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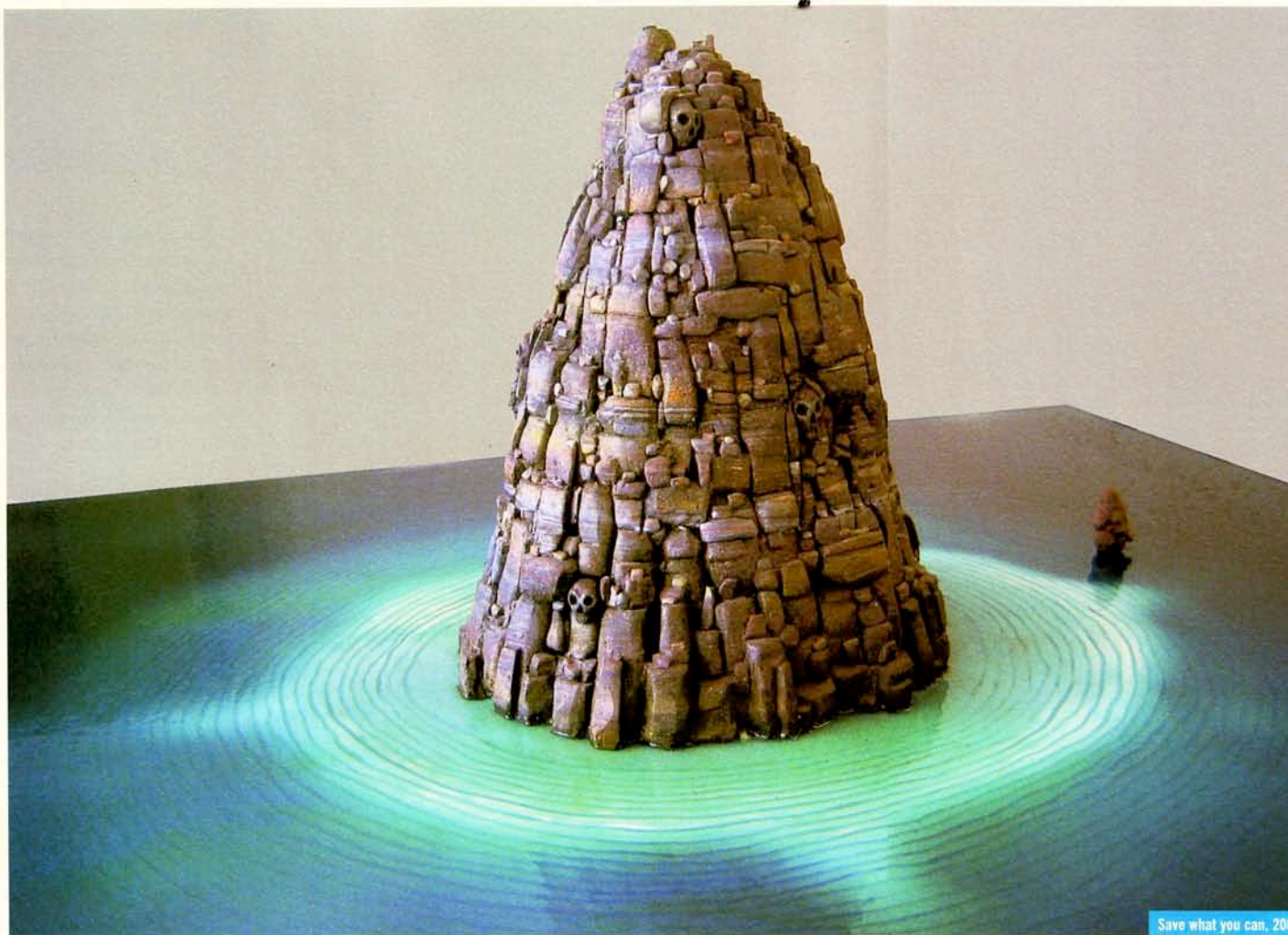
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PHOTOGRAPHY: HENRI DIERKERHOF'S STUDIO, C

Fantastic voyage: MICHAEL SAMUEL



Save what you can, 200

Having shown with Cornelia Parker, Gregory Crewdson and Pipiotti Rist, this month Michael Samuels presents his first solo show – an enigmatic collection of mysterious islands.

The work of Michael Samuels manages to explore isolation and escapism on one hand, and shared experience and memory on the other. His sculptural pieces – miniature seascapes with beautifully finished desert islands – play with fantasy and the banal. However his unique combination of the seductive and the sinister have, until now, evaded the radar of commercial galleries. With his first commercial solo show since graduating from the RCA in 2000 taking place at Rokeby this month, Dazed decided to find out what floats his creative boat. JASON JULES

Dazed & Confused: Where did your fascination for seascapes come from?

Michael Samuels: I'm not quite sure. I've travelled a lot, but I don't put it down to one set of influences. I've been working on new seascapes, as well as new furniture pieces. The seascapes have evolved into something more sinister; like previous pieces they draw you into the space, but this time they suggest a very different narrative. I'm not going to give anything

more away, but I am very excited about them.

D&C: It seems that your miniature seascapes somehow capitalise on our fantasy of escapism, but also manage to magnify this sense of alienation. Is that intentional?

MS: I think so. There is a tendency to look at them and say, 'I want to go there,' then a few minutes later maybe say, 'no, I don't.' They are meant to be uncomfortable places, devoid of life, that, although they are initially appealing, are actually quite inhospitable.

D&C: The finish on your seascapes is very delicate and engaging. How do you feel when viewers give in to the temptation to touch the work?

MS: My seascapes take months to finish, and all I want is to achieve that pristine surface, and that's taken years to accomplish. They are seductively tactile and no matter how hard I try, no matter how many 'Do Not Touch' signs I put up, people always touch them. Deep down it is satisfying that I have made something that people can't keep their hands off. Another part of my practice involves combing second-hand stores for very specific pieces of furniture, which I then

build into environments, stacking and piling it precariously on top of one another. Then usually I put a small urban scene on top. Perhaps because the works seem to be unstable and look ready to topple over, people are not comfortable touching them maybe it is because the furniture is so familiar to them. Personally, I can't wait to get my hands on the furniture and dismantle it once I have found it.

D&C: The titles of your pieces are often obscure. Is your intention that the viewer looks at the work from a predetermined perspective?

MS: People can look at them in any way they want and can come away with something different each time. The titles reflect my intention, but this is often overlooked. I think the works are sometimes on display, people look twice, and what they initially see is not what it seems. The titles can be a clue. One of my new seascapes is called 'False Hope'. JASON JULES
Michael Samuels is showing at Rokeby, Store Street, London WC1 from October 14 – November 14 www.rokebygallery.com