

STEVE MUMFORD

Artist Statement

I went to Iraq for the first time in late April, 2003, just after the US invasion, as a civilian artist. I wanted to document whatever I could see of the 'war on terror', although at that time the war was considered over by most of the troops and the Iraqis I met. This would change over the next six months, particularly in Baghdad and Anbar Province, and I continued to record this change in drawings during six trips to Iraq up until 2008, and two to Afghanistan during Obama's surge.

In Baghdad I got to know a group of Iraqi artists and writers. They introduced me to their favorite gathering spots and gave me some of their perspective on that conflict.

I drew veterans recovering from their combat wounds at Walter Reed Army Hospital and Brook Army Medical Center. I drew the daily routine of doctors, nurses and occasional carnage at the Baghdad ER.

I drew usually directly from life, either on my own in Baghdad (where I lived in hotels and apartments) and other cities, or embedded with US military units. Much of what I saw was life lived with dignity under minor and occasionally major duress. Sometimes actually finding the war was difficult due to its random nature; I often heard bombs detonating distantly, rarely near me. Iraqis and US soldiers alike carried on with their routine tasks with barely a grumble.

Back from the war I painted larger works in which I tried to distill the deeper meaning of my experiences and my feelings about the soldiers and their war. I continue this project, showing my work at Postmasters Gallery in NYC.

I've also drawn in Gitmo, along the Louisiana coastline during the BP oil spill, and at some of President Trump's campaign rallies for *Harper's Magazine*.



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