

# Art in America

February 2004



**Susan York: *Color of Wind*, 2003**  
color-infused gray porcelain and steel  
6 3/4 by 18 1/2 x 4 3/4 inches;

## Susan York at Klaudia Marr

Susan York is a New Mexico-based artist who has been showing small sculptural pieces as well as spare large-scale installations in the Minimalist vein for over 20 years. Her striking body of work and systematic methods—influenced by the Constructivist and De Stijl movements as well as ancient Greek premises of geometry—adroitly provoke tensions between space and form.

This recent show, aptly titled “Center of Gravity,” featured a series of wall pieces (all from 2003) ranging from 2 1/2 to 7 inches high and 4 to 18 1/2 inches wide, constructed of multiple sheets of paper-thin porcelain, most in a restrained palette of subtly varied whites and light yellows. In some works, the elements number in the hundreds, each individually formed and fired before being united in a geometric configuration. Through a meticulous process, the exquisite shards are either piled horizontally or aligned vertically to stand on

edge. Some stacks are displayed on discreet metal shelving while others are secured by wooden supports inspired by Gerrit Rietveld’s chairs. As they yield three-dimensional versions (truncated wedges, spherical and cubic volumes) from initially two dimensional formats (circles, polygons, etc.), these arrangements are curiously reminiscent of Eva Hesse’s small molded latex pieces from the 60’s.

The stark beauty of the unpolished chalky surfaces—barely distinguishable against the gallery’s white walls—combines with the thinness of the elements to offer an illusion of weightlessness. Ironically, York subverts this sublimity with the powerful suggestion of impending collapse and subsequent shattering. Additionally perturbing in relation to the work’s serially repetitive aspect is the trace of the artist’s hand, revealed in the small, varied surface rippling, frayed edges and slight warping unique to each sheet.

In *The Color of Wind*, for instance, the ragged edges of rectangular cream-colored shards slant precariously on an inconspicuous 16-inch-long steel shelf hung on a slight incline. Its potentially disastrous trajectory and its simultaneous sense of calm are entirely up to individual perceptions.

The show included several similar stacked compositions in vibrant blues that delivered quite a different impression. In contrast to its paler counterparts, for instance the intense color saturations of *The Color of Cobalt, No. 1*—a trapezoidal form anchored with beechwood brackets—accentuated its objectness and exacting craftsmanship, making this and other color-infused works easier to grasp but not as intriguing.

Ultimately, through witty and poetic compromises, York’s works negotiate a delicate balance between the conceptual and the material, between control and impulse, between order and chaos.

—Sarah S. King