



LOS ANGELES

Jack Pierson

Begin Projects // January 12–February 16

"THE END OF THE WORLD" is named for a massive sculpture that appears to have landed like a meteor in the gallery. Measuring 14 feet tall and 100 feet long, the show's title is spelled out in plywood letters painted in metallic silver—a swollen version of the Hollywood sign. Music emanates from a nearby Singer phonograph, and copper and aluminum letters, sourced from flea markets, spell SAD on one wall.

Elsewhere, found letters read *TEENAGE RUNAWAY* and *DRUG DEALERS AND MOVIE*

STARS in plastic, wood, and light bulbs. They beckon like broken-down roadside signage alongside appropriated images from vintage magazine covers and movie posters that the artist has re-photographed and then folded, leaving a grid of visible creases.

Pierson often displays his work in this manner, creased and tacked to walls. Here, his affinity for retro aesthetics and imperfect compositions is traced to its source, then polished and blown up to epic proportions as he muses on the siren call of Hollywood and the

mythology of broken dreams.

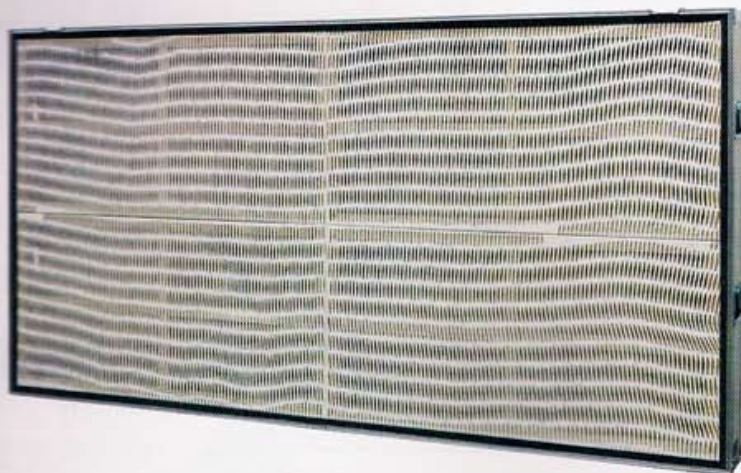
Tangentially, part of the exhibition is the press release, written by the artist. It announces Pierson's "19th comeback attempt," a fictitious film in which he will star as "X, a lonesome post-Rapture nihilist walking the landscape of his vanished youth."

Pierson's postapocalyptic *trek* examines the debris of an era already long gone, but his casting of himself as an action hero is not far off. It is a bravely heroic act to confront the reality of aging, the fear of fading relevancy, and the loss of

a world you once knew.

Ultimately, "The End of the World" is not an ode to nostalgic reverie but a melancholic cataloguing of Pierson's artistic range and early influences. It is a grand gesture, overshadowed by self-deprecation and insecurity, expressed in a grid of smudged graphite word drawings. These taunt Pierson in his youth and today: It's as if the *POOR KID* has become *SOME RICH OLD HOMO* and the promise of achieving *EVERYTHING YOU EVER WANTED* threatens to end as *ARTIST UNKNOWN*.

—Emily Ellis Fox



LOS ANGELES

Hugh Scott-Douglas

Blum & Poe // January 12–February 16

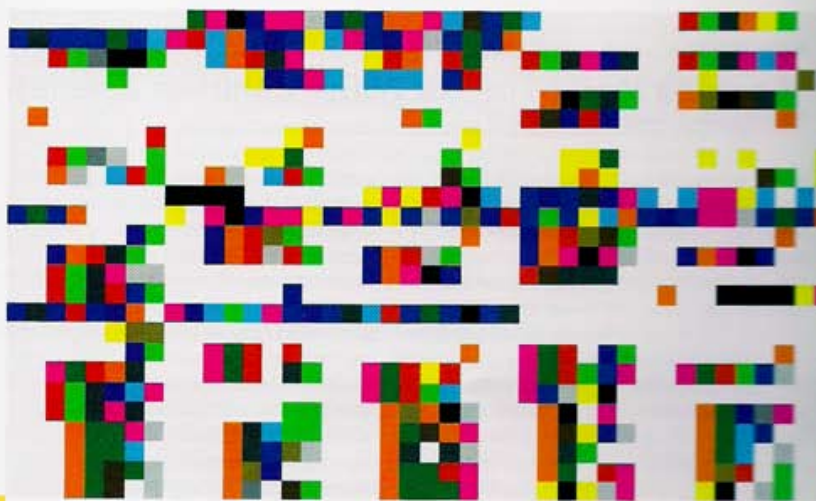
IT WAS A SINGLE still from the German Expressionist film *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* that caught Scott-Douglas's eye: The image uses the unnerving visual technique of *mise en abyme*, whereby two mirrors face each other, reflecting the same image back and forth infinitely in ever decreasing sizes. The effect distorts perspective and disrupts preconceived notions of space.

The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari is known for its highly stylized, two-dimensional stage sets that reflect the delusional psychology and dream-

Cory Arcangel

RIGHT:
Data Diaries,
2003. 62 color
videos, lengths
variable.

BELOW:
Still from *Drei
Klavierstücke op.
11*, 2009. Video,
15 min. 58 sec.



OPPOSITE, BELOW:
**Hugh Scott-
Douglas**
Untitled, 2012.
Laser cut linen,
road case,
54 x 108 x 8 in.

within-a-dream narrative of its characters, including Dr. Caligari and the murderous sleepwalker he attempts to control. In homage, Scott-Douglas borrows the film's title, turning the gallery into his own soundstage with installations created specifically for the space. The work manipulates the venue's layout, mapping out an untraditional, visually disorienting experience.

Commanding the largest room are 18 cyanotypes—computer-generated images that have been subjected to the unpredictable cyanotype process, which requires 15 minutes of sunlight to mature—printed on linen, stretching 18 by 37 feet in an undulating blue grid. The results are lyrical, uneven, and improvised; they are overwhelming when viewed in the too-tight space, a partial hallway that Scott-Douglas has crafted between the wall and a large equipment shipping container.

This road case is the first of four that sit in a row, each smaller than the last, mimicking the effects of mise en abyme. The cases are sliced in half and serve as frames for swaths of laser-cut linen featuring a wave pattern (also derived from the cyanotype files) stretched tautly across their skeletons. Here, however, the shapes are precisely rendered as a result of the use of infrared light rather than ultraviolet, and their sequences reveal a lack of cyan, indicating negative space.

In the second gallery two smaller cyanotype panels sit alone amid otherwise empty walls. The reversal of scale is unexpected: These works cower rather than dominate. The last gallery features a set of slides that rotate in timed 15-minute intervals, exposing the various blue hues that compose cyan in the exact time frame that the cyanotype uses to develop.

Scott-Douglas's attention is captured by the mechanics of an image apart from its story, yet here it is inevitable that the two become intertwined. Much as the film employs mise en abyme as both a visual and a narrative tactic, Scott-Douglas has constructed his own contorted imagery and psychological experience. Patterns mirror themselves, scale flips, and colors are revealed. Like Dr. Caligari's somnambulist, the underlying commonalities become apparent and then shift shape, taking on a life of their own. The viewer is Scott-Douglas's unwitting actor, caught in a landscape that is cohesive, yet unpredictable. —EEF

PITTSBURGH

Cory Arcangel

The Carnegie Museum of Art // November 3, 2012–January 27, 2013

"MASTERS" SHOULD HAVE further embossed a common conception of Arcangel's work—that it's noise. Intelligible and smart noise, but noise all the same. Indeed, the exhibition carries all the trappings of a slightly redundant showing of an artist whose noise has begun to precede him, whose crowd rounds the young artist in anticipation of his latest mischief. A slim selection of iconic video and time-based works are presented here, as well as one new work and a pithy performance. At first blush (and so quickly on the heels of a major installation at the Whitney), "Masters" appears like an adulterated encore to a set still ringing in the ears.

This diminutive exhibition, however, makes a close study possible and it reveals the artist as a more meditative figure than typically suggested. Six video works are featured in the entrance gallery, where the arrangement of Arcangel's clamor and visual discord, such as the hallowed Schoenberg performance by YouTube cats (*Drei Klavierstücke op. 11*, 2009), is tempered by a balance of screens bearing the beautiful scroll of his infinite "data dump" (*Data Diaries*, 2003) or the existential drift of his *Super Mario Clouds*, 2002–ongoing. In the most placid of the pieces, *VIZIO XVT553SV LED LCD HDTV Screen Burn*, 2012, Arcangel attempts to produce the ghost of previously viewed images by presenting boring static text (the artist's name and Screen Burn's caption) onscreen. The more Pop-inspired, abstract patterning of these videos (matched by another, *Permanent Vacation*, 2008, just outside the gallery) suggests the title

track of Arcangel's *Sans Simon*, 2004. They carry the visual equivalent and perhaps, too, the literal embodiment of "the sound of silence."

The ambitious *AUDMCRS Underground Dance Music Collection of Recorded Sound*, 2011–12, epitomizes this unlikely quietude best. An archive of more than 800 records, each listened to, documented, and rated by Arcangel in an extensive catalogue, a homage to a fast-declining moment in popular music.

When during the exhibition's closing night, Arcangel stepped to the microphone in the Carnegie's main music hall, strapped on a guitar, and didn't play a single note but instead



engaged in a conversation with his handmates that seemed like pop-culture drift ("Who was that actor from *Heroes*?" "Connie something!" "No, the cheerleader!"), he effectively presented a rejoinder to John Cage's famed 4:33. There may be a lot of babble clouding the airwaves, but if you step back and listen closely, it's merely static. —Sky Goodden