

# Art in America

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## Fran Siegel at Margaret Thatcher

Fran Siegel's fourth solo show at Thatcher, titled "Observations of Light and Matter," included a 50-foot fine-line graphite wall drawing

suggesting eroded surfaces and cracked earth, as well as a group of sculptures composed of brightly colored or reflective materials such as mirrors, foil disks and colored, transparent plastic film. Mobiles swinging from the ceiling and wall pieces with many elements included, Sarah Sze-like, humble plastic products. Siegel took over the room with intelligence and aplomb, creating a marvelously intricate environment.

The show in some ways functioned like a three-dimensional drawing mapping out an artificially constructed space. But it also included transformations that seemed keyed to atmospheric effects.



View of Fran Siegel's *Expanded Contour*, 2006, mixed mediums, 132 by 108 by 120 inches; at Margaret Thatcher.

Originally based in New York, Siegel has moved to southern California, close to the water, and it is clear that she is referencing some of the nature she is experiencing there. Near the entrance, for example, the mobile *Land* (2006), consisting of white plastic airplanes, looked very much like a cloud formation as it slowly rotated in the air and threw wavelike shadows onto the floor.

The show's main attraction was *Expanded Contour* (2006). Part of it consisted of drawings on two of the space's four walls, with the lines gathering in density toward the corner. The atmospheric drawings were a bit difficult to make out behind silvery, reflective wires decorated with foil circles that connected one wall to another near the gallery's entrance, and that were layered from the walls nearly to the center of the room. Although the wires, which were strung both high and low, created an ephemeral atmosphere, they also acted as a delicate barrier preventing viewers from coming close to the drawings or seeing them in detail.

Part of the goal of the show seems to have been to engage the audience as much as possible in complicated acts of perception. *The Eye of the Contour* (2006), for example, is an assemblage of many components: here it was placed in the corner opposite the wall drawings. From a small white shelf supported by a single strut and attached to the wall sprouted and streamed black-and-white, ribbonlike paper cutouts. The piece also included a green, lenslike, translucent plastic disk rimmed with a red band. It was placed at eye level, attached to the wall but projecting in front of the wooden shelf, as if it were meant to be looked through. Siegel reminds us that art needs time, a requirement in this case embodied in the visual challenge of these works, the result of both wide-ranging imagination and exquisite craft.

—Jonathan Goodman