

# ARTISTS AT THE BATTLE OF MIDWAY

IN THE THICK OF COMBAT, NAVAL ARTISTS RECORDED IMAGES OF ONE OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR'S MOST IMPORTANT BATTLES

BY ROD ELMSDORF

ART WORK COURTESY NAVAL HISTORY AND HERITAGE COMMAND



Lawrence Beall Smith was an American painter, lithographer, illustrator, and sculptor. He studied at the Art Institute of Chicago and received a Ph.D in 1931. During World War Two, he served as a war artist on numerous fronts. Smith created posters, documented naval aviation operations, and served as an artist in the Medical Corps, where he witnessed and documented D-Day. This oil painting on board is titled *Task Force Hornets* and depicts action during the Battle of Midway as Grumman Wildcat fighters are prepared for launching.

Oil on canvas work titled *Midway Island Map* was painted by Griffith Baily Coale immediately before or after the historic conflict. Coale is perhaps best known for his establishing the Navy Combat Art Program. In 1941, as it became more likely that the USA would be drawn into the war, Coale approached Adm. Chester W. Nimitz and proposed having artists placed aboard Navy ships to document what they saw in paintings. This derived from his own personal experiences in WWI as well as being inspired by the war art program of the Royal Navy. Nimitz was impressed with his proposal and established the Navy Combat Art Program. Coale was commissioned as a lieutenant commander in the Naval Reserve.

