

About the Cover Art



When Army Veteran Gary Teixeira came to the United States in 1968 from Trinidad and Tobago, he was intent on getting a college education. One year into his education, he received his Green Card and soon after, his draft document. The new U.S. resident spent his next 4 years serving as a helicopter pilot in the U.S. Army, returning to New York at the end of the Vietnam war.

“My Army experiences changed me, but they also offered many benefits,” says the now 67-year-old graphic designer. “I returned from Vietnam and enrolled in the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, New York, thanks to my GI Bill, and discovered my real calling. I always loved the arts, painting, sketching, and drawing in particular, but I developed some pretty severe allergies to many of the acrylics used in painting, so I had to find a new focus.”

His new focus, paper collage, became his love. He found that taking paper apart by color and shape and putting it back together to create something new was very fulfilling and was a great way to express himself visually. “I found that this new form of expression was soothing and helped me to cope with my PTSD, and people who saw my creations really liked it.” Mr. Teixeira built collections of his art, including *Hampton Bays*, a paper collage that depicts one of his favorite vacation spots, which was selected as a finalist in the Collage Division of the 2013 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival.

Eventually, Mr. Teixeira’s portfolio of work landed him a job with NBC television as a graphic artist. Over his 20 years with NBC and other television networks, Mr. Teixeira evolved his skills into computer arts before finally realizing success as a freelance graphic designer. “Even with the computer knowledge and tools that I have access to, I usually come back to the paper collage because I find it very comforting. I haven’t found a better way to continue do what I do every day, while keeping my PTSD under control.”

While Mr. Teixeira’s work didn’t end up winning the national category, it did provide incentive to continue to his therapy at the J. J. Peters Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center in the Bronx. “I was disappointed that I didn’t win, even though it was my first time entering,” he said. “But my therapist has challenged me to keep working and I’m hoping to win next time.”

JRRD has been featuring submissions from the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival for more than a decade. “We’re honored to recognize some exceptional Veterans and highlight veteran-created artwork on the cover of *JRRD*, in partnership with the Festival,” said *JRRD* Editor Stacieann Yuhasz, PhD. “Their success proves year after year the value of recreation and art therapy in the healing process for Veterans and others. It also reaffirms the commitment the Department of Veterans Affairs has made to provide long-term solutions for caring for our nation’s Veterans. We thank these outstanding artists for their service and contributions.”

