



10-3-2016

Images of Power, Images of War: Schmucker Art Gallery's New Exhibit

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Wilson, Laurel J., "Images of Power, Images of War: Schmucker Art Gallery's New Exhibit" (2016). *The Gettysburg Compiler: On the Front Lines of History*. 172.

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Abstract

Bodies in Conflict: From Gettysburg to Iraq is a brand new exhibit in Schmucker Art Gallery at Gettysburg College. Curated by Mellon Summer Scholar Laura Bergin '17, it features eleven depictions of bodies engaged in various conflicts in U.S. history, ranging from the Civil War to the war in Iraq. In addition to curating the physical exhibit found in Schmucker Art Gallery, Bergin also created a virtual version, which can be accessed online through the [Schmucker Gallery web page](#). Of particular interest to those interested in the Civil War are two of the oldest pieces in the collection, a lithograph depicting Pennsylvania Bucktails engaging with "Stonewall" Jackson's men and stenograph images that depict the aftermath of the Battle of Gettysburg.

[*excerpt*]

Keywords

Gettysburg College, Civil War, The Gettysburg Compiler, history, art, images, Schmucker Art Gallery

Disciplines

Art and Design | History | Military History | Public History | United States History

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This blog post originally appeared in [The Gettysburg Compiler](#) and was created by students at Gettysburg College.

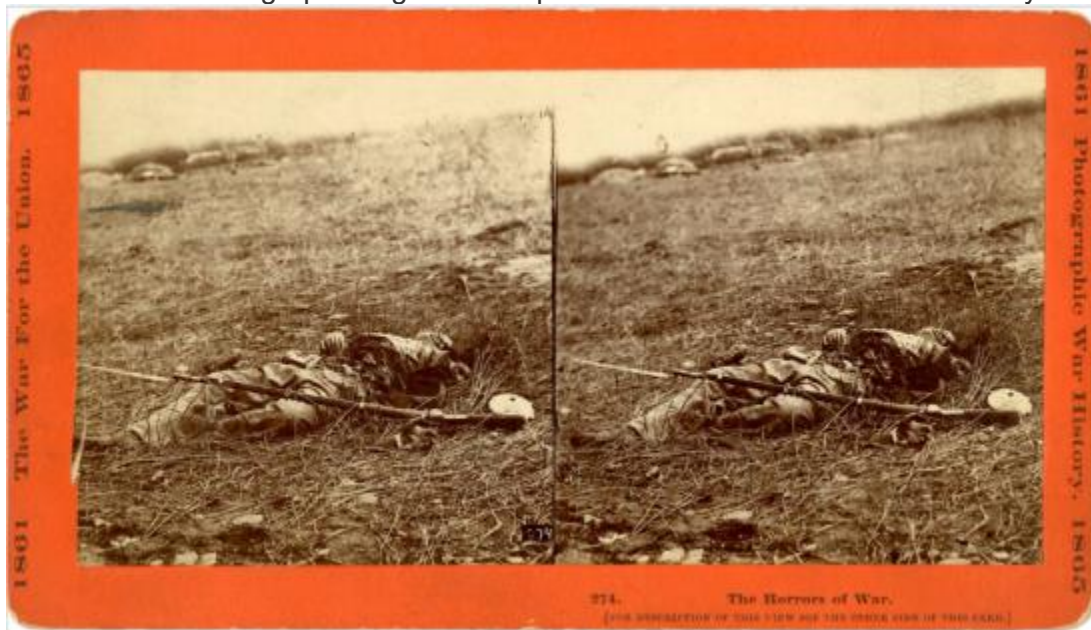
THE GETTYSBURG COMPILER

ON THE FRONT LINES OF HISTORY

Images of Power, Images of War: Schmucker Art Gallery's New Exhibit

By Laurel Wilson '19

Bodies in Conflict: From Gettysburg to Iraq is a brand new exhibit in Schmucker Art Gallery at Gettysburg College. Curated by Mellon Summer Scholar Laura Bergin '17, it features eleven depictions of bodies engaged in various conflicts in U.S. history, ranging from the Civil War to the war in Iraq. In addition to curating the physical exhibit found in Schmucker Art Gallery, Bergin also created a virtual version, which can be accessed online through the [Schmucker Gallery web page](#). Of particular interest to those interested in the Civil War are two of the oldest pieces in the collection, a lithograph depicting Pennsylvania Bucktails engaging with "Stonewall" Jackson's men and stenograph images that depict the aftermath of the Battle of Gettysburg.



This stereoscope portraying the aftermath of the Battle of Gettysburg is featured in Bergin's exhibit. Photo via Wikimedia Commons.

Bergin's self-designed major, *Images of Conflict*, was the basis for creating the exhibit, and her interdisciplinary focus shines in the exhibit's curation. Bergin focuses on both the artistic and historical context of each image, bringing to the forefront the emotions each image is attempting

to convey to the viewers. She worked closely with her faculty mentor, Shannon Egan, director of Schmucker Art Gallery, as well as Carolyn Sautter and Molly Reynolds of Musselman Library Special Collections in order to gather pieces from the college collections for the exhibit. Bergin also wrote up short essays for each piece featured in the collection that provide historical context as well as her own interpretations of each piece's meaning, which are installed next to each piece and featured in the exhibit catalog.

Bergin's goal in creating the exhibit was to show how the human form is represented as the body endures the detrimental effects of war. Bergin focused on photographs and other artistic interpretations of modern conflicts in order to depict how conflict is conveyed across a variety of time periods. The pieces that are featured in the exhibit come from a variety of conflicts from American history, including the American Civil War, World War I, World War II, the Vietnam War, and the War in Iraq. Each piece that Bergin selected tells a slightly different story depending on what it depicts and what time period it is from. This in turn contributes greatly to the overall narrative of the exhibit.

The collection is full of poignant and interesting pieces, including two photo albums that belonged to soldiers in WWI and WWII, a lithograph from the Civil War, journalistic photographs, and propaganda posters. Bergin intentionally selected pieces that reflect artistic, personal, and journalistic perspectives from various time periods in order to show how perceptions of war and the ways in which it is depicted have changed over time.

The personal perspective provided by the photo albums is particularly worth mentioning because the soldiers created them for their personal use, as opposed to most of the other pieces in the collection, which were intended for a public audience. Many of the other pieces in the collection, such as the propaganda posters, must be viewed with a slightly different lens, as they are artistic interpretations of war. These artistic interpretations almost always intend to communicate a certain message and elicit a specific emotion from the viewer depending on the overall context of when they were made and why. Bergin wishes to draw attention to the similarities and differences between each of the pieces in order to help the viewer understand why certain images associated with combat situations elicit different emotional responses. When taken together, the pieces in the collection provide a thoughtful look into how Americans have perceived war over the last 150 years.

Bodies in Conflict: From Gettysburg to Iraq is on display in Schmucker Art Gallery from September 9 to October 22. The collection can also be viewed digitally [here](#).

<https://gettysburgcompiler.com/2016/10/03/images-of-power-images-of-war-schmucker-art-galleries-new-exhibit/>