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Living Arts

SEEING THROUGH LAYERS

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Fran Siegel: Pacific Glow

At: Genovese/Sullivan Gallery, 23 Thayer St.,
through July 19. 617-426-9738.

Seeing through layers

Fran Siegel builds up her painting and drawings in layers, yet, in her show at Genovese/Sullivan Gallery, the works have no heft. The depth they have appears then vanishes in their lightness. It's all in the materials: She uses fine steel mesh, rice paper, and mirrors. Often, you see through all her layers only to glimpse your own reflection.

The "Stratification" drawings on rice paper reflect beach erosion; the artist recently moved from New York to Long Beach, Calif. Siegel layers the paper over piles of dried beans, then applies neon-toned spray paint. In "Stratification No. 05," hot pink and green paint puddle around the beans, which have since been removed, leaving a pebbled texture. Then she traces over that texture with pencil, making pearllike strands and clusters. These works embody the tension of contrasts: the strength of the saturated tones

vs. the delicacy of the material, the sharp focus of the graphite onto the surface vs. the ghostly ground.

On the opposite wall the installation "Glow" echoes the pearl shapes in "Stratification" but blows them up. These white circles hang suspended from the wall; their bright backs reflect behind them, colored auras shining among the circles' shadows.

In "Interference No. 18" Siegel uses spray paint to create a rosy sheen over steel mesh. She has punctured designs into the mesh and used stencils with her spray paint, creating a delightful interplay between figure and ground; sometimes the textured design is the ground for the painted design, sometimes vice versa. All of this hangs suspended over a mirror, like veils or masks. Siegel mines the ephemeral in her work — like cumulus shifting over the sun, it might go anywhere, or just dissolve.