

ECHOES OF SERVICE: PERSONAL NARRATIVES AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

by

Patrick Sargent
A Thesis
Submitted to the
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of
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The Requirements for the Degree
of
Master of Fine Arts
Art and Visual Technology

Committee:

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Fairfax, VA

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Patrick Sargent
Bachelor of Arts
George Mason University, 2012

Director: Helen Frederick, Professor
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DEDICATION

This is dedicated to my loving and patient wife, Kim, my two wonderful daughters, and all those who have served our country and its citizens in any capacity. You have my eternal gratitude.

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ABSTRACT

ECHOES OF SERVICE: PERSONAL NARRATIVES AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

Patrick Sargent, M.F.A.

George Mason University, 2016

Thesis Director: Dr. Helen Frederick

This thesis describes the chronological process and the technical application of Social Art Practice concepts in *ART-illery* community workshops and subsequent themes that culminated in the work on display in my Masters of Fine Art (MFA) thesis exhibit *Echoes of Service: Personal Narratives and Community Resilience*, on display in April 2016 at George Mason University's Fine Art Gallery. Special articles of clothing can trigger vivid memories of the past, whether it's a worn t-shirt or a formal uniform used during the most special of occasions. It's the personal narratives in the woven materials trapped during the course of one's life experiences that touches us deeper and captures meaning beyond a mere garment. This thesis demonstrates a multi-disciplinary use of artistic practices of papermaking, printmaking, and sculpture to broaden and deepen community relationships as well as apply concepts from the humanities such as sociology and group ethnography through active participation.

PROLOGUE

This thesis describes the chronological process and the technical application of Social Art Practice concepts and themes that culminated in the various works on display in my Masters of Fine Art (MFA) thesis exhibit *Echoes of Service: Personal Narratives and Community Resiliency* that resulted from employing the practices of papermaking, printmaking, and sculpture to broaden and deepen community relationships. This thesis further shows specific examples of the application of concepts from the humanities, such as sociology and ethnography, fused together with the arts in participatory workshops and activities.

EVOLUTION OF AN IDEA

Revealing my vulnerabilities feeds the need to get lost in a larger community – to make myself more than I am alone.

My history of working in groups in community settings that benefit those who don't have something they need and can't reach, an elusive idea alone – has provided insights to develop art in action. Art educators have long known that the word community has many meanings depending on an individual perspective or referring to the mass of a geographic area. For many in the Social Art Practice discipline "Community can be thought as both a noun—referring to a specific place or group of people—and a verb—referring to a certain way of collaborating and interaction." (Campana 278). These collaborative environments foster a sense of belonging -- sharing information, sharing techniques, exchanging and donating artwork, creating exhibitions and workshops, and hosting other kinds of community events. My specific goals are to create collaborative art experiences for these particular populations -- creating artwork and organizing exhibitions centered on artistic expressions of healing and coping.

Fade to Red – HIV Awareness

The 2010 Fade to Red HIV Awareness Week events at George Mason University included a guest appearance by Mondo Guerra of Project Runway fame, display of a portion of the AIDS Memorial Quilt, and free HIV testing. Prior to his visit, Mondo astonished Project Runway viewers with his announcement on air that he was HIV positive, a fact he had not yet divulged even to his family. Since the death of my childhood friend to AIDS, I have always been interested in creating channels for open dialogue about sexual health related to HIV and AIDS.

In a collaboration between George Mason University Student Leadership and the George Mason Printmakers Guild we printed over 125 custom silk-screen t-shirts. Each attendee not only printed their own shirt with assistance from a volunteer and selecting images ranging from condoms to robots while at the same time, they also created their own educational experience. As they moved through the different stations, the images, ink drying time, the on-campus activities, and supporting information in the studio helped to foster frank discussions related to HIV Awareness Week goals.



Figure 1 Fade to Red – HIV Awareness, 2010, Photo by Erwin Thamm

The 9/11 Arts Project

Part of the D.C. wide 9/11 Arts Project sponsored by Smith Center for Healing and the Arts was the Northern Virginia art exhibit “*...a mile in my shoes*”— This joint exhibit attempted to demonstrate how we collectively or individually carry the memories of the people that have touched our lives with us as we move through our own. Fourteen artists were invited to interpret what it really means to walk a mile in someone else’s shoes and feel their fears, strength, and attempt to capture their humanity. The events of September 11th, 2001 and those that followed have given us ample opportunity to highlight the ordinary, sometimes heroic, but always human, everyday actions of our fellow human beings.

An example of giving is represented by people like Jim Lynch who spent many years walking the Pentagon halls handing out Werther’s Originals candies. He bought them by the case to generously offer to others. Every day, during Jim’s lunch break, he would walk a regular route handing out the candies to people, trying to put a smile on their faces. On September 11, American Airlines Flight 77 struck the Pentagon killing all 64 onboard as well as 125 in the building, to include Jim. Exhibition participants and viewers discussed the specific subjects of the works, explored the meaning and connections they portrayed, all in an effort to place us in the position of the “other”. These conversations were enlightening and sometimes life changing, allowing for deepened empathy for our fellow citizens and our collective plight.

Arlington Food Assistance Center

In 2012, the nonprofit Arlington Food Assistance Center (AFAC) partnered with George Mason University Printmakers Guild artists to create custom artwork as part of a print exchange, each of the 16 artists created 22 prints for a total of 352 works of art. 200 original prints were donated to AFAC to use as a means to raise money to fight hunger.

Each of the participating artists attended a tour of AFAC's facility, during which they were informed that slightly more than 4 in 10 Arlington residents in the \$60,000 and under income group are experiencing food insecurity or possibly as many as 31,500 local residents. Despite being one of the wealthiest counties in the nation, food insecurity affects a great many Arlington County residents. Food insecurity is measured by limited or uncertain access to food, reduced food intake, and disrupted eating patterns. The resulting print exchange netted a total of approximately \$10,000 to combat hunger in one of our largest local communities.

Collaborative arts processes, such as printmaking and papermaking, can be catalysts for communities to experiment with forms of expression and creativity, and are also opportunities to foster new ideas and critical thinking. To leave the quiet and sanctity of the artist studio for art-making in public spaces invites the kind of interchange that can connect disparate segments of a community. For those groups that express a sense of disenfranchisement, loss of connection with society, or suffer from alienation, providing art making processes at skill levels applicable for all

participants, not only results in a flow of creative expression, but also a stream of dialogue that dispels misinformation, deepens understanding, and strengthens the foundation of the community.



Figure 3 *Share*, 2011, Arlington Food Assistance Center

ART-ILLERY WORKSHOPS

Communication not only elicits fleeting emotional reactions; it also influences how people learn to approach life emotionally. (Kirkwood 16)

Artist and activist Drew Matott, a gifted printmaker and papermaker, joined us at George Mason University in 2012 as an extension of our District of Columbia Arts, Military and Healing Initiative funded in part by Dr. Tara Tappert and me through a grant from the American Craft Council. Matott added a new thread to the legacy of papermaking when he recognized the significance of the experiences embedded in the fibers of combat uniforms and how those experiences could be released in the form of paper made from clothing. His awareness of the true content of uniform-made paper came at the height of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars in 2007 when he met combat veteran Drew Cameron. Matott, and others involved in these types of projects, use empathy and awareness of others as a tool to focus support on collaboration, as Campana points out when she discusses the “perquisite for meaningful self-reflection and evaluation is empathy and awareness of others: being able to both relate to and see oneself in relation to other people and groups.” (Campana 286). These ideas were at the foundation of Combat Paper Project when it was launched in 2007 by Matott in collaboration with Army veteran Drew Cameron. By the time they joined us in

Washington D.C. in 2012, Drew Cameron was the sole leader of the Combat Paper Project and conducted his workshops at the Corcoran School of Art and Design, while Drew Matott and his new partner, Margaret Mahan, brought their fledgling Peace Paper Project to George Mason University's School of Art.

Margaret shared core values of Peace Paper that involved empathy and awareness of the “other” person, these qualities made her the perfect collaborator for Drew Mattot. During one conversation she reflected on a workshop on a street corner at Georgia Technical University, a group of veterans were cutting up their uniforms as part of a workshop. A young man with a backpack was standing nearby but not interacting with the group, just observing the activity and taking in what was happening. Margaret noticed the young man and after sometime she approached and attempted to engage him in conversation. She went on to say that he seemed withdrawn and unreadable, but that after some time he asked about the project, and began to show more interest. Margaret told him about Peace Paper, the cutting of the material, the trapped narratives, the beating and transformation of the material into pulp, and the forming of sheets of paper. The young man said, “Okay,” and left. When Margaret came to the workshop the next day, the young man was there waiting for her—with an armful of old uniforms.

Clearly the empathy and awareness she for had this young man allowed Margaret to act as “both a motivator and (a) guide in facilitation” for this project and allowed her to find the appropriate path as they moved forward together. (Campana

286). Each of the workshops continued the communal activities associated with the papermaking process –cutting fabric, rinsing it, beating it to a pulp consistency in a Hollander Beater, diluting the pulp in a vat of water, using a mold and deckle to pull sheets of paper, gently pressing the sheets onto pellow, creating a stack of sheets, pressing the stack to remove excess water, hanging the sheets to dry, and, finally, flattening the dried sheets–the many hours of methodical work fosters togetherness and makes time for conversation among participants, while the pace of the activity fosters calming and relaxation.

The basis of the George Mason University Peace Paper workshop centered on mixing participants (spouses, civilians, military veterans) from different backgrounds as much as the art-making disciplines that were used – papermaking, print making, writing, and bookmaking – workshop participants were encouraged to bring in significant articles of clothing to transform into works of art that tell personal stories, share community knowledge, and facilitate healing and create common bonds of attachment. The group was enabled and supported by Professor Helen Frederick, student volunteers from George Mason University and certified art therapist, each person supporting the activities and fostering positive outcomes for all the participants.



Figure 4 Drew Mattot and Margaret Mahan, Peace Paper Project

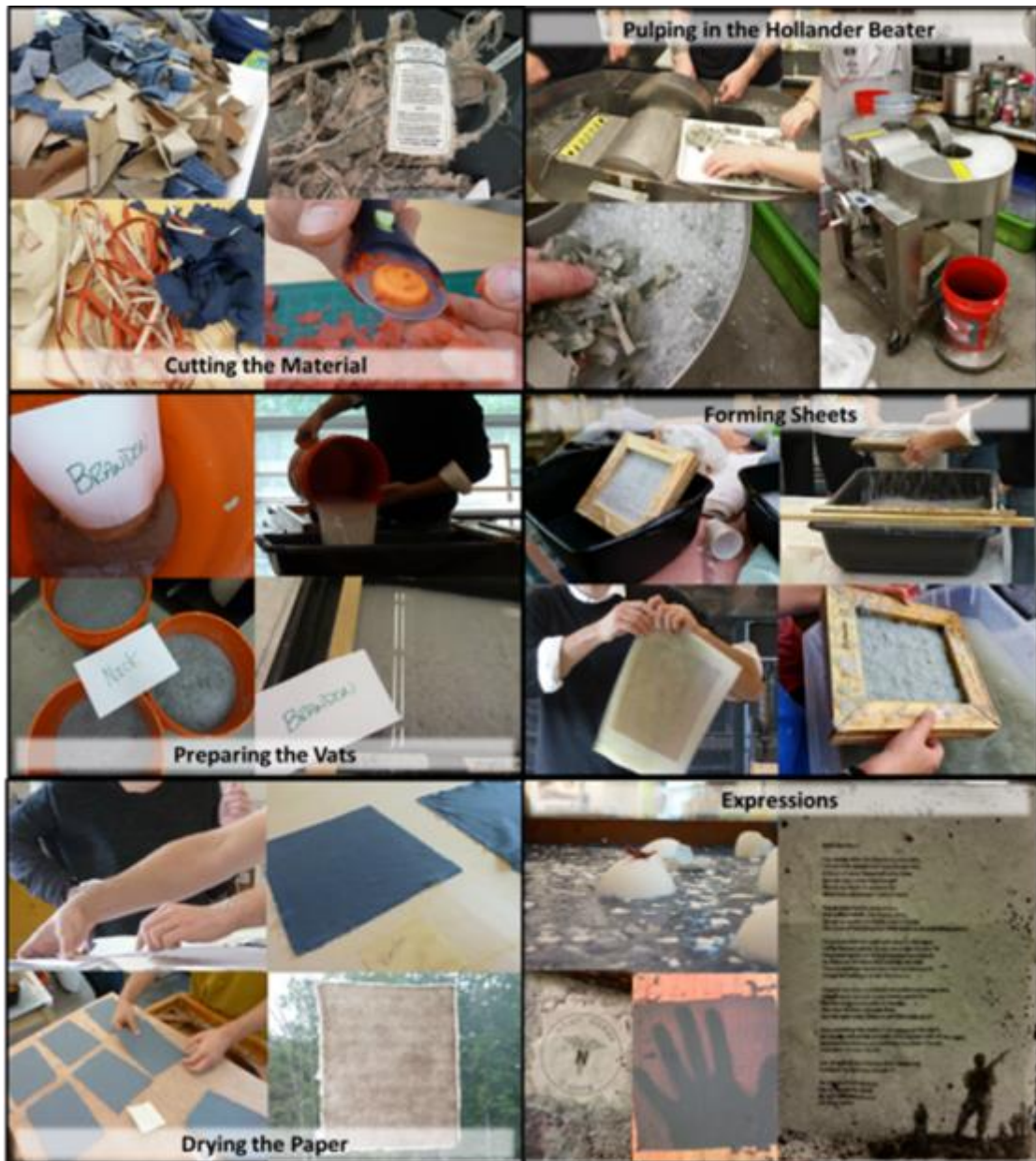


Figure 5 Workshop Papermaking Process, 2012

Arts Military and Healing

The Arts, Military and Healing (AMH): A Collaborative Initiative throughout the metropolitan DC area and was the first veteran centered program to bring together the diverse individuals and groups involved in this transformation of military veterans into artists. This new generation of artists is responding to the traumatic experiences of prolonged war, creating haunting and memorable work. In partnership with the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum, Library of Congress and Corcoran Gallery of Art, the AMH workshops and programs united military communities with veteran and civilian artists, arts organizations, schools, national cultural institutions, philanthropic foundations and military hospitals to raise awareness of the significance of the arts in the healing process.

This project was designed to unite the military communities with veteran and civilian artists, arts organizations, schools, national cultural institutions, philanthropic foundations and military hospitals to raise awareness of the significance of the arts in the healing process. Art exhibition, tours, film screenings, dance and theater performances, as well as a documentary film project, offered a variety of opportunities for exchange and discovery.

The six-day long series of workshops and public events promoted creativity, wellness, and resilience in military and local communities. Artist-led workshops were intended to attract veterans, service members, and military families of the Iraq and

Afghanistan wars, as well as professional artists and art therapy specialists who are now working, or hope to work, within military communities.

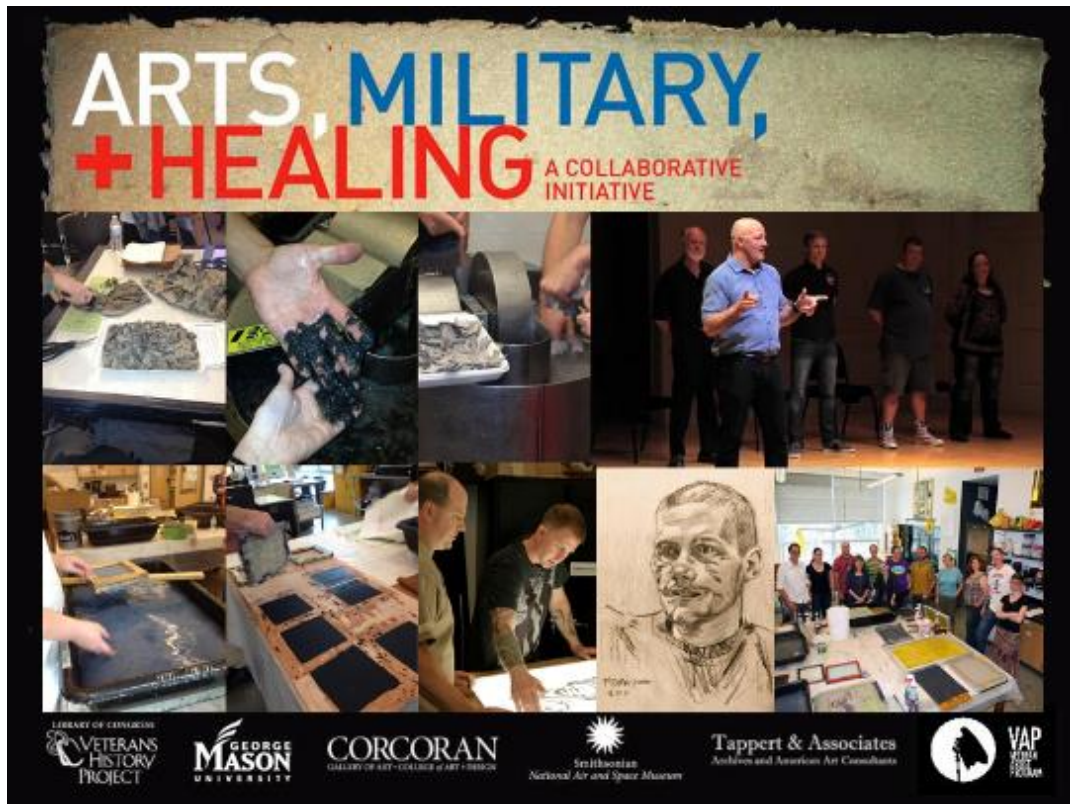


Figure 6 Arts, Military, & Healing, 2012

Mason Paper Project

In recent years at George Mason University the veteran community has become the fastest growing population on campus. While in many cases only a couple of years in age separate these veterans from their fellow students, little common ground exists in life experiences, maturity, and common understanding of each other. In order to provide this growing population an opportunity to interact and meld with the local community, in late 2012 Peace Paper returned to campus and assisted in the formation of the now on-going Mason Paper Project.

The first Mason Paper Project on campus took place in the heart of the Johnson Center. Students, veterans, visitors, and Mason employees cut uniform items, formed sheets of paper, asked questions, and created individual works that represented their experience. Local veterans, community members and school groups came together to share in veterans personal histories about deployments to South America, flying B-52 sorties over Vietnam, and service during the height of the Cold War.

The second Mason Paper Project took place in 2013, student veterans from George Mason worked with members of (8) Fairfax County Elementary Schools – cutting blue jeans, pulping them, and forming large sheets of paper which were decorated for Veterans Day. These posters were provided to Mason student veterans (connecting students and student veterans). The elementary school pulp was also combined with military uniform pulp to create unique pulp paintings by participants that symbolized the reintegration of veterans back into their local community at George Mason

University and Northern Virginia. Figure 8 Diptych-Moments, Pulp Painting, 26 x 36 in.

Mason Paper Project was made from elementary school blue jeans, various veteran uniforms. One of the military uniforms belonged to a mid-twenties marketing student, it was her maternity uniform she wore as an enlisted Marine, while wearing the uniform, she struggled with having another child or leaving military service. She left the military to attend Mason and continue her fledgling family with her husband. The combined pulps from the students of all ages came together to create a perfect backdrop for silhouettes of children playing or sharing a tender moment with a loved one. The physical locations coupled with the density and transient nature of the population creates fertile ground for Social Art Practice experimentation.

The Fairfax County workshops marked the beginning of the idea for *ART-illery* portable art-making workshops. Small compact art making units that could be used to support community events providing hands-on, holistic programs that support returning veterans and their communities as they transition from combat and military life, and rejoin civilian communities. Artists often see things and make connections before the rest of us. Creative, intuitive, and non-verbal skills combine with insight to link ideas and materiality and reveal powerful correlations. Interactive workshops put the community firmly in the role of artist. These portable art-making activities also create opportunities to build relationships across multiple cultural groups with a goal to promote shared experiences and to transform communities.



Figure 7 Mason Paper Project, 2012



Figure 8 Diptych-Moments, Pulp Painting, 26 x 36 in. Mason Paper Project

***ART-illery* at Penn State**

The prints are curled at the edges. They're rough and textured and spotted — one almost wants to reach out and touch them. Black stencil patterns appear as silhouettes against soft-colored backgrounds, showing patterns such as birds, the Lion Shrine and soldiers boarding a helicopter. Images embedded into the pulp paintings created during a weeklong series of workshops at Penn State University in 2014.

Also *ART-illery* mobile art making units were deployed for the first time and used in multiple locations on campus including the HUB or student center, and in the ROTC Drill Hall. Approximately, 150 students and veterans directly participated with a hundred or more visiting the two exhibits of completed works made by the participants. Penn State Audience and Program Development Director Amy Dupain Vashaw presented a talk at the Performing Arts Presenters national conference regarding the success in partnering community programs with various performing and/or visual arts events. Projects included the multimedia contemporary theater production *Basetrack Live* inspired by words and images of the 1st Battalion, 8th U.S. Marines deployed in Afghanistan; the Dear Hero Program who collects and sends care packages to deployed military personnel; three days of *ART-illery* papermaking workshops, supported by the Penn State Adult Learner Program, with Air Force veteran and artist Patrick Sargent; and an intergenerational Veterans Book Project discussion at State College Area High Schools.

Extending values from Drew Mattot's commitment to papermaking as a transformative healing process, my own project, *ART-illery*, took root and found its purpose. This purpose is based on the understanding that papermaking and the arts create a sensory-based activity that allows for the making of meaning through symbolic expression. Through papermaking's specific, step-by-step practice, participants are assured a contained and protected experience and are afforded the safety to share whatever they want, and are also given the chance to let go of old things so restoration and renewal might happen. *ART-illery* creates and cultivates a safe haven for returning veterans and community members in order to discuss and process personal experiences of conflict through art-making: printmaking, papermaking, writing, the spoken word and other mediums. The transition from military to civilian life can be difficult, as a veteran's experience differs greatly from those of new peers and even old friends and family members. The isolating effects of residing inside the gates of closed-off bases, adhering to a highly-regimented daily schedule, enduring multiple family separations, and surviving the extreme conditions of a combat zone often contribute to a sense of dislocation for returning service members.

Theresa Aiello discusses the conflict and tension" that arises when veterans return home to a society that either refuses or cannot acknowledge the horrors they have witnessed." Social theorists have noted the feeling of "otherness" that distort self-perception of identity as caused by experiences of racism, sexism, homophobia, class prejudices, "and prejudices of any sort that can make one feel alienated from oneself

and ostracized by, and from, the world. These distortions can be real, such as in the world that has underlying contempt for the returning soldier in an unpopular war.”

Trauma, regardless of the source of that trauma certainly has that function of altering ones identity and our perspective of ourselves. (Aiello 327)

In order to combat the “otherness” referred to by Aiello, a strong foundation based on mutually shared information should be created in local communities. Social Arts Practice such as *ART-illery* and The Peace Paper Project create solid foundations in local communities based on knowledge of each other and our experiences. It highlights commonalities, by releasing and sharing the personal narratives held in our clothes.



Figure 9 *ART-illery* at Penn State, 2014, Photos by Medora Ebersol



Figure 10 ART-illery at Penn State, 2014, Photos by Lori Falce

PERSONAL WORKSHOP REACTIONS

Soldiers go off to war, civilians watch from the theater seats, while politicians, generals, soldiers “and weapons of mass destruction act out the military drama, their performances coming to define the very summation of the word “war.” But a nation shares an event of war.” This event outwardly performed by soldiers, sailors, and airman while also “inwardly performed by civilians trying to keep the home fires burning.” D.C. Gill surmises that this “inward performance can create in stay-at-home Americans as much distance from self, others and beloved warriors as violence can create distance in the soldier.” (Gill 147)

After a military member leaves active service, many of the support programs provided to them and their family at the national level are no longer available. *ART-illery's* goal is to provide a natural continuation and transition from military-provided arts and recreation programs to a lifelong capacity or capability of art-making. “Just as when a young person enters the workforce for the first time the need to be welcomed and assisted by adults”, veterans returning home “may require a specific ritual that honors commitment and bravery as well as allow for reparation and atonement.” These rituals should be conducted with family or those close to the soldier, giving them the time to adjust to each other but also to make up for the violence in thought or deed

regarding others. “The family members of veterans, including their children are drawn into the drama of the returning soldier.” (Aiello 329). The importance of artistic and creative expression to boost individual quality of life, to enhance well-being, and to encourage meaningful dialogue is well known and fosters togetherness and unity of purpose.

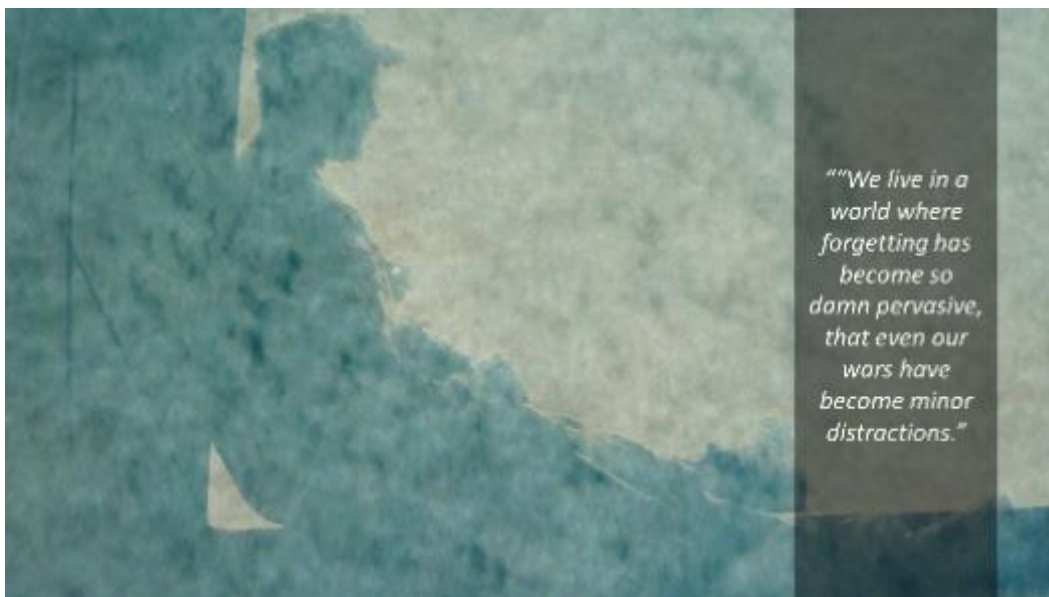


Figure 11 Arts Military and Healing - Participant Quote – Janel, 2012

Veterans Returning to Their Communities

Hand papermaking enables veterans and community members to turn their uniforms and clothing into paper that is then the foundation for visual art-making and writing. The process of shredding and pulping personal clothing, telling stories, and sharing memories of what occurred while wearing the garments create new shared experiences. Art-making forges personal relationships, and fosters individual and corporate investment in community cohesion. Since the U.S. went to war in Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003, about 2.5 million members of the Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, Coast Guard and related Reserve and National Guard units have been deployed in the Afghanistan and Iraq wars. Many of the service members have returned home to a new and different world. Over the past 16 years, experience has shown that readjustment to civilian life is often difficult for those returning, their families, and for those living in the local communities. Many soldiers, sailors, and airmen have come home with post-traumatic stress and traumatic brain injury. Others return with life changing physical wounds. Nearly everyone from the veteran, their families, and their communities face challenges ranging from finding meaningful employment and personal direction to extending community cohesiveness through common understanding of each other's perspectives and experiences.

Combined Threads

During our recent *ART-illery* workshops at the Warrior Clinic at the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (WRNMMC) in the summer of 2014, we met an Army Colonel who told the group that years earlier she had met a young enlisted man and fell in love. The rules in the military frown on personal relationships between officers and enlisted personnel, the young enlisted man left the Army and they were married. The Colonel brought in some of her uniforms to make paper, but also brought in one of her husband's old shirts. The material was carefully cut into one inch squares, and both shirts were placed into the Hollander Beater for pulping, the threads coming apart and mixing together into the pulp of their material. Delicate paper sheets were formed with white and green string entwined below the surface. The couple decided to bring their daughters to the Torpedo Factory Art Center in Alexandria in order to make some prints on the paper. After a brief discussion the family decided to print leaves onto the paper, the trunk of the tree representing their family, the branches the parents with the leaves representing the children (figure 8). The placement of this imagery onto paper made from the uniforms of both parents harkens to the emotional bonds within the family, but it also critiques the fraternization policies of the Army when it comes to relationships between categories of personnel and the daily restriction that service members endure regardless of time of day, location and rank.



Figure 12 Warrior Clinic Made Paper with Printed Leaves, 2014



Figure 13 Materials used during Mason Paper Project, 2012

Workshop Participant Reactions

Colonel David Sutherland, a decorated commander who deployed to Iraq, was dismayed by sense of alienation he felt upon his return to the states. "Never in the history of our Republic have so few been asked to do so much for so long. And yet, when soldiers return home, they feel acutely this disconnect between the military and a civilian society that doesn't even seem to be at war," Sutherland continued, "We fall into the same trap of our fathers from World War II or Vietnam, which is to keep the memories of those sacred moments on the battlefield to ourselves. That's how they become secrets, and secrets are not healthy." (Kitfield)

Art making for healing and well-being has a long and honorable tradition with the U.S. military. Throughout the twentieth century, service members and veterans have used art making for rehabilitation, vocation, and recreation. As early as World War I, arts and crafts making were used as rehabilitation tools for the war wounded through occupational therapy and vocational training. Beginning with World War II, concern for the well-being and morale of active duty service members was addressed institutionally when arts and crafts centers opened on military installations throughout the world. How do we help others to remember, to stay connected to the conflict and its tremendous costs, the conflict that we sent our fellow citizens to go fight on our behalf, that sent them home in need, with families in disarray and injuries that may go undiagnosed for years? Despite improvements in Veteran health care systems and in addition to the nearly 5,000 nonprofits that serve military personnel, clinical psychologist Barbara Van

Dahlen sees a population at severe risk. "We should have learned from Vietnam, because all you have to do is study the homeless population today to understand that an awful lot of those veterans never really made it all the way home," she says. "If we don't get ahead of the challenge, we will risk losing this generation of veterans."

(Kitfield)

Over the last years we have had hundreds of participants in focused workshops where we have a mix of community and veteran members present. Many have traveled great distances to participate. Examples abound, Christie flew in from San Diego, Wonder Janelly drove from Grand Rapids, Beth from North Carolina showed up without a place to stay, and Meredith arrived midweek after driving overnight from Florida. She had lost her son in Iraq and works with veterans groups at Florida State University to honor his memory. She arrives armed with a photo of her son and an infectious smile and wins us over. But her work is not done, months later she invites Peace Paper to Florida State University and suggests they bring Nick, a Veteran and George Mason University Undergraduate she had met at our workshop and who was looking at Master of Fine Art programs. Nick assisted with Peace Paper during their workshops at FSU and a few months later he was offered a scholarship within their art program. Exactly the kind of community connections and mutual support that strengthens our bonds to one another.

The following images are accompanied by quotes from workshop attendees and participants that took place at various workshops held in the Northern Virginia area.

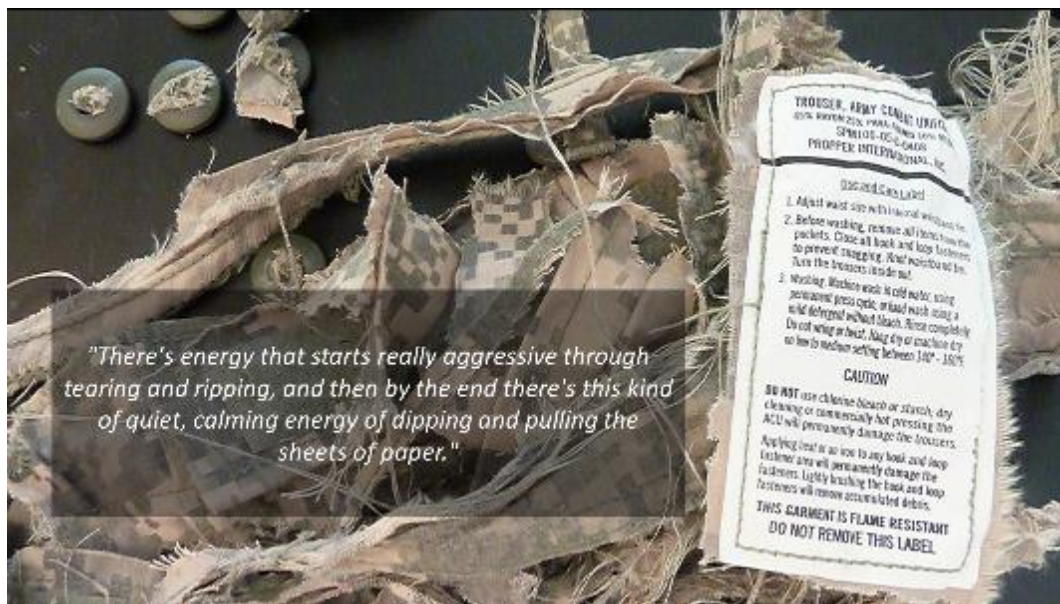


Figure 14 Mason Paper Project- Participant Quote – Maria, 2014

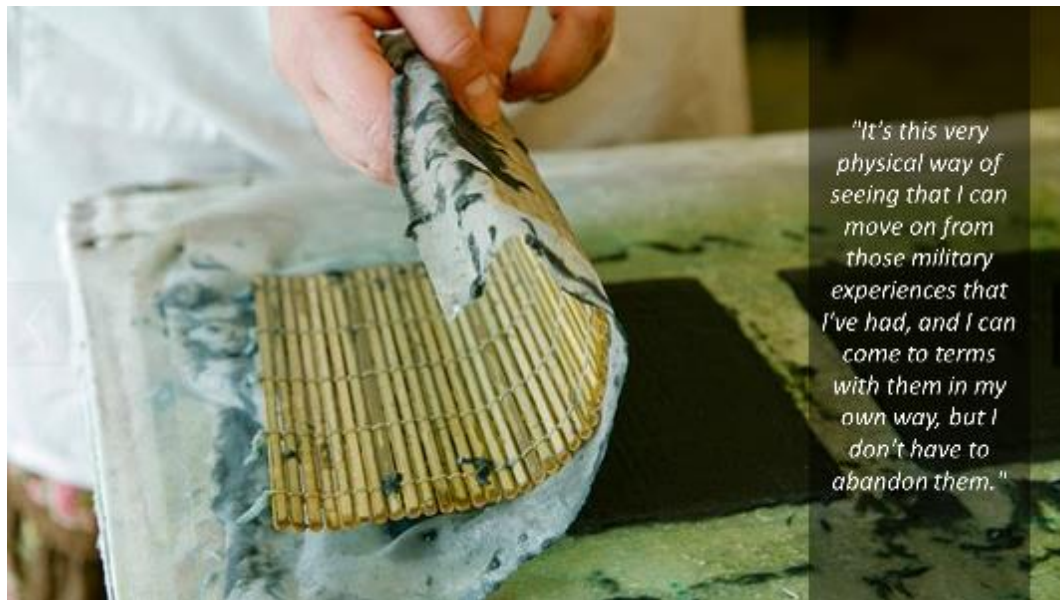


Figure 15 Arts Military and Healing - Participant Quote – Brandon, 2012

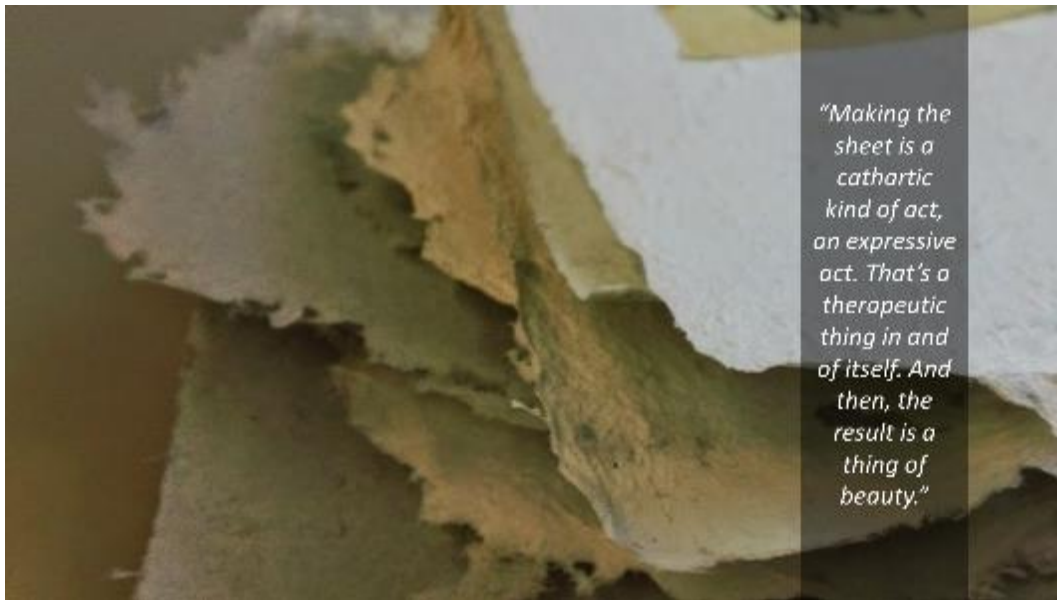


Figure 16 Penn State Art-illery- Participant Quote – Mary, 2015

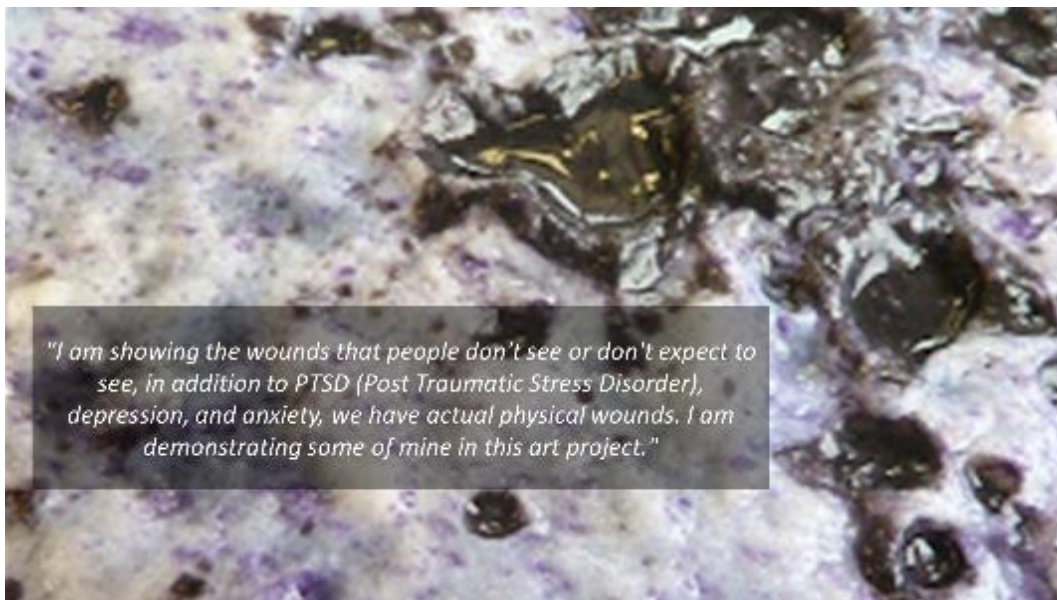


Figure 17 Warrior Clinic ART-illery- Participant Quote – Letitia, 2015



Figure 18 *Mason Paper Project II - Participant Quote – Danett, 2013*

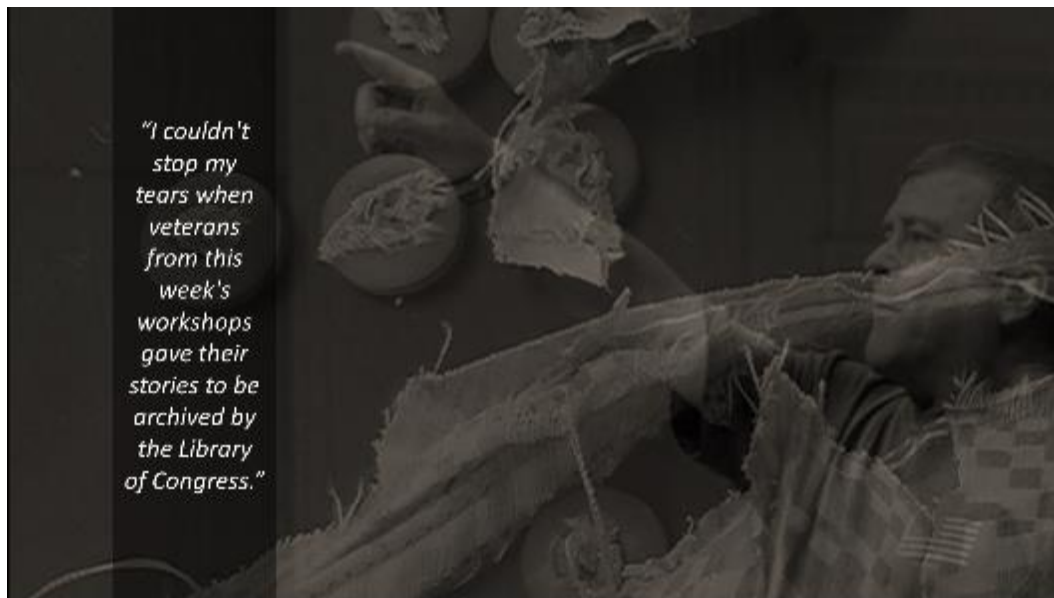


Figure 19 *Arts Military and Healing - Participant Quote – Pam, 2012*



Figure 20 Arts Military and Healing - Participant Quote – Christie, 2012



Figure 21 Arts Military and Healing - Participant Quote – Nick, 2012

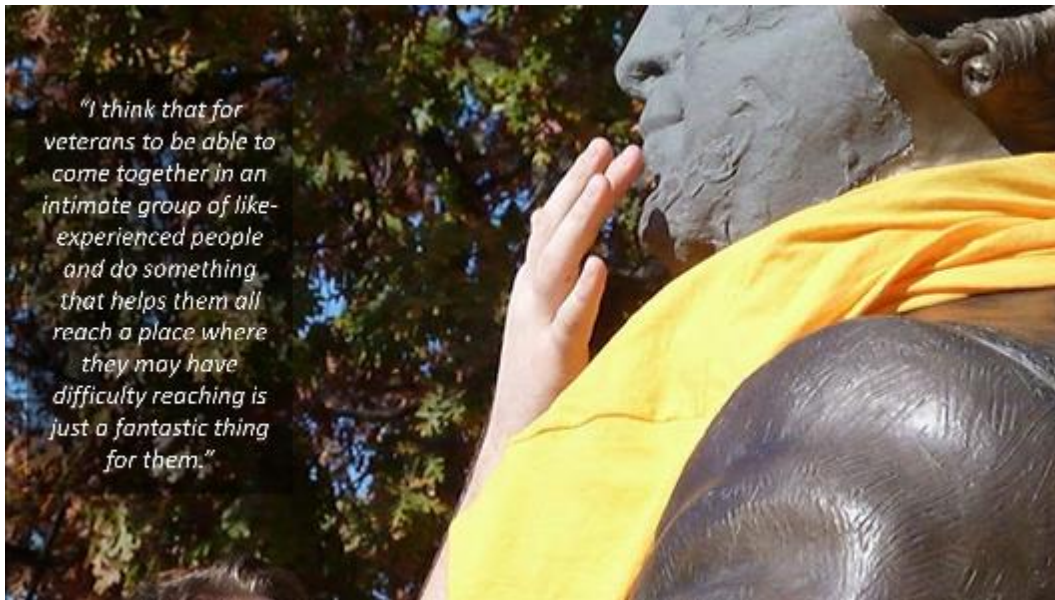


Figure 22 Mason Paper Project - Participant Quote – Aaron, 2014

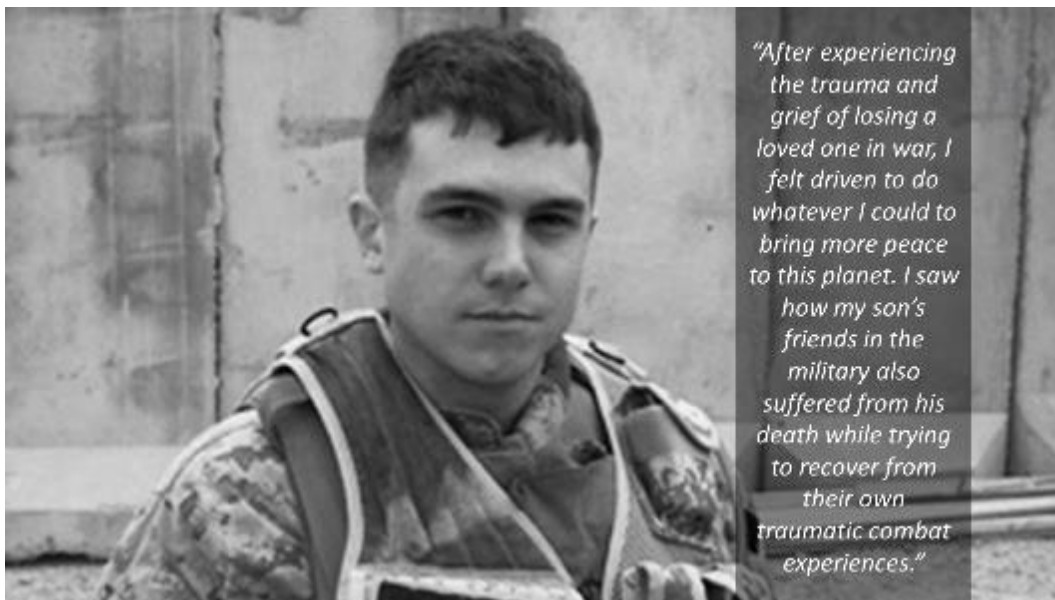


Figure 23 Arts Military and Healing - Participant Quote – Meredith, 2012

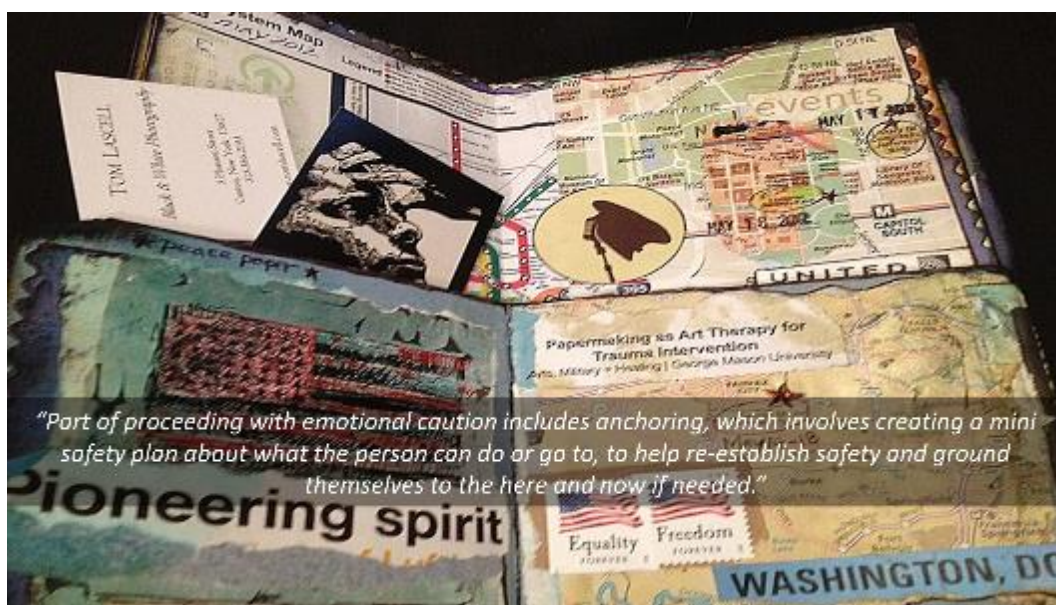


Figure 24 Arts Military and Healing – Art Therapist Quote –Gretchen, 2013



Figure 25 Arts Military and Healing – Workshop Facilitator Quote – Margaret, 2014

ECHOES OF SERVICE: EXHIBITION

Over the past two and half years *ART-illery* has conducted more than twenty five mobile art making workshops in the local community and beyond with a number of participants of all ages with numbers ranging from the 10s to 100s. Large scale events included local street fairs, art center open houses, large college events for students, faculty and alumni, and doctors and nurses at Military and Veterans Hospitals around the District of Columbia. *ART-illery* also provided workshop experience in smaller settings that included high school and community college groups, tourists, random passerby, and individual families. As a Socially Engaged Art Practice, *ART-illery's* is the practice of making art with people. The materials left behind after an event are artifacts and evidence, they echo the ideas, feelings, and stories of the people who participated, but it doesn't allow the viewer to fully grasp the moment of creation, the event itself. Portraying a Social Art Practice body of work in a gallery can be difficult if not impossible. Short of having a workshop in the space, how does one convey the sense of "activity" and meaning that comes with the group dynamic of a crowd? The exhibition is set up to reflect separate areas for planning, conducting, and reflecting on prior workshops.

The Prelude to Work (Planning)

I grew up in the Detroit area of Southeastern Michigan. Everybody has a strong work ethic with an undying loyalty to the area. Nothing comes without planning, preparing, coordinating, gathering, then doing whatever it was you intend to complete. *ART-illery* workshops are no different. The preparation started years ago and has been collected over time as memory and materials.

I recreated my studio desk and work area as part of the *Echoes of Service Exhibition* to highlight all of the things from the past that provide input to *ART-illery* workshops. Some of the input is nonsensical like left over pulp dried in little balls, or books, magazines, and articles, or an occasional comic book. The cabinets that make up my desks are military surplus medical equipment containers whose sides are removed and become free standing tables. Recently I was watching a documentary about a forward deployed medical unit in Iraq and as they panned past the horrific circumstances taking place inside, a doctor passed by the camera holding a man's freshly amputated arm, behind him was one of the cabinets. I instantly felt disgusted, but also relieved that at least the cabinets in my possession were now being used for a new purpose centered on another kind of healing. When clamped together the tables and cabinet become a work surface stretching for approximately 8 feet and the interior of the cabinet can hold a number of workshop materials.

Random memories of service of by others are represented here, small fragments from my Dad who joined the Navy to get away from Michigan and came right back, my

brother who did the same and went absent without leave (AWOL) all over the world, or my Stepfather's Dad who never mentioned his Army service but would angrily crumple the mustard bottle to get at the last drop of that yellow concoction. Not long after inhaling the hot dog he would drift off to Tommy Dorsey and his Big Band. My studio working area also contains a never ending stream of gear, trinkets and photos from my time spent in the military, instead of existing in an attic or crawlspace, these materials find new life and become new and fresh in the hands of community members participating in a workshop or group activity.



Figure 26 Preparing to Work, Studio Desk from *Echoes of Service Exhibition*, 2016

Workshop Materials and Results

ART-illery consists of three different versions of the mobile art-making units: Unit 1 is for relief printing with a miniature printing press, inks, brayers, burnishers, paper and clean up supplies; Unit 2 is for screen-printing with multiple boards and clamps, it will hold up to 10 silkscreen frames, 3 squeegees, inks, paper towels, a collapsible bucket, and various other supplies; finally Unit 3 is a papermaking studio containing multiple vats, up to 6 molds and deckles, 2 collapsible buckets, pellons for drying, clothesline, sprayers and stencils for pulp painting. All of the supplies are carefully selected to ensure they will fit in the cabinet, ensure mobility, and set up easily and broken down quickly and efficiently.

A papermaking area is set-up in the *Echoes of Service Exhibition*, the middle table has a small cutting mat, a quilter's cutting wheel, and remnants of hospital scrubs cut into 1 inch squares. The cut fabric is placed into the portable Holland Beater, a tub or raceway filled with water that the cut material is added in order to allow the spines of the beater pummel the woven material against the bottom baseplate until a pulp is formed. Paper artists and veteran groups such as Combat Paper Project and Buttonfield Press use the Oracle Hollander Beater. This beater is in the exhibition and is located on one side with a couple of supporting collapsible tables underneath. The nearby bucket is intended to catch any leaks and to capture the pulp once the beating has completed. The total beating time for a pair of hospital scrubs is approximately 3 hours to get them

to a usable pulp for forming sheets or pulp painting. To test your pulp put some in a small container with water and shake, if the pulp suspends in the water, it is ready,

Now that the pulp is ready, this takes us to the third part of the display. The papermaking area in the exhibition contains a complete work area for sheet forming and pulp painting. A vat for water and pulp sit near a couple of tables covered in plastic. On top of the table is some felt, a mold and deckle, sponges and towels with a larger frame or mold leaning against the table. The smaller mold and deckle is for individual sheet forming like those in Figure 27 *Individual Papers*, while the larger frame is used for Nepalese paper-making with spray bottles used to spray pulp through a stencil to create an image much like graffiti artists use with spray paint. See Figure 8 *Diptych-Moments*, created during the Mason Paper Project.



Figure 27 Workshop Papermaking Area from *Echoes of Service Exhibition*, 2016

Time Pieces

As we walk through life there are very few constants that travel with us. I might say my wife is with me, or my daughters, but the reality is they spend a very small amount of time with me during the average day. The clothes we wear make our travels with us, they quietly experience the world from our own very personal point of view. Emily Spivack's *Worn Stories*, she collected stories from over sixty people as they relate the hidden narratives held in their own clothing. Just think, our "clothes are full of memory and meaning. That's why we all have garments—that we haven't worn in years but just can't part with." Clothes are also full of meaning and hidden value that keep us safe, add humor to our days, "that serve as a uniform, that help us assert our identity or aspirations that we wear to remember someone." Our clothes are the memoir of our lives just hanging around to be heard. (Spivack 7) Paper made from jeans, shirts, scrubs, uniforms, even underwear contain the hidden narratives of our lives, the individual papers exhibited in *Echoes of Service* hold the stories of many peoples' lives, experiences, wishes and dreams. Below are the accompanying snippets for those fragments of paper.



Figure 28 Individual Papers-*Echoes of Service Exhibition, 2016*

1-Christina

Material: Military Uniforms

Size: 18 ½ x 14

Army Nurse. While on deployment in Iraq, her team lost a single soldier (Marine) while on duty. IED attack victim, bleeding stopped; he died in Germany from a brain hemorrhage. Surrounded by survivors at Walter Reed – she only could see the one that got away – she left the military.

2-Jen

Material: US Air Force Shirts

Size: 18 x 15

USAF Reservist and Office Director at a major U.S. university. As a First Sergeant she looks after the well-being and discipline of personnel assigned to her unit. As the Director of Military Services she looks after the well-being of those using GI Bill benefits while also fostering a campus community for returning veterans.

3-Janel

Material: Blue Jean, T-Shirts, Other Materials

Size: 11 x 14

A civilian. Janel heard about our workshop and came from Michigan to join us in D.C. for a week. “Wonder Janelly” has been a staunch supporter of the use of papermaking as a narrative tool ever since, spreading a citizen’s perspective of what military service means in her local community.

4-Christie

Material: Miscellaneous (Blue Jeans, T-Shirts)

Size: 9 x 13

Navy Wife and mother. Stationed at locations all over the world, running the family’s affairs, raising the kids, while her husband was on multiple deployments. Created an art piece with eggshells and a small plane immersed in paper pulp - “Safe Landings” signified the routine of family separation and reformation.

5-Lynn

Material: Miscellaneous Clothing

Size: 10 ½ x 8 ½

Civilian from North Carolina. Lynn found our workshop online – traveled overnight, arriving early the next day, without lodging. She cut up material, assisted with the beater and paper pulp, listened, absorbed, and became part of our community.

6-Cassidy

Material: Military Uniforms

Size: 9 x 11

Marine Daughter (11). Her father suffered a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) during a deployment in 2008. She wanted to make paper from his uniform for a school recycling project. After we fed his uniform into the beater, she added little notes and drawings she had made into the beater with his uniform material.

7-Malachi

Material: Military Uniforms

Size: 9 x 12

Army National Guard Truck Driver. Multiple Iraq deployments, leaving his wife and daughter in the US. Returned with PTSD, self-medicated, found papermaking as centering tool. Travels throughout the U.S. and conducts workshops out of his car with his wife and daughter.

8-Walter Reed National Military Medical Center

Material: Medical Scrubs and Military Uniforms

Size: 9 x 12 ½

The combination of scrubs from caregivers and uniforms from those being cared for is a symbol of the intense bond that is formed during treatment. For some it signifies the transference of trauma, hope and shared outcomes.

9-Wendy

Material: Army Class “A” Shirts (Green and White)

Size: 8 ½ x 11

Wendy was an officer in the Army. She met her future husband while serving overseas, he was enlisted. This paper is made from their joined uniforms – later used by their children to print leaves and other images.

10-Karla

Material: Blue Jeans

Size: 11 x 14

Art Therapy Student. Karla was one of the first to sign up for our workshop co-orchestrated with an art therapist. Interested in the healing aspects of the work, she was quickly captivated by the personal narratives held within the materials.

11-Moira

Material: Khaki Military Pants

Size: 8 ½ x 11

Public Health Service Nurse. Firm believer of the power of the arts to foster healing. Growing up in a traditional Irish family, in a house filled with the arts, laid her foundation. She is deeply devoted to healing our troops; to being a dedicated wife; mother; and Muslim

12-Aaron

Material: Military Uniforms

Size: 11 x 11

Small town boy from a mountain town in Colorado enlisted in the Army to get away and used the G.I. Bill to get a degree in Economics. Now a brew master for a popular micro-brewery in Northern Virginia.

13-Nick

Material: Military Uniforms

Size: 11 x 13 ¾

Soldier. Multiple deployments. Quiet and introspective, Nick fully embraced papermaking. Later in the workshop Nick carefully disassembled a U.S. Flag, pulping the material, and then reforming it into a flag. Asked why, he replied "I did a lot of things for this flag and I wanted to make it mine."

14-Brandon

Material: Combined Military Uniforms

Size: 5 ¾ x 8 ½

Brandon poet, professor, deeply feeling. He served multiple tours guarding convoys in Iraq. This paper (called "Purple") is combined uniforms from multiple military members. Brandon openly wept while cutting his uniform during the papermaking workshop.

Connection Between Cared For and Caregivers

During the course of workshops and other interactions with the Doctors and Nurses stationed at the National Naval Military Medical Center, we collectively came to focus on the power of combined narrative and the mutual support one can receive from those that share in a workshop experience. Common bonds get highlighted in the materials produced in the form of combined materials shared in pulp paintings and printed on hand pulled sheets of paper. The workshops started with a small group attached to the Warrior Clinic, 25 people who provided acute care ranging from treating the common cold to counseling the wounded on achieving sexual normalcy after experiencing extreme trauma.

The workshops started with material cutting, uniforms and scrubs dissected into small squares so that we could take them back to Mason to add them to the Hollander Beater. On the next *ART-illery* visit, sheet forming was introduced with 75-100 sheets formed in an afternoon. The Doctors and Nurses would rush out to appointments, then rush back in to pull a few sheets during a break. Over the next few weeks we found a rhythm of making and doing, pulp paintings, images transfers onto our new scrub paper, and creating small artist books.

One afternoon we had a discussion about Melissa Walker, an art therapist and healing arts coordinator with the National Intrepid Center of Excellence (NICoE) at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center. Walker conducts mask making exercises with servicemen and women who suffer from Traumatic Brain Injuries and/or PTSD,

“these are service members that sometimes have trouble verbalizing what they're struggling with and these masks, along with all the artwork [they] create, help to make their invisible wounds visible.” (Allen) The results are striking in the emotion and deep level of understanding that is conveyed to the viewer.

As our discussion came to a close, the conversation turned to the radiation masks that are used during treatments for brain tumors. They are a heat molded plastic material that is stretched over the patients face and takes their form as it cools. When the patient comes in for treatment, the masks are used to keep them still but also have markings that guide the technicians in lining up the radiological equipment. Each treatment only lasts a few minutes but the patient may have the mask on for much longer periods. The staff wondered if we could make paper masks to support the art therapy program, as we experimented with the materials, the doctors and nurses provided me with more of the used radiation masks. Over the next year we began casting paper pulp made from hospitals scrubs onto the radiation masks of the patients they served, this connection between cared for and caregiver provides an indelible symbol of the power of nurture and nature. Love and compassion.



Figure 29 ART-illery Workshops at NNMMC, August 2015

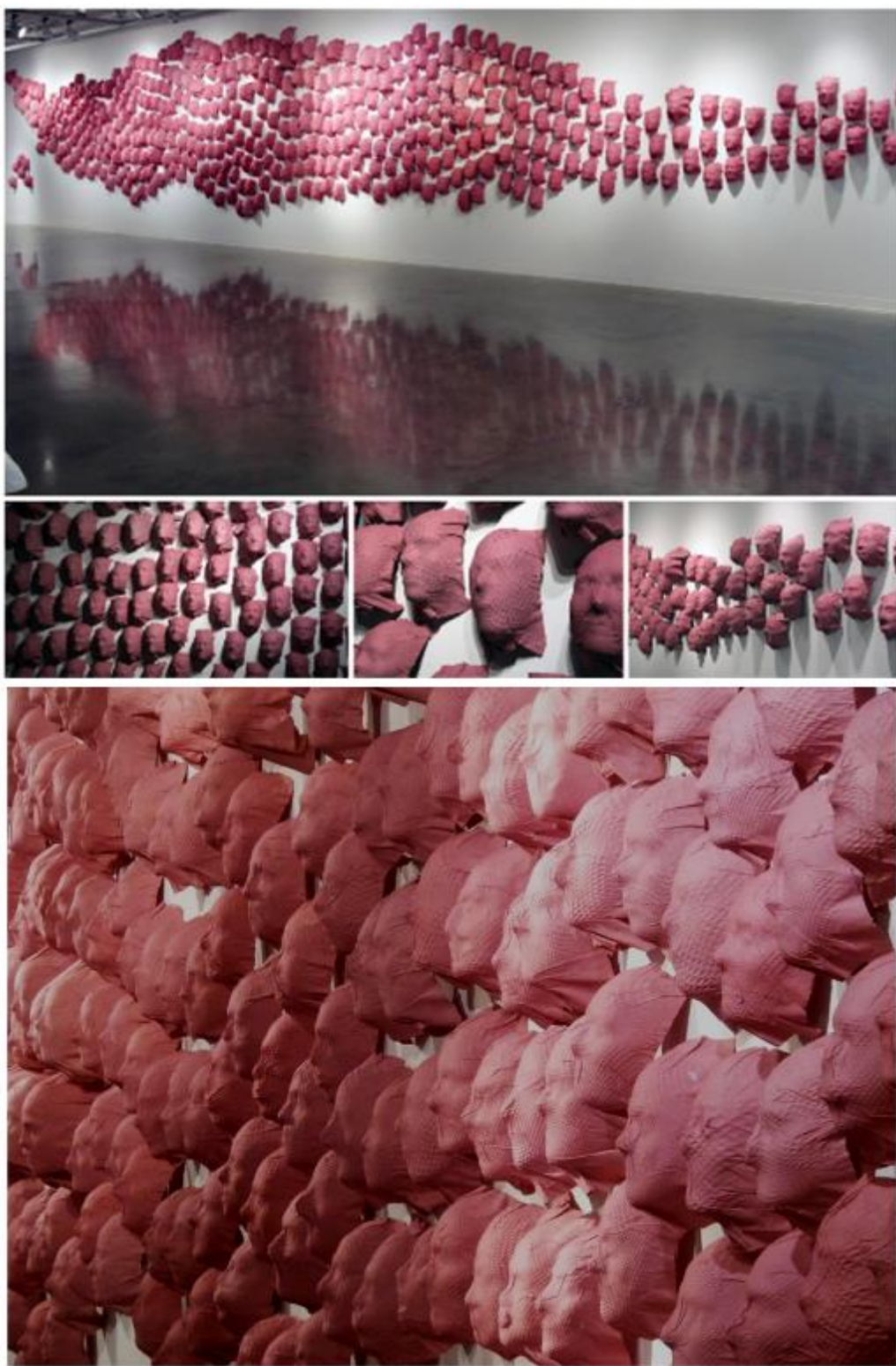


Figure 30 Connections, Scrub Paper on Radiation Masks, 2016, Photos by Erwin Thamm

Conclusion

Each of us has a singular perspective as we walk through our lives; sometimes these moments are shared with others, sometimes they are experienced alone. One of the constants for each of us are the clothes that surround us. Who hasn't touched an article left by a passed parent or loved one and remembered moments they shared with them?

In the *ART-illery* workshops we encourage participants to bring articles of clothing, to separate the materials and reform them into paper while also immersing themselves in the personal narratives of the past. It takes time to prepare the material, time that allows each of us the space to share our own stories with each other - "I remember these jeans...that last time I saw my mother...that first date with my wife...holding my child's hand as we crossed the street." Sharing information personalizes the experiences of the person across from you; strengthening the bonds in our community, we better understand the other person's motivations, loves, and fears - the stuff of personal lives about those around us.

The lineage of Combat Paper Project and Peace Paper is certainly evident in the newer arts initiatives of *ART-illery* as my current endeavors include veteran-focused programming. The narrative doesn't end here – it is not just military veterans that value reflection on the past, everyone has experienced loss and trauma at some point in their life. As a result, other papermaking enterprises are mushrooming across the country, and the world, in which uniforms, other military-affiliated attire, nurses' scrubs, for

example, and personal clothing worn bring the cathartic and transformative benefits of papermaking to those who care for communities and populations around them.

Imagine a simple black t-shirt with a name on the back, a young man joining his comrades for PT, a few push ups, jumping jacks, some stretching. They go out for a run, not that far, but the San Joaquin Valley can be brutally hot, and it takes a toll. Another young man can't push himself any further, his comrades surround him, carry him, and help him across the finish line, canteens come out of no where. A few months later this young man that couldn't finish the run, jumps into a river to save a flailing friend and they both drown. The young man with the t-shirt attends his funeral. Years go by and the black t-shirt ends up with the young man's mother, a token of her son while he is away. She keeps it in a drawer but every now and then she pulls out the shirt and thinks of her son between phone calls. In her final days the young man cares for his mother, they talk about the past, the people in their lives, places they have been, while all the while avoiding the impending future. After she passes, the black t-shirt comes back to the now not so young man. The shirt is coming out of the laundry, the young man's daughter sees it, black with white strips on the arms and her last name on the back. It's so soft and worn. She decided that the shirt is now hers.

The young girl sleeps soundly in this worn heirloom, dreaming of unicorns, castles, princesses, all the while surrounded by the experiences of her father and grandmother, imagine the paper from that shirt.

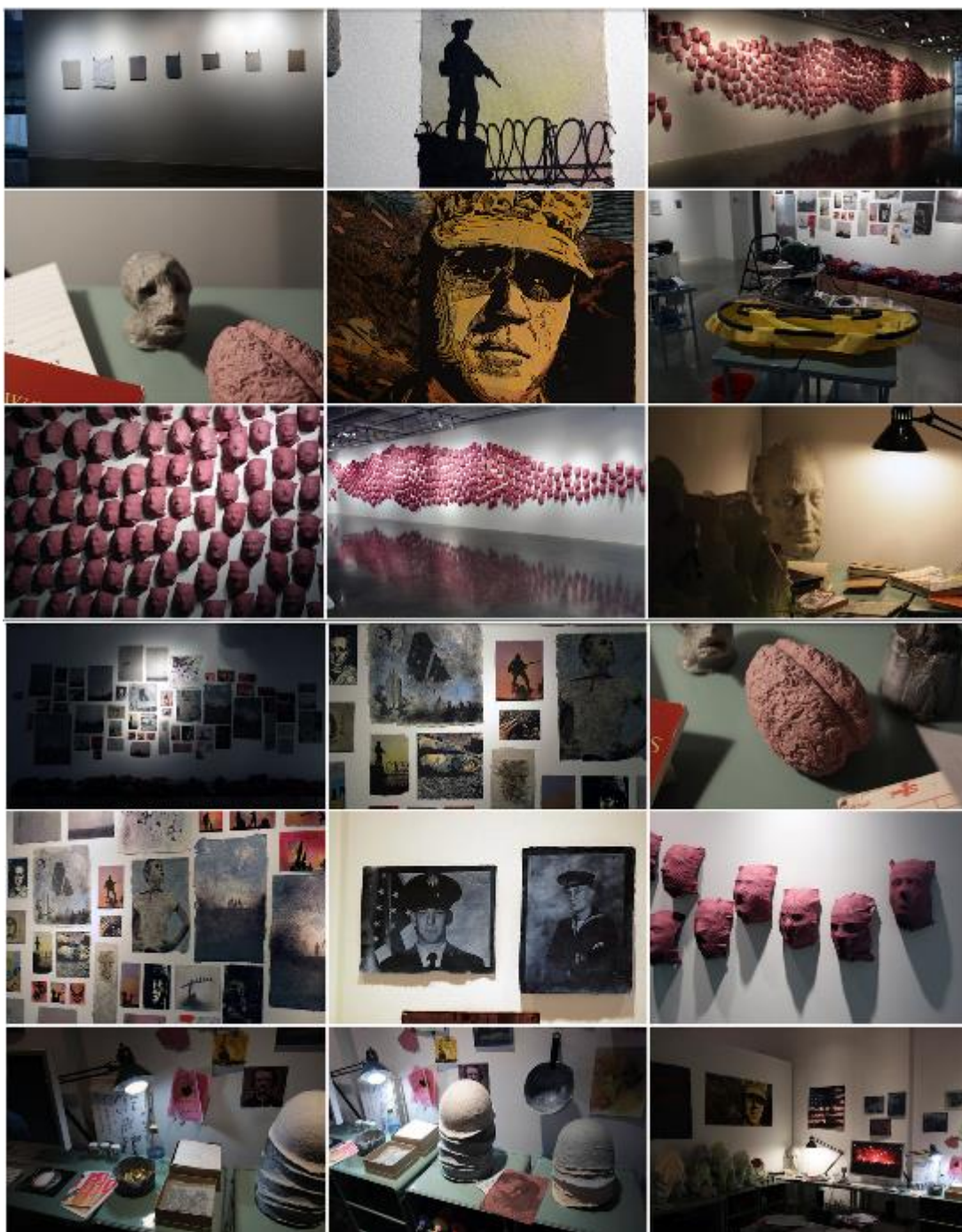


Figure 31 *Echoes of Service Exhibition, 2016, Photos by Erwin Thamm*

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BIOGRAPHY

Patrick Sargent graduated from Saint Clair High School, Saint Clair, Michigan, in 1982. He received his Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies with a concentration in International Security from George Mason University in 2002 and his Bachelor of Fine Art with a concentration in Printmaking in 2012. He is employed as a Research Analyst supporting the United States Government as a contractor.