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Contact: [press@henryart.org](mailto:press@henryart.org)

## A.K. Burns: What is Perverse is Liquid September 7 – May 4, 2025



A.K. Burns (U.S., born 1975). *Living Room*. 2017. 2-channel HD video installation, 5.1 surround sound. Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Production still by Eden Batki.

Seattle, WA —The Henry Art Gallery at the University of Washington is pleased to present the first comprehensive Northwest presentation of work by interdisciplinary artist A.K. Burns.

Based in New York, Burns fosters a feminist and queer worldview through a diverse range of mediums including video, sculpture, and installation. Burns uses materials and storytelling in dynamic ways to grapple with the subjugation of marginalized communities and nature and to imagine alternative ways of relating to each other and the environment. The Henry exhibition delves into the intersections of land, human bodies, and water across Burns's art of the last decade, particularly focusing on the Negative Space series (2015-23).

Negative Space draws inspiration from science fiction, crafting a narrative that challenges societal norms and power dynamics. This non-linear allegory reflects on ecological vulnerability, life at the edges of society, and relationships with place. The concept of "negative space" or the void serves as a central motif, symbolizing a fertile ground for

upending established hierarchies, restructuring social relationships, and fostering agency. Burns describes this as an open and ever-evolving space where possibilities for transformation emerge from traditionally marginalized perspectives.

At the Henry exhibition, viewers encounter three video installations from the Negative Space universe: *Living Room* (2017), *Leave No Trace* (2019), and *What is Perverse is Liquid* (2023). Visually and sonically layered, each of these installations is an immersive environment that features a recurring cast of characters performed by members of Burns's queer community.

Throughout the exhibition, finite categories dissolve and the distinction between animate and inanimate entities blurs. Human bodies, alongside elements like water and land, coalesce into a dynamic, interconnected presence. The accompanying wall-based artworks and sculptures, several of which are new for the exhibition, deepen these themes, creating a portal to imagine a world of collective liberation.

A.K. Burns: *What is Perverse is Liquid*



A.K. Burns (U.S., born 1975). *Leave No Trace*. 2019. 5-channel HD video installation, 4-channel sound.

## ARTIST BIO

A.K. Burns (b. 1975, Capitola, CA; based in Stone Ridge, New York) is an interdisciplinary artist and associate professor in the Department of Art at Hunter College, City University of New York. Using video, installation,

sculpture, drawing, and collaboration and working at the nexus of language and materiality, she/they trouble systems that assign value and explore their sociopolitical embodiment. Burns has exhibited internationally, including at 2018's FRONT International, Cleveland, Ohio; the Harvard Art Museums, Cambridge, Massachusetts; Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia; Julia Stoschek Foundation, Dusseldorf, Germany; MMK Museum of Modern Art, Frankfurt am Main, Germany; New Museum, New York; Palais de Tokyo, Paris; the Portland Institute for Contemporary Art, Portland, Oregon; and the Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, Ohio. She/they was a founding member of W.A.G.E. (Working Artists in the Greater Economy), a nonprofit artists' advocacy group. Community Action Center (2010), a video made in collaboration with A.L. Steiner, which re-imagines pornographic cinema for queer womxn, and trans and nonbinary bodies, has screened internationally, including the Tate, London; and the Museum of Modern Art, New York. Burns is a 2023 Berlin Prize Fellow at the American Academy in Berlin; a 2021 Guggenheim Fellow; a 2016 Radcliffe Fellow at Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts; and a 2015 Creative Capital Foundation Visual Arts Award Recipient.

## ABOUT THE HENRY

The Henry advances contemporary art and ideas. The museum is internationally recognized for groundbreaking exhibitions, for being on the cutting edge of contemporary art and culture, and for championing artists at every level of creation. Containing more than 28,000 works of art, the Henry's permanent collection is a significant cultural resource available to scholars, researchers, and the general public. The Henry is located on the University of Washington campus in Seattle, Washington. Visit [henryart.org](https://henryart.org) to learn more.