

The Kitchen

512 W 19th Street New York, NY 10011
(212)255-5793 www.thekitchen.org

Charles Atlas: *the past is here, the futures are coming* **March 28–May 12, 2018**

The Kitchen presents a multimedia project by **Charles Atlas**, featuring a gallery installation and performances, continuing the institution's nearly 45-year relationship with this pioneer of video art.

In The Kitchen's main gallery, two new video installations take a retrospective look at Atlas's work across more than five decades, beginning with *2003*, whose video portraits of artists based in New York City during that year are interspersed with found television footage from the time. These segments with 36 artistic figures—ranging from writer Eileen Myles to choreographer Ishmael Houston-Jones, among many others—were first shot in 2003 as part of Atlas's *Instant Fame!*, for which he created portraits onsite at the Lower East Side non-profit gallery Participant, Inc., projecting a live mix of the video in the organization's gallery space. At The Kitchen, this material reappears as a large projection with two synced cube monitors, mixing commercials, news coverage, and popular music of the early aughts in a constantly shifting, multicolor sequence that is alternatively funny, poignant, and strange—recalling feelings of malaise at the turn of the century while providing an unsettling reminder of a previous cultural and political moment, notably the inception of the Iraq War, whose imprint lingers today.

Atlas's second installation, titled *The Years*, is a large-scale, multi-channel video graveyard providing a meditation on his work and its relevance in an unknown future. In fact, as chapters unfold, the changing cultural resonance of his different projects becomes palpable even with respect to our own time. Scrolling footage from throughout the artist's oeuvre captivates the viewer with scenes from across his work in live performance, fashion, dance for camera, portraits of artists, installation, and porn. While highlighting his historic collaborations with artists such as Michael Clark, ANOHNI, Marina Abramovic, Merce Cunningham, Karole Armitage, Douglas Dunn, and Rashaun Mitchell + Silas Riener, the profusion of continual footage—as well as filmic mediums transposed to digital video—offers a commentary on our increasingly mediated and multi-hyphenated viewing experience in the twenty-first century. A video projection of women on Plexiglas faces viewers from above and behind these monitors, with their ghostly presence—and visages belonging to a younger generation—suggesting witnesses yet to come in the future.

Also included in a smaller gallery space are several video works by Atlas, offering visitors the opportunity to watch in full pieces that are excerpted in *The Years*. Focusing on his collaborations with choreographers including Karole Armitage, Michael Clark, Merce Cunningham, DANCENOISE, Douglas Dunn, Bill Irwin / William Whitener / Diane Martel, Rashaun Mitchell + Silas Riener, and Yvonne Rainer, these works make clear the expanse of Atlas's projects in dance throughout his career.

The exhibition culminates with two weekends of performances, organized by Atlas with The Kitchen, titled *The Kitchen Follies*, featuring **Julianna Barwick** and **Jodi Melnick**, **Laurie Berg**, **Johanna Constantine**, **DANCENOISE**, **The Illustrious Blacks**, **Solo Termite**, **Stanley Love**, and many others collectively presenting what Atlas calls “the ultimate variety show” (May 3–5 and 10–12). *The Kitchen Follies* will be hosted by **Tyler Ashley**, **The Dauphine of Bushwick**, while Atlas records, mixes, and projects footage live. As Atlas says of these upcoming performances:

The Kitchen Follies is something I have wanted to do in some form or other for more than twenty years. Inspired by the performance art and club scene on the Lower East Side that I was involved with at the time, I had thought to make a “Follies” feature film that...would have had a “New York-centric” performance art “variety show” at its core...This idea remained at that time an over-ambitious dream. As I look back, it seems to me that over the intervening years elements of this idea have emerged sporadically in different forms in the films, installations, and live performance works that I have created. I look forward to this project in collaboration with The Kitchen as both a continuation of my previous work and an opportunity to newly reconfigure the relationship of live performance and video.

The Kitchen Follies takes place May 3–5 and 10–12 at 8pm at The Kitchen (512 West 19th Street). Tickets \$25 General / \$20 Members. With any questions, please contact the box office at boxoffice@thekitchen.org or by phone at 212.255.5793 x11.

This project is organized by **Katy Dammers** and **Tim Griffin**.

About Charles Atlas

During the past four decades, Charles Atlas has continually expanded the parameters of film and video, forging new territory across genres, styles, and techniques. All the while, Atlas has cultivated remarkable collaborative relationships, having worked intimately with musicians, performers, and choreographers including Marina Abramovic, ANOHNI, Karole Armitage, Leigh Bowery, Michael Clark, Yvonne Rainer, and Merce Cunningham.

Born in St. Louis, Missouri, Atlas has lived in New York since 1968. Upon arriving, he immediately became involved in the downtown arts community, volunteering as a stage manager at Judson Memorial Church. Atlas soon started working with Cunningham in a similar capacity, beginning by blowing up Andy Warhol's silver pillows for the set of Cunningham's *RainForest* (1968), before designing the company's costumes and lighting, and eventually becoming filmmaker-in-residence. Teaching himself how to shoot and edit video, Atlas embraced a DIY inventiveness that would characterize his lifelong approach to art. Notably, by 1980, The Kitchen was already staging a retrospective of Atlas's dance videos, screening pieces he created with Cunningham as well as those done in collaboration with Douglas Dunn, Rainer, Valda Setterfield, and James Waring.

Atlas works with Cunningham include the celebrated *Fractions I* (1978), *Channels/Inserts* (1982), and *Coast Zone* (1983). Perhaps giving the greatest insight to their collaboration is *Ocean* (2011), which Atlas completed two years after Cunningham's death: filmed in a Minnesota quarry, Atlas deftly alternates between one- and two-camera views, permitting the audience to view the work in the round as intended by Cunningham.

Atlas's move to London in 1983 proved to be crucial, as the artist immersed himself in the city's vibrant club and underground art scene, working in particular with Bowery and Clark—whose idiosyncratic styles defined an era of eccentric expression while reaching broader pop audiences. (Atlas created lighting design and costumes for Clark, and was later commissioned by Channel 4 to create the feature-length *Hail the New Puritan* (1985–86), which included music by composers such as Glenn Branca.) Subsequently returning to New York, Atlas continued such work on the East Village club scene, collaborating with artists like DANCENOISE, Hapi Phace, and John Kelly. Invariably, many of these works—in particular *Son of Sam and Delilah*, shown at The Kitchen in 1991—addressed the AIDS crisis, joining a movement of artists who fearlessly critiqued the government's willful ignorance. In a similar vein, Atlas's most recent exhibitions at Luhring Augustine in New York, *The Illusion of Democracy* (2012) and *The Waning of Justice* (2015), wryly considered our contemporary political climate. His recent video installation *The Tyranny of Consciousness* (2017) was awarded a special mention for its inclusion in the Venice Biennale.

Since 2000, Atlas has worked with live video mixing of performance, creating reactive works in real time: with artists Mika Tajima and New Humans, for instance, he has turned the gallery space SFMoMA and South London Gallery into a hybrid film set, installation, and stage. Most recently Atlas has collaborated with choreographer Rashaun Mitchell + Silas Riener on *Tesseract*, an evening-length work including a 3D film and live performance with real-time video capture, manipulation, and projection. In all such efforts, Atlas has continually pushed his viewers to be conscious of moments simultaneously live, recorded, and somewhere in-between, rendering his work more invaluable as our present becomes increasingly mediated.

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About The Kitchen

The Kitchen is one of New York City's most forward-looking nonprofit spaces, showing innovative work by emerging and established artists across disciplines. Our programs range from dance, music, performance, and theater to video, film, and art, in addition to literary events, artists' talks, and lecture series. Since its inception in 1971, The Kitchen has been a powerful force in shaping the cultural landscape of this country, and has helped launch the careers of many artists who have gone on to worldwide prominence.

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Press Contact

For more information, please contact Rachael Shearer, Ron Gaskill or Matt Gross at Blake Zidell & Associates, 718.643.9052, rachael@blakezidell.com, ron@blakezidell.com, matt@blakzidell.com