

# Unrealised Potential

ARTIST: Doug Fishbone

TITLE: There Once Was a Man from Iraq

## Outline of Unrealised Potential

Public monuments rarely retain their significance for long as cultural values and political winds shift and historical memory dims over time. A tribute to the virtues of Temperance and Fortitude, anyone? Or a statue of Lord Bentinck, the 14th Viceroy of India? Even if left in their original locations, they rarely age well, and what they exhort us to remember, we've long since forgotten.

What becomes of a monument once it has been torn away from its intended context and placed somewhere completely inappropriate? Especially one that still has a powerful symbolism? Or one that was largely dubious to begin with? Can it be rehabilitated in any way?

On April 9, 2003, US Marines pulled down a monumental sculpture of Saddam Hussein, which had stood in Baghdad's Firdos Square. In an act of political theatre broadcast around the globe, the symbol of dictatorship was toppled, holding forth the promise of a new dawn in Iraq. The image had lost its immediate relevance and was consigned to the dung heap of history.

I propose erecting a copy of this sculpture of Saddam in Trafalgar Square, a landscape filled with monuments celebrating bygone military triumphs which themselves no longer feel relevant.

I want to install it on the fourth plinth, at a 45-degree angle, to reflect the historical moment when it was pulled down. Vacating an archaic symbolic position, and frozen in the act of adopting a new one, it offers an ambivalent monument for a political and military intervention that is itself ambivalent.

Referencing the sacking of conquered cities and the display of the spoils of war in ancient times, and situating the war in Iraq in its place in imperialist history, this gesture calls to mind the arrogance of empire through the attempted resurrection of a fallen symbol.

Installed without obvious comment, and without fanfare, this project looks at the queasy underbelly of the contemporary imperialistic project and the shabbier realities behind the public projection of power.

A tribute to vanity, delusion and impermanence – especially the impermanence of memory – and to the fluidity of symbolism, it might better be thought of as an anti-monument, or a monument to the folly of monuments themselves.

## Suggested Artists

See above

Signed on behalf of Doug Fishbone by Unrealised Potential, (Chavez-Dawson, Ely & Harris).

Date

For Terms and Conditions see:  
[www.unrealisedprojects.org](http://www.unrealisedprojects.org)



Date  
For Terms and Conditions see:  
[www.unrealisedprojects.org](http://www.unrealisedprojects.org)

Signed on behalf of Doug Fishbone by Unrealised Potential, (Chavez-Dawson, Ely & Harris).

## Suggested Artists

See above

Public monuments rarely retain their significance for long as cultural values and political winds shift and historical memory dims over time. A tribute to the virtues of Temperance and Fortitude, anyone? Or a statue of Lord Bentinck, the 14th Viceroy of India? Even if left in their original locations, they rarely age well, and what they exhort us to remember, we've long since forgotten.

What becomes of a monument once it has been torn away from its intended context and placed somewhere completely inappropriate? Especially one that still has a powerful symbolism? Or one that was largely dubious to begin with? Can it be rehabilitated in any way?

On April 9, 2003, US Marines pulled down a monumental sculpture of Saddam Hussein, which had stood in Baghdad's Firdos Square. In an act of political theatre broadcast around the globe, the symbol of dictatorship was toppled, holding forth the promise of a new dawn in Iraq. The image had lost its immediate relevance and was consigned to the dung heap of history.

I propose erecting a copy of this sculpture of Saddam in Trafalgar Square, a landscape filled with monuments celebrating bygone military triumphs which themselves no longer feel relevant.

I want to install it on the fourth plinth, at a 45-degree angle, to reflect the historical moment when it was pulled down. Vacating an archaic symbolic position, and frozen in the act of adopting a new one, it offers an ambivalent monument for a political and military intervention that is itself ambivalent.

Referencing the sacking of conquered cities and the display of the spoils of war in ancient times, and situating the war in Iraq in its place in imperialist history, this gesture calls to mind the arrogance of empire through the attempted resurrection of a fallen symbol.

Installed without obvious comment, and without fanfare, this project looks at the queasy underbelly of the contemporary imperialistic project and the shabbier realities behind the public projection of power.

A tribute to vanity, delusion and impermanence – especially the impermanence of memory – and to the fluidity of symbolism, it might better be thought of as an anti-monument, or a monument to the folly of monuments themselves.