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Immerse yourself in 'Kink'

Neto's installation at the Nasher draws viewers into his work

ART NOTES

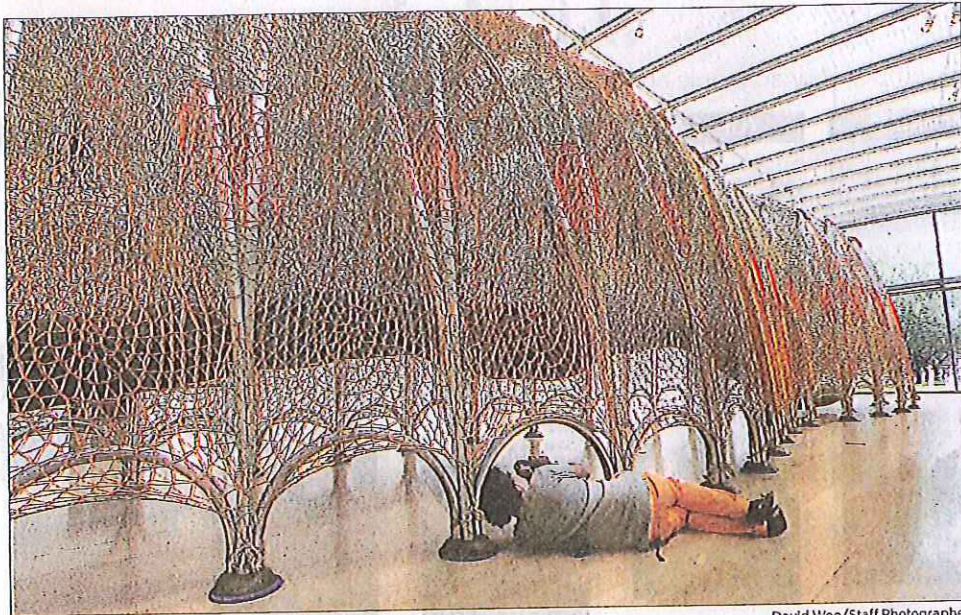


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Soon after the opening of his show at the Park Avenue Armory in 2009, Ernesto Neto threw New York critics the equivalent of a curveball with art that defied conventional molds. One critic labeled it "art that loves you back."

The *New York Times* went even further, comparing his "anthropodino" to a retreat to the womb in offering "a spectacular installation of gauzy Lycra fabric, dangling pods, dinosaurish wooden bones and cavernous interiors." Taking up most of a 55,000-square-foot space, Neto's "ethereal construction," the *Times* wrote, "glows like a magical destination in a children's movie."

And now, Neto has arrived in Dallas with "Cuddle on the Tightrope," an exhibition of aluminum and crocheted rope that begs viewers to climb on it, even immerse themselves in it in the middle of a hot afternoon. In their description of



David Woo/Staff Photographer

Artist Ernesto Neto takes photographs of his artwork, *Kink*, a 60-foot-long cave of crocheted rope described as an escape "from the assault and grind of the everyday world."

the show, Nasher officials write that *Kink*, as the 60-foot-long cave of crocheted rope is called, is an escape "from the assault and grind of the everyday world" that all but demands "an opportunity to slow down and reconnect for a few moments with essential sensory experience."

Neto grew up in Rio de Janeiro and arrived at the Nasher through his friendship with director Jeremy Strick, with whom he worked when Strick was director of the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art.

Seven people at a time are allowed to climb and play on *Kink*, which is having the



Spotted Girl, circa 1940 by Snap Wyatt; oil on canvas

Webb Gallery

same impact at the Nasher as Martin Creed's 9,000-gold-balloon show, which drew record crowds in 2011. Museums have long shown art that people view from a distance, one cool remove away, but which rarely offers the chance to poke, prod and play on it.

"The idea," Neto says in a recent interview, "is to have a sculpture that is a continuation of our body. Taking the people out of the ground and at the same time creating an unusual place to move on. You can lay down, sit down, maybe talk with somebody else. The body carries the mind."

He is not a painter. "I always see the world as a sculpture," he says, though admitting he may one day try painting, "because I do so much with colors that I think about that."

Neto, 48, has two children, ages 8 and 12, who greatly influence his work. Animals also play a role. He once got an idea, he says, by putting a trio of kittens in a box with toys just to see how they might respond. Why not try it on human beings?

"I love life," he says. "I love life! We are a landscape inside of us, and that's what's so interesting to me."

The Neto show and Erick Swenson's riveting *Sightings* exhibition run through Sept. 9.

As with Ernesto Neto, Webb Gallery in Waxahachie understands how to be playful. Its owners thrive on humor and the unexpected, which its shows consistently prove. The Webb's new exhibition "The Greatest Show on Earth" is a celebration of vintage sideshow banners from circuses of the past, ranging from the 1910s through the 1970s.

It runs through Sept. 9 at Webb Gallery, 209 W. Franklin in downtown Waxahachie. Info: 972-938-8085, webbartgallery.com.

University of North Texas graduate Michael Bise is the 2012 winner of the Hunting Art Prize. Bise, who lives in Houston, won the \$50,000 grand prize for a graphite drawing called *Children* that judges selected from more than 100 finalists in the 32nd annual award program, which is sponsored by Hunting PLC an international oil services company.