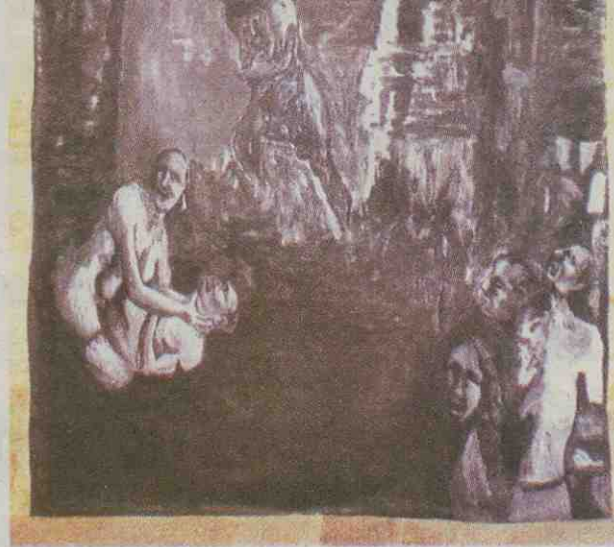




One of Khaddaje's surrealistic visions



"Another kind of nightmare": from the black-and-white series.

REVIEW

Showing the horror without the gore

Mishka Mojabber Mourani
Special to The Daily Star

Turning on the evening news nowadays is not an action I undertake lightly. It is the bane of our media-bombarded times to be at the mercy of ever more graphic images of suffering, abuse and violence.

Nothing is left to the imagination as photographers, reporters, and writers push the limits of our exposure to horror in the hope of shocking or moving us. Members of the media appear to think that, unless there is blood, gore and dismemberment, we barely pay attention to the news.

Such was the case with the

war in Iraq, the birth of which we viewed as a live televised spectacle early in 2003. Eerie images of death and destruction flickered across our screens.

When I picked up Patrick Baz's "Don't Take My Picture. Iraqis Don't Cry," I didn't expect to be so moved by a book of photographs. This photo-diary matches pictures of the war in Iraq since its beginnings with journal entries by Baz, a photographer in the field.

Five years of war are recorded, capturing the dismantling of a country where services, food, and every semblance of normal life are dashed to smithereens.

The book is a powerful portrayal of the suffering of civilians whose lives have been torn

apart by war, and a moving testimonial to the men and women who risk life and limb in order to report the indecency of that suffering.

The title of the book is particularly poignant. It embodies the dignity of ordinary people who are stripped of their self respect as the war intrudes on their lives. Baz captures civilians facing the humiliation of strip searches and interrogations, their homes invaded and their families left to cower in fear.

In his journal, which is handwritten in French with an English translation, the author uses irony and matter-of-fact statements to describe the indescribable. Perhaps the most striking aspect of this photo-journal is the humanity of this hardened professional war photographer, who still manages to be moved by the devastation that surrounds him.

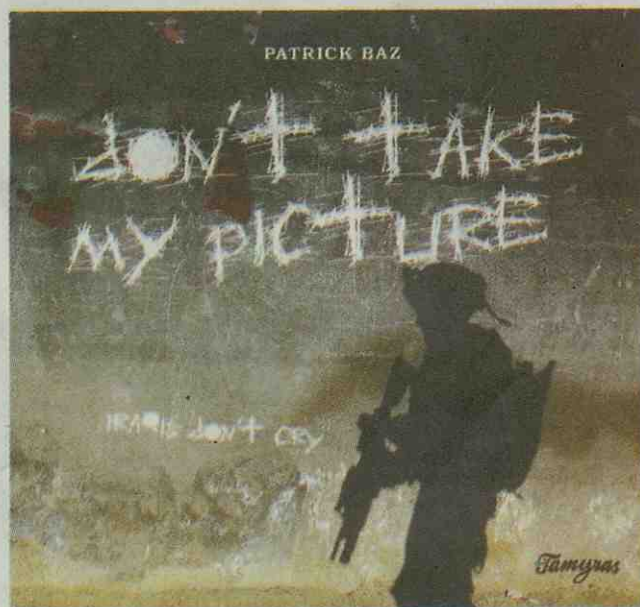
Baz tells the stories of both civilians and military, while trying valiantly to keep his distance. Obviously, he does not succeed. In one journal entry, the author quotes Plato: "Only the dead have seen the end of war."

"Don't Take My Picture. Iraqis Don't Cry" is a shout of pain. Yet, in the midst of the dust, dirt and horror, Baz includes pictures of children dressed in brightly-colored clothes. The camera captures the innocence of these vulnerable youngsters, but also their resilience and *joie de vivre*. They infuse the book with a note of hope, rendering the project all the more poignant.

By resisting the portrayal of explicit gore, "Don't Take My

Picture. Iraqis Don't Cry" is a disquieting book that metaphorically tugs the reader's sleeve, much like the children in the brightly colored clothes.

"Don't Take My Picture. Iraqis Don't Cry" is published by Tamyras and available in Librairie Antoine bookstores. For more information, call +961 1 612 500, extension 5215.



Baz's "Don't Take My Picture. Iraqis Don't Cry"

HOROS

Aries (Mar. 21 - April 19)

Watch out for people with nothing better to do than complain — there are more than you can handle all at once, but call in reinforcements or just play defense for a while.

Cancer (June 22 - July 22)

You have to think ahead today. Otherwise, you're sure to get caught by surprise in the near future. It's one of those days when you can whittle down the possibilities.

Libra (Sept. 23 - Oct. 23)

Your social life is hopping, or it would be if you had the time. Your friends are all asking after you, and you should do whatever you can to make time for them. Keep the good energy flowing.

Capricorn (Dec. 22 - Jan. 19)

Expect requests for help or attention today — but you can't get to everyone. It's one of those days when your extensive practice in saying 'no' really starts to pay off. Don't burn any bridges.