

REVIEWS

WILLIAM E. JONES

David Kordansky Gallery



WILLIAM E. JONES,
INSTALLATION VIEW, 2010

WILLIAM E. JONES MINES archives to create his works. He sees historical materials of both still and moving pictures as a trove ripe for reinvention. Culling through these archives he interprets selected images through different contexts, thereby suggesting new relationships and meanings.

Best known as a documentary filmmaker who assembles found images and footage into feature length films, Jones has recently transitioned from the theater to the gallery where he can present multi-screen projections. While archival research is evident in his creations, what lies beneath the surface is the method of assembly that goes into constructing his work. Jones assembles his animations by rephotographing every frame of an original film, then edits the stills together to create loops that maintain the sharp definition of the original footage. Jones delights in the clarity and precision of his process and the specific algorithms used in his re-editing.

In the darkened space of the Kordansky gallery Jones presents three projection works simultaneously. *Spatial Disorientation* and *Berlin Flash Frame* (both 2010), are derived from archival film footage. The source material for *Spatial Disorientation* was a film shot in the cockpit of a U.S. Air Force plane performing maneuvers in 1969. Following a mathematical system Jones added color and motion-blur to the original footage re-presenting the vertiginous spin of the plane as a psychedelic abstraction. *Berlin Flash Frame* is similarly concerned with the reinterpretation of history and collective memory. Jones came across footage titled *Berlin 1961* in the National Archives. Shot by the U.S. Information Agency as a propaganda film, it presents fictional and factual occurrences in Berlin at the time of the wall's construction. Jones extracts segments from the film that are "flash frames" — moments where the cameramen let down their guard and where identifiers were held up in front of the lens — hoping to blur the boundaries between fact and fiction. Because Jones begins with archival imagery, the veracity of his subject matter cannot be challenged, yet Jones' point is that there is a subjective element in every decision, omission and inclusion. His goal — through abstracting, selecting and editing is to reclaim the significance of what may have been overlooked or omitted.

The most intriguing work in the exhibition *In Mathew Brady's Studio* uses stills taken by Brady in his Washington, D.C. studio after the Civil War. Jones scanned 100 glass plate negatives creating a triptych that systematically zooms in on specific details from the original portraits. The center projection cycles through the 100 male sitters one after another in rapid succession. The figure is never seen in his entirety, rather Jones moves in from a three-quarter view to the eye closest to the camera, then immediately zooms in on the next figure, creating a dizzying effect. The two adjacent sequences zoom in and out on specific props situated behind the sitter. One, a piece of patterned fabric (left side), the other a vase with a floral relief (right side). These objects are not what one would predict would surround portraits of political figures during the time of the Reconstruction Era. Like his other works, Jones looks for what might be incongruous in an image and brings it into focus.

- Jody Zellen