

“Art Attempts to Imitate Iraqi Life”
by Jeffrey Gettleman
New York Times July 25, 2004

Baghdad, Iraq, July 19 - Adnan Abbas spends his days bent over an easel. Twenty-seven years old, surrounded by violence and suffering, he spreads a newspaper at his feet, dips his brush into paint, and tries to paint what it feels like to be an Iraqi now.

“Some people tell me,” ‘Hasn’t Iraq had enough war, enough bad things? Why not paint something happy?’” Mr. Abbas said. “But it’s not that easy.”

The war in Iraq has been difficult for young Iraqi artists, many of whom believed the American promises of freedom. The violence has stunned them, and has made work and life very hard.

Artists like Adnan Abbas have begun to paint the conflict around them in response. As a student at the New Academy art school in Baghdad, Mr. Abbas and his classmates took a trip to paint along the Tigris River. While painting, a boy came up to Mr. Abbas and said, “It’s beautiful. More beautiful than life.” Mr. Abbas smiled, but as he began to paint again, two American Apache helicopters flew over them. Shaking his head, Mr. Abbas said, “I am sick of this!”

Another artist, Taha Wahaib, commented, “We’ve spent so long with the government telling us what to do. Now they are doing it again.”

The artists continue to paint, hoping that things will get better soon. Like many other Iraqis though, they are becoming numb to the killing and the war.

Vocabulary

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| 1. easel ____ | a. kind of like an airplane |
| 2. spread ____ | b. a person who likes to make things with their hands |
| 3. conflict ____ | c. something you paint on |
| 4. helicopter ____ | d. when you can't feel anything |
| 5. artist ____ | e. kind of like suprised |
| 6. stunned ____ | f. when people don't agree |
| 7. numb ____ | g. to move something across |

True/False

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| 1. The story happens in Iraq. | T | F |
| 2. Mr. Abbas works at a bank. | T | F |
| 3. Mr. Abbas is an artist. | T | F |
| 4. The artists in Iraq have no problem with the war. | T | F |
| 5. Mr. Abbas finds it hard to paint happy paintings. | T | F |
| 6. The art school class took a trip to paint to the Mississippi River. | T | F |
| 7. The boy liked Mr. Abbas' painting. | T | F |
| 8. The artists think the government is doing a good job. | T | F |
| 9. Mr. Abbas is sick of the war. | T | F |

What Do You Think?

A: Where did the art class go to paint?

B: Why can't Mr. Abbas paint happy paintings?

C: What happened to make Mr. Abbas say, "I am sick of this!"?

D: What do you think the people can do to make things better in Iraq?
