

These Aren't Abstract Paintings, They're iPhone Smudges

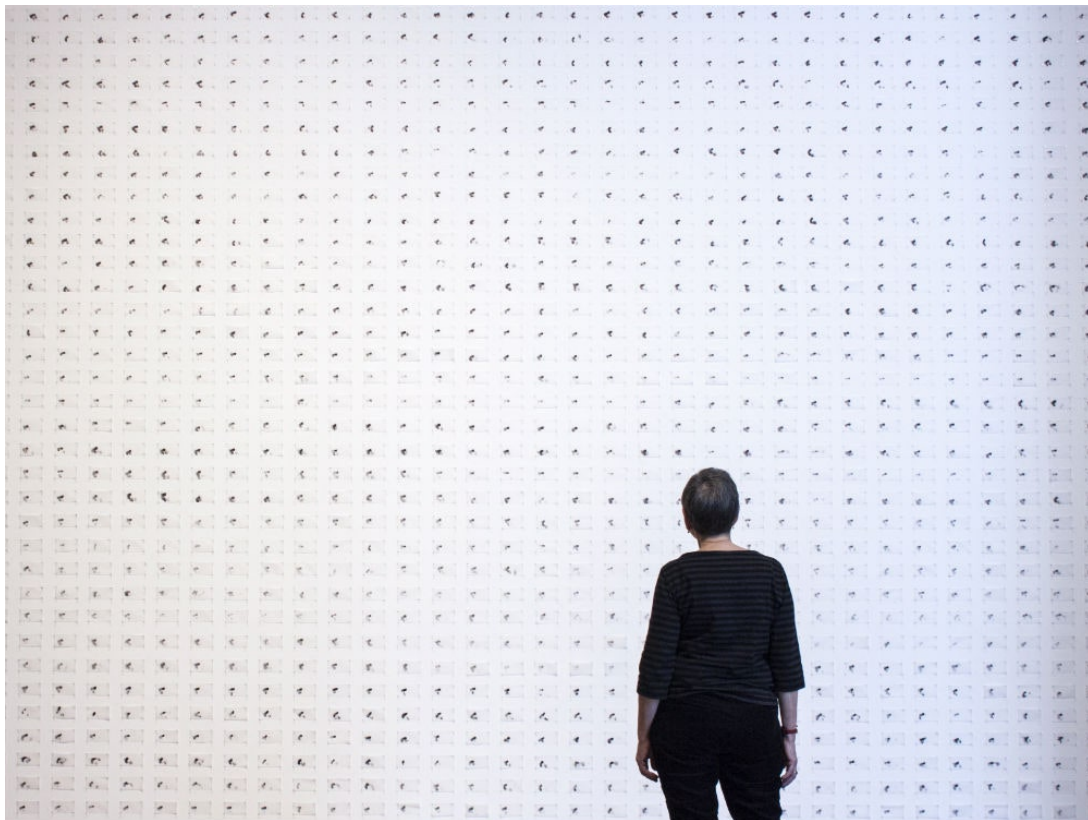
wired.com/2014/07/these-arent-abstract-paintings-theyre-huge-images-of-iphone-smudges

Liz Stinson

July 30, 2014

The smudges on your phone's screen look remarkably different when they're blown up and hung on a gallery wall. Since 2011 Evan Roth has been making prints that turn our everyday touchscreen gestures into art. Called *Multi-Touch*, the series is an exploration of this relatively new form of interacting with computers. "It's about visualizing these new gestures of us kind of awkwardly touching pixels for the first time," says Roth.

To make the prints, Roth slips a piece of tracing paper on his phone, dips his fingers into ink and then it's digital business as usual. In the past, he's visualized the simple act of swiping horizontally across the screen to unlock his phone, he's documented finger-typed passwords and captured the gestures made while beating every level of Angry Birds.



"Level Cleared," shown at Dublin's science gallery.

Image: Wesleyan University

His most recent piece, "Next Next Next," looks at the act of consuming media. Or more specifically the gestures made when swiping through photos in your phone's gallery. Much of Roth's works highlights the habits we form as we enter the age of casual computing, a time where some form of computer is rarely more than a pocket away. "It's

not just about sitting down at a desk. It's stolen moments while we're on the subway or waiting in line for groceries," he says. "This work is dealing with the idea that I'm consuming culture in this very blunt way."

You can imagine it's a particularly sticky subject for artists, whose months or years of work is casually swiped away in seconds. Roth himself admit he's just as guilty of perpetuating these actions. "A lot of the things I'm critiquing I'm critiquing because I'm having trouble wrestling with these things too," he says.

The art might be immediate, but Roth approaches the series in part as a long-term archival effort. Someday, decades from now, you can imagine a young student stumbling across the prints and having a good chuckle at how old-school we were in 2014. Like pioneers traveling the country in a covered wagon, someday tapping and swiping a piece of glass might seem unfathomably archaic. It'll be nice to have a reminder.