

Press Release
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New Zealanders at War – Online Today

Taking the National Collection of War Art to many more people has been the driving force behind a project to get the collection online, Archives New Zealand Chief Executive Dianne Macaskill said at today's launch of War Art Online.

"Nearly 600 images from the National Collection of War Art held by Archives New Zealand have been digitised and from today they will be available to many people throughout New Zealand and overseas," Dianne Macaskill said.

"Some 1500 works, including paintings and sketches, are in this important collection and a digital image of most will eventually be available," Dianne Macaskill said at the War Art Online launch held in the Gallipoli Room, Royal New Zealand Returned and Services' Association National Headquarters, ANZAC House, Wellington.

Robin Klitscher, a National Executive Returned and Services' Association member said the national collection in the care of Archives New Zealand, brings many New Zealanders face-to-face with an important aspect of their heritage.

"This collection helps us get to grips with the struggles of those who have gone before, in this case on the world's battlefields, as we strive to understand who we are. The collection will do this in a way that is simply impossible to convey in the written word alone, or even in the photograph.

"Modern technology allows us to digitise the images. This of course is a worthy aim in itself, since it preserves the work of our war artists.

"But the effect is much farther-reaching than physical conservation. These artworks will now be accessible to New Zealanders – and to the world – with a sweep that could not be achieved if they remained limited to display in a gallery."

Dianne Macaskill said that when people go into War Art Online they will be able to add new information about the paintings using the subject tagging and comments features – this feature complements the archival descriptions already there.

"The comment feature is something new for Archives New Zealand and through it people will have the opportunity to discuss the work and add personal anecdotes which can then be shared through the online community.

"Dating from World War One the National Collection of War Art comprises official pieces of war art, commissioned by the New Zealand government, and other unofficial art works acquired by or donated to government departments.

"The collection includes portraits, battle scenes, landscapes and abstracts works, depicting the men and women who served New Zealand in times of war, and the arenas in which they served.

"In this year of the 90th Anniversary of the Battle of Passchendaele War Art Online is a timely reminder of the huge sacrifice New Zealanders made and help us all to learn about and understand the wartime role of our parents, grandparents and great grandparents.

“These records can help us gain a greater understanding of our own history and our national identity.

“Through this online collection, including work by Barns-Graham, Bowring, Butler, Coe, Longstaff, Mitchell, Wooley, Wollen and McIntyre, New Zealanders will be able to access the life and times of their forebears.”

Dianne Macaskill said War Art Online is an interactive site including video clips and information about war art and the artists in the collection. War Art Online is available through: www.archives.govt.nz or by going to www.warart.archives.govt.nz