

**For immediate release: Tuesday 24 February 2009**

## Tribute to Iraq fallen comes to the North East

An artwork commemorating British service men and women killed in Iraq, including many from the North East, is being brought to mima Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art by The Art Fund, the UK's leading independent art charity. *Queen and Country* will open in Middlesbrough during the week that marks the 6<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the invasion in Iraq and will be on display from Wednesday 18 March to Sunday 3 May 2009.

Created by official war artist and recent BAFTA winner Steve McQueen, in collaboration with families whose loved ones have lost their lives in Iraq, *Queen and Country* consists of a large oak cabinet with vertical drawers containing a series of facsimile postage stamp sheets. Each sheet is dedicated to a fallen member of the Armed Forces and features a photographic portrait chosen by their family.

As a work-in-progress, the cabinet will be updated with images of those who have been killed between July 2007 and March 2008 before it goes on display at mima. To date 155 families have collaborated on the project. However, until the stamps are officially issued by Royal Mail, McQueen considers *Queen and Country* incomplete.

The work includes a number of soldiers from the North East area, including Staff Sergeant Sharron Elliott from South Shields who served in the Intelligence Corps. She was in a boat on a waterway in Basra on 12 November 2006 with three other British service personnel when a bomb exploded on a bridge killing all four occupants of the boat.

Mrs Elsie Manning, mother of Sharron Elliott, says: "The *Queen and Country* stamps are a great way of honouring and recognising the sacrifice these brave Servicemen and women have made. It is a brilliant work of art and something to be proud of, especially for the families who have lost a loved one. They should never be forgotten and work like this helps to keep their memory alive."

The Art Fund is spearheading the campaign to gain public support for the project and visitors to mima will be invited to sign The Art Fund's online petition urging Royal Mail to issue the stamps at [www.artfund.org/queenandcountry](http://www.artfund.org/queenandcountry). To date more than 16,500 people have signed the petition.

David Barrie, Director of The Art Fund, says: "*Queen and Country* is a beautiful and deceptively simple work of art that poignantly reminds us of the enormous sacrifices made by British men and women serving in the armed forces in Iraq. I'm delighted that The Art Fund is bringing *Queen and Country* to mima and hope that many more people will have the opportunity to see the work and support the campaign."

Middlesbrough Mayor, Ray Mallon said: "The British service men and women have been, and are still, doing a fantastic job in Iraq, and this is a wonderful tribute to those that have fallen in the recent conflict in that part of the world.

It is an incredible honour for mima to display this piece of artwork when one considers the content and also the standing of Steve McQueen as an artist.

I am really looking forward to seeing this piece of work, and I do believe that many people across the North of England and beyond will visit mima to see this wonderful tribute to our fallen heroes."

Steve McQueen was born in London in 1969. He won the Turner Prize in 1999 and was awarded an OBE in 2002. His first feature film *Hunger* won the Camera d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival in 2008 and the Carl Foreman Award at the 2009 BAFTAs. He will be representing Britain at the 53rd Venice Biennale in June this year.

**Ends**

**Contact The Art Fund: Lizzie Bloom at [lbloom@artfund.org](mailto:lbloom@artfund.org), 0207 225 4888 or 07912 777761 (out of hours) for enquiries regarding the artist, artwork and family involvement.**

**Contact mima: Nina Byrne [nina\\_byrne@middlesbrough.gov.uk](mailto:nina_byrne@middlesbrough.gov.uk), 01642 726 710, Kirsty Bullock, [kirsty\\_bullock@middlesbrough.gov.uk](mailto:kirsty_bullock@middlesbrough.gov.uk) / Victoria Huntley [victoria\\_huntley@middlesbrough.gov.uk](mailto:victoria_huntley@middlesbrough.gov.uk) 01642 726 713 for enquiries regarding the exhibition at mima.**

**Notes to editors:**

1. For details of the tour, and to sign The Art Fund petition, please visit [www.artfund.org/queenandcountry](http://www.artfund.org/queenandcountry)
2. Steve McQueen was commissioned by The Imperial War Museum and Manchester International Festival to respond to the conflict in Iraq.
3. *Queen and Country* is part of the Imperial War Museum's permanent collection, following its presentation by The Art Fund in November 2007 with a full grant of £60,000.
4. The Art Fund is the UK's leading independent art charity. It offers grants to help UK museums and galleries enrich their collections; campaigns on behalf of museums and their visitors; and promotes the enjoyment of art. The Art Fund is a Registered Charity No. 209174
5. It is entirely funded from public donations and has 80,000 members. Since 1903 the charity has helped museums and galleries all over the UK secure 860,000 works of art for their collections.
6. Recent achievements include: helping secure Titian's *Diana and Actaeon* for the National Galleries of Scotland and the National Gallery, London in February 2009 with a grant of £1 million; helping secure Anthony d'Offay's collection, ARTIST ROOMS, for Tate and National Galleries of Scotland in February 2008 with a grant of £1million; and running the 'Buy a Brushstroke' public appeal which raised over £550,000 to keep Turner's *Blue Rigi* watercolour in the UK.
7. For more information contact the Press Office on 020 7225 4888 or visit [www.artfund.org](http://www.artfund.org)
8. mima Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art, is a new gallery designed by Erick van Egeraat Associated Architects which opened in January 2007. Presenting temporary exhibitions of fine art and craft from 1900 to the present, mima features work by internationally acclaimed artists and a programme which includes painting, drawing, ceramics, jewellery, design, sound, film, mixed media, photography and sculpture. The gallery brings together the town's art collections for the first time. Exhibitions change every quarter and admission is free. [www.visitmima.com](http://www.visitmima.com)

