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Cory Arcangel

TEAM GALLERY

Cory Arcangel is known for hacking various technologies to produce sophisticated remixes. His works have generally radiated a cheerful aesthetic (*Super Landscape #1*, 2005, for example, is a tranquil scene created by removing everything but the clouds and sky from the Super Mario Brothers video game), while also examining the information that flies under our radar (for *Old Friends*, 2005, the artist cleverly reprogrammed a DVD of Simon and Garfunkel's 1981 concert in Central Park to highlight the duo's disintegrating relationship). Arcangel's hacks attest to computer mastery, but they do not constitute simple showing off: They are used as a tool for examining what technology



Cory Arcangel,
*Self Playing Sony
PlayStation 1 Bowling*,
2008, Sony
PlayStation 1 video
game system,
hacked controller.

have mail” chime made by two computers pinging out-of-office messages back and forth (*Permanent Vacation* [all works 2008]). Here, with something accumulating out of nothing (hundreds of these empty messages pile up in each computer's in-box every day), Arcangel declared this exhibition's aesthetic: form and special effect over content. The absurd melancholy of this work is echoed in *Self Playing Sony PlayStation 1 Bowling*, a bowling video game that the artist has reprogrammed to throw only gutter balls—a different kind of perfect game. Far from simply being an exercise in passive futility, however, this piece demonstrates how much work goes into utter failure: It requires ignoring every bit of helpful advice the game provides on direction, timing, and power. (The comfortable slacker's couch provided for viewers is a nice touch.)

Another type of failure results in startling beauty: *Photoshop CS: 110 by 72 inches, 300 DPI, RGB, square pixels, default gradient "Spectrum," mousedown y=1098 x=1749.9, mouse up y=0 x=4160* is a deeply saturated print that seems unaware of its utilitarian provenance and resembles a Color Field painting more than a digital color gradient. *Video Painting* is a feature-length work made primarily of digital-editing effects, an astonishingly dull parade of flourishes, borders, and colors, unrelieved by much in the way of content. (That this work is pretty much a succession of transitions highlights the lack of anything to make a transition to or from—a kind of constant now.) For *Personal Film*, Arcangel digitally manipulated stock footage shot in 16 mm; he then transferred it back onto film, the result looking as if someone has drawn directly on celluloid, as in an experimental film by, say, Harry Smith.

Arcangel is not the first artist to arrive at art-historical forms through technological means. Jason Salavon, for example, has been doing so for years, but where Salavon tends to use different kinds of information (films, statistics) as abstractable content, Arcangel simply lets the tools be tools and asks whether the results can be deemed a successful failure; he willfully disregards his materials, itself a time-honored strategy for artmaking. These works are considerably more interesting in the context of his previous efforts than they are on their own, raising as they do questions of intent, effort, and historical progression.

—Emily Hall

does and does not tell us, presenting a kind of idiosyncratic cultural epistemology.

By contrast, “Adult Contemporary,” Arcangel's recent exhibition at Team, focused on amateurism—on using technology, as the artist explained in the press release, “without really bothering to . . . [read] the manual.” As before, a gentle humor pervaded, this time in a running joke about ineptitude. Intermittently ringing throughout the gallery was a lonely chord, the “you