

## Cosmologies beyond the White Square

Suzie Walshe

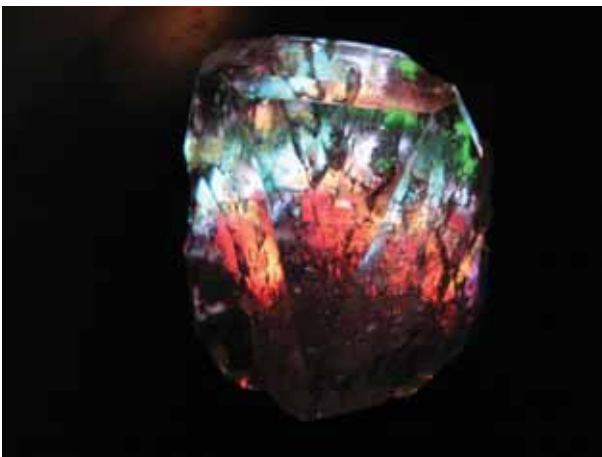
The term “Composition” could imply both a piece of music or dance choreography. Because these art forms are expressed through sound and time, a sense of free-flowing interpretation and open emotional response that is neither literal or interpretive, but rather, abstract and limitless, is engendered in those who witness such art forms. Much like more performance-based work, the work of the Swiss artist known merely as K-soul, operates on levels far and beyond our average viewing experience of visual art. Creating a series of electronic digital moving image and sound pieces known as the “Jardin Cosmique” series, he calls this new medium “light painting.”

Working from a laboratory based in the Helvetian Alps, K-soul’s oeuvre ranges from digital painting to light sculpture—or light jewels. K-soul takes up the medium, first initiated by artist Ruben Nunez, and infuses it with his own sense of the “poetic motion of the spiritual world [and] ... smooth perception of living forces” based in his own real-life observations of nature. His own experiences as a mountain guide inspire these perspectives of the natural world, informing his understanding of the universal and spiritual found in natural locales.

Looking to modern art influences including Kandinsky, Klee, Malevich, Beuys, and Mondrian, K-soul takes an approach that furthers these previous artists’ pursuit of the pure and the spiritual in art. Like Kandinsky, his artworks stir the same associations with music and dance, and embody Wagner’s conception of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, as well as the spirituality emerging from visual art practice, a fact that must hold some links to the German Romantic tradition of honoring the mythical and mystical properties of nature, and their association with man’s emotional life.

Kandinsky, like K-soul, was particularly interested in the idea of rhythm, which he expounded upon in his *On the Spiritual in Life*, in which he emphasized dissonance as well as regularized pattern, a tradition that K-soul deftly picks up on and exploits to signify an extreme sense of comforting harmony, yet mysterious and dark energies, that are slightly unsettling. Like Klee, who was known for his interest in transcendentalism, K-soul’s work also evidences





All images: Courtesy of the artist.

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the influence of German idealist metaphysics. In Klee's *The Thinking Eye*, we see the strongest link with K-soul, in its look at the "science" of design, an interest that is paralleled in K-soul's preoccupation with science as well. According to Robert Hughes in *The Shock of the New*, Klee saw the world "as a model, a kind of orrery run up by the cosmic clockmaker—a Swiss God—to demonstrate spiritual truth."

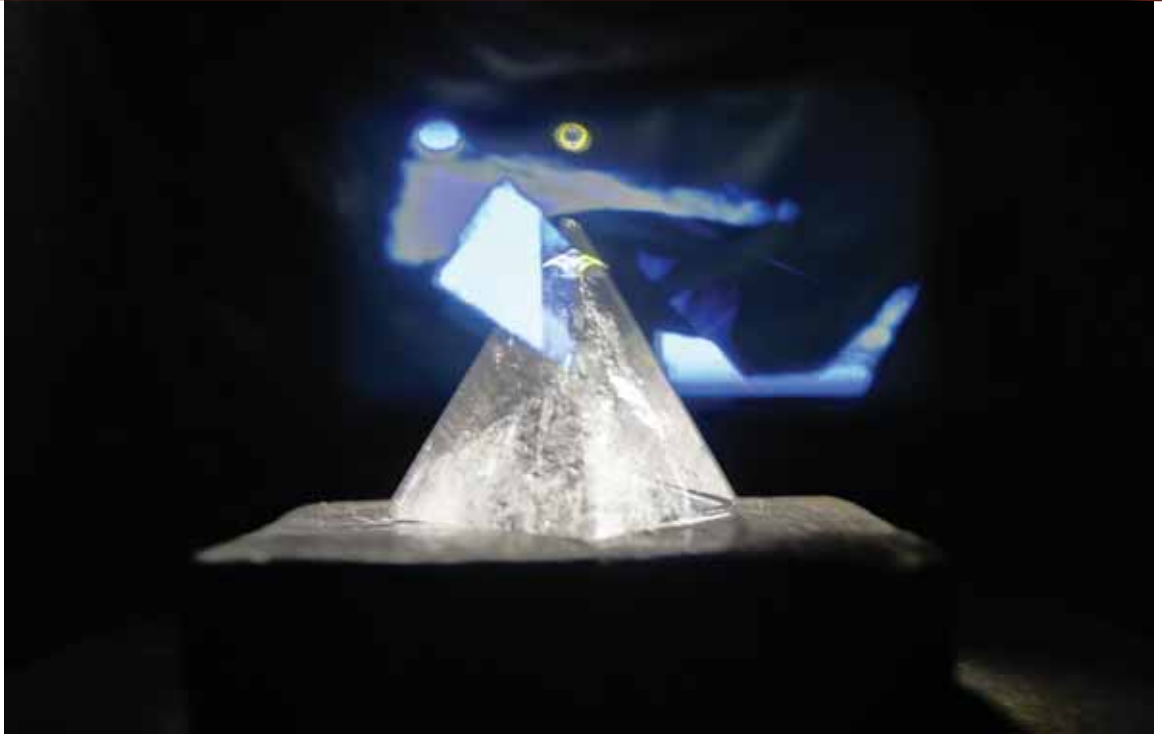
In much the same way, K-soul is most concerned with merging art and science, for as Goethe reminds us: "He who has Art and Science also has religion, But those who do not have them better have religion." Religion (somewhat) aside, in our contemporary society, more than ever before, as Walter Benjamin alluded to over a century ago (in *Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*), art today requires technology, and in this age of mechanical (and digital) reproduction, new means and modes are a necessity.

Taking up where Malevich left off with his *Suprematist Composition: White on White*, K-soul takes painting into the future, by introducing the next logical medium: time. Yet, according to K-soul, when integrating time into the static image, you also are integrating "radiant light and movement in it, [and] the evolutionary processes ... [requires] scientific knowledge" of this process.

For this, we come back to nature, and the observation of nature. Working as a botanist, biochemist, physicist, and mathematician, K-soul draws from his research, coming to the realization that the future of art is "by the light" not "with the light." He relies on information systems and digital technology, using them as tools for poetry to achieve his desired aesthetic—sensuous and morphing forms and lines of a variety of technicolor hues that dance and play, emerging and deforming across the field—either in 2D still representations, or in 3D installations.

For K-soul painting is the first moving light painting in the history of art, achieving the merging of all forms of art into one unique artwork, finally achieving a total *Gesamtkunstwerk*. The secret to this approach is that the light emerges from *inside* color, not reflecting off its surface, hence painting is transformed into a moving light painting, heightening our sense experiences and our perceptions of light and color.

Yet, departing from pigment and embracing digital color has not been an easy path for K-soul, and has presented its own hurdles to overcome. The electronic screen drains the sense of complexity and depth from the color that is so inherent to paint and pigments. Yet, K-soul has found an apt metaphor in this fact: like the modern-day man who is rendered sterile and hollow from the drudg-



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eries of technological life, so too has the life of color itself been synthesized, ultimately representing the ultimate spiritual battle in modern society between light and darkness. According to K-soul:

For an artist, the creation from a morbid technological light should induce a fundamental reflection: how to produce a chromatic profoundness? ... By what means does one insufflate a chromatic dignity into the artwork?

The answer? Intense observation. By carefully observing the movements and internal qualities of color, it is revealed through temporality, and then translated by K-soul through his studied knowledge of technological structures, to open up a new perspective within a system, which allows him to re-infuse these colors with a new kind of profundity and grace that is found in the realm of light. For K-soul, "this quest produces the chromatic quality indispensable to the creation of the pictorial work. The human biography becomes the biography of the color." Colors become dynamic and alive, familiar and yet not, transporting us to a new kind of perception, a new space, a new quality of time.

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