AMERICAN ARTWORKS
FROM IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN

A COLLECTION OF MILITARY ART COMPLETED AFTER SEPTEMBER 11, 2001

JAMES L. KNUTSON AND DAVE WILSON
INTRODUCTION
By James L. Knutson and Dave Wilson

This research project demonstrates the importance of contemporary military artwork created by service men and women, its role of visually documenting events from Iraq and Afghanistan, and its effects on democracy. Since September 11, 2001, our general knowledge of events in the Middle East have been delivered through journalistic forms of mass media surrounded by a multitude of politics. This research project will not research the mass opinions of the events, but instead will research firsthand visual accounts of four artists, either civilian or military personnel, involved with the Navy’s and the Marine Corps’ military’s war art programs. Based on the success of our previous coauthored war art research projects, we discovered a significant amount of materials in the military archives to conduct this body of research. The strength of this research project is based on the collaborative efforts of the individuals at the military art history collections and the researchers.

From previous research, we became aware of work being created by contemporary combat artists since September 11th including the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. This is not totally limited to the two wars that are in progress, however; but we will also include images produced in peacetime, at home, and on the battlefield.

As a brief part of our art history courses, we were surprised that our students were unaware that work of this nature even exists. By conducting this research in a contemporary historical context, installing an art exhibition of reproductions both on and off campus, and delivering lectures to the general public, the project exposes and educates people about powerful visual examples created with the talented endeavors of the artists. The four artists represented in this collection are among many other artists creating contemporary images for the Military Art History Collections.
Morgan Ian Wilbur has been on the staff at the Naval Historical Center working as the art director of the "Naval Aviation News" magazine. He is a self-taught artist who learned his skill from his father, Captain Ted Wilbur, (USN) Ret.

Morgan is currently the resident artist for the U.S. Navy Art Collection, Washington D.C. The researchers visited with Morgan about his experiences growing up under his father’s artistic influence. Ted Wilbur was a naval aviator and combat artist, with more than 6000 flying hours. His work has appeared in many magazines and his paintings have hung in the National Air & Space Museum in Washington, D.C., and are part of the U.S. Navy's Art Collection. He was also the former Editor and Publisher of "Naval Aviation News" magazine. Morgan continues in his father’s tradition as a photorealist artist. When viewing Ted Wilbur’s work archived in the Navy Collection, the researchers asked how Morgan felt about his dad’s body of work. Morgan replied "I am very proud."

The following images are by Morgan and his father, Ted Wilbur.

Morgan Ian Wilbur, "Three on the Knee" (2004) Oil on canvas
These are two examples of Captain Ted Wilbur’s paintings on illustration board produced during the late 1950’s. Captain Wilbur was an advisor for the early space programs. The researchers suspect but cannot confirm that acrylic paint was used for both paintings.
Morgan Ian Wilbur (left)  
"Joe's Stuff" (2006), Oil on canvas

Captain Ted Wilbur (below)
Morgan Ian Wilbur, "Short Final" (2004), Oil on canvas
Morgan Ian Wilbur, “Tomcat into the Night” (2002), Oil on canvas
Morgan Ian Wilbur, “Navy Nocturne” (2009), Oil on canvas
Morgan Ian Wilbur, “Hurry Up and Wait” (2004), Oil on canvas
Morgan Ian Wilbur, “Heroic Spirit” (2008), Oil on canvas
Commander Monica Allen Perin, USNR, attended the California College of Arts and Crafts and entered the Navy as a supply corps officer. After twelve years on active duty, she joined the Navy Reserve in 1991 and was recalled in 1995 as a supply corps officer charged with contracting support for NATO in Croatia. While there, she received orders to create paintings of women serving in Bosnia entitled “Teamwork: Men and Women in the Nation’s Defense.” In 2003, she created works depicting troops in Italy and France on their way to Iraq, and in 2004 she documented wounded personnel from Operation Iraqi Freedom at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. Commander Perin’s primary media is watercolor.
Commander Monica Allen Perin, "Occupational Therapy #3: Walter Reed Army Hospital" (2004), Watercolor
Commander Monica Allen Perin, “USS Laboon DDG-58 Port Visit, Toulon, France #2” (2003), Watercolor
(Above) “Portrait of Artist Looking for Subject Matter, Helo Flight CHM531 on Route to Theodore Roosevelt” (2007), Watercolor

Commander Monica Allen Perin, (left) “Marines Departing Augusta Bay, Sicily” (2005), Watercolor
Commander Monica Allen Perin, “Marine in Booney Hat” (2003), Watercolor
Sergeant Kristopher J. Battles, USMCR, has been deployed twice to Iraq to cover Marine Corps operations. Battles graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Northeast Missouri State University, and served in the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve from 1986-1996 as a computer operator, combat correspondent, and chaplain’s assistant. He was called back to duty to serve as a combat artist in 2006. In his combat art he strives to portray the humanity of the Marines - the men and women who sacrificed so much for the higher cause of Corps and country. The following examples provide insight about life during times of combat.

Sgt. Kristopher J. Battles, "Baharia Barbershop" (2007), Oil on panel
Sgt. Kristopher J. Battles, "The Chess Game" (2007), Oil on canvas
Sgt. Kristopher J. Battles, “Untitled” (2008), Oil on panel
Sgt. Kristopher J. Battles, “Line Up and Load Out” (2008), Oil on panel
Sgt. Kristopher J. Battles, “Civil Affair Groups Meet Local Iraqis at Samhat, Iraq, Jan 2007” (2008), Oil on panel
Sgt. Kristopher J. Battles, “Crew Chief Scopes the Landing” (2007), Oil on panel

Sgt. Kristopher J. Battles, “Lioness Reading” (2008), Oil on panel
Chief Warrant Officer Michael D. Fay, “All Eyes Down” (2002), Gouache on paper
After re-enlisting in 2000 with the Marine Corps Reserves, Chief Warrant Officer 2 Michael D. Fay, USMCR, served two tours each in Afghanistan and Iraq. He received his Bachelor of Science in Art Education from Pennsylvania State University and currently serves as the senior combat artist with the art section of the National Museum of the Marine Corps.

(Left) “Practicing with the Marbot” (2008)

(Below) “Saddled Up for Live Fire Shoot” (2008)
Chief Warrant Officer Michael D. Fay, “Raid Outside Yusifiyah, Iraq” (2003), Watercolor on paper
Chief Warrant Officer Michael D. Fay, "The Two Hands (OIF)" (2003), Gouache on paper
Chief Warrant Officer Michael D. Fay, “Fire and Ice” (2004), Gouache on paper
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(Back cover detail image) Chief Warrant Officer Michael D. Fay, “Memorial Service for Corporal Kirven, Afghanistan”