

ARTISTS AT WAR

DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR, THE WORK OF US NAVY ARTISTS
HELPED RECORD AND INTERPRET THE NAVY'S ACTIONS AT SEA

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ART WORK COURTESY OF THE NAVAL HISTORY AND HERITAGE COMMAND

Alexander P. Russo executed *In the Transport Area, Omaha Beach* in gouache on paper during the 6 June 1944 invasion of France. Aboard a transport, the artist wrote "the expected occurs as small boat crews returned after a busy day of landing men and supplies on Omaha Beach. Yellow-white flares dropped by German planes lighted the skies and ships, and their weird forms contrasted strangely against the pattern of tracer bullets fired into the thick foreboding clouds."



Wrecked Crane in the Port of Cherbourg is a watercolor on board executed by Alexander P. Russo during 1945. The artist noted, "There is something pitifully human about twisted steel girders. They seem to be reminiscent and symbolic of a crying Europe, which the Nazis had plundered and left in devastation." Born in Atlantic City during 1922, Russo would go on to study art at the Pratt Institute. In October 1942, he enlisted in the Navy and was sent to the Great Lakes Naval Training Station but it did not take long before his talent was recognized. He was then attached to the Navy Recruiting Bureau where he began producing art for posters and the like. However, he requested an assignment that was "more exciting" and was given duty with the Amphibious Force, Atlantic Fleet. His duties were to make shoreline sketches for use by the assault forces. Together with three other enlisted men from his unit, he was assigned to a Task Force that participated in the initial landings on Sicily.