



## Utrecht Art Supplies Camoufleurs: Artists at War

In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, artists created the sophisticated patterns and techniques we know today as camouflage.

**"Camouflage was Cubism at war." -Robert Hughes.**

During World War I it became quickly obvious that the brightly colored uniforms of the past were a liability. Teams of artists and scientists on both sides applied their skills to the new art of disguise. Led by painter **Lucien-Victor Guirand de Scévola**, the *Section de Camouflage* was founded in September 1914 to design patterns and surface treatments to make soldiers, vehicles, machines and structures less visible to the enemy.



1899 painting by Lucien Victor Guirand De Scevola, leader of the first French Camouflage Department

The *camoufleur* often faced danger, sometimes working in combat zones. Cubist painter André Mare was wounded while installing false trees to disguise an observation post. Expressionist Franz Marc was killed during the Battle of Verdun in 1916 while producing pointillist camouflage tarpaulins for the German army .



Camouflage Class, New York University 1943



Other painters not directly involved recognized the influence of Modernism on camouflage. Gertrude Stein described Picasso's reaction upon first seeing the new painted patterns on a military truck:

"...we had heard of camouflage but we had not seen it and Picasso amazed looked at it and then cried out, yes it is we who made it, that is cubism."