

# Art in America

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## ALYSON SHOTZ DEREK ELLER

A luminous gravity marks Alyson Shotz's recent sculptures, each a seamless, elegant manipulation of light and shadow as weightless and abstract as breathing. In the largest, *Equilibrium*, Shotz's virtuosity is most apparent. Five hundred supple piano wires strung with myriad silvered glass beads hang from an armature close to the ceiling and drop to the floor, forming a 10-foot-high cage whose gentle contours slope into a shell shaped by its own weight. Shotz has created a work that faintly echoes Richard Serra's "Torqued Ellipses." But where his sloping walls are impenetrable steel framing actual corridors, hers are made of strands and air, and the piece may be traversed by sight alone.

Sharing the main gallery with *Equilibrium* was another sculpture from 2009, *Thread Drawing #3 (Wave)*, made of thin black thread looped under the heads of hundreds of straight pins stuck into the wall to create a shallow (2-inch-deep) relief. Shotz modulates the spans between threads to create a net of irregular diamond shapes that, together with the shadows they cast, form an amorphous "wave" somehow suggesting musculature and fins.

The standout was the site-sensitive *Phase Shift* (2008), the sole occupant of the dimmed rear gallery. Lit from above, 11 stainless-steel wires sprayed out toward the door, each strung with glass beads and hand-cut disks of plastic lenses that cast eerie oval pockets of light on the wall, floor and viewer. Like air bubbles escaping a diver's tank, the refractions turned the space magically sonic despite its total silence.

*Suspension* (2008), hung from the ceiling in the small reception area, was a tangle of thin "branches" of stainless-steel wires capped with glass beads, like ice gathered on a winter tree. Its volumes appeared doubled by the shadows it cast on the wall. Similarly to theatrical designer Jennifer Tipton, Shotz deftly manipulates light and its variables in a manner as critical to the whole as her sculpture's tangible parts. The cryptic title of the exhibition, "Phase Shift," taken from the work in the rear gallery, is a keen fit for all the sculptures, with their penchant for conveying the ephemeral, the subliminal.

—Elaine Sexton



Alyson Shotz:  
*Equilibrium*, 2009,  
stainless-steel wire,  
silvered glass beads,  
aluminum, 120 by  
108 by 144 inches;  
at Derek Eller.