

About: **A MOVING POINT OF BALANCE**

Inspired by a 1982 visit to the Rothko Chapel in Houston, I envisioned *A Moving Point of Balance* as a nondenominational, multisensory, contemplative and participatory healing environment within which the symbols of sacred Native American sites and related rituals of myth and magic are reprocessed and renewed.

Concepts related to spirituality, shamanism, and healing were assimilated into the paintings while the integrated installation's weaving together of the paintings with light projections, music, and a Native American medicine wheel further enhanced the viewing experience.

Pilgrimage and ritual occurred before each painting was created at one of seven sacred sites, five of which were Native American while the other two were at revered locations in France.



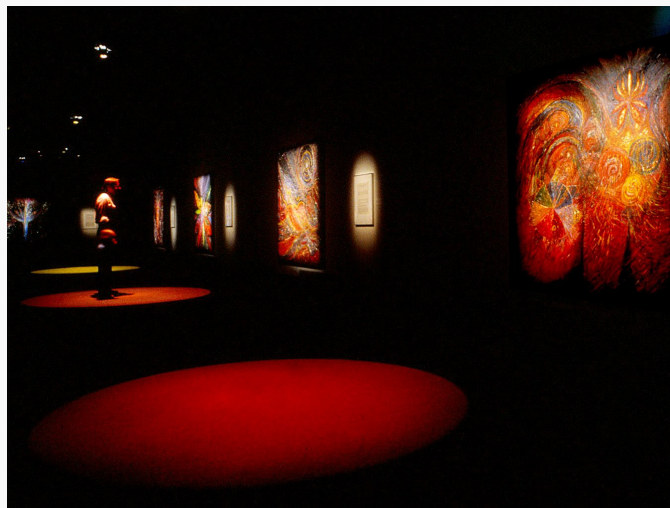
Beth Ames Swartz creating **Chakra #1** from *A Moving Point of Balance* at Snowflake, Arizona, an Anasazi (Sun Clan) sacred site, 1983

Entering the space, viewer/participants move around the medicine wheel, an ancient type of Native American mandala that guides individuals and groups into a ritual awareness of the paradox between unique identity and universal wholeness. Navajo shaman David Paladin (1926-84) created the medicine wheel and gave it to me for inclusion in this installation; its

rocks are incised with petroglyphs. In the background, soft music plays; I commissioned synthesized music, entitled *The Hierophant*, from Frank Smith specifically for this undertaking.



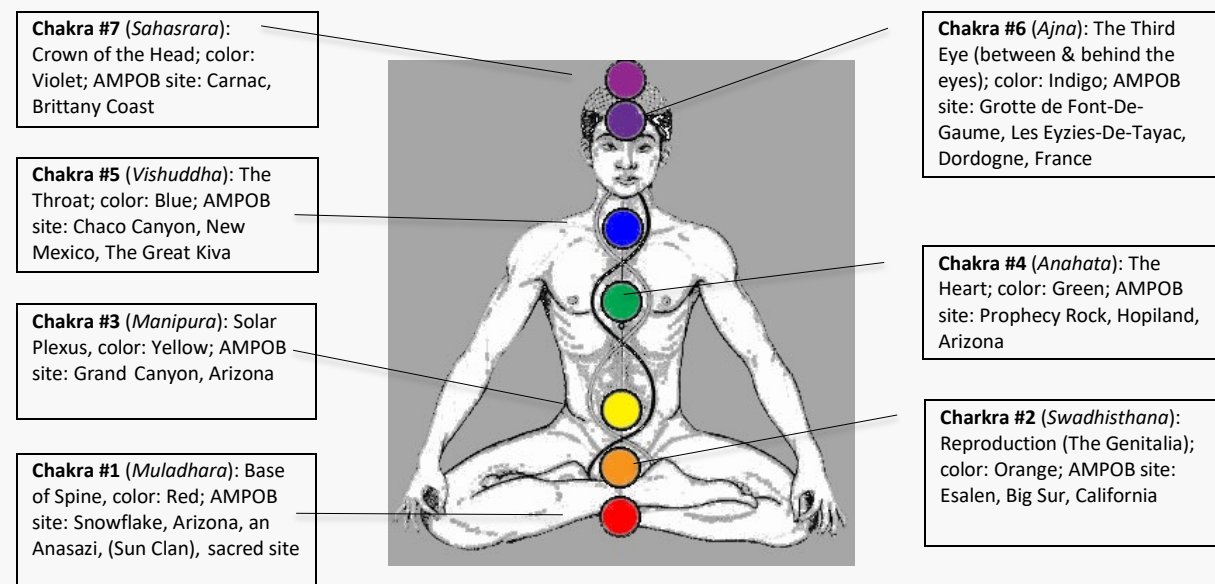
Continuing into the darkness beyond, one encounters seven colored light-baths located in front of seven spotlighted, seven-foot by seven-foot paintings thereby generating seven meditational stations. Viewers were encouraged to participate by moving into the color baths while contemplating the artwork.



I planned for these paintings to be viewed under spotlights in a blackened room. During the painting process, I embedded into the canvases a particular type of colored micro glitter that, when seen in a darkened environment, transforms reflected light into an array of colors radiating from each glittered speck.

The archetypal images within the paintings help appeal to the collective unconscious, furthering a connection between audience and art.

In Sanskrit, *chakra* means wheel or circle. *Chakras* are points where soul and body join with and interpenetrate each other, a place where the physical world and the spiritual world connect. *Chakras* are energy centers in each human being that are believed to balance and connect body matter with body energy. Each painting depicts one of the seven *chakras* central to yoga and certain forms of Hinduism and Tantric Buddhism. Red light bathes the viewer looking at the first chakra, "Base of the Spine." Then succeeding paintings and colors are coupled as shown in the Kundalini yoga diagram below.



Upon exiting the darkened rooms, participants encountered a "Balancing Room" where,

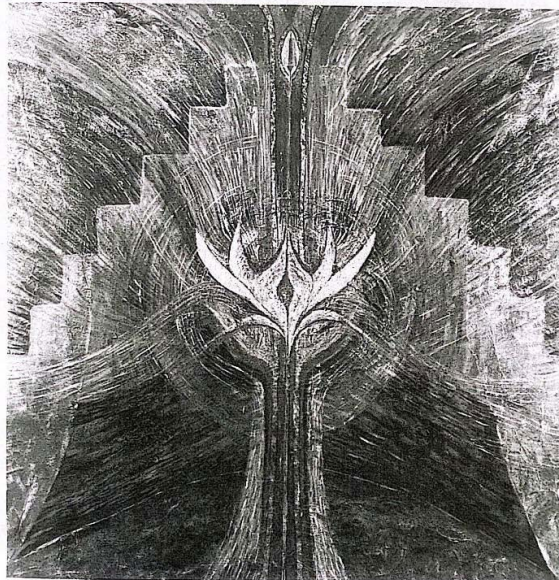
while seated, they could adjust their thoughts before re-entering the cacophony of our normal, everyday lives. The expedition through the cave-like rooms of *A Moving Point of Balance* became a symbolic rite of passage; in this environmental piece, I propose an art that can actively heal.

The installation was first exhibited at the Nickle Arts Museum, University of Calgary, Alberta, in 1985 and appeared in nine U.S. venues over the next five years. Subsequently, *A Moving Point of Balance* was on display at the Arizona Cancer Center in Tucson.

Below is the brochure that each viewer-participant received in all the venues before entering the first color light bath.

A MOVING POINT OF BALANCE

by Beth Ames Swartz



on display at the
ARIZONA CANCER CENTER

Red



FIRST CHAKRA

Base of spine

Silence the world outside. Consider here your personal survival. Receive energy from the earth.

FOCUS upon the small of the back, your basic needs, your requirements for self, and your connection to nature.

Orange



SECOND CHAKRA

Reproduction

We create our own reality. At birth, we are all perfect and willing. Experience the willingness to give birth to a new life force, an idea, and to accept responsibility for it.

FOCUS upon the lower stomach area and your relationships with self and others.

Yellow



THIRD CHAKRA

Solar Plexus

Personal power radiates from the solar plexus. Concentrate upon your willingness to help self and others, or to realize a goal or aspiration.

FOCUS upon your ability to empower yourself.

Green



FOURTH CHAKRA

Heart

Human affection pulses to and from the heart, feeding, refreshing and renewing all other life systems.

FOCUS upon the free flow of your loving kindness.

Blue



FIFTH CHAKRA

Throat

Communication is the key to understanding. Sharing of knowledge, thought and truth is energy in service to spirit. Meditate on how you project yourself, how you receive information. Open all of your communication and creativity channels.

FOCUS upon the throat and the messages you wish delivered and understood.

Indigo



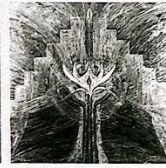
SIXTH CHAKRA

Third Eye

Intuition is inner wisdom's immediate perception of events. It comes directly from the source of all personal knowledge and experience. Trust its direction.

FOCUS upon the storehouse of knowledge behind the forehead.

Violet



SEVENTH CHAKRA

Crown

Energy from the earth moves up through the body and out through the crown. You are connected to receive and transmit to the Universal Source.

FOCUS in your mind that you are a rainbow cylinder of light radiating life from your total being.

ABOUT THE EXHIBIT

A Moving Point of Balance has been loaned to the Arizona Cancer Center through the generosity of its owner, Mr. Stanton Perry, and his family. We are grateful to the Perrys for allowing this exhibition, which encourages viewers to become participants in their own healing process. We hope that the Arizona Cancer Center family will benefit from the exhibit's dramatic sense of renewal.

Each painting represents a "chakra," which is part of an energy center relating to a part of the body. The chakras (the lotuses, the wheels) connect body energy with body matter, and awakening to the flow of the chakras is an ancient wisdom. As the yogi masters know, understanding body energy requires movement, flexibility, and muscular concentration.

The seven paintings took artist Beth Ames Swartz three years to complete. Each painting was inspired by the color and meaning of the specific chakra, as well as the artist's journey to seven sacred sites, both in the Southwest and in France.

A Moving Point of Balance opened at the Nickle Arts Museum in Calgary, Canada, in 1985, then traveled through 1990 to the Multicultural Arts Center, San Diego; the Woodbridge Conference Center, Snowmass Village, Aspen; The University of Arizona Museum of Art, Tucson; the Newhouse Center for Contemporary Art, Staten Island, New York; the Salt Lake Art Center, Salt Lake City; the Palm Springs Desert Museum, Palm Springs; and the University Art Museum, Arizona State University, Tempe.

As you view each painting, meditate quietly and let the healing begin. Focus upon your own body as a multicolored, many-faceted energy center. Focus upon your connection to nature, self, family, community, and the world. We trust this will be a healing experience for you as you slowly shift your attention from painting to painting and end at the seventh chakra, where you can sit and contemplate all the works at your leisure.