

artillery

KILLER TEXT ON ART

International Orange

By Barbara Moore
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"INTERNATIONAL ORANGE" tackles the goal of commemorating the 75th anniversary of the opening of the Golden Gate Bridge, as well as addressing the site of the former military base nestled beneath. Curated by Cheryl Haines, gallerist and executive director of the sponsoring FOR-SITE foundation, the show takes the form of a grouping of diverse, multi-media, site-specific installations. These are interspersed throughout the rooms and courtyards of historic artifacts and exhibits—which one might note include an impressive number of cannons—as well as installed upon architectural elements found in the multi-tiered fort.

Anyone who has visited San Francisco in the summer is surely familiar with the often inclement weather. The bridge itself is often socked-in. Appropriately, Pae White's *muhf-uhl* (all works 2012) attempts to evoke the essence of fog. Responding intimately to the physical and tactile qualities of the space, the massive gauzy tapestry gracefully drapes the room in a field of color from deep burnt orange to pale peach to gray. White's work suggests some of Christo's work, such as *Valley Curtain* (1974) and *Gates* (1975-05).

Stephanie Syjuco's *International Orange Commemorative Store (A Proposition)* feels very tightly focused and clear in its intent, making wry commentary on our desire to take a piece of an experience home with us. Her faux souvenir stand includes pencils, key rings, ceramics, T-shirts and postcards, all bathed in the famous color of the bridge. Nearby, Mark Dion and Dana Sherwood's *Encrustations* introduces the complementary color—blue—flooding the room, giving an undersea glow. Playful objects are created from shoes, coffee pots, bottles and jugs encrusted with barnacles, seaweed and horseshoe crabs. Adjacent, what looks like Captain Nemo's television—Courtney Lain's *Sea Vision T.V.*—presents a customized, vintage set mounted on rusty gold-painted metal legs. Newsreel footage of the newly opened bridge is compelling, while a hypnotic soundtrack suggests mystery and portent. Lain, a composer, and an 11-piece orchestra perform this stirring musical work.



Stephanie Syjuco, "The International Orange Commemorative Store (A Proposition)," 2012. Courtesy the artist and the FOR-SITE Foundation.

Several large video installations tackle the grandeur of the site, the most memorable one in which a pair of massive displays project images of container vessels being guided into and out of the bay; Doug Hall's *Chrysopylae* materializes around a corner, like an apparition, in a recessed area. Two wall-sized images reveal large cargo and container ships, images of frothing surf, and the bridge, seen from below—more as obstacle than icon.

Allison Smith's *Fort Point Bunting* is festooned on railings along the courtyard. These faded semi-circular objects in various shades of orange create an atmosphere at once both somber and oddly festive. Her *Trench Art* presents found folk art mostly comprised of large artillery shells, with embellishments of flora or fauna, transformed into vases or urns. Also recalling the military tradition, Cornelia Parker's *Reveille* occupies the end of a long narrow wing—a pair of gleaming bugles, spot-lit, and a moody shadow falling on the floor; this piece is elegant, if severe.

Conceptually ambitious, the exhibition draws energy and inspiration from the historic walls that house it. The physically imposing presence of the fort offers a challenge as well—to create work that appears relevant, memorable and appropriate within the space. Individual works—16 artists participated—rise to the occasion, others ultimately sink a bit, perhaps, in the portentous windswept context in which they have been placed.