

# Buffalo museum launches gaming app built around artwork

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Jamie Drury, 12, plays the game "Equilibrarian" at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery in Buffalo, N.Y., Thursday, June 25, 2015. The game is one of eight contained in a new app, ArtGames 2.0, that was developed by the gallery's Innovation Lab and will be available through the Apple App Store and Google Play Store beginning Saturday. (AP Photo/Carolyn Thompson)

The newest work at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery is a gaming app meant to put modern and contemporary art in front of kids by way of their smartphones.

ArtGames 2.0 will be available for free from the Apple App and Google Play stores on Saturday.

Developers at the museum's new Innovation Lab worked with artists including Do Ho Suh and Jason Middlebrook to develop games built around their artistic concepts. All eight games are inspired by works in the Albright-Knox collection.

The "Equilibrarian" game, based on Piet Mondrian's "Composition No. 11," for example, assigns measures of weight to primary colors and challenges players to use the colors to fill in and level a floating geographic plane.

"It's about balance and tension and that was one of (Mondrian's) major concerns when he was painting, using simple means, creating a harmony and a vitality in a work of art," said Laura Watts Sommer, director of visual and performing arts at Daemen College, whose animation lab collaborated on the project. "That's what the children are doing when they are playing this game. And when they stand in front of a Mondrian painting ... they're going to understand what that painting is about because they played this game."

Vincent Van Gogh's "The Old Mill," was the basis for "Special Delivery," where players guide a character over haystacks and around holes in a warmly colored landscape.

As long as their eyes are locked on the screen, players are viewing art and absorbing it in a meaningful way, developers said.

"The real goal of this is to get children enthused about artwork through a medium that we know they're already enthused about," said Russell Davidson, the Innovation Lab and special projects manager. "We're engaging kids on their level, as opposed to keeping art something that's a little bit more difficult for them to attain or understand."



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The app and the Innovation Lab where it was developed are part of a broader strategy to more fully engage the gallery in the community and open its doors to a wider audience, Deputy Director Joe Lin-Hill said. Versions of innovation labs have emerged in museums across the country with similar goals.

"Museums are no longer repositories of objects," Lin-Hill said. "They can play a dynamic role in the community."

Besides Daemen College in suburban Amherst, the Innovation Lab's gaming app partners were Empire Visual Effects of Buffalo and All Things Media of Mahwah, New Jersey.

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