



Alyson Shotz Investigates Materiality, Blending Sculpture, Architecture, and Sound

Sculptor Alyson Shotz is the first artist to present work in the Nasher Sculpture Center's *Sightings* series, a new program dedicated to showcasing contemporary artists. Shotz's installation consists of two large material works and a musical score in collaboration with Simon Fisher Turner, creating an illusory experience that blends music and sculpture, two- and three-dimensions.

By Rebecca Carter | November 23, 2010 | 10:27 am



Sculptor Alyson Shotz is the first artist to present work in the Nasher Sculpture Center's *Sightings* series, a new program dedicated to showcasing contemporary artists. Familiar with creating large sculptural installation works for high profile institutions, Shotz's grand, shimmering works that engage perceptual inter-play with light and space have been featured at the Guggenheim in New York, Atlanta's High Museum, Storm King and Socrates Sculpture Parks, and Louis Vuitton in Kobe, Japan.

At the Nasher, Shotz's installation consists of two large material works and a musical score in collaboration with Simon Fisher Turner. In the front gallery, parallel and opposite the gift shop, Shotz's large sculpture, *Wave Equation*, occupies most of the room. The form is simultaneously monumental, yet gossamery - light and delicate. The construction is simple. Between a skeleton frame composed of two pairs of four aluminum ellipses cascades piano wire filaments strung with cylindrical mirrored glass beads. It is not immediately obvious these little objects are beads; instead they seem more like very shiny thin wire. The top two sets of ellipses hang flat in space parallel to the floor, like cartoon eyeballs. The bottom ellipses mirror the top, but nearly invisible monofilament threads hold them in space at opposing angles. The resulting modulations in the fall and rise of the shiny strands embody gravity and resistance to gravity, reflections and refractions, and the back and forth of presence and absence.



Alyson Shotz' "Equilibrium" (Photo courtesy of the Nasher Sculpture Center)

Looking closely I become aware of the subtle interactions between space and sculpture. The metal frame interrupts the wall of windows. This break reflects on the glassy filaments, blocking light in a horizontal stripe. For a moment in my 360-degree tour of the sculpture, it is as if the wires are in fact broken, held together by a space of emptiness. Take one more step, and the illusion vanishes.

I was at the Nasher after lunch, and most of the museum visitors had left except for staff. This allowed sounds to enter the gallery from the kitchen,

intermingling with the music. While looking at the sculpture, I hear dishes clanging, and the buzz of conversation from the nearby café is gone. Again there is a kind of porosity between space and work. It makes sense that an artist dealing with a kind of borderline between immateriality and materiality would turn to sound as an extension of her investigation. What the sculpture does with the architecture, the audio does with the soundscape, foregrounding interpenetration with the surrounding space.

The wall drawing in the café, *Double Torque* has a form similar to *Wave Equation*: Two loops looping over themselves, together but separate. Only in this two-and-a-half dimension version, the forms seem more of a Möbius strip, an impossible structure that can exist in drawing, but perhaps not in real space. Outside, the lines created by the fountain become present as if mirroring a fragment of *Wave Equation*: flexible translucent substance doing what it “naturally does” in gravity when resisted by a particular force. The music has stopped and the clanging of the dishes is over. All that remains audible is the fall of thin threads of water on water.

Main image: Alyson Shotz, “The Shape of Space” (Photo courtesy of the Nasher Sculpture Center)