



CLINTON, NEW YORK

Alyson Shotz

Wellin Museum of Art, Hamilton College

Brooklyn-based artist Alyson Shotz has long been fascinated by space and how objects occupy it. Her work investigates perception and how that perception is shaped through process, materials, and natural forces. Effortlessly interdisciplinary in their manifestation, Shotz's creations are founded on principles of math, science, and the humanities. But they also study sculptural

form in a range of materials and guises, stretching the term to accommodate contemporary ideas of permeability and fluidity. In Shotz's realizations, the definition of sculpture becomes increasingly expansive—each project, often in series, testing another proposition, another possibility, another permutation, while ignoring conventional boundaries.

"Force of Nature," her most ambitious exhibition to date, featured several newly commissioned pieces, including a sequence of vinyl decals pressed onto the upper register of the 27-foot-high glass display cases flanking the Wellin's central staircase. A long-term installation, the decals appear to be etched into the glass and depict two kinds of progressions: one formal and logical, the other more complex and entropic. This same dialectic was evident throughout the show.

A glittering, gossamer web, *Invariant Interval* (2013), encircled a space in the main gallery, shaping form through the use of line and void rather than the mass that has historically defined sculpture, confusing positive and negative volumes, interior and exterior. This drawing in the air was further disembodied by the changing light as it reflected off tiny glass beads strung on the silvery wire: form appeared, then disappeared.

Imaginary Sculptures (2014) consists of a number of white enameled wall plaques inscribed with haiku-like imperatives asking viewers to visualize a "sculpture that is a pile of leaves blown against a car," "...sits on the surface of your skin," "...expands and contracts slowly," and so on, letting the work bloom in the mind. The equally ephemeral, finely reticulated *White Fold* (2014), another site-specific wall installa-

Above: Alyson Shotz, *Recumbent Folds*, 2013. Unglazed porcelain, dimensions variable. **Below:** Alyson Shotz, installation view of "Force of Nature," 2014.

tion, stretched for 50 feet. Executed with the help of four Hamilton College graduate students, this "drawing" was made of white linen thread wrapped around tiny nail heads, its sinuous composition created by Shotz and the animation program Maya. The patterns were both substantive (thread) and illusory (shadow), and the work's presence became part physical, part optical—its nature as sculpture again intensely, deliberately considered.

Two groups of awkwardly graceful objects—*Recumbent Folds* (2013) and *Black Folds* (2014)—nodd to more traditional forms of sculpture but with their own twists. *Recumbent Folds* consists of white



porcelain cylinders that look incredibly malleable, as if they were soft sculptures in meltdown. Shotz dropped the forms from a certain height before they had hardened, allowing chance to determine their final, nonchalant shapes. The opaque black aluminum forms in *Black Folds* are based on enlargements of hand-held origami shapes, translating the intricate configurations of paper to more recalcitrant metal.

Topographic Iteration (2013–14) also plays with illusion and reality; its dimensionality and identity are impossible to make out from straight on. Here, Shotz crumpled a large sheet of Japanese paper, straightened it out, photographed it, printed it on exactly the same kind and size of paper, then crumpled it again, the photographic and actual creases impossible to separate.

The only real notes of color came from a series of beautiful aquatints that extend Shotz's investigations into the translation of form between two and three dimensions and from a monumental latex print (*Emergent Structure*, 2014) that, from a distance, looks like a scan of an electrified brain, bursting with images of all kinds. An animated film rounded out the media forays. *The Bedroom, Time Lapse* (2014) is modeled on van Gogh's famous bedroom, which serves as the (enclosed) space for the temporally compressed, nearly half hour cycle of changing light through time and season.

Steeped in cycles, the continuum, and infinite gestures, Shotz's *Lemniscate* (2014) could have been the exhibition's poster image. The title borrows an algebraic term for

two loops that meet at a central point in a figure eight or infinity form—a Möbius strip. Exploring the forces of light, movement, time, and gravity, Shotz has created a kind of Möbius strip of projects, each related to the other, and never ending.

Her work refines and redefines what sculpture can be today (if we even need to call it sculpture), deceiving and illuminating us, in equal, gratifying measure.

—Lilly Wei