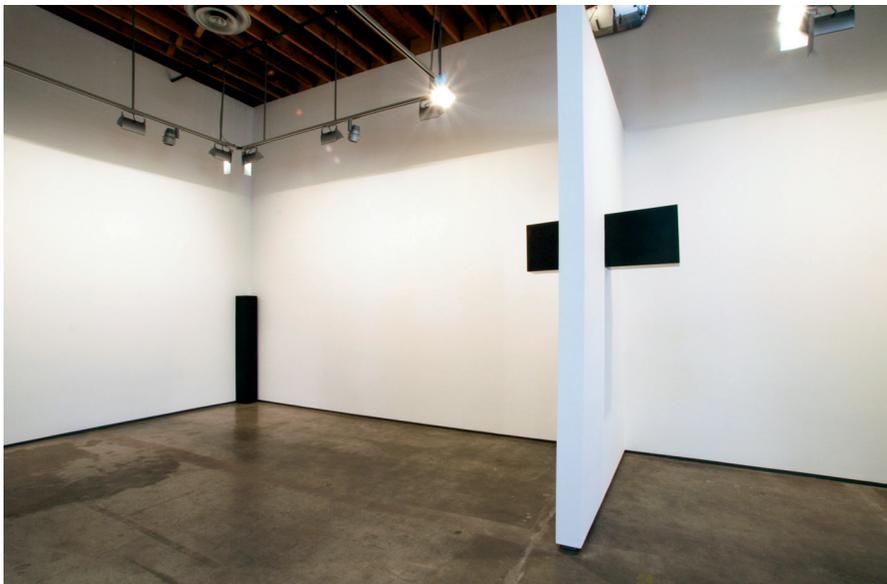


# Art in America

INTERNATIONAL REVIEW

EXHIBITION REVIEWS

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View of Susan York's exhibition, showing *Corner Column*, 2008, and *Untitled (Bisecting Wedge)*, 2010, both graphite; at James Kelly Contemporary.

## SUSAN YORK

JAMES KELLY CONTEMPORARY

Santa Fe-based artist Susan York represents a new generation of minimalist sculptors. While her formal vocabulary of columns, beams and slabs is heavily indebted to such artists as Donald Judd, Robert Morris, Carl Andre, Dan Flavin, John McCracken, Ronald Bladen and Richard Serra, her choice of graphite as a material (cast solid, kiln-fired, shaped into irregular geometric forms with saws and files, then hand-polished) contributes a sense of warmth, mutability and body missing from the industrially fabricated work of the mid-'60s. For years, York has created contemplative spaces based on three-dimensional graphite forms installed in small rooms. This exhibition consisted of six discrete graphite sculptures from 2008 and '10, as well as related drawings, also in graphite.

In York's work, the smooth carbon-black surfaces both absorb and reflect light, softening the hard edges of the cast forms. The condensed and polished material creates a sense of weight and compressed energy (like that found in small Joel Shapiro cast bronzes, but with-

out any narrative reference). Surrounding walls, floors and corners, subtly reflected, draw attention to the surfaces at the same time as they dematerialize solid form. That quality of being there and not being there may be a visual articulation of York's long-standing practice of Zen Buddhism.

Lucy Lippard has written that York's work "looks more like minimalism than it is minimalism." The geometric volumes are slightly skewed so that edges are not all parallel and angles are not necessarily at 45 degrees: a subtle shifting that activates the sculptures, creating a quiet tension more felt than seen.

York determines the placement of her sculpted forms through a site-sensitive response to a particular exhibition space, but her engagement with architecture is visual rather than functional. For example, despite their apparent weight, two identical 6-foot-tall "columns" of solid graphite from 2008, placed in corners of the gallery, appeared to float several inches above the floor, suggesting structural support while providing none.

Sculptures from 2010 feel more active than her earlier, more contemplative work.

*Untitled (Bisecting Wedge)* dramatically pierces a custom-built, freestanding wall. Fixed at an angle in the wall, and above most viewers' heads, the approximately 500-pound, solid graphite wedge, slightly narrower and lower at one end, does not feel precarious, but rather thoughtfully placed and carefully balanced. Engaging with but defying gravity, the wedge projects unequally from both sides of the wall—less bisecting the wall than emphasizing its two opposite sides, and therefore two points of view. Ultimately the wedge both traverses and unifies the resulting spaces on either side. In this way, York's reductive forms suggest agency and meaning beyond a minimalist redux.

—Harmony Hammond