

Peetz, John Arthur. *Critics' Picks: A.K. Burns, Callicoon Fine Arts*, Artforum, October 20, 2013, online.

A. K. Burns

CALLICOON FINE ARTS
124 Forsyth Street
September 15–October 27

A fugue refers to the contrapuntal technique where a musical theme is introduced and then echoed or imitated throughout the composition in various pitches that can occur simultaneously. [A. K. Burns's](#) latest exhibition, "Ending with a Fugue," follows this compositional strategy in suturing posthumanism and the social dynamics of labor: Throughout the works on view, an original inchoate idea is rearticulated and ultimately altered through material and medium. Using three distinct material methodologies—sand casting, metallurgy, and video—Burns continues her career-long investigation into affect, identity, and economy.

Consider *Barrier Island (Overextended Stay)* (all works 2013): Two monolithic tablets made of sand form an open acute angle. Her choice of medium references Fire Island beach, a popular vacation destination among gay and lesbian city dwellers where the artist had a residency two years ago. Beautifully striated waves of maroon, goldenrod, and dark green contradistinguish the two sculptures—these pigments actually supplements like beet powder and bee pollen, commonly found in vogue health store smoothies. Also embedded within the works are delicately folded Mapplethorpe flowers-cum-phallus photos and Asics shoe sole imprints.

Between the two tablets, Burns's *The Orchid Show* reiterates her material conceptual logic through a picture-in-picture HD video of techno-castrated spectators at the New York Botanical Garden's annual orchid show. The orchids act as feminine foil to Mapplethorpe's phallic lilies while suggestive mechanical lenses-as-sexual appendages probe the flora. Burns's totemic monuments gain texture from their subtle nod to Mapplethorpe's male gaze.

Juxtaposing the idea of blue-collar labor with that of art labor are four worker's shirts cast in aluminum as if frozen in a metallic stasis. In their beautiful sloughed-off state the pieces connote the end of the workday and the gleeful abandon of the uniform. At the same time, they hint at the way the so-called culture class has stylistically appropriated work wear. All works here are a variation on a theme, but also function independently in how self-aware they are.

— John Arthur Peetz

ARTFORUM



A.K. Burns, *Barrier Island (Overextended Stay)*, 2013, sand, resin, cayenne, bee pollen, spirulina, beet powder, catalogue pages, bamboo, 78 1/4 x 32 x 3 1/2".