



Ronald Jones Clock in a Radio

Presented by empire

February 22 — March 29, 2025

Following the exhibition Barker Gillick & Jones, Air de Paris is pleased to announce *Clock in a Radio*, **Ronald Jones'** first solo show in France. Jones (1952-2019) worked as an artist, writer, and pedagogue. Presented by New York based **empire**, the exhibition is composed predominantly of works on paper and convenes around a box portfolio produced by Jones in 1993.

As he was known to say, **a radio** is just a radio until it starts ticking. Consumer electronics are containers. The touchscreen was preceded by the interface of knobs and switches externalizing the internal organization of circuitry, in radios and the like. This surface, divorced from the messy interior, is an abstraction. And the abstraction is an opportunity for smugglers. Similarly, Jones smuggles meaning into the assumed modern forms, converting benign abstractions into mediations of violence.

In his first exhibition with **Metro Pictures in 1986** Jones included seven dining room tables. While scaled for a domestic interior to seat four, their designs were originally intended for a much larger conference in Paris to negotiate peace in Vietnam. The United States and South Vietnamese had proposed six designs, each integrating a hemispheric geometry, precluding a set of parties and possible outcomes. The North Vietnamese proposed one, a simple circle, a single state. Negotiations of the negotiating table extended the war for six months.

The Vietnamese liberation struggle began under French colonial rule and continued after American intervention. Soldiers from half a globe away were sent to fight people indistinguishable from a territory they did not know. Relying on maps the soldiers gave new names to existing places, My Lai became Pinkville. The abstraction of a territory into a map is an expression of alienation, while the construction of the modern subject results from the encounter with the colonial subject as a projected other. The distinction of rational individual from savage indelibly results in the violent repercussions like those realized on March 16, 1968.

At the scale of the individual, scientific objectivity subjugates the body as other from the rational mind. In 1990 Jones presented a series of sculptures pairing the horrors of state violence with feats and tragedies of science. A valve connecting oxygen tanks to pressurized suit in space travel rests on the wooden table used for autopsies which is visible behind Warhol's electric chair from Sing Sing Prison. Bookshelves that Ann Frank hid behind host a baboon's heart used as an implant with a known 0% success rate. In this surgery the patient is both a victim and a specimen for experimentation. The collusion of these conditions is the focus of Jones interrogation of science.

Presented at the far end of the gallery are drawings of these sculptures on the artist's letter head. In the fourth of the numbered series the bricolage depicted is composed of a sculpture made by a boy that lived in a bubble made by NASA who eventually died when the association withdrew support due to liability. It is perched atop a tower of collapse boards, wooden planks used in gallows to erect a body that is incapable of standing up to death. Two woodblock prints bracketing the exhibition are impressions of these devices, scaled for male and female.

— Noah Barker

AIR DE PARIS

Après l'exposition Barker Gillick & Jones, Air de Paris a le plaisir d'annoncer Clock in a Radio, la première exposition personnelle de **Ronald Jones** en France. Jones (1952-2019) a travaillé comme artiste, écrivain et pédagogue. Présentée par le new-yorkais **empire**, l'exposition se compose principalement d'œuvres sur papier, et s'articule autour de l'édition d'un portfolio de référence réalisé par Jones en 1993, ici déployé en vitrine.

Comme le disait Jones, **une radio** n'est qu'une radio jusqu'à ce qu'elle commence à faire tic-tac. L'électronique grand public est un contenant. L'écran tactile a été précédé par l'interface de boutons et d'interrupteurs qui extériorisent l'organisation interne des circuits, dans les radios et autres appareils similaires. Cette surface, séparée de l'intérieur hétéroclite, est une abstraction. Et l'abstraction est une opportunité pour les contrebandiers. De même, Jones introduit clandestinement du sens dans les formes modernes supposées, convertissant des abstractions anodines en médiations de la violence.

Lors de sa première exposition chez **Metro Pictures en 1986**, Jones a présenté sept tables de salle à manger. Bien qu'elles soient alors conçues à l'échelle d'un diner de quatre personnes dans un intérieur domestique, le design de ces tables était à l'origine pensé pour une importante conférence organisée à Paris afin de négocier la paix au Viêt Nam. Les États-Unis et le Sud-Viêt Nam avaient proposé six modèles, chacun intégrant une forme géométrique hémisphérique, excluant un ensemble de parties et de résultats possibles. Les Nord-Vietnamiens n'en ont proposé qu'un seul, un simple cercle, un seul État. Les négociations menées pour définir la forme de la table de négociation ont prolongé la guerre de six mois.

La lutte de libération du Viêt Nam a commencé sous la domination coloniale française et s'est poursuivie après l'intervention américaine. Des soldats venus de l'autre bout du monde ont été envoyés pour combattre des gens qui ne se distinguaient pas d'un territoire qu'ils ne connaissaient pas. S'appuyant sur des cartes, les soldats ont donné de nouveaux noms à des lieux existants, My Lai est devenu Pinkville. L'abstraction d'un territoire sur une carte est une expression de l'aliénation, tandis que la construction du sujet moderne résulte de la rencontre avec le sujet colonial en tant qu'autre projeté. La distinction entre l'individu rationnel et le sauvage se traduit de manière indélébile par des répercussions violentes comme celles qui se sont produites le 16 mars 1968.

À l'échelle de l'individu, l'objectivité scientifique soumet le corps à l'esprit rationnel. En 1990, Jones a présenté une série de sculptures associant les horreurs de la violence étatique aux exploits et aux tragédies de la science. Une valve reliant les réservoirs d'oxygène aux combinaisons pressurisées utilisées dans les voyages spatiaux repose sur la table en bois utilisée pour les autopsies, visible derrière la chaise électrique de Warhol provenant de la prison de Sing Sing. Les étagères derrière lesquelles Ann Frank s'est cachée accueillent un cœur de babouin utilisé comme implant avec un taux de réussite connu de 0 %. Dans cette opération chirurgicale, le patient est à la fois une victime et un spécimen pour l'expérimentation. La collusion de ces conditions est au centre de l'interrogation de Jones sur la science.

Au fond de la galerie sont présentés des dessins de ces sculptures sur le papier à en-tête de l'artiste. Le quatrième dessin de la série représente le bricolage d'une sculpture réalisée par un garçon qui vivait dans une bulle fabriquée par la NASA et qui est finalement décédé lorsque l'association a retiré son soutien pour des raisons de responsabilité. Elle est perchée au sommet d'une structure anti-chute, faite de planches de bois utilisées dans les gibets pour ériger un corps incapable de faire face à la mort. Deux gravures sur bois encadrant l'exposition sont des impressions de ces dispositifs, à l'échelle d'un homme et d'une femme.

— Noah Barker

AIR DE PARIS

Clock in a Radio is the continuation of the collaboration between Air de Paris, Noah Barker and Ronald Jones which began with the exhibition “**Barker Gillick & Jones**” (03.11.2024 - 01.02.2025). In this new configuration, Barker, now curator, highlights, through a larger selection of works, Jones’ interest in exploring political history through a variety of minimal languages. In the **Entrée des Artistes**, a new photographic series by Liam Gillick & Noah Barker (And Heaven Too, 2025) builds on the work of this earlier project by juxtaposing installation views with texts written by Ronald Jones, which at the time of the exhibition appeared in four kakemono banners (Ronald Jones Advice for a Singular Artistic Solution for The Trial of Pol Pot, 2024).

Clock in a Radio est la continuation de la collaboration entre Air de Paris, Noah Barker et Ronald Jones qui a débuté avec l’exposition « **Barker Gillick & Jones** » (03.11.2024 - 01.02.2025). Dans cette nouvelle configuration, Barker, désormais curator, met en lumière, grâce à une plus grande sélection d’œuvres, l’intérêt de Jones pour l’exploration de l’histoire politique par le biais de langages minimaux disparates.

Dans l’**Entrée des Artistes**, une nouvelle série photographique de **Liam Gillick & Noah Barker** (And Heaven Too, 2025) prolonge à son tour le travail de ce précédent projet en juxtaposant des vues d’installation avec des textes rédigés par Ronald Jones qui lors de l’exposition figuraient dans quatre bannières kakemono (Ronald Jones Advice for a Singular Artistic Solution for The Trial of Pol Pot, 2024)

empire is a curatorial project by Noah Barker based in 53 E 34 St suite 308, New York. For more information, please visit <http://theempire.biz/>

Noah Barker (b. 1991) is an American artist. He graduated from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2013. He is interested in ecologies and mythologies of knowledge production.

empire est un projet curatorial de Noah Barker installé au 53 E 34 St suite 308, New York. Pour plus d’informations, veuillez consulter le site <http://theempire.biz>

Noah Barker (né en 1991) est un artiste américain. Il est diplômé de l’École de l’Institut d’art de Chicago en 2013. Il s’intéresse aux écologies et aux mythologies de la production de connaissances.

RONALD JONES

Born in 1952

Died in 2019

American artist and critic Ronald Jones gained prominence in New York during the mid-1980s. Through juxtapositions of historical events, innovations, discoveries, violence and fear, he explores the complex interrelation of events as they define our perception of ourselves and the world often through connecting seemingly unrelated occurrences. The relationship between the modernist code and the codes of power is the persistent theme in his work.

« Maybe this was one of his fundamental philosophies: art, technology, culture and politics are spheres in which the most ordinary things should be observed, and talked about, as if they were radically alien findings from outer space – but not to deny their ordinariness and effect on real life, but on the contrary, to fully grasp that effect. Ron's conceptual artworks exemplified that approach of unravelling the untold, unheard-of story behind the seemingly conventional (art) object.» — Jörg Heiser

Jones's criticism has been published in *Frieze*, *Artforum*, *Art in America*, and many others publications, and he penned the exhibition catalogues for artists such as David Salle, Laurie Simmons, Elizabeth Peyton, and Carroll Dunham. He delivered over two hundred lectures to universities, museums, art and design schools.

SELECTED PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

MoMA, New York, USA

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, USA

Guggenheim Museum, New York, USA

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York USA

Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, USA

Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Sweden



Courtesy: Royal College of Art, London.

[wikipedia source]

1980s

Jones graduated in 1974, with a Bachelor of Arts degree from Montgomery, Alabama's Huntingdon College. He completed an MFA degree in sculpture from the University of South Carolina, followed by a Ph.D. in interdisciplinary arts at Ohio University where he wrote about a collaboration between Samuel Beckett and Marcel Duchamp. In 1983, he was included in a group exhibition titled «A Likely Story,» at Artists space in New York City which was curated by Valerie Smith and included Gretchen Bender, David Cabrera, and Jeff Koons. In 1985 he moved to New York City and two years later had his first solo exhibition at Metro Pictures Gallery. In the New York Times, Roberta Smith wrote: «Mr. Jones's main goal seems to be to thwart the eye with formal incoherence and an overload of written information that the mind must digest before his pieces make sense. But the sense made is never visual. Instead, if one wades through the long illustrated paragraph that constitutes each work's title, learning the artwork or event that each component represents, a kind of odd and often frightening poetic logic accrues.» Jones was represented by Metro Pictures Gallery where his last of six solo shows was in 1998.

Jones began his curatorial practice in 1986, when he assembled The Public Art Show with a catalog designed by Louise Lawler and a poster by Barbara Kruger. He went on to organize eleven exhibitions for New York City galleries (Metro Pictures, Lehmann Maupin and Josh Baer) and European and Scandinavian institutions («Dark Side of the Moon,» Stockholm Cultural Capital of Europe Arkipelag project, 1998 and Magasin 3 Projekt Djurgårdsbrunn, 2003).

In 1987, he began writing criticism for Arts Magazine and Artscribe. Soon after, he began contributing articles, essays and reviews to Frieze, Artforum, Bookforum, Art in America, Parkett, Cabinet, Zone and others. Jones wrote numerous catalogs for other artists including Elizabeth Peyton, Laurie Simmons, David Salle, Terry Winters, Richard Phillips, Carroll Dunham, and Keith Edmier.

In 1989 Jones was invited to join the faculty at the School of Art, Yale University as Critic in Sculpture and ultimately was named Senior Critic.

1990s

In 1993 he had a solo exhibition at the Sonnabend Gallery in New York City. As his work continued to be exhibited internationally (including solo exhibitions in Berlin, Tokyo, Los Angeles, Paris, and Cologne) Jones was commissioned to design garden projects including Pritzker Park in Chicago, the Rethymnon Centre of Contemporary Art in Crete, the Botanical Gardens in Curitiba, Brazil, Caesar's Cosmic Garden Boras Konstmuseet, Sweden and a garden for the city of Hamburg, Germany among others.

In 1995, ArtForum magazine's «Best and Worst 1995» article stated that Jones should be «a nominee for a lifetime achievement award for contemporary-art awfulness.»

In 1998 he was appointed professor and chairman of the visual arts department at Columbia University. At Columbia he was the director of the digital media center and co-director of the interactive design lab. While at Columbia he served on the faculty of the MA Colloquia in the masters program in critical studies, department of art history and archeology and taught in seminars at the computer music department. He served as a visiting professor at Konstfack, University College of Arts, Crafts and Design, in Stockholm, Sweden, since 1996. He served on the boards of Artists Space, the Public Art Fund, and Franklin Furnace, all in New York City, the Princeton Sculpture Symposium, and was a member of the executive committee of the Lucent Project, Brooklyn Academy of Music.

In 1999, Jones conceived of, and wrote the libretto for «Falling and Waving,» the first computer generated opera produced by the Brooklyn Academy of Music and Arts at Saint Ann's in New York City.

2000s

In 2001 he was appointed as the first provost at Art Center College of Design, where he guided the design and implementation of a new transdisciplinary curriculum for the college.

Jones became professor of interdisciplinary studies at Konstfack University College of Arts, Crafts and Design in Stockholm, Sweden where he led The Experience Design Group, with a mission «to persuade, stimulate, inform, envision, entertain, and forecast events, influencing meaning and modifying human behavior.» At Konstfack, Jones also co-directs WIRE, the MA program in curatorial practice and critical writing. Jones was a center director at Konstfack for the Stockholm School of Entrepreneurship (SSES), an interdisciplinary initiative by Karolinska Institutet, the Royal Institute of Technology, the Stockholm School of Economics, the Stockholm University and Konstfack.

Jones was a guest professor of experience design at NID, the National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad, India. He also served on the faculty of The Royal Danish Academy of Art, Copenhagen, The School of Visual Arts, New York, and Staatliche Hochschule für Bildende Künste, Städelschule Frankfurt, Germany and as a visiting professor at Bezalel Academy of Art and Design, Israel's national school of art. With his appointment at Konstfack as professor of interdisciplinary studies, he was able, along with the faculty of The Experience Design Group, to create a graduate program especially designed to prepare students to become interdisciplinarians, or even transdisciplinarians. «Interdisciplinarity,» said Jones «is by now a stand-alone discipline, as much as the conventional disciplines of art, design or craft.»

PRESS

Artforum, December 2024

by Michael Corris

Ronald Jones

EMPIRE

That American artist, writer, curator, lecturer, and critic Ronald Jones (1952–2019) was both a scholar and a showman was clear from Empire gallery's two-part exhibition. Jones's cosmopolitan approach to artmaking was on full display, beginning with a selection of prints from his 1991 edition *16 Isarstrasse* and culminating in a lesser-known work with a 451-word title that, for the sake of expediency, will be referred to here as *Diego de Santa Marta . . . , 1992*. This presentation offered an exceptional opportunity to experience two hallmark traits of Jones's output: the exposure of a seemingly pedestrian object's hidden depths and the use of an impossibly long and digressive title to expand upon its fantastic origins. In all respects, Jones's art embodies the kind of redescriptive and appropriationist methodologies that arose out of 1980s postmodernist theory.

16 Isarstrasse, an address in the German city of Neuss, is the site where the terrorist bomb that took down Pan Am Flight 103 in 1988 was assembled. The explosion killed 270 people, including passengers, airline crew, and several residents of the town of Lockerbie, Scotland, over which the plane was flying. This uncharacteristically short title hardly does justice to the circumstances of the edition's production. Jones made the suite by employing the historical analog technique of the photogram. The ghostly, silhouetted tableaux depict the components of a disassembled Toshiba boom box—the shell used for the explosives—and bits of wreckage from the actual disaster. The works were even printed at the former photography lab of the Stasi in East Berlin.

Like the culture he so gleefully exploited and parodied, the referential richness of Jones's art revels in excess. He invites the viewer to traipse through the forest of signs that postmodern theory asked us to vigilantly identify and unpack. The artist's approach, while imposingly cerebral, was always girded by an infinitely expansive impishness. Take the delicate installation *Diego de Santa Marta . . . ,* exhibited in the second half of the show. The work consists of a wax button dangling on a wire in front of a circular mercury mirror—an object that exhibits the “sparkle” characteristic of its degradation over time. A lengthy wall text, parodying the style of explanatory museum labels, provides an illustrated account of the history of these incongruously concatenated items. We read that the button is a replica of one from a greatcoat worn by British commander Sir Jeffrey Amherst (1717–1797), while the mirror is a stand-in for a glass that once belonged to Diego de Santa Marta, a fifteenth-century Spanish mystic.

Amherst is notorious for being the progenitor of biological warfare in North America, having gifted smallpox-infected blankets to the Indigenous tribes involved in the French and Indian War (1754–63). Jones tells us that Santa Marta, using his mirror to cheat at card games, was denounced during the Spanish Inquisition as a sorcerer. He was only spared from death because of his inability to demonstrate his powers in the absence of his mirror. The reproduction in the wall text of Francisco Goya's satirical drawing *For Wagging His Tongue in a Different Way*, 1808–14, expands the anti-clerical context, suggesting that Jones's piece is also a parody that owes a debt to the illustrious Spanish artist.

Jones's works toy with aspects of Fredric Jameson's celebrated analysis of late capitalism. The objects he sets his sights on are treated as infinitely combinable signs. My sense is that the artist aimed to attain a transfiguration of cultural values by creating a monstrous hybrid. Surface becomes depth, and depth morphs into history—the contingencies of his pastiches overwhelm us with associations that may or may not be necessary causal relations.

Are Jones's aims realized? Are the rhizomatic connections so skill-

fully woven in his art actually moments of scholarship in disguise? What Jones seems to overlook is the causality imminent within each link of the networked relationships he highlights—a typical postmodernist depiction of the experience of history. His mash-ups of popular media reportage—with their techno-fetishism, allusions to conspiracy theories, and obsession with historical detail—occupy an unstable space between entertainment and factual communication (or *infotainment*, as that combination was called in the '80s). Because of this, Jones's work is at once seductive and eerily complacent. His art strives to create a picture of culture that could be as big as the world itself.

—Michael Corris



Exhibition views, Ronald Jones : Clock in a Radio, 2024, Photo : Marc Domage. Courtesy Air de Paris, Romainville / Grand Paris



Exhibition views, Ronald Jones : Clock in a Radio, 2024, Photo : Marc Damage. Courtesy Air de Paris, Romainville / Grand Paris



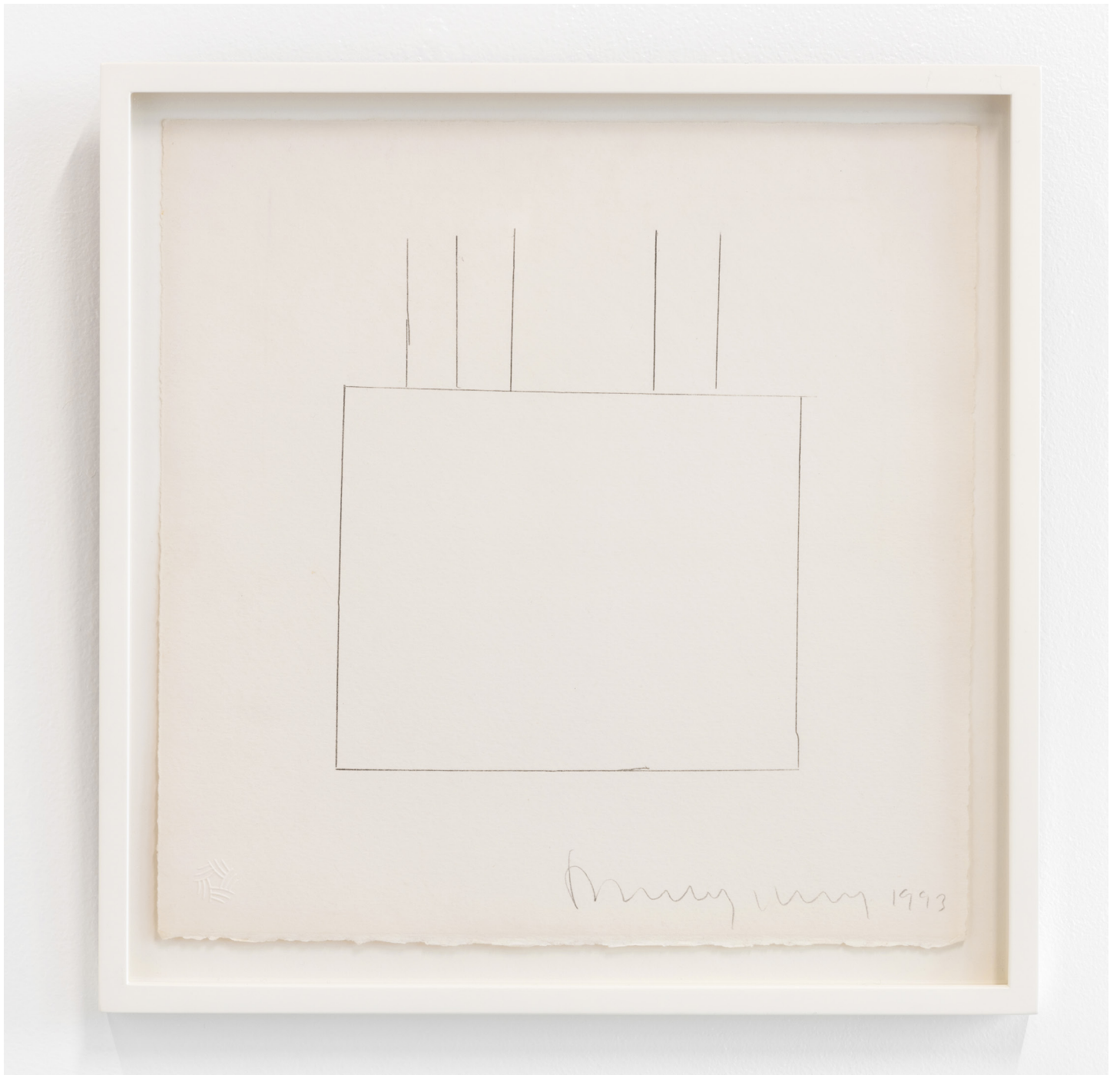
Exhibition views, Ronald Jones : Clock in a Radio, 2024, Photo : Marc Domage. Courtesy Air de Paris, Romainville / Grand Paris



Exhibition views, Ronald Jones : Clock in a Radio, 2024, Photo : Marc Domage. Courtesy Air de Paris, Romainville / Grand Paris



Drawings on Sculptures
nd (approx. 1990)
Set of 5 framed drawings ; pencil on
artist studio letterhead paper
1x (26,6 x 33,1 cm)
4 x (33,1 x 26,6 cm)
Unique



Heisenberg's Bomb
1993
Etching on paper, signed and dated
31 x 30,6 cm
Edition of 7



Untitled (Collapse Board Male)
1990
Woodcut print on rice paper
206 x 66 cm
Edition of 10 + 5 AP



Untitled (Collapse Board Female)
1990
Woodcut print on rice paper
163 x 66 cm
Edition of 10 + 5 AP



Pinkville (U.S. Battelfield Map of M Lai [#4], 16 March 1968)

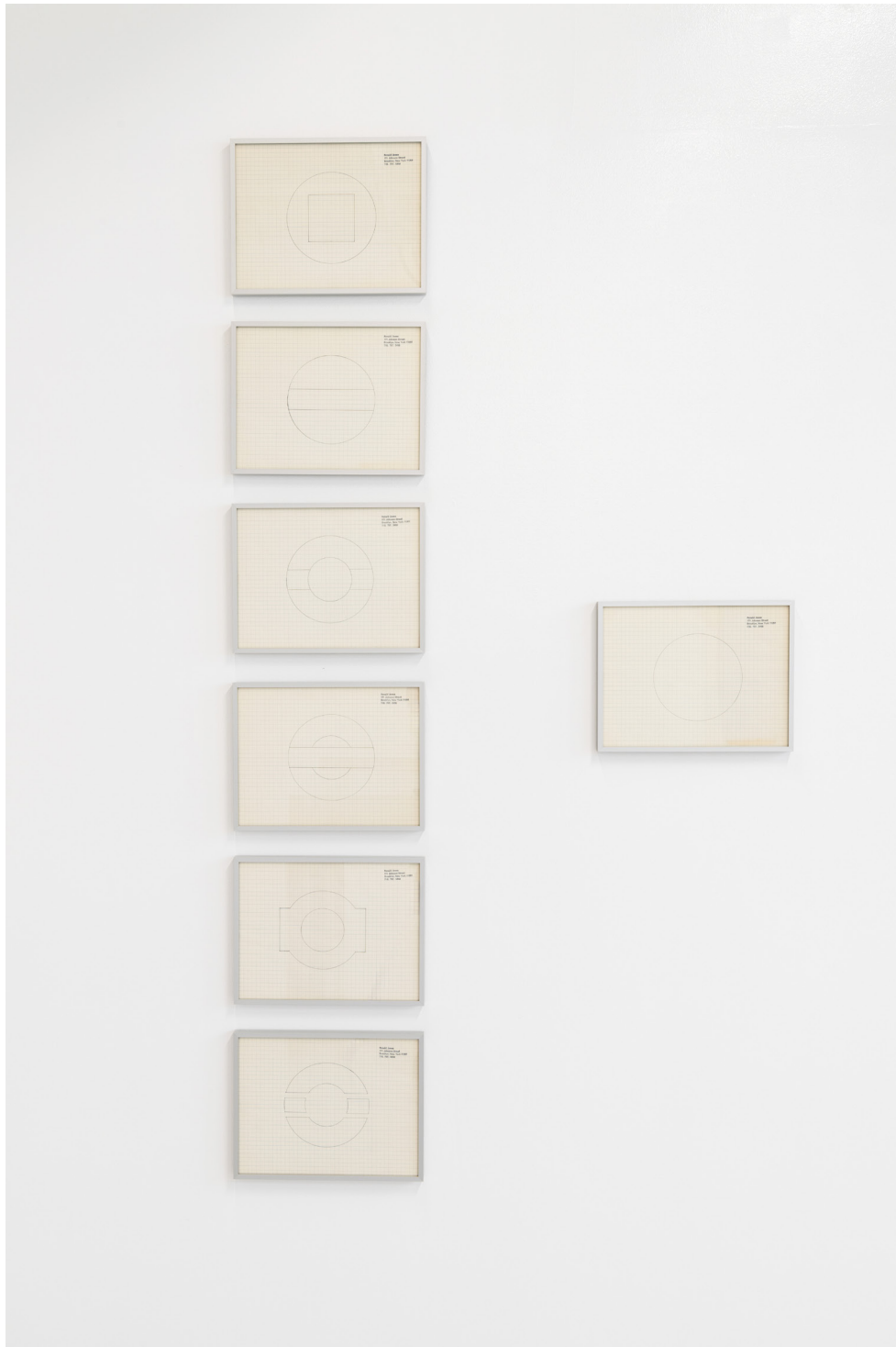
1987

Gouache on vellum paper, framed

40,7 x 70,6 cm

Approx. 30,3 x 61 cm

Unique



Untitled (Peace Conference Table Design by North Vietnam and The National Liberation Front of South Vietnam, 1969) and Untitled (Peace Conference Table Design by the United States and South Vietnam, 1969)

1986

Set of 7 framed drawings, graphite and artist stamp on letter headed graph paper

7 x (22,6 x 29,1 cm)

Unique