

Simulating Iraq

Photographs by Claire Beckett August 2011

Imagining the war before the war.



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These photographs were made on military bases within the U.S., in fabricated spaces designed to mimic Iraq and Afghanistan. The simulations include the use of specific architecture, objects and costumes, and Americans (both soldiers and civilians) who role-play as Iraqis and Afghans.

In some respects, a visit to these places can be confusing. One wonders, who are the good guys and who are the bad guys? Who is a real Iraqi and who is a fake insurgent? What does it feel like for a soldier to play the role of her or his enemy? What does it mean to a young soldier who has his or her first encounter with difference in this environment? These spaces are meant as imitations of reality, but they take on their own realities for soldiers on their way to a real war zone.



Claire Beckett is a Boston-based artist. Originally from Chicago, she earned a BA in anthropology at Kenyon College. She worked as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Benin, West Africa, before going on to earn an MFA in Photography at the Massachusetts College of Art and Design. Represented by Carroll and Sons Gallery, Boston, her solo exhibitions have included Carroll and Sons, Bernard Toale Gallery, the University of Rhode Island, and the Wadsworth Atheneum (opening November 2011). Group exhibitions have included Mass MoCA, the Chelsea Museum of Art, the Haggerty Museum, and others. Beckett is the recipient of an Artadia Award and a Mass Cultural Council Grant.

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