

U.S. Marine Corps Combat Art Prints, 2006

During World War I, Colonel John W. Thomason produced a series of drawings to illustrate *Fix Bayonets!*, a collection of fictionalized accounts of Marines in the "Great War." His powerful sketches laid the groundwork for the official Marine Corps Combat Art Program that started in 1942, under the guidance of Brigadier General Robert Denig. Under his direction, artists were deployed throughout the Pacific, "to record with the artist's eye the great and simple doings of men at war, to picture its action, it's settings, it's tragedy, it's humor." Major Donald L. Dickson's Guadalcanal sketches are perhaps some of the best known early works of the war. Marine combat art soon appeared in newspapers and magazines—*Fortune*, *Saturday Review of Literature*, *New York Times Sunday Magazine*. Original works went on exhibit in such locations as the National Gallery in Washington, D.C., Museum of Modern Art in New York City, and the Taft Museum in Cincinnati, Ohio.

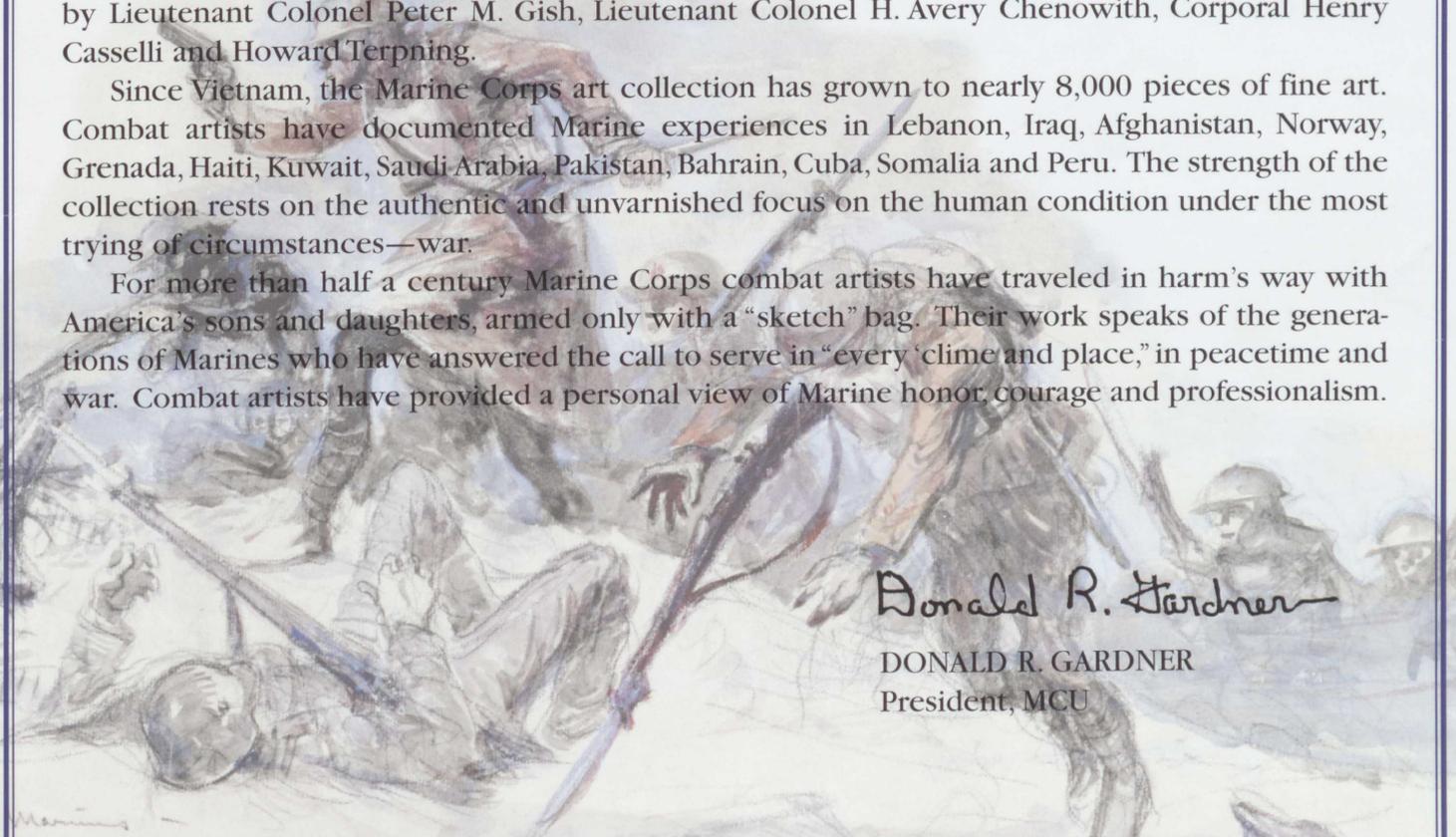
Following World War II, the program quietly ended and the artwork was either returned to the artists, exhibited for the public, or accessed into the U.S. Navy's Art Collection. Several Marine combat artists traded their seabags for highly successful careers in fine arts, including Tom Lovell, John Clymer, and Harry Jackson.

During the Korean War, the Combat Art Program enjoyed a short rebirth. Artists followed operations throughout the Korean peninsula, recording the real life drama of Marines in combat. One artist, John Groth, brought the frozen hell of a North Korean winter to American homes through his passionately expressive ink drawings.

The Combat Art Program was revived in 1966 when Marines were deployed to the Republic of Vietnam. Colonel Raymond Henri, a published poet and one of Brigadier General Denig's original "Demons" was tasked by the Commandant, General Wallace M. Greene, Jr., to again stand up a formal program. Under Colonel Henri's direction, dozens of Marine and civilian artists were deployed to Southeast Asia. John Groth and Major Jack Dyer led the way and were soon followed by Lieutenant Colonel Peter M. Gish, Lieutenant Colonel H. Avery Chenoweth, Corporal Henry Casselli and Howard Terpning.

Since Vietnam, the Marine Corps art collection has grown to nearly 8,000 pieces of fine art. Combat artists have documented Marine experiences in Lebanon, Iraq, Afghanistan, Norway, Grenada, Haiti, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Bahrain, Cuba, Somalia and Peru. The strength of the collection rests on the authentic and unvarnished focus on the human condition under the most trying of circumstances—war.

For more than half a century Marine Corps combat artists have traveled in harm's way with America's sons and daughters, armed only with a "sketch" bag. Their work speaks of the generations of Marines who have answered the call to serve in "every clime and place," in peacetime and war. Combat artists have provided a personal view of Marine honor, courage and professionalism.



Donald R. Gardner

DONALD R. GARDNER
President, MCU

50 Marines
Ch...
J.W. Thomason