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## ***Teresita Fernández***

### **Marcella Beccaria**

Teresita Fernández's art is capable of arousing sensations both subtle and intense, built upon the individual spectator's response to her work. Often posed as a perceptual inquiry, each piece invites us to draw on our own memories and desires. The reductive language she employs is designed to give the barest suggestion of an image or situation that the individual is prompted to complete. "My interest - Fernández says - is to create installations which function as situations where the viewer is somehow psychologically propelled by the signifiers in the work." Within the exhibition space, Fernández suggests what Gaston Bachelard refers to as "intimate immensity." As the French philosopher writes in his book *The Poetics of Space*, the contemplation of objects, even those which are familiar to us, may provoke an immeasurable dilation of our intimate, interior space. Defining the experience of a waking dream that can transport us from reality to a sense of infinity is a concept fundamental to the artist's work.

For her Castello di Rivoli project Fernández has drawn on her extensive research into the subject of landscape. In particular, she goes back to the idea of nature shaped by human hand and mind, ordered in terms of a strict hierarchy, offering the viewer a series of continually changing experiences synchronized to the act of walking through the enclosed space of the garden. Following this important concept that unites vision and the roving body, Fernández has 'landscaped' the museum rooms in such a way that visitors become involved in an experience which takes its rhythm from their movements and eventual pauses as they make their way across the exhibition space. To lure the observer into her garden, Fernández first provides an encounter with the highly suggestive image of a waterfall. Both imposing and elusive, *Waterfall*, 2000 is a sculpture that condenses all the dynamic, roaring energy of the natural phenomenon to which it refers while maintaining its own silent presence. Constructed from bands of multicolored acrylic, Fernández's waterfall takes the form of alternating patterns of dark blue, light blue and white. The effect resembles the successive moments which produce a natural waterfall - suggesting a cinematic, frame by frame, progression. It is thus the viewer who, through his or her own gaze, animates the action of the waterfall dissolving into white foam. At the edge of two-dimensionality (like a single sheet of paper, or a bold graphic sign), Fernández's piece suggests the visual permanence of form within perpetually changing matter that every waterfall symbolically represents. The waterfall's sheet-like contour also delineates an interior, penetrable space, which is enclosed and intimate, alluding to a secluded spot that is physically and sensually charged.

Likewise composed of water but even more ephemeral and elusive is the phenomenon of the rainbow. Without illustrating its referent Fernández's work *3:37pm*, 2001 evokes the rare atmospheric event by tying it to a precise moment in time. Almost as though she were composing a mosaic, Fernández arranges her rainbow by applying thousands of acrylic cubes to the wall, each of

which, standing as a point of pure color, is like a painterly impressionist mark. Symbolic bridge that links heaven and earth, representing the union of the human and divine realms, the rainbow is a distant apparition whose imposing scale often envelops a grand landscape. With Fernández's rainbow, it is the spectator's moving body that constructs the fleeting presence of the spectrum before his or her very eyes.

In most gardens, landscape architects tend to juxtapose spectacular visions with areas that favor a more contemplative disposition, designed to momentarily arrest the gaze.

In the second room of her show, Fernández has constructed a secluded environment whose studied slowness holds the attention.

On the walls, as though delineating the space and confines of the garden are two works entitled *Wisteria*, 2000-01. Composed of hundreds of ellipses which form an ornamental motif, each of these pieces is inspired by the abstracted structure of the flower in bloom. Much like climbing plants, the two works are dependent on the walls that sustain them, infusing them with an unexpected geometry. The hypnotic repetition of these elliptical units and the vibration of color that appears to fill each wall (yellow and green respectively), asks that our eyes perform a subtle perceptual exercise. As viewers, we are compelled to pause for a moment.

According to Thoreau, who saw nature as a powerful instrument of self-analysis, each of us could measure the depths of his or her being by looking into a mirror of water.

Water is the element that gives life to every garden; since ancient times artificial pools and nymphaeums have been constructed to give structure to the landscape, forming the fulcrum of the garden and its true reflecting eye. *Pond*, 2001 features an expansive surface on which a multitude of acrylic cubes are arranged. Their transparency captures and refracts the light, enriching the work with shapes that are organic. This work also possesses a sense of depth, suggesting a space beneath the gallery floor. Alluding to both nature and painting, *Pond* reflects our memories, without reflecting our image. Through its simple language, the work encapsulates the predilection for watery expanses that over the centuries has defined garden aesthetics.

It also refers to the modern cultural obsession with the most celebrated of ponds at Giverny, which Monet, even when almost blind, continued to observe until his death.

Shaped by deliberate artifice and rich in pictorial allusion, Fernández's garden not only invites our attention as viewers but also asks that we listen. This apparent request for silence allows us to enter a space which belongs to the mind more than to nature. In this way the artist reveals the creative act of looking while at the same time emphasizing the inherent command of those who direct such vision.