



Contacts: Ashley Bleimes
617.369.3446
ableimes@mfa.org

Amelia Kantrovitz
617.369.3447
akantrovitz@mfa.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

***OVER THERE! POSTERS FROM WORLD WAR I* AT MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, BOSTON,
MARKS 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF GREAT WAR'S OUTBREAK**

Works on View Include Recently Acquired *I Want You For U.S. Army* Poster



I Want You For U.S. Army, 1917,
James Montgomery Flagg

BOSTON, MA (June 18, 2014)—Timed to coincide with the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of WWI, ***Over There! Posters from World War I*** (on view July 26, 2014—May 25, 2015) at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (MFA), features more than 50 wartime posters from the United States and Europe. Many of the posters were used to encourage enlistment in the US Army, Navy, Marines and Air Service, while others appealed to the American public to buy war bonds, conserve food, support the Red Cross and other relief agencies, and maintain a strong work ethic on the home front. On view in the Mary Stamas Gallery and Frances Vrachos Gallery, this exhibition is the first time since 1938 that many of the posters have been on view, and marks the first time that the newly acquired *I Want You For U.S. Army* (1917) by James Montgomery Flagg has been on view at the MFA. The works are organized by theme—American and British recruitment posters are displayed with a selection of European war bond posters, while American posters aimed at the public on “The Home Front” are grouped separately. Later this fall,

Over There! Posters from World War I will coincide with the exhibition, *Over Here: World War I Posters from Around the World* at The Boston Athenæum (September 10, 2014—January 31, 2015), which includes over 50 posters from 10 countries. *The exhibition at the MFA is sponsored by Sheraton Boston Hotel.*

“There are notable differences in Americans’ experience of war then and now,” said Patrick Murphy, Lia and William Poorvu Curatorial Research Fellow, Prints, Drawings, and Photographs, at the MFA. “In recent years, it has been easier for non-military families to forget that we were at war in Iraq and Afghanistan. In 1917 and 1918, as these posters attest, the call for personal sacrifice—conserving food, purchasing Liberty Loans, or supporting the Red Cross—permeated every aspect of life on the home front.”

Boldly designed color lithographic posters were first used for propaganda on a massive scale during World War I (1914–1918). One week after the United States officially entered the war, on April 6, 1917, president Woodrow Wilson established the Committee on Public Information, which was tasked with creating a propaganda campaign. Through newsprint, radio, film and other media, the campaign's goal was to inspire patriotism and sacrifice, and secure support for the war effort from the American public. An important part of this campaign was the Division of Pictorial Publicity, headed by Charles Dana Gibson, president of the New York Society of Illustrators. Gibson brought together artists and magazine illustrators from around the country, all of whom donated their skills to create some of the most striking posters of the era.

I Want You For U.S. Army (1917) by James Montgomery Flagg is one of the most famous images from the war. The work's sternly imploring Uncle Sam, his finger pointing directly at the viewer, is a self-portrait. It was so effective in encouraging young recruits that it continued to be used during World War II. The composition is based on a British poster made three years earlier, *London Opinion—Your Country Needs You* (1914) by Alfred Leete, which is also on view in the exhibition. Britain declared war on Germany on August 4, 1914 and Lord Kitchener, Secretary of State for War, was charged with assembling an army. Leete's illustration of Kitchener proved to be enormously influential.



Over There! Skilled Workers/ On the Ground Behind the Lines/ In the Air Service, about 1918, Louis Fancher

But, it wasn't just the US Army that needed recruits. The Air Service, a forerunner of the United States Air Force, began combat operations in France in the spring of 1918. *Over There!—Skilled Workers—On the Ground Behind the Lines In the Air Service* (about 1918, Louis Fancher) was an appeal for mechanics, machinists and others who could act in a supporting role on the ground. A poster for the Navy, Richard Fayerweather Babcock's *Join the Navy—The Service for Fighting Men* (1917), depicts a preposterous image of a sailor riding a torpedo through the water, taking a humorous approach to the sober task of recruitment.

In addition to recruitment, many posters were intended to inform the American public about war bonds, or appealed to the Home Front to conserve food, maintain morale in the workforce and support relief agencies such as the United War Work Campaign and the Red Cross. *One of the Thousand YMCA Girls in France—United War Work Campaign* (1918) was created by Neysa McMein—

who was later commissioned by General Mills to create the fictional likeness of Betty Crocker. The United War Work Campaign was an umbrella organization (including the YMCA, the YWCA, the American Library Association and the Salvation Army) tasked by President Wilson with raising \$170 million for the war effort. *Save a Loaf a Week—Help Win the War* (1917, Frederic G.



One of the Thousand Y.M.C.A. Girls in France/ United War Work Campaign/ Nov. 11th to 18th, 1918, Neysa McMein

Cooper) was published by the United States Food Administration, which was responsible for the supply, distribution and conservation of food. It produced a series of posters urging Americans to eat more corn and fish and less meat and wheat, so that more of the latter could be sent to the Allies.

Posters issued by the United States Shipping Board were intended to boost morale among America's work force, linking productivity with patriotism. In *Rivets are Bayonets—Drive Them Home!* (about 1917–18, John E. Sheridan), a civilian shipbuilder is shown standing shoulder to shoulder

with his counterpart on the front—the similarity of their posture reinforces their interdependence. *Your Work Means Victory—Build Another One* (1917, Frederick J. Hoertz), was similarly encouraging—at their peak, the Emergency Fleet Corporation's shipyards at Hog Island, near Philadelphia, were launching a ship (built from prefabricated parts) every five and a half days.

A number of Britain's colorful posters are also on view in the exhibition, along with examples from France and Russia—all allies of the US during the war. Between Britain's entry into the war in August 1914 and the beginning of mandatory conscription in January 1916, London's Parliamentary Recruiting Committee produced over two hundred poster designs encouraging young men to enlist. Germany's first airborne attack on British soil occurred in January 1915, and in May of that year, the first Zeppelin raid on London killed seven people and injured 35. The recruitment poster *It is Far Better to Face the Bullets Than to be Killed at Home by a Bomb* (1915) shows a Zeppelin centered in the sky over a silhouette of Big Ben and Saint Paul's cathedral.

The assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand (heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne) in June 1914 led to the outbreak of the World War I. Austria and Germany—the Central Powers who were aligned against the US and its allies—also produced posters that appealed to the public. Maximilian Lenz's jewel-like image of St. George and the Dragon, 1914–1917 *Subscribe to the Sixth War Loan* (1917) was one of two posters in the show that were printed in Vienna. The other, *Zeichnet 4. Kriegsanleihe [Subscribe to the Fourth War Loan]* (1917), depicts the Austro-Hungarian imperial double-headed eagle against a decorative frieze.



It is Far Better to Face the Bullets Than to be Killed at Home by a Bomb/Join the Army at Once & Help to Stop an Air Raid/God Save the King, 1915, Andrew Reid & Co., Ltd.

Works on view in the exhibition are drawn primarily from the collection of John T. Spaulding, which was given to the Museum in 1937. Spaulding, along with his brother, was also responsible for much of the Museum's world-famous collection of Japanese prints.

The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (MFA), is recognized for the quality and scope of its collection, which includes an estimated 500,000 objects. The Museum has more than 140 galleries displaying its encyclopedic collection, which includes Art of the Americas; Art of Europe; Contemporary Art; Art of Asia, Oceania, and Africa; Art of the Ancient World; Prints, Drawings, and Photographs; Textile and Fashion Arts; and Musical Instruments. Open seven days a week, the MFA's hours are Saturday through Tuesday, 10 am–4:45 pm; and Wednesday through Friday, 10 am–9:45 pm Admission (which includes one repeat visit within 10 days) is \$25 for adults and \$23 for seniors and students age 18 and older, and includes entry to all galleries and special exhibitions. Admission is free for University Members and youths age 17 and younger on weekdays after 3 pm, weekends, and Boston Public Schools holidays; otherwise \$10. Wednesday nights after 4 pm admission is by voluntary contribution (suggested donation \$25). MFA Members are always admitted for free. The Museum's mobile MFA Guide is available at ticket desks and the Sharf Visitor Center for \$5, members; \$6, non-members; and \$4, youths. The Museum is closed on New Year's Day, Patriots' Day, Independence Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. For more information, visit mfa.org or call 617.267.9300. The MFA is located on the Avenue of the Arts at 465 Huntington Avenue, Boston, MA 02115.

###