

**Exhibition:** *Merce Cunningham, Clouds and Screens*

**On View:** October 28, 2018–March 31, 2019

**Location:** BCAM, Level 1



Image caption on page 3

(Los Angeles—September 13, 2018) The Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) is pleased to present *Merce Cunningham, Clouds and Screens*, an exploration of choreographer Merce Cunningham’s dynamic artistic collaborations. Cunningham (1919–2009) revolutionized dance through his partnerships with leading artists who created costumes, films, music, and décor and whose independent creative instincts he held in the highest regard. Known for embracing risk and chance, Cunningham believed in the radical notion that movement, sound, and visual art could exist independently of each other, coming together only during the “common time” of a performance. Spanning BCAM, Level 1, the exhibition features immersive installations by Charles Atlas and Andy Warhol, two artists associated with the choreographer’s company, along with two video projections of early dances by Cunningham.

Anticipating the celebration of Cunningham’s centennial, *Merce Cunningham, Clouds and Screens* is organized by José Luis Blondet, curator of special initiatives at LACMA, and is excerpted from *Merce Cunningham: Common Time*, a major survey of the artist’s collaborative projects organized by the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, in 2017.

### **Exhibition Organization**

Andy Warhol’s whimsical *Silver Clouds*, created with scientist and engineer Billy Kluver, greets visitors to the exhibition upon entrance to the BCAM lobby. Dozens of silver-colored “clouds,” filled with a mix of air and helium, hover in space, shifting with the movement of visitors. Warhol (1928–1987) thought of them as floating paintings that people could play with. *Silver Clouds* debuted at Leo Castelli Gallery in

New York in 1966; after Cunningham saw the show, he approached Warhol about adapting them as décor for his dance *RainForest*.

Anchoring the exhibition, Charles Atlas's posthumous homage to Cunningham, *MC<sup>9</sup>* (short for "Merce Cunningham to the ninth power"), addresses the decades-long investigation developed by the artists on the relationship of live performance and video documentation. For *MC<sup>9</sup>*, Atlas chose excerpts from 21 dances for camera and documentary videos he made with Cunningham and interspersed the footage with graphics, color fields, and countdown leader. Atlas and Cunningham's "dances for camera" featured such techniques as inviting the camera to move onstage with the dancers and using cross-cutting and animation techniques to suggest multiple events happening simultaneously.

Atlas (b. 1949) has been a pioneering figure in film and video for over 40 years, forging new territory in a far-reaching range of genres, stylistic approaches, and techniques. Throughout his production, Atlas has consistently fostered collaborative relationships, most notably with Cunningham, for whom he served as in-house videographer for a decade from the early 1970s through 1983. Their close working relationship continued until Cunningham's death in 2009.

Two videos of early Cunningham dances are shown in an adjacent gallery: *Changeling* (1957, filmed 1958), a solo piece for which Robert Rauschenberg designed the set, costume, and lighting; and *Night Wandering* (1958, filmed 1964)—a duet with star dancer Carolyn Brown—for which Rauschenberg redesigned costumes and lighting. Los Angeles-based dancer and choreographer Jennie MaryTai Liu (b. 1982) will present a commissioned project responding to this exhibition in February 2019.

### **Related Programming**

In February 2019, Jennie MaryTai Liu will choreograph a new work in response to the exhibition, bringing the materiality of dance to the expanse of the virtual cloud and applying exhaustive chance procedure in a study of the body as an algorithmic mechanism, both intuitive and logical. Liu is a Los Angeles-based artist engaged with the body across disciplines of choreography, theater, writing, and video. Each of her works are defined by a different compositional structure, often with multiple, distinct sources and structures at play simultaneously.

Visit [lacma.org](http://lacma.org) for updates on exhibition-related programming.

**Credit:** The presentation of *Merce Cunningham, Clouds and Screens* is organized by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and adapted from the exhibition *Merce Cunningham: Common Time*, organized by the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis.

All exhibitions at LACMA are underwritten by the LACMA Exhibition Fund. Major annual support is provided by Kitzia and Richard Goodman and Meredith and David Kaplan, with generous annual funding from Jerry and Kathleen Grundhofer, the Judy and Bernard Briskin Family Foundation, Louise and Brad Edgerton, Edgerton Foundation, Emily and Teddy Greenspan, Marilyn B. and Calvin B. Gross, Mary and Daniel James, David Lloyd and Kimberly Steward, David Schwartz Foundation, Inc., Andy Song, Lenore and Richard Wayne, and The Kenneth T. and Eileen L. Norris Foundation.

#### **About LACMA**

Since its inception in 1965, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) has been devoted to collecting works of art that span both history and geography, mirroring Los Angeles's rich cultural heritage and uniquely diverse population. Today LACMA is the largest art museum in the western United States, with a collection of over 135,000 objects that illuminate 6,000 years of art history from new and unexpected points of view. A museum of international stature as well as a vital cultural center for Southern California, LACMA shares its vast collection with the Greater Los Angeles County and beyond through exhibitions, public programs, and research facilities that attract over 1.5 million visitors annually, in addition to serving millions more through community partnerships, school outreach programs, and creative digital initiatives. LACMA's main campus is located halfway between the ocean and downtown, adjacent to the La Brea Tar Pits and Museum and the future home of the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures. Dedicated to serving all of Los Angeles, LACMA collaborates with a range of curators, educators, and artists on exhibitions and programs at various sites throughout the County.

**Location:** 5905 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA, 90036. [lacma.org](http://lacma.org)

#### **Images caption**

Charles Atlas, *MC*°, 2012, Collection Walker Art Center; T. B. Walker Acquisition Fund, 2015, © Charles Atlas, photo by Gene Pittman, courtesy Walker Art Center, Minneapolis

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