

Ackerburg, Madeleine. "Brendan Fernandes' upcoming exhibition breathes new life into Scott Burton's legacy," *Ladue News*, 18 July 2024.

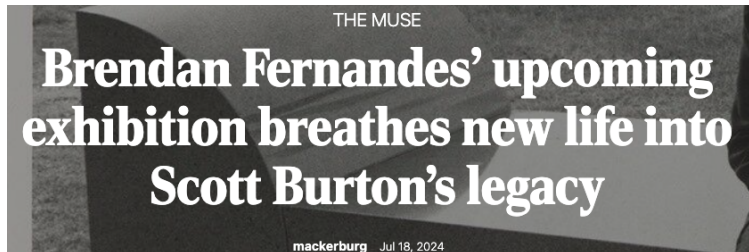


Photo of Brendan Fernandes by Virginia Harold, courtesy of the Pulitzer Arts Foundation

Art, in all its forms, has the unique ability to touch viewers' hearts across generations. The Pulitzer Arts Foundation's newest exhibition, set to open this fall, is prepared to accomplish just that by showcasing work from two artists connected across time through similar, yet distinct, explorations of queer identity. "In Two," a visionary project by Chicago-based artist Brendan Fernandes, will run from Sept. 6, 2024, to Feb. 2, 2025, as part of a larger retrospective titled "Scott Burton: Shape Shift."

Fernandes, known for his innovative approach to art that explores his multicultural and queer identity, created a series of four choreographic pieces that interact with iconic furniture sculptures created by the late Scott Burton, who died of AIDS-related illness in 1989. "Shape Shift," the largest exhibition of Burton's work since his passing, features over 40 sculptures, photographs, drawings and performance records that illustrate his exploration of social dynamics and personal identity. In addition to showcasing Burton's work, the exhibition also emphasizes his unique contributions to public and queer art, delving into social themes such as intimacy, isolation and community.

Fernandes, a multidisciplinary artist with a background in dancing, often merges dance and visual art to challenge the notion of fixed identity. In this new exhibition, Fernandes' fluid work stands in stark contrast to Burton's more rigid creations, bringing life and movement into the space as dancers perform among the installations, interacting with translucent curtains and plush pillows inspired by Burton's 1979 work "Window Curtains." Although Fernandes expertly incorporates elements of Burton's work into his choreography – such as movements from Burton's project "Individual Behavior Tableaux" – his unique contribution to the exhibition provides a fresh and powerful perspective on themes of visibility and invisibility in queer culture.

"'In Two' is like a duet between Scott Burton and me," said Fernandes in a Pulitzer press release. "I am choreographing a kind of call-and-response between the dancers in movement and the sculpture that leads me deeper into ideas I'm interested in: two becoming one, one becoming two, and the invisible and visible in queerness."

Fernandes utilized the architectural spaces of the Pulitzer, designed by Tadao Ando, when creating the choreography for the exhibition. The result, a duet for four dancers, will feature performers dressed in white t-shirts, jeans and platform shoes – reminiscent of Burton's 1976 "Pair Behavior Tableaux" – as they navigate the gallery and echo movements from the codes of gay cruising culture. The interactions between the dancers and sculptures create a powerful visual narrative that bridges generations and art forms.

"We at the Pulitzer are proud to be presenting the work of these two artists in dialogue," said Cara Starke, the Pulitzer's executive director, in a press release. "It is stunning to gaze across a divide of 40 years and see through the eyes of a vanguard artist and thinker like Brendan how revelatory Scott Burton's work was and is."

Performances of "In Two" will take place on select weekends at the Pulitzer Arts Foundation including Sept. 7, Nov. 8 and 9, and in 2025 on Jan. 17 and 18. Admission is free to the public.