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The Role of the Artist: Insights from the U.S. Army's Historical Employment of Artists

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Abstract

This study uses a case study and historical analysis to examine how descaling art education programs leads to diminishing the roles of artist in society. To demonstrate how support for art programs affects artists' roles, this study focuses on the Army's historical use of art programs that engaged artists in documenting history through the eyes of soldiers in both war and peacetime. The role of artist in the Army parallels the role of artists in society, and the diminished emphasis on art education mirrors what's happening in our schools. Examining the Army's history of scaling art programs up and down illustrates the consequences to the artist's role that will be useful to the field of art education to learn from.

Keywords: Army Artists, Art Program, Art Education

Chapter 1

Introduction

The Army is a distinct example of how descaling art programs has irreversible consequences on the role of the artist as evident in the loss of important narratives and records of history from the unique perspective of the artist. Contributing to this loss, the work of the artist has lost value in favor of new technology. Examining how wide accessibility to digital means of record keeping such as photography or social media threatens traditional art raises an additional question about the significance of creating art, especially as means of historical record keeping. Art loses its significance if anyone can pick up a camera or even a cell phone and snap a photo that will show their experience exactly as it was. The diminished emphasis placed on Art programs in the Army reflects the field of Art Education as well. How artists are viewed and contribute to society is in a state of constant change as civilization evolves. The Army as a case study for art programs provides a unique opportunity to see how artist roles are diminishing due to increasing technology and decreasing understanding of the significance of art by society.

The purpose of the *Army Art Program* is to document and record history through the eyes of soldiers in both war and peacetime. I enlisted as a 25M, which is a “multimedia illustrator”. My job description is to provide *visual information products*, which include illustrations, layouts, map overlays, posters, graphs, and charts. I use these visual information products to report combat and non-combat Army, Joint and Combined operations. While these objectives do require some artistic ability, creative skills are reduced to their utility. The shift from creating art to document experiences to using art to create products meant to communicate a message echoes the ideal of “usefulness” of the Arts and Crafts movement during the late 19th century.

When I completed my job training in 2014, it still included traditional art skills such as realistic rendering, perspective, portraits, and other various drawing techniques. Even though creating art wasn't something I was expected to do regularly, it was still important to teach because the soldiers selected to create for the Army Art Program were recruited from the 25M career field. My aspiration to be the resident Army Artist is what originally ignited my curiosity about lack of support for the Arts and sparked my research. I felt it was an incredibly big task to ask a single person to tell the entire history of everyone in the Army through art. There are currently over 900 thousand uniformed personnel serving across the Army, National Guard, and Reserves. It is impossible for a single artist to capture even a fraction of contemporary soldier experiences.

My original job title has been merged with combat photographers. The job title is "visual information specialist" and art is no longer a part of the training curriculum. Since there has been no significant emphasis on art within our own community and career field in the visual information branch, I have concluded this to be one of the reasons for the diminished role of the artist in the Army and the small amount of art being produced by. There is only one individual tasked with creating art as historical documentation of soldier's experiences. The questions I ask in this study addresses my concern for the diminishing role of artists in the Army and, subsequently, how it relates to the role of the artist in society.

It is important to note my research is influenced by my personal interest in art as a soldier. I have been in the Army as a Multimedia Illustrator and Visual Information Specialist since 2013. My job revolves around communication and storytelling so I thought it would be interesting to study the intersection between the role of the artist and the apparent lack of support for art education. My intent is to further educate myself as well as others in the art education

field on the impact the descaling of art education programs has on the role of the artist in the Army and society.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact diminished emphasis has on the role of the artist, and how teaching traditional art skills affects the recording of history despite ease of access to digital means of documentation such as photography. I use case study and historical analysis to examine how teaching art skills plays an important role in the army to document events through eyes of soldiers to chronicle events. This case study is important because it resembles art education's influence on student abilities to tell stories through art in a way that captures a more in-depth understanding of their experiences. Of course, just as the general population has access to digital technology capturing and sharing media, the army has many combat photographers to capture still and video imagery documenting military events and operations, thereby decreasing the need for an artist's rendition when a photo will show things exactly how they were. In this study I ask how art education influences the ability to document and tell stories through art in a way that captures a more in-depth understanding of their experiences. Why is it important to create art from personal experiences to be shared with the public and future generations?

The research questions guiding this inquiry are:

1. How has the artist role in the Army changed since World War I and how does it reflect what is happening in our schools?
2. Why is it important for students to create art from their experiences to be shared with the public and future generations?

3. Does technology threaten or enhance students' ability to express their experiences through art in a meaningful way?
4. How does descaling art programs affect the role of artists in society?

Chapter 2

Methods

Research Design

I use a retrospective case study to assess how descaling art programs has diminished the role of artists in the Army. A case study is a “qualitative study that gains in-depth understanding characterized by detailed descriptions and analysis of a single unit or bounded system” (Miraglia and Smilan, 2014, p. 35). The unit in this case is Army Art program. This approach allows me to collect qualitative data that already exists and analyze the results.

This study also includes analysis of historical documents and artifacts such as past and current artwork from army artists as well as modern photography to extract meaning from responses. “An historical study allows examination of the past for the purposes of understanding the present and contemplating a course of action for the future” (Hamblen, 1984, p. 111). Comparing the results of creating an artwork to photographs as means of recording historical narratives will show the importance of artistic expression.

The descaling of art programs and education in the army will be used as a case study to illustrate effects of devaluing traditional art training that will be useful to the field of art education. The data gathered through these qualitative research methods will form a more comprehensive analysis of past, current, and future impact of art programs and how it relates to the field of art education.

Boundaries of the case

This study was conducted from Fort Liberty, North Carolina. Due to time and location constraints, interview questions were sent, and answers collected through email. Current active-

duty soldiers working in the visual information field as artists were selected to answer interview questions. Both soldiers currently reside in Fort Liberty, North Carolina. The interview data from Sergeant Daniel Lee was gathered from notes I took during an in-person conversation in 2019. The visual organizer below (Figure 2.1) discloses who the 2 participants were for my study and the date of my interviews with them.

Figure 2.1.

Times, Dates, and Locations of Face-to-Face Interviews with Participants

PARTICIPANTS	DATE OF INTERVIEW	MEETING LOCATION
Staff Sergeant Daniel Lee (Visual Information Supervisor)	October 2019	Washington DC
Specialist Amanda Larson (Visual Information Specialist)	27 November 2023	Email Fort Liberty, NC
Laura Goodwin (Myself) Visual Information Supervisor	November 2023	Fort Liberty, NC

Protection of Participants

The protection of the participants was always a consideration. My goal was to allow participants to share their honest opinions without fear of having their responses used against them in the future. Adult interview participants were given the option to disclose their names. If consent to identify the participant was not given, a pseudonym was used.

Data Collection Tools

Triangulation is “using a combination of data collection methods or analytical techniques to gain different perspectives on a particular research problem or question” (Thomas, 2017, p. 325). The data collection tools used in this study includes interview, physical artifacts, and my own reflections (Figure 2.2). *Interviews* are used to gather information from personal narratives of soldiers who have created art for the Army. They also indicate the type of training soldiers have received in the past and are currently receiving regarding art skills. “Interviewing can serve as an important process for fostering inquiry, empowerment, and critical analysis” (Dewhurst & Desai, 2016, p. 51) so it is important for interview questions to be open ended. Asking open ended questions allow participants are given the chance to expound upon their own experiences and develop a more complete narrative. Detailed narratives guided by interview questions developed to inform the research questions help to form a more comprehensive analysis.

Physical artifacts include art collected from the U.S. Center of Military History and archival material. These are used to help inform the historical and contextual aspects of this study by showing visual examples of art created by soldiers. Artifacts “provide external order, a cultural script, and physical evidence of aspects of life that are inherently fleeting and intangible” (Delacruz & Bales, 2010, p. 38). Figures 2.3 and 2.4 are an example of photographic imagery versus an artist’s interpretation of the same scene discussed in my analysis.

Figure 2.2.

Tools, purpose, and sources of data

TOOLS	PURPOSE	SOURCE OF DATA
INTERVIEWS * Structured *Semi- Structured	To understand how participants have used art in their own experience in the Army.	PRIMARY SOURCES *All interviews were conducted between participants and me.

		SECONDARY SOURCES *Interviews conducted by other writers
ARTIFACTS *Art *Documentary *Newspaper / Internet Articles	Used to establish and inform the historical and contextual aspects of the study referenced by this researcher.	PRIMARY SOURCES *Art generated by participants SECONDARY SOURCE *Newspaper and internet articles.
RELECTION	To create portrayal of the case	Personal narrative

Figure 2.2. Outline of data collection tools, purposes, and sources of the data.

Data analysis

The data will be divided into three categories. First, analysis will be conducted by constructing meaning from responses given by current and past resident Army Artists. Their responses will give insight as to how they view their role as an artist and how the role of art has diminished. I also include my own experiences and observations as an artist in the Army.

Second, providing examples of paintings and comparing them to photographs with similar context by Army Artists will help illustrate how their role has changed. Artifacts will be included from several points in time. Including examples from World War I up to the present will show how evolving technology and increasing reliance on digital media is diminishing the artist role. The third set of data will come from Art Education journals and articles pertaining to the role of art in society. This will draw a parallel from the case study to the field of art education.

Limitations of the study

Due to its retrospective nature, this study has several limitations that should be noted. Since the study relies on records and artifacts from the past, there is potential for incomplete or

inaccurately documented information. This limit is increased by the subjective nature of art and my ability to analyze and interpret works of art and photographs. Furthermore, this study focuses on a relatively small and specific case that may make relating findings to a broader context difficult.

Chapter 3

Literature Review

In the continuing conversation of art and its intersections with society, the role of the artist has been addressed by scholars in the field of art education for decades. However, due to the dynamic nature of the relationship between art and society, it's necessary to continue discourse of the topic. The rapidly evolving state of technology introduces another dimension to the discussion, raising questions about the impact digital tools have on the role of artist in society. This literature review delves first into the role of artist in society and explores the discourse surrounding technology and its impact on the world of artists. The existing discourse parallels how the role of artist in the Army has changed over time. Examining historical records of the army art programs alongside existing discourse in art education offers insights into the role of artist and the ever-changing landscape of artistic expression.

Artist Role in Society

The undervaluation or misunderstanding of the contributions of artists and the importance of art education can have far-reaching consequences, extending beyond the educational system and impacting the broader role of artists in society. The question posed in the quote, "why do we teach art," reflects an ongoing debate and struggle within the field of education. Art educators find themselves repeatedly having to articulate the value and significance of teaching art, not just as an extracurricular or optional activity but as an essential part of a comprehensive education. Unfortunately there is still a gap between the value of art education and resources allocated to it in the curriculum (Siegesmund, 1998, p. 197). The discrepancy between the recognized value of art education and the time and resources devoted to it, causes the impact of art education to diminish and subsequently the role of artist in society.

This gap exists partially due to public attitudes towards artists because “public opinion and perceptions have an important influence on the formation of public policies” (Novak-Leonard & Skaggs, 2017, p. 5). If the public undervalues or misunderstands the contributions of artists and the importance of art education, it may lead to a lack of advocacy and support for the integration of art into the educational system. Novak-Leonard and Skaggs' (2017) study sheds light on the relationship between public perceptions and the support for artists. The survey findings, which indicate that the largest group of respondents believes artists should be self-funded or employed, reveal a prevailing sentiment that places the financial responsibility of artists on their own shoulders (Novak-Leonard & Skaggs, 2017, p 16). This perspective not only reflects a potential lack of recognition for the societal contributions of artists but also underscores a prevailing economic view that sees art as a personal pursuit rather than a valuable societal endeavor. The notion that government funding for artists was the least popular option among respondents suggests a broader skepticism or reluctance towards public investment in the arts. It is interesting to note the study revealed that individuals with direct engagement with artists were more likely to support government funding compared to those who had not interacted with an artist in the past year (Novak-Skaggs, 2017, p. 17). This implies that personal interactions and community engagement play a crucial role in shaping perceptions about the societal value of artists and the arts. As public opinion evolves, so will the role of the artist. This transformative evolution of the artist's role in society is underscored by significant shifts in the societal landscape, as articulated by Andre et al. (1975). The assertion that "the fine arts are no longer necessary to carry out the programs of those in possession of economic and political power and have therefore been relegated to the periphery of our culture" (Andre et al., 1975, p. 330) suggests a marginalized status for the artist in the face of changing power dynamics. Art

was once the only vehicle by which government or institutions could circulate narratives. Digital means of creation, documentation and dissemination have caused the artist to no longer be needed. This implies that the traditional functions of art, once intertwined with the objectives of economic and political entities, have diminished in significance. Consequently, the artist's role in society has transformed from being an integral communicator. The artist must "confront growing competition in the form of the flow of images and information circulating in the mass media, particularly in documentary art forms" (Frohne, 2013, p. 40). This phenomenon is highlighted in the government commissioning of artworks by Army artists peaking during World War I and II and steadily decreasing overtime as digital media became more prevalent.

Digital Media

Constantly evolving technology is one of the biggest challenges to artists remaining relevant in society. It's unreasonable to keep artmaking separate from new digital mediums, but according to Black and Browning (2011), educators have been slow to adapt and include new technologies in their classrooms. This is true in Army training as well. The visual information career field is often slow to adapt new software and equipment. This contributes to the diminishing role of artist in society because it maintains the separation between traditional art and digital media. There is a learning gap and the rate at which new forms of media are emerging is intimidating to attempt keeping up with. However, taking a creative approach to new digital mediums in the same way one would experiment with traditional mediums is key to maintaining the artmaking process. "An important approach to teaching digital arts is recognizing that students need not comprehend all that there is to know about the software. Rather, students can learn the software through the act of creating. Technology, however, should not be the most important part of the learning process; rather, the artmaking process is key" (Black & Browning,

2011, p. 21). New software or mediums shouldn't negate teaching basic artistic theories and principles. Automated systems and technology cannot replace the artist creative process. Black's (2011) research found "that art educators not only thrived when they focused on creative art ideas and not technology driving the curricula, but they also flourished when given freedom to shape creative digital arts programs" (p. 23).

Art of the American Soldier

The history of Art Programs and Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) jobs related to art in the Army provide an interesting parallel to the field of art education. The Center of Military History keeps all records of Army Artists and programs. Information was gathered through their website and online galleries. Although imagery and art depicting war has been captured throughout history, the interest in an official program commissioning these types of works by the U.S. Army originated during World War I. The War Art Unit was established in 1942 and selected 43 artists to record World War II. Congress withdrew funding, cutting the program a year later. The Army Staff Artist Program was established in 1992 as part of the U.S. Army Center of Military History, Museum Division. Presently, the Army only provides funding for one artist to hold the Staff Artist position.

Art of the American Soldier: Documenting Military History Through Artists' Eyes and in Their Own Words is a compilation of artist statements to accompany artworks collected by the Center of Military History. Artist statements "enhance the visual story of the completed work" (Klish, 2011 p.3). Throughout the book artists interviewed by Klish (2011) give their insight and opinions about the work they accomplished as artists in the Army. It's important to note that artists are not given any specific direction other than they would not complete any official portraiture for officers. "Soldier-artists were permitted freedom to depict their subjects in their

own way and to show all activities, not only combat” (Klish, 2011, p. 14). Combat photographers often have a secondary mission other than simply documenting. Often, photographers are given specific type of imagery to capture to be used by public affairs. Their imagery is also viewed by an approving authority prior to being released to the public. So, the public is often not connected to soldier experiences through photography the way they can be through art. Army artist Michael R. Crook explains the importance of having a combat artist program is because “perhaps people will look on our art, not as a glorification of war but as a chronicle to be learned from in the future (2011, p. 84). Artists are not bound by the same rules and regulations imposed on photographers by the Army so they have the capability of constructing compelling narratives based on their experiences they may not otherwise be seen by the public.

Army Artists Look at the War on Terrorism

This digital publication is a collection of artworks and commentary gathered by the U.S. Army Center of Military History. The artworks shown were created from 2001 to present and depict scenes from Afghanistan, Iraq, Kuwait, and the United States. The Chief of Military History at the time, Dr. Jeffrey Clark, includes a quote in the foreword contributed to artist J. Andre Smith describing the only limitations artists have in documenting war and their experiences are “the boundaries of his ability” (p. 3). An artist can only show an experience and tell their story as well as their artistic training allows them to. It is also noted that the artworks are a rare opportunity for soldier experiences to be viewed by the public from the perspective of the soldiers in the form of artwork. The War on Terrorism was covered extensively in news cycles and the public had consumed all sorts of media pertaining to the war. Continuing to create works of art constructed from personal memories and experiences “represent an ideology, a point of view, an historical moment, and a fascinating facet of contemporary material culture, ripe for

multiple interpretations and/or critical analysis” (Delacruz & Bales, 2010, p. 38). The artworks provide a more personal connection between the public and soldiers.

Chapter 4

Discussion

As technology has advanced, the ability to capture imagery has become extremely accessible. It is irrational to assume ease and accessibility to new forms of technology are inherently bad for art or history. Many artists use digital mediums to express themselves. The ease and speed at which a photographer can capture, and share imagery of course poses the question then, why should time and resources be used to create an artist's rendition? Why should traditional artistic skills such as perspective and shading to produce realistic renditions of people, events, or objects when a camera can capture the image instantaneously.

Photographs are generally accepted as fact and are invaluable resources in documenting history since they reflect the reality taking place in front of the camera in real time. However, "artists, even more than photographers, are often able to capture the very essence of war, from the harsh realities of combat to the humdrum routine of soldiers' lives" (Forgey et al., 2015, p. v) Artists construct narratives based on their memories and experiences, which allows for a more complete story to be told to the viewer. Teaching traditional art skills alongside digital technology advancements plays an important role in documenting history and the importance of sharing experiences through art because digital photos often lack the human element and emotion that artists imbue their artwork with.

Comparison of Photographs versus Paintings Used by Army Artists

The following example showcases an instance where an artist and a photographer have documented the same scene. The comparison perfectly illustrates artist's ability to add and rearrange a scene they have observed to engage the viewer in a compelling narrative that may not

be as apparent in a photograph, while still managing to show an accurate historical moment in time. It should be noted this example is based on my personal interpretation of the painting (Figure 4.1) by Aaron Bohrod (1944).

Figure 4.1

Military Necessity



Note: Painting of military communication wires wrapped around a religious statue. Aaron Bohrod. (1944). *Military Necessity* [Oil on canvas]. Center of Military History United States Army.

Figure 4.2

Photograph of Signal Corps wires draped over a cross. John Morris, 1945



Note: Photo courtesy of Center of Military History United States Army.

Comparing Figures 4.1 and 4.2 shows how effective an artist's depiction can be compared to a still image of the same scene. The photograph (Figure 4.2) by John Morris (1945) shows a soldier standing in front of a religious monument at Pont-L'Abbé in France during World War II (Klish, 2011, p. 137). The Signal Corps had used the cross in the background to drape wires around to establish communications. The soldier and the statue are identifiable, but what is happening in the scene, where they are located, and what the cross is being used for is not initially clear without the explanation in the caption. Bohrod's (1944) painting (Figure 4.1) depicts the same religious monument and a similar soldier. In Bohrod's (1944) painting, the statue has become the focal point, with darkened clouds forming a halo effect around the cross. The communications wires have been exaggerated, to be clearly seen wrapped around the statue and draped against the sky rendering the cross to look like a telephone pole. The artist has also chosen to include more contextual information for the viewer. A partially destroyed structure and a tank are in the background. The size of the soldier compared to the statue in the painting

suggests how important this structure was for this operation's success. The title of the painting "Military Necessity" adds another layer to the narrative, suggesting that using a religious structure to further their endeavors in the war was not a decision that was made lightly.

The purpose in comparing a photograph (Figure 4.2) to a painting is not to insinuate one is better than the other. The intention is to show how the narrative constructed by Bohrod (1944) in his painting, compliments the photo taken by Morris (1945) depicting the same scene. The photograph (Figure 4.2) legitimizes the subject of Bohrod's (1945) painting, acting as visual confirmation that the subject was not a work of fiction dreamed up from the artist's imagination. However, the painting presents a more captivating story regarding how soldiers adapted and used available resources to them during the war.

The following images are from 1996. Photography had evolved from an analog medium to digital and "point and shoot" cameras were available at this time. However, even though it is now easier to take and share digital photos, Snyder's (1996) painting *Probing for Land Mines* (Figure 2.5) tells a much more elaborate and emotionally charged story.

Figure 4.3.

Probing for Land Mines



Note: Painting of soldier detecting and clearing land mines. Carl E. Snyder. (1996). *Probing for Land Mines* [Oil on canvas]. Center of Military History United States Army.

Figure 4.4.

Photograph of Croatian and U.S. Soldiers locating minefields, Bosnia, 1996



Note: Photo courtesy of Department of Defense

The painting (Figure 4.3) and photo (Figure 4.4) are similar in content and composition: kneeling soldier in the foreground, grey sky and barren trees indicating winter in the background. For the painting, Carl Snyder (1996) notes that he was inspired by Degas. His goal was to tell the story without fully rendering every detail (p. 107). The painting (Figure 4.3) communicates a sense of urgency and danger through bright colors and choppy brushstrokes that the photograph (Figure 4.4) lacks. Snyder (1996) proves a realistic rendering isn't necessary to tell a true and accurate story. More information is given from the stylistic choices (choppy brushstrokes creating a sense of urgency) and bright colors signaling the immense stress and danger experienced conducting something like removing mines from a field.

Sharing Experiences and Important Historical Narratives

Artists, like me, now fall under Public Affairs. When I enlisted, the job specialties of graphic designers, illustrators, photographers, and public affairs were their own disciplines. Now, the first three have been combined into a single job which directly support public affairs.

Although Public Affairs is committed to telling the Army story and fulfilling their obligation to keep the American people informed, there is no longer any emphasis on art. The Chief of Public Affairs states they are "fundamental to the historical and evidentiary record of Army/DoD activities and actions" (army.mil). This stance lacks awareness of how cutting the role of artists has also eliminated the possibility for countless stories and experiences to be shared. Due to strict policies and regulations, the type of imagery that is approved for release to the public is limited.

Figure 4.5

Medics Trying to Save Iraqi Citizen



Note: Painting of U.S. Army medical team performing care to casualty of war. Timothy Lawn. (2005). *Medcis Trying to Save Iraqi Citizen* [Ink and watercolor]. Center of Military History United States Army.

Figure 4.5 is an example of a type of story that would not normally be released or shown by the Army. Generally, photographs of wounded or dead will not be released to the public. In instances like this where the patient is noted to have died, the medical team and victim's story may never be told if the artist had not witnessed and recorded the event. Art creates a layer of separation between the viewer and the event that may otherwise be too uncomfortable such as wounds, blood, or other traumatic imagery.

The artist plays an important role in society bridging the gap between uncomfortable topics and shared human experiences. Art serves as a powerful medium for conveying emotions and perspectives and allows individuals to connect with others. Art also provokes critical thinking, allowing viewers to engage with history in a more personal and meaningful way. Replacing sharing experiences through art by relying on photography and emphasizing taking images appropriate to be shared in the media greatly diminishes the role the artist.

Diminished Role of the Artist

Since the role of artist is relative to how art as an institution is viewed, there are several contributing factors to why it has diminished over time. The decrease in government commissioning of art aligns not only with the increase in technology and digital media but coincides with the military's relationship with the public as well. Commissions for artwork creation relates to public support of the military and their operations. During both World Wars, the public was generally supportive of war efforts, and the large number of artworks from that period reflects the public's support. The large amount of illustrative propaganda produced by the

Army is an example of how art was used as way to circulate specific narratives. Subsequent conflicts did not have as much public support. There is drastic decrease in art depicting the Korean and Vietnam war. It is interesting that at the onset of the War on Terrorism, depicting the soldier experience once again became important and the role of the artist regained relevancy. There was an increase in the number of artists assigned to the Army Art Program. However, as the years dragged on and public support waned, so did the call for artistic documentation of the conflict.

Digital Media Training

The Defense Information School (DINFOS) in Fort Meade, MD is where all branches of military are trained for their individual jobs after basic training. DINFOS trains soldiers in public affairs, mass communications, and multimedia. In the past, manual art which included drawing and painting were taught in the basic multimedia course. It was used as a foundation prior to moving on to digital media such as Adobe Illustrator and Photoshop. DINFOS excluded manual drawing from the multimedia course to spend more time training soldiers in software. This is also when the Army Artist Program opened the residency to anyone who wanted to apply rather than keeping the role exclusive to those with the occupation specialty of multimedia specialist.

Presently, DINFOS does not include any type of art education or training in their curriculum. It is software based. This means that the intent is to learn specific tools within software. This is unfortunate because having the foundation in art prior to using digital software makes a difference in how creative problems are approached. It is my personal observation while training soldiers that those with a background in traditional art are more likely to experiment and problem solve to achieve a desired result. This resembles Black's (2011) action research study that found prioritizing the creative process over technology encouraged "students to learn

“technology based on what was required to creatively develop their art project, so traditional and digital arts flowed together in meaningful way” (p. 24). Those soldiers who attended DINFOS after the arts were cut and did not have any other artistic background were much more limited in their approach to producing imagery. Artists have always held several roles in society, however when foundational concepts are skipped over because they don’t seem relevant to current mediums it further diminishes their role.

As stated by the Chief of Military History, the only limitation artists have is their own abilities. Lack of art education, lack of training in traditional artistic skills results in lack of ability to render and tell stories effectively. Studying art is important because it allows the artist to make deliberate decisions about how they would like to stylize their work. For example, Snyder (1996) being inspired by Degas to not meticulously render every detail in a realistic manner. He was able to use his knowledge of art history to make educated decisions which made his painting (Figure 2.5) and the story it tells more effective. The combination of art history (being able to reference Degas) with artistic skills (rendering) produces a compelling image. I have used similar approaches to products I have made during my career. For example, a graphic design product I produced referenced a specific sculpture that had cultural relevancy to the intended audience. It seems the art education and experience as an artist I have that made that product possible is not relevant to the Army. DINFOS does not include any art history or artistic skills in their curriculum. However, the Army is struggling with maintaining the ability to continue to create quality products. This is evident in our job slots being cut and given to contractors with backgrounds as artists. Both art programs in the military and art education share a common emphasis on skill development. Whether in a military context or an education setting, the cultivation of artistic skills contributes to a well-rounded and adaptable individual.

Interviews and Personal Reflections

The two soldiers who participated in my study echoed concerns for diminishing role as an artist in the Army. Although Staff Sergeant Daniel Lee, a Visual Information Supervisor, enlisted as a photographer in the Army, he has a background in traditional art and illustration. He identifies as an artist and is responsible for developing training for soldiers in illustration and storytelling. Lee was very passionate about the importance of teaching art to soldiers. He said, “anyone can use a camera [...] but an artist has the ability to create with their own sense of emotion, own style, and own interpretation.” He agreed soldiers lacked training in art and creative thinking which is why he helped develop an illustration course taught at his unit. The course included manual and digital drawing and focused on developing personal artistic style. This sentiment supports the need to teach art as a process rather than reducing it to technical skills.

My second participant, Specialist Amanda Larson, is a Visual Information Specialist that enlisted as a Multimedia Illustrator. She feels that her role as an artist has significantly diminished since enlisting. She feels the descaling of art programs contributes to “the importance of manual arts being overlooked and underestimated”. While she is still currently being asked to create illustrations for the Army, Larson states she has “met others in the Army who had the impression that artists are not needed or didn’t even know there were artists in service.”

My own experiences in the Army have led me to believe the role of artist has significantly diminished since I enlisted in 2013. There has been very little support for myself and those in my career field. I was slotted to take over teaching the illustration course mentioned by Lee, however, the unit decided to cut the course instead. Reasons for cutting it included time and manpower that should be dedicated to other Army training. It seems like half of my career

has been spent convincing other people that my job is important. It is the same as art educators defending their value in schools. Where I work, tours are constantly being given to various people of importance in order to validate our existence within the unit. I have witnessed many tours of our facilities to people involved with making policy and budget decisions who has no idea we existed prior. This parallels the importance of understanding public perceptions of artists discussed in the literature.

The evolution of training I have witnessed at the Defense Information School (DINFOS) over the past ten years reflects broader changes in the military's approach to art and in society. While manual arts were once integral to multimedia training, the emphasis has shifted exclusively to digital tools. The exclusion of art education from the curriculum is unfortunate, as it disregards the foundational importance of traditional artistic skills in fostering creativity and effective problem-solving. The omission of art history and artistic skills from DINFOS' curriculum jeopardizes the Army's ability to create impactful and culturally relevant products. This observation underscores the importance of recognizing the how art and technology are related in contemporary society.

Conclusion

Art, with its profound capacity to convey emotions and perspectives, fosters connections and encourages critical thinking, providing a unique lens through which individuals engage with history. However, the role of the artist has witnessed a decline. The descaling of art programs, reduction in government commissioning of art correlates with the rise of technology and digital media, impacting the military's relationship with the public and the narrative conveyed through artworks. Notably, during periods of heightened public support, such as the onset of the War on Terrorism, the role of the artist regained relevance. Yet, as public sentiment waned, so did the

demand for artistic documentation of conflicts. However, artists still had roles to play in the Army besides historical documentation through artwork. Shifts in art education in schools mirror the evolving demands of the society, where creativity and visual communication play integral roles across various domains. Both contexts highlight the importance of adaptability, technological proficiency, and the integration of creative skills in response to changing needs and challenges. Technology is only a threat to students' ability to create art if we fail to adapt while maintaining foundational concepts of creating art. On the contrary, technology should enhance student ability to express their experiences. However, the creative process has to be taught instead of individual technical skills. By acknowledging and navigating this, art education can play a pivotal role in revitalizing the artist's significance, fostering a dynamic approach that integrates traditional artistic foundations with the innovative possibilities offered by technology.

Appendix A

Interview Questions

1. Did you have any formal training or education in art prior to joining the Army?
2. What arts training have you received in the army?
3. How does creating art differ from capturing digital imagery?
4. What value do you think art holds in an age of digital documentation?
5. Do you think it is important to create art from your personal experiences to be shared with the public and future generations? Why or why not?
6. How has the Army supported your role as an artist?
7. Do you see any impact on your role as artist due to descaling of art programs in the Army?
8. Do you feel your role as an artist has diminished in the Army?
9. Is there anything else you would like to share?

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