



“OPEN COURT,” 2012, **Robin Rhode**, DIGITAL ANIMATION, DURATION 60 SECONDS, CONTINUOUS LOOP  
16:9 VIDEO FORMAT, PHOTO: COURTESY L&M ARTS

### LOS ANGELES

#### **Robin Rhode: “Imaginary Exhibition” at L&M Arts**

Robin Rhode is a South African-born, Berlin-based artist who carefully constructs illusionistic images and sequences them together as either stills or animations in which the impossible happens. Created in urban settings, Rhode’s works are always performative, and his mark making has a graffiti-like quality. He produces stop-motion narratives using actors (or the artist himself) performing in front of the camera, often in relation to a drawing that magically comes to life on a blank wall or in an empty lot. In the nine-panel grid, *School of Fish* (all works 2012), a red-capped actor holds a fishing rod and proceeds to reel in triangle shaped “fish” which are drawn on a bright blue facade. The turf or carpet upon which the actor stands becomes wrinkled, indicating both ocean waves and tension in his fishing line that has now attracted numerous imaginary fish. Gesture and movement is paramount in Rhode’s work. In *36 Ways a Dice Can Roll*, a suited man carrying a briefcase gesticulates: throwing drawn dice with one hand, while lifting his actual briefcase with the other simultaneously. As the sequence progresses, the numbers he rolls change, as do their position and the geometric trail that elevates them in varying perspectives on the wall. While the man’s expression is hardly seen, his range of emotions is suggested through his ever-changing body position.

In Rhode’s animations the works come fully to life, whereas in the stills the viewer fills in the gaps in the action. *Open Court*, the only animation in this exhibition, is a sixty-second loop in which a racket-holding actor hits snowballs against a Richard Serra sculpture. The balls leave their mark on the tilted arc, filling the rusted metal expanse with dots of white challenging the preciousness of Serra’s work. Rhode uses the Serra sculpture as a blank ground in much the same way he utilizes other aspects of the urban landscape. *Untitled/Houses+Seas* juxtaposes images of dilapidated homes in New Orleans that have been crumbled into a ball and then smoothed out with images of undulating seas. The natural ripples of the waves parallel the man-made creases in the images of the houses, calling attention to the relationship between man and nature. His imagery is elegant, gestural, and often humorous. No matter what the backdrop—land, sea, or air—Rhode layers personal iconography, usually in the form of drawing, onto the natural environment and conflates formal concerns and social consciousness.

—JODY ZELLEN