

David Everitt How, "Stephen G. Rhodes : Metro Pictures," **Flash Art International**, Issue 277, March-April 2011, pp. 122

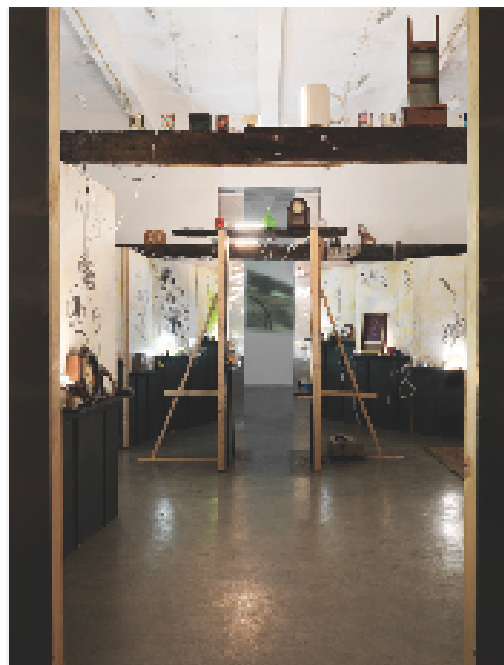
## STEPHEN G. RHODES METRO PICTURES - NEW YORK

For his first solo exhibition at Metro Pictures, Stephen G. Rhodes foregoes canonical Kant, forfeiting the classics like *The Critique of Practical Reason* (1788) for the little-known essay "The Illnesses of the Head" (1764). While Rhodes translates a portion of the text for the press release, it reads less like translation than Nigerian e-mail spam concerning a "silly instability," intestines and "piling." Yet it is an apt introduction to the artist's amusing pop-culture appropriations, the most notable of which colonized the gallery of Isabella Bortolozzi in 2010. For that somewhat infamous exhibition, Rhodes re-constituted Walt Disney's *Song of the South* (1946) and Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining* (1980) as a sort of racially bankrupt, Hollywood ghost story.

Here, he has constructed a similarly sinister funhouse of hallways and dead-end corners. For *Inkantinent Mochte Gemacht; Kalifornia* (2011), a wood cabinet's interior, containing mugs and books — including Rousseau's *Confessions* (1782-1789) — is plastered with chintzy California travel ads scrawled upon with paint. How many cups does it take to make a continuum suspend: stress (2011) is a vaguely Huma Bhabha-like dystopian figure made of drippy string, tire tread and steel rods. Elsewhere, broken coffee mugs line exposed beams and dirtied shelves, while cheap-looking digital clocks ominously blink the same synchronized hour. It is as if time stood still, offering a snapshot of Kant's own agoraphobic, domestic hell.

In the back gallery, four digital videos are projected from a seemingly jerry-rigged stack of audio-visual equipment. Rotating in place, the videos show Rhodes dressed unconvincingly as the philosopher, comically marching in old-timey boots along freeways, or drawing intestines crudely on ad-hoc architecture. A sort of unholy dalliance between Jason Rhoades' capitalist clutter and Mike Kelley's infantilized

regressions, one can be forgiven for conflating Kant with Julia Kristeva as Rhodes defiantly pushes down walls, lights things on fire and imprints poop-like marks with tennis balls and coffee mugs. Like a child with his toys, this troubled subject occupies a space of abject objects and images where, in the words of Kristeva, "meaning collapses."



STEPHEN G RHODES, *Grundlegung Zur Krankisch Grundrisse Kopf bis Magen Innere Wirkung Natur Kapputt Aus Gemacht*, 2011. 4 channel film and mixed media, installation view at Metro Pictures, New York. Courtesy the artist and Metro Pictures, New York.