

*Eastern Mediterranean University*

[Michael.walsh@emu.edu.tr](mailto:Michael.walsh@emu.edu.tr)

At the Armistice it was clear that even if London had avoided the physical ravages of the first industrial war, its inhabitants had not. Artists were no exception and wondered how to mourn those who had been killed in this ghastly struggle and when, if ever, it would be appropriate to get back to the pre-war experiment? How long would it take for the patriotic fervor and ‘Englishness’ to die down and allow for the return of ‘foreign’ cultural influences in the capital? How could the artist capture, then express, the contradictory moods in the country; respond to, cope with, and encapsulate post war sentiment. The nation, they understood, had to confront overwhelming and often contradictory emotions of mourning, memory, victory, guilt, disenchantment, reflection, relief, anger and euphoria. But was painting up to the task of addressing anger and disenchantment, visually relating to new social fissures between the nouveau riche (war profiteers) and the nouveau poor (those who had actually fought); communists and capitalists; nationalists and unionists; trade unions, suffragettes and those who would embrace Americana and all the excesses of the Jazz Age so soon after the guns fell silent? Little wonder many realized they were living in a new no man’s land, based on a shattered past, with no clear vision of the future.

Whether they had fought at the Front or stayed at home as conscientious objectors, the duty of the artist now, after ‘The War For Civilization’, was to re-cast the very civilization for which such a heavy price had been paid. Likewise it would be their job to immortalize, memorialize and mythologize the hard fought victory over the Central Powers, in which they had played no small part. But there was to be no return to the *status quo ante*, and so it became equally clear that the standard bearers who had come this far, would not necessarily be the same artists who were now going to thrive in the peace.

This study will look at the Ministry of Information and the British War Memorials Committee (1918 – 1919): the Peace Academy (1919): the Nation’s War Pictures and

Other Records Exhibition at the Royal Academy (1919), the destiny of Vorticism (1919) and in particular CRW Nevinson's epic canvas *Harvest of Battle* and J. S. Sargent's *Gassed*.