

THE SCREEN AGE: VIDEO'S PAST AND FUTURE

Cory Arcangel on John Knecht's *The Possible Fog of Heaven*, 1993.



John Knecht, *The Possible Fog of Heaven* (detail), 1993, digital video, color, sound, 10 minutes 47 seconds.

IN THE OPENING MOMENTS of *The Possible Fog of Heaven*, a 1993 computer-animated video by John Knecht, pixelated wishbones twirl and descend vertically over a black background. A cello drones on the soundtrack, while Elvis, of all people, speaks in voice-over—apparently delivering his first utterances from the afterlife. As the singer deadpans his experience of heaven—“There is a flyby waiting for everyone here, I mean to each his own, without, without forgiveness”—the wishbones turn to bodies, plummeting downward as if having leaped off a building. “Things have been falling in my videos for decades,” Knecht has said. “It was at first formal . . . [and] increasingly became an atmosphere, functioning both as a formal device and a metaphorical space.”

Nearly thirty years after I first saw *The Possible Fog of Heaven* in my high school video-art class (yes, we had such things in Buffalo!), this is still one of the most beautiful moving-image sequences I have ever encountered. It is a reminder that, as humans, not only do we fail to comprehend our physical surroundings (how many of us really understand electricity, for example?), we also haven't the slightest idea what's happening in the world of spirits, whose mystical forces surround us every day. Knecht hints that Elvis—having made it from Graceland to the promised land—can help lead the way.

[Cory Arcangel](#) is a Stavanger, Norway-based artist and composer.
