

San Francisco Chronicle

Exhibits inside soaring cathedral, stark bunkers

By Charles Desmarais

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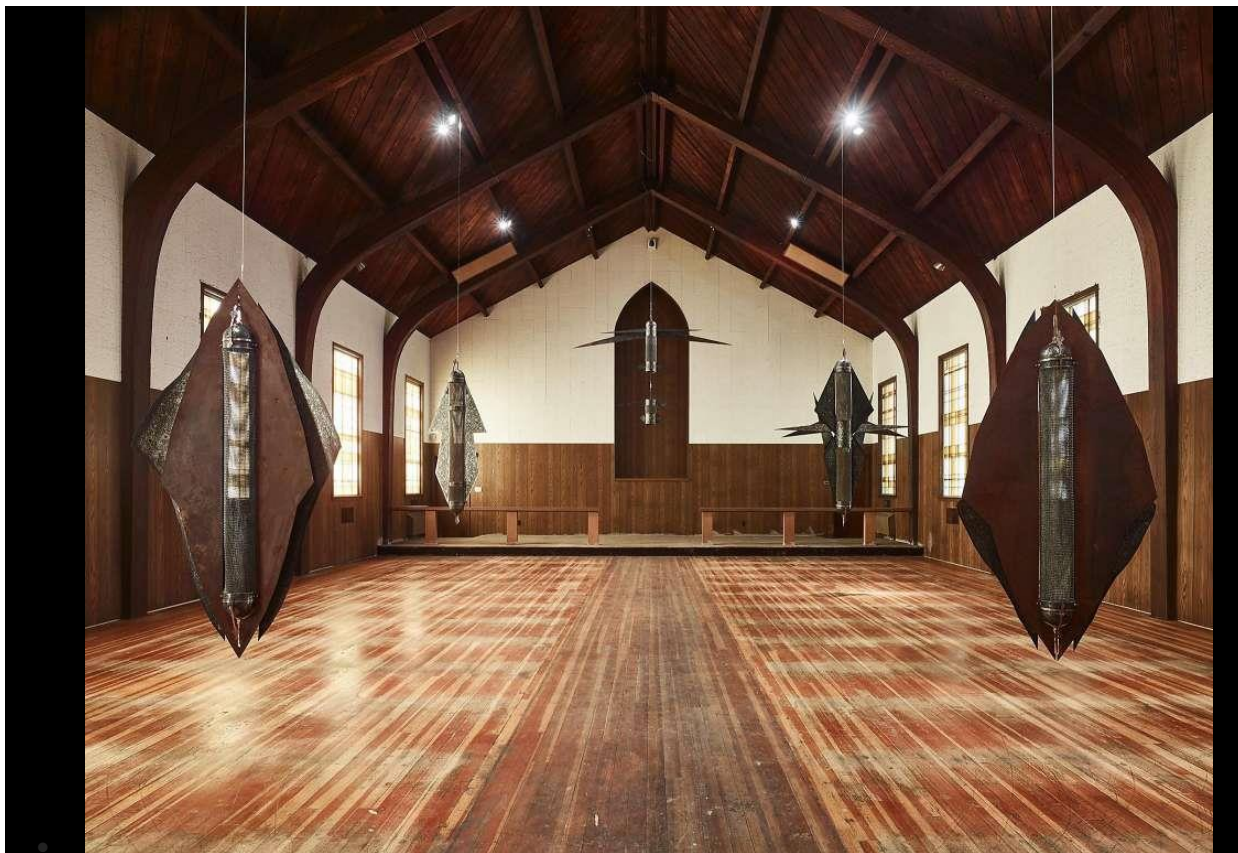


Photo: Robert Divers Herrick, Courtesy The Artist And Nader Ansary

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Shahpour Pouyan's contemporary installation of sculpture recalls traditional mosque lamps.

Two temporary, site-specific art exhibitions are currently on view in stunning environments in San Francisco. Admission is free, and each is a worthwhile special trip, but you had better move quickly if you want to catch them both.

The grand Grace Cathedral has incorporated the contemporary into its art offerings for many years. Beginning in 2012, an artist-in-residence program has commissioned artists to work at the church and with its community for extended periods.

The 2016 project brings together one of San Francisco's most accomplished artists, Jim Campbell, with Benjamin Bergery, a French American cinematographer and media artist who lives in Paris. The first installment of their work opened Sunday, Dec. 11, but the show continues into 2017 (a specific end date has not been established), with plans to add to the work throughout the year.

“Jacob’s Dream: A Luminous Path” is a 50-foot ladder of light, referencing the biblical tale of connection between heaven and earth. Flickering LED images of ghostly figures ascend and descend; some appear to swim, some leap, others simply float.

Meanwhile, the latest exhibition in For-Site Foundation’s series of site-specific art installations closes Sunday, Dec. 18. Like “@Large: Ai Weiwei on Alcatraz” in 2014-15 and “International Orange” in 2012, “[Home Land Security](#)” takes on political questions, presenting them in a public monument freighted with history. “Home Land Security” is set inside military bunkers at the Presidio, dotted along a ridge allowing spectacular, once-strategic views of the Golden Gate Bridge.

The work of 18 international artists is presented. Some of it will be familiar to viewers who have watched contemporary art closely in recent years — Do Ho Suh, Trevor Paglen and Bill Viola are showing works like those seen widely — but it is all of interest. And a surprise like Iranian sculptor Shahpour Pouyan’s intricate metalwork recalling mosque lamps, installed at Fort Scott Chapel, is eye-opening on its own.

A visit involves navigating hilly dirt roads — easy to moderate for most visitors, but real work for those with mobility challenges.

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Jacob’s Dream: A Luminous Path: 8 a.m.-6 p.m. daily (call or check website for occasional holiday restrictions). Free. Grace Cathedral, 1100 California St., S.F. (415) 749-6300. www.gracecathedral.org

Home Land Security: 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Wednesday-Sunday. Through Sunday, Dec. 18. Free. Fort Winfield Scott at Langdon Court, Presidio of San Francisco. (415) 362-9330. www.for-site.org