

# Bennington Banner

## Teresita Fernandez travels light: 'As Above So Below' solo show opens at Mass MoCA

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Artist Teresita Fernandez and her team are installing her show, 'As Above So Below,' at Mass MoCA in North Adams. The show will open over Memorial Day Weekend, Friday, May 16, 2014. Stephanie Zollshan / Berkshire Eagle Staff / [photos.berkshireeagle.com](http://photos.berkshireeagle.com) (Stephanie Zollshan)



Artist Teresita Fernandez and her team install her show, 'As Above So Below,' at Mass MoCA. (Photos by Stephanie Zollshan / Berkshire Eagle/berkshireeagle.com)

NORTH ADAMS -- In Teresita Fernandez's "Black Sun" at Mass MoCA, natural light falls through tall mill windows and polycarb tubes, and as light shifts in the gallery through the day it will change the feel of her work.

This summer will bring a solo show of her work to the museum. A Guggenheim and MacArthur fellow, she has won support from the National Endowment for the Arts, and President Obama appointed her to serve on the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts.

In "As Above So Below," Fernandez looks up to the sky and under the earth in glass and light, graphite and gold.

Mass MoCA curator Denise Markonish has followed Fernandez's work for years. They met at a show in New York, and Markonish invited Fernandez to walk through Mass MoCA.



The show will open Memorial Day Weekend in North Adams. (Stephanie Zollshan / Berkshire Eagle photos)

"She can negotiate space in new and interesting ways," Markonish said. "It was clear early on she was inspired by this space and wanted to make something specific to the museum."

"Whenever I start a show, all the work is new," Fernandez said, walking through the museum again as her work went up around her.

She wanted to respond to the old brick mill buildings and the light from tall windows, and to the larger space around the buildings.

"When you walk into Mass MoCA it's so huge, so massive," she said, "my first response was about miniature, a kind of vastness in the very small and intimacy in the very big. The title comes from that response, an intimate immensity."

Thinking of miniatures, she researched bonsai, Markonish said, and she found that the word does not mean a tiny tree but the container holding the plant. Fernandez took up the idea of a container, the museum containing art, the mountains containing the museum -- and she moved, finally, toward what contains the mountains. She looks above, to the cosmos, and below, beneath the earth.

The sky and the earth are connected, she said.

"Graphite exists in us, in a meteor, underground," Markonish said. "Landscape is not just horizon."

Fernandez wants to capture what it feels like to stand at the edge of the sea and look out over the water, Markonish said. "Lunar Theater" will filter natural light from a wall of windows through glass beads, with a surface like sea or sand dunes.

"Black Sun" echoes the night sky, she said, and "Epic" feels like constellations.

More than trees and mountains, Fernandez hoped to tap events of landscape -- or skyscape -- a meteor shower, a lunar cycle. She wanted not the physical presence of the land but an ephemeral, cinematic experience, Markonish said.

"The piece becomes a barometer of changing light," Fernandez said.

Her work mirrors daily and monthly cycles, sun and moon, diurnal and nocturnal, lunar cycles influencing the tides and human bodies.

"The connection between us and those cycles amplifies us, makes us large," she said.

As the natural light changes, as the sun moves, her work will change constantly.

And she wants the people seeing her art to move, themselves.

She has set a series of graphite landscapes or cloudscape highly reflective panels, so that as visitors walk past their images will flicker in and out like the small movements of a film.

She often works with materials that reflect or distort. In smooth and mirrored surfaces, she sets her work glimmering with gold chrome and pyrite. She chooses her materials carefully, often synthetic ones and often connected to an urban working environment.

"So much of her work is about taking often humble materials and transforming them," Markonish said.

She asked what it means to sculpt a landscape. Landscape has a long tradition in painting and in clay, but how would a sculpture give the experience of a landscape?

"When you go out, you can't see everything," she said. "You look at one thing and then another, and you see a sequence of images, like stringing a set of photographs together."

Fernandez wants that two-dimensional cinematic flickering to build into a three-dimensional time and place. The objects and the materials do not matter, she said, as much as the feelings they call out.

"I'm not telling a story about landscape," she said, "but placing you in a place to experience these things."

She wants to set people down in shadowy cloudscape on golden skies, a golden island crag floating on a black table that reflects it like a calm sea, a wash of glass pebbles and a stream of plastic tubes shading from amber to black with light rippling across their backs.

"Viewers will unravel something by moving through it," she said. "Visual cues spill into one another. You are not just seeing one thing and moving on. It's immersive and meaningful because it affects your body. Your body is an extension of the artwork."