

Frances Siegel

I usually shop the streets for throwaways and recyclables or when I'm in the country I gather a plethora of the raw materials there. Art supplies and inspiration are anywhere I happen to be. From California, I carefully packed and brought back the huge graceful Sycamore leaves that perched and posed like Martha Graham dancers on my mother's lawn one morning. I used delicate wire filaments to give them stability and coatings of PVA to strengthen their brittle bodies and made each a mask-like rice paper version of my own face. They still retain their leafness though, continue to gesture invitingly and perhaps will do so even more dramatically on the miniature stage/environment I'm designing for them... The subway is a particularly favorite source of mine. While I draw them, its riders have nurtured my hungry eyes for years. Last year I assembled and attached transfer prints of many of their presences onto a large piece of canvas. Though sharing territory and placed in relation to one another, they retained the unique "travel identity" of being profoundly in their own space. So I called the piece "meta(transit)tation", and sent it off to India where it traveled to sites in Bangalore and Delhi representing the United States in an international art exhibition. Sometimes though, I don't have to look outside myself at all for subject matter: an inner vision appears—the sight of a richly colored autumnal tree in the suggestive form of a woman; or a memory of a childhood dream of being deep within a forest and finding a cave-like space filled with hanging vines of jewels; or from the play of my hands with a pile of cardboard paper-cutter scraps which began to remind me of the endless, overlapping buildings and fascinatingly complex patterns, pockets and vistas of the city.