

INJURED SOLDIERS AND MARINES

Portraits by Timothy Greenfield-Sanders

November 23, 2008–February 22, 2009

TIMOTHY GREENFIELD-SANDERS is a well-known portrait photographer who has built a career taking pictures of celebrities, politicians, famous artists, and cultural icons. He typically favors frontal poses that engage the viewer with the sitter's direct gaze. Isolating his subjects against a neutral background with minimal props, his simple compositions bring each individual's personality to the fore.

The series of portraits on view here, *Injured Soldiers and Marines*, departs from Greenfield-Sanders's usual well-known subjects. He was invited to make portraits of seventeen Iraq war veterans to accompany a 2007 HBO film, *Alive Day Memories: Home From Iraq*. The film tells the story of ten of these veterans, exploring the emotional and physical price they have each paid, as well as their patriotism and future ambitions. Greenfield-Sanders met each subject and conversed only minimally before taking his or her photograph.

As viewers, we may feel an intimacy with the identities of celebrity portrait subjects, gleaned through headlines, biographies, or gossip. In contrast, we bring little or no knowledge about these Iraq war veterans to our understanding of their portraits. Each portrait subject is a stranger to us, identified only as part of the United States military forces. The power of these photographs emerges from Greenfield-Sanders's ability to create tension between that anonymity and generality and the almost uncomfortable intimacy of seeing bare skin, war wounds, scars, and prosthetic devices.

The photographer himself seems to have felt that tension. He described asking Dawn Halfaker to return for a second session after talking with her over lunch, and only then being able to comfortably propose that she hold her prosthetic right arm in



Jonathan Bartlett

her left hand. The result is a surreal yet poignant and beautiful portrait of a young woman matter-of-factly presenting the reality of her physical disability.

Greenfield-Sanders has always created restrained compositions, with minimal lighting, a neutral background, and few or no props, in order to bring his subjects' physical presence to the foreground. Photographing these veterans presented the additional constraint of the subjects' limited physical mobility, and in some cases emotional devastation—factors that complicated the photographer's ability to interact with his subjects and arrange their poses.

Nevertheless, the neutral backgrounds allow the subjects' humanity and physical energy to define the images. In particular,

the black background almost subsumes the prosthetic legs of Jonathan Bartlett or the missing limbs of Bryan Anderson, allowing us as viewers to engage with their eyes, their expressions, and their postures before we focus on their physical damage. In other words, by limiting his compositions and allowing his sitters to settle into their own poses, Greenfield-Sanders creates images that direct us to the familiar before we become distracted by the unfamiliar.

Portraiture has always served the purpose of recording individuals for posterity. In these photographs it offers the additional, politically charged function of illuminating a specific human cost of war, which many of us may otherwise not see everyday. We may think of portraits as opportunities to feature our most flattering selves. We do not typically think of scars and prostheses as objects of beauty. Yet Greenfield-Sanders brings his talent for observing beauty—and humanity—to documenting these seventeen individuals and the significance of their sacrifice.

continues on reverse

Brattleboro Museum & Art Center

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These images are meant to highlight the physical imperfections of each sitter, yet ultimately Greenfield-Sanders communicates the strength, dignity, and fullness of each complex individual.

Rachael Arauz, Guest Curator

The author would like to thank Timothy Greenfield-Sanders for speaking with her about these photographs.

All portraits are on loan courtesy of Timothy Greenfield-Sanders and Björn Wetterling Gallery, Stockholm, Sweden. Dimensions are height by width, in inches.



Dawn Halfaker

**Oyoanna Allende,
Marine Corporal**
archival pigment print
40 x 30

**Bryan Anderson,
Sergeant, U.S. Army**
archival pigment print
40 x 30

**Jonathan Bartlett,
Corporal, U.S. Army**
archival pigment print
40 x 30

**Crystal Davis,
Specialist, U.S. Army**
archival pigment print
40 x 30

**Dawn Halfaker,
First Lieutenant, U.S. Army**
archival pigment print
40 x 30

**Dusty Hill,
Sergeant, U.S. Army**
archival pigment print
40 x 30



Crystal's tattoo
*I bounced back
Ramadi Iraq
54th ENG
Jan 21 2006*

**Michael Jernigan,
Marine Corporal**
archival pigment print
40 x 30

**John Jones,
Marine Staff Sergeant**
archival pigment print
40 x 30

**Jake Schick,
Marine Corporal**
archival pigment print
40 x 30



Jay Wilkerson



Crystal Davis

**Terrel Dawes,
Sergeant, U.S. Army**
archival pigment print
20 x 16

**Sue Downes, Staff
Sergeant, U.S. Army**
archival pigment print
20 x 16

**Danielle Green-Byrd,
Specialist, U.S. Army**
archival pigment print
20 x 16

**Tara Hutchinson,
Staff Sergeant, U.S. Army**
archival pigment print
20 x 16

**Dexter Pitts,
Private, U.S. Army**
archival pigment print
20 x 16

**Eddie Ryan,
Marine Sergeant**
archival pigment print
20 x 16

**Marissa Strook,
Specialist, U.S. Army**
archival pigment print
20 x 16

**Jay Wilkerson,
Staff Sergeant, U.S. Army**
archival pigment print
20 x 16



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Brattleboro Reformer



Hours and Accessibility

Open daily except Tuesday
11 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Closed Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day
The Museum is wheelchair accessible.

An ASL interpreter for the hearing impaired will be provided if requested two weeks in advance of tours or programs.

Admission and Parking

BMAC members free
Adults \$
Seniors \$3
Students \$2
Children 6 and under free
Parking is available in front of the Museum.

Museum Shop

The Museum Gift Shop, free to the public during regular Museum hours, features an assortment of cards, games, books, prints, educational and gift items, including work of many local artists.

Group Tours

Docent-led tours of the Museum for groups are available by appointment. Call the Museum for information.