

For Immediate Release

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Queer Communion: Ron Athey

Curated by Amelia Jones

Feb 14 - April 4, 2021

Wednesday-Sunday, noon-7pm

Appointments are required

Ron Athey, *Performance at Participant in 3 Acts*, with Hermes Pitakkos, Mecca, and Elliot Reed

I. Opening solo word action by Elliot Reed; II. Pistol Poem: Brion Gysin's 5 x 5 1960 sound piece choreographed for 4; III. Printing Press (1994 brought back for Biosphere 2 performance, cutting the Horns of Consecration)
Tues, Feb 16, 8pm EST
participantafterdark.art

Queer Communion: Ron Athey, curated by art historian and performance studies scholar Amelia Jones, offers the first retrospective of the work of Los Angeles-based performance artist Ron Athey. The exhibition and related publication explore Athey's practice as paradigmatic of a radically alternative mode of art-making as *queer communion* – the generous extension of self into the world through a mode of open embodiment that enacts creativity in the social sphere through collective engagement as art. Athey, through his significant and generative work as a performance artist, is a singular example of a lived creativity that is at complete odds with the art worlds and marketplaces that have increasingly dominated contemporary art over his largely undervalued career. Having been the focus of a homophobic, AIDS-phobic, and sensationalized political attack during the U.S. culture wars of the 1990s, in which a conservative leader denounced a partially government funded Athey troupe performance as depraved, Athey's practice remains a challenge to the politics of today's renewed culture wars. Athey's work is organized in relation to thematic intensities and overlapping communities spanning religion, queer subcultures, music, literature, performance, film, and theater, and displayed via photographic, archival, and video documentation as well as artworks and props from the original performances and Athey's personal collection. The exhibition will travel to ICA Los Angeles in summer 2021.

Queer Communion presents Athey's career and lifework through the lens of these communities that Athey has engaged and helped form throughout his career: each section (Religion/Family, Music/Clubs, Literature/Tattoo/BDSM, Art/Performance/Politics, New Work/Community) is laid out with a range of artifacts, props, costumes, photographs, video, audio, writings, and sketches relating to his creative work, artistic development, and engagement of friends and colleagues across queer networks. The zones move forward in a roughly chronological but recursive and overlapping way, transporting the visitor from the 1970s to the present, laying out the interrelations among the communities and actively purveying a sense of each community's mood, political energies, and creative ethos in relation to Athey's practice. Visitors will ideally gain an active sense of what it was/is like participating in these communities rather than simply a sense of viewing relics from the past, while also gaining a strong understanding of the aesthetic and political trajectories within Athey's own work.

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A catalogue is available which accompanies the exhibition and includes extensive original never-before-published writings by Athey as well as an illustrated checklist and essays by a range of contributors on Athey's work and impact. *Queer Communion: Ron Athey* (Intellect Press, 2020), is co-edited by Amelia Jones and Andy Campbell; the catalogue was listed among "Best Art Books 2020" in the *New York Times*. <https://www.intellectbooks.com/queer-communion>

Ron Athey (b. 1961) identifies as a self-taught artist, having, since 1980, life of experience in Los Angeles post-punk performance scenes. He has collaborated with performers, visual artists, and opera directors, participated in philosophy seminars (via Professor Johnny Golding's tenure at Greenwich University 2012-13), and has visiting artist teaching history at Cal Arts, Roski, UCLA, and Queen Mary University, London. Recent projects include *Acephalous Monster*, Performance Space NY, 2018; *Sebastiane*, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, 2014; *Incorruptible Flesh: Messianic Remains*, Spill Fest Ipswich, UK, 2014; *Self-Obliteration*, Galerija Kapelica, Ljubljana, Slovenia, 2011; as well as community-based projects including *Gifts of the Spirit*, a collectively authored automatic writing opera, culminating in the ultimate version with *Opera Povera* through the Broad Museum at the Cathedral of St. Vibiana, 2018. Athey's work has been included in group exhibitions including *Art AIDS America*, Tacoma Art Museum, Tacoma, Washington, 2015 and *The Displaced Person*, Invisible Exports Gallery, NY, 2012. Athey has received grants and fellowships including English Arts Council 2014 and 15; Art Matters 2018, Foundation for Contemporary Arts 2019, American Academy of Religion for Religion and the Arts Award 2019, and most recently the Harpo Foundation Fellowship 2021. Upcoming projects include a live art/video production in collaboration with Hermes Pittakos, *The Asclepeion*.

Amelia Jones (b. 1961) is Robert A. Day Professor and Vice Dean of Academics and Research in Roski School of Art & Design, USC. Recent publications include *Seeing Differently: A History and Theory of Identification and the Visual Arts* (2012); *Otherwise: Imagining Queer Feminist Art Histories*, co-edited with Erin Silver (2016). Her book entitled *In Between Subjects: A Critical Genealogy of Queer Performance* is published in 2021 by Routledge Press.

Archival, research assistance: David Frantz, Hannah Grossman, Dominic Johnson, Maddie Phinney, Ana Briz.

Safety protocols: Appointments are required and are limited to two people. Visitors and staff must wear a mask at all times, use available hand sanitizer upon entry, and practice social distancing. We ask that you do not visit if you are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms or have tested positive in the past 14 days.

Image: Ron Athey, *Acephalous Monster*, 2019, MoCA Skopje. Photo: Andreja Kargačin. [The artist Ron Athey, wearing a minotaur mask, is seated in a shallow box of viscous fluids under a blacklight in shades of blue, white, and pink, covered in drippy fluids.]

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PARTICIPANT INC is located at 253 East Houston Street between Norfolk and Suffolk Streets. The closest trains are the F (2nd Ave) and the J/M/Z (Essex/Delancey); the closest wheelchair accessible stop is the 4/6 (Bleecker/Lafayette). Entry is on grade and the gallery is barrier free throughout with an all gender, wheelchair accessible bathroom. Service animals are welcome.