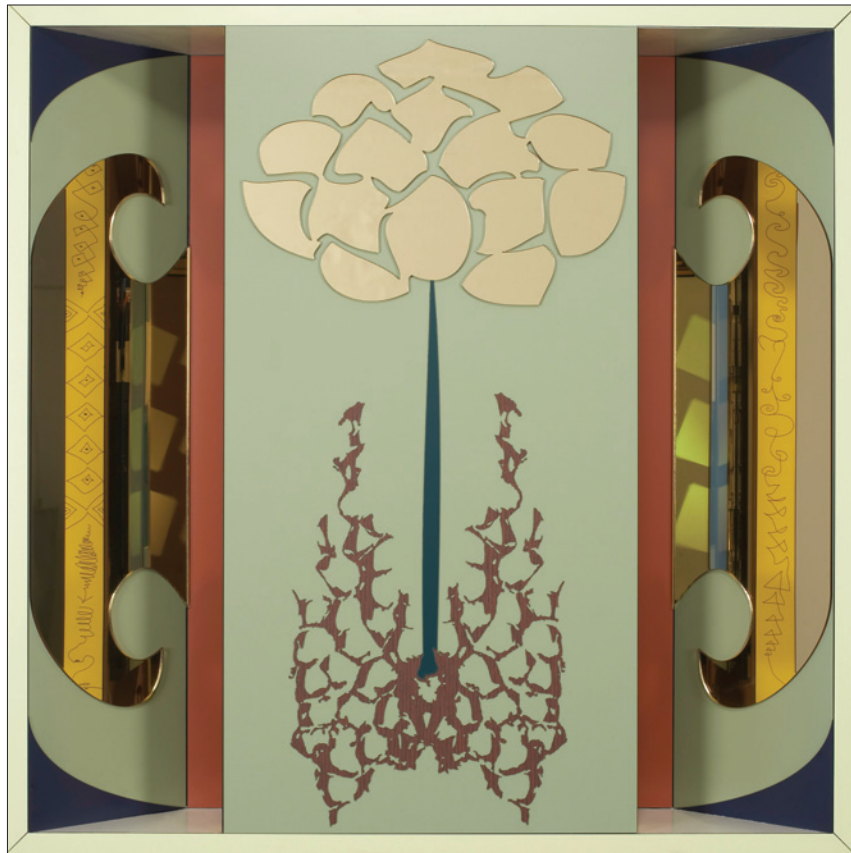


DIGITAL PAINTINGS:  
JOHN F. SIMON, JR.

JUNE 30-SEPTEMBER 23, 2012  
LOUISIANA ART & SCIENCE MUSEUM



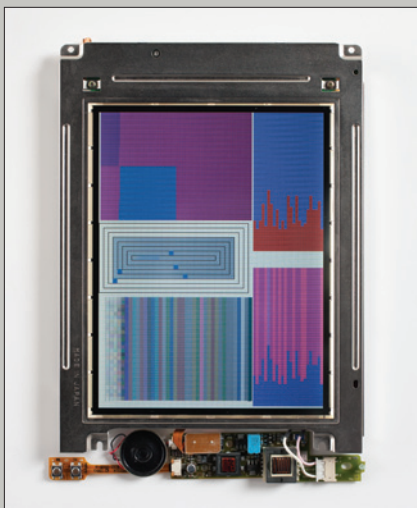
## DIGITAL PAINTINGS: JOHN F. SIMON, JR.

Replacing the canvas with the computer screen, John F. Simon, Jr., a native of Louisiana, uses computer technology to create dynamic visual experiences rooted in art historical tradition. At the forefront of new media internationally since the 1990s, Simon writes his own computer software, basing it on the understanding that simple rules, activated and displayed on a screen, create more images than anyone can ever see in a lifetime. Inspired by the paintings and theories of the European Modernists such as Joseph Albers, Paul Klee and Piet Mondrian, he creates imagery that is constantly evolving yet never repeating.

**ABOVE** *Little Light*, 2007, software, LCD screen, Formica, mirrored acrylic plastic, lacquered wood, 25 x 25 x 4 in.

To make his art, Simon begins by sketching. For the past 12 years, he has engaged in a daily practice that he calls *Divination Drawings*. These serve as inspiration and source material for the production of finished works. Composed in pencil or gouache, Simon allows his unconscious thoughts and emotions to guide his mark making. He then studies them to discern which persistent marks or symbols can best be translated into the language of code. For Simon, writing code is as “personal as a painterly gesture on canvas.” Viewing the results on a computer screen, he improvises with the code and then sometimes returns to drawing with those ideas.

Much of Simon’s inspiration comes from the study of art created by systems or rules. Joseph Albers, a pioneer in the study of color contrast theory, followed rigorous self-imposed guidelines in painting his best known series *Homage to the Square*, a rigorous and disciplined series of chromatically colored squares begun in 1949. Albers, Johannes Itten and others associated with Germany’s progressive Bauhaus School proposed that the perception of color is affected by its surrounding colors and thus never absolute. Simon offers his own digital color studies beginning with



*Color Panel v1.0* (1999), which iterates through all the color possibilities explored in the Bauhaus theories. Building upon this concept even further, the shapes in Simon’s *Morada* imagery from 2008 iterate through more than 16 million different color choices, a seemingly endless number of possible combinations.

*ComplexCity* (2000) and *Intersection* (2005) borrow motifs found in Mondrian’s famous painting *Broadway Boogie Woogie* (1942-1943).

For Simon, rules can be liberating. In the 1960s, Sol LeWitt devised a unique method of execution for his *Wall Drawings*. Instead of making the artwork himself, LeWitt provided a set of rules that ensured the drawings would vary with each installation. As Simon’s software cycles through simple sets of drawing rules, unpredictable patterns emerge. Simon’s first piece to gain critical attention titled *Every Icon* (1996) introduced this concept, the foundation of all his current software. Within the limited confines of the grid of a typical computer icon, the software is programmed to progress through a seemingly infinite number of possible combinations. For one of today’s machines to display all combinations of just the first two lines, it would take



**TOP TO BOTTOM**

*Color Panel v1.0*, 1999, software, Macintosh 280c and acrylic plastic, 14½ x 10½ x 3½ in.

*Morada IV (Water)*, 2008, custom software, Apple Mini, LCD screen, lacquered wood, paint, Formica, 36 x 30 x 6 in.

almost one billion years ( $10^9$ ). Completion of the entire showing of all possible icons would take an exponentially longer  $10^{300}$  years.

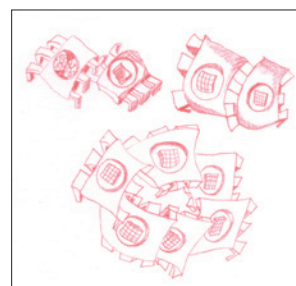
The framing of Simon's art adds much to the meaning of each piece. His software-driven imagery is exhibited on reconfigured computers, LCD screens, even cell phones, and presented as wall-hung objects mounted in laser-cut plastic or Formica, or encased in elaborate cabinets. His early artworks feature a centrally positioned cinematic screen.



Others expand the composition viewed on the screen onto complex borders. More recent works explore the metaphoric possibilities of the screen, and the effects created by its inherent light. The softly glowing hidden screen in *Little Light* (2007), for instance, symbolizes the spirit, or inner light, of the work itself. The obscured screen in *The Secret of the Golden Flower* (2012) faces an inner mirror, suggesting the act of self-reflection and the unattainable quest for true self-knowledge.

Simon does not call his works “paintings” and prefers the terms “software” or “digital” art. Yet, in what has been proposed as today’s “expanded field of painting,” a host of various art forms, including digital, video, and installation art, are being discussed within the parameters of painting itself. Taken in this context, Simon’s work just may indicate the future of painting in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

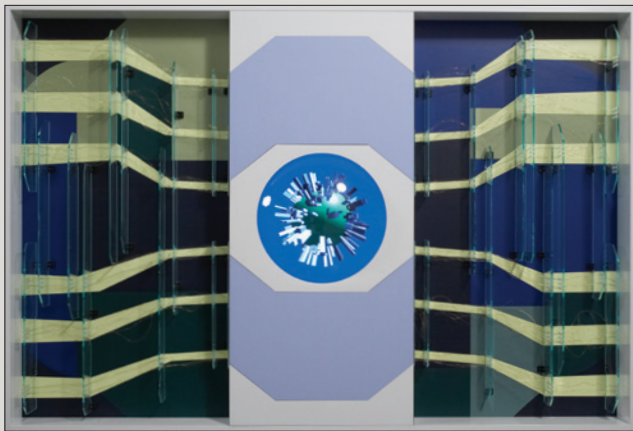
*Elizabeth Chubbuck Weinstein*  
 LASM MUSEUM CURATOR



**TOP**  
*The Secret of the Golden Flower*, 2012, software, LCD screen, metal & plastic laminate, enamel and latex paint, wall paper, acrylic plastic, magnifying dome, 22 x 29 x 14½ in.

**BOTTOM: LEFT TO RIGHT**  
*ChipCycle*, 2010, Trupan Ultralight, plastic laminate (Abet & Formica), Flashe paint. 47 x 56 x ¾ in.

*Divination Drawing* (study for *ChipCycle*), pencil and gouache on paper.



## JOHN F. SIMON, JR.

www.numeral.com  
www.iclock.com

### BORN

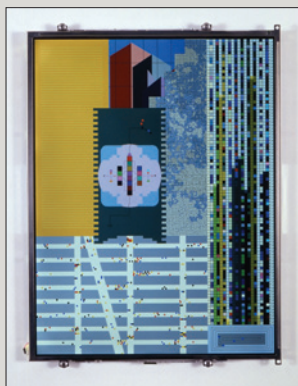
1963 Shreveport, Louisiana

### EDUCATION

1989 MFA, Computer Art, School of Visual Arts,  
New York, NY  
1987 MA, Earth and Planetary Science, Washington University,  
St. Louis, MO  
1985 AB, Art (Studio) and ScB., Geology, Brown University,  
Providence, RI

### SELECTED PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Brooklyn Museum of Art, Brooklyn, NY  
The Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA  
Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY  
The Print Collection of the New York Public Library, New York, NY  
The Progressive Corporation, Cleveland, OH  
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA  
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY  
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY



**TOP TO BOTTOM** *Chip*, 2007, software, LCD screen, Formica, acrylic plastic, gold plated wire, lacquered wood, hardware, 49½ x 73½ x 6 in.

*ComplexCity*, 2000, software, Macintosh G3 PowerBook, acrylic plastic. 19 x 16 x 3 in.

### SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2012 *Digital Paintings: John F. Simon, Jr.*, Louisiana Art & Science Museum, Baton Rouge, LA  
2010 *Innerhole*, Gering & López Gallery, New York, NY  
2009 *Outside In: Ten Years of Software Art*, Collezione Maramotti, Reggio Emilia, Italy  
2008 *Color and Time*, Galería Javier López, Madrid, Spain  
2007 *Winds Across the Inner Sea*, Gering & López Gallery, New York, NY  
2005 *John F. Simon, Jr.*, Alexandria Museum of Art, LA  
*Endless Victory*, Sandra Gering Gallery, New York, NY  
2004 *Suburban*, Knoxville Museum of Art, Knoxville, TN  
2002 *Recent Work*, SITE Santa Fe, Santa Fe, NM  
1999 *CPU*, Sandra Gering Gallery, New York, NY

### SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2010 *01SJ Biennial*, San Jose, CA  
2008 *Holy Fire art of the digital age*, iMAL Center for Digital Cultures and Technology, Brussels, Belgium  
2007 *Art Under Glass*, Macy's, Harold's Square, New York, NY  
2006 *All Digital*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Cleveland, OH  
2005 *Techno/Sublime*, CU Art Museum, University of Colorado, Boulder, CO  
*ElectroScape*, Shanghai Zendai Museum of Modern Art, Shanghai, China  
2004 *Seeing Double: Emulations in Theory and Practice*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY  
*New York Show*, Opelousas Museum of Art, Opelousas, LA  
*Digital Sublime – New Masters of the Universe*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei, Taiwan  
2003 *Flower Power*, Musee des Beaux-Arts, Lille, France  
2002 *media\_city seoul 2002*, Seoul Museum of Art, Seoul, South Korea  
*Digital Louisiana*, Contemporary Arts Center, New Orleans, LA  
*Optical Optimism*, Galerie Simonne Stern, New Orleans, LA  
2001 *BitStreams*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY  
*Selections from the Permanent Collection*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA  
2000 *2000 Biennial Exhibition*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY  
*An Art of Pure Form, Works from the Collection of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum*, New York State Museum, Albany, NY  
1998 *Formulations*, Sandra Gering Gallery, group show with Sol LeWitt and Hanne Darboven, curated by Timothy Druckrey, New York, NY

# EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

*Parameter Catalog*, 1993

Ink on paper  
30 x 22 in.

*Time Reconstituted*, 1994

Ink on paper  
22 x 30 in.

*Every Icon*, 1996

Software, Macintosh G3  
PowerBook, acrylic plastic  
19 x 16 x 2 in.

*Color Panel v1.0*, 1999

Software, Macintosh 280c and  
acrylic plastic  
14½ x 10½ x 3½ in.

*CPU*, 1999

Software, Macintosh 280c, acrylic  
plastic  
14½ x 10½ x 3½ in.

*ComplexCity*, 2000

Software, Macintosh G3  
PowerBook, acrylic plastic  
19 x 16 x 3 in.

*PDA*, 2001

Software, Macintosh G3  
PowerBook, acrylic plastic and  
plastic laminate  
27 x 16 x 3 in.

*Window*, 2001

Software, Macintosh G3  
PowerBook and acrylic plastic  
19 x 16 x 3 in.

*Automata Studies*, 2002

Software, Macintosh G3  
PowerBook, acrylic plastic  
19 x 16 x 3 in.

*Double Flower*, 2002

Laser-cut linoleum tiles  
144 x 240 x 1/10 in.

*aLife*, 2003

Software, Macintosh G4  
PowerBook, acrylic plastic  
21 x 17 x 3 in.

*Endless Victory*, 2005

Software, Macintosh G4  
PowerBook, acrylic plastic  
15½ x 15½ in. x 3 ¼ in

*Endless Bounty*, 2005

Software, Macintosh G3  
PowerBook, acrylic plastic  
22 x 17 x 3 in.

*Intersection*, 2005

Software, Apple Mini, data  
projector  
Size variable

*Stack #1*, 2005

Software, Apple Mini, data  
projector  
Size variable

*World Tree*, 2005

Gouache and colored pencil on  
paper  
22 x 30 in.

*3 Sailors*, 2007

Software, Apple Mini, data  
projector  
Size variable

*Crown*, 2007

Software, LCD screen, Formica,  
acrylic plastic, gouache on paper,  
lacquered wood  
48 x 48 x 14½ in.

*Chip*, 2007

Software, LCD screen, Formica,  
acrylic plastic, gold plated wire,  
lacquered wood, hardware  
49½ x 73½ x 6 in.

*Little Light*, 2007

Software, LCD screen, Formica,  
mirrored acrylic plastic, lacquered  
wood  
25 x 25 x 4 in.

*Spiral*, 2007

Software, LCD screen, Formica,  
acrylic plastic, gouache on paper,  
lacquered wood  
44 ½ x 72 x 6 in

*Morada I (Air)*, 2008

Custom software, Apple Mini, LCD  
screen, lacquered wood, paint,  
Formica  
36 x 30 x 6 in.

*Morada II (Earth)*, 2008

Custom software, Apple Mini, LCD  
screen, lacquered wood, paint,  
Formica  
36 x 30 x 6 in.

*Blue Pendulum*, 2008

Custom software, Apple Mini, LCD  
screen, lacquered wood, paint,  
Formica  
36 x 30 x 6 in.

*Red Pendulum*, 2008

Custom software, Apple Mini, LCD  
screen, lacquered wood, paint,  
Formica, brushed aluminum  
36 x 30 x 6 in.

*HeadWater*, 2009

Trupan Ultralight, plastic laminate  
(Abet & Formica), Flashe paint  
45 x 51½ x ½ in.

*ChipCycle*, 2010

Trupan Ultralight, plastic laminate  
(Abet & Formica), Flashe paint  
47 x 56 x 3/4 in.

*Deco*, 2010

Trupan Ultralight, plastic laminate  
(Abet & Formica), Flashe paint  
46 x 59 x ¾ inches

*Draw*, 2010

DVD player, video and computer  
graphics, acrylic plastic  
13½ x 17½ in. x 3 in

*Dream*, 2010

DVD player, video and computer  
graphics, acrylic plastic, magnifier  
dome  
17½ x 15½ in. x 4 in

*Grasp*, 2010

DVD player, video and computer  
graphics, acrylic plastic  
15½ x 15½ in. x 3 in

*Kiss*, 2010

DVD player, video and computer  
graphics, acrylic plastic, magnifier  
dome  
15½ x 17½ in. x 4 in

*OnePoint*, 2010

Trupan Ultralight, plastic laminate  
(Abet & Formica), Flashe paint  
46 x 60 x ¾ in.

*Phylogons*, 2010

Trupan Ultralight, plastic laminate  
(Abet & Formica), Flashe paint  
47 x 66 x ¾ in.

*RiverBend*, 2010

Trupan Ultralight, plastic laminate  
(Abet & Formica), Flashe paint  
48 x 60 x ¾ in.

*RiverCycle*, 2010

Trupan Ultralight, plastic laminate  
(Abet & Formica), Flashe paint  
45½ x 44 x ¾ in.

*Heat from the Core Raises  
Mountains and Opens  
Oceans*, 2011

Thirty-color water-based  
screenprint on Coventry Rag  
335gsm  
30 x 36 in.

*The Secret of the Golden  
Flower*, 2012

Software, LCD screen, metal &  
plastic laminate, enamel & latex  
paint, wall paper, acrylic plastic,  
magnifying dome  
22 x 29 x 14½ in.

All works are loaned courtesy  
of the artist and Gering & López  
Gallery, New York, NY.



[www.lasm.org](http://www.lasm.org)

The exhibition has been made possible in part by the Louisiana Office of Tourism, Visit Baton Rouge.com, The Albemarle Foundation, a Local Project Assistance Grant from the Arts Council of Greater Baton Rouge, funded by the Mayor-President and the Baton Rouge Metro Council, the Community Fund for the Arts, and LA Division of the Arts. Promotional support provided by The Advocate, Lamar, and WRKF.

**COVER IMAGE:** *Crown*, 2007, software, LCD screen, Formica, acrylic plastic, gouache on paper and lacquered wood, 48 x 48 x 14½ in.



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