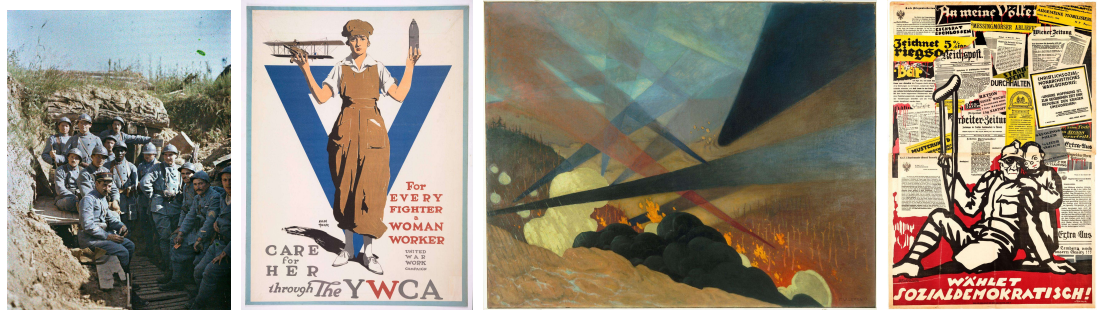


Exhibition: *Imagined Fronts: The Great War and Global Media*

Dates: December 3, 2023–July 7, 2024

Location: Resnick Pavilion



(Image captions on page 4)

(Los Angeles, CA—November 14, 2023) The Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) presents *Imagined Fronts: The Great War and Global Media*. World War I (1914–18), originally known as the Great War, engulfed the geographic extent of Europe and its colonies around the globe. Prior to World War I, there had never before been an event that was conveyed to the public in such an immersive way through the burgeoning mediascape of illustrated newspapers, photography, advertising, and the rapidly advancing medium of cinema. *Imagined Fronts* is an examination of how images and interpretations during World War I were imagined and often manipulated. This exhibition explores the war's global dimensions which involved Eastern and Western European countries as well as colonial forces from Australia, Canada (including Indigenous peoples), India, China, Korea, Japan, the Middle East, and Africa, culminating in the U.S.'s entry into the war in 1917.

*Imagined Fronts* presents over 200 objects documenting the war, including rarely seen color photographs using the autochrome process, along with drawings, prints, paintings, photographs, films, and more. The exhibition draws on the rich resources of LACMA's Robert Gore Rifkind Center for German Expressionist Studies including many recent acquisitions, as well as key loans from the Special Collections of UCLA and USC. The exhibition is curated by Timothy O Benson, Curator, Robert Gore Rifkind Center for German Expressionist Studies, LACMA. *Imagined Fronts* is accompanied by a catalogue, co-published by DelMonico Books/D.A.P.

"*Imagined Fronts* is an examination of how the media and artists portrayed the war," said Timothy O. Benson. "Through an expanding world of images, visual messages, and advancements in technology, the representations of the realities of the war were, above all, *imagined*, and culminated into a global media war."

“LACMA has long been at the forefront of exploring how the intersection of art, media, and technology affects the ways in which we see the world,” said Michael Govan, LACMA CEO and Wallis Annenberg Director. “*Imagined Fronts* is an investigation of how people on both the frontlines and the home front used visual art to respond to the unprecedented crisis and adversity produced by the World War.”

Now on view in BCAM, Level 3, is *War Stories: World War I Print Portfolios by German Artists*, a companion installation to *Imagined Fronts*. This installation presents selections from eight print portfolios about the war including iconic works by Käthe Kollwitz, Otto Dix, and George Grosz.

## Exhibition Organization

*Imagined Fronts: The Great War and Global Media* explores the ways in which a “total war” (at home and on the battlefield) was perceived through an expanding world of images. To the degree that the media serves propaganda—always at the forefront during wartime—it asks a viewer, reader, or listener to fulfill certain aims. Accordingly, the exhibition is organized according to four essential themes.

Within the first area, **Motivating the Masses**, are sub-sections titled “Artists’ Interpretations,” exploring various media and perspectives, and “Ways of Seeing,” which examines how aerial photography, cartography, military panoramas, and other modes of perception permeated the press and shifted artistic perspectives. The **Imagining the Battlefield** section explores different ways of conveying battle, including a mural-sized reproduction of a gigantic composite photograph first exhibited in 1917. **Facilitating the Global War** explores how propaganda encouraged acceptance of peoples of diverse ethnic and racial heritage as soldiers and workers in support of the war effort. **Containing the Aftermath** examines the difficult conditions following the war, various manifestations of anti-war sentiment, and the tortuous and ambiguous ending of the war, which lasted in some regions until 1923.

## Exhibition Highlights

The autochrome process, which produced color images on glass plates, was invented by the Lumière brothers in 1903. Autochromes made through Albert Kahn’s Archives of the Planet project offered a stunning means of portraying soldiers on the Western Front and in the Middle East and North Africa. Paul Castelnau’s *Tranchée de 1ère Ligne Bois d'Hirtzbach (1st Line Trench Hirtzbach Woods)* (June 16, 1917) shows a Senegalese soldier integrated into a group of French troops.

The YWCA, the oldest women's organization in the U.S., advocated for gender equality and provided relief services. Adolph Treidler’s lithograph, *For Every Fighter a Woman Worker. Care For Her Through the YWCA* (c. 1918) is a visual example. Women munitions workers played a vital role in the war effort; the work was

physically exhausting and dangerous, as explosions were frequent and chemical poisoning was a constant threat.

The Battle of Verdun lasted from February through December 1916, generating a horrifying toll of 750,000 casualties. Félix Edouard Vallotton's *Verdun* (1917) is a representation of this longest battle of the war and is remarkable for both its distanced abstraction and its dynamic sense of action. Vallotton toured the front lines in 1917, and combined his own observations of decimated landscapes with inspiration drawn from dramatic aerial photographs that were frequently reproduced in the press.

Victor Slama's poster *Vote Social Democratic!* (1923) reproduces a variety of documents that testify to the terrible conditions suffered by soldiers and civilians alike during the war—thereby promoting Austria's Social Democratic Party as an alternative to the politicians who had supported the conflict. The documents include a weekly ration card (allowing just 1/4 kilogram of flour, two kilograms of potatoes, and 60 grams of margarine) juxtaposed with a dinner menu for officers (who enjoyed such delicacies as cold sturgeon, roast duck, ice cream, and "hand grenade cocktails").

### **Exhibition Catalogue**

The exhibition's accompanying catalogue is co-published by LACMA and Delmonico Books/D.A.P. and includes chapters by Timothy O. Benson, Bruno Cabanes, Santanu Das, Anton Kaes, Jeffrey T. Sammons, Catherine Speck, and Devid Welch. This book examines the war through paintings, sculpture, posters, photographs, film stills, and the graphic arts, showing how it affected the arts between 1914 and 1930, and the role of media in constructing a global "imagined community" that could be accepted as part of the war effort.

### **Credit**

This exhibition is organized by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art

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### **About LACMA**

Located on the Pacific Rim, LACMA is the largest art museum in the western United States, with a collection of nearly 152,000 objects that illuminate 6,000 years of artistic expression across the globe. Committed to showcasing a multitude of art histories, LACMA exhibits and interprets works of art from new and unexpected points of view that are informed by the region's rich cultural heritage and diverse population. LACMA's spirit of experimentation is reflected in its work with

artists, technologists, and thought leaders as well as in its regional, national, and global partnerships to share collections and programs, create pioneering initiatives, and engage new audiences.

**Location:** 5905 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 900036. [lacma.org](http://lacma.org)

**Image captions:** Paul Castelnau, *First Line Trench, Hirtzbach Woods, France* (Tranchée de première ligne Bois d'Hirtzbach, France), 1917, Collection of the Archives de la Planète, Albert Kahn Departmental Museum, Hauts-de-Seine, (Inv. A12046), photo courtesy of the Musée Albert Kahn Paris; Adolph Treidler, *For Every Fighter a Woman Worker: Care for Her through the YWCA*, c. 1918, Huntington Library, Art Museum, and Botanical Gardens, San Marino, CA; Félix Edouard Vallotton, *Verdun*, 1917, Musée de l'armée, Paris, photo © Musée de l'armée, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais/Art Resource, NY; Victor Theodor Slama, *Vote Social Democratic!*, 1923, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, gift of the Robert Gore Rifkind Foundation, Beverly Hills, CA, photo © Museum Associates/LACMA

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