

# SFGATE

## Yorgo Alexopoulos' 'CLOUDS' servers fakes like in '90s scandal



New York artist [Yorgo Alexopoulos](#) started his art-making life as “Ash,” painting buildings in Los Angeles as a member of the graffiti crew WCA. These days he makes enormous video installations, like his 432-LCD-screen spectacle lining the lobby of the [Cosmopolitan Hotel](#) in Las Vegas. As visual effects supervisor on the documentary “The Kid Stays in the Picture,” he developed the now-ubiquitous zooming “2.5D” effect used to animate still photographs. His latest show is “Clouds,” opening Thursday, March 12, at [Gallery Wendi Norris](#). We spoke to him by phone.

**Q: You're making sculptures that resemble computers but don't do anything. Why is the show titled “Clouds”?**

**A:** Imagine a cloud computer data center. I'm creating server racks that are a facade. I was inspired by an anecdote from [Bernie Ebbers](#), the former CEO of [MCI WorldCom](#) in the 1990s. Do you remember that company? They were cooking the books; they were a predecessor to the [Enron](#) and [Bernie Madoff](#) scandals. The anecdote is that he was taking bankers from Citibank and Chase to see the WorldCom headquarters to secure these \$100 million loans. He would take them into these huge data center rooms — and the machines were fake. They had power lines, but no data. I thought, that's a

<http://www.sfgate.com/art/article/Yorgo-Alexopoulos-Clouds-servers-fakes-6128415.php#photo-7618915>

metaphor that can transcend. It's like the Potemkin villages of Russia, or the sets of old Western movies. So I've created sculptures that look like a tower, with blinking lights — but nothing's happening. The title is a riff on the concept of cloud computing.

**Q: What will the video aspect be like?**

**A:** In the back, the machines are totally individual. Each one is its own world. Inside, there's a sculptural diorama. One is of the [World Trade Center](#), which I've 3-D-printed out of gypsum. It's covered in sand like it's being buried in the desert. The second diorama looks like an aircraft carrier, but it's about to hit a sea mine. It's basically David and Goliath, and a loose metaphor for the way the U.S. is a giant superpower going up against guerrilla forces today. In the third diorama, it's like you're looking into a stainless steel elevator. In the back, there's an elevator with a view of the city, but it's zooming by. You're in an elevator that's going up forever, you never get to the top. All along, you'll hear the fans from the machines — it will sound like a data center.

**Q: Do you miss making street art?**

**A:** I'm completely immersed in that world still. A lot of those guys have gone on to big art careers. I do street pieces still; maybe once or twice a year I'll go out and paint a piece. Street art taught me how to work large and attack a huge wall and not be intimidated by big surfaces. And if you squint your eyes and look at the work I do now, it uses the same palette.

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**If you go**

**Yorgo Alexopoulos: *CLOUDS*:** Reception 6-8 p.m. Thursday, March 12. Through May 5. 11 a.m.-6 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday. Gallery Wendi Norris, 161 Jessie St., S.F. (415) 346-7812. [www.gallerywendinorris.com](http://www.gallerywendinorris.com).