



Fran Siegel

Untitled 1999

Oil on etched stainless steel mesh 30" x 30"

Courtesy of the artist

I recall being in Fran Siegel's studio at Yaddo on a late afternoon in June of 1995. I remember being wonderfully startled by her paintings on steel. She had painted dense flecked abstract surfaces of color, and the shimmer of metal coming through was like interior illumination. "My work is about light," Fran said to me that day.

In her new work, she takes light even further. The fine steel mesh surface, like industrial fabric, creates a surface that is organic and high tech in one undulant form. This painting is like a topography of questions at sea-level. Imprints: incisions, indentations, burn-marks, cross hatches (some of them made with a tool called a dremel); markings in white and steely blue-gray paint give the surface a sensuality and a steely minimalism at once.

It's a world that's porous and whose surface dissolves and re-forms. You must follow the light through the gaps of the imprints into the surface behind the painting, where shadows emerge and take you to frequencies of light that make another imprint, the way the eye relays light from its own planes to the surfaces of the retina. Light and shadow and porousness. When you stand back you might think you are seeing the earth's surface from an aerial view; when you move closer, the mystery of this layered map of incision and light pulls you through its own sieve into a fluidity and shimmer that is full of surprise and illumination.