

PRESSBOOK

Julio LE PARC

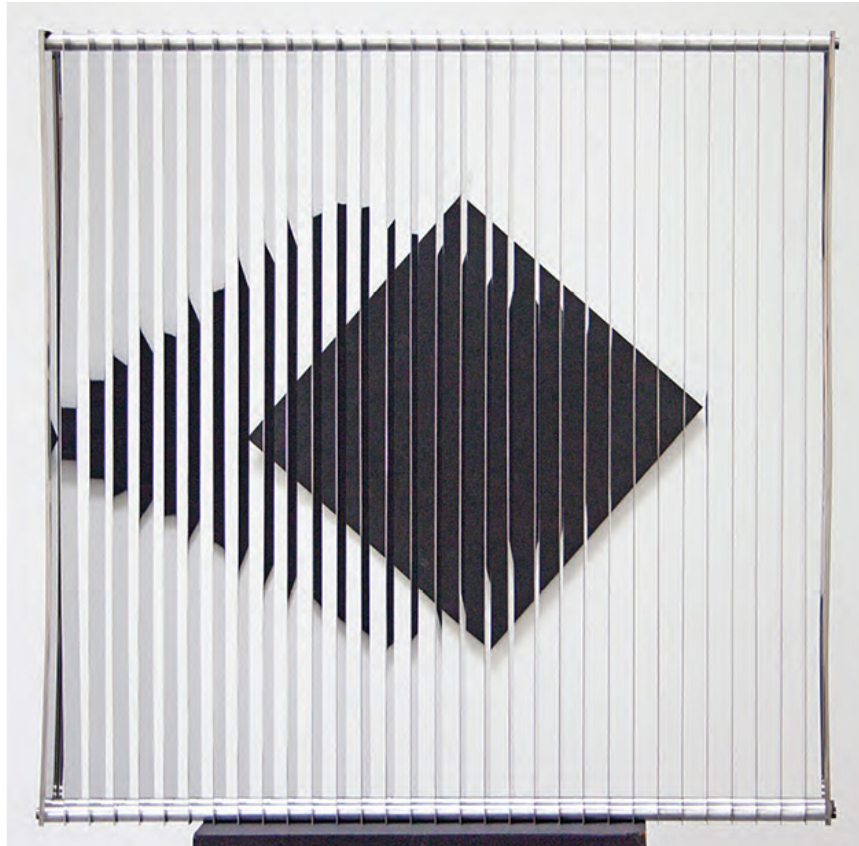
Blouin Art Info

October 2017

Julio Le Parc at Perrotin

A| blouinartinfo.com/news/story/2574905/julio-le-parc-at-perrotin

Sarah Moroz, Modern Painters



Julio Le Parc's work has experienced a global revival of late: exhibitions at the Palais de Tokyo in Paris in 2013, the Serpentine Sackler Gallery in London in 2014, and a major retrospective at the Perez Art Museum in Miami last year. His latest exhibition at Perrotin Paris (following an exhibition in the New York space in 2016) features some 40 paintings, sculptures and installations produced between the '70s and '90s, as well as new installations, mobiles and recent paintings.

His dynamism hasn't faded a bit: his 2016 "Alchimie 349," a bright whirling dervish in acrylic paints, is as energetic as a spiraling 1976 canvas, "Modulation 204." At 89 years old, the Argentine-born artist has a storied past with the French art scene, ever since he arrived in the country on a grant in 1958. He has worked and resided here since, headquartered in an atelier in the southwestern Parisian suburb of Cachan, a veritable funhouse of whirring mechanized installations that transform light into undulating shadows or bright fantasias (including a venture into virtual reality experiences, developed with the help of his sons).

Since 1959, Le Parc has self-imposed a 14-scale selection of colors (plus white, gray and black neutrals), a systematic palette he endlessly recalibrates. The vibrant hues are deployed into electrifying geometric forms that rouse one's sense of perception, toying with shifts in luminosity and sleights of hands to produce optical illusions. His work has been qualified as Kinetic Art, although Le Parc has vocally resisted this term. Ceaselessly motivated by experimentation, he has christened himself a "tinkerer," elaborating in an interview with *Purple* magazine in March 2017: "If you have a little imagination, a little curiosity, a little stubbornness, you'll stumble upon things." This artist-as-explorer approach not only keeps him creatively satisfied, but enables more forthright connections with the viewer: "Play is, perhaps, a good way station toward opening people up to other things."

Le Parc has infused a political dimension to his work: He has criticized dictatorships in Latin America through assorted anti-fascist projects, and was temporarily exiled from France because of his local art activism during the country's political upheaval around 1968. But playfulness has been paramount, even when delivering an activist message. He was a founding member of GRAV (Groupe de Recherche d'Art Visuel, an acronym that winks at

“grave,” the French word for “serious”), the disruptive 1960s collective that sought to popularize art discourse and provide a forum for ideological exchange between a handful of artists. The group’s most impactful gesture was the “Journée dans la Rue” (Day in the Street) in 1966, when members scattered objects and questionnaires in public spaces throughout Paris. “We wondered how we could change or invert the status quo, and create a more direct relationship with people, without filtering things through aesthetic analyses, market value, and production,” the artist told Purple. Today his work still probes the relationship between art and audience participation. He wants joy to be the essential takeaway, he said in an interview: “If people feel a change in their spirit, some optimism, that’s already something.”

This article appears in the October 2017 edition of Modern Painters.