

Going 'Solo,' plus one

Claire Beckett targets phoniness — and reality



WADSWORTH ATHENEUM (TOP); DAVE GREENBLATT, BOSTON (ABOVE)

“Medina Jabal Town, National Training Center, Fort Irwin, CA” is one of Claire Beckett’s photos of US military training centers.

By Mark Feeney

GLOBE STAFF

Claire Beckett’s show of images from US military training centers that simulate Iraq is very different from Smith’s show. There are a lot fewer pictures (18). They’re in color. They’re big (30 inches by 40 inches, or vice versa). They focus on a single subject. And they’re both impersonal and phony — or, rather, about phoniness.

At Fort Irwin and the Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center, both in California, military and civilian personnel play Iraqis. Not only do they wear local dress, they’re given names and histories.

Which is more incongruous: the obviously artificial (a mosque interior with plywood walls) or the unnervingly realistic (the Medina Wasi Village butcher shop, as it’s called, has real meat in it; and Beckett lights it to ravishing effect)? The only thing certain is that her show, which runs through March 4, gives new meaning to the expression “the war at home.”

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PHOTOGRAPHY REVIEW

CLAIRE BECKETT/MATRIX 163: Simulating Iraq

At: Wadsworth Atheneum, 600 Main St., Hartford, through Feb. 19 and March 4, respectively. 860-278-2670, www.thewadsworth.org