at the opening of a retrospective exhibition in Glasgow, where Howson describes the traumatic events he had witnessed in Bosnia,

...my whole attitude to life has changed...I saw things that I’ve never seen before in my life, only in nightmares...All the work I have done before has been imagination, my own nightmares, and suddenly it was as if I walked into one of my own paintings.<sup>83</sup>

*The Scotsman* published an article on Howson in July 1993, noting he was “enjoying his return to the city after illness during a horrendous spell in Bosnia as a war artist”.<sup>84</sup> They draw attention the contrast of the violence of war to his quiet personality, commenting that Howson was “gentle sensitive, almost self-effacing.”<sup>85</sup>

On July 10<sup>th</sup> 1993, *The Times Magazine* included a large feature with the “first sketches from Britain’s war artist”, and the chance to a chance to get “A Howson of your own”.<sup>86</sup> The article *War at first hand* commented that Howson went to the area

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<sup>81</sup> Gordon Airs, “War artist flees war!” *Daily Record* (7 June 1993).

<sup>82</sup> Gordon Airs, “War artist flees war!” *Daily Record* (7 June 1993).

<sup>83</sup> Eric McKenzie, “Artist describes traumas of war,” *The Scotsman* (23 Jun 1993).

<sup>84</sup> Emilio Cola, “The agitated mind of a modest man,” *The Scotsman*, (10 July 1993).

<sup>85</sup> Emilio Cola, “The agitated mind of a modest man,” *The Scotsman*, (10 July 1993).

<sup>86</sup> *The Times Magazine*, 10<sup>th</sup> July 1993, p3.”The opportunity to buy a colour lithograph of *Checkpoint* with frightened child, signed at a cost of £100 or unsigned for £10, a proportion of the proceeds to be given to the Red Cross in Bosnia.

“expecting to paint heroes. Instead, he returned with disturbing and violent sketches”.<sup>87</sup>

While there was no indication that Howson was expecting to see or depict such heroism, the article confirms the traditional expectations of a war artist as producing valiant narratives. Howson commented that the landscape of war was like walking into one of his own paintings, “Those hellish visions brought to life. I couldn’t have believed what it was like if I hadn’t seen it for myself”.<sup>88</sup> The dilemma he now faced was to decide how to translate what he had seen to painting. Howson comments that the works derived from his sketches in Bosnia would show “a significant progression” from the style with which he is normally associated.<sup>89</sup> He does not specifically mention the soldiers that he was accompanied by but he does note,

It’s often said that there is a heroic element to my work, but for me there were no heroes there at all. I expected to find some but the most I found was a lot of very brave people – be they soldiers, civilians, volunteers...It was all but impossible even to say who were the goodies and who were the baddies.<sup>90</sup>

In the following months, Howson tried to complete the commission, but he was overwhelmed by a sense of unfinished business. He was not happy with the sketches he had produced or the development of the works. Therefore, in November 1993 he made the important conclusion that he must return to Bosnia.<sup>91</sup> Howson reflected on this decision in 1994 noting how difficult his return to the normality of Edinburgh had been, “Life is strange if you actually want to go back to a place where you could be killed...Half of you detests what you see and half of you wants to be there. You’re living on the edge and it is exciting...It’s much better than the humdrum existence of normality”<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Alan Jackson, “War at first hand,” *The Times Magazine*. (10 July 1993): 25-28.

<sup>88</sup> Jackson, “War at first hand.”

<sup>89</sup> Jackson, “War at first hand.”

<sup>90</sup> Jackson, “War at first hand.”

<sup>91</sup> Richard Cork and Robert Crampton *Peter Howson: Bosnia* (London: Imperial War Museum, 1994), 9.

<sup>92</sup> Richard Cork and Robert Crampton *Peter Howson: Bosnia* (London: Imperial War Museum, 1994), 10.

*The Times* ran a two-page spread in November 1993 by Robert Crampton, prior to the showing of the BBC documentary *War Artist*, on Howson's decision to return to Bosnia.<sup>93</sup> Crampton recounts a change in Howson's viewpoint of the conflict and the people involved, "Who are we to say they shouldn't be fighting anyway? You can't really say what you'd do in a situation like that - if your family had been massacred".<sup>94</sup> Although Howson had enough material to create works without revisiting the area, his goal in returning was to find "the hope or beauty amid that evil".<sup>95</sup> He notes that on this trip he would be better prepared for the violent scenes of war,

...if I went over to Bosnia and didn't see anything tragic or bad, I wouldn't really be able to come back and do the work. When I went the first time I was hoping that I would see the worst situations for myself, so when I do go back again, if there is an atrocity I wouldn't not want to see it.<sup>96</sup>

Howson concedes other reasons to go back are partly due to the thrill of the action that the time he spent there was such an intense experience,

I can't get Bosnia out of my system...I'm addicted. It's a horrible addiction...You're living on the edge and it's exciting...It's much better than the humdrum existence of normality...there's more material for me as an artist than the whole past 15 years of being in Glasgow.<sup>97</sup>

He also notes that seeing people in the extremes of life and death had made him a less selfish and a more considerate person "I don't want to change history, but seeing that kind of thing can have two effects – it can either make you totally cynical, or it can have a spiritual effect on you. It could actually make you want to do good and help people more."<sup>98</sup> On the second trip in November 1993, without the press entourage, he would also experience a different relationship to the soldiers, which would influence the works he went on to produce.

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<sup>93</sup> BBC, *War Artist* shown Tuesday 23 November 1993.

<sup>94</sup> Robert Crampton, "To Hell and Back," *The Times* (10 November 1993).

<sup>95</sup> Crampton, "To Hell and Back."

<sup>96</sup> Crampton, "To Hell and Back."

<sup>97</sup> Crampton, "To Hell and Back."

<sup>98</sup> Crampton, "To Hell and Back."

## Second visit to Bosnia

Howson gained important moral support on his second trip to Bosnia when he was accompanied by close friend Ian McColl, who was an artist and filmmaker. Although they travelled with the army as before, the lack of a journalist entourage and their officer status resulted in a different relationship with the military. Granting war artists Officer Status was a method of assuring artists could successfully work within the military that had been used during the First World War. Soldiers were now required to treat Howson with the same respect as other Officers, which meant he was often saluted and did not experience the disparaging attitude to his work he had endured during this visit. On this trip he also took a video camera, and sketched from his recollections in the evening, as he noted, “you can’t sketch someone who is utterly terrified”.<sup>99</sup> The video recordings were also used in the process of developing paintings on his return to the UK. I have viewed some of the video footage Howson and McColl took during this time, which is part of the IWM archives, as a source relating to the finished works.<sup>100</sup> While the majority of the content was of the journeys through the villages in Bosnia, there is also some content around the base and of Howson working on sketches in the evening, which gives useful insight into his methods.

Howson provided further information regarding his second visit through an article, which was published in *Modern Painters* in October 1994.<sup>101</sup> The article recounts a day in Bosnia and provides important evidence of his return to the conflict zone and his relationship with the soldiers, as well as the voice of the artist. Written from Vitez at

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<sup>99</sup> Alan Jackson *A Different Man: Peter Howson's art, from Bosnia and beyond* (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 1997), 55.

<sup>100</sup> IWM MGH 4980.

<sup>101</sup> Peter Howson, “One Sunday in Bosnia,” *Modern Painters* 7 (1994): 60-61. Art Full Text (H.W. Wilson), EBSCOhost, viewed 12 October 2016.

the British UN Army Base, Howson comments on the physical challenges of existing in such cold conditions and the replacement of his own clothes with army kit. The clothes allowed him to transform visibly into part of the military, they were also necessary for the conditions, as he comments on his trip to get breakfast results in mud halfway up our trousers. The threat of conflict was ever-present, as he notes, “every soldier has his gun at the side of the table. The guns are loaded”.<sup>102</sup> The barbed wire fenced enclosure was home to Warrior tanks and many Portacabins, which were used as offices and accommodation. He could regularly hear the sounds of shelling and gunfire, and the destruction of local houses was visible through the fence with “huge planks of wood leaning against every window and door”.<sup>103</sup> Although he was treated as one of the troops, he also comments on the luxury of accommodation allocated to him, “compared to the four to a Portacabin that the squaddies have to endure”, he was housed in a flat overlooking the barracks.<sup>104</sup>

The article recounts Howson and McColl’s day as they accompany the convoy of four warriors and twenty lorries through the Muslim-HVO frontline front at Travnik and then the Muslim-Serb front to Turbe to collect two hundred Muslim refugees from the Serbs and transport them to the Muslim town of Travnik. Noting the possibility of personal risk in the exercise, they are asked to check they have morphine syringes in their shoulder pockets, and their blood group is recorded.<sup>105</sup> Despite this peril, Howson notes that travelling in the Warrior tanks gives him a feeling of safety, not just because of the spacious interior but also because of the troops who are with them, “...a driver, machine gunner and tank commander, plus two sharpshooters who stand up in the back. All we can see is their boots and legs as the tank thunders along at 40 miles an hour”<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Peter Howson, “One Sunday in Bosnia,” *Modern Painters* 7 (1994): 60-61.

<sup>103</sup> Howson, “One Sunday in Bosnia”: 60.

<sup>104</sup> Howson, “One Sunday in Bosnia”: 60.

<sup>105</sup> Howson, “One Sunday in Bosnia”: 60.

<sup>106</sup> Howson, “One Sunday in Bosnia”: 60-61.

He is even encouraged to stand in the tank and look at the scenery marked by war the “total destruction, houses that have been cleansed or destroyed by artillery.”<sup>107</sup>

The danger of crossing the checkpoints is confirmed by Howson as he notes trying not make eye contact with the checkpoint guards,

One is a young man wearing camouflage and black trousers, he is carrying a Kalashnikov. He is standing beside an older man with a beard and blond hair. He smiles and waves as we go through. The third man doesn't wave, just spits on the ground. He is dressed in a very smart, black uniform. The tank commander tells us that he belongs to the Croat Nazi faction, which commit atrocities.<sup>108</sup>

Continuing the journey through the worsening devastated landscape, the convoy stops at the Serbian checkpoint where they experience a few minutes of tension waiting for permission to pass through and pick up refugees. Having been told that the Warrior tanks cannot pass, they set off into Serb-held territory in the lorries and Landover.

Howson notes the change in atmosphere as they pass through the wasteland, devoid of people. When they stop to pick up the refugees, who are held at gunpoint, Howson is reaffirms the confidence given to him by the imposing physical presence provided by the heavily armed “40 very large British sergeants.”<sup>109</sup> Howson’s role in this trip was more active than on his previous visit to Bosnia, as he was now able to assist the military. This can be evidenced in the description of his encounter with the refugees,

There are people of all ages and very young babies, but hardly any men. They are desperate to climb aboard the lorries...They are carrying few possessions, just the odd carrier bag. A young woman is struggling with her toddler. I pick up the tiny boy and wait for the woman to find a space on the lorry. As she is doing this, I hold him close and kiss his cheek. His face is like ice and his eyes are dead. His tiny hands play with my flak jacket straps. I pass him up to his mother and she takes him, but she cannot look at me.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Howson, “One Sunday in Bosnia”: 61.

<sup>108</sup> Howson, “One Sunday in Bosnia”: 61.

<sup>109</sup> Howson, “One Sunday in Bosnia”: 61.

<sup>110</sup> Howson, “One Sunday in Bosnia”: 60-61.



Once the refugees are in the lorries, he notes there is still a concern that violence could be sparked at any moment. He writes, “The tension is amazing. The Serbs are very restless. British soldiers are still standing in a long line with rifles ready, just in case” which again shows Howson referring to the power the soldiers have to prevent violence and protect the innocent.<sup>111</sup>

Although some women are crying on the journey back to safety and there is a palpable tension in the lorry, when they reach the town centre over a thousand people are there to meet them and many families are reunited. The sketch *Helping Refugees* (Figure: 155), was reproduced as a lithograph by Howson. It contains a note by the artist “The day we rescued 150 rape victims from the Serbs”. The sketch in black boot polish, as most of his equipment had been stolen early in the visit, is rough and contains many overworked areas, making it difficult to discern individual details; however, it is possible to observe his inclusion of a soldier in the foreground, from the helmet he is wearing. The soldier contrasts with the other figures in the work who are skeletal and draped in fabrics. While there was significant debate around the validity of Howson creating art on the subject of rape, this work adds further evidence to his awareness of the plight of many of the women through first-hand accounts. Howson used his experiences on this day to create the large painting *Sanctuary in Travnik*, (Figure: 156), which shows soldiers aiding the women and children refugees as they disembark from the truck. As Richard Cork comments in the *Bosnia* exhibition catalogue, “He helped lift them onto lorries, and remembers that they were unable to talk about their ordeals or make eye contact with him”.<sup>112</sup> Howson depicts the end of the journey as a woman disembarks from the truck with legs scarred from her ordeal. A dead child, mourned by a mother and sibling, is carried away on a stretcher, showing that their return to safety

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<sup>111</sup> Howson, “One Sunday in Bosnia”: 61.

<sup>112</sup> Richard Cork and Robert Crampton *Peter Howson: Bosnia* (London: Imperial War Museum, 1994), 42.

is not the end of the suffering. Howson comments on the involvement of the media in the tragedy of the refugees by his inclusion of a photographer hovering over the corpse. He also highlights the shame experienced by rape victims, showing people staring at the woman's injuries. The UN soldier in the foreground is recognisable by his blue helmet. He is depicted in contrast to the other figures as his head is turned away from the scene, perhaps out of respect of the trauma or indifference at the commonplace of tragedy.

Howson noted that the most dangerous part of the second trip was the 150-mile journey through the snow-covered mountains to Vitez through Prozor, as the civilians were not appreciative of their presence; the Landrover was "spat at by old ladies, and the local kids amused themselves by blow-piping a few hypodermics at it."<sup>113</sup> As the convoy travelled towards the front line in Gornji Vakuf to deliver food supplies they passed through scenes of devastation "...the buildings all blown out and burnt out, shells and sniping popping off constantly".<sup>114</sup> This increased peril did not have the same effect as his initial visit, due to the company of his friend McColl and his closer links with the Army. As Peter Crampton (1994) notes, his "...admiration for the British soldiers on UN duty in Bosnia...was heartfelt and lasting", Howson even began to look like a soldier as he had had his hair cut short and wore the same clothes.<sup>115</sup> When asked if this closeness might have constrained him from working objectively Howson commented "...No, I liked being with them. I felt as though I was back in the army...but this time no-one was allowed to shout at me."<sup>116</sup>

As I have demonstrated through my primary and secondary archival research, Howson's improved confidence in his role as a war artist in Bosnia was aided by his

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<sup>113</sup> Cork and Crampton *Peter Howson: Bosnia*, 11.

<sup>114</sup> Cork and Crampton *Peter Howson: Bosnia*, 11.

<sup>115</sup> Cork and Crampton *Peter Howson: Bosnia*, 11.

<sup>116</sup> Cork and Crampton *Peter Howson: Bosnia*, 12.

changed relationship with the military. Unlike Kitson, he was not greeted with a royal welcome on his return as there was less media interest in the conflict, but he returned with a sense of satisfaction that he would now be able to complete the task he had been commissioned to do.

## Return to the UK and exhibition of works

When Howson returned to the UK after his second trip to Bosnia on 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1993, he used the sketches, video, and his recollections to develop the works for the exhibition at the IWM. Richard Cork (1994) noted that the period between experience and the generation of art gave Howson the advantage of reflection, one that was not possible in other media, such as photography, which “offers no guarantee of lasting significance.”<sup>117</sup> Howson also reflected on the differences between his work and other media in an interview with *The Telegraph*, noting that his work was “much more personal than photography” with the opportunity to apply imagination and “go more deeply into the subject”.<sup>118</sup> This depth was to take the form of both the events that he witnessed and those imagined from the stories he had been told while in the region.

I could paint all sorts of horrible things, based on my own fears, and the fears I saw in people’s faces. Sometimes I just think I should just do a series of landscapes with not much in them, then I think that’s shying away. Another part of me says I should really go for it, do very frank paintings. I suppose I think I have the right because I was there and because as an artist, I can do anything.<sup>119</sup>

Many of the finished works depicted the horrific acts the people of the region carried out on each other, but as these have been discussed at length in existing publications I shall only draw on them where relevant to my investigation of Howson’s depiction of the soldier or the reception of his paintings. Howson’s technique was to work from the sketches and film as source material, using them to explore composition and experiment on smaller paintings. These then informed the larger works. This process is demonstrated in *Sketch for Battle of Travnik* (Figure: 157), which was probably not completed during the event but from the video footage he shot at the time or in the evening while he was in Bosnia. It shows two soldiers sheltering under a wooden

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<sup>117</sup> Cork and Crampton *Peter Howson: Bosnia*, 35.

<sup>118</sup> Martin Gayford, “Torn between optimism and brutality,” *Daily Telegraph* (21 September 1994).

<sup>119</sup> Cork and Crampton *Peter Howson: Bosnia*, 114.

roofed structure while behind them the streets of Travnik are the site of an ongoing battle. Bosnian men are shown running behind the soldiers, one with a long knife, while others have sticks or guns and one is crouched in a protective stance. The urban landscape where the sketch is set has been partially destroyed, there is rubble scattered on the floor and the buildings are marked with gunshot. Howson has used soft pencil in rapid angular marks to depict the scene. The most detail in the sketch is in the soldiers who form a barrier between the conflict and Howson. They are wearing helmets and uniform and are braced against the wooden pillar. One carries an automatic weapon and is looking down while the other holds a piece of paper and has his head turned to look at the fighting. Their tidy appearance and the lack of emotion in their faces indicate that they are in control, despite the chaos around them. Howson's relationship with the soldiers is highlighted in a comment he has added to lithograph of the sketch "Drawing the battle with my amazing bodyguards". The sketch was used to develop *Battle of Travnik* (Figure: 158) in oil paint. Howson has used a similar composition in the painting to the sketch, but has focused more on the soldiers by cropping the work around the pair, rendering them in dark tones against the pale features of the Travnik landscape. Other development changes he has made are the removal of many of the fighting figures which were in the sketch and the addition a red cross van and a tank. The use of colour and the detail used to depict the soldiers reinforces the impression of the solidity and strength of the soldiers, and that they are a barrier between the viewer and the conflict. I argue that Howson has developed the narrative of the work further in the painting than in the sketch, as the soldier with the map is looking down and pointing to the page, the other soldier looks directly to the viewer solemnly, so while they show no emotion there is an increased indication of peril.

In another work featuring soldiers in Travnik, Howson has used a similar method of development from sketch to painting. *Sketch for Battle in Travnik* (Figure: 159) shows

the soldiers sitting in a UN tank in the foreground while men are involved in battle in a suburban street. The work is drawn with rapid strokes on lined paper and there is minimal detail in either the soldiers or the other elements of the sketch. In the painting *Battle in Travnik* (Figure: 160) the soldiers are emphasised by the use of colour and tone in the same way as *Battle of Travnik* (Figure: 158). The soldiers are depicted in detail while the numerous fighters in the streets are loosely painted in lighter tones. Howson has increased the tension in the scene by increasing the number of protagonists in the battle. The windows of the houses in the street are broken and boarded with wooden planks and even the walking man looks more of a threat as he is shown with one hand reaching into his coat, as if drawing a gun. The soldiers are again a barrier between Howson, the viewer, and the conflict, highlighting their protective capacity. The more active role of the soldier is depicted by Howson in the sketches *Bosnian Taken* (Figure: 161) and *Sorry* (Figure: 162). *Bosnian Taken* shows a soldier loading a barefoot man into the back of an army truck. The man looks back at the soldier disparagingly as other ghostly faces look out from the truck. The soldier's hand is firmly positioned on the Bosnian's shoulder. Howson indicates the soldier's power in physical and military terms as he is shown holding a balanced stance with legs wide, carrying a gun in one other hand. His uniform is neat and his youthful face portrayed elegantly, while the Bosnian is shown with unattractive facial features. The lack of full clothing perhaps indicates that the Bosnian was arrested and taken from his home by surprise as a result of information of atrocities. Unlike Howson's early images of the soldier, when he was in the army as a young man, he does not indicate the soldier forcing Bosnian into the truck. In this commission, violence is only depicted by the Bosnians, Serbians, Muslims and Croats on each other.

*Sorry* (Figure: 162) indicates an emotional reality for the UK soldiers in this conflict in this brief sketch of a soldier with empty hands outstretched, standing in front of a

group of children. Howson noted the issues of hunger the refugees had during his time in the region but this image could also indicate a resignation by the army that there was nothing to be done about the situation. The soldier's mouth is drawn downturned and sad, as he contemplates not being able to do more. The figures in front of him are drawn without detail but the small figure in the front of the group looks at the soldier's hands not at his face.

While the result of the commission in Bosnia resulted in nearly three hundred paintings and sketches, the exhibition of Howson's Bosnian works from 15<sup>th</sup> September to 13<sup>th</sup> November 1994 which took place at the IWM and Flowers East Gallery featured just thirty five of his completed works. The IWM invited a large number of media and special guests to the preview on Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> September 1994, which included mini-bus transport between the two venues. In the press release for the event the IWM commented on the importance of Howson's works in terms of memorialising the events of this conflict, noting that his paintings were,

...not the last word on the subject but they will help to ensure that we do not forget what happened and continues to happen in a European country in the last decade of the twentieth century.<sup>120</sup>

*The Times* was keen to ensure the exhibition of their sponsored artist would be a success by including an advert in their weekend magazine that gave readers a chance to see the exhibition at a reduced price and to receive a copy of the exhibition catalogue.<sup>121</sup> It was accompanied by an article by Robert Crampton focussing on the ordeal Howson experienced in visiting this "Bosnian nightmare". Crampton notes Howson's change in attitude on this second visit to the region, when this time he was

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<sup>120</sup> IWM ENG/2/ACC/6/12/5

<sup>121</sup> Robert Crampton, "Blood and Guts," *The Times Magazine*, (3 September 1994): 13.

“angry rather than frightened”.<sup>122</sup> Part of this change was due to the company of his friend Ian McColl but also because of his new relationship with the soldiers, the “boys in blue helmets”, who he had come to enjoy being with on the second trip.<sup>123</sup> Howson felt safe under their protection as he notes when with the Coldstream guards supervised the handover of Muslim refugees in Turbe, “...The sergeants we were with had to stare the Serbs out. It was a real old fashioned macho thing”.<sup>124</sup>

The works produced for the *Bosnia* exhibition showed none of the glorified masculinity in his depiction of the UK soldiers he had produced in earlier works such as *Patriots* (Figure: 145). Here Howson depicts the UK soldiers as a force who were visually different from the Serbian, Bosnian and Croatian soldiers, as orderly and in control, as compared to an army who were unorganised, drugged, dirty and dishevelled. The article suggests Howson viewed his role as a war artist differently from other recorders of war,

I’m not aiming to be controversial, I’m not aiming to do any Mickey Mouse stuff. But I wanted to cut out all the reportage. It’s not my job to do that. My job is to do the things you don’t see, the army doesn’t even get to see, not to be an illustrator, not to tell stories, but to produce strong images of things...I suppose I think I have the right because I was there and because as an artist, I can do anything...<sup>125</sup>

His mention of “Mickey Mouse” may be a reference to John Keane who was the subject of the previous chapter. The distinction Howson makes here is significant because it shows his desire to create art that extended the understanding of the war with the input of his own experiences, in a way that was different to the photographer and journalists’ reliance on facts.

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<sup>122</sup> Crampton, “Blood and Guts,” 13.

<sup>123</sup> Crampton, “Blood and Guts,” 13.

<sup>124</sup> Crampton, “Blood and Guts,” 10.

<sup>125</sup> Crampton, “Blood and Guts,” 13.



Once the exhibition had opened and journalists had opportunity to see the paintings and sketches, more interviews with Howson were published. Clare Henry for the Glasgow *Herald* focused on the “trauma and terror”, important because, as Howson noted, “If you don’t get the trauma, you don’t get the art”.<sup>126</sup> Henry discusses the poor critical reception to some of his works prior to the commission, and Howson’s recognition that his figurative work had previously started “turning into flat mannerist caricatures”.<sup>127</sup> He commented that the commission as a war artist had removed constraints of worrying if work would sell “I’ve loosened up a lot and there’s a humanity there that was lacking before. The work is some of the best I’ve done.”<sup>128</sup> The *Evening Standard* arts feature also contrasted Howson’s life before his commission in Bosnia, painting “before an audience of admiring collectors...swanning around in his chauffeur-driven limousine”, compared to an artist who now “takes on an unfamiliar haggard look”.<sup>129</sup> Howson candidly reveals his reaction on first arriving to Bosnia was “...these people are smelly, they are losing. They are probably going to die soon. I don’t want to get involved”, but that changed on his second visit when he had a more nuanced understanding of the conflict.<sup>130</sup> While the article does not specifically comment on the debate whether art about atrocities should ever be aestheticized, Howson’s desire to “create beauty out of evil” is problematic when one considers the brutal images he produced.<sup>131</sup> Some of the worst depictions of violence came from Howson’s imagination were developed from incidents he heard about, “such as the old man who had his hands chopped off and shoved in his mouth”.<sup>132</sup> Susan Sontag’s 2003 book, *Regarding the Pain of Others*

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<sup>126</sup> Clare Henry, “Brushes with the truth,” *The Herald* (19 September 1994).

<sup>127</sup> Clare Henry, “Brushes with the truth,” *The Herald* (19 September 1994).

<sup>128</sup> Clare Henry, “Brushes with the truth,” *The Herald* (19 September 1994).

<sup>129</sup> Sarah Jane Checkland, “Home from Bosnia and ethically cleansed,” *The Evening Standard* (22 September 1994).

<sup>130</sup> Checkland, “Home from Bosnia.”

<sup>131</sup> Checkland, “Home from Bosnia.”

<sup>132</sup> Checkland, “Home from Bosnia.”

considers this dilemma, where she comments that harrowing photographs, such as the image of a Serbian militia kicking Muslim civilians (Figure: 163) by Ron Haviv, were not only taken with aesthetics in mind, but had the added purpose of imploring the viewer to take action, or at least to care.<sup>133</sup> Sontag notes there are issues around removing this purpose when this photojournalism is transformed into art and hung on the wall. When Howson talks of transforming the violent scenes, he may be referring to his belief that art's foremost purpose is being one of aesthetics.<sup>134</sup> I shall return to the issues of war art and aesthetics in the conclusion of this thesis when I bring together my findings on the three artists who are the subject of this work.

The major painting selected by the IWM for their permanent collection was *Cleansed* (Figure: 164), which features a family of Muslim refugees sitting by the side of a road having been denied entry to the army enclosure. In an interview in 1994, Howson comments that the event was one that affected him greatly.<sup>135</sup> I know from interviews with Howson that the family in this work were in extreme danger at this time due to nearby Croatian snipers, despite the presence UN soldiers and vehicles.<sup>136</sup> There is some indication of direction from the Army as to what subjects Howson should focus on as he notes, "The army tried to get me to draw the scene, but I couldn't draw them...I didn't think it was the right thing to do".<sup>137</sup> Instead, Howson recorded the scene on his video camera and used it as a source to create the work.<sup>138</sup> As can be seen from screen shots from his video, he was able to get a close, almost intimate view of the waiting refugees. They are visibly uncomfortable and tired as they sit on the

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<sup>133</sup> Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (London: Penguin, 2004), 80 and Ron Haviv, *Blood and Honey: A Balkan War Journal* (New York: TV Books, 2001).

<sup>134</sup> Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (London: Penguin, 2004), 108.

<sup>135</sup> Peter Howson: *Face in the Crowd*, 1994 YouTube <https://youtu.be/8qaoTheEbWc>

<sup>136</sup> IWM MGH 4980 Peter Howson and Ian McColl as War Artist in Bosnia, (film) Made by: Howson, Peter, 1993.

<sup>137</sup> Peter Howson: *Face in the Crowd*, 1994 YouTube <https://youtu.be/8qaoTheEbWc>.

<sup>138</sup> Peter Howson: *Face in the Crowd*, 1994 YouTube <https://youtu.be/8qaoTheEbWc>.

roadside (Figure: 165 to Figure 167). In Howson's painting of the group, the refugees almost completely fill the large canvas. While one woman looks out of the canvas reproaching the viewer, the men's eyes are averted. The hands of these refugees are large and sinuous, a depiction Howson used in works such as the *Heroic Dossier* (Figure: 142). These are voluptuous and sturdy people, who are not injured or visibly effected by war. One of the men holds his hands out imploring the viewer to help, while the sideways glance of the other woman tells us she knows we will not. The soldier in the background of the work stands impassively with his gun lowered. Unlike in other works where Howson has placed the soldier between the war and the viewer, in this painting the soldier is in the background, ineffective and impassive. This is a curious study of the victims of war because it shows no trauma; Howson was surprised that it was chosen over a "tougher painting" as the violence he depicted was "what Bosnia is all about".<sup>139</sup>

*Cleansed* provoked much debate about the role of the IWM collection. While the violent content of other works prompted the staff to display a notice at the entrance warning, "This exhibition contains images of violence which some people may find disturbing", *Cleansed* was a more approachable and family friendly work and was selected for the permanent collection along with *Three Miles from Home* (Figure: 3), *M.F.U.* (Figure: 149), *Checkpoint Guard with Frightened Boy* (Figure: 152), *Entering Gornji Vakuf* (Figure: 151) and *Travnik*.<sup>140</sup> The work which received controversy for not being selected by the IWM was *Muslim and Croatian* (Figure: 168), a large oil painting that depicted the rape of a woman in her home by one man while another held her head down a toilet. While the work contains no images of UK soldiers, the perpetrators of the violent act were part of the combat forces in the Bosnian war, and

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<sup>139</sup> Sarah Jane Checkland, "Home from Bosnia and ethically cleansed," *The Evening Standard* (22 September 1994).

<sup>140</sup>IWM ART 16526.

had the potential to draw attention to the frequency in history of attacks on women during conflict by soldiers.<sup>141</sup> The work was developed from the sketch *Rape* (Figure: 169), which was exhibited in 2016 at the Flowers Gallery exhibition *Peter Howson: A Survey of Prints*. A review of the sketch notes,

...in *Rape*, Howson's sense of duress at his subject matter is plain. Thick lines scramble chaotically across the rapist's body, rendering him at points difficult to distinguish from the background, sharply contrasting with the stark whiteness of his victim.<sup>142</sup>

When comparing the sketch with the completed painting, while there are obvious differences in the method and materials used, the composition remains virtually unchanged. A link between this work and Howson's time as a soldier is evidenced when *Muslim and Croatian* is considered alongside with an untitled work from 1992 (Figure: 170), which depicts the torture of a man at the hands of other soldiers from Howson's time in the Army. In a similar theme to the Bosnian work, muscular men are depicted holding another's head down a toilet. The man at the rear of the naked victim is smiling with one hand on the naked bottom and the other hand hidden, perhaps performing a sexual act. Another man lies on the floor next to the toilet holding the victim's thumb in his mouth. Elements in this work which show parallels with *Muslim and Croatian*, such as the design of the toilet, the positioning of the victim and the hand placed on the back of their neck, highlight Howson's reuse of memories of violence and evidence of how pervasive his time in the army was.

Richard Brooks wrote in the *Observer* that the rejection of *Muslim and Croatian* by the IWM was "a denial of the sordid reality of war, where rape of women is commonplace" by a museum filled with "manly objects and derring-do exploits".<sup>143</sup> He went on to

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<sup>141</sup> For more information on the history of sexual violence see Joanna Bourke, *Rape: A History From 1890 to the Present* (London: Virago, 2007) and Nicola Henry, *War and Rape: Law Memory and Justice* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011).

<sup>142</sup> Mathew Rudman, "Peter Howson: A survey of prints," *Studio International* (25 July 2016).

<sup>143</sup> Richard Brooks, "Bosnian rape too brutal as war art," *The Observer* (18 September 1994).

comment that *Cleansed* was a safe choice that lacked context and, “could be a picture of peasants in a French or Spanish country village”.<sup>144</sup> There is some inference that the males in the selection committee overruled Angela Weight (Keeper of Arts) and Marina Vaisey (Art Critic) in the decision not to choose *Muslim and Croatian*. Although Weight was quoted as saying, “Museums have to take bold decisions and should not go for conservatism”, Sir Kenneth Robinson, one of the other committee members said “We just chose what we thought were the finest pictures. It’s not a matter of rejecting one for another”.<sup>145</sup> This sentiment reinforces the argument over the power the IWM has to determine what is remembered related to conflict. The ability to decide not just what is collected, but also how it is mediated and narrated within the museum is an issue with any museum. However, because of the IWM’s link to the UK Government, from its founding in the First World War and due of the size of its collection, the IWM has a greater impact in the remembrance of conflict to any other institution in the UK. Further information on the reason for the choice of *Cleansed* over *Muslim and Croatian* was provided in a letter from Alan Borg to the *Today Programme* on BBC Radio 4. Citing issues over the authenticity of a commissioned war artist creating work retrospectively, Borg writes, “We decided that, although the rape image was a powerful one, it was not something that Howson had actually witnessed and could have been painted by someone who had never visited Bosnia.”<sup>146</sup>

The following day *The Times* included two articles on the decision, which they noted was a disappointment to Howson and the Flowers Gallery, who had set the price to facilitate the purchase.<sup>147</sup> The question of authenticity of the work, due to it not being seen first-hand, “incensed” Howson,

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<sup>144</sup> Richard Brooks, “Bosnian rape too brutal as war art,” *The Observer* (18 September 1994).

<sup>145</sup> Richard Brooks, “Bosnian rape too brutal as war art,” *The Observer* (18 September 1994).

<sup>146</sup> Letter from Alan Borg to BBC Radio 4 *Today* programme 19<sup>th</sup> September 1994. ACNB/CJD/31/106.

<sup>147</sup> Alexandra Frean, “Briton’s Bosnia rape painting may go abroad,” *The Times* (20 September 1994).

Half the collection in the Imperial War Museum consists of scenes not actually seen by the artist...The reason why artists are chosen to go to wars is to use their imagination, otherwise they could just send a photographer.<sup>148</sup>

Alan Borg defended the decision of the committee, calling *Cleansed* “a very strong painting”.<sup>149</sup> However, the editorial team of *The Times* chose not to include the image of the painting *Muslim and Croatian* to support their articles, due to its violent content. They noted that the work was “terrifying” and a “symbol of a savage racial war in which rape and rumours of war have played so dominant a part”, and should have been bought for public display.<sup>150</sup> The article compares *Cleansed*, a “picture of bored, frightened and brutally cheerful refugees squatting by the roadside”, with the IWM’s recent re-creation of the Blitz “only a little less uncomfortable than the journey to Lambeth by Underground”.<sup>151</sup> While the article notes that the museum had the right to choose which work to select, it goes on to say,

We can sympathise with the dilemma of a museum which exists to record the wars of this century in words and images...but which is also a stop on the tourist trail, heavily visited by children and an important educational establishment for teaching history. It is more than an art gallery. Its curators have to tread a fine line between playing Disneyland with guns and telling the truth of war.<sup>152</sup>

The *Daily Telegraph*’s Martin Gayford joined the debate on the choice asking, “What is the fundamental truth about the war in Bosnia?” as he considers whether the IWM had made the correct decision in choosing the “relatively tranquil” *Cleansed* over “a brutal rape scene”.<sup>153</sup> Gayford notes that Howson believed they should have chosen the “tougher painting”, because omitting the violent images does not tell the real story of the Bosnian war.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> Alexandra Frean, “Britain’s Bosnia rape painting may go abroad,” *The Times* (20 September 1994).

<sup>149</sup> Alexandra Frean, “Britain’s Bosnia rape painting may go abroad,” *The Times* (20 September 1994).

<sup>150</sup> “‘Croatian and Muslim’ Rape realism and the war artist,” *The Times* (20 September 1994).

<sup>151</sup> “‘Croatian and Muslim’ Rape realism and the war artist,” *The Times* (20 September 1994).

<sup>152</sup> “‘Croatian and Muslim’ Rape realism and the war artist,” *The Times* (20 September 1994).

<sup>153</sup> Martin Gayford, “Torn between optimism and brutality,” *Daily Telegraph* (21 September 1994).

<sup>154</sup> Martin Gayford, “Torn between optimism and brutality,” *Daily Telegraph* (21 September 1994).

On the effect the war had on his art, Howson conceded, “It has really been the saving of me as an artist”, his previous work “suffered because it hadn’t come out of real experience...[but] now that I’ve actually seen dead bodies and starving children, it has made the work authentic”.<sup>155</sup> Art historian, Dr Paul Gough responded to the article by sending a letter to the *Daily Telegraph*, calling the decision a “long-standing conflict between artistic freedom and heavy-handed officialdom”.<sup>156</sup> Gough draws on the censorship of *Paths of Glory* by Nevinson due to its depiction of dead soldiers in the First World War. He goes on to note that if “the role of art is to provide a critique of life, then Howson’s painting succeeds...it goes beyond the facile fixation with neutral reportage and begins to work as a metaphor for the brutality and destruction of warfare”.<sup>157</sup>

*The Times* returned to the subject at the end of September, with a review of the exhibition by John Young, who described the collection as “vivid and disturbing”, and considered the “painter’s vision puts the horrors of the Bosnian conflict into perspective”.<sup>158</sup> He notes that Howson “felt aggrieved that museum officials appeared to be saying he need not have gone to Bosnia to produce some of his paintings...that they could have been done in a studio using his imagination”.<sup>159</sup> Two days later, Sir Roy Strong who was Director of the Victoria and Albert Museum, joined the media debate in an article published in the *Sunday Times*. He observed the decision of the IWM not to buy *Muslim and Croatian* called into question the point of official war artists.<sup>160</sup> Strong notes the work is “not a pleasant painting...terrible juxtaposition of

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<sup>155</sup> Martin Gayford, “Torn between optimism and brutality,” *Daily Telegraph* (21 September 1994).

<sup>156</sup> Letters to the editor, “Old battle of artists v officials,” *The Daily Telegraph* (24 September 1994).

<sup>157</sup> Letters to the editor, “Old battle of artists v officials,” *The Daily Telegraph* (24 September 1994).

<sup>158</sup> John Young, “Painter’s vision puts the horrors of the conflict into perspective,” *The Times* (22 September 1994).

<sup>159</sup> John Young, “Painter’s vision puts the horrors of the conflict into perspective,” *The Times* (22 September 1994).

<sup>160</sup> Sir Roy Strong, “Images of War, how much reality can we take?” *The Sunday Times* (25 September 1994).

the ordinary and the unnatural” and wondered if the gender split in the committee on the choice said more about how women “share that sense of outrage, while men prefer to hide it away?” and that the IWM prefer to portray sanitised and stylised views of rape in war.<sup>161</sup> Strong concluded the validity of Howson’s work is in its being derived from his own experiences and had they wanted exact reproduction of a scene they might just as well have sent a photographer.<sup>162</sup>

One newspaper who supported the IWM’s decision was *The Evening Standard*, who called the selection of *Cleansed* a “courageous act of good taste” rather than “cowardice, of not wanting to display such a shocking image of female suffering among its Boy’s Own toys”.<sup>163</sup> They reasoned the decision was valid due to the poor quality of Howson’s work, calling the painting hideous, “Two men, bulbous and rubbery like inflatable Popeyes... There is no skill in the picture – it is as crudely drawn as the most sickly pavement cartoon.”<sup>164</sup> Rather than commenting on the act of rape in war, the article questions Howson’s lack of compassion, citing the addition of the photograph in the scene as evidence “Does Mr Howson really think that Bosnians keep framed family photographs on the lavatory wall? ...it suited his purposes to have husband and children looking down calmly at the woman as she is degraded”.<sup>165</sup> It concludes that the work as a “shocking piece of self-promotion” for an artist who saw “his appointment as a war artist as a great career move”.<sup>166</sup>

Patrick Bishop of the *Daily Telegraph*’s article “What exactly are war artists for?” also challenged the appreciation of Howson’s Bosnian works because most of it was not

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<sup>161</sup> Sir Roy Strong, “Images of War, how much reality can we take?” *The Sunday Times* (25 September 1994).

<sup>162</sup> Sir Roy Strong, “Images of War, how much reality can we take?” *The Sunday Times* (25 September 1994).

<sup>163</sup> “A victory for good taste?” *The London Evening Standard*, (27 September 1994).

<sup>164</sup> “A victory for good taste?” *The London Evening Standard*, (27 September 1994).

<sup>165</sup> “A victory for good taste?” *The London Evening Standard*, (27 September 1994).

<sup>166</sup> “A victory for good taste?” *The London Evening Standard*, (27 September 1994).



seen first-hand.<sup>167</sup> Bishop considers that the purpose of the trip was to “stimulate his artistic imagination”, which meant, “As historical records, therefore, the most dramatic paintings must be considered worthless”.<sup>168</sup> Bishop goes on to deny any merit in even those works that were sketched in situ because “Howson’s artistic technique is to transmogrify, exaggerate and distort. In reality much of Bosnia looks like a Swiss tourist-board poster”.<sup>169</sup> On the people Howson has portrayed in his paintings, Bishop concludes, “he has made them all uniformly ugly and bestial with crunched-up faces and few teeth. They have been deprived of their humanity and turned into grotesques”.<sup>170</sup> Even when depicting the UK soldiers Bishop feels Howson has not succeeded artistically and evidences a British army Major known to Bishop as “a cheerful, suntanned figure” who Howson gives “mad staring eyes and a demented air.”<sup>171</sup> Bishop considered that rather than Howson adding a “new dimension” to the appreciation of the conflict, “he really has nothing to say beyond what we all know – that war is horrible.” The article goes on to consider Howson a poor comparison with First World War artists such as Willliam Orpen and Henry Tonks. He comments that Linda Kitson “may be the last war artist to be recognised as such by those painting in the two world wars” and that John Keane was not remembered for any works based on reality.<sup>172</sup> His damning conclusion was that Howson had “subverted the tradition to the point where it is hardly accurate to describe him as a war artist at all”.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> Patrick Bishop, “What exactly are war artists for?” *The Daily Telegraph*, (12 October 1994).

<sup>168</sup> Bishop, “What exactly are war artists for?”

<sup>169</sup> Bishop, “What exactly are war artists for?”

<sup>170</sup> Bishop, “What exactly are war artists for?”

<sup>171</sup> Bishop, “What exactly are war artists for?”

<sup>172</sup> Bishop, “What exactly are war artists for?”

<sup>173</sup> Bishop, “What exactly are war artists for?”

The musician David Bowie eventually purchased *Cleansed* for £18,000 “in order to keep it in the country”.<sup>174</sup> *The Sunday Times* article comments that despite Bowie offering it as a loan to the museum, Borg declined the offer, noting they already had other works by Howson. Bowie reflected that Howson’s depiction of the Bosnian conflict was justified, “The whole war has been about cruelty and humiliation, and that is what this picture portrays...it’s very powerful, and obviously very important.”<sup>175</sup>

As I have shown, the media reports regarding Howson’s Bosnian exhibition focused on his vivid depiction of violence, the debate over the authenticity of retrospective painting and the works chosen for the IWM permanent collection. I have argued that the selection of *Cleansed* depicts the presence of the military as a passive force in the conflict, but secondary to the refugees. The other works, *Three Miles from Home* (Figure: 3), *M.F.U* (Figure: 149) and *Entering Gornji Vakuf* (Figure: 151), highlighting a more active defensive role played by the soldiers. Howson was not, however, the only artist to respond to the Bosnian War, I will consider some of these in the next section and consider how they supplement the depiction of the soldier during this conflict.

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<sup>174</sup> Dylan Jones, “The war of the works,” *The Sunday Times* (9 October 1994). Note: following the death of Bowie, the work was sold to an unknown buyer for the sum of £173,000 on 11 November 2016 at Sotheby’s Auction House.

<sup>175</sup> Dylan Jones, “The war of the works,” *The Sunday Times* (9 October 1994).

## Other images of Bosnia

The number of artists who travelled to the Bosnia limited the artistic representations of the conflict from the UK. The efforts of photojournalists, who sought to make the rest of the world aware of the humanitarian issues experienced by the people in Bosnia, were coupled with soldier artists and those who made work.

In journalism photography many of the images projected a sense of cultural 'otherness' to those in the UK, as they showed rural, old peasant villagers and children such as this image (Figure: 171) from Reuters which shows Bosnians fleeing the warzone. In contrast the photograph taken by a British Army Official Photographer in 1993 (Figure: 172), shows a group of young people in Tuzla. This work features a modern-looking young group of people, only mildly uncomfortable at the prospect of having their photograph taken. A criticism that was made of Howson's painting *Cleansed* was that war was not necessarily obvious from the work.<sup>176</sup> The army photograph, which is similar in its content to Howson's painting, could equally be mistaken for a family snapshot, were it not for the UN tanks in the background. It prompts the question whether war art or war photography needs to include violence or suffering to be included in the genre. It is without doubt that images such as that from Getty (Figure: 147), which shows the obvious discomfort of the child held by her grandfather, are more emotive than the official army photograph, but both highlight that there is no single representation of war. The role of the soldier is included in another of the works by an official Army photographer held at the IWM (Figure: 173). In this work, the soldier stands before a crowd comprising mostly of children. He appears unfeeling, unemotional and uncaring, clothed in military uniform and with his gun in hand, while the children look up at him. The soldier's relationship with the Bosnians in the

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<sup>176</sup> Richard Brooks, "Bosnian rape too brutal as war art," *The Observer*, (18 September 1994).

photograph is in contrast to the interpretation of the soldier produced by Howson, who presents individuals with a sense of dignity and compassion.

While the photographs I have discussed utilise well-used tropes war in photography, George Kilibarda (b.1954), shies away from the obvious narrative of war art. His mother was Bosnian, and on hearing news of the conflict he travelled alone to the area. Despite contacting the IWM with the hope of becoming an official war artist, his local MP newspapers and even the MP Malcom Rifkind, no one would support his desire to go.<sup>177</sup> In an article for *The Sunday Telegraph* he commented, “Most nights I heard stories of atrocities, all committed by the other side. This took the form of bitter gossip, except that it concerned eyes being gouged out, heads being taken”.<sup>178</sup> The pastel work *Serbian Refugees* (Figure: 174) shows none of the violence he refers to, it shows four women knitting in a small room with a bunk bed. With the knowledge that so many atrocities took place during the conflict, this is challenging to see because of its quietness. It depicts women constrained in the room, but with no indication that he is inferring captivity of the rape camps in Kalinovik.<sup>179</sup> The colours are bright soft and warm, which combined with the composition, presents an indication that these traditions continue, despite all the horrors of war.

A more textural work relating to the Bosnian War is *Frontiers 07* by Gerry Judah (b.1951) (Figure: 175) which is held in the IWM collection. Judah had worked in set design after studying fine art at Goldsmiths College and the Slade. His work, inspired by aerial photographs of Mostar in Bosnia, omits not just the soldier but also the civilians from his consideration of war in Bosnia and succeeds in abstracting the material destruction and personal loss, without losing the material impact of the war.

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<sup>177</sup> Byron Rogers, *The Sunday Telegraph* (16<sup>h</sup> Jan 1994).

<sup>178</sup> Byron Rogers, *The Sunday Telegraph* (16<sup>h</sup> Jan 1994).

<sup>179</sup> Robert Frisk, “Bosnian Rape Camps,” *The Independent* (8 February 1993).

While this is an interesting piece, I contest the level of abstraction only infers the loss of life that resulted from this conflict; rendering beauty in the destruction. The stories behind each of the properties, and the people who lived there, are untold and literally whitewashed.

In 1994, the photographer Luc Delahaye (b.1962) said of Howson's art, "I would like to do such work, but I cannot...I am beginning to realise I am limited, that I am in a way misrepresenting the war here. I always have to look for strong moments and I do not pay attention to the weak moments. They are the most important really, the ordinary things."<sup>180</sup> One of these strong moments is Delahaye's image *Biljana Yrhovac wounded by a shell* (Figure: 176). It shows a young girl in a lace white dress, her hair tied with ribbon, laying in blood beside her dead dog. She is injured, her hand and arm damaged, but she is still alive, albeit visibly in pain. Delahaye has taken the photograph from a low angle allowing the viewer to look directly into her eyes. The feet of another smaller child are also visible behind her, eluding to further injury from the mortar attack. A man in the distance looks over unconcerned, with his hands in his pockets. In 2011, an article in *The Guardian* newspaper identified some issues around his work when, "recent large-format, single-plate photographs from global conflicts have crossed over somewhat uncomfortably into the art market."<sup>181</sup> The work is also unsettling because of its record of injury and with it the disquieting impression that the drive to create art superseded helping the injured child.

While this level of violent realism in photography was unpalatable, Ed Vulliamy, who reported on the Howson exhibition "Bosnia and Beyond" at the Flowers Gallery for *New Statesman* in 1997, questioned whether "...the painter's imagination takes us to

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<sup>180</sup> Richard Cork and Robert Crampton *Peter Howson: Bosnia* (London: Imperial War Museum, 1994), 13.

<sup>181</sup> Sean O'Hagan, "Luc Delahaye turns war photography into an uncomfortable art," *The Guardian* (9 Aug 2011).

places where the photographer is forbidden”.<sup>182</sup> Vulliamy had travelled to Bosnia and reported on the conflict, so his views in this article are based on his own personal experience of the war. He compared Howson’s work with the photographs of Tom Stoddard (b.1953), which were being exhibited at the same time. After a summary of the two artists, Vulliamy asks if the painter can say more about war than the photographer.<sup>183</sup> He notes that the inspiration behind John Singer Sergent’s *Gassed* was a series of photographs taken at Bethune in 1918. He notes the limitations of the photographer being that they can only represent what they are present to witness, they “would arrive to see the aftermath: the smouldering rafters, the charred corpses, refugees or prisoners.”<sup>184</sup> While he considers the press were accused of sensationalising the events in Bosnia, the “reality hidden even from Stoddard’s camera was infinitely worse than anything that appeared before the public...but we were not allowed to ‘imagine’ in print. The camera cannot lie but it cannot have nightmares either.”<sup>185</sup> In Stoddard’s photographs from *Siege of Sarajevo* (Figure: 177) he presents a Bosnian woman as defiant, elegant and unharmed as she walks with head held high, past a wall of sandbags, towards the faceless soldier. Vulliamy notes that Stoddard’s work was unique in showing a “sense of empathy with the pride and wretchedness of its victims”, whereas in contrast Howson “confronts the deepest cruelty of this war”.<sup>186</sup> Stoddard’s photographs are so stylised and artful that the sense of horror is lost. In remembering the war, as Stoddard has depicted it, one might be forgiven for assuming that tragic and sorrowful though it was, the atrocities were not so bad. Vulliamy comments that by contrast the painter can enter the “horrificing netherworld” of imagination and

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<sup>182</sup> Ed Vulliamy. “The art of war: Is the truth about Bosnia found in the camera's lens or the mind's eye?” *New Statesman* (Apr 25 1997), 40.

<sup>183</sup> Vulliamy. “The art of war,” 40.

<sup>184</sup> Vulliamy. “The art of war,” 40-41.

<sup>185</sup> Vulliamy. “The art of war,” 41.

<sup>186</sup> Vulliamy. “The art of war,” 41.

reflection, where the journalist and photographer cannot. Each artist has created works based on what he has witnessed and Vulliamy notes that Howson has limited himself to “violence and pity” because that was all he saw, whereas Stoddart “is concerned with defiance and dignity” because he had a deeper understanding of the war, having been there for longer.

On the subject of the image of the soldier in the art created during the Bosnian War, David Rowlands (b.1952) would seem an important inclusion. However, although Rowlands website notes that in 1993 he was “the first artist to visit Bosnia and record the work of British troops”, his works are not included in the IWM collection.<sup>187</sup>

Rowlands is a figurative painter with a background in the army and a portfolio of works from different military conflicts.<sup>188</sup> He travelled from Split to Vitez and Travnik, took part in the patrols and missions to bring refugees to safety across the fighting lines, and produced his paintings from the sketches completed in Bosnia. In *Turbe* (Figure: 178) soldiers of The Cheshire Regiment accompany tanks as they progress through the village. The soldiers are armed and appear alert to danger, while smaller and secondary to the tanks, they are easily visible due to the composition. In the work *Clear the Way* (Figure: 179) Rowlands depicts the work of the Royal Engineers widening roads in 1993, showing a convoy of the Royal Logistic Corps. The work was based on sketches he made in 1993 as he travelled by Land Rover to Gornji Vakuf with members of 8 Squadron RLC.<sup>189</sup> In, *The Recovery of Lance Corporal Edwards' Warrior*, (Figure: 180) he depicts the heroic soldiers in the face of adversity as Lance Corporal Edwards, the driver of a Warrior tank was shot and killed by a sniper, rendering the tank out of action and the other soldiers in danger. Corporal Bancroft is shown in the painting on

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<sup>187</sup> [http://www.davidrowlands.co.uk/gallery/gal\\_detail.asp?varPaintCode=006](http://www.davidrowlands.co.uk/gallery/gal_detail.asp?varPaintCode=006) accessed 19/10/2018.

<sup>188</sup> For further information, see David Rowlands, *The Military Art of David Rowlands*. (London: Brasseys's, 2003).

<sup>189</sup> David Rowlands, *The Military Art of David Rowlands*. (London: Brasseys's, 2003).

top of the tank as he took the heroic task of exposing himself to gunfire to save the men. Rowlands sketched the area a few days later and used the sketches and the story of bravery to produce the work. The paintings are held in the collections of military organisations, and this seems to be the intended audience as Rowlands is not attempting to challenge any concepts of war, and he rarely features the Bosnian people caught up in the events. His focus on the soldier makes them an important inclusion in my research, but although Rowlands paintings are records of a moment in the conflict, they lack the nuanced exploration of the subject that artists such as Howson achieved.

Another artist whose focus on the soldier is central to his art in Bosnia is Jonathan Armigel Wade (b.1960). His painting *Mine-Clearing by Hand near Vitez, Bosnia* (Figure: 181) is held by the National Army Museum. Like Rowlands, Wade had a background in the army and visited Bosnia in 1994 to paint military subjects, sometimes basing his work on photographs. The painting *Mine-Clearing by Hand near Vitez, Bosnia* shows 49 Squadron, Royal Engineers, from the 33 Engineer Regiment (Explosive Ordnance Disposal), engaged in mine clearance. The detail of the work and the perilous nature of the task implies that the artist did not make the painting in situ. Having the benefit of technical knowledge and using photographs to inform the composition is highly likely in this work. The method of painting is accurate and precise and omits any emotional relationship with the soldiers or the task they are carrying out. While Howson's paintings of the journey through the Bosnian roads were filled with a sense of danger in the woodland, Wade produces an impression of tranquillity in the surrounding countryside. He depicts soldiers who are professionals and to whom no task is too difficult when working as a team.

The artists and photographers I have presented for this section show there were many alternative representations of both the Bosnian War and of the soldiers within it.

However, Howson had the unique position of being the only artist commissioned by the



IWM with the task of memorialising the conflict through his art. In the conclusion of this chapter, I will consider the impact on the remembrance of the Bosnian War, Howson's depiction of the soldier and the choices made by the IWM.

## Conclusion

While the focus of Howson's works during his commission in Bosnia centred on the image of the refugee and the victim of violence, I have shown in this chapter that where the soldier is included their depiction is significant as a symbol of protector. This consequence is partially due to Howson's own history of being a soldier and experiencing the negative aspects of the institution but also due to his relationship with the soldiers in an active warzone. In my earlier chapter, I considered how the soldier had been interpreted in art and I noted that scholars had found the image of the hero and the heroic sacrifice prevalent. I have shown in this chapter that Howson's work does not align with this representation. However, when Howson's works are viewed through the understanding of UK government's actions to "...sabotage any kind of international political - and later military - intervention to curb Serb aggression and ethnic cleansing", even opposing the French idea of a military force in Croatia in 1991, the image of the soldier as protector becomes more complex.<sup>190</sup> Howson's experience of the soldiers as protectors is primarily subjective, they were indeed tasked with protecting him and each other, but their remit with regard to the civilians was much more passive. An awareness of the role of the soldiers leads to the reading of the work *Cleansed* (Figure: 164), which shows the civilians outside of the protection of the military, unwanted and abandoned, as a more accurate depiction of the soldier in the conflict than perhaps Howson had intended.

Heller (2003) considered Howson's art was frequently based on "a vast anthology of memories, images and observations dating right back from early childhood" in which the bully and the soldier is a repeated theme.<sup>191</sup> Where Howson's works prior to the conflict depicted masculinity exemplified by muscular prowess, "dominated by

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<sup>190</sup> Brendan Simms, *Unfinest Hour: Britain and the destruction of Bosnia* (London: Penguin, 2002), 38.

<sup>191</sup> Robert Heller, *Peter Howson* (London: Momentum, 2003), 9.

aggression. Preoccupied with the spectre of a land peopled by snarling thugs” the art created for this commission extended his representation of masculinity.<sup>192</sup> In a review of the Film *Small Faces* in 1995 the critic Geoffrey Macnab notes the film follows the same “Glaswegian myth” as depicted in Howson’s work “rooted in the cult of the 'hard man' in the hard city. High art and machismo”<sup>193</sup> Even in 1998, after his commission, he was still being described as a painter of “sweating muscle-men in apocalyptic cityscapes.”<sup>194</sup>

However, in his work in the Bosnia War, rather than continuing to depict the soldier as the muscle bound bully from his time as an army recruit, Howson evolved his portrayal of the military from being a perpetrator of violence to a guardian of peace, from Howson’s aggressor to protector. This image stands in contrast to the Bosnian, Croatian or Serbian soldiers he meets while on exercises, who are portrayed as unkempt, savage and dangerous. I have demonstrated that Howson presents a soldier who protects the vulnerable and only fights when necessary to get the humanitarian task completed. He depicts the soldier as considerate and empathic in the face of the violence, but rarely overwhelmed by it. Despite this subtlety in modification of the theme of the soldier by Howson, it has been overlooked by academic research, which has instead focused on his images of violence by those at war.

The impact of his own emotional trauma at witnessing the atrocities of war was important to Howson in the validity of his art. In an interview for *The Times* in 1993 he reflects on the difference between civilians and soldiers,

I noticed that the first time a civilian like myself comes into contact with something horrific, he or she reacts really badly, whereas the soldiers have seen

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<sup>192</sup> Richard Cork and Robert Crampton *Peter Howson: Bosnia* (London: Imperial War Museum, 1994), 36.

<sup>193</sup> George Macnab, “Small faces,” *Sight and Sound*, (1996):6, 53-54.

<sup>194</sup> David Cohen, “Pleasing states of decay,” *New Statesman*, (30 January 1998):11, 40.

it all before and know how to distance themselves, of necessity, from it. They take it in their stride – even use laughter as a defence mechanism.<sup>195</sup>

While he considered that prolonged exposure to conflict might have the same effect on him, Howson believed this was a negative trait for an artist, noting “my ability to function as an artist would have been finished”.<sup>196</sup> This reflection by Howson might explain why artists who have a background in the army such as Rowlands and Wade produce art lacking in emotional impact.

Much of the comment around Howson’s work was the debate on the selection of the work for the IWM and the validity of a war artist developing representations of conflict from stories of atrocities rather than actual witness. Unlike the artists, Linda Kitson and John Keane, Howson experienced a horrific and ongoing war. As Howson notes, the difference between this conflict and the Gulf war is, “...there is nothing clean or modern or high-tech about it. It’s medieval almost: great pleasure is being taken in killing people, medieval tortures are being used.”<sup>197</sup> Despite the peril, he had mixed feelings of being inspired by the different environment, as he noted after his first trip “...there’s more material for me as an artist there than the whole past fifteen years of being in Glasgow. The sixteen days were the most intense of my life”.<sup>198</sup> While the IWM received criticism for not choosing works by Howson which showed the grim reality of war, ostensibly because they were developed from second hand experiences, Crampton (1994) considered that Howson’s work was, “just as valid as a reporters of photographers, or a soldiers, maybe more so because in some sense it is more profound”.<sup>199</sup> Crampton went on to note that while Howson was restricted in what he actually witnessed, “...the truth is, women *do* get raped in war, men *do* get castrated,

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<sup>195</sup> Alan Jackson. “War at first hand,” *The Times Magazine* (10 July 1993), 25-28.

<sup>196</sup> Alan Jackson. “War at first hand,” *The Times Magazine* (10 July 1993), 25-28.

<sup>197</sup> Alan Jackson, “War at first hand,” *The Times Magazine* (10 July 1993), 25-28.

<sup>198</sup> Richard Cork and Robert Crampton *Peter Howson: Bosnia* (London: Imperial War Museum, 1994), 11.

<sup>199</sup> Cork and Crampton *Peter Howson: Bosnia*, 14.

children *do* turn into monsters”.<sup>200</sup> This questions not just the role of the war artist but also of the power that selecting committee have on the memorialisation of war. While the initial definition of IWM collection was to collect artistic records of war where, “artistic merit is a most desirable accompaniment of such records”, it was also important that there was some element of first-hand experience.<sup>201</sup> If the images which are collected are to be held up as the historic account of the conflict then the selection of works which do not show these realities is a questionable use of public funds.

Despite his time in the warzone being described by Tom Morton in 1998 in *Scotland on Sunday*, as a “sojourn in Bosnia”, the art produced by Howson during his two visits affirmed and extended the images of violence published in the national newspapers during the conflict.<sup>202</sup> The press were unable to print images of violence, but Howson could include them in his art. Howson took hidden atrocities, and brought them out into the light. As the Flowers Gallery note on their website, the works from his commission are “astounding historical documents: representing the deep and ingrained impact that the scenes in Bosnia had on Peter”.<sup>203</sup> In 1994, Daniel Farson wrote in the *The Mail on Sunday* that Howson produced works with “a disturbingly raw power” that reminds the viewer “so vividly of the daily degradation”, and which goes against the saturation of news reporting.<sup>204</sup> He goes on to draw comparisons with the artists of the First World War, commenting, “Howson’s work shocks us, in the finest tradition of war artists such as Paul Nash”.<sup>205</sup> I have shown that through a knowledge of the worst and the best characteristics a soldier can display. Howson refused to depict the soldier as a heroic

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<sup>200</sup> Cork and Crampton *Peter Howson: Bosnia*, 14.

<sup>201</sup> IWM, Central Files A1/4, 'Committees Internal - Art Committee', Memorandum by Secretary to Conway, 28<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1918.

<sup>202</sup> Tom Morton, “Artist’s brush with Ugliness,” *Scotland on Sunday* (27 September 1998).

<sup>203</sup> Alan Jackson *A Different Man: Peter Howson's art, from Bosnia and beyond* (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 1997), 112.

<sup>204</sup> Daniel Farson, “Brush with death,” *The Mail on Sunday* (3 Oct 1994).

<sup>205</sup> Daniel Farson, “Brush with death,” *The Mail on Sunday* (3 Oct 1994).

caricature or as the bullish brute he had experienced in his past, instead he chose to define the soldier as a positive figure of hope amongst the chaos of war.

In the concluding chapter of this thesis, I will consolidate my research into the representation of the soldier within the Falklands, Gulf and Bosnian wars, and reflect on how the commissioning of artists Kitson, Keane and Howson by the IWM has memorialised the soldier in these conflicts; reflecting on the role of the museum in enabling and curating an artistic history of contemporary conflict.

## **Conclusion: The Soldier Remembered**

In my introduction to this thesis, I maintained the originality of my research is in my addressing the lack of detailed consideration of the image of the soldier within the works of Kitson, Keane and Howson. I have argued that this is an important omission as each of these artists provide a counterpoint to the representation of the soldier seen in war art from the First and Second World Wars, where the image of the soldier as a heroic, masculine and nationalist symbol were prevalent in art. Kitson's experience demonstrates the challenge of impartiality when working as a war artist. Her emotional connection to the soldiers results in a lack of injured soldiers in her work, thereby reinforcing the concept of the soldier as hero. However, her work refrains from depicting a soldier who is an exaggerated masculine ideal or nationalist symbol. She experienced the war alongside the soldiers, and drew them as individuals. Keane's use of the camera allowed him to reflect on his reactions to the conflict and to incorporate media responses. He balances a nuanced depiction of the soldier with a critical view of the concept of war, showing the soldier as an individual, involved but ultimately used as a weapon in the destruction in the war causes. Keane omits symbols that would signpost the viewer to UK involvement in the conflict, but highlights the power and influence of the USA, presenting a soldier who is not a nationalistic symbol but one who is a participant in a war of nations with very different cultures. I have argued that Howson depicted the violence and chaos perpetuated by all sides in this civil war, but the UK soldiers were portrayed as a source of reassuring certainty and as a humanitarian protector. To Howson, the soldiers who accompanied him were heroes, saving him from violence, but he resists in making them caricatures of the heroic warrior. His works show soldiers who, like Howson, are emotionally affected by war.

I have evidenced that the representation of the soldier has been the subject of extensive academic debate within the art of the First and Second World Wars, the originality of my research is demonstrated in the comparative lack concerning later conflicts, and none that considers the artists Kitson, Howson, and Keane together. The focus of my thesis is based on themes from this academic foundation, with the knowledge that the soldier as a hero, masculine ideal and nationalist symbol are not the only frameworks through which to consider these works. Arguments over the creation and display of war art and its ability to inspire new conflicts was a concern to those in government after the First World War, due to the links the IWM had with the Department of Propaganda. While many works in the museum that present a nationalist justification for war show the soldier as a hero who was undamaged even in death, I have evidenced that some, such as Nash and Nevinson, did show the bleak reality. As the collection at the IWM was extended to cover later wars, the commissioning process continued to remain opaque and changed very little but the ability of the artist to be more critical of war became more acceptable. However, this change did not extend to the image of the soldier. There is still an expectation that art commissioned by the IWM depicting the soldier should represent the best of the nation. My framework for the investigation in the works of Kitson, Keane and Howson was to consider how far these artists adhered to the generalisation of the soldier as a hero and nationalist symbol constitutes new and important research into these artists. My thesis argues that existing publications relating to their works resist from any critical engagement. My focal research question was how the artist's representation the soldier in art informs awareness of the UK soldiers who were involved in the conflict. Through a detailed iconographic study, which has included primary archival research, close reading of selected works resulting from the commission and interviews with the artists, I have produced new understanding of the works commissioned by the IWM during this period. I have also placed the art of



Kitson, Keane and Howson within other art relating to the conflicts, including photography.

I have argued that the role the IWM had in commissioning war art was significant in determining how the soldier is remembered. When the IWM was established in 1917, it would have been unprecedented to consider the lasting impact of the museum on the representation of those involved in conflict over the last hundred years. Those involved in its formation considered that the role of the museum “as an embodiment and lasting memorial of common effort and common sacrifice” would be complete when the First World War ended.<sup>1</sup> As my thesis has shown, the museum’s collection policy was extended, initially to include the Second World War and then to cover other wars where the UK troops were involved. In each conflict, they have commissioned artists and collected works to add to the museum collection, but the means of selection has changed little from the First World War.

The influence of IWM Artistic Records Committee on curating history is evidenced in its ability to select artists for commissions, and to choose which works are ultimately included in the national collection. As Duncan (1998) comments;

To control a museum means precisely to control the representation of a community and its highest values and truths . . . What we see and do not see in . . . museums and on what terms and by whose authority we do or do not see it is closely linked to larger questions about who constitutes the community and who defines its identity.<sup>2</sup>

During the period covered by my thesis, the committee chose artists they knew through reputation and exhibitions. Archival evidence has shown that their selection was driven by a desire to curate a specific style of work for the museum, the committee choosing more experimental and subjective artists over the figurative pictorial styles of the army

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<sup>1</sup> Opening speech King George of the collection when housed at Crystal Palace on 9th of June 1920, IWM EN1/ 1/MUS/3/2.

<sup>2</sup> Carol Duncan, “The Art Museum as Ritual,” in Donald Preziosi (ed.), *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 474-5.

artists such as David Cobb. As Alan Borg, Director General of the IWM at the time, noted regarding the appointment of Keane, they were looking for “an artist of personal integrity and individual vision”, someone “...who would give something other than a direct record of events”.<sup>3</sup> The decisions made by the committee had specific impact on the images of the soldier in the collection.

Like the artists during the First World War, Kitson, Keane and Howson were tasked with generating art from events they that they had actually seen, but each artist had internal influences that affected the work they would produce. Kitson wanted to return with a sincere interpretation of war. While she believed she was accepting the commission “without preconception”, her viewpoint was one derived from no knowledge of the realities of conflict.<sup>4</sup> In contrast to this measured opinion, she was also quoted as having a desire to “bring back drawings which would make people think we should never fight again”, which indicates more purposeful expectations, that were never realised.<sup>5</sup> Keane’s political opinion on war was well known to both the IWM and the press. He had experience in presenting works that challenged the impact of media and commercialism, he had already created art related to conflict and had even been part of anti-war demonstrations. As Keane noted on his propensity towards pacifism in 1991, “I’m not a supporter of the war. I can’t see that it solved any problems”.<sup>6</sup> Howson’s work prior to the commission was often informed by his past experiences in the Army, and focused on the dark realities and violent undercurrents in society. He was a successful artist for whom the commission was a new and exciting challenge. While he had been aware of the civil war in Bosnia through news coverage and had a strong desire to respond artistically, he noted there were also personal reasons for

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<sup>3</sup> John Keane and Angela Weight, *Gulf* (London: Imperial War Museum, 1992), 3.

<sup>4</sup> Linda Kitson Oral History tapes, IWM 13727.

<sup>5</sup> *The Daily Mirror* (12 May 1982), 4.

<sup>6</sup> John Fowler, “Portrait of the artist at war,” *Glasgow Herald* (11 Oct 1991).

going, "...my opportunity for rebirth...It was a decision I was making for my soul."<sup>7</sup>

While there was no direction from the IWM on the type of work each artist should produce, when the IWM commissioned Kitson, Keane and Howson, it was anticipating what would be created as a permanent record of the conflict, and the soldiers who served, based on the IWM's knowledge of the style and intent of each of the artists.

In his 2007 publication Koureas noted, "The establishment and inauguration of the IWM provided a platform from which a national identity could be established, but most importantly, it could provide a forum in which a hegemonic memory of war masculinities could be promoted."<sup>8</sup> My thesis has shown that Kitson, Keane and Howson did not challenge the image of the soldier represented in the First World War. Each of the artists' works included images of the soldiers they had lived with and had formed relationships with, but in none of the works has the UK soldier been shown as anything other than a symbol of respect. While Howson experienced initial hostility on his first visit to Bosnia, this was never represented in his art. During his second visit, when he integrated more closely, his relationship improved. This led to his representation of the soldier as a source of stability in comparison with the chaos and violence of the civil war. Kitson felt looked after by those she travelled with on the QE2 to the Falklands and was always treated with respect. The long duration of her post resulted in the creation of friendships, driven by shared experiences on the island. Her drawings reinforced the idea of the soldier as individuals within a larger force. Her work also exemplified her own feelings about the weapons of war, which were alien and absorbing; consuming the soldier. While Keane spent some of his time with the Press groups that were in the Gulf, his photographs of the soldiers evidenced that he

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<sup>7</sup> Alan Jackson *A Different Man: Peter Howson's art, from Bosnia and beyond* (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 1997), 28.

<sup>8</sup> Gabriel Koureas, *Memory Masculinity and National Identity in British Visual Culture 1914-1930* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2007), 182.

also spent time with them and had a good relationship. Where soldiers are included in his paintings they are shown as professionals with individualism.

While injury and loss of life is a sad reality of war, and one that would be expected to be included in any archive of conflict, only Howson depicts the soldier as being emotionally engaged with the war, in their interactions with civilians and loss of life. Kitson witnessed the bombing of the Sir Galahad, the resulting burn injuries and dead. She was also present when medical operations took place and where the dead were laid out prior to being sent home. However, through deference to the individuals and their families she did not use this as the subject of any of her drawings. As Peter Jenkins noted in *The Guardian* in 1982 "...in place of live pictures of burning flesh and mutilated limbs, we have seen romantic line drawings of the kind I remember in Boys Own."<sup>9</sup> For Kitson, her loss of objectivity continues to be a source of regret because it implied a lack of autonomy in her work, "I was in no way subjected to censorship, but people saw that empathy in my work. I have encountered hostility from other artists ever since – they think I was just part of the war machine."<sup>10</sup> The difficulty was self-censorship, driven by a feeling of regard of the soldiers who were not able to give their consent to be drawn. As she commented in an interview with me in 2017, she instead focused on positive aspects of war, "...sharing interesting things; who wants to share grief and suffering?"<sup>11</sup>

When Keane returned to land after being on ship in the Persian Gulf he only saw one corpse, that of an Iraqi soldier. This image featured in a number of works, but most prominently in *Oil Painting* (Figure: 107) where he presents a focused and poignant response to war. While this work unequivocally says 'people die in war', the ritualistic

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<sup>9</sup> Peter Fuller, "The Art of War," *The Sunday Correspondent* (24 August 1990).

<sup>10</sup> Steve Boggan, "Scarred by the art of war," *The Independent* (9 October 1991).

<sup>11</sup> Linda Kitson interview with Jayne Buchanan (17 May 2017).

laying out of this dead soldier and the undamaged nature of his body describes a death, which is in contrast to that seen in Kenneth Jareke's *Just Another War* photographs.<sup>12</sup> When Keane returned home to develop the paintings from the photographs and video he had taken in the Gulf, the lack of casualties was addressed through use of images from the media. He created the work *Death Squad* (Figure: 2) using images from the television to strengthen the narrative of the impact of war on life. However, even in this work, it is the plight of the living soldiers in their uncomfortable task of carrying the body bag that is highlighted over that of the dead. Through his own reaction to a gas attack in *An Ecstasy of Fumbling (Portrait of the Artist in a Gas Alert)* (Figure: 102), Keane presents the wide-eyed reality of fear in wartime. It begs the question 'what would you do?' as a civilian caught up in war, but does not suggest the same fear is experienced by regular soldiers.

Kitson was interviewed in 1991 about her desire to continue her work as a war artist in the Gulf War and gave her views on the importance of the role "Art is the most long-stay record that people get. It becomes history... We must have a memory, visions of what it was like at the time."<sup>13</sup> In the First World War, those who had served were remembered in the works created by the War Artists but as Jay Winter (1995) notes that was not the only means this "human catastrophe was encoded culturally" it was also through images of the dead, war memorials, poetry and social action such as the ceremonies and commemorative rites.<sup>14</sup> He considers the war memorial is a site "...symbolic exchange, where the living admit a degree of indebtedness to the fallen which can never be fully discharged."<sup>15</sup> I argue that although the paintings of Kitson, Keane and Howson have been created about war, from actual experience and in the

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<sup>12</sup> Jareke, Kenneth and Cervenka, Exene. *Just Another War*. (Joiet, Montana: Bedrock Press, 1992).

<sup>13</sup> Lesley Garner, "Drawn to do battle once more," *The Sunday Telegraph* (20th January 1991).

<sup>14</sup> Jay Winter, *Sites of memory, sites of mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 225.

<sup>15</sup> Jay Winter, *Sites of memory*, 94.

case of Kitson, with some of the desire to uphold the memory of the sacrifice the soldiers have given, they are not memorials. The works represent a subjective form of remembrance that is dependent on what the artist experienced and what they wanted to depict.

The work of each of the war artists in my corpus was exhibited following the wars. I have shown that these events were met with some contention by those who attended. Kitson's work was criticised for not depicting injury and loss experienced in the Falklands War. While Keane's focus on the soldier was overlooked in place of criticism over his challenge to the involvement of the US and the extent to which money and greed drives conflict. The honesty of the violent scenes in Howson's works were too much for many, including the IWM, to bear. Howson showed that the while soldiers of the UN stood outside the atrocities that were perpetrated on and by those living in the area, they experienced the trauma of bearing witness to the nightmare. As with Keane, those who served in the forces from the UK in Bosnia were overlooked in critical debate of Howson's work. I have shown that the contrast of the UN forces in their role as guardian and aid to those in peril with the armies in Croatian, Serbian and Bosnian soldiers, who raped, killed and injured was significant.

To endure as a lasting remembrance to the conflicts requires the artworks purchased by the IWM to continue to be seen by the public, because unlike a memorial that stands in the community, art is dependent on the museum exhibiting the work. In 1983, Kitson's Falklands War drawings were the subject of one of a seven part series by the BBC called "Images of War" which highlighted her importance both as a war artist in the Falklands War and the ground-breaking role she played as the first female war artist.<sup>16</sup> Later in 1983, Kitson took a commission to work on the set of the film *The Killing*

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<sup>16</sup> Eric Brown (ed) Tom Conway (Producer), *Images of War* (BBC TV 1983).

Fields.<sup>17</sup> It was that here that she drew the bodies of the dead, which she had not allowed herself to draw in the Falklands (Figure: 182). Although only fabricated bodies, the mass graves of the set have a resonance of realism. In an interview for *The Sunday Telegraph*, they noted Kitson “tried to put into practice the lesson she learned in the Falklands – not to over identify with the subjects”<sup>18</sup> in these works. The emotional legacy of the war on Kitson was commented on when she was interviewed in 1991 for *The Independent*, that for her “war will not end” with “memories that still surface and reduce her to hysterics”.<sup>19</sup> Kitson’s legacy as a war artist ensured she was featured in and an exhibition at the IWM entitled “Women War Artists”, at IWM North in 2009 and London in 2011.<sup>20</sup> In 2018, her works continue to form part of the cultural memory of the Falklands with their inclusion in the current displays at the IWM and Fleet Air Arm Museum.

In 1992, the year after Keane’s return from the Gulf, his works were exhibited at IWM in London, the Northern Centre for Contemporary Art in Sunderland, the Graves Art Gallery in Sheffield, Tullie House in Carlisle and the Aberdeen Art Gallery. In 1998, *Conflicts of Interests* was a retrospective exhibition of his works, including those from the Gulf War at Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle-upon-Tyne. On the twentieth anniversary of the conflict, IWM North curated *The Gulf War 1990 - 1991, Photographs* in which his paintings and photographs were included. While only *Mickey Mouse at the Front* (Figure: 123) is on display by the IWM at the time of writing this thesis, the IWM does not have sole control over display of his paintings. Other Gulf works were retained by Flowers Gallery and in 2018 were exhibited in *Life During Wartime* at Summerhall in Edinburgh. The paintings were also shown in *Art, Conflict and Context*, in London

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<sup>17</sup> *The Killing Fields*, Film directed by David Puttnam is the story of two journalists: Cambodian Dith Pran and American Sydney Schanberg caught up in the Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia.

<sup>18</sup> Lesley Garner, “Drawn to do battle once more,” *The Sunday Telegraph* (20 January 1991).

<sup>19</sup> Steve Boggan, “Scarred by the art of war” *The Independent* (9 October 1991).

<sup>20</sup> Rachel Aspden, “War through Women’s Eyes,” *New Statesman* (16 March 2009):44-46.

during 2017. Additionally, Keane's Gulf works were purchased by galleries outside the IWM. The Royal Air Force Museum own *Payload* (Figure: 99) and the National Army Museum own *An Ecstasy of Fumbling* (Figure: 104). Keane continues to explore themes of conflict and the impact of media reporting after his commission with the IWM, addressing issues in Angola, Ruanda and the political uncertainty of the times.<sup>21</sup>

The exhibition *Peter Howson: Bosnia* was held at the IWM in 1993, works were also presented at the Glasgow Print Studio with the exhibition *Bosnian Harvest*. While the direction of Howson's paintings moved away from war after his trips to Bosnia, conflict of another type was included in his *Football Paintings*, which were exhibited in 1998. These works recalled the hostility seen in *Blind leading the Blind* (Figure: 146), with musclebound rivals baring up to each other in the name of sport. The legacy of the war was continued with in the exhibition *Sex, War, and Religion*, at Flowers East, London in 1999. Interviews following his commission with the IWM indicate that the psychological impact of the war was lasting, "more traumatic than I could ever have imagined."<sup>22</sup> After Bosnia, Howson has explored many themes; he worked on the set design of *Don Giovanni* at the Theatre Royal, Glasgow, before returning to subjects of sex and violence. More recently, his work has explored images of divinity, and in 2011 he was commissioned to create a work depicting Saint John Ogilvie at Blessed Sacrament Chapel of St Andrew's Cathedral. Unlike the Falklands War and the Gulf War, the conflict in Bosnia does not feature in official UK remembrances. This was a war played out on foreign soils, and the UK involvement, although significant, did not result in the level of loss of life seen in the other two conflicts.<sup>23</sup> Whereas

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<sup>21</sup> Other exhibitions featuring his work were *Children in Conflict* (2009). Herbert Art Gallery Museum, Coventry), *Angola* (2008. Flowers Gallery, London) and *Guantanamo*, (2007. Flowers, New York).

<sup>22</sup> Angela Neustatter, "A life in the day of..." *The Sunday Times* (9 October 1994).

<sup>23</sup> Although 13,000 soldiers took part in the peacekeeping work only three British soldiers were killed when their vehicle hit a land mine in 1996, this was the first since they joined the UN operation.



Kitson is often interviewed about her experiences as a war artist, Howson's role as a war artist has not been the focus of media interest to the same level.

I have shown in my thesis the image of the soldier was upheld as a positive icon by all the artists who were commissioned by the IWM during this period. I suggest that a contributing factor to this was the relationship that they were able to build with the troops, due to them being artists within the army. I have evidenced the artists had a genuine respect for the soldiers they worked with. The soldiers were trained to cope with the physical and psychological experience of war, and with the knowledge that the artists did not have this aptitude, attended to their needs and ensured they were safe. The importance of artists 'bringing back' a first-hand account of the conflicts they attended was one of the key features of the collection of war art during the First World War, when artists such as Muriel Bone were commissioned. This legacy of the war artist provided the soldiers with a framework of interaction, which differed from that with journalists.

My thesis has highlighted the tradition of showing soldiers as heroic masculine icons, was evident in war art in the First World War. While the artists in my corpus have not overtly implemented this generalisation, and have represented soldiers as individuals with nuanced relationship to the conflict in which they were a part, there has been no attempt, or perhaps opportunity, to challenge the representation of the soldier. To subscribe to the idea that the soldier is a motif of nationalism, it is required that the soldier is depicted with high standards of morality or heroism. Therefore, when the soldier is shown to be anything less, it asks the nation to consider its own culpability in the events of war. An example of this was on 1st May 2003, following the Second Gulf War, when photographs were published in *The Mirror*, which appeared to show British troops torturing an Iraqi detainee. The initial uproar that met the photographs was followed by the resignation of the editor of *The Mirror*, Piers Morgan, as they were

identified as being manipulated and were actually taken at a Territorial Army base in Lancashire. The BBC reported that Colonel Black, a former regiment commander of the Queens Lancashire Regiment, said, "...the pictures put lives in danger and acted as a "recruiting poster" for al-Qaeda." Despite the knowledge that the photographs were fake, others came forward confirming that torture did occur in Iraq at the hands of the UK forces. However, this was never substantiated. In 2004, there was evidence of the role of the US military departing from the representation of soldier hero with photographs from Abu Ghraib showing torture of Iraqi detainees.<sup>24</sup> One of the photographs (Figure: 183), which was released to the press reporting on the investigation and prosecution of the soldiers involved, was of a hooded prisoner with wires coming from his body, balancing on a box. The photograph was seen by the sculptor Tim Shaw (b.1964) who, went on to create *Casting a Dark Democracy* (Figure: 184) based on the photograph. Although the work has never been exhibited at the IWM, the museum did engage with the incident through the purchase of Abu Ghraib paintings by the South African artist Albert Adams (1929-2006), which were derived from the photographs of the torture (Figure:185). However, despite being *about* a negative aspect of the soldier, both Shaw and Adams works focus on the victim of the abuse and not the soldier as perpetrator. In 2013, Adam's works were included at IWM North's exhibition *Catalyst: Contemporary Art and War* in 2013 displayed alongside that of Keane. The exhibition also included the IWM commissioned work by Steve McQueen (b.1949) *For Queen and Country* (Figure: 186) which was developed by the artist to represent the ninety-eight members of the armed service who had died in the Second Gulf War. McQueen created sheets of postage stamps featuring a portrait, selected by their families, of each of the dead, held in a large rectangular wooden box,

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<sup>24</sup> Seymour M. Hersh, "Torture at Abu Ghraib: American soldiers brutalized Iraqis. How far up does the responsibility go?" *New Yorker* (30 April 2004).

not unlike a coffin, to serve as a memorial of loss.<sup>25</sup> While McQueen's work asks the viewer to contemplate the sacrifice war requires of the soldiers and their families, I contest the reality of death and injury is aestheticised.

The focus of my thesis on the image of the soldier by the artists Kitson, Keane and Howson has resulted in a number of additional opportunities for future academic investigation. Each conflict has been the subject of film and television programmes, which unsurprisingly feature the soldier. When Fran Pheasant-Kelly considered the work of Christopher Nolan's New Millennium Films (2015) she wrote of "an already established crisis in masculinity which happens to coincide with his predilection for narratives involving ambiguous identity and mental disorder...Nolan's signification of trauma is connected to his concerns with uncertain identity, in the way that perpetrator guilt and victim trauma overlap."<sup>26</sup> Although film has been outside the scope of my investigation, a valid comparative work would be to examine the representation of the soldier in film and television during the late twentieth century.

The imagery of the soldier in computer game is the subject of some debate as noted Carden-Coyne's (2016) chapter *Culture Shock* and in Ramsay's 2015 article. *Brutal Games: Call of Duty and the Cultural Narrative of World War II*.<sup>27</sup> An investigation of the representation of the Falklands, Gulf and Bosnian Wars in this games market, specifically in the representation of the soldier, would also provide an area for future study.

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<sup>25</sup> Adrian Searle, "Last Post," *The Guardian* (12 March 2007).

<sup>26</sup> Fran Pheasant-Kelly, "Representing Trauma: Grief, Amnesia and Traumatic Memory in Nolan's New Millennial Films", in *The Cinema of Christopher Nolan: Imagining the Impossible* ed. Jacqueline Furby, Stuart Joy (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 2015).

<sup>27</sup> Anna Carden-Coyne, *Reconstructing the Body: Classicism, Modernism, and the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) and Debra Ramsay, "Brutal Games: Call of Duty and the Cultural Narrative of World War II" *Cinema Journal*, 2015: 54(2), 94-113.

Additionally, as women have only recently been permitted to attend conflict zones alongside their male counterparts, the image of the female warrior in the collection of the IWM, in art and in the media is an area of research that is important. The IWM continues to develop and reinterpret its collection on the subject of war and conflict and still receives nearly half of its funding from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).<sup>28</sup> As a state funded institution, it is important to review the image of war and the soldiers that the IWM is curating and collecting for the country. The IWM continues to fund a number of PhD studentships each year allowing the academic investigation of its collection and making the further exploration of the representation of the soldier in their collection possible. However, this is dependent on the goals of the museum, and there is still a need for academic study of our national institutions from beyond their walls of influence.

Despite my concerns regarding the lack of transparency in the selection of artists to depict conflicts in the late twentieth century, I conclude by noting the enduring importance of the war artist and role of the IWM in commissioning art. The museum's commissioning goals have changed little since the First World War when they sought to create a lasting legacy of conflict, and it is the museum's commissioning and curatorial team who hold the power to define what is generated, seen and remembered of those who serve in war. In accepting that heavy burden, the IWM must ensure the image of the soldier is not framed by the nations hope for a hero or with a rudimentary view of masculinity, but with the reality that the museum is a site of memory for the country. This role is sometimes at odds with the business of running a profitable, family focused museum of war. However, the reality that soldiers are damaged by war,

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<sup>28</sup> In a letter dated 10<sup>th</sup> April 2011 from Dianne Lees to IWM, the Government agreed to continue to fund the IWM subject to it being free entry and continuing to raise money from other sources, such as philanthropy. REF: DL/CS/11/78

that soldiers kill, and sometimes torture and rape in the name of war, should not be allowed to be forgotten.

## Illustrations

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