

back to antiquity, military and police surveillance, and the vast photographic project of the Farm Security Administration. Jones's practice has also consistently involved deep archival research, which increasingly takes place via the Internet. For his latest series, "Heraclitus Fragment 124, Automatically Illustrated," 2013-, Jones expanded his purview to treat the Internet itself—or, more precisely, the operations of Google Image Search (GIS) and the digital junk it continuously churns through and spits out—as a ready-made archive. Jones tested the "epistemology of search" (as David Joselit has put it) by plugging in wildly varying translations of a well-known textual fragment by the Greek philosopher Heraclitus, a poetic appreciation of nature's disorder that has been rendered as "(a) pouring out (of) sweepings at random," "parts" or "rubbish" "scattered at random," and "a dunghheap, rudely dumped."

The result of Jones's efforts was a sober presentation of six unique print series, each comprising one to five panels on which the artist assembled all the images resulting from a search. Recalling Google's interface, the images float in tight grids; Jones subtly intervened by alternating horizontally and vertically oriented pictures, finishing off the last grid with leftovers and leaving any remaining print space blank. The largest work, *The most beautiful universe is (a) pouring out (of) sweepings at random* (all works 2013), is composed of hundreds of images; the smallest, *But just as the fairest man is flesh composed of parts scattered at random, as Heraclitus says, so too is the Cosmos*, just one. These "automatic illustrations," as Jones calls them, turn up so much dark matter of the Internet, and it is curiously banal: pets, food, babies, graduations and weddings, selfies—only very rarely do recognizable figures from popular culture or politics show up. The Heraclitus fragments are a kind of score that reveals the Internet's constantly evolving stream of data, of which the prints on view were only a momentary stilling. Notably, in other works from the series included in the exhibition catalogue, some of the same phrases yielded different images when searched at another moment and with another image size specified.

Heraclitus's meditation on the random order of the universe is a handy metaphor for the randomizing aesthetics of GIS and the larger visual ecology of the Internet, which many younger artists have appropriated as mere style but which Jones engages here with conceptual rigor and precision. For the apparent disorder of the digital world, to riff on the later thought of Henri Bergson, is simply an order for which we are not looking. GIS avails itself of file names, the context in which an image appears, and data about the behavior of previous searchers, and thus Jones's gesture of desubjectivization is knowingly *not* that. The author of his works is a constellated figure made up of Jones, Heraclitus and his translators, content freely supplied by Internet users, and Google's algorithms, keyed not to a universal subject but most likely to the past activities of Jones's own IP signature. And now,

William E. Jones,
The most beautiful world is like a heap of rubble, tossed down in confusion, 2013, three ink-jet prints, each 64 x 58 3/4".

William E. Jones

DAVID KORDANSKY GALLERY

William E. Jones's experimental film and video work of the past two decades has consistently aimed to resurrect and reframe lost, repressed, or occluded visual histories, including those of gay subcultures going



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of course, images of Jones's artworks are implicated in these searches. All of this is not to say, however, that the series escapes an appreciable visual poetry of its own. The one search that produced a single result turned up an image of a white, starlike lily cast against a rugged ground of tree bark or shale, achingly gorgeous and undeniably poignant—a result that may never turn up again.

—Natilee Harren