



News Release

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Contact:

Karis Erwin, National WWI Museum and Memorial, 816.888.8122, kerwin@theworldwar.org

National WWI Museum and Memorial Explores Children's Perspectives on Conflict in *War Toys: Ukraine*

[Kansas City, Mo.] – National WWI Museum and Memorial exhibition [War Toys: Ukraine](#), will run from Oct. 2, 2024 through Jan. 5, 2025. The exhibition is hosted in tandem with Featured Exhibition [The Little War](#), which explores the lives of children swept up by WWI.

Since 2011, internationally recognized photographer Brian McCarty has been collaborating with specialized therapists and children who have been affected by conflict on a unique project titled *War Toys*, which is now active in and near Ukraine. The project invokes principles of expressive art therapy to safely gather and articulate children's accounts of warfare.

Children often share their experiences and emotions through indirect methods of communication, such as art and play. As a result, their personal accounts of war frequently go unseen and unheard by the international community. *War Toys: Ukraine* presents universally understood accounts of conflict while drawing attention to the individual children and communities who have been affected by armed conflict.

Viewers of the exhibition *War Toys: Ukraine* will see 30 of the children's drawings presented alongside McCarty's staged photographs. In the process of sharing their artwork, children would often reveal the details that were most important or impactful to them, but some elements were buried, as if to protect them. The viewers' eyes will move back and forth from McCarty's works to the children's drawings, recognizing the similarities and differences, but most importantly, reading between the lines. Exhibition visitors will also gain an understanding of the specialized support for children and caregivers and the psychosocial programs developed by the War Toys non-profit organization founded by McCarty in 2019 as a result of his project.

McCarty explains, "The inherent desire to create—whether on paper or in scenarios with toys—is universal to us all. For this reason, play is an invaluable tool for communication. Children learn how to process complicated feelings through a playful filter and explore tough questions in a language that is easier for them to understand."

Brian McCarty is an artist and toy industry veteran whose postmodern integration of concept and character has earned his photography a prominent position in the Art-Toy and Pop Surrealist movements. Yet, McCarty's work is often more akin to reportage than photo-illustration. His approach is grounded in documenting actual—albeit manufactured—moments of time from a uniquely personal perspective.

Seeing firsthand the severe effects of displacement and war-related trauma on these children, McCarty assembled a team of directors, advisors, and officers that includes experts in expressive therapy, childhood development, human rights, advocacy, and toy design and manufacturing. Together through the War Toys nonprofit organization, they are continuing the advocacy work of the photo series while developing new programs and forging alliances that will positively impact the lives of children around the world. Their mission is to catalyze a global cultural shift around war, through intentional and accessible methods of expressive war play, in order to build a lasting condition of peace for future generations. As a result, their programs encourage war play in intentional and supported ways, in order to imagine what a condition of permanent, lasting peace could look like for our children and us all.

“By bearing witness through his artwork, McCarty provides the opportunity for otherwise silenced voices to be heard,” says Dr. Julia J.A.G. Byers, Professor of Art Therapy at Lesley University in Cambridge, MA. “He asks us all to reflect on the innocence of childhood when it is surrounded and thwarted by human suffering. He asks us not to deny its existence but, rather, to question how to play—with resolve and resilience—in the face of such reality.”

War Toys artwork has been published by media outlets around the world in over a dozen languages, including: [NPR](#), [The Guardian](#), [Fox News](#), [ABC News](#).

[War Toys: Ukraine](#) is on view on the Lower Level of the Museum and Memorial and is included in a General Admission ticket. The Museum and Memorial is currently open Tuesday-Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

About ExhibitsUSA

This exhibition is toured by ExhibitsUSA, the national touring exhibition program of Mid-America Arts Alliance. ExhibitsUSA sends more than 25 exhibitions on tour to over 100 small- and mid-sized communities every year. These exhibitions create access to an array of arts and humanities experiences, nurture the understanding of diverse cultures and art forms, and expand the depth and breadth of cultural life in local communities, rural and urban. For more about ExhibitsUSA, email MoreArt@maaa.org or visit www.eusa.org.

About Mid-America Arts Alliance

Mid-America Arts Alliance (M-AAA) strengthens and supports artists, cultural organizations, and communities throughout Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Texas, and beyond. To learn more about M-AAA grants, programs, exhibitions, and fellowships, visit www.maaa.org.

About the National WWI Museum and Memorial

The National WWI 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 and Memorial holds the most comprehensive 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 and Memorial 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 WWI 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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