

Ghost Army and Inflatable Deception Sculptures of WW2

Outline

General Intro

- WW2 had a top secret unit called the “Ghost Army” that used deception to fool the Germans
- Group was made up of artists, engineers, actors, etc.

Origins

- Proposed by Captain Ralph Ingersoll on Christmas Eve 1943 to create a group of creatives to devise camouflage.
- Commander Eisenhower deemed it “highest priority”
- The 603rd camouflage engineers were comprised of (379) artists and recruited from NY and Philadelphia art schools (they perfected the use of camouflage to hide factories and vehicles)
- They later became part of the 23rd Division, or Ghost Army

The 23rd and its Members

- Put into use after D-day, while the Allies moved into enemy territory
- 3 units (603 Engineers - VISUAL, Signal Company Special - RADIO, the 3132 Signal Service Company - SONIC)
- 603 Focus now on creating decoy units and deceptive information to distract enemies from the real soldiers.
- Included many artists/ designers who would later become famous (i.e. Bill Blass, Ellsworth Kelly, Art Kane, Jack Masey etc...)

The Inflatables

- No precedents, so they adapted
- Decoys were made in the Arizona desert
- Originally of wood and put on jeeps so they were mobile (too fragile)
- Army moved to inflatables of rubber, often with wire frames
- Took 20 minutes to blow one up/ move
- They made planes, soldiers (not as popular), jeeps, and m4 tanks
- A tank weighed around 93 lbs.
- “Air compressors on good days, bike pumps on bad days, and our lungs on terrible days”

Successes

- Few in the unit thought it would work
- Largely successful
- Biggest victory was the crossing into the Rhineland, the enemy came for the decoys when the soldiers were crossing a river miles away. (saved an est. 10,000 soldiers)

Conclusion

- Operation was declassified in 1996
- Information of it slipped long before then

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