

Anderson, Melissa, "Tearoom," *VillageVoice.com*, October 11, 2016



*By Melissa Anderson*

The film-essayist William E. Jones is equally drawn to the high (Euro-cinema worship, formal experimentation) and the low (pornography, fandom), deftly mixing the two to create fascinating excavations of homosexual histories: pre- and post-gay lib, before and after AIDS. Screening as part of the Anthology series "Voyeurism, Surveillance, and Identity in the Cinema," *Tearoom*, Jones's most provocative and powerful act of archaeology, is a re-presentation of original footage that was shot clandestinely in a men's public restroom by the Mansfield, Ohio, police in the summer of 1962 as part of a crackdown on gay sex in the Midwest. Not wanting to dilute the film's potency, Jones did almost nothing to alter this silent footage, except move the original's final reel, which establishes the location and the dimensions of the bathroom, to the beginning. As men of various ages, classes, races, and sizes joylessly suck, butt-fuck, and wank — eyes always fixed on the door — you realize that court evidence that led to jail sentences for everyone onscreen can now be appreciated as an extraordinary historical document. The cognitive dissonance could not be more extreme.