

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

AROUND THE GALLERIES

By Leah Ollman, Special to The Times

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Horn's inquiry into fluidity

Roni Horn is an artist of substance whose work nevertheless can lapse into the slight and gratuitous. She can tease out profundity with the sparest of means, but she can also simply tease and not deliver much at all.

In her show at Gagosian, Horn offers three types of work: photographs, cast glass sculpture and sculptural word pieces. What unites them is the artist's persistent inquiry into the condition of fluidity as an inevitability and also a kind of wondrous gift. The cast glass sculptures visualize well their material's seemingly dual state as liquid and solid. Each looks like a large cylindrical tub, frosted on the exterior and polished smooth on top. The clear glass version is transparent as water, and the other, black and opaque as obsidian. They make an elegant pair, a rhyme with both heft and fragility.

The fluidity of personal identity has been explored exhaustively by photographers of the past generation or two, and Horn does the theme no favors in her extended portrait of actress Isabelle Huppert. The images, tight close-ups with a narrow range of expression, get tedious rapidly. The subject's celebrity is their only redeeming feature, and it's not nearly enough.

The most provocative works in the show give physical fixity to fragments of poetry by Emily Dickinson. The lines are written out in white plastic block letters embedded in square aluminum planks, 2 inches per side and up to 12 feet tall. They lean against the

wall like delicate buttresses. The impersonality of their manufacture jars against the tone of the poet's singular mind and its intimate probing. "Is it oblivion or absorption when things pass from our minds?" one piece reads. In this case, absorption.

*Gagosian Gallery, 456 N. Camden Drive, Beverly Hills, (310) 271-9400 ,
through Aug. 29. Closed Saturdays and Sundays (summer hours). www.gagosian.com*