



SINAI HOTELS

24.04 – 12.05.08

OPENING: WEDNESDAY 23.04.2008, 7PM

— Sultan's Palace, Sindbad, Sunestra or Magic Life Imperial — the alluring names are what remains of unfinished hotel complexes abandoned on the Egyptian Sinai Peninsular, photographed by the artist duo Haubitz+Zocher between 2002 and 2005 and on show at the Architekturzentrum Wien until 12.05.2008. The concrete skeletons of five-star hotel complexes tower up like a mirage before a backdrop of azure skies. Their envisaged splendour is witnessed alone by their alluring names — names intended to suggest blissful holidays with Oriental flair. This series shows the ghettoised exchangeability of travel destinations in its drastic clarity. The hybrid architecture brazenly employs Asian, Ancient Greek and Roman, medieval and modern stylistic quotations to produce gobbledygook intended to have cosmopolitan promise but that actually only produces a sense of hollow placelessness. There are many reasons why the building of the hotel resort ceased, ranging from bad investments to the embezzlement of subsidised state loans, and dwindling tourism caused by the perceived danger of terrorist attacks.

Haubitz+Zocher have isolated these monuments to failed investment as architectonic sculptures depicted before the background of a mountain and desert landscape entirely void of people. There are no manipulated interventions that altar the image, and before they started shooting the artists had agreed on clearly defined parameters. They photographed the buildings with an even blue sky without any dramatic contrasts in the lighting and with a consistent camera position at eye level. The strongly reduced colour scale is limited to an earthy ochre, stone grey and sky blue. Most exposures are free of any narrative context so that the viewer's attention is focused on the sobriety of the buildings.