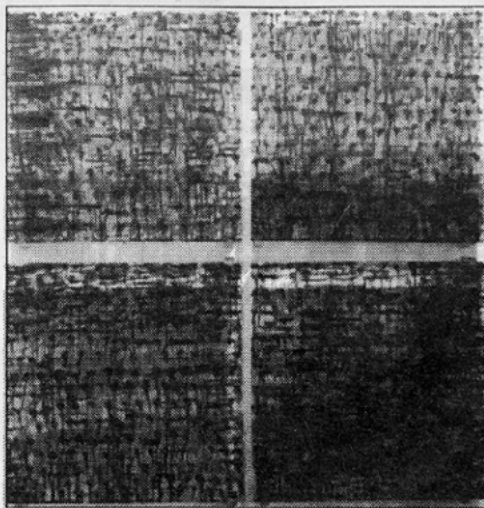


BY CHRISTOPHER  
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CONTRIBUTING WRITER

*We're s-h-o-p-p-i-n-g, we're  
shopping,  
we're buying and selling  
our history,  
we're shopping ...*  
—Pet Shop Boys

Shoppers beware. Newbury Street beware. The serious art for sale isn't available next to Armani or an outdoor eatery, or any of the aestheticians that glitter in the high-rent district downtown. Find your way to 535 Albany Street and climb the five flights of stairs to the Genovese Gallery. Be greeted by the serious fun of accomplished visual artists brought together by the scrupulous attention of Camellia and David Sullivan. You may well make a purchase, but you won't have been shopping.

The exhibit up through Tuesday at the Genovese features the work of three accomplished artists whose materials range from Plexiglas to Victorian prose, but theirs is not the work that greets you on entering the expansive loft whose weathered rafters seem designed to enhance the experience of wandering below them. First you must pass Pat Keck's hilarious and haunting "Shakey Man," a green and red totemic statue on a pedestal with a lever that allows you to make the ornaments of its clothing shimmy. The cymbals in its ears lightly clang.



TEXTURED MEDITATION: Fran Siegel's untitled composition on Plexiglas. (PHOTO COURTESY GENOVESE GALLERY)

Then you need to walk by the opaque glass triangle of Mary Boochever's "Eye" — Bulfinch in psychotherapy. Further along, pay attention to Alberto Venegas' painting of the forehead and eyes and nose of a man framed by whatever it is he's breathing from one of the dozen bottles that scatter the foreground.

While your greeting to the Genovese is raucous, the first of the three featured artists on display, Fran Siegel, is startling for her quietude, the textured meditation of her careful abstractions. Siegel works primarily in painting patterns, for all the nuances of color and form that frequently give her compositions the look of raw silk. She is interested in the power of

stasis, the way screens can hold our attention, and her work achieves a mesmerizing effect like the hum of a television screen when the broadcast day has ended.

But Siegel is no slave to pattern; in fact, she's as much about patterns as she is about their disruption. Dark shadows interfere; unevenness abounds. Nowhere is her studied manipulation more evident than in her compositions on Plexiglas (of which the accompanying photograph offers poor testimony). In another untitled work from 1995, a single square of Plexiglas is marked by competing designs, its underside a leopard-like movement of concentric dots, while its

overside is marked by transparent vertical stripes. The whole is transparent as well; we see past both layers at once, and it's impossible to tell above from below at any distance.

Elizabeth Rosenblum's mixed-media compositions on canvas offer another sort of contemplation entirely. By super-imposing photocopies of texts that read like excerpts of a Victorian dictionary of sexual terms onto backdrops of splotchy paint, Rosenblum's provocativeness is more pointed, more conscious and more political. The texts themselves, preserved in a newsprint sort of primitiveness, are what stand out. "Nympholepsy" appears atop one of Rosenblum's 1992 designs; below appears its definition: "A trance-like

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Rosenblum's work is most successful when the texts themselves surprise or when she plays the text against less abstract images that amplify the written words. Among her largest canvases is "Morphine Addiction," whose lengthy, historic paragraph arrests us for its matter-of-fact racism: "The exact number of morphinists in the world is not known ... But in view of the fact that the morphine syringe has been found in the possession of simple coolies ..." Further, the words look like they have been super-imposed on a canvas that has substituted for a spittoon, its juices sealed under ac-

# ★ art

## Three Painters

Works by Fran Siegel, Elizabeth  
Rosenblum and Kelly Spalding  
At the Genovese Gallery  
535 Albany St.  
Through Nov. 7

etate. Rosenblum's smallest and only representational piece is also her sole instance in the use of color: The silhouette of a female-seeming figure appears riding a raft on one leg while the other leg is raised in the air; she rides on a background of blue-green stripes that represent both sea and air. Abover her, read the term "Catgelpophobia," and below her its meaning: "Fear of being ridiculed." For all its modesty, it is a powerful, vertiginous work. You watch it wondering if she'll fall.

Kelly Spalding's geometric abstractions of complexly connected circles stand out in this exhibit for their premeditated, almost intellectual manner. While Rosenblum's canvases suggest spontaneous outrage, and Siegel's hint at the proximity of chaos to order, Spalding's work appears deliberate, self-conscious and meticulous. While her circles connect, they

See *Genovese*, page 19

## Siegel, Rosenblum and Spalding: Three painting women at the Genovese

Continued from page 16

do not overlap precisely: each is distinct, typically muted in color, each involved in arrangements so exact that they make one think of a cartographer's efforts. In fact, there's a nearly scientific quality to Spalding's oils that also suggests a kind of map-making, because her circles appear to move: They're like looking at a candle through the eyes of a fly. What at first glance seems merely an art studio

exercise gradually gives way to a dynamic incandescence.

The three painters on exhibit at the Genovese are united by the intelligence of their work, an intelligence at once complemented and highlighted by the inspiration to bring their work together. Consider a visit there not for the browsing it invites, but for the investment the artists and gallery directors have already made; they deserve to inspire more.

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