



## NEW YORK Elias Crespin

Cecilia de Torres, Ltd.

Elias Crespin is a 21st-century wizard in a virtual Oz. In "Parallels," the New York debut of his kinetic sculpture, he dazzled viewers with works consisting of simple lines and shapes. At first glance, they appeared to be suspended in space, their movements the whim of a capricious breeze. But nature was nowhere present. Crespin's gravity-defying lines, pentagrams, and circles, fabricated from copper, brass, and stainless steel, hang from nearly invisible nylon threads and take their cues from the hidden computerized motors to which they are attached.

A software designer and consultant with a degree in computer science from Venezuela's Central University, Crespin is a self-taught artist whose only formal brush with fine art came from his two famous grandparents: graphic artist Gerd Leufert (1914–98) and kinetic artist Gertrude Goldschmidt (1912–94), better known as Gego. As a kid, Crespin spent many hours helping his grandmother in her studio. Later, he was influenced by Jesús Rafael

Soto. Both Gego and Soto created architecturally inspired kinetic work that invited viewer participation. Their installations explored shifting perspectives through plays of line, shape, movement, and light.

Crespin updates the approach of these masters for a new technological age. Using custom-designed software as an electronic paintbrush, he translates two-dimensional digital graphics into animated three-dimensional sculpture. Because the motor, wire, and computer hardware guts are stuffed away in unobtrusive boxes on the ceiling, the intensely complicated logistics of these electronic creations appear magically spontaneous and natural.

Crespin's high-tech variations on kineticism reduce line, shape, and movement to their barest, most elegant essences. His minimal geometric language elucidates how simple elements can sire complexities beyond our grasp and how all human experience is, at its core, tied to nature. In *Plano Flexionante 3*, metal rods aligned in a long straight row and held taut in space, appear inert, as if stilled by a dead summer heat. Then, in a blink of the eye, they shudder, swept into the choreography of a full-blown storm.

*Plano Flexionante 2* (2012), a similar work, unfolds like a time-lapse movie. Here, 75 evenly spaced stainless steel rods slowly disperse, like

flying dust. Then they snap to attention, in formations that suggest letters. But just as one expects to decipher a calligraphic line, the nascent letters collapse on one another, falling then rising into a new configuration that casts an endless array of shadow images on the wall. Some transfixed visitors sat for an hour or more watching the actual and projected incarnations of a single cyber-drawing.

*Circuconcéntricos Latón* (2012) throws perception a different set of curves. Ten concentric brass circles slowly separate into planetary-like rings that suddenly burst into an acrobatic galactic performance. They assume a variety of alignments, from an illusionary straight line rendered by curves to a Slinky run amok. *Tapiz 6* (2012) a stainless steel grid, recalls Gego's *Reticuláres* (1969), in which aluminum and steel formed a huge, room-filling web. Crespin's geometric cousin—a grid hanging parallel to the wall, defies its rigid metal warp and weft as it undulates in space, producing the movements of a soft, luxurious quilt in its shadow.

Crespin renders inorganic materials ephemeral, their motorized movements serendipitous and fleeting as the wind. It's so well done that we accept this virtual nature as if it were real, an admission, perhaps, that we live in an age in which technological phenomena qualify as immutable experience. We can, after all, play and replay the nature program in a gallery, museum, or at home all day.

The jury may still be out on the rewards of virtual and augmented experience, but that does not deny the power of Crespin's work. He has a masterful grasp of line as both geometric and organic form, of motion as mystery and mechanics, and of science as art. Though he has only been making and exhibiting his work for six years, he's garnered significant critical notice. It will be exciting to see what he produces when he breaks with the vernacular of his role models for a lexicon all his own.

—Joyce Beckenstein



Above: Elias Crespin, installation view of "Parallels," 2012. Right: Elias Crespin, *Circuconcéntricos Latón*, 2012. Brass, nylon, and motors, 100 x 100 cm.