

# Press Release **Victoria Miro Gallery**

**Alex Hartley**

*Don't want to be part of your world*

6 September - 8 October 2005

From 6 September, Victoria Miro Gallery presents a new body of work by Alex Hartley. For this series, Hartley has taken large-format landscape photographs in remote locations around the world. To these idyllic, desolate vistas he has inserted detailed architectural models meticulously built in bas-relief onto the surfaces of the prints. Abandoned geo-domes nestle amongst the rocks of the Mojave Desert; a glass-walled Bond villain retreat sits unassailable on a high Arctic ridge; a crumbling Case Study house lies abandoned on a plain, slowly returning to the California desert. This exhibition marks a departure from the encased photographs of architectural spaces for which Hartley is well known, and denotes a shift in Hartley's focus from a formal concern with the representation of space to an interest in how we imagine ourselves within it.

These works reference the collage and photomontage techniques of such architectural visionaries as Superstudio, Archigram and Cedric Price. From the mid- to late-1960s, these and other architects used collage and photomontage to bring to life unrealizable projects – whether idealized and utopian, or impossible to build due to scale and ambition. Hartley's imagined structures sample the architecture of Buckminster Fuller, John Lautner, and Richard Neutra, and also incorporate portable or temporary dwellings, matching the invented building to the landscape of the photograph. Within the esoteric narratives that the works establish lies a subtle sense of failure, a dystopian vision of architecture and our attempts to inhabit the uninhabitable.

In the project gallery, Hartley presents photographs of an arctic village built for Swiss and Scandinavian scientists conducting research during the International Geophysical Year of 1957 and deserted only months later. The images reveal a slowing of the effects of time, with no signs of decay evident in the shuttered buildings. Zero humidity at the 80<sup>th</sup> parallel has prevented any physical deterioration of the shelters on the remote ice cap, leaving each preserved exactly as it was left.

Born in 1963, Alex Hartley lives and works in London. He has recently been awarded a major commission to make an installation for the new Silk Street entrance to the Barbican Centre. Hartley has shown in both national and international exhibitions, in venues including the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Denmark; Museum of Contemporary Art, Sarajevo; Künstlerhaus Dortmund, Germany; and The National Museum of Art, Osaka, Japan amongst others. Recently he had a solo exhibition at Distrito Cuatro, Madrid. During a year long sabbatical in Los Angeles Alex Hartley climbed – unaided - many of LA's landmark architectural sites. His climbs were photographed and documented in *LA Climbs: Alternative Uses for Architecture* published in 2003.

<b>Press enquiries:</b>	phone + 44 (0)20 7336 8109	Victoria Miro Gallery	open Tuesday to Saturday
<b>Kathy Stephenson</b>	fax + 44 (0)20 7251 5596	16 Wharf Road	10am to 6pm, admission free
<b>head of publicity and events</b>	info@victoria-miro.com	London N1 7RW	info@victoria-miro.com