This installation of new work by Brooklyn-based artist Alyson Shotz inaugurates *Sightings*, a new series of small-scale exhibitions and installations that explore work by established and emerging contemporary sculptors from across Texas and around the world. Highlighting recent work, commissioning new installations, or exploring advances in contemporary sculptural practice, such exhibitions offer a forum to reconsider accepted notions and generate new ideas about modern and contemporary sculpture. The series also engenders opportunities to engage the spaces of the Nasher Sculpture Center in new, thought-provoking ways, providing occasions to examine the evolving relationship between sculpture and architecture.

In April 2007, The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York presented Alyson Shotz’s *The Shape of Space* (Figure 5) in its iconic, Frank Lloyd Wright-designed rotunda. An undulating curtain of cut plastic Fresnel lenses standing over fourteen feet tall and spanning some thirty-eight feet, the work served as the centerpiece for the museum’s exhibition, *The Shapes of Space*, which investigated the notion of space in 20th-century art. The installation brought Shotz’s work to a wider audience and encapsulated many of the interests that have served as the foundation of her artistic investigations. The sculpture demarcated a large curvilinear volume at the base of Wright’s vast spiral. The clear plastic lenses rendered the structure weightless by allowing light to pass through it and complicated one’s perception of the space, reflecting and multiplying the curves of the surrounding architecture (Figure 6). This work of art highlighted the gap between perception and experience — between the seen and the felt — and made palpable the presence of empty space and the profound effect it has on our physical experience.

Working with translucent and reflective materials, Shotz challenges traditional notions of sculpture as closed, massive, or weighty. Her airy, open-form sculptures define volumes without mass and draw upon an aficionado’s interest in science to investigate the finer points of our perception and experience of the physical world.

For *Sightings*, Shotz created *Wave Equation* (Figure 3), a group of complex, open, volumetric forms made of stainless steel wire strung with silvered glass beads. A pair of elliptical rings is suspended from the ceiling, the reflective strands cascading to another ring near the floor, creating looping, bulging forms. Each exterior ellipse contains a smaller, concentric ring with additional beaded strands defining shapes in their interiors. The rings near the floor are angled in directions opposite to each other and to the neighboring pair, creating a subtle sense of opposing and unequal forces. In this way, *Wave Equation* can be seen as a counterpart to Shotz’s 2009 sculpture, *Equilibrium* (Figure 4): whereas the volumes in *Equilibrium* are in balance, the opposite and opposing forms of *Wave Equation* explore forces that are imbalanced.

Works such as *Wave Equation* and *Equilibrium* expand on the strung, translucent, or open-form sculpture of modern masters such as Naum Gabo, as well as more recent predecessors like Richard Deacon (Figure 2), both represented in the Nasher Collection. Each of these works uses an open, linear vocabulary to define a dynamic volume in space. Shotz’s installations, however, take Gabo’s stringed sculptures to the scale of architecture. Both Gabo’s *Linear Construction in Space No. 1 (Variation)* (Figure 1) and Shotz’s *Wave Equation* are three-dimensional manifestations of abstract ideas — Gabo’s, a mathematical model and Shotz’s, a physical state. The size of Gabo’s work confines it to the realm of visual representation, while Shotz’s installation becomes a physical experience. The ample pair of interior/exterior forms of *Wave Equation* transforms the Corner Gallery at the Nasher Sculpture Center into a transparent, reflective, experiential environment.
1 Naum Gabo
Linear Construction in Space No. 1 (Variation), 1942–43 (enlargement ca. 1957–58)
Plexiglas with nylon monofilament
24 3/4 x 24 3/4 x 9 1/2 in.
Raymond and Patsy Nasher Collection

2 Richard Deacon
Like a Bird, 1984
Laminated wood
121 x 208 x 205 in.
Raymond and Patsy Nasher Collection

3 Alyson Shotz
Wave Equation, 2010
Stainless steel wire, silvered glass beads, aluminum
Courtesy of the Artist and Derek Eller Gallery

4 Alyson Shotz
Equilibrium, 2009
Stainless steel wire, silvered glass beads, aluminum, 120 x 108 x 144 in.
Courtesy of the Artist and Derek Eller Gallery

5 Alyson Shotz
The Shape of Space, 2004
Cut plastic Fresnel lens sheets and staples, 175 x 456 in.
Installation view 2007 at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, NY
Collection of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, NY

6 Alyson Shotz
The Shape of Space (detail), 2004
Cut plastic Fresnel lens sheets and staples, 175 x 456 in.
Installation view 2007 at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, NY
Collection of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, NY
7 Alyson Shotz  
*Allusion of Gravity*, 2005  
Clear glass beads and steel wire  
108 × 96 × 156 in.  
Private Collection

8 Alyson Shotz  
*The Structure of Light*, 2008  
Silvered glass beads on stainless steel piano wire and aluminum  
120 × 216 × 120 in.  
Collection of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art

9 Alyson Shotz  
Detail of *The Structure of Light*, 2008  
Silvered glass beads on stainless steel piano wire and aluminum  
120 × 216 × 120 in.  
Collection of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art
This evocation of the physical states and natural forces at work in the world are frequently the subject of Shotz’s work. In Allusion of Gravity (Figure 7), the artist created an organically shaped network of glass beads and stainless steel wire. Hung from the ceiling at discreet points by thin, transparent filament, the work takes its form from the gravitational pull exerted on it and the countering of that force by the filaments. The sculpture is as much linear and planar as it is spatially three-dimensional. It looks as if it could be laid out and flattened on the floor, like a glistening web or a glittering map. Suspended in the air, however, it takes on volume and reads as a floating topographical landscape or three-dimensional map of the constellations.

The romantic whimsy and buoyancy in Allusion of Gravity is reminiscent of the work Alexander Calder. Sculptures like The Spider (Figure 10) are feats of engineering, with its painted metal arms set into perfect balance so that they float and rotate with a slight air current. It is the action of gravity, and its counterbalance in the precise weighting of each element, that activates the sculpture.

The titles that Shotz selects for her work – Allusion of Gravity, The Shape of Space, Wave Equation – often make poetic reference to concepts as important to science as they are to sculpture. Shotz takes a layperson’s interest in these subjects and keeps tabs on the latest scientific discoveries and ideas about the physical world in popular scientific periodicals. It should, perhaps, come as little surprise to learn that Shotz went to college to pursue a degree in geology, with a particular interest in the role of water, before transferring to the Rhode Island School of Design to study art. Water is, after all, a dynamic substance – transparent, reflective, and manifesting in three dramatically different physical states. One is constantly reminded of things aqueous and evanescent in Shotz’s sculpture. But there is also an analytical element to her work, probing the limits and questioning the very nature of space, gravity, and light.

In The Structure of Light (Figures 8 and 9), the first of Shotz’s large-scale, environmental installations of wire and glass beads, the artist considers the nature of light and our experience of it. The installation is a complex, overlapping, multi-foliate structure. Long strands of individual glass beads fall to the floor in heavy curls, reminding one of the dual particle and wave nature of light. The artist’s interest in light, here, has more to do with how it effects one’s perception and experience of the structure. The glass-covered strands catch and reflect the light, giving one a sense of the volumes they contain. It is as if light had become tangible, like intense moonlight sifted through leaves, the individual beams delineated so carefully that they appear almost graspable. Here, light creates structure.

This interest in science is another trait Shotz shares with Gabo. The rapid pace of scientific discoveries proved to be as germane for Gabo at the beginning of the twentieth century as recent leaps forward in science and technology have been for Shotz. It is understandable how shifts in thinking about the nature of space and the possibility of other dimensions beyond our three-dimensional world might be seductive for a sculptor, an artist intimately involved in the shape of things and our experience of objects in space. Gabo declared these matters in The Realistic Manifesto, which he wrote with his brother, Antoine Pevsner, in 1920: “The realization of our perceptions of the world in the forms of space and time is the only aim of our pictorial and plastic arts…. The plumb-line in our hand, eyes as precise as a ruler, in a spirit as taut as a compass … we construct our work as the universe constructs its own, as the engineer constructs his bridges, as the mathematician his formula of the orbits.”

Although similar interests and considerations inform her work, Shotz is not so dogmatic. Her investigation of these issues reflects a skepticism more in line with contemporary practice.
11 Alyson Shotz
*Double Torque*, 2010
(view of work in artist’s studio)
Yarn and pins on wall, 120 x 185 in.
Courtesy of the Artist and Derek Eller Gallery

12 Alyson Shotz
*Detail of Untitled (3 Views of an Object) # 1, 2009*
Yarn and pins on wall, 183 x 132 in
Courtesy of the Artist and Derek Eller Gallery

13 Alyson Shotz
*Untitled (3 Views of an Object) # 1 and # 2, 2009*
Installation view of Alyson Shotz: *Drawing Through Space at The Warehouse Gallery, Syracuse University*
Courtesy of the Artist and Derek Eller Gallery

14 Fred Sandback
*Untitled (Sculptural Study, Six-part Construction), ca. 1977/2008*
Black acrylic yarn, dimensions vary with each installation
Collection Reina Sofia, Madrid

15 Lygia Clark
*Pocket Bicho, 1966*
Anodized aluminum
Variable dimensions
Private collection
Courtesy of “The World of Lygia Clark” Cultural Association

16 Gego (Gertrud Goldschmidt)
*Reticulária (detail), installed at Museo de Bellas Artes de Caracas, 1969*
Wire, dimensions variable
Galería de Arte Nacional, Caracas
Shotz’s string drawings interrogate the intersection of perception and experience. Works such as *Double Torque* (Figure 11), which makes its public debut in this exhibition, and *Untitled (Three Views of an Object)* (Figures 12 and 13), are complex linear drawings rendered in string woven around pins and set in relief off the wall. They are, in essence, three-dimensional drawings; they create illusionistic space that stands off the wall and inhabits our real space. Usually installed at the scale of an entire wall, the string drawings envelop the viewer, occupying their visual field. The concentric elliptical shapes of *Double Torque* are an analog of the volumetric interior/exterior forms of *Wave Equation*. The tension between the two-dimensional drawing and the three-dimensional presence of the work emphasizes the disparity between one’s perception and experience.

Both Shotz’s string wall drawings and wire room installations expand on the work of Fred Sandback, who used single strands of yarn to define planes and volumes within a given space. In *Untitled (Sculptural Study, Six-part Construction)* (Figure 14), Sandback created a complex spatial environment through the mere suggestion of a succession of open planes. Through minimal means the work pushes the limits of perception and experience: one perceives the open spaces bounded by the strings as solid, transparent planes, and thus experiences the installation as a complex space. Whereas Sandback restrained his work to the minimal and geometric, Shotz’s fuller, more organic forms privilege the physical experience over the perceptual.

In this way the work of Alyson Shotz is perhaps more akin to predecessors like South American artists Gego (Gertrud Goldschmidt) and Lygia Clark. The string drawings and wire installations have the same sense of organic growth and malleability as Clarke’s *Bichos* (Figure 15), small, metal constructions whose shape the viewer was encouraged to change by moving the hinged flaps. The works could be laid flat (a *tabula rasa*) or folded into a myriad of different shapes, making a playful game out of the transformation from two-dimensional plane to three-dimensional object. Clarke’s *Bichos* (creatures) are intimate, hand-held works. The work of Gego in the *Reticulàrea* (Figure 16) is environmental. An organic network of discreet wires and nodes, the room-sized installations occupy and transform the space in which they are contained. Like the work of Alyson Shotz, the *Reticulàrea* are a kind of drawing in space, the amalgamation of linear elements to create an object that interrogates and heightens our experience of the space we inhabit.

Whereas Gego’s linear environments are the result of joining hard, unbending wire, Shotz’s forms are fluid and curvaceous, like the work of Richard Serra. Although Serra’s massive, obdurate, impenetrable plates of Cor-Ten steel seem the very antithesis of Shotz’s light, open, airy constructions, the two share an interest in morphological shapes and the physical impact of objects in space. Like Serra’s Toruses and Torqued Ellipses, Shotz’s *Double Torque* takes its cue from topology, a realm of mathematics that considers forms that can be bent or twisted into new shapes without breaking a continuous surface. Moreover, both artists are interested in the physical impact of their forms. Narrowing, opening up, bulging out, leaning over, the experience of Serra’s work, like *The Matter of Time* (Figure 17), is as physical as it is visual. Concerned with gravity, imbalance, and equilibrium, Shotz’s work highlights a range of physical states.

For *Sightings*, Shotz has taken a more comprehensive approach to the experience of her work. She has enhanced the environment in which her work is seen by programming the music for the spaces in collaboration with noted musician, Simon Fisher Turner, who has composed new scores for this exhibition. Structured, flowing, and lyrical, Shotz’s work has many potential sympathies with music. Turner’s compositions complement Shotz’s constructions and extend the experience from the visual and physical to the auditory, creating an enveloping sensory environment.
Selected Exhibitions, Bibliography, Awards, and Public Collections

Education
MFA, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington, 1991
BFA, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, Rhode Island, 1987

Solo Exhibitions
2011 Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY (forthcoming)
Anderson Sandstrom Gallery, Stockholm, Sweden (forthcoming)
Louis Vuitton, Tokyo, Japan (forthcoming)
Derek Eller Gallery, New York, NY (forthcoming)

2010 “Sightings: Alyson Shotz,” Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas, TX
“Standing Wave,” Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, OH

2009 “Phase Shift,” Derek Eller Gallery, New York, NY
“Drawing Through Space,” Syracuse University Art Gallery, Syracuse, NY

2008 Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site, Cornish, NH
Derek Eller Gallery, New York, NY (Project Room)
Locks Gallery, Philadelphia, PA

2007 Yale University Art Gallery, Yale University, New Haven, CT
“Infinite Space.” Derek Eller Gallery, New York, NY

2006 “Topologies,” curated by Jane Simon, Madison Museum of Contemporary Art, Madison, WI and the Richard E. Peeler Art Center, DePauw University, Greencastle, IN
Derek Eller Gallery, New York, NY (Project Room)

2005 “CZ.” Kevin Bruk Gallery, Miami, FL
Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art, Ridgefield, CT
Derek Eller Gallery, New York, NY

2004 Locks Gallery, Philadelphia, PA
Rice University Art Gallery, Houston, TX
Ingalls & Associates, Miami, FL

2003 The Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum, Saratoga, NY
Derek Eller Gallery, New York, NY

2002 Lemon Sky Projects, Los Angeles, CA

2001 Digital Printmaking Now,” Brooklyn Museum of Art, Brooklyn, NY
“Plant Life,” curated by Patrick Callery, K. S. Art, New York, NY
“Being There,” Derek Eller Gallery, New York, NY
“Material Whirl,” Art in General, New York, NY
“Sensing the Forest,” Wave Hill, Bronx, NY
“Mixed Greens at Space 101,” Williamsburg, NY
“Let’s Get to Work,” Susquehanna Art Museum, Harrisburg, PA

2006 “Light x Eight,” The Jewish Museum, New York, NY
“Garden,” Visual Arts Center of Richmond, Richmond, VA
“Deep Freeze,” Mehr Gallery, New York, NY
“Summer Group Exhibition,” Derek Eller Gallery, New York, NY
“3D: An Exhibition of Contemporary Sculpture,” Carl Solway Gallery, Cincinnati, OH
“Uneasy Nature,” Weatherspoon Art Museum, Greensboro, NC
“Inaugural Group Exhibition,” Derek Eller Gallery, New York, NY

2005 “Labynths,” David Winton Bell Gallery, Brown University, Providence, RI
“Repeat Performance,” Anthony Grant Gallery, New York, NY
“Maurizio Couldn’t Be Here: ARTCOM – The Final Frontier,” Apex Art, New York, NY

2004 “Spectrums: Newer Imaging in Photography and Photography-Related Artwork,” Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA
“Needful Things: Contemporary Multiples,” Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, OH
“reGenerations: Environment Art in California,” Armony Center for the Arts, Los Angeles, CA
“Editions Spotlight: Carolina Nitsch,” Barbara Krakow Gallery, Boston, MA

2003 “Unnaturally,” curated by Mary-Kay Lombino, ICI Tour: Contemporary Art Museum, USF, Tampa, Fisher Gallery, USC, Regina Quick Center for the Arts, NY, Copia Center for the Arts, Napa, CA, Lowe Art Museum, Miami, FL
“bits ’n pieces,” curated by Beth Venn, D. u. m. b. o. Art Center, Brooklyn, NY
“In Medias Res,” Exit Art, curated by Anne Ellegood, New York, NY

2002 “Mirror Mirror,” MASS MOCA, North Adams, MA
“Fictions in Wonderland,” Beverly Reynolds Gallery, VA
“Into the Woods,” Julie Saul Gallery, New York, NY
“Dangerous Beauty,” curated by Manon Slome, JCC, NY

“NeoIntegrity,” curated by Keith Mayerson, Derek Eller Gallery, New York, NY
“All You Desire,” P. P. O. W., New York, NY

Selected Group Exhibitions

“Storm King at Fifty, 5+5: New Perspectives,” Storm King Arts Center, NY
“Group Show,” Daniel Weinberg Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
“Face Your Demons,” Milliken Gallery, Stockholm, Sweden
“Material World: Painting and Sculpture as Environment,” Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, North Adams, MA

“The Age of the Marvellous,” Holy Trinity Church, London
“Selections from the Kramarsky Collection,” Museo de Arte Contemporaneo Esteban Vicente, Segovia, Spain
“Sparkle and Glitter,” Locks Gallery, Philadelphia, PA
“In the Void,” Girls Club Collection, Miami, FL

“Currents: Recent Acquisitions,” Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC
"Making Visible, the Invisible: Abstract Art from MMOCAs Permanent Collection,” Madison Museum of Contemporary Art, Madison, WI
“New Prints 2008,” International Print Center, New York, NY
“multiXply,” A + D Gallery, Columbia College, Chicago, IL
“Landscapes for Frankenstein,” Sara Meltzer Gallery, New York, NY
“In Nature,” Carolina Nitsch Project Space, New York, NY

“NeoIntegrity,” featured at the 2007 Whitney Biennial, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY

2004 "Currents," Project Room
"Materiality," curated by Beth Venn, D. u. m. b. o. Art Center, Brooklyn, NY
"In Medias Res," Exit Art, curated by Anne Ellegood, New York, NY

2003 "Unnaturally," curated by Mary-Kay Lombino, ICI Tour: Contemporary Art Museum, USF, Tampa, Fisher Gallery, USC, Regina Quick Center for the Arts, NY, Copia Center for the Arts, Napa, CA, Lowe Art Museum, Miami, FL
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2002 "Mirror Mirror," MASS MOCA, North Adams, MA
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"Into the Woods," Julie Saul Gallery, New York, NY
"Dangerous Beauty," curated by Manon Slome, JCC, NY

"Plant Life," curated by Patrick Callery, K. S. Art, New York, NY
"Being There," Derek Eller Gallery, New York, NY
"Material Whirl," Art in General, New York, NY
"Sensing the Forest," Wave Hill, Bronx, NY
"Mixed Greens at Space 101," Williamsburg, NY
"Let’s Get to Work," Susquehanna Art Museum, Harrisburg, PA
2000  "Pastoral Pop," The Whitney Museum at Philip Morris, New York, NY
"Greater New York," P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, New York, NY
"Wildlife," organized by James Cohan Gallery, New York at Reynolds Gallery, VA
"Editions Spotlight: Muse-X Editions," Barbara Krakow Gallery, Boston, MA
"The Living End," curated by Ingrid Schaffner, Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art, CO
"Blurry Lines," John Michael Kohler Arts Center, WI
"Not a Theme Show," Pittsburgh Center for the Arts, Pittsburgh, PA
"Snapshot," Contemporary Museum, Baltimore, MD
"Showroom," RCCA: The Arts Center, Troy, NY
"Photasm," Union College and tour to Hunter College, New York, NY
"Best of the Season," Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art, Ridgefield, CT
"Nature is Not Romantic," Leubsdorf Art Gallery at Hunter College, New York, NY
"comfort," Post Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
"New Video from The Outpost," The Kitchen, New York, NY
"Pop-Surrealism," The Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art, Ridgefield, CT
1997  "Dead-Fit Beauty," Leubsdorf Art Gallery at Hunter College, New York, NY
"Giftland V: Consumerism," Printed Matter, New York, NY
"Art on Paper," Weatherpoon Art Gallery, University of North Carolina, Greensboro, NC
1996  "Alm de Agua: Copaciabana," el Museo Extremeno e Iberoamericano de Arte Contemporáneo, Badajoz, Spain
"Anxious Times," Weber State University, Salt Lake City, UT
1995  "August 28," Domestic Setting, Los Angeles, CA
"Fools Day," 12 Warren, New York, NY
1990  "1990 Northwest Annual," Center on Contemporary Art, Seattle, WA
"A Day Without Art," Museum for Contemporary Arts, Baltimore, MD

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2003  Pratt, Kevin. ""Yard," Artforum, September, p. 229 (with photo)
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Budick, Ariella. "Shifting Landscapes," Newaday, August 20
Mario Naves, "It's Not Nice to Fake Mother Nature," The New York Observer, August 28-September 4
"Pastoral Pop," Reviews, The New Yorker, August 7
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Adler, Tracy and Heidi Zuckerman. "Nature is Not Romantic," (exhibition catalog) Hunter College, New York, NY

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Fujimori, Manami. "Graceful Touch in High Tech Age," Tokyo BT Magazine, July, p. 113
Levin, Kim. "Voice Choice: Alyson Shotz at Susan Inglett," The Village Voice, April 23


1998 Awards
2007 Saint-Gaudens Memorial Fellowship
2006-06 Happy and Bob Doran Artist in Residence, Yale University Art Gallery
2004 The New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship
Marie Walsh Sharpe Foundation Studio Program
1999 Pollock-Krasner Foundation
1996 Art Matters Foundation
1990 MOCA, Northwest Annual Award

Selected Public Collections
Brooklyn Museum of Art, NY
The Cleveland Clinic, Cleveland, OH
Davis Museum and Cultural Center, Wellesley, MA
The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, NY
Harvard University, Boston, MA
High Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA
Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC
Kunst am Bau Foundation, Germany
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, CA
Madison Museum of Contemporary Art, Madison, WI
Memorial Sloan Kettering, New York, NY
Museum of Modern Art, NY
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, CA
Southwest Texas State University, TX
University of Houston, TX
Weatherspoon Art Museum, Greensboro, NC
Whitney Museum of American Art, NY
Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, CT

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