



<http://pandora.otdac.org>

Opening Times: Throughout your *Opening Times* residency, you'll be creating new work under the title *Pandora*. Can you tell us what *Pandora* is or means to you?

Nicolas Sassoon: *Pandora* is the name of the street where I've been living off and on for the last 4 years. When I first moved here the name of the street stuck with me as a great location for a science fiction plot. The house where I live on Pandora Street is a slightly run-down small suburban home, with a big backyard and a dark basement. I have turned the basement into my studio, which means I have a desk there with my laptop, a dim light and a heater so I don't freeze during the winter. It's a great place to work on a computer, I can't really see the outside world and I lose track of time pretty easily.

When I was first approached to do a residency for *Opening Times*, the idea of an online residency also stuck with me as a great basis for a science-fiction plot. Usually residencies involve specific sites, where, as an artist, you interact with your surroundings and produce works often based on these interactions. But in the case of *Opening Times*, the geography of the site isn't very obvious, since the project is primarily happening online...

I began to inquire about the site of my residency and realised it would be my studio space, and by extension the space of my computer since it is my main work area. *Pandora* is a project based on this premise. It starts with the depiction of my studio space and then quickly extends into the duality of the space that I work with on a daily basis. This duality interests me because it is in conflicting opposition in many ways; one space being very concrete and operating within the contingencies of reality, the other space being ethereal and operating within the contingencies of whatever fantasies it can be fed.

OT: I can't help but think of Pandora's Box... if you take the lid off your small studio space in the basement, there might be something far bigger, far greater hidden inside.

NS: Pandora's Box is the very first thing that came to my mind when I found the rental listing for my house. It led me to hope that I was going to move onto some sort of supernatural street. I enjoy the myth of Pandora's Box (which was actually a jar, not a box) because it overlaps with a very elementary and visceral perception of computer screens. Pandora's Jar is supposed to

contain all the evils from the world to be released on humanity - a punishment from Zeus to the mortals because Prometheus stole fire from the heavens. In a more general and modern interpretation, to open Pandora's Box means to perform a seemingly innocent action which ends up with horrifying consequences. This modern interpretation of the myth seems, to me, like the perfect analogy for a general perception of computer screens and more specifically for their contents; Internet, videogames, pornography, violence, etc. It's a very basic but also a very resilient perception, which tends to hover like a threatening shadow above our potential misuse of computer technology.

I spend at least 8 hours a day in front of my computer, so you could say that I'm deep inside the box, navigating endlessly into the source of all evils. However, my relationship to screen space has led me to a more complex perception. The environment of my computer screen has become a vital extension of my physical space; it is a projective space in constant dialogue with my geographical surroundings. It's also an environment that allows me to investigate mythologies, fictions and fantasies in a much deeper way. What I'm trying to create during this online residency is a reflection on that personal environment filled with mythologies and fictions, and merge it with my actual surroundings which are essentially my house. My screen-based influences and inspirations become the evils contained within Pandora's Box and they are happily infesting my home.

OT: Do your creations - the works you're making for *Pandora* - go through a sort of exorcism process? Are you expelling a demon each time you upload a new animation?

NS: Each work starts as a hypothetical scenario involving my house or parts of my house. Some of these scenarios are very optimistic, other scenarios are apocalyptic, while some others are more "neutral". Most of these scenarios can be described as science fiction plots. They all place my domestic environment (my home) under an external influence that negates, displaces or alters the physicality of space, the behaviour of objects, the scale of things, etc. While most of these scenarios are rather playful, each of them stems from an actual lingering thought; an afterimage from my exposure to a screen-based reality blending into a physical reality.

In terms of representation, the works use two specific formats. Both of these formats are derived from traditional Japanese art forms - wood-block prints and Suisekis – and computer graphics formats – technical isometric drawings and 3D motion graphics. Although these formats refer to different eras and spaces - on one hand, a tangible space and on the other hand, a virtual space - they appear to me as being part of a common visual tradition, one that I find compelling. I also chose these specific formats for their ability to render projective and contemplative spaces.

OT: GIFs. Why GIFs?

NS: As a kid I was obsessed with the first digitalized video files to be handled by videogame consoles and computers, which, retrospectively, are very close to the first GIFs I experienced online in terms of compression on colour indexation.

Later on in art school, video loops became an important format in my work and GIFs appealed to me for their ability to create seamless loops.

I have always wanted to engage almost exclusively with one particular format and visual language, to be able to dig very deep within that specific field. It ended up being GIFs...