

The Walt Disney Family Museum Presents
Veterans' Voices: Painted Realities
THE MUSEUM'S FIFTH ANNUAL COMMUNITY ACCESS EXHIBITION

Opening Thursday, November 12, 2020

"Tomorrow will be better as long as America keeps alive the ideals of freedom and a better life."

—Walt Disney

"Veterans are the light at the tip of the candle, illuminating the way for the whole nation. If veterans can achieve awareness, transformation, understanding and peace, they can share with the rest of society the realities of war."

—Thich Nhat Hanh

San Francisco, November 10, 2020—In honor of Veterans Day, The Walt Disney Family Museum is pleased to debut its fifth Community Access Exhibition, *Veterans' Voices: Painted Realities*, featuring original artworks by U.S. military veterans. The exhibition will serve as a platform for the American veteran's voice to be heard through their own words and creativity, rather than from depictions by non-veteran artists. *Veterans' Voices: Painted Realities* will be on view from Thursday, November 12, 2020 in the museum's Lower Lobby Gallery, with admission free for active and retired military personnel, as well as their spouses and dependents with valid ID.

Inspiration for this year's Community Access Exhibition came in part from Walt Disney's service in the Red Cross Ambulance Corps in France during World War I, and from his Studios' extensive contributions to the Allies' World War II efforts. *Veterans' Voices* will run also concurrently with the museum's upcoming major special exhibition, *The Walt Disney Studios & World War II*, opening soon in the Diane Disney Miller Exhibition Hall; press release to follow.

To reach artists from the veterans' community, The Walt Disney Family Museum partnered with Veterans Alley, a non-profit mural project in San Francisco's Tenderloin District. Artist, Navy veteran, and founder of Veterans Alley, Amos Gregory, led this art-making initiative with a peer-to-peer approach. "For over 18 months, I engaged my fellow veterans in the creation of artwork designed to uplift their voices and tell stories unheard by the general public. We worked with three distinct communities of veterans: African American veterans living in the San Francisco Bay Area, rural veterans served through the VA Medical Clinic in Eureka, California, and deported veterans. While utilizing techniques influenced by the New Mission School of artwork, we expanded our work from primarily creating murals to include painting on canvas and other more traditional methods of art-making."

Deported veterans represented in this exhibition are associated with the Deported Veterans Mural Project (DVMP) in Tijuana. A Mexico-based organization serving deported veterans from countries all over the world, DVMP was co-founded by Gregory in collaboration with formerly deported veterans Fabian Rebolledo and Hector Barajas. While Rebolledo and Barajas eventually returned home, other veterans remain abroad. Alex Murillo, an artist whose works will be included in the exhibition, came to the United States as a child, served in the U.S. military, and was deported after his service for a cannabis offense. According to Murillo, "It is no great secret that U.S. veterans get into trouble after our military service. They do their time, pay their debt to society, and then they get to go home to their families. Why not us? The judge thanked me for my service to my country, and then ordered me deported."

Artworks created by deported veterans for *Veterans' Voices: Painted Realities* were shipped from all over the world, including Jamaica and Kenya. Themes explored include trauma, citizenship, race, parenthood, homelessness, isolation, and healing. Exhibition Co-curator Antonia Dapena-Tretter notes, "These artworks are

powerful, personal, and as diverse as the veterans who made them. By sharing their art with the public in this group show, these talented artists are contributing to a greater awareness of the realities of conflict and the lifelong process of healing post-service.”

The museum provided art-making materials, additional studio space, shipping expenses, and ongoing curatorial support from exhibition Co-curator Marina Villar Delgado to make the outreach project possible.

“We are honored to feature the important and powerful work of Veterans’ Alley, and we are extremely grateful to the Sharon D. Lund Foundation for their generous grant that made an exhibition at this scale possible” says Kirsten Komoroske, Executive Director of The Walt Disney Family Museum. “Along with our next major special exhibition, *The Walt Disney Studios and World War II*, our goal is to expose museum visitors—both in person and in the virtual space—to the creativity and individual experiences of both our local veteran community and the community that remains abroad.”

Veterans’ Voices is the museum’s fifth annual Community Access Exhibition, inspired by the vision of the museum’s co-founder, Diane Disney Miller, who championed arts access as a vital component of the museum’s commitment to community engagement.

To accommodate individuals who are unable to visit the exhibition in-person, the museum will also be making *Veterans’ Voices: Painted Realities* available to view online in a virtual gallery. A 3D rendering of the exhibition is currently in progress. The debut of the exhibition’s virtual space as well as details on a virtual artists’ reception will be forthcoming.

Special thanks to the Sharon D. Lund Foundation for their generous support of this exhibition.

ABOUT THE WALT DISNEY FAMILY MUSEUM

The Walt Disney Family Museum presents the fascinating story and achievements of Walt Disney, the man who raised animation to the level of fine art, transformed the film industry, tirelessly pursued innovation, and created a global, yet distinctively American legacy. Opened in October 2009, the 40,000-square-foot facility features innovative technology alongside a vast collection of historic materials and artifacts that bring Disney’s achievements to life. There is a myriad of interactive galleries, which present early drawings and animation, movies, music, listening stations, a spectacular model of Disneyland, and much more. The museum is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization located in the scenic Presidio of San Francisco.

Hours: The Walt Disney Family Museum reopened its doors on Thursday, November 5, 2020. Currently open Thursday through Sunday: 10am to 5:30pm, last entry at 4:15pm. Closed Mondays through Wednesdays through the remainder of 2020, and on the following public holidays: January 1, Thanksgiving Day, and December 25.

Where: The Presidio of San Francisco, 104 Montgomery Street, San Francisco, CA 94129

Tickets: Admission to *Veterans’ Voices: Painted Realities* is included with general admission. General admission ticket: \$25 adults; \$20 seniors & students; \$15 youth (ages 6 to 17). Museum admission is free for members, children under 5, and active and retired military personnel, as well as their spouses/dependents with valid ID. Guests are encouraged to reserve tickets prior to their visit.

Contact: 415.345.6800 | waltdisney.org | waltdisney.org/veteransvoices

Follow: [facebook.com/wdfmuseum](https://www.facebook.com/wdfmuseum) | Twitter & Instagram: @wdfmuseum

Press Kit: <https://bit.ly/3kgT7Yf>

Media Contact: Caroline Quinn
press@wdfmuseum.org

###