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WAR DEPARTMENT APPROVES MUSEUM OF MODERN ART SOLDIER ART PROGRAM

On May 6 the Museum of Modern Art will launch a far-reaching program, approved by the War Department, to make use of art and American artists for the benefit of the armed forces of the United States. The program is divided into two major projects:

1. To provide facilities and material for soldier artists in Army Camps throughout the country.
2. To utilize the talents of American artists for therapeutic work among disabled soldiers and sailors.

The first step in the Museum's program is to raise the money for the two projects. To this end the Museum is sending out letters to its 7,000 members throughout the country asking for contributions of works of art--paintings, sculpture, drawings, watercolors, gouaches, etchings, lithographs and prints. Trustees of the Museum are also being asked to contribute similarly.

On Wednesday, May 6, the Museum will open to the public a sales exhibition of all the works contributed. Each item will have its price clearly marked. Oils will probably sell for from \$100 up while other items will be priced as low as \$10. The sale will in no way be limited to modern works of art. On the evening of May 28 the Museum will hold a garden party to complete the sale.

The Museum has already received almost one hundred works of art for the sale. Among them are an early Winslow Homer, a John Kane oil, an oil by Orozco, a Bellows lithograph and two rare Corot drawings: Self Portrait and Portrait of Daumier. As the space for the exhibition is comparatively limited the Museum is requesting contributors to submit lists of items they would be willing to give. The Museum will then communicate with the contributor. The only standard of acceptance is not that a work should be modern but that it should be good of its kind, and that if a contribution is an oil painting it should be worth a minimum of \$100. Works in other media worth far less will be accepted.

The entire program, which is under the direction of James T. Soby, head of the Museum's Armed Services Division, has the approval of the War Department and the enthusiastic support of the Special

Services Branch of the Army, to which the Museum will turn over the facilities and materials for soldier-artists in the Army Camps throughout the country. The need for studio rooms in which to work and canvas, colors, and so forth is acute as most soldiers cannot afford them and there is no specific appropriation as yet to provide these facilities and materials. In the few camps where such facilities have been provided the response is enthusiastic and results are amazingly good. The Army has for years encouraged soldiers whose avocations are music and sport to continue their pursuits in leisure time. But no provision has been made for artists to do the same. Even though soldier-artists are in a minority their work is an important part of Camp life.

Soldier art has three functions. In his survey of soldier art and art for soldiers in certain Army Camps where it has been tried, Mr. Soby, head of the Museum's Armed Services Division, sees the need for such art activity as follows:

1. As inspirational material, art dignifies what the soldier is doing and emphasizes the glories of American military tradition. In Camps where recreational halls have been decorated with military scenes by soldier-artists, the soldiers are intensely proud of these visual records of their own and prior military achievement. In this way soldier-artists work for the common good of their Camp and regiments and are glad and proud to do so. Recently in a recreational hall where murals had been done by soldier-artists, civilian artists were assigned to paint over the walls with murals of their own. They were prevented from doing so, however, as the officers and soldiers of the Camp protested that the murals done by the soldier-artists were as much a part of the Fort as the guns and they would not allow them to be replaced by the work of civilian artists.
2. As decoration, soldier-art enlivens dreary recreation and mess rooms. At Fort Belvoir, where the Soldier Art Program under Captain John J. Sackas had been magnificently successful, soldiers shun bare rooms and sit for hours in rooms decorated by their fellow soldiers. Officers and soldiers alike are interested in art being done among them, with them, and for them. This kind of art has a far greater meaning for the majority of soldiers than exhibitions of civilian art imported for brief periods.
3. As history, soldier-art is obviously essential as an historical record of the war and to build up and continue the American military tradition. As an example of the value of Army art, the British Imperial War Museum of works of art pertaining to the last war has been crowded by the soldiers of this war who come in to see what the preceding generation did and perhaps receive inspiration from it.

The second purpose of the Museum's Army Art Program is to provide funds for exhibition and publication of designs, actual working models and ornamental motifs submitted by American artists

for use in therapy for wounded or disabled soldiers and sailors.

The exhibition will be sponsored by the Museum of Modern Art, Artists for Victory, the American Occupational Therapy Association, and perhaps by other medical associations. The 10,000 artists on the Artists for Victory's nationwide list will be asked to send in entries. The best designs will be chosen by a jury composed of staff members of the Museum and professional therapists. These designs will be shown in an exhibition, probably next fall. In conjunction with the exhibition a catalog will be published with plates and working drawings for use by therapists working with disabled soldiers and sailors. The Museum hopes to circulate exhibitions of these designs to cities or centers where there are hospitals with therapeutic sections. If the project is successful its scope may be enlarged to enlist artists to give instructions to therapists and perhaps to patients.

The exhibition and its correlated activities will offer American artists an opportunity to work on a definite project of aid to the Army and Navy. There is great need both for new designs and for new ideas in therapy. The Museum hopes that through the exhibition artists will be able to adapt new designs to traditional therapeutic media, i.e., pottery, weaving, cabinet making, metal work, etc., and also may be able to suggest new media. Since this war began a sailor patient in an English hospital invented a new weave with a loose sailor's knot which was so successful both therapeutically and esthetically that it spread to hospitals all over England.

In addition to the two major projects of the Museum's Army Art Program, the Museum hopes to obtain funds to institute regular fortnightly parties for sailors, soldiers, marines, merchant marine, and airmen of the united nations. It has held three such parties financed privately, at each of which 250 enlisted men have been entertained. The men arrive at seven o'clock for a buffet supper in the Museum's penthouse and at eight-thirty go to the auditorium for motion pictures or other amusement until ten o'clock, when they return to the penthouse for games, sing-songs, and dancing. The parties already held have been highly successful and they will be continued if funds can be provided.