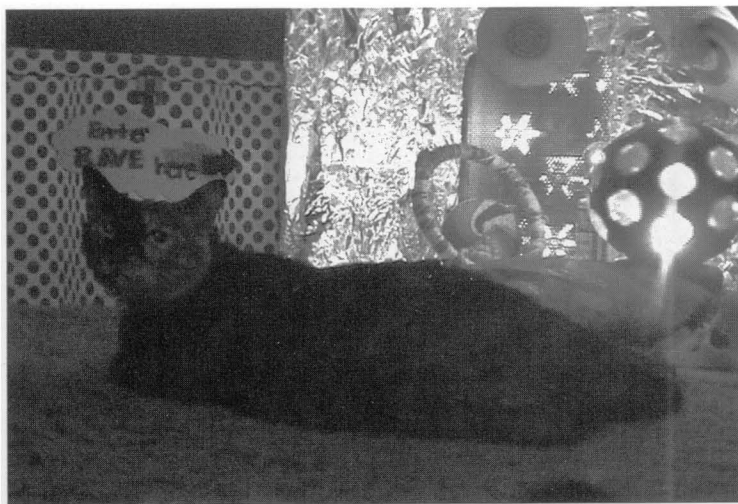


ARTFORUM



Cory Arcangel and Frankie Martin, *Cat Rave*, 2004, still from a color video, 3 minutes 55 seconds.

CORY ARCANGEL

TEAM GALLERY

CORY ARCANGEL/ PAPER RAD

DEITCH PROJECTS

Cory Arcangel segued rather quickly from the realm of Internet message boards and digital-media festivals to that of contemporary-art galleries and museums, borne aloft by the art world's embrace of all things adolescent (here video games in particular) and also by his ability to connect with broader themes, including appropriation and reuse, material specificity, and the mastery of technique. Over the past two years he has shown individual works in five major New York art museums, including a star turn in the 2004 Whitney Biennial. Two simultaneous solo shows recently offered the first opportunity to view his art in aggregate.

Arcangel's works at Team—a constellation of video projections, five-dollar CD-ROMs containing computer software or MP3 files, a hacked website presented on a desktop computer, and his signature hacked Nintendo games—acted as a darkened rec-room rejoinder to Scott Hug's 2002–2003 exhibition at John Connelly Presents, “K48 Teenage Rebel: The Bedroom Show.” *Super Mario Movie*, 2005, made with the artists' collaborative Paper Rad and presented at Deitch Projects, was a large-format projection of an unconventional video—it was made using the eponymous game—accompanied by three-dimensional objects seemingly pulled from the on-screen world.

Arcangel belongs to an emerging generation of artists for whom pop culture, as he said in a 2004 interview, “is no longer ‘source material,’ [but] is the only material.” They share a sensibility in which anything that signifies the mid- to late '80s or early '90s can become art. At Team, these relics included Tetris, rappers Geto Boys, *Doogie Howser, MD*, and rave culture. Already familiar with such content, we look for transformations and juxtapositions that impart new meaning, a search that is by turns frustrated and rewarded, often by the same work.

Arcangel's painstaking recoding of obsolete video-game cartridges—as virtuosic as the technique of any “painter's painter”—is often put to dubious ends, as in *Super Slow Tetris*, 2004, which is precisely what its title suggests. Douglas Gordon achieved much more via equally simple means with *24 Hour Psycho*, 1993. *Japanese Driving Game*, 2004, with its depopulated, unchanging mountain vista and endlessly receding white road lines, fares better; it can be viewed as a Zen drama, a road movie without a climax, or an update of traditional Japanese woodblock prints. In the same room, *Nipod v.2*, 2004, allows viewers to select ringtone-style versions of songs by artists from Black Sabbath to Salt-N-Pepa on an iPod fashioned from an unidentified Nintendo game.

Arcangel's works in other media—primarily video projections from digital sources—do not benefit from his technical facility to the same degree. The novelty of hearing a two-and-a-half-minute excerpt from a Slayer concert recorded by a cell phone wears thin almost as quickly as *Cat Rave*, 2004, a wall-size projection

(made in collaboration with Frankie Martin) of a family pet settling down in the middle of a psychedelic interior. Yet *Beach Boys/Geto Boys*, 2004, an audio mash-up of the former's “Surfer Girl” and the latter's “Six Feet Deep,” accompanied by the side-by-side projection of the songs' videos, is an amazingly concise illustration of how far popular-cultural expression has traveled in thirty years, a trip from innocence to world-weariness. This work's deft marriage of form and content highlights the paucity of the latter on view elsewhere in the gallery.

At Deitch, *Super Mario Movie* presents the title character in the midst of both a midlife crisis and a multicolored world of disintegrating data. Narrative propulsion comes from what else but a mutated mushroom, which guides our hero through the digital clamor to peace of mind and yet another rave. It is entertaining, and its storytelling mode at least offers an alternative to the dead ends presented by his visual one-liners. Like many young recording artists whose hotly anticipated debut albums pad stellar singles with filler, Arcangel's unwieldy solo debut suggests his art may be better experienced one work at a time.

—Brian Sholis