

AROUND THE GALLERIES

Delight is in the details

By DAVID PAGEL
Special to *The Times*

Freewheeling with the help of grids

Not so long ago, no artist in his right mind would make a painting based on a grid. The regularity, regimentation and rigor of such restrictively rational structures represented everything art wasn't — fluid, freewheeling and unpredictable. At Newspace Gallery, a wonderfully engaging three-artist exhibition shows how quickly times change.

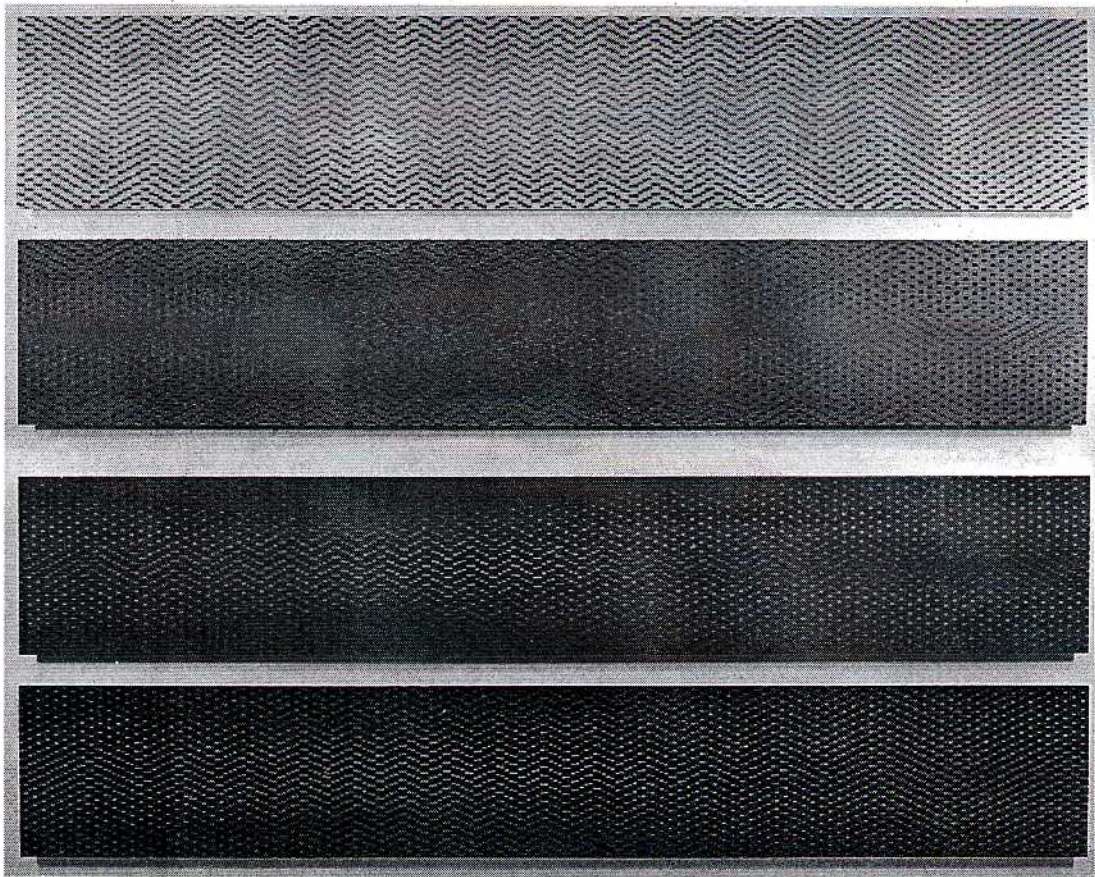
Structurally, the works by **Timothy Nolan**, **Gary Szymanski** and **Eric Zammitt** are similar. Each begins with the format found on sheets of graph paper — perfectly vertical and horizontal lines equidistant from one another and repeated ad infinitum.

And that's the end of the similarities.

Nolan uses silver and white oil sticks to draw oddly contoured shapes on semitranslucent panels of cast plastic.

The complex structures he maps are not proper patterns, because no component is repeated. The idiosyncratic results look both fractured and composed. If snowflakes had DNA, Nolan's works would be their visual equivalents.

Szymanski is the most sophisticated colorist. Using traditional materials, acrylic on canvas, and a conventional setup, neatly ruled lines and the little squares of space they outline, he transforms a seemingly tedious format into optically animated experiences of subtle but significant ambiguity. His palette of



TAKING SHAPE: Eric Zammitt's "Passage Home." The panels are made of small rectangles that have been cut from brightly colored Plexiglas and are held together by synthetic adhesives.

Newspace

soft pastels and tasteful home-decor accents makes for grids that simultaneously stimulate and soothe.

Zammitt fashions space-age mosaics. Each of his 8-foot-long panels is made of thousands of tiny rectangles of brightly colored Plexiglas that have been diamond cut and cemented together with synthetic adhesives. Each hard-edged abstraction is so meticulously crafted that you have to look closely to see the individual rectangles. The translucency of the Plexiglas complicates matters, as does Zammitt's use of dark and light tints, which creates the impression that his works' slick surfaces open onto deep space. Impressionism meets Finish Fetish in these impressively painterly surrogates.

In the three artists' works, the orderliness of grids gives way to playful indeterminacy. Precision and ambiguity accentuate one another's effect.

Newspace Gallery, 5241 Melrose Ave., (323) 469-9353, through July 31. Closed Sundays and Mondays.