

FOREWORD

It is my sincere pleasure to invite you to enjoy this heartwarming, life affirming, community artists' book, a truly creative collaboration between three dedicated and talented artists who are in residence in the City of Palo Alto's Cubberley Artist Studio Program. This program gives artists a rare opportunity to create new artworks and partner on artistic projects. This unique, handmade artists' book is conceived of and designed as a gift to all of our local veterans. The 90 contributions by community members poetically recall memories, stories and images, offer lovely tributes to the people who selflessly served our nation. It is both a physical object that can be handled and a digital e-book that can be viewed online.

This inclusive art project is an affirmation of the diversity of our collective backgrounds and experiences, expressing gratitude and celebrating freedom and the pursuit of peace!

Thank you to all of the community participants, to the three artists- Daniele, Servane and Paloma, and to our veterans!

Respectfully,

Rhyena Halpern

Director, Arts and Sciences Division

Assistant Director, Community Services Dept. City of Palo Alto

PREFACE - STORIES

In 2017, our annual CASP (Cubberley Artist Studio Program, City of Palo Alto) Open Studios event happened on a day that holds a special meaning for many people: Veterans Day. We decided to offer visitors to our studios and members of the community the possibility to remember and honor veterans by participating in a collaborative comic book project. We provided each participant with a three-panel comic page template on archival paper and invited them to create a story, narrative and text, using an art medium of their choice. The goal was to Collectively Remember and Say Thanks to our Veterans.

A comic strip is a unique form of visual storytelling in which a story is told in a short format, three or four panels, combining visuals and texts, dialogs and narration. The content can be humorous, dramatic, informative, etc. However, it often follows a standard narrative arc in three acts. The first panel serves as the set-up for the story, the second panel contains the conflict and the resolution or conclusion is found in the third panel. Participants in our project used the templates in various creative ways. For some of them the three panels represented a simple sequence of events, while others saw the panels as frames to three pictures, interrelated or independent, illustrating a common theme. In some cases, people focused on texts, poems, reflections, or history facts in their panels; while in other cases, panels featured mainly art, abstract or representational.

There are pages full of color, others in a sober black and white. Some participants chose to draw or paint, while others used photographs of real family members. In the end, we collected a surprising 90 comic book pages written by adults, students, and children. The stories are told by people from several countries and focused on various wars all over the world and over a span of many years. Unfortunately, there is war everywhere.

Despite their diversity of style and content, the pages could be grouped into three main categories and individual pages became three books: Stories, Memories and Imageries. The comic book pages in Stories feature a series of reflections on war and veterans, and messages of peace. The pages of those people who chose the opportunity of the project to tell a personal story, to rediscover the life of a family member are presented in Memories. We reserved Imageries for those who saw the three-panel page as a canvas for their images, pictures and words.

For some of us, the reality of war is remote, for others, war is painfully close to home. However, for all of us simply by choosing to be part of this project, by telling a story, by creating a page in the Veterans Comic Book Project, we all participated in a collective reflection on war and veterans. Reflection is important and beneficial to a society. Reflection means progress.

STATEMENT



Although a resident of Palo Alto, California, for more than 20 years, I am originally from Montreal (Canada). I grew up in the 1950s, a few years after the end of WW II. My father was a war veteran and so were the men in many of my friends' families. Memories of WWII marked our childhood: We listened to our fathers' personal stories, watched war shows and movies on TV, we read cartoons about war heroes in magazines and newspapers, and we played war games in which boys were soldiers and girls were spies or sisters (nurses). On November 11, Remembrance Day in Canada, we proudly wore our red poppies in honor of those who served and sacrificed for Canada, during wartime, people like our fathers. Then, as we became adults, other wars happened, near and far. Veterans become people of our own generation, and later, even younger. War was not a game, anymore.

When I first thought of a project that would invite people to recognize and honor veterans, I did not realize how controversial it could easily become at times. Talking about veterans implies conversations about war and war is a difficult and sensitive topic. However, many people were happy to participate in the project and to use the platform of a collective comic book to share their support for the veterans as well as their views on war. People who chose to create stories for this book might come from different cultures, ages and background, but their messages are surprising similar. Going through the many pages of Stories, I am grateful for all the messages of gratitude towards the veterans, but also for all the wishes for world peace.

PREFACE - MEMORIES

Just saying thanks. Early on in this project we decided that we would celebrate all veterans, no matter where they were from, serve or whether they were alive or dead. In the US, we have two different celebrations, Veterans Day and Memorial Day but in other countries like Canada or France, November 11 is the only holiday that celebrates veterans.

Telling stories, remembering our past, saying thanks while embracing our diversity, all these came to mind when we imagined the project. Our community in the Bay Area is a very diverse one. Just walking down the street you hear different languages and you are reminded that people come to live here from all over the world. As we started to get our local community involved and ask people to “be a page in a book celebrating Veterans Day”, we had interesting conversations, some difficult ones too. But all these exchanges and the many stories that people generously shared moved us deeply. Saying thank you to veterans also mean talking about war and its moral implications. But not talking about war and expecting to live in peace are contradictory. In our current society most of us are not expected to fight. But some do and they deserve our respect and gratitude. Making this book is a small token of appreciation but we hope that the deep feeling of gratitude that runs through the book inspires all of us to do more for all the men and women who now serve and chose to put their life at risk for our freedom and peace and keep on remembering those who did it before them. **Just saying thanks.**

STATEMENT



My grandfather was a submarine commander and fought in WWII. My dad was a navy officer and served in Cambodia before it became independent. In France where I grew up, we celebrate “le onze Novembre”, a day that long commemorated the end of WWI. My childhood summers were spent in Brittany where there are many remains of WWII. As a French-American citizen I feel immense gratitude for the courageous Americans who took part in WWI and WWII and for the many who fought to liberate France. Later when I moved to the US and met Vietnam veterans I would think of my dad on the Mekong river and how their paths had crossed. The wars in Irak and Afghanistan brought other feelings. It seemed distant and I was not close to anyone working in the military. But the news brought daily reminders of the war and I thought of our two boys and what if it were them, fighting far away. I remember being conflicted between gratitude for veterans and shame that they alone carry the burden of war.

Doing this book project has forced me to confront these emotions and reflect on how war affects every single one of us. Living in the Bay Area, we can encounter people from all over the world. Often one hears stories of immigration, of having escaped a regime, a conflict or war, having lost everything, started all over, and chosen to come here, to the United States of America. I am lucky to have grown up mostly protected from war, I wish we could all live peacefully and know that is very unlikely. I have the utmost admiration for the skills, hard work and dedication of our men and women in the military and I also have immense gratitude for our veterans. Their service protects our freedom.

PREFACE - IMAGERIES

We are grateful to all the participants who courageously braved their fear of drawing and writing and generously shared their stories. We are also grateful that by deciding to “be a page in a book”, they embraced the larger project, i.e. an artists’ book, that is a physical art object that can be handled, read, viewed. Many of these stories are incredibly inspiring and moving. Making a digital book, companion to the original artists’ book ensures that they are easily accessible. That they can be shared among our community and beyond. That remembrance and gratitude can continue. That we can try to do more to narrow the gap between civilians and veterans.

This project is a collective reflection on war and veterans and an inspiring community effort. It shows the power of many and the beauty of pages that are bound by hand to become a book. Our diversity is reflected in the variety of stories while we all come together to express a common sense of gratitude. By telling our stories and linking them together in a book, we have “collectively remembered” and we have “said our thanks”.

We hope that all the people who get a chance to interact with this artists’ book will be inspired to reflect on the difficult demands we make on veterans and search for ways to express gratitude for sacrifices they make for our common peace and freedom.

STATEMENT



Throughout my life I have had no experience with war and few relationships with veterans. I grew up in a Spain, a country that was officially neutral in WWI and WWII. Although Spain endured a fierce and bloody civil war in the late 1930's, I was not yet born and my family had no links to military personnel. Spain doesn't celebrate Veterans Day, rather we commemorate Armed Forces Day in May as a purely military celebration.

When my partners in this comic book project proposed creating a book to honor veterans, I was intimidated with the idea. Even so, I accepted the idea and embraced possibilities of gaining new insights. The process to create this book involved substantial direct interaction with veterans and those related to veterans. By asking people to participate, talking about moral and ethical issues, and listening to personal accounts, my concept and appreciation of veterans has come together. I see veterans as unique people, driven by duty and honor, proud and committed. It doesn't matter what government they served, their integrity and commitment with their ideals defined their actions. They offered their lives, and often came back injured or forgotten, all for their countries and for all of us.

Thank you for your service!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We are grateful to all the participants of this project. It is a community effort and all pages submitted have been included. Without each single one of you who decided to “be a page in a book”, this artists’ book would not exist.

We would like to thank the city of Palo Alto CASP - Cubberley Artist Studio Program - for giving us the opportunity to work at Cubberley studios and for their support in this project. Many thanks to Rhyena and Brittany. Thanks to our fellow CASP artists – Andy, Conrad, Lydia, Marianne, Mel, Pantea and Patrick. Thanks to Cubberley Community Office - Margie and Paula. Thank you to the members of the Palo Alto Historical Association - Steve, the Palo Alto Humane Society - Leonor, and MakeX - Kevin for their participation.

In our efforts to include members of the greater community in this special project, we reached out to various groups. We would like to extend a special thank you to the students from the Visual Storytelling class at the Palo Alto Art Center, members of the Graphic Novel Book Club at the Palo Alto Mitchell Park library, students in French classes at Gunn High School and their teacher Anne, and Marci’s students at the Pacific Art League and Art Works Studio.

Thank you Janette and the Friends of Palo Alto Public Library for drawing attention to our project at CASP open studios on Veterans Day 2017.

And we don’t want to forget Calvin for his effort in producing these books, Sramana for her beautiful calligraphy and our friends and family for their patience and support in this adventure.

As a nod to the exceptional cavalry fighters of the ancient Ionian city, we will finish with a Colophon.

This artists’ book consists of three books - Stories, Memories and Imageries. It was edited, printed, and hand-bound by Danièle Archambault, Servane Briand and Paloma Lucas at Cubberley Artist Studios in Palo Alto, California.

The edition includes one original set of comic strips pages (1/8) and seven facsimiles. Comic strip pages have been scanned and laser printed at high resolution on Classic Crest Classic Natural White paper with inserts of UV/ Ultra II translucent paper. The books are covered in military authentic spec MARPAT woodland, ACU and navy NWU digital camouflage fabric laminated with Thai Kozo paper. The text of the books is Proxima Nova with titles in Franklin Gothic extra condensed, as indicated in U.S. Army nametape regulation 670-1.

This is number of 8 copies