

## **Howard Cook**

*Norfolk, Virginia, 1941*

watercolor on paper

Gift of the artist

1973.031.0240

Prior to his 1943 assignment in the South Solomon Islands, Cook had already begun responding artistically to the war effort. The Office of War Information commissioned him to sketch military preparations taking place in Norfolk, Virginia, of which this work is an example. Shortly afterwards, Cook was officially invited to participate in the War Art Program, which would take him to the South Pacific.

## Howard Cook

*Untitled (Tree)*, 1943

graphite on paper

Gift of the Howard Cook Estate

1981.018.0363

The density of the jungle growth on the South Solomon Islands both intrigued and disturbed Cook, as he describes in this May 29 letter:

*There is a weird undertone to it all though for the brush and particularly the banyan trees send out feelers and roots from high up in the branches that form in distorted, obscene shapes, winding and weaving around in curious vulgar frightening gestures.*

**Howard Cook**

*Drawn in Foxhole—Rendova—New Georgia  
Islands, 1943*

ink on paper

Gift of the Howard Cook Estate

1981.018.0391

**Howard Cook**

*From Foxhole, Rendova, June 30, 1943, 1943*

ink on paper

Gift of the Howard Cook Estate

1981.018.0392

Cook completed these two sketches from a foxhole he had taken shelter in during an air raid. After the attack, he made these two quick sketches before leaving his trench. Though he rarely sketched during action itself, in this instance he seems to have wanted to commemorate the experience.

**Howard Cook**

*Rendova Island, South Pacific, 1943*

pencil, ink on paper

Gift of the Howard Cook Estate

1981.018.0277

In late June and early July, Cook participated in the Invasion of Rendova, when American troops seized control of the Munda airport on nearby New Georgia Island. Established by the Japanese in 1942, Munda was a critical air base in the Pacific Theater of the war.

## **Howard Cook**

*Movies, Guadalcanal, 1943*

graphite on paper

Gift of the Howard Cook Estate

1981.018.0324

Movies became an important part of daily life for Cook and his colleagues during their time in the South Pacific, providing a much-needed source of entertainment and distraction from their military operations. Cook describes a typical movie night in a May 22 letter to Latham:

*It is quite a sight to see such a bunch of men quietly watching the pictures. Several newsreels, either an animated cartoon or a short, and one feature picture, all of it under the open sky and covered with a spread of brilliant stars...*

**Howard Cook**

*Capt. Howbert 69<sup>th</sup> BC DFC, 1943*

ink on paper

Gift of the Howard Cook Estate

1981.018.0347

**Howard Cook**

*Chief—69<sup>th</sup> BC Capt. C.A. Johnston, 1943*

ink on paper

Gift of the Howard Cook Estate

1981.018.0353

**Howard Cook**

*1<sup>st</sup> Lt. P.E. Tibbets, 1943*

ink on paper

Gift of the Howard Cook Estate

1981.018.0356

**Howard Cook**

*Guadalcanal XIV Headquarters, 1943*

graphite on paper

Gift of the Howard Cook Estate

1981.018.0275

**Howard Cook**

*Sub Practice, South Pacific, 1943*

sepia ink on paper

Gift of the Howard Cook Estate

1981.018.0290

**Howard Cook**

*The Transport Band, 1943*

sepia ink on paper

Gift of the Howard Cook Estate

1981.018.0288



## **Howard Cook**

*On the Way to Guadalcanal, 1943*

sepia ink on paper

Gift of the Howard Cook Estate

1981.018.0295

Cook became fascinated with aviation during his time in the South Pacific, having experienced his first flight while he was on assignment:

*Remember all the birds last winter--? Was in one yesterday. Having one heck of a swell time. Out in real stuff now. Never saw such beautiful sights, tropical beaches with most brilliant manganese blue water, little lace foam and could see deep into the coral reefs, from thousands of feet up.*

**Howard Cook**

*The Ship-Bombers' Homecoming*, 1943-1944  
tempera, ink on illustration board  
Gift of the artist

1973.031.0242

While today we are accustomed to temperature-controlled flights, Cook and his peers did not have the same luxury, as he recalls in a 1945 lecture:

*As we gain altitude we exchange the heavy depression of the island's terrific humidity for the lighter cool air and finally real cold that makes the passengers fortunate enough to own them crawl into their sheep-lined flight coats, and the rest of us who are traveling light edge into the little lozenge of sunlight that streams through the small windows of the plane.*

**Howard Cook**

*The Ship-Bombers' Homecoming*, 1943-1944  
tempera, ink on illustration board  
Gift of the artist

1973.031.0243

The men in *The Ship Bombers' Homecoming* are adapted from portrait sketches that Cook had made of military personnel. You can see some of these portraits on the adjoining wall.

## **Howard Cook**

*Untitled (Barrage Balloon Fantasy)*, 1943

chalk, graphite on paper

Gift of the Howard Cook Estate

1981.018.0124

Barrage balloons are a type of blimp intended to protect cities against air raids by obscuring an attacker's view of the target. In these sketches, the giant balloons become elephants, fish, and other fanciful creatures. Stylistically the drawings are reminiscent of Theodore Geisel, better known today as children's book author Dr. Seuss. During the war, Geisel worked as a cartoonist creating anti-German and Japanese propaganda.

You may notice that the paper has been torn. Cook saw these drawings as studies rather than finished works, and with this piece in particular, he likely had no intention of doing anything further with it. Consequently, it became torn at some point in its history, accidentally or otherwise.

**Howard Cook**

*G.I. Play, 1943*

graphite on paper

Gift of the Howard Cook Estate

1981.018.0258

This sketch shows the curtains for an amateur theatre production staged by various members of the armed forces. Cook attended this production with a colleague, and described his experience in a June 13 letter:

*Had a lot of fun last night when Captain and I went to the "Scandals" put on in a local theatre by members of combined armed forces. It was an amateur affair entirely but from the music to acts and all it was as lively and clever as a Broadway affair and the way the boys put it over, having a real...good time doing it, was a sight I won't forget for a long time. The curtain for the stage was appropriately covered with large soaring female nudes, good service subject.*

**Howard Cook**

*Jungle Road, Rendova, 1943*

ink on paper  
Gift of the artist

1973.031.0230

One of the many challenges of jungle warfare is the lack of a clear battlefield:

*It is so very difficult for us to actually get a look at this Pacific War as there is no "front" in the usual sense of the word, the front is all over the place and is always hidden.*

**Howard Cook**

*B-24, ATC in Flight, South Pacific, 1943*

ink on paper

## Gift of the artist

1973.031.0231

This is one of several studies that Cook made for the *The Ship-Bombers' Homecoming*. You can see how he refined and tightened the composition as he completed the finished works.

## **Howard Cook**

*Jeep Ambulance, Rendova, 1943*

ink on paper

Gift of the artist

1973.031.0234

In addition to war injuries, soldiers in the South Pacific had to keep alert for disease:

*Malaria is taken for granted for anyone who stays up in those parts and dengue fever, or "dingy" as it is called, which doesn't recur like malaria but is severe enough to be called bone-break fever, is rampant.*

**Howard Cook**



*Jungle Rations*, 1943

ink on paper

Gift of the artist

1973.031.0236

**Howard Cook**

*Fire in the Bombers*, 1943

ink, paint on paper

Gift of the artist

1973.031.0225

**Howard Cook**

*Barracks Bags, Rendova, 1943*

ink on paper

Gift of the artist

1973.031.0226

**Howard Cook**

*Easter Service, 1943*

sepia ink on paper

Gift of the artist

1973.031.0214

**Howard Cook**

*Self Portrait in a Foxhole, 1943*

ink, white paint on paper  
Gift of the artist

1973.031.0227

This drawing is based on Cook's experience hiding in a foxhole during an air raid, which happened while he was on the island of Rendova in early July:

*I was just able to wedge into the brown goo and didn't worry at all about rubbing the clay into my clothes and shoes. I could hear planes circling around apparently over the shipping in the bay. Could hear the short rat-tats of machine-gunning and soon the roar of bombers came down over and lay their eggs in our midst. I don't remember being particularly scared, had been too busy to work up a scare and was concerned mostly with protecting myself. I condensed myself so intensely in my hole that I did not realize the show was over until I saw a jeep drive up and almost come in on top of me.*

**Howard Cook**

*Carrying Equipment, Guadalcanal, 1943*

ink, white paint on paper  
Gift of the artist

1973.031.0228

Cook maintained a high admiration for the soldiers enduring their difficult mission in the South Pacific:

*The heroism of our men there will probably never be fully known or understood by those of us who have lived so far from it.*

**Howard Cook**

*Two Men in a Foxhole, 1943*

ink, white paint on paper

## Gift of the artist

1973.031.0223

Armed with shovels, the safety of these two soldiers depends on their ability to conceal themselves from attacking airplanes overhead. After the landing of Rendova, Cook recalled his experiences:

*We got a good taste of what it feels like to slave and sweat in the steaming stink of a jungle and can well imagine what it means to die or lie wounded in the cranking slimy mud. It is no fun, serious business and the guys who are going through it and carrying out their terrible jobs are made of wonderful stuff.*

**Howard Cook**  
*Safe Arrival*, 1943  
sepia ink on paper

## Gift of the artist

1973.031.0220

## **Howard Cook**

*Death in the Jungle*, 1943

ink on paper

Gift of the artist

1973.031.0224

## **Howard Cook**

*Firing from the After Gun Turret*, 1943

watercolor on paper mounted on paperboard  
panel

## Gift of the artist

1973.031.0042

During his voyage to New Caledonia, Cook observed naval artillery practices. He describes their dramatic action in the following passage:

*While the curve of the ship's wake draws an icy-green gash over the water, our port three-inch anti-submarine gun blasts out at its target a mile and a half away. At the moment the gun fires, an empty shell-case is automatically ejected from the breech in a cloud of orange smoke. The recoil of the rifle barrel snaps almost faster than the eye can follow and the naval gunner at his sight is thrown around like a mechanical toy. ... The naval gun crew at this station is captained by a lad of 19 years who with his other boys is coldly efficient and hardly suggestive of his youth in such a position.*

## **Howard Cook**

*Untitled (Naval Artillery Gun), 1943*

sepia ink on paper

Gift of the artist

1973.031.0216

**Howard Cook**

*Guadalcanal, 1943, 1943*

ink on paper

Gift of the artist

1973.031.0221



Censorship was an ongoing concern to artists participating in the War Art Program. After accidentally violating censorship codes in a group of letters from July, Cook made certain that his subsequent visual and written work met approval:

*The censor came over the other day to look over my sketches, which are ideas for works later on. I wanted to get his opinion of whether there was anything "hot" in them...The censor was disappointed I think. It was all passed as harmless.*

## **Howard Cook**

*Sunday on the Transport, 1943*

sepia ink on paper

Gift of the artist

1973.031.0222

Letter reading is an important part of daily military life, connecting soldiers back to their civilian lives and loved ones. Cook repeatedly emphasized the importance of Latham's correspondence during his time abroad:

*Am re-reading four airmails that arrived two days ago and get a lot of meat out of them. I depend a lot on your letters about what they have to tell about your doing, and to keep me up in spirits, for in spite of the nice features about things over here, there are some hard edges, and it is...a long ways off.*