

## On Jung Hee Choi's Drawings with Light

Marian Zazeela

I visited Tangiers in 1959 and again in 1960. The Arabic calligraphy visible everywhere made a very strong impression on me. In the paintings I created in 1960 the calligraphic influence began to appear through broad graphic strokes suspended in expansive static color fields as if I were synthesizing Ms and Zs, the initials of my own name. These calligraphic elements, I gradually discovered, were the seeds for much of the visual work I would produce over the years to come.

The abstract use of initials became a generative form. By 1961, I began to create calligraphic drawings reminiscent of illuminated manuscripts but using abstract letter-like strokes that were not from any known alphabet. In about 1963, through my interest in abstract calligraphy I conceived the idea of borrowing from the forms of letters by taking elemental shapes existing in cursive writing and manipulating them to create interlocking patterns. Elaborating this technique, in the early '70s I evolved an abstract form in which the elements of the letters dissolve into an overall structure of continuous curved lines. Using a very hard pencil on Coloraid paper (an art paper in which color is silk-screened to the surface, providing an unusually flat, matte drawing surface), I developed a technique of executing fine, continuous, curved lines juxtaposed in extreme proximity to form curvilinear patterns suggestive of certain characteristic universal non-repeating patterns such as the grain of wood, fingerprints, and the intersections of various electromagnetic vibrational fields.

In these and in many of my works, I intentionally combined freely drawn patterns with elemental forms. Just as a horoscope combines levels of intersecting relationships into a two-dimensional graph of a person's life, the use of elemental forms—circle, square, diamond, cross, spiral—provides layers of formal structure through which patterns traverse as if sliced in a cross-section of space, transforming or mapping three-dimensional space onto two-dimensional space.

I consider making freely drawn patterns to be: "drawing with the hand's eye." The forms and patterns seem to discover themselves; the hand is free to allow direct expression of feeling to flow from within. Conversely, the layers of elemental forms through which the patterns traverse are drawn with "the mind's eye." The mind brings cognitive form and an aspect of universal order through which imagination can fly free.

Henry Flynt has written about my work:

"In *Ornamental Lightyears Tracery*, the fade-outs of the slides were executed under the perceptual threshold, so that the apparition became different without visibly changing. As to *The Magenta Lights*, the turning shadows on the ceiling were distinguished from the mobiles only by marginal cues (which the viewer did not have to focus on). The spectacle, then, was at the threshold of the discrimination of objecthood. Only the latest technical means made this level of illusion physically possible."

Through my disciple Jung Hee Choi, calligraphic drawing has completed the infinite circle and returned to its ancient origins in the East. In the study of Indian classical raga we have taught her each phrase, motif, ornament and shruti (microtone) of this highly evolved art form. She has memorized the vast set of complex and stylized elements of the Kirana lineage in precise detail and then learned to follow her imagination to creatively improvise within the tradition. Jung Hee has also observed and absorbed an aspect of my calligraphic drawing techniques utilizing the macrostructural concept of "the threshold of the discrimination of objecthood," as in *Ahata*, *Anahata*, *the Manifest*, *the Unmanifest*, and the microstructural technique of using a very hard pencil on black paper to execute fine calligraphic strokes that become elements allowing the revelation of a larger form, for example, of an otherworldly spirit. Through her understanding of the interplay of reality and illusion presented in my lightworks, she has developed video projections that create a constantly changing field of light through which the detailed calligraphic strokes of her drawing emerge for an instant in time and then evanesce into the ethereal mists again and again,

offering us eventually a collective premonition of the overall form. Much as a disciple of a raga singer earns the right to carry on the tradition and create within the form, Jung Hee has earned the right to use my techniques and to combine them with original techniques of her own to create beautiful new work that will become a guiding light for the next generation.

During an extended viewing of *RICE* superposed on my *Imagic Light* projections in the *Dream House*, I perceived an ecstatic array of fundamental archetypal images that were generated by the *RICE* patterns: crystals; swastika; lotus; square; flower (rose), chakra; wheel; spiral; circle; rose window (cathedrals); star; snowflakes: the procession of order out of chaos and back to order that is the ebb and flow of all of life.

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