

COLLATERAL DAMAGE

Scenes from a War

From the dawn of recorded history, war and organized violence have been a scourge of human existence. Today, evidence of this unfortunate reality is readily available. As of March 2011, there were more than 35 active conflicts and armed insurgencies worldwide, including several major wars, the most prominent being the protracted wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Though the grim statistics of war are well known, the world continues to employ violence as a way to resolve conflict, with predictably tragic results.

Some choose to glorify warriors and heroism in battle; others condemn the inherent brutality and absurdity of war. Among the latter was U.S. General William Tecumseh Sherman, whose Union forces were instrumental in the defeat of the Confederacy during the American Civil War. His famous quote, "War is hell," gives only a glimpse into his thoughts on the subject. In a moment of quiet reflection, Sherman wrote about his victory over Confederate forces in the closing days of the war:

I confess, without shame, I am sick and tired of fighting—its glory is all moonshine; even success the most brilliant is over dead and mangled bodies, with the anguish and lamentations of distant families, appealing to me for sons, husbands and fathers ... tis only those who have never heard a shot, never heard the shriek and groans of the wounded and lacerated ... that cry aloud for more blood, more vengeance, more desolation.

This exhibition explores the horrific consequences and incalculable human cost of war and violence as interpreted through the eyes and imaginations of leading

artists. For centuries, artists of diverse backgrounds and experience have addressed this difficult subject, producing a wide array of work ranging from virulent anti-war manifestos to gripping eyewitness accounts to personal reflections on loss and grief. In the context of this exhibition, "collateral damage" refers to the human casualties of war, both military and civilian. The various scenes presented—though referencing specific wars throughout history—are virtually interchangeable images of misery.

Drawn largely from the MIA's extensive collection of graphic art, this exhibition includes some of the most compelling representations of war and violence ever created. From Francisco Goya's renowned *Disasters of War* etchings of the early 19th century to Daniel Heyman's disturbing portraits of tortured Iraqi war prisoners, the exhibition shines a bright light on the ravages of war. Some of these representations are borne of the artists' own military experiences during wartime, such as Otto Dix's terrifying print portfolio *Der Krieg (War)*. Others are derived from secondary accounts or are symbolic interpretations of current or historical events. In the end, all speak perceptively on the tragedy of war.

This exhibition is presented in conjunction with the museum-sponsored program "MIA Inside/Out: Battle of Everyouth," a special one-night event organized as part of the Northern Spark Festival, a citywide celebration of experimental contemporary art in public places. This free program begins at sundown on Saturday, June 4, 2011, on the shared campus of the MIA and Minneapolis College of Art and Design.