

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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MUSEUM OF MODERN ART EXHIBITS SOLDIER ART FROM THE MIDDLE WEST

Soldier art showing tent cities in blizzards, in spring rains, in winter snows, roadside encampments, bayonet practice, field telephone operations, barracks interiors, and other scenes of Army life, will be presented in gouache, watercolors, drawings and photographs Wednesday, February 4, when the Museum of Modern Art opens to the public its exhibition of U. S. Army Illustrators of Fort Custer, Michigan.

The exhibition is composed of authentic soldier art produced spontaneously by the men themselves at Fort Custer. Monroe Wheeler, Director of Exhibitions and Publications for the Museum, saw the work when he was in the Middle West about six weeks ago. He brought back some examples and the decision was made to show the work at the Museum as a particularly fine illustration of how art can serve its purpose in the armed forces of our country. With Major Harry E. Cooper of Fort Custer, Museum officials believe that this particular experiment in soldier art is of genuine value and might be employed to great advantage in many Army camps, on maneuvers, and at times perhaps even in active service.

In commenting on the exhibition Mr. Wheeler said:

"Not to use the Army to keep art alive, but to enliven Army life with art has been the object of the Fort Custer experiment. It started about eight months ago as a mere recreation project for soldiers who wanted to paint. Major Cooper, the Post Morale Officer, obtained the services of Mr. Sidney W. Seeley of the Michigan Art and Craft Project to direct the studio. They began with the traditional life class. Major Cooper, however, soon put his artists to work making posters for camp activities and preparing stage sets for camp performances. He next encouraged these soldiers to make sketches and photographs depicting their daily activities, and these evoked such interest on the part of both men and officers that even on maneuvers the artists were urged to sketch and photograph. Major General Joseph M. Cummings, Commander of the Sixth Corps Area, has endorsed the results enthusiastically and provided permanent quarters for studio and dark rooms. Private contributions were secured to purchase materials.

"The work of Major Cooper's artists has proved valuable in several ways:

- (1) It strengthens camp morale because soldiers like to have their own artists and photographers record their work; their daily routine assumes greater interest and importance for them when it becomes the subject of pictures and photographs.

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(2) As a report to civilians it shows Army life as the soldier himself sees it and brings graphically to the attention of the public the magnificent spirit of our fighters.

(3) Soldier art constitutes permanent, accurate, and characteristic records for Army archives.

"The Museum of Modern Art is showing this work to call attention to Major Cooper's significant precedent, and in the hope that other forts and training stations will follow Fort Custer's example. If this is done, art will soon become a useful and integral part of the life of our increasing military forces.

"One soldier on maneuvers noticed that a snake had coiled itself around a field telephone hung on a tree; he ran to call this odd sight to the attention of the photographer. Many of the pictures shown in the exhibition are the result of such spontaneous interest and collaboration on the part of the men themselves."

When the Custer Army Illustrators first met at the Service Club last March the immediate objective was a hobby class for any soldiers of the post who might be interested in art. Only a few days after that first meeting, however, the Fifth Division moved out on maneuvers to Tennessee. Sketching material was hastily gathered and given to the men of the group. When these soldiers returned from one of the most strenuous war games ever held in the United States they pulled from their kitbags scores of sketches and drawings made during their rare halts and pauses in the South. Results were astonishingly good. Practically every one of the sketches made on maneuvers bore the character and expression known only to soldiers who have endured the hardship of long marches, nights without sleep, cold lunches, chiggers, snakes--in fact, all the tribulations and pleasures of Army life. Civilian amateur and professional artists had been transformed into soldier-artists.

In August of last year Fort Custer Army Illustrators held an exhibition, the first of its kind in the "new" Army--at the Camp Service Club. Soldiers who saw the exhibition, many of whom had never been inside an art gallery, enjoyed it thoroughly. Civilian visitors, too, came and admired. The work of the soldier-artists gave them a new aspect of the Army, and showed them many phases of Army life they had never seen or heard of before.

The exhibition consists of 14 watercolors, 21 drawings, 7 gouaches, and 27 photographs. The artists represented in the exhibition are: Sergeant Frank Irvine, Corporal Ted Treadway, and Privates Wallace Brodeur, Chet Engle, Henry Fortuna, Dugald Gordon, Edward Kingsley, Leonard Krimsin, Arch McLean, Duane Morton, John H. Nachmann, Cesar Seigel, Miles Tunnacliff, and John Urbain. All the photographs in the exhibition (27) are the work of Mr. Nachmann.

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U. S. ARMY ILLUSTRATORS OF FORT CUSTER, MICHIGAN

BRODEUR, Pvt. Wallace. Medical Detachment, 2nd Infantry,
Fort Custer.

Interior of a Barracks, watercolor
Spring Rains at Fort Custer, "
We Carried the Big Ones, pencil
We Walked the Little Ones, "
Chigger Bites, pencil
Blisters, "

ENGLE, Pvt. Chet. Base Hospital, Fort Custer.

Military Arrangement I, watercolor
Police-Up, "

FORTUNA, Pvt. Henry. Company "C", Reception Center, Fort Custer.

Recruit, gouache
Tent City, "

GORDON, Pvt. Dugald. Battery "C", 50th F. A.

Bivouac, pencil
'Til Reveille, crayon
Zero Hour, watercolor
Winter at Fort Custer, watercolor
Faith in the Field, scratch board

IRVINE, Sgt. Frank. Headquarters Company, 11th Infantry,
Fort Custer.

Walkie-Talkie, pencil

KINGSLEY, Pvt. Edward. Battery "A", 50th F. A., Fort Custer.

Convoy, I, pencil
Army Shoes, "
G.I. Construction, watercolor
Barrack Relaxation, "
Camouflage, "

KRIMSIN, Pvt. Leonard. 11th Infantry Band, Fort Custer.

Pen and Ink Sketches -- Washing Clothes; Waiting to Pitch Tents;
Potatoes.
Back from Guard Duty, ink and watercolor
Soldier Shaving, " " "
Barrack Relaxation I, " " "
Eleventh Infantry Band II, ink and watercolor
Mopping the Barracks, " " "

McLEAN, Pvt. Arch. Post M.P.'s, Fort Custer.

December on the Range, gouache

MORTON, Pvt. Duane. Medical Detachment, 19th F. A., Fort Custer.

Chow Line, watercolor
Simulate, "

NACHMANN, Pvt. John H. Headquarters Company, 11th Infantry,
Fort Custer.

All the photographs in the exhibition (27) are the work of
Mr. Nachmann.

SEIGEL, Pvt. Cesar. Headquarters Det., 3rd Battalion, 11th
Infantry, Fort Custer.

Exhaustion, watercolor
Doughboys, "

TREADWAY, Cpl. Ted. 2nd Infantry, Fort Custer.

Message, watercolor
Halt, "

TUNNACLIFF, Pvt. Miles. 11th Station Hospital, Iceland.

Blue Boy, gouaché
Soldiers Portrait, gouache
Landscape I, watercolor

URBAIN, Pvt. John. Company "B", Reception Center, Fort Custer.

Bayonet Practice, watercolor
Tent in Blizzard I, gouache
Tent in Blizzard II, "