



© Claudia Hart, *An Imaginary Ruin*, installation shot, 2020.

Claudia Hart

An Imaginary Ruin

Exhibition: 3rd December 2020 – 13th March, 2021

#ClaudiaHart

GAZELL.iO, the digital arm of Gazelli Art House, welcomes Claudia Hart to ‘takeover’ the Dover Street gallery’s new lower ground exhibition space with her artwork *The Ruins*; launching on the 3rd December for its London premiere. The physical exhibition will be installed until 17th January, alongside an extended viewing of a digitised version which is sited in a two-story scale model of Gazelli Art House, London; a parallel universe created by Hart in Mozilla Hubs. Although the Mozilla Hubs work should be considered an extension of the bricks and mortar exhibition on Dover Street it is in fact an autonomous piece entitled *An Imaginary Ruin* by the artist in a nod to the visionary prisons of the 18th century Italian architect and archeologist Giovanni Piranesi.

The Ruins implements still lifes, the classical form of a memento mori, to contemplate the decay of Western civilisation. In this exhibition, Hart revises the canons of modernist painting and the manifestos of failed utopias. Exhibited works are meditations on the flow of history, expressed as a cycle of decay and regeneration. *The Ruins* is an antidote to a world in crisis, navigating from a Eurocentric paradigm of fixed photographic capture into a reality of malleable and inherently unstable computer simulations and systemic collapse.

The Ruins, the central artwork from which the exhibition gains its title, is an audiovisual animation tracking through a claustrophobic game world from which there is no escape. As the three-channel maze unravels, Hart introduces her newest interpretation of still lifes—low-resolution polygon models. These models, hearkening to the idea of a poor copy or image popularised by Hito Steyerl, are computer-made replications of copyright-protected paintings. Taken from works by Matisse and Picasso, patriarchs of the Modernist canon, these forms

cover *The Ruins* in flirtatious copyright infringement. Copyright marks the beginning of Modernism as a response to the emerging technology of photography. Music composed by Edmund Campion furthers the ethos of modernism through the tactical mixing of failed Utopian ideologies: Thomas Jefferson ‘On American Liberty’; ‘The Bauhaus Manifesto’ by Walter Gropius; ‘Fordlandia’, Henry Ford’s failed suburban rubber plantation in the Amazon rainforest; and Jim Jones’s sermon, ‘The Open Door’. Campion has processed and mixed each recording read by the artist, using Hart’s voice as an instrument that serves as the soundtrack to both the animation and the exhibition itself.

On the 16th of December, Gazelli Art House Founder Mila Askarova and Hart will host a digital demo “walk through” in the custom-made space and will discuss the artwork. The pre-recorded discussion will be filmed in a Cinéma Vérité style from which the viewers will gain an authentic insight into the Hart-curated VR world. The event will be held in cooperation with the real-time engagement platform Agora Digital Art.

About The Artist

Claudia Hart is an artist and associate professor in the Department of Film, Video, New Media, and Animation at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois. Having emerged as part of a generation of 90s intermedia artists examining issues of identity and representation, she was an early adopter of virtual reality.

Here, she has used 3D animation to make media installations and projections. Later, as they were invented, other forms of VR, AR and objects were produced by computer-driven production machines.

The artist explains, “My censored work has been shown internationally in public spaces and on various public platforms. It often references classical art tropes such as the Renaissance odalisque and Hellenistic sculpture.”

About GAZELL.iO

GAZELL.iO is the digital arm of Gazelli Art House, comprising an online Residency programme, NFT drops and collaborations, a dedicated Project Space holding monthly exhibitions, and a permanently installed VR Library — all in the heart of Mayfair. Since 2015, GAZELL.iO Residency has offered a unique insight into the environments of some of the most recognised and upcoming VR, AR, and digital artists. The four-week online Residency allows artists to take creative control, enabling them to showcase their artistic journey and interact with new and existing audiences directly. In 2020, the Project Space was launched to allow artists to showcase their digital artworks in a physical space. By bridging the gap between the digital and physical, NFT drops are shared in conjunction with the subsequent Project Space exhibition or artist Residency. GAZELL.iO aims to bring digital art pioneers and a new generation of artists to a broader audience through its dynamic exhibition and educational programme.

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