

Ben Glahn

BAGHDAD SUITE

For anyone watching at the start, it was clear that this whole thing was by design. The set, a shallow urban theater of walls and locked doors, seemed made to be burned. The script, void of legitimate substance, was nothing more than a half-developed sales pitch, an appeal to that intoxicating sense of collective righteousness. The plot, built on fabricated memory and plastic heroism, was to culminate in a triumphant transformation. Played out on the big screen, it was to be a quick and overwhelming victory. Produced and delivered to an eager audience, it was designed to be a box office smash.

It doesn't look that way now, pulled apart in piles, buried in scaffold and beams.

There was always something terribly wrong going on here. What happened? Nothing about the set seemed ready to endure the inevitability of judgment. And what appeared a nefarious rush to production at the beginning now seems far worse – was this whole thing never anything more than a fragile façade erected by the delusional ambitions of its producers? Removed from reality, hidden behind physical walls and mental constructs, did any of us really ever see the travesty they unleashed? What was once the cradle of civilization, the alluvial plains of Mesopotamia, the reeds and swamplands and waterways that gave birth to irrigation, crops, agriculture, has now become a wasteland for the patriotic. What started as an evangelical vision of redemption is now the buried landscape of Babylon, the paradise of a fool.

It bears repeating that this was always a fabrication. So as the scaffolding came down, its shallow construction served us all a reminder that there is a certain danger in fiction. All the warnings proved right, and now, its consequence have produced the most damning reality of all. There is no clean escape from the production. Once it started, like so many before it, it was simply too costly to stop.

So the whole thing lies in ruins, buried under amputated props. The sandy, pastel colored landscape, once the great theater of imagined victory, has been denigrated, divided, emptied of itself. There is nothing right about this. What is this place? What are we doing here?

All the doors are locked. And now, is there really any chance of getting out the back? Is there really any chance of returning to that intoxicating sense of consolidation that was promised? The design, the construction, the sense of destiny, has it all come to reflect nothing more than a landscape of predictable defeat?

Destiny and mythology, that intoxicating brine, have fallen into ruin. The mental construct dissolved, a complicated pile of destruction lies in revelation.

All that remains now are the credits. There will be no awards.

Andrew Phelps
Photographer

www.andrew-phelps.com

Brunntalweg 3
5020 Salzburg, Austria
+43 662 848 864 fon/fax
+43 650 648 6051 mobil
mail@andrew-phelps.com

Hypobank Salzburg
acct 2825843, BC 55000
IBAN: AT91550000002825843
BIC/SWIFT Code: SLHYAT2S
Taxnumber ATU / UID 41910401