

LEAVING IN, ALSO LEAVING OUT

The Art Scene: Leon Graham

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Susan Ferrari Rowley's sculpture is about opposites and paradoxes: yielding and unyielding materials, volume and its absence, light and shadow. Pieces seem almost weightless, fragile; yet they occupy large spaces. They are difficult at first, peculiar, almost too simple. But quickly you discover their complexity: What is absent is as important as what is there in Rowley's glowing pieces.

Rowley uses quite different materials and techniques to make Continued from her art. She welds frames just sufficient for each piece from brushed aluminum. Then she hand sews white polyfiber and stretches it taut on the prepared frames. Results are always graceful and shapes either closed or open, with interiors as important as exteriors. Pieces can be for a room or so large they can only be placed outdoors.

In her first show at The White Gallery, Rowley and gallery co-owner Tino Galluzzo have chosen only five pieces, but they represent major themes and aspects in her work. Two small residential pieces sit atop their own bases. Light from within each base rises through serpentine cutouts to light the fabric of the sculptures. "Beguiling" is a single sail-shape that resembles one of the peaks of the famous Sydney Opera House. It seems to change volume and color as light changes from natural to artificial. "Compounded," also a single piece of cloth, undulates like a ribbon and somehow resembles one of Christo's gates in Central Park.

"How Deep," which would work in larger indoor spaces, is made like a tall, open book, so that inside volume is as important as outside surface. "Precarious" is made of two fabric objects that resemble halves of a long cylinder. They rest near the bottom of a metal frame that bisects the halves and rises on a diagonal to meet the wall. It calls attention to its own geometry, the juxtaposition of materials and the possibility that it might collapse.

Also at the White, Rowley is introducing her new line of sculptural bracelets. These are trapezoids made of aluminum and stainless steel with holes in the center for medium and large women's hands. They are quite heavy, and the holes are really small, but they are singular enough that the strangely dressed, avant garde fashionistas Bill Cunningham photographs for The New York Times might wear them. Both the bracelets and sculptures will be part of a larger show opening in December at the famous OK Harris Gallery in New York City.