

DHC/ART Foundation for Contemporary Art is proud to present

# ED ATKINS: MODERN PIANO MUSIC

## April 20 – September 3, 2017



Ed Atkins, *Ribbons* (image still), 2014. 3-channel HD video with three 4.1 channel surround sound audio, 13 min. Image courtesy of the artist and Gavin Brown's enterprise, New York.

**OPENING: WEDNESDAY, APRIL 19, 2017, 5:30 - 8:30 PM,**

**465 SAINT-JEAN STREET**

**ARTIST TALK: THURSDAY, APRIL 20, 2017, 7 PM,**

**PHI CENTRE, 407 SAINT-PIERRE STREET**

**ADMISSION: FREE**

**CURATOR: CHERYL SIM**

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Ed Atkins makes digital, computer-generated videos that emphatically stress corporal, analogue reality. The videos exhibited at DHC/ART have the startling ability to return us to our bodies despite – or perhaps because of – their bodiless, digital constitution. The animations themselves centre on representations of starkly physical things, sensations, and experiences – a singularly human affective terrain performed by uncannily realistic computer-animated surrogates. In combination with the imposing scale and volume of their installation, an Atkins video can profoundly unsettle the viewer, disturbing the distinction between what is alive and what is not, what moves of its own volition and what is ‘animated’.

Each work in the exhibition features a solitary protagonist sharing intimate situations and emotions via garbled soliloquies of desperate longing. They are punctuated by fragments of pop music off-screen belches, mawkish inter-titles, and absurd declarations, which are juxtaposed with advertising stock and

the character’s embarrassing breaks into heartfelt karaoke. The fierce verisimilitude of the computer-generated animation and effects is employed to a hysterical, grotesque degree, with every hair, bruise, and contusion blooming and sucking beneath lens flares and dust motes, all towards some corporeally empathetic end: a connection with the viewer on mortal terms, which the videos can only pathetically rehearse despite their livid abjection. Contemporary digital imagery’s veracity collapses beneath the weight of its bloody, sensitive, flawed charge.

Spanning both 451 and 465 rue Saint-Jean, the works presented at DHC/ART are five of Atkins’s most recent. *Ribbons* (2014) is a three-channel installation in which a naked, male figure drinks, smokes, sings, and burbles his melancholic self-pity into a whiskey glass that fills and refills with booze, blood, and urine. Falling in and out of synchronicity, the work runs through what might be a night of progressive inebriation, culminating in a particularly deflating rendition of the aria from Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion*. In *Hisser* (2015) we encounter our protagonist in his bedroom during a never-ending night, held in a disastrous, fugue-state loop of loneliness and confusion from which there is only one horrifying means of escape. *Safe Conduct* (2016), Atkins’s latest work, is a pitch-black send-up of instructional airport security videos that demonstrates the symbolic violence we are all subjected to for the dubious reasons of security and safety. A ballet of procedural horrors unfurls to the relentless rhythm and slow building lunacy of Ravel’s *Boléro*.

Through offbeat timing, jump cuts, and a raft of other skewed cinematic tropes, Ed Atkins destabilizes what we presume to understand about audio-visual storytelling. His is a reflexive vernacular built from cinema, television, games, pop music, infomercials, and the hybrid world of the online with its remodelling of our relations via social media. Atkins’s works conjure a delirious portrait of a collective contemporary psyche: dissociative, sociopathic, misanthropic, absurd, desperate, and vulnerable. The fact that the artist lends his voice and facial expressions to each of the surrogates adds to the acute struggle around discernment: the way the various material and dematerialised worlds we all now occupy confuse a coherent sense of self, of what life is, and of how we relate to one another.

This is the artist’s first exhibition in Canada.

## Biography

Ed Atkins (Oxford, UK, 1982) currently lives in Berlin. Recent solo exhibitions include Castello di Rivoli (Turin); MMK Frankfurt; Tate Britain and The Serpentine Gallery (both London); Palais de Tokyo (Paris); The Stedelijk Museum (Amsterdam); The Kitchen and MoMA PS1 (both NYC). His work was included in the 55th Venice Biennial, the 14th Istanbul Biennial, and the 12th Lyon Biennial. *A Primer for Cadavers* a collection of his writing, was published by Fitzcarraldo Editions in 2016, and a new eponymous monograph published by Skira will appear this fall. The artist is represented by Gavin Brown's enterprise (New York/Rome), Cabinet Gallery (London), Isabella Bortolozzi Galerie (Berlin), and Dépendance (Brussels).

## Also available:

As part of its educational programming for *Ed Atkins*, DHC/ART Education is pleased to offer an art workshop, guided visits, public projects and events, as well as educational tools. All DHC/ART Education activities are free of charge.

For more information, please contact: [education@dhc-art.org](mailto:education@dhc-art.org)

## DHC/ART Foundation for Contemporary Art

Established in 2007, DHC/ART is a non-profit organization dedicated to the presentation of contemporary art. Housed in two heritage buildings located in the heart of Old Montreal, DHC/ART's programming has met with critical acclaim both at home and around the world. Each year we offer two to three major exhibitions, a series of public events, special collaborative projects and a forward-thinking education program. International in scope while responsive to the context of the city of Montreal, all of DHC/ART's programming is offered free of charge as a way to reinforce its commitment to accessibility while fostering a discussion on how contemporary art is invested with the topics and ideas that reflect and touch our everyday lives.

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[www.dhc-art.org](http://www.dhc-art.org)



DHC/ART Foundation for Contemporary Art  
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Opening hours:  
Wednesday to Friday from noon to 7:00 PM  
Saturday and Sunday from 11:00 AM to 6:00 PM  
Free Admission

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