



Obama's Bonkers Beacon

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We had the idea of a beacon,” said the architect who designed the Obama Presidential Center.

It looks like . . . a triumph of brutalist . . . whimsy? (Is that even possible?) A science-fictional housing for our ET overlords, maybe. Or something worse.

Perhaps Baphomet poses inside.

You’ve probably seen the outside of the monstrosity by now. If you’re like me, you’ve marveled at this triumph of bad taste. It surely symbolizes something, but what?

It may serve as an icon for the 44th president’s monumental pretentiousness.

Or his oblivious ideological bravado.

But it could stand for Political Hubris more generally.

“The Egyptians had their pyramids,” [muses](#) Oliver Wainwright in *The Guardian*. “The Anglo-Saxons had their barrows. And the

Americans have their presidential libraries — the chief difference being that the leaders the U.S. venerates are usually still alive at the opening.” Wainwright notes that Americans lack “a royal family or a state religion,” and this has allowed an Imperial Presidency to bloom — filling “the void, transforming over the decades into a national personality cult, complete with its own secular temples to these powerful men.”

He’s not wrong.

But as politics has gotten more extreme, even bizarre, and America’s ideologues and beleaguered voters find themselves anointing a series of increasingly unfit pharaohs (hat-tip to *The Guardian*’s “pharaonic edifice”), this . . . oddly shaped (“like a Klingon prison”) eyesore . . . serves as a monument, perhaps, for the whole age.

Just don’t blame the architect. “The president was very, very hands on with the design,” Wainwright quotes the genius behind this laid egg. “He talked a lot about his love of Brâncuși.”

No. 44 being hands-on in the design explains a *lot*.

The Center hasn’t opened yet; the Grand Opening ceremonies are scheduled for the 18th.

Please let me know how it goes, if you attend. I live near Washington, D.C., and lost my genuflecting and awestruck wonder at that city’s much less ridiculous monuments years and years ago.

This is Common Sense. I’m Paul Jacob.

Note: Chicago, a city with beautiful architecture, will survive.