

A.K. BURNS

The 25 Works of Art That Define the Contemporary Age

Three artists and a pair of curators came together at The New York Times to attempt to make a list of the era's essential artworks. Here's their conversation.

20. A.K. Burns and A.L. Steiner, "Community Action Center," 2010



"Community Action Center," a 69-minute erotic romp through the imaginations of artists [A.K. Burns](#) (b. Capitola, Calif., 1975) and [A.L. Steiner](#) (b. Miami, 1967) and their community of friends, is a celebration of queer sexuality as playful as it is political. We watch as a diverse, multigenerational cast engage in joyfully hedonistic acts of private and shared pleasure involving paint, egg yolks, carwashes and corn on the cob. Although the video opens with the cabaret star [Justin Vivian Bond](#) reading lines from Jack Smith's experimental film "[Normal Love](#)," there is otherwise little dialogue. Instead, the focus is on the dreamlike visuals — captured with an offhand intimacy on rented and borrowed cameras — and the visceral sensations they evoke. "Community Action Center" is the rare ribald work that doesn't refer to male desire or gratification, which is partly why Steiner and Burns, who are activists as well as artists, describe it as "socio-sexual." Radical politics needn't come at the cost of sensuality, however. The piece is meant to titillate.