



# Magdalena Fernández

## The Sound of a Dot in the Sky

In 1998, Venezuelan artist Magdalena Fernández (b. 1964) began to use digital media to include moving images in her artwork. In a series entitled Dibujos móviles [Mobile Drawings], she produced several animated works that captured the deflagration of geometric figures. In 2003, Fernández created Pinturas móviles [Mobile Paintings], a series of elaborate video installations where she appropriated aspects from the creations of the masters of geometric abstraction—from Europe (Piet Mondrian), Latin America (Joaquín Torres García, Hélio Oiticica, and Lygia Clark), and the Venezuelan optical-kinetic movement (Jesús Rafael Soto and Alejandro Otero)—to form a pool of references and interpretations. These connections were relevant to contemporary artistic concerns because she occasionally introduced movement to emphasize the concepts she sought to express, and they were also oppositional because they involved radical quotations from the canon of abstract art.

In *2iPM009* (PLATES 12.1–.6) from the Pinturas móviles series, Fernández starts with a basic unit, specifically a geometric figure—similar to and referencing those used by Mondrian in his *Composition in Line* (1917) from the Pier and Ocean series (1914–15)—and transforms it into a virtual installation that relies on light, images, sound, and movement to recreate a rainy night sky (FIG. 1). She takes this unit and then multiplies it, not on a pictorial plane, but projected exponentially on the walls of the exhibition space. The installation originates from a dot on the plane that then

metamorphoses and moves in space with a degree of plasticity and flexibility that was probably never envisioned by Mondrian, the major exponent of Neo-Ptlasticism. Fernández’s choice of this particular unit echoes the Dutch artist’s attempts to evoke nature through the specific element of water. Yet, while Mondrian abstracted from nature, Fernández takes an abstract element and paradoxically endows it with representational qualities.

The title of the installation is a code based on a system of digits and letters created by Fernández to name her works, thereby eliminating any anecdotal reference that might somehow influence the viewer’s interpretation. The system identifies her efforts in terms of production strategy, number, and date. In the title *2iPM009*, for example, *2i* means installation number “2”; the initials *PM* identify the artist in question, Piet Mondrian; and *009* refers to the year in which the work was produced, 2009.

In her Pinturas móviles series, Fernández showcases her signature ability to take the essence of nature’s organic forms in everyday events, infusing them with a playful quality by linking geometric images with animal sounds and urban noises while deconstructing the monumental rhetoric of geometric abstraction. Her approach to critically breaking down the assessment and authority of history is subtle and in part achieved by installing her work in contemporary art venues; the result is that she succeeds in reconfiguring abstract art practices—past, present, and future—as a part of a dialectical continuum.