

BILL JONES  
a waking dream



# contents

Introduction.....	4
Exhibition Essay.....	5
Cyanotype Series.....	7
Artist Bio.....	15
Video Stills.....	16
Bill Jones & Matthew Brower.....	19
Bill Jones & Stephen Andrews.....	20
Equivalences Series.....	21
Afterimage Magazine Exhibition Review.....	25
Installation Images.....	28
Links.....	30
List of Works.....	31
Exhibition Invitation.....	32

Pamphlet Design by Erin Storus

# introduction

A primary exhibition for the 2018 Scotiabank CONTACT Photography Festival: Organized by and presented in partnership with the John B. Aird Gallery, with sponsorship from Akau Framing, Barefoot Wines, Revest Asset Management and Westbury National Show Systems Ltd.

This exhibition represents the culmination of a multimedia project by New York-based artist Bill Jones that traces the first hundred years of photography, from its invention in 1839 to its modernist triumphs in the early 20th century. The exhibition integrates still and moving imagery and a wide range of media techniques to reinterpret historical works. Looking to the composite images of 19th-century British photographer Henry Peach Robinson and the sequenced motion studies of Robinson's contemporary Eadweard Muybridge, through to the advent of cinema, Jones maps early analogue history onto the contemporary digital landscape.

## ABOUT THE JOHN B. AIRD GALLERY

The John B. Aird Gallery opened in 1985. It was named in honour of the 23rd Lieutenant Governor of Ontario to recognize his support of the visual arts in the province and in Canada. Governed by a Board of Directors, the Gallery's mandate is to create awareness and promote the enjoyment of works of art by professional contemporary artists. In order to fulfill its mandate, the Gallery strives to encourage excellence in visual art; present a variety of media, disciplines, and styles; and to provide opportunities for study and education in conjunction with exhibitions.

# exhibition essay

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By Carla Garnet

Waking Dream is a multimedia project by New York-based artist Bill Jones that traces the first hundred years of photography, from its invention in 1839 to its modernist triumphs in the early 20th century. The exhibition integrates still and moving imagery and a wide range of media techniques to reinterpret historical works. Looking to the composite images of 19th-century British photographer Henry Peach Robinson and the sequenced motion studies of Robinson's contemporary Eadweard Muybridge, through to the advent of cinema, Jones maps early analogue history onto the contemporary digital landscape.

The origins of photography and the evolution of its aesthetic forms has informed Jones' work throughout his career, from his early years in California, where he grew up near Muybridge's photography studio, to his involvement with the Vancouver School of conceptual photography

in the 1970s, to his later collaborative explorations in interactive video. His work breathes new life into the history of the photographic medium, bringing forth a sense of freely moving forward and backward through time and space.

Throughout Waking Dream, the consumptive sleeping figure from Robinson's composite photo *She Never Told Her Love* (1857) repeatedly appears. Here she is cast as Hypatia, a pagan woman who was said to have witnessed Christ's image appear in a piece of cloth submerged in the water. For Jones, Hypatia's miracle in some ways presages the invention of photography in the late 1830s, establishing the medium's essence as a metaphysical experience rather than as a series of evolving recording devices. In Waking Dream, Hypatia travels through time and witnesses the birth of photography and its subsequent growth. Throughout, she is attended by figures animated from

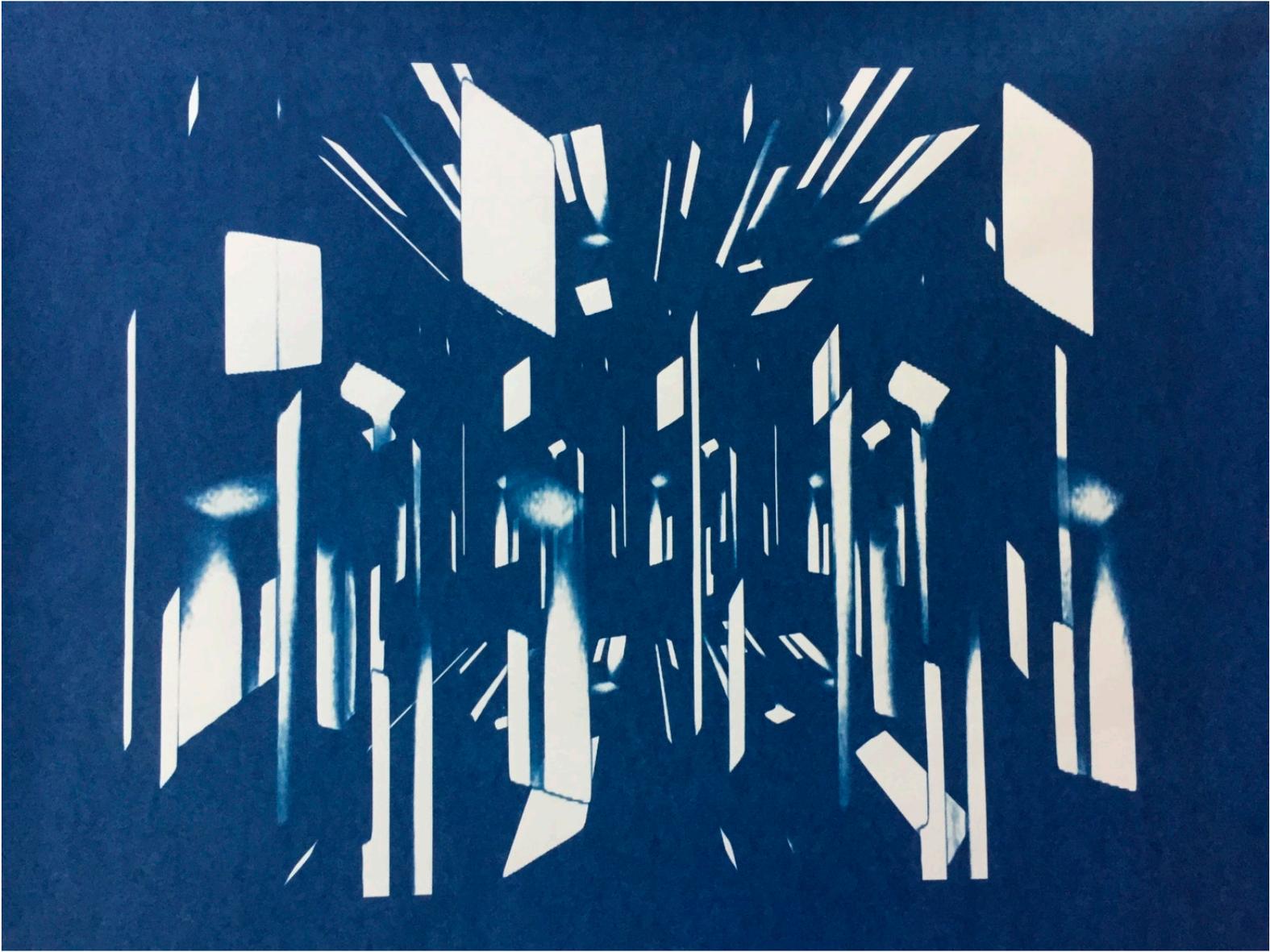
The title *Waking Dream* references the 1993 Metropolitan Museum of Art exhibition 'The Waking Dream: Photography's First Century', curated by Maria Morris Hambourg. For Hambourg, the titular turn of phrase is suggestive of "the haunting power of photographs to commingle past and present, to suspend the world and the artist's experience of it in unique distillations." Jones dramatizes this commingling of past and present in his installation through the use of archival materials, animation software and innovative digital techniques. To accompany the visual components of *Waking Dream*, Jones has written a score based on the 1839 folk song "Kathleen Mavourneen," which was popular during the American Civil War.

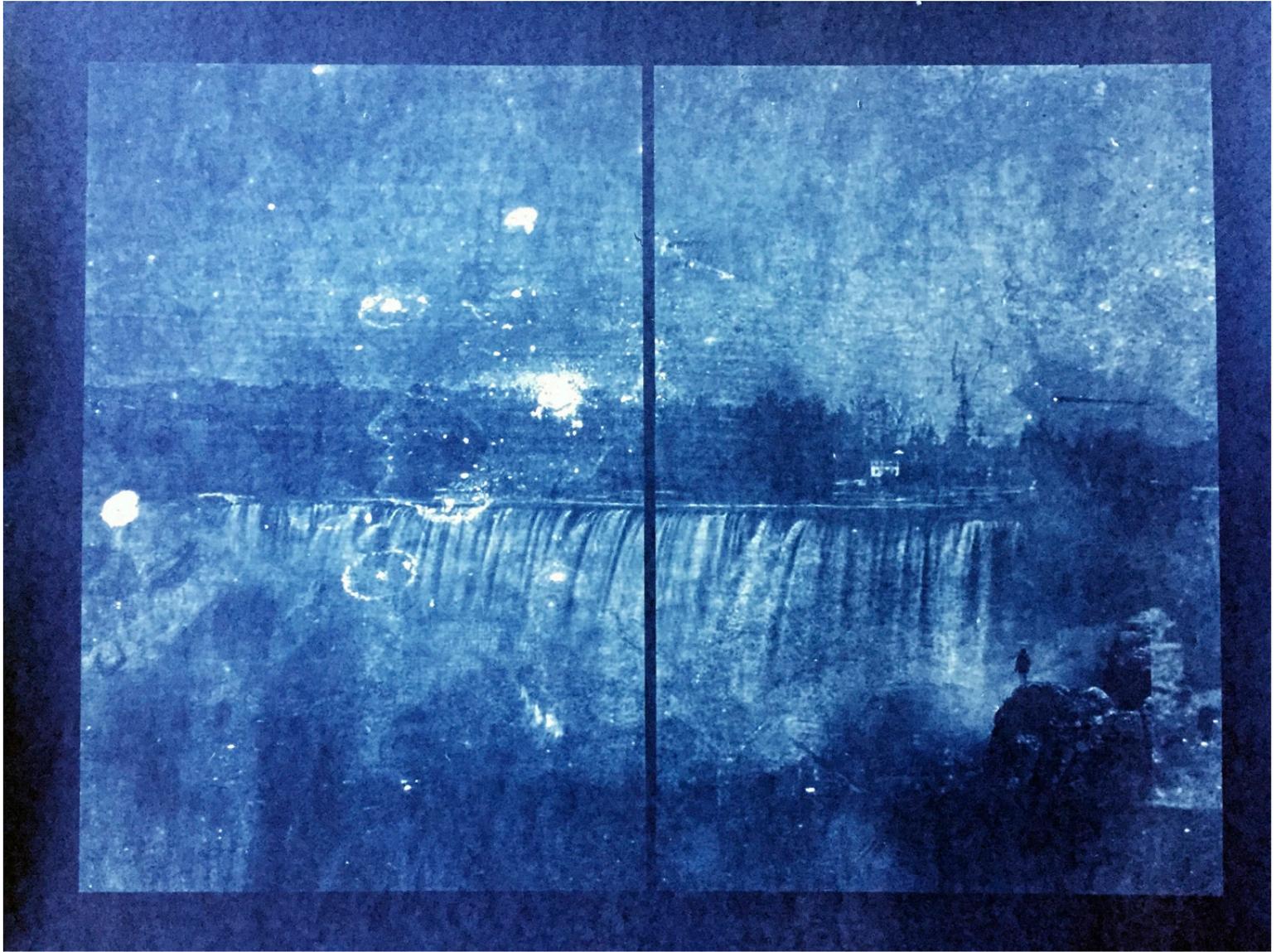
Muybridge's early stop-motion photography experiments first posited photography as a durational art form and presaged motion picture projection. These explorations are echoed in Jones' work, which is equally concerned with the temporal and incremental aspects of images in motion. Further, Muybridge's post-production addition of clouds into his landscapes, and Robinson's use of multiple negatives stitched together into

elaborate tableaux are techniques paralleled in Jones' use of sampling technology and layered loops in the networked software he has used to produce his work of the last two decades. Preliminary experiments in photography have alternately collapsed, expanded, and suspended time; the works that comprise *Waking Dream* take up this thread, unspooling it into the present.

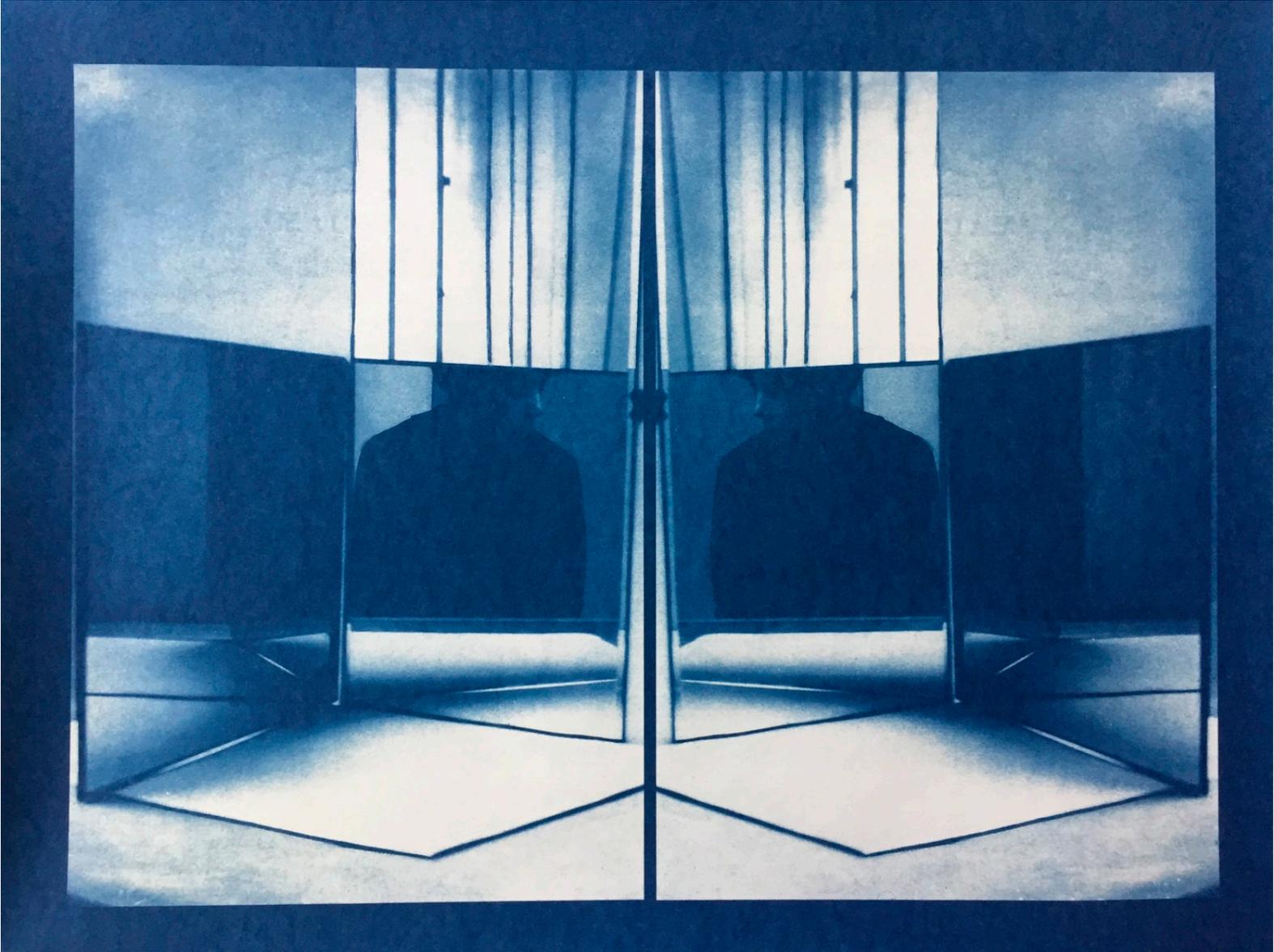
C.G.



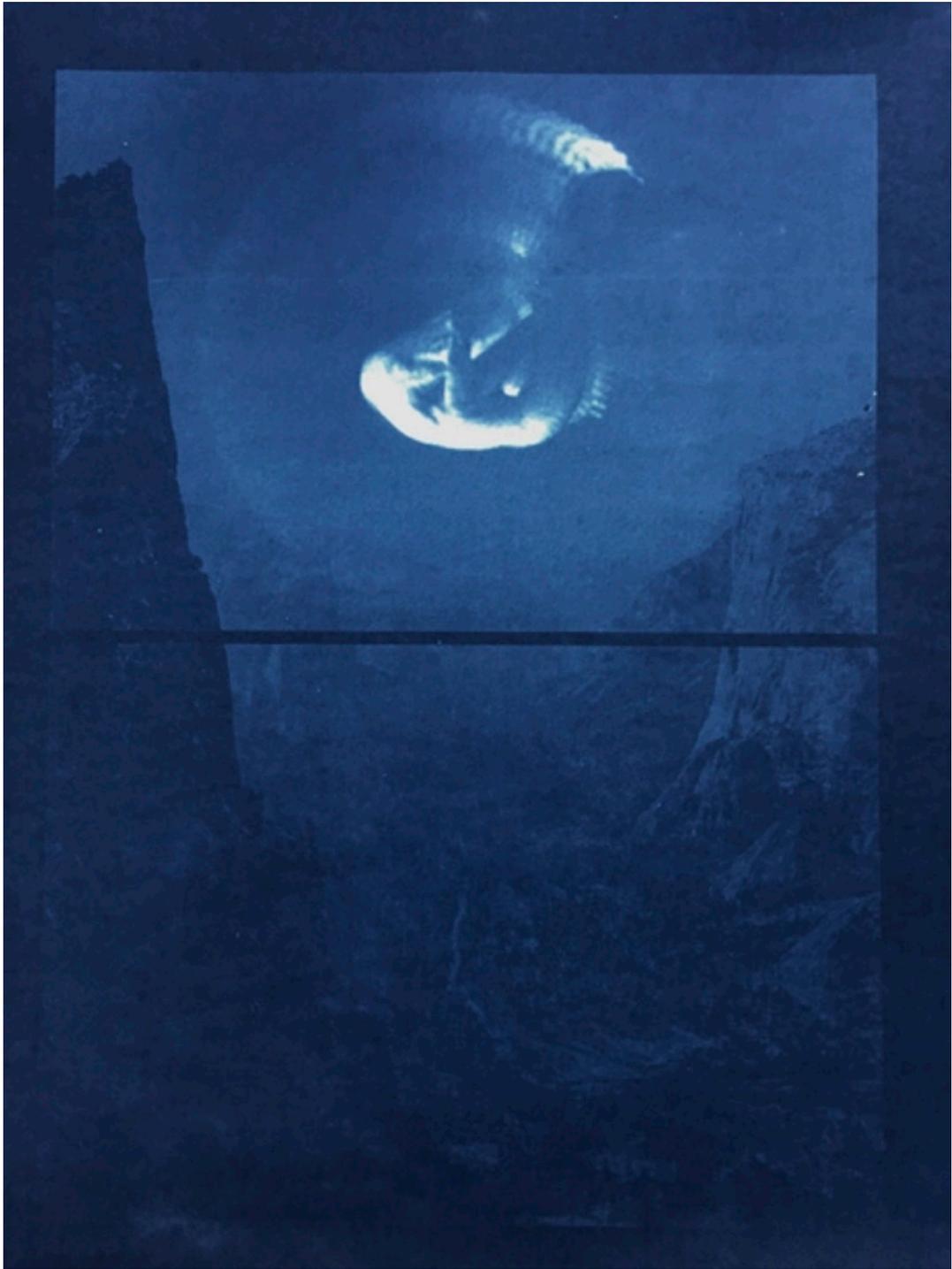














# artist bio

BILL JONES is an artist who lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. Jones was a seminal figure in the 1970s conceptual photography scene in Vancouver, Canada, along with such artists as Ian Wallace, Christos Dikeakos, Jeff Wall and Rodney Graham.

Jones's work engages a range of subjects and methodologies from landscape photography and the interface of urban, exurban and wilderness environments to analogue and digital photographic experimentation. Over the years Jones has developed a number of unique photographic techniques including photo assemblages that combine color and black and white photography, cameraless silver prints made with multiple free-standing lenses and the production of digital imagery by playing and capturing video samples with the Vj program modul8.

Jones' work has been shown widely in the US and internationally,

including a mid-career retrospective, *Bill Jones: 10 Years of Multiple-Image Narratives*, at the International Center of Photography; Badischer Kunstverein, Karlsruhe, Germany; Art Gallery of Ontario, Vancouver Art Gallery, PS1 Contemporary Art Center; The Brooklyn Museum; The Jewish Museum, NY; Rotunda Gallery; Sandra Gering Gallery, NY; Lombard-Freid Fine Arts, NY; Amy Lipton Gallery, NY; White Columns, NY; San Francisco MOMA; The High Museum, Atlanta; The Milwaukee Art Center; Musée d'Art Moderne, Paris; Kettle's Yard, Cambridge, UK.







# bill jones & matthew brower

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## lunch & learn

Bill Jones leads a walk-through of his exhibition Waking Dream, in conversation with photo-theorist Dr. Matthew Brower. Their discussion will centre on the photographic aesthetic developed during its first hundred years and the effect it has had on Jones' life's work as a visual artist, writer, scientist and inventor.



# bill jones & stephen andrews

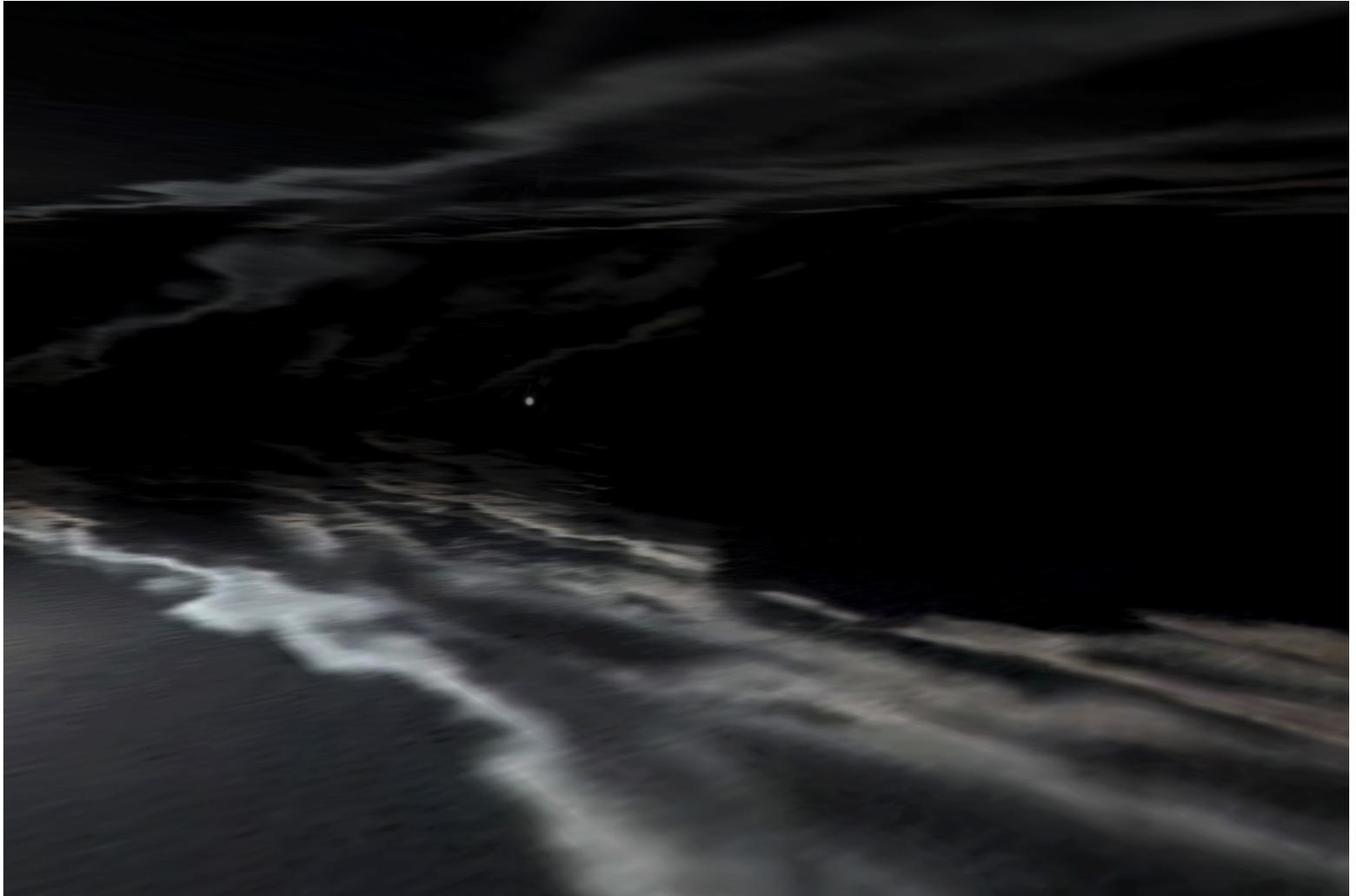
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## in conversation

Bill Jones and Stephen Andrews have been friends and contemporaries for over 20 years. Each have novel approaches to media and mediation in their work and share a love of experimentation. On Saturday afternoon from 1-3, the Aird will present an informal discussion between Jones and Andrews about meaning and metaphor in the information age.











# exhibition review

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## afterimage magazine, 2018

Where do images come from? Western art history tells us they come from male genius. Yet, stories scattered through ancient mythology assign primordial roles for women: Pliny the Elder attributed the origin of painting to a young Corinthian woman who traced her lover's shadow before he departed; a pagan woman, Hypatia, birthed Christ's image from an amniotic lake, establishing the first icon from which all following icons were copied; Veronica printed Christ's face on her veil. New York City-based artist Bill Jones considers such mythical moments as pre-photographic; these early tracings, direct copies, watery images (as in a dark-room tray) generated a lineage that led directly to modern photography, film, and digital media. This lineage—woman imagining and birthing images—glows at the heart of *Waking Dream*.

Jones's exhibition, a summation of his long-term aesthetic and theoretical inquiries, developed a conversation that was at once dense and enchanting. Two multimedia projections, ten large cyanotype and digital prints, and four small vitrines displaying mostly historical photographic technologies and images charted a tangle of themes that engaged technological, psychological, metaphysical, and social relations.

The title of the exhibition recalls the 1993 Metropolitan Museum of Art exhibition *The Waking Dream: Photography's First Century*, which featured works made when the untamed medium was still dreaming itself, in expressive realms outside of positivist science. Jones sampled heavily from that period and, through formal and thematic mixing, destroyed any material and conceptual integrity

imposed upon those images by art history. The artist populated his work with figures plucked from that canon, reconstituting them to express his own meditations on the medium. Thematically intertwined are feminine and maternal symbols of water, ponds, waterfalls, and the moon; death, since no serious study of photography can occur without photography's paradoxical pairing of presence and absence; and imaging processes of copying, mirroring, reflection, layering, animation, and easy production and dissemination. These latter processes recover the feminine and the democratic character of their ancient photographic precursors.

Jones, whose eclectic background includes conceptual artmaking within the 1970s Vancouver School, cancer research, and live animation performance, employed technology from that latter activity to produce the two video works here; through animation software, he animated and merged still and moving images and sound in an evocative statement about our desire to make images.

*Waking Dream* (2018, 14 min.) unfolds as in a dream: a flickering candle flame doubles, as if mirrored within a dark pool. Keening musical strains seem to coax out, as if in a developing tray, an image of a woman, holding a skull and gazing into a framed mirror—she is Georges de La Tour's *The Penitent Magdalen* (1640). In the mirror the face of Julia Jackson, as photographed by Julia Margaret Cameron (1867), slowly emerges; that Jackson's daughter, Virginia Woolf, drowned herself adds additional resonance. Light mixed with desire pulls forth its double—that is what photography does. Another figure, who reappears throughout the exhibition, appears in center frame for the duration of the video: hovering within black space is Henry Peach Robinson's languishing lady, from his photograph *She Never Told Her Love* (1857). She is recognizable as the model, in slightly different pose, who stages her consumptive demise in Robinson's five-negative combination photograph, *Fading Away* (1858). A flow of imagery and sound dances around and behind her delicate figure: Eadweard Muybridge's images mark the when photography breaks into a walk, then a run, before

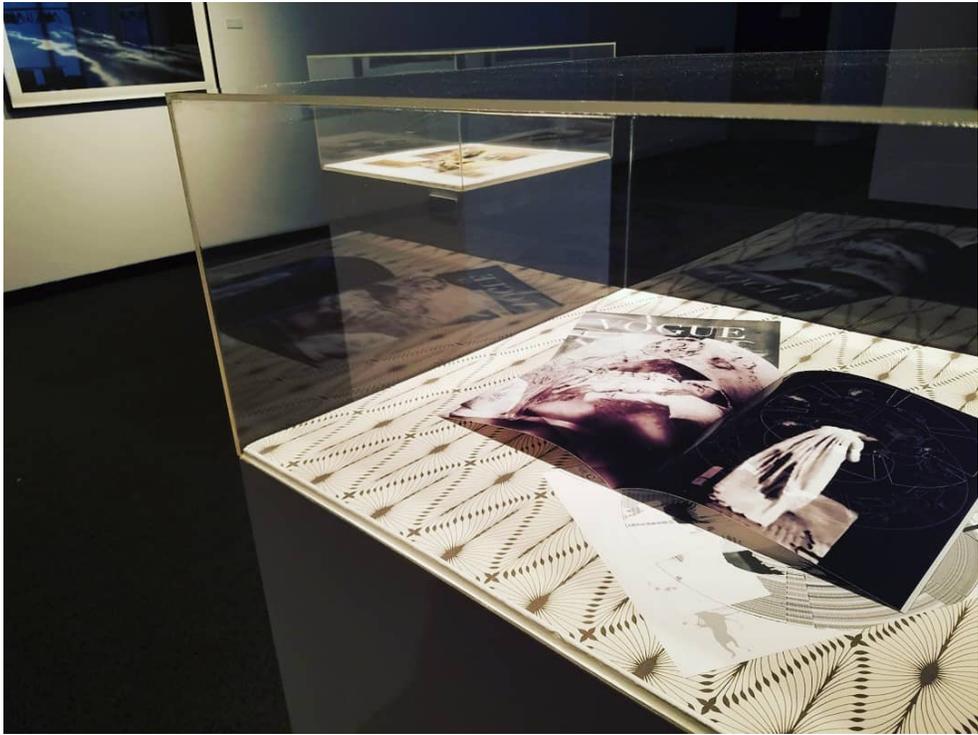
bursting into cinema, his dancing woman first appearing and then turning away, figuring Freudian attachment and loss; his somersaulting man—now colorized by Jones as flesh and rotating in mid-air—is an amoebic fetus; and his zoöpraxiscope disc spins and spirals in joyful tempo. Watery scenes are a Gustave le Gray seascape and Edward Steichen's pond. The music, moving from pretty music box tinkling to mournful lament, reflects the darkness, pleasure, and joy of imagemaking.

Themes and images reappear throughout the exhibition: the video Fox Talbot's Pond (2018, 4:51 min.) animates the inventor's pond photograph with a rising moon reflected in rippling water; Florence Henri's modernist mirror play is mirrored again and printed as a cyanotype (After Florence Henri, from 2017). Jones feminized Alfred Stieglitz's canonical cloud series with his digitally printed video captures of the moon and clouds reflected in water (Equivalent, 2017). One vitrine displays a framed photograph of the artist's mother, revealing his personal engagement with the exhibition's themes.

In *Waking Dream*, Jones merges an exuberant play with interdisciplinary media and his long engagement with the photographic medium to develop a quiet conversation across and between media—a murmur beneath the canon's masculine bravura. Here, time, contrary to photography's heralded ability to stop it, is fluid, moving freely, backward and forward across space.

JILL GLESSING writes on art, politics, and culture and teaches at York and Ryerson Universities in Toronto.

# installation images





# links

Full 'Equivalent' series found here: <https://bill-jones.net/a-brief-history-exhibition/>

Full video of conversation with Stephen Andrews found here: <https://vimeo.com/269755120>

Full video of 'Waking Dream' found here: <https://vimeo.com/269928143>

# list of works

Page 7: Bill Jones, After Henry Peach-Robinson, 2017, cyanotype, 26 x 30 inches

Page 8: Bill Jones, After György Kepes, 2017, 26 x 30 inches

Page 9: Bill Jones, The Photographer, 2017, cyanotype, 26 x 30 inches

Page 10: Bill Jones, Turning Away, 2017, 26 x 30 inches

Page 11: Bill Jones, After Florence Henri, 2017, cyanotype, 26 x 30 inches

Page 12: Bill Jones, Bauhaus 2 (my Moholy), 2017, 20 x 26 inches

Page 13: Bill Jones, Acrobat, 2017, 26x 30 inches

Page 16: Bill Jones, Bill Jones, Waking Dream, 2017, Video Still.

Page 17: Bill Jones, Bill Jones, Waking Dream, 2017, Video Still.

Page 18: Bill Jones, Bill Jones, Waking Dream, 2017, Video Still.

Page 21: Bill Jones, Equivalent # 3, 2016, Iris Print, 30 x 40 inches

Page 22: Bill Jones, Equivalent # 6, 2016, Iris Print, 30 x 40 inches

Page 23: Bill Jones, Equivalent # 7, 2016, Iris Print, 30 x 40 inches

Page 24: Bill Jones, Stereoscope, 2017.

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PHOTOGRAPHY  
FESTIVAL

PRIMARY EXHIBITION



Bill Jones, Waking Dream, 2017, Film Still

## Artist Conversations

Friday • May 11 • 12 - 1 pm

**Bill Jones + Dr. Matthew Brower:**

A walk-through of the exhibition Waking Dream, in conversation with photo-theorist Dr. Matthew Brower.

Saturday • May 12 • 1 - 3 pm

**Bill Jones + Stephen Andrews:**

An informal discussion between Jones and Andrews about meaning and metaphor in the information age.

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# Bill Jones

## WAKING DREAM

Curated by Taryn Foss + Carla Garnet

May 8 - June 8, 2018

**Open to the Public**

Monday - Friday | 10 - 6 pm | Saturdays 12 - 5 pm

**Opening Reception**

Thursday, May 10, 6 - 8 pm



John B. Aird Gallery • Galerie John B. Aird

**airdgallery.org** Macdonald Block, 900 Bay Street (at Wellesley), Toronto, ON, Canada M7A 1C2 | Gallery Hours: Monday to Friday, 10 am - 6 pm