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New York. *Community Action Center* by A.K. Burns and A.L. Steiner is an ode to fucking as fantastical as it is bound to the flesh. The collaborative installation turned gallery into cinema, with rows of seating positioning the audience for comfortable viewing of the video, which clocks in at an innuendo-soaked 69 minutes. The video responds to—and at times inhabits—tropes of gay male pornography, the queer literature of sexual liberation, and the critical struggles with sex and power that have reverberated throughout lesbian and feminist movements. An accompanying zine offers a key to some of the video's referents, in excerpts from Jack Smith's prose-poem "Normal Love," Jean Genet's *Querelle*, a manifesto by Audre Lorde, and the thoughts of other like-minded libertines. Humorous, erotic and polemic, *Community Action Center* queries what is porn, what is community, and what is the relationship of action to discourse.

The work celebrates the body as a porous, messy entity, as likely to be found outdoors as in bed, not the shaven, plucked and artificially-lit bodies of professional porn. These bodies play with food, prosthetic genitals and costumes, alone and with each other. The players are in fact performers, most identified in the credits by pseudonyms but representing a loose-knit circle of queer artists linked via aesthetic purpose and personal connections. Accordingly, an artists' statement, elaborating a feminist slogan dating to the 1960s, claims that "the personal is not only political, but sexual," even if such a claim is elliptically inarguable. The video opens on a giddy, orgiastic scene whose participants wrestle and pose and party and toy with sticky substances, slurping watermelon, sculpting clay body parts and binding limbs with tape. Squirming and giggling, they frame what follows as sex play, role-play and genre play.

What unfolds is a series of a dozen and a half sexual vignettes matched to songs by post-punk bands such as Chicks on Speed, Lesbians on Ecstasy and MEN. Only a few synched sounds—a gasp, a whipcrack or slap—seep over the sound mix. In one scene, a leather-clad butch pursues another woman down city streets and into a vacant trainyard. Their make-out session includes some bloodless knife-play that cites the "rough trade" genre of gay porn and the brinkmanship of anonymous encounters; later, they have sex in a scene shot with documentary rawness. Another performer employs props pulled from New Age iconography, riffing on myths regarding the proximity of feminine fecundity to the earth. But here it is the androgynously transgendered performer Pony who hoists the Amazon's labyris, masturbates with a quartz crystal, and "births" an egg. The most viscerally received scenes aren't explicitly sexual, at least not by conventional standards, although one involves a kind of penetration, as one performer sews feathers to another's forehead and buttocks. Needle punctures skin, thread draws through, again and again, until the act is completed and diffused with the performer's display of her avian crest and tail. Equally riveting is Ashland Mines and Wu Tsang's duet, in which voices and breath mingle but bodies do not touch. The video ends with one of the artist-performers undertaking the simple chore of washing a car, and putting her own large breasts on display for a person in the driver's seat, filming from within the car. Throughout, performers embrace the camera's gaze, performing for it, or in spite of it, acts of love or lust, only to become what we might call *undone*, as performance is overcome by orgasm, by the delirium of play, or by glint of sunlight. Nevertheless, these acts, however personal, are always performative. But are they pornographic?

According to Angela Carter's 1979 book *The Sadeian Woman*, excerpted in Burns' and Steiner's zine, porn is "art with work to do," ideological work, to be sure. Carter proposed that despite a historical preponderance of pornography marked by misogyny, the "moral pornographer" assails straight-jacketed gender roles on screen and in life. As a "terrorist of the imagination," the moral pornographer might provide for "a total demystification of the flesh and the subsequent revelation, through the infinite modulation of the sexual act, of the real relations of man and his kind [sic]." And so it may be that *Community Action Center*, as art and as porn, not only affirms the polymorphism of sexual desire, but also queries what it means to understand oneself in relation to Other, to designate oneself as part of a community, and to feel one's way along the parameters of that social unit. In doing so, the work recalls a question asked by Judith Butler in *Giving an Account of Oneself*: "How are we formed within social life, and at what cost?" She concludes that the ethical life "requires us to risk ourselves precisely at moments of unknowingness ... when our willingness to become undone in relation to others constitutes our chance of becoming human." If we are only ourselves when we experience our actions as imbricated within the fabric of a community, then, as Burns and Steiner claim, the self finds the social in sex (though perhaps not only there). The personal is still political, and the sexual, however easily recognized as a powerful nexus connecting these two realms, still has the power to surprise, delight, and unsettle. Δ