

5.24.07

CRITICS' PICKS

ARTFORUM

Heather Carson

PHANTOM GALLERIES LA

269 Beverly Drive, SW corner of Beverly Drive and Dayton Way, (Temporary art installations in vacant storefront windows. Locations are throughout Los Angeles County)

May 14–June 10

Sandwiched between an Arthur Murray dance studio and an old Pottery Barn in an especially small town-like swatch of Beverly Hills, a group of metal cubes, their skeletons highlighted by fluorescent bulbs, sits in a lonesome abandoned storefront. There, they light up and dim out every few seconds, enacting a poignant rise-and-fall, cradle-to-grave saga, like a fifty-first-century Henry Moore family group, distilled from too-solid flesh to pure electronic DNA. Or maybe they're more like a passel of stress-position cages in some Gitmo on Ice Station Zebra? Heather Carson first came onto my radar as the creator of offbeat waves of icy light in Richard Foreman's New York theater productions of the late '80s and early '90s. The fluorescent bulb, undimmable and untamable, means a lot to her—maybe because it's so constitutionally opposed to the softness, roundness, and “humanness” of conventional theater lighting. Here, the bulb acts a very different part from the one it plays in the Dan Flavin summer blockbuster across town: Carson's light has an implacably individual, quirky personality—a perfume. And the inhale-exhale tempo of Carson's on-off switch, combined with the work's peculiar location, gives it an allegorical quality: You feel as if you're standing before the churning cardiac system of the City of Dreams.

—Matthew Wilder



Light Action: light/CONCENTRIC, 2007, seventy-two fluorescent fixtures, thirty sodium vapor fixtures, aluminum pipe, speed-rail fittings, conduit, junction boxes, conduit clamps, digital relay switches, and computer control, 9' 7" x 10' 3" x 60'. Installation view.