

Cha, Olivian, "Critics' Picks: Mary Weatherford," *Artforum.com*, May 6, 2014

ARTFORUM

Los Angeles

Mary Weatherford

DAVID KORDANSKY GALLERY

3143 South La Cienega Boulevard, Unit A

April 19–May 31

Following a series of exhibitions titled "The Bakersfield Project," "The Bakersfield Paintings" and "Manhattan," (all 2012), "Los Angeles" is Mary Weatherford's fourth show of neon-light paintings that takes inspiration from the places she has lived. As in her former work, lines of light in various colors, lengths, and convexities uniquely illuminate each of the seven paintings on view here—but the color palette compared is decidedly less pavonine. Flashe paint is applied in thin but muddled layers that permeate each canvas with a kind of dirty acrylic pollution. In most of the pieces, brighter hues of pink, yellow, and orange are weighed down by washes of deep blue purples, marshy greens, and black. *Light in Lancaster*, painted in vibrant, tannic shades of orange, is the exception: Heavily worked surfaces are evidenced by repetitive, gestural brush strokes that garble colors but also challenge the margins of their linen support, sometimes touching and other times retracting from the edges of the canvas. In contrast, Weatherford's brilliant neon lines effortlessly rewrite the structural boundaries of painting by casting light in three dimensions, against painterly surface and viewer simultaneously. Neon has its own aesthetic history, which has traversed Las Vegas kitsch, Minimalism, and Conceptual art but rarely the painterly sublime.



Mary Weatherford, 1969, 2014, flashe and neon on linen, 93 1/4 x 79 1/5 x 4 1/8"

Locational marginality is further addressed in the titles of her paintings: *Oxnard Ventura*, *apparition in Artesia*, and *the light in Lancaster* identify suburbs and industrial cities on the outer fringes of the metropolis for which the show is named. Weatherford's privilege of place and geographic

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specificity in the conception of her works also offers a compelling proposition for how painting might newly articulate sociospatial production and meaning. By exposing the cords, electrical transformers, and hardware that charge her neon lines, Weatherford's paintings render the city not only as landscape (or abstract expression) but as network: a series of electrified canvases that signal both topology and topography. Each painterly node is connected to the others by wires that circulate a single source of energy; this gives the paintings a sculptural and spatial register and, more importantly, a social one. This material interconnectedness is perhaps just one response to the possibility of metaphysical inquiry in a late-capitalist society.

-Olivian Cha