



In Yuki Nakamura's installation hundreds of bulbous shapes, from small, knob-like protrusions to fat, elongated globes, crowd the elevator lobby, reminding us electricity is old technology. (Spike Mafford)

Seattle City Light sponsors seven art installations

But you'll have to ride the elevator to see them

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By **ADRIANA GRANT**
SPECIAL TO THE P-I

Step out of the elevator onto the 30th floor of the Seattle Municipal Tower and you'll encounter a wall of porcelain light bulbs, an installation by Yuki Nakamura. This is one of seven art installations commissioned with Seattle City Light 1 Percent for Art funds and administered by the Office of Arts & Cultural Affairs. Sited in elevator lobbies on seven floors (28-30 and 33-36) occupied by the utility, the exhibit's audience is mainly Seattle City Light employees, whose work provides the theme.

Nakamura's installation is a linear smattering of 19th-century light bulbs, cast in porcelain, installed to jut from the wall. Hundreds of bulbous shapes, from small, knoblike protrusions to fat, elongated globes, crowd the elevator lobby. Their antique shapes are a reminder that electricity is old technology.

On the 36th floor, we see a more modern approach. Emily Ginsburg's graphic mural of circuitry, in enamel on aluminum, offers a take on what electricity is powering. Focusing on communication and connection, old-fashioned envelopes dangle from circuit wires, while a CD player connects to an out-of-scale electric tower. In striking black on white, this piece occupies the entire elevator lobby wall, with details of dialogue

ART REVIEW **SEATTLE CITY LIGHT** **ELEVATOR LOBBY ART**

WHERE: Seattle Municipal Tower, 700 Fifth Ave., floors 28-30 and 33-36

WHEN: Ongoing; 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Friday

balloons and electric meters repeating through the out-of-scale circuit board. With a curlicue-added motif that reads like finely designed wallpaper, this piece contains tiny, unexpected images that offer pleasure as one waits for an especially slow elevator.

INFORMATION: 206-684-7171,
[web site](#)

On floor 29, Claude Zervas offers a look at what Seattle City Light's sustainable energy program aims to protect. Three light boxes contain what look like microorganisms, moving slowly in what might be an aquatic environment. Like his other works, these light sculptures are computer-programmed LED lights. Here, the organic forms move like primitive animals behind smoky glass.

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Victoria Haven's cross-hatched metal wall sculptures are immediately recognizable on the 35th floor, though her abstract forms are not. Haven references the landscape in jutting clouds, swooping mountains, sharp-edged rocks, and a city grid. In gray-black polished nickel plating, Haven's nimbus is both angular and shiny, perhaps a set of charged clouds, or a nod to the power the artist may (or may not) use in crafting her own work.

One of the less successful lobby pieces offers a tale of escape from the cubicle. Kerry Skarbakka's video on floor 28 features a diver swimming underwater in a pinstriped suit. In a later scene, depicted on three fat-framed video monitors, this character jumps a fire, which has taken over a woodsy scene. I wonder if the city employees appreciate the joke.

Marie Watt stitches her signature wool blankets into a narrative that parallels the energy of electricity with the warmth of wool. Her series on floor 34 depicts a hydroelectric dam streaming with white satin falls, and, in successive panels, woolen windmills, electric towers and solar panels. I'm not sure I buy the electricity as heirloom theme she's suggesting, but I do enjoy the way Watt's pieces expose their stitches, a subtle reminder that the electricity we rely on is also a made thing.

On floor 33, Margie Livingston's paintings look like a scene of electric lines, in gradations of light. Her familiar geometric structures are less abstract here, and yet remain distinctive. A pale blue early-morning sky is lit pink, while, reading the four works left to right, swooping power lines grow darker until we are looking at a night scene. In oil on linen, each painting offers a landscape of receding power lines suspended above a city grid. The artist's masterly painting and deft use of color make the scenes pleasurable.

These pieces constitute a themed exhibit touting the good works of Seattle Public Utilities. That said, the mandate of the commission seems to rest lightly on the artists.

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