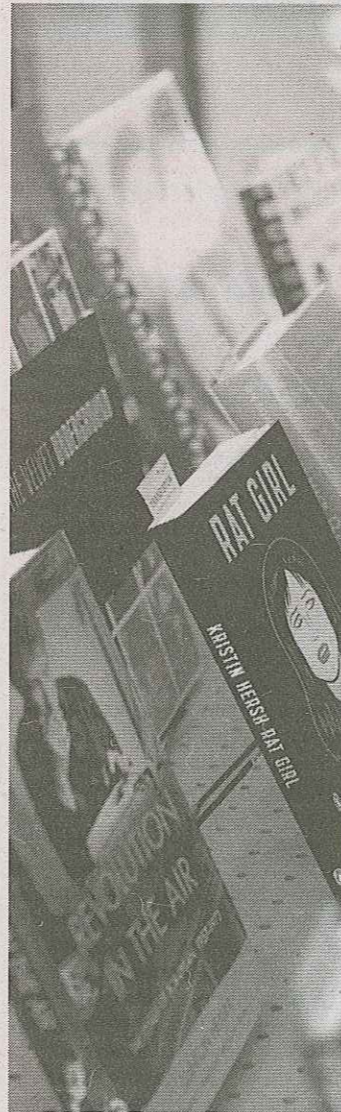


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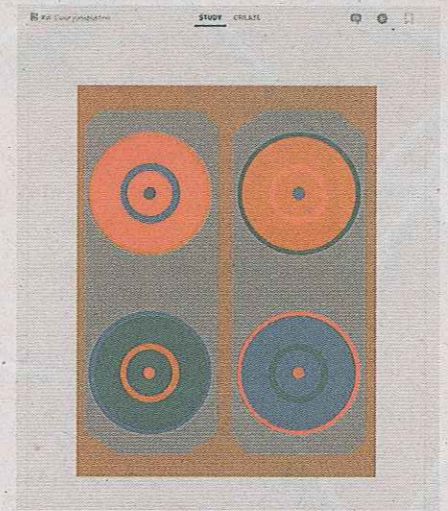
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Dreaming With van Gogh

Several new art history apps put a brush, or a magnifying glass, in the user's hand.

ART and art history are two subject areas in which certain electronic textbooks are not only convenient, but sometimes more effective as learning tools. Who wants merely to read about pigment-mixing without trying it, or to squint at a tiny printed reproduction of a still life by Pieter Claesz — an artist who was sharing pictures of food centuries before Instagram was invented — instead of popping open a full-screen version to better study the composition?

This year is the golden anniversary of a classic art-education text, "Interaction of Color," by Josef Albers, a Bauhaus artist who left Germany for the United States in 1933. His influential book of color theory



"Interaction of Color"

was originally published by Yale University Press as a limited silk-screen edition in 1963 and became a paperback in 1971. Now, **INTERACTION OF COLOR** has arrived as an engaging immersive iPad app (one chapter free to try; \$9.99 for the full app at yupnet.org/interactionofcolor).

The app contains the complete text from earlier treeware editions and most of the original example plates used to illustrate Albers's ideas about how colors are perceived and mixed, and how they react to one another. It includes 60 interactive study screens and over two hours of video clips featuring commentary from artists, designers and educators.

Sections of the text, a flashback to the "Mad Men" era, are a bit dry and dated ("For a very different color effect compare the coffee in a cup with the coffee in the stem of a percolator or with the coffee in a silex glass"). But the material is considerably enlivened by interactive elements. A pop-up glossary provides instant explanations of terms like "color intervals," and

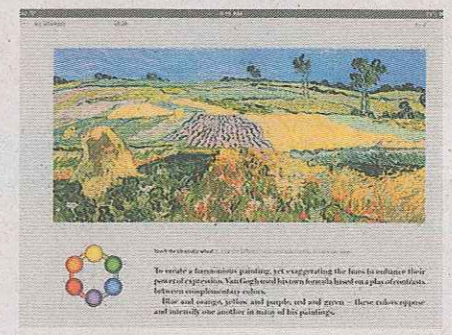
the digital versions of the original plates can be enlarged to better display how different colors work with (or against) one another for specific visual effects.

The app also includes a wheel of virtual swatches, helping users to understand the book's theories by allowing them to tap colors and drag them to blank grids. These personal color studies can be saved and e-mailed right from the app or shared with friends on Facebook or Twitter, which is convenient not only for classmates working together, but also for people experimenting with color in everyday life — say, in a home-decorating project.

Color theory also comes into play in **VAN GOGH'S DREAM** (\$9.99 for iPad at www.vangoghsdream.org), an inventive multimedia biography of the artist and his techniques. Text, high-resolution images, digitized letters, dynamic maps and video clips from experts at the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam combine to recount the life of the volatile Dutch Post-Impressionist.

As with any solid educational app, "Van Gogh's Dream" shows as well as it tells. In the section about his methods, the text explains: "To create a harmonious painting, yet exaggerating the hues to enhance their power of expression, van Gogh used his own formula based on a play of contrasts between complementary colors." A touch-sensitive chromatic wheel on the same screen lets users instantly change the hues on a sample canvas to see the effects of color contrast in action. (Although this app is currently iPad-only, van Gogh enthusiasts toting Android devices can get a biography and 800 photographs of his paintings with the free **VAN GOGH GALLERY** app at bit.ly/1aXH7Cq.)

"Van Gogh's Dream" is divided into nine sections describing the artist's life and afterlife as a cultural icon. But the main focus is on his paintings, including an entire chapter on his depictions of flowers. Parents wishing to introduce their children to van Gogh's work in a simpler format may want to check out



"Van Gogh's Dream"

VAN GOGH AND THE SUNFLOWERS for iPad (free to try; \$3.99 for the full app at bit.ly/1cq2v4K), the digitized version of Laurence Anholt's 2007 picture book about a young French boy and his quirky painter pal, Vincent. It smoothly mixes bright watercolor illustrations with games and activities to keep children engaged. (Intended for ages 4 to 11, the story doesn't directly mention that well-known episode with the ear, although Vincent does wear a telltale bandage on his head before the final screen.)



"Art Authority"

"Van Gogh and the Sunflowers" offers optional audio narration with highlighted words to guide young readers through the story, as a mellow jazz saxophone plays in the background. Page navigation can be a little balky, but the artwork itself is subtly animated. By tapping elements on the screen, children can paint the characters on each page themselves or be transported into a 3-D virtual gallery of van Gogh's most famous works.

As great as tablets can be for touch-based actions, today's sharp color screens also show off detailed photographs and images quite nicely. For students and art lovers looking for a general guide that doesn't strain the shoulder, there's **ART AUTHORITY** (\$9.99 for iPad; \$4.99 for iPhone and Kindle Fire at www.artauthority.net), featuring the work of more than 1,000 major Western artists from ancient to contemporary times.

The app's overall visual design isn't particularly original: tappable paintings on a museum wall lead to eight different historical art periods. But it conveniently rounds up images of some 65,000 paintings and sculptures, and information related to them. Images can be expanded to full-screen views for greater appreciation. Earnest (but not infallible) background particulars and artist biographies come courtesy of Wikipedia.

True, apps can't replace the experience of gazing at art in person. They can, however, bring art closer to the curious in other ways. □