

PATHS AND LOOPS:  
AUTOMATIC DRAWINGS BY JOHN F. SIMON JR.

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HILLIARD UNIVERSITY  
ART MUSEUM





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Paths are my meditations, the traces of my lifelong quest to encompass the sources of creativity; the meandering lines I draw are records of this journey. Loops are fundamental operations in computer programming, statements in code repeating until an ending condition is met. Loops are also the day, the week, the year, the seasons, and the cycles of symbols that emerge from daily creative practice.

In this exhibition, 'Automatic Drawing' has a double meaning. It refers to both the Surrealist's practice of allowing one's hand to roam freely as a means of evoking subconscious imagery and to the coded graphics continually drawn and redrawn on the screens by computers. My introspective art practice is based on improvisation with a pencil, as Paul Klee says, "An active line on a walk, moving freely, without goal", repeated while directing my attention inside, to discover and code my own drawing rules.

Writing software drawing tools was my failed attempt to escape the 'tedium' of drawing, instead I now spend hours in practice, flow, discovery, and wonderment about where it all comes from. As my programming gets more complicated, my questions broaden - can I write an artificial intelligence that mimics my creativity? I peer inside and see creativity in all aspects and I wonder, "how vast is this pool of creative source?" My practice moves between advancing concepts and observing flow - alternatively putting attention on figure and then ground, allowing one to inform the other and glimpsing the deep interlock of attention and awareness expressed in our lives and everything we create

— John F. Simon Jr.

Ideas for a work of art often get lodged in John F. Simon Jr.'s head and float in his subconscious before they are realized. Initially, they take shape during his meditative daily drawing practice. Forms reveal themselves to Simon because they crop up time and again as he draws each day. This is when he knows if something is important and worth more attention past a daily drawing. He reflects on the nature of the repetition and what it could mean. Interestingly, this mirrors how most people probably live life. Important things crop up time and again but it is difficult to give them the attention they merit unless one makes time for contemplation.

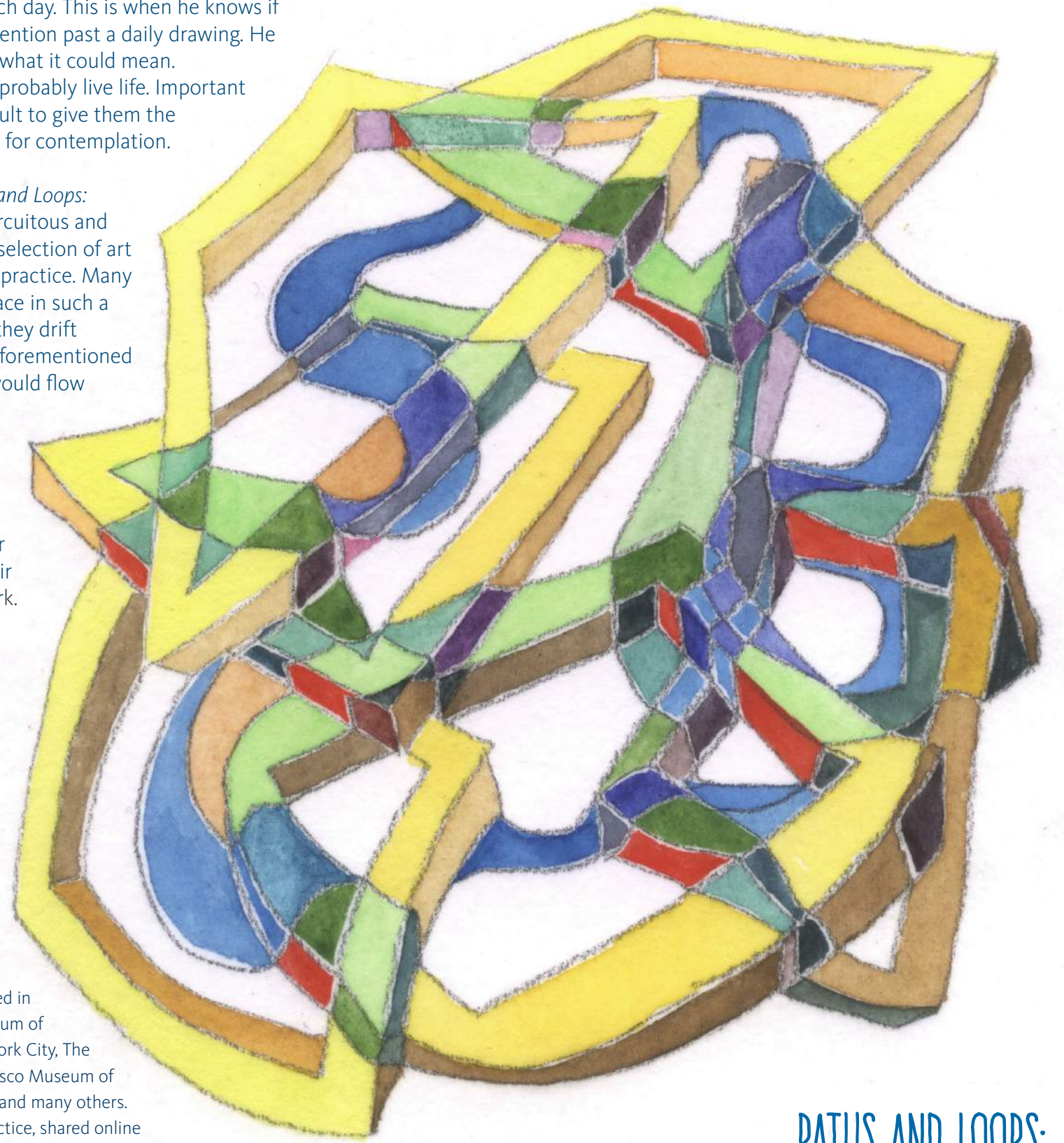
It is for this reason that the layout of *Paths and Loops: Automatic Drawings by John F. Simon Jr.* is circuitous and broken up by cases, temporary walls, and a selection of art that represents the full scope of the artist's practice. Many images refer to others within the gallery space in such a way that visitors are apt to have déjà vu as they drift through the exhibition. When I placed the aforementioned walls, cases, and art, I pictured how water would flow through the space if it were a section in a river. All of these objects would create drag, making ripples and eddies on the water's surface. In turn, I imagined visitors as though they were leaves gently swirling around the space seeing similar images over and over again, enabling them to create their own personal connections with Simon's work.

Benjamin M. Hickey | Curator of Exhibitions



John F. Simon, Jr. is a widely exhibited visual artist and author of *Drawing Your Own Path* (Parallax Press, 2016). His software artwork was recently featured in the Whitney Museum's 2018-19 exhibition *Programmed: Rules, Codes, and Choreographies in Art, 1965–2018*. His work is included in the permanent collections of the The Whitney Museum of American Art, The Museum of Modern Art in New York City, The Phillips Collection in Washington DC, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, and many others. John's work is centered around his daily drawing practice, shared online at [iclock.com](http://iclock.com).

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— JFSjr



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