

France, the average gallery hopper will be at a disadvantage. As label copy is scarce, the most effective approach is to read the thorough hand-out/broadsheet that is available in the galleries, a process that is decidedly worth the effort.

The first gallery "Le Salon (de) Surprise" is dedicated to Lumina Sophie, who was imprisoned and convicted under the name Lumina Sophie Surprise. Here the power of Martinique—and other exoticized French territories—to captivate the minds and convictions of the French becomes clear. A small selection of prints, drawings and photographs, all from private collections, graphically demonstrates this attraction, one that drove Man Ray to learn Creole and try his hand at portraiture. As no image of Lumina Sophie exists, Latamie has effectively transposed to Ady the representation of a strong, intelligent and beautiful Caribbean woman.

The second, and main, gallery is by far, at once, the most compelling and confounding. A small allegorical wooden model of an absinthe distillery, which is martyred San Sebastian style with copper pipes, is held in conversation with nine human-sized, stainless steel representations of Duchamp's *malic molds*, as seen in his *Large Glass*. These figures have apparently assembled to furtively gaze upon the essence of absinthe that twirls within the distillery and supports the very idea of the secret of life in a stylized tree-of-life. Embodied in this central gallery is one of Latamie's aesthetic tenets, as expressed in the brochure: "Obviously I had Marcel Duchamp in the back of my mind, which happens quite frequently when I look at art. Not only when considering my own pieces, but usually the way I approach art is with 'the minimum of demonstration and the maximum of thinking.'" The idea of desire fills the room.

That aesthetic *thinking* is something that could take place in the third gallery, the Absinthe Lounge. Here, in a pastiche of a 19th century parlor, the artist asks viewers to sit and consider the content of the first two galleries. To aid in that process, Latamie has included here two earlier works, in wood, silver, and glass. Each of these boxes (*coffrets*) can be seen as a sort of absinthe user kit. But, in fact, beautifully designed and executed, these boxes take on the form of a reliquary, holding the remains of the idea of the French in Martinique.

Clayton Kirking

Elias Crespin

Cecilia de Torres Gallery

Elias Crespin's kinetic sculptures moan and hum, creating the illusion that we are in the presence of organic beings, even though we know that hidden motors move the metal rods and wires that comprise his works. Although all of the works in his recent exhibition at the Cecilia de Torres gallery, his first solo showing in New York, are ostensibly pure abstractions—geometric compositions made from stainless steel, aluminum, and brass rods and wires shaped into grids, systems of parallel lines, concentric circles and pentagons—they are remarkably evocative of aspects of the natural world. Playful and inviting, each work is a self-contained object meant for contemplating in a gallery or home, rather than in large public spaces. Their domestic scale and organic character relate to the artist's famous grandmother, Gego (Gertrud Goldschmidt), whose hand-rendered metal sculptures quietly defied the grand modernity of the kinetic works her peers were making for public venues in Venezuela. Crespin's continued pursuit of this trajectory that began in an environment in Venezuela very different from today's raises such critical questions as: What type of interactive experience can kinetic sculptures offer individual viewers in a gallery? What is the social significance for this work in a contemporary context that transverses the global and the local?

At Cecilia de Torres, seven different kinetic works constructed from stainless steel and brass rods or wire are displayed in a single gallery. They look like distinct works because each hangs from white platforms that hover about four feet below the ceiling, on top of which the machinery that runs the artwork suspended below is neatly hidden. The main elements of the sculptures—the stainless steel and brass rods, wires, and lead weights—hang from these platforms on near-invisible nylon threads. Silhouetted against white walls behind them and rectangular white platforms below, the metal rods, wires, circles and pentagrams of the works appear to float against these white fields. The platforms have the practical purpose of preventing viewers from walking into the works but they also have the curious effect of playing the role of traditional pedestals, which counter-intuitively forces Crespin's seemingly unconventional works into the traditional category of sculpture.

The show features objects from three different series from 2012. The largest, two from Crespin's *Plano* series face each other, each an undulating plane of parallel, two and a half foot rods that runs almost twenty feet long. The rods undulate and dance, sometimes in concert and sometimes in opposition with each other. Cycling through about twenty different movement sequences over the course of ten-minute loops, with time the *Planos* each begin to appear to have their own personalities. They are controlled by an application Crespin wrote that runs on an iPad, laptop, or even a smartphone. Their owner or a curator is able to control the works by adjusting the speed of their movement, though it is really Crespin, with his computer programming, who determines how the work is animated.

And it is through the process of animation that he displays his artistry at transforming the seemingly mundane geometry of his materials into elements that appear to defy their materiality. Pulsating and flying, the *Planos* resemble fields of rippling grasses or the lapping waves of the ocean. Shifting and rotating, the concentric pentagonal and circular rods of *Pentaconcéntricos Latón* and *Circuconcéntricos Latón* alternate between suggesting large celestial bodies and microscopic cells. The final grouping of works in the show, *Tapiz 7*, *Tapiz 5*, and *Malla 8 Paralelas 2* relate most closely to Gego's drooping and malformed grids, but with the humor that Crespin's animation brings to a grid of metal rods that is pulled and malformed by a combination of nylon threads and its own physical limitations.

In all of these works, Crespin renders invisible forces temporarily visible and calls our attention to the dynamic and unstable nature of vision. Luminosity, shadow, and reflection are as much his media as metal, motors, and computer programming. The artist's desire to stage such engaging and interactive experiences on a small scale not only reflects significant and well-known shifts in the patronage of art in Venezuela, but it also reminds us that the Venezuelan kineticists almost always deployed their aluminum and Plexiglas to engage with the natural world. It also attests that the core experience of kinetic art lies in the wonder of an individual viewer's discovery.

Harper Montgomery



Elias Crespin. *Plano flexionante 3*, 2012. 19 feet 2 inches x 31 1/4 inches. (577,6 x 81,2 cm.).

Natalia Arias

Nohra Haime Gallery

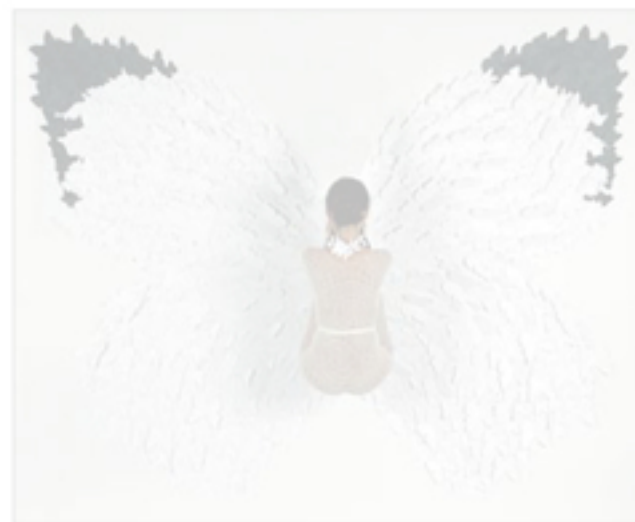
The exhibition of works by Natalia Arias at Nohra Haime Gallery draws inspiration from a poem that the artist also added to the corpus of work as a photograph illustrating the poem. The first two lines read, "No permanent, no perpetual/No comfort from constant" and are taken up in the works exhibited where we witness the artist struggle with issues of representation, transformation, and self-identity, as well as outright metamorphosis.

The central and pivotal work represents a red ball in the midst of a giant butterfly made up of smaller butterflies on paper that extend into the huge wings. In the catalogue cover we see the same image with the artist herself curled up in the central part of the butterfly, replacing the ball that represents the pin, which both secures and kills real butterflies in collectors' frames. The issue of entrapment is hinted at by the pin which looks like the black endings of the wings and some spots in the center that point to what looks like an inconclusive color mutation between a night moth and a black butterfly specimen.

Another photo shows what looks like the cocoon before the metamorphosis where the larva will transform from worm into the winged presence of the butterfly. There is something disturbing about confronting this vulnerable chrysalis, even if we are separated by the flatness of photography. As the enlarged image is almost life sized, we feel in approaching as if we were too close to an unknown biological process. The same applies to another work, closely related to this one in

composition, where a nude body is trapped inside a netted bag and suspended with an industrial cable. The ambiguity of the isolated and netted figure does not inform us whether this is a natural process or an artificially induced one, but there is an uneasy feeling of forced paralysis that can be interpreted as a form of transformation/evolution. The head of the figure is ominously covered with a red bag that looks surgically protective, as if to induce a hatching or to protect a surgical intervention, and large gray and white butterflies have settled on the outside of the net in groups, as if recognizing a fellow member in the making inside the net. Arias has expressed issues of entrapment and transformation that are very present in the language of contemporary women artists as they struggle to redefine the image of a post-modern, post liberated contemporary woman that has abandoned traditional poses and symbols of ancestral femininity but have not yet developed new ones to effectively replace the old with an entirely new field of recognizable material that is as automatically referenced in the archive of images we all share as part of our cultural baggage.

Another image, the most thought provoking in the series, shows a portrait of the artist with her face half-covered by what look like black eggs from an insect's nest. Inevitable associations with reproductive insect "queens" such as bees come to mind as does the idea that this is an unfinished process—whether a new being is evolving from the nest or whether the nest itself is part of the process in the creation of a new being that will not



Natalia Arias. *White Glider*, 2012. C-print, Ed. 5. 48 x 60 in. (122 x 152,4 cm.).

be a woman at all is possible, but either a combination of the two or something altogether different is an unknown/unresolved prospect. There is also a reflection that is captured in the dark foreground that projects this strangely masked face into the bottom visual plane of the photograph, providing a continuum of the disturbing image in reverse.

Alight is the title of another image in which a crouching nude female is shown with an attachment made up of what looks like paper cut outs of white butterflies that again turn to very big wings. There is nothing in this image that reminds us of angels, instead we think of a genetic experiment in the making, an alteration whether surgical or gene-induced that has produced a new species, not necessarily entirely human.

Whether transforming or illustrative of evolutionary states of mind, the compositions of these works question issues of image representation and identity and are as interesting for what is left unsaid as much as by what we see, and think we understand. They question our perception of reality by opening the door to possibilities of body alteration and transformation that we often think about within the context of science, and particularly how those scientific images are manipulated in the process of representation. Ultimately, the treatment of the subjects is not clear enough to indicate a relationship with progress or evolution; it just points in the direction of permanent inquiry and questions the validity of our own reliance on visual information.

Alberto Barral