



### 316 Edward John (E.J.) Hughes

BCSFA CGP OC RCA 1913 – 2007

#### Ten Minutes Rest during Route March on Kiska

graphite on paperboard, signed and dated 1945 and on verso signed, titled, dated 1943 and 1944 and inscribed with the Dominion Gallery inventory #E1350  
19 7/8 x 23 3/4 in, 50.5 x 60.3 cm

#### PROVENANCE

Dominion Gallery, Montreal  
Barbeau Owen Foundation Collection, Vancouver

#### LITERATURE

Heather Robertson, *A Terrible Beauty: The Art of Canada at War*, Robert McLaughlin Gallery and the National Museum of Man, 1977, the related 1945 canvas *Ten Minutes Rest—Kiska* reproduced page 186  
Jacques Barbeau, *A Journey with E. J. Hughes: One Collector's Odyssey*, 2005, titled as *Ten Minutes Rest during the March on Kiska*, reproduced page 18 and listed page 165

Jacques Barbeau, *E.J. Hughes Through the Decades, Volume 2, The Paper Works, 1931 – 1986*, 2014, titled as *Ten Minutes Rest during the March on Kiska*, reproduced page 28 and listed page 84  
Robert Amos, *E.J. Hughes: Canadian War Artist*, 2022, reproduced page 165

#### EXHIBITED

National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, *Exhibition of Canadian War Art*, February 14 – March 11, 1946, traveling across Canada April 1946 – April 1947, the related 1945 canvas

BEGINNING IN 1929, E.J. Hughes received an excellent art training with a three-year course at the Vancouver School of Art, followed by two years of post-graduate studies there. Then, with his associates Orville Fisher and Paul Goranson, he created extensive murals for Vancouver, Nanaimo and the Golden Gate Exposition in San Francisco. But by 1939, he was no closer to making a living, and so enlisted as a gunner in the Royal Canadian Artillery. War was declared almost immediately.

Hughes put himself forward as a potential war artist and, despite the fact that there was no official war art program, early in 1941 he was taken on as a “service artist,” posted first to Ottawa and then Petawawa. In 1942, he was sent to London, England, and from there was posted with various brigades in the south. When the Canadian War Art Program was instituted in 1943, he became an official war artist and was soon returned to Ottawa. Proving his ability as an accurate documentary artist, he had already produced an enormous body of work in pencil and watercolour. His next tour of duty was at Kiska, one of the farther Aleutian Islands that stretch 1,200 miles west of Alaska.

In early June 1942, the Japanese invaded this American outpost but were soon seen off by an overwhelming force of Canadian and US troops, with Hughes being the only artist stationed among them. Arriving in late November 1943, he was quartered in a tent at this frigid and wind-swept arctic outpost and set to work in the short daylight hours.<sup>1</sup>

The three thousand Canadian soldiers were equipped with boots, knapsacks and canteens by their American counterparts. In the 1945 canvas related to this sketch, *Ten Minutes Rest—Kiska* (collection of the Canadian War Museum), the artist painted embroidered “dagger badges,” issued to all the troops who served on the Aleutians, on the soldiers’ shoulders. Across the snow-covered slopes of Mount Kiska are Caterpillar tractors pulling Athey trailers full of troops. At the lower left, amid the huddled members of the Winnipeg Grenadiers, Hughes painted a soldier lighting his cigarette while two men next to him share a light, shielding it from the wind with their gloves.

After two months Hughes returned to Ottawa with a considerable quantity of small oils on wooden panels and conté drawings on grey paper. He then worked every day in a large studio where war artists from every battlefield returned to translate their field studies into larger exhibition pieces, and Hughes’s precise and miniaturist style underwent a transformation. Inspired by the other war artists and by his two trips to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, Hughes set out to create large and bold compositions, with strong tonal contrasts and simplified forms like those he saw in the work of the Mexican muralists. To do so, he first worked up his original sketches into what he called “cartoons”—fully realized tonal studies created with a soft pencil, which resolved every aspect of the composition. Approximately half the size of the finished canvas, these cartoons prepared him to work with confidence on his richly coloured oil paintings.

Before he was demobilized in September 1946, Hughes was photographed by Malak Karsh, brother of the famous Canadian photographer Yousuf Karsh. Hughes brought to the photographer’s studio the graphite cartoons made in preparation for nine oil paintings. These canvases are among the more than 541 works by Hughes now held in the Beaverbrook Collection of Canadian War Art at the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa, where they comprise the largest number by any war artist. A few of the cartoons later made their way to Hughes’s exclusive dealer, the Dominion Gallery of Montreal.

Hughes’s cartoons served as stepping stones to the legendary oils he created in the immediate post-war years, and they were the basis for all of the artist’s full-scale oil paintings until 1959, at which time he switched to heavily annotated field studies and



E.J. Hughes with cartoons for paintings of Kiska, 1946  
Photo: Malak Karsh  
Courtesy of the Canadian War Museum

watercolours. In a letter to Max Stern of the Dominion Gallery, written late in 1960, Hughes wrote:

I find the watercolours as a secondary stage are working out all right in place of the black and whites. I can see how both tones and colours, and composition as well, will look, in this way. However, composing cartoons in tone only is something I am glad to have spent so many years doing, and I think it would be advisable for many young student-painters to do so, at some stage of their career.<sup>2</sup>

The meticulous graphite cartoon *Ten Minutes Rest during Route March on Kiska*, besides being a splendid example of Hughes’s working method, relates directly to a key period in the artist’s career and documents a pivotal time in twentieth-century history.

We thank Robert Amos, artist and writer from Victoria, BC, for contributing the above essay. Amos is the official biographer of Hughes and has so far published five books on his work. Building on the archives of Hughes’s friend Pat Salmon, Amos is at work on a catalogue raisonné of the artist’s work.

1. A detailed description of Hughes’s experience on Kiska is in Robert Amos, *E.J. Hughes: Canadian War Artist* (Victoria: TouchWood Editions, 2022), 126–53. A fuller description of *Ten Minutes Rest—Kiska* is found on page 164.

2. E.J. Hughes to Max Stern, December 30, 1960, Special Collections, University of Victoria.

ESTIMATE: \$25,000 – 35,000