

Ronald Jones

September 11 — November 9, 2024

Empire is pleased to present a two part exhibition of Ronald Jones opening September 11, 2024. The first presentation, *16 Isarstrasse*, will be followed by *multiples: Good Vibrations*, in October.

16 Isarstrasse is the address of several buildings in Germany. The one that concerns us is in Neuss, a city on the west bank of the river Rhine opposite Dusseldorf. It was to an apartment at this address that German police tracked the assembly of a bomb used to blow up a passenger plane over Scotland. On December 21st, 1988, remnants of an aircraft fuselage rained down on the town of Lockerbie, which would lend its name to the disaster and subsequent investigation.

16 Isarstrasse is the collective title for a series of photograms produced by Ronald Jones in 1991. The artist observed the forensics teams at the crash site in Lockerbie and is rumored to have acquired seats from the downed Pan Am jet. He visited the address in Neuss and purchased the same electronics from Huma Markt department store that been used in the bomb's fabrication. These items were brought to Berlin where photographer F.C. Gundlach had acquired a former Stasi photo lab. The cold war facilities were used to produce the photograms using the last rolls of a GDR photopaper. Later that year Jones would combine the electronics with other fabricated elements in a bricolage sculpture.*

16 Isarstrasse would be shown in November 1991 in New York at Metro Pictures and Edition Julie Sylvester. The current presentation, the first of Jones in this city since 1998, would not have been possible without the generosity Carolina Nitsch.

* The sculpture's title describes its formal elements and details the then ongoing Lockerbie investigation:

Operation Mongoose (Suspended from this grand piano, which appears in Salvador Dali's painting, Le Concert ou Le piano rouge ou L'orchestre rouge, 1957, is the electronic circuitry from an iceclock radio that was paired with a digital timer to detonate the bomb which exploded aboard Pan American flight 103 on December 21st, 1988. The clock was purchased at the Huma-Markt department store in Neuss, Germany by Hafez Dalkamouni and the bomb's maker, Marwan Khreesat on October 24, 1988. Framing the circuitry is the silhouette of the headboard of Jack Ruby's bed. Ruby was the owner of two Dallas strip-tease clubs, the Carousel Club and the Vegas Club, and assassin of Lee Harvey Oswald. George Senator, Ruby's roommate, testified to the Warren Commission that at about 10:15 a.m. on Sunday morning, November 24, 1963, Ruby told him that: "If something happened to this person (Lee Harvey Oswald), then Mrs. Kennedy won't have to come back for the trial." About one hour later, as police were transferring Oswald from the city jail to the Dallas County jail, Ruby shot Oswald point blank with a Colt Cobra .38 caliber pistol. This pistol is now valued at over \$100,000. Submerged in the piano is a plaque with a passage from the Holy Koran. Marwan Khreesat purchased this plaque in Cologne, Germany just after his arrival in Neuss on October 13. Translated from the Arabic, the passage reads: "Say: He is God, one, God, the everlasting refuge, who has not begotten, and has not been begotten, and equal to him is not anyone." He hung this plaque in the entrance of the greengrocery at 16 Isarstrasse in Neuss which was owned by Dalkamouni's brother-in-law Hashem Abassi. Using the apartment just above the greengrocery, Khreesat assembled 4 complete bombs, and wired one other. The 4 complete bombs were confiscated by the German Bundeskriminalamt on October 26th during Operation Autumn Leaves as a result of Khreesat's turned allegiance to Jordanian intelligence. The 5th bomb was saved from this raid by Ramzi Diab, who carried it from Germany to Syria by train on October 29th. In Damascus Diab was apprehended by Ahmed Jibril, Leader of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine - General Command (PFLP-GC), who believed him to be working for the Mossad - Israeli Intelligence. Two forged Israeli passports found on Diab, confirmed Jibril's suspicion. Investigators speculate that the incomplete bomb Diab carried was taken to Libya and handed over by the PFLP - GC to Mohammed al-Makoussi, Ibrahim Twafik-Youssef and Hassan Hadi al-Ahar, the freelance terrorists known as the "Kenya Three." An assumption to be made is that in collaboration with other terrorists, including the two Libyans, Lamen Khalifa Fhimah and Abdel Basset Ali al-Megrahi, the "Kenya Three" completed Khreesat's bomb and loaded it as unaccompanied baggage aboard a feeder flight in Malta that connected with Pan Am 103 in Frankfurt, Germany. Speaking of the emancipatory power of his "paranoiac-critical method" Salvador Dali announced nearly thirty years before he painted the Le Concert ou Le piano rouge ou L'orchestre rouge: "I believe that the moment is at hand when, by a paranoiac and active effort of the mind, it will be possible to systematize confusion and thus help to discredit the world of reality.", 1991.