

GALLERIA RAFFAELLA CORTESE

PRESS RELEASE

William E. Jones

Holes in the Historical Record

William E. Jones, *Holes in the Historical Record*
Michael Fliri, *AniManiMism*

via a. stradella 7
via a. stradella 1-4

Opening reception May 16th, 7pm – 9pm

May 17th - July 28th, 2018 | Tuesday – Saturday, 10 am – 1 pm / 3 pm – 7:30 pm and by appointment

Galleria Raffaella Cortese is pleased to announce the third solo show at the gallery by William E. Jones.

Jones' work is characterized by the study of archival material. Over the course of more than two decades, he has created films, videos, photographs, prints, and texts that reorganize and recontextualize archival material of all kinds. He offers an interpretation of some cross-sections of American society, focusing on episodes from recent history that have either slipped into oblivion or have been purposefully forgotten. He intervenes in found footage available on the web and in archival material, experimenting with digital files presented as movies. He combines research with formal experimentation, revealing the passions and sublimated political forces at work in documents of the state, forgotten or overlooked popular media, official (and unofficial) visual histories.

To realize the video works and the photographs on view in the space at via Stradella 7, Jones made use of the massive number of documents kept at the Library of Congress in Washington. The Farm Security Administration (FSA) was one of the federal programs created to document the widespread agricultural recession in the country through photographs taken between 1935 and 1944, the year in which the entire documentation was transferred to the Library of Congress. The FSA's Information Division was headed by Roy E. Stryker, who oversaw the work of the photographers taking part in the program (including Ben Shahn, Walker Evans, Dorothea Lange), who had to stick to specific subjects and themes in scripts devised by Stryker. The negatives sent to the FSA headquarters in Washington were edited by Stryker and, if deemed inappropriate or defective, were classified as "killed." A hole would subsequently be punched in the film strips to mark the killed negatives and prevent them from being published.

For decades, the vast majority of these negatives remained unknown. A selection of images by FSA photographers (whose names appear in the titles of the works) is presented in Jones' video works, photographic diptychs and triptychs, following formal, aesthetic or thematic criteria. A small hole of the same size is present in all of the photographs, which have been cropped so that its position is similar in all images, thus also homogenizing the scale of the figures, which appear similar to one another.

In this new exhibition, just as in the two previous shows held in 2010 and 2015, Jones' starting point is the research and examination of sources marked by an acute critical sense and high intellectual value. The issues taken into consideration by the artist are often linked to the homosexual universe and how homosexuality has been treated in recent American culture. History and the way in which power and its strategies have defined or addressed how we think of recent history and the present are also fundamental themes. All of Jones' work is based on reflections upon these themes and on the conscious critical responsibility that must always, according to Jones, distinguish an artist.

"By concentrating on the holes made by Roy Stryker, I wish to emphasize the aesthetic aspects of gestures that would normally be considered arbitrary, and in so doing, to rescue a bit of 20th Century American history from oblivion."— William E. Jones, March 2018

William E. Jones was born in Canton (OH) in 1962. His work has been featured in solo exhibitions and programs at the following institutions: Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus (2009-2015), Saint Louis Art Museum (2013), Museum of Modern Art, New York (2010); Anthology Film Archives, New York (2010); ar/ge kunst Gallery Museum, Bolzano, Italy (2009); Tate Modern, London (2005) and others. Recent group exhibitions include: Museum of Contemporary Art, Detroit (2013-2014); Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2013); CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts, San Francisco (2013), California Museum of Photography, University of California, Riverside; Desire, Bergen Kunstmuseum, Norway; RAY 2012 Fotografieprojekte Frankfurt/RheinMain, Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt; "Untitled" (Death by Gun), 12th Istanbul Biennial; Time Again, Sculpture Center, New York; The Spectacular of Vernacular, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis. In 2013 he curated *Imitation of Christ* at the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; the book that accompanied the exhibition, published by MACK, was named by Time as one of the best photo books of the year.

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