

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 WEST 53RD STREET, NEW YORK 19, N. Y.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

EXHIBITION OF BATTLE PICTURES BY UNITED STATES MARINES OPENS

AT MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

War in the Pacific as fought, seen, sketched and painted by the fighters themselves will be shown at the Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, in Marines Under Fire, an exhibition of fifty watercolors and sketches made recently in the South Sea battle areas by men and officers of the United States Marine Corps. The exhibition under the auspices of the Museum's Armed Services Program, will open Wednesday, November 10, the 168th birthday of the Marines and will remain on view in the Museum's Auditorium galleries through Sunday, January 9, 1944, after which it will be sent to other museums and art galleries throughout the country.

The exhibition and the spirit that infuses it can best be stated in terms of the pictures themselves and the artists who drew or painted them. Here are the Marines, and the land and sea on which they still fight.

The great picture of the show, Stretcher Party, a pencil sketch drawn by an unknown artist on a piece of cardboard, was found in an ambulance just behind the front lines during the bloody battle of the Matanikau River, Guadalcanal, on October 8, 1942. Bearing that date, the sketch shows men straining every muscle to carry a wounded man on a stretcher uphill through underbrush and a tangle of trees. No one has ever been able to decipher the blurred signature of a Marine private in the lower right hand corner of the sketch. Perhaps the artist was a wounded man waiting by the trail to be treated, who drew the stretcher bearers as he saw them carrying away a comrade; perhaps he himself carried stretchers during the battle and afterward drew the sketch. In either case, it must be assumed that he died of wounds or was killed, as widespread efforts to identify the artist have failed.

The favorite of the Marines themselves Too Many, Too Close, Too Long, a watercolor by Major Donald L. Dickson, is, in effect, a composite portrait of all the "little guys" who have fought beyond human endurance. Torn shirt open all the way, socks gone, battered shoes held on by knotted laces, he still clutches his helmet and drags his rifle. There he stands, as he has staggered from the jungle or up on the beachhead: emaciated, punch-drunk from days and nights of fighting. He has had no real sleep for a long time. He hasn't had enough to eat. And he probably hasn't stopped ducking and fighting long enough to discover that he has malaria. He is going to discover it now, however.

Major Dickson has several other watercolors in the exhibition: the Killer, a bearded dirty Marine, shirt torn, crouching for the kill, finger on trigger of Reising gun, knife handy and with no protection but the heavy helmet that comes down over head and neck; another Marine (or it might be the same one), his job finished for the time being, slogging the Last Hundred Yards in utter dogged weariness; a Marine in his foxhole at night with the battle going on around him, a dead Jap only a few feet away and live ones hiding behind every bush and tree trunk; and the most terrifying of all, Here It Comes, a Marine stretched full length on the ground as a shell comes whistling

over. The agony of fearful suspense, the endless wait until the shell strikes somewhere--these are expressed in the elongation of the figure that seems trying to make itself one with protecting Mother Earth.

As characteristic of the fighting Marine as Capt. Dickson's Too Many, Too Close, Too Long--but before rather than after the battle--is a pen-and-ink sketch by Pvt. Paul R. Ellsworth. Long Thoughts shows the eloquent back of a Marine who leans against the rail of his ship watching the ever-receding horizon. Fight, strength and a tough and cocky courage are in every line of the figure, even though the spectator knows his thoughts are fixed on home as he watches the horizon slip away.

Stripped to the waist, muscles bulging, several Marines pushing, sweating and no doubt swearing, push a heavy Army truck up over a muddy hill. This sketch, also by Pvt. Ellsworth, is entitled New Zealand Mud. Another by the same artist shows an endless lane of weary, bedraggled Marines inching along in the mud under dark and heavy clouds to a shed where chow is ladled out.

Set at the peak of a hill, a small Japanese shrine; beside it the outlines of an American Army tent. The shrine is empty, left by the fleeing Japanese on Tulagi Island. The picture, The War God is Gone, is by Pfc. Joseph W. Mintzer.

T/Sgt. Elmer Wexler has a wash drawing in the exhibition which tabulates in clear detail The Japanese Enemy from his cloven boots to his leaf-camouflaged helmet, with camera strapped to belt, rope around his shoulder, and rifle in hand.

Sgt. Herbert Hugh Laidman was with an Aviation Unit at Henderson Field. In the exhibition he has watercolors of planes and flyers, the teams that cleared the Japs from the skies over Guadalcanal. One of his watercolors is Wing Headquarters, Guadalcanal. When he made this watercolor Laidman was expecting an attack of malaria; he therefore thoughtfully painted the picture from a point near the sick bay so that the stretcher-bearers would not have far to carry him when the malaria--which arrived on schedule--hit him. Another of Laidman's watercolors is Scene from Dog Battery, Guadalcanal: a quiet stretch of water seen through tropical trees and foliage. Beneath the peaceful surface of these waters lie many Japanese ships sunk in five major Naval engagements between the American and Japanese fleets.

A watercolor by Capt. George M. Harding shows the Marine raiders, toughest fighters in the world, making a surprise dawn landing behind Japanese positions. In a small boat they come silently through the surf. Another of Capt. Harding's paintings is of an American B-25 bomber dropping life rafts to survivors of a sinking heavy cruiser. Two of his oils show paramarines jumping from the planes and landing in heavy tropical underbrush.

T/Sgt. Victor P. Donahue has both humorous and serious pen-and-ink drawings in the exhibition. One illustrates in graphic detail the varied activities of Embarkation: trucks drawn up to a small inlet, landing barges with their ramps down receiving men, guns and equipment. Another of Sgt. Donahue's sketches is called Combat Reporters and shows some belligerent Marines climbing the heights of a newly established beachhead and vastly annoyed to see two combat reporters there ahead of them busily writing and sketching the arrival of the tough guys themselves, whose motto is always "First to land."

Old and Young Gooney, a watercolor by Cpl. John E. Jones, shows a mild but exceedingly baffling annoyance of the Pacific battle area. Gooney birds were all over Midway, under everyone's feet, on runways, in foxholes and slit trenches and in vital command posts. Despite the fact that Marines and soldiers and sailors were busy defending that island outpost from a ruthless invader, the Goonies went on about their business with complete indifference, getting in everybody's way and acting as though nothing could disturb their usual routine.

Marine artists represented in the exhibition are:

Cpl. Thomas Anthony Blair, born Chicago, March 1917; joined the Marines in January 1942. He has been with an Aircraft Wing in the Pacific and was at Henderson Field on Guadalcanal.

Major Donald Lester Dickson, born 1906 in Cambridge, Mass., served in the U. S. Army from 1924 to 1927, and in 1927 joined the Marine Corps. An expert with both rifle and pistol, he has served in the Marines ever since, coming up through the ranks to his present grade. In the Solomons' campaign he was adjutant of the first regiment to land on Guadalcanal and the first to occupy Henderson airfield. He was continually under fire, and one of his sketches illustrates such a scene, when he himself was the first man to cross the Lunga River during a Marine attack.

Major Dickson sketched men as they got their orders to go out in the jungle on patrol, tense and alert. He caught their moods as they came back--grim, worn out, dirty, perhaps with a bandage around a wrist or ankle, dragging on a cigarette. He drew them as they hugged the ground during a bombardment, as they peered across a protecting log trying to spot an enemy sniper, as they struggled across deep muddy streams, loaded down with gear, as they charged Japanese emplacements, as they were carried, wounded, from the front. He said: "I'm not interested in drawing Marines who are spick and span and smartly dressed. I don't want to gloss over life out here. I want to picture them just as they are--tired and dirty, rough, and sometimes scared, but with the best damned spirit in the world."

T/Sgt. Victor P. Donahue, born 1918 in Philadelphia, enlisted in the Marine Corps January 1942. He was trained for the Marines on the West Coast and qualified as a marksman with both pistol and rifle. Previously, he had been doing sketches for an Omaha, Nebraska, newspaper, as well as some commercial art work. In his spare time, he was a drummer with a swing orchestra which toured Nebraska and neighboring States. He was originally classified as a musician in the Corps. His drawings, however, brought him to the attention of Marine authorities and he was eventually reassigned to the Division of Public Relations as a combat artist. Today he is with a combat unit in the Southwest Pacific.

Pvt. Paul R. Ellsworth, born April 1923, enlisted in the Marine Corps September 1942. Previously, he had studied art at the Frederick Mizen Academy, the Chicago Art Institute and the Art Students League in New York City.

In the Marine Corps, he has been a tank driver, an intelligence map draughtsman and a camouflage expert. As an artist, it is said by his fellow-Marines that Pvt. Ellsworth mirrors the conditions around him. If the weather is foul, he paints it foul. If the men in his outfit are dirty, tired, or sad, that's the way they look in his sketches and paintings.

Pfc. John Fabion, born in Vienna, Austria, October 1905. Coming to this country at an early age, he became an American citizen and studied as a sculptor, painter and designer. He served with the Illinois National Guard before joining the Marine Corps in January 1943.

Capt. George M. Harding, born October 1882, in Philadelphia, spent most of his adult years in extensive travel, covering in his wanderings such spots as the Kalgoorlie gold fields of Australia, the ice floes of Labrador (where his vessel was wrecked), Yucatan, Singapore and Yokohama, Japan.

As an outstanding professional artist, he has been on the faculties of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts and the School of Architecture at the University of Pennsylvania. A Fellow of the Royal Geographic Society of London for 25 years, he has won several national art competitions. His work has been on exhibition at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, the Carnegie International in Pittsburgh, and the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. He has murals in many public buildings in Philadelphia.

Capt. Harding served in the First World War as an officer in the Army Engineers. He was designated "Official artist of the AEF," serving in France from April 1918 to April 1919. In August 1942, Capt. Harding was commissioned in the Marine Corps. At present, he is with a Marine Amphibious Corps in the South Pacific.

Cpl. Theodore Hios, born February 1910 in Sparta, Greece, was educated at the University of Athens. He came to this country in the nineteen-twenties and after studying at the American Artists School, became a free-lance artist and lithographer. He worked his way through art classes, once running a restaurant as a means of support. Cpl. Hios joined the Marines in December 1942 and trained as a photo-lithographer and map reproducer. Cpl. Hios, an American citizen, has a personal interest in this war, as he has not heard from his parents, three sisters and a brother, since the Germans invaded Greece.

Pfc. Harry Andrew Jackson, born April 1924, in Chicago, enlisted in the Marines December 1942. He had had two years of art training at the Frederick Mizen Academy and the Chicago Institute, and had worked on a Wyoming ranch. As an artist, he works with equal talent in oil, watercolor, pastel, pen and ink, and pencil.

Cpl. John Earl Jones has been at Midway in the Pacific with Marine Unit and did about thirty pictures of bird-life there, as well as paintings of Marines in the Pacific. He has shown considerable ingenuity in his painting equipment. When he does oils his canvas is target cloth stretched over plywood; his brushes he makes from discarded C.B. (construction battalion) paint brushes by removing the bristles, cleaning and sand-papering their edges. He whittles out handles, and with bits of soft metal fastens the parts together.

T/Sgt. Herbert Hugh Laidman, born in New York City, August 1913, served with a Marine aviation unit on Guadalcanal and, while there, contracted malaria. He is now in a hospital in the Southwest Pacific. His watercolors of scenes at Henderson Field and his sketches of typical Marines have received praise for their warm sympathy and understanding. Many of them were exhibited at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D. C., where they were acclaimed by critics and public alike.

Sgt. John Richard McDermott, born August 1919, at Pueblo, Colo., attended high school in Hollywood, California, and worked for Walt Disney and then Columbia Pictures as a cartoon artist. He joined the Marine Corps on September 29, 1942, and has been attached to a relief map section of an engineering unit in the South Pacific.

Pfc. Joseph W. Mintzer, born February 1917 in Philadelphia, enlisted in the Marine Corps on December 29, 1941, and received his recruit training at Parris Island, South Carolina. He has served since as a field lineman and switchboard operator and is now with a Marine combat unit overseas.

T/Sgt. Elmer Wexler, born August 1918, at Bridgeport, Conn., was graduated from the Pratt Institute School of Fine and Applied Arts and entered the fields of advertising and commercial art. He was also the illustrator of the newspaper comic strip "Vic Jordan," from its inception, until he enlisted in the Marine Corps April 1942. In the Marines, he was first trained as a telephone lineman, then attached to a combat unit as a field artist. He is now serving in the South Pacific.

Cpl. Cynthia Wolfe, born April 1919, in Philadelphia, joined the Marines in March 1943. She had recruiting training and was then attached to the Uniform Department, where her fashion-illustration experience makes her useful in designing and sketching.

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11 West 53 Street, New York

MARINES UNDER FIRE

Exhibition of Watercolors and Drawings
by United States Marines

November 10, 1943 - January 9, 1944

1. Corporal Thomas A. Blair, USMC: Three Marine Graves at Henderson Field, watercolor
2. Major Donald L. Dickson, USMC: Killer, watercolor
3. The Last Hundred Yards, watercolor
4. Here it Comes, watercolor
5. Too Many, Too Close, Too Long, watercolor
6. Jap Night Attacks
7. T/Sgt. Victor P. Donahue, USMC: Landing Operations, ink
8. Combat Correspondents, ink
9. Embarkation, ink
10. Land Mine, watercolor
11. Pvt. Paul R. Ellsworth, USMC: The Line, ink
12. Long Thoughts, ink
13. Shuteye, washdrawing
14. New Zealand Mud, ink
15. Totere Beach, Guadalcanal, watercolor
16. Chapel, Guadalcanal, watercolor
17. The Letter, oil
18. PFC John Fabion, USMC: Wash Rack, pencil
19. Captain George M. Harding, USMC: Landing, watercolor
20. Dropping Liferrafts, watercolor
21. Mission Completed, watercolor
22. Scout, watercolor
23. The Landing, oil
24. First Man Out, oil

25. Corporal Theodore Hios, USMC: The Arsenal, watercolor
26. In the Boondocks, watercolor
27. Pvt. Harry A. Jackson, USMC: Night Patrol, washdrawing
28. Corporal John E. Jones, USMC: Old and Young Gooney, watercolor
29. T/Sgt. Herbert H. Laidman, USMC: Mess at Sea, pencil
30. Platter Jockey, pencil
31. Wing Headquarters, pencil
32. Compartment 1-c, pencil
33. Sick Bay, pencil
34. Relaxation, pencil
35. Guadalcanal Mud, pencil
36. Wing Headquarters, Guadalcanal, w.c.
37. Scene from Dog Battery, watercolor
38. Rain Storm, watercolor
39. F4Us on Fighter Strip, watercolor
40. Protection, watercolor
41. Night Bomb Burst, watercolor
42. Pagoda Hill, Guadalcanal, watercolor
43. Bloody Knoll, watercolor
44. PB4Y, watercolor
45. Cpl. John R. McDermott, USMC: Still Life, ink
46. Pvt. Joseph W. Mintzer, USMC: Raider Shack, crayon
47. Japanese Shrine, crayon
48. T/Sgt. Elmer Wexler, USMC: The Japanese Enemy, wash drawing
49. Cpl. Cynthia Wolfe, USMC: Chapel in Camp Lejeune, New River, watercolor
50. Unknown: Stretcher Party, pencil