

# sculpture

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## New York

### Alyson Shotz

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Alyson Shotz's intriguing, often beautiful exhibition "A Moment in Time in Space" encompassed a series of sculptures whose forms and surfaces bend and refract light in memorable and slightly strange ways. This show, held concurrently with a solo exhibition at the Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art in western Connecticut, developed the artist's long-standing interest in the influence of materials on the forms of light. Her sculpture doesn't so much depict or describe as present the way light reflects off plastic surfaces. The goal is not so much to disorient her audience, although that seems to be part of the project, as it is to develop the experience of space in ways that attack the consciousness of the viewer, who is forced to deal with unusual curves and optical illusions emanating from the materials themselves. In consequence, Shotz's sculptures are more about perceptual experience than culture since the high-tech materials distill intimations of space and light. These are very pure works of art.

The largest, most striking piece in the show was *The Shape of Space* (2005), composed of more than 10,000 Fresnel lenses cut and stapled together in a tall, S-shaped wall that bends the light as it passes through its transparent material. Interestingly the lenses seem to push the wall forward, but if you put your hand out to touch the extended surface, it disappears, seemingly merging with thin air. Light is changed as it

passes through the mirrored, mirroring surfaces, and as the press materials point out, the effect of the sculpture changes as light changes through the course of the day. A very large piece, *The Shape of Space* offers an environmental atmosphere in which illusion and visual trickery deliberately confuse the viewer's normal reading of space, making it playful as well as demanding.

*Space Proposition* (2004) consists of six sculptures, each piece made from a square sheet of polypropylene plastic, colored a pale purple. Bent into loops that continuously connect with each other, *Space Proposition* takes the prearranged cuts of the material and distorts them into small explorations of space and physical continuity. Arranged together in a series nearly musical in its devotion to small changes in form, the sculptures comment on each other's shapes, subtly changing in configurations that encompass a fugue-like obsession with neatly varying forms. They look like a contemporary take on the Möbius strip, its visual infinity made engaging through material, color, and form. *Simple Forms* (2004) attacks space in the manner of a line drawing—piano wire, to which spheres have been attached, rises up in a narrowly confined space, creating another world of gently curving lines and spheres that bob up and down at the slightest provocation.

*A Moment in Time* (2005) consists of glass beads hung on monofilament ordered by a grid arrangement; the placement of the lines of beads comments on the seeming rationality of star systems,



Alyson Shotz, *The Shape of Space* (detail), 2005. Cut plastic Fresnel lens sheets and staples, dimensions variable.

which on a cosmic level may be seen as ordered patterns conforming to a reality larger than what we are able to imagine. The exquisite spacing of the work contributes to its poetic flair. The title refers to its time-based existence. Here, then, is a work whose regularity is meant to suggest an instant in time rather than an interjection into space—time proves bound by space in Shotz's ordering. Like much of the work in this fine exhibition, *A Moment in Time* is not really about culture but rather about the fragile nature of perception—Shotz returns again and again to fields of being captured in mid-moment. She does so with a more than utilitarian flare, finding undiscovered ways of

stretching our perception. In doing so, she expands not only her own awareness of the time-based nature of space, she also extends her knowledge to the audience, whose consciousness is made that much sharper by the implications of what they see.

—Jonathan Goodman