

ARTnews

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'Radial Gradient'

Gregory Lind

San Francisco

"Radial Gradient," a group show organized by Boston painter Sarah Walker, gave San Francisco its first look at seven New York artists currently enjoying critical attention. The most notable were Marsha Cottrell, Barbara Takenaga, and Daniel Zeller. The exhibition stopped short of proposing a new movement, but perhaps only because a kind of post-modern critical tentativeness rules now.

All of these artists make intricate patterns. Takenaga's paintings evoke the dizzying internal rhymes of fractals; Zeller's ink drawings recall the mazes of microfilaments in plants or algae; and Cottrell's prints summon up computer-driven explosions of typography.



Barbara Takenaga, *Cascade*, 2003, acrylic on panel, 24" x 20". Gregory Lind.

In the acrylic-on-wood-panel *Lariat* (2003), Takenaga crowded the deep blue ground of the small picture surface with fine pinwheels of white nested in a lacy network of gold chains. The work's rejection of vacancy evoked both the outsider artist's reluctance to leave any spot untouched and Descartes's famous diagram of the invisible "vortices" he believed pervaded all physical space.

Cottrell's works, each a unique electrostatic print on Mylar, resulted from her manipulation of punctuation marks in word-processing software. Her process produces dense abstract fields, both systematic and warped, garnished with small graphic irregularities. To what extent her

These works may owe something to Op art, with their eye-bending geometries and the vibrating effects of their manic patterns. But where Op art persistently referred to perceptual mechanisms, the works in "Radial Gradient" suggested that these artists were trying to devise nets, different from representation, to snag something of the external world's complexity. —Kenneth Baker