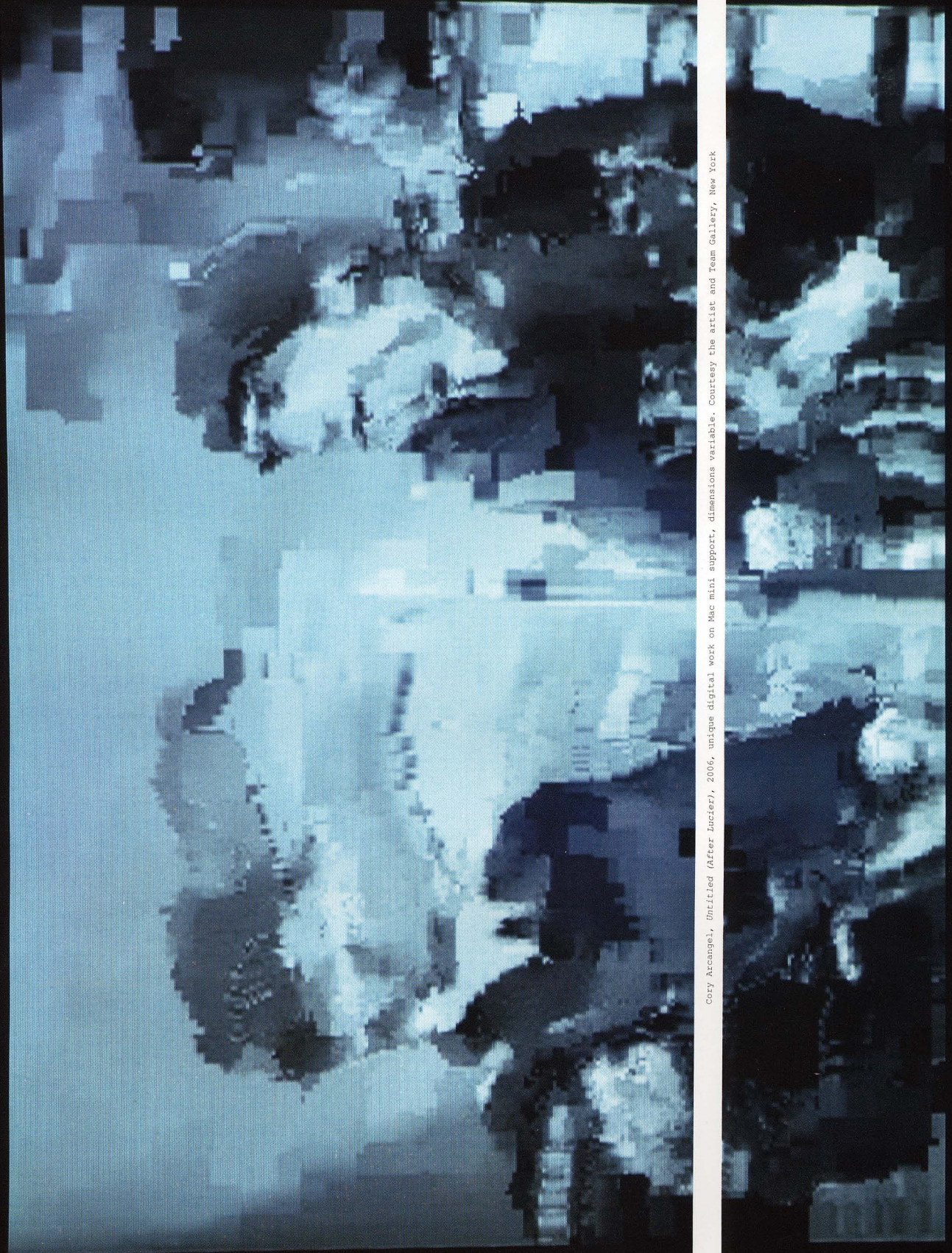


# Art Review:

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Cory Arcangel, *Untitled (After Lucier)*, 2006, unique digital work on Mac mini support, dimensions variable, Courtesy the artist and Team Gallery, New York



# CORY ARCANGEL

words ADAM E. MENDELSON

## WILL THE INTERNET AND THE HOME COMPUTER ULTIMATELY REPLACE THE ART MUSEUM?

**IN 2002 A NEW VOICE FILTERED ITS WAY INTO THE ARTWORLD,** not through established gallery channels but through that unregulated global free-for-all, the World Wide Web. Created as part of the collaborative team Beige, Cory Arcangel's Internet activities and works he dubbed *The Hacks* – video projections of reprogrammed video games – soon moved out of virtual space and into the rarefied environment of the white cube. In an astute engagement with medium and form, Arcangel modified old-school Nintendo game cartridges by removing their electronic chips and replacing them with ones he made himself, creating pieces such as *Totally Fucked* (2002), *Super Mario Clouds* (2002) and *I Shot Andy Warhol* (2002), a piece where Arcangel reprogrammed the original 'shoot 'em up' game Hogan's Alley to include mass-culture icons such as Andy Warhol, the Pope, Flavor Flav and Colonel Sanders (of Kentucky Fried Chicken fame) as targets.

For his most recent solo show, at Team Gallery in New York, Arcangel expanded on his previous project of using early digital technology as a found object by remixing and transforming bits of pop culture into social commentary, from Bruce Springsteen's classic *Born to Run* album (1975), to Richard Linklater's coming-of-age movie *Dazed and Confused* (1993), to Guns N' Roses' 'Sweet Child O' Mine' (from *Appetite for Destruction*, 1987), among others. All but one piece in the show was a video projection and all of them made use of easily accessible digital technology. Arcangel creates new work by using software in the same way that artists have traditionally used paint – something that even today academics are reluctant to accept. Visually engaging, technically accomplished and never without a sense of humour, Arcangel's deceptively simple ideas spread out from the work by word of mouth, like a computer virus; something the artist describes as 'meme'.

**ADAM E. MENDELSON:** What's the commodity, as vulgar as that sounds, in your work? Is it information, your expertise as a programmer, the actual hardware or the idea?

**CORY ARCANGEL:** It's the relationship between the idea/information, my knowledge of the back-end systems (programming, sound editing, music composition, glockenspiel playing, etc, etc) and the end visual or aural product.

**AEM:** In your most recent show you created algorithms, which is basically the same thing as a recipe, right? I suppose then it's a question of motivation and the visual implications.

**CA:** Yes, recipes are the same as algorithms. Set some rules, and let it go. Whatever happens, happens. I am not a trial-and-error artist; the trial and error goes on in my head. Once I settle on the idea, I just have to make it. I know pretty much exactly what a piece will look and sound like before I lift a finger. I'm too stressed and neurotic a person to ever deal with anything more laid-back.

**AEM:** Do you consider yourself to be a conceptual artist and do you see a connection with structuralism?

**CA:** The parallel to conceptual art is obvious, but I am only interested in idea-driven work because of the idea's ability to spread itself. I'm an Internet nerd, and if I'm gonna make something, the idea itself better have legs. At first this was a survival method for making work where my only outlet was the Net (if people don't have a reason to email it to their friends, there is no audience), but now it is just built on. As for structuralist art, yeah, half of the things I make are about the medium they exist on. But these concerns I got from trying to deal with the constant BS of upgrading computers. I just got sick of it, and needed to deal with issues of medium in order to be able to create something worthwhile using a computer.

**AEM:** In *Untitled (After Lucier)* [2006] you deal with the erosion of cultural memory. You programmed a Mac mini to endlessly loop and compress footage of the Beatles's appearance on *The Ed Sullivan Show*, when something like 70 million people tuned in to watch. Is the eventual owner of the work able to start it from the beginning, or since it started, will it run indefinitely down until the hardware gives up? Do you anticipate it just being a grey screen at the end?

**CA:** Yeah, they can start it again if they want. Ha ha ha. I built in a restart button, though that's kinda on the back end. It is against the idea of computers not to be able to restart. I think eventually it would just be grey, or black, or white. I actually haven't run it that far. I only tested it a week or so ahead. But also, if someone wanted, they could just run it into the ground till the computer gives up. That's also fine with me. That's what I would do.