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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

# GHOST ARMY



## THE COMBAT CON ARTISTS OF WORLD WAR II

NEVADA MUSEUM OF ART TO UNVEIL *GHOST ARMY: THE COMBAT CON ARTISTS OF WORLD WAR II* SPECIAL EXHIBITION FROM THE NATIONAL WWII MUSEUM

*Exclusive content explores how the US Army created fake forces through illusion and deception to help secure Allied victory.*

**Reno, NV (December 21, 2022)** – On March 4, 2023, the Nevada Museum of Art will unveil a new exhibition titled *Ghost Army: The Combat Con Artists of World War II*. Organized by [The National WWII Museum](#) in New Orleans and exclusively sponsored by E. L. Wiegand Foundation, the exhibition tells the story of the 23rd Headquarters Special Troops – the first mobile, multimedia, tactical deception unit in US Army history. The unit waged war with inflatable tanks and vehicles, fake radio traffic, sound effects and even phony generals, using imagination and illusion to trick the enemy while saving thousands of lives. Along with the 3133rd Signal Service Company in Italy, the unit helped liberate Europe from the grip of Nazi tyranny. A companion exhibition *Ellsworth Kelly: Prints from the Collections of Jordan D. Schnitzer and His Family Foundation* illustrates the artistic career of one of men who served in the ghost army.

### ***Ghost Army: The Combat Con Artists of World War II***

The unique and top-secret “Ghost Army” unit – comprised of 82 officers and 1,023 men – was the brainchild of Colonel Billy Harris and Major Ralph Ingersoll. Activated on January 20, 1944, under the command of Army veteran Colonel Harry L. Reeder, the group was capable of simulating two whole divisions (approximately 30,000 troops) by using visual, sonic and radio deception to fool German forces during the final year of World War II. Armed with nothing heavier than .50-caliber machine guns, the 23rd took part in 22 large-scale deceptions in Europe from Normandy to the Rhine River, the bulk of the unit arriving in England in May 1944, shortly before D-Day.

“*Ghost Army* explores the bravery, heroics and tactical brilliance of a first-of-its kind military unit,” said Erin Clancey, Associate Vice President of Collections and Exhibits at The National WWII Museum. “Although their efforts were classified for over 50 years, the deceptive and groundbreaking strategies used on the battlefield

saved lives and played a significant role in Allied victory. The National WWII Museum is proud to highlight their vital contributions that went unrecognized following the war.”

*Ghost Army* features inflatable military pieces, historical narrative text panels detailing unit operations, profiles of unit officers, archival photography and sketches and uniforms from unit officers. The exhibit presents exclusive, original content from The National WWII Museum archives along with a historical artifact collection curated and donated to the Museum by [Ghost Army Legacy Project](#) President and Exhibit Consultant Rick Beyer. The exhibition debuted at The National WWII Museum in New Orleans in March 2020 before embarking on a national tour to share the story of the Ghost Army with communities across the country.

“This exhibition reveals an important aspect of the history of World War II, and showcases the creativity, ingenuity and bravery of these soldiers who will inspire Museum guests of all ages,” said Museum CEO David B. Walker. “While the exhibition is on view the Museum will proudly offer free admission to active military members, their families, and veterans thanks to generous support from the E. L. Wiegand Foundation.”

### **Companion Exhibition on artist *Ellsworth Kelly: Prints from the Collections of Jordan D. Schnitzer and His Family Foundation***

Many of the men who served as a part of the *Ghost Army* project would later develop careers as successful artists. Familiar names include fashion designer Bill Blass, photographer Art Kane, and artist Ellsworth Kelly. An artist known for his unique style that employs hard-edged and boldly shaped colors, Kelly became well-known for distinctive work that stands apart from other abstract American art produced in the 1950s. His minimalist aesthetic earned an international reputation, and his work has been exhibited around the world. A companion exhibition of Kelly’s works, *Ellsworth Kelly: Prints from the Collections of Jordan D. Schnitzer and His Family Foundation* will be on view in the Robert Z. Hawkins Gallery alongside the *Ghost Army* exhibition.

Kelly’s biography traces one for many of the artists who served in tactical deception units during World War II. Born in Newburgh, New York, Kelly was attending Pratt Institute in Brooklyn when his schooling was cut short by the rumblings of World War II. He entered U.S. military service in 1943 requesting to be assigned to the 603rd Engineers Camouflage Battalion, a tactical deception unit also known as The Ghost Army. His exposure to military camouflage became part of his basic art training, instructing him in the use of form and shadow, as well as the construction and deconstruction of the visible.

This small exhibition features samples of Kelly’s work for which he became best known, and demonstrates Kelly’s subtle techniques for emphasizing line, color and form. All the works in this exhibition are on loan from the collections of Jordan D. Schnitzer and His Family Foundation.

### **Program Features Filmmaker Rick Beyer**

*March 16 | 6 pm*

In tandem with both exhibitions, the Museum will also host author and filmmaker Rick Beyer, whose book *The Ghost Army of World War II: How One Top-Secret Unit Deceived the Enemy with Inflatable Tanks, Sound Effects and Other Audacious Fakery* offers detailed insight into the 23rd Headquarters Special Troops and their creative deceptions on the battlefields of Europe that would earn them Congressional Gold Medals. The presentation will happen on Thursday, March 16, at 6:00 p.m., and will cost \$15 for General Admission and \$10 for Museum Members.

*Ghost Army: The Combat Con Artists of World War II* will be on view through **July 23, 2023**, in the John Hawley Olds Lagatta Gallery.

*Ellsworth Kelly: Prints from the Collections of Jordan D. Schnitzer and His Family Foundation* will be on view through July 23, 2023 in the Robert Z. Hawkins Gallery.

**Sponsor:** Organized by The National WWII Museum, *Ghost Army: Combat Con Artists of World War II* is exclusively sponsored by the E. L. Wiegand Foundation.

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**The Nevada Museum of Art** is the only art museum in Nevada accredited by the American Alliance of Museums (AAM). A private, nonprofit organization founded in 1931, the statewide institution is supported by its membership as well as sponsorships, gifts and grants. Through its permanent collections, original exhibitions and programming, and E.L. Cord Museum School, the Nevada Museum of Art provides meaningful opportunities for people to engage with a range of art and education experiences. The Museum's *Center for Art + Environment* is an internationally-recognized research center dedicated to supporting the practice, study, and awareness of creative interactions between people and their environments. The Center houses unique archive materials from more than 1,000 artists working on all seven continents, including Cape Farewell, Michael Heizer, Walter de Maria, Lita Albuquerque, Burning Man, the Center for Land Use Interpretation, Great Basin Native Artists Archive, Ugo Rondinone's *Seven Magic Mountains*, and Trevor Paglen's *Orbital Reflector*. Learn more at [nevadaart.org](http://nevadaart.org).

### **Land Acknowledgement**

The Nevada Museum of Art acknowledges the traditional homelands of the *Wa She Shu* (Washoe), *Numu* (Northern Paiute), *Newe* (Western Shoshone), and *Nuwu* (Southern Paiute) people of the Great Basin. This includes the 28 tribal nations that exist as sovereign nations and continue as stewards of this land. We appreciate the opportunity to live and learn on these Indigenous homelands.

**The National WWII Museum** tells the story of the American experience in *the war that changed the world*—why it was fought, how it was won, and what it means today—so that all generations will understand the price of freedom and be inspired by what they learn. Dedicated in 2000 as The National D-Day Museum and now designated by Congress as America's National WWII Museum, the institution celebrates the American spirit, teamwork, optimism, courage and sacrifices of the men and women who fought on the battlefield and served on the Home Front. For more information on TripAdvisor's #1 New Orleans attraction, call 877-813-3329 or 504-528-1944 or visit [nationalww2museum.org](http://nationalww2museum.org).