

The Role of Intermediality in *As Light Falls*: Light, Space, and Philosophical Reflection

Tong Qiu

As light falls across an empty gallery, moments of quiet illumination become the raw materials for a spiritual journey. My exhibition idea emerged from the belief that there is always silence – calm and peacefulness in presence – within a chaotic and bustling world. As a highly sensitive person – sensitive to sounds, light, and emotions – I am able to discover the small details that are often ignored or unnoticed. It's these small details that bring a quiet beauty inside me, helping me navigate the noise of the outside world and stay true to myself.

Through this inner journey, I found myself connected to a larger universe, where various elements merge and influence one another. In the first part of the essay, I will explore how Wassily Kandinsky's theories in *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* provide inspirational guidance for my curating process. Next, I will examine the two intermedial strategies I've employed – media combination and intermedial reference – and how they are applied in the exhibition to express the connection. Finally, I will explain the curating experience as a whole, exploring how the components come together to create a cohesive and meaningful narrative. By blending photography, Haiku, ambient video, and an environment influenced by Wabi-Sabi, Scandinavian minimalism, and Taoism, I created a contemplative experience for the audience that invites both reflection and introspection.

In *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, Kandinsky describes art as a form of communication that speaks directly to the soul, writing, “the artist must train not only his eye but also his soul, so that he can test colours for themselves and not only by external impressions”.¹ This idea deeply

¹ Wassily Kandinsky, “VII. Theory,” essay, in *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (New York, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 1977), 46–52.

resonated with me, particularly in how it relates to my sensitivity to light and shadow. Just as Kandinsky suggests, I've learned to slow down and attune myself to these moments of quiet beauty – whether it's a single beam of sunlight slipping through a window or the way dusk gently softens a wall. These moments of subtle transformation became the foundation of my work, reflecting Kandinsky's call to awaken inner resonance. Through this practice, I invite viewers to slow down, notice the nuances of light, and discover for themselves the spiritual sensuality that these fleeting moments can offer.

Kandinsky also addresses that “one cannot compose a picture according to a formula; there must be inner necessity behind every line and colour”.² For me, this inner necessity manifested as an intuitive urge to capture unposed moments – when warm light settled on a stone or curved across a glass pane – without staging or manipulation. By trusting these spontaneous impulses, I allowed the framing and timing to be guided by what felt most vivid and genuine. Each moment of observation became a personal ritual, allowing the project to unfold naturally.

The dual principles of spiritual resonance and inner necessity form the conceptual guidance of the exhibition, grounding each decision in a search for calm, clarity, and spiritual depth. By capturing genuine moments rather than following popular framing techniques, the work remains rooted in authentic experiences of light. With these principles in mind, I now turn to the concept of media combination, as explored by Irina Rajewsky, where distinct art forms come together to enrich one another through juxtaposition and integration.³

To bring the concept of media combination to life, I paired ten original photographs with ten Haiku poems, each capturing my spiritual response to the images. This pairing creates a

² Wassily Kandinsky, “VII. Theory,” essay, in *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (New York, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 1977), 46–52.

³ Irina O. Rajewsky, “Intermediality, Intertextuality, and Remediation: A Literary Perspective on Intermediality,” *Intermédialités*, no. 6 (August 10, 2011): 43–64, <https://doi.org/10.7202/1005505ar>.

dynamic interplay between the two art forms, where the photograph provides visual depth, and the Haiku adds layers of emotional or conceptual resonance. Displaying the image alongside the poem generates subtle resonances that allow each medium to inform and enhance the other. For example, one photo's diagonal shaft of sunlight across the wood meets the Haiku "Shadow carves silent seam." The word "seam" in the poem adds a human dimension to the image, animating the light and grounding the photograph in concrete detail. This synergy between image and verse invites the audience to engage more deeply, allowing the abstract qualities of both media to merge and create a more interactive experience.

In addition to the images and poems, the exhibition featured a looping video of a classic Zen garden, accompanied by bamboo flute and koto music, with a gentle narration guiding visitors through moss, stone, and raked sand. This audiovisual piece complements the exhibition's focus on texture and rhythm, with the flute's soft motifs mirroring the patterns drawn in the sand, while the narration reinforces the quiet attention to detail seen in both the poems and the photographs. These elements create a harmonious flow that ties the multi-sensory experience together.

Rajewsky's concept of intermedial references – when one medium evokes another system – describes how different art forms interact to create a richer, layered experience for the viewer.⁴ In the exhibition, the gallery environment itself becomes an expressive medium, extending the ideas of Wabi-Sabi philosophy and Scandinavian minimalism, and inviting a deeper connection between the viewer and the art. Both of these aesthetic traditions share an emphasis on simplicity, impermanence, and the transformation of everyday materials into objects of beauty and contemplation. The use of space, materials, and light in the exhibition not only serves as a

⁴ Irina O. Rajewsky, "Intermediality, Intertextuality, and Remediation: A Literary Perspective on Intermediality," *Intermédialités*, no. 6 (August 10, 2011): 43–64, <https://doi.org/10.7202/1005505ar>.

backdrop but becomes an active participant, creating subtle resonances that enrich the experience.

A key example of this intermedial reference is the Scandi–Wabi–Tao Zen Garden, where visitors interact with the materials, raking fine white sand around irregular stones and driftwood. This act, which symbolizes the impermanence and fluidity of nature, brings the concepts of Wabi-Sabi into physical experience. As Avdulov explains, “Wabi doesn’t only describe the outer form, visible state but also refers to the inner quality,” which is exemplified in the garden’s design.⁵ The raking of the sand, shifting with each touch, reflects the passage of time and the beauty found in imperfection. While I originally considered incorporating a shallow water layer to enhance the sense of flow, practical concerns about reusability led to the choice of dry raking. This decision underscores the exhibition’s core message: impermanence and change arise from our interaction with the world, an idea central to both Wabi-Sabi and Taoist thought.

In addition to the physical experience of the garden, the gallery’s layout echoes Scandinavian minimalism, where simplicity and clarity are central principles. The open design, with simple wooden tables arranged in a flowing line and expansive windows allowing soft, shifting daylight to fill the space, evokes the clean lines and light-filled environments often associated with Scandinavian aesthetics. This minimalist approach creates a sense of emptiness – what Tanaka refers to as the presence of emptiness – which invites viewers to engage more deeply with the art.⁶ The environment, rather than being a static background, amplifies the interaction between the photographs, the light, and the space, offering the viewer a chance to experience the art not as isolated objects but as part of a dynamic, living system.

⁵ Alexandre Avdulov, “Understanding Wabi and Sabi in the Context of Japanese Aesthetics,” *ACCS Official Conference Proceedings*, August 1, 2022, 23–28, <https://doi.org/10.22492/issn.2187-4751.2022.3>.

⁶ Jessica C. Tanaka, “The Concept of Emptiness in Wabi-Sabi Aesthetics and Its Influence on Scandinavian Minimalist Space Design,” *Art and Society* 4, no. 2 (February 2025): 8–15, <https://doi.org/10.56397/as.2025.02.02>.

By presenting the exhibition in a live gallery setting, I was able to transcend the dualism of a static presentation. Rather than adhering to a strictly chronological order, the photographs were grouped thematically – some arranged in loose sequences, others by shared light effects or common locations. This arrangement allows for an organic unfolding of the visitor's journey, where each viewer's experience is unique and based on their personal interaction with the space. Cooper expands on this approach by explaining that Zen practice transcends dualism and encourages a holistic understanding, where form and void, the interior and exterior, are not separated but exist together as one.⁷ This idea of non-dualism, also central to Taoist philosophy, is reflected in the exhibition's curation, where every element – from the photographs to the Zen garden – comes together to create an integrated experience.

Reflecting on *As Light Falls*, I see the exhibition as both a personal journey and an open invitation. What began as a series of intuitive pauses – moments when light transformed a familiar scene into something quietly luminous – has evolved into a carefully woven experience of image, word, and space. By engaging with Kandinsky's ideas on spiritual resonance and inner necessity, I learned to trust my sensitivity to color and form. Applying Rajewsky's concepts of media combination and intermedial reference, I discovered how photographs, Haiku, and space can amplify each other's expressive potential. Yet, these frameworks always remained secondary to the lived experience of noticing: the warmth of afternoon light on a doorstep, the soft patina of age on a rusted hinge, the fleeting glow at the edge of perception.

The looping video and ambient soundscape deepen this immersion, reminding us that our experience of art is never purely visual. As viewers rake sand around stones, they become active participants in the exhibition's unfolding impermanence, encountering the philosophical currents

⁷ Cooper, Tracy M., "The Wabi Sabi Way: Antidote for a Dualistic Culture?," *Journal of Conscious, Evolution: Iss.* 10, Article 4.

of Wabi-Sabi and Taoism in each transient pattern. The minimalist architecture also emphasizes how space can speak, allowing light to flow freely and inviting visitors to find stillness in the gaps between objects.

Ultimately, *As Light Falls* is not about presenting finished artworks but about creating conditions for discovery. By arranging the pieces thematically, I invited each visitor to chart their own path – one that mirrors the unpredictable way light dances across our environment. My hope is that, as viewers move through the space, they will find moments that resonate with their own memories and emotions, pause to observe what often goes unnoticed, and carry away not only images and words but a renewed awareness of how even the simplest play of light can become a profound touchstone.

In this way, the exhibition remains open-ended. Just as the sand patterns shift with each visitor's gesture, each person's encounter with the work reflects their unique inner landscape. By sharing my experience of stillness and clarity, I offer a space where others may glimpse their own. And perhaps, in noticing the quiet grace of light, we each find a moment of presence – an echo of calm that lingers long after the gallery doors have closed.

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