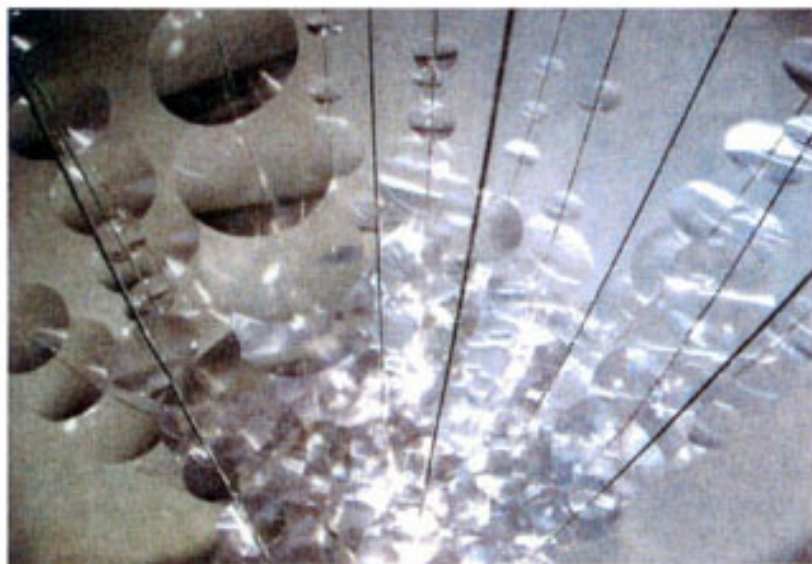


October/November 2008

**ALYSON SHOTZ**Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site • Cornish, NH • [www.nps.gov/saga](http://www.nps.gov/saga)

Alyson Shotz is the 2007 Saint-Gaudens Memorial Fellow. Artists awarded this fellowship are given an exhibit over the brief summer season that the Picture Gallery operates. Shotz brings to the gallery the ability to transform space and activate the relationship between nature and culture, an important attribute in this setting.

Alyson Shotz, *Untitled, Fresnel lenses*, 2008.

There are two pieces presented here: *Untitled*, consisting of cut plastic Fresnel lenses, glass beads, and stainless steel wire; and *Spatial Propositions* (2004), which uses polypropylene and grommets. These are large-scale works that occupy and transform the space, using reflection and creating spatial confusion. But this is not an artist merely interested in spatial games; her

work is deeply rooted in a process that intelligently addresses our relationship to nature. Her work stems from a prolonged investigation into the field of topology, "a branch of mathematics concerned with the properties of geometric forms that remain constant despite transformation." My understanding of this is that within nature there exists geometric structure, which maps the likely development of forms; then we have the *actual* development of forms that occurs when likely structure meets

organic conditions. Shotz, apparently, works in a similar manner. What this means to the viewer is that we encounter works that have an elegant sense of order and exquisitely careful craftsmanship (which is performed in a simple, unobtrusive, almost casual, way). The care and thought put into the work allows the viewer to, paradoxically, ignore the work and experience the sensation—much as we often encounter nature.

Many artists are struggling to find a voice and process with which to address nature at this time. It is an effort fraught with dangers of sentimentalism, idealism, diatribe, romanticism, and other failings. The best of the work acknowledges and works with the interface of sensation, reflection on natural process, and an acknowledgement of contemporary materials and media. Shotz has successfully located herself in this effort, and her work has been enthusiastically received by the public at the Guggenheim, MASS MoCA, the Hirshhorn, and other great and vibrant exhibition centers. It is a pleasure to see her work presented in a small venue with ready access to nature itself.

—Craig Stockwell