

LAWEEKLY

Catherine Wagner: "Dan Corson and Catherine Wagner's Illuminating Ideas"

By Peter Frank

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Catherine Wagner, *The Lamps of 1900* (2006)

"Neon in daylight is a great pleasure," Frank O'Hara wrote (attributing it to his friend Edwin Denby), "as are light bulbs in daylight." Still and all, the best time to see Dan Corson's *Empyrean Passage* is at dusk, when it turns on, and at dawn, just before it turns off. Twenty-odd metal hoops comprise a helical funnel glowing a delicate green (in a way, signaling the environmental friendliness of its low-voltage electroluminescence). It hangs in the trees at West Hollywood's western gateway, like some wormhole to the other side of the galaxy, which has casually appeared in a public park. In its luminous minimalism it complements Yayoi Kusama's extravagant metal garden down the road in Beverly Hills. But unlike the latter sculpture, Corson's inverted tornado of light lasts only another week. Recommendation: Drive up on it from the east at dawn, west at dusk, with the horizoned sun at your back. Corner of Santa Monica Boulevard and Doheny Dr., W. Hlywd.; dusk-dawn; thru May 15.

Catherine Wagner's light bulbs in daylight give off their glow in photographs, although what Wagner has shot are installational arrays of such bulbs, screwed into bases by the dozen and looking for all the world like flotillae of jellyfish or clusters of punctuation awaiting placement in a paragraph. Of course, even under special circumstances, commas and coelenterates don't radiate such hues or shine this brilliantly. Not that all, or even most, of Wagner's bulbs are turned on; that would wipe out her own sensitive technique. Rather, she accentuates the colors tinting the bulbs themselves. If the clustering of shapes and colors suggests a typological collection, it should: Wagner photographed the bulbs in the Baltimore Museum of Industry — though she also invented some of her own, more fanciful groupings. So we go from *Carbon Filaments 1900-1910* to *Ode to Yves* (Klein? Tanguy?) and *Green Energy* — another nod to the ecology.

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