

**R&R&R...** expands the military abbreviation for "rest and recuperation" to other words like "regret, recover, renew."

My sources are photographs of devastation, particularly in Afghanistan, Iraq and Lebanon, whether of ancient cedars damaged by freak tornadoes, national infrastructures deliberately ruined or lives needlessly sacrificed. Altering these images is an imperfect response to such havoc. These are my attempts to recognize, remember or reconstitute what has been decimated through a physical touch, a palette that breathes over dust and ash, and forms that supplant what has been lost.

The generative force behind all creative enterprise embodies hope. In that spirit, my references to the art and architecture of the invaded join other measures of repair while reminding us of the rich traditions we endanger and eradicate. Order and ornament reappear among the chaotic or grimly utilitarian. Concrete and asphalt become fluid. Flora and fauna grace the ruins and rubble becomes renewed – gestures, albeit feeble, at undoing the damage.

The photographic foundations of these images can be problematic. As Mark Reinhardt and Holly Edwards comment in their essay, *Traffic in Pain*, trust in such images can "harbor diverse illusions and excuses – for example, that the viewer need look no further to understand distant events; that "structural violence requires only personal emotional response; that the represented pain or calamity has already been resolved and can therefore be dismissed; or that addressing the problem is the privilege or the perquisite of the viewer." For both the artist and the audience, the photographic source and its manipulation risk subduing the horror depicted.

I am not deluded that my "restorations" offer any actual balm, but hope that my works pose questions about our complicity in, as well as our seemingly miraculous recovery from, incomprehensible and often self-inflicted destruction. Rainer Maria Rilke wrote: *For beauty is nothing but the beginning of terror which we are just able to bear, and we wonder at it so because it calmly disdains to destroy us.* Conflating beauty and terror repels and seduces. They intertwine in the revelations that art has to offer, in the anxiety and joy of creation, and in our own self-delusion and recognition.

**Susanne Slavick**