



# ACTION THIS DAY

The Museum of WWII • Boston

Volume 1 • Number 1

February, 2014

## SPECIAL EXHIBITION

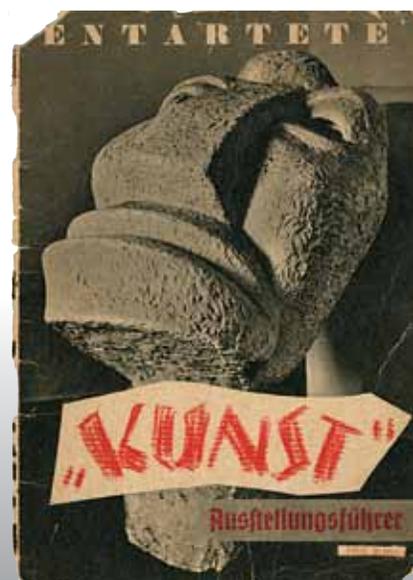
# The Failed Artist

The Museum is opening a special exhibition February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2014, based on Robert Edsel's ground-breaking books on the Monuments Men. Edsel began a recent lecture at Boston's Museum of Fine Art, with slides of paintings by Hitler, and comments that Hitler's rejection by the Vienna Art Academy blocked his artistic career and set him adrift. Our exhibition opens with the contents of Hitler's artist studio in his Munich apartment-watercolour paints, paint brushes, sketch books, drafting tools, and a number of watercolours-an eerie window into the very personal world of Adolph Hitler. The contents of his apartment were left to his long-time housekeeper, Anny Brunner-Winter, in his will. After the war, the Bavarian government confiscated everything and, after protracted court proceedings, she prevailed and they came to us intact. Hitler's apartment building at 16 Prinzgrasse, like much of Munich, was not damaged by bombs and is, today, a special police headquarters.

Completed paintings that he gave to Rudolph Hess and other Nazi leaders are also part of the exhibit. (The Hitler painting below was acquired directly from Hess' widow.)



*Farmers' Market at St. Peter's Church, Munich. Painted by Hitler and given to Hess.*



## The Rape of Europa

The *Degenerate Art* exhibition in Munich in 1937 came largely from German museums, which were emptied of all modern artists except for the approved German artists whose works were heralded in every issue of *Kunst in Die Dritte Reich* during the 1930's and 1940's. The German museums' need for art acceptable to Hitler was a driving force behind *The Rape of Europa*.

*Special Exhibition continued on next page*



A leader of deliberate conduct, Winston Churchill would attach a bright red sticker emblazoned with the words: "Action This Day" to his memos to prioritize and make clear to his subordinates that he expected specific action that day.

**ACTION THIS DAY**

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## SPECIAL EXHIBITION

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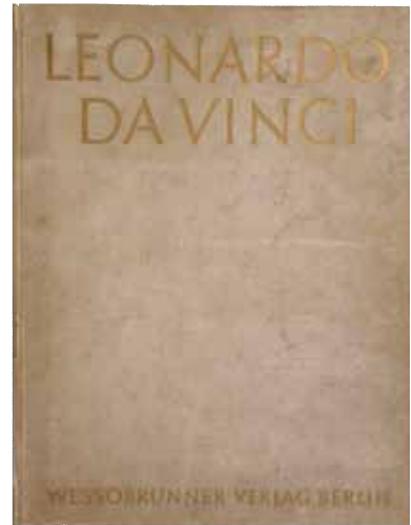
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The extremely rare “Degenerate Art” catalogue.



In 1938 Hitler opened the Haus der Kunst in Munich.



Goering's copy of Leonardo.

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## SPECIAL EXHIBITION

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# The Monuments Men

Mussolini invited Hitler to Italy in 1938, and Hitler saw the masterpieces he wanted for his planned world's greatest art museum to be built in the city of his birth, Linz, Austria. What he didn't steal from the Jews he took from non-Jews in forced sales, and the plundering spread as his armies conquered Europe. Thousands of works were stored, not to see the light of day until rescued by the Monuments Men.

While Hitler's collecting may have been motivated by power, Edsel writes that Herman Goering's was motivated by a collecting mania for beauty. "Masterpieces make me feel alive," he is quoted as saying. Goering's role was personal; unlike Hitler he had no art advisors and personally selected art on 20 trips to Paris. He also commissioned a major

work, in German, on Leonardo da Vinci. This definitive, very large format work has hundreds of illustrations of the highest quality and a copy (above) was bound for Goering in white vellum. His ornate embossed book plate appears on the inside cover with a lengthy forward bearing his signature.

*Mussolini and Hitler viewing Antonio Canova's sculpture of Napoleon's sister, Pauline Borghese at Florence's Villa Borghese in 1938. (From photo album given to Rudolph Hess.)*



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## NEW ACQUISITION

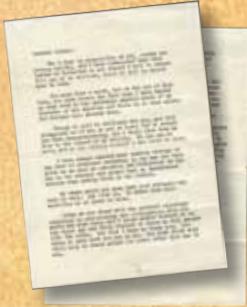
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# A MOTHER'S TRAGEDY

## *An Immortal Letter & A Parent's Proud Memories*

*"We are faced with the greatest organized challenge to ... civilization that the world has ever seen...I am prepared to die... but you will live in peace and freedom... my life will not have been in vain"*



Gene Kowalski was born into the Polish immigrant community of Calumet, Illinois on November 17, 1921. He enlisted in the Army Air Corps and graduated in January, 1943, from flight school as a Second Lieutenant. His extensive photo album shows him proudly posing with his plane, ammo belts, a Tommy gun and many with his fellow pilots. He flew combat missions in North Africa as part of the invasion force and added to his album with photos of himself posing with downed German aircraft. He recorded his combat missions in his Flight Log, and on September 12, 1943 noted that he was transferred to the Italian Front. It was his last entry. His P-40 pursuit plane was shot down on September 17<sup>th</sup>, 1943. He did not survive.

Gene Kowalski's idea for a letter to his mother in case he was killed came from a letter written by a British airman which was publicized when the airman was killed in May 1940. Kowalski likely saw the letter and wrote his own version. Both mothers must have had lifetimes of pride and appreciation for the noblest of thoughts and feelings, and the concern for their comfort, as their sons faced death as an everyday reality.

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*His trunk, containing his extensive photo album, his scrapbook, a captured Africa Korps book, and his papers, was eventually returned to his parents in Illinois. In it his mother found the letter he had written to her in the event that he was killed.*

Dearest Mother:

Tho I feel no premonition at all, events are moving rapidly, and I have instructed that this letter be forwarded to you should I fail to return from one of my missions, which we will be called upon to make.

You must hope a month, but at the end of that time, you must accept the fact that I have handed my task over to the extremely capable hands of my comrades of the American Air Force as so many splenddid fellows have already done.

Though it will be difficult for you, you will disappoint me if you do not at least try to accept the fact dispassionately, for I shall have done my duty to the utmost of my ability. No man can do more, and no one calling himself a man could do less.

I have always admired your amazing courage in the face of continued setbacks, in the way you have given me as good an education and background as anyone in the country and always kept up appearances without ever losing faith in the future.

My death would not mean that your struggle has been in vain. Far from it. It means that your sacrifice is as great as mine.

Today we are faced with the greatest organized challenge to Christianity and civilization that the world has ever seen, and I count myself honored to be the right age and fully trained to throw my full weight into the scale. For this I have to thank you. Yet there is more work for you to do. The home front will still have to stand united for years after this was is won.

You must not grieve for me, for if you really believe in religion and all that it entails, that would be hypocrisy. I have no fear of death. I would have it no other way.

The universe is so vast and so ageless that the life of one man can only be justified by the measure of his sacrifice. We are sent to this world to acquire a personality and a character to take with us. I firmly and absolutely believe that the evil things are sent into this world to try us. They are sent deliberately by our Creator to test our mettle, because He knows what is good for us. The Bible is full of cases where the easy way out has been discarded for moral principles. I consider my character fully developed, thus at my early age my earthly mission is fulfilled and I am prepared to die with just one regret and one only, that I could not devote myself to making your declining years more happy by being with you, but you will live in peace and freedom, and I shall have directly contributed to that, so here again my life will not have been in vain.

Your loving son,  
(Signed Gene)

## IMPORTANT DONATION

# THE M.R.D. FOOT LIBRARY ON RESISTANCE GIVEN TO THE MUSEUM

Michael Foot was the preeminent historian of European resistance and British spy operations in World War II. He wrote the official history of the S.O.E., Britain's spy and sabotage service during the war, the history of MI-9, and histories of resistance movements throughout Europe. His history of the French Resistance exposed the exag-

gerations of the myths, particularly the number of French involved, which was appreciated by those who actually did resist. Foot was more than a historian in that he was in the unique position of having been a member of S.O.E. He parachuted into France in 1944 on an assassination mission of a Gestapo officer, was captured, escaped, and was turned

over to the Germans by French peasants. He was so severely beaten that he was repatriated. Michael amassed a reference library of about 5,000 volumes which his widow Merjiam has given to the Museum. Dear friends for the past 30 years, Michael and Merjiam wanted to ensure that Michael's research work would be continued by new scholars.

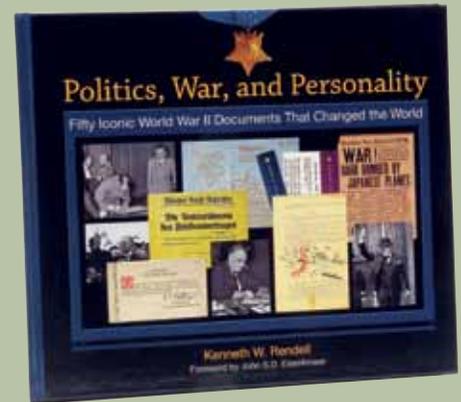
## *Politics, War and Personality*

*Fifty Iconic World War II Documents That Changed the World*

Tom Hanks was the inspiration for this book when he said at the premiere of *The Pacific* that "The Museum is the repository for the actual Holy Grail documents of World War II." I gave his statement careful thought and realized the extraordinary number of iconic documents that are in the Museum, from Adolph Hitler's earliest anti Semitic rant written on the announcement of the Versailles Treaty to the order to drop the atomic bomb on Hiroshima.

This new book has received wonderful reviews from numerous people, none more meaningful to me than John Eisenhower, who wrote in the forward: "For me, *Politics, War and Personality* has performed an

interesting function, that of restoring perspective.... I personally recall a good many of the events covered by these documents.... Hitler seizing power is a vivid memory ...In the summer of 1938, my father and I indulged in a long and sobering discussion of the Munich Agreement....Perusing the documents in this book has ... restored much of my perspective. They have reminded me just how vast the war was, how much transpired in Russia, the Pacific and the Far East. Much happened besides Overlord, important though it was. I know that *Politics, War and Personality* will do the same for others....a book that I will long treasure and reread. Thousands of other will do the same".



Kenneth W. Rendell  
Founder & Director  
Museum of World War II

Available at book stores  
and on Amazon. \$29.95



Throughout the museum the red letter **V** denotes letters and documents in: *Politics, War and Personality: Fifty Iconic Documents That Changed The World*

## News from the Museum of WWII ★ Boston



### MORE VISITORS/MORE DAYS

The Museum increased the number of visitors with a new and much expanded Acoustiguide system. Thanks to the recruitment of additional volunteers by our Director of Visitor Services, Jeff Farrell, we increased scheduled visits to six days a week.

### NEW WEBSITE

Our new website debuted in 2013, and through it more than 5,000 people signed up for the planned newsletter (This is the first issue). Each issue will focus on new special exhibitions, new acquisitions, special donations of artifacts, particularly timely artifacts in the museum, and other news of the museum's activities. Let us know what you think.

**CONTACT**

TO SCHEDULE A VISIT: [www.museumofworldwarii.org](http://www.museumofworldwarii.org) • MUSEUM DIRECT: 508-651-1944  
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[museumofworldwarii.org](http://museumofworldwarii.org)