

1. *de_dust* (2004) Aram Bartholl

In the first section of the exhibition, titled 'Game Travel/Playing Tourist', three large greenish grey cubes stand in an apparently random group in the centre of the gallery. They are about a metre in each dimension. They appear as an odd intrusion, as if a delivery has just been made. At a distance, they look like battered metal shipping crates, standing on wooden pallets, with black and yellow striped hazard tape wrapped around the lower part of each crate. But on closer inspection, it is revealed that the cubes are completely smooth, covered with shiny vinyl printed with digital images of shipping crates, taken from the computer game Counter Strike. These life-size versions of computer-generated images do not attempt to fool the eye – blown up to this scale, the lines of the artwork are jagged and pixelated, revealing their origins as CGIs or computer generated images.

The installation *de_dust* is part of a bigger project by German artist Aram Bartholl in which he attempts to rebuild the entire bomb defusal map 'Dust' from the computer game *Counter Strike*. Initially released in 1999 as a modification or 'mod' of another first-person shooter game, *Counter Strike* quickly spread to become a global sensation. Its community not only joined from all over the world, flooding internet cafes and meeting on-screen through the online multiplayer game, but was also active in designing textures and customising game maps. *de_dust* comments on the aesthetics of 1990s virtual environments and on the increasingly close relationship between virtual and physical spaces for socialising and exchange.