

U.S. Marine Corps Art

The Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University

by Andrew Woelflein

Located in the John Hay Library at Brown University, the Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection is one of the most pre-eminent military art collections in the world. Built over four decades by Anne S.K. Brown, the Collection today houses over 28,000 works of military art, including sketches, watercolors, lithographs, posters, and oil paintings—all of which are easily accessible in digital form. The Collection also has more than 20,000 books on military and naval history, over 5,000 toy soldiers, a large collection of British ceremonial swords, and sections on early military science, exploration, weaponry, heraldry, orders, medals, flags, and photographs. The Collection's original emphasis was on the history and illustration of world military and naval uniforms ranging from the 17th to the 20th centuries, but it has expanded today to include material from the Renaissance onward. Mrs. Brown donated her Collection to Brown University in 1985.

A small sampling of the unique items in the Collection include a rare first edition of the 15th century classic *De Re Militari Libri XII*, a “how-to” manual for early Renaissance soldiers. Another treasure is the illustrated diary of Jean-Baptiste-Antoine Verger, a French officer in Rochambeau’s army during the American campaigns of 1780–81. Illustrations in the diary include watercolor sketches of Native Americans, ships, and fighting men, including one of the earliest depictions of an African-American soldier. A hand-lettered and illustrated text by the Marquis de Vauban, a 17th century military engineer, is one of only 5 known copies and is another prominent item in the Collection.

The U.S. Marine Corps’ campaigns during World War II are well represented in the Military Collection. The Col-

>Mr. Woelflein, a Brown University graduate, is the Presiding Trustee of the Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection. He is the author of Herbert Kotel’s German Armies in Color, (Atglen, PA: Schiffer Publishing, 2007).



***Wounded Marine carried by another Leatherneck on Iwo Jima.* (Drawing by Harry Reeks, 1945.)**

lection’s largest concentration of USMC military art are the 175 sketches and watercolors by Harry Reeks, a USMC combat artist who covered numerous Marine campaigns in the Pacific. Spanning Bougainville, New Georgia, Guam, Saipan, and Iwo Jima, Reeks sketched and painted every aspect of the battle from the initial landings to the ultimate victory. Reeks was the only combat artist to arrive with the invasion force at Iwo Jima and stay through the end of the battle. He was also wounded twice during his 30 days on Iwo Jima. Reeks had unlimited access to the battlefield as part of a small

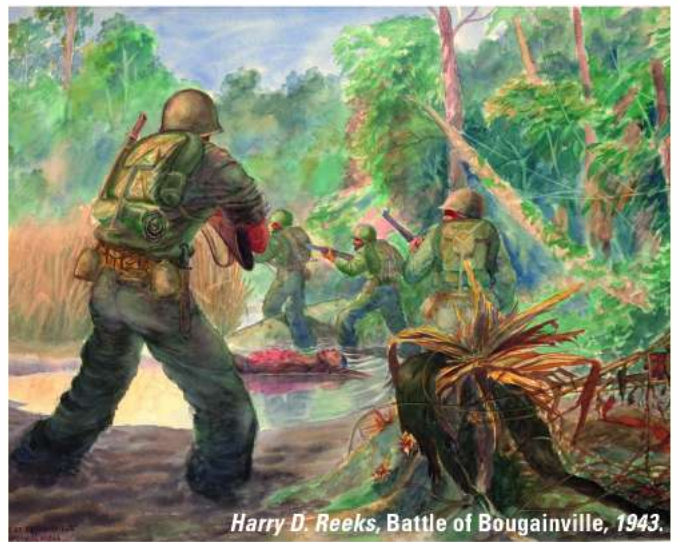
Marine public relations team, and his orders allowed him to attach himself to any unit. He aimed to depict the unvarnished realities of war—chaos and destruction, valor and comradery. Reeks’s *Battle Fatigue*, *Battle Scene on Iwo Jima*, and *Wounded Marine Carried by Another Leatherneck* are good examples of his realistic art style.

Following the war, Reeks married Chloe Baker, who was in the Marine Corps Reserve. They lived in California where he pursued painting, sculpture, and varied business interests. He died in 1982. Following the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II, Reeks’ daughter donated her father’s artwork to Brown University in 1995. Included in her donation were diary entries that Reeks kept while on Iwo Jima and an autobiographical memoir he wrote around 1958. Entries from the memoir demonstrate the great pride Reeks had in joining the Marines. He viewed the Marines as “the cream of the crop of our great nation,” and when speaking of his time in the Corps, remarked, “I was real and in the flesh. I was a U.S. Marine.” While in boot camp, Reeks augmented his salary by sketching fellow Marines. His skill was noted by officers, and he became a combat artist. Reeks, however, was a Marine first; he was shelled all night while in a Seabee camp, spent many nights in fighting holes, bombed, strafed, and even came face-to-face with the enemy. He noted in one entry that he

met a Jap one day on a trail ... I had just finished making a detailed drawing of



Harry D. Reeks, Iwo Jima landing, 1945.



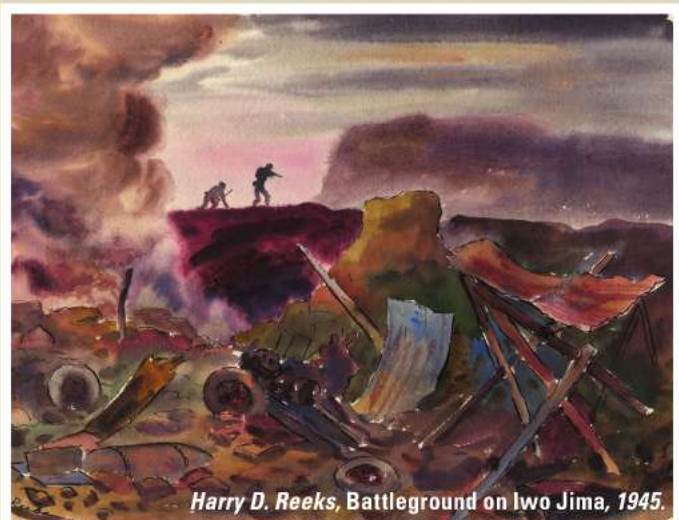
Harry D. Reeks, Battle of Bougainville, 1943.



Richard Baldwin, The United States Marine Corps (28th Regiment, 5th Division) attack on Mount Suribachi, Iwo Jima, February 21, 1945, 1946.



John McDermott, Firefight on Peleliu Island, 1944.



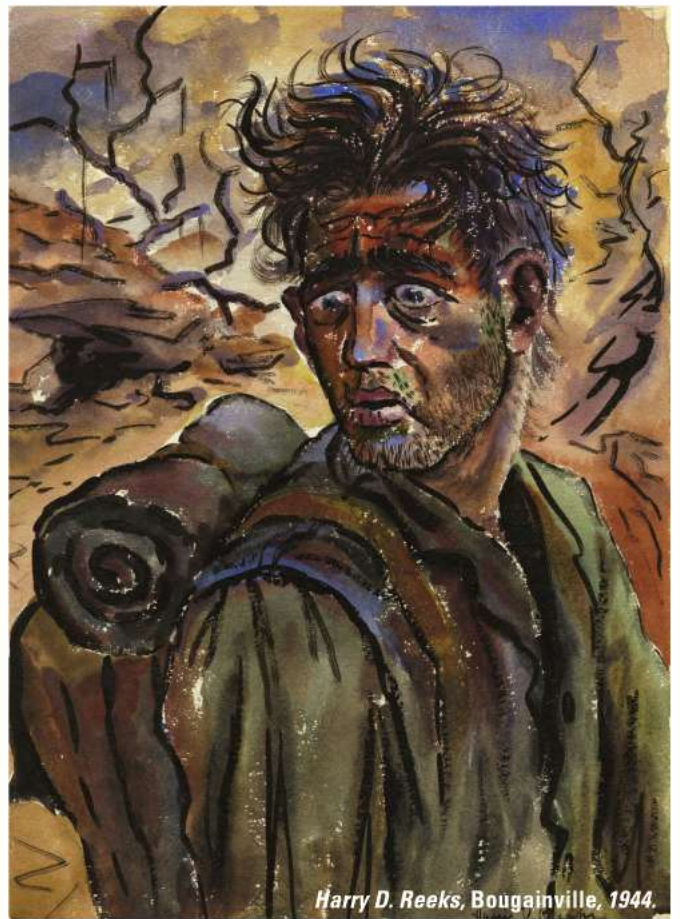
Harry D. Reeks, Battleground on Iwo Jima, 1945.



Harry D. Reeks, Battle Scene on Iwo Jima, 1945.



Harry D. Reeks, Battle Fatigue, 1945.



Harry D. Reeks, Bougainville, 1944.



John McDermott, Landing scene at Tarawa, 1943, 1943.

a hill where the Marines had fought the enemy to annihilation ... There wasn't a sole [sic] in sight as I came around this turn on the trail, stopped and faced each other like duelers. We took careful aim and fired.

Ironically, they both missed. Reeks' memoir has several references to Marines' habit of instinctively using their helmets to cover their private parts, instead of their heads, while being shelled. He also describes flushing out Japanese snipers who infiltrated Marine positions during the night, writing,

They let him shoot a few times and get some idea which tree he's in and then they spray the trees from top to bottom. Sometimes one of them falls down through the vines or fresh blood drips from somewhere up there for a long time.

The combination of Reeks' art and written words provide a unique and honest record of the Marines valiant war in the Pacific.

Having both returned from earlier missions, Hughes Michael met Harry Reeks at Camp Catlin, Oahu, Hawaii, in 1944. Earlier, Michael had seen action with the 2d MarDiv on the Marshall and Gilbert Islands and on Tarawa. Both he and Reeks served on Iwo Jima.

Victor Donahue, one of the first official combat artists, also sketched and painted the Marines in the Pacific. Donahue's *Friend or Enemy* depicts an unwelcome fighting hole visitor—a snake! Bugs, lizards, and land crabs, as Reeks noted in his memoir, were also occasional fighting hole cohabitants. Following the war, Donahue joined Scripps-Howard news syndicate as a featured artist and was twice nominated for the Pulitzer Prize. His later career focused on western genre and animal painting.

Theo Hios enlisted in the Marines during World War II and trained as a combat photographer. Hios received the Bronze Star for "heroic and meritorious action in obtaining valuable combat photographs under hazardous conditions." There are a dozen sketches and watercolors by him in the Collection, most covering the Pacific theater. His somewhat abstract watercolor, *Explosion*, painted on a ship while returning to Maui from Iwo Jima, dramatically captured the lethal force of an explosion experienced firsthand.

John McDermott, a sergeant in the III Amphibious Corps, was a self-taught artist who documented the battles of Guam, Guadalcanal, and Okinawa. McDermott worked at Disney prior to the war and, following the peace, was a freelance action and adventure illustrator of both magazines and books. McDermott's prolific pen-and-ink sketches captured every aspect of battle and were well recognized by Marines and civilians alike as they appeared in a wide range of publications.

Marine artist Edward Dugmore was formally trained as an artist before the war at the Hartford Art School and the Kansas City Art Institute. His pencil sketch of a *Marine Wearing Helmet* is a good example of what a Marine artist might sketch right on or close to the battlefield. Following the war, Dugmore taught drawing and painting while con-

tinuing to paint. His works have been on display at dozens of museums and are also in the permanent collections of prominent museums including The Corcoran and Hirshhorn in Washington, DC.

Richard Gibney originally trained as a demolitions engineer before becoming a Marine combat artist. He participated in the battles of Tarawa, Saipan, Tinian, and Okinawa. After serving in Japan with the occupation forces, he finished his formal art studies at The Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts and then in Europe. Inspired by the European stained glass and frescoes he studied, Gibney designed the magnificent stained glass for the Marines' Parris Island chapel.

Richard Baldwin served with the U.S. Army Air Force as a public relations photographer and artist in World War II. Baldwin was stationed on Iwo Jima after the Marines secured the island. While there, he painted the famous attack on Mount Suribachi by the USMC 28th Marines, 5th MarDiv.

The Anne S.K. Brown Collection continues to grow today through donations of military art and related material. The Curator, Peter Harrington, also makes acquisitions that complement the Collection. Mr. Harrington (Peter_Harrington@Brown.edu) has been involved with the Collection for more than 30 years and published a dozen books on military art featured in the Collection. Visitors are invited to tour the Collection Monday–Friday, 10am to 5pm. The 5,000 toy soldiers on display provide a dramatic visual walk through thousands of years of military history from the ancient Egyptians up to World War I. Additionally, the entire digital archive of the Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection is available online <http://library.brown.edu/cds/askb/index.html>.



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