

## **Wisconsin Was There: Sharing the Legacies of Printmakers Who Served in the Military**

Artists have served in the military for centuries, often the first people to document conflict visually. Rarely understood are the military contributions of these artists and, if they are recognized, they are lumped into the categories of combat or therapeutic arts.

Why a person follows the life path they do is a function of their life experiences. Those artists with military service in their backgrounds, however, have participated in one of the most influential and character-building experiences of their lives. And yet, this service is often a footnote in their biographies or completely passed over. In reality, an artist's military experiences provide unique subjects and perspectives for their work.

For printmakers, especially those who served between the Civil War and World War II, their craft was a skillset still very much in demand for military mission readiness. Trades such as engravers, lithographers, draftsman, and publishers all played vital roles in military preparedness and the civilians in those professions were recruited for the war effort. Wisconsin servicemembers found themselves in new military roles, and several were innovators in the development of new print processes and scientific discoveries to aid the war effort, especially in World War II.

The technological advances in the digital era greatly shifted the roles of artists in both the civilian and military world. While artistic skill is still embraced in the military, it is no longer the recruiting tool it once was, and it's primarily used for moral-building and recreation. Regardless, artists still find their way into service and continue to lead with the creative vision that only an artist possesses.

Interspersed with the museum exhibits are works by Wisconsin veterans with that vision—some living and some who have passed. Their wartime contributions, especially in World War II, strengthened the Allied campaigns. The invention of the "Target Identification Unit" by Milwaukee-born Gerald Geerlings, and a patented "Plane Spotting Technique" by US Navy cartographer, Richard Florsheim, both aided Allied bombers. Their contributions as civilian printmakers continued in classrooms and communities throughout the state and across the nation.

The Wisconsin Veterans Museum acknowledges the collaboration and works on loan from The Wriston Art Galleries at Lawrence University and Beloit College, Wright Museum of Art.

## *Battles of the Civil War*

Chromolithographs by Louis Kurz, Kurz & Allison

Union Soldier

Civil War

Milwaukee, WI



Louis Kurz was born in 1835 in Salzburg, Austria. His family emigrated to Milwaukee in 1848 and Kurz became a scenic painter while working for his father in the German language theater. His family moved to Chicago in 1853 where he worked as a muralist and trained as a lithographer. Kurz served briefly in the Civil War in 1862 and between 1862-1878 he formed various lithography firms in Milwaukee and Chicago specializing in tinted lithographs and chromolithographs. In 1880, he partnered with Alexander Allison to form Kurz & Allison, which became one of the biggest American lithographic firms of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A lifelong friend of Abraham Lincoln, Kurz was asked by the President to make sketches of the battlefields of the Civil War. Entering a period of nostalgia by many veterans of the war, Kurz & Allison achieved great success with their brightly colored, romanticized chromolithographs of the various battles. Most of the prints were issued on or near the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the battle depicted and were meant to inspire feelings of patriotism rather than an attempt to be historically accurate. Unlike other works created during this period, Kurz & Allison included scenes depicting black soldiers within the ranks. By 1893, a total of 36 large-format Civil War chromolithographs were produced.

Courtesy of the Veteran Print Project Collection

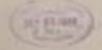
\*There will be a supplementary label discussing the chromolithography process



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REPRODUCED BY THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES FROM A COPY OF THE ORIGINAL PRINTED BY CURTIS & ILLINOIS, CHICAGO, ILL., 1863.

SIEGE OF VICKSBURG.





CAPTURE OF GENERAL G. B. BUCKNER AND HIS ARMY, FEBRUARY 16<sup>TH</sup> 1862.

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BATTLE OF FORT DONELSON.



MICROFILMED

## *Jeweled City & West Point*

Etchings by Gerald K. Geerlings

United States Army

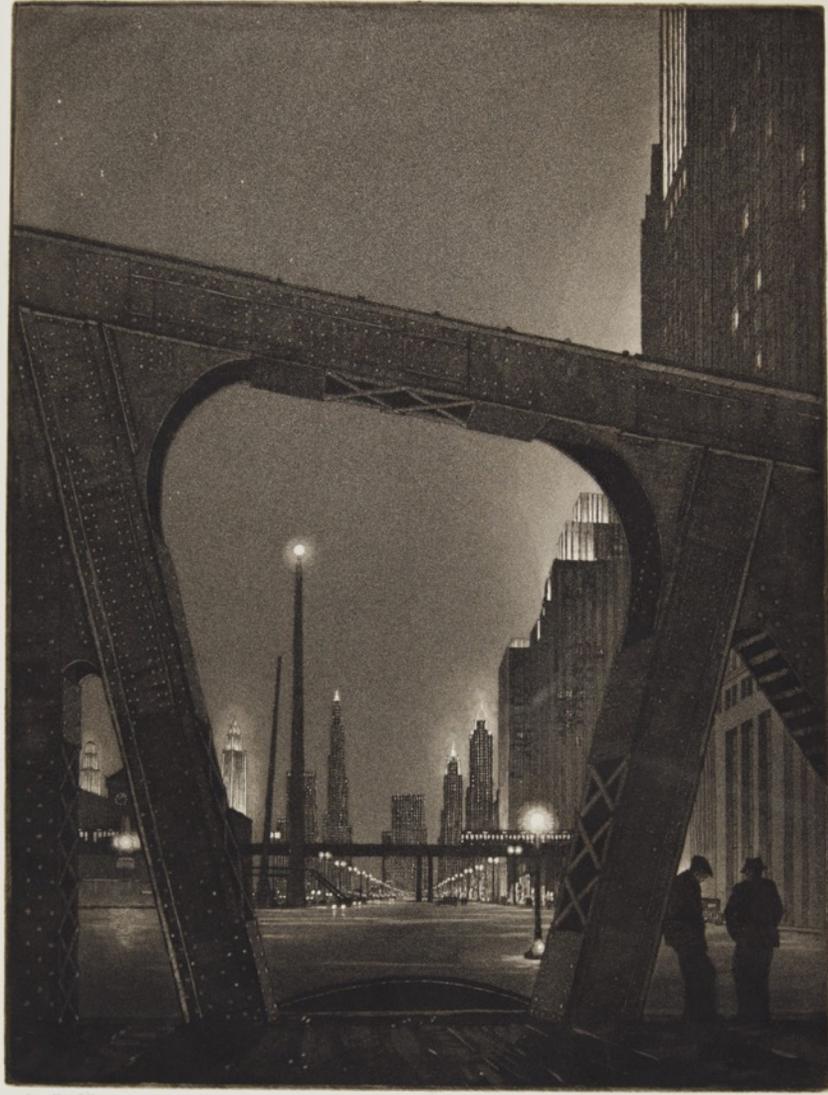
WWI & WWII

Milwaukee, WI



Gerald Geerlings was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 1897. He worked as an architectural draftsman and newspaper reporter before enrolling in art school. His education was interrupted by his enlistment into the United States Army during World War I where he served with the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 120<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Regiment in Wisconsin Rapids. By 1918 he was a second lieutenant and was part of the 32<sup>nd</sup> Division. After the war he received his advanced degrees in architecture from the University of Pennsylvania.

Geerlings returned to the military in World War II as part of the United States Army Air Forces. As captain in the Command Office of the 8<sup>th</sup> Special Operations Squadron in England, his expertise in creating aerial perspective drawings aided in the development of critical cartographic innovations and target maps. Geerlings designed the “Target Identification Unit” to aid Allied bombers in key campaigns. For these innovations, specifically the ones used in the Ploesti Raid, Geerlings was awarded the Legion of Merit medal with an oak leaf cluster in 1943. He retired in 1945 as a colonel but continued to serve as a part-time consultant to the Strategic Air Command Headquarters until 1952.



**Creator**

[Geerlings, Gerald Kenneth \(American printmaker and architect, born 1897\)](#)

**Culture**

American

**Title**

Jeweled City

**Work Type**

etchings (prints); aquatints (prints)

**Date**

1931

**Material**

Etching and aquatint

**Measurements**

sheet: 20 1/4 x 16 inches; composition: 15 1/2 x 11 5/8 inches

**Description**

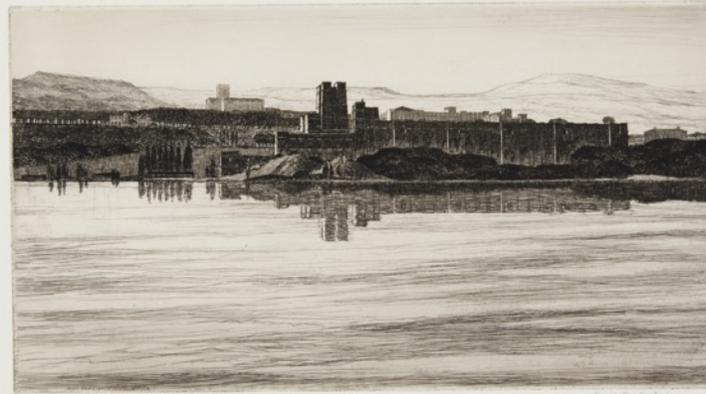
A cityscape at night with a railroad bridge, two men standing under the arch of the bridge.

**Repository**

Wriston Art Center Galleries, Lawrence University, Appleton, WI

**Accession Number**

65.050



**Title**

West Point

**Work Type**

drypoints (prints)

**Date**

1930

**Material**

Drypoint etching

**Measurements**

sheet: 11 3/8 x 17 3/8 inches;  
composition: 7 1/8 x 13 inches

**Description**

Buildings of West Point seen from  
across the river.

**Repository**

Wriston Art Center Galleries,  
Lawrence University, Appleton, WI

**Accession Number**

64.122

## *Red Barn, Wisconsin*

Aquatint by Leon Pescheret

United States Army

WWI

Whitewater, WI



Born in a suburb of London, Leon Pescheret moved to the United States in 1910, studied at the Art Institute of Chicago, and worked as an architectural designer and draftsman. He served in the United States Army in World War I and later established himself as an interior designer in Chicago. He led projects across the Midwest, including the Memorial Union and Elizabeth Waters Hall on the University of Wisconsin campus. He began designing etchings in 1926 and devoted his entire business to the craft by 1930. Noting the lack of color etchings available for sale at the 1933 Century of Progress Exhibition, he decided to return to Europe to master the process. Eventually, he purchased the Halverson Home in Whitewater, Wisconsin in 1936 and for the next 31 years he produced award-winning color and monochrome etchings in his studio. Forever a skilled draftsman, Pescheret's prints delicately captured nostalgic reminders of places and time.

Work on loan from the Wriston Art Galleries, Lawrence University

## *Dimuendo*

Etching by Arthur Thrall

United States Army

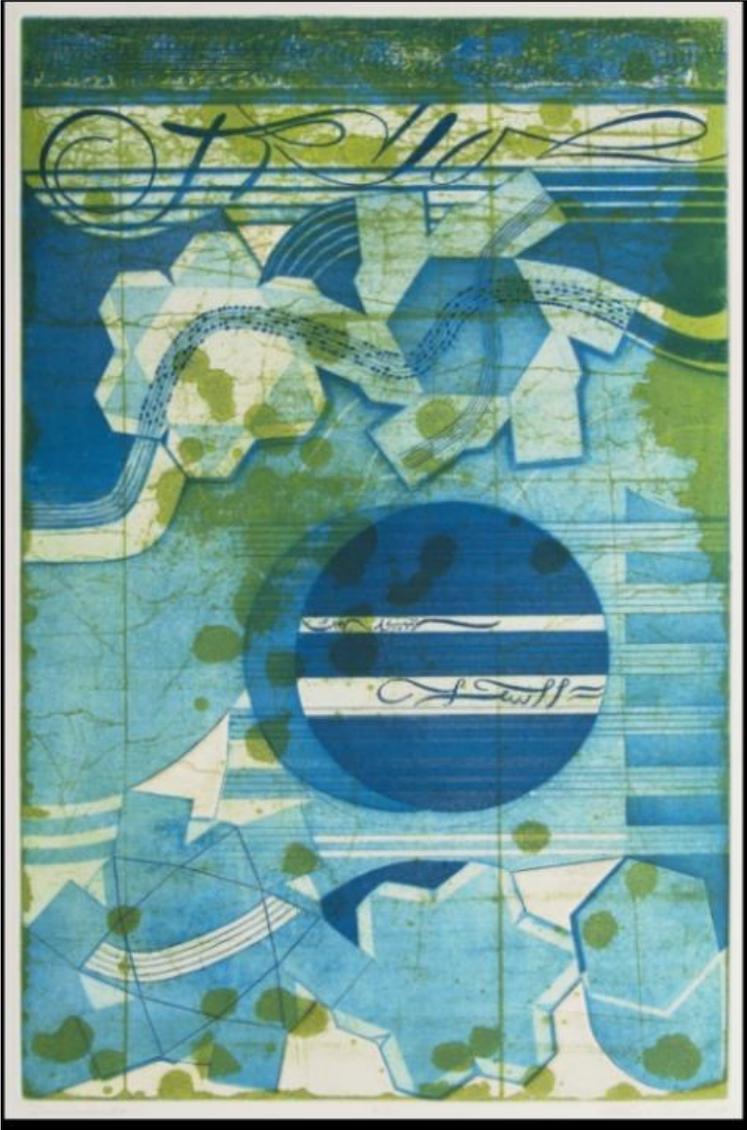
WWII

Appleton, WI

"Many graphic sources fascinate me, such as manuscripts, calligraphy, maps, scientific and technical charts and musical scores. I consider musical notation as visual music or a kind of choreography, and freely interpret the other sources for their gestural and textural effects rather than their literal meanings." -Arthur Thrall

Born in Milwaukee, Arthur Thrall enlisted in the United States Army in 1944 and served in Europe at the end of World War II. Thrall often acknowledged his gratitude for the GI Bill that afforded him the ability to pursue his undergraduate and graduate degrees from Milwaukee State Teachers College (now University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee) and the University of Illinois-Urbana. He was a gifted teacher who spent much of his career at Lawrence University in Appleton, Wisconsin where he retired in 1990. Upon the artist's death in 2011, Graeme Reid, the director of the Museum of Wisconsin Art, complimented Thrall's excellence in teaching by stating, "There are no viable shortcuts to printmaking and its practice made Arthur an exceptional teacher—patient with his charges, instructing them in materials and processes, and taking the many requisite steps toward the ideal result. In other words, lessons learned in the print studio are equally applicable in life. For Arthur Thrall, art was life."

Work on loan from the Wriston Art Galleries, Lawrence University



## *Käthe: Death and Despair*

Etching by Warrington Colescott

United States Army

WWII

Hollandale, WI



Warrington Colescott was born in Oakland, California. Warrington Colescott, Sr., his father, served in World War I and brought home artifacts from France that the young artist played with and used as subjects in his early drawings. After receiving his bachelor's degree from the University of California, Berkeley in 1942, Colescott was drafted into the United States Army. He served on Okinawa late in World War II and as part of the post-war occupation force in Korea. He returned to Berkeley in 1946 and received his graduate degree and teaching certificate. He joined the University of Wisconsin in 1949, where he taught painting and printmaking for 37 years. During his tenure, Colescott used the GI Bill to study at the [\*Académie de la Grande Chaumière\*](#), Paris in 1952–53 and earned the prestigious Fulbright and Guggenheim fellowships. An innovative printmaker, Colescott composed a balanced mix of comedy, tragedy, and political satire into etched, often cartoonish, and colorful visual narratives.

Work on loan from the Wriston Art Galleries, Lawrence University

## *Night Trio*

Lithograph by John Nicholson Colt

United States Navy

WWII

John Nicholson Colt was born in Madison, Wisconsin in 1925 and was one of Wisconsin's most important 20th century artists. Arthur Colt, the artist's father, was the founder of Colt's School of Painting in Madison, Wisconsin, an institute that many returning servicemen attended using their G.I. Bill. In World War II, John Nicholson Colt enlisted in the United States Navy and served as an electrician on a submarine. He returned to Madison in 1946 and studied art education at the University of Wisconsin where he earned his bachelor's and master's degrees in fine art. He taught in Richland Center and Janesville, Wisconsin and was on the faculty at the Layton School of Art in Milwaukee. In 1957 he began his 33-year career at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. He found inspiration in his travels and concentrated on objects, focusing on miniature forms and creating luminous effects to give them an abstract quality. A devoted educator, he spent his tenure encouraging students to embrace unique forms of self-expression.

Work on loan from the Wriston Art Galleries, Lawrence University



## *Night in the City*

Engraving by David Driesbach

United States Marine Corps

WWII

Wausau, WI



“I’ve always had a yen for humor, and often I think of my prints in terms of theater—a stage setting, the main characters, the music accompanying the action.” — David Driesbach

David Driesbach was born in 1922 in Wausau, Wisconsin. He attended the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign from 1940-1941 and enlisted in the United States Marine Corps in 1942. He served in the intelligence section of the Headquarters and Service Company, 5<sup>th</sup> Marines, 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division in the Pacific during World War II.

Driesbach’s daughter said in an interview with the *Chicago Tribune*, “with his artistic ability and keen sense of direction, he became a scout, pinpointing enemy locations on maps he drew for troop commanders.”

Driesbach returned to the United States on Thanksgiving Day 1945 and pursued a Master’s Degree in Fine Art at the University of Iowa. He taught in Arkansas, Illinois, and Ohio before joining the faculty at Northern Illinois University in 1964 where he taught for the next 27 years.

Work on loan from the Wriston Art Galleries, Lawrence University

## *Sunset Bridge*

Lithograph by Richard A. Florsheim

United States Navy

WWII



Richard A. Florsheim was born in Chicago, Illinois in 1916. He studied at the University of Chicago and in New York City with Wisconsin artist Aaron Bohrod. His father subsidized his independent study in France, Italy, central Europe, and the Near East. By 1940 he was no longer receiving financial support from his father, and he returned to Chicago where he worked as a lithographer. He enlisted in the United States Navy in 1942 and served in the Pacific as a cartographer in World War II. He obtained patents for his radar planning device, which accurately predetermined specific areas of geographic terrain from transmitted radar waves. It also helped identify the differences between enemy and friendly aircraft.

After the war, Florsheim returned to exhibiting his art and he taught at the Layton School of Art in Milwaukee from 1949-1950.

Work on loan from Beloit College, Wright Museum of Art.



### *Fast Track*

Relief etching from five plates and collaged relief on handmade paper

Sam Gilliam

United States Army

1956-1958

Sam Gilliam was born in Tupelo, Mississippi in 1933. He received his bachelor of arts from the University of Louisville in 1955 and his master of fine art from the same institution in 1961 after serving in the United States Army from 1956-1958. Gilliam is known for his innovative techniques in abstract expressionist experiments. He was a visiting artist at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in the early 1970's where UW Professor William Weege invited him to make a print at his Jones Road studio. While there, he was encouraged to make unconventional monoprints by using the actual press bed as the plate. The spontaneity and liberating qualities of this technique paired well with Gilliam's colorful and expressive spirit. He returned every summer to work with Weege at Jones Road and was the first artist to create an edition with Tandem Press in Madison. Gilliam's inventive approach to creating art has had a great impact on abstract expressionist art, and throughout his career, he continued to collaborate on outstanding examples of innovation and experimentation in the field of printmaking.

Work on loan from the Wriston Art Galleries, Lawrence University

## *Jake's*

Color Intaglio Print by Michael Flannagan

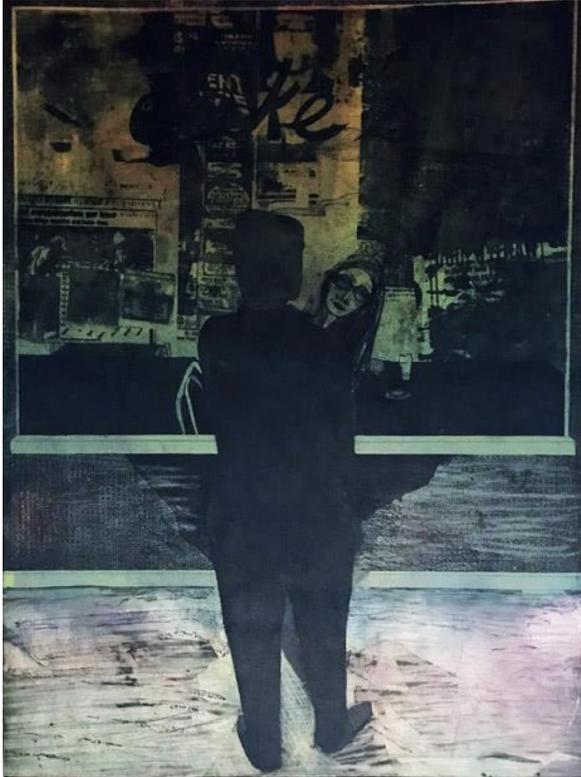
United States Army

Vietnam

### Artist Bio:

Michael Flanagan recently retired as Director of the Crossman Gallery at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater where he had been working since 1995. In addition to managing the gallery, he taught a General Education class and a basic art course in the Department of Art and Design. Flanagan is a member of the Board at the Walker's Point Center of the Arts where he chairs the Exhibition Committee.

Flanagan has travelled to Oaxaca, Mexico with colleagues from UW-Whitewater to help establish a working relationship with the art department at la Universidad Autonoma Benito Juarez de Oaxaca (UABJO). They successfully set up an exchange exhibit with the University; examples by faculty, current and former students from Oaxaca were displayed in the Fiskum Gallery in the University Center along with another group displayed at the Whitewater Cultural Arts Center. The follow up exhibit took UW-Whitewater faculty and student work for a display in the UABJO art gallery in October/November of 2009. Plans are underway for a second exhibit at the Museum of Oaxaca Artists and an exhibit on our campus of examples from the many print shops and tallers in Oaxaca in 2011.





## *Travis*

Screen-print by Shawn Ganther

United States Air Force

Operation Southern Watch | Operation Enduring Freedom

Neillsville, WI

Shawn "Simon" Ganther was born in 1977 and is an American contemporary painter and printmaker. He served in the United States Air Force from 1998 to 2003 and was involved in Operation Southern Watch and Operation Enduring Freedom. Ganther graduated from the University of Wisconsin–Stevens Point in 2012 with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Media Production and Studio Art. Since graduation, he has been an advocate for art therapy as a treatment option for PTSD. He participated in the Veteran Print Project in 2015 and created this print for a Wisconsin Army Veteran named, Travis. Ganther commented on his interview with Travis: “At the beginning of the interview, Travis said, ‘I know you want to hear a military story, but I kind of wanted to talk about hunting.’ This piece is about the interweaving of military and civilian elements. The dark elements overlaying the white and transparent images represent thought and actions between deployments and time at home. When we are overseas home travels with us, but our military service also travels back home. No matter the outcome, our service will always be a part of us whether it is in the forefront of our thoughts or the back of our mind.”

Courtesy of the Veteran Print Project Collection

## *Transfers of War*

Inkjet Transfer Prints by Ash Kyrie

Wisconsin National Guard

Operation Iraqi Freedom

Argyle, WI



“Conversation between Iraqi teenager  
and U.S. Soldier Sgt”

Image Courtesy of the Artist

Ash’s Statement about his prints:

“After returning from the war in Iraq I became increasingly aware with how the printed media in America is portraying our military’s actions in Iraq and Afghanistan, especially the inconsistency of what I remember and what is being depicted in the news. These prints explore how the civilian population of the United States experience war through mediated media. The original source images are taken from major printed media outlets such as the New York Times, LA Times, USA Today, etc. Through the exploration of thousands of images from the war, I came to the understanding: the media was printing three distinct archetypical images, Benign Intervention; Abstracted Explosion; The Sacrifice”

Kyrie lives in Argyle, Wisconsin and is a graduate of UW Madison with an MFA from The Ohio State University. His artwork and commentary reflecting his experiences in the Iraq War with the Wisconsin National Guard have been exhibited throughout the world.

## *“Go, Flash, Go!”*

Woodcut-relief by Yvette M. Pino

United States Army

Operation Iraqi Freedom

Madison, WI



Yvette M. Pino was born in Albuquerque, New Mexico in 1976. She served with the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division through two tours in Iraq. While deployed, she was tasked to paint murals and was coined the unofficial “Division Artist.” Pino created The Veteran Print Project in 2010 and has paired more than 100 veterans with artists to exchange a dialogue that resulted in an edition of prints based on the veteran’s story. The artwork has exhibited nationally, has been recognized by NPR’s *All Things Considered*, and has been licensed by ABC Studios for use in television stage sets. Pino earned her Bachelor of Fine Arts from the University of Wisconsin–Madison and received a Certificate in Museum Studies from Northwestern University. She was a National Endowment for the Humanities Curatorial Fellow for the 2019 National Veteran Art Museum Triennial and Veteran Art Summit. Pino served on the Madison Arts Commission From 2013-2021 and is the Curator of Veteran Art for the Wisconsin Veterans Museum. Her art practice has shifted from focusing on her military career toward the investigation of personal family history as she considers new ways to commemorate the past without requiring monuments or the promotion of hero-worship. There are many layered symbols within her work that draw meaning from both personal trauma and the amplified collective trauma of the last few years.

Courtesy of the Artist