

Pablo Picasso's *Guernica* and the Iraq War

An Account & Poem

by Gregg Mosson

At an antiwar march on March 20, 2004 in New York City, peace activists carry paper figures based on Pablo Picasso's painting *Guernica*.



Pablo Picasso painted *Guernica* in response to the Nazi bombing of the Spanish town Guernica in April 1937, during the Spanish Civil War. Today the painting hangs in the Prado Museum in Spain.

Guernica's fragmented bodies and open-mouthed faces have appeared often during peace marches since the U.S.-Iraq war began on March 19, 2003. A tapestry rendition of Picasso's *Guernica* was placed outside the United Nations Security Council in 1976.

During the infamous United Nations speech by then U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell arguing for invasion of Iraq—a blue curtain covered up this *Guernica* tapestry. The curtain hid *Guernica* from reporters and cameras waiting to question Powell and others when they exited the U.N. Security Council.

Art is a form of memory. That speech that day was not about proving, but forgetting.

A World Without Picasso's *Guernica*

February 5, 2003

At the United Nations, blue drapes sheath
a tapestry rendition of *Guernica*, so speakers can paint
blitzkrieging dreams, burying screams affixed and aired;
killing machines can work again.

Who expunged *Guernica* from the U.N.,
and then did U.N. walls tremor
down to their foundation
in the "war to end all wars"
and covetous twentieth century?

Yesterday, today, or tomorrow
bombs drop and discombobulated body parts
hurl through the air, and brown limbs
burst from horses
and spin past a still-standing bystander
dumbstruck
as infernos smoke and buildings crumble.