

MAXIMILLIAN WILLIAM

47 MORTIMER STREET, LONDON, W1W 8HJ  
info@maxmillianwilliam.com | T: +44 (0) 207 998 4054

JAYLON ISRAEL HICKS  
THE UNIVERSE IS COMING TO TOWN :  
*USA Playhouse (Castle of Peace)*

Exhibition Dates: 30 September – 28 October 2023

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Maximillian William, London is pleased to present *USA Playhouse (Castle of Peace)*, an installation by conceptual artist Jaylon Israel Hicks (b. 1993, Houston, Texas USA).

The installation takes the form of an abandoned playhouse, interrogating external systems of oppression and our resulting longing for escape. Keeping with Hicks' appetite for subversion, *USA Playhouse (Castle of Peace)* does not immediately appear peaceful. The spiked gateway is emblazoned with a reconfigured American flag, announcing Hicks' national identity and alluding to the potential complexities of such an affiliation. At the peak of the Minneapolis protests in 2020, Hicks moved to Minnesota. In the face of a global reckoning with anti-Black racism, Hicks found himself juggling the incessant demands of everyday life while attempting to guard his selfhood. The installation parallels the myriad places where, despite a pervasive hostility, one is compelled to find peace.

Significantly, the structure is not a castle 'for' peace but a castle 'of' peace, with Hicks as creator and host. The version presented in the gallery is a reproduction of Hicks' own castle, originally built in his living room in Minnesota from expanded polystyrene. Hicks' design is yet to be resolved, and thus the reproduction evolved through frequent Zoom calls, collective troubleshooting, and symbiotic experimentation. The nature of the material causes the castle's construction to appear tentative, unfixed in its details, emphasising its existence as a prototype of a prototype. At the height of the art-world's frenzied clamour for easy consumption, *USA Playhouse (Castle of Peace)* serves as a kind of counter-programming, offering a reset that highlights the fraught demands of artistic production and the shared process of translation.

## Notes to Editors:

Production by Theodore Vass

Jaylon Israel Hicks (b. 1993, Houston, Texas, USA) is an American artist who lives and works in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Hicks is a conceptual artist who experiments in a range of media, including but not limited to drawing, painting, sculpture, and photography. In March 2023, Maximillian William, London presented Hicks' debut solo exhibition *Gothica*. Hicks' previous solo exhibition *Wilt* was mounted in a Kaboom Books in Houston, TX, 2015.

For further press information please contact: [uma@maximillianwilliam.com](mailto:uma@maximillianwilliam.com)

Maximillian William  
47 Mortimer Street, London, W1W 8HJ, United Kingdom  
[www.maximillianwilliam.com](http://www.maximillianwilliam.com)  
T: +44 (0)207 998 4054  
[@maximillian\\_william](https://www.instagram.com/maximillian_william)