

ArtReview
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Exposed to the elements
Teresita Fernández captures the force of nature by surprisingly minimal means,
says Lauren Stakias

Artistic investigations into the power and sublimity of the natural world encompass everything from Japanese woodcut prints and the landscapes of the Hudson River School to the earthworks of the 1960s. Working within this extensive and diverse tradition, Teresita Fernández pares down nature to its bare essentials, isolating form, light and colour with a minimalist sensibility.

Fernández's previous work has brought the outside world into the gallery via her glass and acrylic sculptures and installations harnessing the energy and beauty of various natural elements: sky, sand, fire, and water. Yet rather than working in or with nature directly, as in the land art of Michael Heizer or Robert Smithson, Fernández creates her own perfected, geometric terrain detached from and devoid of all natural grittiness or flaw. These works, clearly manufactured and employing synthetic materials, also call attention to mankind's increasing ability, through science and technology, to observe and restrain the world around us.

In her second solo exhibition at New York's Lehmann Maupin this month, the Miami-born, Brooklyn-based artist turns to drawing in addition to sculpture, taking her previous abstractions to a new level. In pieces like *Pink Smoke* and *Blue Haze*, an all-over but irregular pattern of loopy lines creates a fog obscuring the picture plane. Soft pastel pinks, blues and greys evoke the sky at dawn or dusk. While she makes no specific visual reference to a particular natural phenomenon, there is an unmistakably light, airy quality to her drawings. It is as if Fernández has succeeded in isolating and arresting every atom of the air at a particular moment in time, an investigation of the effects of light on a landscape that is almost Impressionistic.

Fernández is also collaborating with the Fabric Workshop in Philadelphia on a new installation, in which thousands of flame-coloured threads will be suspended between two large rings. As in the drawings, the piece reduces the force of nature into its most basic aesthetic components, with light and air creating an ever-changing field of colour. Without exactly replicating a natural phenomenon, Fernández's approach nevertheless manages to distil its essence, in a work that is both calm and vital.

LEHMANN MAUPIN

Teresita Fernández, 15 April-14 May, Lehmann Maupin, New York (+ 1 212 255 2923, www.lehmannmaupin.com); 8 Oct-7 Jan 2006, The Fabric Workshop and Museum, Philadelphia (+1 215 568 1111, www.fabricworkshopandmuseum.org)