

INVISIBLE BECOMING VISIBLE

AN EXHIBITION OF VETERANS' ART

THEODORE GOSTAS
DAVID KEEFE
JOHNATHAN CLARK

JAMES MILLER
BARBARA BARNETT
SKIP ROHDE

The University of North Florida is proud to present this national invitational veterans' art exhibition which explores the healing power of art.

The artworks have been created by veterans who have served in various branches of the military during the Cold War, the Vietnam War, and operations in Iraq and Afghanistan:

Barbara Barnett, Washington, United States Army

Johnathan Clark, Illinois, United States Army

Theodore Gostas, Wyoming, United States Army

David Keefe, New Jersey, United States Marine Corps

James Miller, Indiana, United States Army

Skip Rohde, North Carolina, United States Navy

These veteran artists have been recognized with valor and meritorious awards including the POW Medal, multiple Purple Hearts, Bronze Stars, and numerous service ribbons.

They have embraced art as an outlet to manage their lives and to release the trauma and mental torture of the past, opening avenues of healing and enlightenment.

This exhibition is a collaboration between the Lufrano Intercultural Gallery, Student Affairs, the Department of Art and Design, the UNF Military and Veterans Resource Center, and the UNF Chapter of Student Veterans of America. Special thanks are extended to exhibition co-curator, Jerome H. Domask, United States Army (Retired, Lieutenant Colonel).



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www.unf.edu/student-affairs/lufrano/

BARBARA BARNETT

United States Army

Barbara Barnett served in the United States Army Medical Corp in Germany during the Vietnam War and received a medically related discharge for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

As an active member of several art therapy programs, Barnett says, "Painting and art therapy give meaning to my existence. Art has saved my life, adding an amazing tool for dealing with pain and keeping my soul alive."

For years, Barnett didn't confront the sexual assault she experienced in the military. Now, she uses painting as an emotional outlet. She explains, "My artistic passion is to paint strong women, women warriors, while contributing to the 'voice' of courage and strength so many of my sister veterans exemplify."

A featured artist on ArtLifting.com, Barnett donates all of her earnings to their Community Partner Fund which provides art supplies to shelters and social service agencies nationwide. Her *Women Warriors* series has been the subject of a solo exhibit at the Leedy-Voukos Art Center in Kansas City, Missouri.



JOHNATHAN CLARK



United States Army

Johnathan Clark served in the United States Army, 173rd Airborne Brigade, in Afghanistan Post 9/11 and received a medically related discharge. Clark is currently living in a residence for homeless veterans in Chicago.

Clark channels pain from his wartime experiences into art that is more positive. He says that having art as an outlet helps him tremendously.

Reflecting on his work, Clark says "I think collages are a simple art style that can tell you where your psyche is at from what pictures you choose, why are you attracted to them, and also getting rid of excess papers at your house."

"What I hate is art with a statement: 'this piece is about sex' or 'this piece is about politics.' I say 'no' to all those things... to me, art should be about everything and nothing at the same time."

"A good artist loves negative reviews. The worst thing you can do to an artist is ignore it."

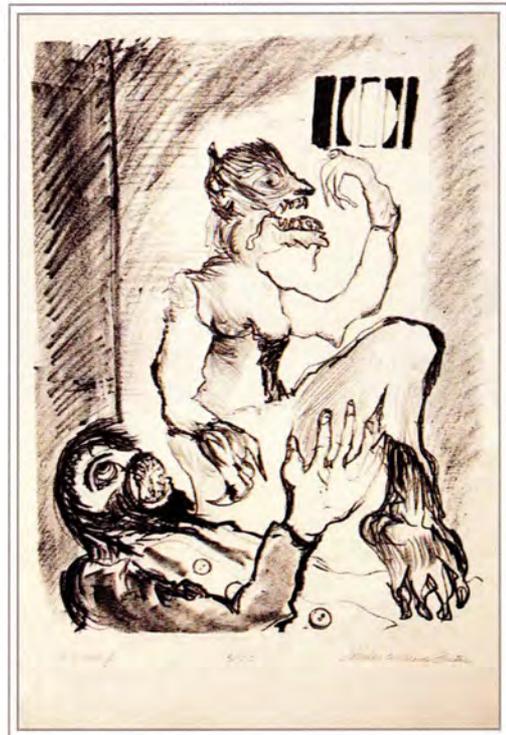
THEODORE GOSTAS

United States Army (Retired, Major)

Theodore Gostas served in the United States Army from 1961 to 1973 during the Cold War and the Vietnam War. During the 1968 Tet Offensive in Vietnam, Gostas was captured and taken as a Prisoner of War for more than five years, spending four and a half of those years in solitary confinement. As the highest ranking intelligence officer captured, Gostas was considered by his psychiatrist, the "most tortured prisoner of war in Vietnam." He was awarded the Bronze Star, two Purple Hearts and the POW medal, and retired with the rank of Major.

Once released from prison, Gostas painted and sketched to purge and ease the pain of captivity and daily torture. He wrote and illustrated a book of poetry, *Prisoner*, published in 1974, and has exhibited his artwork in the National Veterans Art Museum in Chicago.

Although he suffers from many health related problems as a result of his experiences, Gostas continues to pursue his work as a "war artist." He has raised several thousand dollars in college scholarships for the children of indigent veterans. He donates 100 percent of the proceeds of his art work and book sales to the scholarship fund.



DAVID KEEFE



United States Marine Corps

David Keefe served in the United States Marine Corps as a Sergeant from 2001-2009, including a combat tour in Iraq as a riverine infantry scout.

As an artist, educator and community activist, Keefe co-developed Combat Paper NJ, a community and social practice art project that brought veterans and non-veterans together to make paper and art out of military uniforms.

Currently, as Senior Assistant Dean for Veteran Initiatives at Columbia University's School of General Studies, Keefe has developed a hub of veteran activity that centralizes resources and strengthens the veteran community.

About his work, Keefe says, "I create because I question the world around me, want to see it differently, and long to connect to others via my unique expression. I am aware of the roles that war and violence play in my work, for they destroy and create cultures as forcefully as bombs detonate. Vitality and action are breathed into my painted landscapes through the recurring themes of active figures in time, surrounded by unstable bombs."

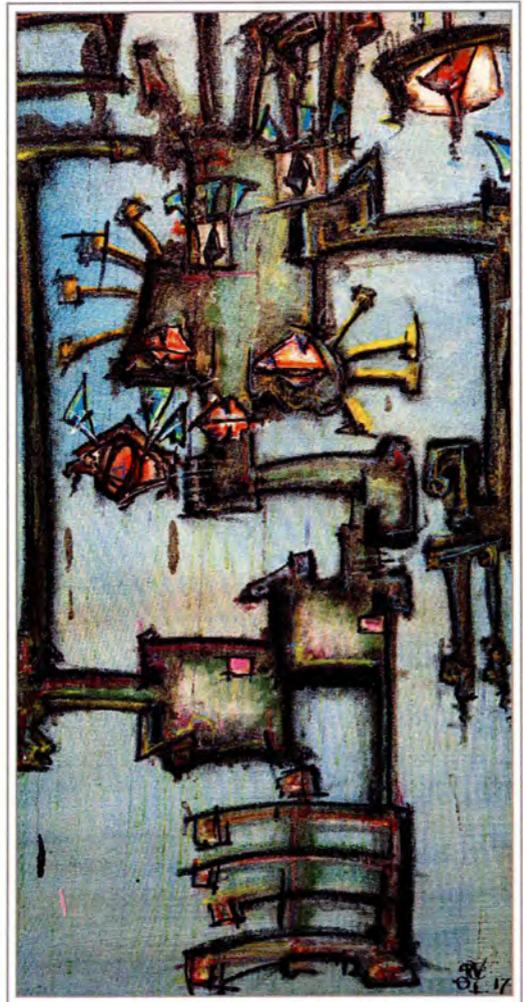
JAMES MILLER

United States Army

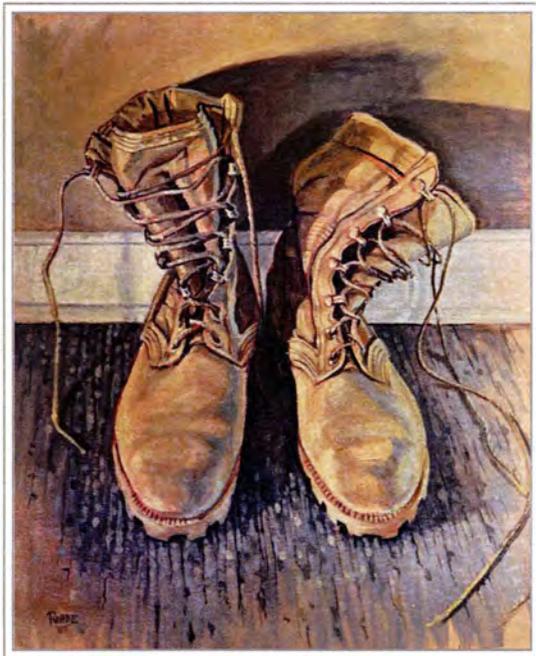
James (Jim) Miller is a combat wounded veteran who served in the United States Army, Task Force 293, in the Middle East and Iraq, and later received a disability retirement.

Upon returning home, Miller created art as a way to navigate his emotional upheaval, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, and combat injuries. He worked as an art coordinator at the Veterans Therapeutic Art Center in Northern Indiana. Currently, he is a member of the Limp Goat Art Collective, a self-driven outsider art studio that incorporates fine art, commissioned murals, graffiti and public performance pieces.

Miller observes, "An artist's responsibility is to bring awareness to social issues, pop culture and current events. 'Art' is not the final product. Art is the process. Every piece is a social statement. Painting is a process of survival."



SKIP ROHDE



United States Navy (Retired, Commander)

Skip Rohde served in the United States Navy as an Officer during the Cold War and Vietnam era. Later, he went to Iraq and Afghanistan with the U.S. State Department to manage in-country reconstruction programs.

As a full-time artist today, Rohde's paintings have won national and regional recognition and awards and have been featured in multiple solo exhibitions across the eastern United States. The Smithsonian Museum of American History in Washington, D.C. has his *Faces of Afghanistan* series, consisting of more than 80 drawings and portrait sketches of rural Afghans done from life, in their permanent collection.

About his *Meditation of War* series featured in this exhibition, Rohde says, "These paintings examine some of my own experiences with combat and military life. War is one of humanity's most defining experiences. News reporters dash in and out of war zones, giving us 30-second snippets before cutting into commercial. In our fast-paced world, we don't pay attention to anything unless it's equally fast-paced. I have found that the quiet things are just as important as the combat itself."