

# Los Angeles Times

## At these exhibitions, everything is illuminated

April 24, 2008



Email



Share

+1

0



Tweet

0



Recommend

0

"Light informs my work," says photographer Catherine Wagner. In fact, she points out, "The word photography is from the Latin phos graphos, or 'light writing.' "

The connection is underscored in the San Francisco-based artist's current exhibit, "A Narrative History of the Light Bulb," the culmination of two years Wagner spent in residence at the Baltimore Museum of Industry, sifting through its vast collection of historic bulbs. Wagner mixed and matched an array of bulbs into various sculptural arrangements, which she then shot with an 8-by-10 view camera to produce a series of still-life portraits that offer both artistic and historic commentary.

### For The Record

Los Angeles Times Tuesday, April 29, 2008 Home Edition Main News Part A Page 2 National Desk 1 inches; 42 words Type of Material: Correction

Dike Blair: The information box that accompanied an article in Thursday's edition of The Guide about artwork by Dike Blair said an exhibition at Mary Goldman Gallery in Chinatown was running from April 26 to May 31. It runs through June 7.

Some groupings, such as "Early Tungsten" or "Carbon Filaments 1900-1910," are based on scientific indexes, while others have more lyrical organizing principles, such as the cluster of sapphire blue bulbs titled "Ode to Yves" in homage to Yves Klein, the French conceptual artist who had chemists concoct the striking pigment that became his signature, International Klein Blue. Then there's "Utopia," in which bulbs of varying colors, shapes and sizes are lined up class-photo style.

Lights also figure largely in the work of New York-based artist Dike Blair. Influenced by Japanese ikebana techniques, Blair's precisely arranged installations may incorporate harsh fluorescent tubes to evoke a sterile corporate environment, or light boxes illuminating nature photographs to create a bucolic atmosphere.

But one light in particular burns especially brightly for Blair: Isamu Noguchi's iconic "Akari" lamp, which features prominently in the sculptor/painter's new solo show at Chinatown's Mary Goldman Gallery.

"I intend the use of the ready-made as homage, not critique," notes Blair, who has prized the Noguchi floor lamp in his apartment for two decades. "Every time I hit the switch, a subtle sense of well-being enters me, but also a sense of the ephemeral and of mortality. It's a funny, second-long daily ritual -- a mini-meditation on beauty, death, and time."

The inclusion of the lamp relates to another favorite theme of Blair's -- different ways of seeing. "Unlike a painting, which conjures light but requires illumination to come to life," says Blair, "the light sculpture is light."