



THE GIGANTIC *is making its appearance*

Jason Rhoades, Four Roads WWIV

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Jason Rhoades is fluent in the language of excess. As presented in his posthumous retrospective *Four Roads*, his aesthetic channels a middle ground between Rube Goldberg and Paul McCarthy, irreverently constructing expansive environments out of the blunt implements of contemporary everyday life. The sheer mass of banal consumer crap has the potential to overwhelm the viewer like she walked into a messy Walmart, or stumbled upon the aftermath of an eviction. But methods begin to emerge throughout the chaos over time. The constellations of drywall, dust, photographs, chairs, TV screens, and lights spatialize themselves and the viewer via their scale and presence. The elements reveal themselves to relate to one another like a machine, with moving parts activating and vibrating all at once. It is impossible to experience everything occurring in a complete way. He revels in incompleteness, anti-climax even, despite his work's complexity and obsessiveness. There is no decisive moment. Things are just arranged and left on, like any average American suburban household. This aesthetic is most pointed in his early works, specifically *CHERRY Makita* (1993) and *The Creation Myth* (1998). The works in the show that are any less than overwhelming lack the cohesiveness to be of consequence. With such masses of information, one would be hard-pressed not to find wry juxtapositions peeking out. The log forest in *The Creation Myth* is textured with images of pornography and vernacular photographs — both of which have a propensity to be masturbatory. And Rhoades' propensity to Do-It-Himself leads to comical manifestations of cardboard, tin foil, and hastily scrawled-upon surfaces of all sorts. The exhibition in addition delineates the artist's thinking process in a bare and visible manner, with a vital collection of drawings, writings, and scale models of the environments (this last inclusion sets up a jarring dynamic as the viewer ponders a model of the piece from within the actual piece itself). But with all the indulgence present in these works, one is left puzzling about where Rhoades' extra-formal criticality enters into the work and the process. The work seems to acknowledge and then simply replicate problematic dynamics all throughout its appropriative aesthetic. Masculinity begins to reach levels of parody in works such as *CHERRY Makita*, but falls short, perhaps because of the lack of antagonism accompanying the work's bodily implications. The work falls beyond sex-normsubversive and into misogynistic, with objectifying texts of women and female genitalia hung up (bleeding out) all throughout. This is particularly acute in *My Madinah*, which is formally compelling but thoughtless and juvenile in its obsession with "pussy words," a term tacitly accepted by the curatorial team as an indicator of Rhoades' "playfulness." Hegemony is the safety net of his falls. Indeed, upon deeper examination Rhoades can be said to have adopted indulgences of a different sort: the work is a little too clean, a little too mellow, and a little too recognizable to be deeply visceral or subversive. In relation to the aforementioned metaphors of Walmart and evictions, Rhoades at his loosest is similar but ultimately too neat to leave the same impact. *The Creation Myth*, his messiest work, fits neatly within the gallery, with little walking paths carved through like a leisure garden. It even conforms to the gallery's rules: viewers are not allowed to touch any part of the piece. There is nothing at stake for Rhoades in registering his American suburban framework, the workings of which are so normative and pervasive that only in pushing them to a logical end can one provide new insight via. His '00-era works are even colder and more sterile, setting up neat lines and distancing themselves from the viewer's space. Rhoades can be seen refining an aesthetic of consumerist and middle-class space throughout this retrospective, but he failed to push its facets to a critical breaking point during his lifetime.