



Fran Siegel: Companion

IX Bienal Internacional de Cuenca, 2007

A Cultural Presentation of the United States of America Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, US Department of State

This brochure was published to coincide with the exhibition **Fran Siegel: Companion**, a cooperative project organized by Kristina Newhouse and Angels Gate Cultural Center's International Program for the IX Bienal Internacional in Cuenca, Ecuador, April 11–June 6, 2007.

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Angels Gate Cultural Center is a place of creative discovery, exploration and enlightenment, providing the Southern California community and visitors from around the world with opportunities for enrichment and education. Angels Gate Cultural Center is supported in part by generous grants from the James Irvine Foundation, Ralph M. Parsons Foundation, California Arts Council, Los Angeles County Arts Commission, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Kristina Newhouse is curator of the Torrance Art Museum in Torrance, California.

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Preliminary drawings and photographs by Fran Siegel have been presented in this document in anticipation of art installations at Iglesia El Sagrario (Catedral Vieja), and the Plazoleta de la Cruz del Vado in Cuenca, Ecuador. A fully illustrated catalog, including an essay by Karen Dunbar, will be published during the presentation of **Fran Siegel: Companion** at the IX Bienal Internacional de Cuenca.

This exhibition is dedicated to Daniel Nord and Alexander Wainrib



Fran Siegel: Companion (Acompañante)

IX Bienal Internacional de Cuenca, 2007

Este folleto se publicó para coincidir con la exposición de **Fran Siegel: Companion (Acompañante)**, un proyecto cooperativo organizado por Kristina Newhouse y el Programa Internacional del Centro Cultural Angels Gate para la IX Bienal Internacional de Cuenca, Ecuador, del 11 de abril al 16 de junio del 2007.

La participación oficial de los Estados Unidos en la IX Bienal Internacional de Cuenca es posible gracias al apoyo de la Oficina de Asuntos Educativos y Culturales del Departamento de Estado de los Estados Unidos, en cooperación con la Embajada de los Estados Unidos en Quito y el Consulado General de los Estados Unidos en Guayaquil, Ecuador. El Centro Cultural Angels Gate de San Pedro, California proporcionó apoyo adicional.

El Centro Cultural Angels Gate es un centro para el descubrimiento creativo, la exploración y la ilustración, que proporciona a la comunidad del sur de California y a los visitantes de todo el mundo oportunidades para el enriquecimiento y la educación. El Centro Cultural Angels Gate es generosamente apoyado en parte por la Fundación Ralph M. Parsons, por la Fundación James Irvine, por el Consejo para las Artes de California, por la Comisión para las Artes.

Kristina Newhouse es curadora del Museo de Arte Torrance de California.

Los dibujos preliminares y las fotografías de Fran Siegel se presentan en este documento en anticipación a las instalaciones artísticas que se ubicarán en la Iglesia de El Sagrario (Catedral Vieja) y en la Plazoleta de la Cruz del Vado en Cuenca, Ecuador. Un catálogo totalmente ilustrado, que incluye un ensayo escrito por Karen Dunbar, será publicado durante la presentación de **Fran Siegel: Companion (Acompañante)** en la IX Bienal Internacional de Cuenca.

Since her move from New York to Southern California in 2002, Fran Siegel has become increasingly fascinated by the aesthetic symbiosis of space and light. Her latest artworks are fundamentally experiential and transitory, grounded in deep investigation of lived time. She seeks to draw attention to the spatial complexities of sunlight and shadow throughout a day's progression and to thereby protract time.

Siegel's considerable interest in light is matched by her curiosity about the multiplicities of place. Making use of optical interventions and an artistic process she has termed "drawing in space," she creates aesthetic awareness of those sites often overlooked as "no place." Further, she illuminates the tangible traces of chronology that are present in even the most modest of locales.

For the United States selection at the IX Bienal Internacional de Cuenca, Siegel has conceived an entirely new body of work. Inspired by a preliminary visit to this southern Ecuadorian city in January of 2007, Siegel's ideas were further developed in her San Pedro, California studio and then brought back to Cuenca to be integrated into two locations: one of the first structures built at the City's core, Iglesia El Sagrario (conventionally known as Catedral Vieja); and the Plazoleta de la Cruz del Vado, a small public park poised at the periphery of Old Cuenca on a high bluff above the Tomebamba River. The exhibition, **Companion**, is composed of three distinctly site-responsive engagements with these places.

Companions are close associates — figuratively, those who share the same bread. Siegel derives the exhibition's title, **Companion**, from the interactive dynamic between two ideas or objects when placed in close relation to one another. Under such dialectical scrutiny, things do pull together. However, they also come apart. Both semblance and difference are brought to the fore. So, too, arise notions of simultaneity, complementariness and duality.

At the Catedral Vieja complex, Siegel situates her artworks outside and to the east of the church. The first installation, *Redistribution*, is located in and above an enclosed, colonial-era patio; the second, *Between*, has been created in an elongated niche separating two family chapels. The passageways and interstices of Catedral Vieja are places where numerous identities and histories can be experienced.

Joining the parishioners who traversed its interior courtyard over the centuries, there are many other souls: the indigenous Cañari people of Guapondéleg, subjects of the Incas who later toiled in the church's construction; the powerful warrior-king, Huayna Cápac, who built a great palace, Pumapungo, in the Inca town called Tomebamba where he was born and died; his

ruthlessly Machiavellian sons, Atahualpa and Huascar, who fought over their father's legacy and ultimately destroyed Tomebamba; the Spaniard, Gil Ramírez Dávalos, who settled in the same mountain valley long after Tomebamba's fall and would christen the new city Santa Ana of the Four Rivers of Cuenca; and the team of 18th century French mathematicians and naturalists, led by Pierre Bouguer and Charles Marie de la Condamine, who traveled to Cuenca in a geodetic quest to prove Isaac Newton's theory about the shape of the globe and who would leave their mark on the church in the form of an epitaph to a slain colleague.

Siegel is drawn both to the handsome austerity and considerable mass of the materials in the Catedral Vieja courtyard: its irregularly-shaped wooden columns; the rectangular blocks of Cojitambo andesite from abandoned Inca ruins and rough local quarry-stone incorporated into chapel walls; the rounded Tomebamba river cobble that lines the recessed patio floor; and the hexagonal terracotta tiles that make up the courtyard walkways.

Architecture is, however, more than an amalgamation of materials. A built structure consorts daily with the natural elements of light, wind, water, and solar heat. For nearly 500 years, the open space of the courtyard provided a slim piece of nature within the confines of church walls. Sun, rain, and breezes warmed and cooled its interior surfaces. Recently, conservationists shielded the courtyard from the intensity of the natural elements through the introduction of glass skylights. For the brief period of the Biennale, Siegel invites these absent elements back inside.

In the architectural context of the courtyard, light becomes structure, bringing a defining presence to the built forms. For *Redistribution* and *Between*, Siegel coaxes light to play a more extensive role by introducing intermediary agents into the environment. Materials such as reflective or translucent polyester film (Mylar, Duralar), synthetic monofilament, wire, and mirrored glass dishes all function to re-direct, mobilize, and transform atmospheric light. Additionally, at the center of *Redistribution*, Siegel has improvised a shallow pool from the sunken bed of the colonial patio. In part, the pool symbolizes the four rivers—Tomebamba, Yanuncay, Tarqui, and Machángara—that help sustain the prosperity of the valley.

Moving outward, beyond the walls of the sequestered courtyard to the western perimeter of the old city, Siegel's third site engagement, *Lookout*, can be found. A subtle companion to the artworks at Catedral Vieja, it is situated within an open space, Plazoleta de la Cruz del Vado,

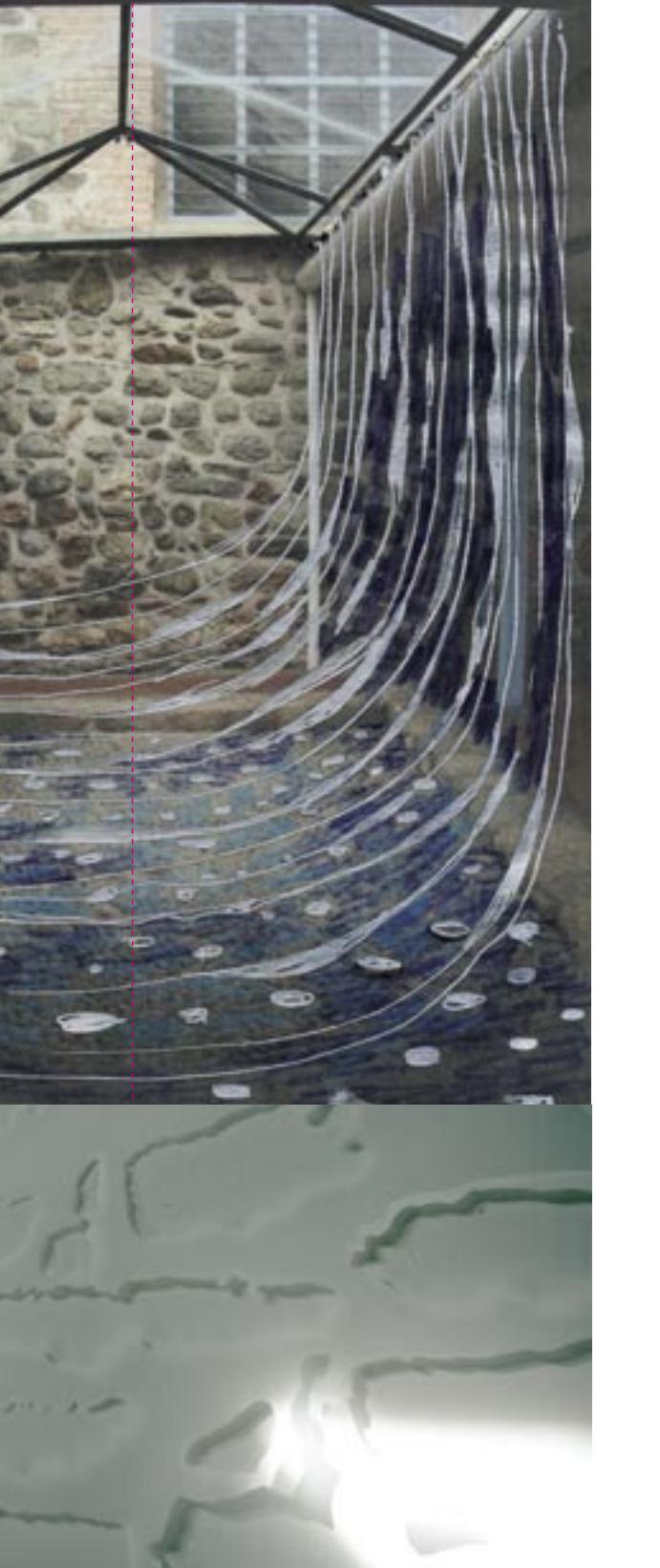
where the rigid urban grid mandated by Spanish King Charles V breaks in concession to the meandering course of the Tomebamba River. In the early days of the colonial city, the Plazoleta must have presented a secure vantage from which the frontier could be surveilled. In the relative calm of contemporary times, the view from this promontory has undoubtedly become less crucial to the safety of the townspeople. Nowadays it reveals little more than the diasporic ripples of urban growth that have spread across the valley floor and into the mountains.

Para representar a los Estados Unidos en la IX Bienal Internacional de Cuenca, Siegel concibió un cuerpo artístico enteramente nuevo. Inspirada por una visita preliminar a esa ciudad del sur del Ecuador en enero del 2007, Siegel desarrolló aún más sus ideas en su estudio de San Pedro, California y luego las trajo de regreso a Cuenca para que se integraran en dos lugares: uno en las primeras estructuras construidas en el centro de la ciudad, la Iglesia de El Sagrario (conocida convencionalmente como la Catedral Vieja), y la otra en la Plazoleta de la Cruz del Vado, un pequeño parque público asentado en la periferia de la Vieja Cuenca en un alto risco sobre el Río Tomebamba. La exposición, denominada **Companion** (Acompañante), está compuesta de tres distintos engranajes que responden a los diferentes lugares.

La arquitectura es, sin embargo, más que una amalgama de materiales. Una estructura edificada armoniza diariamente con los elementos naturales como luz, viento, agua y calor solar. El espacio abierto del atrio proporciona una pieza delgada de naturaleza dentro de los confines de las paredes de la iglesia. El sol, la lluvia y la brisa han calentado y enfriado sus superficies interiores por casi 500 años. Recientemente, los conservacionistas protegieron el atrio contra la intensidad de los elementos naturales a través de la introducción de claraboyas de vidrio. Para el breve período de la exposición de la Bienal, Siegel invita a los transeúntes a detenerse y a participar en un proceso de compromiso con el lugar y el vital paisaje que se encuentra más allá.

Los acompañantes son asociados cercanos y, de manera figurada, aquellos que comparten el mismo pan. Siegel extrae el título de la exposición, **Companion** (Acompañante), de la dinámica interacción que se produce entre dos ideas u objetos que se colocan en relación cercana uno del otro. Bajo tal escrutinio dialógico, las cosas tienden a juntarse, sin embargo, también pueden separarse. Tanto las similitudes como las diferencias son llevadas hacia el primer plano para dar paso a las nociones de simultaneidad, complementariedad y dualidad.

En el complejo de la Catedral Vieja, Siegel



en el espacio," crea una conciencia estética de aquellos lugares que a menudo pasamos por alto como si "no fueran lugares." Más aún, Fran ilumina los trazos tangibles de la cronología que está presente hasta en el más modesto de los locales.

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Los fenomenólogos han acuñado el término

"life-world" (vida-mundo) para describir los patrones y contextos que damos por sentados en la experiencia de cada día. Dentro del espacio

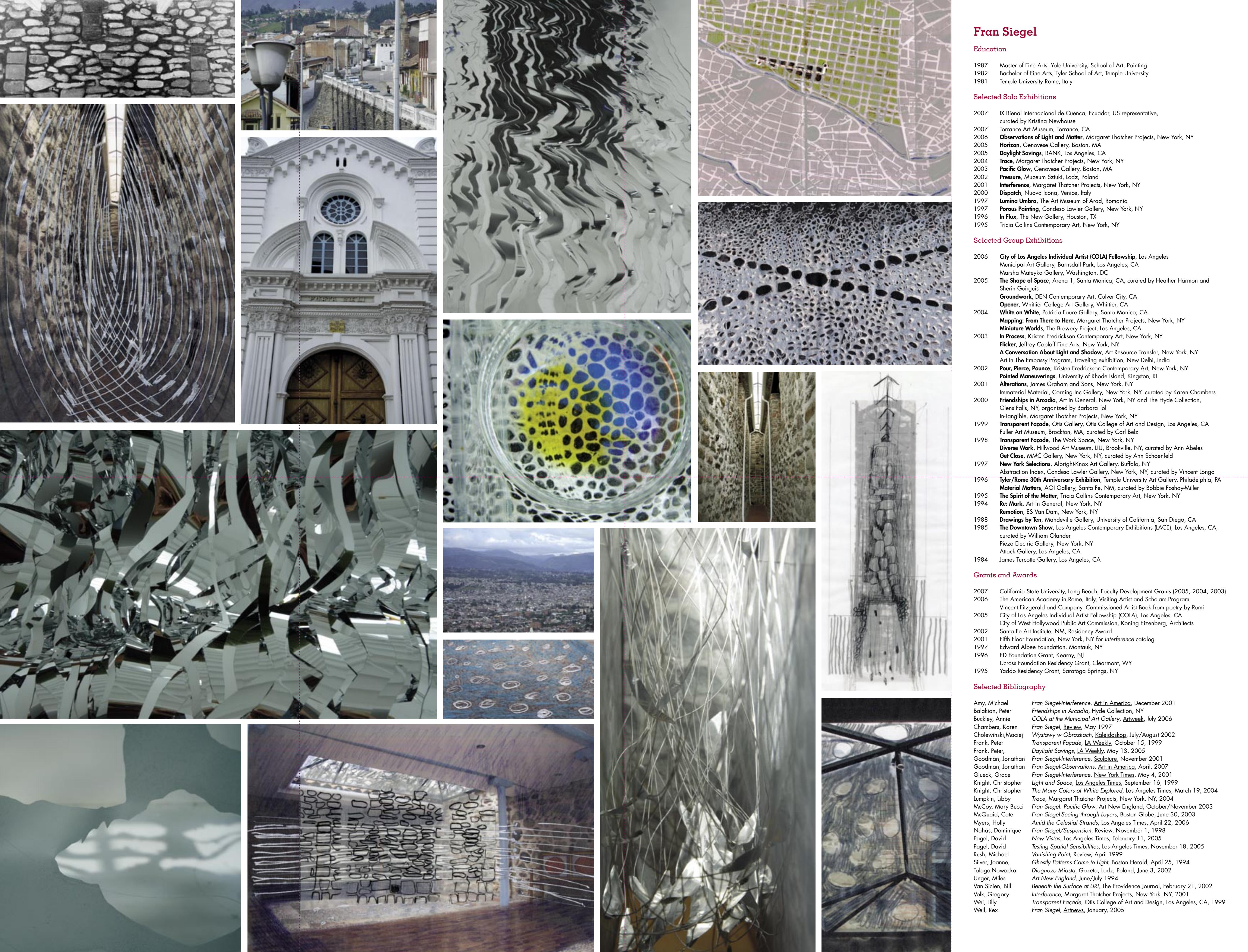
de unas pocas cuadras, desde la Catedral Vieja hasta la Plazoleta de la Cruz del Vado,

el observador es lanzado desde el santuario del atrio de una iglesia hacia un hormiguero de actividad urbana. En estas tres instalaciones que interactúan y responden a la arquitectura de la Vieja Cuenca, Fran Siegel propone a los observadores que se vuelvan conscientes de la vida y del mundo. Más aún, que consideren la importancia del espacio, de la temporalidad y de las fluctuantes identidades de "dentro" y "fuera" en la conjunción entre el propio yo y el medio ambiente.

En el contexto arquitectónico del atrio, la luz se convierte en estructura, trayendo una presencia definitiva a las formas construidas. En *Redistribution* (Redistribución) y *Between* (Entre), Siegel induce a la luz a jugar un papel más extenso, introduciendo agentes intermediarios en el ambiente. Materiales como una capa de poliéster translúcido o reflexivo (Mylar, Duralar), monofilamentos sintéticos, alambre y platos de vidrio espejado, todos se usan para redirigir, movilizar y transformar la luz atmosférica. Adicionalmente, en el centro de *Redistribution* (Redistribución), Siegel improvisó una piscina poco profunda en el desnivel del patio colonial. En parte, la piscina simboliza los cuatro ríos

— Tomebamba, Yanuncay, Tarqui y Machángara — que ayudan a sustentar la prosperidad del valle. Hacia afuera, más allá de los muros del encerrado atrio, hacia el perímetro occidental de la vieja ciudad, puede encontrarse la tercera instalación de Siegel, *Lookout* (Atalaya), un discreto acompañante de la obra artística en la

Kristina Newhouse, Curadora
Silvia D'Aniello Acosta, Traductora



Fran Siegel

Education

1987 Master of Fine Arts, Yale University, School of Art, Painting
1982 Bachelor of Fine Arts, Tyler School of Art, Temple University
1981 Temple University Rome, Italy

Selected Solo Exhibitions

2007 IX Bienal International de Cuenca, Ecuador, US representative, curated by Kristina Newhouse
2007 Torrance Art Museum, Torrance, CA
2006 Observations of Light and Matter, Margaret Thatcher Projects, New York, NY
2005 Horizon, Genovese Gallery, Boston, MA
2005 Daylight Savings, BANK, Los Angeles, CA
2004 Trace, Margaret Thatcher Projects, New York, NY
2003 Pacific Glow, Genovese Gallery, Boston, MA
2002 Pressure, Muzeum Sztuki, Lodz, Poland
2001 Interference, Margaret Thatcher Projects, New York, NY
2000 Dispatch, Nuova Icona, Venice, Italy
1997 Lumina Umbra, The Art Museum of Arad, Romania
1997 Porous Painting, Condeso Lawler Gallery, New York, NY
1996 In Flux, The New Gallery, Houston, TX
1995 Tricia Collins Contemporary Art, New York, NY

Selected Group Exhibitions

2006 City of Los Angeles Individual Artist (COLA) Fellowship, Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery, Barnsdall Park, Los Angeles, CA
2005 Marsha Mateyka Gallery, Washington, DC
The Shape of Space, Arena 1, Santa Monica, CA, curated by Heather Harmon and Sherin Guirguis
Groundwork, DEN Contemporary Art, Culver City, CA
Opener, Whittier College Art Gallery, Whittier, CA
White on White, Patricia Faure Gallery, Santa Monica, CA
Mapping: From There to Here, Margaret Thatcher Projects, New York, NY
2004 Miniature Worlds, The Brewery Project, Los Angeles, CA
In Process, Kristen Fredrickson Contemporary Art, New York, NY
Flicker, Jeffrey Coploff Fine Arts, New York, NY
A Conversation About Light and Shadow, Art Resource Transfer, New York, NY
Art In The Embassy Program, Traveling exhibition, New Delhi, India
2002 Pour, Pierce, Pounce, Kristen Fredrickson Contemporary Art, New York, NY
Pointed Maneuvers, University of Rhode Island, Kingston, RI
2001 Alterations, James Graham and Sons, New York, NY
Immaterial Material, Corning Inc Gallery, New York, NY, curated by Karen Chambers
Friendships in Arcadia, Art in General, New York, NY and The Hyde Collection, Glens Falls, NY, organized by Barbara Toll
In-Tangible, Margaret Thatcher Projects, New York, NY
1999 Transparent Façade, Otis Gallery, Otis College of Art and Design, Los Angeles, CA
Fuller Art Museum, Brockton, MA, curated by Carl Belz
Transparent Façade, The Work Space, New York, NY
Diverse Work, Hillwood Art Museum, LIU, Brookville, NY, curated by Ann Abeles
Get Close, MMC Gallery, New York, NY, curated by Ann Schoenfeld
1997 New York Selections, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY
Abstraction Index, Condeso Lawler Gallery, New York, NY, curated by Vincent Longo
1996 Tyler/Rome 30th Anniversary Exhibition, Temple University Art Gallery, Philadelphia, PA
Material Matters, AOI Gallery, Santa Fe, NM, curated by Bobbie Foshay-Miller
1995 The Spirit of the Matter, Tricia Collins Contemporary Art, New York, NY
1994 Re: Mark, Art in General, New York, NY
Remotion, ES Van Dam, New York, NY
1988 Drawings by Ten, Mandeville Gallery, University of California, San Diego, CA
1985 The Downtown Show, Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE), Los Angeles, CA, curated by William Olander
Piezo Electric Gallery, New York, NY
Attack Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
1984 James Turcotte Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

Grants and Awards

2007 California State University, Long Beach, Faculty Development Grants (2005, 2004, 2003)
2006 The American Academy in Rome, Italy, Visiting Artist and Scholars Program
2005 Vincent Fitzgerald and Company, Commissioned Artist Book from poetry by Rumi
City of Los Angeles Individual Artist Fellowship (COLA), Los Angeles, CA
City of West Hollywood Public Art Commission, Koning Eizenberg, Architects
2002 Santa Fe Art Institute, NM, Residency Award
2001 Fifth Floor Foundation, New York, NY for *Interference* catalog
1997 Edward Albee Foundation, Montauk, NY
1996 ED Foundation Grant, Kearny, NJ
Ucross Foundation Residency Grant, Clearmont, WY
1995 Yaddo Residency Grant, Saratoga Springs, NY

Selected Bibliography

Amy, Michael
Balakian, Peter
Buckley, Annie
Chambers, Karen
Cholewiński, Maciej
Frank, Peter
Frank, Peter,
Goodman, Jonathan
Goodman, Jonathan
Glueck, Grace
Knight, Christopher
Knight, Christopher
Lumpkin, Libby
McCoy, Mary Bucci
McQuaid, Cate
Myers, Holly
Nahas, Dominique
Pagel, David
Pagel, David
Rush, Michael
Silver, Joanne,
Talaga-Nowacka
Unger, Miles
Van Sieni, Bill
Volk, Gregory
Wei, Lilly
Weil, Rex

Fran Siegel-*Interference*, *Art in America*, December 2001
Friendships in Arcadia, Hyde Collection, NY
COLA at the Municipal Art Gallery, *Artweek*, July 2006
Fran Siegel, *Review*, May 1997
Wystawy w Obrazkach, *Kalejdoskop*, July/August 2002
Transparent Façade, *LA Weekly*, October 15, 1999
Daylight Savings, *LA Weekly*, May 13, 2005
Fran Siegel-*Interference*, *Sculpture*, November 2001
Fran Siegel-*Observations*, *Art in America*, April, 2007
Fran Siegel-*Interference*, *New York Times*, May 4, 2001
Light and Space, *Los Angeles Times*, March 19, 2004
Trace, Margaret Thatcher Projects, New York, NY, 2004
Fran Siegel: *Pacific Glow*, *Art New England*, October/November 2003
Fran Siegel-*Seeing through Layers*, *Boston Globe*, June 30, 2003
Amid the Celestial Strands, *Los Angeles Times*, April 22, 2006
Fran Siegel/Suspension, *Review*, November 1, 1998
New Vistas, *Los Angeles Times*, February 11, 2005
Testing Spatial Sensibilities, *Los Angeles Times*, November 18, 2005
Vanishing Point, *Review*, April 1999
Ghostly Patterns Come to Light, *Boston Herald*, April 25, 1994
Diagoniza Miasta, *Gazeta*, Lodz, Poland, June 3, 2002
Art New England, June/July 1994
Beneath the Surface of URI, *The Providence Journal*, February 21, 2002
Interference, Margaret Thatcher Projects, New York, NY, 2001
Transparent Façade, Otis College of Art and Design, Los Angeles, CA, 1999
Fran Siegel, *Artnews*, January, 2005