



News Release

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**Special Exhibition Featuring Striking Modern Images of WWI Battlefields from
Acclaimed Photographer Michael St Maur Sheil Opens March 31 at National World
War I Museum and Memorial**

Sheil to participate in March 31 panel discussion at Museum;
Exhibition images available upon request

KANSAS CITY, Mo. – World War I was the first “modern” war as industry enabled weapons and explosives to be manufactured in vast quantities that brought death and destruction on a scale never previously experienced by mankind.

American Sergeant Charles S. Stevenson wrote, “Machine guns, rifles, shells, aeroplanes, and tanks — everything you read about — I saw ‘em all. We followed the first line (the attacking party) for twelve hours and ours was a sort of ‘after the battle’ review. I saw all kinds of German trenches, barbed wire entanglements, busted houses, burning trees, deep shell holes, torn-up railroad tracks, peaceful gardens, dynamited bridges.”

The experience of American soldiers in the Great War is documented in a free outdoor special centennial exhibition, *Fields of Battle, Lands of Peace: The Doughboys, 1917-1918*, which debuts Friday, March 31 in the Museum’s Memorial Courtyard. The exhibition features the incredible contemporary photographs of Michael St Maur Sheil, depicting the battlefields of the Western Front where the Doughboys fought. The exhibition, co-curated by the Museum, opens in conjunction with the centennial of American entry into the Great War and is the first large-scale exhibition of Sheil’s work in the U.S. His prior exhibitions have been seen by more than five million people across the world.

In addition, a second edition of the exhibition debuts at Guildhall Yard, the site of London’s historic Roman Amphitheatre, on April 6. The exhibition then shifts to the U.S. Embassy in London at Grosvenor Square (April 28-May 12) before traveling throughout the United Kingdom during the course of the year, including stops in Liverpool, Newcastle, Edinburgh, Belfast and Cardiff.

“Through this exhibition, we trace the journey of the American forces in 1917 and 1918, and commemorate their efforts,” said National World War I Museum and Memorial Senior Curator Doran Cart. “It is both beautiful and poignant work and serves as another example of our commitment to understanding World War I and its enduring impact.”



When the United States entered the cataclysm of the war to become known as World War I, the global conflict had consumed many nations since 1914 and continued for years. The Armistice of Nov. 11, 1918 halted the fighting on the Western Front.

The Western Front the American forces saw when they arrived and until they returned home included scenes of environmental degradation, obliterated villages, vast cemeteries, and continuing massive destruction. Much of the landscape of the Western Front looked like an uninhabited planet very foreign to them.

“The U.S. involvement in the First World War was a hugely significant factor,” said Sheil, whose work has been featured in *National Geographic* and *Time* magazine. “Today, it is often overlooked, but it was a New World coming to the aid of an Old World, from which many of the young American soldiers – as first generation immigrants – had sought to escape. Their humanitarian effort in supplying and shipping over seven million tons of food to save the peoples of Belgium and northern France from starvation marked the advent of America as a united nation.”

Fields of Battle, Lands of Peace: The Doughboys, 1917-1918, is open through Aug. 20, 2017 at the Museum. The exhibition is presented by the Aon Foundation with additional support provided by Edward Jones, PNC Financial Services Group and Park University. The U.K. version is presented by the Aon Foundation in partnership with the U.S. Embassy.

In conjunction with the March 31 opening, the Museum is hosting a free reception and panel discussion featuring Sheil, Cart and Museum President and CEO Dr. Matthew Naylor on Friday, March 31. The reception, which begins at 5 p.m., features a free drink and complimentary light hors d’oeuvres with entertainment from jazz musician Bram Wijnands and his trio. The panel discussion follows at 6 p.m. Individuals interested in attending may RSVP at theworldwar.org.

About the National World War I Museum and Memorial

The National World War I Museum and Memorial is America’s leading institution dedicated to remembering, interpreting and understanding the Great War and its enduring impact on the global community. The Museum holds the most diverse collection of World War I objects and documents in the world and is the second-oldest public museum dedicated to preserving the objects, history and experiences of the war. The Museum takes visitors of all ages on an epic journey through a transformative period and shares deeply personal stories of courage, honor, patriotism and sacrifice. Designated by Congress as America’s official World War I Museum and Memorial and located in downtown Kansas City, Mo., the National World War I Museum and Memorial inspires thought, dialogue and learning to make the experiences of the Great War era meaningful and relevant for present and future generations. To learn more, visit theworldwar.org.

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