

ARTS & CULTURE

Bill Mauldin's WWII cartoons on display in N.O.

There are a couple of striking set-pieces in the traveling exhibit “Drawn to Combat: Bill Mauldin and the Art of War,” on view through April 18 at the National WWII Museum.



Dave Walker

One is the title wall, which features a photo of cartoonist Mauldin in June 1945. He had become the youngest-ever Pulitzer Prize winner for his wartime cartoons and received a Purple Heart for taking shrapnel from a German mortar.

Ahead for him was a best-selling memoir, “Up Front,” that Hollywood would make into a movie of the same title. Also ahead was a run for Congress, then a long career as a political cartoonist for newspapers in St. Louis and Chicago.

To the photo's right, through a simulated artillery-made passageway, wait life-size cartoon renditions of the iconic Willie and Bill characters Mauldin created to convey the “exhaustion, cynicism and humanity of the ordinary soldier,” the wall text says.

“His disheveled, muddy infantrymen Willie and Joe became the voice of the American GI during World War II, speaking blunt truths about combat, leadership, fear and survival.”

The second piece comes a little later in the exhibit and is a further study in mud and its meaning during the fighting in Italy, where Mauldin spent most of his war. Framed by wall-sized photos of soldiers wrestling with stuck Jeeps, an anguished cartoon cavalry sergeant holds a revolver to the hood of a real WWII-era Jeep, just above a broken axle that had disabled the vehicle.

The Mauldin cartoon that inspired the tableau sits just to the left, taken from a Stars and Stripes compilation of his work from the Mediterranean Theater. There is no caption, just an editor's note explaining that it was one of the cartoonist's personal favorites. Earlier in life, Mauldin knew a time when cavalry troops rode actual horses and not Jeeps.

Both displays combine real photos and artifacts with ink-on-paper illustrations. In the first, Mauldin's right foot emerges from the photo as if he'd drawn it onto the wall. In the Jeep tableau, rocks from the simulated wall, presumably dislodged by the now-broken axle, tumble into



PHOTOS BY DAVE WALKER

‘Drawn to Combat: Bill Mauldin and the Art of War’ is now on display at the National WWII Museum.



Bill Mauldin's World War II cartoons focused on front-line troops.

the foreground in black and white.

Stepping into his work

The exhibit originated at the Pritzker Military Museum & Library in Kenosha, Wisconsin. The challenge for the team at the WWII Museum was to find ways to expand the exhibit's presentation from mostly two-dimensional cartoons and a few objects (including Mauldin's Purple Heart) to fill the expansive Alario Special Exhibition Hall.

Using macro-artifacts like the doomed Jeep also added emphasis on Mauldin's wartime work, which would be more of a focus

for museum visitors than the sequences on his early life and later newspaper successes (for which he won a second Pulitzer).

“There's a much larger portion of the material related to works both before and after the war,” said WWII Museum Curator Chase Tomlin. “So, we did have to conceive of a way to kind of draw attention to his WWII years given our mission and the scope of our work.”

“Some of what we try to do as well is give the visitor some environmental treatment to have them step into Mauldin's work and engage with it in new and unex-

pected ways.”

Early and late Mauldin

The prewar sequences of the exhibit display his early artwork, starting with his New Mexico childhood during the Depression (he once said he could draw before he could talk) and continuing on to cartooning for his high school newspaper in Phoenix.

Two days before President Franklin Roosevelt federalized the 45th Infantry Division in anticipation of eventual American involvement in the war already underway on the other side of the world, Mauldin joined the Arizona



Bill Mauldin's cartoons addressed the everyday frustrations of life on the front line.

ON THE CALENDAR

■ In celebration of New Orleans Museum Month, **Gallier House will host an after-hours event** from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Wednesday featuring guided tours and libations. Members of other museums will receive a \$5 discount on the admission fee. hgghh.org.

■ At 6 p.m. Aug. 26, the Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience will host a screening of the documentary **“Grit & Grace: How Jewish Women Built a Better Texas,”** followed by a talk by filmmaker Barbara Rosenthal. msje.org.

■ The **Hermann-Grima House will host its Museum Month after-hours event** from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Aug. 26. hgghh.org.

■ The Historic BK House & Gardens will host another installment of its regular storytelling event **“Quarter Kaleidoscope”** at 6 p.m. August 26. The theme: “Summertime in New Orleans.” bkhouse.org.

The postwar sequences of the exhibit track Mauldin's career as a political cartoonist. Perhaps the best-known work from those days was composed after returning from lunch on Nov. 22, 1963. It depicts the statue inside the Lincoln Memorial holding his head in his hands in grief at the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

The exhibit concludes with letters of admiration from U.S. presidents and senators, and finally similar notes from service members from World War II and beyond.

Wrote one of the veterans: “I don't have much to say, other than wishing you well and thanking you for saying in your drawing what we all felt.”

A recording of a July 16 panel presentation that opened “Drawn to Combat” is archived at nationalww2museum.org. A Museumgoer Podcast episode, recorded in the gallery with curator Tomlin, historian Todd DePastino, and Bill Mauldin's son, Nat, can be found at themuseumgoer.com.

Dave Walker focuses on behind-the-scenes coverage of the region's many museums here and at www.themuseumgoer.com. Email Dave at dave@themuseumgoer.com.

PUDDY ROBINSON

GLOBAL REAL ESTATE ADVISOR

985.630.6201

PUDDY@PUDDYROBINSON.COM

PUDDYROBINSON.COM

82322 ANTHONY ROAD

FOLSOM, LA

\$1,998,000

5 BEDROOMS | 4 BATHS

3,611 SQ.FT

Crescent Sotheby's

INTERNATIONAL REALTY

Crescent Sotheby's International Realty

215 N. Columbia Street, Covington, LA

985.200.4802

SHERRY L. OWEN CRS, GRI, SFR, ABR
228-760-2815 • 228-822-9870
OWENSHERRYL@AOL.COM
2208 18TH ST, SUITE B, GULFPORT, MS 39501
WWW.OWENANDCO.COM

WATERFRONT
GAUTIER

BEACHFRONT
BILOXI
CRISTIANO BOARDWALK
SUBDIVISION

308 ITALIAN ISLE ROAD
\$2,850,000

5 Beds / 5.5 Baths / 6,600 Sq. Ft.
This stunning property is nestled on 2.1 acres on the Gulf. Completely renovated. Bulkheaded with a boat house, lifts, air conditioned fish cleaning station, water views from almost every room, and outdoor space for entertaining. Fully furnished. A true must see!

DUPLEX
GULFPORT

1820 19TH AVENUE
\$332,500

5 Beds / 2,650 Sq Ft
Beautifully ren historic home, offering classic charm w/ modern updates. Situated on a beautiful corner lot, minutes from the beach, MS Aquarium, casinos, restaurants & amenities of downtown Gulfport. Converted into a duplex, providing excellent income potential or flexible multi-generational living options while retaining its historic character.

LAUREN FALLS
BILOXI

1908 COURTNEY LANE
\$998,500

5 Beds / 3,478 Sq. Ft
Beautiful Custom Home. Gorgeous view of water. Brick archways, wood flooring, detailed trim throughout. Open concept. Guest suite w/ separate entry. Gorgeous backyard w/ pool & lounge area. Screened porch w/ deck. Large brick fence on extremely large lot!

TRICIA KING
—exquisite properties—

LUXURY LEASE ON
THE CARROLLTON STREET CAR LINE
8021 SPRUCE STREET

Beautifully maintained upstairs apt in the highly desirable neighborhood, ideally situated along the St. Charles streetcar route. Enjoy an unbeatable location just minutes from Tulane University, award-winning schools, Downtown New Orleans, Metairie, shopping, restaurants, and neighborhood favorites. Set on a spacious lot, this light-filled residence offers privacy, charm, and timeless character. Relax on the inviting front or rear porches, the perfect spots for morning coffee or unwinding while watching the sunset.
3 Beds, 2 Baths, 1,258 SqFt. **Call for Details \$2,300/Mo.**

RECENT SOLD:

1415 EIGHTH STREET
\$1,415,215

1029 AURORA AVENUE
\$627,500

D: 504.722.7640 | O: 504.891.6400

www.TriciaKing.com | Tricia.King@compass.com

LATTER & BLUM

COMPASS

Uptown - 7934 Maple St., New Orleans
Garden District - 2734 Prytanis St., New Orleans
Licensed in LA