

ArtForum September 2009

Critics' Picks

By Gregg Perkins

Tampa

Teresita Fernández

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA CONTEMPORARY ART MUSEUM 4202 East Fowler Avenue, CAM101 August 17–October 10

This exhibition presents an exquisite selection of Teresita Fernández's recent sculptural works that reveals her perceptual experience of the natural world through a set of reductive materials. Featuring forms constructed of raw and milled graphite, precision-cut aluminum panels, glass, and onyx, Fernández deftly blends biomorphic patterning, fractal-like repetition, and complex systems of reflection to invoke phenomenological experience as framed by the act of looking. *Vertigo (sotto en su)*, 2007, a cantilevered, highly polished metal array comprising eleven stacked layers that resemble the overlapping and delicate boughs of a silvery tree, extends above visitors. The horizontal flow of the work offers the reflections of viewers in its leafy cutout patterns while creating a beautifully understated interplay between image and object, as well as a subtle cinematic experience through continually shifting imagery.

Epic, 2009, consists of an expansive graphite wall drawing and a sculptural installation that depict a mountain landscape mottled with trees or a band of wispy clouds. The scale of the work, particularly its width, engenders a virtual experience of being in a mountainous landscape or on the high plains. *Projection Screen (Black Onyx)*, 2007, also acutely locates viewers in both a cinematic and a straightforward relationship to the gallery space. Consisting of a symmetrical pattern of black onyx beads installed in a horizontal rectangular form, the piece reflects viewers engaging with the work and embodies a central aspect of the exhibition—an experience that feels at once transcendent and familiar.