

Swallow Street

William E. Jones
20 November – 19 December 2009

3–5 Swallow Street, London W1B 4DE
www.swallowstreet.com | info@swallowstreet.com
Gallery hours: Tuesday to Saturday, 10am – 6pm

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PRESS RELEASE

William E. Jones
20 November – 19 December 2009

Opening reception Thursday 19 November 2009, 5.30 – 8 pm
6 pm: Artist William E. Jones in conversation with Stuart Comer (Curator:
Film at Tate Modern)

Tearoom

1962/2007

16mm film transferred to video, color, silent, 56 minutes

In Mansfield, Ohio, 1962, in the United States of America, the police force hid a camera behind a two-way mirror in a men's public toilet. The primary objective of this clandestine filming was to catch men engaging in sexual acts with other men, and to prosecute them under the Ohio sodomy law. Convicted for up to 12 years; fathers, sons, brothers and grandfathers, rich and poor, black and white, businessmen and street hustlers – all were criminalised and sentenced, with the minimum jail term being one year.

This undercover filming of the 'tearoom trade' was a harsh example of the treatment of homosexuality in 1960s America. Uncovered whilst researching another film, William E. Jones has presented the footage barely edited as a document, which will be screened 24 hours a day for the duration of the exhibition at Swallow Street. Silent grainy footage shows a number of sexual rendezvous in two cubicles. The footage evokes a real sense of pathos with the knowledge that the men we see in front of us on camera were convicted; their lives inevitably changed forever. Society's treatment of homosexuality drove gay men, in this case quite literally, underground.

The decision to screen Tearoom also resonates with a real sense of relevance today. Some 40 years on we still see issues and conflict arising regarding the law and homosexuality; the BNP with their archaic and hateful treatment of laws regarding homosexuality and Los Angeles' struggle with Proposition 8 (its provisions ban same-sex marriage).

There is a publication to accompany the exhibition, which is based on the results of research on these cases and on the production of the surveillance film. The book includes a number of historical texts, as well as two new essays by the artist. Tearoom is extensively illustrated with more than 100 film stills, most of them in colour. The 2nd edition will be available at the opening.

Short biography

William E. Jones (1962, Ohio) lives and works in Los Angeles. He began his career as a filmmaker, directing the experimental films *Massillon* (1991) and *Finished* (1997) and the documentary *Is It Really So Strange?* (2004). Since 2005, he has produced videos and installations drawn mainly from appropriated images. His work has been shown at the Cinémathèque Française and Musée du Louvre, Paris; Witte de With Centre for Contemporary Art and International Film Festival Rotterdam, The Netherlands; Kunsthalle Wien and Vienna International Film Festival; Sundance Film Festival; and the Museum of Modern Art, New York. His films and videos were the subject of a retrospective at Tate Modern, London, in 2005. He was included in the 1993 and 2008 Biennial Exhibitions at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. He currently teaches film history at Art Centre College of Design, California.

William E. Jones has a forthcoming solo exhibition at Veneklasen/Werner, Berlin in January, and a retrospective at Anthology Film Archives, New York in March.

About Swallow Street:

Swallow Street is an exhibition space for emerging artists, with a programme selected by London based curator Sarah McCrory. It is an autonomous project supported by Hauser & Wirth.

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Exhibition works



Stills from Tearoom, 1962/2007, 16mm film transferred to video, colour, silent, 56 minutes



Stills from Tearoom, 1962/2007, 16mm film transferred to video, colour, silent, 56 minutes



Still from Tearoom, 1962/2007, 16mm film transferred to video, colour, silent, 56 minutes

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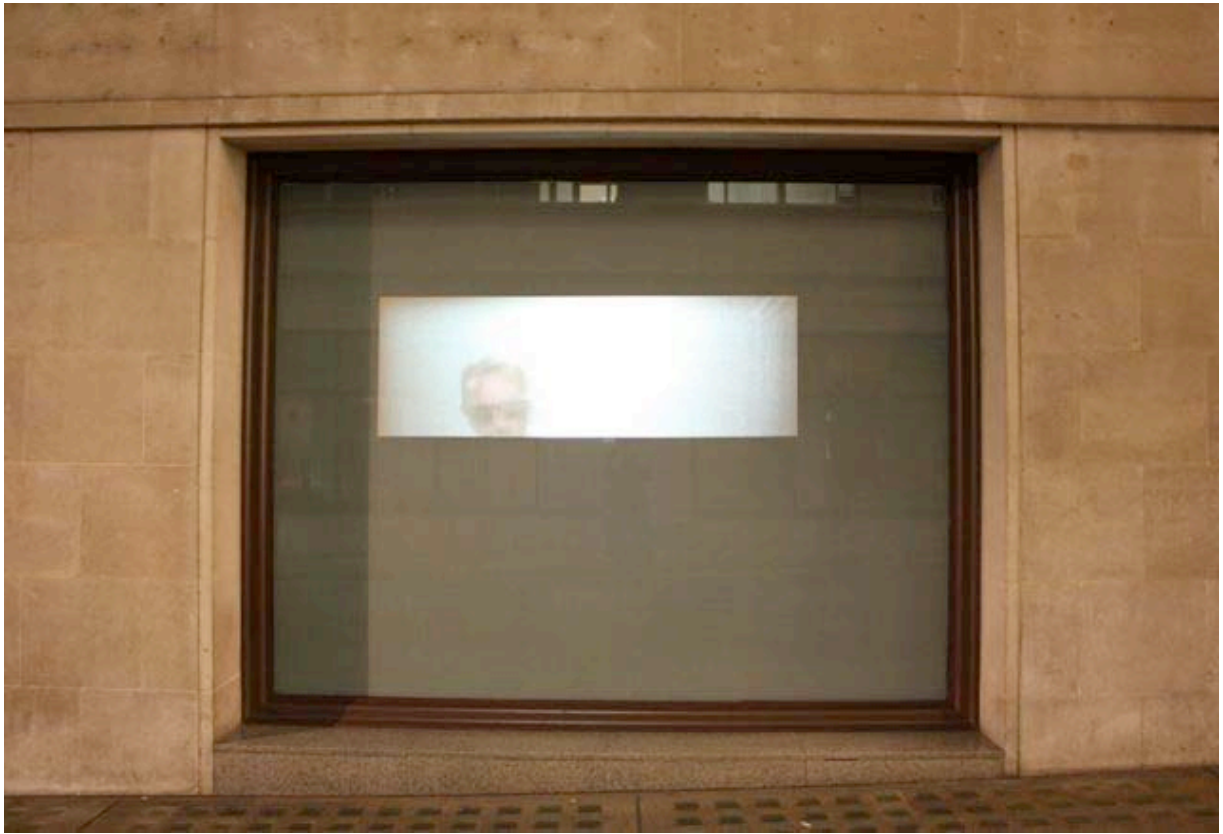
Installation Views



Installation view, William E. Jones, Swallow Street, 2009



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