



# Art and the Second World War

Monica Bohm-Duchen



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Art and the Second World War is the first book in English to provide a comprehensive and detailed international overview of the complex and often disturbing relationship between war and the fine arts during this crucial period of modern history. This generously illustrated volume starts by examining the art produced in reaction to the Spanish Civil War (often viewed as 'the first battle of World War II'), and then looks at painting, sculpture, prints, and drawing in each of the major combatant nations, including Japan and China. Breathtaking in scope, this scholarly yet accessible publication places wartime art within its broader cultural, political, and military contexts while never losing sight of the power and significance of the individual image and the individual artist.

Monica Bohm-Duchen's thought-provoking analysis ranges from iconic paintings such as Picasso's *Guernica* to unfamiliar works by little-known artists. She reinstates war art by major artists as an integral part of their oeuvres and examines neglected topics such as the art produced in the Japanese-American and British internment camps, by victims of the Holocaust, and in response to the dropping of the atom bomb in 1945. In so doing, Bohm-Duchen addresses a host of fundamental issues, including the relationship between art and propaganda and between art and atrocity, and the role of gender, religion, and censorship, both external and internal.

Art and the Second World War offers an unparalleled comparative perspective that will appeal to anyone interested in art history, military history, or political and cultural studies.

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## About the Author

Monica Bohm-Duchen is an independent writer, lecturer, and curator. Based in London, she has worked for such leading institutions as the Tate, the National Gallery, and the Royal Academy of Arts. Her many books include *After Auschwitz: Responses to the Holocaust in Contemporary Art*. She teaches a course on art and war at Birkbeck, University of London, and at New York University in London.

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The second world war had seismic effects on architecture, with reconstruction aimed not just at repairing war damage, but at creating a new society that would never let anything like fascism and world war happen again. As we get more distant from the events and actual memory, the war is increasingly remembered in terms of nostalgic kitsch.Â  Broadcast, by Observer arts and media correspondent Vanessa Thorpe. Although television services were shut down for the duration, lessons learned from wartime radio still shape output today. The BBC was the power in the land and by 1944 George Orwell, a former BBC propagandist, noted that the phrase "I heard it on the BBC" had come to mean "I know it must be true". World War II summary: The carnage of World War II was unprecedented and brought the world closest to the term "total warfare." On average 27,000 people were killed each day between September 1, 1939, until the formal surrender of Japan on September 2, 1945. Western technological advances had turned upon itself, bringing about the most destructive war in human history. The primary combatants were the Axis nations of Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, Imperial Japan, and the Allied nations, Great Britain (and its Commonwealth nations), the Soviet Union, and the United States. Seven days after the suic

During the First World War, two main streams of activity produced official war art. The Imperial War Museum, established by Act of Parliament in 1917, was given the task of collecting all kinds of material documenting the war, including art. Meanwhile, the government was also commissioning and purchasing art to create a record of and a memorial to the war through paintings commissioned from the best and, on occasion, the most avant-garde, British artists of the day. In 1946, after the war had ended, one third of the collection was allocated to the Imperial War Museum and the rest was distributed to museums and galleries across the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth. During World War II, the relations between art and war can be articulated around two main issues. First, art (and, more generally, culture) found itself at the centre of an ideological war. Second, during World War II, many artists found themselves in the most difficult conditions (in an occupied country, in internment camps, in death camps) and their works are a testimony to a powerful "urge to create." Such creative impulse can be interpreted as the expression of self-preservation, a survival War is a common theme in art and has inspired great works of art. Throughout history, most representations of war depict military achievements and often show significant battle scenes. However, in the 19th century a "turn" in the visual representation of war became noticeable. Artists started to show the disastrous aspects of war instead of its glorified events and protagonists. Such a perspective is best exemplified by Goya's series, *The Disasters of War* (1810-1820, first published in 1863), and Otto

