

## CRITICS' PICKS

### Emilie Halpern

ANNA HELWING GALLERY

2766 S. La Cienega Blvd.

May 14–June 26, 2004



Stars to Rain, Everything is the Same, 2004  
Mylar, pins, Styrofoam; Dimensions variable

A tattered, yellowing bedsheet suspended from the ceiling and grazing the floor is covered with crystals of potassium nitrate, the combustible ingredient in fireworks. The physical and metaphoric centerpiece of Emilie Halpern's first solo exhibition, *Indoor Firework*, 2004, will continue to crystallize over time, quietly intimating potential incandescence and the slow burn of memory. Halpern renders frankly sentimental themes like distance and longing with evolving complexity. The two-part sculpture *Stars to Rain, Everything Is the Same*, 2004, for example, seduces from afar with its shiny, faceted surface; but up close, the reflective Mylar material eludes visual apprehension: Now you see it, now you don't. *Darkness*, 2004, a deep-hued monochrome panel of liquid crystal—the mysterious stuff of mood rings—mutates from one unnamable color to another with shifts in daylight and temperature. In other works, Halpern teases special effects out of simpler materials: *With Tunnel*, 2004, a thin, subtly tapering paper cone pricked with thousands of pinholes, doubles as a telescope trained on distant galaxies; and in *Alaska*, 2001, a soft-focus C-print transforms ice cubes in a bathtub into an ethereal landscape. Exploring the time-lapse possibilities of seemingly static media, Halpern rewards the patient viewer with efficient magic.

—Michael Ned Holte