

MUSEUM

REVIEWING THE BEST MILITARY HISTORY EXHIBITIONS
WITH **CHRISTOPHER WARNER**



PRICES
VARY

VISIT

PRITZKER MILITARY MUSEUM & LIBRARY

Open 10am-4pm Tuesday to Saturday

104 S Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL 60603

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It is not difficult to have a good time in Chicago. Just ask Ferris Bueller. Whether feasting on deep-dish pizza (an absolute must), exploring the vibrant arts and music scene, or watching any of its professional sports teams play, the so-called 'Windy City' has plenty to offer. And, for history buffs, there is the Pritzker Military Museum & Library (PMML).

Located inside the historic, Romanesque-inspired Monroe Building in the city's downtown Loop District, the museum was founded in 2003 by Jennifer Pritzker, a philanthropist and retired colonel of the Illinois Army National Guard. The non-profit institution features permanent displays, rotating exhibits, and a staggering collection of rare books, artefacts, and photographs.

These archives document the stories of the citizen soldier, reflecting the PMML's mission 'to increase the public's understanding of military history, military affairs, and national security by providing a forum for

the study and exploration of our military – past, present, and future – with a specific focus on their stories, sacrifices, and values.' Educational programmes are another top priority for the museum, with year-round events and promotions designed to make learning about military history accessible to guests of all ages.

ANNIVERSARY EXHIBITION

As part of its 20th anniversary this year, the museum hosted *Tet and the Battle of Hue* [OPPOSITE BELOW], an exhibit created by John Olson, formerly a photographer for *Stars and Stripes*, the official newspaper of the US military. The powerful multimedia presentation features several of Olson's most stirring images from the Vietnam War, while also adhering to the theme, 'Remembering the Past, Forging the Future'. As the museum's Director of Marketing, April Smith-Miller, explains: 'The exhibit features ten tactile or 3-D images developed from original photographs.'



'Embedded with touch-activated sensors that provide audio interviews with the marines documented in the photos, the three-dimensional tactile images allow blind and low-vision individuals to experience photography in a unique way,' adds Smith-Miller. 'Every exhibit showcased at the PMML takes into consideration how the past transcends into the current landscape.'

Through Olson's lens, the exhibit reveals the heavy action that unfolded on 31 January 1968, when North Vietnamese and Viet Cong troops launched an attack on the ancient capital city of Hue. The fighting was the first time US Marines had engaged in urban combat since the Korean War, and became the longest and bloodiest single battle of the Tet Offensive (named after the Lunar New Year), as well as a turning-point in the conflict.

Last year, two-time Pulitzer Prize-winning cartoonist Bill Mauldin (1921-2003) deservedly came under the spotlight with *Drawn to Combat: Bill Mauldin and the Art of War*. That exhibition showcased 150 framed drawings and published cartoons, and personal material, including the Purple Heart he earned after being

wounded in the shoulder by German fire near Monte Cassino in 1943.

US Army Sergeant William Henry 'Bill' Mauldin rose to fame during World War II with his 'Willie & Joe' newspaper cartoons. Laced with his unapologetic sense of humour, Mauldin captured the realities of a soldier's daily life, giving readers on the home front an insightful account of the war in Europe. He later provided comic art from Korea, Vietnam, and Operation Desert Storm, spending more than five decades as a nationally syndicated political cartoonist. In addition to the exhibit, the PMML, through its book-publishing division, released *Drawing Fire: The Editorial Cartoons of Bill Mauldin*.

With its state-of-the-art production studio and lecture hall [OPPOSITE ABOVE], PMML produces a full slate of original programming. This includes locally broadcast television series *Pritzker Military Presents*, covering various topics, and *Citizen Soldier*, as well as panel discussions on military history, military affairs, and national security. Then there is the Holt Oral History Program, an important collection of stories from American military veterans. Museum members can access more than 400

All images: Christopher Warner/Pritzker Military Museum & Library

of these programmes, podcasts, and streaming videos via its website (as well as past exhibits, academic databases, and other resources).

LIBRARY COLLECTIONS

The library's extensive catalogue contains more than 3,000 rare and non-circulating books, and materials on war and military operations. In the collection is a 15th-century edition of Silius Italicus's epic poem *Punica*, on the Second Punic War, with commentary by Petrus Marsus. Other notable works include *De Bello Belgico* (1650) by Roman author Famiano Strada, which chronicles the Dutch wars for independence, fought against Spain in the mid-16th century; John Entick's *The General History of the Late War: Containing its Rise, Progress, and Event in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America* (1763); and *History of the Expedition Under the Command of Captains Lewis and Clark* (1814), a two-volume set recounting Captain Meriwether Lewis and Lieutenant William Clark's famous 8,000-mile military expedition in search of a

Northwest Passage, or water route across the US continent (spoiler alert: an all-water route from the Atlantic to the Pacific was found not to exist).

To take even further the museum's ongoing efforts to restore, preserve, and warehouse its substantial archival collection, the Pritzker Military Archives Center (PMAC) is scheduled to open in late 2023/early 2024 in Somers, Wisconsin, some 60 miles north of Chicago. The sprawling, multi-faceted complex, designed by renowned architect the late Helmut Jahn, will feature a world-class research facility and a community green space with walking paths and picnic areas.

Since 2007, the PMML has presented its annual Pritzker Literature Award to honour the 'contributions of a living author for a body of work dedicated to enriching the understanding of military history and the history of war.' James M McPherson received the inaugural award, which has subsequently been bestowed on the likes of Rick Atkinson, Hew Strachan, Antony Beevor, and Margaret MacMillan. •



WORTH CHECKING OUT...

UPCOMING EVENTS AND EXHIBITIONS

EVENT

Chelsea History Festival

26 September-1 October 2023

National Army Museum & Royal Hospital Chelsea,
Royal Hospital Road, London SW3 4HT
www.chelseahistoryfestival.com

Prices vary

The Chelsea History Festival returns for its fifth year with an exciting line-up of events and talks. Notable speakers this year include former Rolling Stones bassist Bill Wyman and Monty Python star Michael Palin. For military-history buffs, General Sir Adrian Bradshaw, former Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe, will be sharing his views on the threats facing the West today. Other events for festivalgoers to enjoy include tours, open days, and a concert in the Royal Hospital Chapel. The full programme is available on the festival's website.

EXHIBITION

The Go for Broke Spirit: legacy in portraits

Until 31 March 2024

National WWII Museum, 945 Magazine Street, New Orleans, LA 70130
www.nationalww2museum.org/events-programs/events/go-broke-spirit-legacy-portraits
\$32.50

Japanese Americans served in segregated units in the US Army during World War II, even as more than 100,000 of their fellow citizens were forcibly relocated to domestic incarceration camps. Through a series of intimate portraits by photographer Shane Sato, this gallery explores the service of Japanese American men and women who – in the face of immense prejudice – nonetheless contributed significantly to Allied victory in the war, and the belated recognition they received for their service after the war was won.

EXHIBITION

Northern Ireland: living with the Troubles

Until 7 January 2024

IWM London, Lambeth Road, London SE1 6HZ

www.iwm.org.uk/events/northern-ireland-living-with-the-troubles
Free

For nearly three decades, Northern Ireland was engulfed in conflict, a bitter sectarian form of warfare that came to be known as 'The Troubles'. Marking 25 years since the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, this exhibition at the Imperial War Museum in London invites visitors to understand the period through the voices of witnesses to the war – as well as objects that illuminate their experiences.

EXHIBITION

Bespoke Bodies: the design and craft of prosthetics

Until 7 April 2024

National WWI Museum and Memorial, 2 Memorial Drive,
Kansas City, MO 64108
www.theworldwar.org/bespokebodies

\$10

Prosthetics have come to the aid of wounded soldiers for more than a century, from the revolutionary facial-reconstruction techniques developed during the Great War to the mind-controlled bionic limbs of more recent times. This exhibition at the National WWI Museum and Memorial features close to 50 examples of prosthetics from around the world, and also hears from those who have used them: the veterans – many of whom contributed to the designs.