

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

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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 interior of the form is cloaked in darkness, embodying the depth of outer space and the contemplative feeling of losing oneself in a seemingly infinite expanse. Within the shrunken castle, darkness is not automatically dangerous, and Blackness is not necessarily threatening. What might initially appear menacing to some, might in fact offer a moment of quietude for others. As Hicks reveals, it is only by inhabiting the discomfort inherent in certain spaces that we can begin to access their hidden meditative qualities.