

ARTFORUM

Christian Jankowski

THE KITCHEN

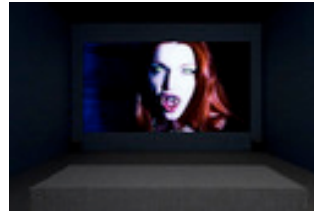
512 West 19th Street

October 21–December 9

Christian Jankowski takes the opposite tack of those artists who elaborately stage reality using professional cinematic tools; he stages staginess, using amateurs and bystanders, and in so doing upends notions of performance and acting. For *Angels of Revenge*, 2006, one work in this exhibition, he engaged costumed participants from a horror-film conference to compose and recite revenge fantasies about people who had hurt or betrayed them. Each video segment follows the same format: The participants—in garish, bloodied costumes—emerge out of darkness into a harsh spotlight and then walk straight toward the camera, reciting, in the familiar monotone of the B-movie psycho killer, their grievances against friends, girlfriends, and former business partners.

It's high cheese, manufactured menace—the costumes, the voices, the threatening approach—but it works, delivering a frisson of something real that is the product of the familiar format and the heartbreaking specificity of the grievances. The intersection of fiction and reality elevates both. In other works, Jankowski tinkers with the formula—werewolf hunters spout cultural theory, an actor portraying Frankenstein's monster joins the artist for a game of chess—all the while demonstrating that the line between performance and reality is hardly stable and may not be, in the end, particularly useful.

—Emily Hall



Angels of Revenge, 2006.
Installation view, "Us and Them,"
The Kitchen, New York, 2006.