



Nicole Landau
(Image: Courtesy of
Deirdre Lyons)

Light as Art



When artist Nicole Landau listened to a Deepak Chopra podcast explaining the string theory, something clicked. “Chopra was interviewing Michio Kaku about his string field theory, and he explained it in a way that even an artist like myself, with no background in physics, could understand. It completely changed how I saw the world, the universe, and my own art.”

The concept—that everything in the universe is a vibrating string that unifies all the forces and energy just like a symphony of musical instruments—became the basis for her light sculpture, UNI-VERSE.

“I thought it would be inspiring to have an interactive piece where people come together in this one song in the universe; they’re contributing to this visual creation,” notes Landau.

The sculpture is a series of organically shaped translucent Bohemian glass pillars arranged in two rows and ranging in size from 5 to 12 feet in height. Arrayed across a mirrored glass surface that’s 28 feet long and 14 feet wide, the columns contain LED belts that are connected to an audio sensor. As people sing to it or make other noises around it, the columns in the sculpture gradually light up, with the illumination progressively increasing up the length of the columns like a musical crescendo.

Trained as an architect and an interior designer, Landau knows all too well the impact that light can have on the soul. “Even in my small living room, I have five light sources, and I’m always dimming them and mixing them to create that mood—calm or functional, depending on what I’m doing.”

She recalls a sunrise hike in New Zealand: “We sat in darkness in a valley, and as the first ray of light appeared, one bird began to sing. Then all the birds in the valley were singing in a symphony of sound as the sun was rising. When it had risen, there was silence... It was like completeness.”

She hopes UNI-VERSE will have a similar impact on the moods of its viewers, giving them a feeling of being uplifted, a sense of joy, and then, as the sculpture is fully illuminated, a feeling of completion, connectedness, and contentment.

Represented by Wendy Posner of Posner Fine Art in Los Angeles, UNI-VERSE is currently in its conceptual stages, but Landau is in discussions with potential clients she hopes will lead to multiple site-specific installations across the country. The designer also is working on a personal version of UNI-VERSE, which will be a smaller installation, designed so someone can enter a column and through the power of song, drumming, or meditation, can light up their own personal universe.

UNI-VERSE is a series of Bohemian glass columns that gradually illuminate as they respond to sound.
(Rendering: Courtesy of 3D Jesus)

