

# sculpture

## NEW YORK

### Susan York

#### Del Deo & Barzune and The Drawing Center

In *Foundation*, a site-specific installation at The Drawing Center, Susan York focused on the granite foundation stones that run along a narrow corridor in the lower level of the building. Drawn to the age and shape of these stones, she created echoes in the form of cast and carved graphite sculptures, each one hung above the real stone so that originals and cast counterparts moved down the corridor like irregular railroad ties. Each graphite shape became progressively less detailed; the last one—hung high on the wall like an exit sign, or a stiffened flag—took the form of a signature York sculpture—a subtle amalgam of fine angles and glowing black surfaces.

A series of large abstract drawings created from fine black strokes hung on the wall opposite the sculptures, offering additional examples of York's work with graphite. Drawings of the sculptures themselves, these works resemble mesas rising out of the desert. The edges of the shapes are blurred, as though by distance, and at times incised by the edges of the sculptures. In this way, the drawings flicker between something seen in the distance and something very close at hand.

York's work is about sensual experience and physical perception. She



is attuned to the subtle changes that our bodies make in response to what we see and feel in the environment. At Del Deo & Barzune, she used the entire galley, placing each sculpture in precise relation to the geometry of the room and to each other. Standing anywhere in the space revealed sight lines that stitched the works together along invisible trajectories.

The individual sculptures also revealed sight lines of their own, with subtle angles and shifts in plane that produced physical effects in the viewer. Surfaces could appear to be both solid and liquid, cubed and depthless, depending on where the viewer stood relative to the piece. The urge to touch, to both locate a work in space and to feel its silky surface, was overwhelming. The fingerprints left on the graphite by viewers' investigations were proof of the nearly magnetic draw.

Standing in her studio one day, York realized that she was surrounded by black, white, and gray, and she wondered what it would feel like to see only those colors. With her usual thoroughness, she investigated and discovered that some people suffer from achromatopsia, or total color blindness. With the help of one such person, she created a series of lithographs. The surface of each print is the exact shade of gray that he saw when York showed him a shade of green, blue, yellow, or red; the back reveals its specific color match. The prints are mounted so that the paper stands above the mat; the colored background reflects against the white backboard, producing a halo of color. Once more York makes us aware of our surroundings in a new way. How would we feel if we could not see the vibrancy of the world in color?

—Jan Riley



Above: Susan York, *Foundation*, 2017-2018  
2 views of installation at The Drawing Center.  
Photo: Maris Hutchinson/EPW Studio

Opposite: Susan York, *New and Recent Work*, 2018  
installation view at Del Deo & Barzune  
Photo: courtesy of Del Deo & Barzune