

The Art of Conflict

Curatorial Perspective

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What should an art show that combines Iraqi and American perspectives on war look like? What sort of responses should it evoke? Will you feel more connected to Iraq? More detached? Is this experience for the artist, or for the audience? Does it heal? Does it reconcile differences?

The Art of Conflict is a visual art exhibit initiated with the intention of providing American artists and Iraqi artists a unique opportunity: to exhibit their art together. The show does not represent one holistic point of view. Instead, the artists share their ideas through various mediums including film, photography, installation, painting, and book art, to present a compilation of works from various points of view.

The show combines different expressions of identity during times of conflict. Identity encompasses that of a victim of war, a soldier, a veteran, an artist, a bystander, an Iraqi, or an American. Building on the peace-making efforts of the recent Sister City agreement between Najaf, Iraq and Minneapolis, Minnesota... 10 of the 23 artists are from Minnesota, 8 are from Iraq and the remaining 5 are from various cities in the U.S. The artists come from different stages of their careers-- some have shown their work for many years, some are showing for the first time.

Inevitably, the media has filtered and distracted us from how we feel and how we internalize the war in Iraq. Iraq is someplace we are too familiar with, and yet not familiar with at all. The artists in this show offer their unfiltered perspectives on the war, the conflict, the victims. Whether they invoke us or not, they are recorded. They are shared. They are part of the story, which is unfortunately, far from over.

The images presented might be expected, others may not be. The influence of media images and stereotypes is inescapable, and politics are unavoidable. The hope is that this exhibition can open a forum for discussion, a platform to share more about Iraq, the current challenges the country faces and what art can communicate beyond language.