

**Application to Puffin Foundation
Seeking Support of:**

From Combat to Campus

*An audio visual installation based on interviews of returning veterans
to Bridgewater State College*

Project Description

We would like to develop an installation for exhibition using audio interviews of student veterans on campus as a way to explore their transition. We plan to exhibit the piece at Bridgewater State College, the Mobius gallery in Boston, MA, and are seeking other college campus venues as well. We are seeking support from the Puffin Foundation for personnel stipends and for the purchase of equipment.

Many veterans from the war in Iraq are enrolling in greater numbers each year and classes reflect that. Her drawing studio course is one of the required courses that non-art majors may elect to fill a requirement for graduation. As a result, she has had a unique opportunity to observe personal issues these returning soldiers reveal in their self-portrait drawing assignments. One issue of concern is post traumatic stress disorder and its consequences. The following quote is from a young woman student who returned from 14 months in Iraq:

“The first couple of months, being around people was very difficult. Over there, we were always guarded, you’re always kind of on edge. So, even when you get back, you’re looking around at people and expecting the worst....I had no desire to interact with people.... I still find when I am driving under overpasses, I check. I look if there’s anyone up there about to throw a bomb at me.”

A series of sample questions that will be useful to others and yet sensitive to subjects veterans do NOT want to talk about, have been developed with input from a veteran Marine:

Sample questions:

- Describe your first days on the BSC campus.
- What do you know now that you wished you knew then?
- What are some strategies you learned that could help others in making the switch to life on campus?
- Are you still in the military? Why or why not?
- What aspect of the military do you miss the most?
- Do you join student activities? Why or why not?
- What are your plans for the future?

The audio developed from these interviews will be paired with a video projection as well as other visual elements in the gallery exhibition. I am in the process of obtaining Institutional Review Board approval to insure that the participants are protected.

Project Goals

The audience is primarily the college community: students, staff and faculty with the general public as secondary. My intention is to bring awareness to both the difficulties and successes of veterans making a healthy transition from a war zone to a college campus. The college community will be reached through the publicity generated by the art exhibition through the Bridgewater State College website (www.bridgew.edu), electronic Community Announcements, the Newslog and a postcard invitation mailing. Additional publicity to a greater audience will be accomplished using the Mobius email list, the Mobius website (www.mobius.org) and press listings in the greater Boston area. A public reception is planned for November 11, 2010 Veteran's Day with additional gallery hours from 12 to 5 PM on November 12, 13 and 14. The curator of the Anderson Gallery at Bridgewater State College is committed to exhibiting this work and has written a letter to support it. Mobius, Inc., an artist run organization in Boston where I am a member, has also written a letter of support.

This project uses the actual voices of veterans and as a result will make a strong connection to the listeners/audience. These veterans have not been heard. They are almost invisible. I know this from my contact with Michael Anthony, student and author of *Mass Casualties: A Young Medic's True Story of Death, Deception, And Dishonor in Iraq*:

"The term that comes to mind is 'fish out of water'. I definitely felt like I didn't belong and that there was something else going on in my mind, than what was going on in the rest of the students. Even though I was back home, I felt like the war was still affecting me, while I looked at all the students, and it felt like it didn't affect anyone else and as if people didn't even understand we were fighting a war."

Bringing their voices to the attention of the college community will help both the veteran and the non-veteran ease the transition from deployment to college. The exhibition will provide a bridge of understanding between the two. This war continues and we are all part of the consequences. These students/veterans are our brothers and sisters.

Enclosures

- Resume
- CD sampler of oral history, The Great Grandmother Project
- CD images from installation, "Global"
- Letter of support from curator Anderson Gallery, Bridgewater State College
- Letter of support from Director of Mobius, Inc., Boston
- Boston Globe interview with Iraq veteran and student