



Aesthetic.Computer

Personal Computers Are Not Done Yet

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LACMA Art + Technology Lab · 2026

Aesthetic.Computer is a creative computing system and public device library (custom hardware, a handmade programming language, a social network, and a lending fleet of laptops for flashing custom creative operating systems) that reimagines the personal computer as a live musical instrument for art.

Project Description

Personal computers have not been very personal. For forty years the form has been shaped by the companies that sold them: operating systems built to sell attention, software gatekept by app stores. The 1980s personal computing scene promised a computer that belonged to you, that you could program, that could do anything. Platform consolidation cut it short. Aesthetic.Computer bets a second personal computing scene is starting, and with tools this powerful in everyone's hands it will go wider *and* deeper than the first. Wider because anyone can publish. Deeper because anyone can write a language, modify a kernel, or put an AI coding partner to work on a single piece.

Aesthetic.Computer has three interlocking layers (an operating system that boots a laptop directly into art software, a custom programming language, and a social network) and a public face: **the Library**. The whole stack is free and open source on GitHub.

There has never been a better time to develop new software for old hardware.

Windows 10 end-of-life has stranded roughly 240 million x86_64 laptops; 62 million tonnes of e-waste pile up each year. Strip away the consumer OS and those machines become a planetary population of half-built instruments waiting for a kernel.

The operating system runs as PID 1 on x86_64 UEFI laptops, with no desktop, compositor, or browser. Graphics via DRM, input via raw evdev, audio via ALSA at 192 kHz, 32-voice polyphony. Per-seat cost lands near \$50, two orders of magnitude below Princeton's PLOrk laptop-orchestra model. A built-in code command drops into a terminal running

Anthropic's Claude Code. The default piece is **notepat.com**, an 8,466-line polyphonic instrument (also free in any browser).

KidLisp.com is a minimal Lisp for generative art. 118 functions, 17,000+ programs already on the platform. Programs can be minted on Tezos without artists touching blockchain infrastructure.

The Network hosts 371 built-in pieces, 265 user-published, 2,800+ registered handles. The website has been in active development since 2021 (19,000+ commits across 5 years); the operating-system build is new, its kernel prototype landing February 2026.

The Library is what makes the stack civic. A lending fleet of AC Blank laptops (refurbished ThinkPad 11e Yoga Gen 6, flashed with Aesthetic.Computer at \$128/seat) circulates through Flash Days, workshops, and Family Play afternoons at LACMA. Members join a public waitlist. Aesthetic.Computer is the flagship; the library openly welcomes artists flashing their own custom creative operating systems onto library hardware, joining a tradition of artist-run device libraries.

During the grant period we grow the library and run public events:

1. **Flash Days.** Cohort artists and library members flash AC Blanks together and take them home.
2. **KidLisp Workshops.** Hands-on sessions writing programs that run live on Aesthetic.Computer as the laptop's whole OS.
3. **Family Play.** Drop-in kiosk hours where visitors of any age play the library's fleet together.
4. **Open Documentation.** Library curriculum, waitlist software, and build pipeline, published openly.

The personal computer is a civic instrument, and a new scene is just beginning.

Figures

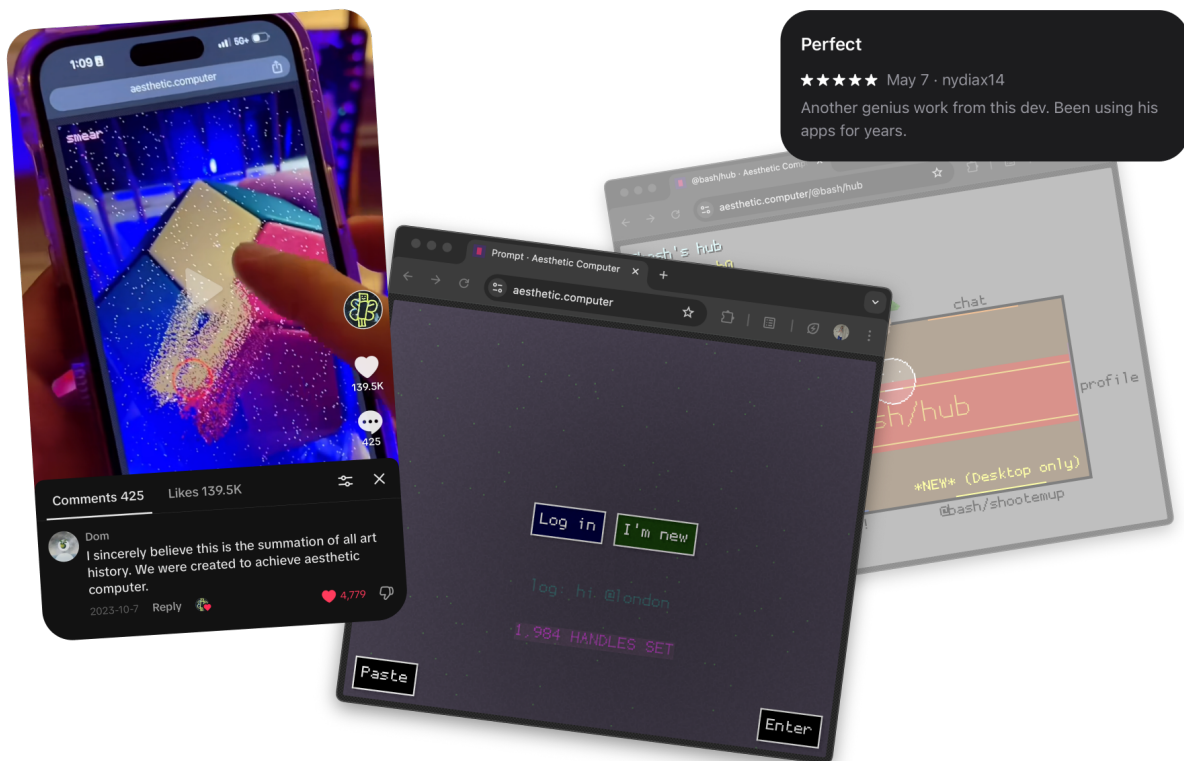


Fig. 1. Aesthetic.Computer running on mobile and desktop. The platform hosts 600+ interactive pieces across 2,800 registered users. Social features include chat, multiplayer, and instant QR sharing.

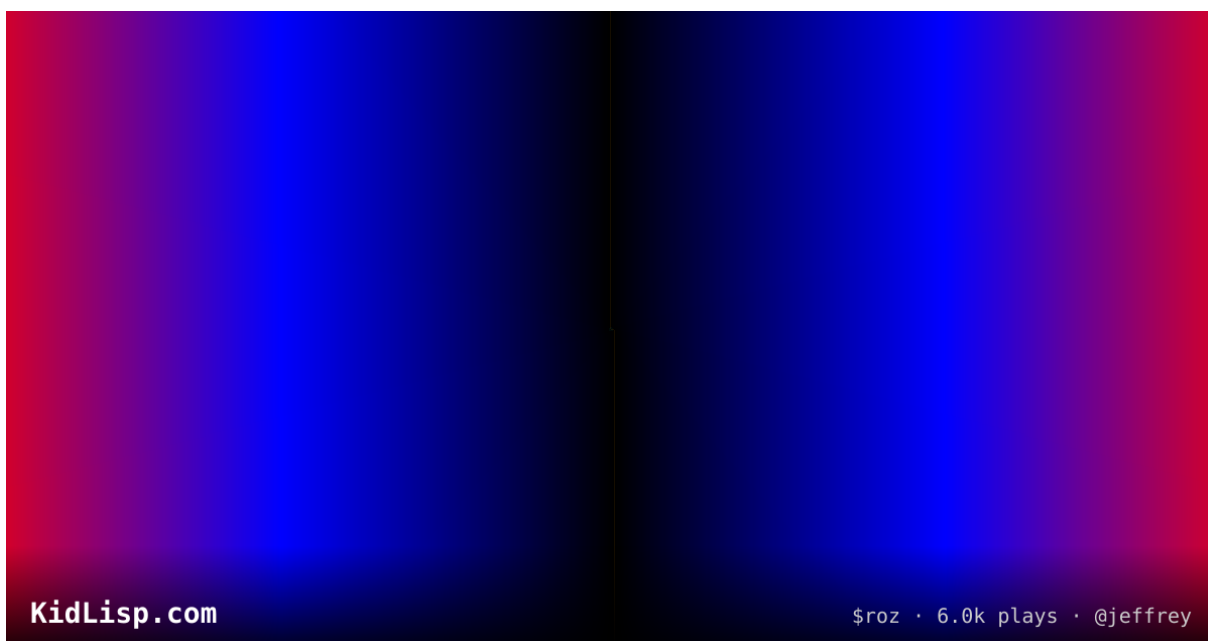


Fig. 2. \$roz by @jeffrey, a KidLisp generative piece with 6,000+ plays. KidLisp programs run

directly in the browser and on AC Blank hardware. Over 16,000 programs have been written on the platform.

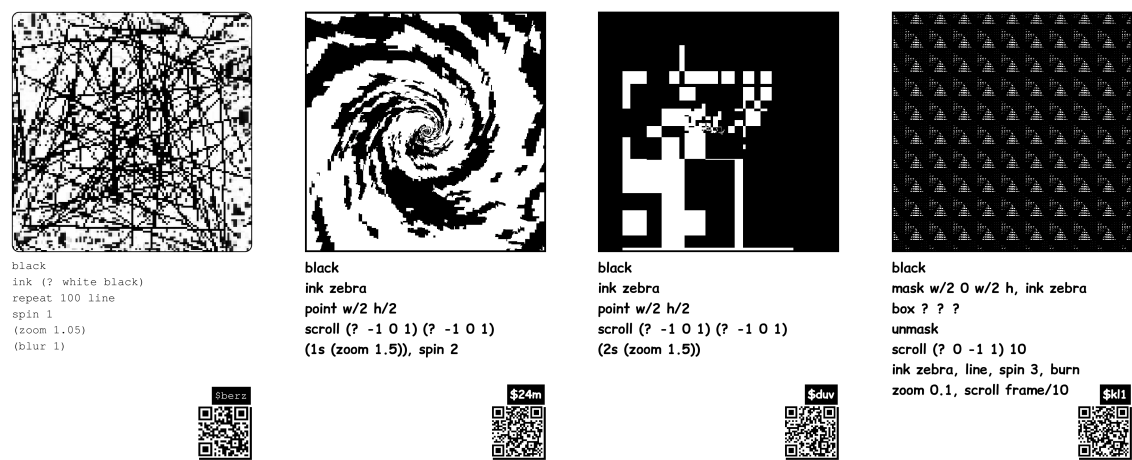
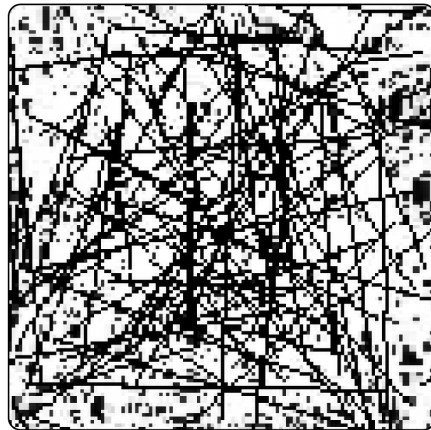


Fig. 3. Four KidLisp pieces as printable cards: *\$berz*, *\$24m*, *\$duv*, and *\$kl1*. Each card is a self-contained program. The pixel image at top is the live output; the code underneath is the complete source. Printed cards were produced for Casey Reas & Lauren Lee McCarthy's "Social Software" course at UCLA (2026). QR codes link back to the live piece on Aesthetic.Computer.



```
black
ink (? white black)
repeat 100 line
spin 1
(zoom 1.05)
(blur 1)
```



Fig. 4. *\$berz* up close. Six lines of KidLisp produce a recursive wire-tangle that spins, zooms, and blurs each frame. No imports, no build step, no dependencies. The entire program is visible on the card. Cards are 2.75×4.75 inches, monochrome, screen-printable.



Fig. 5. Target hardware: a Lenovo Yoga convertible laptop. Aesthetic.Computer boots from USB on x86_64 UEFI machines, turning commodity hardware into a dedicated creative instrument without replacing the factory OS.

Statements

Artistic Merit

Aesthetic.Computer treats the computer itself as an unfinished instrument, a site for ongoing artistic invention rather than a fixed consumer product. By building the whole operating system (custom kernel, framebuffer rendering, sample-level audio synthesis), we recover the directness that early personal computing promised but commercial platforms abandoned. The work sits at the intersection of software art, instrument design, and language design: KidLisp is simultaneously a tool and a medium, and Aesthetic.Computer transforms commodity laptops into dedicated creative instruments. The artistic claim is that how we build computers is itself a creative act with cultural consequences.

Technology and Culture

Consumer operating systems have become attention-extraction machines, optimized for engagement metrics rather than creative agency. Aesthetic.Computer offers a counter-model: a computer that boots directly into art software and grows alongside the artist. Over five years of active development, Aesthetic.Computer's community has written 17,000+ KidLisp programs, made 4,400+ paintings, shared 2,900+ moods, and exchanged 19,000+ chat messages across 2,800+ registered handles. When Aesthetic.Computer runs as the whole operating system on a laptop, the social layer comes with it: chat, multiplayer, notepad, KidLisp runtime. The personal computer's design is a cultural question, not a settled technical one, and people show up when given the room.

Public Engagement

Public engagement happens through the AC Device Library. First, Flash Days where cohort artists and library members flash AC Blank laptops together and take them home. Second, KidLisp workshops where participants write generative art programs that run live on Aesthetic.Computer. Third, Family Play afternoons where visitors of any age borrow and play the library's fleet together. A public waitlist keeps the fleet moving. The entire software stack is free and open source on GitHub, and the library openly supports artists flashing their own custom creative operating systems onto library hardware.

Timeline

This proposal aligns to the Lab's new biennial calendar: a working-prototype milestone at the **2027 Symposium** and a completed public premiere at the **2028 Demo Day**. The cohort structure (3–5 recipients plus invitational projects) is well-suited to this work, since the USB-bootable format means other cohort artists can bring their own pieces to the system, and we can cross-pollinate at Symposium without waiting for Demo Day. Two recent Lab projects sit directly in our neighborhood: Casey Reas's 2023 *METAVASARELY and An Empty Room* (generative systems) and Lauren Lee McCarthy's 2022 *Auto* (public/social interface design). Reas and McCarthy co-teach UCLA's Social Software course, which I am an Author in Residence in during this application year; their class is where the KidLisp cards shown in Fig. 3 were first printed and circulated.

Fall 2026 – Spring 2027

Library Build-Out & Curriculum. Establish the AC Device Library (12 AC Blank laptops, lending-fleet infrastructure, public waitlist software), expand laptop compatibility to 5+ laptop models, design the 3-level KidLisp workshop curriculum, produce printed reference cards.

Spring – Summer 2027

First Library Cohort + Pilots. Open the library waitlist; run 2 pilot Flash Days at LACMA; first public borrowing cycle; assemble a prototype multi-station installation; publish v0 of the open-source build guide.

Fall 2027

2027 Symposium “We boot the cohort.” At Symposium, every laptop in the room becomes an Aesthetic Computer instrument from a single USB stick. Cohort artists and library members flash AC Blanks together and take them home. Public KidLisp workshop; talk / in-conversation on generative computing alongside the 2023 cohort’s work.

Winter 2027 – Summer 2028

Library Scaling + Extended Workshops. Kiosk-mode hardening, library curriculum v1 (EN + ES), 4 additional workshops, returns-and-repair cycle for the fleet, complete documentation of the waitlist and lending system.

Fall 2028

2028 Demo Day “We play the room.” A multi-station installation premieres on the LACMA floor. Family Play afternoons open the library fleet to visitors of any age. v1.0 of the open-source build pipeline ships alongside so any institution can run its own room.

Budget

Artist fee (24 months, Fall 2026 – Fall 2028)	\$22,000
Studio hardware (dev machines, displays)	\$3,500
AC Device Library fleet (12 AC Blank laptops × \$128 flashed with Aesthetic.Computer, incl. cases + shipping + returns)	\$2,000
Mini Rig portable speakers for installation (5 × \$120)	\$600
USB drives, cables, peripherals	\$500
Installation fabrication (furniture, mounts)	\$2,500
Workshop materials (printed guides, KidLisp reference cards)	\$1,200
2027 Symposium “boot the cohort” (cohort demo USB kit, on-site workshop station, travel)	\$2,500
2028 Demo Day “play the room” (multi-station install setup, public-program support, v1.0 release)	\$3,000
Paid event helpers (workshop TAs, install + take-down at Symposium and Demo Day)	\$3,000
Server + compute infrastructure (hosting, CDN, CI/CD)	\$3,500
Documentation production (video, photography, translation)	\$2,000
Contingency (10%)	\$3,700
Total Requested	\$50,000

The 10% contingency line handles budget slip; paid helpers are a direct expense budgeted for the cohort’s two public events. Other funding: open-source sponsorship via GitHub Sponsors and Liberapay supplements ongoing infrastructure costs (hosting, domains, CI).

Curriculum Vitae

Jeffrey Alan Scudder · aesthetic.computer · Los Angeles, CA

Jeffrey Alan Scudder is an artist, educator, and technologist based in Los Angeles. He loves building instruments and tools for other artists to use, and keeps a live and active practice across performance painting, software writing, and teaching. He holds an MFA from the Yale School of Art (2013) and a BFA from Ringling College of Art and Design (2011). He has taught at UCLA, Parsons School of Design, and Southern Oregon University, and is currently Author in Residence at UCLA Social Software with Casey Reas and Lauren Lee McCarthy. He is the creator of Aesthetic.Computer, Whistlegraph, and No Paint, and his open-source tools *No Paint* and *notepat* each reached the front page of Hacker News. His work is held in the collections of KADIST (San Francisco) and SMK,

the National Gallery of Denmark. He hosts biweekly NELA Computer Club demos at Plot.Place in Chinatown, Los Angeles.

Education

- 2013 Yale School of Art, MFA (Sculpture)
- 2011 Ringling College of Art + Design, BFA (Fine Art)
- 2010 AICAD New York Studio Program Residency

Residencies 2026 Author in Residence, UCLA (Casey Reas)
2019 Internet Archive Artist in Residence
2018 Gazell.io Art House Web Residency
2017 Schloss-Post Web Residencies (ZKM)

Teaching 2026 Author in Residence, UCLA (Casey Reas)
2024 UCLA DMA Summer: Interactivity
2019 Asst. Professor, Southern Oregon U.
2016 Visiting Professor, UCLA DMA
13–16 Adjunct Professor, Parsons

Selected Solo Exhibitions

- 2022 Ten Whistlegraphs, Feral File (w/ Whistlegraph)
- 2018 Radical Digital Painting: LA, The Newsstand Project & CAP
- 2017 Tumpin, left.gallery (Online)
- 2017 Imaginary Screenshots, Witcher Projects, Los Angeles
- 2016 No Paint: Release One, Essex Flowers (Digital Commission)

Selected Group Exhibitions

- 2026 47th Venice Family Clinic Art Exhibition + Auction, Venice, CA
- 2025 Turbo Cheap (inaugural exhibition), Los Angeles
- 2019 Internet Archive Artist in Residency Exhibition
- 2018 OPEN CODES (Schloss Solitude Web Residencies), ZKM, Karlsruhe
- 2018 Radical Digital Painting w/ Julia Yerger, Johannes Vogt Gallery, NYC
- 2018 Make Pictures (curated), bitforms gallery, NYC
- 2015 P.S.1 Commencement, ALLGOLD @ MoMA PS1 Printshop, LIC, NY
- 2013 Apartment Show (hosted by Nouriel Roubini), NYC
- 2009 The New Easy, Artnews Projects, Berlin

Selected Lectures & Performances (65+ total)

- 2026 NELA Computer Club demos (biweekly), Plot.Place, Chinatown, LA
- 2022 The Longest Whistlegraph Ever (so far), New Museum, NYC
- 2020 New Dynamic Graphics: Whistlegraph Recital, Korea HCI (keynote)
- 2019 New Dynamic Graphics, India HCI 19 (keynote), Hyderabad
- 2019 RDP @ RAFLOST Festival, Iceland
- 2018 RDP, 35c3: Chaos Communication Congress, Leipzig
- 2018 Casey Reas & JAS in Conversation, bitforms gallery, NYC
- 2018 RDP @ 1st Annual HASH Award, ZKM, Karlsruhe
- 2018 RDP @ Pioneer Works, Brooklyn, NY
- 2018 European tour (15+ venues) w/ Goodiepal & Pals
- 2017 Northeast US Lecture Tour (Parsons, Harvard, Yale, RISD, Temple, Rutgers)
- 2017 RDP @ Cafe OTO, London & Neumeister Bar-Am, Berlin

Collections

KADIST Foundation, San Francisco
SMK, National Gallery of Denmark, Copenhagen

Selected Press & Writing

- 2024 *notepat*, Hacker News (front page)
- 2023 Whistlegraph: A new audience for generative art, *Dirt*
- 2023 Sex: The Whistlegraph Zine, *Sex Magazine*
- 2020 No Paint, Hacker News (front page)
- 2019 Drawing is the best videogame, *The Creative Independent*
- 2018 Radical Digital Painting & Political Rock, *Are.na Blog*
- 2018 *Harvard Advocate*, Winter 2018 (Noise)
- 2017 Artist Profile: Jeffrey Alan Scudder, *Rhizome*
- 2017 A Manifesto for Radical Digital Painting, *Schlosspost*
- 2017 Microsoft Paint's Influence on Artists Is Bigger Than You Might Think, *Artsy*

Software & Platforms

- 2021– Aesthetic.Computer, creative computing platform. 5+ years of active git history, 19,000+ commits. (aesthetic.computer)
- 2026– Aesthetic.Computer as a full operating system (USB-bootable Linux). Prototype

kernel landed Feb 2026; 2 months of focused development to ship.

2024– KidLisp, programming language for generative art (16,000+ programs)

2024– *notepat*, polyphonic synthesizer instrument (8,466 lines)

2016– No Paint, radical paint program (nopaint.art)

2016– Whistlegraph, collaborative performance software (w/ Camille Klein & Alex Freundlich)

Appendix: LACMA 2026 Call for Proposals

Source: lacma.org/art/lab/grants · Retrieved April 2026

The Los Angeles County Museum of Art invites artists worldwide to apply for Art + Technology Lab grants. The initiative supports a “safe-to-fail rapid prototyping environment” where creators explore intersections of art, science, and emerging technology. The program emphasizes experimentation over finished products.

Key Details

Deadline	April 22, 2026, 11:59 PM PST
Notification	July 2026
Project Start	As early as fall 2026
Grant Amount	Up to \$50,000 per project
Duration	Typically two years
Selected	3–5 via open call, plus up to 2 invitational

Eligibility

Artists and collectives worldwide may apply. Prior technological experience is not required. Applicants need not be Los Angeles–based.

Support Provided

Financial grants cover artist fees and direct costs including materials. Recipients also receive in-kind support: mentorship, coaching, and access to partner technologies from Hyundai Motor, Snap Inc., Anthropic, and academic institutions including MIT Media Lab Space Exploration Initiative and NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory.

Evaluation Criteria

Projects must demonstrate:

- Artistic merit and artist-led vision
- Exploration of emerging technology
- Models or methods valuable to broader communities

- Public engagement opportunities during development

Application Requirements

- Project name and three descriptive words
- One-sentence description
- Full project description (500-word maximum)
- Artist biography / CV
- Artistic merit statement (100 words max)
- Discussion of technology–culture dialogue (100 words max)
- Public engagement plan (100 words max)
- Funding sources and conditions
- Detailed budget with milestones
- Up to 5 images / renderings (JPEG format)
- Video links (under 5 minutes)

Apply: lacma.submittable.com