

## International Orange

By John Cary  
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Interior of Fort Point during International Orange. Artist Cornelia Parker's "Reveille" can be seen at the end of the corridor. All photos by John Cary.



Moss covered interior walls of Fort Point.

On May 27, the tranquil beauty of the Bay and the grace of the Golden Gate Bridge were rocked by a spectacle of pyrotechnics and light to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the bridge. Fireworks rippled across its expanse and up and down the two towers of the city's most notable icon. Huge flood lights—perched atop a large roaming barge—pierced the night sky. The deafening fifteen minutes capped an extended series of celebrations, which felt fitting on one hand and wholly over-produced on the other.

Out of the smoke and dust of that weekend appeared "International Orange," a quieter, more meaningful reflection on the context and spirit of the Golden Gate Bridge. *International Orange* is the brainchild of curator Cheryl Haines, representing a unique partnership between Haines' FOR-SITE Foundation, the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy, the National Park Service, and sixteen invited artists from around the world. Haines and her partners left the bridge to its usual cadre of tourists, bikers, walkers, and daily commuters, opting to create a site-specific show in Fort Point, a hulking brick structure over-shadowed by—and more than twice as old as—the bridge itself.

The color of the bridge—orange vermilion, more commonly known as "International Orange"—is the stuff of

legends. Some believe it was originally a primer color, while others contend it was a deliberate choice all along, blending in more seamlessly with the natural landscape than traditional bridge colors of gray steel, white, or black. Philippino artist Stephanie Syjuco deals most directly with the color itself along with the tourist culture that often overwhelms the bridge in her installation, "The International Orange Commemorative Store (A Proposition)."

Located on the second of Fort Point's three levels, Syjuco's "store" is filled with desirable items one would expect to find in a museum store—books, bags, mugs, and even an iconic Eames wooden lounge chair—all painted in the bridge's distinct hue. The catch: none of the items are for sale, leaving visitors like myself to recall other "experiences that money can't buy," according to the artist's statement.

While Syjuco's installation offers the most overt exploration of our obsession with the bridge's painted steel and the iconography it generates, several other pieces take a broader view of the Bay's ecology, which includes the water that flows past the bridge's two huge piers, the freighters and boats that glide under its expanse, and even the workers that tend to the bridge each day.

San Francisco-based artist David Liittschwager's piece, titled "One Cubic Foot: Life Under the Golden Gate Bridge," reveals the hugely varied, complex, and most often hidden ecosystem of organisms surrounding the bridge. He documents ten cubic samples of air, water, and earth, placing each on a pedestal for inspection. Like most of the other works, Liittschwager's piece is situated in the raw, damp, cavernous interior of Fort Point, at once sheltered from and exposed to the constantly changing climate of the Golden Gate.

Artist Doug Hall's time-lapse videos of freighters moving under the bridge and around the Bay provide a scale unmatched by any of the other exhibits. The large, floor-to-ceiling projections give but a taste of the enormity of the ships that pass through "Chrysopylae," Greek for "golden gate," which Hall reminds us is the name given to the entrance of the Bay by explorer John C. Frémont in 1846.

For "Vertigo," Cuban artist Abelardo Morell takes another large-format view, in his case employing a centuries-old technique, the camera obscura. In one application, a tiny opening in a thick brick wall of Fort Point projects inverted images of the outside world into a darkened room. In another, he uses a tent camera like a periscope, superimposing landscape views onto the ground, which he then photographs with dramatic effect.

The most humanizing moments in the exhibition, however, come from artist Andy Freeberg. He captures the beautiful, strong, if sometimes tired and worn faces of the people—the engineers, painters, toll workers, and others—that work to maintain the heavily-trafficked bridge every day. Presented alongside historical and archival photos, Freeberg's images remind us of what the bridge itself, its distinctive color, and even over-produced fireworks shows all are: carefully curated, human creations.



Underside of Golden Gate Bridge, as seen from the roof of Fort Point, shortly after it's 75th birthday.



Allison Smith's "Fort Point Bunting" adorns the railings along the interior courtyard of Fort Point.



"Reveille," by artist Cornelia Parker, occupies the end of a corridor at Fort Point.



"Span," by Camille Utterback is a video-based installation that depicts the shifting shoreline of the San Francisco Bay, in contrast to the seeming permanence of the Golden Gate Bridge.