

Los Angeles-based artist Stephen G. Rhodes multimedia installations darkly theatricalize the historical unconscious, borrowing strategies of pedagogical entertainment found in theme parks, period cinema, and museum displays. When Rhodes takes on a topic, he literally tackles it, ungluing the various parts (overt or subliminal) to reveal the underbelly of his subject.

The starting point for this project is Steve Allen's late-1970s television chat show, *Meeting of Minds*, which featured dramatized roundtable discussions among historical figures such as Cleopatra, Aristotle, Florence Nightingale, Voltaire, Francis Bacon, Atilla the Hun, and Emily Dickinson. The topic of the episode that Rhodes confronts is torture, and it features the Marquis de Sade, Fredrick Douglass, the Italian philosopher Cesare Beccaria, and the empress dowager of China Tzu-hsi. In contrast to the civilized (if scripted) discourse of the original series, Rhodes's version quickly devolves into scenes of mayhem. The "guests" carry out acts of torture upon the set and one another, eventually clawing their way through the wallpaper and green walls to arrive at another episode of the series, which provides pretext for future havoc. The act of dismantling is key here, heightening the lunacy and tension of a situation in which disparate undead historical personages sensibly discuss torture. The entire set has been transposed to the Hammer's Vault Gallery, where it serves as a backdrop for a 360-degree projection of the film (itself shot with a revolving camera), which occasionally spills out through the holes in the set walls onto the gallery walls and visitors' bodies.

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