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ART AND OTHER TACTICS CONTEMPORARY CRAFT BY ARTIST VETERANS

May 24 – September 6, 2015

Group exhibition of contemporary craft works by artist veterans tackles the personal and political outcomes of war and military service



War Pigs, Giuseppe Pellicano, glazed stoneware, 2012. Courtesy of the artist



Reflections, Jessica Putnam-Phillips, mishima, porcelain, underglaze, glaze, mother of pearl and gold luster, 2014. Courtesy of the artist

LOS ANGELES — The Craft & Folk Art Museum presents **Art and Other Tactics: Contemporary Craft by Artist Veterans**, developed in partnership with the Craft in America Study Center and the Museum of Craft and Design, San Francisco. This group exhibition presents 23 artist veterans whose art practice has been shaped by their military experiences beginning with the Korean War in 1950 up through the present day conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. In many cases, the practice of studio craft has been a generative experience in transformation and rehabilitation. Curated by Emily Zaiden of the Craft in America Study Center, the exhibition will be on view May 24 - September 6, 2015.

The modern link between craft and the military traces back to 1941, when arts and crafts programs were implemented across military bases to raise morale among soldiers. After the GI Bill of 1944 made college education free to veterans, many enrolled in college art departments and gravitated towards craft mediums. Influential ceramic artist Peter Voulkos was among the first wave of artist veterans who launched successful careers as professional artists.

Many artist veterans who served in the Vietnam War kept their trauma private, until their craft practice manifested a vehicle for their expression. Glass artist Michael Aschenbrenner creates haunting sculptures of bones representing the casualties he witnessed while injured and stranded for two days during the Tet Offensive. Meanwhile, Vietnam veteran Robin Shores continues to make mixed media sculptures that criticize current American foreign policies and military abuse.

“The act of making craft and giving form to ideas is a powerful tool for reaching people on profound levels when other forms of communication will not suffice,” says curator Emily Zaiden. “The work of these artists opens up the complex dialogue about our understanding of what it means to be a soldier, to serve, and to go to war.”

While military service and reactions to war are the driving focus of the practice for some artists, for others, the work is less explicitly personal and political. Artist Jill Allen vowed to become a visual artist if she survived her combat experience in Iraq, and currently makes playful sculptures based on imaginary “nano-worlds.” After losing both legs in an IED explosion in Iraq, Judas Recendez began creating strong, functional pottery using a hand-powered wheel designed especially for his needs.

Although not all of the artists are combat veterans, military training shaped each one on profound levels. Jenn Hassin, an Air Force dental technician, creates large wall sculptures from rolled-up condolence letters from military command to the families of fallen soldiers. Army medic Giuseppe Pellicano’s “War Pigs” (2012) is a series of ceramic pig heads that represent the greed and corruption of the power elite who often incite war. Civilian Pam DeLuco’s “Paper Dolls Project” (2013) documents the unique perspectives of female veterans through paper dolls and storytelling.



Vitradeflector, Jill Allen, clay, wire, plastic, 2010.
Courtesy of the artist



Beyond Zero: 1914-1918, Combat Paper Project/
Drew Cameron, cotton, nylon, ink, 2014.
Courtesy of the artist

The overarching assertion that emerges from this selected group of 35 works is the idea that craft is an empowering and constructive way for artists to help the public gain insight into the lived experience of military service.

This exhibition will travel to the Museum of Craft and Design in San Francisco, on view from September 26, 2015 to March 27, 2016.

An opening reception for *Art and Other Tactics: Contemporary Craft by Artist Veterans* will take place on Saturday, May 23 from 6:00 - 9:00 p.m. The reception is free for CAFAM members and open to the public for a \$12 admission fee.

Supported in part by a generous donation from the Claire Bell Fund. Media support by We Are The Mighty.

PUBLIC PROGRAMS

CAFAM will offer exhibition-related workshops and events in conjunction with the exhibition, including CraftLab family workshops on the second Sunday of each month from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m.

Sunday, June 28 | 3:00pm | Free Exhibition Walkthrough with Emily Zaiden

Join curator Emily Zaiden for a deeper understanding of works in the exhibition and the impact of craft programs in the armed forces.

Situated on historic Museum Row since 1973, the **Craft & Folk Art Museum (CAFAM)** is an invaluable contributor to Los Angeles culture, exhibiting current artists with intriguing perspectives and distinctive practices. Exploring the leading edge of craft, art, and design, CAFAM gives audience to diverse makers and artists whose work is often not represented in larger art institutions. The museum is a place to see art and make art — all under one roof. CAFAM coordinates a robust roster of hands-on workshops led by professional artists and makers. The intimate, atypical museum space and independent spirit at CAFAM combine to create an atmosphere of excitement and innovation, where people in Los Angeles deepen their relationships to art, creativity and one another. For more information, visit www.cafam.org

Location: 5814 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90036

Admission: FREE every Sunday

Regularly: \$7 for adults; \$5 for students, teachers, seniors, and veterans; free for CAFAM members

Hours: Tuesday-Friday, 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.; Saturday & Sunday, 12:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.; closed Mondays. Every first Thursday of the month, extended hours 6:30 - 9:30 p.m.