'Wounded in Action' is a tribute to those who serve and those who take care of them

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Mike Lyons of the Lyons SHare Gallery in Fairhope, Ala.,with "Windmill of War," a digital photo by Dr. Laura Gehrig, one of 130 pieces in the "Wounded in War" exhibit that runs March 9-13 in New Orleans.

In war, courage is often measured in pain.

Each new theater of battle is scarred by the psychological anguish of armed conflict, the emotional trauma of violent death, and the physical suffering of those who survive. Such pain can be heard and deeply felt in "Wounded in Action: An Art Exhibition of Orthopaedic Advancements" (**http://www.woundedinactionart.org/index.php**), on view this week in New Orleans.

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The exhibit will debut in New Orleans at the 2010 annual meeting of the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons, and it includes approximately 130 pieces by 75 artists, including 27 physicians. Artwork will be on view outside the La Nouvelle Orleans Ballroom in the Morial Convention Center.

The show is organized as a tribute to injured troops, their families and the civilians, medical staff and orthopedic surgeons who cared for them.

The exhibit came about because the AAOS "realized the significant contribution that our fellow orthopedic surgeons were making in care of all these injured warriors in Iraq and Afghanistan,"

says Dr. Frank Kelly, chair of the communications cabinet for the Academy.

"So many service members had lost their lives, and so many had suffered battle related injuries — specifically orthopedic injuries — that we wanted in some way to recognize and honor them."

Kelly says the artwork "absolutely blew me away."

"It's incredible what some these artists have done," he says. "Not only the quality of work, but the meaning behind it. Really, it's almost a tear-jerker and it affects you emotionally."

One of the participating artists is Greg M. Carden of Alabama, son of a retired Army officer, who has undergone almost 30 orthopedic surgeries at military hospitals to treat cancerous tumors and other medical problems. He had an above-knee amputation during the first Gulf War and underwent physical therapy alongside wounded soldiers who had also lost limbs.

"I found the vets' experiences to be quite awe-inspiring," Carden says in his artist's statement. "These were people who signed up for the military knowing they could be injured — some even signed up after the war had begun; so they knew full well what they were getting into.

"My medical situation just happened; there was not anything I could do about it. These vets might have avoided injury, but instead chose to serve their country in the face of such risk. As far as I was concerned, they were heroes, though every single vet I met was as humble as could be and tried to play down that sort of admiration."

Carden's compelling series of black-and-white images, titled "Phantom Footprints" and "Body Image I, II, III," depict a brave man literally charting a new path for his life.

In addition to photographs, "Wounded in Action" features works in oil, watercolor, mixed media, welded metal sculpture, marble and more.

A watercolor titled "Boots of a Fallen Solider" by Dr. Matthew L. Jimenez, shows a pair of empty boots, laced with dogtags, which suggest an untold narrative. Every soldier has a personal story, and too many of them remain unknown.

Two massive works in Carrara marble by Dr. Robert C. Klapper, depict the harrowing wartime experiences of the artist's father.

"Return to Home," a mixed-media work by Dr. Susan Etcoff Fraerman, is made of beads, woven wire, found objects and a 1937 German ammunition box. The work shows a pair of veiled hands in supplication or prayer, and represents "the mothers, fathers, wives and children left behind," the artist writes.

(Press-Register/Kate Mercer)

"Smile on a Stick," a mixed-media work by Barbara Balzer.

"Wounded in Action" is an enormous exhibit featuring artwork from throughout the United States, Canada, Israel, India and elsewhere. It is an arduous task for the art handlers, Mike and Kelley Lyons of the Lyons Share Gallery in Fairhope, who became involved through one of their customers, Bob Audette. His company is handling logistical support for the AAOS exhibit.

"I took this on in kind of a cavalier fashion," says Mike Lyons, "like 'Yeah, we can handle this. We hang artwork, no problem.' Then we started receiving the art and looking at it, and it really kind of knocked me to my knees a little bit when you see what it's all about and the obvious pain people have gone through."

An international call for artwork led to dozens of shipments to the Fairhope gallery, where Mike and Kelley Lyons and an employee, Billy Michalopoulos, uncrated and checked the work for damage, then recrated and prepared to load it for transport to New Orleans.

Information

Last week they drove the truck to New Orleans , where they will unpack and install the exhibit. Next weekend

WHAT: "Wounded in Action: An Art Exhibition of Orthopaedic Advancements"
WHEN: March 9-13 during the annual meeting of the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons
WHERE: Morial Convention Center outside La Nouvelle Orleans Ballroom, 900 Convention Center Blvd., New Orleans
ARTISTS TALK: 4 until 5:30 p.m. March 11 in Room 208,Morial Convention Center
RECEPTION: 6:30 until 8 p.m. March 11, outside the La Nouvelle Orleans Ballroom
ADMISSION: free
INFO: **http://www.woundedinactionart.org/index.php**

NOTE: Approximately 130 two- and three-dimensional works by 75 artists, including 27 orthopaedic surgeons. Organized as a tribute to injured troops, their families and the civilians, medical staff and surgeons who cared for them, the exhibition considers the sacrifices made in war. Sponsored by the AAOS in partnership with the Orthopaedic Research Society, the Orthopaedic Trauma Association and the Society of Military Orthopaedic Surgeons.

they will take it down and repack the artwork for reshipping.

Dr. Kelly of AAOS says the 130-plus piece exhibit, or much of it, will go to Washington, D.C., for display in one of the buildings where members of the U.S. Congress can see it. The Academy hopes the artwork will raise the collective consciousness within the Senate and House of Representatives about orthopedic injuries and lead to increased funding for research.

Certainly, these images will leave an impression on visitors to the Morial Convention Center, where 28,000 to 30,000 AAOS members and allied personnel are expected for the annual meeting. Kelly sees it as a deserving tribute to the men and women of the armed forces, whose sacrifice too often goes unappreciated.

"Every artist has a story behind his or her work," he says, "and this (artwork) makes you really appreciate what they go through for us."