

Alyson Shotz: *Alloys of Moonlight*

By **David Ebony**



Alyson Shotz, *Alloys of Moonlight #11*, 2023. Paint on hand folded aluminum, 46 x 45 x 10.25 inches. Courtesy Derek Eller Gallery.

Encountering the eight recent abstract, painted folded-metal wall reliefs in Alyson Shotz's luminous show, *Alloys of Midnight*, I thought of Gilles Deleuze's book *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*. "The infinite fold separates or moves between matter and soul, the façade and the closed room, the outside and the inside," Deleuze remarks in his study of folds as an infinite weaving of time and space in Baroque art. "Because it is a virtuality that never stops dividing itself, the line of inflection is actualized in the soul but realized in matter, each one on its own side." With the nuanced spatial play in these works—of a façade and an enclosure, outside and inside—Shotz seems to aim for a transcendent quality like the one Deleuze describes.

Hung in the intimate side gallery, *Alloys of Moonlight #10* and *Alloys of Moonlight #11* (both 2023) are rectangular sheets of aluminum hand-folded by the artist into carefully calibrated, delicately creased surfaces. One of the largest reliefs in the show (72 by 48 by 7 inches), the former piece features a sequence of straight lines, caused by the folds, that crisscross the surface in a network of dramatic diagonals. Covered with sprayed lacquer paint mixed with reflective materials, the surface has cool, muted tones that gracefully modulate from pale cerulean blue at the top toward wispy white-gray at the bottom. The work suggests a hazy blue sky, an infinite and ethereal space contained within a rigorous geometric structure.

At approximately four feet square, and protruding from the wall more than ten inches, *Alloys of Moonlight #11* is a fanlike object in which approximately a dozen evenly spaced folds radiate from the upper right corner to the lower

ON VIEW

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left. Shifting in tone from white at the top to blue and pink toward the lower right, the softly glowing surface with its patterned creases evokes bands of raking light in the midst of an imminent sunrise, or sunset.

Folding has long been central to Shotz’s process, and, as per her press statements, the Arizona-born New York artist explores the potential energy in the fold, as well as its capacity to contain space and encompass higher dimensions. These concepts are perhaps best observed in the large folded metal reliefs hung in the main room, with bold colors and more dynamic sculptural forms that protrude further into the space of the gallery. For *Alloys of Moonlight #9* (2023), for example, Shotz painted the outward facing side of the aluminum panel a bright golden yellow, and the back side a deep Prussian blue. Bent or folded at an angle near the middle, the work appears almost like an off-kilter awning, with the blue surface partially occluding the yellow plane to varying degrees as the viewer moves in front of, or to the side of the piece, encompassing the element of time in experiencing the work.



Alyson Shotz, *Alloys of Moonlight #7*, 2023. Paint on hand folded aluminum, 52 x 44 x 30 inches. Courtesy Derek Eller Gallery.

Other reliefs feature more complex folds, and dense and intense color relationships. Several have an organic feel, such as *Alloys of Moonlight #7* (2023), with the crumpled sheet gathered and attached to the wall at eye level near its center. The sides jut some thirty inches into the gallery, creating a more or less concave shape—the sensation of an elusive enclosure—with the outer surface painted a deep moss green, and the interior emanating mostly a searing burnt orange hue. The work suggests a tropical flower, albeit in a totally abstract, hyper-geometricized visual language.



Installation view: *Alyson Shotz: Alloys of Moonlight*, Derek Eller Gallery, New York, 2023. Courtesy Derek Eller Gallery.

Dominating the gallery space, *Aphelion* (2023) is a tubular form some 10 feet tall and wide, with cylindrical dimensions shifting from 3 1/2 to 6 inches in diameter. Made of a translucent metallic mesh and painted in iridescent tones of green, silver, and blue, it hangs from the ceiling by a barely visible wire like a giant mobile Möbius strip. The work reflects Shotz's interest in topology and corresponds to the large-scale sculptures and other public installations with which she has been occupied in recent years. *Aphelion* refers to the position of a planet when it is the furthest distance from the sun, and the work metaphorically alludes to the elliptical shape of an orbit created by gravity and the warping of space time. In this carefully wrought exhibition, an exploration of space and time via the fold yields to an expansive cosmic vision.

Contributor

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