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Exploring the Significance of Site in Michael Rakowitz's "The Invisible  
Enemy Should Not Exist"

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Exploring the Significance of Site in Michael Rakowitz's "The Invisible Enemy Should Not Exist"

In the following essay I am going to discuss Michael Rakowitz's "The Invisible Enemy Should Not Exist", a sculpture that is due to stand on the Fourth Plinth in Trafalgar Square between 2018 and 2020, having been awarded the prestigious international art prize of the same name. The essay will explore the "imbricated relationship" between the artwork and its future location - a theory attributed to Mignon Kwon (p.40). Having analysed this overlap, I will discuss how the placement of the artwork in its future location creates a conversation about how they relate to each other - how concepts discussed by Rakowitz within his artwork can be connected to the histories evident within Trafalgar Square. Informed by Edward Said's writings on culture and imperialism (1994), I will explore the ways that the statue's siting within the square highlights the ways in which British military behaviour and imperial past (a history represented by Trafalgar Square) has contributed to current sociopolitical issues discussed by Rakowitz. Primarily, these issues surround the devastations caused in Iraq by the Iraq War, migration, and the increased threat of terror in London. This echoes Said's argument that the past and present are inseparable. I suggest that the multilateral engagement with themes of conflict provoked by Rakowitz's artwork in the context of Trafalgar Square raises challenging questions on the continued impacts of Britain's military history. Although "The Invisible Enemy" might symbolise a movement away from imperialist attitudes within Britain, it simultaneously implies their lasting effects and continued presence. This inseparability of the past and present could suggest that the future, relative to the issues highlighted by the installment of the sculpture, is precarious.

I will begin by stating the cultural, historical and political relevance of the sculpture's proposed location. Then I will give an outline of the Fourth Plinth Prize, followed by a description of Michael Rakowitz and his artwork "The Invisible Enemy Should Not Exist", which for the remainder of the essay I will call "The Invisible Enemy". Having contextualised my discussion, I will then introduce Mignon Kwon's views on site specificity, and show how when they are applied to the upcoming installation of "The Invisible Enemy", contentious issues involved with recreating this damaged Iraqi artefact within Trafalgar Square are illuminated, particularly when one considers the cultural, political and historical context of both the artwork and its location. Then, I will use Edward Said's discussion of culture and imperialism to suggest how the issues explored in this essay bring attention to the lasting and unavoidable influence of historic imperialist attitudes in Britain today. I hope to show that placing "The Invisible Enemy" in Trafalgar Square today highlights how a history that cultural institutions are actively attempting to erase is in actual fact still present, and will likely have a significant effect on the future.

Today London has reached the status of a global megacity. It is not only England's capital, but one of the major centres of the art world too: the city dominates the UK visual arts sector, which accounts for 30% of the entire global art market (London City Hall, 2017). At the city's nucleus lies Trafalgar Square. Surrounded by architectural wonders and leading cultural institutions, Trafalgar Square hosts major events, demonstrations, displays and performances. It is home to The National Gallery, which in 2016 was the second most popular tourist attraction in the UK, receiving 6.26 million visitors (ALVA, 2017). Trafalgar Square is the beating heart of the cosmopolis. Art writer Isabel de Vasconcellos (2006, p9) compares Trafalgar Square to the ancient Greek 'agora', or 'assembly'; the part of the city in which people would gather, where the leaders spoke to the public and the public spoke to each other (De Vasconcellos, 2006).

The Square is a rich visual showcase of London's power, majesty and imperial rule. It flaunts Great Britain's military dominance. In fact, it was built to celebrate this. Constructed and opened in the mid-nineteenth century, Trafalgar Square was built in commemoration of Britain's victory over France and Spain at the 1805 Battle of Trafalgar, a naval battle in which 1,587 British soldiers were killed or wounded, and an estimated 16,000 French and Spanish soldiers were killed, wounded or captured (Birbeck, 2018). Its centerpiece is Nelson's Column, a 169-foot tribute to Admiral Horatio Nelson who led the British Navy to this victory. Guarding the column are four lions. Lions are national symbols and traditionally represent bravery, courage and strength. The four eighteen-foot bronze panels on the column's pedestal are cast from French guns that were captured during the battle. The panels depict four victories: Trafalgar, The Battle of Copenhagen, the Battle of the Nile and the Battle of Cape St Vincent, Portugal. There are eleven further monuments and statues in the square, all installed to glorify and commemorate famous British war admirals responsible for the defeat of other countries at battle. In this sense, Trafalgar Square is a museum of British imperialism, an expression of British supremacy within racial hierarchy. Edward Said defines imperialism as "the practice, the theory and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory" (Said, 1994 p8).

The Fourth Plinth Project was launched in 1999, creating an extraordinary new platform for contemporary artists. The plinth had remained empty since the construction of the Trafalgar Square. It was intended that an equestrian bronze statue of William IV would stand on the Fourth Plinth, however this never materialized due to exhausted funds, and so the plinth stood vacant for over 150 years. The public art prize was instigated by the Royal Society for the Encouragement of the Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (RSA). When in 1994 it was decided that the plinth finally needed to be filled, the RSA formed an advisory committee to undertake the task. The committee comprised of members of high cultural authority within the city, including numerous directors of some of London's major art institutions. They consulted the City Council, the military, the royal family, the local

authority, arts, tourism and heritage institutions and members of the public, before concluding that the plinth would be home to a rotational contemporary sculpture prize (De Vasconcellos, 2006, p14).

The City Council claim it to be the “most talked about contemporary art prize in the UK” (London City Hall, 2017). It is a four-yearly competition, joint funded by the Mayor of London and Arts Council England. The two winning sculptures are chosen from a shortlist of five finalists, selected from a larger pool of the 150 artists who are invited by the committee to submit proposals. These five artists, shortlisted again by the elite panel of judges, are asked to make a maquette of their proposed artwork for the plinth. The maquettes are put on public display at the National Gallery, and the visitors are invited to give their opinion on which sculpture should be awarded a place on the plinth. The public opinion is considered by the committee, who then select the two strongest works, and the final vote is cast by the Mayor. The winning sculpture is displayed on Trafalgar Square’s Fourth Plinth for two years (De Vasconcellos, 2016, p15). As well as being an art prize that strives to be politically and socially challenging (De Vasconcellos, 2016, p14), the Fourth Plinth Prize collaborates with Arts Council England in an attempt to use art to close sociopolitical divides. London’s deputy mayor for culture and creative industries Justine Simons (cited in Razaq, 2016), explained to the media that it “is now more urgent than ever to unlock the potential of culture to build bridges and bring people and communities together.” Arts Council England have acknowledged the need to give greater representation of minority sectors of the community: “Our mission is great art and culture for everyone - we can only achieve this if we make a commitment to promoting and embedding diversity throughout the work we fund and support. We call this the 'Creative Case for Diversity’” (Arts Council England, 2017).

In January 2017 it was announced that Michael Rakowitz’s “The Invisible Enemy Should Not Exist” would be displayed on the Fourth Plinth from 2018 to 2020. Michael Rakowitz (b.1973) is a multi-award-winning contemporary artist of international acclaim. He is based in Chicago, USA, and although he is best known for existing beyond the traditional gallery context, has exhibited in many major art galleries around the world, including New York’s MoMA, the British Museum, and London’s Tate Modern, where he had a solo exhibition. Rakowitz frequently explores the relationship between the west and the east, and the effect that war and conflict has on societies. His projects engage with issues such as migration, refugees, homelessness, cultural displacement, international trade, and the commemorative function of art. Much of his work focuses on Iraq - he is of Iraqi Jewish heritage (Rakowitz, 2017). By selecting an Iraqi artist to feature their artwork on the Fourth Plinth, the committee addresses the need to feature more non-western art within the city. This could be seen as an active movement away from a historically nationalistic way of discussing global politics evident within Trafalgar Square, and is perhaps an attempt to decrease racial divides in Britain.

Simons (cited in Dex, 2017) believes that the winning sculpture “shows that London is open to creativity and ideas from around the world.”

“The Invisible Enemy Should Not Exist” is part of a much larger ongoing project of the same name. In 2006 Rakowitz began his mission to reconstruct approximately 7000 artefacts from the National Museum of Iraq in Baghdad that had been looted or lost in the aftermath of the 2003 US and British-led invasion of Iraq. The artefacts include statues, friezes, and precious ceramics. Instead of using original materials, the artefacts are made from recycled packaging of Middle Eastern foodstuffs and local Arabic newspapers (Rakowitz, 2017). The project weaves together the archaeological and sociopolitical histories of both the artefacts and Iraq itself. Considering the British involvement in these events, it is particularly poignant that this discussion is moving to central London.

The winning sculpture will be a recreation of an Assyrian protective deity named Lamassu - an Ancient Mesopotamian winged bull with a human head. This hybrid combines the creatures that the Mesopotamians considered to be the most powerful. Lamassu sculptures are understood to have existed since 3000 BCE (Museum of Lost Objects, Winged-Bull of Nineveh, 2017). Instead of creating a Lamassu figure from stone as it traditionally appears, “The Invisible Enemy” will be made of recycled Iraqi date syrup cans and local newspapers. Iraq’s booming global date-selling industry collapsed as a result of the Iraq War. Rakowitz (cited in Smith, 2017) explained in an interview with Northwestern University, at which he is a professor of Art Theory and Practise that “The salvage of date syrup cans make present the human, economic and ecological disasters caused by the Iraq wars and their aftermath”. It appears that Rakowitz’s proposal for the Fourth Plinth intentionally confronts British responsibility in these humanitarian disasters, and the recreation of a destroyed artefact that represents this history prevents it from being made “past”.

Historically, the Lamassu figure was a symbol of protection for the Assyrian empire, and represented the power of its ruler King Sennacherib, a reminder that the King’s authority was paramount. Lamassu figures were placed outside homes and at the entrances of great palaces. The empire covered the majority of what we now know to be Syria, Turkey and Iraq. (Museum of Lost Objects, Winged-Bull of Nineveh, 2017) Specifically, Rakowitz’s work refers to the Lamassu that guarded Nineveh at the Nergal Gate from 700 BCE. Nineveh was an ancient Assyrian city located Upper Mesopotamia. This is on the outskirts of what we now call Mosul in Northern Iraq. American-Iraqi archaeologist Mark Altaweel explains in the above BBC’s “Museum of Lost Objects” (2016) that Nineveh was likely the biggest city in the world when at its peak in 7th Century BCE. We could say that Nineveh at this time was the equivalent of global megacities such as London today. The original statue was almost five meters high and weighed around thirty tonnes and was carved out of a single slab of

limestone. In 2015, it was destroyed by ISIS, along with other artefacts in the Mosul Museum. Terrorists gauged the Lamassu's eyes out with a pneumatic drill (Tharoor and Maruf, 2016).

As the full-sized artwork does not yet exist, my visual analysis of the proposed sculpture is based on the maquette [fig 1]. The flattened cans form a scale-like decorative armour across the surface of the creature, subtly alluding both to the Lamassu's historic role as protector, and to the military costumes of the war heroes on the other three plinths. However, in contrast to its neighbouring statues, the creature is full of bright primary colours. The packaging is organised tonally to form bold, block patterns across the body of the sculpture. Local Iraqi newspapers, though still recognisable for what they are, are organised to form a striped pattern over the legs and hindquarters of the creature, which from a distance, will perhaps resemble stone. Despite the vibrant effect created by Rakowitz's choice of materials, there is something poignant and tragic about the use of waste materials, garbage, so disposable and temporary in nature, to recreate a something so solid, such a sacred and hugely valuable ancient stone treasure. Beneath both the natural and artificial lighting of Trafalgar Square the metallic surface is likely to reflect light in interesting ways. Perhaps it will sparkle, adding to the mythical nature of the object and visually representing the supernatural powers that the Lamassu is historically believed to possess. The creature stands within a large pillar, which is a similar shape to the plinth itself, and traditionally the Lamassu was set into walls. I assume that this was employed practically, as a scaffold to prevent the tin sculpture from weather damage while situated in the square. Rakowitz's sculpture is of intimidatingly large stature, exactly the same size as the original. Its elevation upon the plinth will likely generate a sense that overpowers the viewers who study it in the square. One can only imagine the sculpture's brilliance at full scale; I have no doubt it will be ethereal and dazzling, yet also intimidating and ominous.

Just weeks before "The Invisible Enemy" is due to be erected in Trafalgar Square, it is exciting, with this information in mind, to consider how the public will interpret and respond to the new sculpture, and how the artwork will engage with its location. Mikon Kwon (2004) explores the relationship between artworks and location in "One Place or Another". She suggests that an art object "specific" to its site will "decode and/or recode the institutional conventions [...] making apparent their imbricated relationship to broader socioeconomic and political processes of the day" (p40). She proposes that a site's identity is "composed of a unique combination of elements". Within Trafalgar Square, there are, I suggest, two major "elements": first, the celebration of British imperial history, and second, the spectacle of the contemporary agora - of the Square's high speed, hyper contemporary and multicultural "megacity" landscape. One could simplify these elements to British past and British present. Kwon states that site-specific artwork is "directed and determined" by its site, and that it is impossible to consider one independently of the other (p38). In this case, the installment of "The

Invisible Enemy” in Trafalgar Square will recode the Square’s existing elements to expose the imbricated relationship between British past, present, and the consequences of military intervention in Iraq, and more broadly the Middle East.

This juxtaposing of the celebration of British power (the site) and the acknowledgement of the negative effects of British military involvement overseas (the artwork) is in my opinion incredibly exciting. As intended by the prize’s organisers, it will certainly discuss sociopolitical issues from alternative and challenging perspectives. It has the potential to manipulate the space of Trafalgar Square in ways that will create a multilateral, paradoxical and critical discussion of conflict. Introducing a sculpture about conflict in Iraq in Trafalgar Square challenges the jingoistic sentiments that are established by the military statutory within it. Rakowitz’s “The Invisible Enemy” will potentially create a critical dialogue about conflict and imperialism in Trafalgar Square, which has for so long only attended to British conflict from one perspective. It will stand in stark contrast to the existing statues, which are monuments that celebrate what Britain has gained from war and proudly showcase what Britain has taken from other nations in pursuit of these victories. The Square’s historic statues represent historical values toward war, of a country’s leadership defining itself as a nation of superior power to its neighbours who, in a militaristic context, are presented as enemies. Within Trafalgar Square, “The Invisible Enemy” and indeed the sculpture award itself could be seen as representative of a cultural shift - away from historic and draconian colonialist attitudes to other nations, and toward a non-discriminatory multiculturalism. Coupling the statues of military war heroes with Rakowitz’s sculpture could be described as a timeline that marks these changing attitudes within the agora.

However, there have been contrasting opinions on the effectiveness of recreating precious artefacts that have been damaged or destroyed by conflict. Art historians have expressed varied interpretations of how these reconstructions engage with terror. Prof. Dr. Maamoun Abdulkarim, Directorate-General for Antiquities and Museums in Syria suggests that the reproduction of damaged artefacts stands as “a message of peace against terrorism” and “a gesture of friendship and solidarity with people in the conflict regions of the Middle East” (Abdulkarim cited in Michel & Karenowska, 2016). However, Robert Bevan, journalist and author of “The Destruction of Memory: Architecture at War” (2006) disagrees. He proposes that to reconstruct war-damaged objects is to deny the significance of their destruction, a rejection of the “ruination that bears witness to traumatic events” (Bevan, 2016). Stuart Burch, in his discussion of the reconstruction of artefacts destroyed by ISIS within Trafalgar Square takes this notion even further, suggesting that Britain “risks playing into the hands of its nemesis”, by creating a “memorial to their destructiveness.” He compares these reconstructions to “a grotesque Duchampian readymade that is the fulfilment of ISIS’s wishes” (Burch, 2017). The above

examples describe how Rakowitz's sculpture could function within the space as both a symbol of peace and global solidarity, and a catalyst to terror. Considering the history of Lamassu sculptures, "The Invisible Enemy" also echoes the historic statues within the square as a representation of the power of a country's leaders, and their ability to protect their peoples. These differing interpretations demonstrate an equivocal discourse of contemporary conflict and terror within "The Invisible Enemy": From Abdulkarim's perspective, Rakowitz's sculpture expresses global solidarity, the power of good over evil. However, adopting Bevan's opinion, one would interpret the artwork, while it stands on British soil, as a symbol of a nation's reluctance to recognise the damage inflicted on Iraq as a result of British military strategy. On another extreme, Burch's interpretation reads "The Invisible Enemy" as sculpture as a provocation of the terrorist organisation that threatens Iraq, and the treasured artefacts of human history. This highlights not only the complexity of Rakowitz's sculpture in its ability to engage with sociopolitical issues from such a range of perspectives, but also suggests the challenge Britain faces in understanding and effectively dealing with foreign threats simultaneously with increasing multiculturalism. The installation of "The Invisible Enemy" in Trafalgar Square could on one hand be interpreted as a progressive discussion of conflict from an unbiased, humane perspective (a very different approach to the imperialist sentiments historically expressed within Trafalgar Square) and on another, it could stand as evidence that imperial and nationalistic biases remain embedded within discussions surrounding conflict and terror in Trafalgar Square.

Rakowitz acknowledges the influence of his artwork's prospective location on the interpretations of his artwork: He suggests that the piece will generate conversations around immigration, which I don't believe it would do if for example, it was exhibited on Mesopotamian soil. Rakowitz (cited in Ellis-Peterson, 2017) explains how the sculpture's implied meanings are intensified by London's current sociopolitical climate: "[The plinth artwork] is happening at a time which is especially meaningful, considering the enormous number of people that are forced to leave Iraq and Syria and are seeking sanctuary. This piece becomes a kind of a placeholder for those human lives that can't be reconstructed ... whether it's cultural genocide or the burning of books, it's the destruction of artefacts that always accompanies a human catastrophe." Rakowitz makes it clear that the work is about immigration, and criticizes current attitudes toward this contentious issue: "it is also interesting to have it outdoors in a city that is part of a global discussion about immigration, a conversation that has been disappointing and vulgar" (Rakowitz cited in Ellis-Peterson, 2017). Neither is it likely that Rakowitz would relate his artwork to terror attacks committed by ISIS if it were not in a location threatened by recent and anticipated acts of terror. Interestingly, in an interview for The Telegraph, Rakowitz directly references connection between the recent conflict in Iraq and the imminence of further terror attacks in London and elsewhere, stating that: "The destruction of the past makes the

present and the future that much more precarious" (Rakowitz cited in Singh, 2017). So "The Invisible Enemy" promises a controversial set of issues that are very relevant within London today: immigration, the implications of the Iraq War on Iraqi society, and the threat of ISIS. These issues are likely by-products of British Imperial behaviour. In this sense, one could say that while in Trafalgar Square, "The Invisible Enemy" will draw attention to points at which the history of the site and the history of the artwork converge. It will become a discussion of the layers of British history recorded within the square that influenced the layers of Iraqi history recorded within the artwork. Considering the subject matter that Rakowitz explores and the history of Trafalgar Square, the Fourth Plinth Committee seem to have selected a particularly daring and provocative artwork.

In light of this, when one considers the relationship between Britain and Iraq, it is difficult to ignore the irony of placing a memorial to the damage caused by conflict in Iraq within a space created to celebrate Britain's military power, particularly as "The Invisible Enemy" also serves as a reminder of the threat of middle eastern terror organizations within this space. Specifically, "The Invisible Enemy" may draw attention to ways in which British military behaviour, both historic (imperialism) and more recent (the Iraq War) contributed to the destruction of artefacts, displacement of Middle-Eastern peoples, and the threat of ISIS within London. Therefore "The Invisible Enemy", according to Kwon's framework, inescapably becomes a critique of the site itself. Despite the site's initial function in glorifying British military elite, "The Invisible Enemy"'s interception within the space may restructure the discussion to question not only whether this historic celebration of nationalism is legitimate, but also whether it is still present. A thorough account of imperial Britain's involvement in Iraq can be found in "Britain in Iraq: Contriving King and Country", written by Peter Sluglett (2007). From an unbiased perspective, Britain's treatment of Iraq and its people since Iraq (formerly Mesopotamia) was colonized and placed under British rule in 1920 has been barbaric. Specifically to this investigation, among the outcomes of Britain's treatment of Iraq was not only the Iraq War and subsequent destruction of the treasured artefacts of Ancient Mesopotamia that Rakowitz describes, but also potentially the terror organization that carried out the attacks on Lamassu *and* London. Therefore, all of the conflict-related issues discussed within the latest Fourth Plinth Commission were likely caused by the British institutions of power that are celebrated within Trafalgar Square.

Placing a reconstruction of a Middle-Eastern artefact in Trafalgar Square could make reference or even be comparable to the controversial expropriation of the Elgin Marbles, which are on display in the British Museum. Ironically, a Lamassu statue from the North-West Palace of Ashurnasirpa, which is located in what is now known as Northern Iraq, is also on display in the British Museum. Questions are also likely to be raised over how much the British display of this sculpture differs from the pillaging of Iraqi treasures that Rakowitz discusses within the artwork. Might it imply that Britain

has a self-ascribed responsibility of guardianship over global heritage in order to prevent its destruction? In this sense, the situation resonates imperialistic ideas. Furthermore, it could be described as hypocritical when one considers the part Britain played in the Iraq museum disasters. Specifically to the looting of the National Museum of Iraq, the UK and US received international condemnation for failing to prevent the lootings which were, according to the British Museum's Assyriologist Dr. Irving Finkel, "entirely predictable and could easily have been stopped." (Finkel cited in Sengupta, 2005). It was reported that shortly before the 2003 invasion, multiple antiquities experts asked the US Department of Defence and the British Government to take measures to safeguard the National Museum of Iraq from combat and pillaging, yet neither party did so. Politicians, academics and the media around the world recognised that the loss of these artefacts, and the US-led coalition's failure to protect them, was a tragedy for humankind. An article in the Indian publication "The Pioneer" identified this as an event that "will forever remain a scathing indictment of this inexcusable and manifest indifference towards the very people the coalition claims to have liberated." A Korean newspaper report stated "American and British forces, their commanders and ultimately George W. Bush and Tony Blair, cannot avoid the blame for their negligence in protecting cultural assets of the nation they invaded (The Korea Herald, 2003). According to international agreements stated in the Hague and Geneva Conventions, invading countries have an obligation during wartime to "prohibit, prevent and, if necessary, put a stop to any form of theft, pillage or misappropriation of, and any acts of vandalism directed against, cultural property" (UNESCO, 1954).

Furthermore, when one considers the possibility that British military behaviour exacerbated the terror attacks "The Invisible Enemy" condemns, the debate becomes even more complex. Specifically to the sculpture's possible function as a symbol of Britain's refusal to tolerate acts of terror, there is evidence to suggest that both colonial intervention in the Middle East and the 2003 Iraq invasion were instrumental in the ensuing terrorist attacks on London and other European Cities. A secret assessment created by the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) in 2003 shortly before the US-UK invasion of Iraq stated "the threat from al-Qaeda will increase at the onset of any military action against Iraq. They will target Coalition forces and other Western interests in the Middle East. Attacks against Western interests elsewhere are also likely, especially in the US and UK, for maximum impact. The worldwide threat from other Islamist groups and individuals will increase significantly" (The Iraq Inquiry Report, 2016). Another assessment carried out by the JIC the year before concluded "Al-Qaeda and associated groups will continue to represent by far the greatest terrorist threat to Western interests and that threat will be heightened by military action against Iraq." Both publications were declassified and later exposed by the Iraq Enquiry - the British public investigation into the nation's role in the Iraq War, popularly referred to as the Chilcot Enquiry. These examples reinstate the sculpture's paradoxical position in Trafalgar Square: despite the fact that the sculpture

demonstrates British culture's desire to be inclusive of world views, and the sculpture prize's function as a celebration of the increasingly internationalised city, Rakowitz's sculpture simultaneously highlights Britain's involvement in the cultural disaster it condemns -examples of British behaviour that do not cohere with these internationalist objectives.

This investigation into the imbricated relationship between the artwork and its location highlights the imbricated relationship between the past and the present. Similarly to the way in which Kwon argues that it is impossible to consider an artwork independently of its location, Edward Said (1994, p2) contends in "Culture and Imperialism" that neither can the present and past be separated. With regard to the upcoming installment in Trafalgar Square, if (as according to Kwon) we have no choice but to regard "The Invisible Enemy" in relation to its historic, imperialistic setting, we must hence (as according to Said) consider the effect that the past, documented within the military statues, has on the present (The Invisible Enemy and its concepts). Said discusses the continued presence of the past in contemporary culture, questioning whether the past can ever truly be past (p1). This perspective highlights a more contentious relationship between what "The Invisible Enemy" and its location represent - specifically British imperial past and the global climate today. Said believes that more attention should be paid to the continued effects of European imperialism on the world, arguing that it "still casts a considerable shadow over our own times" (p4). He states that imperialism has become "embedded" in national culture, "which we have tended to sanitise as a realm of unchanging intellectual monuments, free from worldly affiliations" (p11), and hence "unwanted elements, vestiges, narratives" (p16) become excluded from the cultural discussion of the past's influence on the present, the site's influence on the artwork. This argument implies that to view "The Invisible Enemy" as a signifier of British breakdown of barriers between nations is ignorant, echoing selective imperialistic attitudes toward international relations. In fact, interpretation of the artwork free from imperialist biases forces one to acknowledge the possibility that British imperial behaviour can in part be held accountable for the fractured social fabric in Iraq, and for the threat that terror holds over London and the world today. This is because, as Said (p34) explains, so-called Islamic fundamentalists emerged in response to the dictatorial systems of control employed by western imperialist nations and the US over Middle Eastern peoples.

The difficulty in suggesting that "The Invisible Enemy" is symbolic of a shift in national sentiments, is that a) Trafalgar Square continues to be curated by authoritative cultural and political institutions, not the public and b) the artwork itself also functions as a counterstatement to this possibility. Perhaps, in light of Said's argument, this suggests an inconsistency or lag between politics and culture in Britain. Perhaps the discussion of sociopolitics within the arts can be compared "fake news", in that artistic interpretations of the contemporary can inaccurately reflect contemporary climates, in that

immediate interpretations of Rakowitz's engagement with sociopolitical issues within Britain suggest something other than an accurate depiction of Britain's position within global society. In this case, perhaps Rakowitz's comment on Trafalgar Square becomes not only a critique of the implications of the space on the ideas expressed within the sculpture, but also of the way in which cultural authorities vicariously communicate with the public within such public spaces as Trafalgar Square.

And so the question waits to be answered in 2018: will the situation of "The Invisible Enemy Should Not Exist" in Trafalgar Square reflect a transformation of British attitudes toward internationalism, cooperation, inclusivity and equality, a movement away from the violent pursuit of power and victory over other nations as initially suggested by the historic dialogue within Trafalgar Square? How much does the exhibition of an ancient Mesopotamian deity that was demolished as a result of a British-lead war differ from the exhibition of the captured French rifles displayed next to it? Will Rakowitz's Lamassu stand as yet another monument to the imperialist attitudes still ingrained within Britain? I suggest it will do all of these things. As Rakowitz explained, "You cannot erase the past". This echoes Said's claim that the effects of imperialism (both positive and negative) are still present within societies today, regardless of decolonization. Despite the Fourth Plinth Prize's efforts to challenge these issues, the artwork's polemic discussion highlights both the turbulence of the past and more importantly, the uncertainty of the future: Britain is becoming increasingly internationalized, yet the scheduled departure of Britain from the European Union, its fragile relationship with the Middle East and the new US Presidency imply the incalculable future of Britain's international relationships. So while it stands in Trafalgar Square, "The Invisible Enemy Should Not Exist"'s critique of Britain's military relationship, past and present, with Iraq and indeed the rest of the world, will above all highlight Britain's precarious relationship with its future. The Lamassu will stand on the plinth in the shadows of the square's imperial military past, an ominous reminder of the fact that despite attempts to repair sociopolitical issues created by its imperial history, Britain remains in the midst of its complex aftermath.



Figure 1: *Michael Rakowitz, The Invisible Enemy Should Not Exist.* (source: London City Council, 2017)



Figure 2: *The Fourth Plinth, Trafalgar Square.* (source: London City Council, 2017)



Figure 3: An ISIS militant destroys the statue of Lamassu in Mosul Museum. (source: Al-Akhbar, 2015)

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