

LUHRING AUGUSTINE CHELSEA

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Charles Atlas

A Prune Twin

Luhring Augustine Chelsea

January 28 – March 11, 2023

Opening reception: Friday, January 27, 6-8pm

Luhring Augustine is pleased to announce *A Prune Twin*, the gallery's third solo exhibition with pioneering film and video artist Charles Atlas. The presentation will mark the American debut of this major multi-channel installation with sound that was originally commissioned by the Barbican Centre, London as the centerpiece of their 2020 exhibition, *Michael Clark: Cosmic Dancer*, which traveled to the Victoria and Albert Museum in Dundee, Scotland in 2021.

The collaboration between the two artists began in 1984 when the young dancer, Clark, performed in two single-channel films by Atlas: *Parafango* and *Ex-Romance*. However, it was not until the groundbreaking *Hail the New Puritan* in 1986, that the relationship between the two artists was deeply cemented. Originally commissioned as an arts documentary by Channel 4 of the BBC, *Hail the New Puritan* turned the genre on its head, presenting a highly stylized and fictionalized version of a typical day in Clark's life – an “anti-documentary”, as Atlas has called it. The two artists also worked closely together on another Channel 4 production, *Because We Must* (1989), which was full of extreme theatricality in its dance, choreography, scenery, costumes, and directorial position.

In *A Prune Twin*, Atlas pulls material from these two major films to create an immersive eight-channel installation of sound and moving image. He extends the idea of choreography to camera and sound, flowing across and throughout screens and monitors; in this sense, Atlas choreographs his own past material into a new and compelling dance all of its own. Evident in this work, and many others by Atlas, is his strong affection and attraction to exceptionally creative collaborators, his sensitivity to movement and how to capture it on film, and his novel skills as both a storyteller and observer. Much like *MC⁹*, an immersive installation that compiles Atlas' extensive work with Merce Cunningham, *A Prune Twin* surrounds the viewer in a beautifully choreographed spectacle. The work captures the spirit and passion of a 35-year collaborative relationship, one that continues to this day – currently realized through the lighting design that Atlas produces for all of Clark's live performances, an endeavor he has undertaken since the 1980s.

Atlas was born in St. Louis, MO in 1949; he has lived and worked in New York City since the early 1970s. Recent solo exhibitions include *The Mathematics of Consciousness*, a 100-foot long video installation commissioned by Pioneer Works, Brooklyn, NY, and supported by a grant from the VIA Art Fund; *Charles Atlas: Ominous, Glamorous, Momentous, Ridiculous*, Fondazione ICA Milano, Italy; and *Charles Atlas: The past is here, the futures are coming* and *The Kitchen Follies*, The Kitchen, New York. In 2017, the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles acquired Atlas' five-channel video installation with sound entitled *The Tyranny of Consciousness*, which won a prize in *Viva Arte Viva*, the 57th International Art Exhibition of the Venice Biennial. In September 2019, Atlas unveiled *The Geometry of Thought*, a new commission for Art on theMART that spanned across the 2.5 acre river façade of theMART in Chicago. Atlas' work is included in the permanent collections of major institutions worldwide, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Art Institute of Chicago; San Francisco Museum of Art; Tate Modern, London; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Hamburger Bahnhof – Museum für Gegenwart, Berlin; Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Zürich; and De Hallen Haarlem, The Netherlands.

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