



The Ghost Army of World War II

How One Top-Secret Unit Deceived the Enemy with Inflatable Tanks, Sound Effects, and Other Audacious Fakery

By Rick Beyer and Elizabeth Sayles

8 X 10 IN / 20 X 25.5 CM

256 PP / PHOTOS AND ILLUSTRATIONS THROUGHOUT
HARDCOVER

ISBN 978-1-61689-318-7

\$40.00 / £25.00

PUBLICATION DATE: APRIL 2015

In the summer of 1944, a hand-picked group of young GIs landed in France to conduct a secret mission. Armed with rubber tanks, fake artillery, and more than a few tricks up their sleeves, their job was to create a traveling road show of deception on the battlefields of Europe, with the German Army as their audience. From Normandy to the Rhine, the 1,100 men of the Twenty-Third Headquarters Special Troops, known as the “Ghost Army,” conjured up phony convoys, phantom divisions, and make-believe headquarters to fool the enemy about the strength and location of American units.

Many of the deceivers were recruited from art schools, including such future luminaries as Bill Blass, Ellsworth Kelly, Arthur Singer, and Art Kane. As they traveled across Europe, they filled their duffel bags with the drawings and paintings they created between missions. Based on meticulous research and interviews with surviving members of the Ghost Army, and lavishly illustrated with the soldiers’ original artwork and never-before published documents, **The Ghost Army of World War II** tells the riveting true story of a group of young artists and engineers who wielded imagination, paint, and bravado to save thousands of American lives and help win the war.

About the authors:

Historian **Rick Beyer** is a best-selling author, award-winning filmmaker, and popular speaker. He wrote and directed the acclaimed documentary film *The Ghost Army*, which premiered on PBS in 2013. **Elizabeth Sayles** is the best-selling illustrator of more than twenty-five books for children. Her father, William Sayles, was a member of the Ghost Army, and she grew up listening to his war stories.



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Advance praise for *The Ghost Army of World War II*:

“A fascinating read, and a fun one as well. Audacious is the right word for this daring sideshow that protected Patton’s flank and other American soldiers. The original art is superb and frequently humorous. **A well-crafted account of the amazing combination of shenanigans and tremendous courage that characterized the Twenty-Third Headquarters Special Troops.**”

—Libby O’Connell, chief historian of the History Channel,
author of *The American Plate: A Culinary History in 100 Bites*

“World War II was the greatest event in the history of mankind, and although it has been the subject of countless books, documentaries, and academic courses, there is so much still to know. *The Ghost Army of World War II* describes a perfect example of a little-known, highly imaginative, and daring maneuver that helped open the way for the final drive to Germany. It is **a riveting tale told through personal accounts and sketches along the way—ultimately, a story of success against great odds. I enjoyed it enormously.**”

—Tom Brokaw, journalist and author of *The Greatest Generation*

“**This book is a complete delight. An engaging account of the battlefield sleights of American GI artists during WWII, it is unprecedented in the breadth and detail of its telling.** The suspense of its text is enlivened by a wealth of on-scene photographs, artists’ sketchbooks, diaries, and other compelling first-person accounts. This is the eyewitness story of the Ghost Army as told by the artists who made it succeed.”

—Roy R. Behrens, author of *False Colors: Art, Design and Modern Camouflage*

“*The Ghost Army of World War II* is a veritable hive of fascinating information based on sound research. **It’s apparent that Rick Beyer and Elizabeth Sayles enjoy the subject with a level of dedication and passion that warms the hearts of irascible military historians such as me. I heartily recommend this book.**”

—Martin King, author of *Voices of the Bulge* and *The Tigers of Bastogne*,
consultant to the History Channel

“**Brings to life a whale of a tale of World War II innovation—one laced with brash creativity.** The notion of a special Army unit using dummy equipment, mobile loudspeakers, officer impersonations, and foul rumors to deceive German forces seems outlandish, but the tactics worked. This theater-goes-to-war story is finely told and beautifully illustrated—an important contribution.”

—Gordon H. “Nick” Mueller, president and CEO, the National WWII Museum

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