

kartz ucci / an opera for one / artist statement



A central metaphor in my work is the 'location of desire' and the 'pursuit of happiness'. Language theory and philosophy inform my creative approach and my subject matter is often determined by my emotional response to my physical surroundings. In describing my work, I would say that I have an unabashed interest in the romantic and that I prefer, though not exclusively, to work with the merging of two conceptual strategies. These are the application of a system of rules to the process of creation and the appropriation of borrowed elements for its execution.

I am engaged with the materiality of my choices - driven by an expanded field of meaning that incorporates the phenomenal world. This includes relevant texts, ideological statements and specific substrates or visual representations, imagined or real, which expand the context and content of my subject matter, either physically or philosophically. Form over function has been upended by the interrelation between the two as perceived through the re-authoring and recoding of existing texts, musical pieces and films as my material source. Equally important to this process is the recursive relationship between the original and its recoded meaning.

*An opera for one* evolved out of a desire to create a work that combined light-music synthesis and spiritual ecstatic experience with Pablo Neruda's erotically charged love poems – an opera seemed like the appropriate choice. Its setting is the projected image of an empty space which contains a white screen and a singular white viewing bench. The camera's point of view is askew and the perspective is forced. Within the frame, projected light bathes both the bench and the screen in colors that correspond to the applied color-code in time with the rhythm of the music. In essence the opera is a projection of a projection of a projection, three times removed from its source.

This work has taken several years and countless variations in the studio to find its correct expression. In 2004 I hired the young Canadian opera soprano, Deanna Pauletto to sing a cappella, Neruda's book of poetry, "Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair". The piece was recorded in a cement-encased stairwell, 16 stories high with only one take and no rehearsal. She was given a color-coded score of the poetry based on my interpretation of the relation between color and its emotional vibration. The composer Alexander Scriabin's color codex heavily influenced my research, but equally significant was Saint Teresa of Avila's "The Interior Castle". In 2008 I hired the musician David Rosman to map Scriabin's color code to the tonalities of Deanna Pauletto's voice. After recording the resulting color with the sound I decided that Scriabin's synesthetic system was not appropriate for Neruda's text. Returning to the original color-coded score as my source I reassigned color by means of my own emotional, notional and symbolic evaluation of Deanna Pauletto's vocal interpretation of Neruda's poetry.

The opera has a running time of 88:33 minutes.

I would like to gratefully acknowledge the support of *TILT* Export aka Jenene Nagy and Josh Smith without whose contribution this project would not have come to fruition.