

Phoenix Art Museum

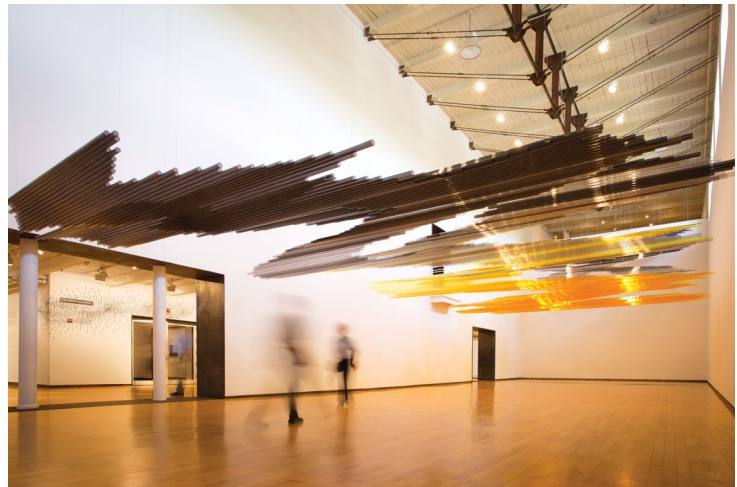
News Release

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Phoenix Art Museum presents first mid-career survey of contemporary artist Teresita Fernández featuring large-scale sculptures, installations, and wall works

The retrospective represents a collaboration between Phoenix Art Museum and Pérez Art Museum Miami



PHOENIX (February 2019) – From March 21 through July 26, 2020, Phoenix Art Museum will present *Teresita Fernández: Elemental*, co-organized with Pérez Art Museum Miami (PAMM) as the first mid-career survey of the 2005 MacArthur Foundation Fellow. The traveling exhibition is co-curated by Amada Cruz, formerly the Sybil Harrington Director and CEO of Phoenix Art Museum who now serves as the Illsley Ball Nordstrom Director and CEO of Seattle Art Museum; Franklin Sirmans, the Director of Pérez Art Museum Miami; Gilbert Vicario, Deputy Director for Curatorial Affairs and Selig Family Chief Curator of Phoenix Art Museum; and María Elena Ortiz, Associate Curator of Pérez Art Museum Miami. The retrospective will feature approximately 60 artworks created by Fernández over two decades and offers visitors an opportunity to experience the artist’s large-scale sculptures, installations, and mixed media works that merge formal and conceptual aspects of her practice through the use of natural materials and the historic genre of landscape to reinterpret relationships between nature, history, and identity. *Teresita Fernández: Elemental* will premiere at Pérez Art Museum Miami from October 17 through February 16, 2020 before traveling to Phoenix in spring 2020.

“We are thrilled to collaborate with Pérez Art Museum Miami to share the works of Teresita Fernández with our community in Arizona,” said Amada Cruz formerly the Sybil Harrington Director and CEO of Phoenix Art Museum who now serves as the Illsley Ball Nordstrom Director and CEO of Seattle Art Museum and co-curator of the exhibition. “Fernández is one of the most innovative artists of her generation and one of the most prominent contemporary artists in the United States, and we look forward to presenting her powerful work in Phoenix.”

Based in New York, Fernández, who was born in 1968 in Miami to Cuban parents, is renowned for her prominent public installations and experiential sculptures. Through her practice, she explores perception and the psychology of looking, regularly manipulating light and space to create immersive, intimate, and evocative experiences. Using a range of materials, including silk, graphite, onyx, mirrors, glass, and charcoal, her minimalist yet substantive installations and sculptures evoke landscapes, the elements, and various natural wonders, including meteor showers, cloud formations, and the night sky. Fernández, who has created site-specific commissions for such public spaces as Harvard College, Madison Square Park, and Olympic Sculpture Park in Seattle, received the Guggenheim

Fellowship in 2003. In 2005, she was named a MacArthur Foundation Fellow for “integrating architecture and the optical effects of color and light into exquisitely constructed, contemplative spaces,” according to the Foundation’s website. Solo exhibitions of her work have been organized at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (North Adams, Mass.); Museum of Contemporary Art North Miami (Fla.); and Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth (Texas), among others.

Teresita Fernández: Elemental represents the first collaboration between Phoenix Art Museum and Pérez Art Museum Miami and spans the mid-1990s to the present to offer a comprehensive view of Fernández’s career to date. Featured works include *Untitled* (1997), a mirrored floor sculpture that references voyeurism but encourages self-reflection from those within the structure, and *Fire* (2005), which uses thousands of hand-dyed silk threads to construct flame patterns that become animated by light and air as viewers move around the sculpture.

The exhibition will also showcase the artist’s most recent body of work, in which she contrasts the sublime nature of traditional landscapes with the current politically charged climate of the United States. Both *Fire (America) 5* (2017) and *Charred Landscape (America)* (2017) underscore Fernández’s reinterpretation of depictions of the land, presenting a contemporary American landscape marred by violence, climate change, and warring ideologies that stands in stark contrast to the idealized vision of the American dream.

“Fernández strategically uses beauty and light to evoke a sense of pleasure, vulnerability, and intimacy,” Cruz said. “By doing this, she is able to eloquently speak about some of the most pressing social issues facing the United States today, including the challenges of democracy, while encouraging viewers to engage with these important topics.”

In a 2018 interview with Cruz, Fernández offered additional insight into this approach:

“There is a sidestepping that beauty employs. It’s not that the work is ‘about’ social justice ... It’s that the beauty in an artwork can be used as a springboard to attach other urgencies. Beauty seduces, it holds attention, it creates a space and a pause where other messages can be lodged gently, subtly placed to linger. The word ‘aesthetic’ in its original form actually means ‘to make aware.’... artists in turn must enable [people] to feel palpably connected.”

The exhibition will be accompanied by a fully illustrated, bilingual publication designed by McGinty, Inc., and co-published with DelMonico Prestel Books. The catalogue will feature contributions by Amada Cruz, former Sybil Harrington Director and CEO of Phoenix Art Museum; Franklin Sirmans, Director of Pérez Art Museum Miami; Matthew Spellberg, PhD, Junior Fellow at the Harvard Society of Fellows; Aruna D’Souza, author of *Whitewalling: Art, Race & Protests in 3 Acts*; Seph Rodney, PhD, staff writer and editor for *Hyperallergic*, and adjunct faculty member at Parsons School of Design; and María Elena Ortiz, Associate Curator of Pérez Art Museum Miami.

Teresita Fernández: Elemental offers the Phoenix community an unparalleled opportunity to experience numerous works by one of the nation’s leading contemporary artists. The exhibition tells the story of a creator who, through her practice, reflects and challenges perceptions of the natural world and the U.S. social order, and asks viewers to contemplate their roles with those spaces.

About the Exhibition

Teresita Fernández: Elemental will be on view from March 21 through July 26, 2020 in the Ellen and Howard C. Katz Wing for Modern Art. The exhibition is co-organized by Phoenix Art Museum and Pérez Art Museum Miami (PAMM), and curated by Amada Cruz, formerly the Sybil Harrington Director and CEO of Phoenix Art Museum who now serves as the Illsley Ball Nordstrom Director and CEO of Seattle Art Museum; Franklin Sirmans, Director of Pérez Art Museum Miami; Gilbert Vicario, Deputy Director for Curatorial Affairs and the Selig Family Chief Curator of Phoenix Art Museum; and María Elena Ortiz, Associate Curator of Pérez Art Museum Miami. Its premiere at Phoenix Art Museum is made possible through the generosity of the Ford Foundation and The Diane & Bruce Halle Foundation. The exhibition will be accompanied by a fully illustrated, bilingual publication featuring scholarly texts written by the exhibition curators and additional contributors. The publication is designed by McGinty, Inc. and co-published with DelMonico Prestel Books. For more details about the exhibition, please visit www.phxart.org/exhibition/teresitafernandez.

Admission is free for Museum Members; veterans and active-duty military and their families; Maricopa Community College students, staff, and faculty (with ID); and youth 5 and younger. Entrance to the exhibition is included in general admission for the general public. During voluntary-donation times, the exhibition is offered to the general public with pay-what-you-wish admission. Voluntary-donation times include Wednesdays from 3 – 9 pm, the first Friday of each month from 6 – 10 pm, and the second Sunday of each month from noon – 5 pm. For a full breakdown of general admission prices and hours, see bit.ly/VisitPhxArt.

To request interviews and high-resolution photography, contact the Marketing and Communications Office of Phoenix Art Museum at 602.257.2105 or margaree.bigler@phxart.org.

Related Programs

[Lenhardt Lecture: Teresita Fernandez | March 21, 2 pm](#)

Artist Teresita Fernández will discuss her mid-career retrospective, *Elemental*.

[PhxArt AfterHours: SPACE and Elemental | May 14, 6 pm](#)

Guests of the Museum are invited to deepen their understanding and experience of Latin American art and artists.

About Phoenix Art Museum

Phoenix Art Museum has provided access to visual arts and educational programs in Arizona for nearly 60 years and is the largest art museum in the southwestern United States. Critically acclaimed national and international exhibitions are shown alongside the Museum's permanent collection of more than 19,000 works of American, Asian, European, Latin American, modern and contemporary art, and fashion design. The Museum also presents festivals, a comprehensive film program, live performances, and educational programs designed to enlighten, entertain, and stimulate visitors of all ages. Visitors also enjoy vibrant photography exhibitions through the Museum's landmark partnership with the Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona. To learn more about Phoenix Art Museum, visit phxart.org, or call 602.257.1880.

About Teresita Fernández

Teresita Fernández (b. 1968, Miami, Fla.) lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. She received a BFA from Florida International University, Miami, in 1990 and an MFA from Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, in 1992. Fernández is best known for her prominent public installations and experiential large-scale sculptures that evoke striking landscapes. Her work, often inspired by natural wonders, invites an individualized experience of the work and the space it occupies. She places particular importance on her choice of medium, playing with the limitations of materials and employing those such as gold, graphite, and other minerals that have complicated histories often tied to colonialism. All of her work is characterized by an interest in perception and the psychology of looking. She was the 2005 MacArthur Foundation Fellow and the recipient of the 2013 Aspen Award for Art, the 2003 Guggenheim Fellowship, and the 1999 Louis Comfort Tiffany Biennial Award. Appointed by President Obama, she was the first Latina to serve on the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, a 100-year-old federal panel that advises the president and Congress on national matters of design and aesthetics. Fernández's work is featured in the permanent collections of various international public and private collections, including Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo (N.Y.); The Museum of Modern Art (N.Y.); Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (Mass.); Israel Museum (Tel Aviv, Israel); Pérez Art Museum, Miami (Fla.); San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (Calif.); and Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (Minn.). For more information on the artist, please visit lehmannmaupin.com.

About Pérez Art Museum Miami

[Pérez Art Museum Miami \(PAMM\)](#) promotes artistic expression and the exchange of ideas, advancing public knowledge and appreciation of art, architecture, and design, and reflecting the diverse community of its pivotal geographic location at the crossroads of the Americas. The 35-year-old South Florida institution, formerly known as Miami Art Museum (MAM) and led by Director Franklin Sirmans, opened a new building, designed by world-renowned architects Herzog & de Meuron, on December 4, 2013 in Downtown Miami's Museum Park. The facility is a state-of-the-art model for sustainable museum design and progressive programming and features 200,000 square feet of indoor and outdoor program space with flexible galleries; shaded outdoor verandas; a waterfront restaurant and bar; a museum shop; and an education center with a library, media lab, and classroom spaces.

Images, left to right: TERESITA FERNÁNDEZ, *Fire*, 2005. Silk yarn, steel armature, epoxy. In collaboration with The Fabric Workshop and Museum, Philadelphia, PA. Collection of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA. Courtesy the artist and Lehmann Maupin, New York, Hong Kong and Seoul. / TERESITA FERNÁNDEZ, *Black Sun*, 2014. Polycarbonate tubing. Installation view, As Above So Below, MASS MoCA, North Adams, MA, 2014. Photo: David Dashiell Courtesy the artist and Lehmann Maupin, New York, Hong Kong and Seoul.

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