

**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.

**KT:** It’s a really important work, too.

**TLF:** I haven’t seen it.

**KT:** They spearheaded this project to essentially make porn, but it’s much more than that, with all kinds of people from their queer community. It includes so many artists that we know and that are making work now, and very visible, but it was all about figuring out how to show their body, show their sexuality, share their body, share their sexuality, make light of it, make it serious, collaborate with musicians. It’s a crazy document of a moment that opened up a conversation.

the other artists : Sturtevant; Marcel Broodthaers; Hans Haacke; Philip Guston; Judy Chicago, Miriam Schapiro and the CalArts Feminist Art Program; Lynda Benglis; Gordon Matta-Clark; Jenny Holzer; Dara Birnbaum; David Hammons; Barbara Kruger; Nan Goldin; Cady Noland; Jeff Koons; Mike Kelley; Felix Gonzalez-Torres; Catherine Opie; Lutz Bacher; Michael Asher; Danh Vo; Kara Walker; Heji Shin; Cameron Rowland; and Arthur Jafa.