

**Images of Former Child Soldiers in Central Africa  
Document Life after Combat**

***Exhibition Features Photographs by Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting  
Grantee Recipients Marcus Bleasdale, Robin Hammond, and Andre Lambertson***

Worcester, MA – September 17, 2014 – Revealing the everyday realities of former child soldiers in Africa, a new exhibition at the Worcester Art Museum provides a window into the lasting impact of war through images drawn from grantee recipients at the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting. *Africa's Children of Arms* features works by internationally acclaimed photographers Marcus Bleasdale, Robin Hammond, and Andre Lambertson that tell the stories of individuals as they embark on a new chapter in their lives. On view November 19, 2014 through May 31, 2015, the exhibition marks the second installment of an ongoing series in dialogue with *Knights!*, a landmark exhibition showcasing one of the nation's best collections of arms and armor.

“With this presentation, I hope that visitors give further consideration to those who have lived through the atrocities of war in the present day. This insight will provide a contemporary framework for understanding the real world ramifications of the weaponry featured in *Knights!*, as well as a more nuanced perspective on an issue that has persisted across centuries,” said Nancy Burns, Assistant Curator of Prints, Drawings, and Photographs at the Worcester Art Museum. “These images not only document and raise awareness of the forced recruitment and exploitation of children, but they also capture the triumph of the human spirit as these ex-soldiers come to terms with their pasts in order to rebuild their lives for a happier future.”

Bringing together 30 photographs, the exhibition sheds light on one of the most pressing human rights issues afflicting Africa, where boys and girls are regularly forced into armed combat. Whether they are abducted, coerced into violence, or perceive their participation in the army as the only option for survival, many of these child soldiers are not old enough to understand the severe brutality to which they are exposed during conflict. The images by the featured documentarians and photojournalists serve as records of life after war as these individuals reintegrate themselves into society and grapple with the unspeakable trauma that defined their youth. Among the works featured are:

- Marcus Bleasdale's 2010 series *Abandoned People: Central African Republic* follows the lives of ex-child soldiers throughout the Central African Republic. Bleasdale is one of the world's leading documentary photographers, who uses his work to advocate for political and social change around the world. His photographs examining human rights abuses have been shown in the U.S. Senate, the United Nations, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in France, and in leading publications, including *The New York Times*, *TIME Magazine*, *Newsweek*, and *National Geographic*, among others.
- *Condemned* (2013) by Robin Hammond documents the crisis surrounding mental health in Africa's war-weary countries. While in Liberia, he took portraits of former child soldiers reenacting their combat roles using sticks and their hands. This series, previously displayed throughout the city of Paris on a series of billboards, won the 2014 Pictures of the Year International Award (POYi). Hammond is a freelance photojournalist who has dedicated his career to documenting human rights and development issues around the world, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. He is the recipient of four Amnesty International awards for Human Rights journalism and the Carmignac Gestion Photojournalism Award (2011).

- Andre Lambertson's *Liberia: Pictures from Out of the Rubble* (2007) chronicles the lives of adolescents, ages 17 to 22, who exist on the margins of society. Victims of a civil war they never chose to join, these young people are often ostracized and not embraced back into the communities they once terrorized. *Africa's Children of Arms* marks the first time this group of works has been exhibited. Andre Lambertson is a New York-based photojournalist, teacher, and filmmaker committed to documenting stories of hope, healing, and transformation. His award-winning photo essays on social issues have been featured in *Time*, *U.S. News & World Report*, *Life*, *National Geographic*, and *The New York Times Magazine*.

*Africa's Children of Arms* is an element of the Good + Evil section of *Knights!*, which uncovers how the use of armor is conditioned by moral questions, for better and for worse. Many of the swords displayed in this section were meant for ritual use and can be admired for their beautiful craftsmanship—but still have the potential for violence. *Africa's Children of Arms* continues this investigation into the ramifications of deploying weaponry, and is part of a series of exhibitions presenting information about real-time conflicts from the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting. Drawing parallels between the medieval wars of Europe and contemporary warfare, the exhibition juxtaposes an 18<sup>th</sup>-century child's rifle alongside a photograph from Marcus Bleasdale's series *The Rape of a Nation*, Congo, 2003. The fully functional hunting rifle was made by a Russian court gunmaker in the service of Catherine the Great, and may have been made for the future Tsar Alexander I when he was still a toddler. By pairing this object with Bleasdale's work, the exhibition aims to dispel the mythology surrounding arms and armor to underscore the historical precedent for children in the military and the principal function of these objects as weapons.

*Africa's Children of Arms* is organized by the Worcester Art Museum and curated by Nancy Burns, Assistant Curator of Prints, Drawings, and Photographs, in collaboration with the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting.

#### **ABOUT THE PULITZER CENTER ON CRISIS REPORTING:**

The Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting is an innovative award-winning non-profit journalism organization dedicated to supporting the independent international journalism that U.S. media organizations are increasingly less able to undertake. The Center focuses on under-reported topics, promoting high-quality international reporting, and creating platforms that reach broad and diverse audiences.

#### **ABOUT THE WORCESTER ART MUSEUM:**

Founded in 1898, the Worcester Art Museum serves Worcester and the broader region. The Museum houses an encyclopedic collection of paintings, sculpture, decorative arts, photography, prints, drawings, and new media. WAM's collection has historically been strongest in European Renaissance paintings, but with recent acquisitions and donations, like Veronese's *Venus Disarming Cupid* and the integration of the collection from the Higgins Armory Museum, it continues to diversify and expand its curatorial and programmatic offerings. Symbolized by the opening of the Salisbury Street doors in 2012, the Museum continues toward its goal of accessibility for all visitors.

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