

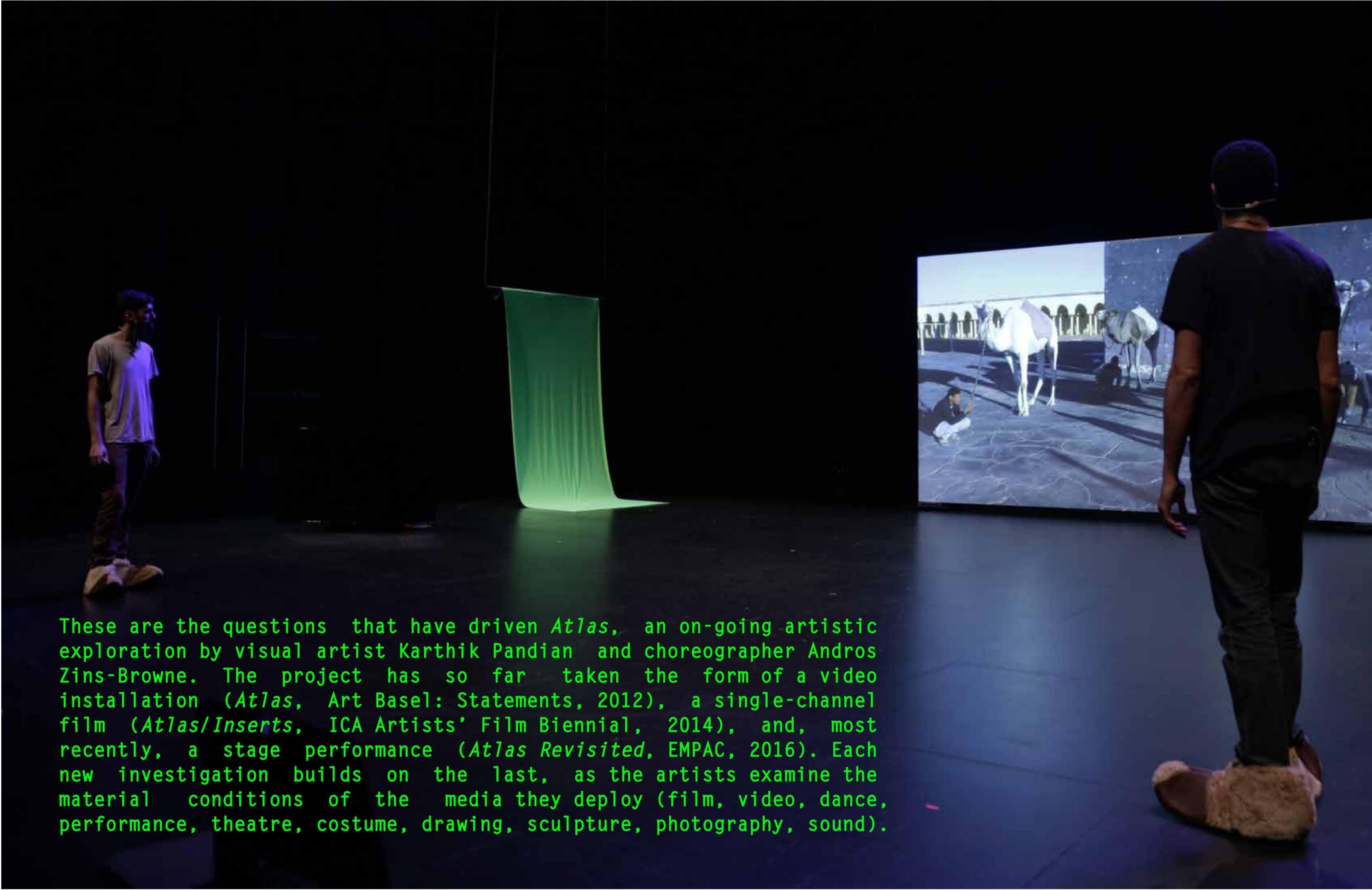


ATLAS REVISITED

KARTHIK PANDIAN & ANDROS ZINS-BROWNE

*HOW IS IT POSSIBLE
TO CREATE AN IMAGE
OF FREEDOM? OR, PUT
ANOTHER WAY: HOW DO
YOU GET A CAMEL
TO DANCE?*

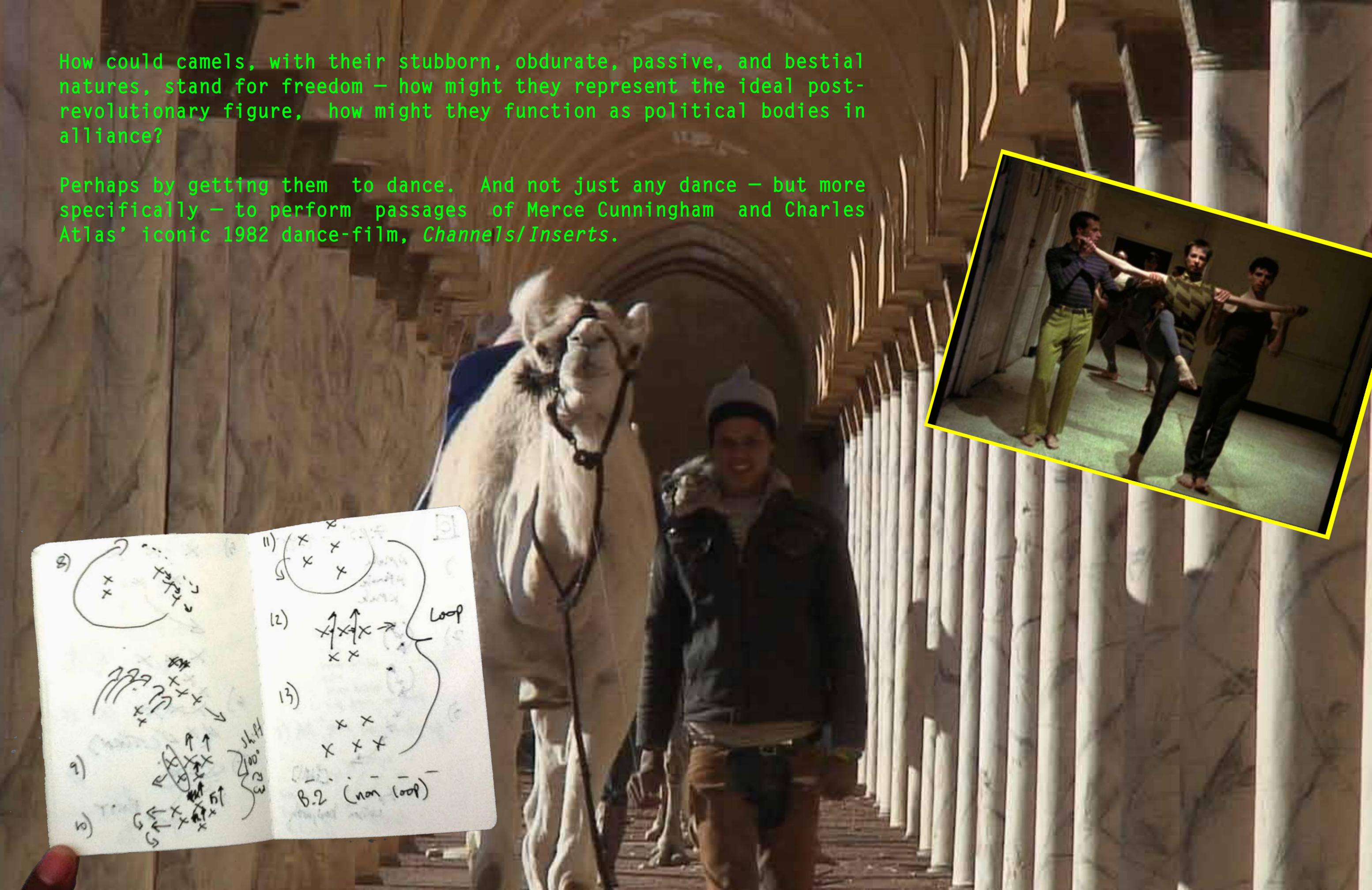
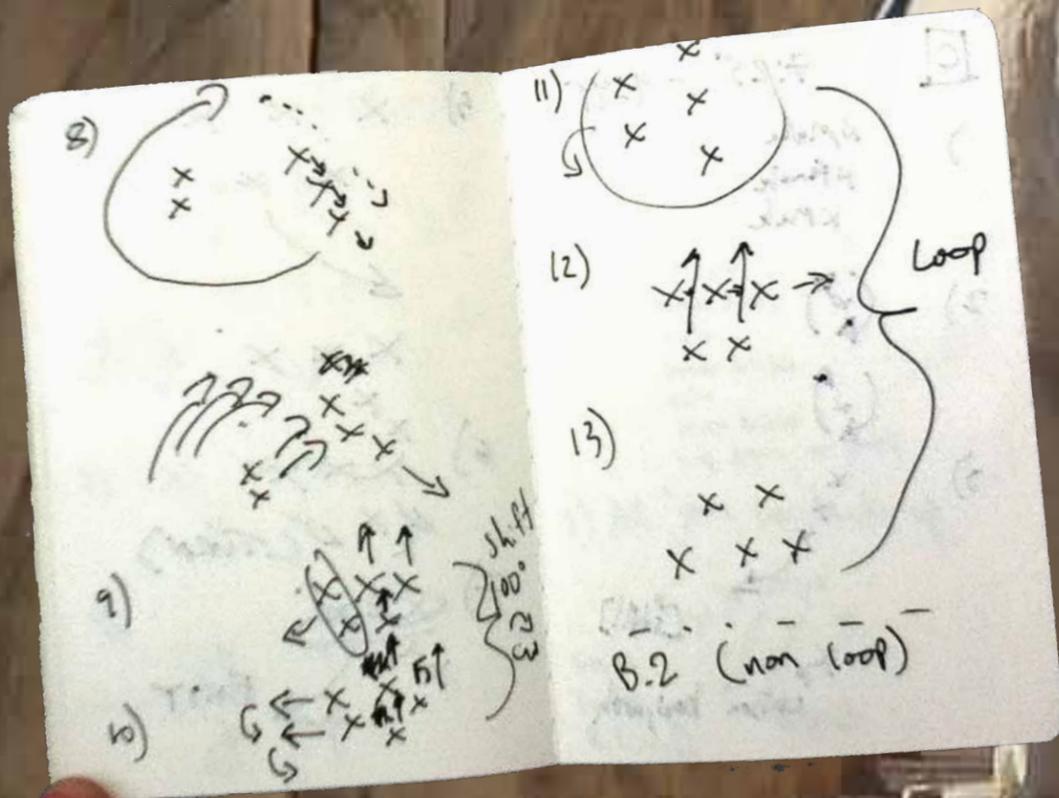




These are the questions that have driven *Atlas*, an on-going artistic exploration by visual artist Karthik Pandian and choreographer Andros Zins-Browne. The project has so far taken the form of a video installation (*Atlas*, Art Basel: Statements, 2012), a single-channel film (*Atlas/Inserts*, ICA Artists' Film Biennial, 2014), and, most recently, a stage performance (*Atlas Revisited*, EMPAC, 2016). Each new investigation builds on the last, as the artists examine the material conditions of the media they deploy (film, video, dance, performance, theatre, costume, drawing, sculpture, photography, sound).

How could camels, with their stubborn, obdurate, passive, and bestial natures, stand for freedom – how might they represent the ideal post-revolutionary figure, how might they function as political bodies in alliance?

Perhaps by getting them to dance. And not just any dance – but more specifically – to perform passages of Merce Cunningham and Charles Atlas' iconic 1982 dance-film, *Channels/Inserts*.



This quixotic goal took them from Morocco to the US, as they tell it – from a movie set in the middle of the desert to a green screen on a soundstage – and, more importantly, from a determination to achieve their visions as creators (producers of movement and image) to a dawning realization of the ethical, political, and even ontological boundaries they must cross to get there.

Camels don't dance without coercion. And whether that coercion is the more nuanced collaboration of choreographer and dancer or the physically uncomfortable solutions the artists and the camel trainers devised, that fact has driven Pandian and Zins-Browne to visit and revisit the scene of this encounter to search and research its consequences.

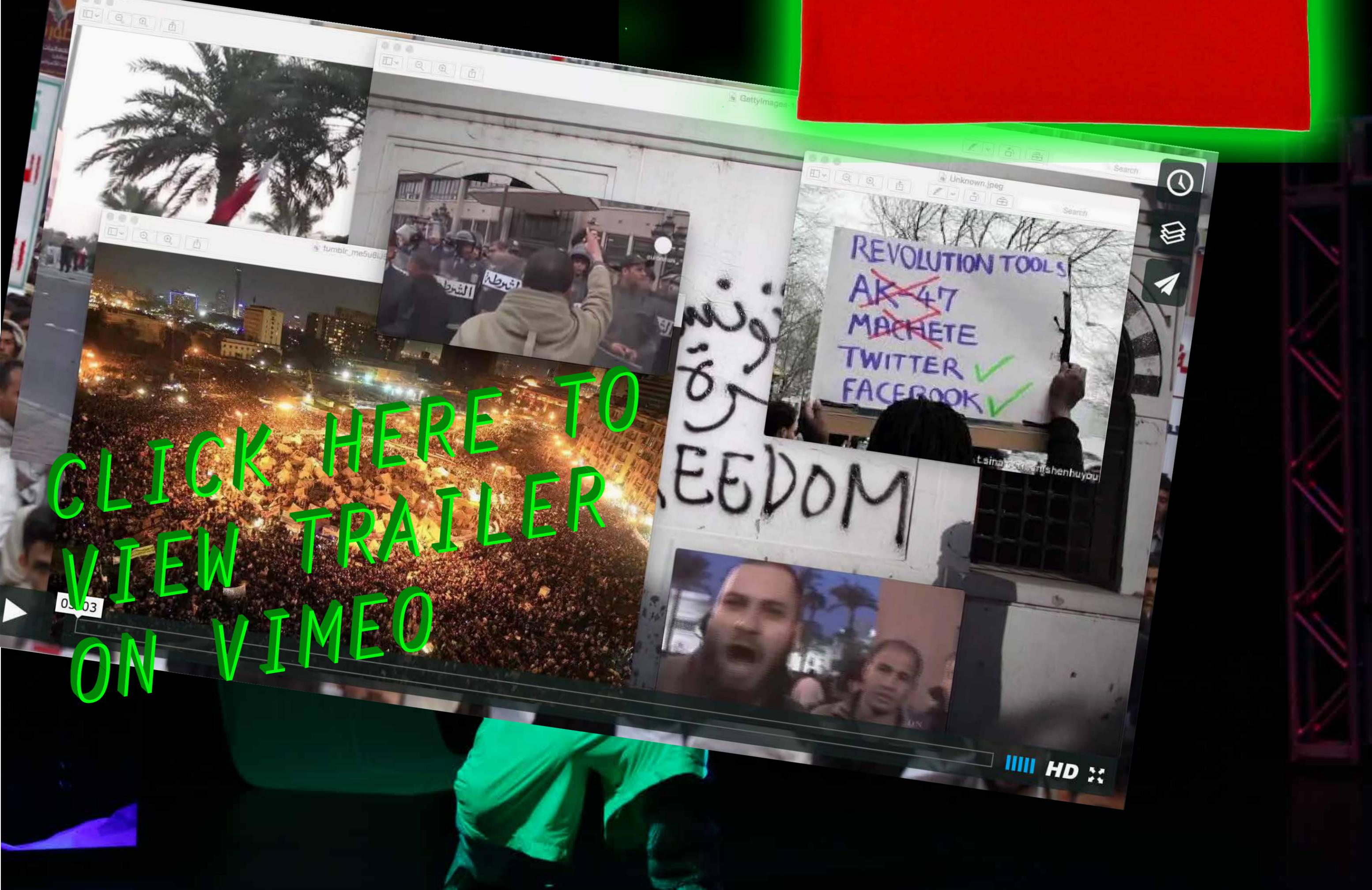


And it takes the viewer on an equally vexing journey, this time through the thicket – not the boundary, but the miasma – of documentary and fantasy. How much of what we see – when we look at these dancing camels, and by extension when we look at potentially

transcendent moments of political liberation – has a foothold in reality, and how much is our fantasy, projected on literal or cultural green screens? Did these camels ever dance? And does it matter – are we hungry for the spectacle in any case and at any cost?

- ARUNA D'SOUZA, JUNE 2016





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ARUNA D'SOUZA is a writer whose art criticism has appeared in *Art in America*, *Time Out*, *Bookforum*, and *The Wall Street Journal*, and a regular contributor to 4columns.org

American artist **KARTHIK PANDIAN** has held solo exhibitions at The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Bétonsalon, Paris; and Midway Contemporary Art, Minneapolis amongst others. Pandian's work was featured in the inaugural L.A. Biennial at the Hammer Museum as well as in numerous international exhibitions including *La Triennale: Intense Proximity* at the Palais de Tokyo, Paris; *Adventures of the Black Square: Abstract Art and Society 1915-2015* at Whitechapel Gallery, London; *Film as Sculpture* at Wiels Contemporary Art Centre, Brussels; and the 4th Marrakech Biennale, *Higher Atlas*. In 2011, Pandian received a Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Award <http://vilmagold.com/artist/karthik-pandian/>

ANDROS ZINS-BROWNE is an American choreographer who lives and works in Brussels. His work consists of performances at the intersection between installation, performance and conceptual dance. Andros' works have been presented internationally both in theaters and exhibitions spaces including Centre Pompidou, Paris; Dance Umbrella and the ICA, London; Het Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Yvonne Lambert gallery and the HAU theater, Berlin; De Singel, Antwerp; Vooruit, Gent; MDT, Stockholm; Kaaistheater and The Villa Empain, Brussels; EMPAC, Troy, New York and the Theater Festival Impulse, Düsseldorf where he received the Goethe Institute Award in 2011 for *The Host*. In 2013 he founded his own association, *The Great Indoors*

The Great Indoors





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contact: elisa@hiros.be