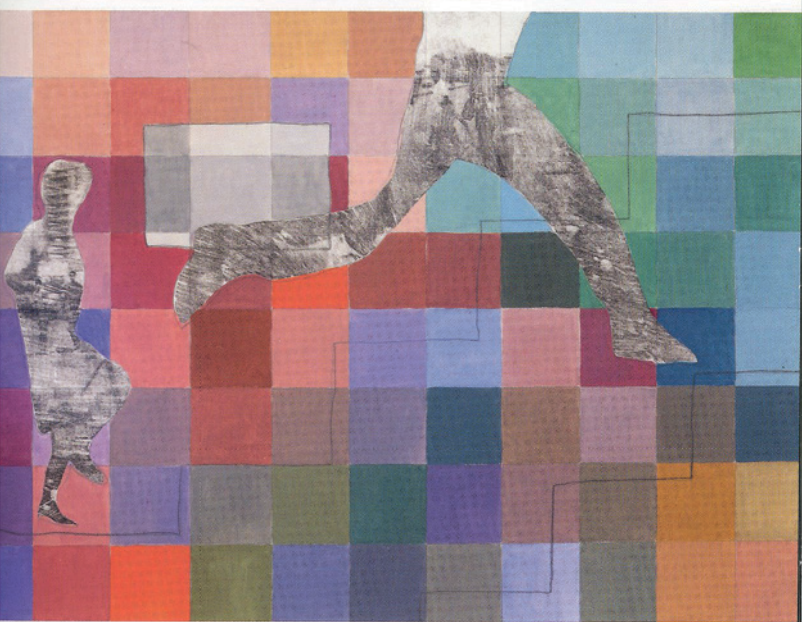
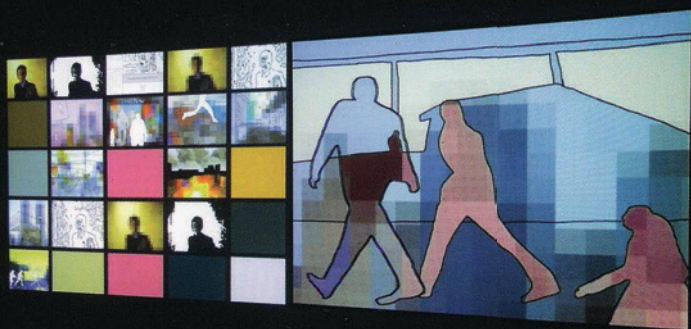


# JODY ZELLEN

*Above the Fold*



JANUARY 31 - MARCH 8, 2014



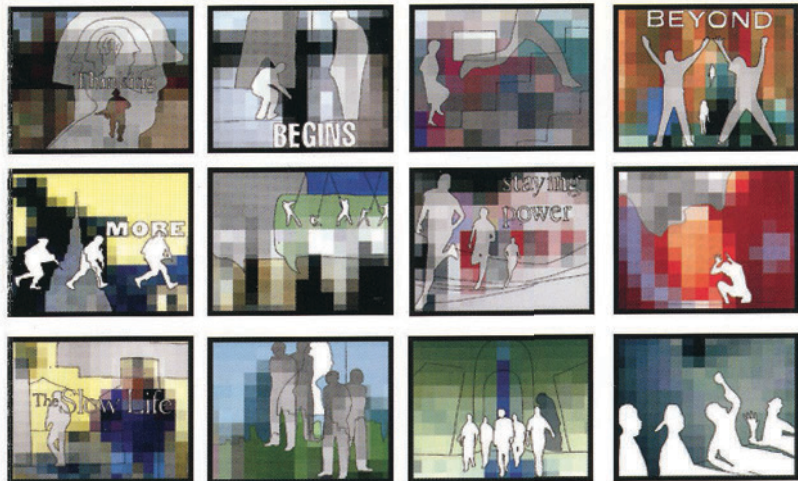


## *Pause Effect*

ESSAY BY JOHANNA DRUCKER

Jody Zellen embraces media as her art form, focusing on both the images and processes that surround and penetrate our current lives and environments. The very methods of mediation often serve as the starting point for her practice, as she utilizes found and captured sources through numerous interconnected processes of mark-making—digital, hand-drawn, painted in the very traditional medium of gouache, or animated on a tablet. Her critical reflections are carried out in her process. Whatever commentary inflects the images, it comes through visual manipulation—redrawing or remediating—and no extra critique or critical injection is required. The acts of making and remaking are the means by which her intellectual and aesthetic engagement is brought to bear on the media streams that are so omnipresent that we take their content almost for granted. In Zellen's work, we literally see a process of rethinking. We watch photographs, pixels, color fields, lines, drawing, and painting all become part of a single cycle of reproduction. The result is a faceted field of connected pieces, each a discrete and distilled element of a body of work that demonstrates the way an intervention of the eye and hand can produce thoughtful reflection on the culture we inhabit. She introduces a pause into the media stream, offering her viewers a remade, remarked version of her sources that, at the very least, lets us see them anew.

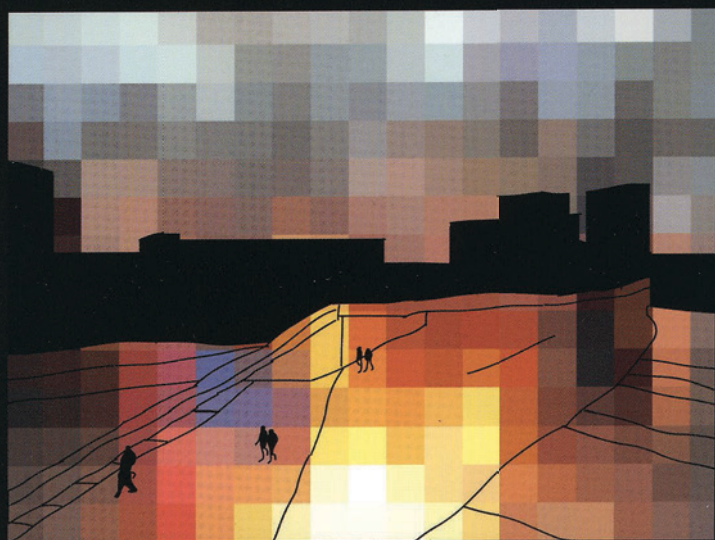
In *Above the Fold*, Zellen creates works that combine screen capture, photographic processing, and hand-drawn imagery in a cycle of refraction and reflection. The images are versions of each other, different phases of production, and call attention to the material of media as much as to their pictorial substance. The constant assault of images depicts extremes of war, violence, destruction, riots, death, and tragedy that become the banal fodder for a ceaselessly streaming sequence to which we become immune. The act of remaking, Zellen suggests, is a way of remarking, reflecting, and intervening, of recovering some human/humane relation to the impossible production apparatus of news culture feeds. This raises questions of where and how meaning refuses to emerge through repetition and banality. Significance must be recaptured through some act, some deliberate and

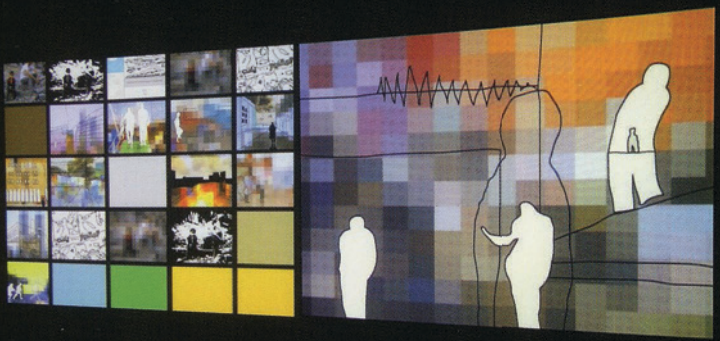


even patiently tedious intervention. Zellen's process emphasizes the artist as medium, as processor, who reworks the received and thus remarks upon the images via the addition of painting and drawing.

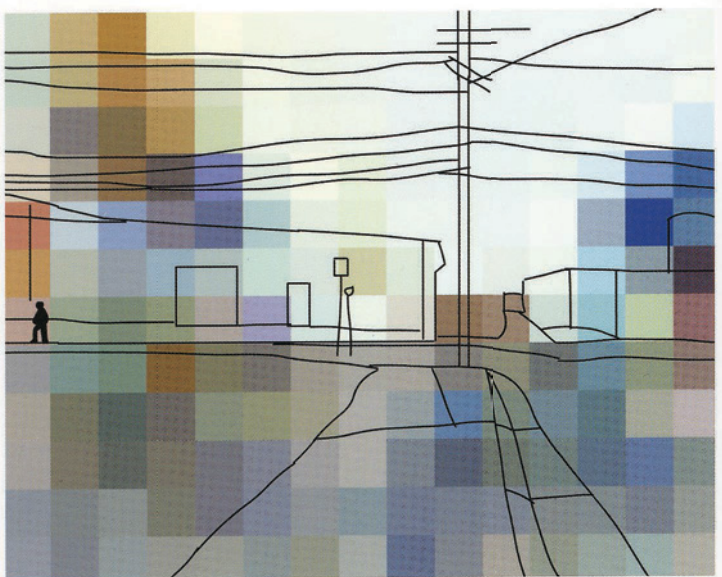
Duration plays a role in Zellen's animation *Time Jitters*, since the source images were gathered every day for a year. The genericness of the images, and their frequently borrowed-from-stock-footage character disturbs any illusion of synchronicity. The images are that much more horrific for being somewhat generic, but the 365-day journal has its own authenticity. The process of aggregation marches with an ineluctable inevitability across the days. Punctuated by occasional headline text, the images jolt and skip across time, nonnarrative in their random juxtapositions.

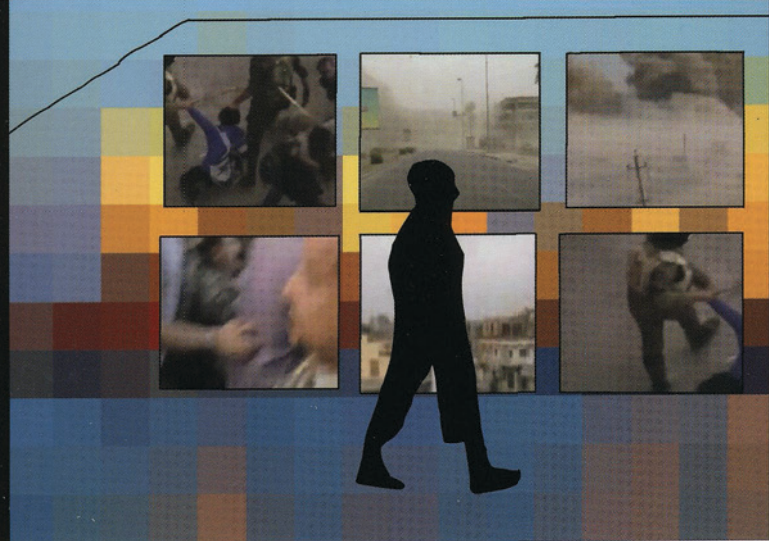
Silhouettes, the figures, present and absent, abound. Grids and fields of color are extracted from the pixel base of the enlarged original, whose colors are aggregated algorithmically to make a degraded/upgraded version of the source image. The figures and landscape features are extracted from the source image and then used as a point of departure for animated vignettes whose formal structures are undergirded by the pixel patterns of the screen. The recycling of basic media components into compositional elements so that digital features become the motivation for





drawing, its inspiration and infrastructure, could be seen as an extension of Leonardo da Vinci's call to let the visual imagination take off from the suggestive character of ink spots and stains. In our era, the distortions of pixelation become a new kind of provocation to visual response. Zellen has focused on media images as her source across a substantial portion of her creative life. But she is also interested in exploring the potential of new kinds of devices. The mobile becomes an arena for engagement. The ubiquitous smart phone offers an always available delivery mechanism for small-scale viewing. This art-on-the-go rewards the distraction impulse of attention deficit with a world of doodle-based stick figures whose creative moves animate their own universe of existentially whimsical activity. In *Episodic* (an iPad and iPhone app), elegant creatures move across the small screen, their torpedo-shaped bodies and limited motion embodying an idiosyncratic language. As one scene or segment follows another, an implicit narrative unfolds, but the stories are all enclosed, enacted in a frame that can't be broken or escaped. A combination of lightness and futility pervades the elegantly designed universe of their existence, and they move with agile grace, as if stealing time for solo performances and quick vignettes from the frenetic surfaces in which they are featured.

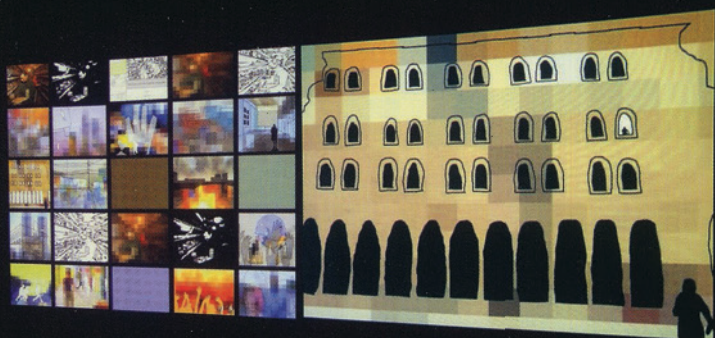




In Zellen's marker-on-panel pieces, the drawings are patterns as much as scenes, dense as urban landscapes, the outlines and filled spaces evenly distributed so that no one area catches the eye or determines the rest. Not overtly connected to media images, these black-and-white fields of figures and forms have their art-historical precedents in the schematic drawings of Paul Klee, the dreamscapes of Joan Miró, and the intellectual urbanity of Saul Steinberg. Their self-contained universe is frenetic, always in motion, even in the apparently static images in which the figures dance and careen within the closed system of their graphical-social world.

Technique is important to Zellen, as much a critical tool as capture and framing, and she chooses her media for their associations as well as their capacities for varied kinds of mark-making. The ink outlines that abound throughout Zellen's work are reminiscent of the world of ruling pens and rapidographs, the instruments of daily tasks and labors in the industry of graphic arts. Now at the service of a fine-art practice, these media bear associations in the marks and colors that they make. Gouache is an antique medium, water-based, capable of opacity and wash effects, used to teach design and make what were known as "boards" in an era when artwork had to be prepared by hand for photographic reproduction. In a world before digital





prepress, the mock-ups and images made by John Heartfield, for instance, or poster artists and illustrators, practitioners of the commercial arts or the fine arts that borrowed from their methods, used gouache to make the color studies for reproduction. Unlike watercolor, its upscale fine-art cousin, gouache has associations with the production studio as well as the atelier, and was used to make work that would become mass media. So, the choice to repaint pixelated images in this traditional medium is itself a statement—and the work enacts the pause effect, the slowing down, refocusing attention that is central to the artist's projects. Similarly, her reconfiguring these images into offset books (such as the 2013 *If*), another constant in her long career, demonstrates her interest in the continuum of analog and digital formats.

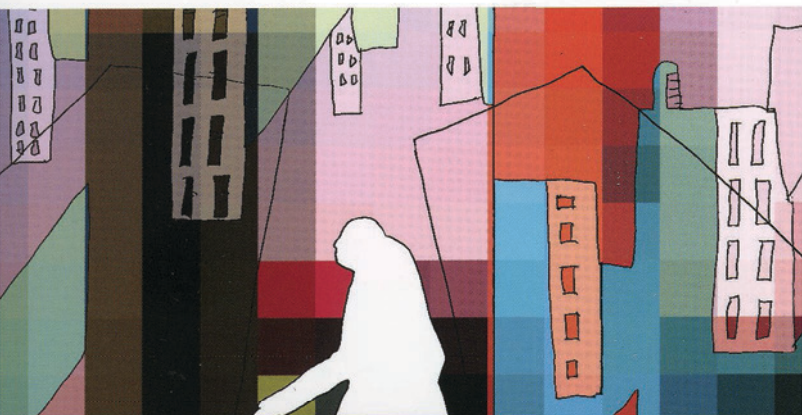
If we are assaulted daily by so many images that we cease to process them, stop registering their import, disconnect their extremes from any reality, fully living the life of the spectacle, then it takes the careful reinvestigation and remaking that Zellen engages in to give us pause and offer a visual study of the graphical overload. This way, we might, perhaps, see again what is in that massive media stream by breaking its rapid flow and remaking its technological production through the work of a human hand and eye.

**JOHANNA DRUCKER** is the inaugural Breslauer Professor of Bibliographical Studies in the Department of Information Studies at UCLA. She is internationally known for her work in the history of graphic design, typography, experimental poetry, fine art, and digital humanities. In addition, she has a reputation as a book artist, and her limited-edition works are in special collections and libraries worldwide. Her most recent titles include *SpecLab: Digital Aesthetics and Speculative Computing* (Chicago, 2009) and *Graphic Design History: A Critical Guide* (Pearson, 2008; 2nd edition late 2012). She is currently working on a database memoir, *ALL*, the online Museum of Writing, in collaboration with University College London and King's College, and a letterpress project entitled *Stochastic Poetics*. A collaboratively written work, *Digital\_Humanities* with Jeffrey Schnapp, Todd Presner, Peter Lunenfeld, and Anne Burdick, is forthcoming from MIT Press.

# Time Jitters

COMMISSIONED BY THE HALSEY INSTITUTE OF CONTEMPORARY ART

Jody Zellen's *Time Jitters* is a collaborative project between the artist, the Department of Music, and the Computing in the Arts program at the College of Charleston. The project design and implementation team is comprised of two faculty members: Dr. Bill Manaris (CITA) and Dr. Yiorgos Vassilandonakis (Dept. of Music); students David Johnson, Corey Reid-Smiley, Seth Stoudenmier, and Matthew Tuton; and the Halsey Institute's preparator, Andrew Steever. In addition to logistical and programming concerns, this group's ideas and input have shaped the interactive aspects of the installation and expanded the possibilities of the immersive experience. This partnership is partially funded by grants from the National Science Foundation. We hope that this project will lead to additional collaborations in the future.



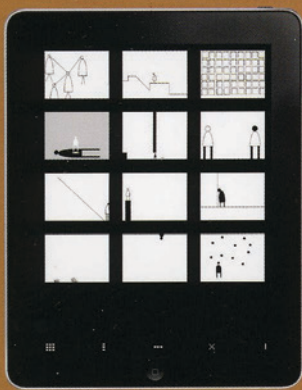
**JODY ZELLEN** is a Los Angeles-based artist who works in many media, simultaneously making interactive installations, mobile apps, animations, drawings, paintings, photographs, public art, and artists' books. Zellen received a BA from Wesleyan University (1983), a MFA from CalArts (1989), and a MPS

degree from New York University's Interactive Telecommunications Program (2009). She is a recipient of an Artistic Innovation Grant from the Center for Cultural Innovation (2011) and a Mid-Career Artist's Fellowship from the California Community Foundation (2012).

Her installations include *Transitions*, DNJ Gallery, Santa Monica, California (2013); *The Unemployed*, Disseny Hub Museum, Barcelona (2011), and Cerritos College, California (2009); *The Blackest Spot*, Fringe Exhibitions, Los Angeles, CA (2008); and *Trigger*, Pace University, New York (2005).

Most recently, she has been making mobile apps. *Spine Sonnet*, *Urban Rhythms*, *Art Swipe*, *4 Square*, and *Episodic* are all available for free in the iTunes Store.

For more information, visit [www.jodyzellen.com](http://www.jodyzellen.com).



## Take the art with you!

All of Jody Zellen's apps are  
available for free in the Apple  
iTunes Store

## Curator tour

Thursday, February 27, 6PM

Join the Halsey Institute staff and your fellow Halsey Institute members for a fun and exclusive evening tour. Director and senior curator Mark Sloan will lead Halsey Institute members on a guided tour of the exhibition. Explore the exhibition, get insider knowledge, meet other Halsey Institute lovers! This tour is for Halsey Institute members only. To join the Halsey Institute, visit [halsey.cofc.edu/support/](http://halsey.cofc.edu/support/) or call our membership and development coordinator, Emily Rigsby at [EaRigsby@cofc.edu](mailto:EaRigsby@cofc.edu) or (843) 953-5652.

**LOCATION:** The Marion and Wayland H. Cato Jr. Center for the Arts  
161 Calhoun Street, 1st Floor (on the corner of St. Philip & Calhoun Streets)  
College of Charleston, School of the Arts, Charleston, SC 29401

**PARKING:** Available in the St. Philip and George Street Garages

**GALLERY HOURS:** Mon - Sat, 11am - 4pm, or by appointment  
OPEN UNTIL 7PM ON THURSDAYS! Free and open to the public.

**CONTACT:** (843) 953-4422 or [halsey@cofc.edu](mailto:halsey@cofc.edu)

**BLOG:** Join the conversation! [halsey.cofc.edu/EDU/blog](http://halsey.cofc.edu/EDU/blog)

**BOOK A GUIDED TOUR:** Free tours are led by knowledgeable and experienced guides and can be adapted to different time lengths, group sizes, and ages. Contact our curator of education and public programs, Lizz Biswell at [BiswellL@cofc.edu](mailto:BiswellL@cofc.edu) or (843) 953-5957.

**OUR MISSION:** The Halsey Institute of Contemporary Art at the College of Charleston School of the Arts provides a multidisciplinary laboratory for the production, presentation, interpretation, and dissemination of ideas by innovative visual artists from around the world. As a non-collecting museum, we create meaningful interactions between adventurous artists and diverse communities within a context that emphasizes the historical, social, and cultural importance of the art of our time.

Funding for this educational brochure was generously provided by the Henry and Sylvia Yaschik Foundation and the Coastal Community Foundation.



COLLEGE of  
CHARLESTON  
SCHOOL OF THE ARTS