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## Soldiers' Portraits Make the Costs of War More Visible

By PETER APPLEBOME

PUTNAM VALLEY, N.Y.

On a windless fall day that feels like summer, the boats still as statues outside Timothy Greenfield-Sanders's window on Lake Oscawana, Iraq seems a million miles away. But then, unless it's your kid or your spouse, unless you're directly involved with training soldiers to go to war or patching up the ones who come home with broken pieces, where isn't that true?

And that seems precisely the point of the black portfolio case with its 13 16-by-20-inch photos sitting on Mr. Greenfield-Sanders's living-room table in this Putnam County town .

There's Dawn Halfaker, a [West Point](#) graduate, holding the prosthesis for her missing right arm like a part of herself that's become temporarily disconnected. There's Mike Jernigan, one eye socket empty, the other with a plastic eye studded with diamonds from the wedding ring his wife returned to him when they divorced after his return from Iraq. There's John Jones, all business in his Marine uniform above the waist, two robotic legs naked below.

The subjects in the photos were featured in the [HBO](#) film "Alive Day Memories," the widely praised documentary that tells the stories of 10 grievously wounded Iraq veterans. Mr. Greenfield-Sanders, a well-known portrait photographer, was brought in to do portraits of the soldiers in the film, six from the Army, four from the Marines, who range in age from 21 to 41 and whose injuries include devastating brain damage, triple amputation and blindness. (Three others who were photographed did not end up in the hourlong documentary.)

And it would appear that after 30 years of capturing people's personalities in his antique eight-by-ten camera, he's still trying to come to grips with the process of producing images that have helped give a visual identity to a war that, it seems, is everywhere, but somehow invisible.

For Mr. Greenfield-Sanders, best known for portraits of artists and other celebrities, the task was in some ways an alien one. "In most portraits you take, you're trying to highlight someone's best qualities, the best angle of their face, their beautiful hair," he said. "Here you're trying to, in a sense, highlight their frailty, their injury. It's an awkward thing to do, to show the world someone missing their arm or three limbs."

Still, that said, he chose black backgrounds over white ones, to focus on the person, not the injury. He found his subjects every bit as forthcoming — every bit as comfortable with their moment in the sun — as rock stars or movie actors. And if portrait photography is something of a mutual seduction, he found the

process intimate in a familiar way.

It took a second session for him to feel comfortable enough to get Ms. Halfaker to pose holding her fake arm in what turned out to be his favorite photo in the group. He was amazed by the resilience of his subjects — the way Bryan Anderson, a triple amputee and former gymnast, still used his gymnast's skills to hop from his wheelchair to the stool where he was photographed; the breezy, cocky, almost beat-poet way that Jon Bartlett spoke.

The hardest by far was the one of Mr. Jernigan. “So much of what I do is about people's eyes, the concentration in their eyes as they look at the camera,” he said. “And here's a guy whose eye is diamond and plastic.”

Mr. Greenfield-Sanders' photographs have quickly become part of the visual landscape of the war — used in HBO advertising, in huge prints at the Donnell Library across from the Museum of Modern Art, scheduled to be shown in November at the Tisch School of the Arts and at exhibitions in Stockholm, Miami and elsewhere.

The film, which features the actor James Gandolfini, who was also its executive producer, is resolutely apolitical, its focus on the stories of the soldiers, not on the war they fought. The soldiers themselves, more often than not, don't express regrets, say they would do it again. But Mr. Greenfield-Sanders, who says he opposed the war before it began, said that at the very least, the show and the portraits play an important role in bringing the invisible into the light, showing the faces, the scars, the missing limbs, the diamond and plastic eye, making the costs — or some of them — seem less than a million miles away

“I think we need to see this,” he said. “We don't see the dead coming back in coffins. We're sheltered from the injured. We just don't see it. It's all been brilliantly hidden from view. So this documentary is very important in letting us see these people, let us know who they are, and make us ask if this war is worth it.”

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