

CLIFTON BENEVENTO

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ART QA

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REVIEWS

ARTIST: ZAROUHIE ABDALIAN

For an installation artist, every exhibition is essentially a new challenge to immerse the viewer in an experience that transforms their perception of the space in which they find themselves. Particularly since the 1970s (but certainly long before), that challenge has been addressed over the years in any number of ways, with or without conceptual intent and with any variety of mediums. A Betrayal, Zarouhie Abdalian's current exhibit at Clifton Benevento in SoHo, improvises in the gallery space with five sculptural pieces and a scrim over a window, all of which are clever in their own right, and which may or may not be conceptually related to each other.

I say "clever" and "may or may not be related" because Abdalian leaves it up to the viewer to dig a little deeper into her work. I am no great fan of so-called "concept art" - or any art form, for that matter - when it requires being hit over the head with a dissertation in order for the viewer to understand it, much less appreciate it. Abdalian's work may be conceptual, but her approach seems independent of the need to bang her point across. Taken at face value, the six pieces might pass as some sort of a pun. Yet there is a sense of more subtle commentary, and this is where her cleverness is evident. Rather than imposing any particular viewpoint, Abdalian offers only a few clues for the viewer to mull over - namely, the pieces and placement, the materials and their origin, and their titles. Such equivocation might be disparaged within certain contexts, but Abdalian's domain is that of the explorative observer. Her work places the viewer in a space that encourages one to look with her, and perhaps to ask questions of one's own, as she comments on social structures and relationship to environment.



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