

VITRINE

18 July ————— 5 September 2021

The Island Max Colson

VITRINE, Digital

'The Island' is British artist Max Colson's first playable, 3D virtual world artwork. The interactive environment takes the form of the exhibition on VITRINE, Digital.

The viewer navigates and explores a pastoral British idyll which has had its time and place disorientated, merging British World War II propaganda with contemporary public health advertising and social media posts around the Covid-19 pandemic and Brexit. The outcome is a strangely dissimilar purgatorial land of visual and documented material collaged together, which reflects upon the continual recirculation of Britain's Second World War crisis in its present day.

Working with video, animation and digital prints, Colson's practice explores the intersection between architecture and landscape, considering their relationships to class, British national identity, technological disruption and urban change. Colson engages with Britain as a political and social ideology, using its turbulent but rich history to reflect on and understand recent events such as Brexit, off-shore banking, and the current Covid-19 pandemic. Having studied photojournalism, Colson is interested in the visual language of making information visible, and the ways in which this is communicated.

Colson's signature style of 'live' collaged, copy and pasted information and material overlaid with one another, is evident in 'The Island'. The artist has used a variety of sources, including the Imperial War Museum's vast, publicly available records through to recent Instagram stories made by British Adventurer Anthony Middleton. The outcome is a disorientated world in which British propaganda from the Second World War absurdly circulates around scenes, images, and news from contemporary Britain. The cyclical landscape is under the shadow of an apparent looming war, as the player navigates through 'The Island's' landscape, with surrounding and evolving ambient sounds. The player is able to explore a number of different areas, each with their own specific audio components which are predominantly taken from British Second World War propaganda films.

'The Island' is styled on the game sub-genre First Person Shooters, in which the player navigates and interacts as the character in the first-person, experiencing the action and game features by only seeing their arms and hands. Colson has chosen to use this over-saturated feature to resemble the gamification of history, a recent phenomenon where factual, historical events are adopted and used as a story line narrative to be played and told over the course of gameplay. This is most evident in the notorious franchises 'Call of Duty' and 'Medal of Honour' which has created games involving events from both World War I and II. This is now a regular feature in games and generally normalised, offering no substantial educational purpose. Colson's adoption of FPS strips the identity of the character so they are unable to be related to a specific time in history, remaining passive in relation to the material they interact with.

Colson says that "'The Island' interrogates the influence of memories of the Second World War Blitz period (when Britain was heavily bombed by the Nazis) on Britain today. On the TV, the radio, and online, the UK public are incessantly reminded of their 'wartime' pedigree; the enemies they must 'liberate' themselves from; and their 'inherent' Blitz Spirit which they can steel themselves with in the face of any adversity – whether that be caused by Brexit, the coronavirus pandemic, or economic hardship induced by both."

There are nine British flags placed around the environment which can be collected by players, however there is no trophy to be won by playing 'The Island'. Instead, the player is invited to

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spend time exploring a landscape in which the nostalgia and propaganda of Britain's Second World War past is used to offer humorous scenes that suggest new ways to compare and critique the UK's present situation and values. The structure of the Island is circular, but there are multiple pathways that criss-cross the landscape, as well as hidden scenes to find and experience. The way in which the island is traversed is up to the player.

'The Island' is designed to be played on a desktop or laptop computer with Google Chrome, so will not be fully functional on mobile or tablet devices. Recommended play time: Short Stay 10-15 mins & Deep Dive 15-30 mins.

Max Colson (b. 1985, London, UK) lives and works in London. He has a BA in English Literature from the University College London and an MA in Documentary Photography & Photojournalism from London College of Communication.

Colson has been exhibited internationally at galleries and museums including: Fotomuseum Winterthur, CH; Arebyte, London, UK; SPACE, London, UK; Royal Institute of British Architects, London, UK; Showroom MAMA, Rotterdam, NL; The Photographer's Gallery, London, UK; The Nunnery Gallery, London, UK; La Condition Publique, Roubaix, FR; Brighton Digital Festival, UK; Noorderlicht Gallery, Groningen, NL; C/O Berlin, DE; Brighton Photo Fringe OPEN14, UK; Republic Gallery, London, UK.

Film festivals and screenings include: Apex Art, New York, US; Sheffield Doc Fest, UK; Hamburg International Short Film Festival, DE; Aesthetica Short Film Festival, York, UK; Chicago Underground Film Festival, US; Kassel Dokfest, DE; Architecture Film Festival London, UK & Rotterdam, NL; World Architecture Festival, Amsterdam, NL; Werkleitz Centre for Media Art, Halle, DE; Cairo Video Festival, EG; Watermans, London, UK; Milano Design Film Festival, IT; VITRINE x Kino Screenings, London, UK; Royal Academy, London, UK; 61st International Leipzig Festival for Documentary and Animated Film, DE; Bertha DocHouse, London, UK; Shortwaves Festival, Poznań, PL.

Awards and residencies include: Jarman Award 2020 (Nominated); Film London FLAMIN Fellowship 2019, UK; Lumen Prize 2019; Tenderflix Artist Video Prize 2017, UK; SPACE Art and Technology Residency 2018, UK.

Artworks

Max Colson, *The Island*, 2021. 3D, playable virtual world. Edition of 3 (+2 AP's).

VITRINE has released two new editions by Colson in conjunction with 'The Island'. These can be viewed in a requested portfolio or in the price list underneath.

For a portfolio and sales inquiries, please contact:

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[View Price List](#)

VITRINE is focused on artistic experimentation and emerging interdisciplinary practices. The gallery was founded in London in 2010, with a second space in Basel opened in 2016 and a third digital space launched in 2020. Over this decade, we have established a reputation as a selector and nurturer of new talent and our continued aim is to support artists' careers and the growth of their ideas.

Our programme is focused on interdisciplinary approaches in a variety of media, concentrating on artists working in installation, sculpture and performance.

Our spaces are transparent, which allows all exhibitions to be viewable 24/7 from the surrounding public squares. Both VITRINE London and Basel are wheelchair accessible. Our office and viewing spaces are hidden inside, allowing for an incredibly flexible contemporary exhibiting and working space.

Our business model is a hybrid. We operate an expanding commercial gallery; representing a core group of artists and advising international clients. Our work in the public realm and commitment to supporting artists with ambitious experimental exhibitions has allowed us access to public funding, which we carefully use for specific large-scale non-profit projects.

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