

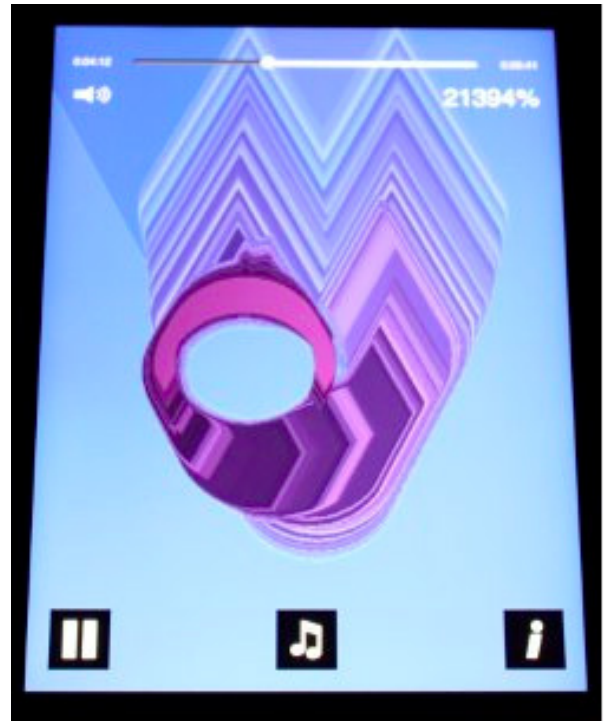
Purple Goo: An Artsy iPhone App Designed to “Destroy Pop Music”

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Two years ago, in an interview with the Brooklyn Rail, the well-known performance artist Ulay talked about how the art of the 1960s and 70s had been a crucial opportunity for altering the definition of what art is, but had failed. During this time, Ulay, as well as contemporaries like Allan Kaprow and Fluxus, began to create work that embraced impermanence and eliminated the distinction between artist and viewer. This type of art had tremendous potential to change, or even obliterate, the art market, as well as the current model for exhibitions; creating the potential for us all to emerge as artists -- our lives, interactions, and creations seen as fine art, in whatever form they embodied.

More than 50 years later, the men and women who control the fine art market continue to push against the hierarchy that divides artists and their audiences. This week, I found myself being sucked into this very concept. I had been invited to an event, passed on to me by a local curator, to see “an interesting iPhone app/art piece.” Huh? Since when do curators see iPhone apps as art? Obviously, I needed to investigate.



Photos by Seanica Howe
Purple Goo screen graphics.



Local band Krisp performing at the Purple Goo app launch.

If you were at last night's app launch for Purple Goo, consider yourselves one of the lucky few who got to witness a quality and seamless blending of the arts that rarely occurs, especially in an intimate local event. The Wolfsonian-FIU served as a perfect backdrop for this eclectic intermingling of music, the visual arts, and people. The Wolfsonian, with its pink lit walls and throw back Gilded Age design, created an ambiance of modern day Great Gatsby, where easy-breezy creative types, dressed in low-key punk, street, and hipster threads, chilled and jammed to the music of local band Krisp.

Between sets, Nicolas Lobo and Dylan Romer, the creators of the application, used the Purple Goo app to entertain the audience by manipulating the live music of the band -- with their permission, of course. Goo breaks down a song into its most basic structure, an act that Lobo and Romer both quantify as an art form, and they should know: Romer studied art before his interests shifted to computer programming, and Lobo is a sculptor whose work is shown by Gallery Diet here in Miami.



Courtesy Gallery Diet
The Purple Goo app as displayed on an iPhone.

Purple Goo displays worm-like graphics that follow the sweeps of your finger-tips while they skate along the surface of your iPhone or iPad, permitting the user to become visual artist, musician, and audience. The two algorithms that stretch and slow the music are visually captured on the screen in an ooey-gooney change of color that reflects the alteration made to the music, one that has the haunting effect of an organ, the raunchy emissions of an accordion, or the screeching sounds of a synthesizer that fell into the wrong hands.



Dylan Romer, co-creator of Purple Goo.

Originally invented with the intention of destroying pop music, the app and the sound it creates remind Romer of audio similar to that of experimental weaponry for crowd control. In effect, a means of “weaponizing pop.” Either way, its the revolutionary stretching of a moment in time, one capable of slowing music up to 10 million percent or, quite possibly, infinitely.

If events like the one held last evening continue, Ulay’s dream will be realized, and the boundaries between high and low art, consumer and creator, will fade. It may sound like a small thing, but the way we do something is the way we do everything. If the categorization of art is eliminated and the creative force behind everything we do is acknowledged, with no one given favor over the other, then what other boundaries and inequalities can we demolish?

Think about it -- then go get you some Goo.

--Seanica Howe



Attendees of the Purple Goo launch party outside of the Wolfsonian-FIU. The event was hosted by Bacardi, Perrier, and Gallery Diet of Miami.