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Mark Armijo McKnight at The Whitney.

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Notoriously difficult to program, the Whitney Museum's first-floor gallery can dwarf the emerging talents it showcases. In Mark Armijo McKnight's institutional solo debut curated by Drew Sawyer, the New York-based artist manages to make the cavernous room look like a theater designed for him and his transfixing new film, "Without a Song (solo ii)." Shot in the Bisti Badlands/De-Na-Zin Wilderness in New Mexico, McKnight's black-and-white short fills the room with a hypnotic chorus of uncountable metronomes slowly ticking their way towards stillness. Stationed among the region's selenic rock formations like soldiers, this army of time-keepers takes on a threatening quality that reminds one of the last few breath-stealing moments before the Western cowboy showdown or the final minutes before the big sci-fi battle royale. Drawn out over some eleven-plus minutes, the film distorts one's sense of place. This feeling is accentuated by the cooling touch of the two massive, limestone sundials the artist has provided as seats. It is only when one gets up from this rudimentary time machine that one remembers they haven't left the lobby yet. McKnight's *Clouds (Decreation)*—an intimate photograph of a cloud chariot charging across a blank sky—waves goodbye as you step back into the light. —Kat Herriman