

# NEW YORK

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FEATURE

## An Afternoon in Chelsea

A critical walking tour of four of this fall's highest-profile gallery shows.

By [Karen Rosenberg](#)



Steve Mumford's *Archers*, 2006.

(Photo: Steve Mumford/Postmasters Gallery)

### [Steve Mumford](#)

#### **2.** [Postmasters; 459 W. 19th St. Through December 2.](#)

In the tradition of the “war artist” (a figure long since superseded by blogs and online video), Steve Mumford spent part of the first year of the Iraq conflict embedded with U.S. military units. His watercolor sketches from the field have been widely exhibited and published in the 2004 book *Baghdad Journal*; since returning, he’s been working them into larger, occasionally epic scenes of military life. “These aren’t antiwar paintings. They aren’t political,” he writes in the press release. Maybe not when they’re compared with Richard Serra’s *Stop Bush* poster, but it’s difficult to look at Mumford’s wheelchair-bound amputees practicing archery and a dying insurgent without feeling a partisan twinge. Mumford is at his best when he lets himself get personal, if not explicitly political. *Steve in Baghdad* is a small painting of journalist and art critic Steven Vincent, who shared a house with Mumford in Iraq before being abducted and shot to death in Basra in 2005 (not long after publishing a *Times* editorial that criticized the local police). It’s a war artist’s tribute to a war reporter, and there’s no question as to who’s at greater risk.

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