

A.K. Burns

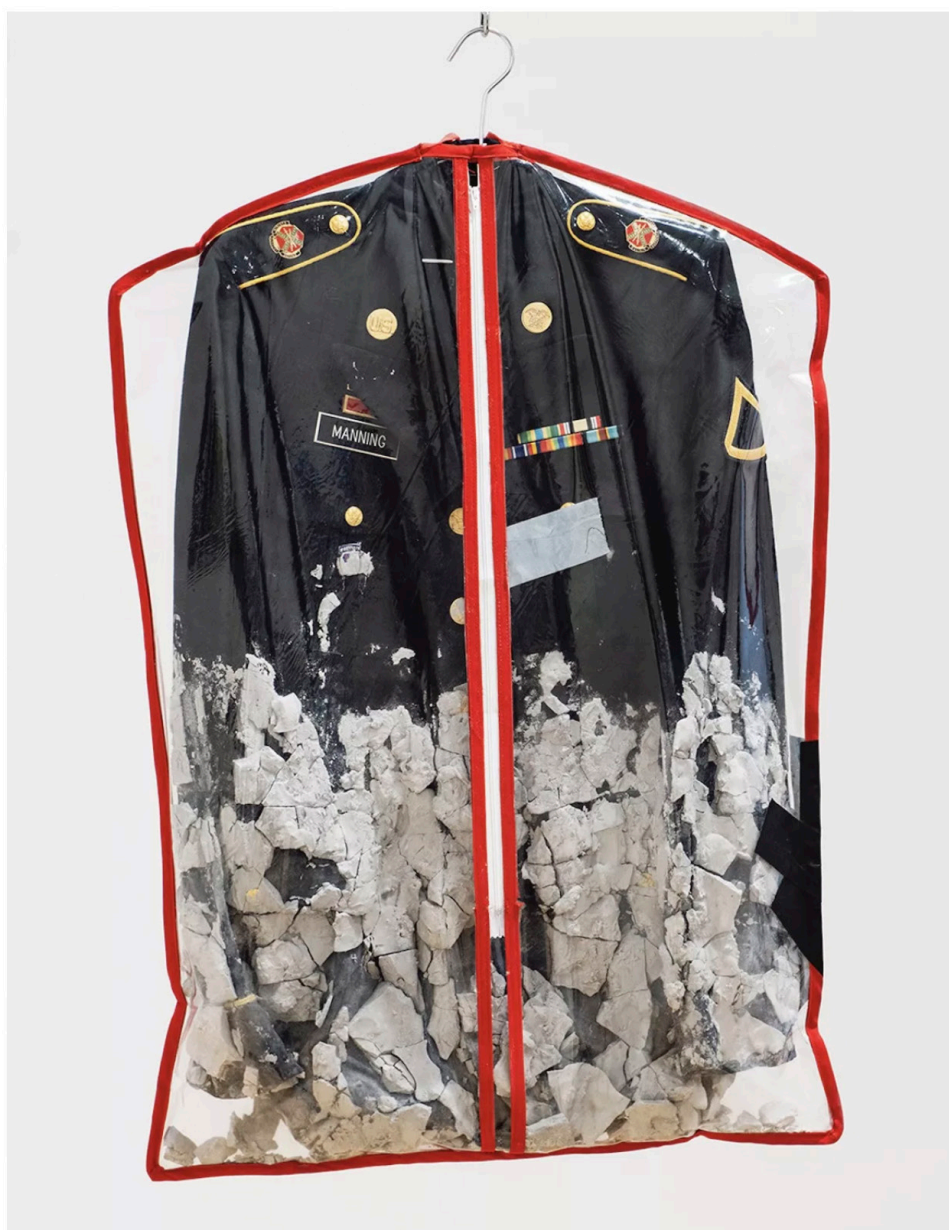
1975 – CAPITOLA, CALIFORNIA, USA



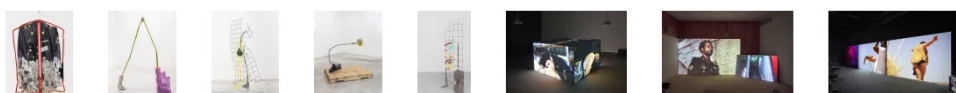
Portrait of A.K. Burns, © Photo: Lauryn Seigel

- ✓ Artist collective
- ✓ Graphic arts
- ✓ Assemblage
- ✓ Audiovisual
- ✓ Space & installation
- ✓ Film
- ✓ Paper & cardboard
- ✓ Sculpture
- ✓ Body positivity
- ✓ Political issues
- ✓ Social classes
- ✓ Women's status
- ✓ Human body
- ✓ Dance
- ✓ Eroticism
- ✓ Feminism
- ✓ Gender fluidity
- ✓ Identity
- ✓ Sex positivity
- ✓ Queer
- ✓ Sexuality
- ✓ United States
- ✓ 2000s
- ✓ 2010s
- ✓ 2020s
- ✓ 21st century

PUBLICATIONS	+
EXHIBITIONS	+
VIDEO ARCHIVE	+
SOUND ARCHIVE	+
LINK	+



A.K. Burns, *The Leak*, 2023, replica of Chelsea Manning's military jacket, concrete, garment bag, and metal hanger, 62 × 24 × 6 in. (157.5 × 61 × 15.2 cm), Courtesy of the artist and Michel Rein Gallery





American video artist, sculptor and educator.

What if pornography could escape its own tired scripts? A.K. Burns, along with visual artist A.L. Steiner (1967-), took up that challenge with *Community Action Center* (2010), a queer-feminist landmark that remains as playful as it is provocative. But A.K. Burns' practice extends far beyond this iconic work: across video installations, works on paper, and sculptures, she interrogates value systems – artistic, economic, bodily – with an eye for the edges where genres and identities come undone.

Burns studied graphic design at the Rhode Island School of Design before moving to New York City in 2003, where she found her artistic community within the queer feminist collective LTTR (2001-2008). She later earned her MFA in Sculpture from Bard College (2010). This formative period shaped her collaborative ethos and led to pivotal projects with A.L. Steiner, including W.A.G.E. (Working Artists and the Greater Economy), an advocacy group co-founded in 2008 to address economic inequity in the arts.

More recently, her most ambitious undertaking, *Negative Space* (2015-2022), unfolds as a four-part cycle. The series treats science fiction not as futuristic escapism but as a lens for examining what the artist considers primordial elements of life such as the void, body, land, and water. The works inhabit sites of abandonment: black-box theatres filled with piles of rubbish, dilapidated IBM offices, deserts bordered by military bases, gutted apartments. There, performers labour with refuse, dance amongst electronic waste and sing ballads to water in limestone caves. The resulting multi-channel video installations occupy gallery spaces with deliberately off-

kilter angles, making viewers conscious of the architecture that surrounds them. The soundscapes, developed in collaboration with musician Geo Wyex, often feel raw and visceral.

Running parallel to the video installations, A.K. Burns's *Depleted Figures* series (ongoing since 2017) uses construction materials such as bent steel rebar and remesh sheets to create bodies that never quite cohere. What remains are extremities made of concrete and resin casts of hands and feet or household objects standing in for absent limbs. For instance, *She Was Warned* (2017) transforms the ancient fertility goddess Artemis of Ephesus into a hollow armature sprouting Gatorade bottles instead of breasts: corporate promises of body optimisation replacing elemental nourishment. These skeletal forms frequently speak to burnout and extraction, especially as experienced by women and labourers.

Major exhibitions include presentations at the Henry Art Gallery, Seattle (2024); Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus (2023); and Harvard Art Museum, Cambridge (2018). A.K. Burns is a tenured professor in Studio Art at Hunter College, CUNY, where her seminar examines the body as a site of political, medical and, economic formation.

Charles Aubin

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