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Antoine Catala: 'I See Catastrophes Ahead'

By KEN JOHNSON

47 Canal

47 Canal Street, Lower East Side Through March 25

An apt slogan for Antoine Catala's amusingly inventive, computer-controlled installation would be "Only connect." It consists of five conceptually and electrically linked parts. In a low vitrine resembling an illuminated aquarium, the holographlike image of an orange model car hovers in space before a wide photograph of piled ice cubes.

Moving clockwise you come to a framed, Pop-style image of a spiral playground slide printed on a latex membrane. A vacuum pump sucks the membrane against the underlying concave forms of three trophies, which become visible as ghostly forms.

Next, another vitrine displays the plastic body of a cat, whose detached, flattened, holograph-like head rotates in space above. Intermittently you hear the startlingly realistic sound of a cat's meow. Then comes a transparent plastic three-dimensional shape of a man's unclothed pelvis and buttocks, enclosing a digital processor that controls all the installation's electronics.

Finally, a panel alternately displays the photographic image of the back of a woman's head and the letter "a" formed by latex vacuumed against an embossing of that character.

Besides cables and tubes, what connects these various constructions is a rebus of images that decodes as “I see catastrophes ahead.” This puzzle is more clever than profound, although reasons for thinking it meaningful might be conceived. What is most impressive is Mr. Catala’s ingenious and poetic play with diverse image-making technologies. He is a dream-machine maker with a bright future.