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# Wartime Art: A Study of Political Propaganda and Individual Expression in American Commercial and Combat Art during World War II

Jennifer M. Wilcott  
jmwilcott@yahoo.com

## **Advisor**

Nancy Weekly, M.A., Lecturer of History and Museum Studies

## **First Reader**

Cynthia A. Conides, Ph.D., Associate Professor of History and Museum Studies

## **Department Chair**

Andrew D. Nicholls, Ph.D., Chair and Professor of History

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## **ABSTRACT OF THESIS**

### **Wartime Art: A Study of Political Propaganda and Individual Expression in American Commercial and Combat Art during World War II**

This thesis will explore the mediums and functions of American art during World War II. The purpose of exploring art during World War II is not simply to provide an overview of the multiple media of art produced during the war, but to investigate the role that commercial artwork and combat soldiers' artwork had on the lasting interpretation of the war. Themes addressed are propaganda, the role of posters, comic books, and cartoons along with their influence on American society at the time. Further analysis examines the role of three artists: Howard Brodie, Edward Reep, and Robert N. Blair. Their motivations and contributions to the documentation of World War II will be discussed.

State University of New York  
College at Buffalo  
Department of History & Social Studies Education

Wartime Art: A Study of Political Propaganda and Individual Expression in American  
Commercial and Combat Art during World War II

A Thesis in History  
with a Concentration in Museum Studies

by

Jennifer Wilcott

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Approved by:

Nancy Weekly, M.A.  
Lecturer of History and Museum Studies  
Head of Collections & Charles Cary Rumsey Curator, Burchfield Penney Art Center  
Thesis Advisor

Andrew Nicholls, Ph.D.  
Chair and Professor of History and Social Studies Education

Kevin Railey, Ph.D.  
Associate Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

**CONTENTS**

|                                      |    |
|--------------------------------------|----|
| Illustrations                        | iv |
| Introduction                         | 1  |
| Chapter 1 What is War Art?           |    |
| Literature Review                    | 5  |
| What is War Art?                     | 16 |
| Artists' Impact                      | 18 |
| United States during World War II    | 21 |
| Chapter 2 Propaganda and War         |    |
| Propaganda                           | 26 |
| World War I                          | 30 |
| World War II                         | 32 |
| Propaganda Posters                   | 38 |
| Artists and the Advertising Industry | 44 |
| Cartoons and Comics                  | 47 |
| Chapter 3 Wartime Artists' Influence |    |
| Wartime Artists' Influence           | 59 |
| Branches of the Military             | 60 |
| Howard Brodie (1915-2010)            | 64 |
| Edward Reep (b.1918)                 | 67 |
| Robert N. Blair (1912-2003)          | 72 |
| Conclusion                           | 77 |
| Bibliography                         | 80 |
| Appendix A                           | 85 |
| Appendix B                           | 86 |

**ILLUSTRATIONS**

## Figures

- |  |    |
|--|----|
| 1. Howard Brodie, <i>Execution</i>   | 87 |
| 2. Howard Brodie, <i>Compassion</i>  | 88 |
| 3. Edward Reep, <i>Bombing of Abbey of Monte Cassino</i>                           | 89 |
| 4. Edward Reep, <i>The Dugout</i>  | 90 |
| 5. Robert N. Blair, <i>Battle of the Bulge</i>                                     | 91 |
| 6. Robert N. Blair, <i>Infantry/Battered Bulge Village</i>                         | 92 |
| 7. Robert N. Blair, <i>Berlin Ruin—Downtown Section with Women Stacking Rubble</i> | 93 |

## INTRODUCTION

Art provides a great service to society. When observing art, one might initially be attracted to the work's beauty. However, not all art is classically and intrinsically beautiful. Due to the variety of subject matter and materials as well as the artist's intention, some genres of art exist primarily to convey messages and provoke deeper meanings. This is particularly true when it comes to the representation of war through art. During wartime, the chaotic nature of events often leaves little time for incorporating the aesthetic details of classic art. Wartime art, consciously or subconsciously, emerges as a more immediate depiction of war documenting the harsh conditions and struggles of the conflict.

Yet, wartime art is not completely stripped of artistic beauty; instead it engenders a different sensibility: beauty in the human condition, beauty in human compassion, and a continued sense of hope despite tragedy. World War II is a good representation of this particular genre of art. Lanker and Newnham have observed that "no single event in the history of mankind was more documented through art while it happened than World War II."<sup>1</sup> Throughout World War II commercial art, in addition to radio reports and newsreels, remained a constant informational resource to the public by informing the home front of the evolving events through posters, newspaper cartoons, and comic books. Overseas combat art allowed the public to gain a glimpse into the action of the war through sketches and paintings. Thus, it is through these mediums that this discussion will examine the uses of commercial and combat art within the United States

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<sup>1</sup> Brian Lanker and Nicole Newnham, *They Drew Fire: Combat Artists of World War II* (New York: TV Books, 2000), vii.

during World War II. Specifically, the main intent is to analyze the motivations behind a selection of sketches, paintings, posters, advertising, and comics and their impact on society.

This examination will be divided into three sections; the first being the pertinent background of war art. Before a discussion of the impact and importance of art during World War II can begin, it is essential to explore its definition and importance. Through Laura Brandon's book *Art and War*, the subject of war art will be analyzed. Brandon's book delineates what war art entails, how it affects society, and where its place and significance fall within history. The purpose of Brandon's work is to explore the relationship between the words "war" and "art" in an attempt to better understand how war has inspired "permanent and impermanent"<sup>2</sup> artwork ranging from propaganda to historical records. Additionally, within this section a brief discussion will outline the role of art and the use of propaganda before the outbreak of World War II to facilitate an understanding of the roles and motivations art played during wartime.

The second section will address how commercial art was consumed in propaganda. Propaganda was used to mobilize and persuade the views of American citizens on the home front as well as American soldiers abroad. Work by artists and designers was used for propaganda purposes in order to engender a sense of fear and motivate responsibility towards the war effort. Wartime posters, advertisements, sketches, cartoons, and comic books will be analyzed to explore the positive and negative motivations behind propaganda. While the positive benefits of patriotism and mobilization were stressed within society, the concept of manipulation was often

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<sup>2</sup> Laura Brandon, *Art and War* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 3.

overshadowed. Propaganda created a culture of manipulation through the promotion of stereotypes and racism by preying upon the fears of American citizens.

The final section of this discussion will examine the combat art produced by American artists during World War II. Despite the hardships of war, artists remained dedicated to their craft continuing to “paint, photograph, build, sketch, and sculpt in the shadow of worldwide destruction.”<sup>3</sup> This discussion will take a look at how the personal experiences of combat artists—specifically Howard Brodie, Edward Reep, and Robert N. Blair—contributed to the representation of the realities of World War II. Brodie and Reep were commissioned artists and thus had specific assignments that sent them overseas to cover several theatres of the war. However, Blair remained one of the numerous “unofficial” soldier-artists that worked free of deadlines, assignments, and governmental censorship. These artists simply fought for their country and recorded their experiences along the way. It can be argued that these men presented a more genuine, emotional, spontaneous, and unbiased perspective on the realities of war.

My desire to discuss soldier artists’ work, specifically Robert N. Blair, resulted from my internship at the Burchfield Penney Art Center at SUNY Buffalo State. During my internship I was able to gain access to the archives of Blair and able to have a firsthand look at Blair’s paintings, sketches, and catalogues. It was through this interaction with the archives which perked my interest into researching wartime combat artists.

Thus, this thesis will show how art was continuously transforming to meet the needs of wartime society. It is not simply the study of World War II art that is the focus

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<sup>3</sup> Barbara McCloskey, *Artists of World War II*, (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2005), xv.



of this analysis; but more specifically, the motivations behind the artwork and its impact on society. This examination of combat artists can provide an opportunity to rediscover the role artists played during the war and how their artwork can provide a more personal and emotional perspective on war. This emotional visual representation can hopefully ignite passion in a new audience to the study combat artists and the genre of wartime art.

## CHAPTER I: What is War Art?

### Literature Review

As a field of study, war art is by nature “immense and worldwide”<sup>4</sup> encompassing multiple genres. Even as the term “war art” becomes more commonplace, it continues to remain expansive. War art is not simply sketches or paintings, but also includes landscapes, portraiture, still life, propaganda, as well as memorials and monuments. In simplistic terms, war art means “art shaped by war,”<sup>5</sup> where any piece of art, regardless of medium, that presents a war theme is indisputably considered war art.<sup>6</sup>

There have been numerous secondary sources published on the topic of war art. In *Art and War*, Laura Brandon discusses the difficulties of defining the genre of war art. According to Brandon, war art has been present in our culture since the beginning of civilization and continues to remain relevant to the present day. War encourages permanent and temporary art, which can range from propaganda, documentation of the events, to memorials or remembrance. This art can provide society with a collective memory as well as an appreciation of war and the individuals involved. One strength is Brandon’s chronological study of the development of war art beginning with ancient art, canon art, art during the world war wars, and discussion of conflicts since 1945, such as Vietnam and wars in the Middle East. As an historian and curator at the Canadian War Museum, Brandon was able to access original artists’ works from museum collections to

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<sup>4</sup> Brandon, 2.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 5.

enhance her discussion. The strength of this discussion was Brandon's overview of the subject of war art and insights into art historical debates.<sup>7</sup>

Barbara McCloskey also provided a detailed survey on World War II artists, including contextual discussions on artists from China, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Japan, the Soviet Union, Spain, and the United States. Each chapter detailed an overview of the country's art during the war and included detailed biographies of several artists. Using a variety of primary and secondary sources, McCloskey set out to demonstrate the blurred boundaries of art and propaganda during the war. The strength of McCloskey's work was this focus on select artists because she provided insight into not only famous artists from each country, but some lesser known artists. This presentation of a variety of artists and countries allowed the reader to compare and contrast artists' experiences of war as well as their responses to the war, whether through support, protest, criticism, or propaganda.<sup>8</sup>

Mary Panzer's book *Mathew Brady and the Image of History* presented a well-researched argument on the relationship of art and war. Panzer detailed Brady's life and career beginning in 1844 with his emergence as a daguerreotypist in New York, then to his creation of a national gallery, his participation during the Civil War, and finally to his bankruptcy in 1972. Panzer highlighted a wealth of primary sources, specifically Brady's photographs and plates, straight from the archives of The National Portrait Gallery, the Library of Congress, and the National Archives. Included are portraits of numerous famous and political figures of the time and photographs from the Civil War, specifically portraits of soldiers, battlefields, and military camps. Within this

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> McCloskey.

comprehensive study of Brady's life Panzer set out to discover Brady's relationship to photography and history. Discussed were the compositional differences between Brady's photographs and those of his assistants, mainly Alexander Gardner. In fact, many of Brady's most famous Civil War photographs were taken by Gardner. Gardner focused his work on the disturbing realities of war, mainly the battlefields scattered with wounded and deceased men. Brady, in contrast, focused his efforts more on the portraiture of individuals, groups, and regiments within the camps, aboard ships, and on the battlefield.<sup>9</sup>

When it comes to the influence of art during the duration of World War II, one of the important discussions centered on the motivations behind the art itself. Art took on many forms including various mediums of propaganda, especially in the United States. One of the many authors to discuss the role and motivations of propaganda was Anthony Rhodes, in his book *Propaganda: The Art of Persuasion: World War II*. Rhodes presented a comprehensive analysis of the major Allied and Axis Powers during World War II and their use of propaganda as "psychological warfare." Through his exploration of government archives and private collections, Rhodes presented examples of the many mediums of propaganda that both sides used throughout the war. Rhodes detailed the use of propaganda in the form of posters, leaflets, pamphlets, newspapers, stamps, comic strips, radio, films, and many more.<sup>10</sup>

Further, in the pamphlet "What is Propaganda?" Ralph Casey provided historical debates and discussions on the difficulties of defining propaganda. Casey explored

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<sup>9</sup> Mary Panzer, *Mathew Brady and the Image of History* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997).

<sup>10</sup> Anthony Rhodes, *Propaganda: The Art of Persuasion: World War II* (Secaucus, New Jersey: The Wellfleet Press, 1987).

multiple forms of propaganda through a comparison of democratic and enemy propaganda. The most beneficial aspect of the pamphlet was Casey's continued discussion on how to define propaganda and the scholarly debates on the uses of propaganda. Another highlight of the pamphlet was its suggestions for further research. Casey provided a brief twelve citation bibliography that readers can refer to for additional research materials on the role of propaganda during wartime.<sup>11</sup>

The use of posters during World War II played an important role in shaping public opinion and promoting a sense of unity within the nation. Propaganda posters were an effective political tool in times of war because their messages were directed in a straightforward and persuasive manner. On this topic there are numerous books and articles written replicating the posters and discussing their themes and importance as tools for propaganda. Denis Judd's book *Posters of World War Two* was a compilation of war posters from the participants of World War II. Judd focused on studying World War II through posters in order to understand the social and political atmosphere of the time period. The book was comprised of more than two hundred war posters from numerous nations including the United States, Germany, Britain, France, Italy, Soviet Union, and more. The major highlight of the book was the presentation of individual posters because most of the posters had not been previously published since the war itself. Judd provided as much information as possible on each poster, specifically for the reader's own interpretation and further study. The introduction provided details on how the major powers began their recruiting and poster campaigns. It was followed by a plethora of examples from the various nations. The posters are organized among

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<sup>11</sup> Ralph D. Casey, *G.I. Roundtable: What is Propaganda?* (Washington D.C.: War Department, 1944).

categories including recruitment, morale boosting, patriotic, production, national security and safety, war finance, nationalist propaganda, as well as ridiculing and vilifying the enemy.<sup>12</sup>

In his book *Selling the War: Art and Propaganda in World War II*, Zbynek Zeman also discussed the use of posters as a mode of persuasion throughout World War II. Zeman provided a brief overview of the use of posters as propaganda during World War I in order to compare and contrast the uses and relevance of posters in World War II. Within the introduction, Zeman focused his discussion heavily on German examples, specifically Hitler and the Nazis; but also included examples of posters from the Soviet Union, Britain, France, and the United States. The book was divided into five chapters which discussed different poster themes; patriotism, national security, war production, international alliances, and the enemy. The main highlight of the book was Zeman's inclusion of numerous color posters as examples to his text. One of the downfalls of the book was the heavy reliance on German propaganda posters. Although the book provided a good analysis of German propaganda, the heavy focus on Germany provided a narrow view of the persuasive nature of wartime propaganda posters. A wider focus on the other Allied and Axis powers could have produced a more balanced discussion on the influence of wartime posters during World War II.<sup>13</sup>

While there are many resources on posters' role throughout World War II, there is limited discussion on the motivations of the artists behind the posters. In the book *Design for Victory: World War II Posters on the American Home Front*, William Bird, Jr.

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<sup>12</sup> Denis Judd, *Posters of World War Two* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1973).

<sup>13</sup> Zbynek Zeman, *Selling the War: Art and Propaganda in World War II* (New York: Exter Books, 1982).

and Harry R. Rubenstein not only discussed the important role of the posters on the American home front, but also focused attention on the motivations behind the artwork. Bird and Rubenstein provided over 150 color reproductions of American posters from the collections of the National Museum of American History. Discussion was provided on the advertising industry to understand how many posters were conceived, produced, and received by the public. The authors explored the expectations and motivations of poster producers, the most effective methods of communicating war aims, the role of posters in wartime production, as well as the impact of the posters' imagery.<sup>14</sup>

Another form of art that was used as propaganda throughout World War II was comic books. There are many resources that discuss the role of comic books as tools of propaganda. One resource that dealt with the history of comic books was Bradford W. Wright's book, *Comic Book Nation: The Transformation of Youth Culture in America*. Wright provided a comprehensive study of the history of comics from the origins of the field, in the early 1930s, through the twentieth century. Wright provided a well-researched and detailed discussion of comic books during World War II that helped recognize the role of comic books throughout the war as well as the motivations of the artists and writers behind the comics. One highlight of Wright's book was his general overview of the comic book industry.<sup>15</sup>

In the journal article, *Written in Red, White, and Blue: A Comparison of Comic Book Propaganda from World War II and September 11*, Cord Scott compared the use of propaganda in comic books during and after both historical events. Through his

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<sup>14</sup> William Bird and Harry R. Rubenstein, *Design for Victory: World War II Posters on the American Home Front* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1998).

<sup>15</sup> Bradford W. Wright, *Comic Book Nation: The Transformation of Youth Culture in America* (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).

discussion of World War II, Scott investigated how comic book illustrators replaced the original comic characters with the real villains of the war. One of the many themes Cord discussed was the intentions and motivations of the comic book publishers to improve their image to the public by focusing their audience on the younger, more naïve generation. Both Scott and Wright provided well-researched discussions of the motivations of comic book artists and writers during World War II. This discussion allowed for an intellectual comprehension of the manipulative power of propaganda during the war.<sup>16</sup> In his book *Dr. Seuss Goes to War: The World War II Editorial Cartoons of Theodor Seuss Geisel* author Richard Minear provided a look at Geisel's work throughout World War II. One of the main themes Minear discussed was Geisel's use of stereotypes towards the Axis powers within his work. Theodor Geisel, more popularly known as Dr. Seuss, commonly stereotyped and mocked Americans' enemies in his work.<sup>17</sup> These numerous resources depicting the role of comic books throughout World War II provide insight not only into the comic themes themselves, but also the motivations of the artists, writers, and publishers. Scott, Wright, and Minear provide the reader not only with detailed discussions of comic books during the war, but also provide extensive bibliographies to promote further research.

Cartoons, like comic books, were another form of commercial art that existed during the war. Jordan Braverman's *To Hasten the Homecoming: How Americans Fought World War II Through the Media* provided an insight into the United States' media participation throughout the war. Braverman's goal was to demonstrate that

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<sup>16</sup> Cord Scott, "Written in Red, White, and Blue: A Comparison of Comic Book Propaganda from World War II and September 11," *Journal of Popular Culture* 40, no. 2 (1997)

<sup>17</sup> Richard Minear, *Dr. Seuss Goes to War: The World War II Editorial Cartoons of Theodor Seuss Geisel* (New York: The New Press, 1999)



Americans soldier were not the only individuals fighting the war. Citizens on the home front were also fighting through media outlets, especially through movies, theatre, radio, advertising, comic strips, cartoons, posters, and literature. By examining American wartime culture, Braverman argued that media was used as a propaganda tool by government agencies. Through this discussion, Braverman provided specific examples of comic book and cartoon characters that can be used as a starting point for further research.<sup>18</sup>

More specific research focused on the role of Walt Disney characters throughout the war. Marcia Blitz's *Donald Duck* presented a biography of the popular Disney character. Accompanied by black, white, and color illustrations of cartoon scenes and posters Blitz recounted the development of Donald Duck's career from his creation in 1934, through his World War II effort, to his television and film career. The highlight of the book for this thesis was Blitz's chapter on Donald's war career. Along with background on the numerous roles Disney played throughout the war—from educational films and insignias to cartoons—Blitz highlighted the plethora of cartons, posters, and films in which Donald Duck starred.<sup>19</sup>

When World War II art is examined, one area of study that has often been neglected and overlooked is original combat art. Unlike commercial art, which was extremely accessible to the public through propaganda posters, comic books, and cartoons, combat artwork was been out of the public eye since the time of the war. Often original artwork has remained hidden from the public in museum collections,

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<sup>18</sup> Jordan Braverman, *To Hasten the Homecoming: How Americans Fought World War II Through the Media* (Lanham, Maryland: Madison Books, 1996)

<sup>19</sup> Marcia Blitz, "Donald in the War," *Donald Duck* (New York: Harmony Books, 1979)

archives, or artists' personal collections. Many combat artists' experiences have never been told and their artwork is largely forgotten. This neglected area of wartime art is what makes researching combat soldiers' artwork so fascinating. It provides the reader and viewer a new perspective into World War II. Original artwork provides a visual presentation of the action of the war, as well as an emotional representation of the individual soldiers.

In *World War II in American Art*, Robert Henkes takes a first-hand look into the role artists played during the war. Arranged by subject matter, the book included paintings of acts of war, the wounded, the survivors, the prisoners, the ruins, the dead, the workers, the home front, religion, recreation, and victory. Henkes used more than 100 pieces of artwork to explore these numerous aspects of the war. Although, not delving too deeply into the individual experiences of the artists themselves and how their experiences inspired their work, Henkes provides a good examination of the plethora of wartime art themes and sparks interest for further exploration.<sup>20</sup>

The public television documentary "They Drew Fire: Combat Artists of World War II," directed by Brian Lanker and narrated by Jason Robards, looked into the experiences and artwork of seven commissioned artists: Franklin Boggs, Howard Brodie, Manuel Bromberg, William Draper, Richard Gibney, Robert Greenhalgh, and Edward Reep. The historical footage of the war gives contextual background in black and white that further enhances the importance and impact of the original artwork. This well-researched documentary, book, and PBS website focused on showing the world unseen war artists using mainly primary resources, specifically interviews and the use of

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<sup>20</sup> Robert Henkes, *World War II in American Art* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Company, Inc. Publishers, 2001).

original artwork. The artwork varied by style and subject matter and was enhanced by verbal descriptions of the surviving artists about their experiences. The companion book written by Brian Lanker and Nicole Newnham examined several art programs sponsored by the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and private companies like Abbott Laboratories and *Life Magazine*. The PBS web site provided additional resources for research including an extensive digital art gallery accompanied by a short biography for each artist. A resource page provided additional contextual information on combat art programs, information on the filmmakers, and archives of specific museums where these specific works are stored. This resource page is a huge highlight of the companion website because it provides the viewer with an avenue for further research.<sup>21</sup>

Although there are several sources that focus on primary examples of combat artists' work, the genre of original artwork is still relatively overlooked. In recent years there has been a moderate resurgence in the interest of the place of original combat artwork in the historical interpretation of World War II. Thus, it is the intention of this thesis to expand on the existing primary and secondary research on the role of commercial and combat art during World War II while providing new arguments and primary sources to the discussion on three combat artists: Howard Brodie, Edward Reep, and Robert N. Blair. More contemporary publications and museum exhibitions have brought combat artists back into the public light. Edward Reep published his autobiography *A Combat Artist in World War II* in 1987 discussing his experiences as an artist during the Italian campaign and presenting his paintings and sketches as visual

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<sup>21</sup> Lanker and Newnham.

examples.<sup>22</sup> Howard Brodie also published an autobiography in 1996 entitled *Drawing Fire: A Combat Artist at Work* that documented his experiences and presented artwork from his time during World War II, as well as his experiences in Korea, Indochina, and Vietnam.<sup>23</sup>

Locally in Western New York, Robert N. Blair has been featured in many exhibitions. The (then-named) Burchfield Art Center at the State University College, Buffalo, New York presented *Robert N. Blair: A Soldier's Portfolio* in 1985. It was the first exhibition to focus exclusively on his World War II works. Subsequently the artist donated 163 artworks and archival materials from this series to the museum.<sup>24</sup> In 2000 the Burchfield-Penney Art Center and Art Dialogue Gallery co-presented *Robert N. Blair & the Watercolor Tradition in Western New York*. The focus of the exhibition was presenting works from Blair's entire career, including many that had not been publicly shown before. A smaller version of this exhibition travelled to the F. Donald Kenney museum in the Regina A. Quick Center for the Arts at St. Bonaventure University.<sup>25</sup> More recently the Hoyt Institute of Fine Arts in New Castle, Pennsylvania featured an exhibition entitled *Robert Blair: Paintings and Drawings*, which ran from August 2 to September 24, 2011. The exhibition displayed 52 rarely seen paintings and drawings consisting of two themes: Blair's experiences as a paratrooper, especially during the

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<sup>22</sup> Edward Reep, *A Combat Artist in World War II* (Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1987),

<sup>23</sup> Howard Brodie, *Drawing Fire: A Combat Artists at Work* (Palo Alto: Portal Press, 1996).

<sup>24</sup> Nancy Weekly, "A Soldier's Portfolio," *Robert N. Blair: A Soldier's Portfolio*, (Buffalo, New York: Burchfield Art Center, 1985).

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

Battle of the Bulge, as well as his post-war life painting in Vermont and other locations across the country.<sup>26</sup>

### **What is War Art?**

Although war art is an account of events during conflict, it is also an expression of culture through the combination of artistic elements and documentary functions. Art within society can provide not only a visual representation of war, but also reflect the “sociocultural attitudes to conflict”<sup>27</sup> by provoking an emotional impression upon society as well as artists and designers themselves. In many understandings, especially Francis Haskell’s, an image or artwork can have an impact on history through a collective sharing of the “non-verbal” experiences and comprehension of past cultures.<sup>28</sup> The appreciation of wartime art allows the viewer not simply to read about the past, but to “imagine” the past visually in hopes of better comprehending the emotion of war.<sup>29</sup>

The series “The Disasters of War” by Francisco de Goya’s offers a unique eye-witness view into the importance of the uses of art during war. Goya’s series presents a glimpse into Spain’s war of independence from France between 1808 and 1814. Goya produced a series of etched plates depicting the ravages of combat, the consequences of the war on soldiers and civilians, and the effects famine on Madrid (1811-1812).<sup>30</sup> The plates allowed viewers to witness the atrocities of Napoleon’s invasion and

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<sup>26</sup> “Robert Blair,” The Hoyt Institute of Fine Arts, <http://hoystartcenter.org/exhibits/past/current/> (accessed June 14, 2012).

<sup>27</sup> Brandon, 5.

<sup>28</sup> Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2001), 13.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>30</sup> Paul Bouvier, “Yo lo vi’. Goya witnessing the disasters of war: an appeal to the sentiment of humanity,” *International Review of the Red Cross*, 93, no. 884 (December 2011): 1107-1108.

occupation of Spain as Goya illustrated not only violence, but the resulting dehumanization of the war's victims.

Mathew Brady also provided viewers with a firsthand glimpse into the reality of the Civil War. The works of Brady and his associates made the Civil War the first armed conflict to be extensively documented through the use of photography. Brady's images served as the first emotional and personal interactions with the realities of war that the American public experienced. Along with his assistants, Brady photographed the everyday soldiers; the dead in Fredericksburg, Virginia; the makeshift gravestones at Antietam, Maryland; as well as Generals Ulysses S. Grant and Robert E. Lee.<sup>31</sup> Along with Alexander Gardner, Brady helped liberate the camera from the studio. Using portable darkroom carts, Brady and his associates were able to bring cameras and supplies onto the battlefields to document the dead and dying soldiers.<sup>32</sup> These examples exemplify the impact visual representations of violence can have on society. Thus, it is through the representations of the home front, battlefields, soldiers, and civilians that provide individuals with the opportunity to create their own objective and personal interpretation of the realities of war.<sup>33</sup> Up to this time, war had been romanticized, so these images were shocking reflections of "the reality of war."

However, Brady's photographs were not always accurate representations of the events of the war. Often Brady would manipulate his subjects, by staging scenes and often repositioning the dead to create more powerful messages. Thus, it is Brady's manipulation that "continues to influence our perception and still shapes the way in

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<sup>31</sup> Cheryl Sloan Wray, "Photographer Mathew Brady fulfilled his stated objective 'to preserve the faces of historic men,'" *America's Civil War*, 10, issue 4 (September 1997): 20.

<sup>32</sup> Kevin Morrow, "The Birth of Photojournalism," *Civil War Times*, 46, issue 7 (September 2007): 40-43.

<sup>33</sup> Brandon, 5-6.

which we see his era, and the story of the nation.”<sup>34</sup> Based on his photographs, history has been shaped around images and facts that were not completely genuine. Brady also occupies a controversial place in photographic history because he did not make all his own pictures. Assistants were responsible for most of Brady’s images during the Civil War. During the war Alexander Gardner photographed battlefields and the aftermath of battles, specifically the dead—but Brady took credit. Brady’s photographs in contrast focused more on the portraiture of individual soldiers, officers, and groups at camp, on ships, and on the battlefield.<sup>35</sup> Thus, when exploring the images of the Civil War accredited to Brady, one must have an objective and educated understanding of the context of the photographs. Despite the controversy that surrounds the authorship and manipulation of Brady’s photographs, their significance to the study of wartime art cannot be denied. Brady’s images of the war were among American citizens’ first understanding of the reality of the war. Americans also were able to gain an emotional knowledge of what Civil War soldiers were truly experiencing.

### **Artists’ Impact**

The art of World War II provided a “universal purpose...to create a historical record of the war”<sup>36</sup> through the eyes and personal experiences of the artists. This interpretation of the role of artists was illuminated by Dr. Noble Frankland, as Director of the Imperial War Museum, London in 1964. According to Frankland:

The resulting artistic record naturally tends to conflict in exactitude of detail, and sometimes abruptly so, with the photographic record...it may, because of this

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<sup>34</sup> Panzer, 7.

<sup>35</sup> Panzer, 18.

<sup>36</sup> Ken McCormick and Hamilton Darby-Perry, eds., *Images of War: The Artist’s Vision of World War II* (New York: Orion Books, 1990), ix.

tendency to conflict with the image of war in the eyes of the beholder. If this is so, it is because these works of art have no stereotype. On the contrary, they enshrine the individual imaginative responses of many artists whose differing impressions were inspired by their having witnessed, and in many cases experienced, the incidents they depicted.<sup>37</sup>

Artwork during this time can be categorized as commercial art and combat art.

Commercial art consisting of propaganda posters, comic books, cartoons, and many more was widespread and its access immediate throughout society. Controlled by the U.S. Government and the military, commercial art presented purposefully crafted messages and information to the public. On the other hand, combat art offered original artworks from artists and soldiers overseas. Combat art was not widely accessible and by nature more spontaneous because most paintings and sketches were produced in the moment. Whether the art was commissioned or not, combat art provided the viewer with an emotional glimpse into the artist's experiences. Since most original combat artwork was either archived in museums or remained with the artist its presence was not readily available to the public and its impact not immediate on society.

The most realistic and genuine artwork depicted the battlefield, active soldiers, and the horrors of war. These artists, whether they were "soldier-artists" or strictly commissioned artists, provided eye-witnessed accounts and were often motivated to paint and sketch as an emotional response to the traumatic events of war.<sup>38</sup> These first-hand experiences of artists lend validity to their work. The intention of artists was to represent battlefield accounts and the daily lives of soldiers while bringing an emotional interpretation not only to the war, but to those fighting.

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., ix.

<sup>38</sup> Burke, 14.



Despite, the amount of photographs and news coverage, artists were able to take documentation of the war a step further. Artists were able to capture events and scenes, especially at night, which cameras were incapable of obtaining. Unlike photographers, graphic artists, and painters were able to censor certain details regarding national security that the government did not want publicized.<sup>39</sup> Through their work, a sense of solace and a form of tribute to the soldiers and civilians who perished were achieved.<sup>40</sup>

While firsthand accounts of war can provide a unique historical perspective of events, they still are a subjective form of interpretation. Not all artwork is a true representation of the past. Artists might exaggerate events as they are happening to provide emotional or traumatic responses. When using art as historical evidence, some media are more reliable than others. Some of the most trustworthy historical testimonies are sketches. Typically created from daily life and “freed from the constraints of the ‘grand style,’”<sup>41</sup> most war sketches were created along the fronts and produced on the spot. Created in the midst of the action, sketches were more likely to be free of manipulated memories and others’ input, especially when created after the events in an artist’s studio.<sup>42</sup>

In some cases tension arises between the cohesion of factual representation of events and an artist’s interpretation. Although all art is subjective, many artists and designers during World War II intentionally produced misleading images. Occasionally

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<sup>39</sup> Lanker and Newnham, x.

<sup>40</sup> McCormick and Darby-Perry, x.

<sup>41</sup> Burke, 15-16.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 16.

latent motivations behind their work existed, particularly when their art was used as a tool for propaganda messages throughout the nation and abroad.<sup>43</sup>

## **United States during World War II**

In the years prior to World War II, the Great Depression created an economic downturn within many countries, including the United States. In attempts to counteract the economic hardships, many governments began to look at art as a “means for generating a spirit of national renewal.”<sup>44</sup> The world looked to artists to reestablish national cultures hoping their work would help “mobilize the people and foster patriotic loyalty.”<sup>45</sup> Countries involved in World War II began creating national art programs dedicated to depicting the war through art and distributing artists’ work to the general public.<sup>46</sup>

The onset of the Great Depression shifted the art world within the United States. Artists began exploring how their work could reach and engage a broader audience while simultaneously tackling the social issues of the time. Artistic movements such as social realism and regionalism emerged in the 1930s and expanded with the New Deal programs established by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1933. Federal art programs under the Works Progress Administration (WPA) were established, including the Public Works of Art Project, the Federal Arts Project, and the Farm Security Administration. Under these programs more than 40,000 artists benefited from federally

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<sup>43</sup> “The Study of Art in War Time,” *College Art Journal* 2, no. 1 (November 1942): 14.

<sup>44</sup> McCloskey, xvi.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, xvii.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

sponsored employment.<sup>47</sup> However, by the late 1930s disputes over the role of government sponsorship of the arts intensified because many believed art was being manipulated as a tool for propaganda to oppose American values and freedom of expression.<sup>48</sup> With this shift in attitude the Works Progress Administration's support for art programs was ultimately lost. Attitudes further shifted calling for the revival of federal art programs with the entrance into the war.<sup>49</sup>

With the assault on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, the United States began preparing for war. On December 10, 1941 the Artists for Victory Association was created by over thirty national organizations on behalf of more than 10,000 artists. Artists voluntarily pledged their work for patriotic exhibitions and also accepted federal commissions to establish campaigns to help build the war effort. Agencies like the Office of Emergency Management, the Office of Facts and Figures, and the Office of Government Reports became responsible for handling war information. Among the three agencies, lack of coordination emerged and President Roosevelt was forced to consolidate the agencies on June 13, 1942 under the title of Office of War Information which sought artists to create advertising war posters that could be mass-distributed.

Additional federal programs, including the War Department's Art Advisory Committee chaired by George Biddle, were established by the spring of 1942. George Biddle's main intention was to create an enduring legacy of art celebrating the United States' participation in World War II. The committee commissioned "23 artists in uniform and 19 civilians"<sup>50</sup> to record the experiences on the fronts. Artists were

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 173-174.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 176.

deployed within military units along the fronts and placed under the supervision of the United States Chief of Engineers. Despite the efforts of George Biddle to present the experience of soldiers, Congress disapproved of the committee and officially disbanded it in 1943 as a waste of war expenses; however, despite its end, many civilian artists sought new commissions elsewhere.<sup>51</sup>

Many civilian artists found their new assignments with Daniel Longwell, executive editor of *Life Magazine*. Prior to the war, *Life Magazine's* signature feature was its use of photography in journalism; however, as the war continued the use of artists permeated the magazine. In 1941, Longwell began commissioning artists to present aspects of war that photography could not satisfy.<sup>52</sup> Artists were commissioned to paint wartime activities on and off the battlefield, including factories, medical activities during training exercises, daily duties on military bases, action along the front lines, and activities inside American hospitals.<sup>53</sup> Commissioned artists, not enlisted men and women, were designated war correspondents and carried no weapons, only art supplies.

Throughout the country *Life Magazine* participated in numerous museum exhibitions proudly displaying their artist's work. One travelling exhibition, *War Art* opened at the National Gallery of Art in Washington D.C. on June 20, 1943 and ran until August 1, 1943. The exhibit presented 122 paintings, watercolors, prints, and drawings from battle zones created by nine commissioned *Life Magazine* artists. The exhibit then travelled to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, and continued on a national

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Lanker and Newnham, 115.

<sup>53</sup> National Constitution Center, "The U.S. Army Art Program," National Constitution Center, [www.constitutioncenter.org](http://www.constitutioncenter.org) (accessed April 13, 2011).

tour of major museums, including museums in Chicago, Toledo, and 11 other cities.<sup>54</sup> Its popularity and success were echoed by a *New York Times* review that stated the exhibition was an “intimate, personal, penetratingly perceptive touch, indeed, that is equipped to furnish a chapter that would have been missing.”<sup>55</sup> This review expressed how firsthand artwork helped to bring a unique perspective to the documentation of the war that photography could not capture adequately.

*Life Magazine's* collections compiled of commissioned artists work produced some of America's most enduring images from World War II. Some of the most well-known commissioned works included; Edna Reindel's 1943 series *Women at War* focusing on women welders and riveters at the Lockheed bomber plant in California,<sup>56</sup> Floyd Davis's paintings *Bermuda at War* (September 21, 1942), Tom Lea's documentation of the Battle of the Coral Sea, paintings *Fighter in the Sky* from the invasion of Peleliu, *The Thousand Yard Stare* portraying a shell-shocked Marine, and *The Price* capturing a wounded soldier on the brink of death.<sup>57</sup> On December 7, 1960 the *Life Magazine* collection, consisting of more than one thousand graphic paintings, watercolors, and sketches, was officially presented to the Department of Defense and today remains as part of the U.S. Army Center of Military History archive in Washington D.C.<sup>58</sup>

Private corporations also contributed to the war effort. In the United States privately owned Abbott Laboratories commissioned twelve artists, among them Joseph

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<sup>54</sup> National Gallery of Art, “Past Exhibitions,” <http://www.nga.gov/past/data/exh22.shtm> (accessed January 10, 2013).

<sup>55</sup> Lanker and Newnham, 118.

<sup>56</sup> National Museum of Women in the Arts, “Guide to the Edna Reindel Papers 1926-1979,” [http://www.nmwa.org/sites/default/files/shared/4.3.4.2\\_edna\\_reindel\\_papers\\_1926-1979.pdf](http://www.nmwa.org/sites/default/files/shared/4.3.4.2_edna_reindel_papers_1926-1979.pdf) (accessed February 2, 2013).

<sup>57</sup> Lanker and Newnham, 117.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.

Hirsch, Lawrence Ball Smith, and John Steuart Curry to document and sketch the experiences of the Army medical staff. With support from both federal agencies and private corporations, soldiers and the action of the war were depicted on a regular basis.

Despite Congress's hesitation, artists were given increased access to the fronts when Congress authorized, in June 1944, soldier artists to travel and create artwork in the European and Pacific theaters. Congress stipulated that the creation of art could not interfere with military duties. With the support of the United States Army, artists documented the experiences of American soldiers in North Africa, Sicily, and Northern Europe. Further, the Pacific unit documented campaigns in the Philippines, China, Japan, and Korea.<sup>59</sup> With the increased support from Congress, the artists' depictions of World War II along the home front and abroad became more acceptable and appreciated.

No dialogue about World War II war art can be complete without discussion of propaganda. Art took on many forms of propaganda including posters, leaflets, pamphlets, newspapers, stamps, comic strips, radio, and films. Although war propaganda was expansive, the next section will concentrate on only a small selection of commercial art to study the motivations and functions of propaganda, war posters, comics, and cartoons.

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<sup>59</sup> National Constitution Center, "The U.S. Army Art Program," National Constitution Center, [http://constitutioncenter.org/media/files/AS\\_arthistory.pdf](http://constitutioncenter.org/media/files/AS_arthistory.pdf) (accessed April 13, 2011).

## CHAPTER 2: Propaganda and War

### Propaganda

Before looking at the role of commercial art throughout World War II, propaganda needs to be defined. Paradoxically, in 1944 Ralph D. Casey claimed that the exact meaning of propaganda has been debated for centuries and no specific definition exists.<sup>60</sup>

Ralph Casey considered propaganda an “instrument of the devil”<sup>61</sup> where the propagandist intentionally deceives, lies, and falsifies facts. One of the more popular interpretations is the notion that propaganda is a negative and persuasive method attempting to influence people to accept specific ideas and beliefs. Despite all the difficulties in formulating a formal definition for propaganda, scholars and historians find some common ground. Many generally agree with Casey’s definition that:

Propaganda has to do with any ideas and beliefs that are intentionally propagated. They agree also that it attempts to reach a goal by making use of words and word substitutes (pictures, drawings, graphs, exhibits, parades, songs, and similar devices). Moreover, although it is used in controversial situations, most experts agree that it is also used to promote noncontroversial, or generally acceptable, ideas. Types of propaganda range from the selfish, deceitful, and subversive to the honest and aboveboard promotional effort. It can be concealed or open, emotional or containing appeals to reason, or a combination of emotional and logical appeals.<sup>62</sup>

Despite multiple interpretations of the definition of propaganda, it is important not to limit the term only to methods that seek to promote “bad ends.”<sup>63</sup> Throughout history not all

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<sup>60</sup> Casey,35.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.,36.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.,38.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.,37.

propaganda was used in a deceitful and negative manner; most was used simply as a form of nationalism.

Although not coined “propaganda” in the United States until the beginning of World War I in 1914, the concept of propaganda existed in ancient civilizations—one of the earliest being Athens. Athenians held different views on political and religious matters so they turned to propaganda to spread and suppress certain beliefs and opinions. The Greeks used games, theater, courts, religious festivals, speeches, and handwritten books as effective forms of propaganda, although it was not officially coined “propaganda” at that time. Thus, the Greeks were efficiently able to shape and control opinions within in their civilization.<sup>64</sup>

As history progressed, civilizations began using forms of propaganda that more closely resembled modern usage. In Europe, distribution increased with the advent of the printing press. The Catholic Church practiced propaganda through missionary activities in seventeenth century Europe, and still does. Within the Church, Pope Gregory XV established the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith in 1622 to which a commission of cardinals worked towards spreading the Catholic faith and regulating church affairs. In addition a College of Propaganda was established by Pope Urban VIII to focus on the training of priests for missionary work. Our modern understanding of propaganda recognized its negative connotations; but when applied to the religious activities of the seventeenth century, the usage of propaganda was considered a valid method.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid.,17-18.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.,18-19.



The influence of propaganda also was present during the American Revolution. The struggle for American Independence saw the rise in popularity of works by Samuel Adams and Thomas Paine. These revolutionary writers stirred up opposition to the British crown using propaganda materials that were produced with the employment of the printing press making it possible to reach large numbers of American colonists within a short timeframe. Adams was an outspoken supporter of the cause for independence and had no qualms about publicly instigating opposition against the British and calling for a decisive break between the colonies and Great Britain. Adams professed his opposition within newspapers, especially the *Boston Gazette* where he accused the British of imposing the Church of England on the colonists. These newspapers took Adams' oppositions and opinions to the people and helped influence their discontent with the British control over the colonies. Further in 1772 the "committee of correspondence" created a statement of the "Rights of the Colonists." Within this statement Adams and the committee spread their revolutionary message outside Boston and proposed a framework for the Declaration of Independence.<sup>66</sup>

Thomas Paine also used his writings to influence the people in support of independence. In his pamphlet *Common Sense* (1776) Paine used religious arguments to bluntly encourage Americans to reject the British monarchy.<sup>67</sup> These two writers were among many key players in the American Revolution to use print newspapers and pamphlets to spread their opinions and oppositions to Great Britain. The mass

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<sup>66</sup> Ira Stoll, "The Revolutionary Gospel According to Samuel Adams: How a leader of the Sons of Liberty turned the patriot cause into a divine mission," *American History* 43, issue 5 (December 2008): 42-45.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

distribution of these propaganda materials allowed Adams and Paine to greatly unify the public around colonial independence and rebellion of the British crown.

During the French Revolution the works of Montesquieu, Rousseau, and Voltaire spread dissent among the people. The French Revolution consisted of a series of phases turning from one philosopher to another. The first phase of the Revolution was dominated by philosopher Montesquieu who proclaimed in his publication *L'Esprit des lois* (1753) that a liberal constitutional monarchy was the most beneficial system of government by dividing the sovereignty of the nations between separate centers of power that would check one another. According to Montesquieu this was achieved in Great Britain by sharing sovereignty between the Crown, Parliament, and the courts.<sup>68</sup>

The second phase of the Revolution began roughly around September 1792 and continued until November 1799 with Napoleon's *coup d'état*. This phase was dominated by Rousseau's philosophies on freedom. Where Montesquieu understood freedom as unconstrained and unimpeded to do what one chose, Rousseau redefined freedom as ruling oneself. Rousseau was able to spread his philosophies to the people through his writings *Confessions*. According to his interpretation of freedom, the people were to keep sovereignty in their own hands and in terms of a constitution the nation became sovereign over itself.<sup>69</sup>

With Napoleon's *coup d'état*, the third phase of the Revolution progressed. Within this phase Voltaire and his doctrine of enlightened absolutism began spreading. Voltaire's *Social Contract*, kept the sovereignty of the state undivided, but still under the

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<sup>68</sup> Maurice Cranston, "Ideas and Ideologies," *History Today* 39, issue 5 (May 1989): 10.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

control of the monarch.<sup>70</sup> It can be seen during the French Revolution that propaganda was spread through these differing philosophical writings and helped shape the three phases of the Revolution until its end.

Although propaganda was employed throughout centuries, it was not until World War I and World War II that society recognized its palpable efforts. Cognizant of the origins and difficulties in defining propaganda in the mid twentieth century, we can now turn to the role of propaganda during World War I and World War II.

### **World War I**

The incorporation of propaganda within society becomes most prevalent and widespread during times of war. During World War I, American artists played an important role along with the government to transform art into a “powerful weapon” of persuasion.<sup>71</sup> Artists were commissioned by the government in jobs such as designing camouflage for the Army. At this time, most art was controlled by the Division of Pictorial Publicity of the Committee on Public Information. Established on April 17, 1917, shortly after the United States’ official entrance into World War I, the Division of Pictorial Publicity developed propaganda posters, cartoons, and newspaper illustrations. Artists’ propaganda posters used government motivations for recruitment, loan support, and additional wartime purposes. Posters presented themes of patriotism, recruitment, production, secrecy, and conservation of food, coal, and other various war materials. Between its establishment in 1917 and its end on November 15, 1918 the Division of Pictorial Publicity created for the United States “government and various patriotic

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>71</sup> Albert Eugene Gallatin, *Art and the Great War* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Company, 1919), 21.

societies and committees, fifty-eight in number, seven hundred posters, two hundred and thirty-seven cartoons and four hundred and thirty-two cards and designs for newspaper advertising.”<sup>72</sup> These posters were used by various agencies, some including the federal government, the Red Cross, the YMCA, and the Salvation Army.<sup>73</sup> Locally the Buffalo and Erie County Library celebrated its 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2011 with a digital collection of its history. Through the digital collection, the Rare Books and Special Collections Department prepared an exhibit of Edward Michael’s World War I poster themes. Poster themes ranged from nationalistic purposes, production, mobilization, propaganda, and more.<sup>74</sup>

World War I additionally brought about a change in the attitudes of Americans acceptance of propaganda with President Woodrow Wilson’s Committee of Public Information in 1917. Propaganda was to be used as a tool for the explanation of the events of the war to the American people. Despite this explanatory uses of propaganda many Americans still remained suspicious, regarding propaganda as “an alien, un-American, method of persuading people to subscribe to doctrines in which they have no interest”<sup>75</sup> even in the years leading up to the second World War. Some Americans remained tentative on the United States need for propaganda because they feared that the corrupt and vile propaganda produced by Europe, specifically the Fascists, Nazi’s and Communists would negatively influence and infiltrated American propaganda.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 34-35.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Buffalo and Erie County Public Library. “175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library,” New York Heritage Digital Collections, <http://nyheritage.nnylm.net/cdm/landingpage/collection/VHB007> (accessed May 15, 2013).

<sup>75</sup> Rhodes, 139.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

## World War II

President Roosevelt's Propaganda Department, established in 1940, was created under the pretense that information would "always retain the essence of truth."<sup>77</sup> Under the Propaganda Department, the Office of Facts and Figures was established to discuss the need of the United States to support the Western Allies. Unfortunately, the propaganda organizations in the United States were not unified and continuously argued over methods of use.<sup>78</sup> The government created two psychological warfare departments: the Office of War Information (OWI) responsible for overt or "white" propaganda and the Office of Strategic Services responsible for covert or "black" propaganda. With responsibilities being vaguely defined the two departments found it difficult to work together because they constantly fought for power over each other.<sup>79</sup> Some branches of the government even argued over the presence of propaganda; many in Congress regarded propaganda as "wasteful mumbo jumbo,"<sup>80</sup> while many high command generals and admirals of the armed services proclaimed it as "unmanly"<sup>81</sup> and unnecessary towards the war effort.

Despite the differing opinions of the use of propaganda the United States did slowly began employing propaganda towards the war effort. Leaflets, radio programs, posters, cartoons, comic books, and film were utilized. One of the biggest ways the United States employed "psychological warfare" was through the use of leaflets, which were dropped by air fleets to influence the enemy's civilian morale. Leaflets were typically printed on a free floating single sheet of 5"x8" paper and discharged from

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid.144.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 145.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 146.

aircrafts flare-chutes, observation traps, bomb bays, and doors before the invention of the leaf bomb.<sup>82</sup> In 1944 by American air force Captain James Monroe invented the leaf bomb or Monroe bomb, a cylinder of laminated paper about five feet long and one and a half feet in diameter.<sup>83</sup> Designed to fit into B-17s, B-24s, and B-29s the Monroe bomb made propaganda leaflet drops easier and more accurate motivating the Allies to produced more than 75,000 Monroe bombs.<sup>84</sup> With the invention of the leaf bomb more than 80,000 leaflets could be delivered at once which allowed the Office of War Information (OWI) to drop over 7 million leaflets per week throughout occupied Europe.<sup>85</sup>

Leaflets were dropped to support many campaigns. On July, 10 1943, the Allies scattered leaflets on German and Italian positions in preparation for the Sicilian Invasion. A few days later on July 16, 1943, the United States dropped more leaflets informing the Italians they could either “die for Mussolini and Hitler, or live for Italy.”<sup>86</sup> Leaflets accompanied the Allied landing at D-Day in June 1944. More than twenty-seven million leaflets were dropped containing counterfeit money, ration cards, stamps, coupons, and formal “surrender cards” promising fair treatment to all enemy soldiers who surrendered.<sup>87</sup> American soldiers were instructed by the government that any enemy soldier carrying a leaflet containing a “safe conduct” pass was no longer considered an enemy of the United States. Additionally, leaflets were also in the form of newspapers, especially the tabloid newspaper *America at War (L' Amerique en Guerre)*

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<sup>82</sup> Allied Force Headquarters: Psychological Warfare Branch, “Paper Bullets: Combat Propaganda,” PSYWAR, [http://www.psywar.org/pdf\\_paperbullets.pdf](http://www.psywar.org/pdf_paperbullets.pdf) (accessed January 20, 2013), 2.

<sup>83</sup> Rhodes, 146.

<sup>84</sup> Ferenc Morton Szasz, “Pamphlets Away”: The Allied Propaganda Campaign over Japan During the Last Months of World War II,” *Journal of Popular Culture* 42, no. 3 (2009): 532.

<sup>85</sup> Rhodes, 146.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Szasz, 531.

which detailed the American war production figures, weapons and ships being produced hourly and daily, as well as Allied advancements in North Africa, Sicily, and Italy.<sup>88</sup>

Propaganda leaflets also played a major role in the United States war in the Pacific theatre. In the closing months of the war, the Allies combined to distribute roughly two billion leaflets over Japanese-held territory.<sup>89</sup> During the struggle for Okinawa, from April 1 to July 2, 1945, naval aircrafts dropped over five million leaflets reinforcing Okinawa citizens that they were not the enemy or target and urging all citizens to flee to the countryside. Simultaneously, "I cease resistance" leaflets were dropped over Japanese troops. One leaflet read: "This leaflet guarantees humane treatment of any Japanese desiring to cease resistance. Take him immediately to your nearest commissioned officer."<sup>90</sup> Another leaflet stated: "Soldiers, think it over. Throw away your weapons and helmets, and come out waving this paper. Any number of you may surrender with this one leaflet."<sup>91</sup> These leaflets created in a red, white, and blue design were dual printed with English on one side and Japanese on the other promising safe passage to all Japanese soldiers who "ceased resistance" and surrendered to Allied forces.<sup>92</sup> With the help of numerous leaflets roughly ten thousand Japanese soldiers surrender at Okinawa and some put to work helping to translate new messages to the Japanese. With the capture of Okinawa the Allies established portable printing presses on the island and were able to additionally produce two hundred different leaflets to which they dropped as many as 75,000 daily. Although, never mentioning the atomic bomb specifically nearly 720,000 leaflets were dropped warning certain cities of

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<sup>88</sup> Rhodes, 147.

<sup>89</sup> Szasz, 531.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 533.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

bomb drops by the U.S. Army Air Force and urging all Japanese citizens to seek shelter and evacuate. Dropping warning messages on over eleven cities, including Aomori, Nagasaki, and Hakodate, the Allies hoped to spare as many noncombatant civilians as possible.<sup>93</sup>

Radio was also a tool used to play on the emotions of the American people. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt broadcasted his series of fireside chats starting on March 12, 1933 from the White House. In his series Roosevelt appeared to share his feelings with the American people while trying to stay neutral on the war. However, after Pearl Harbor radio preyed on the fears of American citizens. In February 1942 a thirteen-week radio series, "This is War," hit airwaves broadcasting to more than twenty million Americans nationwide and overseas every Saturday night. Producer Norman Corwin aimed the series at "inspiring, informing, and ultimately frightening people into action."<sup>94</sup> Like many wartime radio series, the purpose of "This is War" was to give the citizens of the Allied nations a fuller comprehension of the nature and events of the war through patriotic messages, discussion of the enemy, the Allied Navy and Army, as well as discussion on propaganda.

The attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941 changed how Americans felt about the war in Europe. Initially there was little public outcry for government action against the Japanese-American communities. As fear and anxieties of a second attack intensified, outrage grew. Americans became frightened and threatened by the Japanese enemy demanding the "immediate incarceration or removal to the interior of

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 533-536.

<sup>94</sup> Rhodes, 148.



the considerable Japanese-American colony living peaceably there.”<sup>95</sup> Citizens began voicing their opinions and desires for revenge by contacting the White House “demanding revenge against Japan and pledging their aid in the war effort.”<sup>96</sup> With retaliation at the forefront, racial attacks and animosity became constant realities as the calling for the removal of Japanese-Americans into concentration camps became more prevalent.<sup>97</sup>

The government also became suspicious of Japanese-Americans. On December 7-8, 1941, President Roosevelt signed a proclamation authorizing the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) to arrest any aliens in the continental United States who they deemed “dangerous to public peace or safety.”<sup>98</sup> Further, the Navy was ordered to beach all fishing boats owned by Japanese nationals to prevent possible aid to Japanese ships. The United States Treasury froze all Japanese nationals’ assets and suspended their licenses to sell produce to protect food supplies from poisoning.<sup>99</sup>

What resulted from this fear of the enemy was the creation of Japanese-American internment camps by the government. The fear and anxieties surrounding the place of Japanese-Americans in the United States went public with President Roosevelt’s Executive Order 9066 on February 19, 1942. The Executive Order did not specifically mention Japanese-Americans, but the purpose of the order was to give the government the authority to remove Japanese-Americans from the Pacific Coast in fear of sabotage, racial prejudices, and violence. Executive Order 9066 allowed the

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Greg Robinson, *By Order of the President: FDR and the Internment of Japanese-Americans* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2001), 74.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 89-90.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

government to take action against further attacks by giving them the authority to protect the nation against espionage and sabotage through the creation of military zones.<sup>100</sup> Within these prescribed military zones “any or all persons may be excluded, and with respect to which, the right of any person to enter, remain in, or leave shall be subject to whatever restriction”<sup>101</sup> the military desired.

Japanese-Americans living along the West Coast of the United States were the main victims of evacuation and internment. Japanese-Americans who lived in Hawaii during the war were spared from internment because the federal government did not consider them a threat to the Hawaiian territory or the United States.<sup>102</sup> The Executive Order created the evacuation of 110,000 people, more than two-thirds of whom were American born.<sup>103</sup> Japanese-Americans were placed in temporary assembly centers by the Army, and then transported to ten camps in the interior of the new civilian agency, the War Relocation Authority (WRA). It was within these camps that Japanese-Americans were held until the Executive Orders were lifted in January 1945.<sup>104</sup>

The fear and hatred which propaganda created brought about the unprecedented Executive Orders which infringed on the basic human rights of American citizens on a racial basis. Although violating the constitutional rights of Japanese-Americans, the Executive Orders were greeted initially with joy and relief from the public. This relief was short-lived as debate soon arose over the legitimacy of the policy. The continued

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 108.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 108.

<sup>102</sup> Braverman, 28.

<sup>103</sup> Robinson, 127.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 4.

controversy over the orders was among the reasons the racially discriminating Executive Orders were finally changed.<sup>105</sup>

Attitudes towards Japanese-Americans during World War II echo similar sentiments today against Muslim-Americans. A resurgence of racial and religious animosity against Arabs, Muslims, and Middle Easterners intensified with the attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001. Since the attacks public attitudes have worsened and American media outlets have continued to reinforce sentiments of intolerable and violent Muslims.

### **Propaganda Posters**

It is one thing to analyze the presence of propaganda art during wartime, but it is also necessary to examine the motivations behind the art itself. Latent motivations behind propaganda—specifically posters, cartoons, and comic books—can bring new perspectives regarding the atmosphere of the war.

Propaganda posters played a vital role in shaping the atmosphere of the American home front, helping to form and manipulate the opinions of American citizens. Posters were not as prevalent in World War II society as they were in World War I. During World War I there was no radio, or television, and only silent films, so propaganda posters played a huge role in informing and motivating the public and its behaviors. Posters were forced to share the stage with other methods of reaching the public, like newspapers, radio, and films.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid. 125.

<sup>106</sup> Judd, 31.

Despite the weakened presence in society, government agencies and private corporations still saturated society with a constant stream of propaganda posters. Unlike other forms of communication, posters were inexpensive, accessible, and used as an “agent for making the war aims the personal mission of every citizen,”<sup>107</sup> by disseminating political messages directly to the public. Posters were produced on single sheets typically with outwardly democratic designs and messages. Focusing on duty, patriotism, industrial production, and recruitment most posters were created with a red, white, and blue color scheme, often using the American flag, Uncle Sam, and soldiers as symbols.<sup>108</sup>

Government agencies like the U.S. Office of War Information (OWI) organized campaigns to encourage the spreading of posters everywhere. As one U.S. Office of War Information officer stated:

We want to see posters on fences, on the walls of buildings, on village greens, on boards in front of the City hall and the Post Office, in hotel lobbies, in the windows of vacant stores-not limited to the present neat conventional frames which make them look like advertising, but shouting at people from unexpected places with all the urgency which this war demands.<sup>109</sup>

The goal was to place posters in all aspects of citizens’ lives; posting them in factories, companies, railroad stations, post offices, restaurants, retail stores, government agencies, schools, and nearly all public places. The government believed that it was advantageous to reach the most people as possible. Campaigns hoped to boost public patriotism and production within factories by reinforcing personal wartime responsibilities.

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<sup>107</sup> Bird and Rubenstein, Introduction 1.

<sup>108</sup> Judd, 32-34.

<sup>109</sup> Bird and Rubenstein, 11.

Themes of pro-war propaganda posters were numerous, including recruitment, morale boosting, patriotism, industrial production, national security and safety, war finance, nationalism, as well as ridiculing and vilifying the enemy. Blatantly patriotic posters purposely evoked the use of emotive symbols and emblems, like the national flag, to prey upon two basic human needs: “the need for men and women to belong to a group, and the need for the group to have its own symbols, flags, badges, banners, uniforms, colours.”<sup>110</sup> These posters helped shape public opinion in favor of the American war effort and strengthen loyalty to the nation while implying that pacifism was wrong. Recruitment posters encouraged young men to enlist through the use of straightforward slogans and patriotic symbols like Uncle Sam, bald eagles, American soldiers, and strength. Often the visual use of masculine men with muscles operating machines was used as a symbol of America’s strength and confidence in victory.<sup>111</sup> These posters were constant reminders of how important military involvement was to the success of the United States’ victory.

After the attack on Pearl Harbor, a sense of urgency surrounded American industry with a shift from consumer goods to war materials. The necessity of war production brought about a growing need for campaigns directed towards the factory. The War Department and the War Production Board’s initiated poster campaigns promoting workers and managers to take “personal responsibility and make individual sacrifices to win the war.”<sup>112</sup> These campaigns served as daily reminders to factory

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<sup>110</sup> Zeman, 32.

<sup>111</sup> National Archives, “Powers of Persuasion: Poster Art From World War II,” The U.S. National Archives and Record Administration, [http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/powers\\_of\\_persuasion/man\\_the\\_guns/man\\_the\\_guns.html](http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/powers_of_persuasion/man_the_guns/man_the_guns.html) (accessed February 3, 2013).

<sup>112</sup> Bird and Rubenstein, 62.

workers of the importance of increased production and its direct impact on war overseas. Production posters constantly reinforced the relationship that linked the wartime factory and the front lines by stressing the “parallel between the front-line soldier and the factory worker, and point to the dependence of the soldier on the worker.”<sup>113</sup> The success of the soldiers would depend on the equipment and supplies they received from the home front. Posters from the National Association of Manufactures promoted industry as a key to defense of the country and victory of the war because it was everyone’s job to participate in the war effort and defend the nation through mobilization.

Another major theme was the role of women within the factories. With so many men in uniform, American factories need to new workforce, and women filled that void by joining the workforce and continuing to produce necessary war materials. The need for female industrial workers was stressed the most throughout the war effort. Perhaps the most memorable image of women was J. Howard Miller’s *We Can Do It* poster features Rosie the Riveter dressed in blue overalls and wearing a red bandanna with the caption “was used as a “symbol of patriotic womanhood.”<sup>114</sup>

Additionally emphasized were the citizen’s personal responsibilities and financial sacrifices. The major financial plea for production came from the United States Treasury Department with war bond posters.<sup>115</sup> War bond campaigns were one of the Treasury’s largest poster themes linking the sale of war bonds to success on the battlefield. Posters showed how buying war bonds produced more materials for the military which would help the United States win the war. The government was trying to

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<sup>113</sup> Zeman 65.

<sup>114</sup> “Powers of Persuasion: Poster Art From World War II.”

<sup>115</sup> Zeman, 65.

reinforce the personal duty of all citizens, no matter their economic status, to participate in support of the war economically.

Despite numerous patriotic themes, not all posters promoted positive means. Motivations behind many posters preyed upon the guilt, fear, and revenge emotions of Americans. Guilt was used as a fear tactic directed towards unemployed Americans who were not involved in the military, essentially to force them into joining the war effort, especially to seek work in factories.<sup>116</sup> Revenge for the attack on Pearl Harbor was another popular theme. Posters calling for revenge preyed upon Americans' hatred of the Japanese and fear of mainland attacks. Despite the justified message to encourage defense of the nation, revenge posters created racial prejudice that later manifested itself by the internment of Japanese-Americans.<sup>117</sup>

Fear was also used to create posters for national security. These posters stressed the importance of the idea of silence to "fight hard against the enemy."<sup>118</sup> Security posters dealt with the concern of military information leakage, sabotage within war industry, spies, and the enemy. Posters portrayed how costly leaking information was to the security of the nation and the lives of thousands of American soldiers. Although spies and information wasn't a huge threat for the American home front the possibilities caused fear. Careless talk posters reinforced the reality of war by warning of the dangers of frivolous talk. Artist Stevan Dohanos illustrated many "Careless Talk" posters where he urged the public not to discuss military information. In his poster "Award for Careless talk: don't discuss troop movements, ships sailing, war equipment," created in 1944, he illustrated a hand wearing a Nazi swastika ring and holding a

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<sup>116</sup> Bird and Rubenstein, 70.

<sup>117</sup> Zeman, 101.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 49.

German military Iron Cross medal.<sup>119</sup> Dohanos used the Nazi hand as a symbol of the negative ramifications of leaking military information to the enemy. Posters containing images of children were also used to show the importance of secrecy. The idea was to prey upon fear that if secrecy was not upheld, children's future, as well as the future of the United States, would be in jeopardy. These images showed Americans how spreading secrets and information could damage the lives of American soldiers and innocent citizens.

Posters depicting American enemies were often concentrated on the Nazi's. Nazi atrocities and swastika images were the subject of numerous posters printed by the Office for the War Information Board. Ben Shahn's poster, *This is Nazi Brutality* (1942), refers to the aftermath of the massacre of Lidice, a Czech mining village, by the Nazis in retaliation for the killing of a Nazi official. The poster depicted a hooded prisoner chained to a brick wall, as if he was moments away from execution. With this poster Shahn was illustrating the true brutality of the Nazis by murdering the men of Lidice and shipping the women and children to concentration camps. Another poster by Shahn, *We French Workers, War You...* (1942) shows the round-up of French workers by Nazi's to be sent to slave labor camps. The message of the poster warns that a Nazi victory would lead to slavery, starvation, and death.<sup>120</sup> These examples along with numerous other propaganda posters were created not only show the people the atrocities the Nazi's had already committed, but also to warn the people would could

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<sup>119</sup> Stevan Dohanos, "Award for careless talk : don't discuss troop movements, ship sailings, war equipment," UNT Digital Library, <http://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc560/> (accessed October 1, 2012).

<sup>120</sup> "Powers of Persuasion: Poster Art From World War II."



happen if Germany won the war. These posters served as a motivator for the American people to keep sacrificing for the war effort.

### **Artists and the Advertising Industry**

Hidden behind the messages and images of propaganda posters lay a more intriguing understanding of the war; mainly the motivations of the designers, producers, and artists. Many historians believed that posters not only informed society, but also “expressed the needs and goals of the people who created them,”<sup>121</sup> specifically those organizations, private or federal, who commissioned campaigns, artists, and designers.

An exploration of the advertising industry offers insight into how posters were conceived, produced, and received by the public.<sup>122</sup> With its entrance into the war, the federal government began receiving complaints about its organization of campaigns and inadequate quality of posters.<sup>123</sup>

Art and advertising merged, allowing artists and commercial illustrators to join forces in the war effort. The War Advertising Council was established in January 1942 to help create more effective posters. Professionals from leading advertising agencies, national advertisers, and mass medium outlets created research surveys to gauge the emotions of the public. Additionally, Chester J. LaRoche, War Advertising Council chairman and vice president of Young & Rubicam Inc., urged the government’s Office of Facts and Figures (OFF) to establish a National Advisory Council on Government

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<sup>121</sup> Bird and Rubenstein, Introduction 1.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 25.

Posters. Composed of prominent advertising art directors the newly formed Council set out to establish a new standard for effective poster design.<sup>124</sup>

The first action of the National Advisory Council was the implementation of a “reaction survey” of thirty-three different war posters in Toronto, Canada by Young & Rubicam, Inc. The survey lasted from March 16 until April 1, 1942 in hopes of gaining an understanding of the Canadian public’s confusion about posters and applying those conclusions to American posters. One of the main arguments Young & Rubicam specialists concluded was to change to more direct designs. According to the survey, the most effective posters should appeal to human emotions and present a literal picture of people and objects. Furthermore, they surmised that posters should appeal to all levels of intelligence including the lower third of the American population.<sup>125</sup>

One of the governmental motivations behind the promotion of survey research was for tighter control over poster messages. The government created the U.S. Office of War Information (OWI) in June 1942 to control propaganda posters by reviewing and approving all designs and distribution. OWI officials provided artists and agencies with an instructional guide including six authorized war information themes: the nature of the enemy, the nature of the United States’ allies, the need to work, the need to fight, the need to sacrifice, and the American people. This allowed the government to strengthen its control over poster campaigns by having final approval over designs.<sup>126</sup>

The OWI poster campaigns along with radio and magazines presented wartime messages in new ways. Where previous posters would relay messages of sacrifice and struggle, the advertising world put a new superficial spin on themes. Posters now

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 27-28.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 32-36.

translated messages of sacrifice into images of smiling, carefree individuals and families in order to strengthen support for the war through positive advertising.<sup>127</sup> However, the new infusion of advertising techniques into poster design caused controversy. Many OWI officials disagreed and rejected having to transform poster designs to appeal to mainstream commercial arenas, such as retail stores.<sup>128</sup>

This shift to more commercialized poster designs forced the OWI to relinquish some control over the distribution and quality of propaganda posters. One of the biggest changes involved poster procurement becoming more business-oriented. The OWI was forced to end soliciting and poster competitions and instead turn to commissioning commercial illustrators for their designs. The use of “war graphics” (mainly battlefield casualties) was also banished and replaced by emotional appeals and literal representations of wartime reality. Banished were the casualty graphics, like those used in “careless talk” posters, often depicting deceased American soldiers on the battlefield. Instead, the goal was to shift promotion to return propaganda posters to “prominence as a powerful device for the selling of social, economic, and political ideas.”<sup>129</sup> Some new commercial posters focused on appealing to people’s emotions by using children in promotion of buying war bonds. In Ruth Nichols’s poster *Protect his Future* (1944) the message simply declares that in order to protect the futures of children all citizens must continue to support the war by buying and keeping war bonds. Some posters created by the U.S. Treasury Department contained war bond charts showing weekly savings and interest for one, five, and ten year increments.<sup>130</sup> These

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 48.

new motivations behind propaganda posters transferred the commercial arena in order to increase distribution. The intent was to increase popularity, reach new audiences, and draw greater attention to wartime responsibilities by putting a new advertising spin on posters.<sup>131</sup>

### **Cartoons and Comics**

Another form of entertainment used for propaganda was cartoons, comic strips, and comic books. Exposure for cartoons and comic strips was critical in daily and monthly newspapers because it allowed for the relay of wartime messages to the public in an entertaining manner. By the war's end in December 1945 over 2,300 major daily newspapers published comic strips with the exception of the *New York Times* and the *Christian Science Monitor*. Newspapers printed roughly 1.5 billion copies of four or five panel comic strips weekly.<sup>132</sup>

Comic strips and cartoons were regularly published in more than 1,200 service newspapers throughout the country. Military newspapers like the Army's *Stars and Stripes* became popular as humor provided soldiers with a sense of escape from the realities of war. A 1945 survey by the Market Research Company of America reported nearly 44 percent of service men in training camps were reading some form of comics and cartoons. Military newspapers sought not only to boost morale, but also to educate servicemen and civilians. During basic training the military created a character named Private Pete to help teach soldiers basic training programs as well as to read.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Braverman, 218.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

Many cartoons, like Bill Mauldin's "Willie and Joe," as well as Disney cartoons, were created not only for moral purposes but also to show American citizens the harsh conditions soldiers were facing overseas. As World War II began artist Bill Mauldin became a rifleman for the 180<sup>th</sup> Infantry and later went on active duty in the 45<sup>th</sup> Division overseas in Sicily, France, and Germany. Overseas Mauldin began creating cartoons surrounding his experiences as a soldier along the front. By 1944, Mauldin was creating six cartoons a week for *Stars and Stripes*, the G.I. newspaper. Mauldin's most popular cartoons were those centered on characters Willie and Joe, two weary infantry soldiers. Willie and Joe were portrayed as average "dogfaces" or infantrymen always professional and fighting hard when necessary. Both men were pale in complexion, bearded, always slumped over, disheveled, filthy, and tired. Most importantly Willie and Joe displayed great courage, kindness, and compassion towards each other and their fellow soldiers.<sup>134</sup> Willie and Joe became most popular among fellow soldiers throughout Europe as well as the United States. In fact the characters became the faces of American infantry men fighting overseas.<sup>135</sup> Mauldin created Willie and Joe because he wanted to remind American citizens that "combat was hell, but it was a vision of war that could be lived with,"<sup>136</sup> by shedding light on the lives of the soldiers with his cartoons.

Walt Disney and his animators were also dedicated to supporting the war effort. Disney became a propaganda machine for the government by using many beloved characters often dressed in military clothing, including Donald Duck, Pluto, Mickey, and

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<sup>134</sup> David Michaelis, "He Drew Great Mud," *The New York Times*, March 2, 2008.

<sup>135</sup> Dick Spencer III, *Pulitzer Prize Cartoons: The Men and Their Masterpieces* (Ames, Iowa: The Iowa State College Press, 1951), 96-97.

<sup>136</sup> Michaelis.

Minnie, in educational films, cartoons, and comics to spread propaganda, educate Americans on their enemies, and boost public morale.<sup>137</sup> Using these characters, Disney animators created cartoons and designed more than 1,200 combat insignias for the U.S. military and its allies by the end of the war. Animators created many insignias including a mosquito riding a torpedo for the Navy's new torpedo boats as well as emblems for tanks, bombers, and ships. Even soldiers and airmen decorated their tanks and fighter planes with images of Mickey, Donald, and Pluto to symbolize the "American way of life, of freedom and democracy, of everything that was at stake."<sup>138</sup>

In December 1941 the United States Military contracted Disney studios to use studio lots and soundstages for repair shops for the Army.<sup>139</sup> The government also contracted Walt Disney and his animators to create educational wartime cartoons. The Navy commissioned educational animated films to train sailors and inform the public about how to spot enemy aircraft. In fact between 1942 and 1943, Disney studios created more than 62,000 meters (200,000 feet) of film dedicated towards the war effort.<sup>140</sup>

Mickey's best friend Pluto became a common character in cartoons and insignias because of his willingness to do his part for the war effort. In the cartoon *The Army Mascot* released in May 1942, Pluto found himself on a military base longing to be one of the Army Mascots. After outwitting the current mascot, Gunter the goat, Pluto humorously and proudly became the new Army Mascot. Also, the cartoon *Private Pluto*

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<sup>137</sup> Blitz, 124.

<sup>138</sup> Sven Stillich, "Walt Disney and the Art of WWII Propaganda," <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/donald-versus-hitler-walt-disney-and-the-art-of-wwii-propaganda-a-641547.html> (accessed July 9, 2012).

<sup>139</sup> Blitz, 124.

<sup>140</sup> Stillich.

released in 1943 showed soldier Pluto guarding a pill-box (gun emplacement) from saboteurs, specifically two chipmunks, later known as Chip and Dale. Minnie Mouse, first drawn by Walt Disney in 1928, also made appearances in cartoons, specifically *First Aiders* released in September 1944 featured Minnie learning first aid while using Pluto as a reluctant helper.<sup>141</sup>

As popularity of Disney cartoons increased, it became obvious that the most used character was Donald Duck. Cartoons and insignias featuring Donald symbolized the “gutsy, fist up fighting spirit of the American soldier and so became the mascot and good luck charm of innumerable units and squadrons.”<sup>142</sup> Henry Morgenthau Jr., United States Secretary of the Treasury Department, commissioned Disney in 1942 to create a film, *The New Spirit*, for explanation of new legislation making millions of Americans eligible to pay income taxes.<sup>143</sup> The Treasury Department’s motivation was to have Disney, especially Donald, to encourage voluntary and fast payments. In the film Donald became informed via radio broadcast of the new income tax payments and he eagerly sent in his money to the government in Washington D.C.<sup>144</sup> Response by the public to the cartoon was enormous as reports indicated that tax payments came in more promptly than previous years.<sup>145</sup>

Donald appeared in numerous wartime military cartoons including *The Vanishing Private*, *Sky Trooper*, *Fall Out*, *Fall In*, *The Old Army Game*, and *Commando Duck*. The most patriotic cartoon was *Donald Gets Drafted* released in 1942. In this cartoon

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<sup>141</sup> *Walt Disney Treasures: The Complete Pluto 1930-1947, Volume One*, DVD, directed by Ben Sharpsteen, Charles A. Nichols, Clyde Geronim, Jack Hannah, and Jack Kinney (Orlando, Florida: Walt Disney Home Entertainment, 2004).

<sup>142</sup> Blitz, 130.

<sup>143</sup> Stillich.

<sup>144</sup> Blitz, 125.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

Donald gets drafted into the Army on April 1, 1941 and undergoes a physical, gets measured for his uniform, and enters basic training. Millions of American soldiers overseas sympathized with these cartoons as Donald became a symbol of American determination because of his military experiences.<sup>146</sup>

Donald was also used to create more mocking propaganda specifically through the satiric anti-Nazi cartoon entitled *Der Fuehrer's Face*. Released on January 1, 1943, this cartoon was awarded the Academy Award for Best Cartoon Short Subject of 1942-1943. The cartoon depicted Nazi Donald's miserable experience in "Nutzi Land," saluting pictures of Hitler, Mussolini, and Hirohito, working on the assembly line, and working out to strengthen the master race. The horrible Nazi experience Donald endured thankfully ended in a dream as Donald awoke dressed in red, white, and blue pajamas.<sup>147</sup>

As with wartime industry, comic book production was booming during the war. According to *Publishers Weekly* and *Business Week* in 1942, roughly 15 million comic books were sold monthly. Then, by 1943 more than 25 million comics were sold monthly, increasing the yearly sales to over 30 million dollars.<sup>148</sup> Unfortunately, setbacks arose with the government rationing programs of 1943. The War Production Board's rationed paper allotments decreased paper usage between 15 to 20 percent by comic book publishers. Changes had to be made, so publishers implemented solutions to reduce the number of copies printed per issue and the number of pages of each

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 130.

<sup>148</sup> Wright, 31.



comic book. Further, some companies were even forced to suspend production on several titles to meet federal restrictions.<sup>149</sup>

The initial intentions of comic book publishers were to improve their public image and expand their audiences. Comics were directed towards the younger generation because comics gave “hope in the outcome of the war, a bit of escape from the actual events, and a sense of contributing to the effort through calls in the comic books for scrap paper, metal, war bonds, or other related rallies, as well as to remain vigilant against enemy spy rings.”<sup>150</sup> Comic books were marketed towards the younger generation mainly to influence their understanding of the war through subtle stereotypes in hopes of persuading them to join the war effort.<sup>151</sup>

In hopes of expanding audiences, companies like DC Comics and Fawcett Publications also turned their attention to attracting parents. Publishers established advisory boards to focus on the moral standards comics should be addressing. DC Comics and Fawcett Publications, as well as several other companies, created Editorial Advisory Boards consisting of professionals to provide insight and recommendations to help improve comics’ moral messages.<sup>152</sup> One of the major ways publishers attempted to improve their image was by establishing a relationship between patriotism and supporting the war effort. Comic heroes from Superman and Captain America to Batman and Robin urged the public to give to charities such as the American Red

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 31-32.

<sup>150</sup> Scott, 329.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 328.

<sup>152</sup> Wright, 33-34.

Cross, to buy war bonds and saving stamps, to collect scrap metal and paper, and more.<sup>153</sup>

The government also took advantage of comics and cartoons as propaganda tools. The U.S. Office of War Information (OWI) created cartoon character, Kid Salvage, to educate the public on wartime conditions. The OWI printed numerous cartoons in hundreds of weekly newspapers and factory periodicals. Kid Salvage appeared in cartoons advocating meat rationing, preserving rubber and gasoline, the need for women in industry, as well as salvaging scrap metal and war materials. The federal Office of Inter-American Affairs also produced comic pamphlets *Heros Verdaderos* (True Heros) which expressed American wartime achievements and *Nuestro Futuro* (Our Future) which was an anti-Nazi comic book describing what was at stake for Americans in the war.<sup>154</sup>

Private companies also created cartoons and comics that infiltrated the American's reading materials. In March 1942 the Douglas Aircraft's graphic cartoon "The Tokio Kid" found popularity in American factories. The main purpose of "The Kid" was to warn Americans of the consequences of failed production. The messages used fear tactics to show that if workers wavered on production efforts; in doing so, they would be helping the Japanese win the war. This message resonated loudly throughout the nation as the U.S. Treasury Department adopted "The Kid" in campaigns to sell war bonds in 1942. Artists of the Douglas Aircraft Company reproduced the character for rubber drives in Santa Monica, California in the spring of 1942. The racist caricature of "The Kid" portrayed him holding a dagger dripping with blood and wearing a cap with an

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>154</sup> Braverman, 226-227.

emblem of “The Rising Sun” as well as round-rimmed glasses. The racist cartoon was not uncommon and “The Kid” drawn with an “ape-like forehead, slanted narrow eyes, elongated buck and fanged teeth, a drooling mouth, and pointed ears”<sup>155</sup> was just one example of the racist depictions of Japanese by American artists. The Japanese were often portrayed as monsters with yellow skin and exaggerated facial characteristics, including leering or slanted eyes and exaggerated teeth. Artists and American citizens alike harbored racist hatred of the Japanese which was echoed in entertainment. America’s hatred for the Japanese intensified with the attack on Pearl Harbor, the treatment of American prisoners of war, and the publication of the atrocities Japanese inflicted on their enemies in the 1930’s. Americans justified their treatment of Japanese in entertainment as a cathartic tool to vent their hostilities.<sup>156</sup>

Once based on entertainment, the comic book and cartoon industries slowly transformed into wartime propaganda mechanisms based on stereotypes. The stereotypical depictions of the United States’ enemies were common practice. Artists and designers infused their own prejudices and malicious stereotypes within their work to prey upon and intensify fears and generated hatred of the enemy. Many comic book artists of Jewish background actually favored American intervention into the war and retained a liberal approach to government.<sup>157</sup> Due to their Jewish backgrounds, many artists and writers had personal, moral hatred of the Nazis and were not afraid to express their opinions in their work with superheroes fighting the real enemies of the war. Two artists known for integrating their own personal moral opinions were Joe Simon and Jack Kirby, the producers of “Captain America” in 1940. Simon and Kirby

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 227.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 226-228.

<sup>157</sup> Scott, 328.

used Captain America to “wage a metaphorical war against Nazi oppression”<sup>158</sup> to express their political stance against Nazism.<sup>159</sup>

United States comic books began to represent the new climate of war. Initially, superheroes like Superman, Captain America, Batman, Captain Marvel, and many more participated in the war effort by selling war bonds, promoting salvage drives, and engaging in recruitment campaigns and industry.<sup>160</sup> As the war progressed many comic book writers and illustrators replaced the original comic characters, heroes and villains, with the real villains of the war. Comic books began to show real-life villains and presented stereotypical characterizations that would eventually saturate society.<sup>161</sup>

One popular comic book superhero of the time was a military character known as “Blackhawk.” Blackhawk comics appeared in Military Comics in August 1941 and traced Blackhawk’s origins to the beginning of World War II as he fought the Germans in September 1939. Like many other comic artists at the time, the writers and designers of Blackhawk included numerous stereotypes. The most classic was the use of the “sneering, aristocratic German officers...and a gallery of misfits and outcasts”<sup>162</sup> that mocked Germans and Nazis through exaggerated negative physical characteristics, which became one of the most popular methods of stereotyping.

Africans, Asians, and Japanese-Americans were also targeted. The intensity of stereotypes during the war “served as a way of portraying villains to relay complex political issues to all social and education groups from young children to adults.”<sup>163</sup> The

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<sup>158</sup> Wright, 36.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 35-36.

<sup>160</sup> Braverman, 213.

<sup>161</sup> Scott, 328.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid., 331.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., 328.

worst part about the inhuman depictions of American enemies was the distribution of them to society, especially towards impressionable young adults. Africans were stereotyped with oversized lips and spoke in simple uneducated phrases. Asian stereotypes were based mainly on American writers' lack of cultural knowledge and rejection of other cultures.

Most Asians, especially the Japanese, were depicted as evil with “buck teeth, thick glasses, rat-like facial features, and a general tone of underlying treachery.”<sup>164</sup> It was common for comics to portray the Japanese as “sinister, ugly, [and] subhuman,”<sup>165</sup> as well as animals. The racist caricatures of the Japanese were purposely meant to depict the race as “ghastly yellow demons with fangs and claws or bucktooth little monkeys with oversized spectacles.”<sup>166</sup> Theodor Geisel, more popularly known as Dr. Seuss in his later career, commonly took his pro-intervention stance for the United States into his work by creating comic books themed around Americans' enemies. Like many other cartoonists of the time, Geisel on a regular basis depicted the Axis powers as “less than human,”<sup>167</sup> often portraying the Japanese as cats. Geisel's favorite subject was Adolf Hitler and the Nazis. Geisel's first public cartoon of Hitler debuted in May 1941 with Hitler's face mounted atop multiple animals, such as birds, snakes, and horses. Axis partners were portrayed as animals, often illustrating conquered countries as performing seals or Hitler's hunting trophies.<sup>168</sup> Nazis were portrayed as “bumbling and aristocratic,” the Italians as “monetarily poor and manipulated,” and the Japanese

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<sup>164</sup> Ibid., 333.

<sup>165</sup> Wright, 45.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Minear, 78.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

as “bizzardlike and treacherous.”<sup>169</sup> Mussolini was another useful target, commonly ridiculed by his body language and posture.<sup>170</sup>

Additionally American and British political cartoons often portrayed the Japanese as monkeys or apes.<sup>171</sup> Cartoons and comics also praised the violence against the Japanese, especially by the Americans.<sup>172</sup> Many Japanese-Americans were forced into prescribed military zones with the creation of President Roosevelt’s Executive Order 9066 on February 19, 1942. Not specifically mentioning Japanese-Americans, the Executive Order gave the government and military authority to protect the nation against a future attack. The creation of Japanese-American internment camps intensified American citizens’ fears while comic books and cartoons further “justified the internment”<sup>173</sup> within their tales.

Although hostility towards the Axis Powers was common, the main focus was on Nazis, with an oversaturation of anti-German sentiment. Nazis were depicted in two ways: as either “stiff, militaristic, and ruthless” or as “fat, bumbling buffoons.”<sup>174</sup> The German military’s cruelty was personified by German officers, usually depicted with a monocle and a scar on the cheek. Unlike the Japanese-Americans in the United States, German-Americans fared better within comic books. In many comic books tales, German-Americans retained their allegiance to the United States despite their German descent.<sup>175</sup> These stereotypes not only showed how personal motivations and

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<sup>169</sup> Scott, 329.

<sup>170</sup> Minear, 78.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid., 118.

<sup>172</sup> Wright, 45-47.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid., 47-48.

emotions drove artists' work, but also how influential artwork was to the American public.

Although these stereotypes and anti-Semitic attitudes were not universally widespread, they did produce hatred and fear in many impressionable children and adults. These propaganda media, whether intended for positive patriotic or malicious ends, all played a significant role in influencing some collective opinions of American society towards the war, the American war effort, and America's enemies.

## CHAPTER 3: Wartime Artists' Influence

### Wartime Artists' Influence

The creation of combat artwork based on firsthand observations and personal experiences became essential in offering a sense of reality and humanity to the war that was previously unavailable. These artists whether commissioned or not produced sketches and paintings that were directly influenced by their personal and emotional experiences overseas. Commissioned artists, like Howard Brodie and Edward Reep, gained credibility and freedom of expression as the war progressed. In the United States alone over one hundred combat artists were commissioned to document their daily experiences alongside their fighting comrades. National art programs gave commissioned artists greater opportunities to record the war in every branch of the military overseas.<sup>176</sup> It was through these emotional combat artworks that artists were able to help shape the historical interpretation of World War for further generations. Since, art is so subjective viewing an original combat piece gives every viewer their own unique perception of war. Not only were these artists creating work that presented the battles and horrors of war, but they were also presenting the public with a raw and personal glimpse into their lives. Even to this day, the study of combat artwork is becoming a rediscovered genre and artist's sketches and paintings are being reevaluated and interpreted.

However, not all artwork during the war was created by commissioned artists; some artists like Robert N. Blair were never officially commissioned. These "unofficial artists" or "soldier-artists" produced artwork subsequent to their responsibilities as

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<sup>176</sup> Lanker and Newnham, x.



soldiers. It can be argued that these men depicted more politically unbiased representations of the war because they sketched in the moment, remaining free of censorship and deadlines faced by commissioned artists. Their work reflected personal and emotional responses to war, putting it in context for general observers.

### **Branches of the Military**

The Navy Combat Art Program began taking shape in 1941. Griffith Baily Coale's offered to the Navy his "services to my country by applying for a commission as a reserve officer in the United States Navy. I propose to make paintings from sketches and drawings ashore and afloat ships, yards, docks, and all the intricacies incorporated in the running of the mighty navy."<sup>177</sup> By August 1941 Coale's desire to join the war became a reality when he was commissioned as Lieutenant Commander and assigned to a convoy to Iceland. Along the journey a destroyer, *Reuben James*, was torpedoed and sunk on October 31, 1941 by German submarines off western Iceland and Coale was lucky enough to capture the attack. Coale's images of the *Reuben James* disaster brought national attention to the necessity of artists and convinced the Navy to commission several additional artists. This decision to commission more artists was authorized by the Art and Poster section of the Navy Department's Office of Public Relations. Captain Leland P. Lovette, Navy director of Public Relations best described the importance of artists in the field:

Painters...could catch the dramatic intensity of a scene and put it down on canvas. They could also omit the confidential technical details a camera might reveal, thus making many interesting subjects unavailable for publication. Subjects beyond the range of photography can be vividly depicted by painters,

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<sup>177</sup> Lanker and Newnham, 89.

such as action at night, or in foul weather, or action widely scattered over the sea or in the air.<sup>178</sup>

The intention of the Navy was to establish artists as “officer-artists on combat assignments”<sup>179</sup> by requiring them to earn their officer status, endure deck officer training, and perform regular duties aboard ships. Although all sketching and painting was restricted to off-hours, the “officer-artists” were free to choose their own subject matter once in the field.<sup>180</sup>

The Marine Corps Combat Correspondent Program was developed during the early years of the war. With the United States’ entry into the war, the new Director of Public Relations for the United States Marine Corps, Brigadier General Robert L. Denig, vocalized his desire to recruit young writers and artists to be marine “combat correspondents.” According to Denig, correspondents were “Marines first, and artists, or anything else, second,”<sup>181</sup> so they were required to meet all training requirements of regular Marines. The Marine Corps was so adamant that artists be trained as active Marines because they would not only observe the war, they would live it firsthand. This in turn would bring to light a realistic and true account of the lives of World War II Marines. Artwork was produced under extreme conditions, especially when illustrating Marine landings. Combat correspondents were expected to fight like Marines during the landings and were only allowed to sketch after the beach was secure.

Denig believed that artists supplied the public what they “need to know, and have the right to know”<sup>182</sup> about the war. Artists had some advantages over photographers

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<sup>178</sup> Ibid., 89-91.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid., 89.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., 52.

because artists had a more honed “photographic eye” that allowed them to take part in the actions while being able to recreate any moment from memory later.<sup>183</sup> Scenes could even be constructed from sketches after the fighting ceased, while photographers only had one fleeting opportunity to document a moment with a single shot of the camera.

After the first official Marine combat correspondent was sent overseas in August 1942, artwork was shipped back to the United States and featured in leading magazines, newspapers, and gallery shows.<sup>184</sup> One of the many exhibitions of Marine combat art was held at the National Gallery of Art in Washington D.C. from September 12 to October 10, 1943. In the show “Marine Watercolors and Drawings,” more than forty sketches and watercolors were exhibited depicting the experiences of Marine Corps officers and enlisted men on Guadalcanal and other South Pacific Islands.<sup>185</sup>

The United States Army established the War Department Art Advisory Committee (WDAAC) in the spring of 1942. Chairman George Biddle initially sent 23 soldier artists and 19 civilian artists to different theatres to paint, draw, or sketch anything and everything they experienced. In total forty-two artists were selected to work in twelve theaters.<sup>186</sup> The importance of the Art Program was stressed directly by Chairman George Biddle in a memorandum sent to all the participating artists:

In this war there will be a greater amount than ever before of factual reporting, of photographs and moving pictures. You are not sent out merely as news-gatherers. You have been selected as outstanding American artists, who will record the war in all its phases, and its impact on you as artists and as human beings. The War Department Art Advisory Committee is giving you as much

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<sup>183</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>185</sup> National Gallery of Art, “Past Exhibitions: Marine Watercolor and Drawings,” <http://www.nga.gov/past/exhy1943.shtm> (accessed May 4, 2012).

<sup>186</sup> Lanker and Newnham, 6.

latitude as possible in your method of work, whether by sketches done on the spot, sketches made from memory, or from notes taken on the spot, for it is recognized that an artist does his best work when he is not tied down by narrow technical limitations...Any subject is in order, if as artists you feel it is part of the War; battle scenes and the front line; battle landscapes; the wounded, the dying and the dead; prisoners of war; field hospitals and base hospitals; wrecked habitations and bombing scenes; character sketches of our own troops, of prisoners, of the natives of the country you visit...the tactical implements of war; embarkation and debarkation scenes; the nobility, courage, cowardice, cruelty, boredom of war...Try to omit nothing; duplicate to your heart's content. Express if you can--realistically or symbolically--the essence and spirit of War.<sup>187</sup>

Artists were given great freedom in terms of personal expression and subject matter. Artists were encouraged to document any and all subjects or aspects that related to the war because it provided American citizens a complete picture of the war abroad. Artists sketched and took notes along the front lines and later finished larger drawings and paintings in studios back at camp.<sup>188</sup> Through the Art Advisory Committee's efforts, more than 2,000 pieces of art were created and sent home. Despite the initial success of the program, funding waned as a waste of war expenses. On August 31, 1943 funds for the artists were cut and the committee was officially disbanded by Congress.<sup>189</sup> Unofficially soldier artists continued to document their experiences and send their work to the War Department. In 1944 Congress changed its stance on artists' participation by allowing soldier artists to produce art overseas as long as sketching did not interfere with military duties. Army artists were again authorized to work along fronts in North Africa, Sicily, Italy, Northern Europe, the South Pacific, Japan, and Korea.<sup>190</sup> Thus, this new-found appreciation of the participation of wartime artists is the topic of the following section that explores artists Howard Brodie, Edward

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<sup>187</sup> Reep, xv.

<sup>188</sup> Lanker and Newnham, 6.

<sup>189</sup> Brandon, 70.

<sup>190</sup> Lanker and Newnham, 7.

Reep, and Robert N. Blair and their emotional and personal wartime experiences expressed through their artwork.

### **Howard Brodie (1915-2010)**

Born on November 18, 1915 in Oakland, California, Howard Brodie was most well-known as a combat and courtroom sketch artist for various conflicts. After graduating as valedictorian from Polytechnic High School in San Francisco, Brodie continued his education briefly at the California School of Fine Arts. As World War II approached, Brodie was employed as a staff sports artist for *The San Francisco Chronicle* illustrating college and high school athletes. With the United States' entry into the war, Brodie enlisted in the Army and was approached to become an artist for *Yank Magazine: The Army Weekly*.<sup>191</sup>

The weekly magazine was conceived by Egbert White, who had previously been a staff member for *Stars and Stripes*, and was officially founded by the War Department's Army Service Forces in May 1942. The magazine had an unique perspective: it was to be written, edited, illustrated and heard by enlisted men only. Around the world *Yank Magazine* saw its first foreign edition published in November 1942 in London and by the war's end it included twenty-one editions in all active theaters. With an estimated cost of a nickel, *Yank Magazine* reached an audience of more than ten million.<sup>192</sup>

With photography in its infancy, artists and illustrators played a vital component of the *Yank Magazine* staff. Like writers and photographers, artists were recruited as

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<sup>191</sup> William Grimes, "Howard Brodie, 94, Combat and Courtroom Artist, Dies," *The New York Times*, September 24, 2010.

<sup>192</sup> Lanker and Newnham, 124.

official correspondents and sent overseas to cover the war. Although enlisted in the Army, Brodie never carried a weapon—only a sketch pad and pencil. He did not participate directly in combat, but he help injured soldiers as a medic. It was for these efforts that he was later awarded a Bronze Star for valor.<sup>193</sup>

Brodie's assignments sent him to France, Belgium, and Germany to cover several conflicts. One major campaign Brodie covered was Guadalcanal which was fought between August 1942 and February 1943 on the island of Guadalcanal in the Pacific theatre between the Allied forces and Japanese forces. While covering Guadalcanal, Brodie spent weeks working in foxholes, dressing stations and artillery positions, constantly experiencing air raids, exploding mortars and snipers. Brodie not only produced on-the-spot sketches, but in some cases he took notes which helped later when he darkened and finished drawings in his tent.<sup>194</sup> Brodie's sketches and paintings from this campaign remain some of his most famous works for *Yank Magazine*. The Museum of Modern Art presented the exhibition *YANK Illustrates the War* between March 17 and April 18, 1943. The exhibition displayed original drawings, sketches, cartoon, illustrations and photography from the magazine. Brodie's work was represented by nineteen sketches from the Guadalcanal battlefield and in New Caledonia. This exhibition was so influence at the time because it was the first time the public had the opportunity to see the war from the perspective of enlisted men.<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> Grimes.

<sup>194</sup> Howard Brodie, "The Last Days at Guadalcanal," *The Best From Yank the Army Weekly* (New York: Kessinger Publishing, 2005): 77.

<sup>195</sup> "Exhibition of Original Drawings, Cartoons and Photographs: For Official Army Magazine Opens at Museum of Modern Art," The Museum of Modern Art press release, on The Museum of Modern Art Website, [http://www.moma.org/docs/press\\_archives/865/release/MOMA\\_1943\\_0017\\_1943-03-15\\_43315-17.pdf?2010](http://www.moma.org/docs/press_archives/865/release/MOMA_1943_0017_1943-03-15_43315-17.pdf?2010), accessed May 6, 2013.

Most of Brodie's best work was created in the midst of battle. One of Brodie's most well-known sketches, *Execution*, (fig.1)<sup>196</sup> portrayed the execution of three German soldiers during the Battle of the Bulge in 1944. The German soldiers were captured impersonating American G.I.'s and were sentenced to death by firing squad. Brodie's sketch depicted one of the German soldiers tied to a post, blindfolded, his body sagging following his execution. This sketch had a powerful impact on Brodie as well as the American military. Due to the brutality of the executions, all coverage, including sketches, were censored by the federal government. To Brodie the killing of three defenseless human beings emphasized the consequences, ruthlessness, and inhumanity of war.<sup>197</sup>

Sketching fellow soldiers became a norm for Brodie at camp. While observing soldiers, Brodie liked to focus on the compassion and solidarity that existed among the men. One of his drawings that best depicted the true camaraderie was entitled *Compassion* (fig. 2).<sup>198</sup> The drawing showed an intimate moment of sympathy by one soldier embracing and consoling his fellow comrade during battle. It can be inferred that the men were under attack by the terrified, anguished expression of the soldier needing support. The sketch embodied the intense bond among soldiers knowing they must rely on and trust each other. Brodie's intent was to show that no matter how horrible and inhuman war could be, soldiers still retained their sense of humanity and compassion. These empathetic images persuaded Americans at home to respect the hardships and emotional turmoil that men endured on the front.

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<sup>196</sup> Howard Brodie, *Execution*, in *They Drew Fire: Combat Artists of World War II* (New York: TV Books, 2000): 137.

<sup>197</sup> Lanker and Newnham, 136.

<sup>198</sup> Howard Brodie, *Compassion*, in *They Drew Fire: Combat Artists of World War II*, 134.

After his stint as a World War II artist, Brodie returned to his pre-war job as a sports artist for the *San Francisco Chronicle*. With another war approaching, Brodie was later commissioned to document the Korean War, French Indonesia, and later Vietnam. Brodie also maintained a long career as a courtroom artist by joining the CBS News in 1964. As a courtroom artist, Brodie sketched everyone present to trials including judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys, defendants, and juries. Brodie recorded many famous trials, including those of the Chicago Seven, Charles Manson, the Jack Ruby Trials, the Watergate hearings, and the Senate Civil Rights Debates. Brodie passed away on September 19, 2010 at the age of 94 at his home near Parkfield, California.<sup>199</sup>

Currently Brodie's collection belongs to several institutions including the United States Center for Military History in Washington, D.C., the Library of Congress, The New Britain Museum of American Art, and the San Francisco Olympic Club. In addition to having collections in many museums, Brodie also authored two books: *Howard Brodie: War Drawings* in 1963 and *Drawing Fire: A Combat Artist at Work* in 1996. These books combined his collection of writings and artwork from World War II, Korea, Indochina, and Vietnam.<sup>200</sup>

### **Edward Reep (b.1918)**

Edward Reep was another well-known combat artist. Born in Brooklyn, New York on May 10, 1918, Reep moved with his family to Southern California in 1921. He began his artistic education at the Art Center School in Los Angeles and developed an

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<sup>199</sup> Grimes.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid.



appreciation for watercolors. Throughout his career, Reep also worked in gouache, acrylic, and oil. Reep graduated in 1941 just five months before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

On July 11, 1941 Reep decided to enlist in the U.S. Army as a private and soon began a career as a combat artist. Initially Reep thought he would be assigned to a camouflage or an art-related unit, but he was wrong; first he had to undergo basic training as a private.<sup>201</sup> Reep's first assignment in Fort Ord, California was for the Presidio in Monterey's capital, Colton Hall, on December 7, 1941. Along with fellow artist Gordon Mellor, he was assigned to create three panels depicting the history of exploration and conquest of South America, California, and the United States. Word of test interviews for Officer Candidate School arrived when the panel murals were almost completed. Reep passed and went on to officer training in Virginia. Next Reep was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Corps of Engineers for the United States Army and sent to Ford Leonard Wood in Missouri to teach engineering to black soldiers. Eventually Reep was transferred to New Orleans to train at the Andrew Higgins Boat School for service in the Amphibian Brigade.<sup>202</sup>

However, with the closing of the Andrew Higgins Boat School in spring 1943, Reep was reassigned to Ford Ord, California as a member of the Third Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment. During training Reep received a telegram on May 27, 1943 from the Art Advisory Committee seeking his possible interest in becoming an overseas artist. Reep joyfully accepted the opportunity and received his orders to ship out to

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<sup>201</sup> Reep, 1-5.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid., 8-10.

North Africa in early fall 1943.<sup>203</sup> On the overseas voyage to North Africa, Reep was required to perform daily crew tasks as well as to record his experiences “daily, without exception, making a valiant attempt to record all the activities taking place above and below decks and the ominous, rolling endless seas.”<sup>204</sup> Reep found it important to record everything, sketching even the smallest details because to him sketches of men gambling, washing their clothes, relaxing in their hammocks, working, and even bathing in tubs on the deck were all important. These simple tasks reminded Reep, as well as society, of the humanistic aspects and sometimes mundane realities during times of war.<sup>205</sup>

After a short-lived arrival overseas, Reep received word that Congress cut funding for the Art Advisory Committee.<sup>206</sup> Reep’s career as an artist correspondent was halted and he was transferred as a commercial artist to the publications division of the Psychological Warfare Branch (PWB) at the Allied Forces Headquarters in Algiers. Here Reep produced small leaflets that were to be dropped over France, Sicily, and Italy. One leaflet in particular was aimed to build good will among Italians for the approaching Allied soldiers through the admiration of the American people for Italian conductor Arturo Toscanini. Other popular leaflets created were “safe conduct” passes hoping to encourage the surrender of Italian and German soldiers. Reep worked on elaborate posters that encouraged peasants to continue farming through the reassurance that Allied Forces were on the way. He also helped produce a brochure, “Trois Discours,” intended for France which publicized the speeches of Joseph Stalin,

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<sup>203</sup> Ibid., 11-15.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., xiv.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid., 16-26.

Winston Churchill, and Franklin D. Roosevelt. Although, Reep did not voluntarily involve himself in the production of propaganda, he did contribute materials for enemy consumption that manipulated and molded opinions.<sup>207</sup>

General Eisenhower's new art program gave military artists a second chance. Reep was placed in command of assigning commissions to a unit of five military artists. For himself, Reep chose the 1<sup>st</sup> Armed Division and was sent to Naples, Italy, where one of the most significant initiatives of his assignment was to travel to the front lines for several days at a time. His watercolors and sketches of the front provided a firsthand account of the action in real time.<sup>208</sup>

On February 15, 1944 the Allied bombers dropped over 450 tons of bombs on the Abbey of Monte Cassino, a historical monument, and Reep was present. The purpose of bombing the abbey was to eliminate the enemy—mainly the Germans' hold on the area. The *Bombing of the Abbey of Monte Cassino*<sup>209</sup> (1944), (fig. 3) captured in watercolor the controversial bombing of the landmark. The swirled and frantic brushstrokes depicted the rising smoke of bombs in the chaos. Despite the danger, Reep risked his life to document the event as it unfolded. His capture of the bombing reinforced the necessity of artists who accompanied the frontlines. It was easier to record the aftermath of battles, but it was rare to have images of the event unfolding. If it were not for artists like Reep and Brodie, society and future generations might not have been able to study emotional perspective of the war from the view of the soldiers.

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<sup>207</sup> Ibid., 29-30.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid., 34-39.

<sup>209</sup> Edward Reep, *Bombing of the Abbey of Monte Cassino*, "They Drew Fire: Combat Artists of World War II," <http://www.pbs.org/theydrewfire/gallery/small/106.html> (accessed July, 2, 2012).

Documentation of the soldier's experience and the fragility of human life were invaluable visual depictions of the war. As a soldier-artist, Reep not only risked his life to paint and sketch, but he also witnessed war's psychological effects on soldiers. In the painting *Dugout*<sup>210</sup>(fig.4), he portrayed the limited space soldiers experienced. Whether in a dugout or a foxhole soldiers found conditions at the front difficult and space a precious commodity. Intending to portray the cramped conditions along the front, Reep distorted shapes and angles, and visually pulled up one soldier's knees to his chin and huddled the other soldiers tightly together in an exaggerated condensation of space. By producing paintings and sketches, like the *Dugout*, Reep hoped to give society a glimpse into the lives of the men that were risking their lives for their country.<sup>211</sup>

At the war's end, Reep was awarded the Bronze Star, promoted twice on the battlefield, and left the Army as a Captain. In 1946, Reep received a Guggenheim Fellowship for his artistic contribution during World War II. Upon his return home, Reep continued his artistic pursuits and began a career as an art instructor in California until his retirement in 1985. In 1987 Reep successfully published his autobiography *A Combat Artist in World War II* where he details his experiences during the war. Reep's wartime watercolors and drawings currently belong to the War Department of the Pentagon as well as the National Museum of American Art in Washington, D.C.

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<sup>210</sup> Edward Reep, *The Dugout*, 82.

<sup>211</sup> Lanker and Newnham, 16.

**Robert N. Blair (1912-2003)**

Despite numerous materials on the subject of war art and the hundreds of “unofficial” or “combat” artists who recorded their experiences of World War II, there is a sample of artists that are continuously overlooked. There were hundreds of soldier-artists drawing and painting unofficially without monetary compensation or commissions from the federal government or private companies. Many of these soldier-artists are still relatively unknown and their works unseen mainly because their work was never publicized, instead resides in private artist or family collections. Even though much of this artwork remains unknown, its importance remains relevant to an unique emotional and courageous perspective from the soldiers.

Although still considered combat artists, an unofficial artist’s work was not influenced by an art program or a particular assignment. Those artists fought first for their country and sketched and painted second. It can be argued that artwork produced by unofficial artists provides a more personal and authentic recollection of war because it was uncensored.

Watercolorist Robert N. Blair was one of these “unofficial artists,” known for his firsthand wartime art. Robert Blair has been recognized as an accomplished painter best known for his landscapes of Western New York, Vermont, and the Southwest. However, his art created during World War II, especially his images of the Battle of the Bulge in Belgium, is the most memorable. Throughout the duration of the war Blair was able to paint and sketch in the United States, England, Scotland, France, Belgium, and Germany.

Robert N. Blair was born in Buffalo, New York in 1912 and began his interest in art at an early age. Blair began his formal art training by studying at the Albright Art School in Buffalo and continued his education at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston from 1931 to 1934. Blair worked in oils, pen and ink, acrylics, and sketches, but is most well-known for his watercolors.<sup>212</sup> Painting and sketching mostly on location, Blair carried his own supplies and was forced to use a limited palette of grays, browns, and primary colors.

Blair entered the United States Army in February 1942. He served from 1942 through 1945 in Europe, specifically in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Regiment in Fort McClellan, the 17<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division in Europe, and the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division in Berlin. Initially Blair's desire to serve as a soldier and an artist in the field was discouraged. It was thought by the government and military that drawing and painting would interfere with a soldier's military responsibilities. As a result Blair initially had to disguise his art supplies, camouflaging them among his military gear, and inside his "K ration boxes and stuffed in a straw mattress."<sup>213</sup> However, he no longer had to hide art supplies after General Liebel granted him official permission to carry them anywhere and everywhere as long as his art did not interfere with his military duties.

Blair made drawings and paintings on the spot in order to sketch the action of the war as it happened. Movement was one of the most notable stylistic features Blair captured in his work. Wartime conditions were typically not ideal for artists, who had to work in the dark and draw on top moving vehicles. Although conditions were not always

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<sup>212</sup> Nancy Weekly, "Robert N. Blair & the Watercolor Tradition in Western New York" (Buffalo, New York: Burchfield-Penney Art Center, Buffalo State College, 2000): 4.

<sup>213</sup> Robert N. Blair, *Autobiography*, facilitated by Diane Hanson (Robert N. Blair Archives, Burchfield Penney Art Center, Buffalo, NY): 36.

conducive, Blair's art thrived. He actually preferred action and moving subjects. After sketching during action, Blair then returned to camp and created larger watercolors from his sketches.

One of the benefits of Blair's work was his unique perspective. He sketched experiences from the soldier's viewpoint instead of an observer's, like many commissioned artists had done. As a soldier himself Blair sketched the conditions of the front, his fellow soldiers, several battles, and the aftermath. Being a soldier Blair was able to get firsthand experience of battles from the action to fellow soldiers' reactions and emotions.

Blair's most notable work includes paintings of the Battle of the Bulge in Belgium when Allied troops fought against the Germans in January 1945. His paintings of the battle are among a small handful of extant firsthand documentary paintings depicting the largest battle fought by Americans during World War II. In fact, some of Blair's first paintings captured images of the Allies surrounded by German troops in the Ardennes near Bastone during the winter.<sup>214</sup> Blair's watercolor titled *Battle of the Bulge*<sup>215</sup> (fig. 5) provided a personal, close glimpse into the action of an advance across the countryside. Blair used vivid watercolors to enhance the destructive nature of the military advance. The focal point portrays advancing armored tanks firing at troops. The viewer experiences the destruction of the city in the distance as buildings burn and tanks cause explosions.

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<sup>214</sup> Weekly, 7-8.

<sup>215</sup> Robert N. Blair, *Battle of the Bulge*, U.S. Army Center for Military History, [http://www.history.army.mil/html/reference/bulge/botb\\_images\\_03.html](http://www.history.army.mil/html/reference/bulge/botb_images_03.html) (accessed July 2, 2012).

Blair focused on action, as well as his fellow soldiers. For example, in the watercolor *Infantry/Battered Bulge Village*<sup>216</sup>(fig.6), Allied soldiers appear physically drained and emotionally fatigued as they walk amongst the rubble the battle produced. As a soldier himself, Blair represented his fellow soldiers to echo his own emotions.

When the war ended Blair was reassigned to the occupation force within Berlin, specifically in the American, British, French, and Russian sectors. Blair shifted his focus to depict the destruction that the war inflicted upon European cities by exploring the ruins of Berlin, Cologne, Essen, Hamborn, as well as numerous other cities.<sup>217</sup> Blair deliberately painted surviving civilians—especially women—sifting through the rubble as it exemplified in the watercolor *Berlin Ruin-Downtown Section With Women Stacking Rubble*<sup>218</sup> (1945), (fig. 7). The watercolor shows the devastation inflicted upon the civilians as women collect pieces of buildings to begin to restore the city. This simple act shows the determination of the human spirit not to succumb to war's atrocities and destruction, but to persevere with hope and actively contribute to the rebuilding of society.

Through this examination of the role of combat artists—whether officially commissioned or not—it can be understood that these artists provided a personal perspective on war that changed the way wartime society and future generations might comprehend the events of war. Combat artists produce only a fraction of the art created during the duration of World War II; however it can be argued that their artworks provided some of the most authentic and realistic images of the war. These sketches or

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<sup>216</sup> Robert N. Blair, *Infantry/Battered Bulge Village*, U.S. Army Center for Military History.

<sup>217</sup> Walter Garver, "Meet the Masters: An American Visionary," *Watercolor Magic*, October 2004, 68.

<sup>218</sup> Robert N. Blair, *Berlin Ruin-Downtown Section With Women Stacking Rubble*, in *Weekly*, 11.



paintings provided a unique perspective that propaganda could not match, much to the benefit of preserving for society a compelling visual and firsthand glimpse into World War II.

## CONCLUSION

All art, even war art, benefits the public because there is no correct, singular interpretation. Each piece of artwork will engender a unique emotional response in each individual. These numerous interpretations and perspectives made art during World War II so valuable. Most importantly, artwork developed by combat artists still provides a firsthand emotional and personal connection to the events of the war that most historical textbooks are unable to convey.

Discussions of commercial art, especially propaganda, helped to show the prominence and utility of art during wartime society. One intention was to garner support and loyalty for the war effort through posters, comics, and cartoons emphasizing to citizens their wartime responsibilities and duties. However, not all propaganda was used for nationalistic purposes. Analyzing the latent motivations behind the artwork provided new historical context and allowed viewers a more complex picture of war. Propaganda often used by the government and artists demonstrated their own prejudices. Artists designed posters, cartoons, and comic books to manipulate society's opinions of the enemy, especially by promoting hatred towards the Germans, the Japanese, and Japanese-Americans. Since, the government often had tight control over the propaganda messages that permeated society they shaped America's perception of the war and presented the war on their terms. Thus, we cannot take all art at face value, but instead need to place the artwork in the context of history and understand the underlying motivations, messages, and prejudices that the artists attempted to portray.

In contrast, combat artists, especially noncommissioned artists, were able to remain relatively free of censorship. Unlike commercial art, that was very constructed and blatant, combat art was spontaneous and its messages more subtle by nature. Soldier artists would risk their lives in the midst of battles to record their surroundings and experiences. Thus, these works had a very personal and emotional nature. In propaganda posters or cartoons it was easy to separate the artist from the work, but with original combat artwork it's not that easy. One cannot separate the artist from their sketch or painting because their artwork was a direct response to their personal wartime experiences. These original works can be arguably more realistic representations of the war. There is always the issue of over exaggeration or staged depictions of events, but sometimes we have to take these risks into account and formulate our own observations and interpret the validity of the artwork. Although there is the chance that some work is not completely authentic these works are still more useful in depicting and shaping the historical interpretation of war. They provided today's generation a personal glimpse into the lives of soldiers that history books cannot offer.

Art will always have an influence on American society and societies throughout the world. Art provides society with unique representations of events and emotions caused by and war or conflict. Since, most combat art was not easily accessible its impact of World War II society was not immediate. However, since the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of World War II a resurgence of combat art has slowly emerged. If more original artworks can make their way out of archives and personal collections a new generation can experience World War II in a new way. Hopefully this resurgence of combat art will

inspire more people around their world to delve into the genre of wartime art, specifically World War II artwork.

Although this examination concentrated on only a small sample of art in the United States during World War II, its foundation can be applied to any conflict one wants to explore further. Since World War II, artists' original works have documented conflicts such as Korea, Vietnam, and today's conflicts in the Middle East; so there is a wealth of artwork one can explore that will provide a more cohesive visual approach to the study of history.

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## APPENDIX A

Presented is a short list of World War II combat artists that can be used for further research.<sup>219</sup>

George Baker  
Charles Bakerville  
Ludwig Bemelmans  
Robert Benney  
Peter Blume  
Franklin Boggs  
Aaron Bohrod  
Dave Breger  
Irwin Caplan  
Floyd Davis  
Harris A. Davis  
Olin Dows  
Kerr Eby  
Joseph Hirsch  
Peter Hurd  
Bil Keane  
Edward Laning  
Tom Lea  
Warren Leopold  
Fletcher Martin  
Bill Mauldin  
Barse Miller  
Frank Miller  
Ogden Pleissner  
William Linzee Prescott  
Edward A. Sallenbach  
Paul Sample  
Sidney Simon  
Lawrence Beall Smith  
Harrison Standley  
Ralph Stein

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<sup>219</sup> Renée Klish, *Art of the American Soldier: Documenting Military History Through Artists' Eyes and In their Own Words*, (Washington, D.C.: Center for Military History, 2001).

**APPENDIX B**

Additional World War II combat artists who were included in The Museum of Modern Art exhibition *YANK Illustrates the War* (March 17, 1943 – April 18, 1943).<sup>220</sup>

C. Ardovino  
David Berger  
Douglas Borgstedt  
Frank Brandt  
Dan Dowling  
Robert Greenhalgh  
Allan Kleinwaks  
Sidney Landi  
Oscar Liebman  
Ernest Maxwell  
Bill Newcombe  
Peter M. Paris  
Charles Pearson  
William Pene du Bois  
Larry Reynolds  
Jake Ruge  
N.L. Sentz  
Howard P. Sparber  
Norman Shadlet  
Joe Vlasek  
Sam Weissman

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<sup>220</sup> “Exhibition of Original Drawings, Cartoons and Photographs: For Official Army Magazine Opens at Museum of Modern Art,” The Museum of Modern Art press release, on The Museum of Modern Art Website, [http://www.moma.org/docs/press\\_archives/865/release/MOMA\\_1943\\_0017\\_1943-03-15\\_43315-17.pdf?2010](http://www.moma.org/docs/press_archives/865/release/MOMA_1943_0017_1943-03-15_43315-17.pdf?2010), accessed May 6, 2013.

Figure 1. Brodie, Howard. *Execution*. 1944. U.S. Army Center for Military History, Washington, D.C. In *They Drew Fire: Combat Artists of World War II*, by Brian Lanker and Nicole Newnham. New York: TV Books, 2000, 137.



Figure 2. Brodie, Howard. *Compassion*. date unknown. U.S. Army Center for Military History, Washington, D.C. In *They Drew Fire: Combat Artists of World War II*, by Brian Lanker and Nicole Newnham. New York: TV Books, 2000, 134.



Figure 3. Reep, Edward. *Bombing of the Abbey of Monte Cassino*. 1944. Watercolor. 17 x 22 ½ inches, U.S. Army Center for Military History, Washington, D.C.. They Drew Fire: Combat Artists of World War II. <http://www.pbs.org/theydrewfire/gallery/small/106.html> (accessed July 2, 2012).



Figure 4. Reep, Edward. *The Dugout*. 1944. Gouache, 19 x 20 ½ inches. U.S. Army Center for Military History Washington, D.C. In *A Combat Artist in World War II*, by Edward Reep. Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1987, 82.



Figure 5. Blair, Robert N. *Battle of the Bulge*. c. 1945. Watercolor. U.S. Army Center of Military History, Washington D.C. Battle of the Bulge.

[http://www.history.army.mil/html/reference/bulge/botb\\_images\\_03.html](http://www.history.army.mil/html/reference/bulge/botb_images_03.html) (accessed July 2, 2012).





Figure 6. Blair, Robert N. *Infantry/Battered Bulge Village*. c. 1945. Watercolor. U.S.

Army Center of Military History, Washington D.C. Battle of the Bulge.

[http://www.history.army.mil/html/reference/bulge/botb\\_images\\_03.html](http://www.history.army.mil/html/reference/bulge/botb_images_03.html) (accessed July 2, 2012).



Figure 7. Blair, Robert N. *Berlin Ruin-Downtown Section with Women Stacking Rubble*.

1945. Watercolor and ink, 27 x 40 inches. Collection of the Burchfield Penney Art

Center, Buffalo, New York.

