

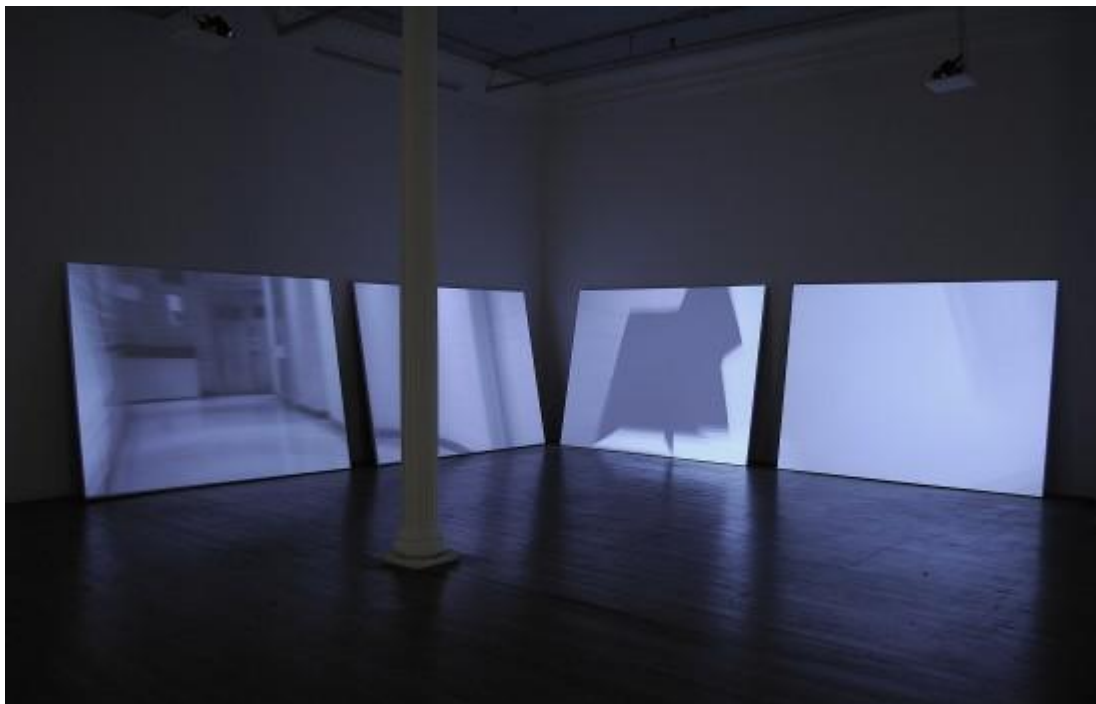
## All That Is Solid Melts Into Air: Simone Jones at Ronald Feldman

by Kris Scheifele

Simone Jones at Ronald Feldman Fine Arts

November 3 to December 23, 2011

31 Mercer Street, between Howard and Grand  
New York City, (212) 226-3232



Simone Jones, *All That Is Solid*, 2011. Four-screen 3D animation, run time: 12 minutes. Edition of 3

For her first solo show at Ronald Feldman, Simone Jones claims Marshall Berman's book, *All That is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity*, as thematic inspiration. Through diverse examples, from Goethe's *Faust* to Robert Moses' public works, Berman articulates modernity as "a maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal." This duality causes an uneasy split—you can't have 'the good' without 'the bad.' Otherwise, creative energies are snuffed out with destructive ones. Berman's modernity is a balancing act and always on the move.

Jones's video installation, *All That is Solid*, is an exercise in perpetual motion. Projected onto four screens propped against the wall, computer-generated 3D cubes, spheres, and reductive architectural models tumble vertiginously over film noirish photos of hallways and staircases. These uninhabited transitional spaces—facilitating movement from one thing to another—have the generic, institutional feel of school/office/hospital. Even if glimpses of this 'real' world did possess any distinguishing features, attempts to identify them are frustrated by the shapes, which continuously expand and contract, burst on the scene and disappear just as suddenly. While the photos of old, ossified modernity pan horizontally back and forth, the geometric avalanche only moves one way: right to left. There is, however, an exceptional moment of resistance: a small cube makes a slow break but quickly succumbs to the leftward momentum. Is this the maelstrom of modernity at work in our digital age? If so, it takes time and attention—both uncharacteristic of the current moment—to catch the breach. Accompanied by a sinister soundtrack, this piece is distinctly dystopic despite trading in a techno-pastoral currency.

*End of Empire* is also sinister. While this 14-minute video mimics the conditions of Warhol's eight-hour film, *Empire*, times have changed since 1964. Both pieces depict the Empire State Building, but Warhol's locked-down lens fixates on (what was) an emblem of enduring glamour and success. Jones sees the Machine Age icon differently. Her camera pans up the landmark while her crane-like robot tilts the projected image onto the ceiling. In this position, it's possible for viewers to assume the position of tourist—feet planted, head back—a stance rarely taken by locals who do not gawk at what they take for granted. The projector then tilts back down to the wall while the camera pans down to a murky, architectural thicket. Here, the grainy base of the city's tallest building melts into air. Supposedly, this Toronto-based artist isn't referencing 9/11—an impossible leap for any New Yorker. Rather, Jones shares Warhol's sentiment, "I like old things torn down and new things put up every minute."

Representative of quick, visually explicit turnover, Jones's piece does not illustrate Berman's split, it embodies it. When the video makes its second upward migration, the building is gone without a trace. Even Thomas Cole's *Course of Empire* (1836) left some remnants in the ravenous, vegetal wreckage. Jones's *End of Empire* is neither that literal nor is it as symbolically complex as Matthew Barney's *Cremaster 3* (2002). Jones's modernity—today's modernity—is digital dematerialization; it is both good and bad.



Simone Jones, *End of Empire*, 2011 (in collaboration with Lance Winn). Custom-made robotic dolly and track, digital projector, video run time: 14 minutes. Photo: Eleanore Hopper. Courtesy Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, New York