

ALTMAN SIEGEL

GALLERY S/F

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# ARTFORUM

## CRITICS' PICKS

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### San Francisco

## “A Wild Night and a New Road”

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49 Geary Street, 4th Floor

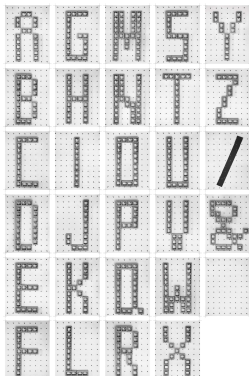
January 23–February 21

Opening an ambitiously programmed gallery in this economic climate, in San Francisco nonetheless, is an act of hope, dedication, and trepidation. But the title of Altman Siegel's inaugural exhibition quotes Emily Dickinson's musing on death, contextualizing the work of the seven artists in the show through the excitement and fears of major cultural shift. The mostly monochromatic exhibition is a sober celebratory debut. Leaning against the wall, Matt Keegan's *Meryl Streep*, 2008, repeatedly renders the actress's name in gold leaf, like a willfully optimistic awards-season mantra. Its parallel horizontal lines are echoed in Wade Guyton's jagged 2008 ink-jet-on-linen painting, itself evocative of a machine-made or digital Minimalism or a violent update of a meditative Agnes Martin. Hovering above the room, Kelley Walker's *Circle in Circle*, 2006, is a cast-chocolate disco ball, a chalky brown sphere that absorbs light rather than reflects nightlife glamour. It's an odd, schizophrenic object, one that might melt if the room gets too hot.

Luckily, the tone here is coolly cerebral. On a wall beneath it, Christopher Williams's typically pristine and flatly named photograph *Cutaway model Switar 25mm fl.4 AR. Glass, wood and brass. Douglas M. Parker Studio, Glendale, California, November 17, 2007–November 30, 2007*, 2008, serves as a deconstructive paparazzi eye. In the group, Williams is the elder figure, and his overseer influence is felt by the image of the lens peering out at us.

Christopher Wool serves a similar function in the slightly less compelling second room, with a large silk screen of an abstract drawing that he has enlarged to the point of grainy distortion. Shannon Ebner's descriptively titled *Leaning Tree*, 2008, echoes this off-kilter condition so that even nature seems defiantly skewed. With an untitled 2008 mixed-media collage of ripped and reconfigured elements of his own work, Josh Smith inserts the only splashes of color into the proceedings. The work fills in the chromatic blank in this curatorial picture and posits bracing, thoughtful visions down the road.

— Glen Helfand



Shannon Ebner, *CIOU*, 2008, color photograph, 50 x 33 1/2".

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