

# Faces

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Operation Iraqi Freedom, Sgt. 1st Class Paul R. Smith, 33, who was killed on April 4, 2003. Artist Kathy Berg Emery painted his portrait.

Polan said among the nine portraits she painted was the first serviceman



The father of Army Lt. Col. Dominic R. Baragona, 42, who was killed on May 19, 2003, left a message by his son's portrait at the "Faces of the Fallen" exhibit on display at the Women in Military Service to America Memorial in Arlington, Va. It read: "Hey Rock, Like you always said ... the truth has changed. Love, Dad." Mary Challinor painted Baragona's portrait.

killed in Iraq, Marine Corps Maj. Jay T. Aubin, 36, who died on March 20, 2003.

The exhibit opened without having portraits of some fallen servicemen and women. Some portraits are still not available, Polan noted. "We haven't added to the total number since the exhibit opened," she said. Silhouettes are used for missing servicemembers, and the silhouettes are replaced with portraits as they're received. Silhouettes have also been used for eight portraits that families didn't like.

"We're going to ask artists in each state where the exhibit travels to paint portraits of all the servicemen and women from their state who have been killed," Polan said. "The portraits would stay on permanent display at the museum in that state."

Face of the Fallen was named as one of the top five gallery exhibitions for 2005 by the Washington Post, said Polan, who teaches at Washington's Corcoran Gallery. She also teaches seminars on the contemporary art scene in New York and Washington. Polan said creating the exhibit was a gut reaction for her. "My mother had died at the age of 81 a few months before I got this idea, and it was a difficult time for me," she explained. "In trying to deal with my own grief, I decided to reach out to others. One way I have of getting through difficult times is working. If you feel like you doing something for somebody else, you will not think about yourself so much."

"I wanted to create something permanent that would honor all the men

and women who lost their lives and offer some kind of support to their families," she said. "It was a task too big for one person to do, nor should one person do it."

The idea to create Faces of the Fallen came to her one morning when she saw four pages of thumbnail photographs of servicemen and women who were killed in Iraq and Afghanistan in the Washington Post.

"I intuitively thought this is something I can do to help others and also deal with my own sense of loss through working," she said. "I didn't really know where we'd show the portraits, I just knew I would show them. I've been incredibly lucky in contacting the right people at the right time to help me do this."

Polan said she made it clear to artists she contacted that the exhibit was not a statement for or against the war. "This is a honor, a memorial so these lost lives wouldn't be forgotten," Polan said she told the artists.

John Phelps is a professional artist who painted the portrait of his own fallen son, Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Chance Phelps, who was killed in Iraq at the age of 19. Otherwise, Polan assigned portraits arbitrarily to the various participating artists, in chronological order by date of death.

"A lot of the artists have developed relationships with family members of men and women they portrayed," Polan noted. "Artists are an intelligent group of people who often don't have a public voice. This has given them an opportunity to speak up through their artwork."



Probably the most famous portrait of the fallen is former National Football League star Pat Tillman, 27, who gave up the glamorous life of a professional football star to join the Army Rangers. He was killed in Afghanistan on April 22, 2004. Natasha Mokina painted his portrait at the "Faces of the Fallen" exhibit on display at the Women in Military Service to America Memorial in Arlington, Va.

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