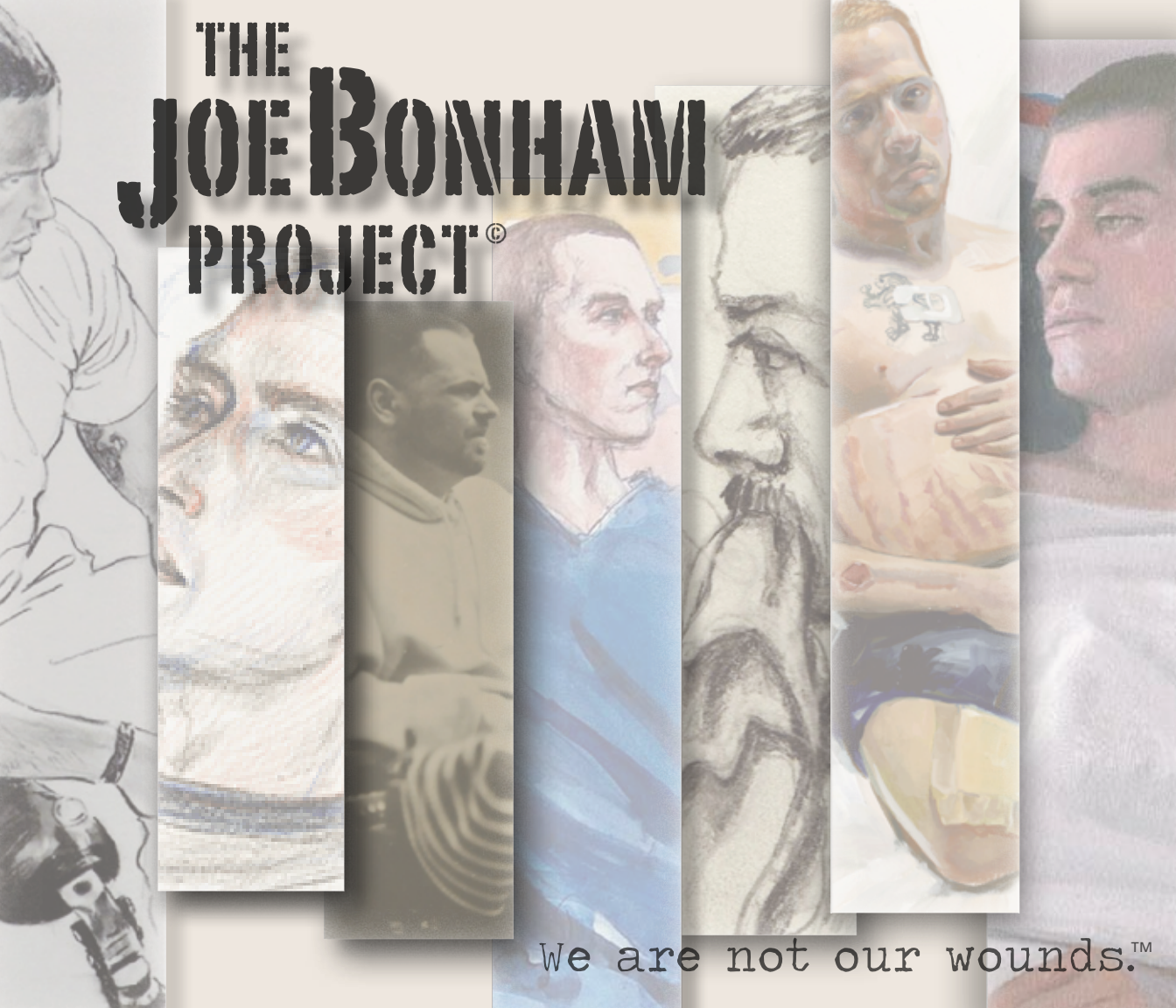


THE JOE BONHAM PROJECT[®]



We are not our wounds.[™]



The Joe Bonham Project

Drawing the Stories of America's Wounded Veterans

Organized and Curated by

Michael D. Fay

Founder, The Joe Bonham Project

With Generous Support from

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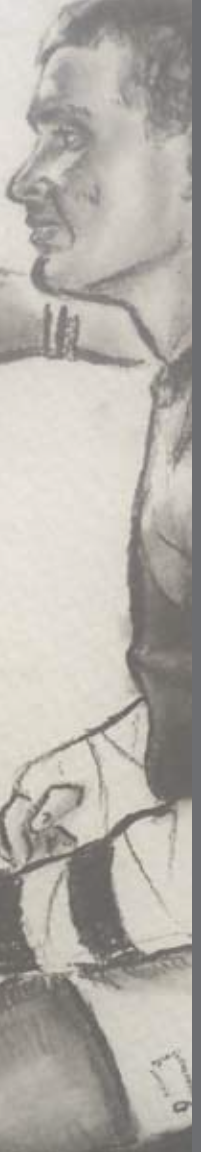
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Catalogue Design: Military Marketing Solutions, LLC



Lo, I too am come,
chanting the chant of battles,
I above all promote brave soldiers.

– Walt Whitman, "As I Ponder'd in Silence"



The Joe Bonham Story

Joe Bonham is the central character in Dalton Trumbo's 1938 novel "Johnny Got His Gun."


Somewhere on the Western Front, Joe, a World War I Doughboy, is horribly wounded by the blast of an artillery round. All that remains of Joe is his conscious humanity and the absolute minimum of bodily functions to support awareness. He has no arms or legs; no face, no eyes, no ears, no mouth, or tongue to speak. Joe simply is.

Through the pages of the book, Joe becomes aware of the extent of his injuries, grapples with the absolute horror of these realizations, and miraculously begins to reach back out into the world of his fellow man.

Joe's ultimate goal is to have himself placed in a glass box and toured around the country as a living example of the realities of war, and the victorious transcendence of the human spirit. His wish is denied, and Joe is ingloriously spirited away to live out his days alone and forgotten.

(artwork, previous page) Study #1, Specialist Eric Hunter, USA, pencil on paper, 2012, Rob Bates

(artwork at left) Corporal Mathew Bowman, USMC, Takes A Break From Physical Therapy, pencil on paper, 2011, Rob Bates



The Joe Bonham Project

As the Global War on Terror enters its second decade, service members are surviving the most catastrophic wounds imaginable. Yet even as medical science continues to advance to address ever more devastating injuries, our nation seems to want to forget the new generation of 'Joe Bonhams'.

In February 2011, a group of American, Canadian and Australian artists began documenting the experiences of service members going through stateside medical treatment, through art. Working primarily at in-patient surgical shock-trauma wards, these artists spend time with some of the most physically battle damaged soldiers, sailors and Marines. Many of the subjects are patients mere weeks away from being injured in IED blasts and fire fights in Afghanistan. Most have endured

multiple traumatic amputation injuries and disfiguring facial wounds, and will endure months of operations and challenging physical therapy. With them on this journey back to wholeness are often equally traumatized family members. All have volunteered to be sketched.

Several of The Joe Bonham Project artists are seasoned war artists; Michael Fay, Richard Johnson, Steve Mumford, Kristopher Battles, Victor Juhasz, Roman Genn, and Robert Bates have each embedded with US combat units in both Iraq and Afghanistan in order to create art. Others, like Jeffrey Fisher, Fred Harper, Jess Ruliffson, Ray Alma, Bill Harris, and Josh Korenblat, have friends and family who have, or are currently serving in the armed forces.

The Joe Bonham Project, will keep the dedication, sacrifices and indomitable spirit of our wounded warriors present and accounted for.

(artwork at left) Two Holes In, One Hole Out, graphite on paper, 2012, Michael D. Fay

(artwork, next page) Sergeant Jason Ross, USMC, Receiving Physical Therapy at Walter Reed, mixed media, 2011, Victor Juhasz



We are not our wounds.



Ray Alma

Over the last few years, I've been privileged to have met and drawn many of our Wounded Warriors. Previously it was in my role as a member of the National Cartoonist Society working in conjuncture with the USO. In those instances we were there to try to entertain our injured service men. Now, with the Joe Bonham Project my role is to document their stories.

Time and again, in whatever circumstance that I meet these brave men and women, I am amazed at their positive spirit in the face of a sometimes difficult recovery. They inspire me to appreciate what I have and to feel thankful that they have sacrificed for me and this country.

I hope that whether I am trying to entertain them or document them, that I do them the justice they deserve.

Exercising His Lungs, pencil on paper, 2012



He Saved My Life, pencil on paper, 2012



The Bullet They Dug Out of Me, watercolor on paper, 2012



And This Is Where It Hit, watercolor on paper, 2012

Rob Bates

It has been an honor to be a part of a project much larger than myself. Having been a Marine, I felt at ease with the concept of entering hospital rooms to sketch recovering service members, with the exception of my initial visit. Corporal Mathew Bowman was the first person I have ever sketched at Walter Reed. Even though we came from the same unit, it was still hard to make a connection. Once I relaxed, things started rolling. Visiting Cpl. Bowman taught me a lesson in what it means to be a fighter who refuses to quit.

Since my visit with Cpl. Bowman I have drawn and painted several more heroes in recovery. I learn something new with every encounter; not only do I learn about the person that I sketch, but also about myself. It is extremely gratifying to go to bed every night knowing that I play a part in ensuring that their stories are not lost.

It has been an absolute privilege, and I am forever grateful for this experience.



(below)
Sergeant Jacks Resting
graphite on paper, 2012



(left)
Specialist Eric Hunter, USA
pastel on paper, 2012

(below)
Single Leg Amputee at Troop First Foundation Golf Tournament
watercolor on paper, 2012





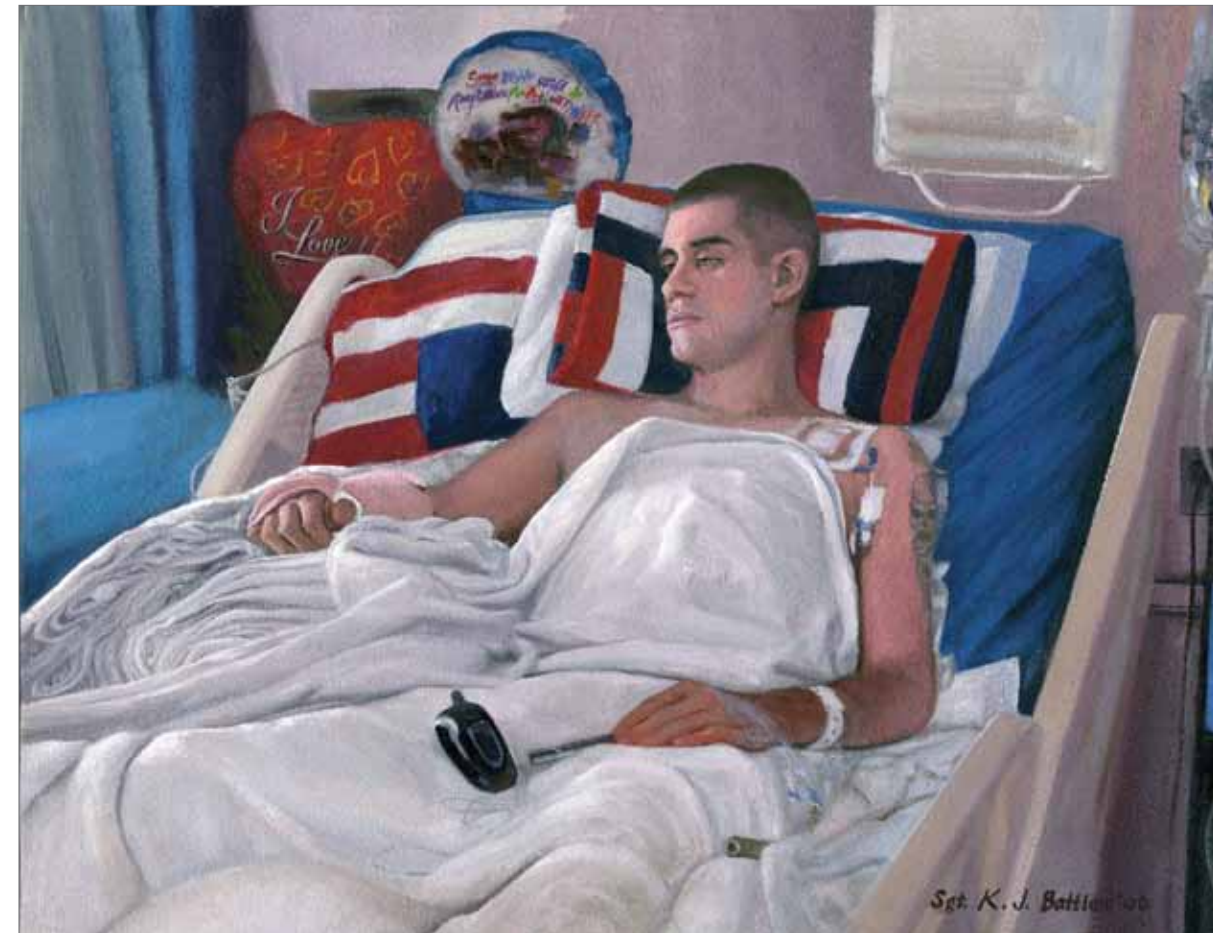
Kristopher Battles

Sketching Wounded Warriors is a very emotional thing. The act of portraying them is one of the more challenging endeavors I've ever done. As artists, we have a calling to render what we see, and to be faithful to the reality that is before us. As American citizens, we have a sacred obligation to honor the stories these Warriors have to tell.

With each of these individuals, there is a different reality; a different story to tell—and some of those stories are more difficult to render than others. Yet when I see the artwork that results from these times, I am filled with pride—even more so when I see their reactions, when they see what we do.

I feel it's important that they see that our nation values them—not just as a group, but as individuals—and that we value them enough to go to where they are, spend time with them, and create art about them. It's important also for our nation that future generations will see and honor the things they have done through these images, which will tell their stories long after we're gone.

Lance Corporal Patrick Howard, Wounded in July of 2006 in Ramadi, Iraq, oil paint on panel, 2006





Emily Bolin

I am a twenty-three year old recent graduate, just now really struggling with starting my adult life. I expected to encounter warriors multiple years older than me, people more reminiscent of an older sibling than a peer. The first thing I noticed about the men I met was their age. Their young, fresh faces startled me. Here I am trying to find a path to start a career, and there they were. Each one having to overcome obstacles that even the most mature and worldly human being would be gravely challenged by. Though none of them seemed bitter, maybe reservedly somber, they told me their stories without regret, without anger. Most had suffered an attack from an enemy unseen—improvised explosive devices—resulting in the loss of limbs, severe scarring, and or permanent brain damage. But despite these atrocities they still felt passionately about their military experiences. Brennan Cleveland and Mark Andrews both shared their desires to continue serving the military once they are well enough.

I look back at meeting these men, starting their lives differently with great hardships ahead, and I am filled with admiration of their remarkably collected dispositions and their complete devotion to duty.



(far left)
Mark Andrews
marker on paper, 2012

(left)
Mark Andrews, Sketch
pencil on paper, 2012



(right)
Mike Stringer, Sketch
pencil on paper, 2012

(far right)
Mike Stringer
ink and graphite on paper, 2012





Michael D. Fay

Founder, The Joe Bonham Project

As a combat artist, I've been with Marines when they've been wounded on the battlefield—some are screaming bloody murder, a few grinning with almost sheepish embarrassment, others limp and comatose, but most are stoically silent. They get placed into the back of a HUMVEE or slid on a stretcher through the side door of a helicopter, and disappear. As the sound of vehicles and rotor blades fade over the horizon, we're left with an un-nerving quiet, followed by the rising sound of gunfire, and new calls of "corpsman up!"

By embedding with battle-wounded soldiers and Marines in military hospitals stateside, I've been deeply moved by the care they're receiving, the impact the injuries have on families, and the resolute "still in the fight" attitude of all involved.



Lance Corporal Kyle Carpenter
pencil on watercolor paper, 2011



Jeffrey Fisher

Drawing for the Joe Bonham project has been a pleasure and a privilege. When I started, I had no idea how much the experience would enrich me. Upon arrival at Walter Reed Hospital I started to meet the Marines and soldiers. At first I was shocked as to the severity of some of their wounds. During the course of the day, the servicemen's wounds began to pale in comparison to the strength of their character. I no longer focused on the ravages of war, but instead am now focused on the individual serviceman, his dedication, and his forward-looking attitude, and that is what I try to record. Not the physical, although there is no getting around that, but rather, the ethereal essence, not of the marine or soldier but of the man who happens to be a Marine or soldier.

This experience goes beyond the political into the humanity of each person. It has been, and continues to be, my privilege to return to the hospital to meet more servicemen and hear their stories. They have given so much already yet they honor me, by allowing me to sit with pencil in hand and hear their story and meet their families.



Family Support, Private First Class Timothy Donley, USMC, watercolor on paper, 2012



Roman Genn

As a kid studying art in my native Russia, I learned what the grateful Soviet authorities did with their 'Joe Bonhams'. Many were sent to the Island of Valaam to live out their war-crippled lives. Comrade Stalin was determined that their missing limbs and ravaged and sometimes missing faces would not trouble the cheerful builders of socialist utopia. But, a Russian artist—Gennady Dobrov (1937 - 2011), went there, and in a series of graphic drawings drenched in un-blinking honesty ensured that these profoundly damaged WWII veterans' sacrifice and suffering would not be forgotten.

In January of 2009 I embedded with the 3rd Battalion, 8th Marines, at Forward Operating Base Gulistan in Farah Province, central Afghanistan. One of the guys who tolerated this humble doodler, was an explosive ordinance disposal Marine, Sergeant David Lyon, with whom I shared evenings of smuggled vodka and thoughts of comfortable monotones of peace. I would later learn he would lose both legs above the knee the following May. Trying to save a wounded friend, Dave stepped on an IED. I had drawn him whole in Afghanistan and at the Balboa Naval Hospital he generously allowed me to sketch him with his new prosthetic legs. His bushy combat "stache" was gone, but his bashful, bigger than life smile was undiminished.



Sergeant David Lyon, USMC, FOB Gulistan, Farah, Afghanistan
pencil on paper, 2011



Staff Sergeant David Lyon with Stanley, Balboa Naval Hospital
pencil on paper, 2011



Fred Harper

When people think of fallen soldiers, they think of flag draped coffins. They don't think of a 24-year-old kid with a colostomy bag and two legs amputated below the hip. But the wounded, more than the dead, are the face of the war in Afghanistan. Politicians and corporations are far removed from the young people living their lives with severe disabilities. They had their lives changed in an instant and the plans they had made for their futures based on having a healthy body are gone. I have a deep respect for these young men who show an amazing resilience in facing their altered futures. They are cut from a cloth I can not imagine. Each mutilated body I drew made me more anti-war, yet more filled with respect for the men and women who voluntarily put themselves in harms way because they believe in America.



*Specialist Derek McConnell,
10th Mountain Division
gouache on paper, 2012*



Bill Harris

I've never been in or even around the military. I'm an artist—an oil painter. I paint figurative works with subtle narrative content.

A neighbor, The Joe Bonham Project founder Mike Fay, invited me to join him for a sketching trip to the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland. On the ride up to Bethesda I was acutely aware that I really didn't know what to expect. During the ride, two of the artists, both former Marines, shared what daily life in Afghanistan is like. Most of what I heard we just don't get in the news—I felt like I was hearing more about another planet than another country.

Inside Walter Reed it was clear I was in a place much different than other hospitals. It was extremely clean and orderly. The halls were full of nurses, doctors and assorted health care workers. It seemed like there were ten caregivers for every patient.

With little warning I found myself sketching a Marine just two weeks after he'd stepped on an IED. I've never seen anyone so damaged and still look so strong.

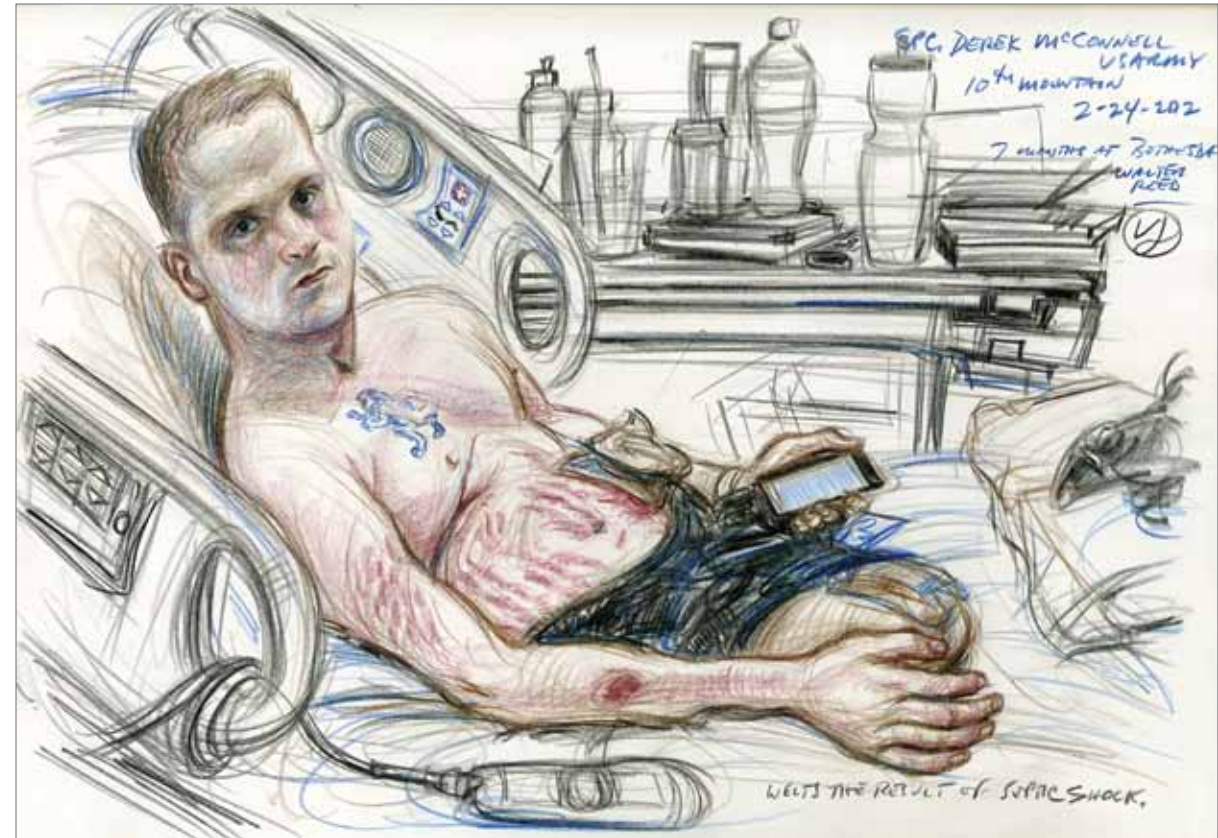


Hero (Sergeant Blumenberg), oil in canvas, 2011



Victor Juhasz

I was greatly concerned, prior to my first visit to Walter Reed, about how I would react seeing the wounded warriors, especially the ones with catastrophic injuries; if I would betray any uncomfortable emotion. Instead I was immediately struck by how at ease I was sitting down, listening to their stories, and simply drawing them, because they were at ease. They were, and are, unapologetic and matter of fact about their current circumstances, upfront in their self-assessments, and often quite funny with senses of humor that range from dry and sarcastic to nightclub raw. And not once have I witnessed an expression of self-pity. Their points of view are not cookie cutter uniform, and their frontline observations are often striking and unexpected. It quickly becomes obvious that they are also sincerely appreciative of the time we spend with them, with no agenda other than to record their stories in words and visuals. The fact that we remain friends with a number of these subjects long after we leave their rooms is a testament to the bonds that form between the artist and subject. I remain in humble awe of these soldiers and Marines.



Specialist Derek McConnell, 10th Mountain Division, colored pencil on paper, 2012



Richard Johnson

I approach every sketching encounter with a wounded serviceman with an overwhelming sense of foreboding and guilt. I freeze before entering their room. Whether it's a Canadian, U.S. or Afghan soldier—the need to be elsewhere is palpable. My fear of how I will react to the damage and horror combines with a deep feeling that I am somehow taking something from their pain, and interfering in a place of such personal privacy that no outsider has any right to enter.

But these soldiers took an oath to serve until death—so surely we owe them something in return. It is important that people don't forget—we should behold the truth of their bravery and the suffering, and not look away.

So with my pencil and my sketchbook in hand I knock on the door to their world, and lo, the strangest thing happens. I discover that all of the misgivings and guilt are mine alone. These young men and women welcome us like old friends—they want their story to be told. Hopefully our art opens their experiences to the world and world will not look away.



Wounded Afghan National Army Soldier, No Identity Papers, prismacolor pencil on paper, 2012



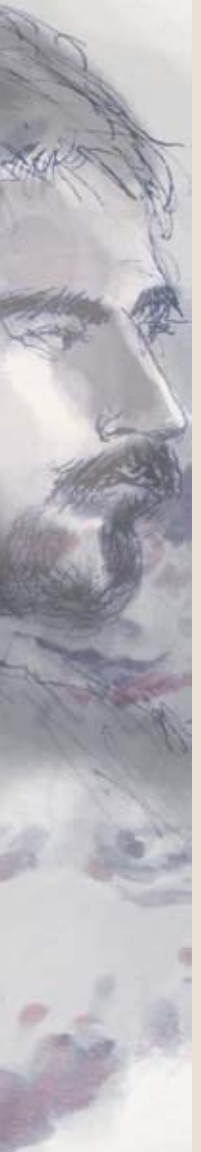
Afghan National Army Soldier Double Amputee, prismacolor pencil on paper, 2012



Lance Corporal Tyler Huffman, USMC, Practicing to Right Himself, prisma- color pencil on paper, 2011



Corporal Zach Stinson, USMC, prismacolor pencil on paper, 2011



Joshua Korenblat

At Walter Reed Hospital, I hurriedly sketched in my journal, trying to capture the likeness of Cody Stanton, a young soldier from Raleigh, North Carolina, who had just weeks before lost his legs, part of his hand, and some of his hearing in an explosion while in Afghanistan. At Walter Reed, artists don't draw quietly. They engage in two conversations at once: with the burgeoning portrait of the soldier and with the actual soldier, whose spoken story informs the sketched image, giving it an internal power. The hurried slowness of sketching, the rawness of the war wounds, and the accompanying conversation made our engagement with Cody suddenly close. Cody's eyes seemed faraway at times, possibly imprinted with the shock of having momentum, so natural to youth, arrested. He was surrounded by caring staff and his loved ones, and he was already on the determined path to recovery. I noted his way of listening to others, a stoicism of steady gazes defied only by a light sense of humor. I observed a common nature in Cody and the other young men I sketched: they could endure trauma by keeping in mind the meaning of a shared mission.



A Study, Cody Stanton, mixed media, 2012

Steve Mumford

I'm a visual artist who has lived and worked in NYC for many years. I'm interested in narrative art that tells stories about who we are, as Americans and simply as people.

When the Iraq War started I decided to go there as an artist, to record my experiences and discover stories to tell in painting back in my studio. After several trips to Iraq, both embedded and unembedded, I realized that I wanted to follow up on the stories of the soldiers wounded in that war. I went to Brook Army Medical Center in 2006 to do a portfolio for "Harpers Magazine." It was very humbling and enlightening to see the dignity of young men and women learning to cope with their injuries, often in an environment of surprisingly good spirits. I'm very grateful for their willingness to let me draw them and hopeful that all the drawings done by artists of our wounded soldiers remind Americans of the true cost of war.



We Could Be Heroes
oil on canvas, 2010

Phil Nesmith

As a former Army paratrooper, and later a civilian embedded in Iraq, I found myself unexpectedly apprehensive about working with injured service members. Upon reflection, this hesitancy was rooted in the fears of what could have been my own experience with war. Indeed, I did come face to face with some old nightmares, the physical traumas caused by modern weaponry and explosives when I finally entered the hospital.

I found in the service members I met a drive to continue forward, to adapt to what had happened to them, and to live fully. The idea that all was lost never surfaced in any of the people I met. This encounter with their unwavering acceptance of a life path dramatically altered, and a deep motivation to tackle the challenges head-on, has been a very a powerful and important experience for me as a veteran and artist.

This experience has been humbling, challenging, and rewarding. The friendships I have made through this project are testimony to the power of art to connect people in meaningful ways and to counteract the effects of the darkest, destructive abilities of man.



Jeff East, *Three Portraits*, wet plate photography, 2012

Joe Olney

As an Iraq war veteran who, by pure, dumb luck, managed to make it back home relatively unscathed, I felt apprehensive about meeting and drawing other veterans whose bodies and minds bore scars of a less fortunate fate. I didn't want to impose. I thought, "Who the hell are we to take up their personal recovery time?" But these guys graciously welcomed us into their rooms and granted us a chunk of time to ask them questions, hear them out, and record their stories and likenesses. And theirs is a story that needs to be told. They're from all walks of life and from all over the U.S. They show moxie and charisma in the face of their injuries and setbacks. These guys are tough, and their determination and optimism is extremely inspiring. I feel privileged to be a part of this project and to help get their story out.



Cody, oil paint on paper, 2012



Jess Ruliffson

Traveling to Walter Reed has been a humbling experience. In practicing art, I often find myself tethered to my drawing table and out of touch with the real world. Drawing these service members has awakened me.

I have drawn and listened to other veterans who have had the benefit of much time passing between their war experience and my questions, and they are careful and measured in their speech. These very young men, however, are still processing the impact of being a wounded soldier, and are amazingly open about their experiences. I am consistently shocked to hear how recently they've come back home. Most were catastrophically injured just days before I hear their story. The pace of their recovery is astounding. These men are determined and hard-working, accept no pity, and see their situation as just part of the job of being in the Marines or the Army. To top it off, they've got a wicked sense of humor! I believe they have always been this incredibly dedicated, determined, and downright funny, and that their injuries only serve to let their beautiful qualities shine even more.



Bethesda Page 9, ink on paper, 2011



First Lieutenant Nathan Rimpf, USA, colored pencil on paper, 2012

The Artists

Ray Alma, 47, hails from Queens, NY. He graduated from the School of Visual Arts in New York City. His work can be seen in magazines and newspapers publications. He is a member of the National Cartoonists Society, and has recently ventured into animation, storyboarding an updated version of the classic cartoon, "Speed Racer."

Rob Bates, 29, is a former Marine infantryman who served in Afghanistan. He currently lives in Concord, NC, with his wife and son, and attends the University of North Carolina at Charlotte full-time, where he is majoring in Fine Arts.

Kristopher J. Battles, 44, is a Marine Corps Combat Artist and professional portrait artist. As a combat artist, he deployed twice to Iraq, once to Afghanistan, and once to Haiti, following the devastating earthquake of 2010. Kris lives in Fredericksburg, VA, with his wife, Kelly, and three young children, and is pursuing an MFA in Illustration from the University of Hartford.

Emily Bolin, 23, from Mechanicsburg, VA, is a recent graduate of the Virginia Commonwealth University, where she graduated Magna Cum Laude with a BFA in Painting and Print-making.

Michael D. Fay, CWO-2, USMC (Ret), 59, is a former Marine Corps Combat Artist who has been deployed twice each to Iraq and Afghanistan; and once to Afghanistan as an embedded civilian war artist/correspondent. In addition to founding 'The Joe Bonham Project', he also founded the International Society of War Artists. He has a BS in Art Education from Penn State and an MFA in Illustration from the University of Hartford. Mike lives with his wife, also a veteran of Iraq and Afghanistan, in Fredericksburg, VA.

Jeffrey Fisher, 56, graduated from Parsons School of Design, in New York City, and has been an illustrator for over 25 years. His art has been shown in galleries from Long Island to Washington, DC, and in publications as diverse as *Readers' Digest* and *Smithsonian*. His subjects range from sports to fashion to science fiction. He lives with his wife in Smithtown, LI. They

have two grown children.

Roman Genn, 40, is a Russian ex-pat who grew up in Moscow, USSR. As a boy, he was infamous for his highly critical and mockingly satirical drawings taunting the Communist regime. He moved to the US in 1991 and resides in southern California where he is the senior artist and a contributing editor for the *National Review* magazine.

Fred Harper, 45, lives and works in New York City. He is known for his artwork in *DC* and *Marvel* comics, as well as newspapers ranging from *The New York Observer* to *The Wall Street Journal*.

Bill Harris, 45, is an internationally renowned painter. He lives with his wife and three sons in Spotsylvania County, VA.

Richard Johnson, 47, is the graphics editor of the *National Post* of Canada. Spanning multiple disciplines, his photography and film-work includes documentaries about war-torn Africa, and reportage art and correspondence

from Afghanistan, where he has embedded with both Coalition and native forces. He recently returned from his third trip to Afghanistan; he has also embedded once in Iraq and multiple times with UN Peacekeeping Forces in Africa. Richard is a founding member of the International Society of War Artists. He lives in Toronto, Canada, with his wife and two children.

Victor Juhasz, 58, has been a professional illustrator for almost 38 years, starting with *The New York Times* while still a student at Parsons School of Design. His work has been commissioned by national and international magazines, newspapers, advertising agencies, and publishing houses, and he has been a long-time contributor to *Rolling Stone*, and the now-defunct *Golf* magazines. Victor is a member of the US Air Force Art Program, and has deployed to Iraq, Kuwait, and Afghanistan to illustrate American Forces in action. He lives in Averill Park, in the New York Berkshires, with his wife, the life coach and motivational speaker Terri Cole. They have three grown sons and two grandchildren.

Joshua Korenblat, 34, originally from St. Louis, MO, now calls Washington, DC, home. He is an art director, artist, writer, and teacher. He has worked as a graphic designer at *National Geographic* and *Science News* magazines, and is currently an Art Director at Graphicacy/Timeplots, a design firm specializing in infographics, as well as an instructor at the Boston University Center for Digital Image Arts, in Georgetown. Josh has an MFA from the Maryland Institute College of Art and an MA in Writing from Johns Hopkins University.

Steve Mumford, 51, a renowned artist from New York City, where he lives with his wife, the artist Inka Essenhigh, and infant son. He embedded as a war artist six times with the US Army in Iraq, and twice with the Marines in Afghanistan.

Phil Nesmith, 39, from Cincinnati, OH, is an award-winning photographic artist, who works primarily in 19th century plate photograph methods. He has taught at Virginia State University and at the Virginia Museum of Fine Art. A former Army paratrooper, Phil embedded as a civilian photographer with the Army's 1st Armor Division in Iraq, in 2004.

Joe Olney, 34, was born in Iowa but now lives in Virginia. When his first attempt at college didn't work out he joined the US Army. He then reenlisted into the Virginia Army National Guard and deployed to Iraq where he was able to complete his studies in geology, graduating from The College of William and Mary. After becoming a geologist and working in Texas, he realized that his true calling was art. He enrolled in the Virginia Commonwealth University and is pursuing a BFA in Painting and Printmaking.

Jess Ruliffson, 27, is a freelance illustrator living in Brooklyn, NY. She graduated from the School of Visual Arts in 2008, and has been working on a comic book series based on interviews with veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars.

For more about the artists and their work,
please visit the website:
thejoebonhamproject.org

(artwork inside front cover)
Marine Lance Corporal Tyler Huffman
prismacolor pencil on paper, Richard Johnson, 2012



thejoebonhamproject.org