

ART REVIEW

At 90, This Artist Is Still Opening Doors of Perception

Julio Le Parc, a student of Lucio Fontana, choreographs a motorized movement-of-the-spheres dance, poetic and hypnotic.



By **Holland Cotter**

Jan. 24, 2019

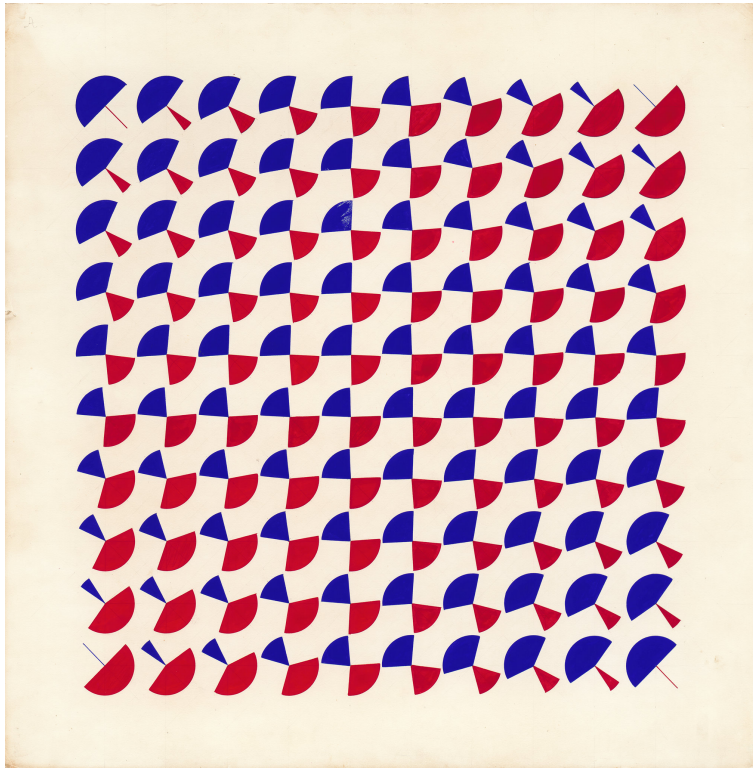
At the Met Breuer, concurrent with the Lucio Fontana retrospective, comes the New York solo museum debut of another Argentina-born modernist, Julio Le Parc.

Born in 1928 in the city of Mendoza, Mr. Le Parc was an art student in Buenos Aires in the late 1940s, and he lucked out in having Fontana as a teacher. Master and pupil were on the same beam: Both were formally omnivorous, anti-academic and futuristically minded. When Fontana spoke of aligning art with scientific technology, and using light, space and movement as aesthetic materials to make art accessible to new generations of viewers, his ideas fell on the right young ears.

[Read Holland Cotter's review of the Lucio Fontana retrospective.]

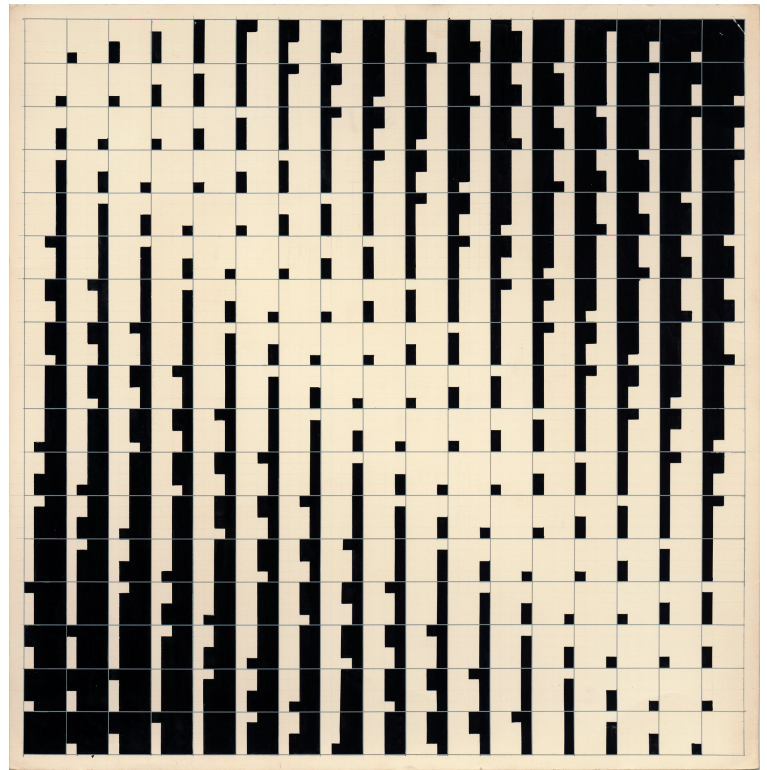
In 1958, Mr. Le Parc moved to Paris. There he met Victor Vasarely and a group of artists associated with what would be called Op Art and Kinetic Art, movements geared to audience interaction. Their populist potential was of particular interest to the younger artist, who took a history of political activism — Anticapitalist, anti-authoritarian — with him to Europe. (In 1968, he was expelled from France for five months for participating in protests.) His resistance politics extended to the art

establishment. He was diffident about engaging with it, and as a result, his career, after a much-noticed start in the 1960s — biennials, prizes — slowed way down outside of France where, at 90, he still lives.



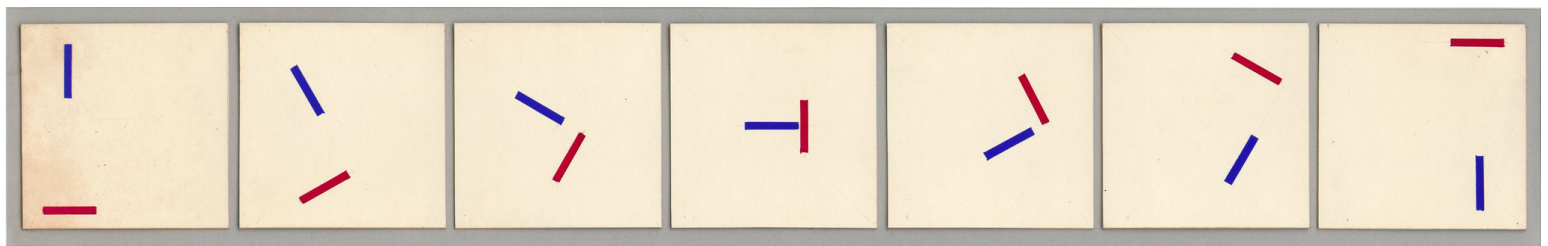
Julio Le Parc's "Mutation of Forms," 1959, gouache on cardboard.

Julio Le Parc; The Metropolitan Museum of Art



The artist's "Quantitative Sequences," 1959, gouache on cardboard.

Julio Le Parc; The Metropolitan Museum of Art



"Seven Sequences of the Movement of the Translational Motion of Red and Blue Segments," 1959, gouache on cardboard. Julio Le Parc; The Metropolitan Museum of Art

The Met exhibition, "Julio Le Parc 1959," and organized by Iria Candela, the museum's curator of Latin American art, is far from being a full survey but gives a good sense of what he's about. The bulk of it is a group of some 50 gouache studies on

paper, two dozen of which the artist recently gave to the Met. He produced the series, in what must have been an elated rush, in 1959, his first full year in Paris. The gouaches are all of abstract geometric forms, no two alike, that create illusions of movement through patterning. Black dots vibrate; rectangles do back-flips; puzzle-like forms fly apart and snap back together. The optical technology is straightforward; Mr. Le Parc's basic model is flip-book animation. Yet the results are subtly ingenious.

Two installations show him taking that ingenuity to a more ambitious scale. "Form in Contortion Over Weft" (1966) is part painting, part sculpture, part machine, with several curvy, black-and-white-striped upright forms shimmying against a striped ground with which they rhythmically merge. And "Continual Light Cylinder" joins mirrors and lights projections to choreograph a motorized movement-of-the-spheres dance, poetic and hypnotic. Fontana would have been proud of the work his student-turned-master has done, and we need to see more of it.

Julio Le Parc 1959

Through Feb. 24 at the Met Breuer, 945 Madison Avenue, Manhattan; 212-731-1675, metmuseum.org.

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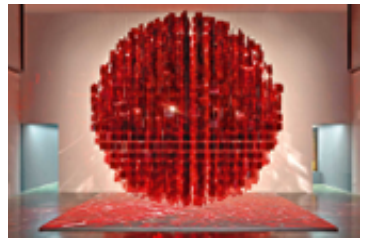
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Holland Cotter is the co-chief art critic. He writes on a wide range of art, old and new, and he has made extended trips to Africa and China. He was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Criticism in 2009.

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