

## 5. Stairways (Time)

Andy Kassier

This installation is found on the floor in the centre of the section entitled 'Role Play/Playing with Identity'. A low platform about 4 metres long by 2.5 metres wide is covered with thick cream carpet. The objects on the carpet serve as props to create the impression of a rich, successful man on a business trip. In one corner, a nest of shiny black executive tables fans out. On top, there is a miniature folding canvas chair, the sort associated with film directors. There is a logo on the back of the chair – perhaps it was a corporate gift. A copy of Steven Hawking's 1988 book on theoretical cosmology, *A Brief History of Time*, lies casually beside it. A plastic 'no smoking' sign of the sort that might be found in a chain hotel invites you to '*Take a Mint instead*' continuing: *This is a non-smoking floor. For the comfort of future guests, kindly refrain from smoking. Thank you.* In the opposite corner of the 'room', there is an automatic golf putt returner – a black box with an opening lined with green flock that can be used to practice golf indoors. A golf club, golf ball and a packet of multicoloured plastic tees lie scattered on the carpet, along with a book titled *I can Help your Game* by American professional golfer Lee Trevino, first published in 1971. Elsewhere on the carpet there's a heavy gold watch, a broken reproduction of Michelangelo's 'David' sculpture, just about 30 centimetres tall, and a packet of Newport cigarettes, an American brand of menthol cigarettes. Lying among these objects is a framed photograph of an unsmiling white man in his thirties, wearing an unbuttoned white shirt open over his bare chest, a straw sunhat and gold-rimmed glasses. He stands against a background of blue sky and tropical trees,

and smugly proffers an orange between his fingers. It's a selfie, we guess by the way his right arm extends towards us, as if holding the phone the picture was taken on.

On Instagram, German artist Andy Kassier plays the part of a rich and successful man, serving up all the different stereotypes that go with this image – and thus exposing it as a construct that can be reproduced at will. His installation *Stairways* presents the artist's backdrop to his staged photographs, the set for his repetitive poses of happiness, beauty and wealth. Self-presentation on social media is not an expression of individual personality but a form of self-marketing orientated towards clicks and likes. It therefore becomes ever more visually standardised.