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Requisitioned: American War Art of the Second World War

A Thesis by

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Orange, CA

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in War and Society

May 2020

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February 2020

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ABSTRACT

Requisitioned: American War Art of the Second World War

by Spenser Carroll-Johnson

The United States requisitioned artists to assist with military objectives and servicemen requisitioned art as a form of rhetoric. This research reexamines the role of “official artists” and thereby extends its definition to include the multitude of art they produced during the Second World War. The underpinnings of this thesis reside during the economic crises of the 1930s that brought about American emergency relief initiatives for artists under the direction of Holger Cahill and, by extension, Edward Bruce. For the first time in history, the American public engaged with state-sponsored art. Due to a symbiotic relationship that formed between the State and the art community between the interwar years, 1933 and 1941, the United States witnessed a proliferation of art programs during the Second World War. The genesis of American war art of the Second World War began prior to the declaration of war in December of 1941. By the start of the war in 1941, members of the Armed Forces were already working with artists to formulate art programs. The production of practical art for training purposes burgeoned, and artist-correspondent initiatives reemerged to secure pictorial historical records of the war. Through a study of both practical and creative forms of “official” and “unofficial” art, this thesis reveals art was not merely employed during the Second World War for propaganda. During the Second World War, art was a valuable and malleable tool for both the State that required it to accomplish military objectives and for servicemen who relied on it to articulate their experiences to loved ones and one another. This narrative reshapes current assumptions of war art and encourages readers to reconceptualize art and its capacity to operate both as a State and social function.

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ABBREVIATIONS

WPA	Works Project Administration
FAP	Federal Art Project
PWAP	Public Works of Art Project
WDAAC	War Department Art Advisory Committee
CPI	Committee on Public Information

Introduction

In January 1939, President Franklin Roosevelt forewarned the nation as he spoke “of the disturbance abroad and of the...storm signals from across the seas.”¹ Amid this looming threat of war, American artists conferred among themselves as to *what would become of American art* and *what role they would play*.² Soon discourse turned to action as artists formed groups, committees and the National Art Council for Defense to determine their wartime role.³ Congress, too, developed its own opinions on wartime art. With war on the horizon, adversaries of economic relief initiatives in Congress saw no place for federally funded art in a time war. “All the little bureaucrats with whom it is my misfortune to have to deal...decided that now the world is at war and we ought to cut out this art muck,” wrote Edward Bruce, head of the Section of Fine Arts.⁴ Just one year into the Second World War, Roosevelt ordered the liquidation of the Works Project Administration (WPA), a New Deal agency, effectively putting an end to state economic relief initiatives and, by extension, state-sponsored art. Roosevelt’s signature ostensibly marked the end of nearly a decade of state involvement in the production of art. The role of art in American society, however, did not depreciate with the onslaught of the Second World War. Instead, the art community’s efforts were redirected from cultural development to wartime affairs. American art

¹ Franklin D. Roosevelt, *Annual Message to Congress (Speech file 1191C) January 4, 1939*, Speech, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Master Speech File, 1898-1945, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library & Museum, <http://www.Fdrlibrary.marist.edu/archives/franklin>.

² Italicized for emphasis.

³ “Artists Organize to Help Win War: 17 Groups Set Up a Council to Study What They Can Do,” *New York Times*, December 18, 1941, 37.

⁴ The Section of Fine Arts was assigned to decorate public buildings and spaces. It was first established in 1934 and titled the Section of Painting and Sculpture. In 1938 the program was moved from the Treasury Department to the Public Buildings Administration and renamed the Section of Fine Arts. “Section of Fine Arts Selected Administrative Records and Correspondence, 1934-1943,” Archives of American Art accessed June 2019, <https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/section-fine-arts-selected-administrative-records-and-correspondence-9774> *Washington Star*, Sept. 12, 1937, as quoted in Richard D. McKinzie, *The New Deal for Artists* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1973), 45.

would, contrary to popular memory, continue to have a lasting state and social function during the Second World War.⁵

Eight years of state-sponsored art under the Roosevelt administration had, as the head of the WPA hoped, nurtured the American public's participation in the production of art.⁶ By 1941 servicemen, statesmen, civilians and artists worked together to formulate war art programs. Soldiers' desire to engage with art also burgeoned, becoming a leading recreational activity by 1942.⁷ Servicemen, interested in the production of art crowded in art classes in army training camps, volunteered to paint road signs and requested reassignment to camouflage units. When such opportunities were unavailable, servicemen were willing to pay or exchange labor for artwork and solicited their artist comrades to paint, draw and sketch scenes of warfare. On the home front, American artists appealed to state officials to establish innovative war art initiatives. By the Second World War, artists and their relationships with the State during the interwar years served as the catalyst for the formation of official war art initiatives. This thesis asserts that American war art of the Second World War was requisitioned by the State to execute military objectives and, similarly, requisitioned by servicemen as a form of rhetoric to communicate with one another and

⁵ American war art of the Second World War references works of art produced by civilians and soldiers alike during the Second World War. It does not include art created in its aftermath. This stringent definition is provided for clarity. However, the perimeter of American war art of the Second World War likely began before the United States declaration of war in December 1941 and months following September 1945 to include works displaying, among many events, the mobilization of total war and the embarkation of soldiers' return home. Any art mentioned in this thesis that was produced shortly after the conflict is revealed as such.

⁶ Holger Cahill reiterated the purpose of Federal Community Centers as "cultural development through community participation." Quoted in: "Federal Aid Held Vital to Spur Art: Holger Cahill, WPA Director, Sees 'Cultural Erosion' Diverting Talent, Sees Age of Materialism, Community Centers Inspire Wide Participation, Speaker Says at Congress Here," *New York Times*, December 19, 1917, 50.

⁷ The Women's Interest Section and War Department, Bureau of Public Relations, *The Soldier and his Recreation*, (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1942), 12. HathiTrust, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.a0012724266&view=1up&seq=3>
Official artists were artists commissioned by the state to produce art.

"Soldier-artists" or unofficial artists reference American soldiers who produced art under their own fruition. In moments of quiescence, ordinary soldiers drew. Soldier-artists and unofficial artists are used interchangeably.

loved ones at home. These varied forms of purpose help reshape current misconceptions of American war art of the Second World War. An examination of the Army's war artist-correspondent program and other official and unofficial war art initiatives reveals the ways in which the State, servicemen and civilians used and deployed art during the war.

Belisario R. Contreras, the author of *Tradition and Innovation in New Deal Art*, purports "the advent of World War II marked the end of this experiment in federal support for the arts."⁸ State-sponsored art, however, did not decline with the onslaught of the Second World War. As a result of the summation that it had, Contreras, like historian Richard Mckinzie author of *The New Deal for Artists*, focused on the politics that led to the final dissolution of the WPA and the Federal Art Project (FAP) in 1943. However, both historians largely ignore the servicemen and civilian personnel who had, in fact, actively participated in and stimulated the production of State-sponsored art throughout the Second World War. These artists who helped propel the nation forward in a time of war through training guides, camouflage, and the procurement of intelligence information did not fit into the mold of the creative form of fine art. As such, they became some of the many unseen artists working to prepare the nation for war.

Historian, Ralph Purcell authored a 1958 compendium on the United States patronage of art entitled, *Government and Art, Study of American Experience*. Purcell's central focus was arguing for the revival of American state-sponsored art programs. He, therefore, did not draw a parallel between the introduction of state-sponsored art programs during the interwar years and the formation of art initiatives during the Second World War, as this thesis does. For Purcell, art of

⁸ Belisario R. Contreras, *Tradition and Innovation in New Deal Art* (London and Toronto: Associated University Press, 1983), 20.

the New Deal era and art of the Second World War were two separate, distinct, and exclusive subsets in the larger narrative of American state-sponsored art.

Current scholarship examines American war art of the Second World War in isolation. Peter Harrington, the foremost American military art historian and curator of the Anne S.K. Brown Military collection, traces the production of Army art beginning with soldier-artists' uncoordinated efforts to paint murals in 1941, culminating with the establishment of a liberal Army-artist-correspondent program in 1943.⁹ This short-lived program, known as the War Art Units, produced thousands of works of art for the War Department, which encapsulated the very nature of Army life at war. Harrington's study is of particular significance as he adds extensive information to the larger narrative of official American war art where government documentation and archives left only gaps. Harrington attributes the formation of the War Art Units to the efforts of artists and servicemen between 1941 and 1943. However, he makes no connection between the War Art Units and former state-sponsored art initiatives. While thorough, he studies the War Art Units in a vacuum, only addressing them in the period in which they were established. In broadening the study of American war art of the Second World War to the interwar years, it becomes clear that war art initiatives were inextricably linked to the relationships and infrastructure that grew out of Roosevelt's New Deal Era.

The examination of American war art of the Second World War begins in Chapter 1 with the Great War. American art programs existed during World War I as discussed through a study on the first prolific artist-correspondent program, the AEF "eight." The AEF "eight" was established as a propaganda scheme shortly after the United States intervened in the Great War.

⁹ The liberal nature of the Army's war artist correspondent program, the War Art Units, refers to the official Army artists' ability to paint, sketch and draw any subject matter, in any form, and to navigate nearly any location without restriction. See appendix, page 99, for more information.

Its failure to produce revered imagery for the State and periodicals, however, made it an unlikely catalyst for the formation of future war artist-correspondent programs. Chapter 2 examines the emergency relief measures instituted by Roosevelt's administration to support American artists and art institutions during the interwar years, 1933-1943. This chapter explores the art committees, personnel, administrative work, policies and artists to convey the ways in which the state relied on the art world to effect specific cultural identities, ambitions and military goals.

Chapter 3 begins with a study on the mass recruitment and organization of artists for the State. The accelerated technological advances of the modern era and rapid expansion of the Armed Forces necessitated the development of new training materials for the Second World War.¹⁰ Artists' talents, therefore, became a necessity for the training of American soldiers and the execution of military objectives. As the United States shifted from a period of relative peace in the 1930s to war in 1941, art programs were already in existence due to the WPA and FAP, and therefore, artists were readily available to be of service in the interest of national defense. Artists were lured by art programs, encouraged through personal connections, or—more forcibly—transferred into the war industry and Armed Forces. It is through these channels that the United States experienced a transition from American art produced during in the interwar years to the American war art of the Second World War. Additionally, chapter 3 investigates official American war art initiatives. It enlarges the definition of official American war art beyond the canvas during the Second World War to include the mass production of practical art for the war effort such as training materials, intelligence information, camouflage, and imagery for morale, and historical records.

¹⁰ Surveys of old training materials were dated, unsatisfactory and obsolete. Paul Saettler, *The Evolution of American Educational Technology* (Greenwich: Information Age Publishing, 2004), 184.

Chapter 4 examines the formation and dissolution of the Army's War Art Units in 1943. It is through an examination of these units that historians can come to appreciate the social phenomenon that formed over the course of the interwar years. The War Art Units exemplify, through their structure, personnel, and policies that the interwar years were influential in the production of American war art of the Second World War. Chapter 5 concludes with the expansion of the definition of American war art to include art in letters produced by unofficial artists. During the Second World War, art in letters served as a language for servicemen to communicate with their loved ones.

PART 1: THE ORIGINS OF STATE-SPONSORED AMERICAN WAR ART

Chapter 1: The AEF “Eight”

In February 1918, the American Expeditionary Forces (A.E.F) deployed eight artists to compete with allied forces for the procurement of wartime imagery. These official artists, also known as the AEF “eight,” sketched, drew and painted scenes of war. In 1915, Germany was the first nation to send an artist to war. France, England and Canada soon followed, instituting combat art programs in 1916. Having entered the war in 1917, the United States was among few nations that had not officially acquired visual documentation of the war on canvas. England had “a very adequate pictorial record of the Great War,” opined celebrated art critic Albert Gallatin, “a record which far outstrips that of any other country. Canada only excepted.”¹¹ It is apparent from the United States’ delayed involvement in the production and procurement of wartime art that the successes of the British and Canadian art initiatives created a competitive climate spurring the United States establishment of the AEF “eight.” The establishment of an artist correspondent program in 1918 was, then, tied to propaganda schemes orchestrated by the Committee on Public Information.¹² George Creel’s Committee on Public Information (CPI) quickly adopted an art component to enhance its propaganda initiative, as propaganda theorist Jacques Ellul asserts, “As soon as *one* country has taken the road, all other countries must eventually follow suit or be destroyed.”¹³ The United States was compelled to engage in the production of war art and simultaneously pressured to establish a working propaganda campaign. In response to international

¹¹ Albert Eugene Gallatin, *Art and the Great War*, (New York: E.P. Dutton & Company 1919), 133.

¹² “the Committee on Public Information (CPI), under the direction of George Creel ... was responsible for censorship and propaganda...” Phillip M. Taylor, *Propaganda in the Age of Total and Cold war*, (New York: Manchester University Press, 2003), 183.

¹³ Jacques Ellul, *Propaganda: The Formation of Men’s Attitudes* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), 134.

pressures, the United States introduced its first “official” artist-correspondent program—a precursor to the War Art Unit of 1942.

The artist correspondent program of the Great War was proposed in the spring of 1917. Director of the Division of Pictures for the CPI, Kendall Banning, sought to establish an artist-correspondent program similar to the art initiatives instituted by Germany, Britain, Canada and France. Banning consulted British and French representatives regarding the production of wartime art, and was, subsequently, advised to establish an initiative in which artists would cover battle zones unseen by civilians.¹⁴ Although, artists were recruited to participate in an artist-correspondent project, a concrete program never materialized. In December 1917, the initiative was revisited by the Engineer Reserve Corps and the Signal Corps of the Army. General John J. Pershing, Commander of the American Expeditionary Forces in France, approved both plans and agreed to send eight artists, four from each initiative, to serve as captains under the Engineer Reserve Corps. The eight artists selected to procure “a pictorial history of the war” were William James Aylward, Walter Jack Duncan, Harvey Thomas Dunn, Ernest Clifford Peixotto, J. André Smith, George Matthews Harding, Wallace Morgan, and Harry Everett Townsend.¹⁵ In February 1918, their orders were to produce “oil paintings, portraits, sketches, etchings, etc., within the war zone for historical purposes.”¹⁶ Days later, the nature of the project as an innocuous initiative to

¹⁴ Gallatin, 39 and Creel’s *How we Advertised America*, p118-119 as cited in David H. Mould, *American Newsfilm 1914-1919: The Underexposed War* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 250. For more information on how the artists were selected and their artistic prowess see Alfred Emile Cornebise’s *Art from the Trenches: America’s Uniformed Artists in World War I*.

¹⁵ Reports of Commander-in-Chief A.E.F. Staff Sections and Services, “III. The Official Artists of the A.E.F. A. History of Their Relations with G-2-D And Notes on Their Work. Report on the Work of the Eight Official Artists in the A.E.F. Commissioned as Captains in the Engineer Reserve Corps,” in *United States Army in the World War 1917-1919*, (Washington D.C.: Historical Division Department of the Army and U.S. Government Printing Office, 1948), 127. HathiTrust. <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/msu.31293006840494?urlappend=%3Bseq=133>.

¹⁶ Peter Krass, *Portrait of War: The U.S. Army’s First Combat Artists and the Doughboys’ Experience in WWI*, (New Jersey: Wiley, 2007), 8. As quoted in Major General William M. Black, chief of engineers, U.S. Army, at the War Department to Harry Townsend, February 15, 1918, Folder 2.

secure wartime imagery was presented to the American public. “As part of a plan for making a complete official pictorial record of the American Army’s participation in the war against Germany [sic] the War Department has a recommendation from General Pershing for special artists” read the *New York Times*.¹⁷

Little time was spent devising the initiative and, being the first of its kind in the United States, there was no model on which to base it.¹⁸ Shortly after its founding, the AEF “eight” initiative morphed into a haphazard propaganda program. The frenetic organization of the program was apparent from the very outset. The “eight” and the General Head Quarters, A.E.F. were not issued definitive plans regarding the assignment or its function.¹⁹ Many of the “eight” were shipped out within days of receiving their assignments. As a result, they received no training. Artist Peixotto was aboard the *Pocahontas* bound for France a mere ten days after his induction into the program. Acclaimed artist, Harding shipped out nearly twelve days after receiving notice.²⁰ Because there were no preset assignments or definitively prescribed military regulations set in place for such a program, several artists were commandeered by their superiors (in transit to France) and assigned duties commensurate with their captain ranking.²¹ Peixotto and Morgan, for

¹⁷ “Copy of Statement to the Press in Regard to Appointment of Official Artists,” February 22, 1918, *The New York Times*, Ernest Peixotto Papers, 1893-1946, The Bancroft Library UC Berkeley, microfilm.

¹⁸ The narrative of official American war art does not originate the AEF “eight.” George Washington employed artists during the Revolutionary War, President Lincoln during the Civil war, and President McKinley during the Spanish-American War. Nevertheless, the artist correspondent program under the Wilson administration had a dissimilar structure from its predecessors. 89 Cong. Rec. 6174 (1943) (statement Rep. Robertson) <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/GPO-CRECB-1943-pt5/pdf/GPO-CRECB-1943-pt5-5-1.pdf>.

¹⁹ Reports of Commander-in-Chief A.E.F. Staff Sections and Services, “III. The Official Artists of the A.E.F. A. History of Their Relations with G-2-D And Notes on Their Work. Report on the Work of the Eight Official Artists in the A.E.F. Commissioned as Captains in the Engineer Reserve Corps,” in *United States Army in the World War 1917-1919* (Washington D.C.: Historical Division Department of the Army and U.S. Government Printing Office, 1948), 128.

²⁰ Alfred Emile Cornebise, *Art from the Trenches: America’s Uniformed Artists in World War I*, (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1991), 27.

²¹ Reports of Commander-in-Chief A.E.F. Staff Sections and Services, “III. The Official Artists of the A.E.F. A. History of Their Relations with G-2-D And Notes on Their Work,” 128.

example, were assigned guard duty on multiple occasions by Major Franch. “I admit the dismay I felt,” wrote Peixotto, “an artist suddenly turned soldier, in uniform scarcely three weeks old; at being thus suddenly thrown into a position of such responsibility, giving and carrying out orders, trying to conceal my real feelings...”²² Dunn found himself in charge of an entire company during his Atlantic voyage.²³ Without any formal training, however, this became a bureaucratic nightmare and daunting task for the artists. Ultimately, this initiative’s shambolic start had damaging implications as the program matured.²⁴

Once in France, the crude nature of the program became more apparent. The “eight” were assigned to Neuchâteau near the front. Without assigned lodging, it was incumbent upon the “eight” to locate studios and art supplies with their own funds.²⁵ This posed a challenge in war torn France. Upon their arrival at Pershing’s office, the “eight” were informed to report to the Censorship and Press Division of the Intelligence Branch (G-2D).²⁶ With their new reassignment to the Censorship and Press Division, their roles in the state’s larger propaganda schemes began to take shape.²⁷

²² Ernest Peixotto, *The American Front*, (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons MCMXIX, 1919), 10.

²³ Cornebise, *Art from the Trenches*, 26.

²⁴ Banning wrote to, artist, Wallace Morgan, in September 1918, “fault lies very largely in the fact that you were sent overseas without adequate idea of your functions and without proper equipment and instructions. The thing was done in a haphazard way and much valuable time was lost.” Major Banning to Captain Morgan, Sept. 23, 1918 in collection titled: “Portfolio of World War Sketches” Sanford Low Fund as quoted in Cornebise, 145.

²⁵ Captain USA Acting Chief G.2.D. Donald L. Stone to Captain Ernest Peixotto Engineers Official Artist, Memorandum, April 21, 1919, Ernest Peixotto Papers, 1893-1946, The Bancroft Library UC Berkeley, microfilm.

²⁶ The eight retained their captain ranking in the Engineer Reserve Corps. Cornebise, *Art from the Trenches*, 26.

²⁷ “The fourth subsection of the intelligence section of the General Staff of the A.E.F. (G-2-D, G.H.Q.) was charged, during the war, with the executive direction of postal, telegraphic and telephonic censorship of the American Expeditionary Forces; with handling of press correspondents, accredited and visiting, and the censorship of their telegrams and mail articles; with liaison press censorship with the French authorities; with propaganda of the American army, which included direct propaganda over the enemy lines, liaison with the committee on public information (which was charged with propaganda in neutral countries...)” Reports of Commander-In-Chief, A.E.F. Staff Sections and Services, *United States Army In The World War 1917-1919*, Historical Division Department of the Army Washington D.C. 1948. P81 General Headquarters, AEF Chaumont, Haute-Marne, May 1 1919 HathiTrust <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/msu.31293006840494?urlappend=%3Bseq=1>.

Shortly after their arrival in France, the “eight” frequently received updates regarding their ever-evolving program. Following his assignment delineated in February 1918, Peixotto received a letter on April 19th explaining, “You are authorized to make sketches and paintings anywhere within the Zone of the American Army in accordance with instructions already given to you.”²⁸ Just weeks into the program, the CPI, and various United States entities began to demand imagery for propaganda schemes and publicity, thereby, dramatically changing the fabric of the program. Eleven days after receiving their orders on April 19th, the “eight” received a letter from the General Headquarters setting forth their assignment in greater detail. The “eight” were reminded by Chief of G.2.D., W.C. Sweeney, to supply the General Headquarters with “sketches and paintings both for historical purposes and for current use in American publications to which these sketches will be distributed thru the War Department.”²⁹ Suddenly the “eight” were required to submit works of art monthly along with a report including descriptions of completed works of art, as well as, prospective works.³⁰ By June, 1918 the artists were authorized “considerable latitude” regarding the subject matter of their work as long as they continued to document the field.³¹

The monthly requirement to submit finished works of art placed a strain on the relationship between the “eight” and the CPI. Documenting the war posed a challenge for the eight civilian artists who were unprepared for what they witnessed, as well as the discomforts of war. Peixotto confided in a colleague, Charles Gibson, “Having spent much time seeing all the different fronts

²⁸ W.C. Sweeney to Captain Ernest Peixotto, Letter, “Work as official artist, A.E.F.,” April 19, 1918, Ernest Peixotto Papers, 1893-1946, The Bancroft Library UC Berkeley, microfilm.

²⁹ Chief, G.2.D Lt. Col. Walter C. Sweeney to the captains Wallace Morgan, Ernest Peixotto and J. Andre Smith, letter, “Duty as Official Artists of the A.E.F.,” Apr. 30, 1918, Ernest Peixotto Papers, 1893-1946, The Bancroft Library UC Berkeley, microfilm.

³⁰ Chief, G.2.D Lt. Col. Walter C. Sweeney to the captains Wallace Morgan, Ernest Peixotto and J. Andre Smith

³¹ Even though Peixotto was assigned such latitude in the June 1918 letter, he was already given extensive latitude in April of 1918. Peixotto had a pass authorizing him to travel “as far as your headquarters and as much farther as you consider wise to permit.” Major General Edwards, signed by C.M. Dowell Lieutenant Colonel Chief of Staff April 11, 1918, Ernest Peixotto Papers, 1893-1946, The Bancroft Library UC Berkeley, microfilm.

on which our boys are stationed, we realize how big a proposition we are up against. We all hope that our work is not going to be judged too quickly.”³² Peixotto’s entreaty went unheard. Periodicals wanted the artists to produce images of action on a monthly basis. In turn, “the artists complained that the necessity of producing a quantity of pictures on a specific date placed them under a pressure which interfered with the proper pursuit of their artistic studies and work.”³³ The “eight” wanted time to digest the sights they witnessed and to transcribe their sketches into finished works of art. Time, the intransigent General Staff were unwilling to give. They also wanted artistic freedom.

By July 1918, the General Staff grew increasingly impatient with the content of works produced by the “eight”. They desired images of combat to use in periodicals and for propaganda. Instead, the “eight” sent artwork depicting the banal realities of war.³⁴ Their works did not glorify

³² Quote Continued, “The British and the French have had years in which to know the game and it will take us a little time to strike our gait – so don’t be hard on the first stuff we send.” Peixotto to Gibson, Letter, August 1, 1918, Ernest Peixotto Papers, 1893-1946, The Bancroft Library UC Berkeley, microfilm.

³³ Reports of Commander-in-Chief A.E.F. Staff Sections and Services, “III. The Official Artists of the A.E.F.,” 128.

³⁴ “A *New York Times* article summarized the content of their work, “The subjects cover practically the whole field of war, dressing stations, supply trains, bomb-proof billets, ‘chow,’ officers’ mess, German prisoners, the hurry call to fight, and the roll-call afterwards, artillery and machine guns...and a hundred other scenes of activity.” *New York Times* as quoted in Gallatin, *Art and the Great War*, 40. Figure 1: Harvey Thomas Dunn, *Between Le Charnel and Jaulgonne*, 1918, watercolor and pastel, 16 5/8 in x 25 5/8 in, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, https://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/search/object/nmah_447424. Figure 2: Walter Jack Duncan, *Newly Arrived Troops Debarking at Brest*, July 22 1918, ink wash and charcoal, 10 1/4 in x 14 3/8 in, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, https://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/search/object/nmah_448077.

war. For example, Dunn's painting of soldiers struggling to release a wagon caught in a quagmire captured the quotidian challenges of mobilizing soldiers for war while, simultaneously, documenting the desecrated French countryside made treacherous by the advancement

Figure 1 Harvey Thomas Dunn, *Between Le Charmel and Jaulgonne*

of thousands of troops. Walter Jack Duncan's 1918 painting *Newly Arrived Troops Debarking at Brest* recorded the disembarkation practices of American troops in France. Duncan's charcoal

Figure 2 Walter Jack Duncan's *Newly Arrived Troops Debarking at Brest*.

sketch reveals the general structure and size of American vessels and, concurrently, reveals American troops' accoutrements and social behavior (i.e. how American troops interacted with one another, how they carried their packs, their posture and general deportment). Despite the wealth of historical information these works of art portrayed,

they lacked the formidable, imposing and resplendent images of battle scenes the periodicals demanded to see.

The CPI and periodicals anticipated this art would illustrate aspects of war for the American public that photographs had not previously captured.³⁵ Magazine editors surfeited with photographs requested art that captured action and other forms of imagery that were different from the photographs they received daily. When the “eight” failed to submit works of art that appeased publishers’ expectations, they were approached with disappointment and contempt.³⁶ Banning, who had conceived the program in 1917 was now a major in the Signal Corps and expressed his displeasure for the art via correspondence. He sent letters to several of the “eight” hoping to spur a change in the content of their art and to express magazines’ disinterest in their current work. He notified the “eight” that periodicals sought art that was “inspirational in nature” and more reflective of war at the front.³⁷ Bannings letters continued into the summer of 1918. He also wrote of the head of the CPI’s dissatisfaction with the art.³⁸ Captain Smith received one such letter, in which he was admonished. “Neither the magazine editors for whom the pictures are largely intended...nor the officers of the General Staff appear to express very much interest in the pictures.”³⁹ Some of the “eight” even received recommendations for subject matter they should

³⁵ “‘The Banning Barrage’: Extracts from the Letters of Major Kendall Banning, officer in Charge, Pictorial Section, Historical Branch, War Plans Division, General Staff,” 2, Ernest Peixotto Papers, 1893-1946, The Bancroft Library UC Berkeley, microfilm.

³⁶ Major Robert M. Johnston to Lt. Col. C.W. Weeks, letter, September 6, 1918, Ernest Peixotto Papers, 1893-1946, The Bancroft Library UC Berkeley, microfilm. (Hereafter cited as Major Robert M. Johnston to Lt. Col. C.W. Weeks).

³⁷ An August 5, 1918 letter to Smith stated, “You are occupying a front seat at the greatest drama the world has ever known...you are surrounded with opportunities to do unusual work...the vast events which are taking place within a few miles, ought to and I believe will, put an inspirational quality into your work, which is quite lacking in the first pictures that have arrived. Generally speaking your pictures are lacking in human interest and they are also lacking in importance.” “‘The Banning Barrage,’” 1-2.

³⁸ “Mr. Creel and Mr. H. Devitt Welsh and Mr. Charles Dana Gibson, all of the Committee on Public information, are so disappointed with the subject matter of these drawings...and await the arrival of pictures that show more action and which are more valuable for propaganda purposes in the press.” “‘The Banning Barrage,’” 2. George Creel was the Head of the Committee on Publication and H. Welsh and Charles Gibson were artists affiliated with the Committee on Publications.

³⁹ “‘The Banning Barrage,’” 3.

incorporate in their art.⁴⁰ Despite Banning's efforts to shape the nature of the art, or more concisely, to censor the "eight," the artists maintained support from their superiors and colleagues. Major M. Johnston wrote, "I happen to know through personal contact with several of the artists, particularly Capt. Smith, what high seriousness they are putting into their work, what continuous risk of life they work under."⁴¹ This, however, did not stifle Banning's incessant letters and the continuous monthly deadlines to produce propaganda.

Due to the demands for more depictions of combat, the "eight" received yet another memorandum regarding their assignment in September of 1918. A.L. James Jr.'s September memorandum limited the "eight's" access to Advanced Zones, "all work of the Official Artists until further notice will be confined to activities in the Advance Zones. There will be a special effort to portray action wherever possible."⁴² The "considerable latitude" McCabe gave them to navigate the field months earlier, was now revoked due to bureaucratic pressure from across the pond. The demand to churn out art with the speed and efficiency of a factory assembly line was a constant reminder for the "eight" that this art was intended to sway the masses back home.

The CPI manufactured the AEF artist-correspondent program in anticipation that these works would be used as propaganda. The program originated from the CPI and remained closely

⁴⁰ "Suggestions for subjects to be treated in colors by the artists A.E.F... Tanks in attack formation moving through the mist of dawn. They would look like monsters of the ancient world... A tank coming down a dusty road at sunset with the light on the dust clouds about it. It is accompanied by infantry. Men are seated upon it. They are cheering... A battle at night. Under a moon great spears of headlights cross each other and shells like rockets fall from the air... A group of German prisoners coming down a road herded by a young soldier who is young enough to still have the air he had last year when he herded the cattle in Kansas... I think this is about the sort of thing we want for reproduction." Col. J.R.M. Taylor as quoted in the "The Banning Barrage," 3.

⁴¹ Major Robert M. Johnston to Lt. Col. C.W. Weeks

⁴² A.L. James Jr. Major Calvary Chief, Memorandum, "Memorandum to Official Artists," September 19, 1918, Ernest Peixotto Papers, 1893-1946, The Bancroft Library UC Berkeley, microfilm. And Reports of Commander-in-Chief A.E.F. Staff Sections and Services, "III. The Official Artists of the A.E.F.," 128. It is unclear what Advanced Zones were exactly. It can be assumed, however, that they were sites of great conflict and action.

tied to it through actors such as Banning. Despite the initial intentions of the AEF “eight” in February of 1918, the artist-correspondent program of the Great War was used primarily to produce propaganda imagery. Their works were appropriated for propaganda imagery in periodicals.⁴³ Although Banning referenced the “eight” as “officers in charge of the compilation of the pictorial history of the war” this did not hold true.⁴⁴ The role of the “eight” was reconfigured to support the endeavors of the CPI. The immediate benefits of the art as a propaganda tool, outweighed the long-term benefits of art as a historical record. Procuring imagery for propaganda purposes took precedence. The state had not yet realized the cultural significance of procuring pictorial masterpieces of the war.⁴⁵ As Major Robert M. Johnston opined, it goes back to “a fundamental lack of appreciation of the nature of the art.”⁴⁶

Banning, Black and Pershing’s 1918 war artist-correspondent program was largely unsuccessful for the State because it did not produce the imagery the General Staff had originally anticipated for mass circulation. As Banning stated in his August 1918 letter, “they do not serve either military purpose nor propaganda purposes.” The General Staff did not receive the quantity of works they had envisioned; despite its monthly deadlines, the submission rate was low. Of the estimated 497 works of art produced by the “eight,” Smith produced 105 with one artist, Dunn, having submitted “a few.”⁴⁷ One hundred and ninety-six pieces of art were submitted to periodicals

⁴³ In a June 1918 letter, McCabe explicitly expressed the state’s intentions for a series of sketches drawn by the “eight.” “During the past ten days, the artists have done considerable work in the rear of the Marne battle front, drawing sketches of the French refugees, which it is believed will prove of considerable value for use as propaganda at home and abroad.” Lt. Col. E.R.W. McCabe, “General Policy Reference the Work of Official Artists” memorandum, photographed and referenced in “World War I Art and Combat Artists,” by Billywade17, National Archives: The Unwritten Record, last modified June 13, 2014, <https://unwritten-record.blogs.archives.gov/2014/06/13/world-war-i-art-and-artists/>. (Hereafter cited as “General Policy Reference the Work of Official Artists”)

⁴⁴ “The Banning Barrage,” 1.

⁴⁵ Gallatin, *Art and the Great War*, 23.

⁴⁶ Major Robert M. Johnston to Lt. Col. C.W. Weeks

⁴⁷ Gallatin, *Art and the Great War*, 40-41. By August 15, 1918 Banning noted only seventy-seven works had been produced. “The Banning Barrage,” 2. However, between the months of April and September 1918 the

and a mere fifty-one were selected for publication.⁴⁸ Celebrated artist and art critic Albert Gallatin referenced the art by the “eight” as “commonplace,” claiming they had little media buzz, opining that “even as drawings suitable for publication in the press the pictures were not a success.”⁴⁹ By the Great War’s end, the State was finished with the “eight.” They were ordered to return home.⁵⁰ In the aftermath of the Great War, the A.E.F realized it knew very little about how to devise a successful war program for artists. Brigadier General D.E. Nolan noted in January of 1919, “the work of an artist is of such an intangible nature that it is difficult to outline, in any very specific manner, how their work in war time should be directed.”⁵¹ In 1920, the program was reviewed by the Commission of Fine Arts which produced its report to the President. The “eight” were nearly expunged from history, receiving a mere paragraph within the larger narrative of art and the Great War.⁵² The artwork’s less than heralded reception and the program’s chaotic organization made it an unlikely initiative to be redeployed in times of another world conflict. It was not the catalyst for the Army’s war artist-correspondent program during the Second World War. The artist-correspondent programs of the Second World War arose out of the symbiotic relationship between the state and the art world that formed during the interwar years of 1933-1941.

following works of art were produced by each artist as noted by Pershing, “Morgan 24, Peixotto 58, Smith 106, Harding 19, Dunn 17, Aylward 19, Townsend 27, Duncan 13” Pershing, Ernest Peixotto Papers, 1893-1946, The Bancroft Library UC Berkeley, microfilm. This figure grew as expressed in a reproduction in a 1948 report, Smith 194, Townsend, 54, Peixotto 116, Morgan 150, Harding 32, Dunn 27, Duncan 20 and Aylward 36. Historical Division Department of the Army, “III. The Official Artists of the A.E.F.,” in *United States Army in the World War 1917-1919, Reports of Commander-in-Chief A.E.F., Staff Sections and Services*, (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1948), 128.

⁴⁸ Gallatin, *Art and the Great War*, 24.

⁴⁹ Gallatin, 24.

⁵⁰ “five returned artists have been discharged. It is not desired that any of those remaining be held in service to complete work.” Gen. Peyton C. March, Chief of Staff, for the Adjutant General of the Army, memorandum for transmission via cablegram to Pershing in France, undated [June, 1919], folder, “Dunn reference/” SDMAC as quoted in Cornebie, *Art from the Trenches*, 152.

⁵¹ Commander-in-Chief, A.E.F. to “name of artist”, letter, January 4, 1919 as cited in *United States Army in the World War 1917-1919, Reports of Commander-in-Chief A.E.F., Staff Sections and Services*, 129. (Hereafter cited as D.E. Nolan Letter regarding the AEF “eight”).

⁵² Commission of Fine Arts, “Commission of Fine Arts Eighth Report January 1, 1918-July 1, 1919,” Report, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1920), 39.

Chapter 2: The Interwar Years, 1933-1941

The social clout and visibility of the art community established under the Roosevelt Administration during the interwar years of 1933 and 1941 paved the way for art programs instituted during the Second World War. The administration fortuitously constructed the groundwork for national war art initiatives by introducing a web of work relief programs, art committees, and administrators beginning with the first state-sponsored art program in the United States—The Public Works of Art Project (PWAP)—in December 1933. Established as an emergency work relief program for artists, the PWAP was the impetus for the formation of a series of New Deal art programs and, later, war art programs. Through the PWAP's successor programs, the United States government employed more American artists than any other institution by 1936.⁵³ In turn, these artists became attached to the State. By the start of war in 1941, their appeals to serve the nation both contributed to, and fueled, the development of innovative state-sponsored war art programs.

In 1928, acclaimed artist George Biddle had been living in Mexico City, observing Diego Rivera produce frescoes. Biddle witnessed the splendor and social function of murals.⁵⁴ Inspired, he wrote his old Harvard classmate, Franklin D. Roosevelt, encouraging him to establish a mural art program, "The younger artists of America...would be eager to express these ideals in a permanent art form if they were given the government's cooperation. They would be contributing

⁵³ William J. Barber, "'Sweet Are the Uses of Adversity': Federal Patronage of the Arts in the Great Depression," *History of Political Economy* 31, (December 1999): 250.

⁵⁴ Marcia M. Matthews, "George Biddle's Contribution to Federal Art," *Records of the Columbia Historical Society*, vol. 49 (1973/1974): 499, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40067753>.

Biddle's transformation following his stay in Mexico is encapsulated in a 1929 *New York Times* Article, "George Biddle has been spending the last two years in Mexico; none of his many and various previous adventures has been as productive as this one. Mexico seems to have done some-thing to him emotionally. He is no longer limited to the business of making amusing decoration." Quoted in: "The New George Biddle: Mexico Seems to Have Done Something to Him Emotionally—Other Shows Visited," *New York Times*, November 3, 1929, X13.

to and expressing in living monuments the social ideals that you are struggling to achieve.”⁵⁵ President Roosevelt responded, “I am interested in your suggestion in regard to the expression of modern art through mural painting. I wish you would have a talk some day with the Assistant Secretary of the Treasury Robert, who is in charge of the Public Buildings Work.”⁵⁶ After months of continued pressure and advocacy by Biddle and members of the art community, the Public Works Art Project (PWAP) was established as a provisional initiative under the direction of an artist, Edward Bruce.

Within two months, the PWAP was introduced in every state. By the spring of 1934, 3,700 artists were employed, and roughly 16,000 works of art were produced.⁵⁷ The project was not limited to the production of murals; it also facilitated the creation of watercolors, prints, pottery and maps. Despite its productivity, the program was a temporary venture and short lived.⁵⁸ Following the closing of the program in June of 1934, similar activities continued under the Section of Painting and Sculpture and the Federal Art Program (FAP).⁵⁹ The general public had expressed a continued interest for the arts and was receptive to the government’s efforts to employ artists for the production of murals and other public works.⁶⁰ In response, to the public’s interests in the arts, the Roosevelt administration continued to support America’s artists through economic relief programs. The administration had now perceived art as socially and culturally beneficial.

⁵⁵ In the spring of 1933 Franklin received Biddle’s letter. Barber, ““Sweet Are the Uses of Adversity,”” 236.

⁵⁶ Ralph Purcell, *Government and Art: A Study of American Experience*, (Washington D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1956), 49, as quoted in George Biddle “An American Artist’s story” (Boston, 1939), 269.

⁵⁷ Ralph Purcell, *Government and Art*, 52.

⁵⁸ The PWAP received funding from the Civil Works Administration (CWA), a stopgap intended to support unemployed persons during the winter of 1933/1934. The CWA was dissolved in 1934. Dependent on funds from the CWA, the PWAP was, subsequently, liquidated in June of 1934.

⁵⁹ Edward Bruce became head of the Section of Painting and Sculpture. He was assigned authority to place and select all the art for federal buildings. To circumvent any opposition, he formed a committee. Barber, ““Sweet Are the Uses of Adversity,”” 241.

⁶⁰ *The WPA Federal Arts Project: A Summary of Activities and Accomplishments*, (New York: Works Progress Administration, N.D.), 2, HathiTrust <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/ien.35556042561597>
<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=ien.35556042561597;view=1up;seq=1>.

The Section of Painting and Sculpture and FAP managed the production of public art in different capacities. Established under the Treasury Department Art Program, the Section of Painting and Sculpture was devised to decorate federal buildings with paintings and sculptures. The Section assigned the production of murals in small towns and brought art to communities that had no previous experience with such original works. Between 1934 and 1938, The Section of Painting and Sculpture funded 375 artists, held 79 competitions with nearly 5,000 artist-participants and decorated federal buildings in over 300 communities. Its assignments waned during the early 1940's due to the threat of war. Yet, the Section of Painting and Sculpture did assist the Roosevelt administration with the war effort by creating poster contests, conducting exhibitions, and assisting with art programs in the Armed Forces.⁶¹ "U.S. Artists Offers Artists a Way to Serve Their Country," read one *New York Times* article. "The United States Government wants at once paintings and drawings that record defense and war activities."⁶² By 1943, the Section of Painting and Sculpture was transferred to the Office of the Supervising Architect.⁶³

Established under the WPA in May 1935, the FAP was designed to employ artists and provide resources for the American public to engage with art.

"Through employment of creative artists it is hoped to secure for the public outstanding examples of contemporary American art; through art teaching and recreational art activities to create a broader national art consciousness and work out constructive ways of using leisure time; through services in applied art to aid various campaigns of social value; and through research projects to clarify the native background in the arts. The aim of the project will be to work toward an integration of the arts with the daily life of the community, and an integration of the fine arts and the practical arts."⁶⁴

⁶¹ Purcell, *Government and Art*, 72.

⁶² Thomas C. Linn, "U.S. Offers Artists a Way to Serve Their Country: Office of Emergency Management to Spend \$2000 for Art Work—Will Pay \$30 for Each Accepted—Museum Safe in Raids," *New York Times*, December 21 1941.

⁶³ Purcell, 72.

⁶⁴ Holger Cahill, *Federal Art Project Manual*, (Washington D.C.: Works Progress Administration, 1935), 1. Hathitrust, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/ien.35556043279389?urlappend=%3Bseq=1>.

Its director, Holger Cahill, developed the FAP based on the philosophies of John Dewey.⁶⁵

The FAP was divided into four sections: Fine Arts, Practical Arts, Educational Services, and Personnel.⁶⁶ A fundamental component of the program was to establish projects nationwide and in smaller communities that had little to no, previous interactions with art. Nevertheless, this was not accomplished. A mere twenty-five cities comprised seventy-five percent of all FAP workers.⁶⁷ Policies, review processes, and administrators were set in place to ensure that local artists of “professional and technical” caliber were selected.⁶⁸ Cahill wrote, “Every endeavor should be made to have these classifications accurate and fair so that artists may work on projects for which they are best fitted.”⁶⁹ Local offices were required to provide supervisors with relief rolls encompassing lists of registered artists and craftsmen; these supervisors would then be certified and classified based on their skill level. Such data and connections became a valuable source of information during the war when artists were in demand.⁷⁰ Efforts were made to locate work for artists within their communities to curtail the migration of talented artists to major metropolitan areas.⁷¹ The intent was to both discover new talent and preserve American heritage.⁷² Between 1935 and 1943 the FAP produced over 2,500 murals, nearly 19,000 sculptures, 22,000 plates, roughly 11,500 fine prints, and over 100,000 easel works were produced.⁷³

⁶⁵ The WPA was instituted on May 6, 1935 as a national program to employ “needy” citizens. It was liquidated in February 1943. “Final Report On the WPA Program: 1935-43,” (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, n.d.), 7. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015002348590&view=1up&seq=23> For more information on Holger Cahill and John Dewey see George Mavigliano, “The Federal Art Project: Holger Cahill’s Program of Action,” *Art Education* 37, no. 3, (May 1984): 27. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3192762>.

⁶⁶ Cahill, 1.

⁶⁷ McKinzie, *The New Deal for Artists*, 93.

⁶⁸ Cahill, 5.

⁶⁹ Cahill, 6.

⁷⁰ Cahill, 3-4.

⁷¹ Mavigliano, “The Federal Art Project,” 30.

⁷² Mavigliano, 30.

⁷³ “Final Report On the WPA Program,” 65.

The mission of FAP incorporated both art production and art education. Community art centers were constructed to provide lectures, art classes, and to display art. By 1940, “eighty four [Community Art Centers] were in operation, reaching between twelve and fifteen million people, with an average monthly attendance of 350,000 involved in art activities.”⁷⁴ In a country where recreational and leisure time was expanding, Cahill had hoped that the American public would spend that time producing, interacting, and connecting with art. Art lessons and teachers were valued for their far-reaching effects on the community.⁷⁵ Through art courses, it was assumed the American public would develop an appreciation for art and find a place for it in their everyday lives. These lectures and demonstrations were not limited to adults. Children were encouraged to participate in community youth programs because art was recognized as a method to educate as well as transform the public in the image of the State. A Federal Arts Project pamphlet read, “The WPA Federal Art Program offers a measure of assurance that once-maladjusted and delinquent children and those whom art has aided to change from incipient enemies of society [sic] will become useful citizens, contributing to the general welfare of the country.”⁷⁶ It was anticipated that through art the government could craft its own cultural democracy.

The FAP and the Section of Fine Art initiatives were deeply rooted in cultural production. American art drew from classical works of art and foreign trends from Greece and Rome even borrowing traditional aesthetics such as color and form. A 1933 report from The President’s Research Committee on Social trends identified that American art continued to draw from foreign

⁷⁴ Johnathan Harris, “Nationalizing Art: The Community Art Centre Programme of the Federal Art Project 1935-1943,” *Art History*, no. 2 (June 1991): 253.

⁷⁵ Mavigliano, “The Federal Art Project,” 27 and *The WPA Federal Arts Project: A Summary of Activities and Accomplishments*, 3.

⁷⁶ *The WPA Federal Arts Project: A Summary of Activities and Accomplishments*, 4.

influence.⁷⁷ Cahill, through the FAP, hoped to pull away from such foreign influence to create “American art.” Murals were infused with American imagery to appease patrons as well as reinforce American life. Murals exhibited American folklore, landscapes, American historical figures, and glorified the daily life of blue-collar workers. Bruce encouraged the production of

Figure 3 Vertis Hayes' *Pursuit of Happiness* is one of an eight-panel mural located in the New Nurses Resident of the Harlem Hospital. This panel illustrates the experiences of black life in America while also imparting the central

American themes and scenery.

So too did assistant director of the PWAP, Edward B. Rowan.

As early as 1934, Rowan encouraged the production of American imagery in public

murals.⁷⁸ Art was a malleable tool employed to

meet the needs of the federal government. As

historian John Harris explains, “Nationalizing

the community was thus the goal and the preoccupation of Community Art Centre policy, as part of the Federal Art Project’s strategy for reinventing the heroic democratic past in New Deal America.”⁷⁹ Nonetheless, by 1941, there was still no definition of American Art.⁸⁰

The objectives for state-sponsored art became linked with American ideals. President Roosevelt valued art as a form of expression and recognized its potential as a fundamental component of democracy. In his 1939 speech for the reopening of the Museum of Modern Art he explained, “In encouraging the creation and enjoyment of beautiful things we are furthering

⁷⁷ McKinzie, *The New Deal for Artists*, 4 and 7. Figure 3: Vertis Hayes, *Pursuit of Happiness*, oil on canvas, 1937 <http://iraas.columbia.edu/wpa/pursuit.html>.

⁷⁸ McKinzie, *The New Deal for Artists*, 23 as quoted in Rowan to Walter Heil, March 6, 1934.

⁷⁹ Harris, “Nationalizing Art,” 265.

⁸⁰ Anita Brenner, “Is There An American Art? The question long debated, is still to be answered, yet there is evidence of native art,” *New York Times*, November 23 1941, SM12.

democracy itself...As the Museum of Modern Art is a living museum...it can, therefore, become an integral part of our democratic institutions—it can be woven into the very warp and woof of our democracy. Because it has been conceived as a national institution, the museum can enrich and invigorate our cultural life by bringing the best of modern art to all of the American people.”⁸¹ The facilitation, or more concisely, cultivation of a relationship between the art world and the American public through public art programs became a state objective in the 1930s. It was foreseen as advantageous for the enrichment of American culture. A 1940 FAP pamphlet portrayed such an endeavor as a success.⁸² In spite of its success, Congress worked to dissolve these federally funded art programs due to their costly nature and alleged ties to communist propaganda.⁸³

Several attempts were made by Congress to put an end to the WPA and Federal One prior to the Second World War.⁸⁴ Nevertheless, it was the onslaught of the war that led to the dissolution of the WPA and FAP. Despite Roosevelt’s support of the WPA and FAP, he never envisioned the FAP as a permanent government responsibility. Rather, he saw it as a program instituted during a state of economic emergency. With the looming threat of war, Roosevelt shifted his attention away from certain public expenditures. In a 1942 letter to Major General Philip B. Fleming, the Administrator of the Federal Works Agency, Roosevelt “honorably discharged” the WPA, setting

⁸¹ MOMA, “Roosevelt’s Address on the Museum of Modern Art, As Printed in the Herald Tribune May 11, 1939.” Accessed March 18, 2019. <https://www.moma.org/research-and-learning/archives/archives-highlights-04-1939>

⁸²*The WPA Federal Arts Project: A Summary of Activities and Accomplishments*, 2.

⁸³ Budget concerns and the termination of the WPA led to the discontinuation of FAP initiatives in 1939. Allegations of communist propaganda in the Federal Theater project (a branch of the Federal Project No. 1) drew negative and unwanted attention on state-sponsored art. “Congressional discussion of Federal Project No. 1 was largely concerned with the supposed domination of the arts projects in New York City by Communist influences, as charged at congressional hearings.” “Final Report On the WPA Program: 1935-43,” 63. Martin Dies unleashed a crusade against the theater project. The House Special Committee on Un-American Activities conducted an investigation that became headline news. The FAP was not tied to such allegations nevertheless it was a causality. For more information on the dissolution of the WPA and FAP see Richard D. Mckinzie’s *The New Deal for Artists*.

⁸⁴ Federal One is shorthand for the Federal Writers Project, Federal Theater Project, Federal Art Project and the Federal Music Project.

a final liquidation date of February 1, 1943.⁸⁵ Roosevelt's decision to discharge the WPA simultaneously prompted the demise of the FAP. Despite Roosevelt's decision, the complete liquidation of the Federal One was delayed because the state required experienced personnel for the war effort. As the American Council on Education poignantly stated in a 1948 report regarding educational programs for national defense, "No expense was spared in getting the desired results."⁸⁶

American war art of the Second World War grew out of programs established during the interwar years. During those eight years, the state had been perfecting its New Deal art programs to support artists, as well, as create a national consciousness for art. By the start of the war in December of 1941, the military and government administrators, both at the national and local levels, were equipped with the experience of using art to serve state initiatives.⁸⁷ The infrastructure and the social relationships between the government and members of the art community were set in place, thereby creating a near seamless ability to utilize and incorporate artists' talents during the Second World War.⁸⁸

Many servicemen supported the production of art during the Second World War due to their personal engagement with art during the interwar years.⁸⁹ Art even emerged during the war

⁸⁵ Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Final Report on The WPA Program 1935-43" (Washington D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1946), Babel.hathitrust.org, V. "With the satisfaction of a good job well done and with a high sense of integrity, the Work Projects Administration has asked for and earned an honorable discharge."

⁸⁶ Grace, Alonzo G. and Members of the Staff, *Educational Lessons from Wartime Training the General Report of The Commission on Implications of Armed Services Educational Programs*, (Washington, DC: American Council on Education, 1948), V. [https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.\\$b630603?urlappend=%3Bseq=5](https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.$b630603?urlappend=%3Bseq=5).

⁸⁷ In the 1930s the state initiative was cultural production—establishing a collective state consciousness for art; by late 1941 it would be training soldiers, improving *esprit de corps*, and preserving the history of the Armed Forces.

⁸⁸ General Brehon Sommervell was head of the WPA in New York in 1939 and, during the Second World war, he was assigned head of Services and Supply in the Army. With his new role he created an Army artist-correspondent program in November 1942 and established murals programs.

⁸⁹ As reported by a 1942 recreational pamphlet prepared by the War Department, "the cultural training in the homes and schools of the country during the past generation is reflecting itself in the recreational interest of many of today's trainees. Music, art and reading, interests that have been fostered by the public schools and the

as a popular soldier pastime. Through the experiences of official and unofficial artists it becomes clear that servicemen in positions of power supported the production of art and, similarly, requisitioned soldier-artists to execute military objectives. During the war, Ashley Bryan, Horace Day, and Jacob Lawrence received special privileges from their superiors to produce art as an avocation. John Gaitha Browning and Victor Lundy were not so fortunate. They were momentarily reassigned duties to gather intelligence information by drawing.

Ashley Bryan was a stevedore and wrench man during his service in the Second World War. While stationed in Glasgow, he received permission from a battalion colonel to attend art school. “I asked my officers if I could attend the Glasgow School of Art my officers of my company said, ‘No! This is war, get out of here,’” recounted Bryan. “So, I went to my battalion commander Colonel Pierce, and he gave me permission to attend the school. I brought with me a folder of my artwork and he said I would have that permission.”⁹⁰ Similarly, Horace Day was given authorization to paint. Just days before Easter in 1945, Day laid eyes on a cathedral that had survived a bombardment. Compelled to paint it, he reached out to his superior for assistance. “Fortunately [*sic*] my commanding officer was interested in painting and generously arranged, both on Easter Sunday and several times thereafter, to lend me a jeep for my unmilitary mission of painting the cathedral and the ruins.”⁹¹ Jacob Lawrence also felt compelled to paint during his service. As a sailor abroad the *Sea Cloud*, Lawrence submitted a request to his Captain, Lieutenant Commander Carlton Skinner, to paint. Skinner, previously an executive officer of Public Relations

national women’s groups, are among the leading recreational occupations in the 1942 Army Camp.” The Women’s Interests Section and War Department, Bureau of Public Relations, *The Soldier and his Recreation*, (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1942), 12. HathiTrust <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.a0012724266>.

⁹⁰ Ashley Bryan, “African American Illustrator Ashley Bryan,” interview by Time Travels, BBC Sounds <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/p07bwbb7>.

⁹¹ Horace Day, “Easter in Cologne,” 2. Folder Day, Horace (1) Box 1, Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University John Hayes Library.

Office, not only granted Lawrence permission to paint, but also reassigned Lawrence to a public relations ranking to carry out the assignment. The art Bryan, Day and Lawrence produced was largely unrelated to their assigned wartime duties. Yet, their superiors encouraged and supported their artistic pursuits. Due to the “cultural training” they underwent during the interwar years, servicemen were supporting and encouraging the production of art during a time of war.

Meanwhile, other servicemen, administrators, and personnel in the Armed Forces used art to effect specific wartime goals. In March of 1943, soldier-artist John Gaitha Browning confided in his diary, “Captain Gudgeon from Intelligence Headquarters has asked me about doing some work—sketching some beaches from the boats... He also wanted me to go out and look at some machine gun replacements.”⁹² Browning was assigned to use his artistic prowess to conduct intelligence assignments despite his duty as company clerk. Much like Browning, Sergeant Victor Lundy was called upon to use his artistic skillset despite his assigned duties. Lundy was in the infantry as a “BAR man” when he was injured in France. A surgeon found Lundy’s sketchbook and sent him to Walter Reed hospital to draw sketches of surgeries. He was detained at the hospital for eight months to produce sketches.⁹³ Nearly eight years of state-sponsored art led to the proliferation of art initiatives during the war.

⁹²John Gaitha Browning and Oleta Stewart Toliver, *An Artist at War: The Journal of John Gaitha Browning*, (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 1994), 23.

⁹³ “That’s him. I’ll never forget, that Dr. Akesian, you know, checked me out, and then, I had this sketchbook in my pocket -and he said, Sonny boy, you’re what I have been waiting for. I said, What? You know what he had me do? He had me do medical drawings of his surgery. And he in a way probably saved my life, because he kept me there so long. I mean, at that time, they were sending guys back. He made sure that I shipped out after about three months to Walter Reed Hospital where it took eight months to patch me up. But it was really incredible. He put a hat on me, and I had a big cast on my left side. And I would draw his operations, and he invented an incredible operation.” Victor Lundy, interview by Sarah Rouse, Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, March 11, 2010.

<http://memory.loc.gov/diglib/vhp/story/loc.natlib.afc2001001.69801/transcript?ID=sr0001>
A BAR man implied a soldier was assigned to a Browning automatic rifle.

PART 2: AMERICAN WAR ART OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Chapter 3: Official American War Artists of the Second World War

American artists had a significant wartime role that propelled the United States forward in a time of great conflict. The surge of nationalism expressed by Americans at the outset of war in 1941 was similarly accentuated by artists. Many American artists endeavored to continue to serve and support their nation through the arts. The Roosevelt administration was presented with artists who appealed to the State for work by providing innovative ways to use their skillset during the war. Artists began to advocate for job retention as they needed work. Artist Kent Rockwell wrote directly to Roosevelt in October of 1941, imploring him to utilize artists for the defense of the State. “I venture to remind you that artists can help in the promotion of national unity, and to suggest that you recognize this and permit certain of us to discuss with you, or with such Administration officials as you would designate, how artists, in this crisis, can best be utilized in the service of their country.”⁹⁴ He continued, “I speak with knowledge and authority when I assure you of our patriotism....Not only do we want to serve – we need to....Artists are unemployed.”⁹⁵ As the result of artists’ activism, the United States formed distinguished initiatives such as the Army’s War Art Units, the Navy’s artist-correspondent program and the Ghost Army Unit.

As the threat of war continued to mushroom, the FAP began to consolidate its programs and transfer artists into war industry roles.⁹⁶ According to an anonymous letter, “With the country on the verge of war, the emphasis is on the armed forces. Unless a strong argument is made for the

⁹⁴ Rockwell Kent to Franklin D. Roosevelt, letter, October 13, 1941, Reel 5229, Roosevelt, Franklin D. and Eleanor 1938-1945, Rockwell Kent Papers, Archives of American Art Smithsonian Institution. <https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/rockwell-kent-papers-9557>.

⁹⁵ Rockwell Kent to Franklin D. Roosevelt, letter, October 13, 1941.

⁹⁶ *Certified Defense Art Program 1941*, document, Reel 1106, Holger Cahill Papers 1910-1993, Archives of American Art Smithsonian Institution, <https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/holger-cahill-papers>. (Hereafter cited as *Certified Defense Art Program 1941*).

Arts Program, we may find a gradual or sudden closing of all projects not directly related to defense.”⁹⁷ The author’s premonitions were soon realized by September 1942. Over the course of five months, WPA projects reduced their staff by fifty percent, transferring them to positions in the war industry.⁹⁸ In the fall of 1942, assistant to Major General Philip B. Fleming of the Federal Works Agency, George Field released a three-page memorandum to Work Project administrators in which he encouraged administrators to transfer artists working in the Federal Works Project into wartime rolls. Reminding administrators of the War Commission’s most recent directives which placed “the responsibility on the Work Projects Administration for transferring all able-bodied workers on our rolls into the various training facilities so that they may take their place in the war production as rapidly as possible.”⁹⁹ Field’s memorandum exemplifies the continued pressure placed on artistic communities to utilize their abilities for the American war machine.

Academic institutions and private corporations provided programs and activities concentrated on the impending war effort. The School of Design in Chicago announced the addition of a camouflage corps to their curriculum, which would assist in the advent of war.¹⁰⁰ Harvard expanded its curriculum to include aerial mapping and camouflage.¹⁰¹ Similarly, Lisa Minevitch from MIT submitted her thesis, in the spring of 1942, on the production of art in Army camps.¹⁰² She advised the immediate inclusion of art as a form of leisure to improve morale. Abbott

⁹⁷ *Certified Defense Art Program 1941*

⁹⁸ *Certified Defense Art Program 1941*

⁹⁹ George H. Field, “Subject: Facilitating Placements in Private or Other Public Employment,” Memorandum, September 30, 1942, Reel NDA15, Reel 1106, Holger Cahill Papers 1910-1993, Archives of American Art Smithsonian Institution, <https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/holger-cahill-papers>.

¹⁰⁰ L. Moholy-Nagy, “The Renaissance Society of the University of Chicago present War Art exhibition by The School of Design in Chicago and the W.P.A. and Craft Project, Dist. #3.” n.d. Reel 1105, Holger Cahill Papers 1910-1993, Archives of American Art Smithsonian Institution, <https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/holger-cahill-papers>.

¹⁰¹ Corydon Ireland, “Harvard Goes to War,” *The Harvard Gazette*, November 10, 2011, <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2011/11/harvard-goes-to-war/>.

¹⁰² Lisa Minevitch, “A program for building morale of soldiers in Army camps through the constructive use of leisure hours and the design of a recreation unit to house such a program” (Thesis, MIT, 1942), Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University John Hayes Library.

Pharmaceuticals, a leading supplier of pharmaceuticals for the Armed Forces, initiated a war art program in 1942 after purchasing seven works by the distinguished artist, Thomas Benton, for an advertisement in December 1941.¹⁰³

Personal connections also contributed to the employment of artists in the war industry and the Armed Forces. For many artists, guidance from a colleague became the catalyst for their involvement in the war. In a 1942 letter, artist Eugene Erwin noted that his decision to join the Naval Reserve was due to encouragement from Holger Cahill: “Since talking to you, I have decided to go ahead and put in my application for a Commission in the United States Naval Reserve. My best bet seems to be to apply for special service which will in all probability be administration work. However, there will be a chance, I think, for me to work in camou-flage if and when it opens up.”¹⁰⁴ Similarly, architect and sculptor, Eero Saarinen left his work with General Motors for an assignment as Chief of Special Exhibits after receiving a call from an old Yale colleague, Donal McLaughlin—Chief of the Graphic Section of the Visual Presentation Branch.¹⁰⁵ While some artists were encouraged to participate in the war effort, others voluntarily reached out to commissioners, directors, and administrators for assistance and recommendations to serve.

In 1918 “official artists” were defined as war-artist correspondents commissioned by the United States to procure imagery of the American war effort.¹⁰⁶ By 1941 the definition of an “official” artist was reconfigured. The production of state-sponsored American art was no longer

¹⁰³ Brandon Burrell, “Abbott Laboratories: Provisioning a Vision,” (PhD diss. Florida State University, 2013), 8. Between 1941 and 1945, Abbott Pharmaceuticals would employ over twenty-four artists to document war scenes.

¹⁰⁴ Eugene Erin, *Eugene Erwin to Mr. Holger Cahill, March 21, 1942*, letter, Reel 1107, Holger Cahill Papers 1910-1993, Archives of American Art Smithsonian Institution, <https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/holger-cahill-papers>.

¹⁰⁵ Barry Katz, “The Arts of War: ‘Visual Presentation’ and National Intelligence,” *Design Issues* 12, no. 2 (Summer, 1996), 9. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1511709>.

¹⁰⁶ “General Policy Reference the Work of Official Artists.”

simply the production of creative arts produced by war-artist correspondents. It was expanded to include the production of practical art to assist with the mobilization of the state for war and the execution of military objectives. “Art activities in a certain sense have been thought of as an isolated pigeonhole in the vast field of education” exclaimed academic Elmer Stephen. “Now, we have the best opportunity [the war] that has ever offered itself to demonstrate that there are no boundaries to this pigeonhole—that art in all its multiple forms is overflowing and all encompassing. It permeates every other activity.”¹⁰⁷ During the Second World War, American official artists included servicemen and civilians commissioned by the State to produce training materials, intelligence information, camouflage, imagery to improve *esprit de corps*, and pictorial historical records.

Training Materials

With the advancement of the German Wehrmacht into western Europe, the United States began to prepare troops and civilian personnel for war. This undertaking was monumental. American artists’ talents became increasingly necessary for the rapid training of soldiers as visual imagery proved to be a quick, effective, and efficient means to train servicemen and personnel. In 1940, the Navy had roughly 75 training institutions with approximately 10,000 pupils. By 1945, the Navy established 879 additional training institutions with over 500,000 students.¹⁰⁸ A year prior, in 1944, the United States formed the largest Navy in the world comprising over “1,100 warships and 60,000 other craft...34,000 planes, 22,000 guns...and a net-work of more than 700 depots and stations,” all of which were predominately operated by men who had little to no

¹⁰⁷ Elmer Stephen, “Art Education and the War Emergency,” in *Handbook on Education and the War: Based on Proceedings of the National Institute on Education and the War, Sponsored by the U.S. Office of Education Wartime Commission at American University Washington D.C. August 28 Through 31, 1942*, (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1943), 215.

¹⁰⁸ Grace et. al., 10.

previous experience working at sea. Eighty-seven percent of the crews manning these warships had never set sail.¹⁰⁹

The Army was no less impressive. In 1940 an Army Air Force flight school trained roughly 9,000 pilots with an additional 18 men as bombardiers and another 44 as navigators. By 1945, 200,000 pilots and more than 100,000 navigators and bombardiers had gone through training. The U.S. Army's ground forces in 1940 had twenty-eight divisions compared to Nazi Germany's 300, Japan's 120 and Italy's 70 divisions. The Army's numbers grew to 89 divisions during the war.¹¹⁰ In total, by December of 1944, there were roughly 12 million servicemen in the Armed Forces.¹¹¹ They all required training. The federal government was ill prepared to train these men for war and leaned on art educators and artists for support. The breadth of art produced over the course of the Second World War for educational purposes was vast and exceeded traditional forms of educational devices. The training of America's Armed Forces was a colossal undertaking buttressed by the contribution of American artists. Without the aid of American artists, the United States would not have been able to rapidly mobilize for war.

As early as 1939, the Navy and Army recognized the value of audio-visual materials to train servicemen and personnel.¹¹² Many servicemen had no experience with the conditions and demands of war. "Today's recruits were yesterday's civilians" read a Navy manual.¹¹³ Eighty-eight percent of the over 2.9 million servicemen in the Navy's arsenal in 1944, had been farmers, businessmen, and even school boys in 1941.¹¹⁴ And, the processes, mechanisms and weaponry

¹⁰⁹ Grace et. al., 10.

¹¹⁰ Grace et. al., 12.

¹¹¹ Grace et. al., 114.

¹¹² Saettler, *The Evolution of American Educational Technology*, 190.

¹¹³ Bureau of Naval Personnel Training, *Guide for Training Recruits*, (U.S. Government Printing office, 1944), 4. SMU Libraries, <http://digitalcollections.smu.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/hgp/id/492/rec/13>.

¹¹⁴ Grace et. al., 10.

instituted during the Great War were made obsolete by technological advances necessitating the production of new guides and manuals to replace the outdated documents. With each new weapon, process, or mechanism, a new visual guide had to be crafted meaning artists were constantly producing visual aids.¹¹⁵ To train servicemen and personnel for various wartime roles, new visual aids and graphics such as instruction and maintenance manuals, reports, charts, mockups, graphs, diagrams, models, cutaways, maps, cartoons, booklets, posters,

Figure 4 Artists busy producing visual aids and study materials at a Navy Visual Education Center located in

and animations had to be produced in record time. The Navy established visual aid offices in training camps in Idaho, New York and Illinois solely devoted to the production of training materials. Six servicemen, alone, produced some 20,000 training posters in the Great Lakes, Illinois Naval Training Station.¹¹⁶ When artists were not actively producing visual aids, they were called upon for consults. Conferences were held in which artists offered their opinions on imagery in a guide, “First Aid for Soldiers.”¹¹⁷

Assistant commissioner for the WPA, Florence Kerr, expressed her concern for the production of training documents. “In view of the need for this work, [visual training documents

¹¹⁵ George Raynor Thomas and Dixie R. Harris, *The United States Army in World War II, The Technical Services, The Signal Corps: The Outcome (Mid-1943 Through 1945)*, (Washington D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History United States Army and U.S. Government Printing Office, 1966), 548.

¹¹⁶ Training Division Bureau of Naval Personnel, “Great Lakes Trains by Posters,” The TraDiv Letter, Subject: Information and aids for better training the Naval Service, July 15 1943, 33. HathiTrust, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uiug.30112119813290&view=1up&seq=596> and Training Division Bureau of Naval Personnel, “Visual Aids at Farragut,” The TraDiv Letter, 2. Figure 4: Training Division Bureau of Naval Personnel, “Visual Aids at Farragut,” 2.

¹¹⁷ *Medical Department, United States Army: Surgery in World War II, Activities of Surgical Consultants, Volume I*, ed. B Nolan Charter M.D. and ass. Ed. Elizabeth M McFetridge M.A. (Washington D.C.: Office of the Surgeon General Department of the Army and U.S. Government Printing Office, 1962), 26.

and devices,] it is essential that it be given sufficient emphasis within the War Services Program.”¹¹⁸ She then pressed for the inclusion of the Graphics Services Units and the advisement of Cahill, head of the WPA, to help orchestrate the mass production of such materials. As one pamphlet concluded, the “WPA’s Art Program had taken stock of what it had to contribute to national defense — and found it was considerable.”¹¹⁹ By January of 1941 most of the WPA’s art

projects were altered for the war. Community Art Centers taught courses on camouflage while artists in the visual aids industry constructed models of tank engines and airplane motors. Museum personnel found themselves making maps.¹²⁰ By the end of 1941, the WPA was supplying the Army, and Navy with training aids, posters, maps, models, charts and other instructional materials.¹²¹

Artists were an integral part of the production of visual education material as some imagery required technical precision and tremendous detail, while others demanded more creativity, such as cartoons. The style and degree of skill for each visual

aid varied depending upon the audience. Art for training documents and manuals had to be clear

Figure 5 Technical Manual Aircraft Hardware and Materials Manual

¹¹⁸ Florence Kerr and Walter M Kiplinger, Letter, n.d. Reel 1105, Holger Cahill Papers 1910-1993, Archives of American Art Smithsonian Institution, <https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/holger-cahill-papers>.

¹¹⁹ *WPA Art Program*. Document, Reel 1106, Holger Cahill Papers 1910-1993, Archives of American Art Smithsonian Institution, <https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/holger-cahill-papers>.

¹²⁰ Mckinzie, *The New Deal for Artists*, 169. Figure 5: War Department, “Technical Manual Aircraft Hardware and Materials, TM 1-424,” manual, (Washington: 1942), 2. HathiTrust. <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.b3241791?urlappend=%3Bseq=6>.

¹²¹ *Certified Defense Art Program 1941*.

and concise to simplify tasks for the audience. Aircraft bolts, screws and other such hardware were drawn with great detail in a 1942 technical manual to assist aircraft maintenance workers with information regarding general functionality, materials, and parts necessary for the construction and proper repair of aircrafts.¹²² At the same time, troops were responsive to cartoon educational materials in manuals and films.¹²³ Superman, for example, was employed as a cartoon illustration

Figure 6 *Pocket Guide to West Africa*

to assist with literacy training in the Navy.¹²⁴

Pocket Guides distributed to soldiers depending on their theater of war instructed them on native cultures and languages; cartoons often adorned the margins to reinforce key

information. A pocket guide for West Africa displayed imagery of traditional dress, customs and introduced readers to different tribes. Despite the practical nature of the Pocket Guide assignments, artists infused their creativity and perhaps, individuality, as they tailored their work to each location. A French language pocket guide used animation to teach pronunciations. For example, a sketch depicting a bird pecking away at a ticker tape instructed readers not to “drawl” out their

¹²² War Department, “Technical Manual Aircraft Hardware and Materials, TM 1-424,” 2.

¹²³ Christina M. Knof, *The Comic Art of War: A Critical Study of Military Cartoons, 1805-2014, with a guide to artists*, (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2015), 37.

¹²⁴ Grace et. al., 118. Figure 6: Special Service Division, Army Forces, United States Army, *A Pocket Guide to West Africa*, (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1943), 28-29. SMU Libraries. <http://digitalcollections.smu.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/hgp/id/680/rec/29>.

annunciations and to “cut it short.”¹²⁵ “Not only were soldiers more receptive to the information presented through such entertainment [as cartoon images],” explains war-cartoon historian, Christina Knof, “but the insider, or intergroup humor it used could also forge and strengthen the group identity.”¹²⁶

In addition to the diagrams and charts produced for drills and instruction, were the production of films and murals. Artists on staff produced elaborate murals for educational purposes in the Navy. “Large size wall cartoons serve to point up and fix in recruits’ minds training suggestions and ideas which might otherwise be ‘lost in the shuffle’ of recruit training.” These murals referenced as ‘mural messages’ were identified by training officers as an effective training method to reinforce essential information.¹²⁷ Murals, not dissimilar from those produced during the interwar years, were instituted in a time of war as educational imagery.

Projected visual images, commonly referred to as slides or films, were a coveted method of training. Films were valuable as they standardized processes and could expeditiously train servicemen without the use of an onsite, experienced instructor. Many reports found that film reduced the training time for a given subject by a minimum of 30 percent.¹²⁸ By 1945, the Army had produced roughly 2,300 films and no classroom was complete without a projector.¹²⁹ The variation of subject matter varied, ranging from “Modern Weather Theory” to “The Construction

¹²⁵ “Take a Closer Look at Pocket Guides,” from *Useful Words and Phrases, French Language Guide*, The National War Museum: New Orleans, accessed August 2019
<http://enroll.nationalww2museum.org/learn/education/for-students/ww2-history/take-a-closer-look/pocket-guides.html>.

¹²⁶ Christina M. Knof, *The Comic Art of War*, 38.

¹²⁷ Training Division Bureau of Naval Personnel, “Training Aids Notes,” The TraDiv Letter, Subject: Information and aids for better training the Naval Service, NavPers 14910, September 15 1943 HathiTrust, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uiug.30112119813290&view=1up&seq=596>.

¹²⁸ George Raynor Thomas and Dixie R. Harris, *The United States Army in World War II*, 548.

¹²⁹ Grace et. al., 121.

of Diesel Engines.”¹³⁰ One film, “Useful Knots” explained how to tie eight knots including a clove hitch. Illustrations and drawings once produced for booklets and manuals were projected for a broader audience. A 1945 Navy catalog noted roughly 9,000 films were available for use by instructors in the Marine Corps, Coast Guard, and Navy.¹³¹ During one thirty-day training cycle historian Paul Saettler reported “more than 200,000 prints of 16mm training films—almost a quarter million projections—were shown to military personnel...It has been estimated that over four million film show-ings were made before Army Ground and Service Force audiences in the continental United States from July 1, 1943 to June 30, 1945.”¹³² Between 1942 and 1945 the use of visual aids increased exponentially. Surveys suggest by the war’s end, nearly every military instructor relied upon and utilized graphic aids and film, in their classrooms.¹³³ Through visual imagery—art—troops learned to construct aircrafts, speak languages, tie knots, fix engines, and more. American state-sponsored art expanded during the Second World War to serve the immediate needs of the State.

Intelligence

Artists’ wartime contributions were not limited to educational materials and the classroom; their artwork had far reaching influence both on the home front, as well as the frontlines. Artists produced maps, charts, diagrams, cutaways and architectural designs for intelligence agencies. The production of maps, for instance, required artists. In the first year of war the Army Map Service employed WPA workers to produce maps. Due to the exponential demand for maps and the limited

¹³⁰ U.S. Office of Education Division of Visual Aids for War Training, *Army and Navy Training Films and Filmstrips for use in Civilian War Training Programs*, 1944. p3 and 6 respectively. HathiTrust. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nnc1.cu02270480&view=1up&seq=3>.

¹³¹ Grace et. al., 121.

¹³² Saettler, *The Evolution of American Educational Technology*, 191.

¹³³ Saettler, 191.

availability of qualified personnel, the employment of illustrators was a necessity. “Employees, who had possessed artistic backgrounds, were trained in the performance of routine drafting tasks where comprehensive knowledge of cartography was not required.” Soon women with majors in art were recruited in college for the Army Map Service.¹³⁴

The Office of Strategic Services (OSS) was devised in response to the war effort. In 1941, the United States was in dire need of a centralized intelligence agency.¹³⁵ Artists helped construct OSS facilities, scale out programs, and filled many leadership roles.¹³⁶ Staffed with engineers, architects and artists, a “‘Visual Presentation’ unit” was established to provide information and construct a facility for the President to receive information.¹³⁷ From 1942 until 1945 the Graphic Section of the Visual Presentation Unit, “illustrated film reports; drew charts, graphs, and maps; prepared technical illustrations of secret devices and weapons; made propaganda sketches, caricatures and forgeries.”¹³⁸

Camouflage

Artists’ production of visual materials had a practical impact on the war effort, as well. Modern warfare and technologies brought about during the First World War necessitated the development of camouflage to deceive the enemy on the battlefield.¹³⁹ Camouflage was used during the First and Second World Wars to conceal American forces, facilities, installations, weaponry and materials from enemy surveillance. During the First World War artists were used to

¹³⁴ WWII History of the Army Map Service, “Predecessor Organizations of the Army Map Service”, accessed October 2019, easteurotopo.org.

¹³⁵ Katz, “The Arts of War: ‘Visual Presentation,’” 4.

¹³⁶ Katz, 4.

¹³⁷ Katz, 5.

¹³⁸ Katz, 9.

¹³⁹ Camouflage would come to “include the use of appropriately colored paints applied in disruptive patterns on vehicles, facilities, structures, equipment, and just about anything else. It also includes garnished nets, screens, natural materials, and the use of mottled uniforms and gear.” Gordon L. Rottman, *World War II tactical Camouflage Techniques*, (Osprey Publishing 2013), 7.

advance the production of camouflage.¹⁴⁰ By the Second World War, however, the United States incorporated artists into the production of camouflage on a much larger scale. Nothing could compare to the artistic prowess harnessed for the production of camouflage than the Twenty-Third

Figure 7 Brockie A. Stevenson's *Camouflage Installation at Railroad Depot* illustrates the process of concealment.

Headquarters Special Troops. In December 1943, a secret unit comprised of artists, writers, camouflage experts, radio operators and soldiers earned the sobriquet, "Ghost Army" for their elaborate schemes of deception.

The Ghost Army was devised by author and magazine editor, Ralph Ingersoll and described as

"an incubator for young artists."¹⁴¹ In June of 1944, the Unit landed in Normandy to deceive the German Wehrmacht.¹⁴² Completing over twenty missions from France through Germany, the Unit relied on rubber tanks, elaborate illustrations, and sound effects to impersonate units and confound Wehrmacht intelligence assets.

¹⁴⁰ Gallatin, *Art and the Great War*, 49. Figure 7: Brockie A. Stevenson, *Camouflage installation at railroad depot*, watercolor, 13.9 x 22.7 cm, WW2 Art, Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University John Hayes Library.

¹⁴¹ *The Ghost Army*, directed by Rick Beyer, 2013; USA: Plate of Peas Production, Color, Amazon Prime.

¹⁴² Rick Breyer and Elizabeth Sayles, *The Ghost Army of World War II: How One Top-Secret Unit Deceived the Enemy*, (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2015), 2.

Armament production necessitated the use of camouflage on the home front. Private corporations, active in the war industry, required the rapid employment of artists to camouflage their facilities. Lockheed, a prominent supplier of military aircraft for the United States, utilized camouflage to procure the safety of its personnel and buildings. Just days after Pearl Harbor, artists were called upon to camouflage the 340-acre Burbank plant.¹⁴³ Artists were acquired from movie studios in Hollywood by Colonel John F. Ohmer, who oversaw the project.¹⁴⁴ To appear like a

Lockheed's Burbank Plant before it was camouflaged.

Lockheed's Burbank Plant after it was camouflaged.

typical California suburb, "Airfields and parking lots were painted green and lined with plants to make them look like fields of alfalfa. The main factory was covered with a canopy of chicken wire, netting and painted canvas to blend in with the surround grass. And fake trees were erected with spray-painted chicken feathers for leaves...An elaborate system of underground walkways was constructed to allow for free movement across the plant."¹⁴⁵ Such acts of concealment were replicated throughout the United States.

¹⁴³ Ralph Vartabedian, "Lockheed Will Move Top-Secret 'Skunk Works' From Burbank," *Los Angeles Times*, November 5, 1988, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1988-11-05-fi-1021-story.html>.

¹⁴⁴ Lockheed Martin, "Lockheed During World War II: Operation Camouflage," Accessed March 2019 <https://www.lockheedmartin.com/en-us/news/features/history/camouflage.html>.

¹⁴⁵ Lockheed Martin, Figure 8: Winifred E. Newman, *Data Visualization for Design Thinking: Applied Mapping*, (New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2017), 163.

Esprit de corps

Art was also used to safeguard soldier morale both overseas and at home. The Marine Corps, Navy, and Army established art programs under the notion that art was linked to the improvement of *esprit de corps*.

Figure 9 Elizabeth Black sketches of a soldier as troops watch.

Such assumptions of art continue today. Colonel John A. Scott, stated in a 1953 report to President Eisenhower that “the Marine Corps considers combat art inseparably related to recruiting, *esprit de corps*, and training.”¹⁴⁶ Artist and Chair of the War Art Units, George Biddle, expressed a similar revelation in an earlier letter to Roosevelt. “I talked about it with doughboys, correspondents and several of our divisional generals.... On the whole I felt our art program was valuable in helping troop morale, and I was able to persuade General Eisenhower to restore it in his theatre...”¹⁴⁷ Art was used both on the home front and overseas to improve soldiers’ morale and it proved effective. Elizabeth Black produced art for the FAP; during the war she devised a program to draw portraits of American troops and to send them to their families for morale. It was an immediate hit. Soldiers entered lottery systems to have their portrait drawn.¹⁴⁸ Mimi Lesser played a similar role in the USO. Assigned to sketch soldiers for the purposes of entertainment,

¹⁴⁶ David E. Finley et. al., *Art and Government Report To The President By The Commission Of Fine Arts On Activities Of The Federal Government In The Field of Art*, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1953), 72. <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015016887930>.

¹⁴⁷ George Biddle to Franklin Roosevelt, letter, December 21, 1943, P17 George Biddle Papers, Circa 1910-1970, Archives of American Art Smithsonian Institution.

¹⁴⁸ David Solomon, dir. *Portraits for the Home Front: The Story of Elizabeth Black*, WQED Multimedia 58 min 29 sec, <https://www.pbs.org/video/wqed-documentaries-portraits-home-front-story-elizabeth-black/> Figure 9: Portraits for the Home Front.

Lesser worked in hospitals, barracks, even bars to produce portraits of soldiers.¹⁴⁹ Her portraits helped improve the spirits of the soldiers she drew and by extension their loved ones.¹⁵⁰ Captain George Pool attempted to reach out to Lesser's superior to express his gratitude for the art initiative, "I am writing to you in order to that I may express our very great appreciation of the artists you have been sending us from time to time."¹⁵¹ Peter Sanfilippo drew as a private in the 633rd Field Artillery, and recalled painting as "an important emotional outlet. 'My attitude was always upbeat. I was frightened many times like everyone else. But, I'd recoup and keep on. Painting I'm sure helped me do that.'"¹⁵² George Stuber served in the 20th Armored Division and drew cartoons. He explained his work as emotional support for servicemen. "These cartoons were made to cheer up some of us and were made from an enlisted mans [*sic*] point of view."¹⁵³

Various forms of art were applied to improve troop morale. Knopf identifies art, not only as a form of morale, but also as a means to improve teamwork, unit cohesiveness, and relieve stress.¹⁵⁴ For her, "one of these coping mechanisms is the creation and sharing of the graphic narratives themselves, which offer perspective and sympathy for the unique challenges presented

¹⁴⁹ Byron E. Williams, *Schedule For Sketch Artists in XII Corps Area: Ann Schabbehar Mimi Korach, October 6 1945*, letter, Lesser, Mimi Korach Box 1, Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University John Hay Library. The letter read, "The purpose of these sketch artists [Ann Schabbehar and Mimi Lesser] is to entertain at any outlying units whose area is not, in general, served by the larger USO shows." as quoted in "Milford Girl Home After Sketching G.I.'s in Europe: Mimi Korach Visited Camps and Hospitals During Tour," *The BridgePort Sunday Post*, December 30, 1945, Lesser, Mimi Korach Box 1, Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University John Hay Library.

¹⁵⁰ "Mimi Korach [Lesser]...had been selected to go overseas with the USO Camp Shows—Hospital Program, to portray American servicemen in hospital for the benefit of the lad's morale and for their families' reassurance." *The BridgePort Sunday Post*.

¹⁵¹ Captain MAC George F. Pool to Patricia Tiffany, letter, February 22 1945, Veterans History Project <http://memory.loc.gov/diglib/vhp/story>.

¹⁵² "Peter Sanfilippo," Experiencing War: Stories from the Veterans History Project, accessed July 2019, <http://memory.loc.gov/diglib/vhp-stories/loc.natlib.afc2001001.05844/> Quote: Peter Sanfilippo, Golden Link Long Island Lighting Company Spring 1995 Vol 9 no 1, Remembering WWII, *Capturing World War II on Canvas*, Sanfilippo, Peter Box 2, Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University John Hay Library.

¹⁵³ George J. Stuber to Peter Harrington January 15, 1997, Stuber, George J. Box 2, Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University John Hay Library.

¹⁵⁴ Knopf, *The Comic Art of War*, 21.

in military life.”¹⁵⁵ Cartoons appeared in Army newspapers such as *Stars and Stripes* and *The Beacon* addressing the lives of soldiers. Bill Mauldin’s, *Willy and Joe* became an instant favorite among soldiers. Soldier-artist Frederick Robinson exclaimed to a love interest, “I want to make a collection. Especially Mauldin for no truer portrayal of the gravel agitators has been made; not even in photos.”¹⁵⁶ *Willy and Joe* were relatable. Their plight as depicted by Mauldin was a shared experience and understood by the troops who read it. They saw themselves in Mauldin’s caricatures. A 1943 *Navy Editor’s Manual* referenced morale as “a thing called spirit.” Through text as well as imagery station papers were designed to make seamen feel “as much a part of the ship’s company as the gunnery office, [or]...bust with pride in his ship and his mates, even to the extent that he will scrub a little harder before next inspection.”¹⁵⁷

Murals were employed as a mechanism to enhance *esprit de corps*. Prior to the Second World War, a series of art programs were established to decorate camps with murals and paintings.¹⁵⁸ Murals were painted in

Figure 10 Artists producing murals and paintings.

¹⁵⁵ Knof, 58.

¹⁵⁶ Frederick Robinson to Francesca, Letter, April 1, 1945, The Center for American War Letters Folder 21, Box 3

¹⁵⁷ It was incumbent upon station papers to reflect the spirit of the Navy, but also to build morale. *Navy Editor’s Manual*, Ship’s Editorial Association Informational Services Section, Welfare Activity, Bureau of Naval Personnel. n.d. p2. Figure 10: *Interior design and soldier art*, Special Service Division, Services and Supply and the War Department. n.d. Two artists in the back are working on murals. It reads, “A typical workshop. Here soldier artists of professional ability produce paintings to be hung in recreation buildings and enjoyed by all the men.”

¹⁵⁸ As early as June 1940 a soldier art program was established by the War Department to adorn Army recreational facilities. Experienced troops were directed to produce such works. The program became an immediate success growing to include fine arts. In January of 1942 the program was transferred to the Service Division and renamed, “Interior Design and Soldier Art.” David E. Finley et. al., *Art and Government Report To The President*, 63.

mess halls and recreational facilities to depict the valor and daily lives of the American soldier. While many murals illustrated Army life, training, morning marches, and daily duties others reflected fictional scenes of warfare.¹⁵⁹ By 1943, a War Department manual *Interior Design and Soldier Art*, instructed soldier-artists on how to produce effective murals. Henry Poor would later define it as a “liberal morale building program.”¹⁶⁰ Fort Bragg, in North Carolina; Camp Barkeley near Abilene, Texas; Fort Custer in Michigan; Fort Meade in Maryland; and Camp Crowder in Missouri all established local art programs.¹⁶¹ Professional soldier-artists reached out to news outlets, the art community and one another to connect, obtain funding, and produce art. At Fort Dix in New Jersey, some 400 soldier-artists, both amateur and professional, crowded into recreational centers to paint.¹⁶² Amateur soldier-artists at Fort Custer produced sketches during training. By December 1942, the military worked to standardize these programs. The Commanding General of Services and Supply, General Brehon Somervell, sent a letter regarding the improvement of Army installations through the arts. He proposed art could “impress upon the mind such object lessons as the importance of camouflage, military behavior, dress, etc.; and...[it could] produce an atmosphere that will be conducive to the development of esprit de corps, a spirit of sacrifice and a will to win.”¹⁶³ This program grew to become an Army art initiative established in over fifty camps.¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁹ Peter Harrington, “America’s Forgotten Soldier Art: The World War II Camp Art Programmes,” in *Constructing the Memory of War in Visual Culture since 1914: The Eye on War*, ed. Ann Murray (New York: Routledge, 2018), 39-50.

¹⁶⁰ Henry Varnum Poor, “The Turner Passage,” 1944, p 2, Henry Varnum Poor papers, 1873-2001, bulk, 1904-1970, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. <https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/henry-varnum-poor-papers-13442/series-3/box-2-folder-35>.

¹⁶¹ Harrington, “America’s Forgotten Soldier Art,” 40.

¹⁶² Harrington, 40.

¹⁶³ General Brehon Somervell in Harrington, *America’s Forgotten Soldier Art*, 42.

¹⁶⁴ Harrington, *America’s Forgotten Soldier Art*, 49.

War Artist-Correspondents

Between 1941 and 1945 the United States experienced a re-emergence of artist-correspondent programs. The Navy, Coast Guard, Marines, and Army encouraged the formation of war-artist correspondent programs to secure pictorial historical records and commemorate the efforts of those who served. These programs varied in scope and scale. All of which however, incorporated artists who lived among sailors, jarheads, and GIs to capture the war on sketchpads and canvases. The Navy, Coast Guard and Marines dramatically differed from the Army because their official artists were servicemen first. They engaged in hostilities and performed their duties as servicemen. The Army did not require their official artists to participate in the war effort—they were war tourists.¹⁶⁵ Banning, Black and Pershing's war artist-correspondent program, the AEF "eight," during the Great War was, undoubtably, a precursor to war-artist correspondent programs during the Second World War. It was not, however, directly linked to the Second World War because the AEF "eight" was largely an unsuccessful propaganda scheme.¹⁶⁶ Even though propaganda and censorship re-surfaced as an appendage of American war artist-correspondent initiatives during the Second World War it was no longer the driving force behind the establishment of artist-correspondent programs. By the Second World War, the catalyst for the proliferation of artist-correspondent programs was primarily due to the symbiotic relationship between artists and the State.

In writing a petition to the Navy in August 1941, American artist, Griffith Bailey Coale would be the impetus for the formation of a Navy art program. "I would like to offer my services

¹⁶⁵ I borrowed the term war tourist from Phil Klay, *Redeployment*, (New York: The Penguin Press, 2014), 78.

¹⁶⁶ Additionally, in the aftermath of the war, the American Expeditionary Forces stated it still did not know how to devise an effective war artist program. It had no recommendations for art programs in the future. D.E. Nolan Letter regarding the AEF "eight."

to my country” he wrote, “by applying for a commission as a reserve officer in the United States Navy. I propose to make paintings from sketches and drawings...”¹⁶⁷ Shortly thereafter, he was assigned the position of Lieutenant Commander and dispatched to Iceland. Coale’s war art caught the attention of the Art and Poster Section of the Office of Public Relations resulting in the selection of three artists from the Navy’s ranks.¹⁶⁸ Civilian artists were soon contacted to serve. Artist and director of the FAP in Washington, Robert Bruce Inverarity was one such artist. He sent a telegram to Cahill, “Navy interested in my having commission. Would you write letter of recommendation addressed to Naval Officer Procurement...what you say will not be held against you however the more flowery the better. Would Dorothy feel she could also do one particularly on basis of work it would help greatly...Hope you both will assist.”¹⁶⁹ Inverarity was not selected. Instead, the Navy commissioned New York artist, Mitchell Jamieson. Ultimately, four artists were selected and assigned an officer ranking. In addition to their wartime work as artists, they were ordered to carry out their duty as officers of the Navy.¹⁷⁰

Much like Coale, acclaimed artist Jacob Lawrence was the catalyst for one of several uncoordinated efforts, on the part of the Coast Guard, to produce historical records of the war. In October of 1943, Lawrence was drafted into the Coast Guard as a steward’s mate.¹⁷¹ In December 1943, the United States Coast Guard authorized its first racially integrated vessel,

¹⁶⁷ Brian Lanker and Nicole Newnham, *They Drew Fire: Combat Artists of World War II*, (New York: TV Books, 2000), 89.

¹⁶⁸ Dwight Shepler, William Draper and Albert Murray were transferred to their new role as artist correspondents. Lanker and Newnham, 91.

¹⁶⁹ Robert Bruce Inverarity, *Robert Bruce Inverarity to Holger Cahill Western Union Telegram November 2 1942*, Telegram, Reel 1107, Holger Cahill Papers 1910-1993, Archives of American Art Smithsonian Institution, <https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/holger-cahill-papers>.

¹⁷⁰ Many official Navy artists participated in the day to day duties of sailors at sea. Lanker and Newnham, 89.

¹⁷¹ Xavier Nicholas, “Interview with Jacob Lawrence,” John Hopkins University Press, Callaloo 36, no. 2 (Spring 2013): 260-267. The John Hopkins University Press <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24264907>, 263. Stewards were “the officer’s servant.” Skinner, “U.S.S. Sea Cloud, IX-99, Racial Integration for Naval Efficiency,” 9; Lawrence’s duties included “waiting on tables and janitorial work.” Patricia Hills, *Painting Harlem Modern: The Art of Jacob Lawrence*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009), 150.

the *USS Sea Cloud*.¹⁷² As a young artist in Harlem, Lawrence was involved with the FAP; he studied under Charles Alston at the FAP's Harlem Art Workshop and earned a position in the FAP's easel division making paintings. His works studied and explored the black American narrative, "I was always interested in Negro history. Contemporary Negro life was the only thing I knew to do...Naturally I was interested in the problems of the Negro people" explained Lawrence.¹⁷³ He continued to paint and produce art in the initial months of his service through the encouragement and support of his colleagues and superior, Captain Joe S. Rosenthal. It was not until September 1944, when Rosenthal arranged Lawrence's transfer to serve aboard the *Sea Cloud*, that Lawrence had the opportunity to document black life in a new space.¹⁷⁴ He put in a request to his Captain, Lieutenant Commander Carlton Skinner, to paint. Skinner, previously an executive officer of Public Relations Office, assigned Lawrence to a public relations ranking.¹⁷⁵ For eight months, Lawrence served aboard the *Sea Cloud*. Despite the nature of his new assignment, he continued to serve as a sailor; only painting when he completed his daily duties.

¹⁷² Nicholas, "Interview with Jacob Lawrence," 263.

Truly, Lawrence produced two war series. The first was conceived as an official artist and the second, entitled War, was produced as a civilian under a Guggenheim fellowship between 1946 and 1947.

¹⁷³ "Over the Line: The Art and Life of Jacob Lawrence," ed. Peter T. Nesbett and Michelle Dubois, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000) 25 and 28. Quote: Jacob Lawrence as quoted in Elizabeth McCausland "Jacob Lawrence." *Magazine of Art*, November 1945, 253; Jacob Lawrence and Gwendolyn Knight Papers, 1816, 1914-2008, bulk 1973-2001, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. <https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/jacob-lawrence-and-gwendolyn-knight-papers-9121/series-4/box-8-folder-7> Between 1937 and 1939 he produced *The Life of Toussaint L'Ouverture* series, *The Life of Frederick Douglass* series, and *The Life of Harriet Tubman* series. By 1940, he began his renowned *Migration* series. As an official war artist-correspondent, the black narrative continued to be a dominate fixture in his artwork.

¹⁷⁴ Hills, *Painting Harlem Modern*, 152.

¹⁷⁵ Commander Carlton Skinner, "U.S.S. Sea Cloud, IX-99, Racial Integration for Naval Efficiency," US Coast Guard Historians Office, https://media.defense.gov/2018/Jun/04/2001926386/-1/-1/0/CARLTON_SKINNER.PDF, 3.

The subject of Lawrence's war paintings aboard the *Sea Cloud* are oftentimes black sailors performing mundane tasks at sea. They can be seen washing the deck, steering the ship, baking, cooking, praying, and manning the engine room. "I've always dealt with my experiences, either directly or indirectly. My work in that way is autobiographical" stated Lawrence. "My War paintings come out of my experiences as a serviceman aboard a ship and overseas during World War II."¹⁷⁶ His lack of detail does not make his art less authentic. Instead, Lawrence's riveting war works were moments in time or

Figure 11 Jacob Lawrence, *Prayer*

Figure 12 Jacob Lawrence, *No. 2 Main Control Panel, Nerve Center of Ship*

"fragments" as McClausland called them, "such fragments that reconstruct that world of tense action which was the war..."¹⁷⁷ To bear witness to the black sailor experience, viewers did not have to see the blank stare amidst the charred ruins of Tom Lea's *2000 yard stare* or Bill Mauldin's

¹⁷⁶ Xavier Nicholas, "Interview with Jacob Lawrence," 264. Figure 11: Jacob Lawrence, *Prayer*, 1944, gouache and watercolor, 20 3/4 x 29 in, The Jacob and Gwen Knight Lawrence Legacy Resource Center, http://www.jacobandgwenlawrence.org/gallery.php?artist=Jacob%20Lawrence&medium=all&start_year=1943&end_year=1945&series=all&term=&page=7. Figure 12: Jacob Lawrence, *No. 2 Main Control Panel, Nerve Center of Ship*, 1944, gouache and watercolor, 20 x 24 in, The Jacob and Gwen Knight Lawrence Legacy Resource Center, http://www.jacobandgwenlawrence.org/gallery.php?artist=Jacob%20Lawrence&medium=all&start_year=1943&end_year=1945&series=all&term=&page=5.

¹⁷⁷ McClausland, "Jacob Lawrence," 251.

war-weary caricatures—*Willy and Joe*—but see it in *prayer* as a forlorn soldier lays upon his bunk. The widely circulated painting, *No. 2 Main Control Panel, Nerve Center of Ship* displays a black sailor as he operates a board in the engine room. Standing akimbo, he controls the panels much like a captain at the helm. Skinner’s ethos “that men were to be treated and used as sailors, not as colored or whites...”¹⁷⁸ is evident in this piece as Lawrence depicts a sailor performing tasks that were once impossible for black sailors to undertake due to race restrictions.¹⁷⁹

Lawrence also documented acts of desegregation that took place aboard the *Sea Cloud*. *Painting the Bilges* documents black and white sailors navigating the same space as they refinish pipes. *Signal Practice* illustrates white and black sailors training together. When not at work,

Figure 13 Jacob Lawrence, *Painting the Bilges*

¹⁷⁸ The President’s Committee On Equality of Treatment And Opportunity In The Armed Services” April 25-26 1949. Pentagon, Washington, D.C. Appearances of Mr. Carlton Skinner, Director of Information Department of the Interior, Commander Eric S. Pardon, USNR and Mr. William T. Coleman, Jr. Law Clerk to Justice Felix Frankfurter. 7-8. Figure 13: Jacob Lawrence, *Painting the Bilges*, 1944, gouache, 30 7/8 x 22 5/8 in, The Jacob and Gwen Knight Lawrence Legacy Resource Center. http://www.jacobandgwenlawrence.org/gallery.php?artist=Jacob%20Lawrence&medium=all&start_year=1943&end_year=1945&series=all&term=&page=5.

¹⁷⁹ Black soldiers were unable to be assigned to rankings outside of messman. In his February 1942 classified memorandum to president Franklin Roosevelt, Frank Knox—secretary of the Navy—notes “I am attaching herewith for your personal when you have the time, the report of the General Board. It doesn’t get you any-where, however, because the Board finally recommends against the enlistment of negroes in other than the messman branch...” In the declassified document “General Board Study of The Enlistment of men of colored race in other than the Messman Branch” it was stated, “II. Assumptions: 1. [t]hat enlistment of men of colored race for unrestrict-ed service is considered by high authority to be unadvisable.” Frank Knox, “Memorandum for the President” February 4 1942 The Secretary of the Navy, Washington. Declassified. And “General Board Study of the Enlistment of men of the colored race in other than the Messman Branch” Declassified Franklin D. Roosevelt Library.

black and white seamen are depicted participating in leisure activities. One such work depicts seamen playing cards and checkers; another, illustrates sailors intermingling as they watch a boxing match. "...boxing matches, which aside from endless poker & crap shooting, were the chief entertainment of the trip [at sea]" recounted army official artist, Henry Varum Poor.¹⁸⁰ Black and white seamen navigated, worked and rested in the same shared spaces during the duration of their service aboard the *Sea Cloud*. Lawrence's works are not idyllic. Black and white sailors were, as

Figure 14 Jacob Lawrence and the *Sea Cloud*

Skinner wrote, "completely integrated and reacted to the needs of the military mission as a unit and as a well trained, ready unit."¹⁸¹

Lawrence's decision to produce works that celebrated and recognized the service of black seamen partially stems from

his own service as a black sailor and

steward's mate. Prior to his assignment in public relations, Lawrence's duties included "waiting on tables and janitorial work."¹⁸² He valued the contribution of black sailors and painted them. "A man may never see combat, but he can be a very important person. The man at the guns, there's glamor there. Men dying, men being shot, they're heroes. But the man bringing up supplies is important too... The cook may not like my style of painting. But they appreciate the fact that I am

¹⁸⁰ Henry Poor was aboard the *Turner* as he journeyed to Fort Robinson in Alaska. Poor, "The *Turner* Passage," 3.

¹⁸¹ Carleton Skinner, "U.S.S. *Sea Cloud*," 9.

¹⁸² Stewards were "the officer's servant." Skinner, "U.S.S. *Sea Cloud*, IX-99, Racial Integration for Naval Efficiency," 9; Patricia Hills, "Painting Harlem Modern: The Art of Jacob Lawrence," University of California Press: Berkeley, 2009. P 150 Figure 14: It is unclear where Jacob Lawrence is in the image, or that this was taken aboard the *Sea Cloud*. It is however, likely that it was taken aboard the *Sea Cloud* because it was the only desegregated vessel in the Coast Guard. Photographs of J. Lawrence, Gwendolyn Knight and Others, 1987, 1991, undated, Jacob Lawrence and Gwendolyn Knight papers, 1816, 1914-2008, bulk 1973-2001, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. <https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/jacob-lawrence-and-gwendolyn-knight-papers-9121/series-5/box-9-folder-9>.

painting a *cook*.”¹⁸³ He documented black sailors whose service oftentimes went unheeded and unheralded. Unlike the “eight” who were chastised for the content of their art and instructed to paint predetermined images, Lawrence was given artistic freedom. As an artist who made a career by painting the American black narrative, Lawrence continued to illustrate black life by painting sailors at sea. Propaganda schemes did not drive Lawrence’s decisions to paint specific images aboard the *Sea Cloud*. Lawrence painted what he witnessed, and Captain Skinner supported this endeavor.

In April 1949 Carlton Skinner, captain of the *Sea Cloud*, appeared before the President’s Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Forces to present his testimony to which he stated, “We had no segregation or discrimination.”¹⁸⁴ Lawrence’s depiction of a cohesive unit working and resting together within the tight quarters of the *Sea Cloud* is not unlike the testimony Skinner, provides. Lawrence painted what he saw, not what he had hoped to see. Lawrence’s wartime works have proved to be reflections of authentic experiences as opposed to fantastical, propagandistic images of war. The public found Lawrence’s art as an informative and a realistic portrayal of soldiers at war. They consumed these paintings as facts and grasped a better understanding of the soldier experience. Lawrence’s war art debuted in 1944 at an Art Exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art and was received on the home front as honest accounts of the soldier

¹⁸³ Elizabeth McClausland, “Jacob Lawrence.”

¹⁸⁴ Quote Continued, “White and colored slept in the same compartments and ate at the same mess tables. Colored officers and petty officers had white petty officers and seamen under them and vice versa. During that time we performed all our duty creditably, completed all assignments and, in our regular Atlantic Fleet inspection, on a comparative basis with other ships under top command of Commander Destroyers Atlantic Fleet, were rated Excellent or Very Good in every department. Also, during this period, the ship satisfactorily went through two complete Navy Board of Survey and Inspection inspections with a regular Navy Admiral and Commodore as senior member each time.” Quoted in: “The President’s Committee On Equality of Treatment And Opportunity In The Armed Services” April 25-26 1949. Pentagon, Washington, D.C. Appearances of Mr. Carlton Skinner, Director of Information Department of the Interior, Commander Eric S. Pardon, USNR and Mr. William T. Coleman, Jr. Law Clerk to Justice Felix Frankfurter.

experience. Journalist and art critic, Dorothy Adlow opined, “The latest work is the result of personal experience in the service of the Coast Guard. However, Mr. Lawrence . . . envisions the universal war experience. In an imagery of exceptional individuality, he has summarized every major experience of a soldier.”¹⁸⁵ Similarly, Elizabeth McClausland found his works to be reflective of wartime. In her 1945 article she wrote, “Through Jacob Lawrence’s eyes, we, the public see the orderly routine and discipline of daily works and play . . . Such fragments reconstruct that world of tense action which was the war and give us in art a lasting chronicle of a dramatic and crucial period in history.”²¹ Lawrence’s wartime art derived from his personal encounters yet mirrored a larger more universal soldier experience.

The Marine Corps artist correspondent initiative grew out of a vision Brigadier General Robert L. Denig crafted at the start of the Second World War. Denig hoped to send writers and photographers as correspondents to war. After earning the permission of Marine Corps Commandant Major General Thomas Holcomb, his initiative grew to include artists. Despite the artists’ assignment to document the war effort, they were still required to serve as Marines. Denig purported that “these men are not artists in Marine Corps uniforms,” implying they were Marines first.¹⁸⁶ As such, they “learned to drill, to deploy for attack, to use his bayonet, to fire basic weapons, to walk guard watches to serve always with a high degree of discipline and durability.”¹⁸⁷ Official Marine Corps artist, Richard Gibney recalled going into action with the Marines fully armed. “I was armed like any other marine with an M1 rifle and 38 pistol, a bayonet, ka bar knife, ammunition around my waist, across my chest.”¹⁸⁸ One writer recalled Marine Corps artists in

¹⁸⁵ McClausland, “Jacob Lawrence,” 253.

¹⁸⁶ Lanker and Newnham, *They Drew Fire*, 54.

¹⁸⁷ Lanker and Newnham, 54.

¹⁸⁸ Mike Kacur, “They Drew Fire-Combat Artists [*sic*] of WWII Part 1,” PBS Documentary, accessed January 2020, YouTube video, 2:18, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fpZEiM3vBcs>.

Guadalcanal. They “lived in tents; ate what and when the marines ate, huddled in soaking foxholes, had to stand ready to repel enemy land attacks, dodged enemy bombs and shells through swampy, malarial jungle where snipers lurked—and went to work with their pens, brushes, and paint.”¹⁸⁹ Marine Corps artists, thus, learned to draw under all sorts of conditions.

Figure 15 Harry Reeks, 1945

First Sergeant Harry Reeks served among Marines during the landing of Iwo Jima. He sketched on the shoreline during shell fire to document the onslaught.¹⁹⁰ “Only a percentage of the troops were ashore, and this fact still presented me with the opportunity to make my landing scenes. In doing this, it was not hard to realize the danger

involved, because the beach was under constant mortar and shell fire.”¹⁹¹ Reeks 1945 watercolor of three marines in a machine gun nest vividly immerses viewers in a moment of warfare. Little action is depicted, but it is no less riveting. Three marines, nearly indistinguishable from the jungle floor, occupy the frame. Two marines, cautiously peering out of the nest, intimate there is something ominous approaching. Without even seeing their faces, their panic is palpable. The three

¹⁸⁹ *World War II in the Pacific and Encyclopedia*, ed. Stanley Sandler, (New York: Garland Publishing Inc, 2001), 1057.

¹⁹⁰ Peter Harrington, “‘Sketches in a Hail of Bullets’: A Marine Corps artist, Harry Reeks, left a matchless eyewitness record of the struggle for Iwo Jima. MHQ reproduces his battle pictures for the first time.” *MHQ: The Quarterly Journal of Military History* (Spring 1995) Vol 7 no 3, 34.

¹⁹¹ Harrington, “‘Sketches in a Hail of Bullets,’” 34. Figure 15: Harry Reeks, watercolor, 51 x 61.4 cm, 1944, *Prints, Drawings and Watercolors from the Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection*. Brown Digital Repository, Brown University Library. <https://repository.library.brown.edu/studio/item/bdr:244490/>

marines are tightly squeezed into the frame, so the viewer is left feeling as though they, too, are occupying the same space as the men. The viewer is engrossed in the moment, anxiously waiting to hear or see what resides just out of view. Reeks successfully embroils the viewer in the world of a marine, shrouding them in the menacing parts of war. Through art, Denig planned to share the Marine Corps narrative with the American public through exhibitions of their works.¹⁹² The American public's response to such art and the State's response to the production of war art is expressly seen, however, through the formation of the Army's war artist-correspondent program. It was an art program devised by a committee of artists with artists in mind.

¹⁹² During the war, the program included seventy artists. Their works contribute to the 9000-piece art collection housed in Marine Corps museum. Carol Kino, "With Sketchpads and Guns, Semper Fi," *The New York Times*, July 14, 2010. And Lanker and Newnham, *They Drew Fire*, 55.

Chapter 4: The War Art Units

The Army's war artist-correspondent program was established in 1943. A brief letter to Major General Fleming on December 4, 1942 had all but ended state involvement in the production of art. A year into the Second World War and overwrought with pressure from Congress, Roosevelt wrote Fleming, "I agree that you should direct the prompt liquidation of the affairs of the Work Projects Administration...this will necessitate closing out all project operations in many States by February 1, 1943, and in other States as soon thereafter as feasible...the Works Project Administration has asked for and earned an honorable discharge."¹⁹³ Roosevelt sealed the fate of WPA art programs and the FAP. Unbeknownst to Roosevelt, his assistant Secretary of War, John J. McCloy and General Brehon Somervell had formally established a war art program shortly before the Thanksgiving holiday.¹⁹⁴ Together, McCloy and Somervell would help develop the operations for an Army art program, which would commence February 1943.¹⁹⁵

In November 1942, the Chief of Engineers received Somervell's memorandum regarding "Art Projects and Historical Art Records of the War."¹⁹⁶ The Chief of Engineers and the Special Services Division were directed to comply with three points. The first outlined the primary assignment. "It is desired to accomplish certain types of art projects and to obtain historical art

¹⁹³ Franklin Roosevelt to General Fleming December 1942 letter as quoted in the, *Final Report on the WPA Program 1935-43*.

¹⁹⁴ Confidential Copy Memo for the Chief of Engineers and the Director, Special Service Division "Art Projects and Historical Art Records of the War." Memo, November 13, 1942, P16 George Biddle Papers, Circa 1910-1970, Archives of American Art Smithsonian Institution, microfilm. (Hereafter cited as Confidential Copy Memo for the Chief of Engineers and the Director)

¹⁹⁵ The War Art Units were conceived in the earlier part of 1942 as discussed by Franklin Roosevelt "I have received your letter of June 27, 1942 soliciting my support for the program...to provide a corps of pictorial war correspondents... The Army also has a plan for the creation of an artists corps within the military establishment if and when it seems appropriate to launch such a project. Taking cognizance of the above, I am not inclined to approve a new program in this category." Franklin Roosevelt to Gilmore D. Clarke, Letter, July 21, 1942, Minutes of the Commission of Fine Arts, Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/details/uscommissionoffineartsminutes>

¹⁹⁶ Confidential Copy Memo for the Chief of Engineers and the Director.

records of the present war.”¹⁹⁷ Somervell directed the Chief of Engineers to select and dispatch artists “to active theaters to paint war scenes.” Commanders were also granted authorization to produce murals in camps, military installations, posts, and stations. Soldier-artists were authorized to produce works for the decoration of mess halls, recreation facilities, administration buildings, service clubs, and even classrooms.¹⁹⁸ Somervell’s memorandum concluded with the allocation of these tasks to the Special Service Division and the reluctant Chief of Engineers, General Eugene Reybold. Over the next three months, Somervell, McCloy and Reybold worked with American artists to formulate a tenable operation for the production of American war art, but first they needed an advisor.¹⁹⁹

In early February 1943, Biddle sat down to write his cousin, Constance. He was named Chairman of a War Department Art Advisory Committee (WDAAC).²⁰⁰ Edward Bruce had passed away just weeks earlier, and Biddle was inclined to take up the gauntlet. Months prior, in June of 1942, Biddle wrote his dear friend, Henry Poor remarking, “I was shocked to hear of Ned Bruce’s

¹⁹⁷ This memo was distributed by command of General Brehon Somervell. W.D. Styer to Chief of Engineers and Director of Special Service Division, Memorandum: “Art Projects and Historical Art Records of the War,” November 13, 1942, P16 George Biddle Papers, Circa 1910-1970, Archives of American Art Smithsonian Institution, microfilm. (Hereafter cited as W.D. Styer to Chief of Engineers and Director of Special Service Division Memorandum)

¹⁹⁸ This particular assignment was similar to the work conducted by Edward Bruce and the Section of Painting and Sculpture during the interwar years. W.D. Styer to Chief of Engineers and Director of Special Service Division Memorandum.

¹⁹⁹ Art critic, Peyton Boswell applauded his efforts in a 1940 column of *Art Digest*. “Somervell’s plan of an Advisory Committee of established artists to help lift the aesthetic level of the Federal Art Project in New York City is eminently fair, honest and practical.” Peyton Boswell, “Comments: More Art, Less Politics,” *Art Digest* 15 (October 1 1940), 3. In 1944 General Reybold spoke before the House of Representatives and explained he did not advocate for the program, but rather “just carried out orders.” Hearings before the United States House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations, Seventy-Eighth Congress First Session on the Legislative Branch Bill, 1944, (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1943), 325. <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.b3637338?urlappend=%3Bseq=754>.

²⁰⁰ George Biddle to Constance Biddle, letter, February 7 1943, 2. George Biddle Letters to Constance Biddle, 1943-1945, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. In his letter to President Franklin Roosevelt, Biddle explained McCloy and General Reybold assigned him chair of an art committee. “I have been asked by the assistant Secretary of War, John J. McCloy, and General Reybold, Chief of Engineers, to set Up [*sic*] and act as chairman of a War Department Art Advisory Committee.” George Biddle to President Franklin Roosevelt, Letter, February 13, 1943, P16/P17 George Biddle Papers, Circa 1910-1970, Archives of American Art Smithsonian Institution, microfilm.

recent stroke. He has held on bravely. As your suggestion, about my taking over the Section [of Fine Arts], I have thought it over very dispassionately and talked to Hélène. If the position were offered to me I should say ‘Yes’. You know as I do that artists hate to give up their painting for executive jobs, but I am moved...”²⁰¹ In January of 1943, he met with Brigadier General Frederick H. Osborn to offer his services to the Armed Forces. General Osborn immediately informed Biddle of Somervell’s memorandum. In response, McCloy prompted him to craft a plan for an art program.²⁰² General Reybold, tasked with formulating the art program, received Biddle’s compelling memorandum, highlighting the value of art to the “historian of the future.”²⁰³ For Biddle, this art would have a place alongside Goya and Delacroix in American museums and, a relic for historians. For Reybold, Biddle was the perfect liaison between the State and the art world to create a seamless and cohesive program. He was a champion of state-sponsored art during the interwar years—assisting in the establishment of the FAP—a prominent leader within the art community, brother to the U.S. attorney General and an acquaintance of President Roosevelt. In early 1943, McCloy and Reybold offered Biddle chair of a war art committee. He became a founding father of the War Art Units, responsible for overseeing the production of some 2,000 works of art.²⁰⁴

The WDAAC was established in February 1943 to create a “historical and pictorial record of the war.”²⁰⁵ This entailed orchestrating the production, collection, examination, and circulation

²⁰¹ George Biddle to Henry Poor, Letter, June 3 1942, Box WWII Art (notes, files, etc.), Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University John Hay Library.

²⁰² George Biddle, *An Artist at War*, (New York: The Viking Press, 1944), 1.

²⁰³ George Biddle to John J. McCloy.

²⁰⁴ In just six months the War Art Units completed roughly 2,000 works of art, 1,500 of which were retained by the government. Marian R. McNaughton, “The Army Art Program.” In *A Guide to the Study and Use of Military History*, ed. by Jessup John and Coakly, Robert E. (US Government Printing Office: Washington, 1979), 321. Biddle organized Somervell’s art program. George Biddle to McCloy, letter, February 1, 1943, Box WWII Art (notes, files, etc.), Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University John Hay Library.

²⁰⁵ Despite the date of this letter, the exact date of the formation of the unit is unknown. George Biddle to McCloy, Memo “Objectives and Organisational Structure of War Department Art Advisory Committee,” February

of wartime art via periodicals and domestic exhibitions. At its height, the WDAAC was comprised solely of artists. Selected by General Reybold and approved by Somervell, were the artists: George Biddle; David Finley of the National Gallery of Art; Henry Varum Poor, the Commissioner of Fine Arts in New York City; Edward Rowan, the director of the Federal Section of Fine Arts; Reeves Lewenthal, Associated American Artists President; and acclaimed author John Steinbeck.²⁰⁶ It was paramount to appoint committee members who both understood and could advocate for the needs and requirements of the artists. This philosophy extended to the very core of the initiative.

The administration of Somervell's WDAAC was largely based on FAP programs. The FAP had a web of art committees, both national and local comprised of exceptional artists instituted to help ensure the production of high-quality art.²⁰⁷ A 1935 FAP manual required committee members to be "such persons as artists, museum directors, heads of art schools and art departments of the public schools, and other persons professionally concerned with art. It is important that these committees represent a catholicity of taste."²⁰⁸ Much like the FAP, Somervell's WDAAC was comprised of the art world elite and the structure of the WDAAC adopted fundamental components of the New York advisory committees. While it may seem Biddle, Lewenthal, and Reybold were the cardinal architects in the establishment of the WDAAC,

10, 1943, P16/P17 George Biddle Papers, Circa 1910-1970, Archives of American Art Smithsonian Institution, microfilm. (Hereafter cited as "Objectives and Organisational Structure of War Department Art Advisory Committee" Memorandum)

²⁰⁶ Letter "Organization of the War Department Art Advisory Committee," February 20 1943, P16/P17 George Biddle Papers, Circa 1910-1970, Archives of American Art Smithsonian Institution, Microfilm. It is unclear if John Steinbeck had any further contribution to the Army Art Program after February 20, 1943. For More information see Peter Harrington, "Steinbeck and the War Department Art Advisory Committee," *Steinbeck Studies* 2001 Fall; 13 (2): 23-26 San Jose State University.

²⁰⁷ The objectives of the art committees were stipulated in the FAP manual, "...help the art directors to maintain high standards of performance, stimulate interest in art projects, assist in making local resources, and in establishing constructive co-operation between the art projects and other activities of value to the community." *Federal Art Project Manual*, 2.

²⁰⁸ *Federal Art Project Manual*, 2.

Somervell was likely also involved in creating policy. Somervell had an appreciation for the arts and developed a relationship with the art community as head of the WPA in New York.²⁰⁹ Of all the FAP artists in the nation, New York employed roughly 44.5 percent of them.²¹⁰ It was the epicenter of art culture in America. As head of the WPA in New York, Somervell managed the largest percent of FAP artists in the nation and worked to improve WPA advisory art committees in New York. The WDAAC was the product of the New Deal Era. As commander of the Army Service Forces in 1942, Somervell conceived an art program that would mirror the administration of the FAP programs.

Despite its relations to the New Deal era, this was an Army program. The committee was directed to work in subordination to the Chief of Engineers. Together, they devised the War Art Units. These two entities dispatched artists to theaters of war to document the war. Many artists remained stateside to paint the war effort as it progressed on the home front.²¹¹ It was understood by both the WDACC and General Reybold that a complete record of the war included documenting the home front.²¹² As an anonymous letter explained, “The mission of your committee is to obtain through the finest talent of our country a pictorial record of War in all its phases.”²¹³

To ensure all phases of military activities were recorded by the War Art Units, the WDAAC’s mission was to incentivize private organizations, media outlets and industries to commission artists to produce war art for “historical...records of the present war.”²¹⁴ Biddle

²⁰⁹ Somervell was head of the WPA in New York from August of 1936 – November 1940.

²¹⁰ Mckinzie, *The New Deal for Artists*, 93.

²¹¹ Unlike their overseas counterparts, these artists were selected solely from enlisted men.

²¹² Eugene Reybold to The Commanding General, Army Services Forces, letter “Expansion of Scope of War Art Project,” March 22, 1943, George Biddle Papers, Circa 1910-1970, Archives of American Art Smithsonian Institution, microfilm.

²¹³ Unknown to George Biddle, Draft letter, P17 George Biddle Papers, Circa 1910-1970, Archives of American Art Smithsonian Institution, Microfilm.

²¹⁴ “Organization of the War Department Art Advisory Committee,” letter, February 20, 1943, P16/P17 George Biddle Papers, Circa 1910-1970, Archives of American Art Smithsonian Institution, microfilm.

explained in a memo to McCloy, the inclusion of private organizations was beneficial for the units as it could dramatically help procure art.²¹⁵ It was anticipated that private enterprises would alleviate funding concerns thereby permitting more artists to be commissioned to graphically record the war. This would solidify the program's longevity and ensure the execution of their mission.

The creation of a comprehensive pictorial war record required the WDAAC to acquire war art produced prior to the establishment of the committee as it had been established two years into the war. General Reybold directed the WDAAC to procure pictorial matter already produced by ordinary artists and industries during the initial phases of the war.²¹⁶ Similarly, the committee was directed to motivate unofficial artists to submit their works. Under this same directive, Reybold instructed the committee to "[e]xamine the creations submitted by all artists and make them available for examination by representatives of this office, with written recommendations of the Committee as to those considered worthy of showing and reproduction."²¹⁷ The committee was then charged with reviewing these works and recommending them for periodicals and other forms of publication.²¹⁸

Biddle's Intentions

With his appointment as chair, Biddle devised an entirely different mission for the War Art Units, contiguous, of course, to the procurement of "historical art records."²¹⁹ Biddle first

²¹⁵ "stimulation of such private initiative can result in valuable benefits, and well may prove to be the vehicle which will supply a certain amount of pictorial matter which will make the difference between a completed and an incomplete program." "Objectives and Organisational Structure of War Department Art Advisory Committee" Memorandum.

²¹⁶ "Objectives and Organisational Structure of War Department Art Advisory Committee" Memorandum

²¹⁷ "Organization of the War Department Art Advisory Committee," letter, February 20, 1943, p2, P16/P17 George Biddle Papers, Circa 1910-1970, Archives of American Art Smithsonian Institution, microfilm.

²¹⁸ "Make recommendations to this office as to news releases and publication of the finished material." P16/P17 George Biddle Papers, Circa 1910-1970, Archives of American Art Smithsonian Institution, microfilm.

²¹⁹ W.D. Styer to Chief of Engineers and Director of Special Service Division Memorandum.

expressed his expectation for the art in his January memorandum to McCloy, “the impact of war on the individual, as recorded by our best artists.”²²⁰ Biddle opined the camera could only “show things as they actually were,” but an artist could show how men actually saw things.²²¹ As acclaimed war cartoonist Bill Mauldin explained: he hoped the American public would begin to see, “how dogfaces look at themselves...to understand these strange, mud-caked creatures who fight the war and...to understand their minds and their own type of humor.”²²² In a February 1943 letter to his cherished cousin Constance, Biddle confided, “they have given me absolute authority to make all the decisions...this of course means we want only the best artists in the country and not factual reportage, but the emotional impact of War [*sic*] on an artist.”²²³ He intended to procure pictorial information on the psychological consequences of war in addition to historical records. From here, his intentions grew, further diverging from Somervells’.

In February 1943, he reiterated his plan to obtain the psychological consequences of war in an acceptance letter to official artists Aaron Bohrod and Sidney Simon. “Our committee expects you always to be more than a news gatherer. The importance of what you have to say for the historian of the future will be the impact of the war on you, as an artist, a human being.”²²⁴ Biddle expanded his intention for the art from just the “impact of war” on the artist to the “impact of war” on the human being.²²⁵ Manual Bromberg received a similar letter that March. George Steinbeck, much like Biddle, aspired to send writers to war. His response to the January memorandum

²²⁰ George Biddle to Assistant Secretary of War John J. McCloy, Memorandum, “Organizing and Selection for War Artists and Writers,” n.d. Box WWII Art (notes, files, etc), Anne. S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University John Hay Library.

²²¹ “U.S. Artists Depicted Tunian War Scenes: George Biddle, Attorney Gen-eral’s Brother, One of Group,” *North American Newspaper Alliance* and *New York Times*, June 1, 1943, 9.

²²² Bill Mauldin, *Up Front*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2000), 8.

²²³ George Biddle to Constance Biddle.

²²⁴ George Biddle to Aaron Bohrod, letter, February 16, 1943, Box WWII Art (notes, files, etc), Anne. S.K. Brown Military Collection Brown University John Hay Library and George Biddle to Lt. Simon, letter, February 20, 1943, Box WWII Art (notes, files, etc), Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University John Hay Library.

²²⁵ George Biddle to Constance Biddle.

clarified Biddle's intentions for the art stating, "it is advisable to send painters to battle areas to set down permanently for historical record the psychological and psychic impact of war on a people..."

He later added,

"Of other wars the best and most [brimming?] accounts are the work not of military analysts nor news gatherers, but of litterateurs...these were not specialists but artists and yet they have left the only comprehensible accounts of their times... A good writer being more highly trained in psychological observation and selection of material that even qualified psychologists will be able to furnish the nations with a record which is more full and even more true than news reporters."²²⁶

As chair of the WDAAC, Biddle had no intention of sending artists to simply paint reflective images of war. He instructed the War Art Units' official artists to paint "the war...and its impact," reminding them that they were selected "as outstanding American artists, who will record the war in all its phases; and its impact on you..."²²⁷ Biddle wanted to see the psychological implications, the emotional toll of war, on canvas.

Artists, Harry Reeks and Ashley Bryan illustrated the psychological implications of war. Both Reeks and Bryan accomplished this feat through different mediums and styles, as Congresswoman Louise McIntosh Slaughter of New York spoke before the House of Representatives in 1995, "their paintings and drawings are varied in personal interpretation, but

²²⁶ John Steinbeck, "Notes a? to the memorandum of George Biddle on the advisability? of sending artists to combat areas," p1, Box WWII ART (notes, files, etc), Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University John Hay Library.

²²⁷ George Biddle to War Art Units, memorandum, April 15, 1943, Box WWII ART (notes, files, etc), Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University John Hay Library. (George Biddle to War Art Units Memorandum) See Appendix 23 and 24 for more information.

are alike in their portrayal of the reality of war.”²²⁸ Reeks’ 1945 painting takes place on a battlefield ravaged by war. A soldier, as depicted by Reeks, looks off into space, scarred by war. His mangled hair, blends into the ruined landscape making him nearly indistinguishable from the desecration. Academic Suzannah Bernoff contends, “The damaged face is also a symbol of the psychological trauma of modern conflict.”²²⁹ The soldier is war weary, tired, distressed, and quite literally, “battle fatigued.”²³⁰ Reeks portrayal of war extends beyond the destruction of the landscape

Figure 16 Harry Reeks, *Battle Fatigue*

and beyond the destruction of the body to the destruction of the mind.

Ashley Bryan’s depiction of psychological trauma is not so clearly labeled as Reeks’ “Battle Fatigue.” Unable to disembark for home due to the segregation of vessels, a black soldier suspends in air as if he is seated at a table with his head buried in his arm. The viewer does not

²²⁸ The entire quote: “I rise today to pay tribute to the World War II veterans who served as combat artists. The art collections of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, and Coast Guard provide a pictorial memory using the medium of fine art to record the military heritage of America to provide in-sights into the experiences of individual members of the Armed Forces. Regardless of service affiliation, the World War II combat artist was assigned to document events of military importance.... Their paintings and drawings are varied in personal interpretation, but are alike in their portrayal of the reality of war.” Hon. Louise McIntosh Slaughter of New York in the House of Representatives, June 27 1995 Congressional Record vol. 141 Washington, Folder Baldwin, Richard Box 1, Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University John Hayes Library.

²²⁹ Ana Carden-Coyne, and David Morris, Tim Wilcox, and Dorothy Price, and Suzannah Biernoff, *The Sensory War 1914-2014*, (Manchester: Manchester Art Gallery, 2014), 38. Figure 16: Harry Reeks, *Battle Fatigue*, watercolor, 39.4 cm x 28 cm, World War II Art Box 3, Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University John Hayes Library.

²³⁰ His stare is explained by Private Robert Leckie, “Lieutenant Ivy-League...sat on a coconut log and told us what had happened. He smoked desperately and stared into the river as he talked. The skin around his eyes had already taken on that aspect peculiar to Guadalcanal, that constant stare of pupils that seemed darker, larger, rounder more absolute.” Robert Leckie, *Helmet for my Pillow: From Parris Island to the Pacific*, (New York: Bantam Books Trade Paperbacks, 2010), 83.

have access to the soldier's facial expressions but can sense his anguish through his body language. With a simple sketch, Bryan powerfully illustrates another form of trauma, emotional trauma born

Figure 17 Ashley Bryan's Swift Sketch reads: "News Item 6 December '45 Yesterday 140 Negro Soldiers were taken off of homebound ships in Le Havre by the Navy because there were no...for segregation."

out of segregation in the Armed Forces. Harry Reeks' 1945 image of a stoic soldier and Ashley Bryan's sketch of a crestfallen soldier are stylistically different—one is a finished work of fine art and the other a swift sketch. Yet, both Reeks and Bryan articulate the psychological implications of war on the American soldier.²³¹ For Biddle the style was not important; he recognized the psyche could be depicted through various mediums. "The War Department Art Advisory Committee is giving you as much latitude as possible in your method of work...for it is

recognized that an artist does his best work when he is not tied down by narrow technical limitations."²³² Much like Reeks' and Bryan's art, official Army art was not to be simply reflections of wartime events, but was intended to articulate the heartfelt experience of American warfare. Biddle was not concerned if such an experience was attained by a real or an imagined event, if the subject depicted scenes of action or, more simply, soldiers at rest. Art produced under the War Art Units, Biddle had hoped, would force the American public to bear witness to the daily intricacies of modern warfare.

²³¹ Figure 17: Ashley Bryan, Sketchbook, December 1945.

²³² George Biddle to War Art Units Memorandum.

Biddle anticipated that these pictorial records would be disseminated among the American public through museums and traveling exhibitions. As he explained to McCloy in a February 1943 memorandum, "It is essential that ownership in all important graphic art be retained by the Government, in the hopes that it will constitute a collection of high artistic and historic interest, some day to be honored in a National Museum."²³³ These graphic images of war would also decorate public buildings and appear in military installations to display or rather magnify the American war effort and both the sacrifice and realities of American warfare. The Committee was responsible for establishing connections with the art houses, museums, and publications to ensure the visibility of the Army art.²³⁴ In Biddle's January 1943 Memorandum to McCloy he explicitly explained that the art would be for museums and history. "All such material will be used for museum circuit exhibitions, for art albums, illustrations for war histories, etc. It will eventually be housed in our museums."²³⁵

From the earliest stages of its formation, the War Art Units were not intended for propaganda. The intent of the Units was neither to produce works to manipulate the masses, nor merely to establish a record of the war as Somervell had envisioned. For Biddle, who had full authority to formulate the program, it was quite simply to produce fine works of art to be revered and through such works, to ascertain and to show the psychological implications of war. Biddle and Steinbeck were not alone in their hope to secure prominent works of art. The Commission of Fine Arts, too, had hoped to acquire celebrated works of art, "In the past, wars had the power to

²³³ George Biddle to John J. McCloy. "Subject: Method of Selection and Payment of War Artists and Writers," Memorandum. February 1, 1943, P16 George Biddle Papers, Circa 1910-1970, Archives of American Art Smithsonian Institution, microfilm.

²³⁴ George Biddle to R Lieberman. Letter. February 1943, P16, George Biddle Papers, Circa 1910-1970, Archives of American Art Smithsonian Institution, microfilm.

²³⁵ George Biddle to John J. McCloy. Memorandum. "Memorandum for John J. McCloy Assistant Secretary of War, Subject: Organization and Selection of War Artists and Writers." Approx.. January 1943, Box WWII Art (notes, files, etc.), Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University John Hayes Library.

stir men to create moving poems, great literature, and stirring music, as well as to make notable contributions in the fields of architecture, painting and sculpture, We believe that the great traditions of the past may be fulfilled again in these momentous times and we hope that efforts to stimulate the arts may not be stifled in our time.”²³⁶ It was Biddle’s aim to acquire documentation of the psychological implications of war through art. This set the War Art Units apart from the Navy, Coast Guard and Marine Corps’ artist correspondent programs. Biddle’s intentions for the art were no secret as the artists were informed of Biddle’s mandate and his plan to submit the works for exhibitions.

Lewenthal’s Intentions

Upon Biddle’s temporary resignation as chairman of the WDAAC in April of 1943, and without his direction, the purpose of the Unit soon became propagandistic. Reeves Lewenthal was appointed executive secretary when Biddle stepped down to paint the war in Africa.²³⁷ Lewenthal’s June 1943 letter to official artist, Millard Sheets, was not unlike Banning’s letters to the AEF “eight.”

“Millard, your sacrifices will all be for naught if the creative results of your experiences are not in the right direction...we want you to always have uppermost in your thoughts the fact that inspirational pictures are wanted. It is expected of course that actual battle scenes will furnish the best source of material, but don’t overlook subjects that might have some immediate use for psychological warfare for normal purposes and possible tactile benefit.”²³⁸

²³⁶ On December 18, 1941 the Commission of Fine Arts adopted this resolution. Report of The Commission of Fine Arts January 1 1940 – June 30 1944, 78th Congress, 2d Session Senate Doc no. 204 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1944), 55, HathiTrust, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.c2589937&view=1up&seq=553>.

²³⁷ George Biddle, letter, April, 16, 1943, P17 George Biddle Papers, Circa 1910-1970, Archives of American Art Smithsonian Institution, microfilm.

²³⁸ Reeves Lewenthal to Millard Sheets, draft letter, June 9, 1943 as quoted in Hearings before the United States House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations, Seventy-Eighth Congress First Session on the Legislative Branch Bill, 1944, 329.

He requested works of art that depicted action and inspirational imagery. Gone were the promises of the freedom to paint, draw and sketch “any subject.” As seen through Sheet’s disembarkation letter, Lewenthal wanted specific works of art and was willing to bribe artists with “future opportunities” and “proper homage” to attain it. It is not clear to what extent Lewenthal’s directive and propagandistic plans had on Sheets and the Unit as his letter was crafted mere weeks before the Unit’s dissolution in July of 1943.

Regarding the Artists

The Committee set out to acquire esteemed artists to document the war effort in all its capacities. Placement in the WDAAC’s art units was elite. Only America’s most distinguished artists were considered for a position. Many of the artists had been selected as early as February 13, 1943.²³⁹ They were recommended by the art community and hand selected by the committee. An artist’s military or civilian status did not debar them from admittance. As official artist and colleague of Biddle, Sydney Simon recounted, “Two meetings with Gen. Reybold, Chief of Engineers, were held in which Biddle called the White House twice. After much arguing, it was agreed that 50% of the artists would come from the ranks, and 50% from a list recommended by Lewenthal/Biddle.”²⁴⁰ However, for the hopeful, unsung soldier-artists like Frederick Robinson, and Ashley Bryan it was closed to open enlistment. The committee presumed leaving the unit open to enlistment would entice too many recruits to serve simply in hopes of evading their wartime assignments. The committee was given full authority to prolong an artist’s contract or release them from their duty.

²³⁹ George Biddle to Franklin Roosevelt, letter, February 13, 1943, P17 George Biddle Papers, Circa 1910-1970, Archives of American Art Smithsonian Institution, microfilm.

²⁴⁰ Sydney Simon to Peter Harrington, letter, transcribed by Peter Harrington, 1993, Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University John Hayes Library.

As the program progressed, the WDAAC reached out to the art world for referrals. Juliana Force from the Whitney Museum of American Art received one such letter from Biddle, “I wonder if you would be willing to give me the names of the one hundred artists which your Council has selected... Your list would be extremely helpful to us.”²⁴¹ It was not long before, the art community began to reach out with recommendations. Just three short weeks after the first artists received their acceptance letters, Edward Alden Jewell from the New York Times wrote Biddle, “The other day I looked over a quantity of Mr. Goths published sketches and thought them excellent. He would seem to me well fitted for an assignment such as this; and since he is very eager to be sent—preferably, he tells me, to the North African front—I hope you may see fit to give his work full consideration.”²⁴² By June 1943, some 1200 artists applied to serve in the War Art Units.²⁴³ One such artist wrote Biddle of his adulation for the program. Millard Sheets shared that “he had recommended me to you and your group to fill a position with him in Asia. I appreciate what has been done to place me in this in this [sic] work...I am no less eager to be properly placed in war work than when I last wrote you...From what I know, your project sounds exactly right for me. I would appreciate anything you can do to place me...”²⁴⁴ Artists were “eager” as Biddle would later write in September 1943, “to contribute their share to the nation’s victory.”²⁴⁵

Following the selection process, artists were sent notification letters. Several boilerplate acceptance letters were sent depending on the status of the artist—civilian or soldier—and their

²⁴¹ George Biddle to Mrs. Juliana Force, letter, February 24 1943, P17, George Biddle Papers, Circa 1910-1970, Archives of American Art Smithsonian Institution, microfilm.

²⁴² Edward Alden Jewell to George Biddle, letter, March 10, 1943, P17, George Biddle Papers, Circa 1910-1970, Archives of American Art Smithsonian Institution, microfilm.

²⁴³ Peter Harrington, “The 1943 War Art Program,” *Army History*, No. 55 (Spring-Summer 2002), 14. Jstor, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26306074>.

²⁴⁴ Tom Crasy? to George Biddle, letter, April 7, 1943, P17, George Biddle Papers, Circa 1910-1970, Archives of American Art Smithsonian Institution, microfilm.

²⁴⁵ George Biddle, *An Artist at War*, 123.

date of induction. One such letter included a truncated version of Biddle's memorandum. Acceptance letters did not ensure admittance into the unit. Biddle insisted artists had to express enthusiasm for the role otherwise it was assumed they would not perform their best work once on location. Biddle explained to McCloy, "The successful use of artists and writers to record the war impact will depend on the happy choice of artists."²⁴⁶ For the chairman, it was a role to be coveted.

Once acceptance letters were submitted the next step was, naturally, verification. The FBI was entrusted to review the artists for, among many things, their loyalty.²⁴⁷ When three artists became detained in the process, Biddle was notified. "General Reybold desires that steps be taken as rapidly as possible to employ the men named as primary nominees...or the necessary alternates...It is likewise suggested that the services of Mr. Francis Biddle, the Attorney General, be enlisted in expediting the investigations."²⁴⁸ Biddle contacted his brother, Francis, ten days later, requesting assistance.

Official artists were provided art supplies and given the permission to procure additional supplies near their disembarkation sites before shipping out.²⁴⁹ Unlike the AEF "eight," these official artists had the opportunity to obtain supplies before shipping out. This time, they would be

²⁴⁶ George Biddle to John J. McCloy. Memorandum, "Subject: Method of Selection and Payment of War Artists and Writers," February 1, 1943, P16 George Biddle Papers, Circa 1910-1970, Archives of American Art Smithsonian Institution, microfilm. Biddle's insistence that artists were enthusiastic about the role seems to be in response to a recommendation by Brigadier General D.E. Nolan for future war artist-correspondent programs in January of 1919, "it may be said that officers assigned to the work of drawing and painting pictures with an army in field should be men accustomed to rapid work under conditions where all the implements and accommodations of a studio are not available. They should be chosen also with a view to their ability to care for themselves under trying conditions, men used to accommodating themselves to conditions as they find them." D.E. Nolan Letter regarding the AEF "eight."

²⁴⁷ George Biddle to Francis Biddle, letter, February 29, 1943, P16/P17 George Biddle Papers, Circa 1910-1970, Archives of American Art Smithsonian Institution, microfilm.

²⁴⁸ Burrach to unknown, letter, February 18 1943, P17, George Biddle Papers, Circa 1910-1970, Archives of American Art Smithsonian Institution, microfilm.

²⁴⁹ "Information for Artists who may be sent to Theaters of Operation by the Chief of Engineers," document, n.d. 1. P17, George Biddle Papers, Circa 1910-1970, Archives of American Art Smithsonian Institution, microfilm. It is likely that the document was produced by artists from Fort Belvoir. Henry Varnum Poor references a lengthy list created by such artists. See "San Francisco" for more information.

prepared. David Fredenthal visited Flax's Artist Materials, Picture Framing on Kearny Street in San Francisco before shipping out. He purchased some 281 items including a water color easel, drawing pads, painting knives, thumb tacks and an extensive collection of paintbrushes and watercolors.²⁵⁰ "We were all in a state of excitement," recalled Poor, "over the quality [and] abundance of the store of artist's supplies laid in for our use."²⁵¹ Together with Mr. Edward Laning, Mr. Joe Jones and Second Lieutenant Cummings, Poor packed the materials in chests before embarking on their journey.²⁵²

In addition to art supplies, artists were provided cameras. Cameras were used as a means to collect data and capture "sights" to be used in finished works. For the WDAAC, the camera was not the adversary. Biddle explained to the *New York Times* in May 1943 that "we made no effort to compete with but rather wished to supplement the camera."²⁵³ Any visual imagery captured by cameras was an asset to the artists as they worked to capture the essence of war. Also, artists were encouraged to keep a journal. The value of textual information was realized by Biddle, who advised official artists to maintain a written record, even keeping one himself. Potential publications, he believed, could draw upon the artists written word to caption their finished works.²⁵⁴ Works derived from photographs taken on location by official artists were of great value and did not conflict with their mission. Instead, they were an asset as described by Samuel Smith, an official artist in 1944. In a report to his commanding officer he explained the realities of textual and photographic documentation.

²⁵⁰ Flax's: Artist Materials-Picture Framing, receipt, Fredenthal, David Folder Box 1, Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University John Hay Library.

²⁵¹ Henry Varnum Poor, manuscript, n.d. box 2 folder 33, "San Francisco," circa 1944, p4, Henry Varnum Poor Papers, 1873-2001, bulk 1904-1970. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. <https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/henry-varnum-poor-papers-13442/series-3/box-2-folder-33>.

²⁵² Poor, "San Francisco," p 4.

²⁵³ Biddle, *Artist at War*, 42.

²⁵⁴ George Biddle to Sidney Simon, letter, March 13, 1943, Box WWII Art (notes, files, etc), Anne. S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University John Hay Library.

“On 28 October Kweilin field was completely destroyed on short notice taking me by surprise. Due to the poor light in the late after-noon no photographs were made of the blowing of the field, the blowing being viewed only by the 15 man demolition crew. After interviewing and gaining an accurate word picture from the crew on their arrival at Liuchow as to the actual procedures and explosions -- with the help of this and the complete set of landscape photographs I had prepared to be used in the event the field was blown at night, I will be able to prepare an accurate and authentic picture of this event.”²⁵⁵

Smith acutely describes the pitfalls of the camera in his report, while confirming it as process of how official Army artists procured imagery for their art. They not only were eyewitnesses and painted or sketched on the spot, but they also acquired oral testimonies, notes and photographs to supplement what they, the artist, had witnessed.

Official artists were designated three disembarkation sites: New York, San Francisco, and New Orleans.²⁵⁶ Those dispatched to the Southwest and South Pacific disembarked from San Francisco. Those assigned to Alaska traveled by train from San Francisco to Seattle before disembarking from Seattle.²⁵⁷ By March 22, 1943, eleven official artists had been dispatched. In the Southwest Pacific theater of war were artists, Captain Barse Miller, First Lieutenant Frede Vidar, Second Lieutenant Sidney Simon, and civilian artist/war correspondent David Fredenthal. Three artists were sent to the South Pacific: Howard Cook, Aaron Bohrod, and Charles Shannon. Henry Poor, Edward Laring, Joe Jones, and Second Lieutenant Willard Cummings were sent to

²⁵⁵ Samuel Smith to Commanding Officer Headquarters Detachment West African Service Command, Declassified Secret “Report of Activities,” December 27, 1944, P3-4, Smith, Samuel D. Box 2, Anne. S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University John Hay Library. The production of finished or permanent war art was bifurcated. It began with the “rapid accumulation of date, notes, photo-graphs, sketches and impressions of the scene of action” and it concluded with the embellishment or reproduction of these images in a hospitable location in the rear.

George Biddle to War Art Units Memorandum.

²⁵⁶ “Information for Artists who may be sent to Theaters of Operation by the Chief of Engineers,” 1.

²⁵⁷ Henry Varnum Poor, “An Artist Sees Alaska,” manuscript, Henry Varnum Poor Papers, 1873-2001, bulk 1904-1970. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. <https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/henry-varnum-poor-papers-13442/series-3>.

Alaska.²⁵⁸ Artists were not confined to their assigned location because it was expected that they would travel. Reeves Lewenthal wrote Aaron Bohrod, “It is quite conceivable that after being in the South Pacific for a month or so, you will feel that you have gathered everything you have to get, and will want to move on to India – to China – to Burma – to Berlin – etc. The important thing for you to remember is that your first assignment is not necessarily a permanent one.”²⁵⁹

The official artists were assigned various rankings depending on their military or civilian status. The Committee recommended the ranking of captain, but some artists were given the ranking of first or second lieutenant. A captain ranking was intended to afford official artists liberties to paint and navigate spaces that they would otherwise be unable to do with a lower ranking. Charles Shannon did not receive such a ranking, instead he was assigned Technical Sergeant. Discomfited, he requested a higher ranking. Lewenthal rejected his request, “The Technical Sergeancy [*sic*] he received is the highest possible rating that he can be given...he’s a Sergeant rather than a Private...The little class distinctions that might be made should not become minor when the benefits are evaluated.”²⁶⁰ Their civilian counterparts, were assigned “an accredited status” and provided a certificate.²⁶¹

Before civilian artists could finally begin their work as official artists they were required to partake in a ninety day training camp to prepare them for the rigors of war.²⁶² Artist, Edward Laning recounted his training in a letter to Biddle, “talks on army organization; close order drill,

²⁵⁸ E. Reybold to the Commanding General Army Services Forces, letter, March 22, 1943, P17, George Biddle Papers, Circa 1910-1970, Archives of American Art Smithsonian Institution, microfilm.

²⁵⁹ Reeves Lewenthal to Aaron Bohrod, letter, April 12 1943, WWII Art (notes, files, etc), Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University John Hay Library.

²⁶⁰ Reeves Lewenthal to Aaron Bohrod.

²⁶¹ “Information for Artists who may be sent to Theaters of Operation by the Chief of Engineers,” p2, P17, George Biddle Papers, Circa 1910-1970, Archives of American Art Smithsonian Institution, microfilm.

²⁶² Colonel Corps of Engineers Chief Civilian Personnel Branch W.E. Lorence to Howard Cook, letter, February 18, 1943, p1 WII ART, Shannon, Charles Box 3, Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University John Hay Library.

reconnaissance [*sic*], etc, some experience handling and dismantling a rifle and pistol and training in the use of a gas mask.”²⁶³ However, several artists did not receive such rigorous training. Aaron Bohrod reminisced about his three-day training period in his diary. “They reminded me of the three afternoons we had spent up at Berkeley playing soldier. We had learned a lot about a number of weapons - we had stripped and assembled four or five different guns but we hadn't fired a shell from any of them.”²⁶⁴ Henry Poor wrote to friends recounting his three day instructional training.²⁶⁵ Unlike the official artists in the Marines and Navy who had to serve with both pen and rifle, artists in the War Art Units were artists first. Training was not imperative as they were not required to participate in the hostilities or execute any official duties as captains in the Army.

“We were face to face with our assignment at last” wrote Poor.²⁶⁶ Artists began producing art once aboard the vessels. Edward Reep joined a War Art Unit in the fall of 1943. “I painted and sketched daily, without exception,” explained Reep, “making a valiant attempt to record all activities taking place above and below decks and the ominous rolling endless sea.”²⁶⁷ War Art Unit artists had the freedom to navigate battlegrounds, while, they lived, ate, traveled, and slept among the troops. They were, in a sense, war tourists moving from location to location, at will. This ability to live within such close proximity of the troops and the war, allowed the artists to experience American warfare much like a serviceman would. Thereby, making their art authentic, nuanced, and dramatic. Neither enlisted or wholly civilian these artists navigated a unique space as war artist-correspondents.

²⁶³ Edward Laning to George Biddle, letter, April 8 1943, P17, George Biddle Papers, Circa 1910-1970, Archives of American Art Smithsonian Institution, microfilm.

²⁶⁴ Aaron Bohrod Diary, May 20 1943, translated by Peter Harrington, Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University John Hay Library.

²⁶⁵ Henry Poor to Bessie and Annie, letter, April 9 1943, Henry Varnum Poor papers, 1873-2001, bulk 1904-1970, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, <https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/henry-varnum-poor-papers-13442/series-2/box-2-folder-13>.

²⁶⁶ Poor, “The Turner Passage,” 2.

²⁶⁷ Edward Reep, *A Combat Artist in World War II*, (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky), 19.

In the midst of hostilities, when soldiers pulled out their rifles to fight the artists pulled out their pens to sketch. Immersed in the armed conflict yet not able to fight challenged these artists. Ed Verdell, artist for *Stars and Stripes* newspaper, witnessed the battle for Monte Cassino, “I could turn around and walk away and they couldn’t and they knew it. That feeling will stay with me for the rest of my life.”²⁶⁸ The dichotomy of living the daily life of a soldier, but unable to engage in the hostilities like a soldier was jarring. After serving for several weeks in the South Pacific for the War Art Unit, Howard Cook returned home on medical discharge.²⁶⁹ Soldier-artist Manuel Bromberg was drafted into the Army in 1942 and reassigned to a War Art Unit in March of 1943. He explained that, “toward the end of the war, I really didn’t want to do any more pictures. I could go wherever I was assigned and know that I was going to be able to leave...whereas most [soldiers] couldn’t. So I got to a point where I just didn’t want to make any more art on the subject, it’s that kind of guilt. You’re using their misery or their death or this wreckage for subject matter for your art.”²⁷⁰ This guilt was tied to the inability to engage in the hostilities as he later reported, “I would rather be given a bayonet and a gun and given the best equipment to be an infantryman.”²⁷¹ Edward Reep, too, had an impassioned response to his wartime role. “I hated him, [Hitler] and it was my idea once I got into uniform to kill as many Nazis as possible. And when I finally had the opportunity to do it, I couldn’t kill them, I just captured them...” Later, when asked if he wanted to remain in the Army and offered a promotion, Reep refused exclaiming, ““God, no, I don’t want to be a part of this anymore.... I just want to go home”” He had his fill of war; it had consumed him.²⁷² This sentiment was not expressed by every artist, but it is critical to consider that as these

²⁶⁸ R. W. Stevenson, “Squinting, Drawing, and Never Forgetting,” *New York Times*, July 2004, CT9.

²⁶⁹ Kristin Fawcett, “Brush with Death: Artist Howard Cook Captured the terror and tedium of war in the Pacific Theater,” *World War II*, vol 34 (October 2019): 58.

²⁷⁰ Manuel Bromberg in Lanker and Newnham, *They Drew Fire*, 30.

²⁷¹ Manual Bromberg in Lanker and Newnham, 28.

²⁷² Lanker and Newnham, 19.

artists moved from one unit to the next and one battle front to the next, that behind the jubilation, prestige and honor of their assignment, resided a sense of emotional turmoil. Official artists who documented the realities of modern warfare endured trauma.

Censorship

Censorship was a part of the War Art Units. It came in the form of a directive by General Reybold. Reybold placed stringent stipulations on the circulation of the Army art: "Attention is invited to the fact that no written or pictorial matter may be released, or showings made, except by specific authority from the Public Relations Branch of the War Department as arranged by this office."²⁷³ This final order, reoriented the program from its liberal roots espoused by Biddle. Artists may have been awarded the opportunity to draw any aspect of war, but what the American public would see was regulated. As Biddle noted to McCloy, "the material can be either accepted or rejected by the Committee..."²⁷⁴ Oddly enough, Biddle often vacillated about censoring war art. He encouraged artists to paint freely to document the psychological implications of war and even chastised Army censorship explaining, "the people at home do not know what is happening to our soldiers. Whose fault is that? Largely, I think, the Army's policy of censorship." Later saying, "our public at home has no conception of the actualities of war and so it is more difficult for them to give real moral support to our soldiers."²⁷⁵ However, on several occasions, he strongly advocated for censorship of the art. In devising the program, Biddle recommended that works be sent to the WDAAC for review and more, strikingly, to the Government. "It is therefore suggested...that the Government during the war and for one year thereafter should exercise complete censorship and

²⁷³ "Organization of the War Department Art Advisory Committee," February 20, 1943, P17, George Biddle Papers, Circa 1910-1970, Archives of American Art Smithsonian Institution, microfilm.

²⁷⁴ "Objectives and Organisational Structure of War Department Art Advisory Committee" Memorandum

²⁷⁵ Biddle, *An Artist at War*, 123-124.

have exhibition or publication option of the artists' or writers' material..."²⁷⁶ Biddle's insistence to regulate the procurement of the art was likely a combination of blandishments to secure state-sponsorship and a safety net to ensure that all of the war art produced by the War Art Units were retained by the Army. Effectively, this prevented the official artists from hoarding their art or sending their best works home.

The Demise of the Units

Shortly after its formation, the War Art Units appeared to be a great success. By March 1943, eleven artists had been dispatched to the Southwest Pacific, South Pacific and Alaska. The WDAAC had received orders to expand the program to North Africa, Great Britain, Iceland, Caribbean, Panama, South Atlantic, Central Africa, Middle East, India, Burma and China.²⁷⁷ And, it was anticipated every Army unit would have assigned to it a qualified artist.²⁷⁸ A mere two months later, the figures nearly quadrupled. In total, forty artists received their assignments to produce art in active theaters of war and another twenty would remain on the home front.²⁷⁹ Even Biddle was scheduled to disembark for Africa to paint, temporarily, leaving behind his role as chair.²⁸⁰ Nonetheless, it was Biddle who turned the tides of the burgeoning War Art Units. It was his revealing statements in May to the North American Newspaper Alliance in Tunisia that landed the War Art Units in the *New York Times*. "The project...is one of the most liberal ever devised.

²⁷⁶ "Objectives and Organisational Structure of War Department Art Advisory Committee" Memorandum and George Biddle to John J. McCloy, "Subject: Method of Selection and Payment of War Artists and Writers," Memorandum, February 1, 1943, P17, George Biddle Papers, Circa 1910-1970, Archives of American Art Smithsonian Institution, microfilm.

²⁷⁷ Robert H. Burrage to War Department Art Advisory Committee, letter, "Expansion of Art Project to Other Theaters," March 29 1943, P17 George Biddle Papers, Circa 1910-1970, Archives of American Art Smithsonian Institution, microfilm.

²⁷⁸ George Biddle to Edward Rowan, letter, March 23, 1943, P17 George Biddle Papers, Circa 1910-1970, Archives of American Art Smithsonian Institution, microfilm.

²⁷⁹ Biddle, *Artist at War*, 42. "U.S. Artists Depicted Tunisian War Scenes: George Biddle, Attorney General's Brother, One of Group," *New York Times* via *North American Newspaper Alliance* June 1, 1943. Written May 17.

²⁸⁰ George Biddle, letter, April 16 1943, P17 George Biddle Papers, Circa 1910-1970, Archives of American Art Smithsonian Institution, microfilm.

The artist works entirely without supervision or direction. He paints by the environment. This will result, he believes, in a type of war record never before achieved.”²⁸¹ This information did not bode well with U.S. media outlets and correspondents who faced stringent limitations in the field.²⁸² The discriminatory advantage the War Art Units’ official artists had agitated adversaries, and reignited old memories of the recently liquidated FAP. Soon, the rapid growth of the War Art Units came to a screeching halt. Biddle’s words had captured the attention of Congress.

Once again, the necessity of art in American society found itself the topic of dissent in Congress. Congressman Absalom Willis Robertson from Virginia had appealed to the House of Representatives to review the Appropriations Bill and restore a previously denied budget request of \$125,000 to send artists to paint war scenes.²⁸³

“We can take photographs of what happens in Europe, but my point was it takes the vision and artistic skill of the artist to bring to us the inspiration which only an artist can put on canvas.... I want to see a picture to the memory of those who die in this war good enough for the Hall of Fame.... I think we would be penny-wise and pound foolish, as well as lack-ing due concern for some eight or ten million men who are going into the worst war of all time, not to...perpetuate on canvas as well as in movies and other photographs what they did to preserve our liberty.”²⁸⁴

However, such an Army art program was reminiscent of the WPA, a program Congress vigorously fought to dismantle years earlier. Raymond Springer from Indiana followed Robertson’s speech, suggesting they restrain from needless government spending—he had hoped to trim the fat from the bill. “We must win this war. We must win it both quickly and decisively. We must not yield

²⁸¹ “U.S. Artists Depicted Tunisian War Scenes: George Biddle, Attorney General’s Brother, One of Group,” *The New York Times* via *North American Newspaper Alliance*, June 1, 1943.

²⁸² Sydney Simon to Peter Harrington.

²⁸³ Congressional Record 89, 6174.

Historian Peter Harrington, contends, this request for \$125,000 brought unwelcomed attention to the program thereby contributing to its demise. The \$125,000 was intended to fund talented civilian artists. Had Biddle not required the talents of acclaimed American artists, the program would not have required additional funds. Nonetheless, it was the images produced by these civilian artists and their soldier counterparts that created some of the Units’ most eminent works. For more information see Peter Harrington’s, “The 1943 War Art Program.”

²⁸⁴ Congressional Record 89, 6153.

the life or lives of our men and boys beyond that which is absolutely necessary for our speedy victory in this conflict,” implored Springer, “every nonessential item of spending money must be entirely eliminated.”²⁸⁵ Robertson’s appeal seemingly fell upon deaf ears. The War Art Units’ value could not outweigh the behemoth that was the appropriations bill. Roosevelt signed the bill on July 1, 1943, thereby, dissolving the WDAAC and terminating the War Art Units.²⁸⁶ “The painters will now have to search for their own stars” mocked TIME magazine, “Congress has refused to put up the project’s funds.” Between February 1943 and August 1943, 42 artists (23 troops and 19 civilians) were dispatched to produce art.²⁸⁷ By the program’s demise, the War Art Units produced some 2,000 works of art.²⁸⁸ The official soldier-artists were reassigned to new units, their civilian counterparts were sent home, or their contracts assumed by *Life* and Abbott Laboratories.

Biddle received word of the War Art Units’ impending liquidation in Tunisia. Lewenthal, his replacement as chair, sent the grievous letter. “Dear George...In conference between the House and Senate, our project was killed! Not only were we eliminated, but the Section of Fine Arts was liquidated, Special Service in the Army involving painting was stopped, and the Graphics Division of the OWI was eliminated.”²⁸⁹ Biddle furiously scribbled in his journal words of dogged determination. “I do not think you can kill...the most intelligent and generous art program that any warring country ever organized for its artists.... Still one must make the best of it. Salvage something from the ruins of the Congressman’s spite. Begin building anew.”²⁹⁰ Congress may

²⁸⁵ Congressional record 89, 6174. “This bill is the largest appropriation measure that has ever been in the history of the world... a bill calling for the stupendous sum of \$59,037,599,673” The program was asking for an additional \$125,000.

²⁸⁶ Peter Harrington, “The 1943 War Art Program,” 14.

²⁸⁷ “Artists in Uniform,” TIME Magazine. 7/19/1943, Vol. 42 Issue 3, 45.

²⁸⁸ McNaughton, “The Army Art Program.” 321 and Reep, *A Combat Artist in World War II*, XIV.

²⁸⁹ Reeves Lewenthal to George Biddle, letter, July 16 1943 as reproduced in George Biddle, *An Artist at War*, 58.

²⁹⁰ Biddle, *Artist at War*, 58.

have put an end to the program, but Biddle's endeavor to send artists to war to paint the American war effort was not lost. He continued to campaign for its revival. He sought out advocates and soon found one in General Eisenhower, who had previously approved of the program.

In November of 1943, just months after the demise of the WDAAC and the War Art Units, Biddle sat down with General Eisenhower. As he sketched the General, he spoke of a War Art Unit that influenced soldier morale, captured the "essence and spirit of war" through the production of art, and shared of its recent liquidation.²⁹¹ Enthused, Eisenhower requested Biddle to follow-up with a memorandum. In December 1943, Biddle wrote Roosevelt, "I was able to persuade General Eisenhower to restore it in his theatre, after Congress, as you remember, did what they could to kill it."²⁹² That same month, artist Edward Reep received papers to report to General Eisenhower's Headquarters. Eisenhower met with Lieutenant Reep. "[W]e're reestablishing the art program with army artists only." He explained, "The civilians are going home. Now—there are five artists awaiting assignment, and there will be five divisions going into Italy. You will head up the group, pick a division, and assign each of the others to a division."²⁹³ The Army would again have an artist-correspondent program. Albeit, this subsequent program would not become as prodigious as its predecessor. Together, with *Life* magazine and Abbott Laboratories, official artists continued to paint in theaters of war.

By declining to support the War Art Units in July of 1943, Congress concluded the Units had no real military function. In truth, official Army artists did not participate in combat or any duties commiserate with their captain ranking. For Congress, the War Art Units were merely a program devised to document the war. "In concrete terms, what did it really mean, what business

²⁹¹ George Biddle to War Art Units Memorandum.

²⁹² George Biddle to Franklin D. Roosevelt, letter, December 21, 1943, P17, George Biddle Papers, Circa 1910-1970, Archives of American Art Smithsonian Institution, microfilm.

²⁹³ Reep, *A Combat Artist in World War II*, 35.

did artists have, here,” as artist Henry Poor opined, “what were they going to do with a war already covered as no war or as no event in human history, had ever been recorded before.”²⁹⁴ While Congress found the program unworthy of funding and, thereby having no intrinsic wartime value, every commanding general in each theater of war had approved of the initiative.²⁹⁵ General Eisenhower even reinstated the program months after its dissolution. Commanding generals and servicemen advocated for the program—for art—in military life. The War Art Units exemplify the role the interwar years played in the establishment of wartime initiatives, but they also exemplify how the military was largely in support of the arts. It is evident by reviewing wartime art initiatives such as training methods, camouflage programs and war artist correspondent programs that art was a valuable resource for the military. Nonetheless, its value was not limited to State-sponsored initiatives. For American soldier-artists spread across the globe, both abroad and at home, art also had a social value during the Second World War. It was a communicative device. Soldier-artists made a conscious decision during wartime to employ art in their letters to communicate with their loved ones. This is evinced through a close study of letter art.

²⁹⁴ Henry Varnum Poor, “The Turner Passage,” 2.

²⁹⁵ Congressional Record 89, 6174.

Chapter 5: Unofficial Art, “A Species of Rhetoric”²⁹⁶

“It was terrible to see them, to see what could happen in the war, especially what could happen to people mentally, physically and psychologically. I can not verbalize it, because it would devalue the experience.”²⁹⁷

- Jacob Lawrence

The American public was actively corresponding with troops. By the end of the June 1942 fiscal year, the postmaster general handled over thirty-billion pieces of mail. By 1944 it was nearly thirty-five billion and in 1945 that figure peaked at over thirty-seven billion.²⁹⁸ Art in these letters—unofficial art—enabled the public to witness the realities, complexities and psychological pains of war.²⁹⁹ This unofficial art created a unique dichotomy between what the American public learned about the war from art displayed in public spaces (i.e posters and ads), exhibitions and periodicals and the more personal musings found in letters. Currently, it is not possible to determine to what extent, if any, the interwar years spurred the production of unofficial art. It is clear, however, that through art in letters soldier-artists continued to execute state goals set by head of the FAP, Holger Cahill, during the interwar years. Art in letters continued to introduce new forms of American art to the public and informed the public about American military culture—two essential endeavors sought by Cahill.³⁰⁰

²⁹⁶ Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, (Picador, 2003), 6.

²⁹⁷ Jacob Lawrence, “Jacob Lawrence, War Series: Casualty: The Secretary of War Regrets, 1947,” Watch and Listen, Whitney Museum of American Art, <https://www.whitney.org/WatchAndListen/894>.

²⁹⁸ Between June of 1941 and June of 1942 the Post Office Department managed 30,117,633,460 pieces of mail. In the Subsequent fiscal years the Post Office Department handled 32, 818,261,854; 34,930,685,000; and finally 37, 912,066,799. Annual Report of the PostMaster General For the Fiscal Year Ended June 30 1942 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1942), 1. Annual Report of the PostMaster General For the Fiscal Year Ended June 30 1943 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1944), 1. HathiTrust, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015016416706>. Annual Report of the PostMaster General For the Fiscal Year Ended June 30 1946 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1947), 5. HathiTrust, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015016416706?urlappend=%3Bseq=675>.

²⁹⁹ Unofficial art was art produced by soldier-artists under their own fruition and in moments of repose.

³⁰⁰ Historian Contreras explained, “His social experiment—to unite artists and society through participation in the arts.” Contreras, *Tradition and Innovation in New Deal Art*, 18.

War letters uniquely circulated art among the American public and were not a private affair. They were often shared with family, friends, and even neighbors. The State was not involved in this wartime initiative, nonetheless, communities both large and small, urban and rural now interacted with art as Cahill had hoped. His long-held aspiration to bring art to the American public began to bear fruit. Through letters, the American public received and encountered all manner of art—cartoons, comic strips, landscapes, battle scenes, stick figures and even fine works of art. This art was produced under the soldiers' own fruition; it was personal. As such, the subject matter was not restricted by social norms or State involvement. Nearly any topic was open for artistic expression. What is seen in American letter art of the Second World War, was exactly what soldiers wanted their families, loved ones, and associates to see, feel and understand about war. As such, art in soldier-artists' letters revealed information about military life. During the interwar years, art was used by the State to cultivate a distinct American culture by illustrating aspects of American life. Art in soldier-artists' letters revealed information about military culture. Much like the interwar years, this art informed the public about American culture.

Drawings and sketches that informed the reader of servicemen's experiences were most common. Art was used in the place of words to express events, locations, sights, people or objects soldier-artists simply could not put into words. Sugarman explains, "...all I was trying to do was to capture moments so I can send these home to my bride so she could see get a sense of what these moments were like. What these kids look like, what these men officers looked like what Plymouth looked like. What a blackout looked like and felt like."³⁰¹ Soldier-artist Kent Day Coes expressed a similar sentiment regarding his own work, "Each sketch was made with the sole

³⁰¹ Tracy A. Sugarman, interview by Peter Bartis. *Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center*. Library of Congress. June 19 2003. 52:12 <https://memory.loc.gov>.

Figure 18 M.D. Elevitch, letter n.d.

native peoples, and wildlife.

No subject was impermissible in letter art. Elevitch's depiction of two soldiers relieving themselves by squatting back to back under the light of the moon, while indecorous, was an authentic experience of the arduous nature of living in a battleground.³⁰⁴ Captain O.C. McDavid made light of a shaving ritual in his 1944 letter entitled "Hair Styles for New 'Shellbacks.'" His drawing of sailors is of tremendous value as he documented a popular ritual in which sailors received botched haircuts in celebration of crossing the equator for the first time. Thereby transitioning from rookie to experienced sailors or *Shellbacks*. The drawing is grounded in

purpose of showing as accurately as possible with the means at hand the daily life that goes on even in the midst of battle."³⁰² For southern soldier-artist John Browning, the native peoples, plants and animals of the East Indies were all too new. He elected to draw what he saw in detail to curious family and friends. "You at home write and ask 'What are the people like, what is the country like?' It is sometimes difficult of these little known lands."³⁰³ He created a small snakeskin booklet made of sketches of native masks, pipes, cooking utensils, pottery, and combs,

³⁰² Kent Day Coes, document, February 1946, Coes, Kent Day WWII Sketches, 1944-1945, Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University John Hay Library.

³⁰³ Reproduction of sketchbook in John Gaith Browning, *An Artist at War: The Journal of John Gaitha Browning*, 178.

³⁰⁴ Figure 18: Letter reproduced in M.D. Elevitch, *Dog Tags Yapping: The World War II Letters of a Combat GI*, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press), 46. See Appendix, page 103, for full letter.

historical information as McDavid included the sailor's names and ranks thereby placing the men on the vessel.³⁰⁵ Servicemen who recorded their wartime experiences in art introduced the reader and, by extension, the American public to the realities of modern warfare.

Letter art was as much for the family as it was for the soldier. Many servicemen included art in their letters to impart messages

Figure 19 Captain O.C. McDavid to Jack

of good health and wellness in order to suppress familial concern. During the First World War, *in the pink* was a common expression among soldiers. Largely seen in war letters, *in the pink* was an ironic phrase which referenced the author's good spirits and the state of being in the "peak of perfection," when, in reality, the author was not.³⁰⁶ Images of cartoons, whimsical caricatures, beaming soldiers, and visual references to prewar lives took on the same meaning during the Second World War. These works of art present in letters brought comfort to recipients back home. "His sketches became his war story," noted daughter of soldier-artist and Army Air Corps Corporal, Eugene Woloskowski; "they were enjoyed by their entire family and neighborhood."³⁰⁷

³⁰⁵ Figure 19: Captain O.C. McDavid to Jack, letter, February/March 1944, Captain O.C. McDavid World War II Letters Collection, University of Houston Library. <https://digital.lib.uh.edu/collection/mcdav/item/489/show/486>. See appendix, page 104, for more information.

³⁰⁶ "'In the pink' was a phrase used mainly by British soldiers. Ostensibly it meant that the speaker was well and contented, but it was used ironically... It reflected both the stoicism of the average Tommy, a version of the stiff upper lip, with a simultaneous acknowledgement that the speaker was well aware that all was definitely not well... Simply to enunciate the phrase, or to print it, was to express the profound disgust which the average trench soldier felt about the war and his enmeshment in it." Graham Seal, *The Soldiers' Press Trench Journals in the First World War*. (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan 2013), 142.

³⁰⁷ Tessie Charbonneau as quoted in Terry Brown, "Duty Calls: World War II depicted by envelope art set [sic] to mom," October 27 2019, *Times Union* <https://www.timesunion.com/local/article/Duty-Calls-World-War-II-depicted-by-envelope-art-14566960.php#photo-18512991>.

Harry Chrisman relied on art to alleviate familial concern. Art in his letters “became a subtle way to reassure my mother and father, my wife and friends that I was doing well, was happy and—sometimes even happy with the Army Way and that I loved life. No matter that it often became a Liars Platform, for often it became that way.”³⁰⁸

A corporal in the U.S. Air Force in the 110th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron, Frederick Robinson, was injured during his service. In a 1944 letter to his love interest, Francis, Robinson drew

Figure 20 Fredrich Robinson, 1944

cartoons addressing his release from the infirmary. As a jovial soldier departs from the infirmary, he waves goodbye to a grinning caricature of a hot water bag. Robinson wrote, “Now that the x-rays of my back have been pondered over, caused and dis-cussed; the crutches (‘figuratively’) passed on to those more worthy of them; and the bandages loosed of their curative embrace-Ive returned again to the Squadron and the Photo Section.”³⁰⁹ Unsure of Robinson’s emotional wellbeing, Francis only had to see the drawing to know her bow was elated and reinvigorated to return to his squadron and duties—in actuality, he had hoped to return home.³¹⁰ Even those who could not or chose not to draw, relied on their soldier comrades to draw them and commemorate

³⁰⁸ Sheryl Jones, *This is the Army, Mr. Jones!: The WWII V-Mail Cartoons of Harry E. Chrisman*, volume one, (Ashland: Hellgate Press, 2013), XIV.

³⁰⁹ Frederick Robinson to Frances E. Mote, letter, October 14, 1944, Second World War Correspondence Center (2015-115-w-r) for American War Letters, Chapman University, CA. (hereafter Robinson Correspondence) See Appendix, page 101, for the letter. Figure 20: Robinson Correspondence.

³¹⁰ Every morning, in the infirmary, he would bark like a dog at the doctor in hopes of getting sent home. One day, in response the doctor “kneeled on my bed and barked back at me. He winked at me and said, ‘I’d like to get out too, kid, but I don’t know how.’” Shortly thereafter he was released. Robinson Correspondence.

their service. Wounded soldiers patiently waited for their turn to be sketched, “they pose eagerly, for they know the portraits will be sent home—[they] will be something to reassure their worried families and friends,” wrote *Overseas Woman’s Magazine*.³¹¹

In spite of the fictitious nature of these *in the pink* letters, soldier-artists still conveyed common soldier experiences. Soldier-artists sought to share their experiences with their loved ones, and they often did it through humor and joy. In a 1944 letter to Francis Mote, Frederick

Figure 21 Fredrich Robinson, 1944

Robinson depicted a cheerful soldier chuckling as he reclines in a foxhole reading whilst under a barrage.³¹² Cheerful he likely was not, but strafing, reading and foxholes were experienced by many foot soldiers in combat.

Private Leckie recalled strafing, “a Zero [aircraft] took to playing with us, strafing us. Chuckler became so angry he dragged his gun out of the pit and set it up to return the fire... he could not bear huddling in the pit while the Jap made sport of us.”³¹³ Viewers should not disregard the specious nature of these illustrations. However, they must look beyond the thin veneer soldiers were forced to hide behind for their loved ones. Soldier artist, Stuart Hodge clarifies, “I am glad you took time to examine it all in detail because it really is loaded with records on the spot by one soldier during 2 ½ years overseas.

³¹¹ “Portrait of a Soldier,” August/September 1945 *Overseas Woman Magazine* Mimi Lesser Veterans History Project.

<http://memory.loc.gov/diglib/vhp/story/loc.natlib.afc2001001.11904/enlarge?ID=pm1064001&page=1&size=1024>.

³¹² Figure 21: Robinson Correspondence. See Appendix, page 101, for the letter.

³¹³ Robert Leckie, *Helmet for my Pillow*, 115.

Possibly it will help confirm some data of that area years from now.”³¹⁴ As soldiers drew, sketched, and painted to communicate with their families they were also documenting the American war effort.

While art was used to settle the minds of loved ones, soldiers oftentimes depicted the vexing experiences of war. Sketches and drawings illustrating grievances with service, fatigue, pain, rain, and hunger were prominent. Artist E.D. Elevitch was a private in the Army; he drew fatigued soldiers weighed down by their packs in his letters home. So, too, did Staff Sergeant Robert K. Bindig.³¹⁵ Sumner Grant was a private in the Army, in letters home he often drew himself in subordination to his superiors; in several of his drawings he is seen being reprimanded by his superiors.³¹⁶ The daily pains

Figure 22 Staff Sergeant Robert K. Bindig, Envelope

Figure 23 Sumner Grant, Envelope

of war were made visible by soldier-artists as they drew imagery such as soldiers flattened by their packs, gasping for air as they trudge along under the weight of their gear, or digging foxholes.

³¹⁴ G. Stuart Hodge to Peter Harrington, letter, June 14 1994, Hodge, G Stuart Box 1, Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University John Hayes Library. Figure 23: Sumner Grant, Envelope, December 1944, *Veterans History Project*, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress. <https://memory.loc.gov/diglib/vhpstories/loc.natlib.afc2001001.20970/enlarge?ID=pm0147001&page=1>.

³¹⁵ Figure 22: Robert K. Bindig, envelope, October 11 1944, *Veterans History Project*, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress. <http://memory.loc.gov/diglib/vhp-stories/loc.natlib.afc2001001.32475/enlarge?ID=pm0006001&page=1>.

³¹⁶ Sumner Grant, Envelope, December 1944.

Not every work of letter art was elaborate as both professional and amateur artists were drawing. Instead, many soldier-artists employed rudimentary techniques to notify their loved ones of their good health. Soldier-artists John Cullen Murphy and

Figure 24 Tracey Sugarman's 1941 letter to his wife, greets the reader with a grinning soldier exclaiming, "Today is a Happy day!" It is soon replaced four pages later by a doleful caricature stating, "still a leryly [*sic* lovely] day-but much much later."

Tracey Sugarman used simple cartoons to remind their families of their wellbeing. Murphy wrote his mother nearly every day of his service in the Army, on occasion, hugging the margin of a letter would be a cartoon brimming ear to ear. Sugarman was in the Navy; he drew simple stick-like figures and faces in letters to his wife.³¹⁷ Such works appear rudimentary when juxtaposed with a finished work of art. Murphy and Sugarman's figures exemplify the range of skill presented in letter art. Lack of skill was not a determinant for the inclusion or exclusion of art in letters. Art was a wartime rhetorical necessity for servicemen. They leaned on it for support.

For many servicemen art was the only way they could communicate or clearly express themselves. Soldier-artist, Woloskowski drew elaborate war scenes to his Ukrainian mother back home in Cohoes, New York. Eugene's mother was unable to read English; she became acquainted with

Figure 25 Eugene Woloskowski Envelope

³¹⁷ Tracey Sugarman to Mrs. Tracey A Sugarman, letter, March 28, 1944 Veteran's History Project, <https://memory.loc.gov/diglib/vhp/story/loc.natlib.afc2001001.05440/pageturner?ID=pm0085001>. Picture: Tracey Sugarman to Mrs. Tracey A Sugarman. See Appendix, page 102, for more information Figure 25: Eugene Woloskowski to M Woloskowski, Envelope, as cited in Terry Brown, "Duty Calls: World War II depicted by envelope art set [*sic*] to mom,"

his service from her son's art. "Looking at the illustrations, you can tell when Eugene was happy and optimistic and conversely when he was scared and depressed... she could see in his drawings how he was getting on, coping with the daily privations of service," explained his daughter, Tesse Carbonneau.³¹⁸ For his family, this art imbued the psychological implications of war. Much like Woloskowski, Chrisman, used art to articulate his emotional state. "I could cry out or whimper, or sob, or brag, or dissent with Army policies, or show their value to the soldier," wrote Chrisman; "it did give the lowly GI, the infantry soldier that I had become, a way to express himself with art, something that I could not feel at ease with in writing letters, letters that were censored by our own immediate officers."³¹⁹ Soldier-artist's reliance on art can also be seen in their entreaties to family members for supplies and willingness to draw on nearly any surface.

Soldier-artists frequently wrote home pleading for additional materials. Servicemen on the frontlines were not afforded the same opportunities to draw nor did they have access to the same materials as official artists. For many, the arrival of mail not only meant word from home, but also art supplies. Running low on paints, John Farris regularly asked his family to send supplies, "It would be swell if you could send my art equipment. Send my box of water colors and the tubes of water color also."³²⁰ Even nagging his younger brother, "George, try and get the art stuff I asked for as soon as you can..."³²¹ Soldier-artist Kent Day Coes relied on miscellaneous papers to draw on until an entreaty to his wife resulted in art supplies. "A request in a letter to my wife soon brought a sketch book of good rag drawing paper, with which she kept me supplied for the duration

³¹⁸ Tessie Charbonneau in *Times Union*, "Terry Brown, Duty Calls: World War II depicted by envelope art set [sic] to mom," *Times Union*, October 27 2019, <https://www.timesunion.com/local/article/Duty-Calls-World-War-II-depicted-by-envelope-art-14566960.php#photo-18512991>.

³¹⁹ Sheryl Jones, *This is the Army, Mr. Jones!*, XIV.

³²⁰ Joseph Farris May 1943 letter as reproduced in Joseph Farris, *A Soldier's Sketchbook: from the Front Lines of World War II*, (National Geographic Society, 2011), 31.

³²¹ January 1943 letter as reproduced in Farris, *A Soldier's Sketchbook*, 62.

of the war.”³²² Soldier-artists used varied surfaces to produce art on. Captain Taggart oversaw the distribution of works of Army art, some of which were “done on practically every conceivable surface, from wrapping paper to plyboard; even acetate. An entire group of water colors from the Pacific was accepted for the permanent collection, despite the fact that it was executed on panels of corrugated pasteboard from packing boxes.”³²³ Soldier-artists Charles Salerno and Coes were forced to rely on materials found on location. Salerno used pieces of cardboard while Coes used old Army manuals. Keith Crown procured art supplies from what he could find “amongst the battle rubble,” and Don Sudlow drew on Algerian currency.³²⁴ The existence of art on various surfaces infers soldiers’ deep inclination to draw—to produce art that articulated their experiences of war and documented their service. More importantly, the survival and preservation of these pictorial documents suggest this art was not insignificant, but relics of soldier-artists’ wartime past.

Notably, art in letters was also employed to circumvent the challenges posed by letter writing. Art, in many cases, evaded censorship. Soldiers could visually impart their wartime experiences without censors. A woman’s thumb bandaged, as depicted in Robinson’s letter, was a quip at the M1 Garand’s mechanism and a powerplant represented his hometown.³²⁵ Chrisman used code as author Sheryl Jones recounts. “Harry began using codes, as many men did, to indicate where he was and what was going on. Maui V-mails, for example, used a palm tree. On Christmas

³²² Kent day Coes to Peter Harrington, letter, November 11, 1997, Coes, Kent Day Box 1, Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University John Hay Library.

³²³ Captain Edwin L.M. Taggart, “Art for the Asking,” 14.

³²⁴ “And I never saw anything resembling art material excepting what I brought with me, and some Japanese brushes, ink sticks and the rectangular dishes for mixing some ink that I found amongst the battle rubble after battle.” Keith Crown to Peter Harrington, letter, Crown, Keith Box 1, Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University John Hay Library.

“The World War II Cartoons of Don Sudlow,” 32nd Station Hospital: History of the U.S. Army’s 32nd Station Hospital During World War II, <https://32ndstationhospital.com/2018/12/10/the-world-war-ii-cartoons-of-don-sudlow/> See Appendix, page 105, for more information.

³²⁵ Robinson Correspondence.

Island he always used a crab, a gooney bird or phrases...”³²⁶ By the Fall of 1943 the Armed Forces became privy to the hidden messages in letter art. Having caught on to these pictorial ciphers, Christmas cards were banned in October 1943. “Three different official V-mail Christmas cards...are being distributed...No others will be allowed... Thousands [of letters] piled up on the censors’ desks, and those unhappy men were con-fronted with the tremendous job of scanning all the designs for hidden messages and codes.”³²⁷ The War Department and Postmaster General were overwhelmed by the amount of mail that competed with war supplies for space on transports. In response, V-mail, or Victory Mail, was an 8x11 inch piece of stationary distributed as an alternative to traditional letters.³²⁸ Nevertheless, due to its size soldiers had difficulty writing a detailed letter. Handwriting had to be pristine and just the right size otherwise it would not appear legible after the replication process. Servicemen also had to write succinctly or risk writing more than one letter. In which case, they never arrived in the proper sequence. What’s more, photographs oftentimes could not be sent.³²⁹ The limitations posed by V-mail led many servicemen to use art to communicate. They could articulate their thoughts without the concern of fine penmanship or inclusion of several letters.

³²⁶ Sheryl Jones, *This is the Army, Mr. Jones!: The WWII V-Mail Cartoons of Harry E. Chrisman*, (Ashland: Hellgate Press, 2013), 10.

³²⁷ “V-Mail Designs For Christmas Cards Adopted: Ten to be Provided Each Soldier; First Holiday Parcels Arrive,” *Stars and Stripes* vol. 3 No. 299 October 19 1943
http://www.servicenewspapers.amdigital.co.uk.libproxy.chapman.edu/Documents/Images/BL_BLL01013918574_S TARSANDSTRIPES_19431019/0.

³²⁸ “V-mail Limitations,” Smithsonian, National Postal Museum, accessed September 2018, <https://postalmuseum.si.edu/es/exhibitions/victory-mail-using-v-mail/v-mail%27s-limitations> AND “How Did V-mail stack up,” Smithsonian, National Postal Museum, accessed September 2018, <https://postalmuseum.si.edu/es/exhibitions/victory-mail-introducing-v-mail/how-did-v-mail-stack-up>. V-mail reduced transportation costs and time because V-mail was microfilmed and then shipped.

³²⁹ For a brief time, photographs could not be sent through V-mail. “V-mail Limitations” AND Sheryl Jones, *This is the Army, Mr. Jones!*, XIV.

A close examination of art in letters, has affirmed that art was a linguistic device employed by soldier-artists to communicate with loved ones.³³⁰ In a time of war, servicemen relied on art as a “species of rhetoric.”³³¹ Text was not the singular linguistic device servicemen elected to use to articulate sentiments and their wartime experiences. When words did not suffice, servicemen relied on art to communicate. “I didn’t use to talk about it, but I could draw it,” recalled soldier-artist Ben Steele.³³² George Biddle was not wrong to discern the capacity for art to inform on the psyche of servicemen as seen through these unofficial works of art. As soldier-artists confessed, they used art to inform their families about war. And, as Woloskowski’s daughter so vividly explained, by just looking at her father’s letter art her family could comprehend how he felt. Letter art is more than a historical record; it’s a testimony produced in close proximity both temporally and spatially to the illustrated events.

³³⁰ Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, 6.

³³¹ Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, 6.

³³² Benjamin Charles Steele, interview by Keifer Clark and Elizabeth Austein, Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Benjamin Charles Steele Collection, Library of Congress, September 23, 2011, <http://memory.loc.gov/diglib/vhp/story/loc.natlib.afc2001001.84561/sr0001001.stream>.

Conclusion: Myth and Memory

This research challenges the current assumption that all state-sponsored American war art of the Second World War is propaganda. It asserts that the war art programs that were conceived during the interwar years were used to mobilize the state for war, execute military objectives and to procure historical records and not solely as a grand propaganda scheme. The myth that state-sponsored American war art of the Second World War is predominately propaganda has been reinforced through “silences” created by the Armed Forces, the artists themselves and scholarly discourse. Manuals, guides, training procedures and pamphlets produced by the Armed Forces often failed to mention the acquisition of American artists for the execution of specific wartime objectives. Many wartime roles necessitated the skill and expertise of artists, but the actual term “artist” is absent from many military training texts. This omission from textual sources contributed to the exclusion of artists from the larger narrative of the United States’ mobilization for war. From the outset, artists were an invisible entity. More striking were the silences created by American official and unofficial artists themselves. Following the end of the Second World War, artists, both official and unofficial, returned home to their prewar lives. They locked away their art as they rejoined American society. For many, their war art had no place in their post-war lives as they worked to regain a sense of normalcy. For others, they assumed their war art was of little consequence to anyone. It was years, if not decades before artist Ashley Bryan mentioned his war art as vast as it was. Even still, it was not until his old age that he spoke at length about his war art, later publishing a book in 2019. Together, the United States Armed Forces and American artists would help erase the narrative of American artists’ wartime accomplishments.

Historian Michelle Trouillet contends, “something is always left out while something else is recorded.”³³³ As historians narrowed their focus on state-sponsored art and American war art of the Second World War, they neglected to discuss art produced for practical purposes and its role in American militarization. The limited focus in scholarly discourse also erroneously severed the relationship between the interwar years and art of the Second World War. The symbiotic relationship between the State and the art community that led to art initiatives during the war was not recognized. By narrowing their scope, unfortunately, many historians, limited the breadth of American war art of the Second World War as well as its impact on American warfare and society.

In 1943 George Biddle claimed that art was a historical source. He opined that an Army artist-correspondent program could supply information for “historians of the future.”³³⁴ Official art was produced, according to the head of the War Department Art Advisory Committee, to inform on the psychological ramifications of war and for historians. After the Second World War, Marian R. McNaughton, curator for The Army Art Collection located in Washington, maintained that “the U.S. Army Art Collection is a rich and often neglected source of material for research and study in military history....modern narrative military paintings provide valuable insights into the life, thoughts and feelings of the American soldier in his own time.”³³⁵ American war art of the Second World War is a reservoir of information on the soldier experience and of the events that took place during the war. Even so, it has yet to be extensively reviewed by historians. This art, both official and unofficial, has historical value.

³³³ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 49.

³³⁴ George Biddle to John J. McCloy Memorandum.

³³⁵ Jessup and Coakly, *A Guide to the Study and Use of Military History*, (US Government Printing Office: Washington 1979), 319.

American war art of the Second World War is a viable historical source. It was produced in close proximity, both temporally and spatially to the events it portrays suggesting a level of precision and authenticity that rivals that of memoirs and oral testimonies.³³⁶ Even more so, official and unofficial artists' unique perspectives as recorders of the war have been marginalized by textual sources, oral testimonies, and even photographs. Historian Claudia Siebrecht adds, "Eye witness testimony of modern war has taken a wide variety of forms but tends to be associated with personal narrative accounts produced by soldiers, whose first-hand descriptions in letters and diaries have been considered the most authentic reflection of what war, and especially combat, was like, not just in the view of contemporaries but also historians."³³⁷ Nonetheless, photography has truly been a marginalizing force due to preconceived notions.

Photography, the alluring alternative to this art, is construed as an unadulterated objective record due to its technological nature. While the art may be caught in the crosshairs "between documentary and aesthetic value,"³³⁸ photographs have eluded notions of subjectivity due to a presumed distance between the camera and the photographer. Philosopher and author Susan Sontag calls this a "sleight of hand" that "allows photographs to be both objective record and personal testimony."³³⁹ Art critic and author John Berger contends, "all images are man-made."³⁴⁰ He continues stating, "every image embodies a way of seeing. Even a photograph. For photographs are not, as is often assumed, a mechanical record. Every time we look at a

³³⁶ American war art of the Second World War was oftentimes produced on the spot—as the event was taking place—or shortly thereafter. The official or unofficial artist, therefore, is more likely to remember the event better than servicemen who wrote about the event or recounted the event years later.

³³⁷ Claudia Siebrecht, *The Aesthetics of Loss: German Women's Art of the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 5.

³³⁸ Stephanie Benzaquen, "Mediums of Resistance: When Art Historians Look at the Art of Ghettos and Camps," in *Jüdischer Widerstand in Europa (1933-1945): Formen und Facetten* ed. Julius H. shoepe, Dieter Bingen, and Gideon Botsch (Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2016), 258.

³³⁹ Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Picador, 2003), 26.

³⁴⁰ Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, 9.

photograph, we are aware, however slightly, of the photographer selecting that sight from an infinity of other sights.”³⁴¹ The act of selecting a specific sight or focus for a photograph is, in itself, subjective. However instantaneous it may be, photographs, much like art, are the result of a point of view captured and reflected on paper. Sontag clarifies, “[a photographic image]...cannot be simply a transparency of something that happened. It is always the image that someone chose; to photograph is to frame, and to frame is to exclude.”³⁴² To take a photograph of one sight is to exclude the “infinity of other sights.”³⁴³ Photographs are the result of a selected point of view and, therefore, cannot maintain objectivity or absolute transparency. Photography is an interpretation of a past event as opposed to a window or reflection of one.

To aggrandize historical photographs and marginalize the art is an antiquated approach. Berger’s and Sontag’s exposition regarding the objectivity of photographs is not to discredit such images. However, it is the inescapable notion that the photograph is entirely objective that has pushed the art to the periphery as a historical source and record. In light of Berger’s and Sontag’s arguments, historians must reassess the value and authority of art as a reputable and reliable historical source. Both photographs and art can inform historical narratives.

This thesis helps reshape current perceptions of the Roosevelt administration’s impact on the American art community. From a state of peace to the maelstrom of war, art remained a near permanent fixture in Roosevelt’s administration. The New Deal policies and programs established under Roosevelt’s presidency exemplified his pursuit to support and advance American art in the United States. Roosevelt understood the value of art as a fundamental component of American culture and democracy. Under Roosevelt’s administration, art had been

³⁴¹ Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, 10.

³⁴² Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, 46.

³⁴³ Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, 10.

used and reconfigured like never before in American history. Roosevelt's close ties to the art world suggests that state-sponsored art was not merely a revolutionary State initiative instituted during the New Deal Era, but a defining component of his presidency. Making Roosevelt the artist-president.

In summation, the interwar years had a quintessential impact on the production of official and unofficial American war art. It was the infrastructure and relationships formed over nearly a decade that paved the way for American artists to play an active role during the Second World War. This origin story of American war art of the Second World War introduces a new frontier for historians to re-evaluate the study of the Second World War. This war was one of the first instances in American history in which artists played a pivotal role. Art was weaved into the very fabric of American militarization and military life. Without American artists and their art, the United States would not have been able to prepare its troops and personnel for war with the speed and efficiency that it did. This summation is lofty, but as one Navy training manual noted in 1944, "Today's recruits were yesterday's civilians."³⁴⁴ The millions of servicemen and personnel that formed the backbone of the United States Armed Forces required training and the quickest way to do so was through visual aids. More astounding, however, was that so many servicemen embraced art as they sought out new ways to execute military objectives, communicate with their loved ones and commemorate their service. American servicemen and soldier-artists employed art as a language in a time of war. Their art offers great insight into historical events and experiences as they operated in a space that few could.

³⁴⁴ Bureau of Naval Personnel Training, *Guide for Training Recruits*, (U.S. Government Printing office, 1944), 4. SMU Libraries, <http://digitalcollections.smu.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/hgp/id/492/rec/13>.

APPENDICES

George Biddle to War Art Units, memorandum, April 15, 1943, Box WWII ART (notes, files, etc), Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University John Hay Library.

WAR DEPARTMENT
UNITED STATES ENGINEER OFFICE
NEW YORK DISTRICT
ROOM 601, 125 WALL ST.
NEW YORK, N. Y.

REFER TO FILE NO.

March 17, 1943.

Pvt. Emanuel Bromberg,
S.C. 586, Flight 250,
Keesler Field, Miss.

Dear Pvt. Bromberg:

You have been recommended by the War Department Art Advisory Board as one of a small group of outstanding American artists to go to an active war theater, and there to obtain a graphic record of the war. The theaters of war to which you will eventually be assigned will include

1. The Carribean and South America
2. Southwest Africa (Dakar and Akkra)
3. England and Iceland
4. Northeast Africa and the Near East
5. India, Burma and China

The specific front to which you will be assigned will depend as much as is possible on your own choice. As soon as we have received word from you stating your interest in such an eventual assignment, our Committee will recommend your transfer to the Engineers and eventual work under their direction.

In making their selections, the Committee generally recognized the importance of graphic reportage. But it was looking for something more. As Henry Poor, one of our Committee, phrased it:

"The United States must take the lead and find some way of getting from our finest artists and writers the things they alone can give -- a deeply, passionately felt, but profoundly reflective interpretation of the spirit and essence of war."

John Steinbeck, another of our Committee, wrote:

"A total war would require the use not only of all the material resources of the nation but also the spiritual and psychological participation of the whole people. And the only psychic communication we have is through the arts."

In this war there will be a greater amount than ever before of written,

War Department Art Advisory Committee to Private Emanuel Bromberg, letter, March 17 1943, Manuel Bromberg Collection, The George Marshall Foundation, <https://www.marshallfoundation.org/library/to-private-bromberg-from-war-department-march-17-1943/>.

Letter to Pvt. Bromberg (Cont'd.)

photographic, and pictorial data. Our Committee expects you always to be more than a news gatherer. The importance of what you have to say for the historian of the future will be the impact of the war on you, as an artist, a human being. One has in mind Goya's Horrors of War; Grosco's drawings of the Mexican Revolution; the lithographs of Steinlen, Forain, and Naudin, now showing at 451 Madison Avenue; the sketches and battle scenes of Gericault, Baron Gros and Delacroix; or in another medium the imperishable war writings of Tolstoi, Eric Remarque, Hemingway and T. E. Lawrence.

Our choice was difficult. Many of our finest artists were physically or emotionally unsuited for this work. Others we felt would not particularly respond to an active theater of war. A few, whom we selected, felt themselves unable to accept. Our choice, by army directive, was limited to a few. We realize that we are only tapping a slender freshet from the full reservoir of American Art. Our hope is that our results will warrant a more generous use of our Country's willing talent.

By army directive, some of the artists selected had a civilian status. Others chosen are either Privates or commissioned officers in the armed forces. This arrangement must of necessity result in certain inequalities of status, financial pay, and so forth. Our Committee and the Chief of Engineers will do all that they can to make up in your case for this difference. It probably will mean a raise to the status of a Technical Sergeant.

FOR THE COMMITTEE

George Biddle, Chairman
David Finley, Director, National Gallery
Edward B. Rowan, Director, Section of Fine Arts
Reeves Lewenthal, Director, Asso. American Artists
John Steinbeck, Writer

War Department Art Advisory Committee to Private Emanuel Bromberg (continued), letter, March 17 1943, Manuel Bromberg Collection, The George Marshall Foundation, <https://www.marshallfoundation.org/library/to-private-bromberg-from-war-department-march-17-1943/>.

Frederick Robinson to Frances, letter, October 14, 1944, The Center for American War Letters
Folder 21, Box 3.

U. S. S.—L. S. T. 491

WARDROOM

Sunday - March 28th, 1944

TODAY IS
A HAPPY ONE!

Well's being!

Feeling just wonderful tonight - 6:55 - the happy conclusion is a real nice Sat. night and a gorgeous Sunday. Have been back all afternoon on the beach - just soaking up the Sun - giggling at Mark's "How Yorkers - and falling" laying as we stretched out and watched the gulls circling silently way up high. Strictly an afternoon to invite your soul, darling! My poor soul! It suffered through services aboard ship today and was left cold - frigid. Somehow organized religion as such has lost its charm for me - and my soul was stuck for about an hour and a half. The rest of the afternoon brought salvation though - and once again partner we have one (!) well conditioned, oiled up soul! Last night Mark Telman came out for dinner aboard and

Tracey A Sugarman, letter, March 28, 1944 Veteran's History Project.

Letter reproduced in M.D. Elevitch, *Dog Tags Yapping: The World War II Letters of a Combat GI*, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press), 46.

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General

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