

The American Institute of Stress

COMBAT STRESS

BRINGING YOU ALL THE WAY HOME

Volume 3 Number 1
February 2014



Healing with the **ARTS** Reconnecting To Self and Community



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COMBAT STRESS

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Combat Stress is a quarterly magazine with news and advertising designed with Service Members, veterans and their families in mind. It appeals to all those interested in the myriad and complex interrelationships between combat stress and health because technical jargon is avoided and it is easy to understand. Combat Stress is archived online at stress.org. Information in this publication is carefully compiled to ensure accuracy.

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GET INSIDE OUR HEAD

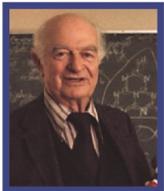


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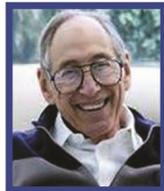
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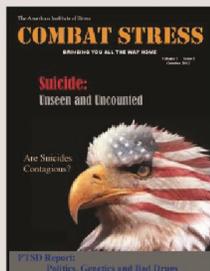
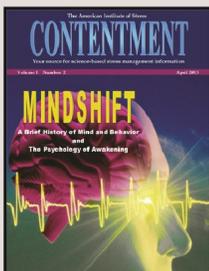
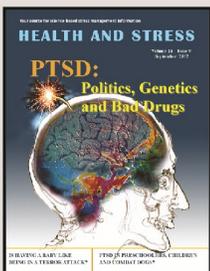
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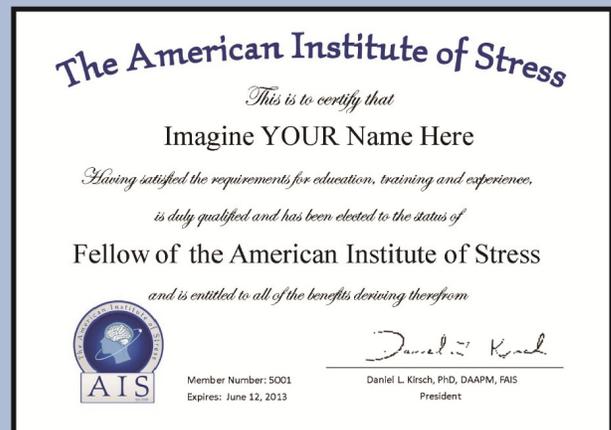
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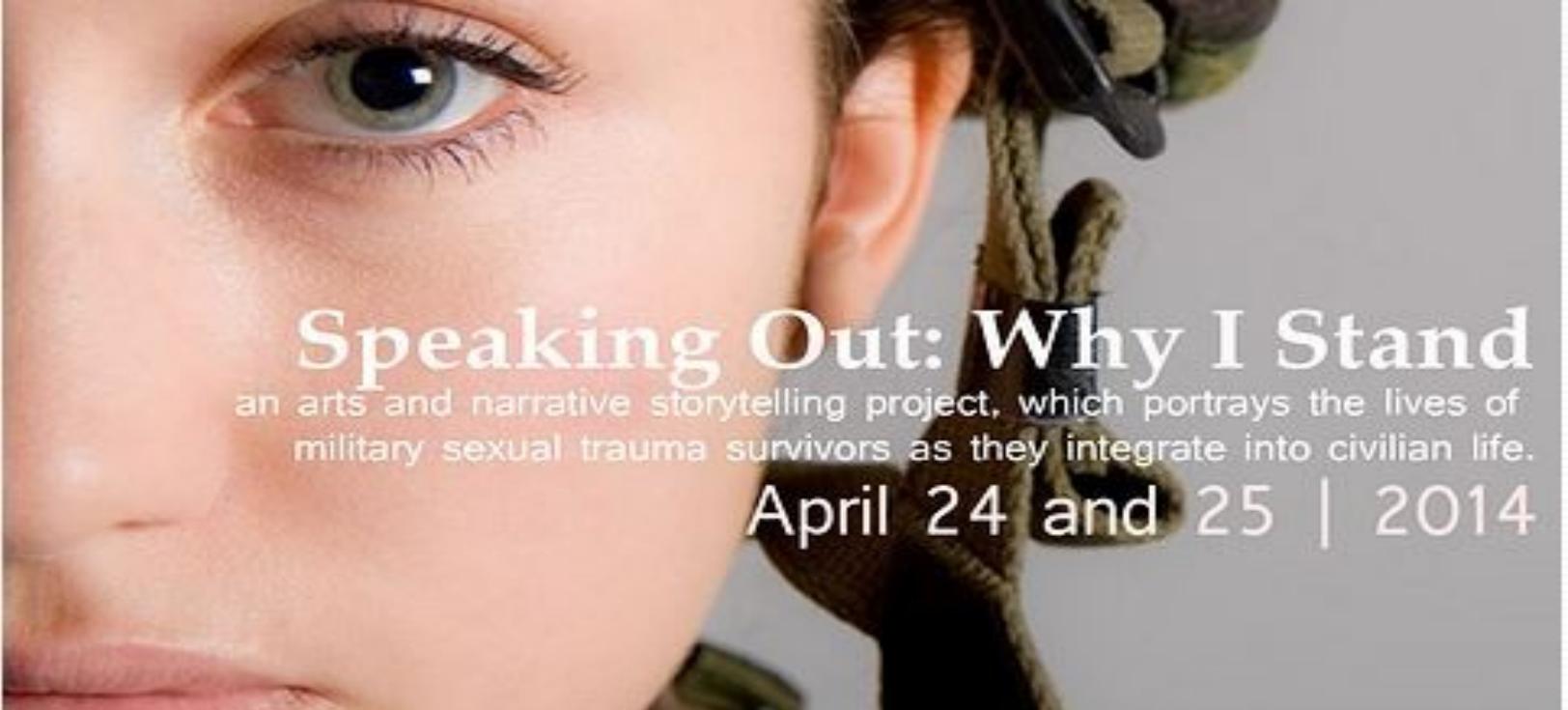
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Speaking Out: Why I Stand

an arts and narrative storytelling project, which portrays the lives of military sexual trauma survivors as they integrate into civilian life.

April 24 and 25 | 2014

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men and women, 18 and over due to mature subject matter



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Auditions for Speaking Out: Why I Stand will be February 24th from 6-9pm and February 25th from 6-8pm with call backs at directors discretion from 8-9pm. Auditions will be held at the Muse Theatre located at 1353 Avon St, La Crosse, WI. Men and women, 18 and older are needed. For more information, contact Rachel Beauchene at survivorsempowered@gmail.com.

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Veterans and the Arts as Healing Interventions: Reconnecting to Self and Community

**by Christiane C. O'Hara PhD, Red Cross Consulting Psychologist, DDEAMC,
Fort Gordon GA**

And

**Travis L. Martin, Sgt., USA (2002-2006), PhD Candidate, Dept. of English,
University of Kentucky, Founder & President, Military Experience and the
Arts, Inc.**

Much has been said about the healing capacity of the arts. Some argue that the evidence behind these healing interventions is anecdotal. Others, particularly those who have benefitted from translating their experiences into prose, poetry, art, dance, film, photographs, crafts, or music, credit it with saving lives. Regardless, creative works emerge out of trauma generation after generation, allowing those who have gone beyond the extremes of human experience to articulate lessons learned and appeal to the common fibers of humanity. Veterans, for their part, employ creativity and imagination to heal from/process military experiences (including, but certainly not limited to, war trauma). Many of these veterans use the arts to educate civilians about the costs of war and the benefits of military service. No two veterans share the exact same political or moral views, of course; that individuality is an integral part: the need to reveal and explore the very parts of humanity veterans have had to repress in

order to do their jobs, work as a team, and survive.

The two authors of this article, one a non-veteran healer and the other a veteran writer, have approached this complex issue of veterans and the arts from two different perspectives. Christiane O'Hara, Ph.D., uses the expressive arts therapies (art, music, drama, writing, movement/dance) with teams of expressive arts therapists, other trained mental health professionals, and veterans as powerful healing interventions for veterans and their families. Travis L. Martin, a scholar of trauma in twentieth century American war literature and Operation Iraqi Freedom veteran, on the other hand, sought out creative writing as a means of finding himself after war and later founded a community of veterans sharing the same goal. In the past, much of this work was done in isolation—one writer/artist/dancer/musician/photographer working with his or her own medium, grappling with trauma,



Roman Baca's *Exit 12 Dance Company* performs "Homecoming" on the Intrepid flight deck. A veteran of the Iraq War, Roman Baca served as a Marine in Falluja, and his company's repertory emphasizes wartime experiences. "Homecoming," an unusual union of dance and topicality, depicts scenarios in which people who have seen their loved ones go off to battle and have either embraced them on their return or mourned their loss. Read more about Roman Baca and Exit 12 in the Featured Artists section at the back of this issue.

hoping to educate loved ones, or developing a new identity. Today, the proliferation of electronic communication during and in the wake of the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan has greatly expanded the audience and network of veteran artists and authors. Grassroots communities have sprung up throughout

the country, each offering some form of "healing," be it the mind, body, heart, or soul. The work produced in these communities transform warriors into educators, creating a new mission: paying tribute to those wounded, memorializing those who did not come home, and teaching civilians about war.



Prisoner of War, Composite Photograph with Digital Drawing (2013) Courtesy Tif Holmes.
See more of Holmes's work in the *Featured Artists* section at the back of this issue.



How the Arts Can Help Veterans

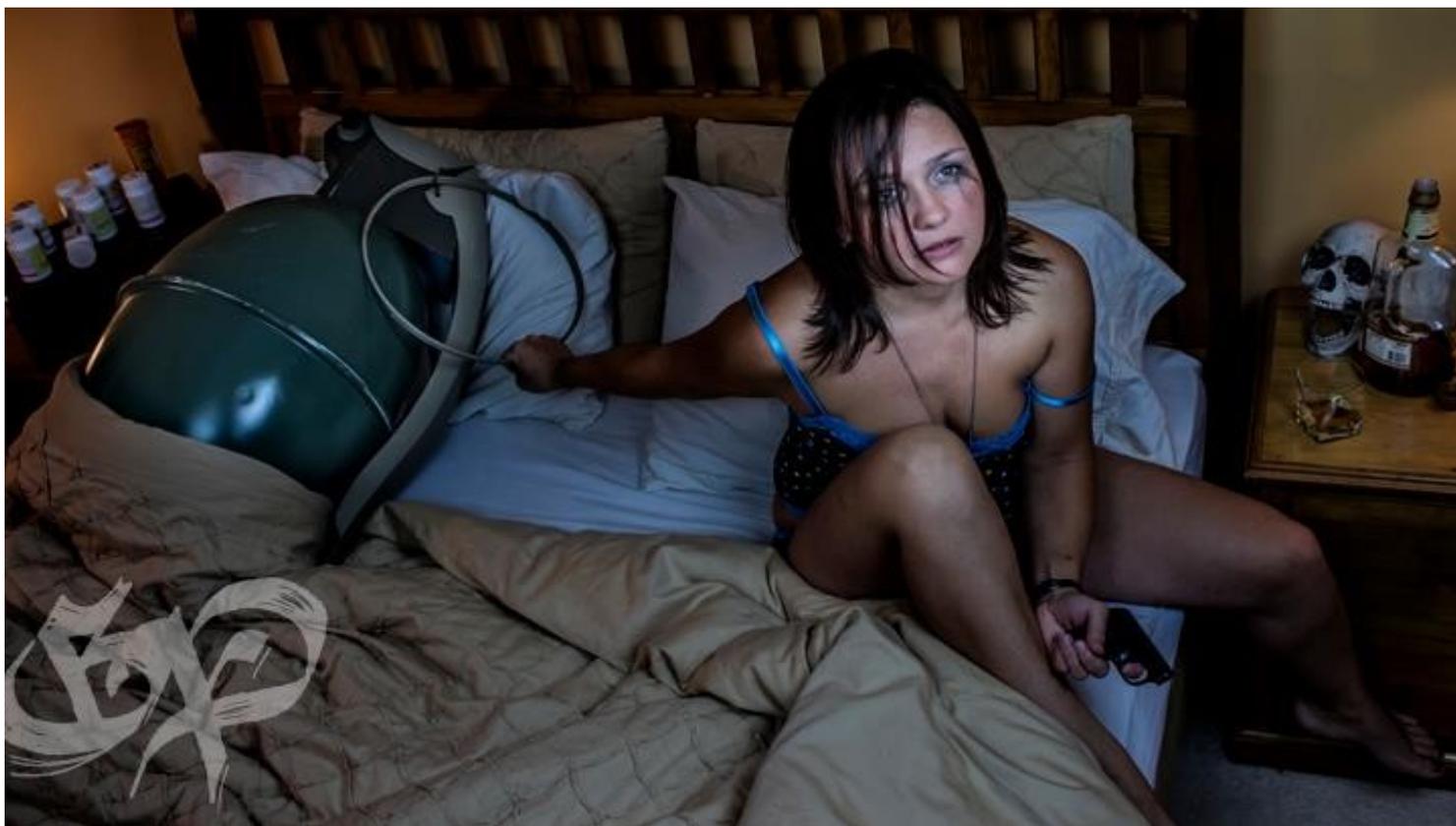
by Christiane O'Hara, PhD

Military personnel and veterans are often skeptical about their capacity to “do art” or benefit from it. And yet, our creativity is universal; our American military traditions and personnel are steeped in the arts. Military music began with the call to arms of our first Fife and Drum Corps, continuing with military band marches, battle-ready music within squads and companies, boot camp cadences, and of course, “Reveille” and “Taps”. This music bonds recruits together, as do the hymns of each branch of service and our countless patriotic songs. Our military incorporates the decorative arts in its uniforms, awards, flags, patches, insignia, and monuments. For over two centuries, artists, cartoonists, photographers and, more recently, videographers have been embedded in battalions to depict battle scenes and record the historic details of military life “in the field.” These records are stored in its National Military Archives, of which a selection was displayed in the 2010-2011 Art of the American Soldier exhibit in Philadelphia. The Department of Defense has routinely used the arts to document war, recruit military personnel, sell war bonds, promote its missions, and provide news from the battlefield to civilians.

In parallel, our men and women in uniform have used the arts to document their own stories and process their reactions to war and military service. Our eighteenth and nineteenth century warriors wrote their stories in letters to loved ones and played instruments (harmonicas, banjos, horns) to fill the silence. More recently, they have added carried electronics into war (iTunes, mp3 players) to relax, "pump up" before a battle, and record their experiences in photographs, video, and music on YouTube. Warfighters have continued to sketch and keep journals, creating art in the form of individual and group "graffiti" on the protective barriers surrounding military camps, some of which was captured by the group "Graffiti of War" and its founder, the former medic,

Jaeson "Doc" Parsons. At home, veterans' stories are transformed into films such as those included in the yearly Washington DC and Los Angeles-based GI Film Festivals featuring juried documentaries and movies created by veterans.

The works produced by these groups frequently tell the stories of veterans who return from war, only to continue fighting. These fights take the form of nightmares, distractibility, irritability, isolation, fatigue, and poor performance in academic and work settings, the latter of which are already unfamiliar territory. Those who seek help are often faced with delays, interviews with strangers who ask for detailed repetitions of their problems, clinicians with large caseloads and/or limited experi-



Oh Happy Day, Digital Photography (2012), 18 X 28 in., Courtesy Giuseppe Pellicano. See more of Pellicano's work in the *Featured Artists* section at the back of this issue.

ence, and/or insufficient information on resources and interventions. Many opt for additional or “alternative” interventions outside of clinical settings, particularly those that carry no stigma and can be embraced with enthusiasm, including the arts. The arts are activities that tap into the imagination, allowing for reconnections to one’s natural, pre-trauma creativity. The arts also allow for war and military trauma, including military sexual trauma, to be transformed and titrated through metaphor, fictionalized in storytelling, and processed in homogenous groups, helping individuals to connect to communities which encourage creativity and camaraderie.

The Department of Defense (DoD) and the Veterans Administration (VA) have spent millions of dollars researching those interventions that are most effective in helping veterans heal from emotional, physical, spiritual, and relational war injuries. Several research-based “best practices” have been endorsed, but these are insufficient to meet the needs of the 20-30% of the 2.6 million Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom veterans who may require treatment for PTSD, TBI, and co-existing problems (Tanielien, Jaycox, & Rand, 2008). The DoD and VA have committed research funds to study “complementary” therapeutic interventions, including yoga, meditation, and acupuncture (DoD Report to Congress, 2011).

The Naval Medical Center in San Diego, for example, has incorporated dance/movement therapy groups and expressive arts therapies for personnel in treatment for traumatic stress, depression, and substance abuse (Winters, 2011). These developments represent a shift from the traditional medical model to an integrated one that includes the arts, eastern practices,



The DoD’s National Intrepid Center of Excellence treatment protocol included art therapy (<http://www.arttherapy.org/upload/toolkitmedicalsettings/intrepidcenter.pdf>), adding music and writing therapies to its arts programs in partnership with the NEA in 2012. This program has been piloted at the Fort Belvoir Medical Center NICoE satellite (<http://arts.gov/news/2013/national-endowment-arts-announces-expansion-creative-arts-therapy-program>).



The Naval Hospital Camp Le Jeune has continued to use art therapy for treatment of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder since 2009 (<http://www.navy.mil/submit/display.asp?>

and holistic medicine. Correspondingly, a significantly higher percentage of military personnel than the general public are now using holistic interventions (Goertz et al, 2013).

Those who experience military trauma respond to interventions that incorporate telling one’s story in a safe way: Cognitive Processing Therapy, Prolonged Exposure Therapy (PET), and Eye-Movement Desensitization and Retraining (EMDR). All of these interventions include telling one’s story repeatedly until strong emotional valence is diminished. DoD research protocols have demonstrated that yoga and meditation calm brain reactivity (Stoller et al, 2012; Barnes et al, 2012; Rosenthal et al, 2011) but have not yet funded similar research using arts therapies. The arts therapies, however, have clearly demonstrated positive effects with veteran populations (Collie et al, 2006; Dobbs, 2002; James and Johnson, 1997; Nanda et al 2010; Rorke, 1996) and in non-military medical populations including cancer (Morgan et al 2008; Puetz et al, 2013), heart disease (Bittman et al, 2013), PTSD (Carr et al, 2012) and traumatic brain injury (Gardiner et al, 2009; Guetin et al, 2009; Thaut et al, 2009). The construction of a narrative provides an element of safety—whether in verse, prose, clay, music, dance, drama, photo and

film images, or brush strokes on a canvas. Metaphor once belonged solely in the domain of artists, authors, and scholars of the humanities. Today, healers, in particular expressive arts therapists, use metaphor to exhume and transform images, sounds, gestures, colors, textures, or words otherwise locked away or emerging as symptoms of avoidance and post-traumatic stress.

The production of art in any form becomes a means to uncover and heal repressed memories—of assimilating dissociated parts of self and inducing calm.

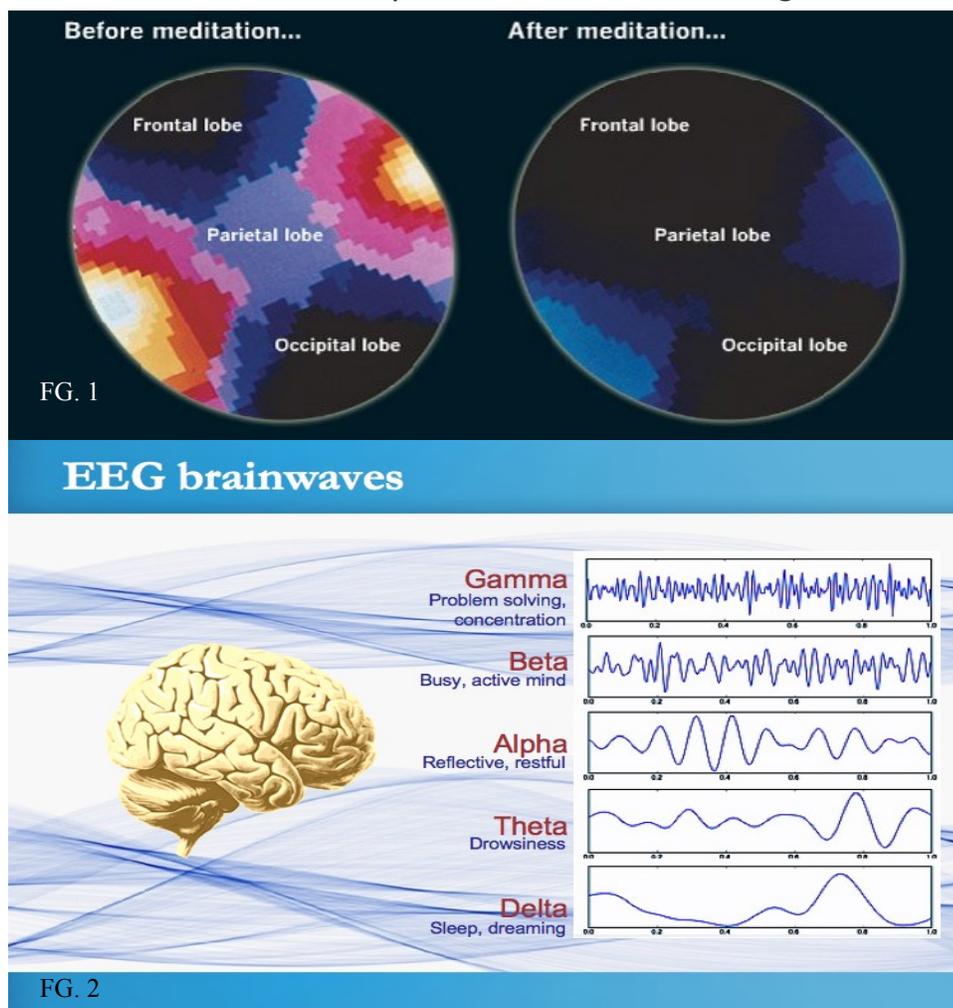


Figure 1: Illustrates brain activity before and after meditation. Figure 2. Illustrates various brain waves associated with various states of consciousness.

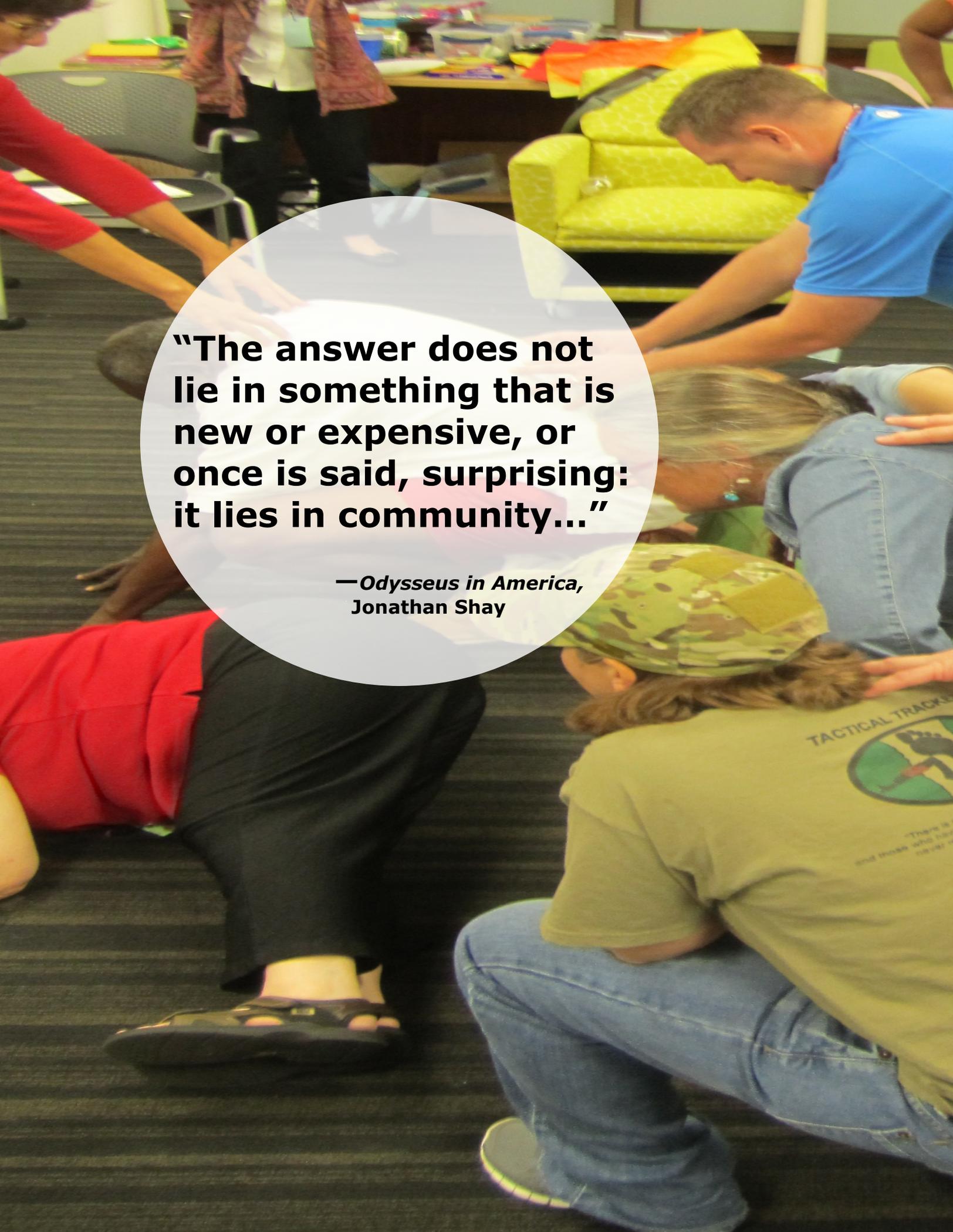
The arts access memories indirectly, offering safety in the selected art form. Themes of sacrifice, service, loss, pain, horror, and connections to "battle buddies" or those left behind emerge as the products of these creative experiences, speaking through metaphor, producing tangible effects: the ability to communicate to and from the souls of warriors, to connect with other warriors long after battle, to share stories that inform and warn those whom they have protected and defended, and to express that which is too painful to speak.

The arts also allow for experimentation in mixed mediums that stretch into "unfamiliar territory," where there is no correct/incorrect product. This experimentation can take place alone, in community, or both. It allows the veteran to reconnect with his or her self, to other

veterans, eventually with their families, and later, to the greater community. There are additional benefits: the arts are portable, thus available everywhere and at relatively minimal cost. They can be experienced in a community setting without referral to mental health treatment, or incorporated as part of a treatment plan to enhance recovery. They invite the safety of witnessing and participation as an audience member, as well as the taking on of roles and new identities as artists/actors/musicians/dancers/writers. The arts provide room for all, allowing for a graduated invitation to participate in communal expression. Because of the breadth and depth of the arts, they are unique in offering veterans the safe space to heal at their own pace, to tell their own stories that can become transformational.



Above and next page: Drama Therapy intervention: Body Sculpt- veterans are invited to move into a positional "freeze" to allow the whole body to express a theme; ArtReach Project America workshop, MEA Symposium, July 2012; used with permission of The ArtReach Foundation, Inc.



“The answer does not lie in something that is new or expensive, or once is said, surprising: it lies in community...”

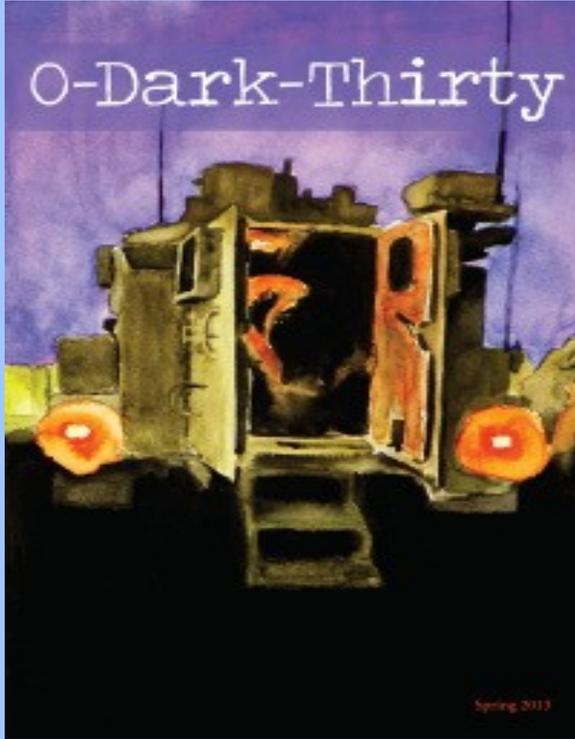
**—*Odysseus in America*,
Jonathan Shay**



Understanding Self & Reclaiming the Veteran Narrative

**by Travis L. Martin, Sgt., USA (2002-2006), PhD Candidate,
Dept. of English, University of Kentucky, Founder & President,
Military Experience and the Arts, Inc.**

Veterans Writing Project



RedCon-1



In *Odysseus in America*, Jonathan Shay, a career mental health practitioner with the Department of Veterans Affairs, comments on the importance of community in healing psychological wounds: "The answer does not lie in something that is new or expensive, or once is said, surprising: it lies in community. Vietnam veterans came home alone. The most significant community for a combat veteran is that of his surviving comrades" (2002, pg. 33). Although many of war's horrors remain universal, today's veterans seem to have at least learned the value of community from their predecessors. Veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan war generation have come together in communities for the sake of creative expression. Each community has its own story and set of guiding principles. The "Veterans Writing Project," for example, began with one veterans' attempt to "give away what [he] learned", culminating in the literary magazine, *O-Dark-Thirty* (click image at left). The Atlanta-based "ArtReach Project America" has trained veterans and expressive arts therapists to offer workshops for veterans and their families (Morley et al, 2012). The "RedCon-1" music group, started by the veteran rapper Soldier Hard, continues to grow with the inclusion of veteran musicians from different genres. (click image at left) The "Veteran Artist Program" (click image at right) out of Baltimore seeks to propel the works of veteran artists into the mainstream arts community. Others, like the "Warrior Arts Alliance," which partners with Southeast Missouri State and Missouri Humanities Council, bring together established authors to mentor veterans in the craft of writing.

In much the same way that the Great War Poets—Robert Graves, Ivor Gurney, Siegfried Sassoon, and others—knew each other and each other's work, the veteran authors and artists who have come together in these communities are already producing what may one day be considered the canonical works of war literature from my generation. I have had a unique opportunity to inter-

act with and understand these communities as the founder and president of Military Experience and the Arts (MEA) (click image at right). MEA has an all-volunteer staff of more than three dozen writers, professors, clinicians, and advocates. In the past three years, MEA has published 154 works of art, 102 poems, 53 non-fiction stories, 12 fiction stories, and 11 peer-reviewed scholarly works in six edited collections by 163 authors and artists. We maintain four online support forums through Facebook, where veterans are able to talk with each other as peers and share resources about Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Military Sexual Trauma (MST). At any given moment, our editors are leading writing groups of 15-20 veterans in the production of non-fiction, fiction, or works of poetry.

One member, BriGette McCoy, referred to the MEA as a “healing salve” when interviewed for our website (2013). She has since gone on to testify on Military Sexual Trauma before the United States Senate. Another, Rod Merkle, was recently compared to Hemmingway by *Time* magazine. It was at MEA’s first national symposium in 2012 that I met Ron Capps, the founder of the Veterans Writing Project, and began my training as a workshop leader in ArtReach: Project America, meeting with members of The Veteran Artist Program and Warrior Arts Alliance (click image at right). It was also at the MEA symposium that I was able to see firsthand, how these communities are genuinely changing lives.

Michelle Monte, a veteran and MST survivor, attended the MEA 2012 symposium in Richmond, KY. She joined a community of more than 130 veterans and professors, clinicians and poets, authors and artists at the event. And it was within this community that Michelle, who had previously remained silent about her trauma, broke into tears on the steps of the Eastern Kentucky University library. Despite the availability of mental health professionals on-site, it was the event’s other par-

Veteran Artist Program



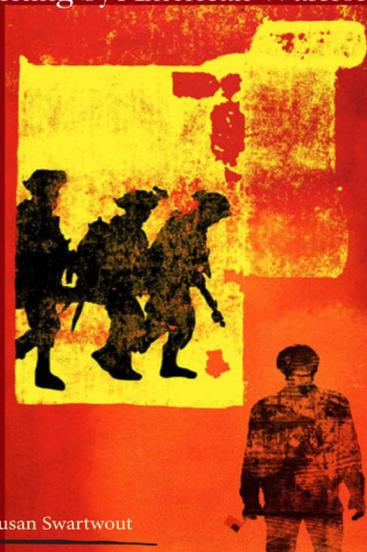
MEA



Warrior Arts Alliance

Missouri Humanities Council and Warriors Arts Alliance

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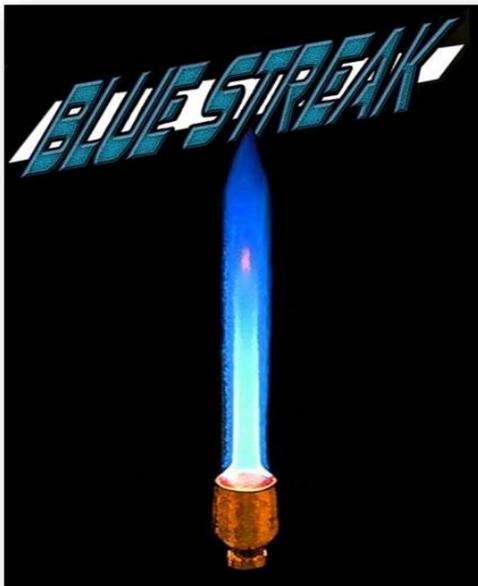
Edited by Susan Swartwout



prose. I have done several sketches. I continue to stay in contact with my new friends. I have made a few realizations about my situation that have advanced my healing process. Thanks to MEA, I am writing my way home after nearly 20 years” (2013).

Veterans like Michelle are expressing themselves in arts groups like MEA all over the country. Many of these focus on healing. Others focus on education, professionalization/employment, or social change. Regardless, scholars in both the humanities and the sciences are trying to understand how these communities work—how therapeutic models influence the literatures produced and how the literature produced becomes evidence of a therapeutic model. As an Iraq War veteran dealing with post traumatic stress, I turned to writing when traditional therapies and medications failed to work. Later, my research became a self-prescribed

MEA publications include: The Journal of Military Experience, Blue Streak: A Journal of Military Poetry, The Blue Falcon Review, and Blue Nostalgia: A Journal of Post-Traumatic Growth.



participants who helped Michelle work through the tears and to express them in writing and art. Michelle later claimed, “The other participants didn’t classify me by disability, combat status, or gender ... I have written nearly a dozen pages of

bibliotherapy, enabling me to better understand what I had been through by reading memoirs, poems, and works of fiction by combat veterans alongside trauma scholarship.

For the most part, those of us who are veteran writers and artists do not claim to be completely healed by the arts. It is no more a panacea than the traditional models of therapy that may promise too much, only to later shift blame to the patient when war trauma is not resolved with therapy sessions and medications. But creative expression can provide a new community and purpose after military service. On an individual level, it also provides an opportunity to articulate to loved ones what it is you are going through and dealing with, the chance to contextualize your experiences within larger social frameworks, and a chance to remind America of the true extent of what has been asked of us over the last decade of war.

This last point, the need to remind America about the extent of veterans' sacrifices, is a crucial point in the works of both Jonathan Shay and Judith Herman. Her seminal text, *Trauma and Recovery* (1992), explores trauma as it is experienced by sexually abused/exploited women, combat veterans, and survivors of political terror. The central theme running through her research, that "repression, dissociation, and denial are phenomena of social as well as individual consciousness", is worthy of consideration by all of society, not just veterans and those who strive to help them. Just as the post traumatic stress symptom makes little sense to the veteran who has repressed the memory of its cause, veterans with mental illness make little sense to the society refusing (consciously or unconsciously) to acknowledge them, preferring instead to repress the realities of nineteen-year-old soldiers who witness the kinds of atrocities that will impact

them for the rest of their lives. It is much easier to pretend that veterans of this generation, to the extent that they have had it "better" than their predecessors in Vietnam, will be able to assimilate seamlessly. In the same way that yellow ribbon bumper stickers have replaced genuine concern for the men and women who have borne the costs of war, we must guard against narratives that say the arts or any other intervention serve as a cure all. Societies, scholars like Herman argue, will silence those who have served and endured trauma in favor of the pre-war innocence that veterans will never reclaim. "Feel good" stories promoting narratives of seamless transition reinforce this silence by obfuscating the reality of veterans' day-to-day struggles to find the right treatment, the appropriate medication, or the strength to move forward. When the reality of veterans' struggles are relegated to the fringes, those individuals dealing with mental illness shock those who have never encountered veterans except as fictional characters in television and film. But literature and art rage against false narratives, bringing real veterans and society into contact. The products produced in today's veterans' arts communities work against cookie cutter philosophies and stereotypes, exposing the nuanced recovery of the individual. As we continue our discussions about the viability of arts interventions, the literature produced by those interventions should be examined, not only as art, but as the realities veterans choose to share with us.

Grassroots Veto

by **Christiane O'Hara, PhD**

and

Travis L. Martin, Sgt., USA (2002-2006),

PhD Candidate, Dept. of English, University of Kentucky

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, widespread distribution of war novels such as *The Red Badge of Courage*, *A Farewell to Arms*, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, and *The Young Lions* introduced civilians to combat veterans' struggles with war trauma. Many of these stories reached large audiences through Hollywood films that depicted the physical and emotional costs of war, including the 1928, 1930, 1939 and 1946 Best Pictures, *Wings*, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, *Gone with the Wind* and *The Best Years of Our Lives*. The latter, combined with newsreels from the frontlines shown in theaters every week, brought the horrors of combat home to civilian audiences, helping to bridge the gap between the innocents and the initiated.

William Dieterle's film, *The Last Flight* (1931), begins after a brief sequence explaining how they were wounded, with two WWI pilots, Cary Lockwood, played by Richard Barthelmess, and Shep Lambert, played by David Manners. In the film, these Soldiers are found sitting in a hospital, watching a clock in anticipation of the war's end and their release. Both men are fully dressed. They appear angry, not excited, and lean forward as if they will take off at a sprint once set free. Barthelmess, in particular, appears to brood. His expression conveys an almost criminal intent. It fades briefly, however, in the presence of a military doctor in the next scene. The doctor prescribes "time" for Shep's nervous tick, stretching for Cary's burnt hands, and normal living for both of the lieutenants. But in a conversation with a col-



er an Initiatives

league following their departure, it becomes clear that these are only hollow words:

Well, there they go. Out to face *life* and their whole training was in preparation for *death* ... They fell, you know: 6000 meters. Like dropping a fine, Swiss watch on the pavement. Shattered both of them. Their nervous systems are deranged, disorganized, brittle ... Spent bullets. That's it. They're like projectiles: Shaped for war and hurled at the enemy. They've described a beautiful, high-arching trajectory. Now they've fallen back to Earth: spent, cooled off, useless (00:05:06-00:06:17).

Of course, there are a number of different interpretations for the doctor's speech: war weariness, cinematic foreshadowing, or an effort to channel America's angst surrounding the successful reintegration of servicemen into postwar society. But, what cannot be dismissed is its clear focus on the psychological wounds of combat. The doctor sees Shep and Cary as "spent bullets" because of their minds, not because of nervous ticks or burnt hands. In 1931, *The Last Flight* suggests that the trouble WWI veterans have reintegrating into society has entirely to do with the psychological wounds of combat.

Cinematic stereotyping of this sort has played itself out for each generation of war veterans in a formulaic pattern: the Soldier goes to war; he or she comes home and battles what we now

call “the invisible wounds of war;” a social plight or depiction of the veteran as some type of villain; the veteran’s “instability” is directed violently at self or others, eliminating the threat, but also the protagonist. In a society that reinforces silence in the wake of trauma, characters in films such as *The Last Flight* become the only models available to those who return home. Worse, these troubled works of fiction become warnings for those who stayed home, transforming our collective notion of the “veteran” into one that is dangerous and unstable. In the absence of viable models and in the face of societal pressure, veterans look inward and to each other, expressing the reality of what they experienced (and continue to experience) through the individual creative act. But the second half of that message, that veterans are a benefit as opposed to a threat to society, is lost if those creative works are not acknowledged by the general public.

One early example of an organized project, which collected and published veterans’ writings, the Hospitalized Veterans Writing Project, was founded in 1946 by a hospital auxiliary in Kansas for its veteran patients (veteransvoices.org). The project has run continuously since then, moving to nonprofit status in 1984 and partnering with the Veterans Administration Hospi-

als to publish the *Veterans Voices* magazine three times a year.

In 1996, well after their own war, a group of Vietnam veteran artists opened a museum of their work in Chicago. This initiative was followed by two national ones: the first, sponsored by the Library of Congress, encouraged recording veterans’ stories both in audio and video format (“Veterans History Project”). The second, “Operation Homecoming,” was funded by the National Endowment for the Arts. Operation Homecoming invited military personnel and their families to attend a series of writing workshops to record their experiences and feelings about deployment as they occurred, subsequently generating a book about the process and the veterans’ and families’ personal stories.

The sharing of stories and the community-building of veteran artists has rapidly expanded to include local and regional networks, Electronic communications—“Friends” on Facebook, hashtags on Twitter, comment threads on blogs—allow for the unlimited distribution of veterans’ works. These mediums allow access to on-line galleries, journals, and films, and inform participants of training opportunities and symposia. They also bring national attention to the growing network of:



Performance Groups, such as Marine veteran/ballet dancer and choreographer Roman Baca's "Exit 12" Ballet Company based in New York City; and "MusiCorps Wounded Warrior Band", whose members perform around the country using adapted instruments;

Networks of Veteran Artists, such as the *Dirty Canteen Project*, described in the forthcoming documentary and featuring 11 veteran artists, including Ehren Troop, Marine veteran/potter, and Army veteran/photographer-sculptor Giuseppe Pellicano

Veteran Writers/Publishers, who have established on-line and print journals that publish veterans' writing and art, including: Army veteran Ron Capps, founder of the Washington DC-based "Veterans Writing Project", author of the *War Writing* workbook, and editor of e-journal *O'Dark-Thirty*; the yearly *Proud to Be: Writing by American Warriors* Anthology; and *Military Experience and the Arts* journals and network

Touring Veteran Arts Programs, such as the *Combat Paper Project*, which turns uniforms into pulp for paper used as transformational art; *The Telling Project*, which records and transforms veterans'

stories into plays told by these veterans to local community audiences, and the I AM THERE veterans film workshops, sponsored by the *Patton Veterans Project*;

Professional Veteran Artists Organizations, including Keith Jeffreys' *USVAA (United States Veterans' Artists Alliance)* in Los Angeles, which stages dramatic works by veterans with veteran actors, hosts veteran writing workshops, and promotes veteran artists' gallery exhibits, veterans developing careers in the arts industry, and establishment of November 1st as a yearly National Veterans and the Arts and Humanities Day.

These groups, and the many not mentioned in this article, very clearly indicate that veterans of recent generations are inclined to tell their own stories. Through a variety of mediums, they come together in communities and make public what has traditionally been private and guarded: the act of healing. Revealing this act works against the stereotypes perpetuated in popular media, acknowledging the depths of sacrifice required by war, but also the ability and desire of those who serve in it to be welcomed back into society.



Government, Non-Profit, and Expressive Arts Therapies Initiatives

by Christiane O'Hara, PhD

At the end of World War I, the Surgeon General recruited "reconstruction aides" to staff Veterans Administration Hospitals and assist tens of thousands of wounded veterans, adding "arts and crafts" to the new Occupational Therapy Departments. This initiative was the first national effort to provide injured veterans with an outlet for creative energy and to ward off the boredom of extended hospitalizations. These programs continue today, having shifted to include craft kits of varying degrees of difficulty and complexity, provided to veterans free of charge through *Help Hospitalized Veterans*.

In 1989, the Veterans Administration created the first national competition for veterans across all genres of art with the initiation of its ongoing *National Veterans Arts Festivals*, which continue to encourage veterans receiving services through VA Medical Centers to submit their artworks for local, regional, and national recognition. This yearly endeavor has encouraged thousands of veterans to not only create art, but to risk sharing their work and having it judged.

During the past decade, a disconnect between most grassroots veterans' arts

initiatives and government/arts organizations/private funded "arts as healing for veterans" initiatives has resulted in parallel efforts to promote the arts from widely differing perspectives. This appears to be linked to three factors: The **Department of Defense** (DoD) and **Veterans Administration** (VA) limit approval within their treatment facilities to evidence-based therapeutic interventions, with few clinical positions for expressive arts therapists. The arts community, specifically expressive arts therapists and their national professional organizations, have not yet generated a robust body of research-based controlled studies showing the efficacy of the arts in treating military personnel and veterans. At the same time, most **veterans working in the arts** have no need or interest to convey their effectiveness to the DoD and VA, let alone in the format of "evidence-based treatment interventions." They also have minimal input in DoD/VA's decisions to incorporate arts interventions into treatment programs. This "stand-off" may be unintentional, but limits the inclusion of the arts as healing interventions for most military personnel and veterans (who remain unaware of their existence and power).

Non-profit/non-government research and programs by civilians have been poorly funded, under promoted, as well as short-staffed. These initiatives are offered at little or no cost to veterans, usually within a specific geographic area and ordinarily limited to one genre of the arts, including those offered by local arts organizations. Networking and partnerships among these non-profits are virtually non-existent, in large part due to competition for donor dollars, differences in mission and staffing, and geographical distance. A few have expanded in capacity, offering programs that are portable, affordable, and scalable. Such options include: *individual tutorials in the arts*, such as "Guitars for Vets," which has supplied more than 10,000 free private lessons, 2000 guitars, and has chapters throughout the country; *experiential arts workshops* led by trained teams, including veteran leaders, such as "ArtReach Project America", which has conducted workshops in 16 states for military personnel, veterans, families, and clinicians; and *audience participatory live theater*, such as *Theater of War*, an adaptation of Sophocles' plays illustrating universal themes of loss, self-destruction, and difficult homecomings, performed for over 35,000 military/veterans/civilians. For the most part, however, nonprofit initiatives do not have the funding to conduct/publish research, nor expand to serve the public health epidemic numbers of veterans in need of healing interventions.

Expressive Art Therapists and National Expressive Arts Therapy Organizations represent our nation's best trained healers in the arts. Each of the expressive arts has its own training programs,

certifications, and representative national organizations. These represent art therapists, music therapists, dance therapists, drama therapists, poetry therapists, and expressive arts therapists (who receive cross-disciplinary training). These disciplines have demonstrated efficacy in research across different populations, but most have not yet built a body of research concerning veterans' issues specifically. They are committed to working within the DoD, VA, and with individuals and veterans' art groups. It would benefit veterans and expressive arts therapists to begin a dialogue on how to blend their visions, interests, and skills, and to promote them to the community, the press, and within the DoD and VA.

Fortunately, communication among expressive arts therapists, national expressive arts organizations, veteran authors and artists, the DOD, and VA has begun. The DoD has recognized the public health issues it faces in helping troops and veterans manage war trauma, and it is shifting toward integrated health interventions. As part of this shift, representatives of the military engaged with national arts organizations in 2011 and 2013 to co-sponsor two National Summits for the Arts and Military Health at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, MD. Representatives of the military, arts and expressive arts therapies organizations, non-profit groups working with veterans in the arts, and veterans were invited to contribute ideas for inclusion in a white paper published from the summits' proceedings. [National Initiative for the Arts and Military Health](#), through the Americans for the Arts, subsequently published "Arts, Health and Well Being Across the Mili-

tary: White Paper and Framing a National Plan for Action” (2013). This paper outlines the need for partnerships among the DoD and VA, expressive arts therapists, arts organizations, and veterans to develop research protocols, standardize clinical interventions, and commit to best practices in the expressive arts with military personnel and veterans.

This white paper has not been widely distributed, nor has there been national discussion of how subsequent progress and communication will be promoted; the link to the full text is included [here](#). The authors/editors strongly encourage veteran artists to join national and regional dialogues with summit participants to cross-promote ideas and programs, share funding, conduct regional conferences, and develop electronic resource directories to assist veterans in finding artistic outlets, be they labeled therapies or otherwise, to meet their individual needs and talents.

Though much research is needed to establish parameters and best practices with veterans, the expressive arts and expressive arts therapies are neither new nor untested healing interventions. Vet-

erans, with or without the assistance of trained professionals, have turned to writing, visual, and performance arts after every major conflict. Today’s veterans, perhaps because of the proliferation of their communities through social media, the sheer volume of veterans who have been deployed and returned alive



This image is used with special permission from the The ArtReach Foundation, Inc. This image was taken in July 2012, at the MEA Conference at Eastern Kentucky University. The completed mural is featured on the cover of this issue.

with invisible wounds, and the quality of the works they have produced, have encouraged DOD and VA personnel to support arts interventions. Whether in arts therapy sessions, art galleries, writing groups, live performances or electronic communications, the effects are felt both on individual and societal levels. Veterans today are healing on the page, the canvas, stage,

and screen, connecting to one another through the arts in person and electronically. The arts allow these veterans to send powerful messages to those who hope to help them. Arts interventions promise healing, but also unbiased looks at who veterans are, what they have endured, and what they hope to become. We need to join forces, collaborate, and aid these men and women as they rediscover home, self, and humanity.

War Trauma Resources

Updated: October 2012

This is a listing and description of 500+ resources for Service members, veterans and their families.

[Click](#) here to
download the free PDF

The list is compiled and maintained by AIS Fellow, Dr. Ray Monsour Scurfield, Professor Emeritus of Social Work, University of Southern Mississippi. Dr. Scurfield is also in private practice with Advanced Psychotherapy located in Gulfport, MS.

Annotated Timeline and Locations of U.S. Veteran Arts Initiatives:

Post WW1-present: arts/crafts in VA Medical Centers

1946-present: Hospitalized Veterans Writing Project, Mission KS

1989-present: National Veterans Creative Arts Festivals

1996-present: National (formerly Viet Nam) Veterans Art Museum, Chicago

1998: USVAP United States Veterans Arts Program- Chicago

2000-present: Veterans History Project, Library of Congress

2003-2006: Operation Homecoming, NEA sponsor

2004-present: USVAA United States Veterans Arts Alliance, Los Angeles, promoting veteran theater, film, television and the visual/fine arts and a wide variety of crafts

2006-present: GI Film Festival, Washington DC; LA subsequently added

2007-present: Exit 12 Dance Company founded by Roman Baca

Guitars for Vets founded, Milwaukee; 30 chapters in 15 states; free lessons/guitars

Combat Paper Project founded, San Francisco; partner studios in NJ, NY, NV, TX, MN

The Telling Project, Eugene Oregon; plays from veterans' stories, performed by veterans

2008: MusiCorps/RIME, founded by Arthur Bloom

2009: Theater of War - live production of selections from Sophocles' plays and audience town hall discussion; presented to over 30,000 troops in US and abroad and to civilian/veteran communities

Veteran Artist Program Baltimore; NYC; veteran artists professional development organization

VetArt Project, Chicago, now Akron Ohio; workshops and other veterans' arts projects throughout the US

Veterans Art Alliance (see text)

Veterans Book Project, Minneapolis; books throughout US

ArtReach Project America, Atlanta (see text)

Naval Hospital Camp Lejeune launches art therapy program

Operation Oak Tree, Music Institute of Chicago, for military children/families

- 2010:** **Veterans Writing Project**, DC - veteranswriting.org
Warrior Writers, Philadelphia - warriorwriters.org
NYU Veterans Writing Project
The Lioness Project – film on women warriors
NiCoE incorporates Healing Arts Program
Art of the American Soldier Exhibit, Philadelphia, from National Military Archives
- 2011:** **Innovations in Arts & Technology for Military MH Conference**,
GTRI and ArtReach Project America co-sponsors, Atlanta
National Summit: Arts in Healing for Warriors, Bethesda MD
Patton Veterans Project, Inc. "I WAS THERE" filmmaking workshops
The Graffiti of War Project launches travelling exhibit of OEF/OIF graffiti
Journal of Military Experience launches, Eastern Kentucky University
ReENTRY – play using Marines' and Marine families' letters
Voices of Valor, 8 week songwriting program, NJ
- 2012:** **Arts and Military Project** Washington DC
Military Experience and the Arts Symposium, Eastern Kentucky University
Warrior Songs, Jason Moon, Milwaukee w retreats in PA and WA
Lincoln Center/IAVA partnership – event tickets, employment for veterans
VetCAT, Veterans Creative art therapy pilot program initiated, Chicago
Kurt Vonnegut Memorial Library Veterans Reclaiming Armistice Day Fest,
Indianapolis
Dancing Well: The Soldier Project, Deborah Denenfield, KY
- 2013:** **National Summit for the Arts and Military Health**, Bethesda MD
Publication of white paper on The Arts and Military Health: "Arts, Health and Well Being Across the Military: White Paper and Framing a National Plan for Action":
<http://artsusa.org/pdf/ArtsHealthwellbeingWhitePaper.PDF>
Survivors Empowered Through Art, Onalaska, Wisconsin
From War to Home Photovoice Exhibit/Project, Philadelphia PA VAMC

Featured Artists:



W. A. Ehren Tool is a third-generation soldier who served as a Marine in the Gulf War in 1991 during Desert Shield and Desert Storm.

His work as a ceramist is heavily influenced by his military service. When he left the Corps in 1994, Tool studied drawing, and then later earned a BFA from the University of Southern California in 2000 and an MFA from the University of California at Berkeley in 2005. Through the production of clay cups decorated with press molds of military medals or bomb, and images of war and violence he seeks to raise awareness and generate conversations about war.

His cups are often assembled, broken or intact, into installations or are used in videos. He then gives them away, often mailing them to corporate and political leaders. A United States Artists Berman Bloch Fellow, he now works and teaches at UC Berkeley. Tool also lives in Berkeley with his wife and son.

Roman Baca is a Marine Iraq War Veteran and the Artistic Director of Exit12 Dance Company in NYC. After a career in dance, Mr. Baca served as a US Marine and was deployed to Fallujah, Iraq from '05-'06.

In 2007, Mr. Baca co-founded Exit12 Dance Company. Mr. Baca has choreographed several major works relating to the military and their families, writes and lectures about his experiences.

EXIT12 is a contemporary dance company committed to creating and performing works of high cultural significance that inspire conversations about worldly differences and the lasting effects of violence and conflict on communities, families, and individuals. Through movement, we educate audiences about the reality of war, advocate diversity and mutual understanding through cultural exchange, and champion the humanity and dignity of all persons.



EXIT12 supports and advances the notion that art heals, and is devoted to serving those who have been touched by conflict by expressing their stories.

The following 20 minute video explains Baca's personal journey of healing and how he hopes to inspire and heal other's through dance.



Featured Artists:

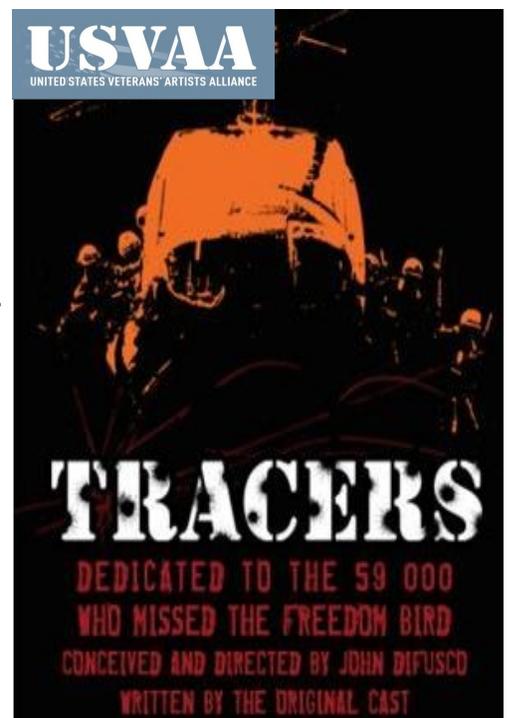
Tif Holmes is a photographer, a writer, a musician, an educator, and a former soldier, among other things. Her experiences have made her intensely aware of injustice and suffering, as well as immense beauty and joy, and she strives to communicate those things through her work. While she has a very strong connection to nature, and much of her work emanates from that connection, she enjoys working with diverse subjects and continually seeks to push the boundaries of her own self-expression. Tif is a member of the visual peacemaker community at International Guild of Visual Peacemakers, and is purposefully committed to their ethical code, their values, and their vision.

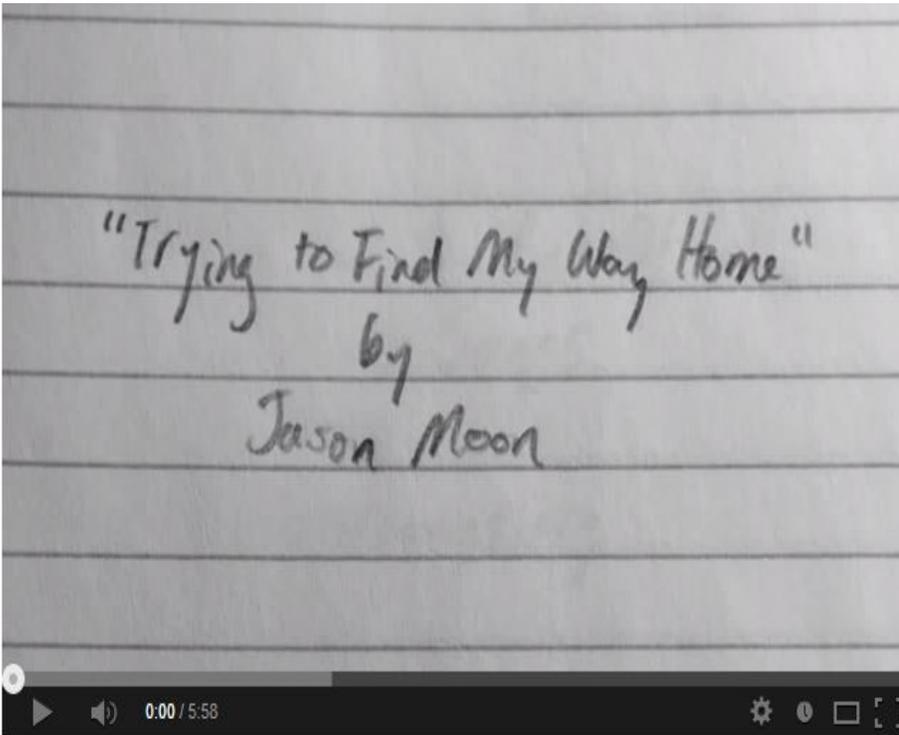
BELOW: *Invisible War*, Composite Photograph with Digital Painting (2012), Courtesy Tif Holmes .



United States Veterans' Artists Alliance (USVAA) is a 501(c)3, non-profit, based in Los Angeles, CA . Founded in 2004, by military veterans and artists, Keith Jeffrey's now serves as Executive Director of this multi-disciplinary arts organization. USVAA provides opportunities for veterans in the arts by networking with veterans, artists, supportive individuals and organizations within the arts and veterans' communities to find funding and support for individual artistic projects in theater, film, television and the visual/fine arts and a wide variety of crafts.

Pictured at right, (click to read more) is a promotional poster of USVAA's latest project, a play called "TRACERS." TRACERS follows a group of young American soldiers through the rigors of boot camp, the horrors of combat, the craziness of war, and the PTSD challenges of coming home. Because it is a group piece, it is not just one story. It is a series of events intertwined with music, movement, and ritual.





Warrior Songs proudly presents a video interpretation of **Jason Moon's song "Trying to Find My Way Home"**

Visit www.warriorsongs.org to find out more about Jason's non-profit and make a donation.

Paul Schmidt was the film's producer, director, cinematographer, editor. He commented, "The concept of the film was to take the song and present it in a linear storyline. Essentially (it's) a day in the life of a returning soldier struggling with PTSD." See more films by Paul Schmidt at vimeo.com/pschmidtvideo

The Dirty Canteen Documentary will focus on Veteran-Artists who have taken on the mission of storytelling by trading in their rifles and rucksacks for art supplies. This documentary will explore the lives and work of these veterans and illustrate how art has helped reshape their individual experiences in the military. With your help, these artists will share stories of reintegration and adaptation to life back at home.

In the military we were issued brand new canteens, but after many training exercises and deployments the canteens got worn, abused and dirty. The Dirty Canteen is a metaphor for our involvements and experiences in the military. We were soldiers and humanitarians and though we can no longer do so in uniform, we choose to continue this service to others by using the arts, education and workshops.

The Dirty Canteen Documentary is a collaborative initiative with Artists for Awareness Inc. a nonprofit public charity recognized by the IRS as tax-exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.



For more information about the Documentary, please visit Artists for Awareness's Fundraising page at: <http://www.crowdrise.com/TheDirtyCanteenDocumentary>

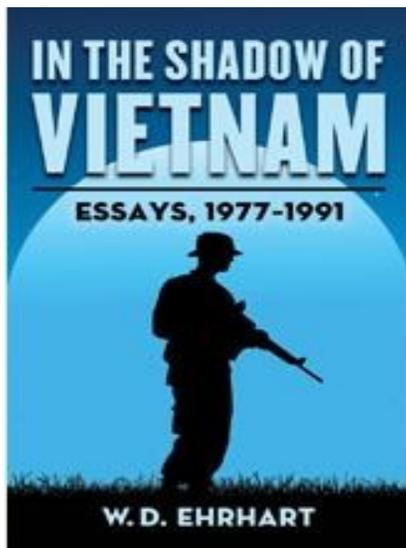
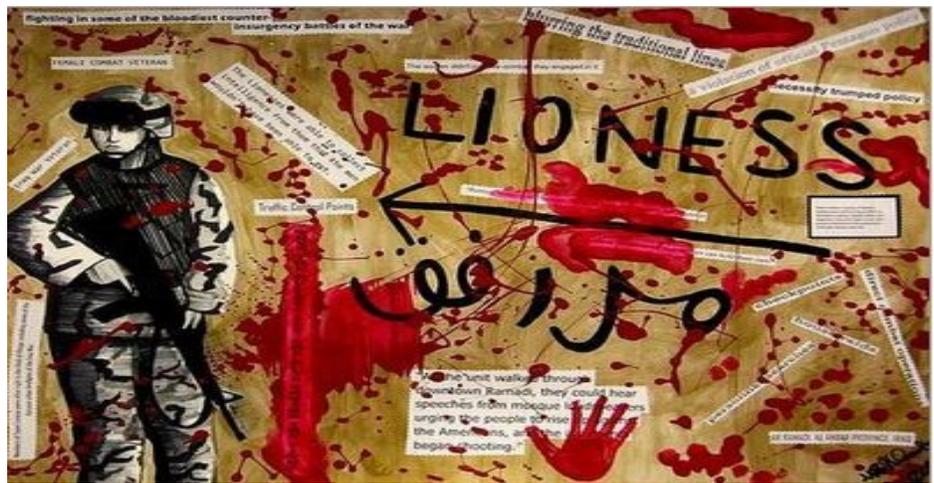
Featured Artists:



Above: Women Warriors
To the right: Lioness

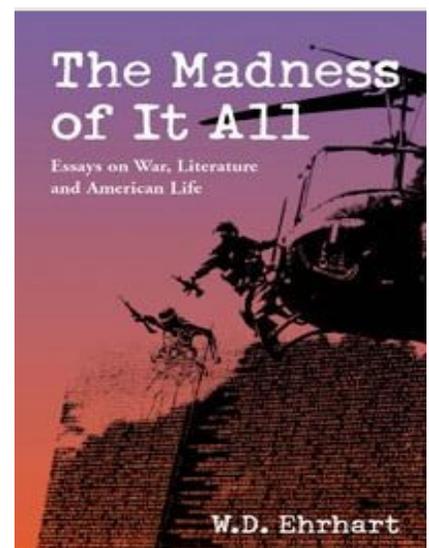
www.thedesertwarrior.com

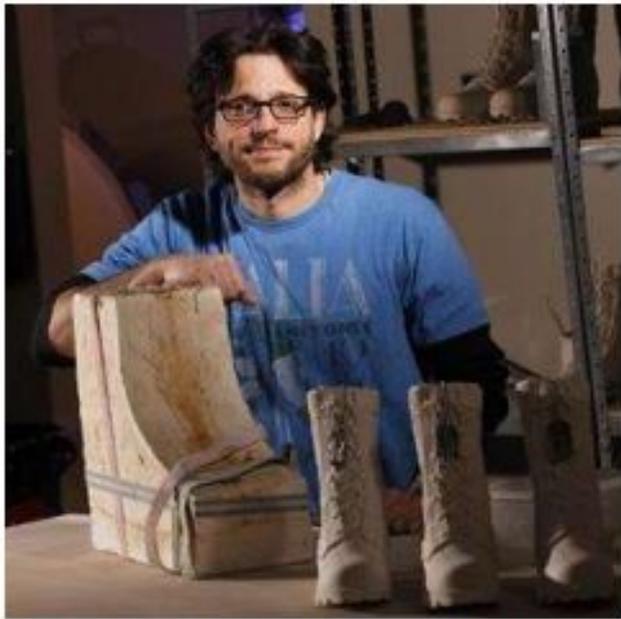
M.B. Dallocchio, formerly Michelle B. Wilmot, served as a medic, mental health sergeant, and retention NCO in the US Army for eight years. While on deployment to Ramadi, Iraq in 2004-2005, she served as a member of "Team Lioness," the first female team that was attached to Marine infantry units to perform checkpoint operations, house raids, and personnel searches on Iraqi women and children for weapons and explosives. Since returning from military service in Iraq in late 2005, M.B. Dallocchio took to fine art and creative writing to assuage post-war trauma.



W. D. Ehrhart (Bill) is a Viet Nam veteran who has written war poetry and prose, as well as many other topics, for over 40 years. *The Last Time I Dreamed About the War*, edited by Jean-Jacques Malo and forthcoming in 2014, is a collection of essays on Bill's life and writing.

www.wdehrhart.com





Giuseppe Pellicano is the founder of the Warrior Art Group, a grassroots organization established to create a zone for veterans, active duty military members, and their spouses. The group showcases original artwork in any form or medium, and plans to offer online space where members can exhibit, sell, enter contests, and network with others.

Courtesy of North Central College



Porcelain (2012), Given to Families of Whose Fallen Soldiers Are Memorialized by These Boots and Dog Tags, Courtesy Giuseppe Pellicano

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