

A.K. Burns, *The Leak*, 2023.
 Replica of Chelsea Manning's military jacket,
 concrete, garment bag, and metal hanger,
 2 x 4 x 18 in.
 Courtesy of the artist and Michel Rein,
 Paris/Brussels.



A.K. BURNS

SUNSET AT SCUM POND

Born in 1975, Burns is an American interdisciplinary artist and educator whose work focuses on social and political issues and gender activism, utilising a range of mediums from video and sculpture to installation. A.K. Burns' latest exhibition "Sunset at Scum Pond", at the Michel Rein Gallery in Paris, highlights various artworks that express the artist's exploration of the body as a space, where strong socio-political issues are challenged. In the *Split Tongues* series the artist utilizes black industrial tarps to evoke the lapel of a tuxedo, reworking the material via a tailoring process usually referred to in fashion as "ruching". The artwork becomes an expression of the duality where masculinity and femininity blend to create unique meaning and gesture. *Split Tongues* is a significant work that fully expresses the ideals and perspectives of the artist, while also perfectly reflecting the contrasting opinions of the current cultural and political sphere.

Another notable work in the exhibition is *The Leak* (2023), a sculptural monument dedicated to Chelsea Manning, the American activist and whistleblower who served as an Army Intelligence Officer during the Iraq war and was convicted and imprisoned for her involvement with Wikileaks and Julian Assange and the disclosure of sensitive US government material. The garment alludes to the concept of "dispersion" and "loss" of information, playing with the meaning behind the work and seeking to delve more deeply into the artist's interpretation of "leaky bodies": a term coined by the artist which indicates the fluidity of gender and individuals with non-forming gender identities, such as trans and non-binary bodies that go beyond traditional denominations.

Mirror Collage is a series of collages that are transformed into tangible surfaces. Each mirror presents different elements from everyday life that manage to transform the surrounding space. Works in the *On hands and buckets*, *Adaptive walker* (medical boot), *Night Shift* series narratively explore daily life through figures crafted from steel rebar and mesh; industrial materials used to reinforce concrete. These sculptures represent an empty and depleted body aimed to tell the autobiographies of individuals living in impossible and challenging conditions, particularly those of low paid laborers and women coming from precarious backgrounds, experiencing difficulties in labor and childbirth.

Text Martina Conte, A.K. Burns, "Sunset at Scum Pond" Michel Rein Gallery, Paris, From December 2nd to January 27th.