



NATIONAL VIETNAM VETERANS  
Art Museum

## Teacher Packet

# *In Defiance of Tradition: Works on Paper*

*The National Vietnam Veterans Art Museum would like for your class visit to be as enlightening and as effective as possible, and we are pleased to offer you our Teacher Packets to aid and prepare your class for their visit. This material is designed to be used both before and after your visit, and we hope it will maximize the impact of your class' experience here. We welcome any feedback or suggestions you may have on how to improve this teacher packet. Thank you for giving us the opportunity to be a part of your educational process. We look forward to your visit.*

National Vietnam Veterans Art Museum  
1801 South Indiana Avenue  
Chicago, Illinois 60616

312/326.0270 phone  
312/326.9676 fax

[www.nvvam.org](http://www.nvvam.org)

## Lesson Plans and Activities

### ACTIVITY 1

*Optional research project for students before or after museum visit: Who was Madame Nhu?*

### ACTIVITY 2

Curator of this exhibit Ted Stanuga stated: “Paper is portable, durable and resilient while at the same time capable of supporting techniques that yield minute detail. These are the autobiographic pages and diaries, often repressed as memory, explosively fresh when realized, and full of the inspiration and information we need to begin an understanding of the human cost of war.”

In short, some of these pieces can serve as “personality snapshots.” Artwork done “in the moment” allows the artist to record something significant as it happens, before they can think too much about the event. Artwork done in retrospect, however, allows the artist time to put the event in perspective through wisdom and time, giving a more “well-rounded” perspective on the subject or event depicted, and how they depict it.

#### *Questions:*

Does artwork from memory or art done “in the moment” have more value or truth to it? Explain.

W.O. Dugan worked with dead animals to help him get used to being back “in the world,” or out of war and away from the military. Why might working with the dead as he did help him?

Did a particular medium/subject/style appeal to or interest the students? Did the media used in this exhibit seem more appropriate than another (like painting or sculpture) for what the artist was trying to say? Is a certain media better for expressing ideas, emotions, etc? Explain why or how.

### ACTIVITY 3

Frank Dahmer, *Crossing*: Besides possibly being marked for death, for what other reasons could the artist have singled-out the red soldier? Keep in mind the name of the piece—it is not “THE Crossing”—it is an action that is being played out—the soldiers are in the process of crossing, rather than being at a crossing. Think of the phrase “crossing over,” or any other expressions that leap to mind. How else can these phrases or this action be applied to the piece?

### ACTIVITY 4

Bill Crist’s *Sleeping With Things That Bite and Critters*: These pieces illustrate some of the other dangers or inconveniences soldiers must contend with. Students can get a clearer idea of scale for these “critters” when they visit the exhibit *Issued and Beyond*.

## Works Cited

Crist, Bill. *Sleeping With Things That Bite*. Undated. National Vietnam Veterans Art Museum, Chicago, IL.

---. *Critters*. Undated. National Vietnam Veterans Art Museum, Chicago, IL.

Dahmer, Frank. *Crossing*. Undated. National Vietnam Veterans Art Museum, Chicago, IL.