

Recommended Critics' picks (Wed. June 24, 2009)
Katrín Sigurdardóttir, Eleven Rivington, through July 3



Sigurdardóttir, Untitled, Photograph: Courtesy of Eleven Rivington, New York

Eleven Rivington seems ideally suited for Katrín Sigurdardóttir's sculptural installation: Her bulky MDF structure takes on Tony Smith-like proportions in the small gallery. With all four of its sides joined to the ceiling, the piece hunkers in the space at an awkward angle, so that one of its corners greets visitors at the door. As you move around this bland but well-constructed shell, it's easy to lose hope that any interesting feature will break its monumental monotony, which makes the interior view—that suddenly appears through a narrow window cut into the box's far corner—all the more enticing.

Inside, lighting creates a luminous fade from dusky rose to periwinkle, landing us somewhere between the backlit skies of Hudson River School splendor and the aurora borealis. The allure of this peek at inner light is augmented by the fact that the opening is covered in one-way glass, while an interior mirror, rounded at the top like the portal itself, is mounted directly opposite. Instead of seeing yourself as you might expect, you see only the illusion of an infinite progression of entryways receding into space. At a moment in the art world when complicated installations are in vogue, this Brechtian mechanism is simple, effective and relevant at the very least to the vacillation between the calm self-reflection and self-doubt many artists must feel in these precarious times. —T.J. Carlin