

ARTISTS



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DAVID MORENO

By Jeff D. Min

To meditate upon a David Moreno sculpture is to have your perspective bent in half; the senses struggle to decide whether it is a sketch or a sculpture, the rational mind finally concludes that it's both. Consensus between the two disciplines is the nucleus of Moreno's work, an invitation to a place where perspective folds and magic and science become one.

Based in Badalona, Spain, Moreno firmly believes that sketching and sculpture are akin, both coming from an intrinsic place. For Moreno a canvas can appear anywhere, and his focus is on how he can utilize his skills to fill that blank slate when it appears. "I like Jaume Plensa with his isolated individuals and curtains of letters, and Antony Gormley with his humans; implosive and explosive, individuals without identity," says Moreno. "Chiharu Shiota too and her installations, generating atmospheres with objects wrapped with millions of threads."

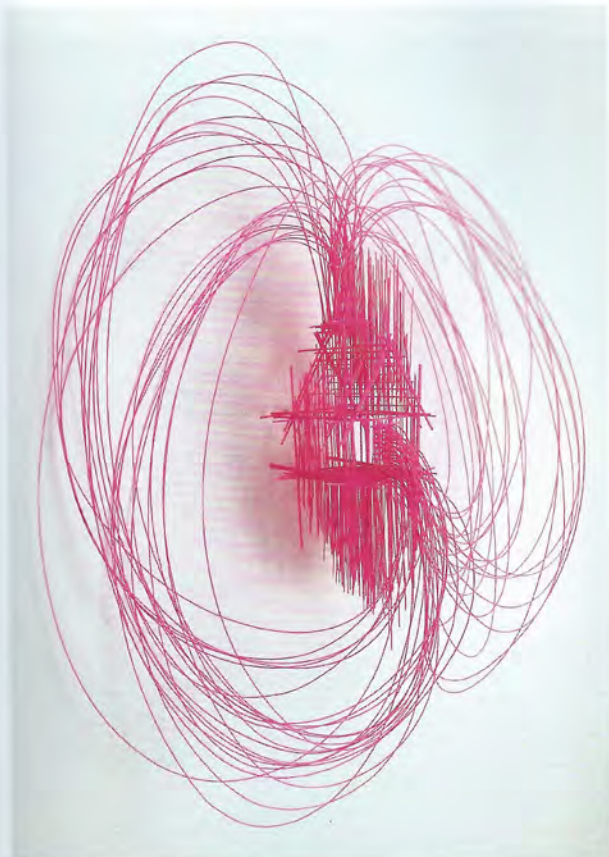
Seemingly effortless in nature, Moreno's methods are anything but easy. Over several years he's had to retool his techniques to be more efficient. "The first sculptures were really slow to make," explains Moreno. "I was welding them dot by dot, all steel rods. I'm still welding dot by dot, but I have a new process, so I can be more agile with my constructions." Part of the design includes being mindful of weight, tension, balance, and gravity; as to avoid unforeseen malformations. Lately he's been working with resin and wax, which can be an unpredictable medium to manipulate but one that he's eager to experiment with because as he puts it, "a new process equals new mistakes, new mistakes equal new opportunities."



ABOVE: "Paisaje Horizontal_001", steel rods, silver weld, orange paint
120 cm x 74 cm x 30 cm

BOTTOM: "Favela Vertical_001", steel rods, silver weld, silver paint
100 cm x 45 cm x 20 cm

OPPOSITE: "De Uno a Otro", steel rods, silver weld, black paint
60 cm x 50 cm x 21 cm



Like a fearless dreamer, Moreno believes that the imagination can take shape anywhere. His sculptures invade space and give the illusion that it is expanding. The movement creates a kinetic energy, and as the viewer walks around the piece different shapes emerge, oscillating in ways that reveal hidden passages and exotic realms.

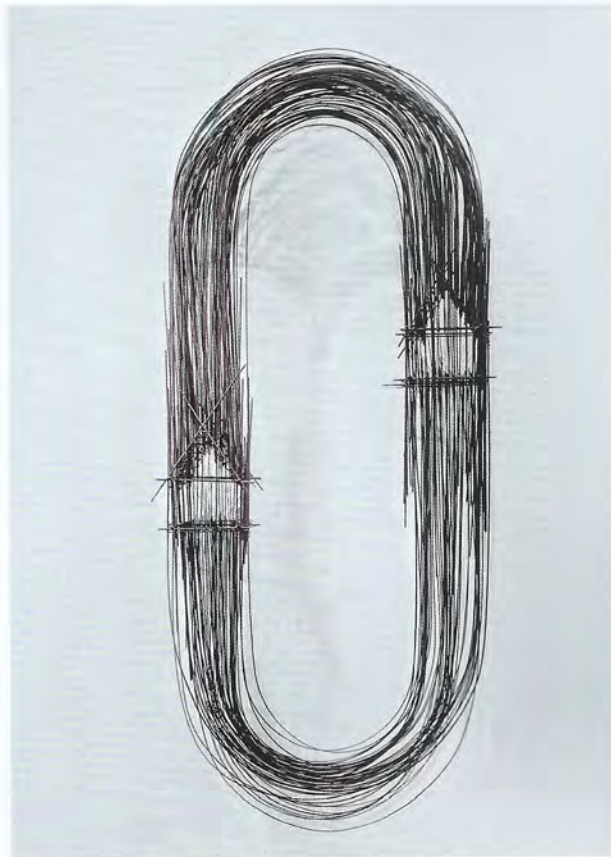
"While the point of view is changing the lines are blending and juxtaposing, generating different atmospheres," says Moreno. "This changing juxtaposing of steel rods provides a kinetic dimension. You don't see this effect until the sculptures are fully developed."

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The different atmospheres occupy more than just the physical space. Like dropping ink in a glass of water, Moreno's sculptures blossom in the mind, lingering with a cool dreamlike fragrance. *Cathedral Connections* is a pristine example. Leading from one door to the next are elaborate stairs that ascended and descend, the movement is fluid and the negative space creates an invisible framework. For Moreno the journey takes on a special meaning. It is a pilgrimage leading to a safe haven, a palace of stillness where a person can reflect.

"On the *Cathedral Connections* series, I conceived a door as an entrance to a protected and peaceful space, a portal

OPPOSITE: "Chatedral Connection_001", steel rods, silver weld, gold paint, 80 cm x 48 cm x 18 cm



that can transport you," says Moreno. "It is a place that allows you to connect with other people with similar thoughts. The stairs that are going up and down are like a complex way of traveling; they lead you to your place of comfort."

For Moreno connecting with people and the environment is important. His work is a small bridge that attempts to close a huge divide. On a daily basis we pass strangers and think nothing of it, failing to realize that within each individual is a depth of unfathomable proportions. You can spend the rest of your life with someone, and still not know

what makes them tick; their greatest ambitions and most crippling fears. Our spiritual legs buckle with atrophy as we sit shoulder-to-shoulder with strangers who may as well be on another planet. It's a daunting chasm, but all it takes is to inquire honestly and with an open mind.

Moreno's technique is a representation of this ethos. As he welds each wire dot-by-dot, he's paying homage to the anonymous individuals that make up a city. Take his "Favelas" as an example. The wires are thoughtfully placed and after several man hours a dwelling slowly emerges, and then another and another and then you have an emerging community, an atmosphere where life can inhale

ABOVE(L-R): "La vie en Rose", steel rods, silver weld, pink fluorescent paint, 85 cm x 80 cm x 30 cm, "Infinito_001", steel rods, silver weld, black paint, 100 cm x 50 cm x 25 cm



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and exhale. But where *Cathedral Connections* has a divine touch, "Favelas" has a more immediate and pressing tone. Favelas are slums most commonly found in Brazil. In 2016 during the Rio Olympics numerous news outlets brought attention to the heinous and deplorable living conditions found within the favelas. It placed a spotlight on human rights violations and the wealth disparities that go along with them. *The New York Times* ran an exposé where they interviewed sixty-four-year-old Marie Auxiliadora, a resident of Favela do Mandela. When asked about how she felt about the Olympics she replied, "The rich play, and we die." Moreno recently painted one of his favelas gold, explaining that it is a resource that is "valued" and "longed for" but not accessible to all.

"I always look at my sculptures as if they were individuals," says Moreno. "I mean, a house is a reflection of a person; individual protection (roof) with roots (foundations) that are developing relationships with others (resorts, favelas)." Moreno quickly adds that remembering this mantra is a fundamental part of the construction.

"After the juxtaposition and grating of different thicknesses of steel rods, a series of micro-atmospheres are generated," he explains. "A unique motive is constantly repeated in an addictive, disturbing, and poetic way at the same time. The rhythm, gesture, line drawing and the experimentation of drawing with thin steel rods and piano wire are the basis for this exploration, which results in small pieces with great delicacy and tenderness."

Located in Chicago's Millennium Park is the "Crown Fountain"—a sculpture by Jaime Plensa, one of Moreno's biggest influences. It is comprised of two LED towers that measure fifty feet in height. Its most notable feature is the display, which reels off portraits of Chicago residents.

The towers face one another as to simulate a conversation, and periodically they spout out streams of water. In between them you can find droves of children playing in the granite reflecting pool. The lakefront is steps away and during the summer music can be overheard from the pavilion close by. It pays homage to Chicago's most endearing feature: its people.

In this unique part of the city you can find residents from all over—from Englewood and Pilsen to Logan Square and Chinatown. It is a place that blurs economic lines and embraces community through diversity. Framing the things that make us human is essential to Moreno and you can clearly see the influence that an artist like Plensa has had on him. Moreno doesn't over intellectualize, nor does he press his perspective. He only introduces an alternative way for us to identify with our environment. His sculptures take a moment to acknowledge the individuals who are vital to a city, but to a great extent remain nameless.

When asked if there was anything personal he would like to share, Moreno enthusiastically answered that he's a teacher, which isn't a totally uncommon side gig for an artist. But it's what he said about teaching that is most impressive. Moreno said candidly "I'm always learning from my students." It's a simple statement, but a telling one all the same. Moreno is constantly exploring, connecting with people, and embracing whatever his heart and mind bring. Moreno combines multiple disciplines to give life to his growing vision. In his world nothing is impossible, all you have to do is look within and reach out.†

ABOVE: "Fragmento de Favela", resin, steel rods, metallic paint
20 cm x 15 cm x 15 cm

OPPOSITE: "Ciudad Flotante", steel rods, silver weld, coral paint,
220 cm x 90 cm x 90 cm