



Vertigo (Sotto in su), 2007

## TERESITA FERNÁNDEZ: BLIND LANDSCAPE

In its contemporary conception, sculpture is a broad and difficult to locate notion. No longer entrenched in territorial debates, contemporary sculpture has emerged as a pursuit of conditions, relationships, and informed presences and absences, realized in fragments, series, combinations, and overlapping formulations. Though the viewer's experience is the implacable precedent for sculpture's contemporary aegis, sculptural practice remains powerfully unique because it exists both within the familiar world we know, and precisely outside of it. A doubled status, which permits both materials and forms to bridge between symbolic space and actual experience, to co-exist as commentary and witness to our spatial habits—informing not simply how we see the world, but how we value it. Few contemporary sculptors are able to bridge these gaps more persuasively than Teresita Fernández, who has explored, for over a decade, the loaded

relationship between nature and perception in exhilarating spatial and material formulations through a spectrum of approaches, including site-specific projects, outdoor works, immersive installations, freestanding works, and wall works.

Among Fernández's skills as a sculptor, none appears more significant than her ability to maneuver materials into a zone where they may occupy several resemblances—indeed several functions and spatial strategies—at once. Clouds, trees, water, and fire—in patterned formations of polished stainless steel, glass, onyx, graphite, and thread—double as screens, mirrors, and lenses, and vacillate between object and phenomenal experience. Harnessing the qualities of transparency, reflectivity, and depth into instruments meant to provide spectators with the synaesthetic links between disparate appearances, this overlapping multiplicity of visual

structures is a key component to Fernández's sculptural logic, which posits the viewer within differing spatial orientations—part representational, part technological, and part topological.

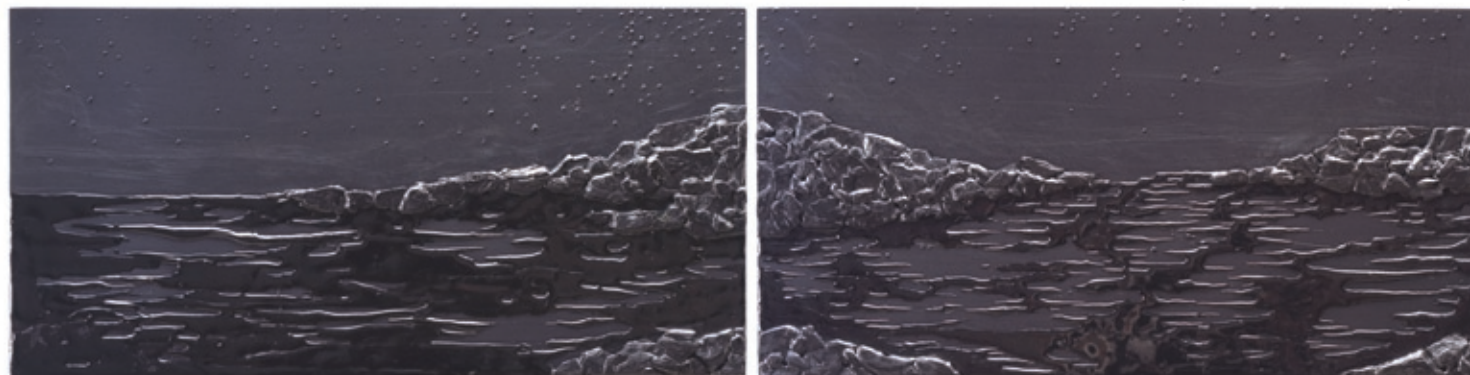
No doubt, an aspect of Fernández's skill is rooted in her clear understanding of both the embodied dimension of spatial perception and the epistemological significance of visual formula. More, however, has to do with Fernández's keen awareness of the doubled status of materials in the sculptural realm: both what they phenomenally deliver to the viewer and what they remain coupled with in the world. Such is the quality of her conjunctive forms, which synthesize a matrix of individually coded materials with our fragmented, if not glitch-like memories of them. An attuned process, focused on working materials and forms through a complex intertwinement of bodily and cognitive-perceptual responses—prompting viewers to recall what they already know and re-perform their experience of them.

Featured in this exhibition, Fernández's *Vertigo (sotto in su)* of 2007, epitomizes such trajectories. The work is comprised of eleven layers of mirror polished aluminum cut in an intricate arboreal pattern suspended high above the viewer, not unlike an immense, cascading tree branch. The cantilevered form seems to resist its own volume and mass, visually extending far beyond its constructed means. Spectators catch reflections of themselves seeing—their body's own inscription of itself onto the perceptual field—gazing up into reflected patterns and projected shadows. Reflections repeat on other layers and extend out onto the wall, ceiling, and floor to form a penumbral theater of activity. The act of looking up, while disorienting, is targeted at making the synaesthetic links to the familiar act of gazing up into the fractured canopy of a tree. The scale, too, of *Vertigo* remains linked to familiar experience. The work

delights in its one-to-one relationship to its abstracted resemblance and does not suppose a modeling away from such direct sensible experience. What *Vertigo* makes is—in effect—a second nature: a synecdochic parallel to standing under a tree, albeit through experiential and abstract means rather than depictive. In fact, *Vertigo* upends the traditions of pictorial staging.

There is no single perspective point from which a viewer can come to discover *Vertigo's* overall form. Rather, it appears from a distance as a collection of cantilevered and tiered, ultrathin strata of horizontal aluminum planes, floating in space, reflecting and refracting light, which the spectator attempts to gather into anamorphic sense by obliquely encircling its outer edges. Since the bottom of the work is overhead, it is only as the spectator approaches—as its underside becomes visible—that *Vertigo's* ultrathin strata gives way to broad flat expanses of reflective, patterned tracings of foliage. Indeed, understanding *Vertigo's* overall form involves moving back and forth across its bow to piece together—through movement and memory—an accumulated recall of all its patterned edges, folds, pockets, and depths. Since *Vertigo* is overhead it is only as the spectator arrives there—underneath the work—that they will realize how large this form is, stretching some 12 feet out off the wall and some 12 feet across the wall. Its multiple stacked planes, through which the viewer looks, merge and vacillate between object and illusion, disassembling and reassembling itself into sensible form as the viewer moves and shifts. The effect of *Vertigo's* combined qualities of reflection and depth draw the viewer into a space charged with self-reflexive potential: as if—inversed—gazing into a reflecting pool.

— David Louis Norr, Chief Curator, Institute for Research in Art



below: *Nocturnal Series (Relief Sculpture)*, 2009  
right: Teresita Fernández installing at USFCAM

## BIOGRAPHY

Teresita Fernández was born in 1968 in Miami, Florida and lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. She has been featured in numerous solo exhibitions internationally and abroad at sites including the New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York; the Centro de Arte Contemporáneo de Málaga, Spain; the Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia; Site Santa Fe, New Mexico, Castello di Rivoli, Torino, Italy; the Witte de With in Rotterdam; and the Miami Art Museum, Florida. Fernández was commissioned by the Seattle Art Museum's Olympic Sculpture Park, where her work *Seattle Cloud Cover* allows visitors to walk through a covered skyway while viewing the city's skyline through tiny holes in multicolored glass. In January 2009, The Blanton Museum of Art unveiled *Stacked Waters*, a site-specific installation created for the cavernous entrance of the museum. Her new site-specific commission *Blind Blue Landscape* will be on view from September 2009 at the renowned Benesse Art Site in Naoshima, Japan. She is the recipient of numerous fellowships and awards both in the U.S. and abroad, including the 2005 MacArthur Foundation Fellowship, a 2003 Guggenheim Fellowship, and the 1999 Louis Comfort Tiffany Biennial Award. Her work is included in numerous major private collections as well as the permanent collections of the St. Louis Art Museum, the SF MOMA, the Museum of Contemporary Art, Miami, the Miami Art Museum, the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, Minnesota, the Sammlung Goetz, and Albright-Knox Art Gallery in Buffalo, New York.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The ambition and scope of this project would not have been possible without the dedication of many individuals. The IRA faculty and staff, as a whole, facilitated many aspects of this multifaceted project. I would especially like to thank Director, Margaret Miller for her support and thoughtful guidance. I would also like to thank the lenders to the exhibition and Lehmann Maupin Gallery for their cooperation, assistance, and enthusiasm for the project since its inception. Ela Orleans, manager of Teresita Fernández Studio, offered invaluable support and assistance. Most of all, I wish to express my thanks to Teresita Fernández who has created brilliant works that challenge and elevate viewers to engage with the world in new and profound ways.

## PUBLICATION

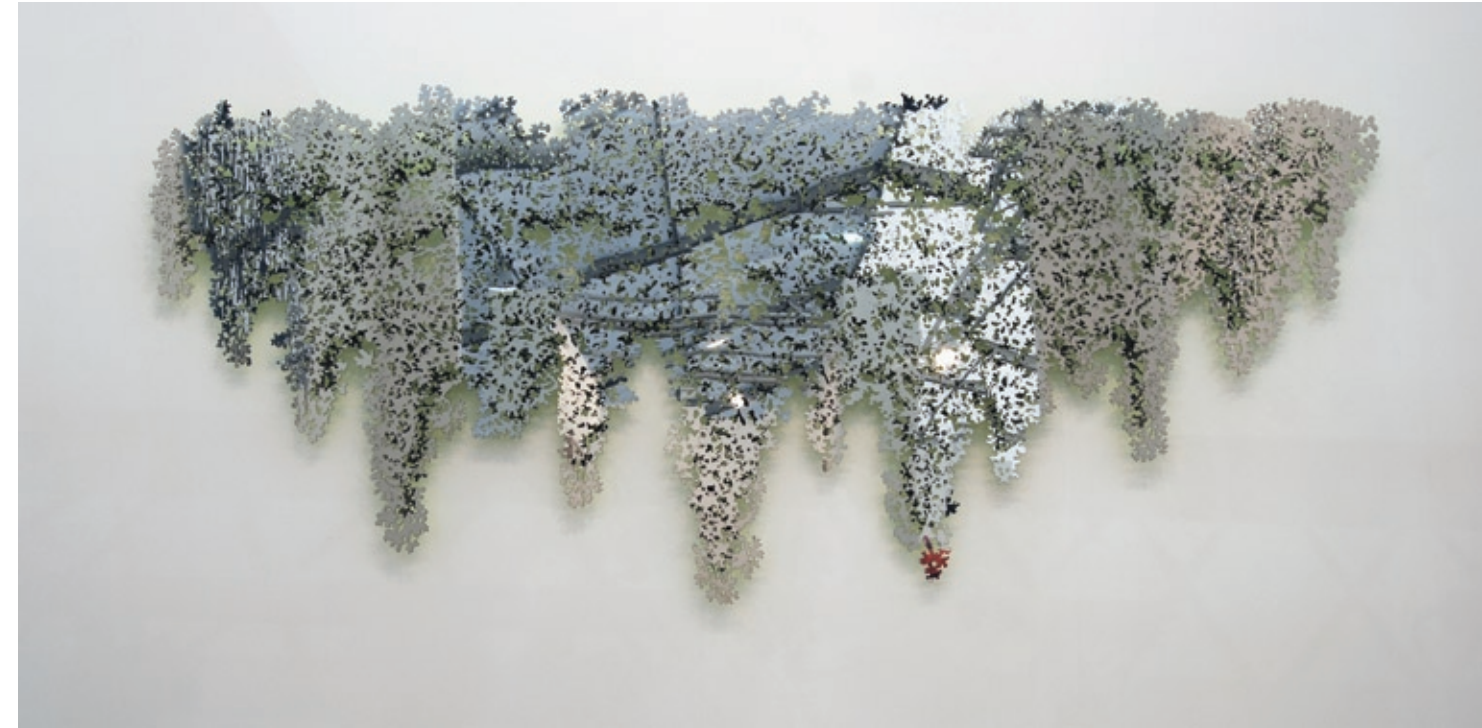
To accompany this major exhibition, the USFCAM is co-published with JRP Ringier a comprehensive monograph that will offer the most complete view to date of the work of this important artist. The fully illustrated publication will feature essays by noted art and cultural critic Dave Hickey, critic and independent curator Gregory Volk, and the exhibition's curator David Louis Norr. The publication will also feature a conversation between the artist and Anne Stringfield, free-lance writer, formerly with The New Yorker.

## EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

1. *Ink Mirror (Landscape)*, 2007  
High-polished black fiberglass and marble dust  
71 x 174 x 58 inches  
Courtesy of the Artist and Lehmann Maupin Gallery, New York
2. *Mirror Canopy*, 2007  
Glass with silvering  
Edition of 2, AP 1/1  
106 x 154 inches  
Courtesy of the Artist and Lehmann Maupin Gallery, New York
3. *Portrait (Blind Landscape)*, 2008  
Precision-cut stainless steel and enamel  
Edition AP 2/2  
56 ½ x 136 x 4 5/16 inches  
Courtesy of the Artist and Graphicstudio, University of South Florida
4. *Epic*, 2009  
Graphite  
150 x 686 x 1 inches  
Courtesy of the Artist and Lehmann Maupin Gallery, New York
5. *Drawn Waters (Borrowdale)*, 2009  
Natural and machined graphite on steel armature  
121 3/16 x 43 ½ x 86 inches  
Courtesy of the Artist and Lehmann Maupin Gallery, New York
6. *Nocturnal Series (Relief Sculpture)*, 2009  
Graphite on wood panel  
diptych, each: 8 x 16 x 2 ½ inches  
Courtesy of the Artist and Lehmann Maupin Gallery, New York
7. *Vertigo (Sotto in su)*, 2007  
Polished precision-cut aluminum  
Edition AP 1/1  
132 ¼ x 128 x 138 inches  
Courtesy of the Artist and Graphicstudio, University of South Florida
8. *Longing (Double Portrait)*, 2007  
Black onyx and glass with silvering  
Edition of 5, AP 1/2  
62 x 135 inches  
Courtesy of the Artist and Lehmann Maupin Gallery, New York
9. *Projection Screen (Black Onyx)*, 2007  
Black onyx  
Edition 3/3  
76 x 103 inches  
Courtesy of the Artist and Lehmann Maupin Gallery, New York

USF Contemporary Art Museum | Tampa, FL  
August 17 - October 10, 2009

The Blanton Museum of Art | Austin, TX  
November 1, 2009 - January 2, 2010



above: *Portrait (Blind Landscape)*, 2008  
cover: *Drawn Waters (Borrowdale)*, 2009  
inside cover: *Mirror Canopy*, 2007 (detail)

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