MEMORIAL ART GALLERY EXHIBIT SHOWCASES WORLD WAR I POSTERS

ROCHESTER, NY — World War I was the first war in which the US government used posters as a cheap and effective means of mass communication. Playing on cultural roles of gender and family and utilizing the power of symbols and personification, US wartime posters addressed such needs as recruitment, government bond and loan campaigns, labor, food conservation, and Red Cross fund drives.


The exhibition is dedicated to the memory of David Hochstein (1892–1918), violin prodigy after whom the Hochstein School was named; killed in the Battle of Argonne.

Into the fray
As the United States entered into the ugly fray of a European war, propaganda artists attempted to personalize an increasingly impersonal modern warfare system. To convince reluctant citizens to sacrifice themselves and their family to the brutal machine of war, poster artists tapped into Americans' pride, fear, familial love, and need for sustenance.

The great demands of war necessitated the involvement and support of all citizens--men, women, and children. Bold language, hyper-dramatized scenarios, and potent cultural symbols enhanced the urgency and enthusiasm of this message. While the stereotype of the brutal German soldier was common in World War I propaganda, the figures in this exhibition embody the complex and conflicting ideals of American gender roles.
Aided by the momentum of the Women's Rights Movement, World War I caused a tremendous shift in the social structure as women filled jobs vacated by men at war. President Wilson said, "This war could not have been fought... if it had not been for the services of the women." But despite the shifting social roles during the war, its conclusion brought a return to the status quo as men returned to the workplace and women returned to the home.

Along with other forms of propaganda—including pamphlets, major motion pictures and buttons—America produced more posters than all the other belligerents combined.

"What's Up" Lecture
Thursday, November 2 at 5:30 pm, MAG director Grant Holcomb and assistant curator Jessica Marten present an informal 20-minute talk in the exhibition space. Their talk will be followed by the opportunity to ask questions. Free with Gallery admission (below).

Admission
The exhibition is open Tuesday-Friday noon to 5 pm and Thursday until 9 pm; Saturday and Sunday 10 am-5 pm. Closed Mondays and Thanksgiving Day.

Admission is $7; college students with ID and senior citizens, $5; children 6-18, $2; free to MAG members, UR students and children 5 and under. Reduced admission Thursdays 5-9 pm, $2.

Your ticket to Georgia O'Keeffe: Color and Conservation also admits you to the exhibition. For O'Keeffe ticket prices, visit http://mag.rochester.edu/okeeffe/index1.html.