

## *Underworlds: Jan Müller at Lori Bookstein and Elizabeth McAlpine at Laurel Gitlen*

By Will Heinrich 5/15 5:21pm



Installation view of Elizabeth McAlpine, "The Map of Exactitude," at Laurel Gitlen

Courtesy Laurel Gitlen

**There's the psychological** impossibility of plumbing our own depths, and then there's the mathematical version, in which the sheer profusion of information available in the world threatens to overwhelm any but the steadiest and most decisive mind. For "The Map of Exactitude," her new show at Laurel Gitlen, Elizabeth McAlpine used black tape to mark off rectangular segments of wall, corners and moldings in another artist's clean, white studio. The intended rectangles mutate against the room's geography—on a projecting corner, for example, a rectangle becomes a peaked keyhole shape—and then, in six handsome photos, are flattened out again. Ms. McAlpine also cast curved, hollow, plaster reproductions of these segments of shape, built them into wooden cases, pierced every acne-like irregularity of the plaster and lined the inside of each wooden case with a single sheet of appropriately shaped and folded photo paper. The resulting pinhole photographs—a single state to match each sculpture, although not all the photos and sculptures produced are in the show—are unfolded, flattened out and framed in thick black frames, while the sculptures themselves are displayed on steel legs that put them at exactly the heights they happened to be sitting at when they were used to photograph the studio.

What makes all this work is the severity of Ms. McAlpine's restraint. Beginning with a concept that could easily veer into the preciously self-referential, she prunes it back ruthlessly, so that far from purporting to say anything about the larger world, it's barely allowed even to investigate itself: the handsome form dominates the discreet content so completely that it achieves a kind of artistic version of that Buddhist aspiration, awareness without object.