Refuge in the Rubble: A Contemporary Garden of Eden for the War-orphans of Iraq

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refuge in the rubble
Island of Stability
or the open-sky museum of
stone sculpture in the
centre of the town.

For those who are tired of plastic
vanity, for those who feel sick
of foam rubber life, for those
who believe in heavy things
that are difficult to move...

_Brodsky and Utkin_
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at its most basic responsibility, architecture as a profession demands for a sense of security, a sense of permanence, and a sense of home.

this thesis intends to explore the role of space as a tool for refuge, a place to find comfort. since man was of Earth, shelter had been his ultimate necessity, in the caverns and under rocks. he was safe and he was familiar, away from the dangers of the unknown. and if his home was to be compromised, a new home was to be found, with hopes of a similar promise.

now, thousands of years later, we find ourselves searching for that same promise, a constant hum of nomads looking for a place to call our own, in pitched roofs and high-rises, in locked bedroom doors and soft plush blankets.

there is a peace to be found.
in order to properly explore the notion of architecture as hope and peace, I find it necessary to paint the extremes; that of a post-crisis scenario.

for if there was a time when one was hopeless, distressed, and afraid of tomorrow, it is the moments after war, when the rubble is all that is left after the dust settles. there is no more home. there is no more security. there is no more permanence.

and so we return to the womb in order to be cleansed, to start anew. only then can we move forward, our aim targeted towards a better tomorrow.

in this state of reconstruction, we begin at zero, like the caveman, to rebuild our trust in our nation, in our community, and in ourselves. and architecture’s responsibility is to adapt and grow alongside us, aiding in the process.

at such a time of ambiguity and restlessness, architecture must stand as the solidity of the future, rooted in the grounds of certainty. because to rebuild means to re-live; to re-inhabit and to reassure oneself that the troubles of the past, although not forgotten, may rest below the foundation of the present.

Nan Ellin, in the *Architecture of Fear*, urges a fight for the human spirit and to constantly improve upon our world for future generations with the faith that things can and will get better. “Rather than crush this human spirit and the desire for connectedness, we must nourish them through our words and our works.”

only then can we make way for a better generation.
there are three distinct settlement sites that refuge finds as campground for a number of patrons. they are separated due to the urgent role they have on the user, from none to all.

range of refuge

 autonomy
 control
 necessity
as camps of choice, these sites range from localized to institutionalized organizations, from sleepovers in the backyard to Hawaiian retreats, and from Mecca to Burning Man. circumscribed by freedom, they act as refuge from our everyday norm, in order to teach, to follow, to pray, or to protest.

Boy Scout Camp

“Camp is usually located in some spot sheltered by hills or rocks for the double purpose of securing the full warmth of the sun’s rays, and screening it from the notice of strolling Indians that may happen in the vicinity. Within a convenient proximity to it stands a grove, from which an abundance of dry fuel is procurable when needed, and equally close the ripplings of a water-course salute the ear with their music.”

Rufus Sage
Boy Scout Fieldbook (1846)
control
as sites regulated by systems of power, they focus on strategic camping areas that respond to perceived threats, expected hazards, or immediate pressures. controlled by force, they are tools to oversee migration, work, and public exposure.

Concentration Camp
designed as temporary installations by the Third Reich, Auschwitz and others were places for extermination. disregarding the basic needs of human rights, they still provided somewhat of a standard for shelter and nutrition, at least for a time. displaced Jewish persons and other minorities were forced to make a new home.
necessity
exploring the transient spaces of relief and assistance, these sites respond to the power of circumstance. due to external forces such as military conflicts, economic shifts, and natural disasters, it is determined the location, scale and duration of the spaces.

Mass Shelter Camp
declared as a “refuge of last resort”, New Orleans' Astrodome contained over twenty thousand evacuees during Hurricane Katrina. the floodwaters transformed the arena into an island and “refugees” were forced to remain there for weeks until they would soon be relocated elsewhere.
focusing on refuge due to necessity, for those that have displaced their homes and displaced their families, the time after their sudden loss is a pace of doubt and indistinctness. it is that of nomadic urgency.

yet neither rushed nor static, they roam between the fragments of their surroundings in search of settlement, a subdued chaos stuck between time and place.

**time, place**
refuge and displacement sites are defined by where they exist and for how long, a realm blurred between the temporary and permanent.

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**status quo**
the normalcy of routine, safe and familiar for the being.

**crisis**
due to mass destructive conflict one has no control of.

**reconstruction**
rebuilding and reinventing fragments to sustain a new whole.

**loss**
comfort and safety compromised and parts are lost. displacement.

**path to displacement**
in his 1943 paper, “A Theory of Human Motivation”, psychologist Abraham Maslow proposed man’s hierarchy of needs. Often portrayed in the shape of a pyramid with the largest, most fundamental need at the bottom.

If the first four layers, called the “deficiency needs”, are not met, the individual will feel anxious and tense. This is obviously apparent after a crisis that dismantles the pyramid already in place for the individual.

Displaced individuals must begin anew from the bottom in order to sustain equilibrium within themselves and their surroundings.

In addition, for infants and children, Attachment Theory is a model by John Bowlby that states their set-goal is to maintain or achieve proximity to attachment figures, usually the parents.

Yet in times of mass crisis, children are often left orphaned and at a loss of a primary caregiver. This spirals into individuals of flawed normalcy that creates difficulties to attain the top three needs of the pyramid.

In order to reach personal growth and fulfillment for an individual, architecture must recognize its role as a foundation. Along with food and water, it is shelter, an inherent necessity to support physiological and safety needs. For the power of the profession to diminish fear through design, it holds a certain responsibility for itself and designers.
over the last decade, Iraq has witnessed an incredible rise in the number of displaced orphans, currently at over one million, most of these children, aged from birth to pre-teens, are left to fend for themselves in the nation’s war-ridden streets. As a result of the ongoing war on terror, as well as the current ISIS crisis, for this generation of the new millennium, conflict in their homeland, rubble in their backyards, and missiles in the sky have become their “normal.”

what’s left of their future after the dust settles? A day by day struggle to survive, as the 10 year old boy becomes the sole guardian of his 3 year old sister. And for those privileged enough to room in an orphanage, they are forced to rot in unsanitary, unsafe, and crumbling housing shelters. Without guardians, adequate nutrition, clothing, medical care, and education, they will grow up to be the bleak future of a slowly decaying nation.

in effort to address this issue, my research aims to raise awareness of the problem and begin to explore the necessary steps to rehabilitate these children and to provide for them a possibility of an optimistic future.
a look into the time line of Iraq bleeds a history of turmoil.
1921 - After the defeat of the Ottoman Empire during World War I, Great Britain gains control of the area. It sets up a government in Mesopotamia and renames the country Iraq.

October 3, 1932 - Iraq becomes an independent nation with Baghdad as its capital, and is admitted to the League of Nations.

1943-1945 - Kurdish leader Mustafa Barzani leads an uprising, gaining control of areas of Irbil and Badinan. When the uprising is defeated, Barzani and his forces retreat to Kurdish areas in Iran and align with nationalist fighters under the leadership of Qazi Muhammad.

March 22, 1945 - Iraq becomes a founding member of the Arab League, December 21, 1945 - Iraq becomes a member of the United Nations.

July 14, 1958 - King Faisal is killed in a coup led by Abdul Karim Kassem.

October 1959 - A group, including Saddam Hussein, attacks the motorcade of Abdul Karim Kassem. The assassination attempt fails and most of the attackers are killed. Hussein escapes and flees to Syria.

February 1963 - Kassem is overthrown and executed. The Baath Party assumes control of the government. Hussein returns from Cairo, Egypt. The new Baath government is overthrown before the end of the year.

July 17, 1968 - In a coup, Major General Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr of the Baath party becomes Iraq's new president. Saddam Hussein becomes the secretary and acting deputy chairman of the Revolutionary Command Council.

October 1973 - Iraq tightens its borders in a response to the Yom Kippur War.

October 1973 - Saddam Hussein and Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi of Iran meet to discuss a treaty. The Algiers Accord is signed by both countries later in the year.

March 6, 1975 - At the Shah's insistence, Hussein expels Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini from Iraq, where he has been in exile for 13 years.

February 1979 - The Ayatollah returns to Iran to lead the country, after the ouster of the Shah in January.
Legend
- beginning of time line
- internal conflict/ strike
- external conflict
- treaty/ agreement
- significant event
Jan. 29, 2002 - U.S. President George W. Bush says in his State of the Union address that Iraq, Iran and North Korea constitute an “axis of evil” that threatens the United States.

Sept. 16, 2002 - Iraqi Foreign Minister Naji Sabri sends a letter to the U.N. from Saddam Hussein stating that Iraq has no chemical, nuclear or biological weapons.

Nov. 8, 2002 - The U.N. Security Council unanimously adopts Resolution 1441, outlining strict new weapons inspections and threatening “serious consequences” if Iraq fails to comply.

Nov. 13, 2002 - Iraq agrees to comply with U.N. Resolution 1441.

Nov. 27, 2002 - U.N. inspectors begin working in Iraq.

Dec. 7, 2002 - Iraq submits a 12,000 page declaration of former weapons programs and civilian industries with military applications to the United Nations.


March 7, 2003 - Chief inspectors ElBaradei and Blix submit their final reports to the U.N. Security Council.

March 19, 2003 - President George W. Bush announces that U.S. and coalition forces have begun military action against Iraq. (This means that military action began the morning of March 20th in Iraq.)

March 20, 2003 - President Hussein speaks on Iraqi TV. He calls the U.S. led coalition attacks - “shameful crimes against Iraq and humanity.”
034

Legend
- beginning of time line
- internal conflict/ strike
- external conflict
- treaty/ agreement
- significant event

April 9, 2003 - Coalition forces take Baghdad.

May 1, 2003 - Speaking on the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln, President George W. Bush declares that “major combat operations” in the Iraq war are over, despite some continued fighting.

May 22, 2003 - The United Nations Security Council approves Resolution 1483, lifting sanctions against Iraq and reaffirms the “sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq.” It also acknowledges the U.S. and Great Britain’s right to occupy Iraq. The resolution sets up a U.N. support system to work with the U.S. and Great Britain to facilitate the transition to a government elected by the people of Iraq.

Nov. 21, 2003 - The oil-for-food program ends. The Coalition Provisional Authority takes responsibility for supplying humanitarian aid to the Iraqi people.

Dec. 13, 2003 - Hussein is captured in a “spider hole” near a hut in Tikrit. His capture is not confirmed until December 14 by the U.S. Defense Department.

June 1, 2004 - The Iraqi interim government takes over from the U.S.-backed Iraqi Governing Council (the IGC dissolves itself). The new interim government will be in charge of the country after sovereignty is handed over and until national elections for a transitional government are held by the end of January.

June 28, 2004 - Ayad Allawi is sworn in as the interim prime minister of Iraq. He is the first ruler other than Saddam Hussein to lead the country in more than three decades. He steps down in April 2005.

June 30, 2004 - The Coalition turns over legal control of Saddam Hussein and 11 other former top Iraqi officials to the interim Iraqi government. They remain, however, in the physical custody of the U.S. for security reasons.

July 1, 2004 - Saddam Hussein makes his first appearance in court. A judge changes him with a variety of crimes that marked his reign, including the invasion of Kuwait and the gassing of the Kurds.

August 2004 - U.S. and Iraqi forces battle insurgents in Najaf. Many insurgent there are followers of Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr.

Sept. 23, 2004 - Ayad Allawi, interim leader of Iraq, speaks before a joint session of Congress while he is in Washington for meetings with President George W. Bush.

033
November 2004 - U.S. and Iraqi forces battle insurgents in Falluja. About 2,000 insurgents are killed. On November 14, 2004, the U.S. declares Falluja “liberated.”

Jan. 30, 2005 - Millions of Iraqis cast ballots in the nation’s first free election in half a century. Iraqi expatriates in Australia, the United States, Great Britain, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Iran, Jordan, the Netherlands, Sweden, Syria, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates also participate.

April 6, 2005 - Kurdish leader Jalal Talabani is selected the country’s president by the transitional national assembly. The next day he and two vice presidents are sworn in.

April 22, 2006 - President Jalal Talabani names Nuri al-Maliki Prime Minister-designate.

May 3, 2005 - Ibrahim al-Jaafari is sworn in as Iraq’s interim Prime Minister. He steps down in May 2006.

Feb. 10, 2006 - The results of the December 2005 election are certified. The United Iraqi Alliance wins 128 seats, the Kurdistan Alliance Party wins 53 seats, the Iraqi Accord Party wins 44 seats and the final 50 seats are split between five other parties.

Dec. 15, 2005 - Millions of Iraqis participate in an election to choose a 275-seat Parliament that will serve a four-year term.

May 20, 2006 - The Iraqi Parliament approves Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki’s choices for the Iraqi national unity government. There are 37 cabinet ministers, comprised of representatives from all major parties and all major ethnic and secular groups.

Nov. 5, 2006 - The Iraqi High Tribunal reaches a verdict in the Uday case. Eight defendants are charged with crimes relating to the murder of 140 Iraqi men in 1982. Former President Hussein is found guilty and sentenced to death by hanging, pending appeal.

Dec. 30, 2006 - Former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein is hanged a few minutes after 6 am Baghdad time.

Jan. 1, 2009 - The U.S. military hands over control of Baghdad’s “Green Zone” to Iraqi authorities.

June 30, 2009 - U.S. troops pull back from Iraqi cities and towns and Iraqi troops take over the responsibility for security operations. However, U.S. troops remain in the country to continue combat operations and patrols in rural areas.

Legend
- beginning of timeline
- internal conflict/strike
- external conflict
- treaty/agreement
- significant event
March 7, 2010 - Iraqi legislative elections are held. The results are announced on March 26th. The Iraqiya coalition, led by interim Prime Minister Ayad Allawi, wins the most seats in Parliament.

August 19, 2010 - The last U.S. combat brigade leaves Iraq. Approximately 52,000 U.S. troops remain in the country.

Sept. 1, 2010 - Operation Iraqi Freedom is renamed Operation New Dawn, to reflect the reduced role U.S. troops will play in securing the country.

Nov. 25, 2010 - Al-Maliki is named to a second term by Iraqi President Jalal Talabani in a televised ceremony.

Dec. 15, 2010 - The U.N. Security Council votes to lift Iraq from sanctions that began during the Saddam Hussein era.

Dec. 15, 2011 - U.S. troops lower the flag of command that titles over Baghdad officially ending the U.S. military mission in Iraq.

Sept. 9, 2012 - Fugitive Iraqi vice-president Tariq al-Hashimi is sentenced to death after being found guilty of running a death squad.

January 2014 - Violence erupts in Anbar province with Iraqi security forces, Sunni tribesmen and al-Qaeda-linked groups battling for control of the cities of Falluja and Ramadi.

April 30, 2014 - Iraqis vote in parliamentary elections to elect members of the Council of Representatives. Prime Minister Nuri Al-Maliki’s party wins 92 seats in parliamentary elections, short of the 165 seats needed for a majority.

June 10, 2014 - ISIS takes control of Tikrit.

June 11, 2014 - Foad Masoum succeeds Jalal Talabani as president.

July 24, 2014 - ISIS takes control of Falluja.

Legend
- beginning of time line
- internal conflict/ strike
- external conflict
- treaty/ agreement
- significant event
due to ISIS’s growing influence, the thousands of internally displaced persons were scattered and divided north and south of the capital of Baghdad. not only did families lose their homes, many lost their children and were forced to camp out in barren grounds, either waiting to die or start a new life.

Religion of IDPs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arab Shia muslims</td>
<td>60.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arab Sunni muslims</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Places of Origin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baghdad</td>
<td>63.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diyala</td>
<td>19.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nineva</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
separation of demographics
due to Islamic State of Iraq and Syria

ISIS’s strategic control of both Iraq and Syria created real disparities between the different sects of Islam.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Living Arrangements</th>
<th>Sunni</th>
<th>Shia</th>
<th>Kurdish</th>
<th>ISIS control</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rented housing</td>
<td>59.4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House of family/relatives</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective town settlement</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td></td>
<td>16.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top Needs</th>
<th>Legal help</th>
<th>Water</th>
<th>Work</th>
<th>Food</th>
<th>Shelter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19.2%</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
<td>65.7%</td>
<td>68.4%</td>
<td>71.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
proposed future borders of Iraq and Syria

if ISIS continues to expand and gain political influence, the borders of Iraq and Syria would be assumed null and separate new states are to be hard lined based on the sects.

although extremely saddening to lose my native land, such a proposition would hypothetically cause some temporary rest within the area, and as such a rebuilding process can take place in all sections.
reality as...

the common and the flawed, the deficient and the acceptance of everyday.

architecture as...

the ideal, the basics of necessity for humankind, and the representation of standard.
at risk of being vulnerable, uncovered and helplessly in the way of danger.

to be protected and secured, from man, nature, and oneself.
temporary

displaced, wavering and unsettled, resting on shreds of ambiguity.

permanence

to be rooted in a home, finding comfort in the longevity of time.
flaccidity

an uncertainty in living, grounded loosely in doubt and misinformation.

solidity

assuradness and trust, in one’s environment and society.
distress

a condition of anxiety and grief, augmented by the chaos, and hopeless to being altered.

comfort

to be content, at peace with the well-being of oneself and their surroundings.
danger

in constant and consistent crisis, an everyday jeopardy of day by day survival.

safety

to find assurance in the asylum, detached from harm.
I am interested in a location that can boast the potential to reconstruct a nation and its people. If the division of states should occur, the city of Basra would most likely become the capital of the Shia sect.

Located in the southern tip of Iraq, it holds several accolades of a promising future.

*basrah* (arabic for “the overwatcher”)

- Iraq’s 2nd largest city (1.5 mil)
- primarily Shia
- world’s 4th largest oil reserve
- Iraq’s primary port
- international airport
- terminal point for pipelines
- largest plantation of datepalms in the world
- where Tigris and Euphrates Rivers meet
- "Venice of the East"
- foundation of Islamic thought and Arab literature
- historic location of Sumer
- home of Sinbad the Sailor
- proposed Garden of Eden
penetrated by a complex network of canals and streams, the city is vital for irrigation and other agricultural use. These canals were once used to transport goods and people throughout the city, but during the last two decades, pollution and a continuous drop in water levels have made river navigation impossible in the canals.

The heart of the fertile crescent, it populates on agricultural goods, including rice, maize corn, barley, dates, and wheat. Shipping, logistics, and transport are also major industries.

Yet it’s economy is largely dependant on the oil industry, estimating a reserve of 115 billion barrels.

*In Voltaire’s Zadig “Bassora” is the site of an international market where the hero meets representatives of all the world religions and concludes that “the world is one large family which meets at Bassora”*

*In H.G. Well’s “The Shape of Things to Come”, where the “Modern State” is a the center of a world state emerging after a collapse of civilization, and becomes in effect the capital of the world.*
Within the governate of Basra, one possible site may be explored:

**Al-Qurnah, Iraq**

_74 km NW of Basra_

_qurnah (arabic for “connection/joint”)_  
_garden of eden_  
_biblical tree of knowledge_  
_west qurna field as world’s 2nd largest oil field_
for the city of Basra, for it’s families and the future of their kids and this decaying nation, I propose an institution that aims to act as a vocational marketplace. it is a city within a city. Aldo van Eyck stated that “the analogy of city and house: a small world within a large one, a large world within a small one, a house as a city, a city as a house, a home for children.”

accepting the horrific realities of the present, it is necessary to acknowledge the state of these children. they need shelter, they need guidance, they need hope. they are the upcoming generation, and with no hand to hold, they will grab rifles.

a vocational marketplace would grant them housing and care and education, as well as become a trade school to cement a positive influence in their lives and the community.

relying on agricultural abundance, the oil industry, and a strong passion for arts and literature, the institution would provide necessary jobs for the adults, and the children that have been forced to grow up too quickly.

as the sites themselves create a context of connections, they can easily become a hub for a new Iraq, a doorway to the rest of the world.

in order to propose this architectural intervention, we must assume that the hypothetical borders separating the sects are well on their way, and it is a time for rehabilitation and reconstruction; that the new Iraq values its future. only then can its citizens hold on to permanence, attain security, and find a new home.

it is my hope that the project, although not the solution, can become a catalyst for progress. and where there is architecture, there is growth. there is evolution.

the intent is to give hope, to carve space that nourishes the soul and eases the mind.

“our problem here is that we do not receive academic education. If only the government could build special schools for us to guarantee our future.”

_9 year old girl_
“Existing to offer. Believing in what they can become and what they deserve. Refusing to ignore.”

“Home is not just a place to find comfort at night. Home is where comfort finds you, and makes everything better.”

“For now, the streets are empty. The orphanage has gathered in the children with the hope that someday soon it can introduce young life and joy back into cities that have seen far too much sorrow.”

“the large hand and the small hand clung to one another, one no more desperate than the other”

“Sheltering the growth of a nation.”

“A child finds refuge in a small collection of tattered photographs. Sitting quietly in a caravan full of strangers, she wonders who she had become through this violence. Camp Bravo in 4 hours.”

“Throat aches bare, lungs breathe sorrow. Gut cramps pain, heart pumps dry. Knees bow to mommy. Yet I cannot cry for one more angel.”

“The temenos wall, the divider between the chaos beyond and the world within.”

“Have you ever seen a grown man cry? Ground vibrations shake my bones. Screams cut my ears. Under billows of dust, the Man has taken them. You don’t know pain until you’ve lost a loved one.”

“Comfort, peaceful, play. Diverting, never forgetting.”

“lost amongst the dust small hands groping for safe walls she cannot see love but only in her guardian he who fights the same”

“Someone holds your hand. Finally you are not alone.”
works cited:


