

James Siena drawings and paintings

San Francisco Art Institute Walter Galleries
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The San Francisco Art Institute is pleased to present *James Siena: drawings and paintings*, the first survey exhibition of the artist's production from the past twelve years. Born and raised in California, Siena studied painting at Cornell University and has lived in New York for more than twenty-five years. It is a particular pleasure to organize this exhibition of his work in the Bay Area, which includes twenty enamel paintings on aluminum, twenty-two works on paper and two new site-specific, commissioned wall drawings.

Siena is known for his intricate abstract paintings of repeating geometric forms derived through sets of specific pictorial strategies. He refers to these strategies as algorithms, sets of strict guidelines he devises to make his meticulously rendered drawings and enamel paintings. Working from his own lexicon of prescribed nesting devices, mazes, grids, latticework, spirals, ellipses, or key patterns, each algorithm elicits a complex composition to achieve various visual effects, often described as hypnotic or even mesmerizing. Created in standardized sizes, Siena's drawings and paintings are compelling not only for their exquisite formal qualities and technical virtuosity, but also because of their highly conceptual, systematic and task-orientated process. With their insistent, perhaps obsessive procedures and permutations, Siena's algorithmic works reference mathematics and artificial intelligence, linguistics and visual semiotics, as he astutely questions the very nature of abstraction and representation.

James Siena has been in residence at the San Francisco Art Institute teaching a two-week intensive course in drawing and working with staff and



students on his gallery installation. As we continue our efforts to integrate outstanding visiting artists into the Art Institute's academic and public programs, we have welcomed James' energetic presence, tenacity and commitment.

Our special thanks to James Siena, Gorney Bravin + Lee, Daniel Weinberg Gallery, and the generous collectors for their lending work to this much deserved, long overdue survey exhibition.

Karen Moss

Director of Exhibitions and Public Programs,
San Francisco Art Institute