

# HOME LAND SECURITY



**Home Land Security—presented by FOR-SITE Foundation in partnership with the National Park Service, the Presidio Trust, and the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy—brings together 18 artists and collectives from around the world to reflect on the human dimensions and increasing complexity of national security.**

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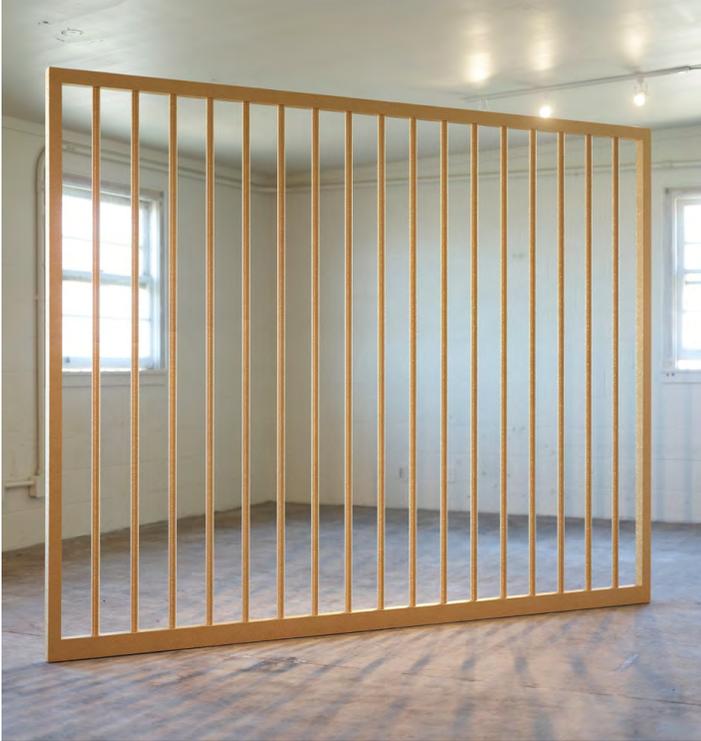
The exhibition's themes of home, safety, and defense are amplified by the site, Fort Winfield Scott, a decommissioned artillery post integral to the army's 20th-century Coastal Defense System. Interestingly, Fort Scott never came under attack, and military innovations rendered its infrastructure obsolete.

The following curriculum is designed help teachers and other visitors prepare themselves and their students to visit Home Land Security. The lessons give teachers and students suggestions for their visit, and activities for reflection when they return to the classroom. The curriculum spotlights three of the participating artists, whose work can be used as the basis for student exploration of artistic processes and exhibition themes.

## Artist Spotlight: Liza Lou

<http://lizalou.com/work/2008/l-m/barricade>

<http://www.lizalou.com/work/2008/l-m/conditions-of-capture>



*Barricade*, 2007-8; photo: Robert Herrick

Liza Lou's works *Barricade* and *Conditions of Capture* are part of a series based on the architecture of confinement and the premise that enclosures are not fully capable of offering protection. The works are displayed in one of the rooms in the Nike Administration Building, the former headquarters for a missile program developed during the Cold War. *Barricade* is a large, gate-like aluminum structure covered with tiny, 24-karat gold beads that stands in the middle of the room. *Conditions of Capture*, which hangs on a wall nearby, depicts a chain-link fence motif disguised by millions of vibrant glass beads.

### Engaging with the work as Conceptual art

In this lesson, students will preview Conceptual art, study Lou's background and body of work, and examine the political and social context for *Barricade* and *Conditions of Capture*.

### Discuss conceptual art with your students.

Conceptual art is a genre that developed in the 1960s in which artists challenged the use of traditional techniques and materials in their work. Instead of focusing on the finished art object, conceptual artists stressed the primary importance of the ideas and concepts behind their work. Conceptual artwork uses unconventional materials

and methods, and is often exhibited outside of traditional spaces like museums and galleries.

### Examine Lou's background.

Lou began using beads in her artwork after discovering a bead store while studying at the San Francisco Art Institute. Lou has become well-known for her beaded works, including *Kitchen*, a life-size replica of a kitchen that took five years to complete. Lou's use of beads began as an exploration of attraction and repulsion—using something luminous and luxurious to create something restrictive or oppressive. Lou created *Barricade* and *Conditions of Capture* in 2008, motivated by ideas about confinement and protection. Marked by wide bars and an imposing, seven-foot height, *Barricade* stands in the center of the room without a solid support base. Seemingly unable to stand securely, the gate, constructed of aluminum meticulously covered with beads, cannot provide protection or safety. *Conditions of Capture* presents an impenetrable perspective on a chain-link fence: not only is it disguised but we are unable to see through it.

### Art Project

Have students reflect on a major event that occurred in 2015 or 2016. This can be any event—political, cultural, national, or international. Have the students design a Conceptual art piece about this historical moment. Ask students to think about how a Conceptual artwork might differ from a traditional monument, sculpture, or painting. Have students reflect on how Conceptual art draws them into questions about the work and the issues it examines. Often there are no clear or easy interpretations—they depend on our own backgrounds and ideas. For the students' Conceptual art pieces, helpful prompts for the projects are: What materials would they use? How would people engage with the artwork? Ask each student to describe his or her art piece. Things to consider: Would they select material that was soft or hard? What colors would they use? Would the piece include words? How would the words influence our engagement and interpretation? Would the piece be best situated in a gallery, in a public setting, or at the site of the historical event? Have the students sketch their pieces.

### Discuss the following questions with the class:

1. Does either *Barricade* or *Conditions of Capture* feel imposing?
2. Does *Barricade* look strong or weak?
3. Why do you think Lou chose such labor-intensive techniques to create *Barricade* and *Conditions of Capture*?
4. What do these works remind you of? Do you encounter similar structures in your everyday lives?
5. After you explore other works in the exhibition, think about your engagement with *Barricade* and *Conditions of Capture*. How do the other artworks influence the meanings of Lou's pieces? Would Lou's works mean something different to you if they were situated in another location, either within Fort Scott or in an art museum or gallery?
6. Imagine you came across *Barricade* outside, in a grassy field in a park. Would it feel prohibitive? Would you be drawn to it, or would you keep your distance? Would your feelings change if there were people waiting on the other side of it?

### Fort Scott and security

In this lesson, students will learn about the history of harbor defenses in San Francisco—specifically the development of Fort Scott as an artillery post and its utility as weaponry and warfare evolved. Students will then connect this history to larger questions about national security, the messaging behind Liza Lou's *Barricade* and *Conditions of Capture*, and the aspects of their own lives that they want to protect. Students will investigate the questions what parts of my identity do I want to protect, how do I go about protecting them, and what do I lose in erecting barriers?

### Discuss the history of the Presidio.

The Presidio served to defend California's coast for more than 200 years: from the time Spain established an adobe fort in 1776 until it ceased use as an active military outpost in the 1990s.

- After 1848, when the United States claimed California as part of its territory, people flocked to the area searching for gold. This "gold rush" led to rapid growth. Fort Point was built to defend the San Francisco Bay, but soldiers often deserted their posts to search for gold, and its brick walls were no match for weapons developed during the Civil War (1861–65).
- In the late 1800s American imperial aspirations led to new coastal defenses at the Presidio's Fort Winfield Scott and other ports.
- In 1912 Fort Scott was established in the Presidio as a coast artillery post and the headquarters of the Artillery District of San Francisco. Fort Scott housed 17 gun batteries that were constructed, armed, and manned between 1891 and 1946.

- In 1946 the U.S. Army's Coast Artillery School was transferred from Fort Monroe, Virginia, to Fort Scott. The school operated for only a brief period, as the coast artillery system was soon made obsolete by modern air power and amphibious warfare.
- After World War II tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union stopped just short of armed conflict in the Cold War, as the two nations competed for influence and raced to gain an advantage in weapons technology. Communism was seen as a dangerous threat, and fear of nuclear attack was pervasive. The Nike Administration Building, which houses Liza Lou's *Barricade* and *Conditions of Capture*, became a designated headquarters for the Nike Missile Program—a national security program created so missiles could shoot down attacking aircrafts. By the late 1960s, however, the Soviet Union had developed missile technology that rendered the Nike program obsolete, as well.
- The coastal defenses at Fort Scott and throughout Northern California never came under attack, perhaps due to the Presidio's presence as a military base. No shot was ever fired there, except in target practice and celebration.

### Connect the Presidio to Lou's *Barricade* and *Conditions of Capture*.

Like Fort Scott itself, Lou's works highlight the human need to protect ourselves and our ideals from intruders, and at the same time, our inability to protect ourselves completely. *Barricade*, Lou states, offers "useless protection" and is a "golden surface that doesn't keep anyone in or out." Investigate this connection with the students, and reflect on the aspects of their lives (identity, values, people, etc.) that they want to protect and would be willing to fight for. Consider the following questions:

1. When you saw *Barricade*, were you aware of it defining the space in a way that would keep anyone in or out? Would it offer protection, if needed?
2. What were your impressions of Fort Scott and the Nike Admin-

### Art Project

Work with students individually, in groups, or as a class to construct a gate or wall-like structure out of paper by folding and reinforcing it with other materials (pipe-cleaners, toothpicks, string, etc.) to try to make it secure. Add special features, like colors, words, or materials, so it can tell a personal story.

istration Building, specifically? Did they feel like places that could offer national security? Could you imagine that they actually did at one time? What do you imagine such places would look like in 2016?

**3.** Does the fact that no fighting ever took place at Fort Scott change your perception of its importance to the nation's or military history? Do you think the lack of fighting was due to Fort Scott's inability to protect, or to its existence?

**4.** Try to imagine our country's desire or need to establish military defense systems. What are the "dangers" that a country needs to protect its citizens from? How well do these protective measures work? What are we cutting ourselves off from, as a nation?

**5.** What are the aspects (people, beliefs, ideals) in your life that you feel the need to protect? Which ones would you be willing to fight for? What might you be cutting yourself off from, in your efforts to protect them?

## Artist Spotlight: Díaz Lewis (Cara Megan Lewis and Alejandro Figueredo Díaz-Perera)

In this lesson, students will learn about the artwork of collaborative team Díaz Lewis and its project *34,000 Pillows*. They will reflect on their own family histories and consider the ease or difficulty with which their family members came to the United States. They will then connect these stories to contemporary migration and the policies that direct it.

### Examine the artists.

Díaz Lewis is the collaborative name of Chicago-based artists Alejandro Figueredo Díaz-Perera and Cara Megan Lewis. Their artwork speaks to their personal histories: Díaz-Perera was born in Cuba, and Lewis is from the United States. They draw upon the differences that exist between their experiences as artists and citizens of distinctive cultural environments. Political commentary is central to their artwork, and they hope their work will prompt social change. In Díaz-Perera's words, "Art can go places where other platforms cannot." Díaz Lewis's work typically includes a performative aspect and juxtaposes the public and private domains.

### Provide context for *34,000 Pillows*.

This project was inspired by the 2007 U.S. congressional mandate, often referred to as the "bed quota," that requires the Immigration

and Customs Enforcement Agency (ICE) to maintain 34,000 detained immigrants per day in 250 centers around the country.

*34,000 Pillows* is an ongoing installation in which the artists construct pillows from clothing that has been donated by former detainees, undocumented immigrants, and their allies to form a collective patchwork of individual experiences. The pillows' comfort and support are not purely symbolic: the artists are selling each pillow for a donation of \$159—the government's daily cost for detaining one immigrant—to Human Rights Watch, which will direct the funds to assistance to immigrants who have been detained. For Home Land Security, one room in the Nike Administration Building is set up as a workshop for creating Díaz Lewis's pillows. Each student has the option of being assisted by a docent in finishing a pillow that will be added to the growing installation in Battery Boutelle. [Note that your class/school must arrange this activity in advance].

### Reflect after the activity on the following topics:

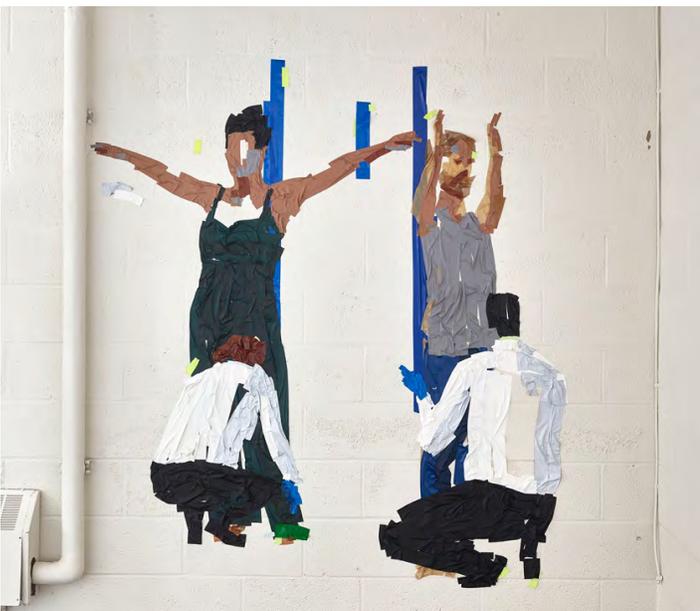
1. Consider the current policies and attitudes in the United States—a country founded by, and for, immigrants—toward immigrants and other cultures. How are these policies and attitudes at work in other parts of the world—in Syria, for example?
2. Think about the artists' objective of making pillows from the clothing of refugees and immigrants. This is their way to humanize statistics and a complex political issue, to make the realities of this policy tangible. Why do you think they chose pillow-making? What are some other ways that this subject could be expressed and represented artistically?
3. The artists chose to have individuals participate in the pillow-making process to allow a deeper and more tangible connection to the detainee/immigrant experience. Was this successful for you? In what ways did making the pillow impact your ideas and feelings about detained, released, and undocumented immigrants?
4. The works by Yin Xiuzhen (*Weapon*) and Mandana Moghaddam (*Exodus*) exhibited in Home Land Security also involve used clothing. For Yin, clothing is "a second skin. Once it's been worn, it bears the traces of the wearer's experiences." For Moghaddam, the contents of suitcases adrift in the ocean represent the struggles that immigrants face regarding their identity—the loss of membership in one culture and the uncertain membership in another. What are the similarities and differences between these two works and *34,000 Pillows*? Why do you think the curator chose to display these works near each other? Would your understanding of each piece change if they were not in the same building?

### Lead students in the following writing exercises:

1. Reflect on your family history and consider the ease or difficulty with which your relatives came to the United States. Interview a family member and draft a short piece on a relative's journey to this country.
2. Think about the immigrants who came to San Francisco and settled here. What were their circumstances for leaving their home countries, and what challenges did they face when they arrived? How has their culture influenced San Francisco, and how is it still present?
3. Imagine the actual person whose clothes were used for the pillow you constructed. Where did he or she come from? Was he alone? Was he loved? Was she hungry? How old was she? Why did this person choose to donate personal articles of clothing? Write a short autobiography from this person's perspective.
4. Reflect on your experience making the pillow. Did you choose the clothing? If so, why did you choose those particular items? Did the creation of a pillow—an intimate object—make you feel close to the person the clothes belonged to? In what way? Did you feel like you were helping this individual, or repairing some injustice?

## Artist Spotlight: Tirtzah Bassel

<http://www.tirtzahbassel.com/about/>



*Concourse*, Tirtzah Bassel, 2016 (installation detail); photo: Robert Herrick

In this lesson, students will learn about Tirtzah Bassel's duct-tape installation *Concourse*. This piece probes the tension between intimacy and vulnerability as it depicts people waiting in lines and crossing

security checkpoints. Students will have the opportunity to think critically about various forms of security in our everyday lives, as well as the intentions and outcomes of these measures.

### Discuss Bassel's background and art.

Tirtzah Bassel is an Israeli artist based in New York City. Her drawings, paintings, and duct-tape installations explore public and private domains—specifically in airport security zones, border crossings, and public transportation—where distinctions between the two become blurred. Using colored duct tape, Bassel creates large and expansive artworks that are not confined to the dimensions of a canvas. The artist installs her duct-tape installations directly on the wall, which allows her to respond to the actual site of each project and subtly change a piece with each showing. The fact that these works are one-of-a-kind, and temporary, is intentional: Bassel is investigating the relationship between permanence and transience, in both the medium of her artwork and her subjects. In this piece, passengers waiting to board a flight are staring at their phones and being screened by security agents.

Viewing *Concourse* at the historical site of Fort Scott makes it particularly poignant. Built as one of the first national security sites, Fort Scott was the beginning of a system that grew to be highly regulated and complex with the intention of protecting our country from harm. Given the national security measures that we have in place today—in response to incidents like 9/11—we are compelled to analyze their origins, impacts, and repercussions.

### Lead students in the following activities:

Watch this short (2 mins.) Transportation Security Administration (TSA) video for kids <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IHjIN-5lzCjM>, and juxtapose it with Bassel's work. Though the video is designed for younger children, it is a useful point of contrast with Bassel's project. Ask students to answer questions about the similarities and differences between the video and the duct-tape installations. Then ask the students to think about the motivations behind Bassel's work. Use this as a springboard for further discussions about propaganda and its purposes, both defensible and not.

1. How does this video portray the TSA, its security measures, and their purposes?
2. How does the video portray the family as they cross through security? Does it look challenging or easy? Frustrating or enjoyable?
3. How does this compare to the figures in Bassel's *Concourse*?
4. Does Bassel's work suggest something ominous about airport

security measures? Does the video convey the same feeling?

**5.** Bassel's investigation of public and private domains in public spaces, particularly in airports, prompts us to think critically when these lines are blurred. In the adjoining room, Michele Pred's work *Encirclement* displays personal and mundane objects that have been classified as "dangerous" and confiscated by the TSA. Both Bassel's and Pred's works were created in response to Homeland Security regulations after 9/11. What are the artists saying about the power of these regulations and the disempowerment, or vulnerability, of travelers?

**6.** Why are some of Bassel's figures staring at their phones? What does this represent?

**7.** Do you think these security measures at airports are necessary? What are the positive and negative outcomes?

**8.** Security lines exist in many different types of public places. Can you think of others? In each case, why do the security measures exist? What are security personnel looking for?

**9.** Are such security systems effective? What could be different? Is there a solution that might be less invasive and more effective in offering protection?

**10.** The right to be free is a founding principle of the United States. Do security measures exist to protect that principle? Do security measures impact an individual's right to be free?

### **Lead students in the following writing exercises:**

**1.** Think about a time that you had to pass through a security checkpoint. What about this experience stands out to you?

**2.** If you've been through an airport security checkpoint, is your experience more similar to the TSA video or Bassel's *Concourse*? In what ways?

**3.** Design your own procedures for security screenings in a public space. Describe the place. What and who are you protecting? What tests would people have to go through? Would people have to empty their personal belongings? Show IDs? Would there be scanners? Police dogs? How would you preserve people's right to be free?

## **Art Projects**

**1.** Using poster board, duct tape, and drawing materials, ask the students to work together or individually to create artworks that illustrate the security processes they have designed in writing exercise number 3. Could they apply opposing feelings of happy/excited and worried/frustrated to the people waiting in line, or to the artwork overall?

**2.** Ask students to create a photo project in which they use their phones to take pictures of classmates waiting in lines at school and other places. Then ask each student to design a poster for airport security screening that uses these photos and informs travelers about the somewhat invasive and trying aspects of screenings. How could the process be illustrated in a way that is more transparent or honest?