



TRUE DIPLOMACY - JIMMY & JIL BAKER

At a time when America's optimism for the war in Iraq is exhausted, we have the unique spectacle of witnessing the unveiling of the largest US embassy in the world. With \$592 million dollars of emergency funding for Iraq, the embassy will house 21 buildings, a water treatment plant, and an electrical plant on 104 acres within the Green Zone of Baghdad, on the banks of the Tigris River.

Artist Jimmy Baker and architect Jil Baker set out to comprehend the scope and secrecy of the US embassy project with only scraps of data found on the internet. Their interpretations of the heavily fortified hermetic complex expose the disparity between idealistic ambassador relations, and this new war-fortress approach to diplomacy.

A dark figure looms in the painting *Succession*, which features a hybrid portrait of L. Paul Bremer [Director of Postwar reconstruction, 2003], and ambassadors John Negroponte, Zalmay Khalilzad, and Ryan Crocker. This mutation shows an uneasiness and uncertainty toward the factual progression of oversight in Iraqi relations. This uncertain future in Iraq prompts us to imagine a Kafka-esque vision of further metamorphosis for the figure in *Succession*. The architectural site model, *Invisible Fortress*, employs a three dimensional replica of what the complex might look like based on layout images that the architectural firm Berger Devine Yaeger leaked on the internet before being shut down by the State Department. This model is a saturated solid gold city cast into a mass of clear resin. Many reports have described the design to be 'suburban' in nature, thus fitting in with many of the accoutrements of the Green Zone. The other works include five digital images combining computer renderings of the embassy complex and imagery depicting the turbulent existence outside of this bubble. They contrast visions of development and disaster, as they look beyond the construction phase of this behemoth site, and into its placement within the origins of human development in the Fertile Crescent.



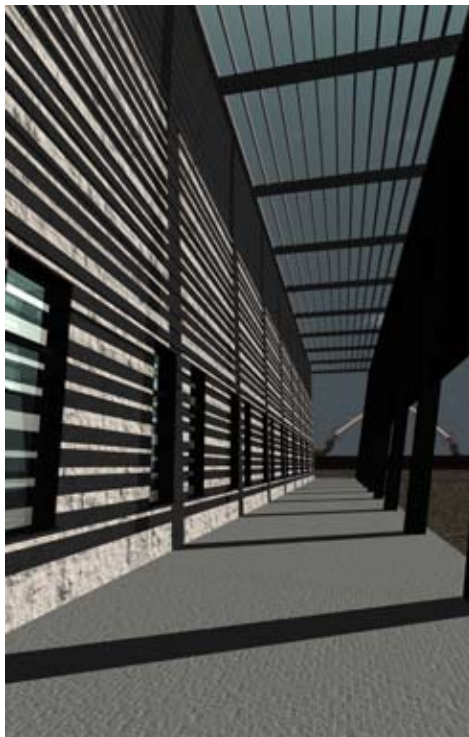
September 8 - October 6, 2007 **Western Exhibitions**
Cover: *Vision of Progress 2 (detail)*, unique digital print, 34" x 22"





Opposite: *Succession (detail)*, oil and epoxy resin on panel, 15" x 12"

Above: *Invisible Fortress*, MDF board, polyester resin, epoxy resin, foam, plywood.
48" x 30" x 5"

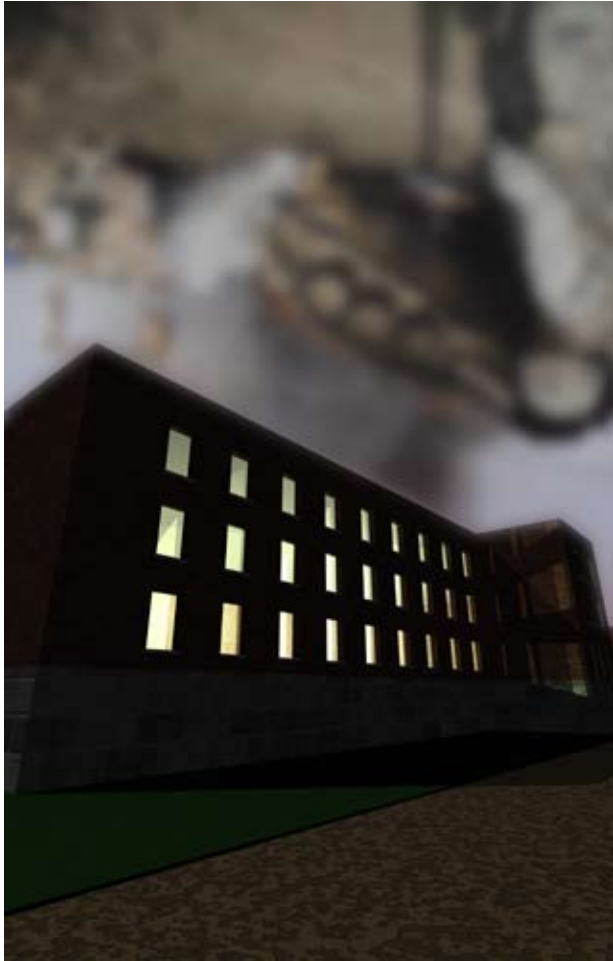


Left: *Vision of Progress 1*, unique digital print, 34" x 22"

Right: *Vision of Progress 3*, unique digital print, 34" x 22"

Opposite: *Vision of Progress 4*, unique digital print, 34" x 22"

Back cover: *Vision of Progress 5 (detail)*, unique digital print, 34" x 22"



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