The New Yorker
7 May 2025

THE NEW YORKER 100

In 2002, the thirty-five-year-old, Luxembourg-born painter Michel Majerus was on a short flight from Berlin, where he lived, to his native country, when the plane crashed, killing him and nineteen other passengers. With his death, a burgeoning artistic career was cut short. Majerus had been the subject of a solo museum exhibition in Switzerland, in 1996, and he'd created a major installation for the Venice Biennale, in 1999. There would be no more of his innovative œuvre, which included individual painted canvases in addition to room-scale installations smashing together the vocabulary of early digital culture—lo-fi video games, internet-y typefaces—with aggressive brushstrokes and flat planes of color borrowed from Abstract Expressionism and Minimalism. Majerus's souped-up Apple PowerBook G3 laptop, however, survived the wreck—at least, the hard drive did.

The computer remained with his estate for many years, a relic left untouched. During that time, Majerus's paintings continued to be shown in galleries and museums, exerting a quiet but persistent influence on a generation of artists who were creating work using and responding to the internet. Then, in 2017, the artist Cory Arcangel, famous for his digital art works, became aware of Majerus's hard drive and began a quest to access its contents. What prompted Arcangel's interest was an untitled painting of Majerus's, from 2000, that an assistant had shown him on Instagram. The background is covered in acid-pastel blocks of color, reminiscent of the Neo-Geo movement of the nineteen-eighties, but the foreground contains evocative phrases in text that looks pulled from Geocities or a "Matrix"-era rave poster: "Newcomer," "burned out," "fuck the intention of the artist." Majerus had intuited that the internet would lead to a great collision of styles and reference points—everything from Super Mario to Jackson Pollock coexisting in pixels. The untitled painting inspired nostalgia for the dial-up millennial generation, but Arcangel, whose own work

includes a hacked version of "Super Mario Bros." with only its clouds remaining, was also struck by how contemporary it seemed. During a recent Google Meet call from an austere apartment that a gallery representing the Majerus Estate maintains in Berlin, Arcangel said, "It just came at me from a hundred different angles, and each one of these little things sent me off into a spiral of associations."

The contents of the computer revealed Majerus to be an artist who was "aggressively digital-native," Arcangel said. From the files, Arcangel could reconstruct how Majerus had downloaded and collaged images of geometrically shaped Frank Stella paintings from the nineteen-sixties, zooming in, slicing them apart, and rotating them, then using them as the basis for his own wall-size, triangular "pressure groups" paintings, from 2002. Majerus used Photoshop to design his paintings and then virtually install them in specific gallery spaces in advance, tailoring the layout down to the inch, before his brush ever touched canvas. Arcangel has described Majerus as a kind of robotic "printer," making all his decisions in advance and then rendering the output by hand.

The laptop also contained poignant artifacts of Majerus's life: a photo of what appears to be a tiny New York City hotel room, with the artist's chunky black laptop on the hotel bed alongside a bulky power adapter, a pizza box, candy, and a binder of compact disks, a television blaring in the background. What emerges is a portrait of the artist as an itinerant hacker, and a snapshot of digital creation in the years before social media or the advent of the cloud. "There's only a few years where somebody would have carried around their whole studio with them," Arcangel said.

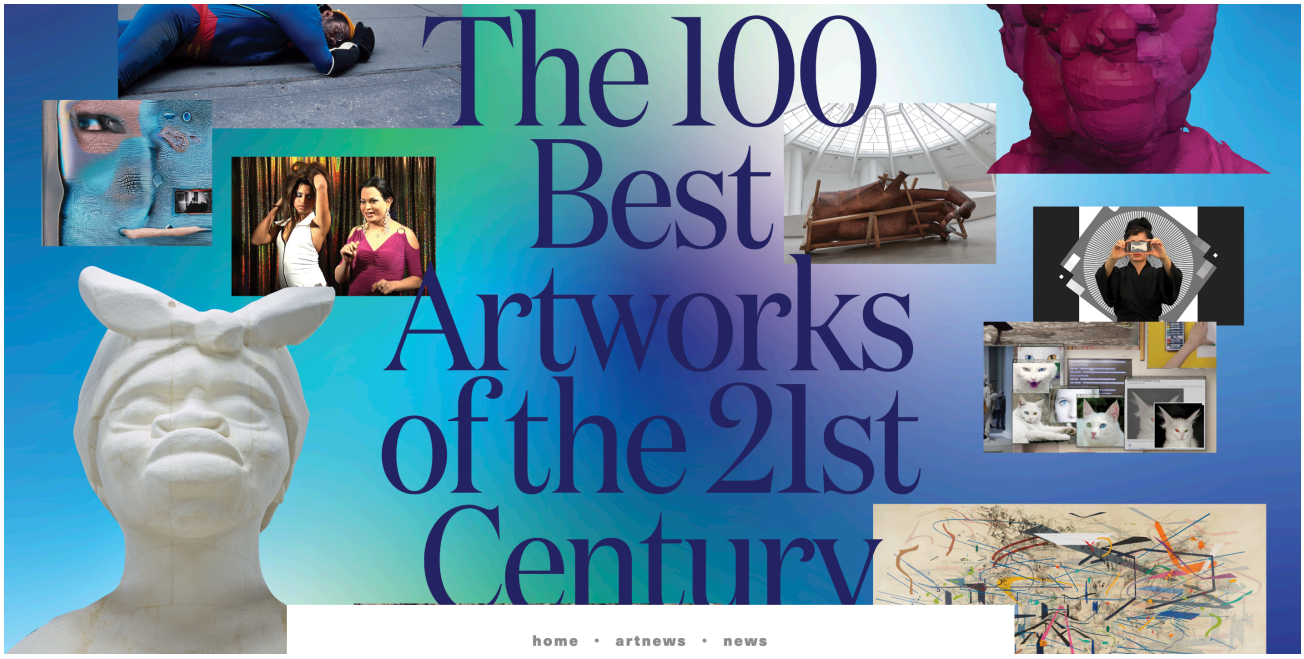
Arcangel, who is forty-six, has a background in music composition but transitioned into visual art in the two-thousands, using a laptop similar to Majerus's to create his early work. As Arcangel explored Majerus's computer, he found himself remembering reflexively how to navigate the vintage software. The digital tools are part of the legacy of Majerus's work—his art makes viewers recall what it was like to use the Photoshop paint bucket or burn a CD, back when those were radical technological experiences. Arcangel began recording a series of YouTube videos titled "Let's Play Majerus G3," riffing on the genre of Twitch-stream videos that capture creators playing video games. Last weekend in Berlin, Arcangel performed an iteration of "Let's Play Majerus G3" at the Majerus Estate for an audience of a hundred gallerygoers, talking through the artist's desktop and pulling up his favorite files. They included one of the only existing videos of Majerus painting, and a Photoshop image in which the artist had made a digital sketch, then edited that sketch into a photograph of his studio, visualizing what it would be like if the digital image were a canvas leaning against the wall, as if it were a physical work-in-progress. In this way, Arcangel explained, Majerus seemed to merge his computer and his IRL studio into one creative space.

Given Majerus's incorporation of digital imagery, such as video-game sprites, and the fluency of his tech-culture references, Arcangel guessed that Majerus was as much a digital artist as an analog painter. Perhaps the laptop held the key to his process. Arcangel brought the hard drive to the attention of Dragan Espenschied, the preservation director at Rhizome, a New York institution that archives the history of art created in digital environments. There was a risk that the hardware might malfunction and the stored files would be lost forever. The Majerus Estate commissioned a data rescue company to create a digital copy of the drive. Then, Espenschied used an emulator—a piece of software that mimics the entire architecture of an older device—to boot up a facsimile of the laptop, including its early-two-thousands operating system and the pixellated file icons on Majerus's cluttered desktop, which featured a background image from Ms. Pac-Man. This was his computer exactly as he had left it, down to his customized Photoshop shortcuts and the positions of the windows. "It's like he just stepped out of the room," Arcangel said.

Digital art has thus far not proved to be particularly durable. There are now more than two decades' worth of experimental websites, art projects on defunct social networks, and vernacular digital images that have simply been lost to technological obsolescence and disuse. Majerus's laptop, and Arcangel's archival work and performances, represent an effort to insert the visual legacy of our era into the longer arc of art history, to immortalize the ephemeral modus vivendi of a particular technological moment. On our video chat, Arcangel pulled up another collage in which Majerus had placed images of his work next to photos of vintage Stella exhibitions, installations of the Neo-Geo painter Peter Halley's work, and a more recent Stella painting that Majerus had encountered in a Manhattan skyscraper lobby. He was measuring his own accomplishments against those of his influences, merging art-historical references with his own output across time, on his super-powered laptop. Majerus's art work was birthed on the screen, and through his recovered files, Arcangel said, "We get to see over the shoulder of one of the best artists to ever do it." ♦

ARTnews
5 March 2025

ARTnews Est. 1902



The 100 Best Artworks of the 21st Century

BY The Editors of ARTnews, Art in America March 5, 2025 8:00am

A global recession, a pandemic, 9/11, the Arab Spring, Brexit, the rise of Web 2.0, unrest in the face of economic stability, wars in Afghanistan, Ukraine, Gaza, and elsewhere: these were but a few of the many events that have defined the past 25 years, a period characterized by tumult and uncertainty. That all may explain why art appeared to change faster than ever all the while, with artists burning through styles and tendencies with each coming year.

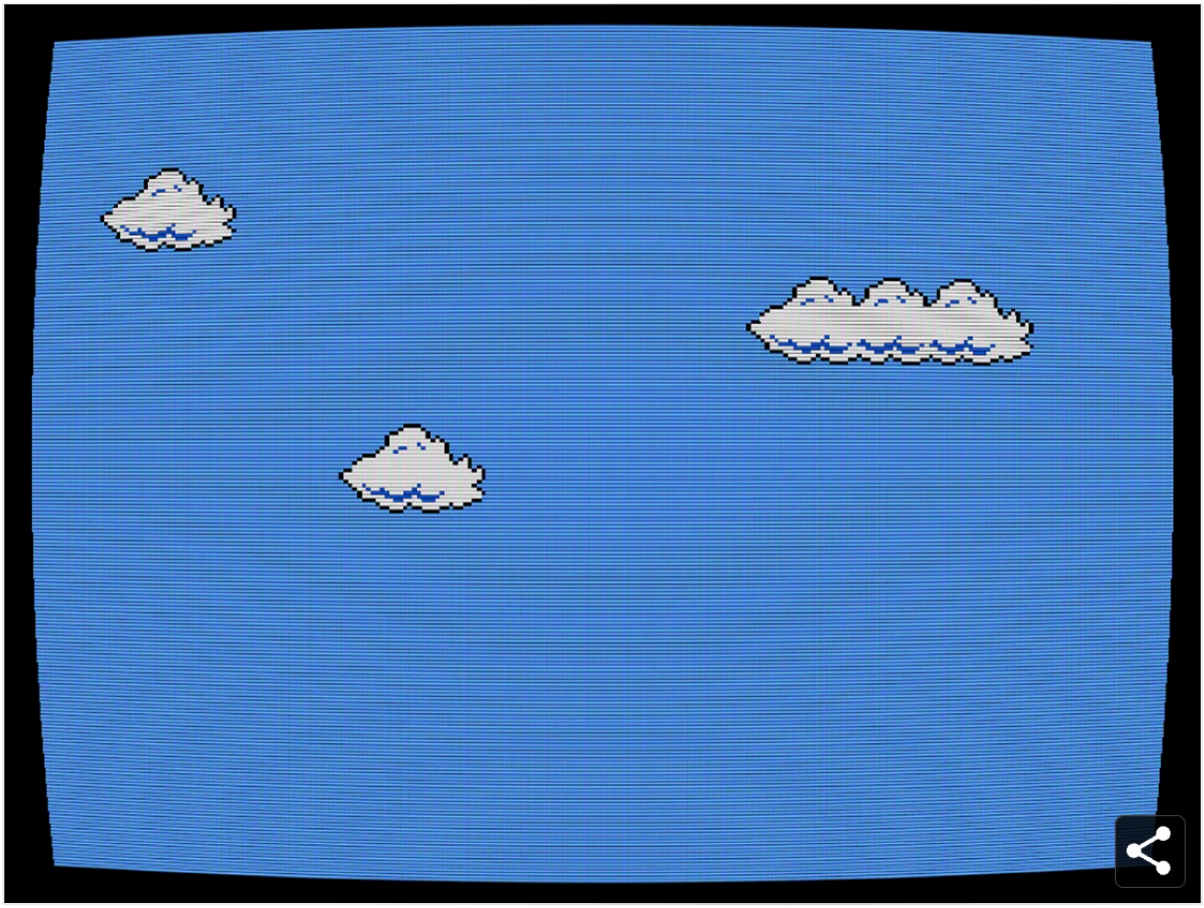
With the 21st century now at the quarter point, we've taken the opportunity to pinpoint the greatest artworks of the past 25 years. Even though we set down some parameters for ourselves (**more on that here**), it was no small task—one made more difficult by the restless creativity of artists during this period.

The joy of an epic list like this one is that it can't encapsulate everything: we know we've left some artworks off, simply because there was no shortage to choose from. We hope you'll discover some amazing pieces here, reflect on some that are much-loved already, and debate the merits of others. And moreover, we hope to learn of new artworks through the conversations we hope our list inspires.

Below, a look back at the greatest 100 artworks of the 21st century so far, as selected by the editors of *ARTnews* and *Art in America*.

This article features contributions from the following writers: Francesca Aton, Andy Battaglia, Daniel Cassady, Anne Doran, Sarah Douglas, Maximilíano Durón, Alex Greenberger, Harrison Jacobs, Tessa Solomon, and Emily Watlington.

54 Cory Arcangel, *Super Mario Clouds*, 2002



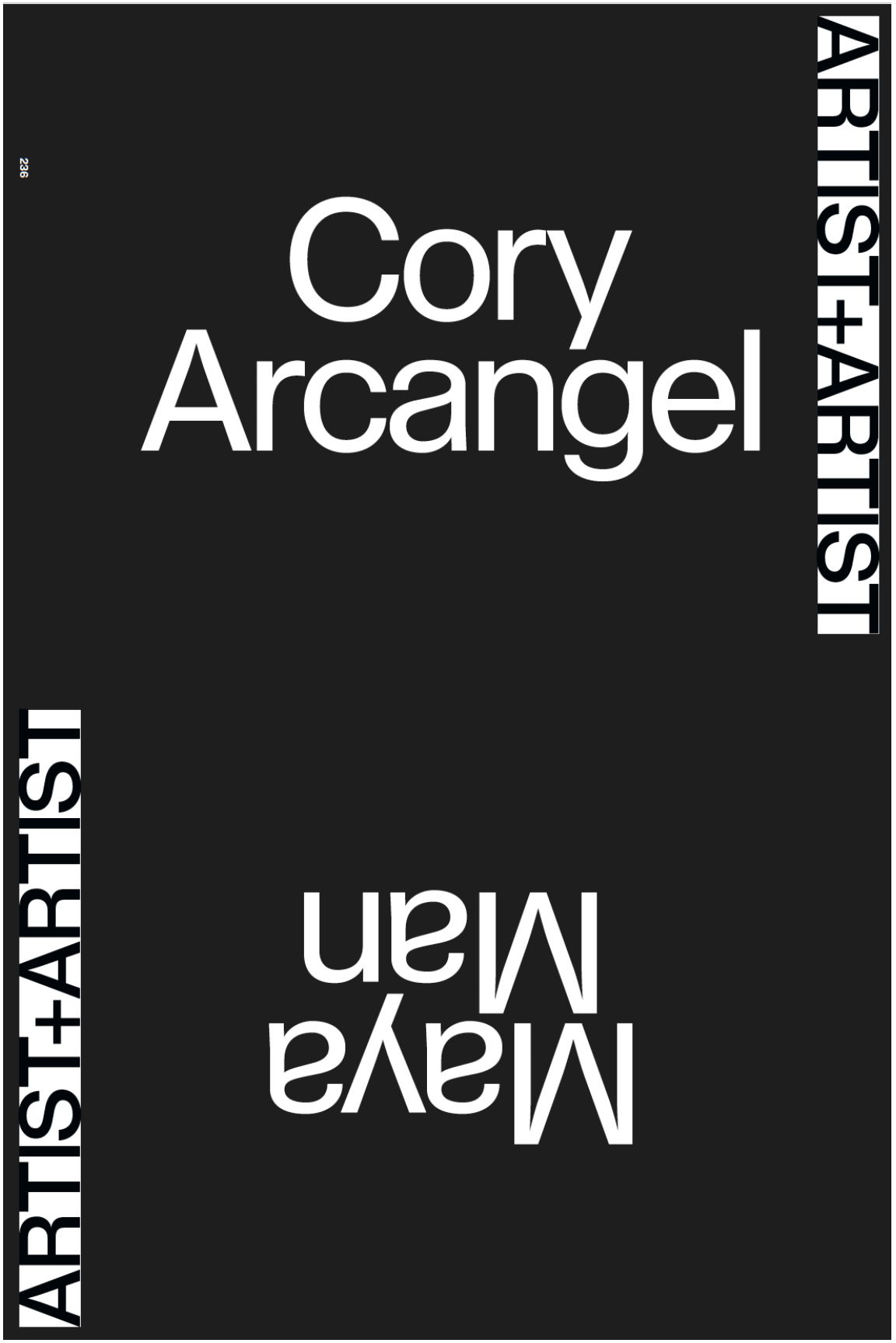
Cory Arcangel: *Super Mario Clouds*, 2002.

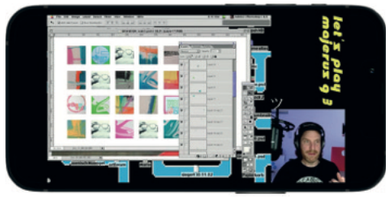
Photo : ©Cory Arcangel/Courtesy Lisson Gallery

We may want to imagine that nostalgia-inducing franchises from the past are set in stone. But Cory Arcangel suggested with his 2002 installation *Super Mario Clouds* that everything is inherently fungible. To make the work, Arcangel undertook the laborious process of hacking a *Super Mario Bros*. cartridge, removing every element except the game's pixelated clouds and vibrant blue sky. Presented on monitors and projected on nearby walls simultaneously, those clouds now float on without Mario, Luigi, or their cohort to race around beneath them. From the detritus of consumerism, Arcangel forged something new: an artwork that resembled its source material in spirit alone. — *A.G.*

LISSON GALLERY

CURA Magazine
2025





Cory Arcangel, the Michel Majerus Estate, & Rhizome.org, *Let's Play Majerus G3* 📽, 2024 Photo: the artist Courtesy: the artist, Michel Majerus Estate & Rhizome

CA: I listened to the podcast you did with Ben Davis, and you are super on it.

MM: Wow. Thank you.

CA: You had mentioned you used to work at Google. I would like to know what the trajectory was. You studied with Casey Reas, then you were working at Google, and at some point, you went back to school. Can you take me through it? How did it happen?

MM: I grew up in the suburbs, which is something I know we share. As a kid, I loved spending time on the computer, messing with the built-in software, uploading videos to YouTube that no one watched, all of that. But I was also into math, and I thought I would be a physics major. Growing up in Central Pennsylvania, I wasn't exposed to the world of contemporary art. When I went to Pomona College in California, I knew that I had an interest in technology and programming, so I chose to double major in computer science and media studies. I knew what I liked to think about, but I still didn't see how this might lead to an art practice and didn't have a vision for what life might look like as a contemporary artist.

Right after school, I needed a job. I had interned as a software engineer at Google previously, and ended up in a kind of residency program at the Google Creative Lab in New York City. Living in New York, I met a lot of artists. My friends were all involved with organizations like the School for Poetic Computation or Rhizome. I started to realize there was a whole ecosystem supporting artists making work critically engaged with technology.

The stability of working in tech was obviously nice, and I learned a lot working inside the industry, but I felt deeply conflicted about the job from the beginning. A bit after the pandemic hit, I left. I spent a lot of that period online looking at art and reading about artists. I realized that was what I've actually always wanted to do and decided to apply to UCLA's Media Art MFA program to study with Casey Reas and Lauren Lee McCarthy.

CA: Did you work in the actual Google building, that giant building which takes up the whole block?

MM: In Chelsea. Right across from the Chelsea Market.

CA: I've never been there, but every time I walk by it, I always ask myself, what is in there?

MM: It's really wild in there. It's probably what you would expect. I was on the fifteenth floor.

CA: I went to the opening party when Google opened their New York office. This might have been 2005? There was all-you-could-eat ice cream, and if I am remembering correctly, drones flying through the party? The same night, I went to a Microsoft party, and it was in this old brownstone, and they were discussing ethics with a philosopher they had invited. The contrast left such an impression on me. For years, I thought, "Oh, Microsoft really knows what's happening." But now I don't know. I think none of them knows what's happening. Talk me through some of the first things that you were seeing.

MM: My first introduction to code as a medium was through Processing and p5.js, programming languages for visual art. I saw there were all of these artists building out a vision for accessible, open-source software for other artists and educators.

I've always felt that my practice stretches across two different worlds. There are artists who are into using software as a medium and programming as their primary way of making, like Casey, whom I studied with. Now there's this whole scene of 'generative artists,' but a lot of the work is often more formally driven or more abstract. Then there's this other group of artists who are interested in the internet and pop culture, who are often using digital tools or out-of-the-box software in some way, but aren't necessarily interested in programming specifically.

Seeing your work was very important for me because you clearly encapsulate both of those worlds.

CA: I always thought there was the MIT world, which you would describe as the Processing world, and then the other world, which I associated with artists from Europe and Russia, like Olia Lialina, for example. Those two worlds, even in the late '90s, were kind of established. I always thought it was MIT, but I don't know how connected Casey and Processing are to MIT.

Cory Arcangel, the Michel Majerus Estate, & Rhizome.org, *Let's Play Majerus G3* 📽, 2024 Photo: the artist Courtesy: the artist, Michel Majerus Estate & Rhizome

MM: Processing actually came out of the Aesthetics and Computation Group at the MIT Media Lab.

CA: Okay, right! And although they were conceptual bubbles, I remember that all those different people were all really around. When I moved to New York, they were all blobbed together, you know?

MM: So it didn't feel like there was a big, definitive difference?

CA: There was a difference in the work, but not in the community, because there were so few people doing code art at the time. You just had to take whoever you could get. It was like 11 people. And it was all mixed up. It's interesting that it kind of solidified, and to hear how you thought of them. Who were the artists? What might have been some early projects that you saw, both Processing style things and then more net-arty kind of things?

MM: Seeing work focused on self-performance really shifted my perspective. Lynn Hershman Leeson's *Roberta Breitmore* was important for me, but that's pre-internet. Definitely Olia Lialina's websites, Ann Hirsch's *Scandalishious* in the early days of YouTube, Molly Soda's *Inbox Full*, and Lauren Lee McCarthy's *Social Turkers*. These projects play with the performance of identity and femininity online, and even before I knew I wanted to be an artist, since I was a kid online, that's something I obsessed over. Their work guided me.

Maya Man, *FAKE IT TILL YOU MAKE IT #37*, 2022 Courtesy: the artist

CA: Speaking of being a kid, I'd like to talk a little bit about the Capital City Mall.

MM: I'm so excited to talk about the Capital City Mall.

CA: For those reading the conversation, we have been sharing a private Are.na channel together. Maya, how would you describe Are.na?

MM: The way I usually describe it to people is "Pinterest for ideas."

CA: Okay. I say "a cool Pinterest."

MM: Okay, yeah, very similar.

CA: Are.na is the only place online that I actually feel comfortable with these days. I struggle with identity online, so maybe we can come back to that because there's probably a generational divide. It's so fun to talk to you because the twenty years in between us create so many differences.

MM: A lot has changed.

CA: A lot is the same, but a lot has changed. So we've been sharing this channel, and one of the things that came up is you had posted a video from the Capital City Mall, which comes from a larger channel you have. And somehow I deduced that it was your hometown mall. So tell me about it. I want to hear everything about it.

MM: Okay. Well, the motivation for me to make the Capital City Mall Are.na channel came from us working on our Are.na channel and thinking about mass culture and suburbia as something that we're both interested in. The mall analogy has been made a million times in relation to social media and the internet. So, I made this collection of Capital City Mall YouTube walkthroughs because I wanted to "revisit" it online. Capital City Mall is outside Harrisburg in Pennsylvania. I grew up in a town called Mechanicsburg. I used to go there, and I remember I would walk in, and to the right, there was a Forever 21 store. The turnover of clothes there was so fast. It felt like the magazines I read were lifted off of the page and hanging in the store in a way that inspired this intense feeling of panic and desire. I used to love going there because it felt like all of my fantasies might be realized if I made the right purchases. Actually, while I was making this channel, Cab (Charles Broskoski) from Are.na messaged me on Instagram and was like, "What's up with Capital City Mall? I used to go there with my grandparents."

CA: No. Really?

MM: And I said, "What? Where did they live?" And he said Mechanicsburg, where I'm from, and no one ever knows this town! So that channel really unlocked something for me. Then it was crazy to me that I was making the Capital City Mall channel, thinking about our shared Are.na channel, and then you shared the video that you had made when you were 19 of your mall walkthrough.

CA: I hadn't really thought about the mall. Just to get back to what you were saying, imagine that you're in that Forever 21, and then maybe Cab actually walked by.

MM: I know! We were probably there at the same time. Do you know Gene McHugh? He's also from Mechanicsburg.

CA: What an influential mall!

MM: The Capital City Mall was doing a lot of work.

CA: In the Ben Davis interview, you had also mentioned that you are annoyed when people talk about IRL and virtual as being two different things. I felt that, but I could never articulate it. Do you want to explain? Is there any relationship between this idea of yours and what you first experienced? Because if you're in Forever 21, it sounds like it's one of the first times you experienced being confronted by the media that you acquire. Is there any relationship between those two things?

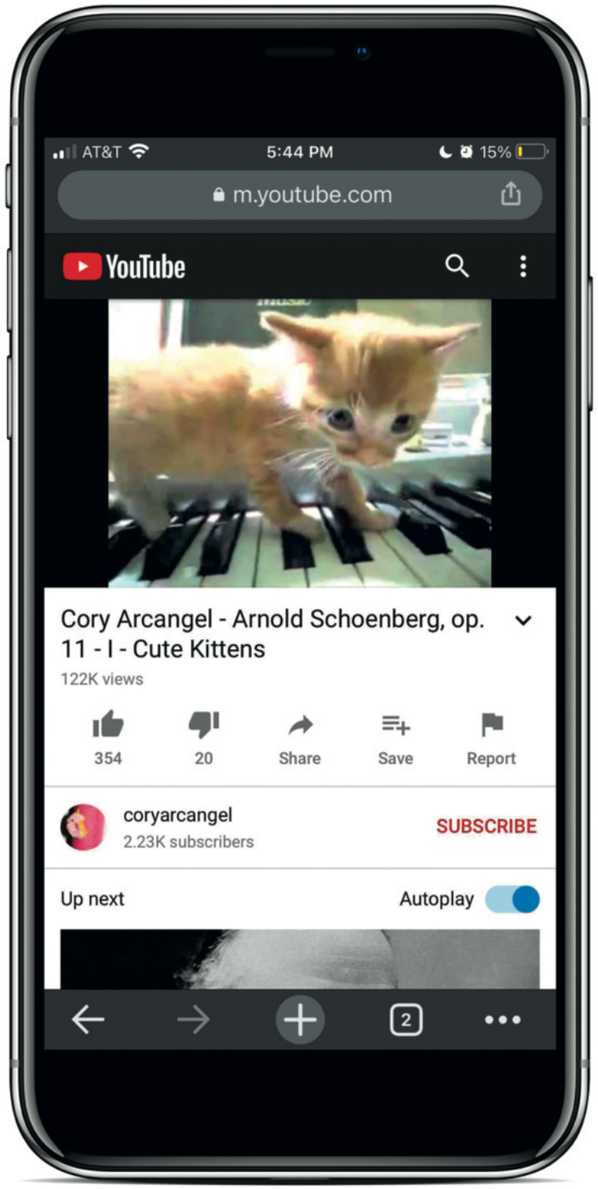
MM: Definitely. I'm glad you agree with that about IRL versus online.

CA: Hearing you articulate it was like hearing a mathematician solve one of those impossible 100-year theorems. And I think it's totally true!

MM: I always felt it was always true. A lot of my feelings about being online have come from this deep discomfort with posting, but also not being able to explain why, de-

Maya Man, *FAKE IT TILL YOU MAKE IT #85*, 2022 Courtesy: the artist

Cory Arcangel, *Femmes d'Alger dans leur appartement (Version A)*, 2024, installation view, *ALL I EAT IN A DAY*, Kunst Halle Sankt Gallen, 2024
Photo: E. Sommer Courtesy: the artist and Kunst Halle Sankt Gallen



Cory Arcangel, *Drei Klavierstücke op. 11*, 2009 Courtesy: the artist

Maya Man, *love/hate*, 2022 Courtesy: the artist

/www.tiktok.com/@alyssasheil/video/732582081770987

/www.tiktok.com/@alyssasheil/photo/732778944629467

d 1/19/2024, 1/25/2024

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URL: https://www.tiktok.com/@sydneynicolegiff/video/7313952802982661406
Posted 12/18/2023
"BagandDecor.2023.12.18" in U.S. Copyright Reg. No. VA0002380575; Reg. No. PA 2-462-344, "BagsHaul.2023.12.18"

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ants:

Case 1:24-cv-00423 Document 1-1 Filed 04/22/24 Page 39 of 70

ktok.com/@alyssasheil/video/721523628

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TikTok Content

Plaintiffs:

URL: https://www.instagram.com/p/CpQ8kmNunEv/?img_index=2
Posted 3/1/2023
"SkirtOutfit2.2023.03.01" in U.S. Copyright Reg. No. VA0002380575

Defendants:

Flower clip and white boots do not come with the featured skirt and shirt set.

URL:
https://www.tiktok.com/@alyssasheil/video/7211549035361045803
Posted 3/17/2023

39

Case 1:24-cv-00423 Document 1-1 Filed 04/22/24 Page 40 of 70

TikTok Content

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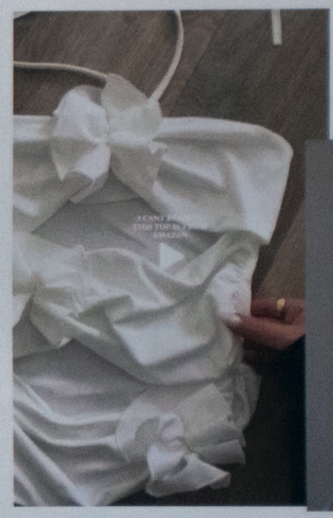


URL:
https://www.tiktok.com/@sydneynicolegiff/video/7235314719660942
Posted 5/20/2023
Reg. No. PA 2-462-385, "FlowerTop.2023.05.20"

After Removal

ork protected by VA 0002380575 *after*

Infringing Content Re-posted After Removal

Defendants posted a photo that infringes upon Plaintiffs' "AestheticBestsellers.2023.10.30" work protected by VA 0002380575 *after* substantially similar original content was removed pursuant to a copyright infringement report. The photo was posted by Defendants

Infringing Content R

Defendants posted a photo that infringes upon Plaintiffs protected by VA 0002380575 *after* substantially

Maya Man, *Hard Copy*, 2025 Photo: Gunner Dongieux Courtesy: the artist

Cory Arcangel, *Permanent Vacation*, 2021 © the artist
Courtesy: the artist and Lisson Gallery

ON THE HOUR

On the Hour is a series of Internet art projects that mark every full hour around the clock, unfolding over a time frame of thirty hours. Replacing the Sunrise/Sunset series, which ran from 2001 to 2013 and featured footage in New York City, On the Hour projects are commissioned by the Whitney specifically for whitney.org.

Using whitney.org as their habitat, On the Hour projects disrupt, replace, or explore the museum website as information, in this form of [illegible] creates [illegible] intervention in existing [illegible] pages.

The series is organized by Christiane Paul, curator of Digital Art at the Whitney Museum of American Art.

To see the current project, please visit this website on the hour.

Peter Burr: Sunshine Monument
Sept 20, 2024–

Nicholas Provenzano, *Sunrise/Sunset Dancing In New York City*, 2024 (screenshot)
Courtesy the artist and the Whitney Museum of American Art

This will be my future one day, today, is just a dream 😍

What a perfect day 🥹♥

I love your voice, it's so calming 🤍

So adorable and eventful 🥹

The New York life!

I love you so much, please keep more of these coming🤍

You are so chic and cool. Love these videos

the vibesss💗 couple goals love!!

I would love to wake up to that view daily ! Gorgeous

I love nyc!!!!!!

Dream girl dream world🤍

where are u glasses from

an you st

ve your days

Question! How do you edit your captions? I like the font and how it highlights each word

ve your energy !! 🤍🤍

I lov[illegible] content [illegible] up [illegible] av[illegible] So cute obsessed 🫶🎀

Oh to be rich 😫

I love Your whole vibe 😍😍

A [illegible] for you

W[illegible] lips?? They looks so good

You low key inspire me

my dream is to live in NYC

ur vids r so comforting ily

girl i need to be ur friend

How I can also live like this

You are the most beautiful little creature! 🥰🥰 Adorbs!!!

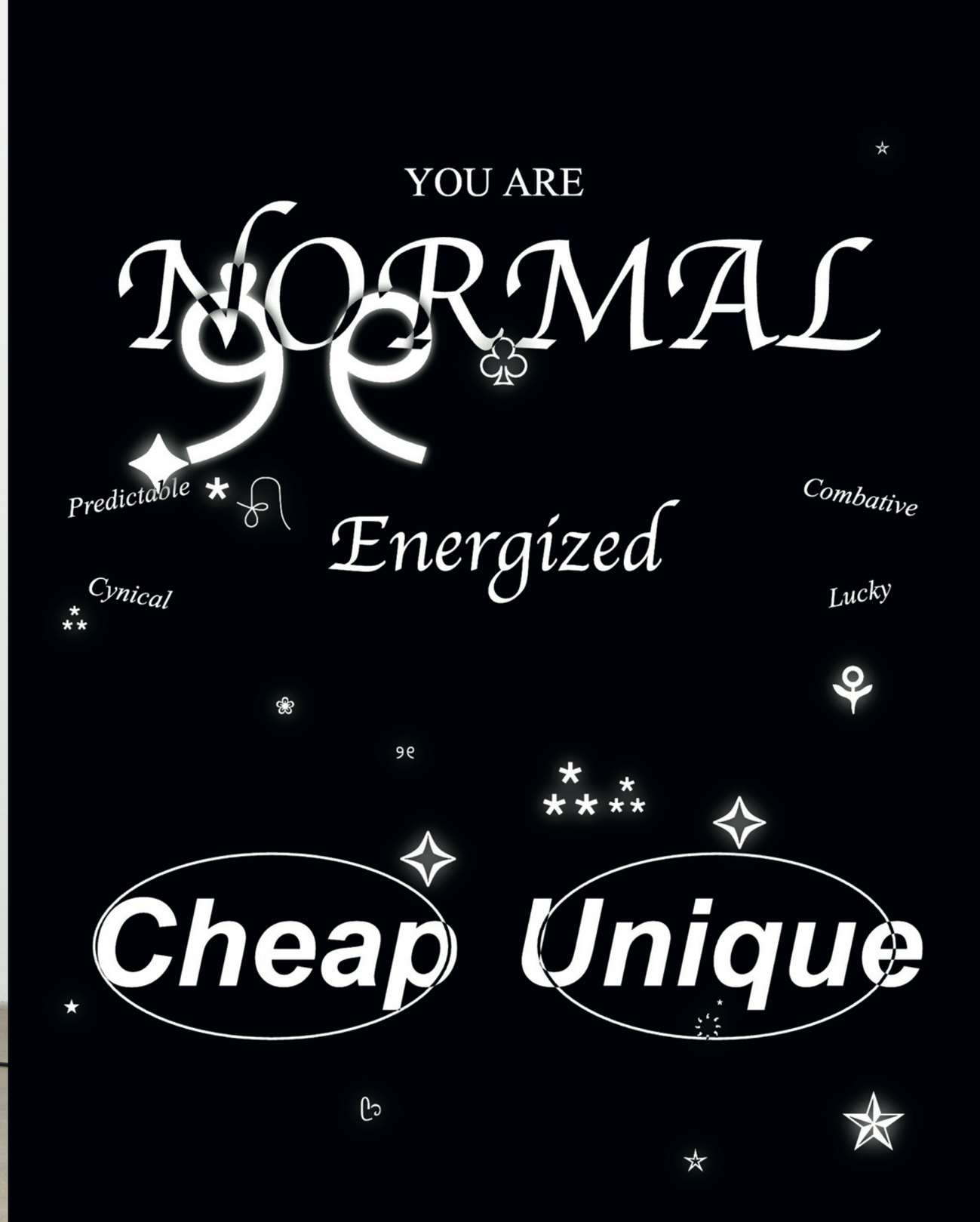
So pretty! It's finally feeling like spring. Hope you are feeling better 💕

Not me liking the video before it starts 😂

You're so beautiful!!!!!

ur behind on vlogs

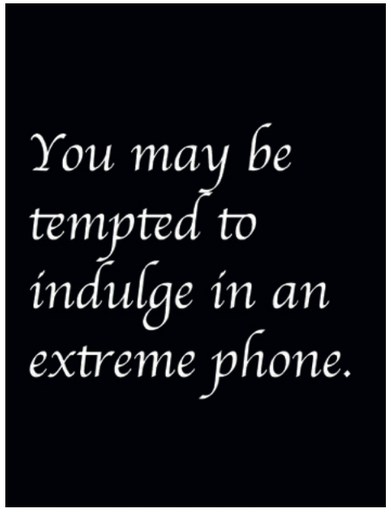
Cory Arcangel, *Server Cabinet Cooling — Everything you need to know*, 2020
Photo: Elisabeth Bernstein Courtesy: the artist



Maya Man, *I'm Feeling Lucky #133*, 2023 Courtesy: the artist and Verse, London

Maya Man, *(The Angels Wanna Wear My) Red Shoes*, 2024 (screenshot)
Courtesy: the artist and HEK, Basel

Cory Arcangel, *Flying Foxes*, installation view, Kunstverein Hamburg, 2022-2023
Photo: Fred Dott Courtesy: the artist and Kunstverein in Hamburg © Kunstverein in Hamburg, 2022



Maya Man, *I'm Feeling Lucky #270*, 2023 Courtesy: the artist and Verse, London

spite that discomfort, I do it all the time, and I've done it for over a decade very regularly. I think this feeling, the emotion that I would feel going into a place like Forever 21, I felt the same when opening Tumblr or Instagram or YouTube, or whatever.

Being surrounded by this potential of who I could become if I shopped the right way made me feel very powerful. Going into Forever 21, I'm thinking about everything I've consumed online. I'm thinking about images on the internet and how I can become them via the clothes in front of me in the store. So, for me, there was no point at which I was able to conceptualize an idea of myself that wasn't in relation to being online.

CA: I wonder if it comes from previous generations. For me, there was a whole adult life until I was in college, which was basically pre-online. I wonder if it's something that will just be washed away like vaudeville or something.

MM: I know. I wonder about that too, but I also see people much younger than me still promoting this propaganda of IRL, like, you know, oh, the internet is fake. Don't believe everything you see; it's just a highlight reel. I think it's very dangerous to try to divide them because it basically invalidates people's experience online, as like, you shouldn't feel a certain way because it's not real, that I don't really agree with. Do you feel like when you were starting to engage in such a deep way with being online, people thought about the internet as so far away from the place that everyone else was living?

CA: 100%. You couldn't even explain what it was to people. You'd be like, "Well, the computers, they're all hooked up together." It just was like talking about Mars or something.

MM: And was the novelty for you exciting, being the one to bring people to it, or was it tiring to have to be the bridge?

CA: For normal people, it was exhausting. It was really only a small number of people, those 11 people I described earlier, that you could talk with. And it was maybe similar to your experience. I had to go to New York to meet people, which is kind of hilarious, but it is true. And it wasn't until, I would say, '06 or '07, where I could start to relax a little bit, and I could talk about email to a normal person. So it was very specialized, very separate. Then, of course, social media came in the late aughts, and that really changed everything in a way. I'm pre-social media. To give you an example, in the early 2000s, for an artist even to have their own website (theirname.com or .net) and to put their work on it was considered gauche or tacky. It was a totally different universe.

MM: To me, it sounds quite romantic in a way. I'm very curious about the parallels between the pursuit of being a contemporary artist and the pursuit of being an influencer.

CA: That's another thing I wanted to talk to you about because you had another text I read where you started diving into these ideas. Would you like to elaborate a little bit? What is it to be a net artist today? And maybe you could talk about all that together with the fact of being in an influencer world.

MM: You know, everyone's on the internet all the time now. 24/7. It's no longer a novelty. What I'm interested in now is taking and repackaging a lot of what everyone's too used to seeing and reframing it in my work. The overdose of content I take in online stresses me out. To me, making work about it is my only way through.

CA: What would be the parallel if you were a painter? You're like, "Oh, I'm here in the studio every day, and these acrylics, they're just grinding me down."

MM: All this paint is just destroying me.

CA: You are surrounded by color all day long.

MM: There's so much to look at. There's so much visual culture in the world.

CA: What you're saying is that it is an especially caustic medium. It's so juiced up with violence and capital and commerce and monopolies and digital feudal lords, Silicon Valley, and these fucking guys. You know? It's all there. Right? That's your medium.

MM: It's also so infused with desire. Like in your work, *Sorry I Haven't Posted*. The phrase gets at this intense desire people have to feel like they are producing something.

CA: Or to be appreciated, essentially. To be seen in some way.

MM: That engine has been running the internet since the beginning.

CA: There was another phrase that was supposed to be a kind of sister project to the *Sorry I Haven't Posted* project, which was, *Is anybody reading this?*. Those were the first years, around 2010, that you could see this, that this need was starting to be exploited. That was really a new thing. Social media had really just started only a few years earlier, but you could just start to see that it was poking people in these ways. But now it's like it's more than poking. You know? It's like algorithmically fire-hosed.

MM: All of those phrases are about this wish to have an audience, and that's what being an influencer is all about. People who post regularly now usually aspire to brand deals and building their lives around the possibility of developing a dedicated following.

CA: I was in New York over the summer, and every once in a while, you would see these huge lines outside of these stores. And I realized this is because of Instagram.

Cory Arcangel, *Mall Walking*, 1997 Photo: the artist Courtesy: the artist

MM: It's really true. And TikTok.

CA: Yes, also TikTok, of course! Ten years ago it was not that way. I guess it gets back to your theory. There is no difference between IRL and virtual worlds. I also watched this incredible *FAKE IT TILL YOU MAKE IT* code video that you did. If I were in the early 2000s and things like that had existed, I would have lost my mind. It is exactly the kind of thing that should exist.

MM: I love talking about the code. I'm so glad you watched it and liked it.

CA: I mean, I couldn't even believe it. It was like crack to me.

MM: I love hearing artists talk about their own code because it is very unique that the medium is completely obscured in the final work. You never see it.

Cory Arcangel, */roʊˈdeɪoʊ/ Let's Play: HOLLYWOOD 2021-1214T19:26:00+01:00 10918*, 2021 System sounds: Daniel Lopatin (Oneohtrix Point Never) Photo: the artist

CA: When you do a drop like that, can anyone view the source code?

MM: Technically, anyone can view the source code. I don't have a public GitHub repo for this one. But anyone can inspect and view the source. That is my dream, to have someone interested enough to read through the files, because I think about it when I'm writing them. I'm naming variables in a specific way and everything.

CA: It was so beautiful. So, you're very orderly. You're very tidy. And what I loved is that there was this really orderly core to the code. The sentences with the kind of Mad Libs variables. To me, it was so incredible because that is actually what it's like to be a coding artist. Then what I especially loved is that at some point, you were kerning your own fonts.

MM: *FAKE IT TILL YOU MAKE IT* was originally released on a platform called Art Blocks, and a constraint that they have is that you can't upload any fonts. Everything has to be on-chain, so you have to rely on the default web safe fonts. In a lot of the Instagram graphics that I was referencing in this piece, the typesetting is very bespoke, so it was hard to create a way to mimic that with code. The really challenging thing about working with text is that it's very obvious when something is 'wrong' versus when making something more abstract. If the words are out of frame, it looks like a mistake, which you can play with in an intentional way, but there is not a lot of room for error. When you're working with a generative system and you have to allow for a really wide-ranging possibility space of what can be generated, there's a ton of testing that you need to do before letting the code run live. It's funny, looking at one *FAKE IT TILL YOU MAKE IT* output, I'm like, "someone's going to think I made this in Canva." That's why it's really important to me to talk about the code. It makes up the core concept of the piece.

CA: What is the line between the fantasy and the reality of that language?

MM: All the language is actually taken from real Instagram posts. Nothing is fabricated. It's all found. I collected hundreds and hundreds of different posts from different accounts to use as a reference. But I wanted the perspective of the project to feel like it was coming from a singular voice or maker, because it was also going to live on its own Instagram account that I would post on every so often. There are choices that the algorithm makes that are not what a person, a designer, or a content creator would make when they're making these graphics, so I need to shape the code in a way that constrains the output pretty strictly. Then the algorithm starts to return this cohesive collection of generated output. It looks like there is one specific perspective, even though it is different than what a person could ever create.

CA: Does this emerge while you're coding?

MM: It's something I'm curious to ask you about, too, because I am so concept-driven, and I find fine-tuning the visual output of a piece extremely difficult because I know how I want it to feel, and I know, looking at other people's work, what I like and I don't. I'm very tuned into that. But to try to warp something so it's the best representation of the concept that I have and I know that I like, it's a really grueling process for me for some reason. I spend a lot of time iterating on one detail of the code, generating hundreds of outputs, looking at the collection from afar, and looking at it close-up.

CA: When did you first know that you had this visual sense? When did you know that you were pretty psychotic about how things are laid out?

MM: Visually, I really gravitate toward the aesthetics of pop culture. I'm really into making things look almost real. But then, when you get close, you realize something's off about it. Reality is crystal clear, a very hard-coded reference. It gives me something very steady to work toward. Also, coming from a background in software engineering, I'm also very tuned into the exactitude that you need to make these things look a certain way. Which I think is sometimes great, but then also sometimes it's difficult for me to know exactly when to let go of reality a little bit and twist it in the way that actually makes it art.

Maya Man, *I'm Feeling Lucky (At a Glance)*, 2025 (still) Photo: Pablo Mason Courtesy: the artist and Mandeville Art Gallery, San Diego

CA: So, there's also a lot of neurosis here. There's a lot of pain, anguish. Right? A lot of this is unpleasant.

MM: A lot of it is unpleasant.

CA: When I am in my office, I am always in a little bit of a bad mood. I'm always dis-

satisfied.

MM: I mean, it's funny. Earlier this year, I went to the Ruth Asawa show at SFMoMA. I walked away thinking, "Wow, this is an art practice that's really in alignment with having a nice life." That's very surface level, but I think there is something to the medium of the way that we work that is a little bit… yeah, masochistic. I have a belief that good work comes from melting my brain through the process of immersing myself in the media and making work about it.

Cory Arcangel, *Totally Fucked*, 2003, Courtesy: the artist

CA: It reminds me that when you were doing your *FAKE IT TILL YOU MAKE IT*, you started this other Instagram account to train the algorithm to kind of melt your brain. You're training yourself like if you were AI.

MM: Exactly. It really felt like I needed to learn to think like I'm a generative model that's only been trained on these graphics. For me, that's always been the process when I'm making work about any kind of content online. I need to go really deep into that genre of content and feel like I'm fully immersed before I can make something decent about it.

CA: So, you're basically training your intuition. That's how I described it with the *Let's Play Majerus G3* project. I had to spend a year in Majerus' laptop just to train my intuition and get a sense of it where I felt comfortable. Then it was quite easy after that.

MM: It's almost like working out a muscle. When it comes time to do the work, you feel trained, and it feels easier because you've trained in it. Watching you use Majerus' laptop in your YouTube videos, it felt like you were dialed in. You could just tell that you had this backlog of hours and hours spent on the computer because you knew exactly where everything was.

CA: Actually, those were pretty rehearsed.

MM: Really?

CA: I would record them over and over again just to get the tone right. So they were actually quite massaged. It's one of the secrets behind that project.

MM: They do really feel like they are for a YouTube audience.

CA: Yeah. They're for a kind of audience that has no attachment to contemporary art in theory. That is one of the pleasures of doing this kind of work, it often ends up in front of people who aren't aware that it's even a work. That's one of the things that I love so much about net art: it is ambiguous. When I first saw a JODI piece in the '90s, I didn't know it was art. It was unclear what it was.

MM: That's what's so beautiful about making work on the internet. You can reach people who aren't going to museums and galleries and who don't know about contemporary art, but can appreciate the absurdity of a project.

I was watching a lecture you gave at the ICA in Philadelphia. You were talking about your piece *Drei Klavierstüke*. You were showing it in a gallery, and it was on BuzzFeed. You have these two lanes that you're sharing work in, and both are important to you. Both are really weighted in, in your practice, but they live in completely different contexts. And I've always wanted that, but it's quite a hard balance to strike.

CA: That's why you did the Instagram channel for *FAKE IT TILL YOU MAKE IT*. That's a similar dynamic. On Art Blocks, everybody knows it's an artwork, while on Instagram, it travels ambiguously. I wondered if you were annoyed that Instagram just put a retweet in now.

Maya Man, *I'm Feeling Lucky #162*, 2023 Courtesy: the artist and Verse, London

MM: What I'm most annoyed by is that Instagram has changed its grid layout to not be square.

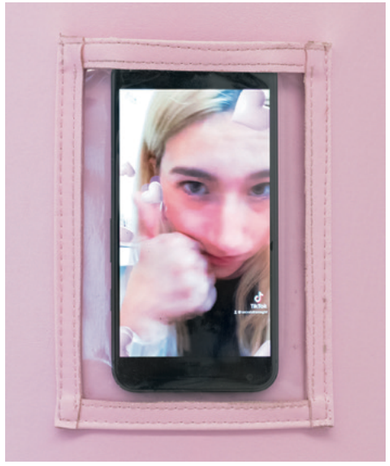
CA: Oh, really?!

MM: *FAKE IT TILL YOU MAKE IT* was released in 2022. I already feel like it's an archive of a past moment in Instagram culture.

CA: I always have this analogy. Imagine if you were to see a Jeff Koons sculpture twenty years later, and it would be shrunk to one-third its size. That's what net art is like. It's always like this, you know? It's just changing.

MM: For work that you released that's about a really hyper-specific moment of online or technology culture, do you feel like the impact is strongest at the moment when you're within it, or once you actually move past it and then have hindsight?

CA: That's a crazy good question. It's a little bit like jazz. In the olden days, in the '50s, jazz musicians would go to the clubs, and the clubs would always have mics set up. They never knew if the mics were on or not. Sometimes they would be on. And three months later, there would be a record released by Columbia Records, and it would be like, "Live at the blah blah blah club." So, sometimes I think this kind of work is very much like that, it's just like it happened once, and it's a recording. If we extend the metaphor, was the performance the most effective the night they were playing in the club? Probably. An even higher-level theory that I've been trying to test out lately is that all art is a performance. Even a painting. Even if you go to the MoMA and you stand in front of a painting made in 1959 or whatever. It's just some color on a piece of fabric. It really means nothing. It's a performance only in that it's hanging in the MoMA, and someone is whispering in your ear, "Oh, that's a Rothko." Does that make sense?



Maya Man, *love/hate*, 2022 (detail) Photo: Kisshomaru Shimamura Courtesy: the artist and SOOT, Tokyo

MM: It totally makes sense.

CA: Not to mention that it's even literally a performance because the rays from the sun are coming and hitting a piece of plastic polymer. So I wonder if everything is not so far from what we do, really.

MM: I've been thinking a lot about this. I am thinking about an Are.na channel you have, Things I learned in art school. An amazing channel.

CA: Thank you. That's all not even a joke. I'm not performing, I'm being sincere!

MM: One note in it really unlocked something for me. It says, "What happens in the studio is the work. And when the work leaves the studio, it's show business." That's what I really think. That's what creates the whole world of art. You need the show business swirling around the art object, and that's what's making it the painting hanging in MoMA. That's the coolest part.

CA: That same painting could just be hanging in your aunt's living room, and you would not give a fuck. Exactly. Show business. It's like when you see the festival Coachella. You see the poster. Guess what? Some names are little and some names are big. That is show business. The managers of each one of those bands are fighting to death to get the font of their band a little bit bigger, and that's what makes the world go around.

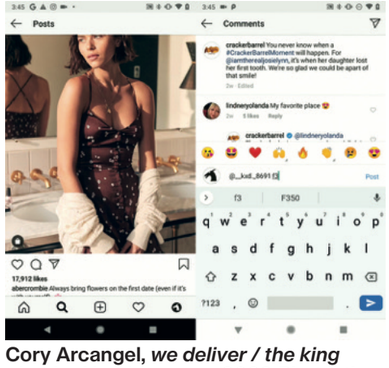
MM: It's so true. It's one of the biggest and, I think, toughest lessons to learn about being an artist, which goes back to the 'artist as influencer' idea.

CA: Tell me, how do you survive in the age of 'influencers as artists'?

MM: I make a lot of work about influencer culture, specifically. It's important to me to maintain ambiguity. I am not interested in playing the role of an artist who poses as someone living above internet culture, because I live inside of it. It's interesting to be able to both recognize that desire and be in certain spaces online and then also be able to critique them. I'm able to experience the highs of indulging online and the depth of its flaws, and the kind of consequences that it has socially and psychologically.

Did you ever feel like you had to walk a tightrope between playing the role of the contemporary artist and being someone who releases things online?

CA: Art is what people think art is, and also what becomes embedded in the archives of art. At the moment, there are museums, but maybe now there are other things like blockchain collections or whatever. I think maybe there isn't an answer because in the end, you're just looking for the highest of human expression, regardless if it's a kid or someone who's fifty years in the art game. But, with that said, I like the game, and I like the show business. So in a sense, as a professional, I am embedded, and I do enjoy the kind of logistics of being an artist in the world. The avant-garde is what people in the avant-garde want and think is in the avant-garde. Although perhaps, maybe, I should live a little bit more in the other world of just appreciating all beauty.



Cory Arcangel, *we deliver / the king checked by the queen*, 2020 Photo: the artist Courtesy: the artist

Ocula
29 July 2024

OCULA

Cory Arcangel: ‘If I was 24, I’d be in some NFT collective’

In Conversation with
Stephanie Bailey
Chicago, 29 July 2024

Cory Arcangel (2015). © Cory Arcangel. Courtesy Lisson Gallery. Photo: Tim Barber.

OG digital native Cory Arcangel looks backwards and forwards at how he’s been turning technology into art since the world came online.

With a new commission showing at Art on the Mart in Chicago this summer, an exhibition on view at the Michel Majerus Estate in Berlin through March 2025, and a curatorial project at Kunst Halle Sankt Gallen opening this September, Arcangel notes that his latest protect reflects a significant shift—but only in some ways.

The Art on the Mart video installation, 🌬️, 🌪️ & 🔥 (2024), a reference to the Chicago-based band, Earth, Wind & Fire, is an animated, digitally-abstracted ‘landscape painting’ that resembles a pixelated heat map.

The projection covers the two-and-a-half-acre façade of the Merchandise Mart—the iconic Art Deco building built on the banks of the Chicago River in 1930—the world’s largest digital art platform.

Exhibition view: Cory Arcangel, *Water, Wind and Fire*, ART on THE MART, Chicago (6 June–11 September 2024). Courtesy ART on THE MART.

To develop the work, Arcangel collaborated with designer and programmer Henry Van Dusen on custom-built software dubbed 'Cookery', which processed footage of nature that Arcangel filmed in Chicago and in Stavanger, Norway, where he has been based since 2015.

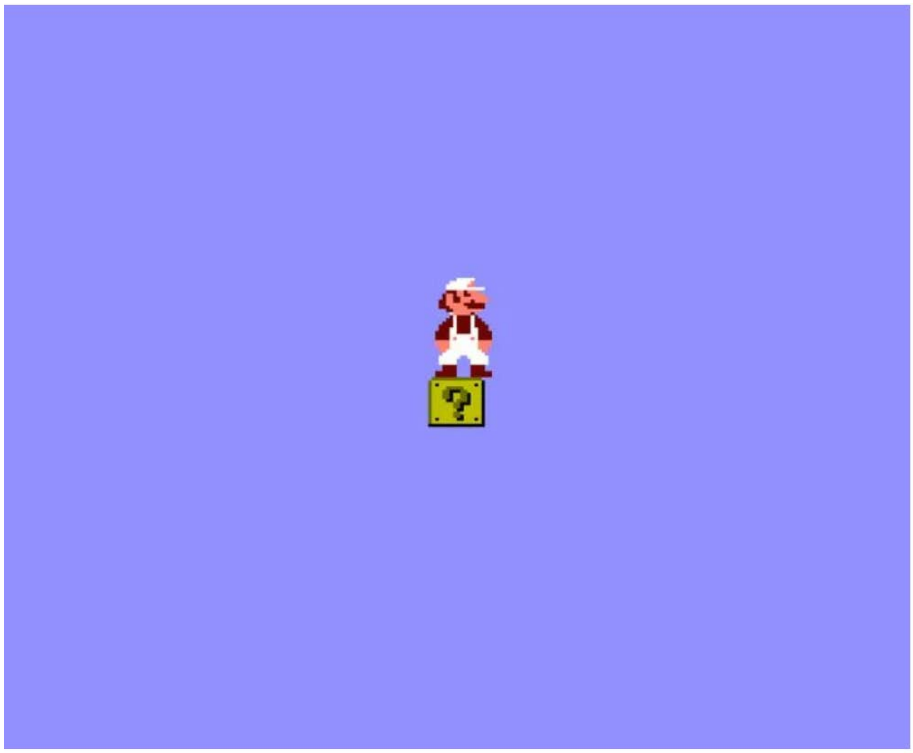
The accompanying witty, minimalist score of melodious digital blips and bleeps, created by experimental musician Hampus Lindwall, reflects Arcangel's background as a composer of electronic music.

His repertoire includes a 2009 edit of YouTube clips showing cats playing piano to recreate Arnold Schoenberg's 1909 composition, 'Drei Klavierstücke Op.11', and the 2013 LP *24 Dances for the Electric Piano*, published on his label Arcangel Surfware.

Cory Arcangel, *24 Dances for the Electric Piano* (2013). LP. © Cory Arcangel. Courtesy Lisson Gallery.

Arcangel was part of a wave of artists working with digital and internet culture at the cusp of the new millennium. He even participated in dot-com millionaire Josh Harris' iconic project, *Quiet: We Live in Public*, where 100 people lived in a subterranean space under New York City with webcams monitoring everyone, everywhere, at all times—an event captured by Ondi Timoner in the 2009 documentary.

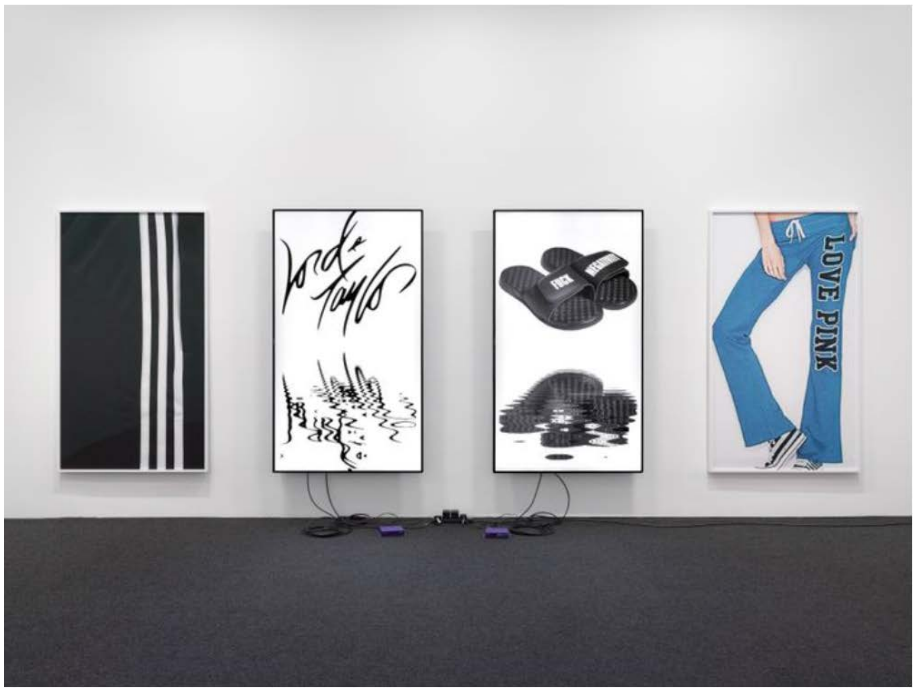
Coming of age within this moment, at the cusp of the digital age, shaped Arcangel's engagement with art and pop cultural history—an engagement which has been described as semi-archeological. The artist treats video games, software, social media, and machine learning as subject matter, material, and art historical medium.



Cory Arcangel, *Totally Fucked* (2003). Handmade hacked Super Mario Bros, cartridge, Nintendo NES video game system, artist software. Dimensions variable. © Cory Arcangel. Courtesy Lisson Gallery.

Take *Totally Fucked* (2003), a hacked Super Mario Brothers game cartridge showing Mario stuck on a cube, bringing to mind the Romantic trope of the lone figure in a vast landscape, this time located in the digital sphere.

Other projects reveal a sharp formalism. The Photoshop series (2007–ongoing) comprises prints created from the software's gradient templates and tool demonstrations functioning as readymades and contemporary hard-edge colour-field abstractions, while *Working on my Novel* (2009), a compendium of Twitter search results for 'working on my novel', recalls the seriality of conceptual art.



Exhibition view: Cory Arcangel, *currentmood,* Lisson Gallery London (20 May–2 July 2016). © Cory Arcangel. Courtesy Lisson Gallery. Photo: Jack Hems.

Then there was Arcangel's 2016 exhibition with Lisson Gallery, *currentmood*, for which he produced online ads as 'promoted content', turning the internet into an exhibition space and site of transmission in a gesture that brings to mind the television event *The Medium is the Medium* (1969), when Boston's public station WGBH-TV broadcast works by artists including Allan Kaprow and Nam June Paik.

Exhibition view: Cory Arcangel, *Errors and Omissions*, Lisson Gallery Shanghai (3 November 2023–31 January 2024). © Cory Arcangel. Courtesy Lisson Gallery. Photo: Alessandro Wang.

More recently, Arcangel's mini-survey with Lisson Gallery in Shanghai, *Errors and Omissions* (2023–2024), covered 20 years of practice. The show was bookended by two video works: *Super Slow Tetris* (2004), a playable cartridge of the Nintendo game hacked so that the blocks take forever to fall, and */roʊ ˈdeɪoʊ/ Let's Play: HOLLYWOOD* (2021), where a custom-built Deep Q-learning supercomputing system plays the mobile role-playing game 'Kim Kardashian: Hollywood'.

With these earlier projects in mind, 🌊, 🌬️ & 🔥 reveals a shift that has taken place in Arcangel's decades-long interrogation of the digital following his move to Norway—a transition the artist reflects on candidly in this discussion.

Exhibition view: Cory Arcangel, *Water, Wind and Fire*, ART on THE MART, Chicago (6 June–11 September 2024). Courtesy ART on THE MART.

SB **Your Art on the Mart commission is monumental in terms of scale and technology. Is this the biggest project you've ever worked on?**

CA Absolutely. I've never come close to this scale in anything I've done and most likely ever will do, given how big the building is. There are very few artworks that are of this size, with the exception maybe of something like Michael Heizer's city that he built out in the desert recently, or some Land works.

In terms of interacting with the technology, that was more standard for me and on par with almost all of my other projects, although Cookery is a one-of-a-kind system.

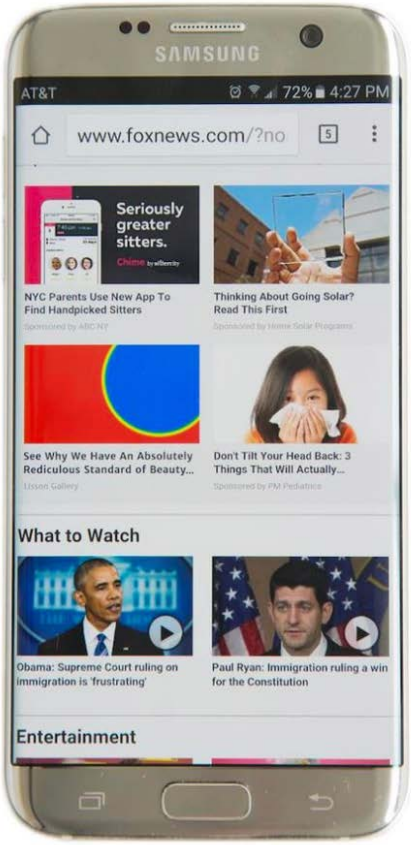
When an image flies around on cloud servers, typical processes like compression, resizing, sharpness, and brightness slowly degrade the file. The software I developed with Henry Van Dusen allows you to script those degradations and amplify and play with them. This project was a good excuse to finish that software and get it to work on video.

It's a wild work. I've been doing this for 25 years, but this project had so many unknowns and things that I hadn't really done before—to make real software and then release it for people, and obviously the scale of the building. It's public, which meant I couldn't get away with doing some kind of edgelord minimalism. I had to make it fun. There are subways riding by! There were so many factors to consider, and in the end it was really rewarding because I was taken out of my comfort zone.

As the deadline for delivering the file approached—and of course like with all deadlines, that's when you're really confronted with making hard decisions—I was thinking hard about scale. At some point I counted the windows in the building and realised that the file would likely look better the smaller it was—a smaller width and height of the file would mean bigger colour blocks. So I dropped the resolution of the final video down significantly to only 240 pixels wide.

SB **It really feels like you mapped every brick.**

CA Exactly. Your perception is exactly the process that I just described. In the end it became a giant physical presentation of an absolutely tiny, tiny video file.



Cory Arcangel, *More to Explore* (2016) (detail). Jpeg, ad copy, online content discovery platform, promoted content ad buy platform. Courtesy the artist.

SB **You used your own video footage to create the work. Was this material from your archive, previous works, or new footage?**

CA It was all video taken specifically for this work, of water, sky, and fire, in-between Norway, where I live, and Chicago. I filmed all kinds of things in these categories—fjords, mountains, birds.

As the deadline approached, I realised the footage should be life-size, so that what you saw on the building would not be so far from how these things would appear. It's a bit of a trick—the image of the fjord is not presented at the scale or size of that fjord, but it's blown up to the size it would look in reality if one is standing and seeing it from across the Chicago river.

When I'm standing in front of the fjord with my phone, I'm seeing a huge visual—a vista—which is a massive part of my visual field. One of the closest things that we have to that experience is cinema, where you're sitting in front of a screen, and that ratio of distance to screen can also be a vista. In the case of Art on the Mart, the screen is something like 14 storeys high.

So I was thinking about scale and phones: the scale of videotaping the fjord on the phone, the scale of where I was standing in front of the fjord with my cellphone filming it, and the scale of it projected on the building.

SB **I love this idea of stretching out the pixels because you're opening up the digital image to the energetic experience of space. It's about amplifying the static in the space of the pixel—each pixel—to create that feeling of being in the world through the image, or abstraction, created.**

CA Amplifying the static—that's exactly how you could describe this software that me and Henry Van Dusen wrote for this.

I think what happened is that I was confronted with so many new variables with this project and I got quite stressed because for one, it's public. Then I looked back on the last 25 years of my practice and I was like, 'Let's do landscapes.' Landscapes are kinda like my safe space.

That happened in parallel with my living in Norway for the last eight years, so those two things kind of combined. I live on the fjord and look out on it all day long, so I decided to start with that. Classic Norwegian painting is of course all about the fjord.

Cory Arcangel, */roʊˈdeɪoʊ/ Let's Play: HOLLYWOOD 2021-12-14T19:26:00+01:00 10918* (2021). Single-channel screen capture video of */roʊˈdeɪoʊ/ Let's Play: HOLLYWOOD* recorded on 14 December 2021. System sounds by Daniel Lopatin (Oneohtrix Point Never). © Cory Arcangel. Courtesy Lisson Gallery.

SB **The idea of the landscape is interesting in terms of your move to Norway. As a Xennial—which describes those born between the analogue and digital ages, at the cusp of Gen X and Millennial—how has living on the edge of nature and the city informed your practice in recent years, given your focus on the digital landscape?**

Shortly after I first moved to Norway, I had to take all social media off of my phone because it is so quiet where I live and it was too jarring, too intense, to go back and forth from what I saw outside to looking at all the violence on my phone. Whereas when I was living in New York, the energy in the phone and out in the city were about the same. That was the first time I realised something weird was happening, that this move was a whole different thing.

The other thing which is wild is that I live in Stavanger, the oil capital of Norway. So while it is beautiful, there's this oil industry that builds platforms out in the North Sea to extract the oil. It's beautiful as a physical, natural place, but it's also a site of manufacturing for the thing that powers all of our lives today, which is oil and gas. It's an amazing duality.

So I think of everything now in terms of energy and nature. I think where I live in Norway is an incredible place to understand the modern world because it is both: you can see energy, which is what builds our modern world, and you can also see what was before all that. That has affected my worldview completely.

Cory Arcangel, *Super Slow Tetris* (2004). Exhibition view: *Errors and Omissions*, Lisson Gallery Shanghai (3 November 2023–31 January 2024). © Cory Arcangel. Courtesy Lisson Gallery. Photo: Alessandro Wang.

SB **Your recent exhibition at Lisson Gallery in Shanghai, *Errors and Omissions*, covered 20 years of your practice. Looking back, how has your approach to the digital evolved? Has there been a big shift from *Super Slow Tetris* (2004), for example, to 🌬️, 💨, & 🔥?**

CA I think that my work is a kinda locomotive. It has its own inertia and it goes in its own direction. What's really changed is everything around it. The shifts that I have lived through as an adult, as a working artist, include the first dot-com boom, which was Yahoo, and then the crash. Then the birth of Web 2.0—Twitter, blogs, whatever. Then social networks came, and YouTube, and then of course crypto and AI. And that's just the digital world!

I actually think that in its essence my work has been quite stable. There isn't much difference between what I did with *Super Slow Tetris* and getting a team together to programme a machine-learning AI computer to play the Kim Kardashian cellphone game. Both are defined by a kinda existential stupidity.

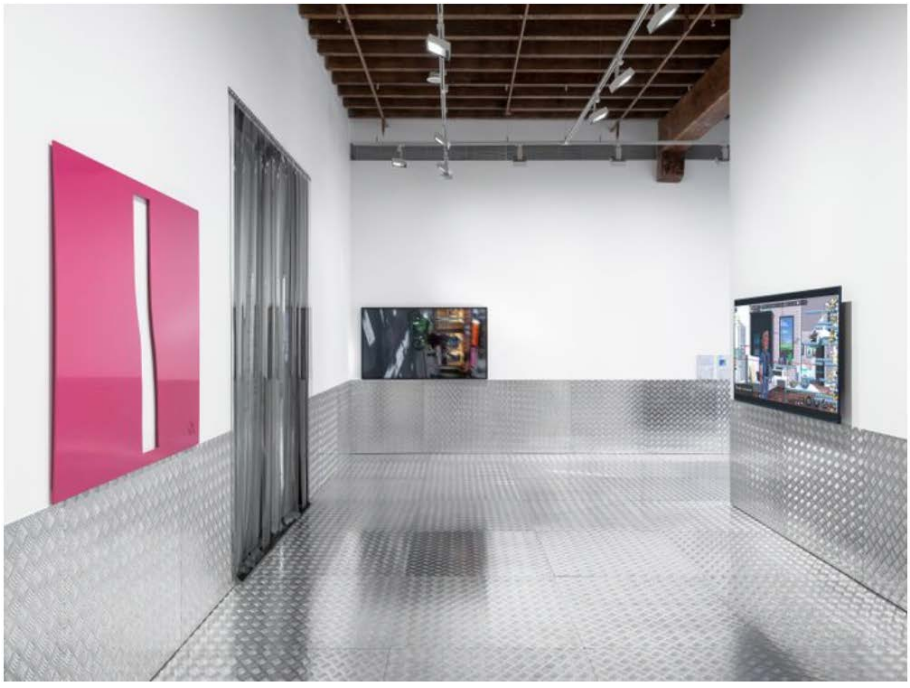
Cory Arcangel, *Super Slow Tetris* (2004). Handmade hacked Tetris game cartridge, Nintendo NES video game system, artist software. Dimensions variable. © Cory Arcangel. Courtesy Lisson Gallery.

SB **That sense of automation, of being caught in the loop of digital architecture, brings to mind how algorithms and search engine optimisation is shaping the production of content in the art industry. How are you observing that phenomenon?**

CA I think paintings are so popular now because these social media algorithms understand a painting as an artwork, and Instagram has been pushing them because of that. I think partly what you see in the art market right now is related to the Instagram algorithm. For all the poor conceptual artists whose work doesn't photograph well, it's a visibility disaster.

SB **One thing you've mentioned a few times is the deadline and how it catalyses the finalisation of your projects. When you work in the digital sphere, you're working in a context that is never still, so the deadline creates a grid: a space of pressure to work within.**

CA Exactly. Because you can have multiple versions, you could theoretically never be done with anything.



Exhibition view: Cory Arcangel, *Errors and Omissions*, Lisson Gallery Shanghai (3 November 2023–31 January 2024). © Cory Arcangel. Courtesy Lisson Gallery. Photo: Alessandro Wang.

SB **This relates to your work in music, because as a composer, a composition is a framework with a start and end: a grid. Could you talk about your relationship with formalism? Do you feel like a formalist?**

CA I'm a psycho for what you would call formalism. I am almost OCD about structures and systems, it's my Achilles heel. Sometimes I feel like I'm an experimental artist doing wild things, but really I could be a finance bro. I love spreadsheets. I love structure. I love numbers.

SB **There's something so structural to what you do.**

CA Definitely. Speaking about structuralism, structural film kind of led to experimental video, which is a type of structural film but in a different medium. My Art on the Mart project is 100 percent an experimental video. The code Henry and I wrote is like a digital synthesiser for imagery, and the result looks a lot like a video from the eighties that would've been done with analogue synthesisers.

I think structure—form, narrative, flow, timing, entertainment, or whatever you call it when you experience an artwork—is about trying to keep people's attention. Music is about attention. So you have to be aware of it.

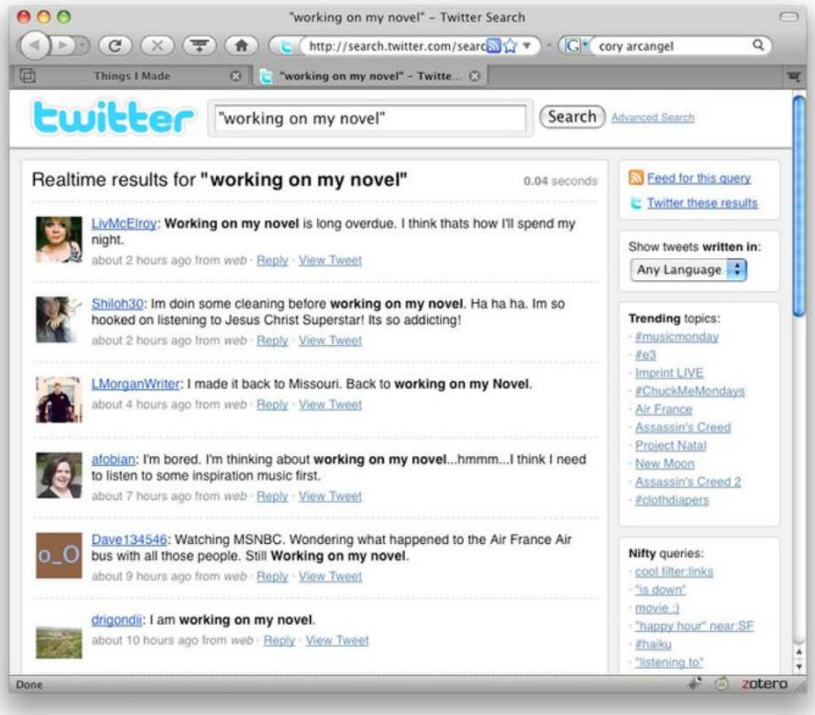
Cory Arcangel, *Photoshop Gradient and Smudge Tool Demonstration* (2007). Inkjet on laminate. 109.2 x 109.2 x 3.5 cm. © Cory Arcangel. Courtesy Lisson Gallery.

SB **That awareness is also about making the digital legible —to make it tangible as matter.**

CA Definitely. From the perspective of my generation, the huge issue or opportunity to solve in the early 2000s was how to make digital work that was legible to people who were not digital natives. A big part of my project at that time was to figure out how to make work that could be read as art to people who were not interested in digital art.

SB **This relates to your upcoming Kunst Halle Sankt Gallen show, which you are curating and also producing a work for. Could you talk about that?**

CA The St. Gallen show is centred on art history. I'm co-curating it with Giovanni Carmine who is the director of the Kunsthalle. We're looking at mediums which are on the edge of being considered seriously as mediums for contemporary art, like NFTs and sneaker collaborations. The work I'm developing for that show is a Pablo Picasso immersive installation.



Cory Arcangel, *Working on My Novel* (2009). Twitter search results for 'working on my novel'. Courtesy the artist. Photo: Cory Arcangel.

SB **Is that a parody of the Van Gogh immersive experience?**

CA Not a parody, but a pastiche. A parody is making fun of something, whereas a pastiche is done more lovingly.

SB **Coming back to what you were saying about making digital art legible in the early 2000s, could you talk about your experience with *We Live in Public*?**

CA Oh, wow. There were two of those live streaming houses in the late 1990s and early 2000s and I did performances in both. One house was a little earlier than *We Live in Public* in Ohio, where I went to school, which was called *Here and Now*. There were cameras in every room for that project as well. At some point I did a one-off live-stream performance there, then again a few years later in New York, I did a musical improvisation with another artist, Yael Kanarek, for *We Live in Public*.

For *We Live in Public*, I was part of a group of artists who were invited there. If I remember correctly, it was organised by Yael, who was asked by Josh Harris, I think. It's hard to explain now, but there was no way for electronic artists to show their work then—it wasn't even clear how!

There were different groups and communities of net artists then, centred around things like rhizome.org, thing.net, and The Upgrade (which Yael later did). Everyone kind of knew each other in New York—the real hackers, DNS hackers, net artists, and people like Josh Harris. It was a small and motley collection of people, I would say.

Josh Harris' company, pseudo.com, was huge. It crashed when I moved to New York. I remember going to a party once in their office. I think they had already gone bankrupt. I had never seen so many Aeron chairs!

SB **Is there still a sense of community in this early digital scene now? Do you keep in touch?**

CA We definitely keep in touch. When I opened my recent show at Michel Majerus Estate, a lot of artists from that era came out. It was like a class reunion. They all live in Berlin since New York was not so friendly to the avantgarde artists of that era—it's so expensive, for one. But also new communities have emerged. I'm sure that if I was 24 today, I'd be in some NFT collective. There are whole other worlds now. —[O]

Cory Arcangel: 🌊, 💨 & 🔥 is on view at Art on the Mart in Chicago until 11 September 2024. *Let's Play Majerus G3* is on view at the Michel Majerus Estate in Berlin until 15 March 2025.

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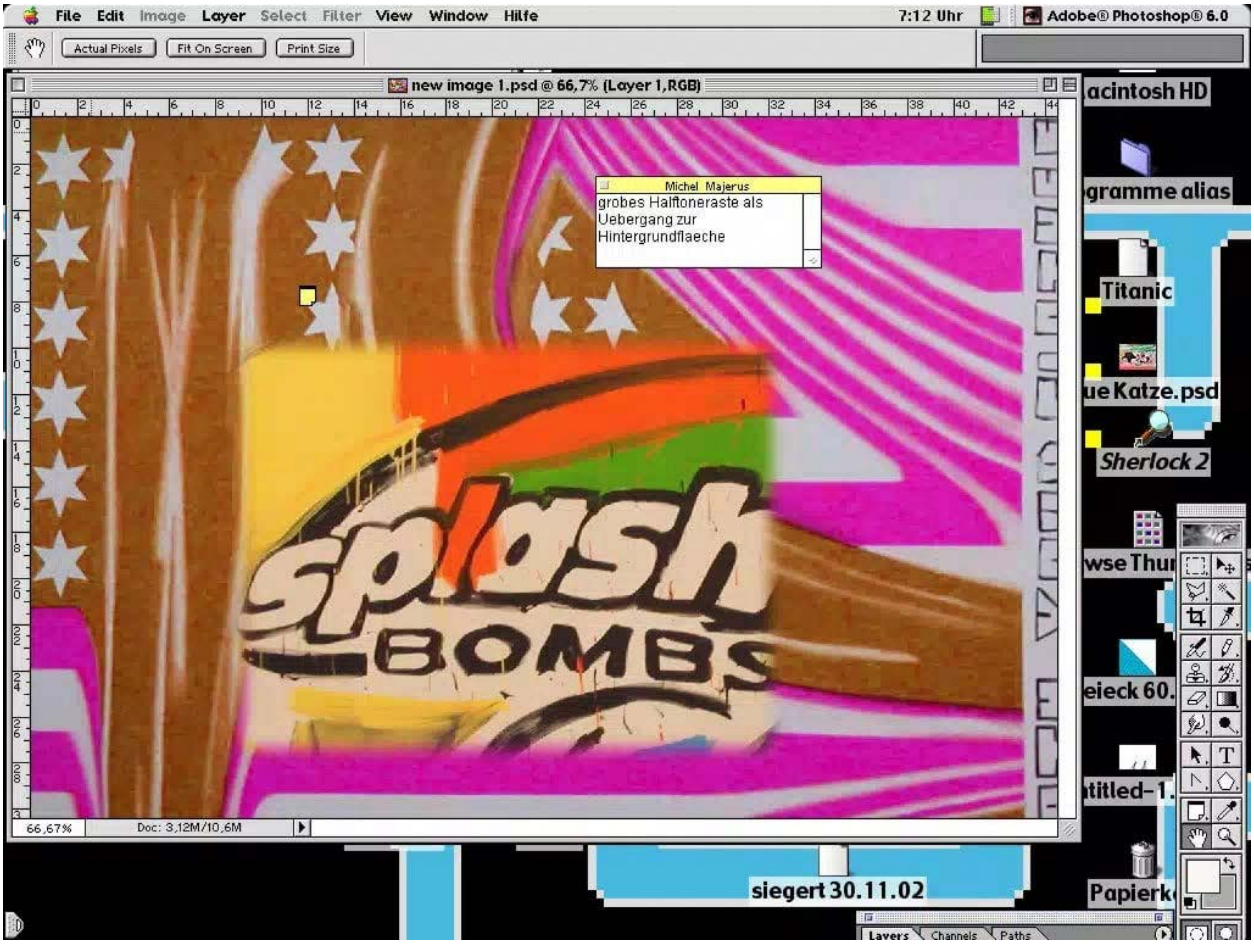
Art & Exhibitions

20 Years After Michel Majerus's Tragic Death, the Pioneering Artist's Laptop Has Been Restored. Surprises Abound

'It's a true virtual studio,' said Cory Arcangel, who's exploring its hard drive in a YouTube series.



Screenshot of Michel Majerus's laptop (a PowerBook G3), selected by Cory Arcangel, November 2023. © Michel Majerus Estate, 2024

Andrew Russeth • July 1, 2024 • **Share This Article**

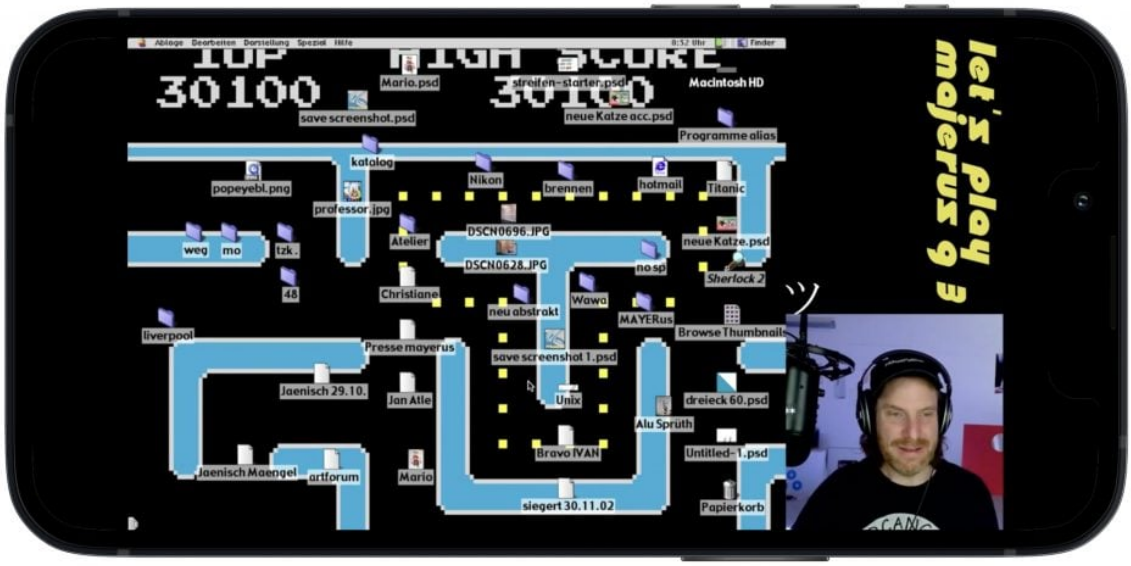
On November 6, 2002, when a Luxair plane crashed while attempting to land at Luxembourg Airport, 20 passengers were killed. Among them was

the Luxembourgish artist Michel Majerus, who at 35 had already won international acclaim for playful and incisive paintings that borrow from advertising, video games, record covers, art history, and a vast array of other sources.

Since then, Majerus's reputation has continued to grow, with younger artists like Jamian Julinao-Villani and Egan Frantz citing him as an influence. In 2022, the Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami hosted a Majerus survey, and five German museums and art spaces staged shows devoted to his work, which ranges from icy text paintings that recall techno CDs to deadpan abstractions to a half-pipe emblazoned with computer graphics. His longtime Berlin gallery, Neugerriemschneider, and the New York-based Matthew Marks, have been guiding his work into key collections.

Now a sprawling body of material that details how Majerus made his trailblazing art has become available. His laptop was recovered from the plane crash and has been restored as part of a thrillingly multifarious project that involves his estate, the artist Cory Arcangel, a longtime Majerus fan, and the digital-art organization Rhizome. Arcangel has created an ongoing YouTube series titled "Let's Play Majerus G3," and is in a joint exhibition with Majerus (of the same name) that is running through the middle of next March at the estate's Berlin home, the artist's former studio.

"It wasn't even known whether anything would work," Arcangel said in a video interview from Stavanger, Norway, where he's based. "We worked on the project for many years, knowing that it could have just been a big dud. The hard drive could have been corrupted beyond bootable form."



Cory Arcangel, *Let's Play Majerus G3!*, 2024. © Cory Arcangel and Michel Majerus Estate, 2024/Courtesy Cory Arcangel, Michel Majerus Estate and Rhizome

A Tour Into the Past

Mercifully, it was not corrupted, and Dragan Espenschied, Rhizome's preservation director, went about figuring out how to make the laptop run exactly as it did in the past on a contemporary computer, a potentially thorny process known in the tech trade as emulation. "It can work again if the stars align," Espenschied said, speaking from his home in Stuttgart, Germany.

The two men have experience with such projects. They emulated a Macintosh computer that Arcangel bought at a Salvation Army store in 2005, finding a homemade game on it called *Bomb Iraq.* The artist also helped rescue digital Andy Warhol pieces stored on decades-old floppy discs held by the Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh.

However, the contents of Majerus's laptop are on an entirely different scale. "It's a true virtual studio—a true studio," Arcangel said. There are files related to shows he never realized, his final solo exhibition, in 2002, at Petzel gallery in New York, "almost from start to finish," a bevy of source images he used, "and photographs he's taken with his Nikon camera, out and about."

On YouTube, Arcangel has released the first video walkthrough of the laptop, a Macintosh G3 Wall Street—"the Ferrari of its day," as he says. Inspired by popular YouTube channels that do song or chess analysis, Arcangel offers lucid commentary as he clicks through folders and discusses Majerus's practice for a general audience. He also hams it up a bit. "If you're wondering why this is all taking so long, that's how life was in the '90s," he says, firing up the emulation and waiting for Mac OS 9 load. "Computers were slow!"

Installation view of "Let's Play Majerus G3," a project by Cory Arcangel at the Michel Majerus Estate in Berlin, April 27, 2024–March 15, 2025. © Michel Majerus Estate, 2024/© Cory Arcangel, 2024/Photo: Jens Ziehe, Berlin.

Opening Photoshop 6.0 in the emulation, Arcangel reveals, layer by layer, how Majerus built some images, and how he created digital mock-ups for his exhibitions. "You see the full sausage being made, so to speak," Arcangel told me. Not everything that was on the laptop is accessible, though. Majerus's family removed items that they deemed too personal. "If

you're looking for some hot gossip, you're not going to find it here," Arcangel cautions his viewers.

A New View on Majerus

What is clear is that Majerus was something of a computer power user. "You turn it on, and you immediately see [that it] is heavily customized," Espenschied said. "Everything that could be changed and configured in the system was changed to look different. The system typeface was like a huge, cartoonish-looking, almost handwritten typeface."

Even for those knew Majerus, or who have studied his practice closely, there have been discoveries. "We were surprised by how many photographs he took," said Ruth Kißling, the director of the Michel Majerus Estate, which oversees his archives and runs its exhibition space. "There's an endless mass of photographs." One poignant photo, which Arcangel pulls up on screen on YouTube, shows Majerus's laptop sitting on a hotel bed: a behind-the-scenes glimpse of an artist on the road, perhaps taking a break from work.

"He had a computer, and he used it, but he never spoke about it," Tim Neuger, a cofounder of Neugerriemschneider, told me. As Neuger sees it, "it's a dimension that we're not really able to grasp yet, the dimension that Cory is laying open."

What would Majerus make of all this? "Michele would have been enormously pleased and happy," Neuger said, "that such a wonderful figure like Cory would do a YouTube tutorial on him, not an art-historical text but a YouTube tutorial, a new thing."

Michel Majerus, *Lettin' off as much as you can*, 1997. © Michel Majerus Estate, 2024/Courtesy private collection and neugerriemschneider, Berlin.

Arcangel likened the experience of looking through the laptop to “going to Pollock’s studio. It’s very similar, but it’s just a virtual version.” Once it was operational, he began spending an hour or two every morning on it. “There’s no organization so I could just like systematically understand it,” he said. “I had to learn it like a language. I had to just go in a little bit every day and just immerse myself in it.”

While Arcangel develops new episodes of the YouTube program, a total of eight works by the two artists are on view in the Berlin exhibition, including one astonishing Majerus piece that unites a small abstract painting, a pair of Fila sneakers, and the hit Prodigy album *The Fat of the Land* (1997) on CD—an ode to shifting tastes and disposable consumerism.

“He was really, really at the edge of something that was happening, and not many artists were in the league that he was in,” Arcangel said. Majerus’s laptop, he went on, “could show us what studios are going to look like in the future. This is what art history will be in the future, undeniably.”

Monopol
18 May 2024

MONOPOL
Magazin für Kunst und Leben

Artist Cory Arcangel

"I can't come close to a really good Majerus"

Cory Arcangel "Let's Play Majerus G3!", 2024, YouTube video series

The art of Michel Majerus first annoyed and then fascinated Cory Arcangel. Now he has brought the data from the deceased painter's laptop back to light. A conversation about technology nostalgia and AI that plays with Kim Kardashian

Cory Arcangel's work is a kind of bridge between the media art of the 90s, the experiments of net art and the post-internet art of the 2010s. The New York artist, who now lives in Stavanger, Norway, says he would like nothing more than to be a contemporary artist. In Michel Majerus he found an unlikely counterpart and a source of inspiration. The Luxembourg painter, who died in a plane crash in 2002, left behind not only an extensive oeuvre of paintings and installations, but also a laptop on which he planned works and created mood boards.

With the help of the New York-based organization Rhizome, Arcangel saved the data from the old Mac Powerbook and comments on the finds in a kind of "Let's Play" format on YouTube. At the Majerus Estate in Berlin, where Arcangel's work is put in relation to Majerus, he talks over strawberries and cookies about his path to Majerus' work and talks about the infinite loneliness of digital worlds.

Cory Arcangel, what was your first encounter with Michel Majerus?

I forgot my first encounter, and it was only the second one that piqued my interest. In 2002 I saw Majerus' exhibition "Leuchtland" at the Friedrich Petzel Gallery in New York. I was 24 and became interested in contemporary art after moving to New York City in 2000. As a trained composer, I didn't know much about it. I worked in SoHo, and during lunch breaks and after work I would walk through the galleries. The Majerus exhibition really annoyed me – especially his Space Invader paintings. I just turned around and left.

An extreme reaction.

I didn't like this for many reasons. I was ambitious. I also wanted to exhibit in such gelatines. And then there's this painter who does something with video games! Why are there only painters and no media art? I didn't know anything about painting yet. Eventually I completely forgot about this encounter. Then, in 2014, one of Majerus's paintings popped up on my Instagram feed. That was so good! I panicked because there was no information about the picture. This was one of those beautiful paintings that combines gestural abstraction, typography and graffiti. Eventually I learned that it was by Michel Majerus, who had died twelve years earlier. As I was going through his archives, I saw the Space Invader painting again - and immediately remembered it.

Funny, because you also have a work called "Space Invader" - a modified video game.

I made that in 2004, two years after I saw Majerus. I'm sure I was thinking about it subconsciously.

Do you feel connected to his work?

What do you mean by connected?

He's clearly a painter, but...

I wouldn't call him a painter in the true sense of the word. His paintings are not paintings, his paintings are objects that perform as paintings.

You mean they act like paintings?

They are self-reflective and they are objects that reflect the entire history of painting and its path through the world. This is a staging of art history, power, money and the name Majerus. He stands somewhere between painter, installation artist and institutional critic.

In the 2010s, post-internet, Majerus' work struck a chord. It's reminiscent of pop, he's interested in surfaces, but there's something else in there.

It's scary! When I saw this picture on Instagram in 2014, I thought it was a young artist from Berlin. I thought these kids were getting too good for me. And he could actually paint too.

How did the collaboration with Rhizome, a non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation and exhibition of media art, and the Majerus Estate come about?

I learned that he had a laptop. I asked what was on it and if we could get it working again. I've done this a few times - my last such project was Andy Warhol's Amiga experiments. Then I need someone who knows how to do something like that. My next call was to Rhizome and Dragan Espenscheid. Dragan has been offering such emulation services for a long time, and the project started in 2017.

These old systems are amazingly fragile, and it's hard to get them working again, right?

They are vulnerable, frighteningly vulnerable. We had a lot of technical concerns. But once we mirrored the hard drive, it became clear that our chances were pretty good. Actually, it wasn't so much about a result, but about the process.

Nobody has opened the laptop in 15 years?

It was last used in 2002. Shortly after the plane crash, someone in the family somehow copied files from it, but it hasn't been touched since.

A lot of your work has an archival quality. I'm thinking of the collection of trance records that you included in this exhibition: the "AUDMCRS Underground Dance Music Collection of Record Sound". The music and the design of the covers are very period, very 90s.

It also fits perfectly into the exhibition, the collection is archival, it is techno.

You also seem to be interested in technologies that have only just become obsolete, for example in "Super Mario Clouds" from 2002 and other works based on modified console cartridges. Or your piece "/roʊˈdeɪoʊ/ Let's Play: HOLLYWOOD", in which an AI tries to play a smartphone game by Kim Kardashian from 2014. It is also a "Let's Play" in a way. What fascinates you about the recent past?

It's fun to use things that have just been discarded. When I first started modding video games, you could get Nintendo cartridges for next to nothing. You're also not as distracted when you're not working with the latest trend, because otherwise so many artists work with it. And sometimes the work just takes time. We started the Kim Kardashian Project in 2017 and completed it four years later. We needed the time to build the machine. Last month, the game “Kim Kardashian: Hollywood” went offline. The work will never be seen live again.

The AI played in real time?

Exactly, but it was only performed live once, at the Greene Naftali gallery in New York. It needed a full-time technician to babysit. Whenever there was an update to the game, we had to update the code.

There is also a certain loneliness in all of this. There are no characters to be seen in "Super Mario Clouds," and the Kardashian game is actually deserted. What happens if you remove all traces of human players?

The Kardashian game was my Mount Everest. It is the loneliest and most dystopian of my works. The "Clouds" are also sad. At the same time, I love computers and I love programming. But that doesn't always work out for the benefit of technology.

You mean they are working against technology?

Well, at least I'm not trying to show that everything is cool. The works always give me that feeling that you allude to, but I'm also a bit powerless over it.

And do you want to pursue this further?

I don't know. It's not entirely in my hands. I'm sorry if I sound like a yoga teacher: it's like fishing. I don't know what kind of fish I'm going to catch.

You have used the term dystopian several times to describe your work. What does that mean to you?

I've been living in Stavanger, Norway for a while. Oil is mined there and that gave me a different perspective on the world. Since the war in Ukraine, I think Norway has become the most important energy supplier in Europe. Living here has helped me think a bit more globally. My Norwegian DJ friend once explained to me why Norwegians are so good at DJing.
Why then?

Because they're so far away, geographically and culturally. They can look at the world, they can say: let's take a record from here, one from there. And there are so few people that you can't just be an acid house DJ. You have to play the Rolling Stones as well, because the dance floor has to keep moving.

Do you think you have to be eclectic?

Yes, and this distance allows that. Anyway, from this position you can see that the whole thing is just about energy. You might think that a strawberry grows because of the sun, but that wouldn't be possible without oil. It is needed for fertilizer and the tractor runs on it. When I lived in New York, such connections were invisible to me.

Things that hold the world together are now apparent to you?

I'm not on a crusade against fossil fuels because that's just the way the world works. That's the long answer as to why I would describe my work as dystopian. I'm trying to get a sense of what's going on.

You mentioned music. Because you trained as a composer, I'm interested in how the idea of the score has influenced your work.

Most of it is based on scores, after all a score is just a series of instructions executed over a period of time. Computer code is a score, and that's how I imagine most of my work. The techno records are literally instruments played by a DJ - an institutional object passed around as an auratic collection. What if we elevate this to something important? The aluminum works are a little different, but ultimately they are based on vectors that are milled out, so it is also a kind of score. This object then travels through the world like a painting. And the YouTube thing – that's maybe my most complicated work. I do not know what that is.

You are entering a different media environment.

Yes, but I don't have to be a successful YouTuber. This is more of a research. And I can't call this a work of art because that would be too pretentious. But I definitely used my skills as an artist.

I read that Majerus continued to produce paintings while he was in Los Angeles. He composed them on the computer, then sent the drafts to Berlin, where an assistant executed them. A bit like a, er, score?

Yes!

Perhaps it is precisely this translation from the virtual to the material that makes this laptop so fascinating.

In any case. But he and I are completely opposite artists. But he never ceases to amaze me. I'll never come close to a really good Majerus.

Why?

Formally, it's just astonishing. The work is incomprehensible. It can't be reduced to an algorithm or a formula, and there's no way to reproduce it.

Her aluminum works are also very picturesque.

I'm trying my best.

And they're a bit Majerus-esque.

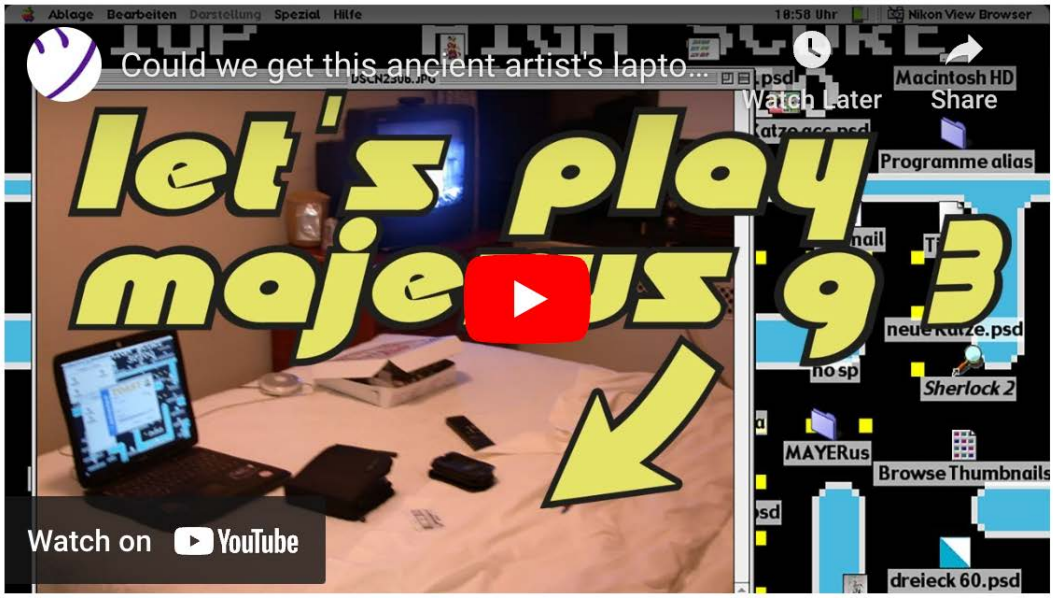
That's them!

What was going through your mind when you started this series?

I didn't think of Majerus when I started scanning the logos. That was 15 years ago. But when I started milling them in aluminum, I immediately thought of him.

Have you ever compared your career with Majerus?

I started out as a media artist and my goal was to eventually become a contemporary artist. Majerus started out as a painter and eventually became more of a media artist. My work has become more conservative over the past 25 years. I feel like his work went in the opposite direction.



PRESTIGE
July 14, 2023
PRESTIGE

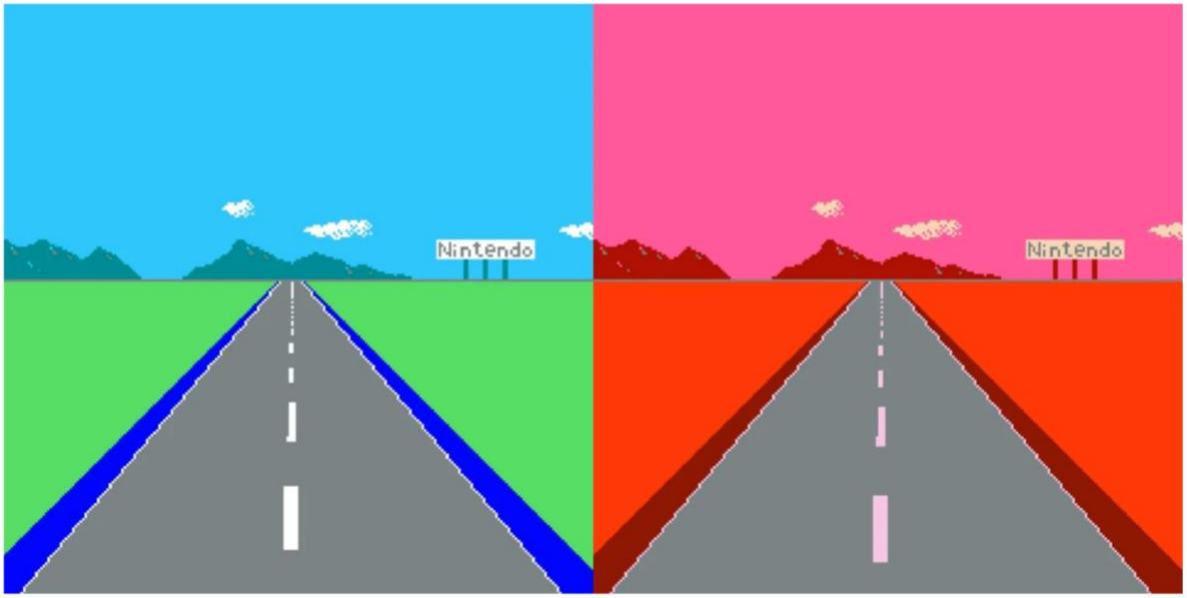
Cory Arcangel: The Coolest, Contemporary-est Artist on the Planet

BY STEPHEN SHORT | 14 JUL 2023

But srsly. Cory Arcangel is showing "✎╔➝" at Thaddaeus Ropac in Seoul Fort Hill this month until July 29, 2023.

Writing this paragraph about American artist Cory Arcangel one Friday in June, an email pinged into my mailbox, announcing that British artist David Hockney's work was about to grace the stage at the Glastonbury Music Festival that afternoon. And not just any Hockney but the nonagenarian's first AI-related work, in which the AI removes the figures from his painted series *The Dancers*, 2014, leaving nothing but an empty computer-generated landscape. Why am I telling you this?

Well pre-ping, the above paragraph was a primer on Cory Arcangel and his first artwork of note, *Super Mario Clouds*, 2002, based on the 1980s Nintendo game. Arcangel learned a computer language that enabled him to hack the game, and he deleted most of its elements – characters walking, the bricks, mushrooms and sound. All that remained was the blue-sky background and fluffy white cumulus clouds, moving in real time. And Arcangel projected it on walls. A brand new category of cross-pollinated art/tech "digital minimalism", it was a micro/macro-masterpiece in redaction, and Zen some. Arcangel saw the cloud before Apple made it a tech term. And what Hockney was showing that afternoon at Glastonbury in 2023, Arcangel had accomplished via different means 21 years earlier.



Cory, Arcangel, F1 Racer Mod (aka Japanese Driving Game), 2004

Which tells you all you need to know about this playful aesthetic innovator. A pioneer of technology-based art, artist, composer, programmer and entrepreneur, Arcangel trained in classical guitar and studied music technology at Ohio's Oberlin Conservatory of Music in the late 1990s, which coincided with the beginning of the digital revolution. He draws attention to the way things are made, why they are made and the arbitrary nature of the product that surrounds us, and ultimately, the absurdity of the mass culture we live in. `He often claims not to understand the implications of his work and often says he's "the last to know".

All of which South Korea is about to experience via his inaugural show at Thaddaeus Ropac gallery in Seoul. Simultaneously, he's also showing in Seoul with the group exhibition Game Society at MMCA (the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art), which he hasn't seen on the day we speak to him. "I'm going tomorrow. The show is pretty amazing. My intel tells me that it's a really wild, expansive show." It concerns how the grammar and aesthetic of video games have influenced contemporary art and visual culture.

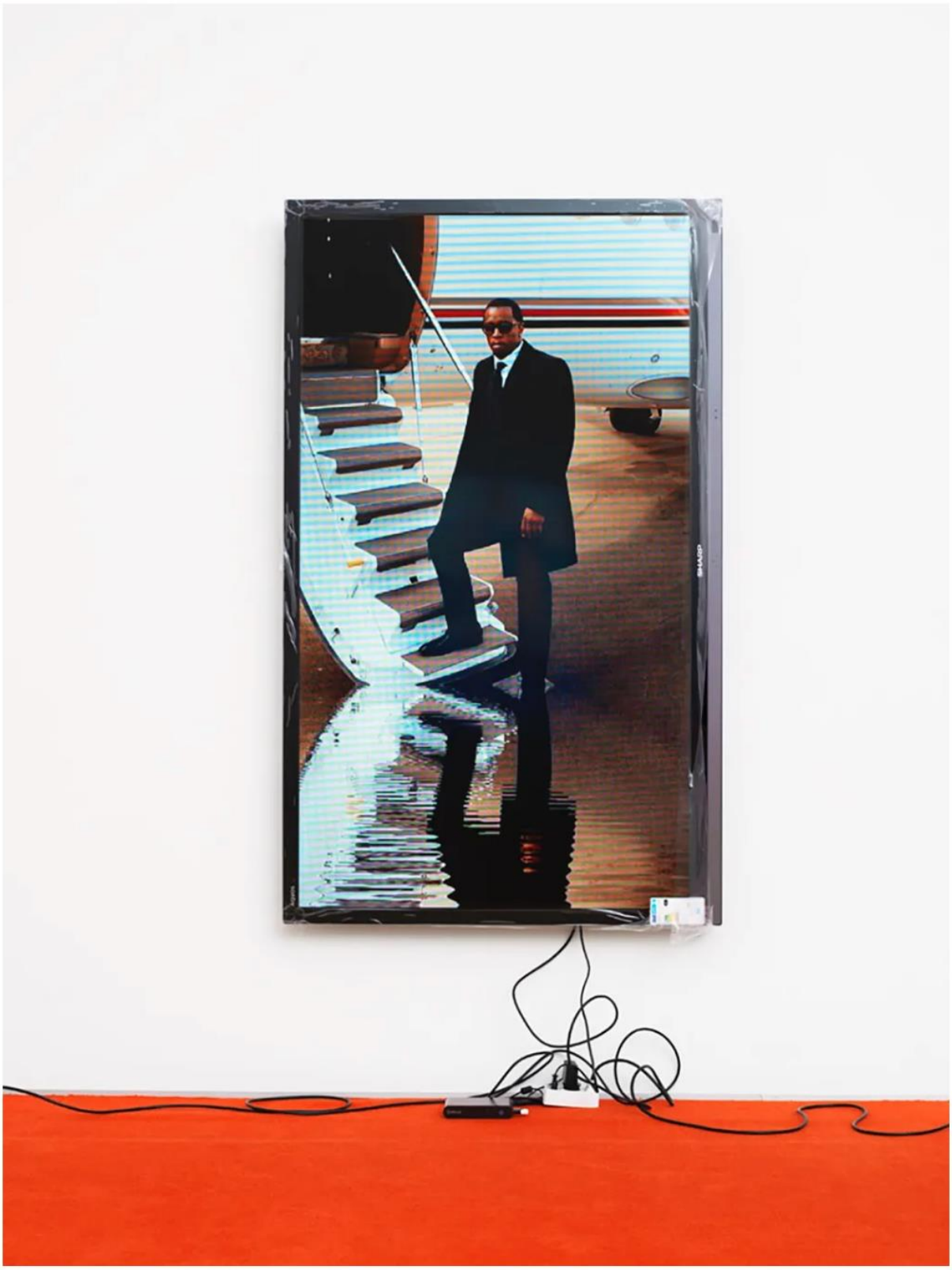
Anyone who wants to understand Arcangel (who's studied as part of art history in the US), would do well to visit his URL. Unlike a conventional site, it's just an inventory, like a shopping list. Every project he's ever made is listed. Click on a link and you get the name, date and, most engagingly, his so-called "elevator pitch" for the project and sequences of code for anyone who wants to replicate his work. So whereas Andy Warhol replicated endless Marilyns, Brillo boxes and whatnots from his ivory-towered factory, Arcangel invites his audience to replicate his own work as they please.

Cory Arcangel, Super Mario Clouds, 2002

Two years after *Super Mario*, Arcangel was decluttering again, removing the game and cars in his 2004 work *Racer Mod* (aka Japanese Driving Game), and leaving only the road. His elevator pitch on the project? "Just the road from a racing game." A discombobulated art world was uncertain how to interpret the actions of this digital hacker or alt-tech-geek-punk, oblivious as it was to the counter-cultural mantra of his mindset – i.e, he was enabling yet subverting technology to highlight his own resistance to participating in the contemporary world's ultra-fast digital development. Arcangel saw himself more as archivist than activist. He'd consider how many elements he could remove from a work, yet leave the viewer able to distinguish the source material. He could evoke nostalgia in the viewer and kindle memories. See John Gerrard's *Surrender (Flag)*, 2023 at the Hayward Gallery's current *Dear Earth: Art and Hope in a Time of Crisis* exhibition in London and you'd wager at some point Gerrard's quietly fanboyed Arcangel's *Super Mario*.

His rise was rapid thereafter. By 2011, he was the youngest artist since Bruce Nauman to hold a solo exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York. The same year, he knocked on the door of the Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh hoping to resolve questions that had been "bouncing around my head for several years". Specifically: did Warhol really have an Amiga computer, as Arcangel had long heard rumoured? And, if so, what had happened to the disks, and had anyone ever looked at them? Despite the floppy disks being archaic and some of the technologies almost obsolete, disks were found with file names like "flower.pic", Campbells.pic", and "mariilyn1.pic". Moment.

But Arcangel was just getting started. By 2014, he launched Arcangel Surfware, a software and merchandise publishing company, and in 2018 opened a flagship store in Stavanger, Norway.



Cory Arcangel, Diddy Lakes, 2013

And along the way there's been a bunch of eclectic projects: *Jay-Z Blue*, 2011. Elevator pitch? "Licensed Jay-Z blue colour." Turns out Jay-Z has his own colour blue called FYI, which Arcangel licensed to use for painting one wall in an exhibition. The following year came Diddy/Lakes featuring the hip hop star. Elevator pitch? "Diddy w/Lake effect." So began an entire Arcangel series *Snowbunny/Lakes*, 2015; *Vomit/Lakes*, 2015; *Jeans/Lakes*, 2016; *Yoga/Lakes*, 2017. And then *Disclaimer*, 2019 features a screen recording of an Instagram bot liking every post on a single profile – Conocophillips, an oil and gas company in Norway. And in 2021, he created *Let's Play: Hollywood*, a work based on the smartphone game Kim Kardshian: Hollywood. His elevator pitch? "A custom-built and programmed high-performance machine-learning computer, which plays (and learns as it plays) Kim Kardashian: Hollywood – a casual free-to-play role-playing Android game where players aim to increase their reputation by gaining fans in order to become A-List celebrities."

What's the biggest misconception people have about him as an artist? "That I'm not a contemporary artist. That I'm some kind of sub genre, that I'm like a digital artist, but I think I very much am a contemporary artist, because these are the tools of our day. That's the biggest misconception."

The artist Cory Arcangel

Not many artists set up their own clothing retail outlet. “I wanted it to be mainstream,” he says. “I went into partnership with Universal Music, so I did have the mechanics behind it, which meant it wasn’t totally a crazy thought.” At least not at the beginning. “But then I started to think: I’ve got this brand let’s play around with it, what fun things can I do, so it changed from my original vision.” Which sounds a lot like his take on almost everything. “I launched the brand at a Holiday Inn. I did everything the wrong way around. It was like an anti-brand, and part of me just took over.” Unhappy with its direction, he closed it.

Soon after his wife was offered a job in Norway and they moved from America. Arcangel restarted the store. “I had a store for two years in Stavanger. I thought it would be fun for people to come to buy stuff at the store, which was only open on a Saturday. Except when people came to the store it was a full-on store and I was there” Although he’s closed the store a second time, one feels the latent fashion-retail impresario in his talk. When I ask if he saw the previous day’s Pharrell Williams debut show for Louis Vuitton in Paris, he hasn’t but: “That trajectory you could see back in the early 2000s. It was that attitude [he references Supreme and others], that I was trying to pack into my brand. But you could see all this happening a while back.”

Since arriving in Norway, he’s been featuring Stavanger in much of his work. “It’s all about energy, the oil and gas, as Norway’s now the leading energy provider to Europe. My day-to-day is surrounded by what were once very big companies, like Maersk (shipping and drilling). So there’s a whole bunch of aluminium works in the show, which are like abstract paintings. They’re laser-cut aluminium panels. And that’s a very Nordic product. But it’s just another global commodity and global branding, so I wrestle with all these things in my work, like how you have Maersk and Adidas stripes in the same work, but there’s no resolution. There are no answers. It’s just about energy, right? It’s power, energy, money.”

~3.2022.057~2×1.2~E6, 2022

The wall-mounted metal works he's referring to are known as *Alus*, 2022-23, in which a robotic laser machine cuts abstract shapes from thin plates of aluminium. The shapes are derived from iPhone photographs of tracksuits laid on the floor of the artist's studio. Arcangel then generates a sequence of lines, curves and syntax that renders the motifs of the leisurewear brands unfamiliar, thereby transforming the imagery of fast fashion into the visual realm of abstract painting. And in a nod to Apple's computer products, which come in a range targeting both amateurs and professionals, Arcangel's plates appear with finishes in three tiers: raw aluminium, powder-coated aluminium and gold-anodised aluminium, the latter of which he describes as a "deluxe model".

"I see celebrity, fast fashion, branding and supply chains as connected and part of internet/IRL junk space today. How far away are those three Adidas stripes in any given Instagram feed or, that matter, just outside our doors?" he says.

For Arcangel, the world's an interconnected, frenetic space. "There's a connection between everything," he says. "Whether it's Beyoncé and her Instagram posts," which he likens to the power of a "magic sword", "to the aluminium that makes things run, to oil and gas being sucked out of the oceans, these things are all part of the temporary condition, which no one of us can see whole. We only see parts, because we're all lost. In the show in Seoul with Ropac, you can feel I have a love for all this stuff, which I'm trying to sort out through the work. It's all about energy, and replicating everything."

Installation view at Thaddaeus Roppac in Seoul Fort Hill

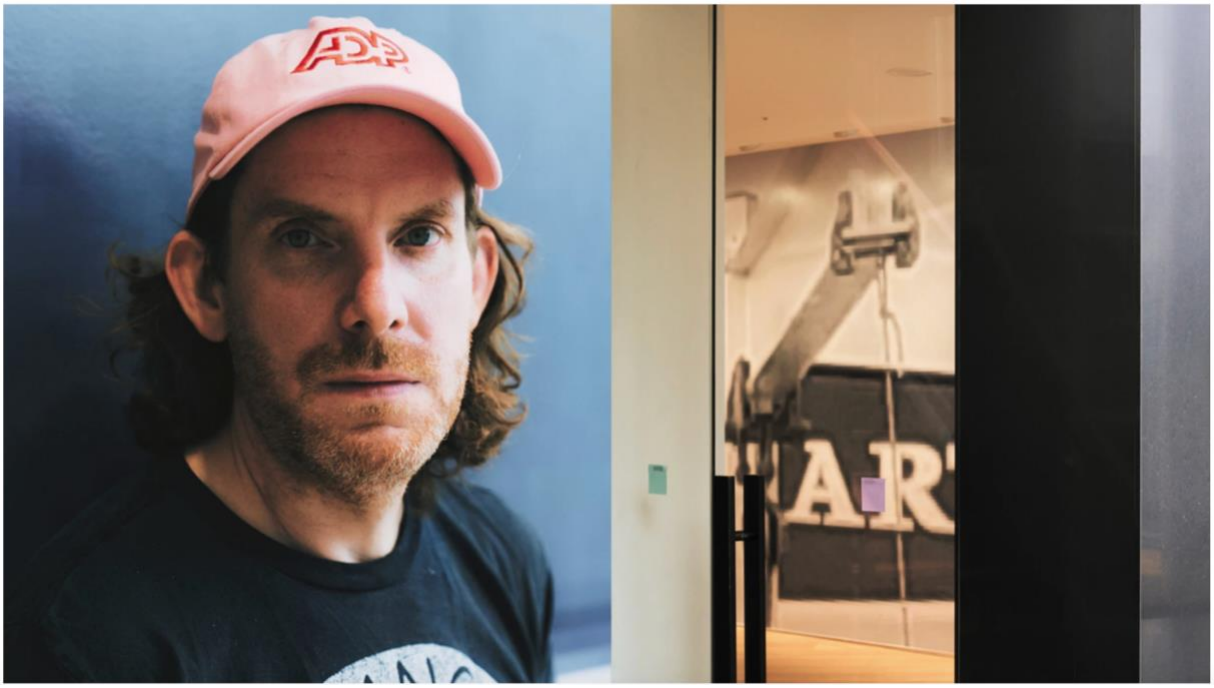
Will he ever replicate or redact Minecraft? “I’ve started to play Minecraft with my daughter, but at the moment what I’m most interested in is menus; all these fast-food chains have these digital menus now and at the moment that’s my life. It’s hard for me to predict where my eye will go on it. So now, if there’s a way to link goggles with menus that might be interesting.”

That’s Apple goggles, just debuted by Tim Cook, which Arcangel isn’t crazy about. “Why do you need more immersion?” he says rhetorically. “We’re already there. Do we need anything more to assist that process? We’re already completely immersed in our daily experience of technology. In 1982, when you played video games you were in that world. But I just think now, we don’t need to … I’m sure it can be successful but I just feel we’re already there.”

Where Arcangel’s been for the last 20 years.

i-D Korea
June 30, 2023

i-D



Interview with Corey Archangel, an artist who uses various media

We had an interview with Corey Archangel, who held his first solo exhibition in Korea.

BY KIM DOHEON | 30.6.23

It is impossible to define Corey Archangel's work in one word. Based on technology-based media art, the art world is unique in that it seeks to reflect the modern society and present new content through unique media and programming such as composition, video, video games, the Internet, and even hacking. Corey Archangel, who deconstructs the digital from an analog perspective and captures the perpetual changes and hierarchies of the electronic world, is a successful artist, programmer, technician, and entrepreneur. We had an interview with Corey Archangel, who held his first solo exhibition in Korea.

This is his first solo exhibition in Korea. How are you feeling?
It is a new feeling to finally visit Korea. What an honor! There are not many countries that include experimental media artists among the artists representing a country! Of course, I'm talking about Nam June Paik. 😉

Korea has well-developed IT-related hardware and infrastructure, and the public's interest in software and the Internet is high and the speed of development is fast. Have you ever been interested in the Korean media market, content, or platform while producing your work? If so, what specifically are you interested in?
I sometimes visit an electronics store near my home in Stavanger, Norway, for inspiration. I love electronics stores! (Of course, I also like office supply stores.) Since Samsung and LG have a strong presence in the electronics field, the Korean media market doesn't feel far away either.

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He also participated in the group exhibition 'Game Society' at the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Seoul, presenting his early works 'Super Mario Movie (2005)' and 'Let's Play: Hollywood' (2021). I am curious about the background of participating in 'Game Society' and the reason why the two works were selected for the group exhibition.
About a year ago, I suddenly received an e-mail requesting participation from the producers of 'Game Society', and they coaxed 'The Super Mario Movie' (2005) and '/rodeo/ Let's Play: Hollywood (/roʊˈdeɪoʊ/ Let's Play: HOLLYWOOD)' (2021). asked to pick up I don't know the exact reason for choosing those two works, but they were the perfect choices from my point of view because they are works located at both ends of my career. 'Super Mario Movie' (2005) is a work made with Nintendo NES in the early 2000s, and 'Rodeo Let's Play: Hollywood' (2021) is a work that is only a few years old. For this work, me and my studio I had to build my own supercomputer. It is always fun to show works from different eras together. It's because I can understand a little bit of what I've done and what I'm doing.

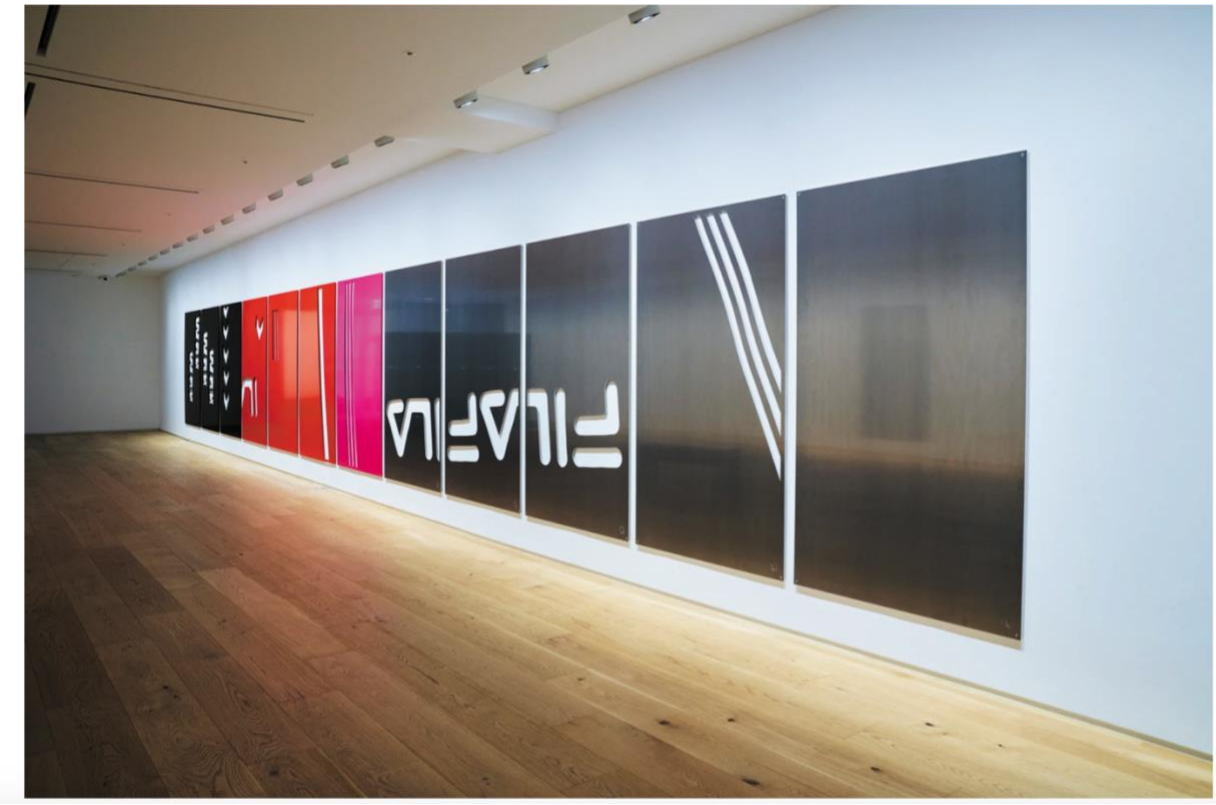
Coincidentally, both the individual exhibition and the group exhibition were held in the same country at the same time. I wonder how you felt when you received the offer.
Doing both at the same time helped. In fact, I thought of those two exhibitions as one. I think the works of 'Game Society' and the works of '✎ ⮡ give a pretty good introduction to the overall work I've been doing over the past 25 years.

'The Super Mario Movie' is about 15 minutes in the past game cartridge, and '/Rodeo/ Let's Play: Hollywood' is a real-time replay of the game ' Kim Kardashian: Hollywood' . How did your interest in combining games and art start and how has it developed?

My interest in video games began in the late 1990s when a friend and I discovered the micromusic scene of making music using old video game systems. For example, Bodenstandig's (Bodenstandig 2000) 'Maxi German Rave Blast Hits 3' was one of the most popular records at the time. Wow, this is still a great album! The scene taught me how to reprogram video games, and it was only then that I started making experimental videos using old video game systems. And my core concern has always been “How can I use video games to make experimental videos?” I have been dealing with this subject from various angles. For example, '/Rodeo/ Let's Play: Hollywood' uses a fairly advanced machine learning algorithm that was impossible 25 years ago. I am developing along with the development of technology.

There is a 20-year gap between 'Super Mario Clouds' (2002) and 'Let's Play Hollywood' (2021), and the game was created 2-30 years ago. What is the reason for producing the work by transforming the game work of the past, and what did you want to express through it?

I love experimenting with extending the definition of video! Video games are so obvious and familiar that you could call them the “Hollywood” of our time. I can say that I have accomplished my goal only when people say to the video I have created, “Is this art?” or even further, “Isn’t this a joke?”



What stands out in Corey Archangel's two works is the visualization of digital operation. It can be seen as a kind of performance exhibition that works by supplying power to media art. What does the act of 'exhibition' mean to Corey Archangel?
A museum is a strange place filled with all kinds of powers. I particularly like the handling of that power in a way that pushes all sorts of things into the gallery that push the limits of expectations and permissiveness.

The mega yacht image 'Lion Heart', which was created for the Thaddeus Ropac Seoul space where the exhibition is held, is interesting. There is a gallery description that the work provides the conceptual basis for the exhibition, and I would like to hear additional explanations on this.
That's right, the first mega yacht I saw in the harbor of my hometown of Stavanger was the basis for this show. I've been thinking a lot, both literally and poetically, about the subject of power. So, on one side there is an abstract aluminum 'picture', on the other side, to be precise, at the entrance of the exhibition hall there is a life-size image of a large yacht, the Lionheart. Through contemporary art, we go through a process that traces back from aluminum, the raw material, to mega-yachts, the exclusive property of the uppermost privileged class. Maybe the process itself encompasses the entire modern civilization?

The series 'Alus', which has been in development since 2022, cuts out abstract patterns from thin aluminum panels with a laser robot cutter. Various iconography and fast fashion techniques overlap. Where did the idea for the Alus series come from? What is the future direction?

I am not an artist who builds my life around my work. Rather, the work tends to be formed around my life. So after moving to Stavanger, a port city where oil and gas come and go, I started thinking about energy, metals and commodities (both raw materials and consumer goods). So, at some point, I was dealing with aluminum. The reason why aluminum is produced so much in Scandinavia is because of the low electricity bill. I'm not sure, but I think my future work direction will be more minimal and abstract!

You often record and upload social media feed videos to your YouTube channel . This can also be found in works such as "elleusa, equinor, equinox, etrade_financial". In addition, the single channel video ' Related to your interests ' (2020-2021) displayed in '✎ ╭✈' is a randomly combined video through bot programming. What message do you want to convey through these works? I am not trying to convey a specific message through my work. The message belongs to the viewer. Instead, I work with emotions and energies at the center. When I was working on these bot-created pieces, I thought a lot about the atmosphere of spam, bot farms, malware, and cloud computing warehouses.

Is there a technology, media or device that has caught your attention lately?
I love that in the last 5-6 years, most fast food restaurants have replaced printed menus (often behind the counter) with flat screens. I want to work on a menu board series someday. 😉

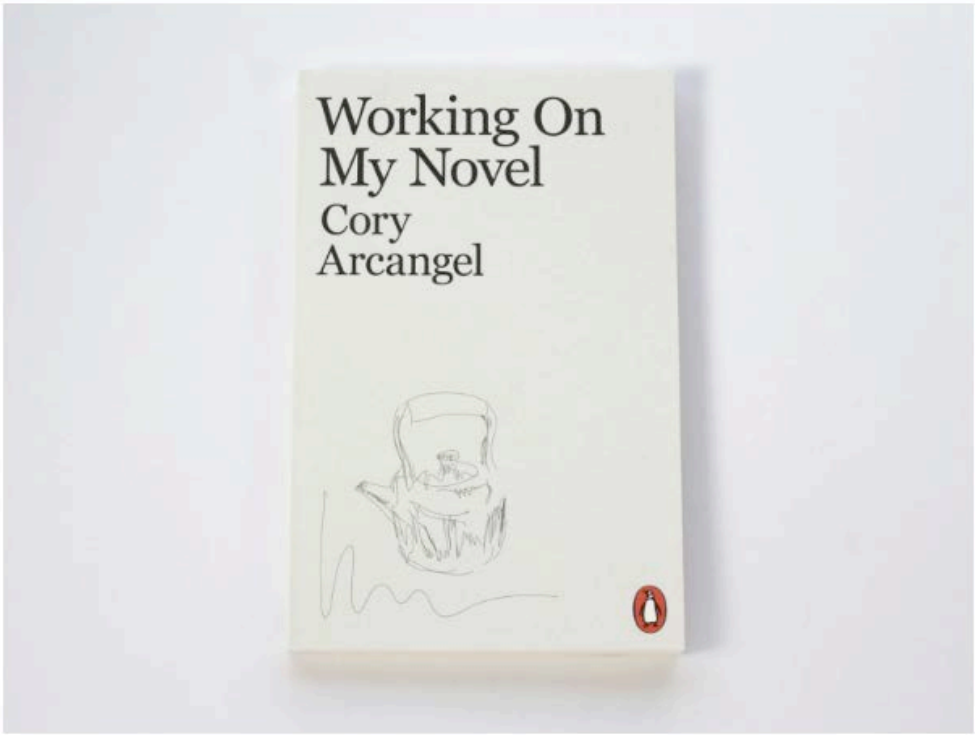
Elephant
17 October 2019

ELEPHANT

CONTEMPORARY CLASSICS

Cory Arcangel's Working On My Novel Is a Monument to Digital Distraction

This collection of tweets that include the phrase "working on my novel" raises questions about the line between online and offline, and between dreaming and doing. In the age of the influencer, it feels more relevant than ever. Words by Louise Benson



We are living in the age of digital distraction. We are told to pay attention to our digital health, and to set sensible limits to our online consumption. Apple introduced a weekly Screen Time report function last year, supposedly to enable us to “make more informed decisions”. But just how much of a choice do we really have? What distinction can we draw between our online and offline lives, when (particularly for the creative industries) career advancement can hinge on how “online” we are. And who is to say which version of ourselves holds greater value?

Cory Arcangel is familiar with the highs and lows of the internet. One of the first artists to be widely recognized for embracing video games, websites and software, Arcangel became known for works such as Super Mario Clouds (2002), in which everything is removed from the game except for its drifting clouds. He uses digital media to explore its rapidly expanding role in our daily lives.

In Working On My Novel (2014), a compilation of tweets that include the phrase “working on my novel”, Arcangel continues his interest in appropriation. The project began its life as a Twitter feed consisting of retweets, but took on a different tone when Penguin published highlights from the feed as a physical book—a novel of sorts.

“What distinction can we draw between our online and offline lives, when career advancement can hinge on how ‘online’ we are”

“What does it feel like to try and create something new? How is it possible to find a space for the demands of writing a novel in a world of instant communication?” he asks in his introduction to the book. The question of newness is never far out of sight in Arcangel’s work; he raises age-old questions of authorship through the recycling of popular culture, either as it happens or just after the fact.

Working On My Novel highlights the blurred line between our real and our virtual selves. One tweet reads: “Hanging out in a cafe, just working on my novel.” Another: “#Offline, working on my novel!” The offline world is present even when it becomes nothing more than a hashtag, and the physicality and locality of the author’s personal surroundings paint a picture of life lived in liminal space.

In Sleeveless, Natasha Stagg’s recent book of essays on fashion, image and media, she writes, “We say that the internet and literature are separate, except that one can be found on the other. To ignore certain impulses that dictate our lives, and to write in earnest about living: Is this disingenuous? Is your relationship with the internet masochistic? Do you feel like it drains you of money, time and dignity? Me too, and when I am trying to write, it taunts me, existing in the same space as the one in which I write, and choking my thoughts like a hangover.”

The masochism that Stagg describes underpins Working On My Novel, like a hunger that cannot be sated. The aspiring writers snapshotted in Arcangel’s book are seeking gratification. They want to feel full, or to feel fulfilled, and Twitter offers the rapid feedback that the lonely conditions of novel-writing preclude.

Ambition and failure go hand-in-hand: it is impossible to fail if you never tried in the first place. In Arcangel's work, the question of dignity is a difficult one. Working On My Novel is undoubtedly humorous, an easy read and an easy laugh, but, then again, irony has always been easier to pull off than sincerity.

The people quoted in the book might have been surprised to find that their first publication was not in the context of their novel-in-progress, but in Arcangel's adaptation of their Twitter presence. Somewhat reassuringly, all of the tweets collected in the book are used with the permission of the original authors.

"It deals with time in a different way and it's in a different space, but there is hopefully real truth and something honest about what it means to be human in all of it," Arcangel said in an interview for Elephant in 2015. "I wouldn't have spent three years on Working On My Novel if I thought it was just something funny. There has to be something true in it."

"Twitter offers the rapid feedback that the lonely conditions of novel-writing preclude"

It is a dilemma that feels more relevant now, in 2019, than when it was first released in 2014. When Arcangel devised the project, the term “influencer” was still nascent. Five years on, and the story of Instagram influencer Caroline Calloway and her now-shelved novel looms large. She is the perfect poster child for Working On My Novel.

In a viral essay by Natalie Beach, her former friend and ghost-writer, Calloway’s doomed aspirations to fulfil a book deal—offered to her on the basis of her influencer status (she has amassed 780,000 followers since joining Instagram in 2013)—are laid out in painful detail. That the book never came into being, due to a combination of mental health issues, narcissism and digital distraction, feels like a tale fit for our times.

Working On My Novel makes visible the traces of books that might never be, like waves leaving a line of litter on the beach. It is the digital detritus of unrealized dreams.

Financial Times
30 July 2019

FINANCIAL TIMES

When does a video game become art?

Game makers and artists use the medium to explore new ideas and ask questions about our world

Lawrence Lek's 'Unreal Estate (The Royal Academy Is Yours)' places the player in a world where the London institution has been sold off to become a playboy mansion

Tom Faber YESTERDAY

20

Are video games art? Most gamers today greet this question with a yawn. They might respond: How many times do institutions like MoMA, The Smithsonian or the V&A have to spotlight gaming before the medium is taken seriously? They might point to the aesthetic hybridity of game design; combining visual art, sound, writing and interactivity. They might patiently defend video games as an art form, or they might just not bother. For many of us, games don't have anything left to prove.

The discussion about games as an art form normally examines triple-A games (big-budget mainstream games) and the indie market. It looks at artists within the gaming world. However, the opposite also exist: gamers within the art world. Like generations of artists before them, they harness technological innovation to articulate a moment, using the language of games to comment on our digitally mediated lives.

In 2002 digital artist Cory Arcangel made *Super Mario Clouds*, a hack of Nintendo classic *Super Mario Bros* where every graphical element has been removed except for the clouds, which scroll across a blue sky, evoking an enigmatic nostalgia. More recently art game *Ennuigi* cast Mario's plumber brother, Luigi, in a meaningless landscape of blocks and green pipes, where players can walk slowly and draw long puffs on a cigarette. Press the "ruminate" button and Luigi makes existentialist remarks about the game-world, such as: "I look at this turtle and think — I have done you one better. You wear a shell, I have become one."

It's not always satire. Art games generally prioritise provocation over play, detaching gamers from familiar objectives like levelling up. Many are technically "mods", made with design tools certain games provide for anyone to create their own in-game environments. A notable early example was *Velvet Strike*, a mod of popular shooter *Counter-Strike* made in the wake of 9/11, where players sprayed antiwar graffiti on walls instead of shooting each other, interrogating the thoughtless violence committed in so many games.

Chinese artist Feng Mengbo has engaged with gaming throughout his career. *Taking Mount Doom By Strategy* interpolates scenes from one of the Mao-era's few permitted operas into the classic shooter *Doom*. His grand work *Long March* began as acrylic pieces fusing retro gaming aesthetics with personal memories of the Cultural Revolution and culminated with a playable game on an 80-foot-long screen in MoMA. There the player battles through Mao's much-mythologised "long march" as a Red Army soldier, encountering wry critiques of communist China's propaganda campaign.

Video games offer a pliable medium for creation at the crossroads of digital and experiential art

Lawrence Lek also uses virtual environments to explore political questions. His work *Unreal Estate (The Royal Academy Is Yours)* places the player in a world where the venerable London institution has been sold off to become the playboy mansion of a Chinese billionaire, replete with sports cars and a Jeff Koons bunny in the courtyard. It debuted, fittingly enough, at the real Royal Academy of Arts in 2015.

Video games offer a pliable medium for creation at the crossroads of digital and experiential art. They are well positioned to interrogate questions of aesthetics, narrative, virtual space, agency and human behaviour. Artists are only beginning to explore this potential, ranging from Jenny Jiao Hsia's *Consume Me*, a thoughtful exploration of eating disorders, to Cao Fei's art platform *RMB City*, created in the virtual world of Second Life. David O'Reilly's *Everything* is particularly accomplished, underlining the essential harmony of the universe by allowing you to fluidly control anything, from microorganisms and plants to animals and planets.

When does a game become art that belongs in a gallery? Perhaps when it asks questions about what it means to be alive in the world today. Few do this as concisely as *Passage* by Jason Rohrer, maverick artist and the first game developer to have had a solo museum retrospective. In this five-minute game you experience a pixelated character's lifetime. As you move along the narrow tunnel from the left of the screen to the right, you age. You find a wife. Gradually, there is more ground behind you than there is in front. Near the far right of the screen, your wife dies. You know you will, too, but you don't stop or turn around. You keep walking until the end.

LISSON GALLERY

Contemporary Art Society
27 June 2019

contemporary art society

Cory Arcangel and Hampus Lindwall, 'They told me there would be tea' (2019) at St. Mary's Church Walthamstow commissioned for Art Night 2019. Part of LBoC 2019 programme in Waltham Forest

Art Night 2019

Since its launch in 2016, Art Night has established itself as one of the most exciting free art festivals in London. With an emphasis on edgy and participatory art, it brings the work of some of the most adventurous practitioners to different parts of London. Art Night does not simply give us the opportunity to discover parts of London that we may be encountering for the first time, but also to do this at night, when everyday activities have ceased, and most areas can become a terrain where alternative narratives can be played out.

This year the programme centred around King's Cross and Walthamstow, and there were projects for every taste: poetry readings, workshops, performances, film screenings and installations. Even if you'd been able to stay all night, it wouldn't have been possible to check them all out. From the General Programme I loved Beth Kettel's performance at the Vestry Road Playground and the concept behind the Bank Job project, but allow me to focus on the Curated Programme, which every year brings together a number of new commissions and gives us the opportunity to view existing works in a new context.

Curated by Helen Nisbet, this year's Curated section was loosely inspired by East 17, a pop band originally from Walthamstow that achieved chart success in the 90s with several songs including "It's Alright". This particular song resonates well in the current social and political climate of conflict and uncertainty and with this tune in mind, Nisbet commissioned a number of established and emerging artists, to create works that offer new ways of thinking about art, participation, community and the future.

Barbara Kruger's imposing new outdoors commission *Untitled (look like us, talk like us, think like us, pray like us, love like us)* is a typical example of the artist's practice that seeks to undermine the language of authority and to critique consumerism and power structures. It is installed in Walthamstow Town Square, in close proximity to the big chain cafés and shops, making its message more relevant.

Emma Talbot's mystic paintings are installed in two wonderful venues: the William Morris Gallery and the Mirth, Marvel and Maud. The latter is an entertainment venue with an impressive 131-year history. A favourite of Alfred Hitchcock's Mirth, Marvel and Maud features a splendid art deco bar, a mezzanine restaurant and an auditorium. Plans are in place to restore the cinema to its former glory. At the moment, the visitor can admire Talbot's complex works which raise questions about spirituality and alternative realities that are installed high up behind the fancy bar, and watch *The Magic Flute* animation by Frances Stark in the auditorium. As its title suggests, the work is an interpretation of Mozart's famous work by a group of young musicians aged 10-19.

I leave the Mirth with a smile and head to the Empire Cinema which presents a new work by Shiraz Bayjoo, a co-commision with Iniva. Bayjoo's *Pran Kouraz (take courage)* is made in collaboration with students from the Mission Grove primary school in Walthamstow, who wear costumes that have been inspired and devised by the Mauritian dramaturg David Furlong. It is a powerful and emotional art film that deals with ideas of migration and displacement, loss and pain in the most original manner.

The Contemporary Art Society has been a long-time supporter of Art Night and this year supported a participatory performance by Oscar Murillo. Murillo's performances or "actions" consider globalisation, labour, migration, displacement and cultural and economic hegemony. This particular one titled *Letter from America* is a cross-generational investigation of the changing nature of place. The piece was extremely well received by an enthusiastic audience queuing throughout the night. Walthamstow Trades Hall, where it was taking place, was buzzing with a 20-piece band and different generations coming together.

Cory Arcangel and Hampus Lindwall invited a number of artists and musicians to compose music for organ that was played late on Saturday evening in St Mary's Church. The programme included playfully subversive compositions by Pierre Bismuth and Hanne Lippard but also an arresting piece by Haroon Mirza that routes a basic frequency pattern of electronic signals: it was accompanied by an LED light show that turned the whole thing into a dystopian experience. The 90-minute programme was an intense minimalist liturgy and definitely among the highlights of this year's Art Night.

Rosie Hastings and Hannah Quinlan's Gay Pride float that was installed in the town square was one of the most successful works, as it both defined and questioned our notion of community. The work extended the artists' questioning of gay culture that has entered the mainstream, contributing to a new homogeneity. The artists, who also showed a new video work, had invited musicians and DJs to perform and the sounds of disco, Hi-NRG and techno pop united different crowds into a passionate celebration of community.

It is worth noting that Barbara Kruger's piece will remain installed over the summer into September, while Emma Talbot's silk banners have been acquired by the Vestry House/ William Morris permanent collection and as an outcome of our support of Art Night, four drawings by Oscar Murillo will enter Bristol Museum and Art gallery's collection. Finally, Zadie Xa's immersive installation that was co-commissioned by Yarat (Baku), Tramway (Glasgow), and De La Warr (Bexhill-on-Sea) will tour to all three venues, so even those who didn't make it to Art Night last weekend, will have the opportunity to see some of these newly-commissioned works.

Interview Magazine
11 June 2019

ARTIST CORY ARCANGEL DIVES INTO THE NEW WEB SERIES CULTURESPORT

By Asher Penn
Illustrations by John Michael Boling

Published June 11, 2019

CULTURESPORT

CULTURESPORT represents the fourth seismic career change for Internet artist John Michael Boling, previously known for his work as a music video director, associate editor at Rhizome, and co-founder of the social network are.na. A 3-D animation studio operating entirely on the open source software Blender, CULTURESPORT has been making waves with their highly recognizable commercial work for Telfar, Supreme, and Kenzo, while building a cult following on Instagram. This has all been in anticipation of a mysterious pilot episode, which has finally been released for free in support of their seriously extra Kickstarter (spoiler alert – the campaign was a success). "Rotterdam 1995" – the first installment of a transhistorical series about the genesis of a chatbot that leads an army of teenagers to take over the world – took five years to make, but was well worth the wait. To find out more about CULTURESPORT, the artist Cory Arcangel spoke with Boling about Internet videos, weaponized memes, and the power of parameters.

ASHER PENN: Could describe or define what CULTURESPORT is?

JOHN MICHAEL BOLING: I originally came up was that word combination when I was working at Rhizome. I can't remember exactly, but I was doing a write-up for a blog post and I was thinking about Internet art and making stuff for the Internet, and what my relationship to that was. In thinking of what it means to make a thing and put it out in the world, I came up with this concept of CULTURESPORT. It's basically like putting a media object into the world, but thinking about it like a sport. That was the departure point. We're five years in now. We're putting out this animated series, but we've also worked with arts organizations in the Netherlands. We've done music videos, we've worked on marketing campaigns and advertising campaigns. What can we say? How can we treat all these different layers of culture across mediums? How can we, with this project, play it like a game?

PENN: I was curious about how you guys first got to know each other, and how you've watched this genesis take place.

CORY ARCANGEL: The first incarnation that I knew John Michael from was from his web project, 53 os, which was a collaborative website. It had Internet art, that's a complicated term, because sometimes it doesn't feel like art. It's like sometimes it's kind of fun.

BOLING: At the beginning it was anonymous. I started it in response to my being disenchanted with art school and the art world, and I did it for fun. I thought if anybody ever ends up typing 53 os into Google, in their pajamas with microwaved lasagna, they'll find this and it will really blow their minds. That was my highest hope for it at that time.

ARCHANGEL: I saw it originally through Delicious, which was a social network where people would share links to things they were interested in. You could easily find other people who are interested in the same things as you. At the time, the Internet was more open, and most everything resolved to a unique URL.

BOLING: It was a special time for the Internet, because Web 2.0 just kind of happened. Myspace was still bigger than Facebook. Tumblr didn't exist. Twitter was maybe just starting to be an SMS service for bike messengers. This would've been 2000. The main 53 os stuff was from 2005 to 2008. I stopped making stuff when I switched to Rhizome full-time. I didn't want to be some sort of gatekeeper. I wanted to make a clear distinction between making stuff and supporting stuff. I think I got a little nervous, because when I first started making stuff for 53 os, it was really fun. It was really free form. And then, when it got attention, and I was starting to get offers to be in shows and getting press and having people contextualize it as fine art, it kind of gummed up my creative engine. It started to feel a little alien to me.

CULTURESPORT

ARCANGEL: Can you talk about “Four Weddings and a Funeral”? That was the thing on 53 os that blew my mind apart.

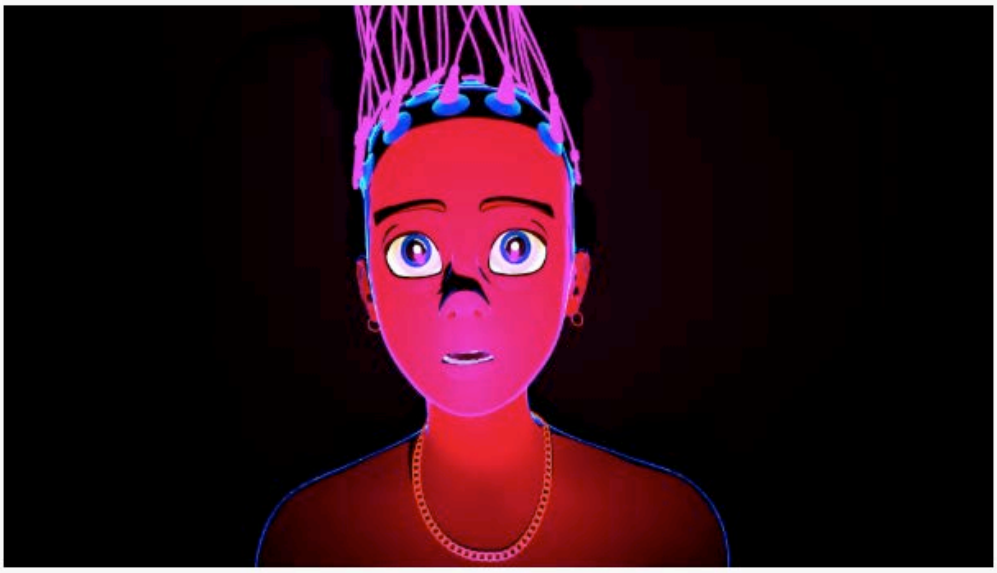
BOLING: YouTube had just come out. YouTube, for me, is one of the biggest social keyframes from that decade. This new psychological landscape where everybody is now. Everything was on there and you immediately have access to it. It went from, you could only see the most amazing thing you’ve ever seen once a year, to seeing it 10 times a day. “Four Weddings and a Funeral” was in a series of YouTube collages. Visualize an HTML page, and on the top were four embeds of YouTube videos of weddings people had uploaded, and right below that was one video of a funeral. The idea was that, as people take these videos of weddings down, I’ll be able to replace them. The HTML follows instructions for a piece that could be recreated 20 or 30 years from now. I remember it feeling really weird at the time that somebody had uploaded a funeral to YouTube. It doesn’t feel weird anymore. I think that with the art from that time, there’s no way you could put it in a gallery. It’s not the same. The experience is totally different.

ARCANGEL: It was a joke work, but it was also meaningful. It was right at the edge of what was possible. I remember thinking that this is what art should be now. After Rhizome, you do something like completely different, which is you basically start your own social network.

BOLING: 53 os was me and Javier Morales, who consequently has the world's best Instagram and YouTube account to this day. Are.na was after.

ARCANGEL: Do you wake up one day like, 'I need to start a social network with my friends?'

BOLING: I started it because Yahoo bought Delicious and fucked it up like they do with everything they buy. I felt a real hole in my heart and soul for what Delicious was and what it could do. I felt a real need to replace it. I came across the word Are.na, and the domain was available, which was amazing to me. A-R-E-dot-N-A. That period of interacting with Are.na, collecting reference and interacting with the community was pretty key to a lot of the stuff that worked its way into CULTURESPORT. It was like a really intense research and reference, but without knowing where I was going to go.



CULTURESPORT

ARCANGEL: How long did it take you to understand that you wanted to do an animated series?

BOLING: It was six months of pretty much non-stop, in the studio, learning Blender. When I left Are.na I had just enough money saved up, so I knew I had six or seven months where it's all I had to do. I wanted to get back to my original dream, which was to make movies and TV. There was this one that I kept coming back to, which was "Best Friends Forever," which is a story about a chatbot that becomes self aware and recruits an army of teenagers to take over the world. It was originally supposed to be live action, but it was going to be expensive to do. I starting to make concept art for it in Blender, and at the same time through Are.na, I had been put into contact with a lot of really good anime. I was thinking about the story, and then I thought, well, what if I could make this? Anime is this beautiful form, and it's totally economical. I spent a month working on what was the original formula for CULTURESPORT, and by the end of the month, I thought, "This is it. I can do this." But I couldn't do it in New York, because it's too expensive. I talked to my brother, and he and I had been wanting to work on a project together for a while. I told him if he wanted to put a few thousand dollars into the production, then I'll move down to the family farm for three months and come back with a pilot. He was down to do it. A week-and-a-half later, I had my birthday party at my apartment and told everybody that I was going to Georgia. I set up the first office for CULTURESPORT in this general store, which had no Internet, and went to the task of building up the world, coming up with the story, and figuring out the characters. A lot of the way we do CULTURESPORT is with duct tape maneuvers that I would figure out because I couldn't get the real answer. A lot of the references for the characters in this world were based on what was at hand in the general store, which was my 500 or 600 VHS tape collection from when I was in middle and elementary school. If I needed to have a reference image for a city street, I would put on *Coming to America* and I would pause it. There was also a really cool volume of the Encyclopedia Britannica, so that was my Wikipedia. That's one of the things that was really cool about that phase, having to figure out how to do things because I couldn't Google it.

ARCANGEL: It really shows in the first episode. It's impossible to understand the era. The references in the episodes were kind of ad-hoc – they didn't seem like they were coming from the Internet.

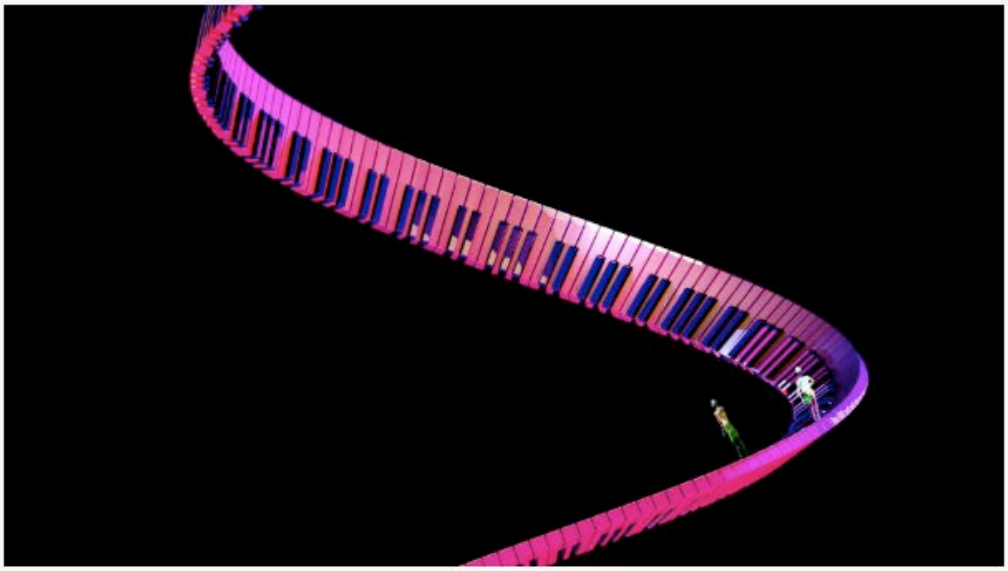
BOLING: Limitations are so powerful. That's one of the things I worry about, the fact that we're not at the farm anymore. Being there, my Internet habits totally changed. The first few weeks was really strange. Then myself, Joe Kubler and Jason Coombs, who are principle 3D artists on CULTURESPORT, we moved to Athens because it was too cold in the general store. I had a kerosene heater next to a computer to try to warm us up.

ARCANGEL: I feel like your friends were a little worried about you at this point.

BOLING: They definitely should've been. The thing I like a lot about the Rotterdam episode is that took all the building blocks of the CULTURESPORT universe and imposed another limitation, which was being in the Netherlands in 1995. I didn't know anything about the Netherlands before this project.

ARCANGEL: Why the Netherlands?

BOLING: There's a pretty cool arts organization in Rotterdam called Showroom Mama that emerged in the '90s out of street art, and they did some really good net art shows too. The curator there, Marloes de Vries, reached out, and they wanted to do an exhibition. At this point, I was still loathe to place CULTURESPORT in a fine art context, but it's the Netherlands, and they support art there. They said, "We can give you a grant, and then you can work for a few months." So if we know they're going to pay for three or four months of studio time, let's do a site-specific episode instead of doing an installation in the gallery. We'll use Rotterdam as a sort of limitation or reference for a storyline in a CULTURESPORT universe. CULTURESPORT is very music-driven at its heart. So I was Googling Rotterdam, and found out that hardcore techno kind of came out of Rotterdam in the early '90s. And that was it, there we go. We'll make an episode in the Gabber scene in 1995. Then I just thought, where is my bad guy? Where does he go in 1995, how do I get him to the Netherlands? What kind of like black magic computer science would be up to? The technological and cultural landscape of CULTURESPORT allows us to have an alternate technological pathway for developments. Storylines that happen in 2006 can be more futuristic in different ways than our experience of 2006 was in this reality. So much changed so quickly. That period from 2005 to 2012, things were done that cannot be undone, technologically speaking.



CULTURESPORT

ARCANGEL: I think that young people have this really incredible sense for the social world online.

BOLING: So much has changed that it's impossible to even categorize it all. I think people today socialize differently – like communicating with memes. I think the best work being made right now are memes. It's like watching really quickly weaponized neuro-linguistic viruses. Communications can happen immediately and deeply through an image macro in a way that could never happen before. The meme culture gives me hope.

PENN: Do you consider CULTURESPORT to be an artwork, or do you consider it to be the latest foray of a highly creative person?

ARCANGEL: Something is an artwork if enough people think it's an artwork. Art can be a game. What I like about the first episode of CULTURESPORT, the Rotterdam '95, is when I saw it on YouTube, I could imagine what it's like to wander onto it. That's the most mind-bending aspect of CULTURESPORT. It's like you've wandered onto some lost television show. For me, it's important to maintain an identity as a fine artist, because I like the game of art. I like making things and trying to convince people that they're art. John Michael, what's your preferred context for CULTURESPORT?

BOLING: I don't know if I've figured it out yet. I would say with CULTURESPORT, time will tell. It's going to be a sort of a sum of all its parts, wherever it goes. I'd see that question in five years, and then maybe I'll have an answer.

ARCANGEL: If the Internet even exists in five years.

BOLING: The Internet will be our blood in five years.

ARCANGEL: The world will be on fire in five years.

LISSON GALLERY

Art of Conversation
14th October 2018

Ryan Gander & Cory Arcangel

RYAN GANDER AND CORY ARCANGEL DISCUSS CONTEXT AND INTENTION AT LISSON GALLERY, LONDON.

Ryan Gander, All things being equal, or I'm with you, 2018 Bronze 70 x 25 x 35 cm (each sculpture) 27 1/2 x 9 7/8 x 13 3/4 in (each sculpture) © Ryan GanderCourtesy Lisson Gallery

RG—When did we meet?

CR—I saw your show in the Store Gallery in 2006? That was the first time that I'd...

RG: Did you see that? That's amazing!

CR: It was very cool. I can tell you what was in it , I think. But you probably know better than me.

watched that and it turned really quickly to 'I want to sit next to that guy in a pub or a restaurant because the type of jealousy it will give me will make me want to go to the studio and make better work', so like a positive jealousy.

CR: Yeah I decided for a few months that I was gonna go preppy (Laughter) but it didn't last. But It was the same actually. I'd read about you. It was very similar. The thing is when there are two artists close to each other it creates a kind of anxiety, but then the way to do it always - it's better to jump into it, you know what I mean?
You have two artists who make very similar work they're either good friends or they really dislike each other. That's the kind of classic situation.

RG: Better the devil you know...

CR: Or it's like... it's just a little, like normal thing you know. But yeah 2006. I'd heard about you and I'd already started taking ideas, like the idea of taking a year off. You took a year off!

RG: Yeah, I've done that.

CR: I've stolen that idea, I've done that, I'm taking a year off

RG: It's not really an original idea is it.

enough of them and there's a diversity and you can make an exhibition. Being an artist in another way.

And there's this other thing, which I really believe; the trajectory of your practice. .So when we look back and we are 80, it was like that, I was up there, and left and a bit right a bit, so the idea that you are only as good as your last work...

CR: Ok maybe it's not right.

RR: No, there's a truth to it, but if I followed it I would not be as productive or prolific.

CR: Yeah maybe it's too much pressure on the present but it's also true.

RR: I might end up making blockbusters.

CR: Because there's another... maybe I'm gonna walk back, I'm gonna be a politician, I'm gonna walk back my statement.

RG: (Laughter) OK

CR: One of my three tenets. I'll put a disclaimer on it because, yeah, you might be right. Current work is a thing, what makes the artwork good is the next artwork and the previous artwork.

RG: Yeah, like brackets or something. They contextualise it or don't contextualise it.

CR: Because you can make a really great artwork, but if the things you've been making and the things you will make are terrible, it's hard to make a case for its greatness.

A good artwork is only a good artwork if there is a consensus that it's a good artwork. It involves other people. Sometimes the consensus it is a good artwork comes 30 years after it's made.

RG: Yeah but if it was made then you didn't know the context 30 years in advance of everyone else so it wasn't a good artwork it just fell into goodness. see what I mean?

CR: Yeah!

RG: You didn't make it good. The world changed and changed the meaning of it. That doesn't make you a good artist, just makes you mystic fucking Meg (Laughter) When people say, 'what's your favourite artwork?' I'm always like 'I dunno', But which artist do you think is really good?
I know straight away. I can reel off a list, but all artists, all great artists make terrible work. I think artists who make the same kind of work every year, again and again, aren't very good artists. The whole point is development, experimentation, changing, pushing things forward and risking badness. It's like exploration and investigation.
Making a blockbuster that you know will do well on Instagram and be seen by lots of people and loads of people go and see, that's not being a good artist, its being a good promoter of yourself or something. It's something different.

CR: What makes a great artist? Everyone's description might be different. I like people who get into really seriously gross territory, that's fun.

RG: Like what?

CR: Like really get into some gross areas. As an artist you always see it differently. Playing a long game, and if they're good they are always working a little bit ahead of people's perception and it can be really gross for a couple of years then people are like 'Oh I get it!' So it's a little bit of a game when your work is in front of fellow artists, because your favourite artist can really throw you off.

RG: I wouldn't remember as I did two shows at Store Gallery.

CR: It was the one with the Basquiat video.

RG: Ah that one. I'd actually done three shows then. That was in the other gallery space

CR: Was it later then?

RG: No it was probably 2006.

CR: So I saw your third show at Store Gallery. It had the Basquiat video. It had a bronze dancer...

RG: That was the first one.

CR: Yeah it had... a Mexico Olympic print? Or it was based on a...

RG: The rings had fallen out.

CR: Yeah the rings had fallen out and one other work. I can't remember the other work. There was another work at the far end.

RG: There was a plaster wall I think.

CR: Yeah.

RG: That's a long time ago.

CR: That's the first time I became aware of you. I had friends in common who knew you.

RG: I knew you really well before I met you because I secretly - you don't know this - I stalked you online. I watched some interviews of you on YouTube. One of them was you at Team Gallery. It was a show and you were wearing a tie!

CR: Ah, that's the Tate video.

RG: And I remember thinking

CR: No, but I was like...you did an interview and you were really clever how you talked about it. You where just, 'This is nonsense, I need to leave this for a while and to have a life'.

RG: That sounds cool. Are you sure I said that?

CR: You said 'I need to go and have...' Yeah you said that! I was stalking you in reverse. So that's how I know all these things about you. (Laughter)

We can talk about my firsts rule. I have three rules about art making. One I can't remember so we'll talk about the second one; you're only as good as your last game.
What do you think about that ?

RG: I didn't understand that till you explained it with visuals.

CR: I wouldn't say it's a rule. I'd say it's a suggestion.

RG: For me I find that idea a bit depressing because I feel an artist's value is cumulative. I didn't live in a big city, I wasn't in London when I studied , I was in Manchester and at that time there weren't any museums or galleries in Manchester, so I only knew art through magazines and early internet (makes early internet noise). Dial up stuff, which was quite laborious, and I would have a yearly trip to London to go to the Tate. I didn't know where else to go. So I always saw art as an image, a caption, a text about it, a title, a view.

For me to be able to

produce work and not exhibit work. I really got into documenting work, taking slides of the work and putting the slides in those slide folders and that would be... I saw it as a cumulative thing so you know like, works and the labels, when you have

So things are changing, the remarks are changing, the work is getting good and when that happens to your own work it's really scary. It's like certain work becomes better and certain work become worse and you have little Zen about it. You're not really in control of it anymore, you only have a little bit of control.

RG: I think there's a question that no one asks, and it's about true motivation. like

'This guy is so funny and charismatic and he knows how to talk about his work', and I was really jealous of you. Jealousy is a weird thing. It was almost animosity until I

I was really jealous of you, jealousy is a weird thing, it was almost animosity

I'm gonna be a politician, I'm gonna walk back my statement

actual motivation of artists.

I think we subconsciously do that in a millisecond when we look at art, but we don't verbalise it or talk about it. We never say 'What's their true motivation?'.

It's hard to talk about without naming artists. It's hard to talk about 'on air'. I won't name them, but when you see an artist's work and you think, 'Are they really interested in that? Are they?'

I need to talk about actual examples. Are they really interested in naked pictures of themselves with an erection? Are they really interested in expressing themselves like that? Or what is their true motivation? Is their true motivation to cause sensationalism, make something that would stop people in their path?

So I mean you can look at any art and we don't know, but we always ask what the true motivation of the artist is, you see what I mean?

CR: Have you ever known something is really good? Have you ever just known?

RG: I thought I had, then I started doubting again.
The Useless Machine is a work based on semantics - the way we read things - and it's an explanation to the way we read things.

So in semantics traditionally there were Natural and Conventional signs so like, me seeing hair on your trousers and me

knowing you have a poodle and you didn't look in the mirror this morning before you left, like Sherlock Holmes (funny voice) that's Natural. And Conventional signs are ones that we know in language, like art that's made, dependent on how they've made it and have made decisions about what they are going to communicate. A Roman Western typeface or the idea of a joke, they are Conventional signs.

They all communicate things. So painting is a Conventional sign not a Natural one.

So I wanted to make an artwork that was a Natural sign, so it was almost like an illustration of the convention within art, so I made a darkroom that you get in video installations, then a mirror, a pillar in the middle with some cogs that you could barely see, a digital counter, some flickering and some L.E.Ds that went on and off but didn't do anything. So it was like the systems that surround the framework that surround the production of what we traditionally expect art to be, but it wasn't that, that was the work. See what I mean?

CR: You lost me there.

RG: (Laughing) It's just a mirrored box with lights. You have to see it.

CR: So everything you just said, you were hoping to communicate with the work?

RG: I'm interested in talking about things that are art and things that don't look like art. Natural and Conversational signs because art is supposed to be the place you can do anything. It's the only place you can do anything, so why would you like, stretch some fabric on a wooden frame and spread coloured oil on it and give it to someone and they know already it's an artwork? It doesn't make sense. It's the same as surfware or any product.

CR: I might argue with you a little bit. It does...it does... You keep going 'But I have to come back to painting', as I like painting as an idea.

RG: I like painting as an idea.

CR: It's like a chess game or something.

RG: Painting is like one interest. One idea. It's like a tadpole in a sea.

CR: But I think it's one of the biggest challenges and that's why it's interesting. I think it's one of the hardest things to do as there are so many conventions around it and so things are stricter and to innovate you only have this tiny little window.
I think it's really difficult. That is interesting. When you see a really new great painter and wonder 'How did they manage to do that as there's so little room?'. So it's like playing a very advanced game, right?

RG: My dad likes painting. He does it on the occasional Sunday. He'll go into the spare bedroom, paint something in watercolour, camels, the sea whatever. He takes great pleasure in it.

CR: That is a different thing

RG: I don't think it is. It's a selfish act. A painter takes great pleasure from it, but I don't take great pleasure in my work. It's hard, it's my job. It shouldn't be self gratifying, it should be hard. Talk to me about surfware. Talk to me about surfware.

CR: Wait, wait one last thing...

RG: Let's talk about surfware..It's a natural sign because surfware fits in the real world. It is not framed around artwork, see what I mean? It exists in the world . If you came across your shop and you didn't know who you were - an artist - it is a shop.

CR: It is a shop. So I have a kind of publishing, merchandising surf brand called Arcangel Surfware, separate from my studio practice. It is a thing that exists in the real world, like clothing. We also make software.

RG: (Laughing) I love the way you say 'we', because that's such a corporate pitch already. It works.

CR: Total disclaimer; at the moment it's just me. But I would say 'we' still. So we are gonna open up a shop-gallery in a small regional town called Stravanger...

RG: Will it be art or real or both?

CR: I think it's going to be a real store and for people who visit the store in Stravanger it's a real store and they are going to buy things and whatever. For people who know a lot about my work it can easily be seen as an art gesture and it is kind of both. But I don't want to push the art angle too much as it's exhausting .
It's annoying to pass this off as art at the moment, but maybe after two years I'll figure it out. But I like it now being outside my practice, there are no rules, I don't have to be organised about it, I can do anything I want there and it doesn't matter.

RG: This again comes back to true intentions. Your intention is you have this thing you have a passion for, even to the point where you don't know if it's art or not. For me it makes it more art and more worthy than someone who makes something that looks like art that is trying to be art, because the consequences of that are that they are seen as an artist and that is what they want.

CR: It's complicated. Art is a complicated thing, right? Art is only art when other people think it's art, or good, so to make that situation happen all these mysterious things have to happen. So not making something can make something more art. Oh it is just so complicated.

RG: What was your motivation then? Why did you want to be an artist? Was there a moment you thought 'I'm going to be an artist, I'm going to make art, I'm going do art'?

CR: It was pretty late. I'd already been an artist for many years, but not realised it, but then I was like,' I'm an artist!'. Does that make sense?

RG: (Laughter) Superb!

CR: When I first moved to New York I was just like, a person who made weird projects, and I didn't know anything about contemporary art and so I experimented with alternative comedy, with underground films. Or not experimented with; I participated in other scenes besides contemporary art. I had the things I was making, but it was unclear how it would fit in. Eventually art people kept asking me more and more to collaborate to make things and eventually I started to be an artist and at a certain point I guess I realised 'I'm an artist'. This was late 2007/2008.

RG: It's interesting, and that is why you are, like..

CR: And it's still quite a shock.

RG: But it's interesting because, I think you are different to a lot of artists.

CR: But you...

RG: In terms of your motivation. Because if we were to ask 100 artists that we know, 99 would say, 'I wanted to be an artist as it looked like a cool thing to do'. You didn't want to be an artist. You were just doing stuff and became an artist.

CR: The work that I did was not considered art.

RG: ...before you started doing it.

CR: It was considered art after I did it. But you always knew you wanted to be an artist?

RG: I didn't think I'd be an artist. It

The whole point is: Development, experimentation, changing, pushing things forward and risking badness.

It was pretty late, I'd already been an artist for many years (but not realised it) but then I was like, 'I'm an artist! Does that make sense?


ARCANGEL
FRONT
FRENTE
AVANT
TRA HDTV
UB8500
Smart
CINEMA 3D
Tru-
ULTRA HD
Engine
IPS
ULTRA HD
webOS
55"
CLASS
CLASE
CLASSE

sounds horrible and crass, but to be totally honest I thought I'd be a TV presenter.

CR: Cool, because you would be really good at that! (laughter). Oh my god that makes total sense.

RG: I used to see stuff and be able to talk about it in a non-pretentious, non-elitist way.

CR: When I see you on video, I think 'He's so good'. You are really good at that stuff.

RG: That's what I thought I'd probably do.

CR: Up until?

RG: I was working at a carpet shop in Chester and I tried to get a job as a journalist at North Wales Newspapers as I thought it would be a way into media, but my writing was too bad. So they employed me as a photographer because I had a car and a mobile phone before anybody had a mobile phone. I wasn't from a wealthy background; I was given the phone by the government because I was in a wheelchair. It was about 6 inches by an inch and a half and it had a yellow backlit LCD screen, it was a Nokia, weighed a ton. 4hr battery.

CR: When were you an artist?

RG: You mean when did I think 'I'm gonna try and make art' a lot? Or when 'I am only gonna make art, I don't need a job'?

CR: Both .

RG: I think I became an artist when it was my profession.

CR: When was that?

RG: That was 2003/4. I was doing three teaching jobs, in Sheffield, Leeds and Manchester, teaching fine art degrees and travelling around. I had a studio in London and I'd only go on Sunday. The thing that we all had; you had to pay for a space but you can't go to the space because you have to go to work to pay for the space. The studio - work paradox.

But then there was a gallery in the Netherlands that took my work to Basel and I won a prize and suddenly I had more money that I'd ever had. So I called up straight away... I'd won a prize and I called all three teaching jobs and said ' I'm not coming back'. Then I went to L.A., got a rental car and I lived in someone's weird bungalow / shed in someone's garden.

CR: In L.A.?

RG: I didn't know anyone. I just went.

CR: Why?

RG: Because I had money for the first time in my life. I was like; I'm going to go and live in L.A.

It was ace. The car that I got was a Chrysler Monte Carlo. It was big and red. I was there for three months.

CR: So the show that I saw wasn't that much later. You made all that work...you made a lot of work really quickly. It must have been building up. It's like a band's first album is made over nine years and then the second is just a rush.

RG: The second album conundrum.

CR: It happens to artists too.

CR: There are so many more art schools now and so many more artists. The negative is there are so many more bad artists, but there are also so many more good artists.

RG: Do you think there really are?

CR: I think it's just a game of numbers. I think there's going to be more. I think it's a net positive.

RG: They are hard to find, need a better sieve.

CR: Yes and it is complicated but I think, but I do think there are a lot of artists. I'm going to open up this art space, I'm going put on a show and I'm like immediately, there are way too many people, there's a lot of very good things going on. I'd never thought about it from the other end.

RG: The sieve is coming; the sieve is a big topic.

CR: I give you a pitch. I think it's a net positive; it's just a game of numbers.

RG: But you get a lot of bad art coming through the sieve .

CR: I think it's fine. It's like, why worry about it? The way to see if an artist is good or bad, check up on them in 7 years.

RG: I'm a little bit worried about artists who do the same thing year after year and are really successful, represented by big galleries.

CR: I'd say it's ok as there are still a couple of good ones that are represented by the same galleries, the more people through the system the better.

The more the better. I'm trying to get really positive.

RG: Get positive. I'm just worried about the sieve.

CR: I'm opening up a shop where I live. It's Archangel Surf stuff, plus I'm gonna have a show maybe 2/3 times a year...

RG: It's what artists do, giving back. It's like Robin Hood.

CR: ...and I'm curating this show for Lisson with Tina Kukielski, the Lisson Summer show in New York, that's gonna be pretty fresh.

RG: That sounds good.

CR: Another thing where there is a lot of good artists, and we've been working on it for a long time so it's gonna be fresh.

RG: That's good, that's exciting. How long have you been in New York?

CR: Couple of weeks.

RG: A bit of sun?

CR: Problem with New York is it's too hot. What you doing now? You have a show and I'm going see it later.

RG: I haven't seen it yet , I've been away. You know when you do a show and you just go away...you just saw it with your friends at the opening. It was like that, so I didn't really remember what it was like. I went the next morning. It was quite weird, I was a bit like Mystic Meg: I had a chair with snow and a snow globe that never stops snowing, and it snowed really heavily on the opening! And then I went to Sydney to do the Biennale and I built a 2,000sq ft landscape of snow. (Laughter)

CR: Where did you get all that snow?

RG: It's recycled Styrofoam that they turned into benches afterwards. They squash it all up and make park benches .

CR: So that bench will be art.

RG: Mean, what do they call it, provenance?

CR: Melt down all your old work....

RG: I love snow though.

CR: ...then you wouldn't need to pay storage fees. I guess you would for the benches

RG: No you give the benches to a park, and as we both believe that art has souls that physical things are just vessels for ideas and stories, the bench could be a carrier for something it doesn't represent that's -it!

@ryanjgander @cory.arcangel

Artnews
17 September 2018

ARTNEWS

ARTISTS — NEWS

Surfing Scandinavia: Cory Arcangel on His Brand's New Flagship Store in Stavanger, Norway

BY ***John Chiaverina*** POSTED **09/17/18 11:21 AM**

Arcangel Surfware Flagship (detail), 2018.
PHOTO: JAN INGE HAGA

For the past four or so years, the artist Cory Arcangel has run a merchandise and software company called Arcangel Surfware, a sort of lifestyle brand with the internet enthusiast in mind—the surfing in question refers to web browsing, not wave shredding. Among the items in the extended Arcangel Surfware catalog are sweatpants, bedsheets, and fidget spinners, alongside collaborations with musicians ranging from the late composer Tony Conrad to the pop band Wet.

Arcangel is known for multimedia work that often trades in the addition, subtraction, isolation, and modification of popular cultural tropes, with technology a particular running concern. In 2011, he staged a solo exhibition at the Whitney Museum in New York. In 2015, the artist made the move to the coastal town of Stavanger, Norway, the hometown of his wife Hanne Mugaas, who is currently the director of the Kunsthall Stavanger. This summer, Arcangel "soft launched" a combination store and gallery in a formally industrial part of town. The two components are called Arcangel Surfware Flagship and Flagship A.S., respectively.

"[The store] looks a little bit like a cellphone repair shop, and a little bit like a clothing store," Arcangel told me during a recent video chat. "It's kind of unclear what it is, which is what I was kind of going for. We've had a couple people come in looking to get their cellphones repaired." (Arcangel remarked that a few actual water-based surfers have also checked out the space; the extended Stavanger area happens to be a top Northern European surf destination, especially for windsurfing.)

At around 350 square feet, Arcangel Surfware Flagship is compact, not unlike a Boost Mobile store. It is filled with new pieces Arcangel made in collaboration with local fabricators, alongside items from the brand's first four years of output. Though the store has been open since May—it keeps modest hours, noon to 3 p.m. on Saturdays, and by appointment—September 29 will mark a second, more internationally focused launch for the space. "It's not really a real store and not really a real gallery so I can of course have two launches, it doesn't matter," Arcangel said. "I can have as many launches as I want."

The second launch will bring new items in the store: the debut of the brand's 2018 collection, which features a suite of locally produced multi-function scarves–Arcangel called them "scarves that you can also wear as hats, you kind of pull them over your head." It's part of a larger brand pivot that sees Arcangel Surfware moving from mass-produced items (the company recently ended its partnership with the Universal Music Group's merchandise company Bravado) to a more artisanal aesthetic that the artist describes as "New Nordic" (this style of scarf is currently popular in Norway). There will also be a small collection of emojis created especially for the digital collaboration tool Slack and a new catalog for "Asymmetrical Response," Arcangel's recent traveling exhibition in collaboration with the artist Olia Lialina.

Then there is Flagship A.S., the gallery component of the storefront, which focuses on single-work shows—three a year. The first is a 2005 video by the late artist Burt Barr titled *Watching The Paint Dry: Red*, which Arcangel referred to as a "legendary minimal video" and whose title can be taken literally. It is 7 and a half minutes. The second launch also marks the opening of a new show at the gallery, another video by a legacy media artist: *Let It Be* by the storied Steina Vasulka. In the video, Vasulka—who, along with her husband Woody, founded the New York experimental theater the Kitchen—lip syncs the lyrics to that Beatles standard in extreme close-up style: only her mouth is visible.

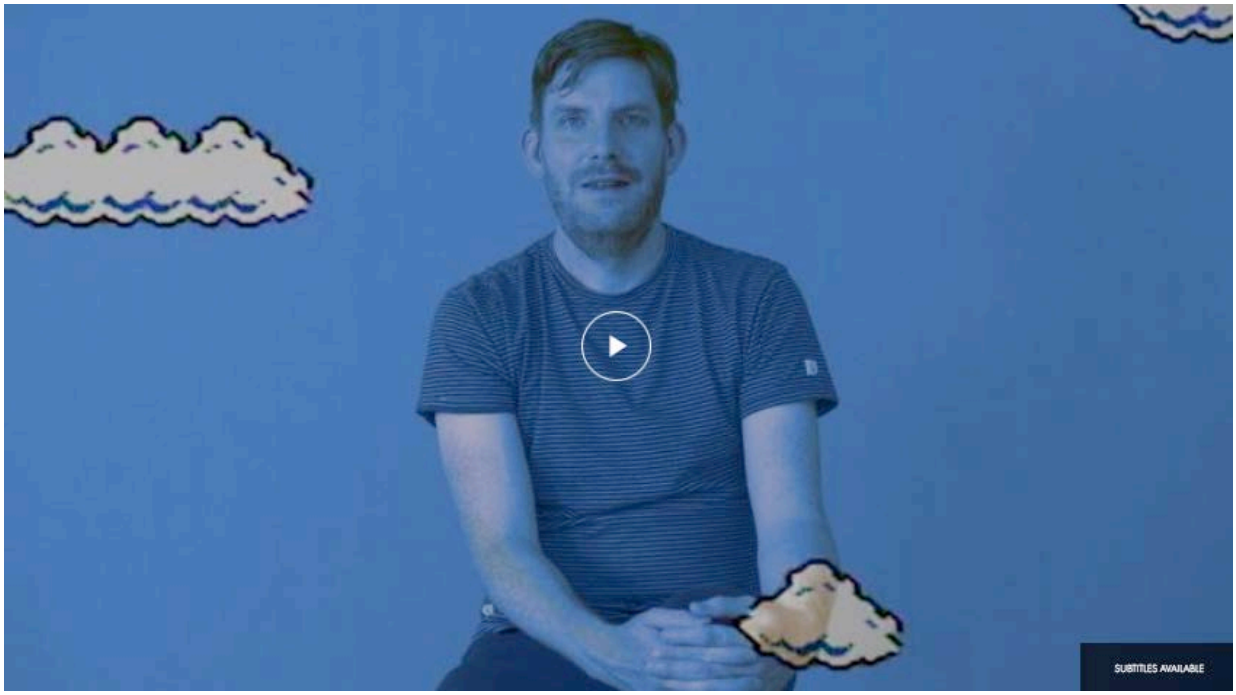
Keeping with the theme of canonical video art, Arcangel remarked that for the remainder of the year, the gallery is going to focus on what he calls "masterpieces" before starting with a program of younger artists in 2019. First up is the New York–based Nick DeMarco.

Arcangel told me that when he is in town, he tries to be present during the operating hours for the store and gallery. "When people come in I kind of chew their ear off about the artwork," he said. And that isn't the only thing the artist is chewing. Arcangel Surfware Flagship is in a former sardine-canning district, and though those factories are long closed, remnants of that rich tradition can still be found. "There is an actual still-functioning smoked-fish factory three minutes from the shop," Arcangel told me. "I go and get smoked fish for lunch all the time, and you can also bring your own fish to smoke."

LISSON GALLERY

Nowness
24 August 2018

NOWNESS



Raw Materials: Cory Arcangel

We get our head stuck in the clouds with the internet artist who hacked Mario

In the latest episode of Raw Materials—where we interview artists about the things that inform their practice—director Izzy Cohan gets meta mastermind Cory Arcangel chatting about everything from baby monitors (how can they be turned into art?) to the machines that power menus in McDonald's.

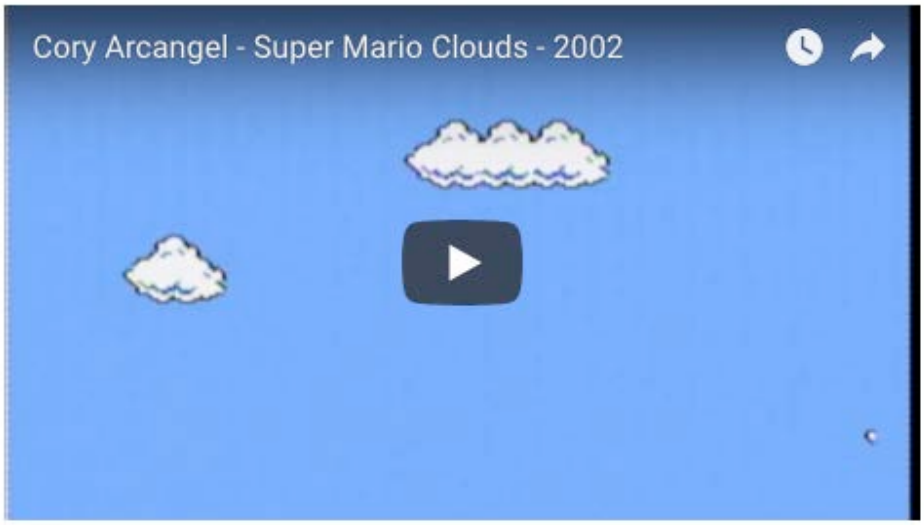
"For Arcangel, a baby monitor is akin to a block of marble"

In his work Arcangel is interested in preserving things in culture that are disappearing. If you browse his website, you can read, in exacting detail, the instructions on how to reproduce his iconic Photoshop paintings for yourself. In a recent interview he claimed that the works are "so easy," but this simplicity belies a complex and sophisticated attitude to digital media and the 'hackability' of tech—from obscure Nintendo games to advanced 3D software, as Cohan's film reveals.

Born in the late 1970s, Arcangel's work has consistently, and gleefully, returned to the toys of his childhood. In 2002, the artist infamously hacked a Mario cartridge, deleting everything from the game except an infinity of blocky and floating clouds. These artworks—both meditative and sugary—overthrow fine art's traditional instruments, or force us to think again about the sites in which 'art' plays out; ignoring horse-hair brushes and oil paints in favour of screens, gadgets, and often obsolete systems. For Arcangel, a baby monitor is akin to a block of marble. It's just a question of where—and how—you chisel it.

Alongside his ongoing solo practice as an artist, Arcangel is also a curator. His latest show—co-curated with Tuna Kukielski—was held at New York's Lisson Gallery. Titled Difference Engine, the exhibition sought to balance the mechanical logic of machines with the fetishism of surrealism. The exhibited works played with the ambiguity between clinical robotics and the madcap, and often uncanny, nature of how we use technology in the modern age. What emerged is a picture of modern technology as both a miracle and as misery—something we can get our hands on, but can only just begin to comprehend.

Clouding up



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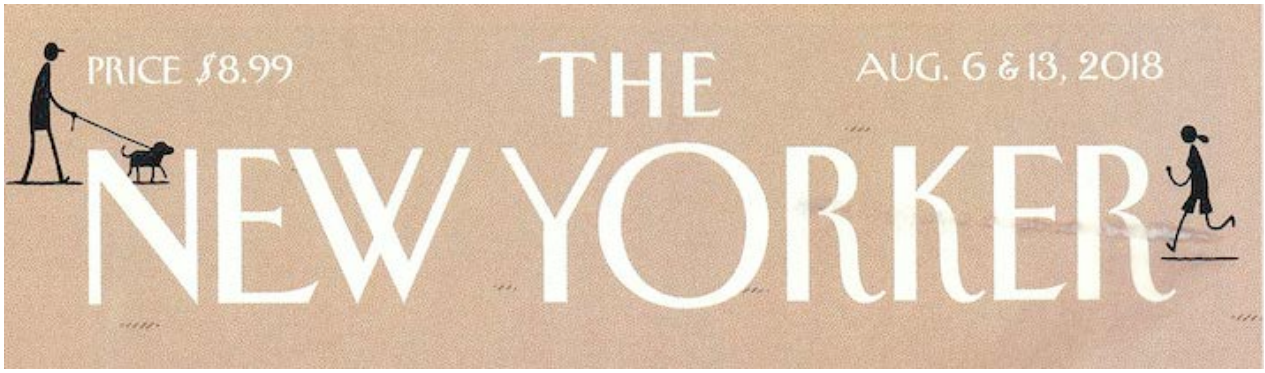
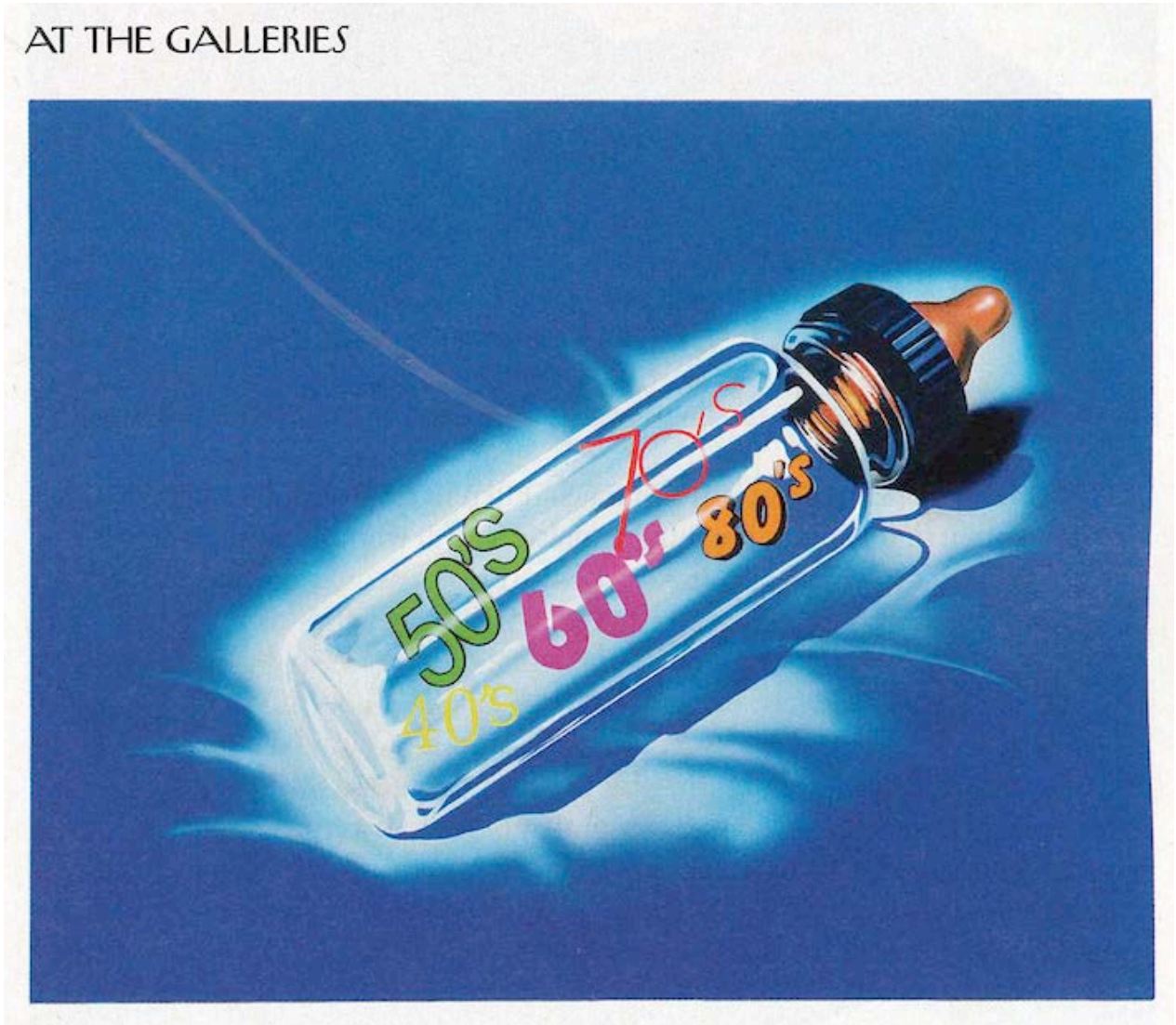
Clouding up

LISSON GALLERY

The New Yorker
6-13 August 2018





The ingenious hacker-artist Cory Arcangel and Tina Kukielski, the dynamic director of Art21 (best known for its Peabody Award-winning PBS series "Art in the Twenty-first Century"), teamed up to curate **"The Difference Engine,"** at the Lisson gallery (through Aug. 7). The sixteen-person exhibition is named for a two-hundred-year-old machine designed by the British polymath Charles Babbage, which was the world's first computer—or would have been, had it ever been built. The show, which feels a little too slapdash to be called historical, spans fifty years; new digital works by Guthrie Lonergan and the collective JODI join a machine-dream painting from 1992 by Konrad Klaphek and a fleshy slab of wax and hair encased in glass by Paul Thek in 1964—one of his indelible "Technological Reliquaries." In keeping with their ever-tried-ever-failed theme, the curators are not above a deadpan joke, notably the ouroboros cell-phone sculptures of Jacob Ciocci, programmed never to charge despite being plugged in. If the over-all installation strikes you as surprisingly static, given the disruptive spirit of the individual works, consider the advice that Arcangel emblazoned on the sandals in his "surfware" collection, for sale in the back room: "Fuck Negativity."—*Andrea K. Scott*

THE NEW YORKER, AUGUST 6 & 13, 2018

LISSON GALLERY

Art in America
2 August 2018

Art in America

Summer Bodies: Surveying Chelsea's Group Shows

NEWS Aug 2, 2018

by Alex Bienstock

View of the exhibition "Difference Engine," 2018, at Lisson.

I often wonder if I am in a minority because I enjoy summer group shows, sometimes even more than solo exhibitions. Even if a group show is based on vague connections, it is likely to include at least one artist I can jibe with. I found two such artists at each of three engaging shows now on view in New York's Chelsea district.

"Difference Engine," organized by artist Cory Arcangel and Art21 executive director Tina Kukielski at Lisson Gallery through August 7, explores the world of mechanical forms with a surrealist flair. It is an expansive exhibition of seventeen artists with a flamboyant design that highlights a variety of mediums, sounds, and scales. Many of the works are arranged on top of Arcangel's *Water* (2008), a giant carpet printed to look like a pixilated lake.

The show's title comes from the name of an early computing device invented by Charles Babbage, and many of the works engage the Information Age imaginary by juxtaposing technological signifiers with human ones. These contradictions evoke the emancipatory aspirations of the digital revolution belying its dystopian consequences. The unconscious has surely been affected by the mechanical, and, as Félix Guattari writes in his 1979 book, *The Machinic Unconscious*, "[t]he unconscious itself is an abstract machine; for it is populated not only with images and words, but also with all kinds of mechanisms that produce and reproduce these images and words."

Jacob Ciocci's *Charging in a Bag* (2017) pokes fun at habits of contemporary art-viewing and the limits of acceptable gallery behavior. Custom-made stanchions line the wall, and just outside this barrier sits a posh handbag with an iPhone 5s in a hot pink case peeking out the front pocket. Its cord trespasses the rope to reach a nearby outlet. It is as if a fancy consumer of art has rudely decided to charge her phone at the gallery, perhaps in order to take a cute selfie or share a favorite work on Instagram.

Jayson Musson's *Many Nemes* (2009-18), consists of colorful hats lined in three rows on a black-coated chrome steel rack. The hats depict the faces of popular characters: Sponge Bob, Goofy, Oscar the Grouch, Angry Bird, Spiderman, and so on. Musson wore these cartoonish hats (along with diamond jewelry and hip-hop gear) while inhabiting the persona of Hennessy Youngman in his "ART THOUGHTZ" series of YouTube videos (2010-12). This popular online performance project playfully criticized the art history canon using subcultural humor and video-editing antics. The popular characters give the hats an aura of virality; Musson's costuming was surely just as important as his wit and knowledge to the success of his series.

"This Is Not a Prop" at David Zwirner's 19th Street location through August 3 includes fourteen artists and explores the liminal space between body and object. The title riffs on Magritte's famous *The Treachery of Images* (1928–29), which shows a painted pipe and the words "*Ceci n'est pas une pipe*" ("This is not a pipe"). The artworks at Zwirner suggest a treachery of objects. Most sculptures are props of sorts, if you think of galleries as stages for the art market. So if these objects aren't props, what are they? Are they things that exist beyond the self-contained narratives created by artists, in the "real" world of functional items?

One room features "Brothers and Sisters" (2018), a series of sensitive and allusive sculptures by Gordon Hall. The pieces sit low, and as viewers look at them, their bodies move around the sculptures, as if performing in a choreography of bent waists and necks. *Fold (II)* is made of several layers of hand-dyed cotton. Its dark shape suggests a portal leading to the underworld. *Brother and Sisters (II)* is a small staircase-shaped sculpture made of cast-pigmented concrete; its compact geometry joins the floor and the wall in a very satisfying way. *Digits* is made up of five light orange pieces of wood of equal length and distance from each other. This sculpture's matter-of-fact expression of a number gives weight to an abstract entity.

Alex Da Corte's video *Slow Graffiti* (2017) is a shot-for-shot remake of Jørgen Leth's short film *The Perfect Human* (1967). While the Danish director put a man and a woman in a white room and had them exemplify ideal human behavior, Da Corte replaces those characters with actor Boris Karloff in and out of makeup for his breakout performance as Frankenstein's monster in the 1931 movie. Da Corte stars in the video, playing both Karloff and Karloff-as-monster with convincing prosthetics and costumes. Sentimental music plays while the monster reluctantly eats, sprays aerosol paint on himself, trims his nails, and curls up in despair. Quotidian objects like brooms, bread, Christmas ornaments, utensils, and cigarettes are transformed into symbolic props that relate to emotions and powerful human hardship. The film balances the pop colors that decorate the consumer products with formal restraint—Da Corte uses the same white backgrounds as Leth did—to achieve a memorable gravitas.

"The Changes Wrought" at American Medium through August 18 examines the suspension of events, cementing moments in time in order to create objects with metaphorical and prophetic potential. This group exhibition, which includes seven young artists, offers a more focused viewing experience than the group shows at the larger, more established galleries.

Exo Womb (2018), by the duo Loney Abrams and Johnny Stanish, is a kinetic sculpture made out of resin, latex, plastic, mineral oil, rope, human hair, and stainless steel. It depicts an artificial uterus with a robotic baby inside that twitches and comes to life. The purple womb is covered with embossed double helixes, as if carrying the genetic instructions for the development of the embryo, to explore the hypothetical possibilities of controlling a child's DNA. There are even angel wings in relief on the sculpture, conflating scientific synthesis with heavenly life.

Sydney Shen's *Vox Aranea (Here Rests Syd)*, 2018, is a medicine cabinet that doubles as a reliquary for the remains of the artist's deceased pet spider. On and inside the cabinet are newspaper clippings of hospital patients, electric organ hardware with musical notation, a belt from what the checklist describes as a "punitive garment," and mirrored flower-shaped buttons. Shen's cryptic sculpture captures a moment of passing with gothic lyricism.

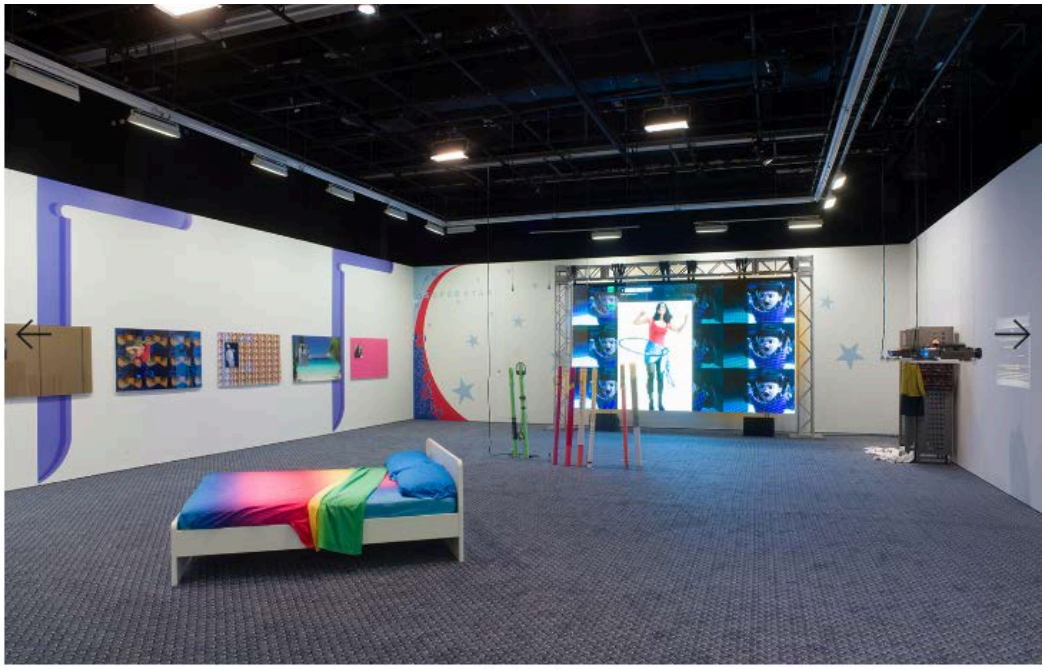
These works allude to the body in relation to the world around it, and to the technological and emotional effects of objects, machines, and events. A lost pet becomes holy, a phone-obsessed spectator becomes a light-hearted joke, unassuming forms take on personas and come to life. Artists are offering fresh and exciting ways of grappling with familiar themes. It is a good sign for the season to come.

Mousse Magazine
January 2017

MOUSSE

EXHIBITIONS

Cory Arcangel and Olia Lialina "Asymmetrical Response" at The Kitchen, New York



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Cory Arcangel and Olia Lialina "Asymmetrical Response" at The Kitchen, New York, 2017
Photo: Jason Mandella

In military parlance, the terms *asymmetrical* and *symmetrical* have historically been employed in reference to political provocations and diplomatic démarches, escalation, and tension, as well as to power dynamics of the highest order. Yet today these terms are also useful for describing a set of relations that define our social and cultural connections to power, particularly as we take stock of contemporary media structures. In fact, this terminology is uniquely pertinent for any dialogue about the socio-cultural impact of the Internet as it has shifted in recent decades from a tool for military communication to an "information superhighway" promising open and equal exchange, and, finally, the increasingly asymmetric "content delivery system" that shapes contemporary experience.

On the eve of Y2K, Russian-born Olia Lialina—who is among the best-known participants in the 1990s net.art scene—first met American artist Cory Arcangel. Ever since, the artists have been deep in dialogue about such changing terms for the Internet. For their first collaboration in an exhibition format, Arcangel and Lialina present complex bodies of work that arose through their continuing conversation. The exhibition was curated by Caitlin Jones for Western Front,

Vancouver (where it appeared last fall), and organized for The Kitchen by Tim Griffin and Lumi Tan.

The New York presentation of "Asymmetrical Response" comes at a time when Americans are all too familiar with the question of asymmetrical responses, escalation, and power relations as they pertain to the Internet. Public dialogues are still unfolding around the role of disinformation spread through technology during and after the most recent Presidential election, signaling a historic shift in the influence of social media platforms and their users on not only on cultural life but also societal organization. In this respect, the homogeneity of one's Facebook feed may streamline the most outrageous fabrications; the character limit of Twitter is more effective discursively when fewer people read beyond the headlines.

Arcangel and Lialina's works directly address such shaping of public discourse—and, in turn, personal identity—through manipulated media and corporate limitation, creating an installation in which multiple digital temporalities exist at once with respect to form and content. For example, when it comes to such found media and its shaping of ostensibly personal expression: While the gallery floor is carpeted with a diamond plate pattern frequently used on as a background on personal websites in the mid-1990s (including Arcangel's own first site), the walls are covered in patterns taken from early Yahoo templates whose aim was to channel and standardize personal expression following their acquisition of Geocities in1999. A central work in the exhibition is Lialina's *(Nothing you can compare to your neighborhood hoe)*, an immense screencast of an existing Tumblr page that includes Lialina's *Animated Gif Model*, a gif of the artist hula-hooping that has been circulated on hundreds of websites since its creation in 2005. Her avatar, now beyond life-size, appears as merely one of many random images without attribution in a total rejection of template-based social media.

However, instead of looking back nostalgically on more innocent, amateur days of the Internet, the exhibition critically acknowledges a transition—or better, an abstraction—of power that Lialina has identified in her writing around the most fundamental linguistics of our digital life: from computers to technology, interface to experience, users to people. In the titular work by Lialina, two "empty" browsers are opened side-by-side on a monitor. One browser displays a 1×1 transparent gif, an early web convention, but also a tool of surveillance with which companies track users; the other browser, a 400 x 400 transparent gif that users of the popular image generator site Blingee.com, distributed amongst their community to go around Blingee's template restrictions. This "invisible" response puts forth a canny strategy for resisting the increasingly visible modes of control sanctioned by the technologies marketed in our service.

In conjunction with the exhibition, Olia Lialina will present the U.S. premiere of *Bear With Me*, a performance starring Kevin Bewersdorf on February 18, at 8pm.

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[JUNE 1 2016]

AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH POST-INTERNET ARTIST CORY ARCANGEL

In his latest show *#currentmood* at *Lisson Gallery* in London, artist CORY ARCANGEL explores surfing the Web as a productive element of artistic practice. From cat videos to fragmented DAVID GUETTA magazine covers, the American artist regurgitates and reifies parts of the flickery, low-res imagery he encounters on his travels online—and even adopts the logic of clickbait ads in the communication of his art. PURPLE met ARCANGEL to discuss early surfing, the perils of Instagram, and the power of images, right before a planned 2-year hiatus from the art world.

JEPPE UGELVIG — *Hi Corey, how are you? Where are you right now?*

CORY ARCANGEL — I'm in Norway! I live here, but I don't know if anyone's really noticed. My wife, HANNE MUGAAS, is a director of an art museum.

JEPPE UGELVIG —*You have been quite busy in the past years, exhibiting across the world. How have the last couple of years been?*

CORY ARCANGEL — I took a couple of years off until 2013, and since then I've been on a run of shows—around 12, I think. That was the first experiment of a particular way of organizing my life where I would either make shows or make new ideas, but never both at the same time. It's been very busy, with a lot of travel, but I'm very pleased with how the work all came out. This show at *Lisson Gallery* is the last show in the run. After this, I don't have any solo shows on the schedule, and I'm going to try to do something similar: try to disappear for a couple of years.

JEPPE UGELVIG — *I guess the benefit of disappearing is that you end up finding a new kind of research rhythm. Webs surfing is one of these activities for you. Do you remember, when did you begin surfing?*

CORY ARCANGEL — I remember it was in college—it was probably 20 years ago. It was at the computer lab, as I didn't have a personal computer back then. It was fairly common to have a family computer at home, but to have a personal computer in 1996 was pretty rare. At my school there was a media lab, and there were like 3 or 4 computers, and I think one of them had a CD-ROM burner, which formed the 'media' aspect of the room. It was in that room that I started understanding what the Internet was. E-mailing was thrilling in 1996. Our college had an internal chat system, so you could chat with anyone who was online at the school.
That time, it was almost more like being a baby and discovering a whole new world. I didn't have any understanding of what it was, literally: I didn't know what I was looking at, that I was looking at files being served off of a server in some other country. I didn't understand the mechanics of the web. I was also introduced to vernacular homepages, like on *Angelfire*and *Geocities*, and realized that the Internet can be used to create beautiful things. I was introduced to the early net artists, like the collective jodi.org.

But that was different from what I would call surfing now. Surfing today is essentially media consumption: it's a combination of procrastination, meditation and trash media consumption. So I actually would think they're 2 different ways of using the Web. Net artist OLIA LIALINA once argued that when search engine launched, the whole way of looking at the Web changed. Before, everything was exploratory because you had to go from link to link to link. Websurfing, which was the term people actually used, was a kind of a requirement in order to even find anything.

JEPPE UGELVIG — *A lot of your work recognizes that joy of being behind the computer. How do you feel about other digital devices? With browsing and scrolling, the ceremony of sitting behind a computer is becoming rarer. The Web is increasingly consumed lying down, on your phone.*

CORY ARCANGEL — It's totally different. When I'm in front of a computer I will still browse around, but then it will get to this heavy, insane tab-territory. I'll have like 40 tabs open. It's like a concentrated insanity. The phone is so different. Especially with Instagram: I had to delete Instagram recently because it was just too much. I couldn't stop. It became anti-productive to my life. But Twitter I can handle! I feel like Twitter is just not smooth enough to not take over your life. It's old-fashioned. Twitter is like opening up a computer from 10 years ago. So in a way, it's ok.

JEPPE UGELVIG — *You often share a lot of your research and Internet behavior on Twitter. Can you describe your journey? Do you start your research on places like Reddit or Tumblr, or does one thing lead to another?*

CORY ARCANGEL — Definitely, one thing leads to another. For me, it used to be del.icio.us. That was my jam. That was the golden era of web surfing. And through del.icio.us, I met a whole different group of web surfers, like artist PETRA CORTRIGHT. Today, it's more friends who will send me emails. A lot will come from Twitter. A lot will come from just surfing around.

JEPPE UGELVIG — *What kind of value does clickbait have, you think? What do you find interesting about it?*

CORY ARCANGEL — One is the imagery. Those ads only get like a little square, and there's particular. There's a particular type of imagery that people tend to use for clickbait and it's often just a face, or of a human, or a celebrity, or some kind of body part. It has its own visual language. I find it interesting because this language is very crass and very low-resolution. Degraded, gross-looking jpegs or things that have been compressed wrong has always been an interest of mine. Clickbait is the language that I like at the moment because it's really aggressive and really low-brow.

JEPPE UGELVIG — *But at the same time, it's very advanced in that it communicates very deep visual desires and anxieties from Internet users.*

CORY ARCANGEL — I remember being around when people started to figure this out. The whole idea of clickbait was pioneered by Google ads, in that it shows you real-time feedback on advertisement online. Essentially, they made ads into a weird type of game. So people would put up ads, and then they would see what people are clicking on and which ones are working and not working, delete the ones that were not working: it's like a self-mutating thing, and the language gets more and more pumped up and alluring. And that has resulted in statements like "8 Celebrities Who You Won't Believe Are Bankrupt" or "This Trick That Gmail Doesn't Want You To Know About," all of these wonderful sentences. My intuition tells me it's probably similar to how a casino works, or a slot machine; there's some kind addictive element to it. I'm getting a little bit of pleasure each time.

JEPPE UGELVIG — *Are you nostalgic about how the Internet used to be, or are you more interested in how fast it's changing? I think a lot of net art and post-internet art are mourning that original form of life online.*

CORY ARCANGEL — I think a lot of net art and post-internet art are mourning that original form of life online. I wouldn't say that any era of digital life merits being particularly better than another era. I think there are plusses and minuses of each era. To me, it's about time, and how these things change over time – and also kind of taking things with one timeline applied to them, and bringing them to another place, where another timeline will be applied to them. A lot of the images in my art would just be floating online as temporary imagery from today and then disappear after a while – but now it's on the wall of Lisson, and suddenly has a different timeline. Now it's an artwork, which is about permanence and institutional pressure. So it's kind of all about mixing these chess pieces around.

JEPPE UGELVIG — *What role do you take when you self-produce promotional content and clickbait? Is it a kind of piracy, or?*

CORY ARCANGEL — That is playing on it, kind of. Some of the imagery in the show has be taken from clickbait sites and manipulated, and then it appears in *Lisson*, which is the opposite from clickbait: a space where I try to make an argument, where it does tell us about who we are today. I then take it and feed it back into the Web as a kind of vapor of these campaigns – and there is a power in that. There is a power of an image existing in two places the same time; one dispersed around the net in these slots, and the other at the wall of *Lisson*.

JEPPE UGELVIG — *And is there a way to track this clickbait you're putting out? What do you hope to gather?*

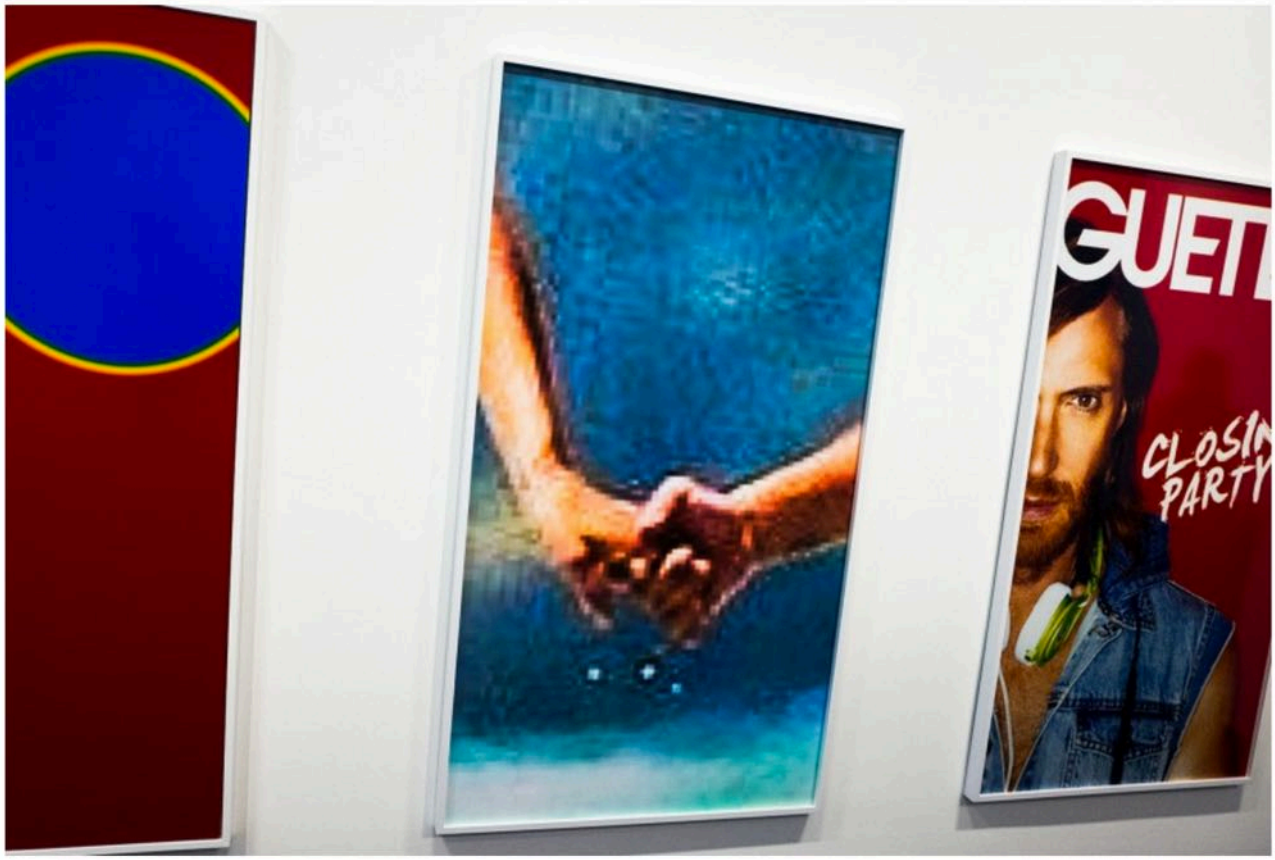
CORY ARCANGEL — The campaign just started a week ago, and I need to now go look what ads are working and which ads are not. And I have to then put up more ads that are in the direction of the ones that are working. So the ones that I know that are working are the one with the kitten and one about "how your cat hates you". So now I have to go and make some more in that vain. I'm thinking a picture of a kitten with the caption, "Is Your Cat on Drugs?". So that's project is going to last the whole show, constantly tweaking it so people will click on it more. So it's an ongoing performance. And then the documentation will hopefully work as exhibition views. It's important to me that this kind of work would be documented in the same way that a work in the show would be documented. So it's kind of even. There's no hierarchy.

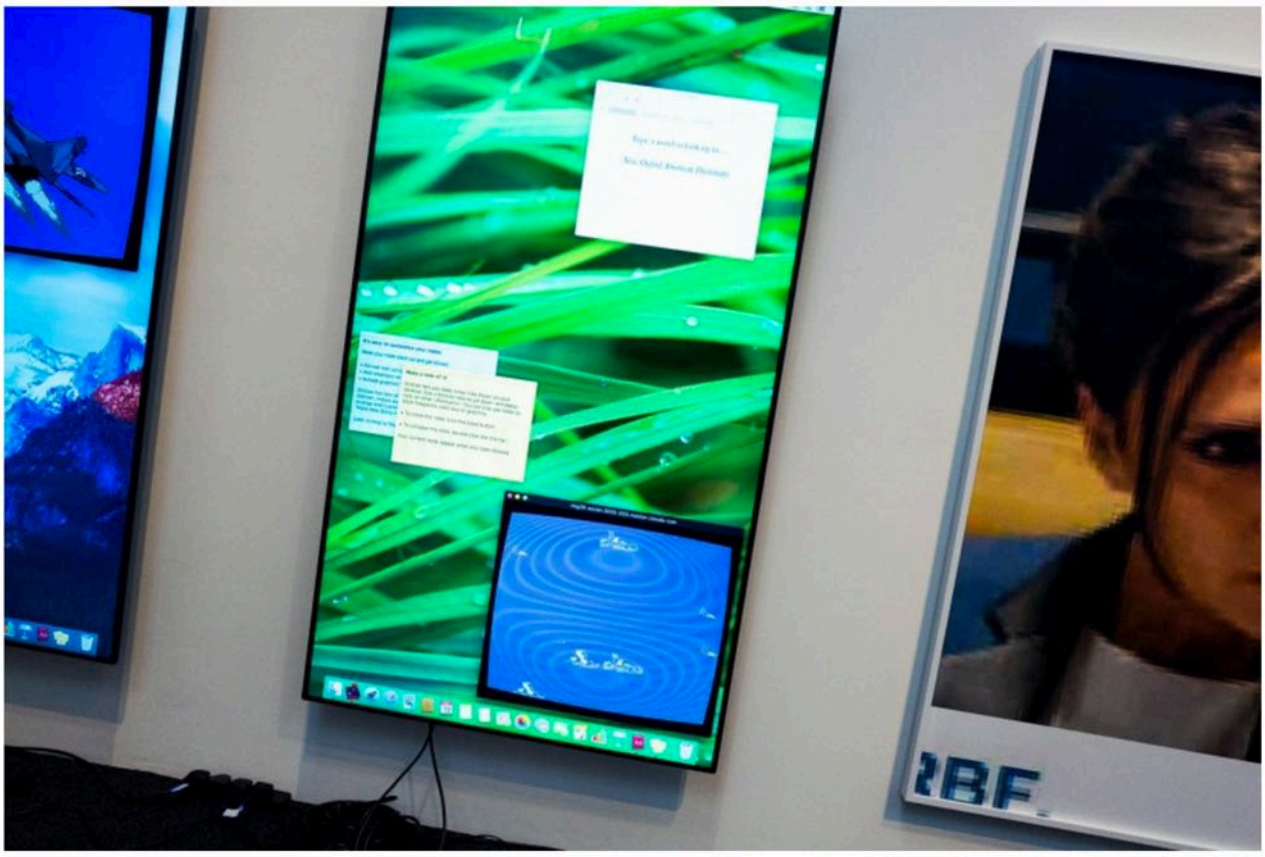
JEPPE UGELVIG — *What's after this? Will you be turning on your computer, and then we see you in 2 years*?

CORY ARCANGEL — [laughs]. I need to do a lot of internal archival work. I need to go back to the office and have some space and start working on new ideas. I will be doing a lot of web projects and collaborations. In fact one is a show with Olia Lialina. But as for my solo work, I just need space to see what happens.

On view until July 2nd, 2016 at *Lisson Gallery*, 27 Bell Street, London.

Text Jeppe Ugelvig and photo Flo Kohl



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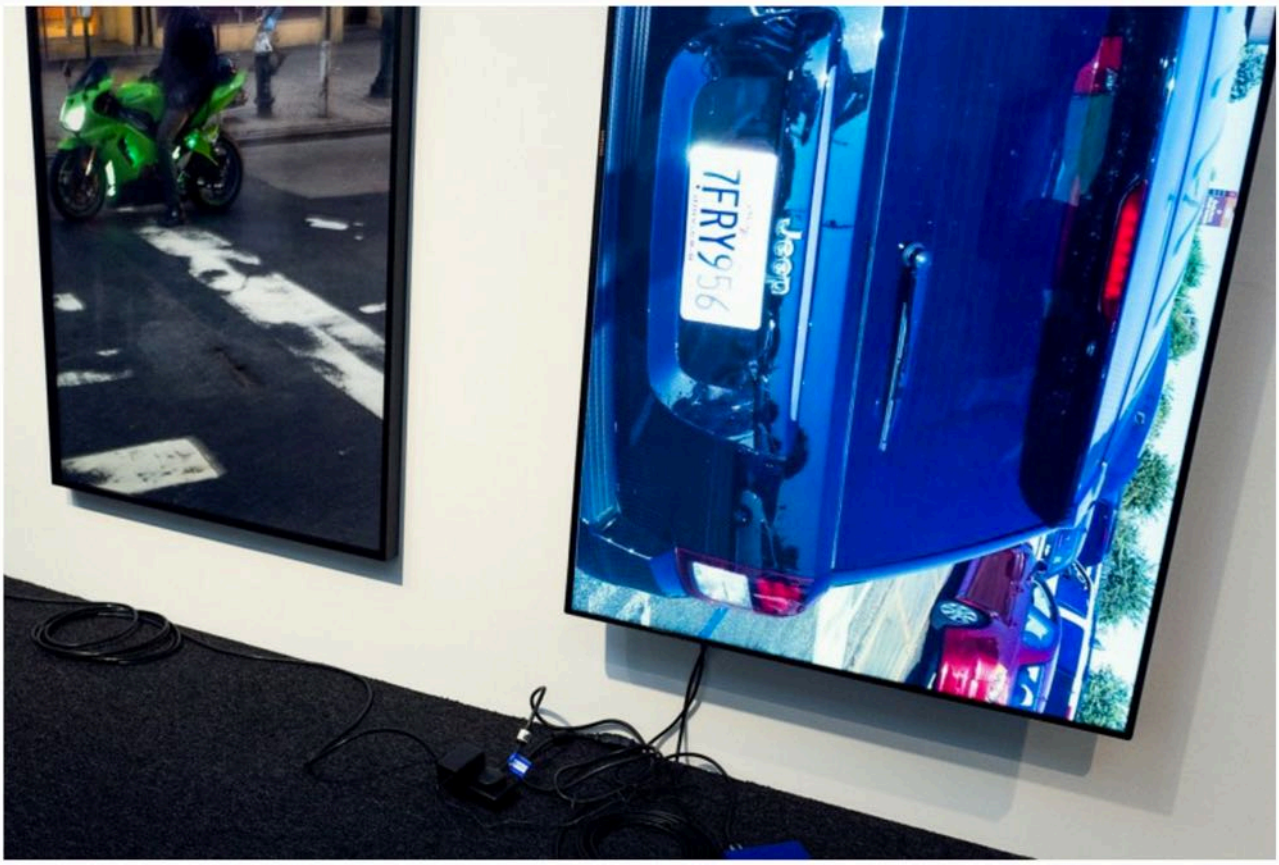
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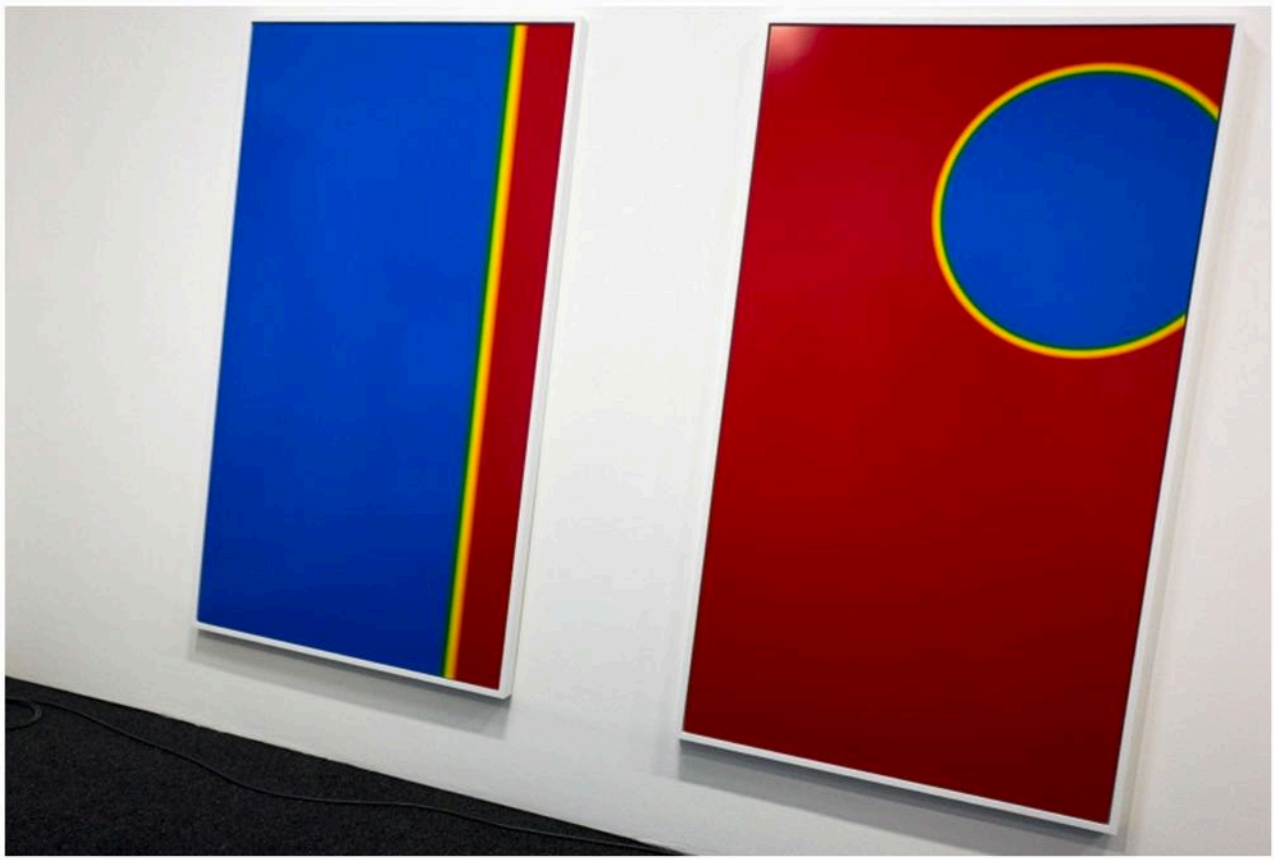

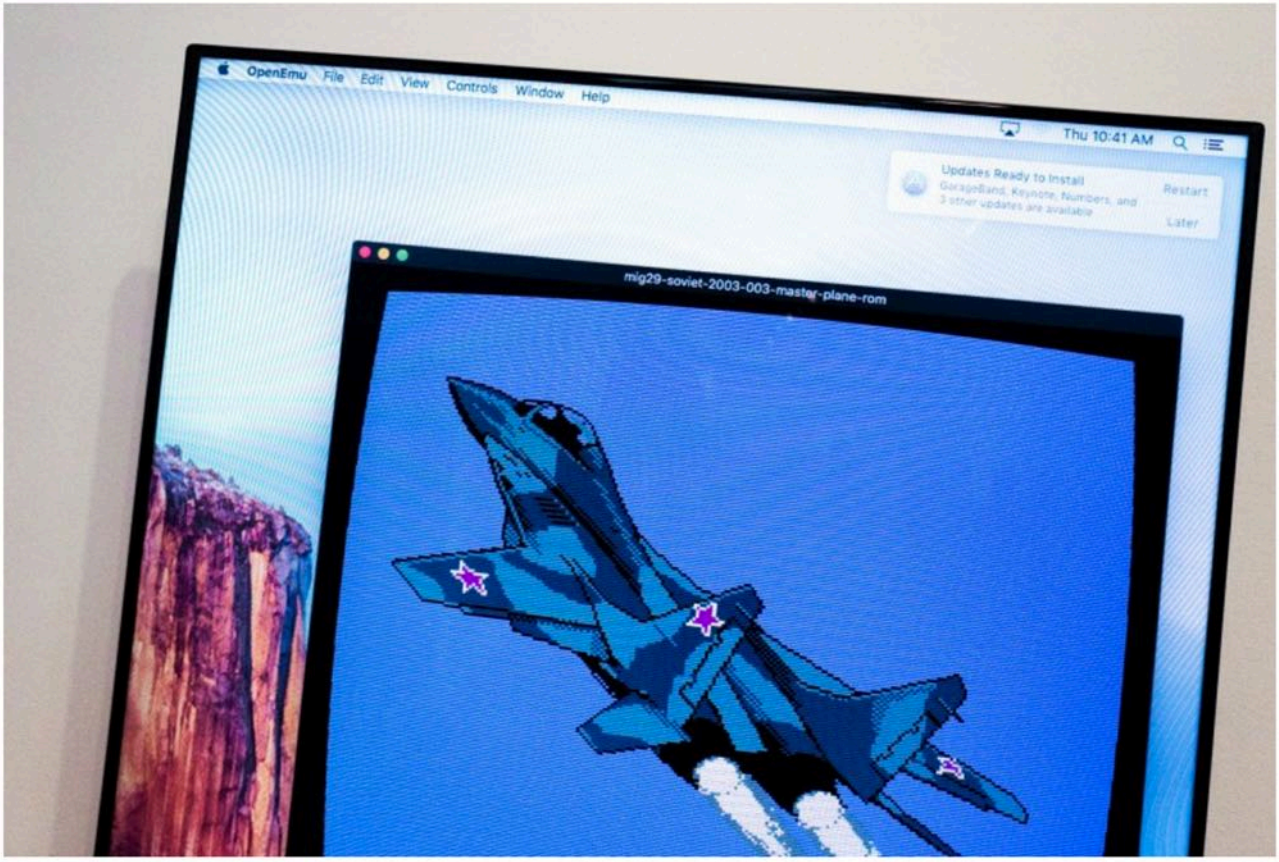
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i-D
23 May 2016

i-D

ART | Felix Petty | 23 May, 2016

cory arcangel's #currentmood – kittens, kanye and instant nostalgia

As the post-internet, post-conceptualist's new exhibition opens at The Lisson, he talks memes, clickbait and whether anyone will find his work in fifty years time.

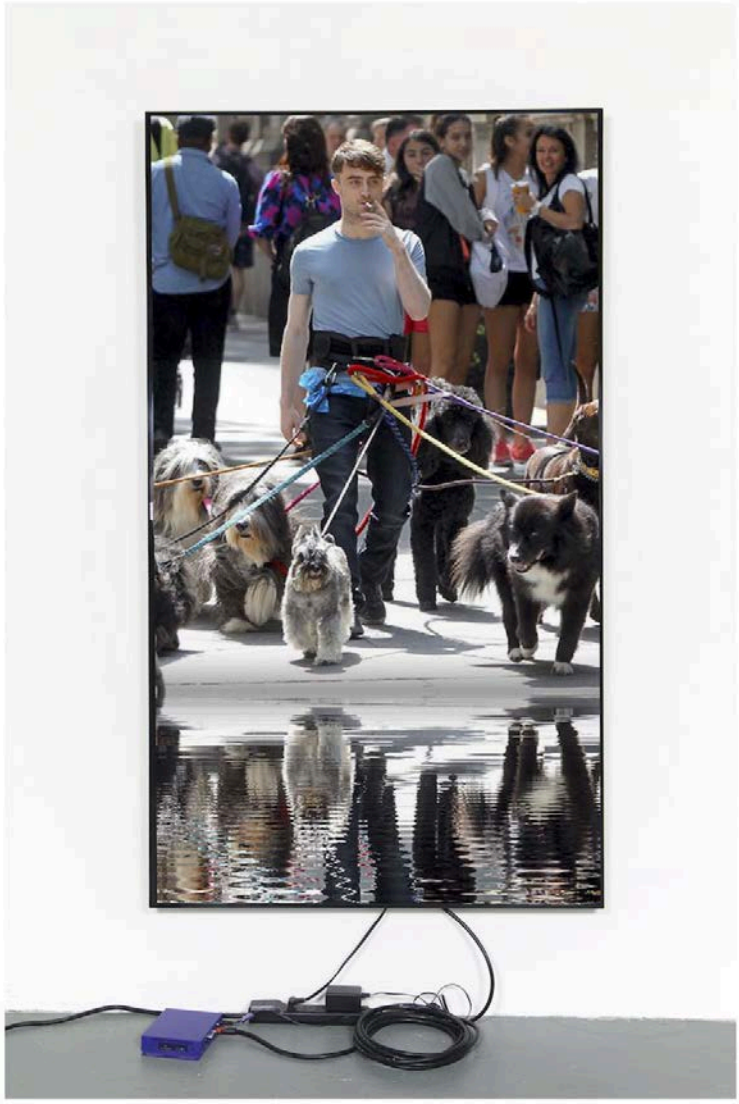
Cory Arcangel is stuck in time, stuck, in the paradoxically differing speeds of "art history time" and "technology time". His work, technological excavations of the present, has constantly utilised the disconnect between those two chronologies to make some wider, often funny, sometimes tragic, observations about futility, oddity and surreal beauty of the world we live in.

The works that first got him noticed back in the early 00s, teased up the inherent-nostalgia in retro game technologies, and reworked them with a d dose bleak, post-modern, existential humour. Super Mario Clouds pulled Mario out of the game, left a gently scrolling landscape of clouds to float past. Beat The Champ saw Cory reconfigure old bowling games so that each time a bowler stepped up to take a go he bowled a gutter ball. I Shot Andy Warhol turned Hogan's Alley, a video game where you had to shoot cardboard cut outs of gangsters and avoid innocent civilians, into a game where you had to (yes) shoot Andy. The innocent civilians recrafted to resemble Public Enemy's Flavor Flav, KFC's Colonel Sanders and Catholicism's The Pope. These works turned a (relatively) new element of consumer cultural detritus into an electric new form of art, mangling the video games of the artist's youth into a statement on Where We Are As Society in a similar to manner to all those other great pop experiments made from the consumer cultural detritus of the 60s.

Hank 2016. © Cory Arcangel; Courtesy of Lisson Gallery

This of course isn't to say that Cory's work is merely limited to toying with the sensibilities aesthetics and codes of video games; he's crafted a series of ready mades out of Photoshop gradients, with each work's title being an instruction on how you at home could also make it. He's made cover versions of classical compositions from found YouTube clips of cats hitting piano keys and released text based works, the famous of which, Working On My Novel, was published by Penguin and which archived tweets featuring the phrase "working on my novel" (Sample: "I guess not working on my novel for a few days works for me cuz once I begin again I dominate!") He's added glockenspiel parts to Bruce Springsteen's Born To Run, he's released "merch" featuring phrases like "Fuck Negativity" on pool sliders, and tracksuit bottoms with his name on in rainbow colours.

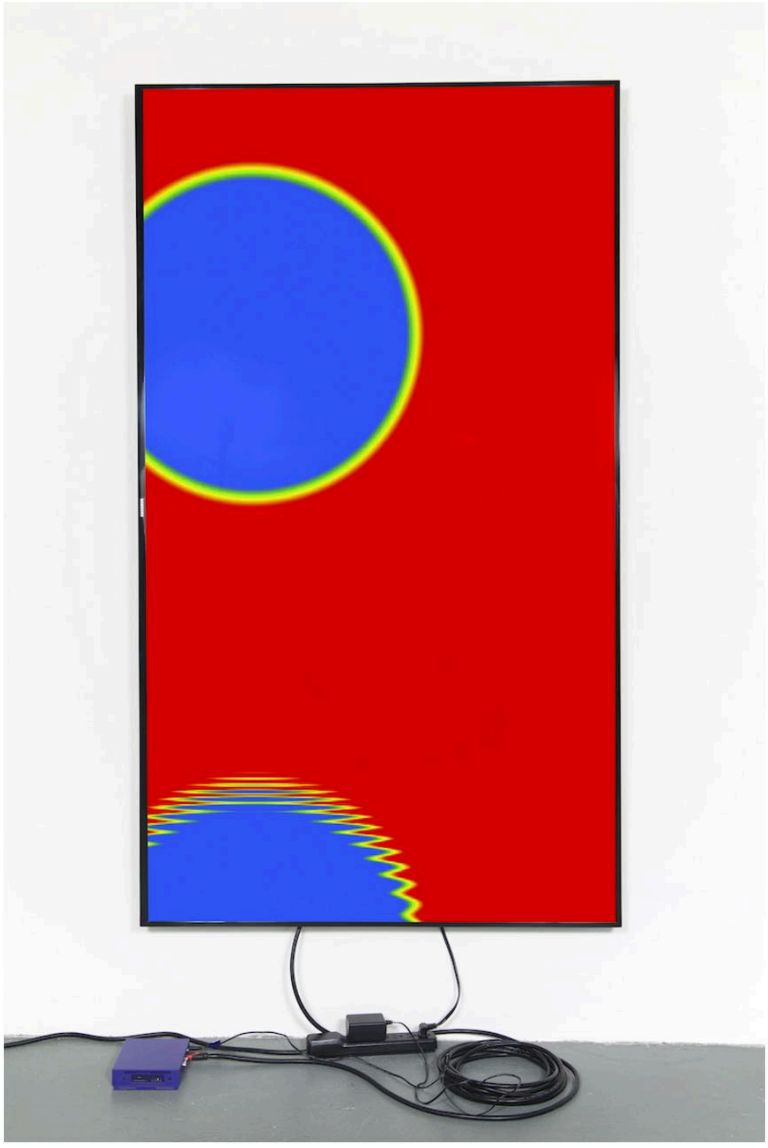
The newest show, #currentmood, has just opened at the Lisson gallery, in London. It's the last, he explains, in a run of shows he's been working on, before taking some time off. "If I was a musician," he jokes (he is of course, also a musician) "you could consider this the last concert for the current album. With that in mind, the show is a kind of survey. It's kind of a summary of a lot of the different ideas and series of works that I've been working with the past five or six years, and so there's a ton of work in the show. There's some videos, some photographs, some gradient works, some drawings, some sound pieces, but everything is going to be presented next to each other at the exact same size. I just raided my harddrive for weird and strange images and pulled it all together. It's a fun, chaotic, messy show."



Dawgs / Lakes 2016. © Cory Arcangel; Courtesy of Lisson Gallery

To list some of these works hanging in the Lisson, then. A gif of Daniel Radcliffe walking a thousand dogs and smoking a cigarette. A selection of gradient works. A corrupted and pixellated image of Victoria Beckham. A still image of a Mac desktop featuring a gif of those Super Mario Clouds. Kanye getting out of a car. An image of David Guetta advertising a concert. A kitten with big, cute emotive eyes. A photograph of the stripes of an adidas tracksuit. A zoomed in deeply pixelated image, almost unrecognisable, of Leonardo DiCaprio holding hands with a girlfriend walking across a beach. It resembles Michaelango's Sistine Chapel Adam and God as much it does intrusive celeb pap portraiture. #currentmood, it seems, is dipping its toe in and taking the temperature through a constellation of images that could make up the image-dense world we live in. It's meme heavy, in the way the world feels meme heavy. It's funny in the way memes are funny, and also, profound, in the way that memes also have a way of saying something unexpectedly profound about human condition.

"You know I remember in the late 90s and early 00s when there was this kind of excitement about the idea that there could be something that was a meme, but people hadn't quite wrapped their heads around what they were yet. It was so fun to try to listen to people try to theorise about what these things could be. I found it really interesting that these things were self-replicating and self-distributing, when I was starting to make art. I was never able to make a real meme, you know, that's like writing a number one hit single. But the internet was really starting to happen then, and I was trying to participate in it. I was attempting to make work iconic enough that it could become kind of like a meme, and spread itself.I think that's stayed with my work, the concepts are very simple, they are very easy to communicate."



Russell's #3 / Lakes 2016. © Cory Arcangel; Courtesy of Lisson Gallery

"One idea about this show was that it would be fun to place these Photoshop gradient works next to weird, random things that I'd downloaded off the internet. Originally the Photoshop series was a kind of ready made, almost a joke in a way. Now I think, seven or eight years on, they are seen totally differently, they're seen as kind of like, artworks, with the capital A, and so for me it's fun to kind of take them back down, or at least try to and pair them next to imagery that doesn't have that same kind of lustre."

The effect in the gallery is oddly dazzling, this collision between everything, between kittens and gradients and Kanye, overwhelming like having a thousand browser windows open all at once. But the exhibition will be bleeding back out the gallery and onto the web, as Cory is utilising Outbrain to launch the pieces as web adverts you can discover via browsing, releasing the art work back into the wilds of the world wide web.

More than most artists of his generation, Cory has transcended the novelty of his initial approach to art. If he's stuck somewhere between the paradoxically differing speeds of "art history time" and "technology time", his work has managed to continually function as a barometer of now as it's been pulled in different directions, by the slowly changing landscapes of the art world and rapidly reinventing world of technology. His work works because it's funny, partly, (who doesn't like seeing a picture of a kitten on the hallowed walls of the Lisson) and partly because it feels honest and genuine and never really ironic or detached from the subject. He's not an outsider poking his nose into web niches, but an insider recrafting those niches he loves into art.

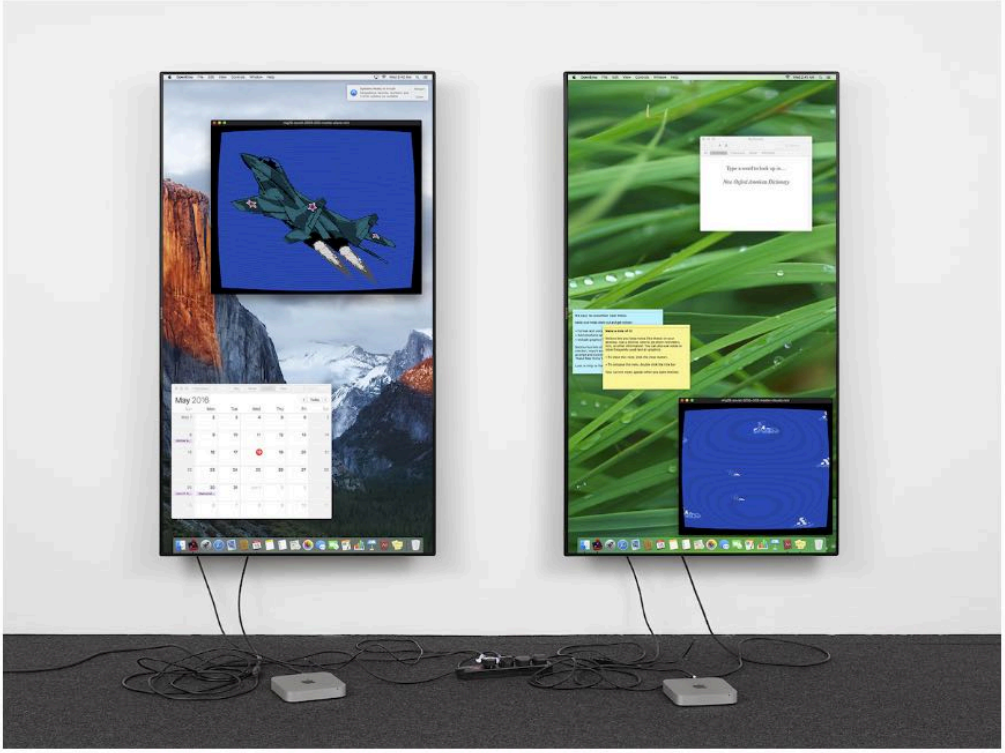
FN Slides / Lakes 2016. © Cory Arcangel; Courtesy of Lisson Gallery

Those gradients, which he started as a kind of "dare" or "taunt" are now transformed and turned into serious pieces of work. "It seems crazy to see the way that the perception of the work changed," he explains, "and I would say it has changed in ways that I couldn't have predicted, and in ways I barely understand a lot of the time. The stuff I made in the early 00s, like it's so funny because people are nostalgic for that work now, whereas originally they might have been nostalgic for the medium. And in another 50 years maybe it will have another totally different reading. It probably, to be honest, won't be funny. You know people don't find those Photoshop works funny anymore? They couldn't be further from funny. People don't find my Nintendo clouds thing funny anymore, I mean when I first did that people thought that was a joke. Weirdly enough there will be a chance that people won't find any of this funny in 50 years," he laughs.

And personally I find that quite funny, that in 50 years, no one will find any of this funny. That in 50 years they'll be doing a big retrospective at the Tate Modern and the viewers will be traipsing through the galleries, watching bowlers bowl gutterballs, and clouds from ancient video games float past whilst they stroke their chins and look at long-ago download images of long-dead celebrities and contemplate work that was by dragging a mouse around on Photoshop.

Ibiza / Lakes 2016. © Cory Arcangel; Courtesy of Lisson Gallery

Uber of Weed 2016. © Cory Arcangel; Courtesy of Lisson Gallery



Mig 29 Soviet Fighter Plane, Clouds and OSX 2016 Mig 29 Soviet Fighter Plane and Clouds (2005). © Cory Arcangel; Courtesy of Lisson Gallery

Credits

Text Felix Petty
Portrait Tim Barber

The Guardian
20 May 2016

theguardian

Cory Arcangel

Kittens, Kanye and kiss-and-tells: the artist who swapped canvas for clickbait

For 15 years, hack-happy Cory Arcangel has captured and caricatured the digital world. His new show puts Instagram in the gallery, converts art into clickbait and sells pool sliders to surfers who never leave their sofa

Hettie Judah

Friday 20 May 2016 14.49 BST

'The kitten is burning it up' ... a selection of images from Cory Arcangel's show, currentmood. Composite: Cory Arcangel/Lisson gallery

Cory Arcangel wants to know what makes you click. Kittens? A candid picture of Leonardo DiCaprio strolling along the beach with his girlfriend? A fuzzy long-lens shot of Victoria Beckham? Images like these are framed on the walls of his new exhibition at the Lisson Gallery, London. Many have also been released into the online world of "clickbait" adverts, enticing readers with offers of hot babes, celebrity revelations and you'll-never-believe-this dieting tricks.

"They're really equal - there's a part of it here in the gallery, and a second part online as clickbait," says Arcangel, with the gentle, tousled demeanour of a new parent. Five years ago, aged 33, he became the youngest artist since Bruce Nauman to be given a full-floor solo show at the Whitney museum in New York. That show brought together a number of software works in which Arcangel had hacked outmoded computing equipment and games. In Beat the Champ, co-commissioned by the Barbican, a row of bowling games was adapted so the frustrated avatars threw only gutterballs.

'Distracted' ... Cory Arcangel Photograph: Tim Barber

Trained as a classical guitarist, Arcangel had made witty coding and hacking his shtick since mothballing his metronome to become an artist 15 years ago. "When I started making work, digital technology wasn't mainstream," he recalls. "These days everything comes through our phones - and it happened so quickly!" His new show, titled currentmood, is an attempt to address this digital world and the shifting status of the image within it. "My hope is it's a show you could only make right now - it's taking the temperature of 2016."

And what is that temperature? Taking a reading from the Lisson show, it's Kanye on the cover of GQ flashing his knees through ripped jeans; desktop screengrabs; retro video game gifs; Photoshop colour fades; heavily branded teen clothing; David Guetta flyers; bland Shutterstock images; lovingly scanned Adidas garb; and blurry cameraphone snaps.

"I wanted to show every possible variation on the type of imagery you would see in your day-to-day life," explains Arcangel. "There's a work in there that is my car rental return photographs - the ones you take so they don't charge you for damaging the car. That's probably the lowest kind of photography." Echoing the absence of hierarchy on image-sharing sites such as Instagram, all the works in the show are identically sized and displayed so it's hard to tell whether they're a video playing on a flatscreen or merely a print behind glass.

Like fish being reeled in by an angler to be weighed then thrown back into the pond, many of the pictures in currentmood are only passing by - destined to return, via gallery-goers' social media, to the image torrent from which Arcangel grabbed them. ". These are fine art objects when you're standing here, then they get photographed and turned into Twitter or Instagram material."

Cory Arcangel - Super Mario Clouds - 2002

Arcangel has something of a hacker's view of ownership. Some of his best-known works, such as Drei Klavierstücke op 11 (2009), in which cat-on-the-piano videos are edited together to play the titular Schoenberg work, and a related 2011 splicing of guitarists playing Paganini's 5th Caprice, are both available online, as is the source code to recreate 2002's Super Mario Clouds. In fact, he's currently in the process of publishing The Source - an archive providing the code for all of his software works.

Merch store ... Arcangel's FN Slides / Lakes 2016 Photograph: Courtesy the artist and Lisson Gallery

He has turned being "distracted and unfocused" into a remarkably prolific career, albeit one that draws heavily on the culture of contemporary distraction. In 2014 he released Working on My Novel, a book based on his Twitter feed that aggregated the best posts featuring that phrase. In 2015, he launched a range of surfwear (for internet users rather than board waxers on the beach at Newquay) emblazoned with the slogan "Fuck Negativity". Pool slider sandals (to be worn *with* socks, please) are on sale at the Lisson.

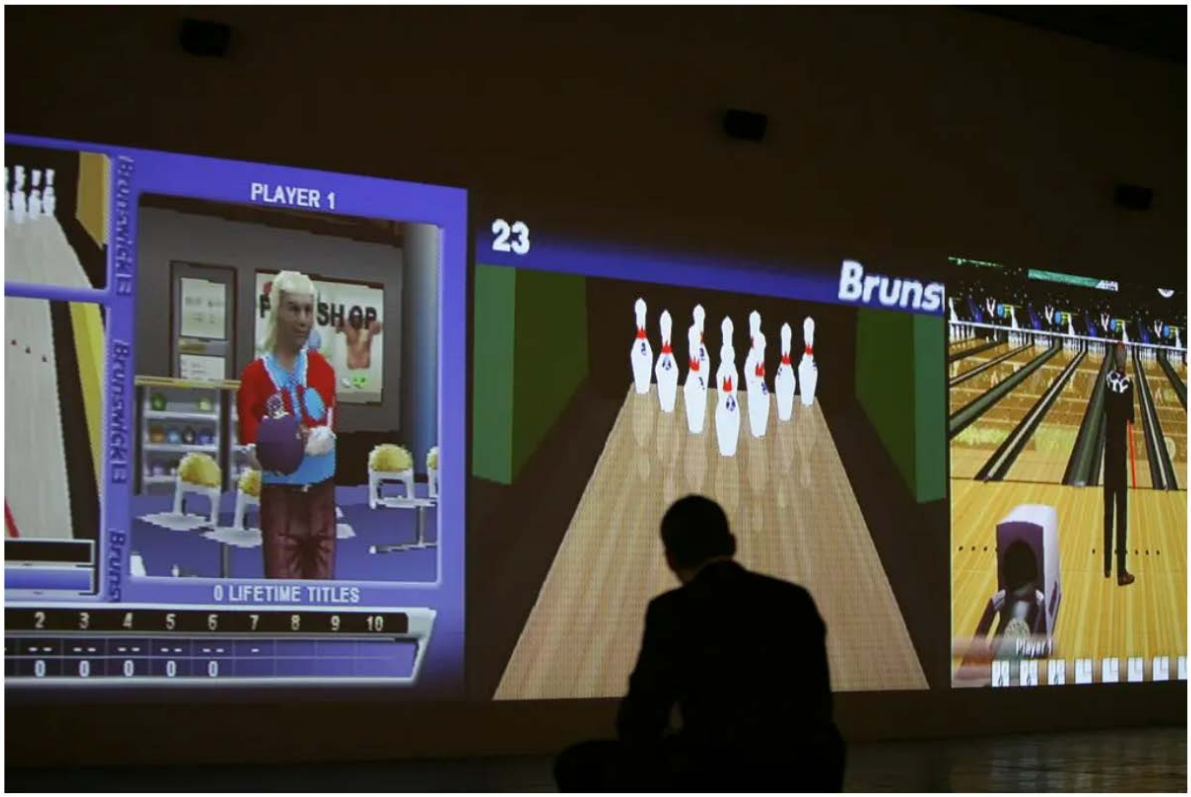
Far removed from the elite space of the art gallery, clickbait is the gladiatorial arena of an image-obsessed world. "You see which ones work, delete the ones that don't, and keep modifying," says Arcangel. The result is an illuminating collection of images we might not want to admit we're drawn to, but evidently are. Of the adverts Arcangel has put out for currentmood, the kitten is apparently "burning it up". As to whether there's Arcangel clickbait on theguardian.com? You'll just have to click and find out.

- Cory Arcangel: currentmood is at the Lisson gallery, London, 20 May-2 July.

New York Times
May 26, 2011
The New York Times

ART REVIEW

A Muse in the Machine: Click. Create.



Some works in Cory Arcangel's solo show at the Whitney Museum of Art reflect his longstanding interest in television and video games. Librado Romero/The New York Times

By Roberta Smith
May 26, 2011

It seems almost unnecessary to introduce Cory Arcangel, the digital wunderkind, artist-musician and inveterate hacker whose exhibition, “Pro Tools,” has opened at the Whitney Museum of American Art.

In the ramp-up to the show Mr. Arcangel achieved something of a journalistic triple crown: profiles in New York magazine, The New Yorker and the Arts & Leisure section of The New York Times. These pieces detailed his early fascination with television and computers; his undergraduate years at Oberlin College, where he switched his focus from classical guitar to technology in music; his love of obsolete electronic equipment and programs; and the splash he made in the 2004 Whitney Biennial with “Super Mario Clouds v2k3.”

Projected on four walls of a small gallery, this work consisted of a hacked program of the Super Mario Brothers video game, scrubbed clean of everything but its background: the puffy white clouds pulsing along on a pixelated blue sky. Its quietly animated fusion of Pop, Minimalism and giddy innocence was one of the exhibition’s high points.

But Mr. Arcangel’s Whitney solo turn does not quite live up to its advance attention. For one thing, it too seems a trifle scrubbed clean, sanitized and austere. Containing work almost entirely from 2011, it tells us little of his funkier early digital efforts, or artistic development. A few pieces reflect his longstanding interest in television and video games; in others he tries too hard to establish his formalist bona fides wryly with riffs on abstract painting and sculpture.

Cory Arcangel, 33, studied technology in music at Oberlin College. Librado Romero/The New York Times

The Arcangel show, organized by Christiane Paul, the museum's adjunct curator of new media arts, has the Whitney trending young, hip and fashion forward, if a bit skimpy. Mr. Arcangel, who just turned 33, is the youngest artist since Bruce Nauman in 1973 to be accorded an entire floor at the museum. Yet, like the Whitney's small lobby shows, this effort comes with only a brochure, not a thick catalog. No big case for greatness is posited; we're just being shown some fresh new art, barely six months of work. Signaling modesty and flexibility, the Whitney has momentarily shifted to alternative-space mode, which may be the perfect gesture for the week when it also broke ground for its new downtown home in the meatpacking district.

As seen here Mr. Arcangel comes across as an artist who has parlayed his interest in electronic gadgetry and his infatuation with past avant-gardes into a low-affect art-about-art that too often flickers to fragile life only after you've ingested a dry, didactic wall label. The pieces on view are full of savvy echoes of early video art and structuralist film; kinetic, Conceptual and Pop art and their current derivatives; abstract painting; and, above all, appropriation art — all of it often updated by his generation's democratic attitude toward information sharing.

In that spirit three invisible works of art — identified by labels only — indicate that Mr. Arcangel has persuaded the Whitney to liberalize gallery conditions. The museum has suspended its prohibition of photography and let Mr. Arcangel boost cellphone reception and introduce Wi-Fi for computers, whose uses are normally verboten. This means that using such devices in the exhibition makes you part of a nominally participatory artwork. It also potentially underscores art as a momentary distraction, photo op or tweeting topic in a world of ever-shortening attention spans.

The show's opening gallery is in many ways the best. The space is dominated by "Various Self Playing Bowling Games (a k a Beat the Champ)," a large-scale video work that asserts a virtual storm of light, noise and flashing images via six cheek-to-jowl projections of video bowling games, from the late 1970s to the 2000s, all altered so that the bowlers throw nothing but gutter balls. The label intones that the piece "highlights the absurdities of simulating a physical experience in a virtual environment" and that the parade of failure "undermines both our expectations of technology and its promise of progress."

But the work's most gripping aspect is its ever-sharper depiction of human emotion; the piece inadvertently mimes a kind of dawning of modern consciousness and existential despair by charting the evolution from the player as a pre-Pac-Man grunt, barely differentiated from the bowling ball itself, to a relatively realistic tantrum thrower, who collapses or pounds the floor after each failed bowl, like one of Mr. Nauman's furious frustrated clowns. The piece is also an anarchic reprise of the buttoned-down anthropological parsings of early-1980s Pictures art, especially Richard Prince's sequences of similarly posed models from ads for watches, jewelry or cigarettes.

In an opposite corner "Research in Motion (Kinetic Sculpture #6)" rehearses the old saw about the similarity between modern abstract sculpture and commercial design with a series of "dancing stands" typically used in supermarket displays, but here conjuring, according to the label, the grids of Sol LeWitt. Whatever. The sight of them swiveling silently but weirdly in sync with the tumult of the bowling piece is among the show's nicer moments. Nearby a small monitor flashes and scrolls horizontal bands of intense color, from thick to thin to static, recalling Joan Jonas's early experiments with vertical roll and Paul Sharits's intensely chromatic flicker films.

"Pro Tools" at the Whitney Museum of Art is full of savvy echoes of early video art and structuralist film; Conceptual and Pop art, abstract painting, and appropriation art.
Librado Romero/The New York Times

Punchy abstract color briefly holds sway in the second gallery, where 10 large, bright “Photoshop Gradient Demonstrations” evoke a kind of lurid cross between Color Field painting mistiness and Op Art harshness. As the title implies, these seven-foot-tall prints were made in Photoshop with a few clicks of the mouse, using pixel coordinates that are generously included in the individual titles; anyone can make them. As with the Mario cloud piece, these works bring forward and isolate background motifs, in this case ones frequently used in commercial art. Recalling photographs by Thomas Ruff and Mr. Prince, the ensemble makes a nice surround, but it is hard to imagine actually living with one of these hyper-slick pieces.

Similarly it is difficult to imagine that the thousands of people who apparently downloaded Mr. Arcangel’s code for hacking the clouds-only version of the Super Mario Brothers game will find much to like in this show. There’s too much inside baseball. In one gallery a label informs us about the details of seven new pairs of Oakley M Frame sunglasses on a snazzy display stand: Mr. Arcangel has replaced the frames with painted bronze, seemingly parodying a certain art-world mania for hard-to-discern realistic casting. Nearby 10 boxes for Vizio 55-inch high-definition flat-screen TVs are double-stacked to form a long, low partition. This piece’s title, “Volume Management,” refers to computer storage systems while also slyly suggesting a new label for Minimalism, with its emphasis on boxy voids of space.

The label reveals that the screens are still in the boxes, conjuring Jeff Koons's early 1980s appropriation sculptures, which consisted of fresh-out-of-the-box vacuum cleaners presented in hermetically sealed, expertly lighted Plexiglas vitrines, like the expensive art objects that they soon became. Mr. Arcangel dispenses with the visual formalities, leaving everything to the imagination.

The inadvertent humanism of the bowling piece occasionally reasserts itself, albeit in routine feats of bravura editing. "There's Always One at Every Party" is a compilation, or a "supercut," of all the scenes from "Seinfeld" concerning Kramer's dream of doing a coffee-table book about coffee tables, pulling taut a thematic thread, ripe with Conceptualist self-reference and a kind of artistic delusion, that wandered through several episodes. "Paganini Caprice No. 5" reconstructs the well-known virtuoso work by Niccolò Paganini, the 19th-century violinist and composer, by grabbing individual notes from YouTube videos of amateur heavy-metal guitarists who frequently play the piece as a test of skill; it also creates a sweet, rapid-fire group portrait of music-driven souls whose dreams of stardom rarely materialize.

But too often this show stalls in slight or incomprehensible works: 40 drawings, done with a relatively antique pen-plotter printer, that resemble angular Jackson Pollock scribbles; five innocuous wire sculptures made by computer-operated machines used in the manufacture of metal furniture and display racks; and a final wall painted in the custom-mixed color Jay-Z Blue, a reproduction of the color that, according to the wall label, was "featured on a GMC Yukon Denali S.U.V. displayed at the North American International Auto Show in 2007."

Mr. Arcangel seems guided by a somewhat callow faith in the avant-garde, striving to perpetuate its tradition, dating from Duchamp, of laying claim to new areas of nonart for art's sake. Sometimes he succeeds, but sometimes he falls short, at which point it is perfectly O.K. to reach for your cellphone.

"Cory Arcangel: Pro Tools" runs through Sept. 11 at the Whitney Museum of American Art; (212) 570-3600, whitney.org.

A version of this article appears in print on May 27, 2011, Section C, Page 21 of the New York edition with the headline: A Muse in the Machine: Click. Create..

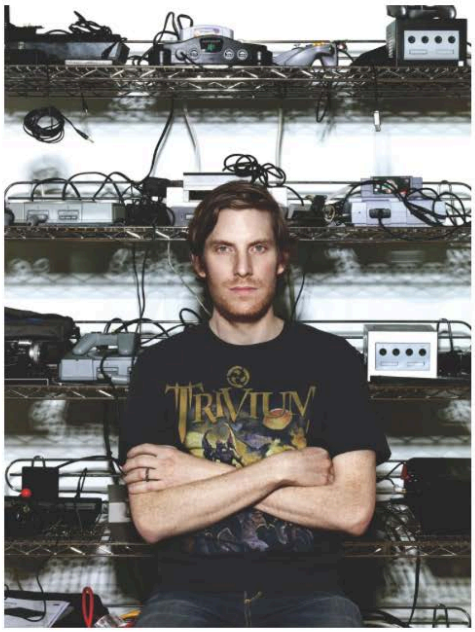
The New Yorker
May 23, 2011
THE NEW YORKER

Onward and Upward with the Arts

Futurism

By Andrea K. Scott

May 23, 2011



Arcangel finds abject beauty in obsolete machines. Photograph by Robbie Fimmano

Cory Arcangel was making a drawing, but he wasn't holding a pen. In a small, high-ceilinged studio in Industry City, a warehouse-lined wedge of Brooklyn between New York Harbor and the Gowanus Expressway, he was sitting at the keyboard of a Macintosh computer. Arcangel had bought an old printer on eBay—a pen plotter manufactured in 1983, when he was five—and hacked together the code for it. As he typed, a mechanical arm across the room whirred around a piece of paper, making linked acute angles, in black ink. It was abstraction on demand: the digital heir to a century of instruction-based art, from Dada to Sol LeWitt.

On May 26th, a day after his thirty-third birthday, an exhibition of Arcangel's work will open at the Whitney Museum. Although he has no formal art training—he studied classical guitar and electronic music at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music—his work is in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, the Smithsonian, and the Tate. In addition to drawings, he makes sculptures, videos, and photographs, most of them digitally generated, but he is best known for sly modifications of video games. The centerpiece at the Whitney is a series of room-size projections of bowling games, all of which have been tweaked to throw only gutter balls. Earlier this year, when the installation premièred, at the Barbican, in London, Charles Darwent, an art critic at the *Independent*, called it "complex and funny and moving."

In his studio, Arcangel was sitting at a large worktable strewn with digital paraphernalia (four Macs, one P.C., one kitten mouse pad). He wore a Buffalo Sabres sweatshirt with cutoff sleeves—Buffalo is his home town—and a black T-shirt with a Google logo on its left arm. He smiled sheepishly and explained, "It's my last clean shirt." Arcangel, who is just under six feet tall, was affably unshaven, with shaggy blond hair and pale-green eyes. Every time I met him, he was wearing the same black Polo cap.

Arcangel had invited me over that day to see a "demo" of the plotter in action. (He has a penchant for marketing lingo; his Whitney show is titled "Pro Tools," for a brand of audio-editing software.) When I began asking him about his programming skills, he demurred, saying that the lines he had written for the plotter were no big deal. "I was literally just hacking around," he said. His voice is still inflected with the flat-"A" accent of Buffalo. "It's a few lines of Perl script, the first language I learned. You can make a mistake and it doesn't bark back at you."

The arm of the plotter stopped. Arcangel leaped from his chair, took the sheet from the printer, and said, "I'll make another one! It's randomized, so they're never the same." His delight in the drawing was evident, and I realized that fixating on his Perl code was like grilling Jackson Pollock about why he used house paint.

Arcangel finds an abject beauty in the way that modern technology is doomed to obsolescence. In another project, Arcangel had connected, via computer, a digital drawing tablet to a second, larger plotter, which was resting on a makeshift sawhorse. His sketches were translated into digital bits with 2011 technology, then transformed into pencil on paper using mid-nineties technology. The result: a picture of a palm tree. The plotter was something that most people would consider junk, but in Arcangel's hands it was a time machine. "It's a relic from the days before ink-jet printers," he said. "In the nineties, it was state-of-the-art. But by the time I found one on eBay—which took more than a year—the price was so cheap that it cost more to ship it."

His assistant, Bennett Williamson—a twenty-five-year-old artist and d.j. with the confidence of an athlete—was sitting across the table. "It came without a stand," Williamson noted. "So we tracked down the company that made it originally and called to find out about ordering one."

"They just laughed," Arcangel said.

Until recently, Arcangel didn't have a studio, let alone a full-time assistant. Later, he told me that Williamson helps him stay calm when things get off track, adding, "My mother always says I'm not happy if I'm not worried." When I visited the apartment, in Brooklyn's Boerum Hill, that Arcangel shares with his wife—a soft-spoken but steely Norwegian curator named Hanne Mugaas—she teased him by telling me, "This is where Cory comes to stress out."

On one wall of the studio, Arcangel cued up the bowling projections, which Whitney visitors will see immediately after stepping off the elevator. The six projections present a history of the bowling-game genre, starting in 1977, with the Atari 2600's rudimentary 8-bit imagery, and ending in 2001, with the Nintendo GameCube's humanoid avatars, which are somehow more off-putting than their primitive precursors. "What's more bizarre than virtual bowling?" Arcangel said. "Well, maybe those fishing games—that might be my next project. But throwing a gutter ball is just humiliating. That's what makes the piece so ridiculous, but also sad and even oppressive. The failure seems funny at first—then it flips." He was right; the repeating animations of frustration instill a rising sense of discomfort. The bowlers are virtual kin to Bruce Nauman, who, in his iconic 1968 video "Stamping in the Studio," clomped around an empty room for an hour—a ritual of isolation and futility.

A figurine of Mario, the classic Nintendo character, sat on a bookshelf. "People have been giving those to me since 'Clouds,' " he said. He was referring to "Super Mario Clouds v2k3," the video installation that made his name in the art world, when it was shown at the 2004 Whitney Biennial. "I was a kid, but I knew it was a great idea," he said of the work. "When your intuitive sense overwhelms your critical voice, you have to give in." The idea was as simple as silk-screening soup cans: take the code to the classic 1985 Nintendo cartridge and erase everything but the clouds, which typically drift behind the action. At the Whitney, the clouds were projected onto the walls of a room, suggesting a wry reboot of John Constable's cloud paintings. A television monitor, complete with tangled cords, was also placed in the room—a reminder of the imagery's origins. Though the pixellated clouds triggered memories of rec-room joystick battles, the installation itself was spare and silent, the clouds' progression eerily slow. The project, which bathed the room in a celestial blue glow, made one think less of a boardwalk arcade than of James Turrell's skylit Quaker meetinghouse.

"Super Mario Clouds" was a classic before the Whitney installed it. In 2002, Arcangel uploaded a video of the clouds to the Internet, along with his source code and a tutorial on hacking the game cartridge. Like many programmers, he believes that coding should be "open source"—transparent to all. He posted a cleaner version of the code in 2003, and again in 2009, when a British graduate student in mathematics alerted him, by e-mail, to a few stray pixels. Arcangel puts the number of bootlegs of "Clouds" at roughly "a gazillion," but the video never became a viral meme of mainstream proportions—its YouTube views number in the tens of thousands, not in the millions. Nevertheless, for an underground art project its reach was unprecedented. The high regard for Arcangel in digital circles was confirmed in 2008, when he received an invitation to Foo Camp, an élite tech conference. "Foo" stands for "friends of O'Reilly"; Tim O'Reilly is the author of the books that Arcangel used to teach himself coding.

Although gaming is one of Arcangel's key subjects, he isn't a gamer, any more than Édouard Manet was a matador or George Bellows a boxer. Arcangel says of his family in Buffalo, "We had an Atari early on, but we never had a Nintendo. I'd watch my friends play when I went to their houses, but that's it. I think that's why my pieces are about watching, not interacting." Although his bowlers are icons of absurdist alienation, in real life he doesn't take a dark view of digital culture. One evening, as we walked through Boerum Hill, he suddenly stopped and said, "Take a few steps back and look at that guy!" Framed in a parlor-floor window, an obese man in headphones and an undershirt sat before a screen, absorbed in a game, his back to the warm April night. I found the image depressing. "You're seeing it too superficially," Arcangel said. "It's a hopeful scene. He seems really happy. He's entertaining himself. He probably has a lot of friends in that world."

Growing up in Buffalo, Arcangel says, all he wanted to do was "to shred on the electric guitar." A 1991 home video—posted on the "Things I Made" section of his Web site—shows him jamming in the basement, wearing a backward baseball cap and a goalie mask, while his younger sister, Jamie, cavorts in a polka-dot ensemble and a brown wig. The name of their band was Insectiside. "I'm Death," the boy in the mask says. "I'm Pestilence," his sister says, then warns him, "You better not call me 'retard' again."

Arcangel told me that by the time he had turned seventeen he was practicing the guitar eight hours a day. His life wasn't, perhaps, quite as single-minded as that. Although he didn't mention this to me—Williamson, his assistant, did—Arcangel was a star lacrosse goalie at the Nichols School, a private academy in Buffalo. Arcangel recalls that the school hosted workshops by Squeaky Wheel, a local media-arts center. Through Squeaky Wheel, which also airs a public-access television show in Buffalo, he was exposed to experimental video work by seminal figures like Nam June Paik.

In 1996, he was accepted to Oberlin, as a classical-guitar major. Soon after arriving in Ohio, he encountered his first high-speed Internet connection. "I started to spend all my time in the basement computer lab," he recalls. "By senior year, all my friends had moved off campus, but I wouldn't leave the T-1 line in the dorms." He switched to a new major: technology of music. He says of his musical aspirations, "Basically, I burned out. At a certain point, you have to ask yourself, 'Do I really want to be a classical guitarist?' It was amazing how much energy I had when I wasn't sitting alone in a room with a metronome all day." Arcangel and his friends frequently staged performance-like stunts. Once, they put two turntables in an elevator and replaced the light fixtures with colored bulbs. When the doors opened, students stepped, unaware, into the world's smallest rave.

In the computer lab, he met two people who became early collaborators: Jacob Ciocci, who went on to co-found Paper Rad, an art collective that played with the D.I.Y. ethos of digital culture, and Paul B. Davis, now a London-based artist, who taught Arcangel how to hack game cartridges. In 2000, Arcangel and Davis co-founded Beige Programming Ensemble, and they soon released "The 8-Bit Construction Set," a record of abrasively bright music that they made with two friends using old Atari and Commodore computer games as instruments. When the quartet performed in 2001, the *Times* ran a review with the headline "SOUNDS LIKE NERD HEAVEN."

His first real break in New York came in the avant-garde film and video scene, when Ed Halter, a curator and the author of the book "From Sun Tzu to Xbox: War and Videogames," included Arcangel in the 2002 New York Underground Film Festival. Halter says, "I have a very strong memory of Cory coming to my office, on Chrystie Street, with all this equipment and saying, 'This is what I do!' I realized that he was onto something amazing. Most important, he was the first artist I saw who fully understood that a game console was really a video synthesizer."

Arcangel says that his fascination with finding artistic inspiration in unlikely machines can be traced to a composition class he took at Oberlin with Pauline Oliveros, the electronic-music pioneer, who is now seventy-eight. "I was kind of a punk back then, but Pauline transcends authority," he recalls. "She told us about a piece she did in the sixties, when she hooked up sine-wave oscillators to speakers and tuned them to the resonant frequency of the concert hall. The waves match up and amplify each other, so the sound gets louder and louder inside the hall. That's when it clicked for me. I'd learned about Stockhausen. I'd learned about Schoenberg. But Pauline made it all come alive and I finally could see that this history really did have an edge."

In 2009, he revisited Schoenberg, constructing a video performance of the atonal milestone "Drei Klavierstücke" by rapidly splicing YouTube clips of cats jumping on pianos. (For accuracy, Arcangel matched the feline audio track with a 1958 recording by Glenn Gould.) The work succeeds as an experimental homage to both high-modernist music and the lowbrow Internet phenomenon of LOLcats. Such radical equanimity, no doubt, would have outraged the art critic Clement Greenberg, who, in 1939, famously defined the avant-garde as a safeguard against kitsch. But Arcangel's sensibility is insistently open. One day, as I was leaving his studio, he handed me a flow chart that he had made of his influences; the connections ranged from Steve Reich to Tiger Woods to "Weekend at Bernie's."

If you watch Arcangel's Schoenberg video, it's not evident how much technical expertise it required. In fact, no editing software existed to make a sufficiently fast-paced result, so Arcangel compiled the code himself. He mentioned this accomplishment to me more than once. "The code is sloppy and it barely works and it gives me a headache when I use it," he said. "But it does something pretty incredible." He recently used the software to make a new video for the Whitney exhibition—a few hundred heavy-metal guitarists performing Paganini's Fifth Caprice, a showpiece that Arcangel used to play at Oberlin. An obvious touchstone for Arcangel's mashups is Christian Marclay, the composer and artist, whose installation "The Clock" —a twenty-four-hour collage of one-minute film clips that have been synchronized to correspond to the actual time of day—caused a sensation in London and New York last winter. Arcangel acknowledges an affinity with Marclay, and says of his work, "Christian goes entirely at his own pace, and his work is super-tight as a result." (Marclay's partner, Lydia Yee, curated the London installation of Arcangel's bowling games.)

There's no denying that the Schoenberg cats are, on one level, a joke. Arcangel likes to pull you in with a punch line before deeper meanings unfold. In their epigrammatic structure, Arcangel's looped one-liners recall Samuel Beckett—"Try again. Fail again. Fail better"—with a little Borscht Belt thrown in. As with Beckett, or Bruce Nauman, his humor has an existential spark. In Arcangel's modification of the classic Atari game Space Invaders, only a single, hapless invader remains. Arcangel has a Web site that automatically updates every time someone tweets the phrase "follow my other Twitter," and a compulsively readable blog, Sorry I Haven't Posted, that re-posts other people's apologies for not blogging. Both projects have clever conceits, but over time they become bittersweet commentaries on aspiration and failure.

One afternoon in April, Arcangel and I visited the Greene Naftali gallery, in Chelsea, to see an exhibition about entertainment and conceptual art. Afterward, as we walked along Tenth Avenue, the conversation turned to painting. "I've been on a Keith Haring kick lately," Arcangel said. "But I wonder—and I know it's an old question—where can painting go after so many hundreds of years? I think the best artists acknowledge the joke. I really admire Roy Lichtenstein for bringing comics into the art industry." (Arcangel avoids the phrase "art world" with assiduous self-consciousness, though it's not clear how much longer he can play the outsider.) He went on, "I know that art-funny isn't funny-funny, but don't you think Warhol's 'Triple Elvis' must have seemed hilarious when it was made?"

Andy Warhol is the default reference when curators and collectors bring up Arcangel's work. Anointing a young artist "the new Warhol" is as clichéd as calling a color "the new black," and it's perhaps telling that, in 2002, Arcangel modified the video game Hogan's Alley so that players shoot at an avatar of Warhol instead of at gangsters. I asked Arcangel how he felt about the comparison. Predictably, he cracked wise. "Forget about Warhol," he said. "I want someone to compare me to Seinfeld!"

Three years ago, Arcangel gave a lecture titled “Continuous Partial Awareness” to a packed house at the New Museum. For nearly an hour, he recited from a dizzying list of art projects: “make spray-tan monochromes”; “make atonal twelve-tone ring tones”; “go to a comedy club and re-do Seinfeld routines from memory.” He had recently tried out the Seinfeld one, at an open-mike night on the Lower East Side, and he had bombed. “It was all young comedians testing out their material,” he recalls. “They were pretty hostile. I felt like a gate-crasher.” The museum talk could be seen as a parody of the lecture in the age of attention-deficit disorder, and the Seinfeld imitation a comment on how thoroughly people’s brains have been colonized by pop culture. But neither the museum audience nor the unwelcoming comics were aware of a bleak inside joke: Arcangel had recently been given a diagnosis of thyroid cancer and was undergoing treatments that compromised both his memory and his ability to concentrate. In 2009, the cancer recurred and his lymph nodes were removed. Though he now has a long scar on his neck, he is free of the disease.

The subject of cancer came up when we met for a late Sunday lunch at a Mexican restaurant in Sunset Park, near his studio. When his tacos arrived, he examined them and genially observed, “There’s nothing whole grain about this tortilla.” Before he fell ill, he often ate at Wendy’s several times a day; now he and his wife receive weekly shipments of organic produce from a local farm. He spoke of discovering his tumor: “There was a bump on my neck. Hanne noticed it first. She’d been saying that I seemed tired for months, so that made me finally go to the doctor. Getting sick doesn’t compute in the same way that another new task does. It’s amazing how fast your brain can shift modes.”

A few nights later, I joined the couple in downtown Manhattan, at a dinner hosted by José Freire, the owner of the Team gallery, which represents Arcangel. After drinking one glass of red wine—"doctor's orders"—Arcangel politely abstained from a second, as well as from a plate of salmon in teriyaki sauce. "It negates my medication," he explained to me. He downplayed his illness, which was never life-threatening, but conceded that the treatment was tough. "I couldn't hold a real conversation," he said. "My short-term memory was completely wiped out. And my work got really strange. I was making things that were hyper-structuralist or that just didn't have any real content. Now I see them as endgames." At one point, he went online and paid three hundred dollars for a pair of sneakers—vintage Nike Quantum Force high-tops—then wore them while undergoing radiation therapy. He promptly threw the shoes out, and documented the process on video.

After his first bout with cancer, he seemed to find a new enthusiasm for conventional forms of visual art, while retaining his interest in the outmoded. One gallery at the Whitney will be devoted to ravishing photographs that Arcangel made using Photoshop's gradient tool, which creates seamless transitions between colors. Printed as large as nine feet tall, they're computerized variations on color-field abstractions. And, like an actual color-field painting, they balance seductive beauty with my-kid-could-do-that simplicity. Each image in the series is unique—an absurdity, given that a digital file can be printed countless times—and was conceived after only a few clicks of the mouse. Arcangel's titles double as instructions: if you copy the wall label at the Whitney, you can go home and make the image yourself. For example, "Photoshop CS: 84 by 66 inches. 300 DPI, RGB, square pixels, default gradient 'Yellow, Blue, Red, Green,' mousedown y=3000 x=16700, mouseup y=0 x=12600" is a recipe that results in a rectangle whose upper-right corner is tipped in lemon and violet, above a field of crimson that shifts to green. Arcangel's creations will thrive as beautiful pictures for decades, if not centuries. But, as examples of cutting-edge design technology, their demise is inevitable.

At one point, Arcangel proposed a thought experiment to me. He said, "If art is a playing field, at one end there are the people who like art but don't know too much about it. At the other end, there are the people who are obsessed with it, maybe to an unhealthy degree. What if the same piece was recognized as art by the people who like going to museums but was considered blasphemous to the insiders?" I asked him if creating such work was his goal. He responded, "Not my goal—just something to think about." But Arcangel's Photoshop gradients might come close to pulling this off. In 2009, Jerry Saltz, the art critic for *New York,* took note of one such photograph that had been included in a survey of young artists at the New Museum: "Cory Arcangel is a good artist, but his chromogenic print of a color spectrum is a decorative one-liner. It's tenth-generation art about art about the monochrome." When I mentioned the review to Arcangel, he wasn't ruffled. "I've been hearing that 'one-liner' comment from people for years," he said. "The thing is, I'm all for it. I think the same joke over and over becomes something eternal."

We were sitting again in his studio, this time near a shelf containing a small bust of Mozart, National Hockey League trading cards, a catalogue of conceptual video art, and a life-size plush toy of the horse's head from "The Godfather." Arcangel wanted to show me a piece of his that exists only online. "This might be the best thing I've ever made," he said. He says that a lot.

His main computer screen displayed what appeared to be a fan site, in Arabic, devoted to the adult-contemporary singer Christopher Cross, whose career tanked sometime around 1983. The site's design was gloriously cheesy: pastel images of sailboats at sunset; song snippets accompanied by animated piano keys; a wing-flapping seagull. Arcangel, it turned out, had created the site and then translated the text into Arabic. He observed that, "in a few years, someone will just stumble across this and have no idea that it's art." I asked him if he was being ironic, and for the first time he appeared offended. "Irony doesn't produce anything," he said. "It takes the air out of the world and I can't imagine taking any pleasure in that. I'm trying to find something hopeful, some kind of truth." His intent was not to mock but, rather, to celebrate the amateur aesthetic of the early Internet—a frontier that is being paved over by the homogenized tools of "advanced" Web design.

Arcangel's embracing attitude is a welcome riposte to the circled-wagon mentality of so much recent art. At the Team gallery dinner, Eileen Cohen, a collector with the intense air of an early adopter, asked Arcangel if he would consider joining the board of Triple Canopy, an online art journal. He said yes on the spot—and soon agreed to attend a board meeting, even though he was consumed with final preparations for the Whitney show, which was only a few weeks away. In 2008, when the organizers of London's Frieze Art Fair invited Arcangel to participate, he decided to intervene in its selection process. In a move straight out of "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory," he hid a golden ticket inside one of hundreds of chocolate bars that were mailed to gallery owners who had applied to the fair and been rejected. The lucky winner was in Milan.

At the Whitney, Arcangel plans to spring another surprise: in a piece called "Real Talk," the wireless reception inside the galleries has been enhanced, thanks to temporarily installed signal repeaters. He told me, "I love the thought that people will, just out of sheer force of habit, do this"—he stared into the palm of his hand—"and get the best reception they've had all day long." He is also reversing the museum's no-photography policy, in a work titled "777"—Unix code for unrestricted access to a file. These gestures echo the California conceptualist Michael Asher, whose contribution to the Whitney's 2010 Biennial was to have the museum stay open for seventy-two hours straight.

One morning in mid-April, I met Arcangel—his black Polo cap paired this time with a red Benetton sweatshirt—at the museum, where he was taking some measurements of the room where he planned to install ten Photoshop-gradient photographs. He had initially intended to cover the floor in Astro-Turf, but he was scrapping the idea. "I realized that this isn't just any floor," he explained. "It's the floor of a modernist icon. If I'm going to engage with modernism, I have to use it, not cover it up." He knelt down with a tape measure, below a series of prints by Jasper Johns, which move through a spectrum of colors; they suddenly seemed like the ancestors of the very images that Arcangel was preparing to display. He followed my gaze and laughed, saying, "Those are beautiful, but they're not really helping." It's not lost on him that the bar is set high: he is the youngest artist ever to have a show on an entire floor of the Whitney.

He walked over and joined me on a bench facing a row of canvases by Ed Ruscha—one of the artists on Arcangel's flow chart of influences. We talked about the enhanced-wireless project. I asked him why the exchange between artist and audience wasn't enough for him. Why increase the likelihood of distraction? "To heighten the flow," he said. "I want the environment to be just like it would be anywhere else in the outside world. I'm envisioning a visitor who's just a little too preoccupied with modern communication to entirely invest their time where they're standing. It's almost as if people just physically aren't wired for it anymore. I'm not encouraging it. I'm just making it silently possible." In one of the Ruscha works before us, a 1965 painting titled "Give Him Anything and He'll Sign It," a bird's beak has turned into a pencil, which is drawing a line. It felt like an uncanny prequel to Arcangel's plotter art. He smiled when he saw it and asked me, "Isn't it the whole job of art to let new things in the door?" ♦

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Each copy of this month's *Artforum* features one of two cover images. **Dara Birnbaum, *Technology Transformation: Wonder Woman*, 1978-1979**, still from a color video, 5 minutes 50 seconds. **Cory Arcangel, *Super Mario Clouds v2k3*, 2002**, modified Nintendo game system and cartridge, dimensions variable.

IN CONVERSATION: DARA BIRNBAUM AND CORY ARCANGEL

By Dara Birnbaum, Cory Arcangel

Cory Arcangel, *The Bruce Springsteen "Born to Run" Glockenspiel Addendum*, 2006. Performance view, Light Industry, New York, August 5, 2008. Photo: Damien Crisp.

CORY ARCANGEL: Recently I read an interview in which you said clubs provided one of the first outlets for your videos. In other words, you felt you could make videos to be projected in clubs at the same time you made videos that were to be shown in art spaces. Was that specific to the time? It made me wonder how the context for video has changed over the past thirty years or so.

DARA BIRNBAUM: Well, to clarify just a bit, I was saying that whenever I made a work, I believed it could be inserted into different contexts. It wasn't that I was actually making different work for a specific venue. You see, when I started, video was a very bastardized medium, mainly separated out from the arts. The only video I knew of within the arts in the 1970s consisted mostly of extensions of performance art, body art, or Earth art. Video was understood almost as an expanded documentary format, whereas I thought that it had a great capacity for different applications. I was excited when, for instance, the Guerrilla Girls asked me to show *Technology/Transformation: Wonder Woman* [1978–79] at a special evening in their honor at Palladium, which had these massive video walls, or when I could show *Pop-Pop Video: Kojak/Wang* [1980] in another club that had forty monitors around the room, so we could stand within this shootout, truly encircled by the action on-screen, which never resolves itself. But my excitement was more about the change of context than about changing the content.

CA: Yet all these different things were possible only because the clubs suddenly had the technology. It was the classic era of the New York club, right?

DB: Clubs had fantastic architecture and decor at that time. Places like Area had a different interior design every month. But when it came to video, I honestly think they were just looking for a new kind of light show. Studio 54 was using lights in an effective way, and the next club had to ask, "What can we do?" Video was perfect for them, because it presented a whole new dynamic of audiovisual stimulus. The Ritz had this enormous screen, and I had never seen anything like that. I mean, the thing was a couple of stories high.

CA: It was called the Eidophor. NASA had that a decade earlier in its first central-command rooms. Now you see it only in movie renditions of NASA.

DB: I know that your work often deals with technology that's practically obsolete. I guess the Eidophor, given its original use, was also obsolete in a sense. So if it no longer serviced NASA and those applications, it then seemed to have made its way to the clubs. And the clubs would call me. At that time, I was very hot, since I was seen as somebody who edited really fast, utilizing a multiplicity of images and sound.

CA: This was years before MTV, right? I swear I saw your MTV "Art Break" when I was a kid. I was glued to MTV.

DB: You had to be glued to see it, it went by so fast. But I think what's more significant in all these examples is that one is getting inside popular culture as opposed to the frameworks of institutional art spaces. I used to talk about how Bertolt Brecht would refer to mediums such as the newspaper, radio, or television and how they had the tendency to fulfill themselves and then become overinflated. All of a sudden there are holes within their structures, and then other substances could penetrate. That's what happened with cable, for instance. Artists believed that they had finally found a spot within which they could operate; holes opened up and they inserted work into them.

CA: I think I'm definitely in a parallel situation today when it comes to the question of context. You made videos and found it interesting to place them in clubs; my videos go on view in galleries, but I'll also put them online. And just as the galleries weren't interested in your video work because they thought it was just TV, they weren't so interested in my work at the beginning. They just didn't see it as art.

DB: I initially avoided galleries like the plague. I didn't want to translate popular imagery from television and film into painting and photography. I wanted to use video on video; I wanted to use television on television. A lot of us who went into video at the beginning did so because we thought art shouldn't be made in limited editions, and in video we finally had an eminently reproducible medium that could get out into the hands of many. It was a populist form, and our great hope was to do something that made it to Kim's Video store. You know? I didn't want to be collected. I wanted to talk. Looking back, there were different test runs to promote this way of distribution for artists, but nothing ever truly supported that vision.

CA: But that last assertion makes me wonder: Is there even such a thing as a bastardized medium today? Sure, if you're talking specifically about the art context and its inevitable waves of style. In larger culture, however, you now have to consider all the developments in distribution. The fact is that you can put anything up on the Internet and there will be five people who want it, no matter how weird or obscure the information. The niche exists; someone's going to find you, period. That means there can't ever be, in terms of expression and audience, a wrong move. Now, for me, this creates a dilemma I'm still dealing with. On the one hand, it's great, because I'm conceivably able to just chase my wildest, weirdest dreams. But it's also completely paralyzing; if I were to make just what I "liked," it could just as well be all about hockey or something like that. So I use the art context to bring me back.

DB: How does that dilemma unfold with your video games? Aren't they bastardized? As much as we want to let go, there is, I think, still contradiction in art and culture along the lines of, for example, the Museum of Modern Art's exhibition "High and Low" [1990]. Such exhibits have supposedly come together to allow for comparative views, but this actually only reinforces a "low," bastardized component in the art world—until, that is, the art world can see a gateway into it. And that gateway is usually a reinforcement of art-historical values and views. And then come those critical interrogations where people make something of it, saying, "Oh, how interesting that he uses these video games that are obsolete." Because that's a cool word in the art world: *obsolete*. [*laughter*]

CA: Well, you're right to some extent. I can put a video game online and the core audience will be drawn like a magnet to it, while in the art context, some people just won't even go there—although, as I get older, I find that more people are willing to accept it, because everyone else is getting older, too. There's a generational shift. I guess I tried to address the problem with *I Shot Andy Warhol* [2002] and *Super Mario Clouds* [2002], which were meant to be blind to both audiences, meaning that art people would see the work one way and like it while Internet people would see it another way and like it. I wanted these parallel rails on the train track. *I Shot Andy Warhol* doesn't totally work online, though, because your average computer dork doesn't care about Warhol. The *Clouds* really worked, on the other hand, for the reasons you describe. In the art context, it brings to mind the history of landscape and video installation.

DB: Another of your videos, *Japanese Driving Game* [2004], features an endless road, which for me reflects this parallax between the rails of art and popular culture. In the video, you're looking out endlessly, and it's as if the two sides reach toward each other—there is that promise held out—but they never really come together, and the road stays empty.

CA: That work was also about how video games convey space. Structurally, video games, and especially the ones from the ’80s, are different from television because they assume there is land to the left and right of the screen. Your perception is of an endless, horizontal, scrolling plane. So my work is dealing with the structural concerns of the medium, just like some of your early *Pop-Pop Video* work was dealing with the editing techniques found in, say, soap operas.

DB: The piece still seems very reflective of a kind of hopelessness in its endlessness, manifested for me in the empty road that goes on forever. That’s my feeling of what’s going on, in a larger sense, between popular culture and art—the latter of which is steeped in attempts to reinforce its own history now more than ever before.

CA: But that kind of separation is only going to be more pronounced given the rise of the Internet, I think. Art is bound to become more and more specialized, because that’s what *everything* is going to have to do; there won’t be mixing even within popular culture, simply because of the way information travels. Each person goes his or her own way. Already, we don’t have superstars like Michael Jackson anymore, because people aren’t “watching the same channel” the way they used to.

DB: It’s funny you say that, because I recently viewed your *Bruce Springsteen “Born to Run” Glockenspiel Addendum* [2006] online. Springsteen has maintained a certain stardom level—and with some integrity—and yet you make him into an obsolete background figure by playing this “dumb” glockenspiel live against a recording of his music. This is humorous enough, but what’s most interesting to me is that you’re performing in New York at the Museum of Modern Art, of all places, and you’re almost like a star yourself.

CA: Well, MoMA has a “Pop” night. But that project works in every setting. I mean, it’s ridiculous. I use a spotlight sometimes. I dress all heavy metal. I create a cultural mixture that doesn’t make any sense.

DB: But my point is that the audience is screaming before you even start playing. I asked myself, What the fuck is this, where an art audience is cheering like that, giving you star status? It made me think about how odd it is, as when the arts seem to demand that someone's got to "crack the code" of popular culture. I remember feeling like people in the '80s wanted me to crack the code of television. I did that, but then I never found the next model. But here, I thought a generation was clearly looking for that in you—waiting for a superhero to crack the codes of newer mediums, like video games and the Internet.

CA: Well, I'm no superhero. I would say that *you* did crack the code of the Internet, though. You anticipated the way people would express themselves today through technology. In fact, if you look on YouTube, one of the most popular genres is called "super cuts"—where people take a television show and edit together all the similar parts. It's so common now, because every ten-year-old kid has iMovie, but the format—even when it comes to mash-ups—is predicted by your work. I certainly know that I use the repetition and isolation of certain cuts in order to highlight and extract visual elements in video, as you do.

DB: That's true. What I liked about another work of yours, *Sweet 16* [2006], was that even though it has a very formal concept behind it—relating to Steve Reich's compositional strategies, as you've said elsewhere—a mesmerizing drone takes over, which releases me to see some very specific aspects of the image. Like how Axl Rose enters the frame, brief moments that reveal his exact position—

CA: The way he snakes in, yeah. It's very similar in technique, without a doubt, to your *Pop-Pop Video*.

DB: Iconography starts to emerge through a formalist device; repetition allows certain things to surface. In my work, it was the hidden agenda of what was really being said on TV. I think you reach a point where these hidden agendas are also made visible.

CA: But it's important to note that the whole media landscape has changed in just the past couple years. Media is no longer a one-way street. It's participatory. People just make things. And so I don't know whether it's so necessary to "reveal" anything anymore. Maybe a previous era's debate has shifted over to, I don't know, Are you going to Twitter about what you're doing every second?

DB: What is Twittering?

CA: I'm sorry. This is embarrassing. I'm going to tell the editors not to print the word *Twitter*. Twitter is this new website. People use their cell phones to text what they're doing—"I'm eating lunch" or "I'm in the *Artforum* offices having a conversation"—to their website, where other people can read about it. I do have my own audience online, in this sense, because I surf the Internet all day long and leave a bread-crumb trail so people can see what I've been looking at. And when I'm "leaving bread crumbs" for my audience, I'm Twittering, basically. It's like production itself has become consumption.

DB: That sounds to me almost like when artists first got hold of the Porta-Pak. They would just turn it on, not really knowing what to say with this new device. I remember a tape by Howard Fried called *Fuck You, Purdue* [1972]. It was just him in his studio, pacing and recording every word: "Fuck you. Fuck you, Purdue."