

**Features**

**#19**

**Ed**

**Atkins**

**May**

**2023**

**Ed, you are best known for your works featuring computer-generated avatars as protagonists. What drove you to use this technology at the height of contemporary image-making and management?**

I've been making that work for a long while now. It was in 2011 when I first used a digital surrogate. The context shifts the sensation of the work, of course, but beneath the overt contemporaneity/datedness, the works have always centered on the use of conspicuous artifice to speak about otherwise unavailable sensations. Novelty of tech affords a certain resistibility as regards access to subject matter — or it makes the work ineluctably reflexive regarding its medium. I find structural exposure moving, I suppose, and my use of a medium is almost always in allegorical relation to a life, embodied and figured.

**Throughout your oeuvre, you present the (human) body in isolation as a vessel of existential, social, and ideological struggle. Yet, at the same time, you imply that it is also a source of creativity. What is your idea of intimacy?**

I don't quite understand the question, but perhaps one way in which the videos I make attempt to affect the viewer is by presumptuous intimacy. Being too close, thinking too much of themselves, confusing themselves with people, assuming a relation that's perhaps inappropriate for something so heretically fake.

**I remember reading in an interview you had with Hans Ulrich Obrist how your video works are often derived from your writing. Could you tell me more about this creative process?**

I think that's an old interview, but the fundament of writing remains, even if any idea of scripting is disappearing. Writing is the thing I like doing the most, so it's the first thing I do. It's the most expedient thing, too. Thinking through writing. And the rhythms of writing tend to form the structure of the videos. At least, they did a while ago. I'm leaning toward unscripted forms these days. Far less written, if at all. This isn't to say that writing isn't still key to their inception, but its overt presence has receded somewhat.

**Let's talk about your new show at dépendance in Brussels. I'm particularly struck by this untitled paperwork where you have used red crayon.**

**Correct me if I'm wrong, but is it a self-portrait...?**

Yes, it is. First time for that.

**The exhibition brings together an impressive selection of paintings and drawings. In which ways do these works relate to each other?**

It's two bodies of work, really: self-portraits in red crayon on yellow legal paper and large ink paintings of mattresses on paper. I think their relation is pretty conspicuous and not really something I need to outline. It's a very, very simple show, conceptually simple, even if in the context of my own oeuvre, it feels timely and poignant. To me, at least.

**I would love your collaboration for the next one — If I had to interview one artist, a friend of yours, for an upcoming issue of the FEATURES series, who would that be and why?**

Errm... I'll have to think about that...

Ed Atkins

*Old Food*

2017-19

Video loops with sounds, racks of costumes from Teatro Regio Torino,  
texts by Contemporary Art Writing Daily

58<sup>th</sup> International Art Exhibition - La Biennale di Venezia, *May You Live  
In Interesting Times*

Courtesy of La Biennale di Venezia; the artist; Galerie Isabella Bortolozzi,  
Berlin; Cabinet Gallery, London; Gavin Brown's Enterprise, New York,  
Rome; and dépendance, Brussels

Photo: Roberto Marossi



Ed Atkins

*Old Food*

2017-19

Video loops with sounds, racks of costumes from Teatro Regio Torino,  
texts by Contemporary Art Writing Daily

58<sup>th</sup> International Art Exhibition - La Biennale di Venezia, *May You Live  
In Interesting Times*

Courtesy of La Biennale di Venezia; the artist; Galerie Isabella Bortolozzi,  
Berlin; Cabinet Gallery, London; Gavin Brown's Enterprise, New York,  
Rome; and dépendance, Brussels

Photo: Roberto Marossi



Ed Atkins  
*Ed Atkins: Get Life/Love's Work*  
2021  
Exhibition view: New Museum, New York  
Photo: Dario Lasagni



Ed Atkins

*Ed Atkins*

2023

Exhibition view: dépendance, Brussels

Photo: Alice Pallot



Ed Atkins

*Untitled*

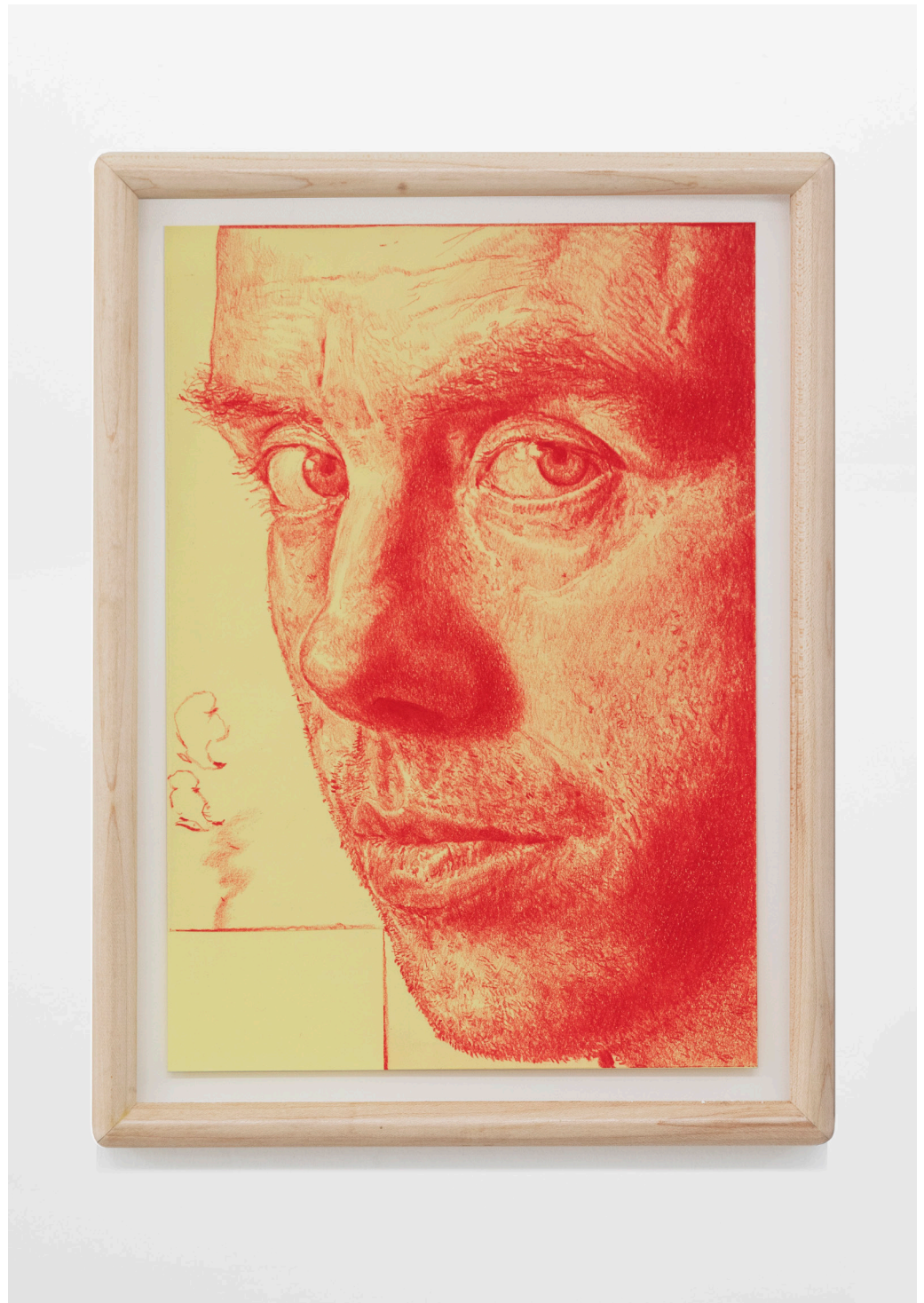
2023

Coloured pencil on paper, framed

34,6 x 26 x 2,5 cm (framed)

Courtesy of the artist and dépendance, Brussels

Photo: Alice Pallot





Ed Atkins

*Untitled*

2023

Coloured pencil on paper, framed

26 x 34,6 x 2,5 cm (framed)

Courtesy of the artist and dépendance, Brussels

Photo: Alice Pallot



Ed Atkins

*Untitled*

2023

Coloured pencil on paper, framed

34,6 x 26 x 2,5 cm (framed)

Courtesy of the artist and dépendance, Brussels

Photo: Alice Pallot



Ed Atkins

*Untitled*

2023

Ink, bleach and coloured pencil on paper, framed

124,6 x 188,6 x 6 cm (framed)

Courtesy of the artist and dépendance, Brussels

Photo: Alice Pallot



## Ed Atkins

Ed Atkins is a British artist who lives and works in Copenhagen. Working predominantly in high-definition video, drawing, and writing to explore notions of materiality and corporeality, Atkins often creates dream-like environments and existential experiences. He has had institutional solo exhibitions at the New Museum, Martin-Gropius-Bau, Stedelijk Museum, Serpentine Galleries, Julia Stoschek Collection, and MoMA PS1. In addition, Atkins was included in the 56<sup>th</sup> and 58<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale, the 13<sup>th</sup> Lyon Biennial, and Performa 13 and 19. Forthcoming presentations include gallery shows at Cabinet and Gladstone Gallery. In 2025, he will present his largest solo exhibition to date at Tate Britain.



**Features is an interview series that explores inspiring artistic and research stories in contemporary culture. Invited artists and practitioners from all over the world — acting within a multitude of initiatives, spaces and contexts — share their creative processes with curator Nicolas Vamvouklis.**

***The opinions expressed in the interviews are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the position of the Foundation.***

**Nicolas Vamvouklis**  
**vamvouklisn@aegean.gr**

**Fondazione Imago Mundi**  
**Piazza del Duomo 20 — 31100 Treviso Tv, Italy**  
**[www.fondazioneimagomundi.org](http://www.fondazioneimagomundi.org)**

