

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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

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MUSEUM OF MODERN ART OPENS EXHIBITION OF FIRST YEAR'S WORK AT WAR VETERANS' ART CENTER

"I had a lot of time to think while I was in service. I decided that life should be more than routine living and grubbing for money, and I promised myself that if I ever came out alive I was going to do a lot of the things that are worthwhile. Art is one of them. That's why I'm here!"

This remark by an ex-infantryman best expresses the motive of returned service men and women in joining the War Veterans' Art Center. On Wednesday, September 26, the Center will show the fruits of its first year's work in an exhibition Art for War Veterans opening in the auditorium galleries of the Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, where it will remain on view through November 25.

Our national allergy to education, as indicated by the alarmingly low percentage of returned soldiers taking advantage of the educational opportunities provided by the G.I. Bill of Rights, has found at least a partial antidote in the Center. Established in 1944, it is a place where returned service men and women not only learn but produce painting, sculpture, ceramics, industrial design, jewelry, silk screen printing, graphic arts and allied subjects.

During the first year of the Art Center, its facilities have been used by 439 veterans, of which 300 were Army, 45 Navy, 59 Air Corps (Army and Navy), 2 Coast Guard, 6 Marine, 9 Merchant Marine, 12 Wac and 6 Wave. Of these, 112 served overseas, 46 in action; 327 served in this country only; 256 have physical disabilities; 262 are now employed, 94 are unemployed; 37 are students; 7 are either free-lance or part-time workers, etc.; and 39 are still in service. Of the total number 184 joined the Center for recreational purposes and 255 for prevocational purposes.

The Art Center has a twofold object: to give veterans an opportunity for personal satisfaction in creating some form of art; and to provide preliminary professional training in the fundamentals both of fine and applied art. Any veteran, man or woman, who has been in our country's service, is invited to join the War Veterans' Art Center. Instruction and materials are free, although many have asked to pay for the materials they use.

The exhibition is called Art for War Veterans because it consists not only of the actual objects produced by the veterans, but also includes a series of panels showing by means of photographs and descriptive captions the veterans at work and a step-by-step analysis of the methods and techniques employed. A major purpose of the Center is to make these methods and techniques available to other institutions or agencies planning to carry out similar programs. Part of this material is now ready in printed, illustrated form. It is hoped that later motion picture strips will be made of special methods in actual operation.

Inquiries by veterans regarding admission to the Center may be made by telephone: Plaza 9-6885. Requests by organizations or groups for information regarding the methods used in the Center may be addressed to:

Mr. Victor D'Amico
War Veterans' Art Center
681 Fifth Avenue
New York 22, N. Y.

Mr. D'Amico, director of the Museum's Educational Program, has been director of the Veterans' Art Center since its inception. He comments on the Center and its service to veterans as follows:

"The veteran is a unique individual in the history of art teaching. He is both young and old--young in his development in art, and old in his accumulation and intensity of human experience. He is deadly serious and works with an enthusiasm and concentration that is rare in younger art students. Art holds something of life which the veteran feels he has missed. This idea is repeated again and again by the men and women who have come to the Center. It is perhaps best expressed by the infantryman already quoted.

"The primary function of the War Veterans' Art Center is not to find artists, but to help veterans find themselves. Therefore, examples of the veterans' creative efforts in the exhibition are used to show how art may serve the veteran. They are not presented as accomplished products.

"The realization that art can provide profound personal gratification and play an important role in developing personality is no recent discovery. In its service to the veteran it can do more than entertain; it can revive his spiritual vigor and help him to find greater enjoyment and security. The feeling of personal satisfaction, of release from tension, of physical and emotional relaxation, is generally a basic factor in the veteran's reconversion to civilian life.

"The Art Center's program, briefly, is based on the following principles:

1. Personal Satisfaction. By starting with simple projects, concrete results are attained in a minimum of time, and thus the veteran is quickly reassured of his ability to go ahead.
2. Individual Instruction. For one who does not know where his talent, power, or interest lies, the first object of the Center is to evaluate his ability. He first decides which course will prove most satisfying. Instruction is individual. There is no set time schedule. He starts

when he is ready, and progresses at his own pace with the help of the instructor.

3. Creativeness. Perhaps the most important part of the program is that creativeness is stressed and imitative methods of working are discouraged. Once a veteran learns to express, through art, his own ideas, he has made the first important step in his struggle to assure himself of his importance as an independent and developing personality.
4. Fundamentals. Dilettante methods and projects of more entertainment value are carefully avoided. The veteran is introduced at once to the fundamentals, because a knowledge of them in any art gives him the opportunity to progress as far as his interest and ability will allow.

"At the beginning, most veterans use art as a means of getting rid of disturbing experiences which they try to project onto paper or canvas. A former Navy man paints a vivid recollection of an experience at Pearl Harbor. Another starts jewelry to ease his mind, and mounts his war emblems as gifts, thus sharing his experience with others. In ceramics a veteran pounds clay, shaping and reshaping its form, to prove himself master of the medium.

"Happily, after this period of emotional release, the veteran relinquishes his preoccupation with the war. The war themes of the sailor disappeared from his canvas, and he began to use his own environment, drawing freely on his imagination for ideas. The veteran in jewelry class has proved one of our best designers, and he says that jewelry-making helped him overcome many troublesome thoughts. Now he makes jewelry at home, and some day would like to start a school for others. By first expressing his disturbance through an art form, the veteran recreates it and divorces it from himself forever."

The training period of the Art Center is three months, beginning whenever the veteran enters. There are eleven classes: Orientation; Beginning Drawing and Painting; Advanced Drawing and Painting; Jewelry and Metalwork; Sculpture and Ceramics; Design Workshop; Woodworking Design; Wood Engraving and Book Illustration; Graphic Arts; Silk Screen Printing; Lettering, Layout and Typography. Classes are held week nights, Monday through Friday, from seven until ten. There are no day classes at present, but there is provision for them and they will be introduced whenever there is sufficient demand.

If a man desires to enroll in a certain class, but has had no experience in that type of work, or if he has had preliminary training and needs reorientation, he is admitted for a period of three months. At the end of that time he may be reentered for another three-month period if it seems desirable.

The War Veterans' Art Center Committee is composed of

Kenneth Chorley, Chairman
James Thrall Soby, Vice-Chairman
Stephen C. Clark, Chairman of the Museum of Modern
Art Board of Trustees
Victor D'Amico, Director of War Veterans' Art Center
Rene d'Harnoncourt, Director Museum of Modern Art
Department of Manual Industry
Frederic G. Epton, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation,
N. Y. State Education Department

Dr. Thomas A. C. Rennie, Payne Whitney Psychiatric
Clinic, New York Hospital
Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., Vice-Chairman of
Museum of Modern Art Board of Trustees
Mrs. Guy Misson, Secretary

The staff of the Art Center during its first year was as follows:

Design Workshop - Alexander Stavenitz
Drawing and Painting - Mervin Jules
Graphic Arts - Will Barnet
Jewelry and Metalwork - Charles J. Martin
Lettering, Layout,
and Typography - Robert Haas
Orientation - Samuel G. Weiner
Sculpture & Ceramics - Julia Hamlin Duncan
Silk Screen Printing - Harry Sternberg
Wood Engraving and
Book Illustration - Fritz Eichenberg
Woodworking Design - Kendall T. Bassett

There is no mass or group handling of those who come to the Art Center. Each is treated as an individual and his individual background and problem taken into consideration. A few of these are as follows:

One infantry veteran was a farmer previous to induction. He doesn't want to go back to farming and has decided that our class in Woodworking Design offers him an opportunity to develop a new vocation.

An ex-army man received an injury to his eye while in training. The doctors have cautioned him against heavy physical labor, as the strain may cause the loss of his sight. Contrary to the doctor's orders, he is now a packer. Attracted by the class in Woodworking Design, he came to the Center where he hopes to learn to make toys and small furniture, thus using his skill without physical strain.

An infantry veteran was introduced to clay work while in the hospital. He discovered talent for modeling and made several portrait busts of his family and friends which were greatly admired. He is now joining the class in Sculpture and Ceramics because he wishes to learn the fundamentals.

A former M.P. was a Hollywood movie set designer before his induction. While he was in service he thought things over and decided that movie set designing was not an occupation important to society. He has applied for the Design Workshop Class where he wishes to study the fundamentals of industrial design, which he thinks is more useful.

A veteran of the Army Air Corps has been a professional dancer. He complained that the basic training he received in the Army destroyed his ability as a dancer because "it developed all the wrong muscles." He has applied for the course in Sculpture and Ceramics where he hopes to develop pottery as a new vocation.

A veteran who was in the Quartermaster Corps and is now a typographer is training his left hand because he may lose the use of his right hand.