



**A.K. Burns**  
**A SMEARY SPOT**

Opening episode of *Negative Space*

September 13 - October 18, 2015

Opening Reception:

Sunday, September 13, 7-9pm

From September 13 - October 18, 2015, PARTICIPANT INC is proud to present **A Smeary Spot**, a solo exhibition by **A.K. Burns** consisting of a new 55-minute multi-channel video installation, drawing on speculative fiction, theater, and documentary tactics. This episode was shot in two locations: on public lands in the deserts of southern Utah and inside a black box theater, where performers deliver recitations of appropriated and altered texts that compose a loose manifesto on being. A *Smeary Spot* is an entrance into a cycle of video works and exhibitions that will be collectively known as *Negative Space*.

The title *A Smeary Spot*, a reference to the sun, is borrowed from Johanna Russ. This dense concentration of heat and light, bright beyond our abilities to perceive, is always out of focus, out of grasp, yet permeating everywhere in every *thing*. An organizing principle of time, of place, of ego, it is powerful in its persistence. Sitting there, sinking, only to rise again. Hung above the line, the horizon, balancing between giving and taking too much. What potential emerges when we glance away from the source and settle into the blurry residue of the afterimage?

This is about orientation, a re-orientation, a speculative present. Another present will be another future. Inside this cinematic experience is a surreal narrative of *bodies in transition* - bodies that change, move, slip between, act and act out, delivering language and materially motivated gestures that add up to an offering, a set of possibilities. Among these bodies, the land, the water, the junk pile and the theater are not simply grounds, resources, waste or stages upon which actions occur. They are sprawling protagonists, who, like the sun - permeating and persistent - cast large shadows, and occupy most of the screen.

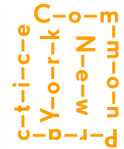
Negative space is a mutable matter - the between, under, and around space. Positive space is the thing, the object of our desire, the subject of our attention. We might conclude that negative space is subordinate to its other, but if we shift our focus toward the formless, we see it is always becoming, always adaptable, always there even when *the thing* is gone.

A *Smeary Spot* was realized with the generous support and resources provided by Creative Capital, The Kitchen, collective address, Outpost Cuts and Burns Residency, Callicoon Fine Arts and PARTICIPANT INC, and in conjunction with performers niv Acosta, Nayland Blake, Grace Dunham, Jack Doroshov (aka Flawless Sabrina), Macauley Devun, Marcelo Gutierrez, Katherine Hubbard, Lee Maida, Matana Roberts, Jen Rosenblit, Mariana Valencia, with an original score by Geo Wyeth and others.

Born at home on the coast of northern California, **A.K. Burns** is an interdisciplinary artist, educator, and compulsive collaborator residing in Brooklyn, NY. Burns insists that matter matters, that the body is a site of imminent negotiation, and that unexpected affinities between material, medium and media offer space to work and rework economies of gender, labor, ecology and sexuality. Burns co-founded the artists activist group W.A.G.E. (Working Artists and the Greater Economy). Working in collaboration with A.L. Steiner, the feature-length socio-sexual video portrait *Community Action Center* was released in 2010 and subsequently toured worldwide. Additionally, Burns maintains an ongoing collaborative practice with Katherine Hubbard, which has resulted in a series of performative explorations that build and question queer cosmologies. Burns is a 2015 recipient of a Creative Capital Foundation Visual Arts Award, and has works in several public collections including MoMA, International Center of Photography, and LACMA. Burns is full-time faculty at Hunter College Graduate Department of Art & Art History and a mentor in the Graduate Department at Columbia University School of Visual Art.

Image caption: Still from *A Smeary Spot*, courtesy of A.K. Burns and Callicoon Fine Arts, NY.

## Creative Capital



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Common Practice New York is an advocacy group that fosters research and discussions on the role of small-scale arts institutions in New York City. Common Practice New York aims to collectively embody the question, *What is our common practice and why do we value it?* [commonpracticenyc.org](http://commonpracticenyc.org)

PARTICIPANT INC is located at 253 East Houston Street, between Norfolk and Suffolk Streets on the LES, ground floor, wheelchair accessible. Subway: F to Second Avenue, Allen Street exit; or JMZ to Essex/Delancey. [participantinc.org](http://participantinc.org)

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