



A CALL TO ARTS

ARMY VETERAN YVETTE PINO'S ARTWORK TELLS WISCONSIN VETERANS' STORIES IN UNIQUE WAY

If you've had the fortune of walking through one of the Wisconsin Veterans Museum's temporary exhibits over the years, the first thing you may notice is the intricate display of military artifacts and artwork. What you may not immediately realize is the careful attention to detail and dedication to perfection taken by the museum's Art Curator and Traveling Arts Exhibits Coordinator Yvette Pino.

Pino, a U.S. Army veteran, has used her unique artistic ability to make complex ideas come to life at the museum throughout the years. From curating artistic exhibits of other veteran artists at the museum, to telling veterans' stories by creating a magnitude of artistic prints, the artistic foundation Pino has built started when she was a child.

"I've been drawing since I could hold a pencil," Pino said, adding that her parents' encouragement motivated her to pursue her early interests in art. "My granny used to get the weekly newspaper and ads came in the brown

craft paper, and she'd give me that and crayons and I'd draw. In kindergarten, my teacher let me stay up during naptime so I could draw."

Pino was born and raised in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Aside from drawing, she acquired a passion for theater work, using her talent to find success as a props artisan and stagehand.

As she looked for additional career opportunities, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 changed everything.

Even after joining the Army in 2002, Pino's passion and drive for art never left, and she worked to stay involved in the field even while serving. After doing some research, she joined the Army's culinary arts team and also became a mural painter. She deployed to Iraq twice (2003-2004) with the 101st Airborne and was the division's painter while serving, deploying again to Iraq with the 101st from 2005-2006 with the 501st STB.

FINDING AN INSPIRATION

In 2008, Pino left the Army and moved to St. Louis, enrolling at St. Louis Community College and pursuing a degree in graphic design. When her partner got a job in Wisconsin, she moved with and found a new home in Madison.

By using the benefits she earned through her military service, Pino enrolled at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and was accepted on her first try to its well-known art school.

"I had no idea what caliber institution the university was, and I didn't realize how competitive it was," Pino said. "I was really fortunate because of my veteran status and background. After I got in, everyone was like, 'Wow, you got in after your first try...that doesn't happen!' When I started school there, I realized how great of a school it really was."

Pino's first interest was painting, but that quickly changed when she started studying at UW-Madison, ranked as having the No. 1 printmaking program in the nation by *U.S. News and World Report*.

"There's quite a legacy of printmakers from UW," she said. "The long history stems from World War II veterans. They came back from the war, and it was similar to the behavior of post-9/11 veterans. They came back and saturated the universities by using the G.I. Bill."

Military veteran printmakers from UW, such as Warrington Colescott, Santos Zingale, and Jack Damer to name a few, inspired Pino to take up that type of art, and her interest for it grew steadily.

"They are really the influence of what I do now," she said. "They are the essence of the type of artwork that I not only make, but the art that I curate."

The impact from those artists helped Pino create the Veteran Print Project in 2009. The project sought to not only obtain the oral histories of a new generation of military veterans, but also connect local artists with the

veterans to create prints based off of those experiences.

"It's made my artwork stronger," Pino said of using oral histories to tell a story through printmaking. "I'm not just in this abstract world of, 'What can I do? Who can I paint today?' Suddenly, there was context and meaning to the work I was doing."

LEAVING HER MARK

Shortly after finding her footing in Madison, Pino noticed a flyer seeking students to complete their work study at the Wisconsin Veterans Museum. Despite not knowing much about the museum, Pino was interested and inquired about the opportunity in person. She was almost immediately hired.

"I started listening to people come in, and I found out about the museum's oral history program," she said, adding that she soon became acquainted with the area's population of women veterans because of veteran Gundel Metz. "We were brand new, post-9/11 veterans who just got out, and they encouraged us to tell our stories right away."

With a new desire of recreating the idea of the "historic portrait," Pino said that she found her niche, and ideas started flowing.

"I wanted to show people the humanity of the veteran experience, rather than the 'Shoot 'em up' narrative," she said. "Art has a unique way of doing that."

As she became more involved in the veterans community in Wisconsin, Pino was presented many new opportunities. With the encouragement of her peers and area groups like the United Women Veterans, Pino found herself in a unique situation, which led to the creation of Not At Ease: A Veteran Print Project.

The exhibit at the Wisconsin Veterans Museum provided a forum for 20 women veterans from Wisconsin to share their stories by pairing them with 20 artists, who created an edition of prints inspired by the resulting

dialogue. The exhibit was displayed during one of the Madison art community's biggest evenings: Gallery Night.

"It felt incredible, it was huge," Pino said, crediting a group of women veterans for propelling her forward and Marine veteran Matthew Sorensen for helping her form her ideas.

Now, the latest exhibit to make its debut at the museum, *In My Spare Moments: The Art of Harold F. Schmitz*, intricately tells the story of World War II veteran Harold Schmitz. Schmitz, an Army veteran from Milwaukee, documented many of his experiences in the Pacific through drawings, photographs and letters.

Led by Pino, museum staff were tasked with creating a temporary exhibit that used Schmitz's artifacts to fully immerse those visiting in his story.

"That was such a cool project because I saw myself as the work study kid in the library again," Pino said. "The research I did on (Harold) Schmitz has opened up a whole new world of research."

Pino has compiled a long list of artistic accomplishments throughout the years. Among her most meaningful opportunities were participating in the American GI Forum, planning an exhibition of emerging artists from the Madison area in 11 different venues, and even painting the "Every Veteran is a Story" Bucky Badger statue for the Bucky on Parade art presentation in Madison. The statue now sits at William S. Middleton Memorial Veterans Hospital in Madison.

Above all, though, Pino said telling veterans' stories in such a unique way continues to motivate her.

"Researching other peoples' stories and being able to tell them, in conjunction with tying it to history has been really cool," Pino said. "The artwork is allowing me to dig in a little to history. Now, anytime I see anything about history, something creative comes up in my mind, and I start to research it."

