



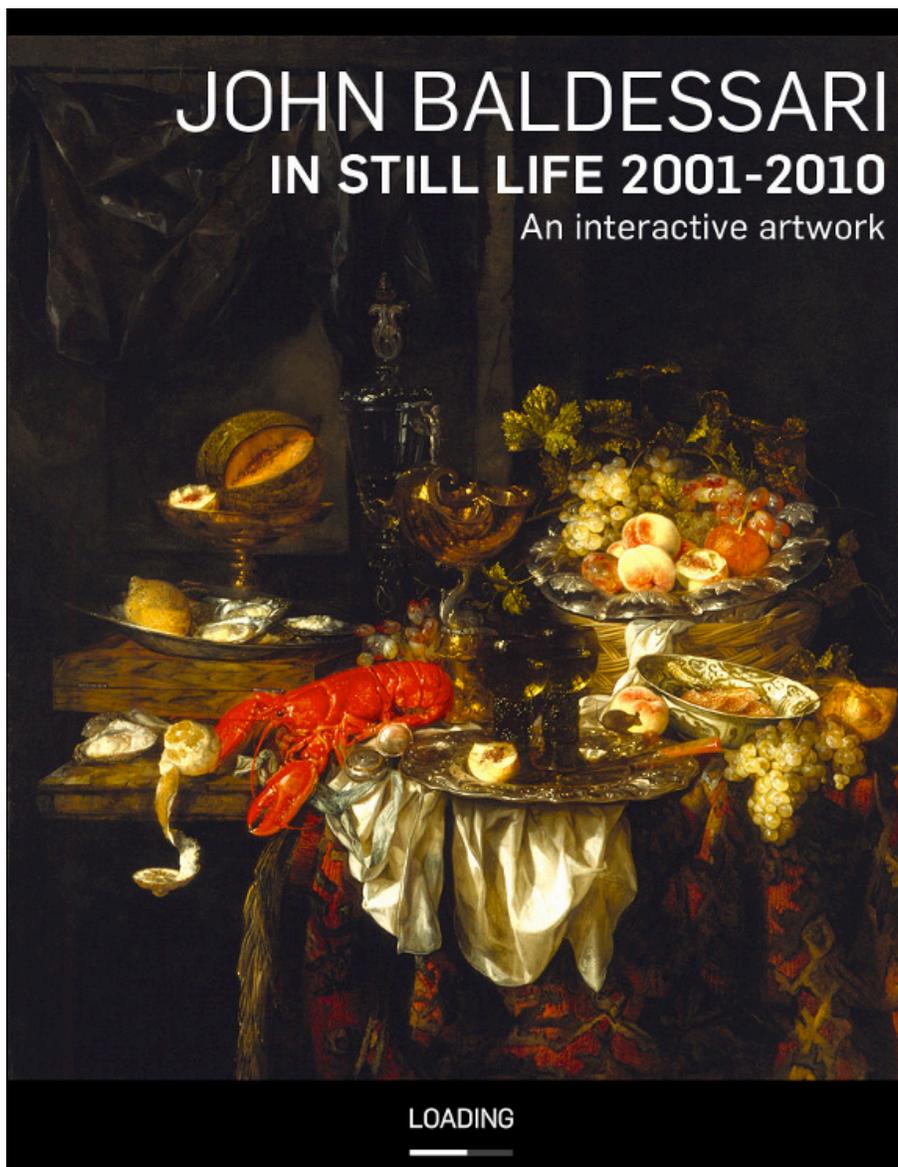
Original Works Of Art Composed For Your Smartphone? There's An App For That

Shana Nys Dambrot



Digitally-generated images are serious factors in fine art -- this has been established and is getting to be as par for the gallery course as it's become for cinema. But there is at least one realm of digital art that is only beginning to be properly explored -- the smartphone app. Not to be confused with art-making apps like Draw Something, or sharing apps with cool effects like Instagram, these are apps which are in themselves works of art, functionless in the same way as a painting, but made of code instead of paint. Sounds cool, right? And it is -- way cool. Gorgeous, self-generating and/or interactive, randomizable, poetic, mesmerizing and addictive, the best art apps are also, ironically, almost impossible to find without infinite patience or an inside tip on where to look.

That's because app culture and the search engines that drive its traffic have yet to realize the value of this emerging genre, and as such, these apps get buried under the unsearchable categories of "entertainment" or sometimes "media." Search terms like "art app," "artist app," "art project," "fine art," and etc. inevitably yield results of the Draw Something and Instagram variety within the iTunes store. A Google search returns those plus a few lovely red herrings that turn out to be sites rewarding the (considerable) innovation and artistry of IOS interface designers. Every once in a blue moon, you'll have an artist of stature like **John Baldessari** make an app for a museum show as he did for his most recent LACMA survey. But while imaginative and moderately entertaining, that's not exactly obscure -- if anything, it's a marketing tool. Same thing with the L.A. Soundmap app released for the current Hammer Biennial Made in L.A. It features musical selections by **dublabb**, geo-locating pop-up points of curatorial interest, and programming designed for both in and out of the show itself, and in a way is as much a "piece in the show" as anything in the galleries. But again, the institution pushed it out through all its channels. Hip and engaging yes, but it's not quite under the radar in the same way an individual artist's singular work would be in the current situation.



John Baldessari LACMA App.

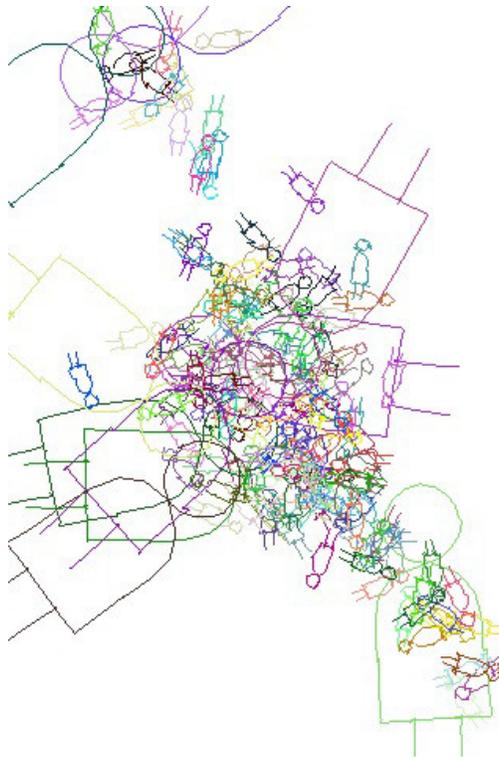
So if you are interested in exploring this facet of the New Media revolution, the most effective strategy is still the old-fashioned way -- try getting a tip about where to start from someone who knows more about it than you do. Then once you have a foot in the door, follow the trail of suggestions and you will make your own discoveries. I was fortunate enough to be asking **Jody Zellen** -- an accomplished photographer, digital and installation artist, and art-app designer, who was gracious enough to share her cheat-sheet with me and turn me onto half a dozen of her peers doing fascinating things with app art, and they are presented below. A perusal of their work imparts the sense that they as artists are occupied with the same concerns of beauty, movement, emotion, narrative, and gesture as any painter -- but that they are also interested in truly utilizing the inherent qualities of touch-screen interactivity, programmable algorithms, audio capability, and luminosity to make app-based art objects that fulfill all the expectations of a true work of art. Most of the below are either free or 99 cents, the same as a single song -- and trust us, you'll be playing these art works long after you've stopped playing "Call Me Maybe."

Jody Zellen: This artist has just released her fourth art app, **4 Square** (the others are Urban Rhythms, Art Swipe, and Spine Sonnet). 4 Square looks, like some of Urban Rhythms, like Zellen's own work, but the app and user's finger take over the role of the artist in choosing compositions, juxtapositions, and assigning meanings. Urban Rhythms is a code-based replication of how people move in crowded urban environments. A series of sketches explore gestures specific to the touch-screen -- tapping, swiping, tilting. Urban Rhythms can be used as a drawing tool, a game, and as data visualization. Spine Sonnet is an automatic poem-generator that randomly composes 14-line sonnets out of art and architectural theory and criticism

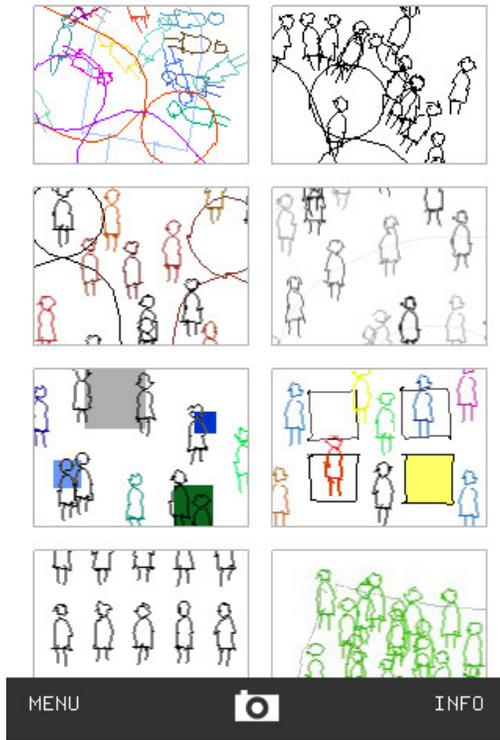
book titles. Art Swipe is loosely based on the Surrealist game Exquisite Corpse, allowing users to make collages from LACMA's Image Library, as well as images from the camera/phone itself. Like many such projects, this App was developed to coincide with the women surrealists' show at LACMA from January to May of 2012.



Jody Zellen's Spine Sonnet.



Jody Zellen's Urban Rhythms App.

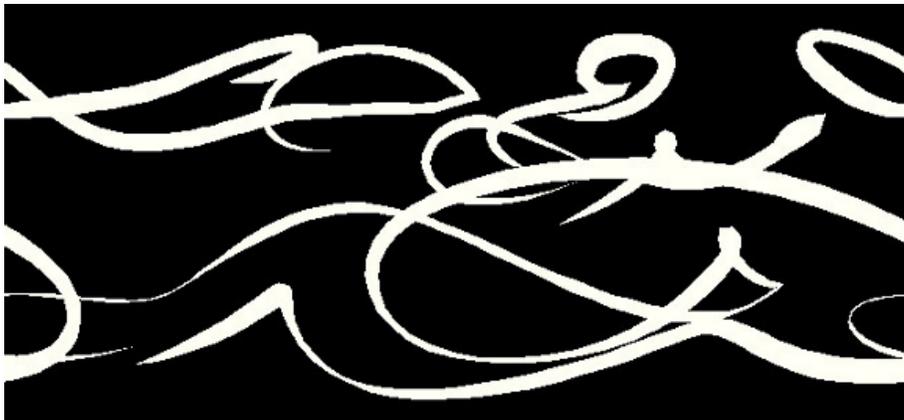


Jody Zellen's Urban Rhythms App.



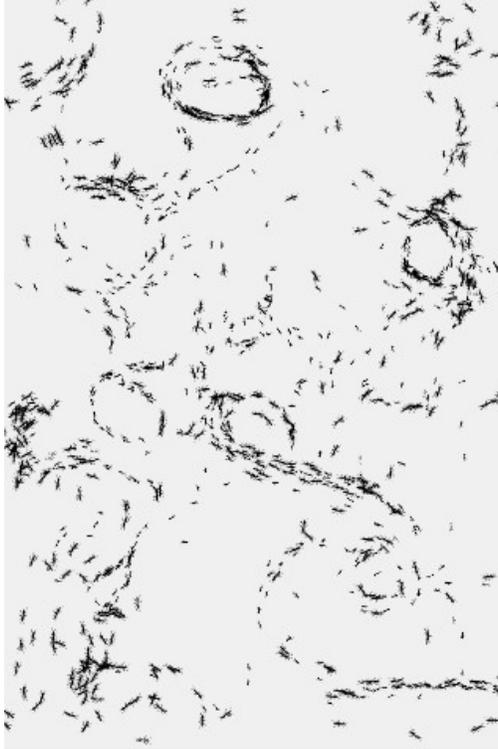
Jody Zellen's Art Swipe App.

Golan Levin: Yellowtail. One of the simpler concepts but a classic. A black screen, white lines. You make one swipe with the tip of a finger, the app grabs your mark and its momentum and generates an endless supply of looping variations on it. It's the sort of thing you can stare at a la "Vertigo" but with no adverse effects.

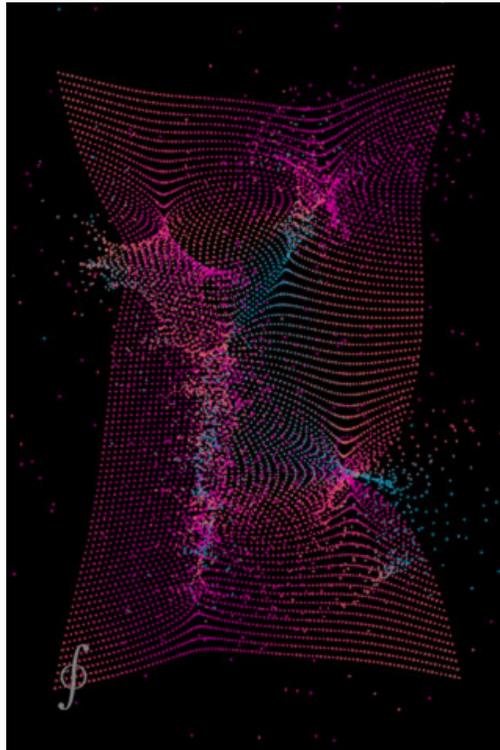


Golan Levin's Yellowtail App.

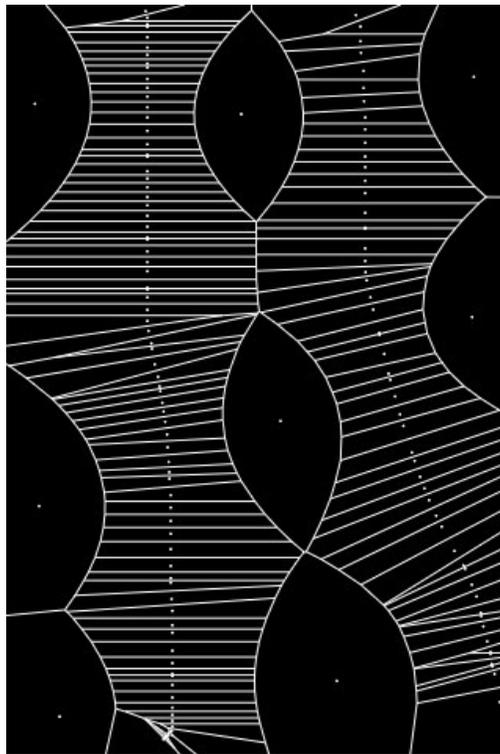
Scott Sona Snibbe: Antograph. Touch the screen to release a stream of ants that follow your movements in much the same way as the trails in Yellowtail and the stick figure citizens in Urban Rhythms. Like many but not all of these early (2009-2012) examples, Antograph is a combination of drawing, animation, art, science, and gaming. Scott Snibbe also released Gravitlux, which he describes as "a work of interactive software art." With each touch in Gravitlux, you exert a gravitational pull on a world of simulated stars. Though inspired by Newton's equations for gravity, Gravitlux doesn't follow our universe's laws. Perhaps the most charming of Snibbe's apps is **Bubble Harp**. Bubble Harp draws lines that emanate from the impressions of your fingertips, recording and replaying your movements and creating music based on those forms. You can select for color and mood, but the overall effect is like having fun at a John Cage concert.



Scott Snibbe's Antograph App.



Scott Snibbe Grivilux App.



Scott Snibbe Bubble Harp App.

Andreas Muller: For All Seasons. This work starts as prose poetry and ends as a spinning 3-D rendering of objects made of the same words. The words in a snippet of memory about a garden fall apart and become shapes that assemble themselves into a picture of a garden that can be viewed from all angles. So there's interactivity and control but also narrative and image. It's simple but haunting. On the more complex side, visually speaking, there are two sumptuous apps from Austrian artist Lia. The first is **Arcs 21**. It looks like watching the masterful strokes of invisible dry-ink

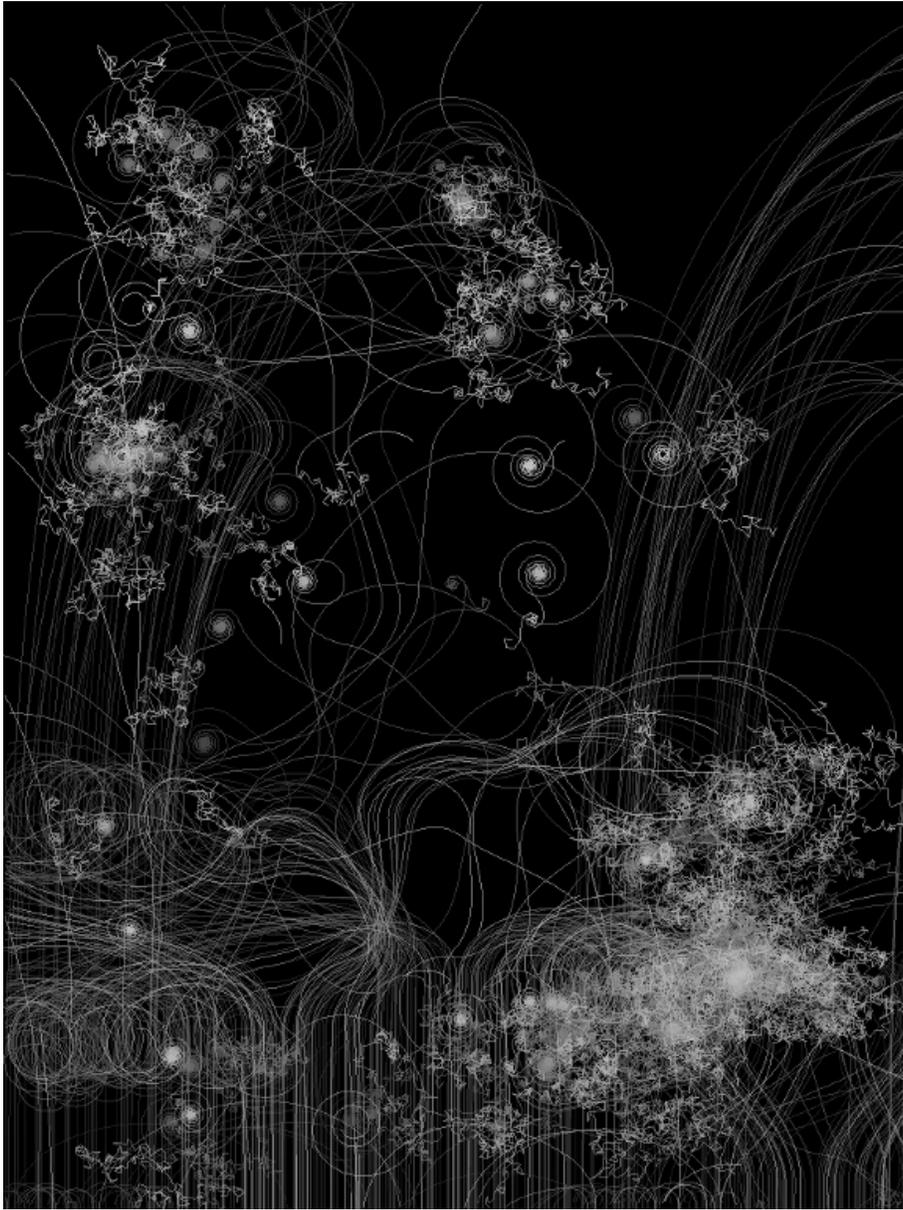
brushes. Here's their own more technical description of what the active visual elements entail: "Interaction alters the behavior of the elements which construct the image, allowing for an infinite range of possible results. Various controllable parameters allow you to influence the creative process, sculpting the development of the artwork on your screen. An element of random influence means that no generated image will be the same as any other." Lia's **sum05**: claims that the software and the user collaborate in the creation of the artistic experience. One simply shakes the device to get a random color, taps to reposition linear elements, and tilt the device to change their direction. Again, no two uses will ever result in the same image.



Lia's Arcs 21 App.



Lia's Arcs 21 App.



Lia's Sum05 App.

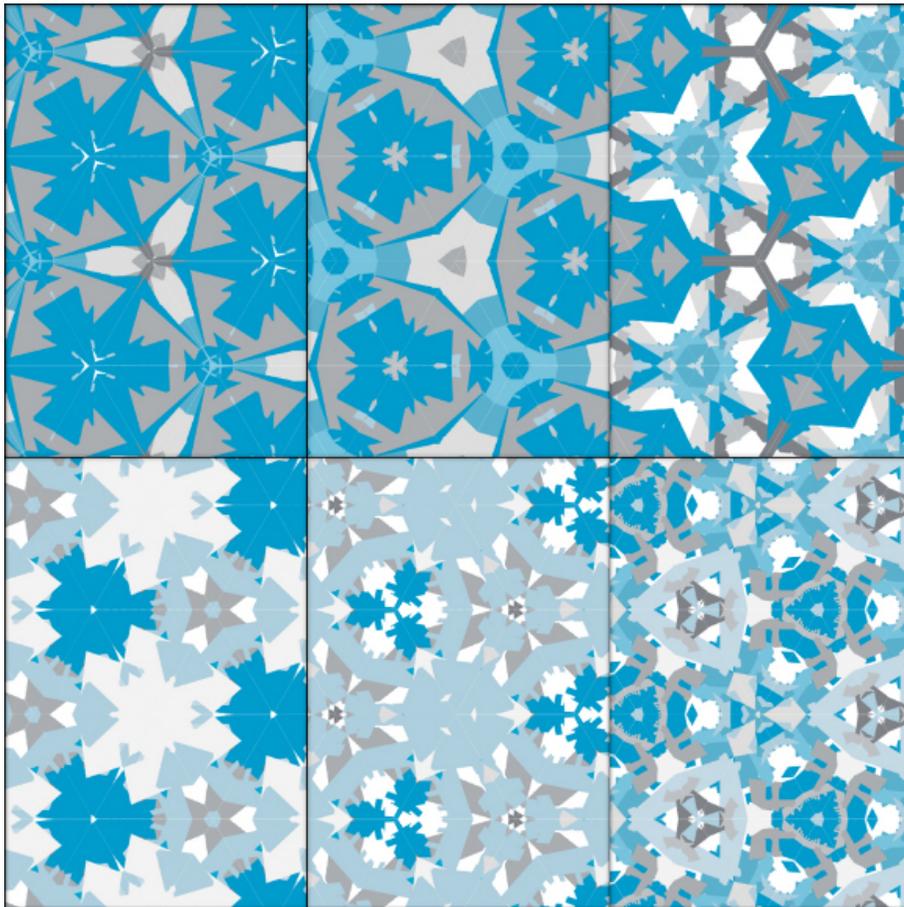


Lia Sum05 App.

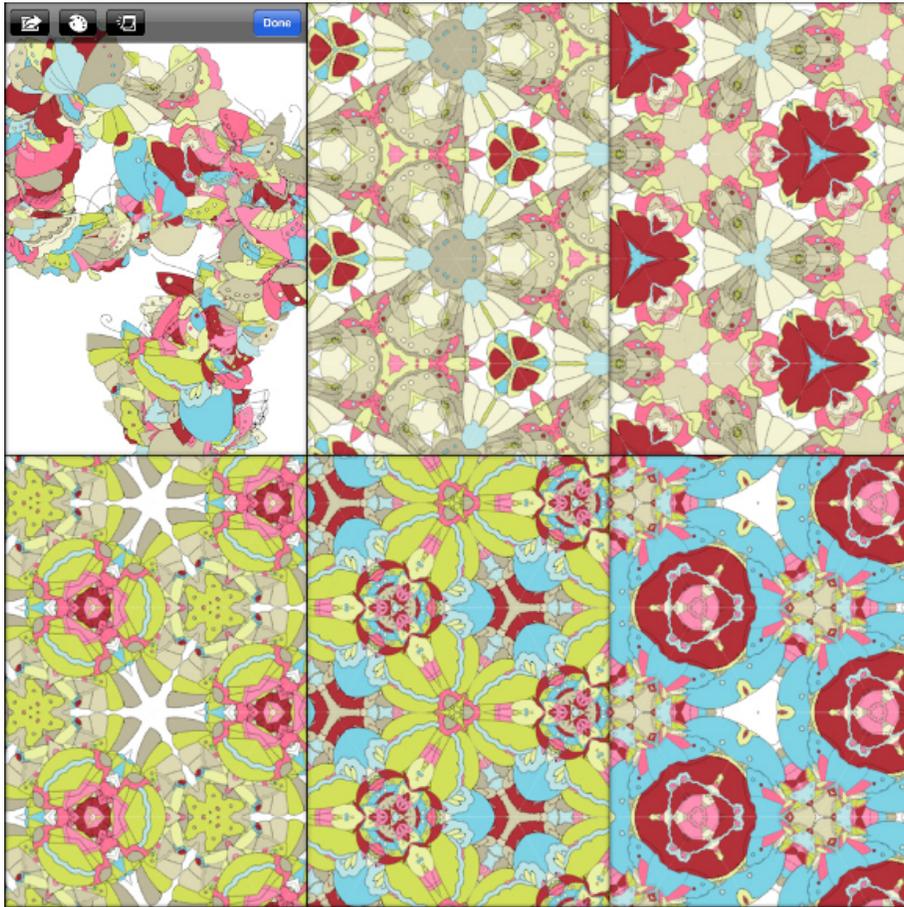
Joshua Davis: Reflect. Your finger movement generates forms and color patterns via algorithms of shapes and colors that create original works of art in a reflective kaleidoscopic. Davis said in a *Wired* interview: "Pollock showed that there was beauty in randomness," but there's also more than a few psychedelic-pop influences at work as well. The results are like acid-test stained glass, and accomplish, as do all of these apps mentioned here, and those that I haven't stumbled across yet, that when it comes to contemporary art, these days it's not what apps can do, it's what they can be.



Joshua Davis' Reflect App.



Joshua Davis' Reflect App.



Joshua Davis' Reflect App.

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Top Image: Jeremy Rotsztain's PhotoRibbons App.

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Multi-hyphenate works that combine disciplines, remix dogmas, and reinvent the wheel.



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Stuart Krimko
Los Angeles + Performance
Brainchild: An Otherworldly Ceremony on a Simulated Mars
 Kathleen Johnson's multi-faceted performance "Brainchild" tells the story of a woman who explores the remnants of an alien civilization. The piece was recently staged at the Mars Desert Research Station -- a landscape with which it has clear associations.



Myriam Gurba
Los Angeles + Multi-Disciplinary
Killjoy's Kastle: A Romp Through a Lesbian-Feminist Haunted House
 Created by Toronto-based artists Allyson Mitchell and Deirdre Logue, and sponsored by the ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives, "Killjoy's Kastle" is a lesbian feminist haunted house where herstory and Halloween collide.



John Brian King
Los Angeles + Film/Media Arts
Night Shots: John Brian King's Photos of 1980s Los Angeles
 As a teen, photographer and filmmaker, John Brian King roamed the terminals of LAX - and adjacent neighborhoods -- with a camera, snapping away at the people and landmarks he briefly encountered. His upcoming book "LAX: Photographs of Los Angeles 1980-84" is comprised of never-before-seen images that lived inside a storage box for 30 years.



Liz Goldner
Orange + Multi-Disciplinary
The Roots of Radical Art at University of California, Irvine
 Exhibition "A Performative Trigger: Radicals of Irvine" shines a light on the cutting-edge performance and conceptual art created by UC Irvine students in the 1960s and '70s.



Michael Haas
Los Angeles + Music
Walter Arlen: Exiled Composer's Personal Works Are Rediscovered
 Born Walter Aptowitz, composer Walter Arlen left Nazi-occupied Austria in 1939 for the United States at age 18. In Los Angeles, Arlen would become a prominent music critic but stash away his original works for many years. In recent times, an effort has been made to make his songs public.



Alex White
Los Angeles + Interdisciplinary
D.I.Y: Art from the Indonesian Archipelago
 For "Road Trip to Indonesia" visiting artists He Leong Kiang, Anwar and Putu rented a car and along the state's joint exhibition is informed by their of California and of cultures within Indonesian/Mala archipelago.

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