

# Los Angeles Times

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## ART REVIEW

### Emilie Halpern at Pepin Moore



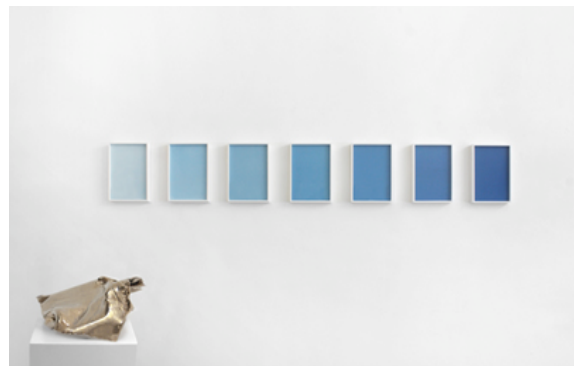
Emilie Halpern's new exhibition of sculpture and photography at Pepin Moore is both poetic and diffuse, tracing somewhat mystical connections between astronomy, geography and ancient Egyptian mythology. Halpern has a knack for quiet, elegant pieces that gesture toward larger existential questions, but in this case she seems to be stretching a bit for big ideas that don't quite come together.

The show is divided into two rooms, one representing the "East" of ancient Egypt, thought to be the birthplace of the sun, and one symbolizing the "West," or the origin of darkness. This Manichaeian scheme is only gleaned from the press release; although the two rooms certainly feel different, the only explicit reference to Egypt is a pair of identical photographs of the top of a pyramid that align to form an inky black diamond — the afterlife mirrored and turned on its head.

This arrangement appears in the "West" or "dark" room, which is far more interesting than its partner. Its works, which all have to do with the moon, stars, stones and meteorites, explore human attempts to impose order on natural phenomena. A scale model of the eponymous constellation, "Big Dipper" is made of rocks suspended from the ceiling at heights corresponding to each star's distance from Earth. The rocks don't look like much until one gazes into the mirror on the floor beneath them, where the familiar constellation suddenly materializes. Reflecting an earthly version of our own sky back to us, it's a lovely distillation of the process of finding meaning in randomness.

It's too bad the show doesn't pursue this direction further. The works in the "East" room — including a series of photographs of blue sky arranged from light to dark, shards of gold-coated ceramic, and a framed piece of magician's flash paper (a kind of potential, artificial sun, I suppose) — feel a bit slight by comparison. They may be intended as a foil to the richer examination next door; the dark side, after all, is always more seductive.

--Sharon Mizota



*Images: "Pyramid" (top) and installation view of "Sunrise" and "Aurum I".*