

ARTS

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Lewis Stein's new black-and-white photographs of chandeliers, on view at Paula Allen (January 31–February 25) are also about light, but light as a cold foreboding presence. Stein's light fixtures are objects which emanate from the nothingness of the black ground. The artist has photographed them in a straightforward, clinical way. What were once elegant, twinkling light sources, dinosaurs of grander days and partners in spectacles of high society, have now succumbed to the decontextualizing format of the tightly cropped photograph. We are likely to find such objects in rundown architectural specimens of yesteryear, nightclubs and old dance halls. Like the club scene and city nightlife in general, they tease with the impossible promise of intrigue and romance. Stein's pictures function to take this frustration and expectation back into the world as an ominous presence. His depictions of light-as-object demystify and decode our worship of energy and the light it radiates.

Peggy Cyphers



Lewis Stein, *Untitled (Chandelier)*, from *Chandelier* series, 1986–88, Black-and-white photograph, 40" x 60". Courtesy Paula Allen Gallery.