

Anne Spalter transforms NASA footage of the sun into psychedelic, meditative portal

Meet Me in the Sun • an immersive installation by Anne Spalter • curated by Natalie White
SPRING/BREAK Art Show • March 6 – 12, 2018
4 Times Square • Floor 22 • Room 2252

Digital mixed media artist and academic pioneer Anne Spalter, founder of Brown’s and RISD’s original digital fine arts programs in the 1990s, and Natalie White, artist and Equal Rights Amendment activist, have joined forces for *Meet Me in the Sun*, an immersive installation of kaleidoscopically manipulated imagery and video art meant to meditatively guide viewers on a simulated journey to the sun. In the context of an art show where the theme is ‘otherness,’ Spalter and White chose to conversely highlight the sun as the underlying force that binds us.

“The sun is by far the most important source of energy for life on earth,” explains Spalter. “It transcends barriers of culture and creed to not only physically sustain every living creature and plant but also to dictate the very constructs (“day” and “night”) by which any society functions. If everything the sun touches is unified by its contact, then the sun itself serves as the literal beacon of unity.” To that end, added curator Natalie White, “the idea of meeting in the sun takes us to the core our commonality and brings into question why we would ever consider an ‘other’ living thing to be anything but equal.”



Installation view of *Meet Me in the Sun* with still of two-channel video loop (video duration 9m24sec)

Meet Me in the Sun’s conceptual centerpiece is a two-channel video artwork projected on perpendicular circular discs. In her digital art practice, Spalter uses custom software to manually manipulate source footage (often that she’s captured on her own) into abstract “Modern Landscapes.” In this instance, the source footage that she processed and combined derives mainly from NASA’s heliophysics database, but also includes video Spalter took herself during a trip to the ethnically diverse island of Martinique. The Martinique scene in the source footage is a group of people on the beach at sunset, the sun’s angle casting them into silhouettes in a way that makes the figures’ ethnicities indistinguishable from one another. Overlaid in parts of the projected video component is a digitally manipulated silhouette of a female figure soulfully beckoning the viewer to join in on her journey to the sun.

Two strips of custom fabric of the same source footage as the video works intersectionally drape the room, welcoming visitors at the door like a red carpet and guiding them to a central observation bench. Compositionally integrated into the fabric section on the left wall are five digital “video prints,”

framed pieces that appear on first glance to be vibrantly printed mandalas, but on closer inspection reveal a seamlessly integrated video screen at their center that adds an entrancing meditative component to the otherwise still works.

Meet Me in the Sun celebrates unity and reminds us of our common DNA at a time when those at the helm of public policy have perpetuated the acceptance of outspoken contempt toward outsiders. Summarized Spalter:

“Who is out and who is in? Who defines the imaginary borders between countries and decides who can cross them? These days everything is strange and getting stranger. *Meet Me in the Sun* unites participants in a joyous experience created by a science fiction-style incarnation of the sun as a planetary life-giving orb. In this mythical space, all are welcomed, and those who wish to do so are invited to take part in a meditative moment of healing.”

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ABOUT ANNE SPALTER

Digital mixed-media artist Anne Spalter is an academic pioneer who founded the original digital fine arts programs at Brown University and The Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) in the 1990s. With a decades-long goal of integrating art and technology, Spalter has authored over a dozen academic papers and the seminal, internationally taught textbook, *The Computer in the Visual Arts* (Addison-Wesley, 1999).

Spalter’s classical arts education (she received an MFA in painting from RISD) combined with her foundational command of digital art theory and practice suited her well when she transitioned from academia to a full-time studio practice in 2009. Her artwork now adorns the permanent collections of the Victoria and Albert Museum (London, UK); the Albright-Knox Art Gallery (Buffalo, NY); the Rhode Island School of Design Museum (Providence, RI); and others.

She is also noted for her large-scale public projects; in 2016, MTA Arts commissioned Spalter to create a 52-screen digital art installation, *New York Dreaming*, which remained on view in one of its most crowded commuter hubs (Fulton Center) through Fall 2017.

Spalter’s artistic process employs a hybrid arsenal of traditional and innovative digital tools. For her digital mark making, Spalter uses custom software to transform source footage—captured by herself during multisensory experiences such as riding the Coney Island Cyclone; walking through an open-air flower market in Bangkok; and gazing down from a helicopter over downtown Dubai—into kaleidoscopic, algorithmically manipulated Modern Landscapes. Having studied mathematics as a Brown undergraduate (and with additional cross-disciplinary masteries including a 2010 black belt and 2011 Sensei designation in Kenpo Karate), Spalter’s eclectic influences in the studio are as diverse as Buddhist art, pure mathematics, Futurism, and Action Painting.

Spalter regularly lectures on digital art practice and theory, with recent speaking venues including the National Arts Club (New York) and Design Miami, for the latter of which she discussed the cultural impact of new technologies. Spalter currently serves on the board of the New York Foundation for the Arts (NYFA).

ABOUT NATALIE WHITE

Feminist by nature, a riot by habit. Natalie White is a provocative and progressive feminist and artist, best known for her self-portrait work with Giant Polaroid photography, and her contribution as a "Muse" to the work of many of today's art and fashion luminaries. Her creative drive and unapologetic spirit have led her to collaborative ventures with artists such as Peter Beard, George Condo, Michael Dweck, Will Cotton, Spencer Tunick, and Sean Lennon.

Growing up in a small town in West Virginia, Natalie first gained attention internationally as a young model, featured on the covers of numerous European Magazines. Never one to shy away from the risqué, she was also the first American ever featured in French Playboy.

In 2013, at the "Who Shot Natalie White?" show, amidst a retrospective of 25 different artists for whom she has been a muse, Natalie debuted herself as a solo artist. Through this series of double exposed Giant Polaroid nudes, she re-defined herself as "her own muse."

As a leader in female empowerment and self-affirmation through art, Natalie also works in activations for women's rights. She has performed at the "Art Basel Miami Women in Art Benefit" in collaboration with the Brooklyn Museum's Elizabeth Sackler Center, as well as the "Natalie White for Equal Rights" show at the Hole in 2015 and a 2016 follow-up at the WhiteBox Foundation for the Arts. In July 2016, She led a 16 day, 250-mile march from NYC to DC promoting the fight for inclusion of The Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution.