HOME LAND SECURITY

Fort Winfield Scott in the Presidio of San Francisco
September 10 – December 18, 2016
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Bill Viola
Alexia Webster
Krzysztof Wodiczko
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Letter from the Director

When the idea for Home Land Security was taking shape back in early 2016, I had no idea just how timely the exhibition would prove to be.

Running September 10 through December 18, 2016, and presented in historic sites in Fort Winfield Scott in the Presidio of San Francisco, Home Land Security brought together works by 18 artists and collectives from around the globe to reflect on the human dimensions and increasing complexity of national security. It opened a few months after the Brexit vote, and straddled the 2016 U.S. presidential election—one of the most divisive elections in recent U.S. history, and one that centered on many of the issues presented in the exhibition.

I founded FOR-SITE Foundation in 2003 with a firm belief in the power and possibility of art about place. With Home Land Security—FOR-SITE’s fifth large-scale public art project—it felt like those possibilities were profoundly realized. The exhibition was presented with our longtime partners the National Park Service, the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy, and the Presidio Trust. Collaborations like these, which allow for the engagement of a wide audience base, are what set FOR-SITE projects apart from other public art initiatives. Over the exhibition’s fourth-month run we received 26,273 visitors. Many were tourists to San Francisco who discovered the exhibition while out exploring the Golden Gate Bridge. Others were longtime residents curious about the coastal batteries and buildings where Home Land Security was installed, and which were open to the public for the first time through the exhibition. On the weekend following the election, Home Land Security attendance numbers soared.
Visitors repeatedly approached Art Guides to express their gratitude for having a place for gathering and reflection.

FOR-SITE was excited to be able to offer a school program through the Crissy Field Center that welcomed 489 youth from 17 Bay Area schools. Special tours were offered for community groups such as the Girl Scouts and local VA chapters as part of their art therapy work. Additionally, we welcomed 210 participants to the hands-on workshop offered by the artist collective Diaz Lewis. Through the workshop visitors helped sew pillows as part of the collective’s ongoing art project 34,000 Pillows, created in response to the congressional mandate that Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) maintain a “bed quota” of 34,000 detained immigrants per day.

In an industry-leading move, FOR-SITE worked with the GGNPC and the digital imaging company Matterport to provide 3D scans of the entire exhibition. Not only did this allow for an accessible experience (something difficult to achieve in non-ADA-accessible historic spaces), it allowed us to capture the Home Land Security experience beyond its physical run — preserving it for virtual visitation across the globe and across time.

I am grateful to FOR-SITE’s partners, supporters, and visitors for making Home Land Security possible. My excitement for the rich possibilities of place-based work continues to grow, and I look forward to FOR-SITE’s next opportunity to present work that can encourage a new way of looking at and thinking about the pressing issues of our time.

Cheryl Haines
Executive Director
“Poignant and powerful!”
– Kimberly and Thomas P.
“...by exhibiting these works at the Presidio, the FOR-SITE Foundation is able to ground [the artwork] in a tangible site of war and military surveillance, placing the world we live in now in the context of its precedents.”

– KQED

“A needed exhibit.”
– Mary and Kitty M.

“A stunning experience.”
– Joan B.
“As I walked through the dispersed sites, it was refreshing to see tourists to the Presidio stumble upon the exhibition, popping in to check out a piece before disappearing, or being compelled enough to talk to the posted docents and guides for more. This is the promise and possibility of public art, and I commend curators Cheryl Haines and Jackie von Treskow for choosing difficult works rather than easily digestible narratives about war and survival.”

– Hyperallergic

“These works… belong to a larger tradition of art and literature that manages to capture and perhaps counter the dehumanising effects of war.”

– The Art Newspaper

“This is what art should do.”

– Mark and Kathleen F.
Inspired by the way postcards were utilized for the @Large: Ai Weiwei on Alcatraz exhibition, the Crissy Field Center wanted to replicate the opportunity for youth to correspond personally and directly with youth around the world who were being directly impacted by the concepts explored through Home Land Security. Youth were invited to write and decorate postcards addressed to Syrian refugee families.

127 Postcards were collected in total and through a partnership with Any Refugee were sent directly to Syrian Refugee families. The Syrian Refugee Postcard Project became an opportunity for students to explore the current conflict in Syria, promote cultural understanding, and to learn how displacement directly effects youth around the world.
Students discussed how Webster’s photography “offers families uprooted by violence the chance to reclaim their heritage, dignity, and sense of belonging through professional photographs.” Students then created their own photo self-portraits and discussed how their personal work could be used to explore their own sense of heritage, dignity, and sense of belonging.

Alexia Webster’s Refugee Street Studio Project inspired Self Portraits

Photo: Robert Divers Herrick
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Vanguard
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