

ARTFORUM

CRITICS' PICKS

A movement seems to have recently emerged of artists, including Walead Beshty, Amy Granat, Michael Rashkow, Jennifer West, and Anthony Pearson, who are interested in expanding the formal and material dimensions of film and photography. Pearson's recent investigations into the modes and processes of photography have led to his making elegant pictures that are more cleanly formal and less intentionally rough-hewn than those of his peers. His work carries with it the history of photographic form, from its alchemical origins to early modernist experiments to the digital present. Tinkering with the parameters not only of photography but also of sculpture, Pearson makes bronze objects that he places on wooden plinths alongside his photographs—putting together, as he does in this exhibition, what he calls arrangements. The sculptures and photographs mirror each other in both their compositions (which are at once crumpled and well ordered, aleatory and heavily worked) and their creation processes, which are founded on metal. The darkly stained pedestals make the sculptures feel like ancient treasures of a bygone civilization that would be more at home at the Getty or the Metropolitan than at a commercial contemporary art gallery.

The photographs, three types of which are on view, jump us ahead a few millennia. One set comprises solarized shots of foil and paper that Pearson has layered, folded, manipulated, and mutilated on concrete. Another set sees the artist playing with multicolored lights reflecting off a wall. Despite their documentary nature, the images from both series teeter on the edge between representation and abstraction. For the third set, Pearson digitally isolates lens flares so that concentric circles of light fade, like diminishing halos, into smooth black fields. Seen together, Pearson's recent works seem like a backward glance from a future civilization, one that takes stock of a past that, for us, has yet to occur.



Untitled (Slip Cast Slab Arrangement), 2007
uncoated hi-polished bronze sculpture, base, pedestal, framed solarized silver gelatin photograph, sculpture, base, pedestal: 53.75 x 12 x 14 inches (136.5 x 30.5 x 35.6 cm), framed photograph: 16.5 x 14 inches (41.9 x 35.6 cm)