

Chester Arnold

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HILL** *Gazette*

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The former Cliff House, now part of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, is situated at Lands End in San Francisco. | Photo courtesy of Terrance Emerson / [shutterstock.com](https://www.shutterstock.com)

***An iconic structure is resurrected with the installation of an exhibition focused on climate change.***

**S**an Francisco's Cliff House has long teetered on the edge of the world. Famed for its panoramic views of the Pacific Ocean, the Victorian-era landmark has been destroyed and rebuilt several times throughout its history, once after a schooner carrying explosives crashed into the rocks near Point Lobos, and again after succumbing to multiple fires. Now, it will be transformed into an art gallery, where a forthcoming exhibition will ask visitors to contemplate the changing climate.

*Lands End*, presented by San Francisco-based For-Site Foundation and the National Park Service, will make its debut November 7 and run through March. The show includes 26 contemporary artists whose work explores the tenuous ground upon which humanity stands in the face of a warming world.

"I have long wanted to do something more about climate and environment," says **Cheryl Haines**, the For-Site Foundation's founder and executive director. "But I don't arbitrarily choose a topic to focus on unless I have the right site to hang the ideas off of. So when this building was offered just a few months ago, frankly, I jumped on it because I knew this would be my only opportunity."

Haines, a longtime gallerist and curator, is no stranger to site-specific installations that blend art and the natural world. For-Site's previous exhibitions have featured shelters for grey foxes and hummingbirds, and is widely known for British artist **Andy Goldsworthy's Wood Line**, a winding trail of Eucalyptus trunks that snakes through the Presidio's Lovers' Lane.



Daniel Beltrá's Oil Spill #12 is a digital pigment print that measures 40" × 60". | Photo courtesy of Daniel Beltrá And Catherine Edelman Gallery

With *Lands End*, Haines is moving the experience indoors. The Cliff House restaurant was vacated in December by its longtime owners, **Dan** and **Mary Hountalas**, after pandemic losses piled up and they were unable to reach a long-term lease agreement with the National Park Service.

While the building awaits its next operator, the space will be on display as never before, allowing visitors to meander through the bar spaces, prep areas, trash rooms and bowels of the kitchen.

Although it's no longer inhabited by the frenetic flurry of line cooks, sous chefs and servers, one of the kitchens has been transformed into a feast for the eyes. **Richard Lang** and **Judith Selby Lang** of One Beach Plastic have installed a series of plates brimming

with all-white plastic debris, including old toothbrushes and cigarette lighters the couple collects on Kehoe Beach in Inverness.

"It's going to look like a nightmare," says Richard Lang, "which we're happy to wake people up to." The installation, called *Unaccountable Proclivities*, is a reminder, the couple says, not only of our disposable, single-use culture but also that we are what we waste.

In recent years, scientists have found microplastics everywhere they've looked for them — atop Mount Everest and in the deepest depths of the ocean. Plastics show up in our beer and table salt, drifting in the air, and falling with the rain. "It's the substrate of our lives," says Judith Selby Lang. "We are surrounded by it."

Other artists, like **Mark Dion** and **Dana Sherwood**, explore humanity's relationship to food waste and a culture of excess. At first glance, *Confectionery Marvels and Curious Collections* serves up a fanciful display of decadent desserts. But upon closer inspection, the molded resin confections crawl with beetles, flies and other insects.

Others have drawn inspiration directly from the ocean. Local artist **Ana Teresa Fernández** will install her haunting sculpture, *On the Horizon*, which features 16 acrylic cylinders brimming with seawater pulled from the Pacific. Each pillar is 6 feet tall, representing the estimated height of sea-level rise San Franciscans might face.



For-Site Foundation founder Cheryl Haines curated the *Lands End* show | Photo courtesy of Haines: Jan Stürmann And For-site Foundation

For Fernández, the threat of sea-level rise was purely theoretical until she realized that being 5-feet- 10-inches tall, the rising seas would swell well above her head. The question started to nag her: "How can I suspend 6 feet?"

The work's previous installations inhabited the shoreline of Ocean Beach, where children and dancers zigzagged through the sculpture as waves crashed over their clear foundations. "You can't provide scale unless you are next to something," says Fernández.

The exhibit also considers — through sculpture, painting, textiles and video — how climate change intersects with other critical issues like racial equity, human rights, forced migration and colonialism.

Works like **Brian Jungen's** turtle shell made from rubber stools that sit atop a plinth of filing cabinets examine the devastating effects of colonialism on Native peoples. **Doug Aitken's** video installation highlights the burgeoning conflicts between human and animal territories. "Artists are so articulate and so skilled in being able to bring us toward a difficult topic of conversation in a way that doesn't always provide answers, it just asks questions," says Haines. "It's really important to me as a curator that these projects get created with a light touch — wooing people into this dialogue."

San Franciscans are reemerging from the coronavirus pandemic in a moment where climate anxiety is on the rise, and new reports offer bleak assessments about the future of our planet. But Haines is hopeful that *Lands End* will serve as an artful contemplation of what it means to be alive right now — and the interconnectedness of all the issues represented in this historic space.

"We've been so isolated in our own heads, our own bodies, that I think being able to go and view something and have something new to discuss and consider, to share with others — I think that's going to be very powerful," she says.

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