

JAMES COHAN GALLERY



Videobytes

Press Release

In collaboration with **James Cohan Gallery**, **Russ & Daughters** is pleased to present the exhibition *Videobytes*, an installation of video and film works shown in a continuous loop 24-hours a day, seven days a week in the Russ & Daughters storefront window. The presentation will run from Friday, November 4th to Sunday, December 11th.

With work that spans a fifty-year period, *Videobytes* features pieces by internationally renowned experimental filmmakers **Robert Breer** and **Harry Smith**, conceptual artists **John Baldessari** and **Gordon Matta-Clark**, and a younger generation of video and performance artists including **Kate Gilmore**, **Hiraki Sawa** and **Susana Mendes Silva**. The common link between all

seven of these artists is their engagement with process, performance and materials. This exhibition was organized by Elyse Goldberg and Christine Minas.

The engagement with process and materials is one that is essential at Russ & Daughters as well. For nearly 100 years, the Russ & Daughters family and staff have maintained the gastronomic tradition of appetizing in New York — personally selecting only the finest fish, hand-slicing smoked salmon with paper thin precision, and serving as the heart of the community—with artisanal skill and passion. Throughout its history, Russ & Daughters has been a hub of culture and community on the Lower East Side. When Yiddish and vaudeville theaters populated Second Avenue, Russ & Daughters stayed open until 2:00 a.m. on Saturdays to accommodate the post-theater crowd of actors, musicians, and audience members who flooded into Russ & Daughters looking for lox for a late dinner or for the next day's brunch. During the difficult decades of the 60's through the 80's, when few people other than artists and bohemians lived or even ventured into the neighborhood, Russ & Daughters was a beacon of nourishment and community. It is in this spirit of dialogue between food, community and the arts that Russ & Daughters has partnered with the James Cohan Gallery to now host the exhibition *Videobytes*.

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VIDEOBYTES features work by the following artists:



Known as a visual artist, poet and musicologist, **Harry Smith** (1923 – 1991) engaged in the radical act of manipulating the medium of film to create abstract works that functioned as “moving paintings.” *Videobytes* includes a selection of short films produced between 1946 and 1949 and more recently transferred to DVD. Consisting of lively, fast-moving colorful abstractions, his designs are scratched and painted onto the actual film, rather than filmed. Harry Smith is famous for these exquisite and eccentric laboriously hand-painted 35mm films. A three minute film could take as long as three years to paint.

Still from *A Strange Dream*, 1946, 2:00 minutes, color, sound, 16-mm film transferred to DVD for exhibition purposes



Robert Breer's (1927 – 2011) most well-known experimental animation film *Blazes* (1961) consists of over 90 scratched and painted frames that have been stitched together to form a kaleidoscopic experience for the viewer. It is important to note that *Blazes* is a film that is not meant to be seen on a flat screen, but rather projected onto a wall; the current presentation is considered a “copy” of the original.

Still from *Blazes*, 1961, 3:00 minutes, color, optical sound, 16-mm film transferred to DVD for exhibition purposes
Blazes © 1961 Robert Breer / Courtesy of Re:Voir Video, Paris / Special Thanks to Pip Chodorov, Re:Voir Video, Paris



John Baldessari's *Six Colorful Inside Jobs* (1977) also explores the notions of a non-linear narrative progression through performative actions. The film, installation, and performance all exist as one singular work. However the film is the only remaining result of Baldessari's performance of painting the same room over and over again, in six different colors. Baldessari was interested in exploring the question of what an artist can paint after the advent of abstract expressionism; he plays the jester by offering the answer of painting, and re-painting, a rectangular room.

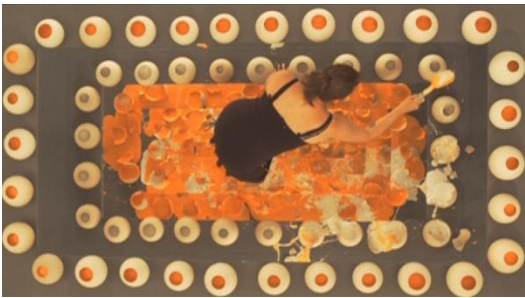
Still from *Six Colorful Inside Jobs*, 1977, 32:53 minutes, color, silent, 16-mm film transferred to DVD for exhibition purposes
With the kind permission of the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery, New York / Licensed by Electronic Arts Intermix, New York



Gordon Matta-Clark's (1943 – 1978) *Tree Dance* (1971) is the artist's response to action painting that he produced for a show titled *Twenty-Six by Twenty-Six* at Vassar College Art Gallery in Poughkeepsie. He originally planned to climb a tree and live in a makeshift structure of rope and canvas for the "duration of the show." Denied permission to remain in the tree, Matta-Clark and his friends created and filmed the performance piece *Tree Dance*, which refers to spring fertility rites.

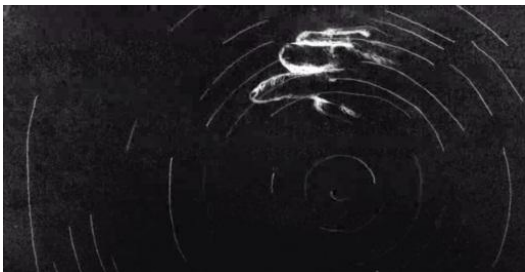
It is interesting to note that in 1971 Matta-Clark co-founded and designed the restaurant Food at Prince and Wooster Street in Soho. Managed and staffed by artists—many of whom are well-known today—Food was not only a restaurant but also a place for art events and performances.

Still from *Tree Dance*, 1971, 9:32 minutes, black and white, silent, 16-mm film transferred to DVD for exhibition purposes
© Estate of Gordon Matta-Clark / Licensed by Electronic Arts Intermix, New York



In the video titled *Built to Burst* (2011) by performance artist **Kate Gilmore**, a camera gives the viewer a bird's eye view of a stage covered with paint-filled ceramic pots. Gilmore proceeds to smash each pot, releasing blobs of orange and cream-colored paint on her and all over the floor. *Built to Burst* acknowledges the performative aspects of Baldessari and Matta-Clark and is a humorous nod to Jackson Pollock's action painting.

Still from *Built to Burst*, 2011, 5:54 minutes, HD video with sound, Courtesy of the artist



Hiraki Sawa's *did i?* (2011) consists of fragmented images that serve as starting points for an exploration of the mind. Similar to the entropic loss of material in the physical world, memories form, take shape and then disappear. In one scene the artist, as a sort of performance, is erasing marks on a wall, an action that reminds the viewer that disappearance can be as powerful as presence.

Still from *did i?*, 2011, 9:31 minutes, black and white, sound, Digital video with custom casing and monitor
Courtesy of the artist and James Cohan Gallery, New York/Shanghai / With thanks to Rie Nakajima and Elliot Dodd



Susana Mendes Silva also uses performative actions in her video *Ritual* (2006). Her hand is depicted at close range holding a pencil and writing the words “My obsession becomes my compulsion” over and over again. She repeatedly overwrites these five words in the same place until the pencil rips through the weakened paper, leaving the process of destruction as evidence.

Still from *Ritual*, 2006, 5:49 minutes, color, sound, Video, PAL, Courtesy of the artist

ABOUT RUSS & DAUGHTERS

Purveyors of the highest quality smoked fish, caviar, and specialty foods, Russ & Daughters is New York's premier appetizing shop. Since 1914, this landmark New York institution has been continuously owned and operated by four generations of the Russ family. In the same spot on East Houston Street, and run by the same family for nearly a century, Russ & Daughters continues to provide the tastes, traditions, and old-world class of a true New York experience.

When Joel Russ started peddling herring from a pushcart, could he have imagined a time when the fourth generation of the Russ family would walk daily into a landmark appetizing shop hailed by the Smithsonian Institute, the National Register of Historic Places, The New York Times, Gourmet, Martha Stewart, NPR, The New Yorker, New York Magazine, and Vogue - among many esteemed others - for its contribution to New York's culinary and historical landscape?

Joel Russ, an Eastern European immigrant who arrived in America in 1907, started the business from a pushcart to cater to the throngs of Jewish immigrants settling in New York's Lower East Side district. In 1920, he opened his store at 179 East Houston Street, after a few years of operating out of a storefront around the corner. In 1933, he renamed the business "Russ & Daughters," after his three daughters who joined him in the business. Mark Russ Federman succeeded as the 3rd Generation and, now retired, is at work on his forthcoming memoir, *The House That Herring Built*. The business is now owned and operated by the 4th Generation of the Russ family: Niki Russ Federman and Josh Russ Tupper.

Russ & Daughters is located at 179 East Houston Street, between Orchard Street and Allen Street, on the Lower East Side. Russ & Daughters is open Monday through Friday from 8:00 am – 8:00 pm, Saturday 9:00 am – 7:00 pm, Sunday 8:00 am – 5:30 pm.

ABOUT JAMES COHAN GALLERY

In September 1999, James Cohan Gallery opened on West 57th Street with an inaugural exhibition of early work by Gilbert and George. In 2002, the gallery moved to its present location at 533 West 26th Street in Chelsea and maintains a diverse exhibition program with one or two thematic group exhibitions in addition to the solo exhibitions of gallery artists. In July 2008, James Cohan Gallery opened its second location in Shanghai, China.

The gallery now represents established artists Bill Viola, Fred Tomaselli, Roxy Paine, Beatriz Milhazes, Richard Long, Yinka Shonibare, MBE, Bill Owens and the Estate of Robert Smithson along with emerging artists Trenton Doyle Hancock, Ingrid Calame, Tabaimo, Byron Kim, Jesper Just, Ruben Ochoa, Alison Elizabeth Taylor, Yun Fei-Ji, Hiraki Sawa, Erick Swenson, Simon Evans and Katie Paterson.

James Cohan Gallery is located at 533 West 26th Street and is open from Tuesday to Saturday, 10:00 am – 6:00 pm.

For further information, please contact **Jane Cohan** 212-714-9500 and jane@jamescohan.com or **Jen Snow** 212-475-4880 and jen@russanddaughters.com.