

Jason Rhoades 1965-2006



Jason Rhoades in his studio, surrounded by the "Black Pussy" installation, Mar. 30, 2006.

Jason Rhoades, 41, Los Angeles installation artist, died on Aug. 1. At this writing the results of the autopsy are still pending, but he reportedly died from heart failure. A frequent participant in major international exhibitions, Rhoades was known for his exuberant lifestyle and boisterous personality, which were reflected in his complex, often provocative room-size sculptural installations that combined a hodgepodge of objects and substances—motor engines, utility trailers, donut-making machines, donuts, whipped cream, scrap wood—into a slippery coherence. In L.A. he had recently undertaken "Black Pussy Soiree Cabaret Macrame," a series of invitation-only dinner parties within an interactive

installation in a warehouse filled with such items as shelves, beds, neon signs and electronics. New York dealer David Zwirner, who has represented the artist since 1993, will present a re-creation of the installation this November, along with documentation of the L.A. events.

Rhoades's works frequently reference cars and/or female genitalia. His first New York show, in 1993 at Zwirner, was "CHERRY Makita—Honest Engine Work," for which he created a foam-core garage in the gallery and filled it with handmade objects relating to power tools and car racing. Similarly, a 1994 show at Rosamund Felsen in L.A., "Swedish Erotica and Fiero Parts," was a gathering of items, many of which were yellow, including the artist's yellow Pontiac Fiero parked outside. For the 1999 Venice Biennale, Rhoades collaborated with Paul McCarthy—with whom he had studied at UCLA—for "Proposition," which involved a bucking bronco and the making of a porn film. For "Meccatuna," his 2003 installation at Zwirner, the artist had a gallery assistant cobble together a Lego version of the Kaaba, which was constructed throughout the show's run and displayed with cans of tuna and hundreds of neon signs of slang words for vagina. —Stephanie Cash