

Happy Birthday, Golden Gate Bridge

By Heidi De Vries
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It could have been the Bumblebee Bridge, our Golden Gate. Back in 1937 when the iconic span was built, the Navy wanted to make sure ships and planes wouldn't go careening into it and suggested it be painted in bands of black and yellow. Fortunately, saner heads prevailed and the trademark solid vermilion was chosen instead. It's a color known within engineering circles as "International Orange," which is also the name of a site-specific group exhibition at Fort Point that opens today (Friday) at 10 a.m. and is part of Golden Gate Festival on Sunday celebrating the bridge's 75th anniversary.

Installed throughout the historic grounds of the old military outpost, the commissioned pieces in the exhibit offer contemporary takes on the Golden Gate by 16 local and international artists.

Allison Smith and Anandamayi Arnold reference history and traditional handicrafts (particularly those made by women) in their artworks. Smith decks out Fort Point with swags of orange bunting, while Arnold's crepe-paper dresses pay tribute to those worn by "Fiesta Queens" at the bridge's 1937 opening celebration. Stephanie Syjuco tweaks the idea of the gift shop by stocking hers with locally produced goods that are not for sale.

Some artists take a more technological bent, such as Camille Utterback in her computer models detailing the ever-changing coastline of the bay, or Bill Fontana in his live audio installation of sounds created by the bridge itself.



Sound Artist, Bill Fontana.

Elsewhere in the areas near the bridge you'll find performance stages, a historic vehicle display, a maritime exhibit, and a "future fair." The fort should prove a prime vantage point for a parade of ships and the fireworks spectacular planned for after dark.

We just hope that other Golden Gate icon, the fog, stays away for the day.