

THE NATIONAL WWI MUSEUM AND MEMORIAL

News Release

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Special Exhibition *Rearranging History: Daniel MacMorris and the Panthéon de la Guerre* Opens Dec. 15 at National World War I Museum and Memorial

Exhibition Explores What Happened to the World's Largest Painting

KANSAS CITY, Mo. – The largest remaining intact sections of the *Panthéon de la Guerre* have been on exhibit at the National World War I Museum and Memorial for nearly 60 years. For the first time, since the painting was last shown in its entirety 75 years ago, the public has the opportunity to view additional fragments from the world's largest painting.

[*Rearranging History: Daniel MacMorris and the Panthéon de la Guerre*](#), a new special exhibition at the National World War I Museum and Memorial, helps answer the question: what happened to the world's largest painting?

"For the first time since the *Panthéon de la Guerre* was last shown as a complete painting in 1940, the public will be able to see key fragments from this important work of art," Museum Senior Curator Doran Cart said. "It's challenging to put in perspective how massive this painting was in its original form. Imagine a canvas longer than a football or soccer field – it was simply colossal in size and scope."

At 402 feet in circumference and 45 feet in height, the *Panthéon de la Guerre* was not only the most ambitious artistic undertaking during World War I, but upon completion in 1918, it was the largest painting in the world at more than 18,000 square feet.

"*Rearranging History: Daniel MacMorris and the Panthéon de la Guerre* continues the Museum's mission of providing compelling special exhibitions commemorating the centennial of World War I," National World War I Museum and Memorial President and CEO Dr. Matthew Naylor said. "The majority of these fragments haven't been seen by the public in 75 years and we're pleased to tell the fascinating story of this incredible painting."

Forgotten after exhibitions in Europe and the United States, when artist Daniel MacMorris (1893-1981) learned from a 1953 *Life* magazine article that the *Panthéon* was in the U. S., he saw a golden opportunity. MacMorris, who was in charge of decorating the Liberty Memorial, knew the panorama intimately. He had seen it in Paris as a doughboy and had studied it closely in the 1920s as a student of the *Panthéon* artist Auguste Gorguet. MacMorris thought the *Panthéon* would be perfect for the one remaining wall in Memory Hall without a mural.

After acquiring the painting, MacMorris photographed it in detail. He cut out the figures in the photos and used these like movable puzzle pieces to work out how best to reduce and reconfigure the composition – an effort he compared to "whittling down a novel to Reader's Digest condensation." After deciding whom to include and where to place them, he took scissors to the canvas. He cut out selected figures, flags, and other passages and added these to either side of the original American section.

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What happened to the unused portions of the original? By far most of what MacMorris did not use he threw away. He sent several larger, excised passages back to William Haussner, the Baltimore restaurateur and art collector who donated the *Panthéon* to the Liberty Memorial. Haussner displayed many of these in his eponymous restaurant until it closed in 1999, after which they were sold at auction. MacMorris doled out other pieces to the art students who helped him reconfigure the painting. Still others he gave to influential Kansas Citians, some of whom have since donated the fragments back to the Museum.

Rearranging History: Daniel MacMorris and the Panthéon de la Guerre is open Tuesday, Dec. 15 through March 27, 2016 in Memory Hall.

About the National World War I Museum and Memorial

The National World War I Museum and Memorial is America's leading institution dedicated to remembering, interpreting and understanding the Great War and its enduring impact on the global community. The Museum holds the most diverse collection of World War I objects and documents in the world and is the second-oldest public museum dedicated to preserving the objects, history and experiences of the war. The Museum takes visitors of all ages on an epic journey through a transformative period and shares deeply personal stories of courage, honor, patriotism and sacrifice. Designated by Congress as America's official World War I Museum and Memorial and located in downtown Kansas City, Mo., the National World War I Museum and Memorial inspires thought, dialogue and learning to make the experiences of the Great War era meaningful and relevant for present and future generations. To learn more, visit theworldwar.org.

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