

GALLERIA RAFFAELLA CORTESE

PRESS RELEASE

WILLIAM E. JONES



William E. Jones
Yael Bartana

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

opening reception february 19 7.00 | 9.00 pm
february 19, 2015 | april 14, 2015
tuesday - saturday 10.00-1.00 pm | 3.00-7.30 pm

Raffaella Cortese is proud to present a second solo show by US artist William E. Jones.

Over the course of more than two decades, William E. Jones has created films, videos, photographs, prints, and texts that reorganize and recontextualize archival materials of all kinds. 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, and official (and unofficial) visual histories.

For the current exhibition Jones presents works dealing with secret psychiatric experiments performed on unwitting victims and funded by the CIA. Based upon historical material from the 1960s and 70s, the works, in light of recent revelations about torture conducted by the CIA, are directly relevant to the present.

In the gallery space at Via Stradella 7 will be projected the new video *Psychic Driving*, derived from a 58-minute television news report about mind control experiments. The original, a VHS recording obtained from the US National Archives, has been extensively edited and rearranged to focus on the experiences of one woman, Val Orlikow, who sued the CIA after the details of her case were revealed to the public. The treatment to which she and other psychiatric patients were subjected became widely known after documents relating to the US Government's program, called Project Artichoke or MKUltra, were accidentally leaked in the late 1970s. The picture track of *Psychic Driving* consists of 6 brief sequences of the same frames repeated over and over; they are transformed from abstract patterns of horizontal lines to representational video images in their original state.

William E. Jones will also present an installation made with declassified CIA documents requested under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act of 1976. These materials are accessible to the public, but before the US government releases any documents, officials censor sensitive or secret information. This information is blacked out, or redacted, with pencil, marker, or sometimes crayon. The documents used for the installation have not been altered by the artist, except for a slight cropping to make them conform to a standard size (8.5"x11" or A4). In the course of their review and circulation they have been photocopied many times by the US Government, and are often multiple generations away from the original documents. They acquire interesting visual textures in the process, and begin to resemble abstract paintings.

Art historians have discovered that several exhibitions of American abstract painting during the Cold War were funded by the CIA, at the same time that these mind control experiments were being conducted. (In a sense, abstraction, associated with individual freedom of expression, was the "official" CIA style in the 1950s and early 60s.) Over the last 30 years, it has been revealed that some modern art (as well as literature and criticism) received indirect support from the CIA through fake charitable foundations that exerted a covert and possibly pervasive influence on US culture.

In 2013, **William E. Jones's** work was the subject of solo exhibitions at the Saint Louis Art Museum and the Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus. His work has also been featured in solo exhibitions and programs at the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Anthology Film Archives, New York; ar/ge kunst Gallery Museum, Bolzano, Italy; Tate Modern, London, and others. Recent group exhibitions include *The Past is Present*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Detroit; *Les Dérives de l'imaginaire*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris; *More American Photographs*, CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts, San Francisco, Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, and 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; and *The Spectacular of Vernacular*, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis. Last year 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 2013.

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