

Thankful Generations: Heroes Found

Artist: Maureen Kenney



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Introduction:

Showcasing the unique artistry of beaded tapestries, the "Thankful Generations" traveling exhibit pays tribute to those who served in World War II (WWII), expresses gratitude for current military service members and their families, and preserves the memories of a pivotal era in history.

During World War II, sixteen million men and women served on active duty in the Armed Forces. Millions more worked at home in defense industries that supplied the sailors, soldiers, and marines. The massive mobilization brought people together from all over the country as they served side by side on the ground and at sea. A squad of soldiers could include a farmhand from Wisconsin, a mechanic from Georgia, a salesman from New York, and a teacher from Hawaii; people who would have never known each other or the places they came from. With surviving World War II veterans now 100+ years, there is a pressing need to capture their voices and experiences before they fade into history. The urgency to express gratitude and create a platform for intergenerational conversations is palpable.

Objective:

The primary goal of the exhibit is to bridge generational gaps and foster dialogue, particularly with the diminishing number of World War II veterans. Through intricate beaded tapestries, the project aims to immortalize brief glimpses of their stories, ensuring their bravery and sacrifice are remembered and acknowledged.

Service and sacrifice are themes familiar to this Greatest Generation, and their stories have much to teach subsequent generations. These are not images of the famous, but merely everyday people who participated in and dedicated themselves to the conflict whether at home or overseas. The purpose of this collection of WWII portraits is to spread the artist's heartfelt gratitude from the subsequent "thankful generations" who have benefited from these sacrifices. It is also to inspire viewers to seek out the heroes in their own world, find their stories and pass them along so that these experiences are not lost to the unwritten pages of history.

Artist Statement:

As I was approaching 50, I actively chose to put my artistic energy towards honoring the Greatest Generation, those citizens who served and sacrificed for our country in ways almost unfathomable today. Growing up in an Air Force family, I experienced my father's unwavering commitment to put "country-before-self". Moving every two to three years, my early life was filled with new adventures and infused with deep appreciation for our wonderful country as we relocated from state-to-state across the continental US.

My ties to the military strengthened over the years. Being married to a Navy guy meant being separated from him during Operation Desert Storm, with daily anxiety about what could happen to him during his wartime duties. Working at General Dynamics Bath Iron Works meant pride in working for a company building not only Arleigh Burke Class destroyers but contributing to our national security.

These life experiences fuel my desire to honor and respect those who have served our country. Like many, I find expression through my artwork, though my way of saying thanks is different than most. By creating beaded tapestries of real people who served in the military or in other ways served our country, every woven bead expresses my personal thanks. I capture moments in time in a format that I hope makes people pause, reflect and discuss what they think.

I'm hoping to inspire others to seek out the heroes in their own world. This ties directly to the theme of the Thankful Generations exhibition, which is "Heroes Found". I'm hoping this project will promote new dialogue across generations, and most urgently with the generation of brave men and women who participated in the Second World War. We still have surviving veterans and civilians who served amongst us. Nearly every day I read an article about the passing of yet another WWII veteran, and I feel compelled to do this project before their collective voices are lost forever.

Exhibition Overview:

Exhibit includes beaded woven tapestries based on WWII portraits created on-loom with precision cut Miyuki Delica size 11 beads, plus:

- 1) Eleven tapestries
 - a) Ten 12.75" x 12.125" x 1.5" gray silk- framed tapestries
 - b) One central gray silk-framed tapestry with 19.25" x 19.125" x 1.5" dimensions
- 2) Printable PDF Banners:
 - a) Welcoming banner (42" x 36")
 - b) About the Artist (24" x 36")
 - c) About the Series (24" x 36")
- 3) Electronic Flipbook with detailed images of artwork; example from Doss Museum exhibition can be found at this link: <https://heyzine.com/flip-book/781190d306.html#page/1>
- 4) Printable QR Code flyer to accompany exhibition that visitors can take with them to peruse at their leisure – each tapestry includes online stories.



Sample Layout from Doss Museum Exhibition:

- Ideal layout is ~600-700 sq ft.
- Two long walls (20x30), or three shorter walls in U shape
- Doss Museum exhibition photo below shows 30' wall plus 19' wall display floor plan

On longer wall:

- o Three banners as described in section above
- o Ten central tapestries in custom-made silk covered frames plus larger centerpiece framed tapestry

On shorter wall to the right:

- o Display cabinet (currently provided by venue) with small demonstration loom and weaving materials under glass cover
- o Carswell tapestry in shadow box with banner (donated to Texas Christian University by artist, no longer available for exhibition)
- o Posting board for visitors to leave comment cards (optional, provided by venue), along with comment cards for visitor notes (optional, printable pdf provided by Artist)



Target Audience:

- General public, beyond those with interest in military history

Educational and Public Programs:

- Artist tours (optional, contingent upon distance and travel expenses) or Video Lecture that can “bring to life” and enhance the visitor experience
- Kick-off full presentation by Artist to generate excitement

Logistics:

- Shipping expenses to and from receiving institution, fully insured:
 - o Expenses paid by receiving organization;
 - o Contingent upon distance, preferred carrier, total weight, and timing
 - o Preliminary estimate of \$800 (to and from)
- Installation / receiving institution requirements:
 - o Tapestries can be hung on wall using D rings on back of frames, or as A-frames on table tops or display counters
 - detailed written instructions provided with exhibition
 - two silk-covered travel boxes that may or may not be used as part of the exhibit
 - o Strongly recommend use of museum-quality gloves for handling professional silk-covered frames
 - o Secure facility with sufficient staff to ensure safety and protection of exhibition materials
- Proposed timeline for installation and deinstallation:
 - o Approximately five hours required for installation of exhibition with two people, depending upon venue-specific methods of displaying and hanging objects
 - o Removal of exhibit requires approximately three hours for repackaging each tapestry in protective sleeves and bubble wrapping

Budget considerations*:

- Cost estimate for transportation as referenced above
- \$100 per week to display exhibition for museums free to the public
- \$250 per week to display for museums with general and special exhibit admission fees
- Based on the above estimates, **for an eight-week exhibition** the receiving institution estimated rental fee is as follows:

Free Museums or venues*:	\$1,600
Museums or venues with general and special exhibition admission fees:	\$2,800

* Fees negotiable, depending upon museum or venue circumstances

Previous Exhibits, Competitions and Commentary:

Exhibits

- Full exhibition at Doss Heritage & Culture Center, Weatherford TX
 - October 2023 – May 2024, Full Gallery Exhibition - Thankful Generations: Heroes Found
 - 17 beaded tapestries
 - Collaboration on tapestry of Major Horace Carswell JR (WWII Medal of Honor recipient) with Medal of Honor Museum opening in Arlington TX in March 2025
 - June – November 2017, Courage Exhibition
 - 2 beaded Thankful Generations tapestries of Parker County citizens



Competitions

- Texas National 2025, Stephen F. Austin Galleries, April 11, 2025 through June 22, 2025. The SFA Galleries present exhibitions of regional, national and international art to an expanding audience centered in East Texas. Artist work on display:
 - Jean Stone, Marine WWII (Left)
 - Marine in Saipan (Right)



- Fantastic Fibers International Exhibition, Yeiser Art Center, Paducah, Kentucky. “Fantastic Fibers” is an international juried exhibition that seeks to showcase a wide range of outstanding works related to the fiber medium. One of Yeiser Art Center’s most engaging, innovative & colorful international exhibits, “Fantastic Fibers” is an inspirational must see for fine artists, quilters, and textile art enthusiasts across the globe. Now in its 37th year, this year’s “Fantastic Fibers” exhibition features work from ten different countries, twenty-six states, and sixty-four different artists! Artist work on display:
 - Beatrice Singer Selig, WWII Army Nurse Corps



- Coppell Arts Council Quilt and Fiber Art Exhibit, September 16, 2024 – November 3, 2024, Coppell Arts Center, Coppell, Texas. This exhibit featured artists from Texas and surrounding states. Artist work on display:
 - Jean Stone, Marine WWII (Top L)
 - Chester Kenney, WWII Corps of Engineers (Top R)
 - Joseph Brown, Navy WWII (Bottom L)
 - Beatrice Singer Selig, Army Nurse Corps WWII (Bottom R)



- 30th Annual Juried Maritime Art exhibition, Coos Bay Art Museum, Coos Bay, Oregon July – September 2024. This annual juried art exhibit showcases maritime themed art from artists around the country and is sanctioned by the American Society of Marine Artists. Artist work on display:
 - "Anna Mae Shellenbarger", WWII Welder
 - "Joseph Ruf", Sailor WWII



- American Tapestry Alliance (ATA) 14th Biennial international juried exhibit, May 12 - July, 2023, featuring the best of international contemporary hand-woven tapestry, held at Appalachian Center for Crafts, Smithville, TN. Artist work on display:
 - "Anna Mae Shellenbarger", WWII Welder (top)
 - "Joseph Kubes, Marine WWII" (bottom)



- Portraits 2023 exhibition: "Joseph Kubes, Marine WWII" tapestry placed 2nd
- Valentine 2023 exhibition: "Harvel's Wedding Day" tapestry received 1st place
- Woman 2023 exhibition: "Doris Neuren, WWII WAVE" tapestry placed 4th in International Women's Day competition



Quote from Amanda Edwards, Executive Director and Curator, Doss Heritage & Culture Center, Weatherford TX:

At the Doss Heritage and Culture Center we are honored to display the Thankful Generations exhibition. This collection of beaded tapestries was created by an artist who wanted to express her gratitude to the “greatest generation” for their service during World War II. She captured their images through the intricate art of bead weaving, resulting in a stunning display of both beauty and history.

As you walk through the exhibition, take a moment to reflect on the sacrifices made by those who served their country during this tumultuous time. Each tapestry depicts a different individual, each with their own unique story and contribution to the war effort. The level of detail in each piece is truly remarkable, showcasing the skill and dedication of the artist.

We are honored to be the first stop for this travelling exhibition, and we hope that visitors will find ways to thank the veterans in their own lives. In 2017, our museum featured two beaded tapestries of Parker County veterans by artist Maureen Kenney. These pieces sparked meaningful conversations among visitors, and we are excited to see how the full Thankful Generations exhibition will continue to inspire dialogue and appreciation.

Thank you for joining us on this journey of gratitude and remembrance. We hope that you will leave this exhibition with a deeper understanding of the sacrifices made by those who served their country, and a renewed sense of appreciation for their service. We would also like to congratulate Maureen Kenney on her work. The hours and thousands of beads it took to bring this exhibit together is an incredible testament to her passion for honoring these heroes. It was a privilege to help curate this impactful collection of tapestries and stories.



Quote from Rick Kubes, son of Joseph Kubes, WWII Marine and founder of Kubes Jewelers in Fort Worth on the "Joseph Kubes, Marine WWII" tapestry which placed 2nd in the Portraits 2023 exhibition:



Maureen has done not only a great artistic bead tapestry rendering of my father but paid him the highest honor by remembering and celebrating his service to our country along with the millions of other American men and women just like him that served away and at home in various capacities. Thank you, Maureen, for sharing your talent and your time

Quote from Rahul Bajaj, viewer commentary on the "Joseph Kubes, Marine WWII" tapestry:

Wonderful! This piece has a Mona Lisaesque quality to it...the eyes follow you as you look at it from different angles. That's an incredible feat of artistry to achieve in any medium, but especially so in beadwork. Simply wow!"

Quote from Samantha Petty, Executive Director USS Fort Worth Support Committee, commenting on the "Harvel's Wedding Day" tapestry which received 1st place in the Valentine's 2023 competition Doris Neuren, WWII WAVE" tapestry, which placed 4th in International Women's Day competition:

This tapestry is exquisite! I admire the artist's attention to detail and respect to history. The medium of small beads is interesting and reminds me of the tiny moments strung across time that make up a memory and lifetime. I would love to see more art like this displayed.

Quote from Jeff Payne, longtime friend of the artist on the "Harvel's Wedding Day" tapestry:

I have been a big fan of Maureen for years. Every time I look at one of these from this series I see and feel something new. Sometimes I see the obvious skill and love that went into the depiction of an amazing photograph. Other times it is like slowly walking through a maze with each bead adding to the story with another contemplative thought, quietly whispering with just a few shades of grey, so softly that it leaves room to consider the thought again to see if the whisper changes. To me each bead simultaneously represents a moment in time, a lifetime, a thought, a feeling, a tragedy, and a triumph. Thank you Maureen for many walks in the maze.



Quote from my Aunt and accomplished artist Rosalie Pyetzki, on the "Doris Neuren, WWII WAVE" tapestry, which placed 4th in International Women's Day competition:

AMAZING! Incredible talent. I have done portraits in oil, gouache, watercolor and graphite but cannot fathom the patience and talent to capture one in beads!!! This is truly priceless!



Conclusion and Contact Information:

The exhibit's thematic focus extends beyond merely preserving history; it seeks to prompt reflection on the significance of sacrifice, resilience, and the interconnectedness of generations. Through this lens, the exhibit offers a fresh perspective on the narratives surrounding service and sacrifice.

"Thankful Generations: Heroes Found" goes beyond conventional methods of expressing appreciation. Through the medium of beaded tapestries, this exhibit is a heartfelt acknowledgment of the sacrifices made by the Greatest Generation. It is an invitation to engage in conversations that transcend generations, ensuring that the legacy of those who served endures for years to come.

Contact Information:

- Email: mkenney63@me.com
- Cell phone: 207-504-6033
- Artist location: Fort Worth, Tx
- Visit website exhibit booking page for more information:
 - <https://www.thankfulgenerations.com/about-3>

