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Moving from One Dark Room to Another

By Leah Garchik

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The mist engulfed the bridge towers and the sky was getting dark, but inside Fort Point, it was even darker. The air was dense, dank, as sound artist Bill Fontana led us to a corner chamber that will be the central listening/watching point for his installation. Mini-flashlights created pinpricks of light, and an iPad was passed around to share images.

Fontana's project, incorporating cameras transmitting views of the bridge and microphones picking up foghorns and sounds of the expansion joints and cables as they vibrate, is part of "International Orange," a series of artists' projects that commemorate the bridge's 75th anniversary. It's produced by Cheryl Haines' For-Site Foundation, which focuses on site-specific art. The work of 16 artists focuses on Fort Point, an elegantly battered and bruised 151-year-old structure at the base of the Golden Gate Bridge, where no weapon has ever been fired.

International orange, of course, is the color of the bridge, and artist Stephanie Syjuco said she began her project by getting a can of paint from bridge workers. Her work, about the structure's iconic status with tourists, is the creation of a "souvenir shop." "The International Orange Commemorative Store, a Proposition," is an art installation in which thousands of objects, everything in the "store," is the same color. She showed us an orange DVD case containing an orange DVD that, when inserted into a player, turns a screen all orange; she showed us three jars of orange powder in an orange case; and she showed us Heath Ceramics' specially produced cups and saucers in this particular international orange.

"As someone really conscious of how things are produced and distributed," Syjuco had been thinking "about the site and specificity of San Francisco as a place of made objects."