We had just gotten back from Disney World and were watching some footage from the trip. Psychedelics have a way of re-presenting the obvious, and for some reason we enlisted their assistance in the study of the object of our research. The event was always lost in memory, but its effect had lodged itself in my unconscious. I had, after all, been going to the Hall of Presidents all my life...

To be ushered into the Hall of Presidents is to descend into the realm of paranoia. First of all, you are in Disney World, and, secondly, you are entering a federally recognized museum of American Presidency. The fact that forty-one of the forty-three animatronic figures occupy the stage in silence only adds to the atmosphere’s tension: these “presidents” represent the undead. With the exceptions of George W. Bush and Abraham Lincoln, the undead performers exist in silence and in the shadows of one another. They maintain the spirit of repression that is the theme of the Hall of Presidents. While at once posing as a museum, the Hall of Presidents also serves as a graveyard theatre of mediums. The layers of media enlisted for the attraction mirror the condition of the undead robot presidents. Film, theatre, paintings, and sculpture are all improperly buried and share this graveyard stage. The closet drama of one medium’s repression of another plays out in the service of the enactment of a repressed history.
Prosceniums, curtains, stages, screens all appear and disappear in 180-degree surround. In the middle of all this sit the forty-three animatronic presidents who populate this surround, hovering near the audience in an implacable space between the depths of curtains and screens. It is generally difficult for the human eye to apprehend what is transpiring among the robots as they are vaguely lit and too far in the distance on both the vertical and horizontal axes. You are allowed to use a camera, but the hosts do warn that you may not use “flash photography or video camera lighting.” Essentially you are being instructed on how to film a ghost. It is no coincidence that the Hall of Presidents lies directly opposite Disney World's Haunted Mansion.
Only by way of spectral camera zooms can one attempt to apprehend what is happening on stage. Because one is always focusing on or privileging one area, the sensation of being tapped on the shoulder by one of the robot ghosts at stage lefts always interrupts the study.
I’ve seen the Hall of Presidents undergo presidential adjustments. Its spectacle plays on the half hour every day that Walt Disney World is open. I feel like I have been summoned to it in a crooked, synchronic manner. My visits began on family vacations dating back to when I was probably four years old. I then returned every five years, under various persuasions, and twice over the past five years to research and revisit these traumas. On these most recent research trips, however, I would return to the hall of presidents six times in one day. On the most recent visit, I invited a friend and furnished him with a camera so that I could double the number of visits. Of course, it is impossible to capture and apprehend the undead. You can’t film a ghost.
...Reviewing this footage we realized that we were seeing something we didn’t know we had experienced. My brother made a timely observation: “Who Farted!!!??????!” It was the most accurate diagnosis of the exchange of non-recognition happening on stage (which we could only see in the first place with the assistance of an apparatus). The interregnum is embodied onstage: presidential robots from various reigns hold their non-synchronous ground in this vast plenum.

What is a fart but a time between movements?
“Who Farted!?!???!!!” is a question and a demand, unburied and unanswerable.
During the transfer of office from Clinton to Bush, it is said that Clinton's head was removed from its body and replaced with Bush's. A similar substitution is predicted to take place during the coming interregnum: Bush's head will be removed and replaced with Obama's. Supposedly the Hall of Presidents will shut down during this interregnum to perform this operation and other refurbishments well into the first year of Obama's first term. It will be interesting to see how bodies, spaces, and speeches have shifted and if indeed the Hall of Presidents will return at all.
audience, it is a question of certain people who will be adequately educated to comment on theater in general and on the play performed that day.

Without becoming too preoccupied with the theater, it seems to me that the important thing is not to multiply the number of performances so that a large number of spectators can profit from them (?) but to arrange it so that the trials—which they call rehearsals—end up in one single performance, whose intensity and brilliance would be so great that, by what it will have set ablaze in each spectator, it would be enough to illuminate those who weren’t able to be present and stir up trouble in them.

As to the audience, only those would come who knew they were capable of a nighttime walk in a cemetery to be confronted with a mystery.

If such a location were used, as much a part of urbanism as of culture, writers would be less frivolous, they’d think twice before having plays performed there. They might accept the omens of insanity, or of a frivolity bordering on insanity.

With a sort of easy grace, cemeteries, after a certain amount of time, allow themselves to be dispossessed. When the dead are no longer buried there, they die, but in an elegant way: lichens, saltpeter, moss cover the slabs. The theater built in the cemetery might die—it will go out—like it. Might it disappear? It is possible that the art of the theater may someday disappear. We must accept the notion. If one day the activity of men were revolutionary day after day, the theater would have lost its place in life. If dullness of mind one day evoked only daydreams in men, the theater would also die.

To look for the origins of the theater in History, and the origin of History in time, is idiotic. A waste of time. What would we lose if we lost the theater?
Stephen G. Rhodes is a trans-disciplinary artist from Louisiana working in Los Angeles. His most recent installation Who Farted!!!??!!?? (Interregnum), a voided study of the Hall of Presidents, is part of the Prospect 1 Biennial in New Orleans, on view until January 17th. He shows at Overduin and Kite in Los Angeles and Galerie Isabella Bortolozzi in Berlin.