

Al Farrow



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Al Farrow's '*White House*' reflects on presidencies

Artist comments on changing government in Catharine Clark Gallery show



Al Farrow's "*The White House*" is the centerpiece of an exhibition at Catharine Clark Gallery opening May 18. (Courtesy photo)

By Jackie Lee

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Catharine Clark Gallery in San Francisco focuses on the political arena with “The White House,” a group show opening this week with a large replica of The White House by Al Farrow as its centerpiece.

It’s not white, though. Made of rusted, corroded metal and covered in bullets and casings, it represents Farrow’s concerns about U.S. presidencies and the changing conditions of the U.S. government.

Farrow calls orange the color of corrosion.

His purpose in creating the sculpture is to address the last 40-plus years of the presidency, during which each president in turn has expanded the influence of the office by declaring wars without the support of Congress.

He planned to create it when George W. Bush was in office, but when Barack Obama was elected president, he felt hopeful about the positive changes about to take place and abandoned the project.

When Donald Trump won the election, Farrow felt the time was right to resurrect the piece and continued to work on it. He added a flickering light inside the structure, representing the television that is reportedly on night and day at the White House.

The mainframe is a welded steel structure, made in three sections and bolted together.

Though he has a technical background, Farrow says the engineering part of this project was challenging.

He had a full-time assistant to help with the welding, and they worked together for 22 months to complete it. “By far the longest I’d ever worked on a piece to date,” he says.

Aside from technical issues, Farrow said the personal element was a challenge: “It was emotional and expensive, it took a long time to complete, and the size of the pieces dictates the need for a very large studio and warehouse.”

Still, the project didn’t take too big of a toll on him. He says, “I am aware of every single detail when working, and my brain gets all tangled up, but I don’t carry it with me. On the

contrary, I have a wonderful wife and family, and I keep my work issues separate from my personal life. “I’m really a very happy person.”

Also on view in “The White House” are Chester Arnold’s painting “*Crowdsourc*,” Sandow Birk’s gravure etchings on copper plates in the “*Imaginary Monuments*” series, Deborah Oropallo’s video work “*NRA*” about journalism, and Stephanie Syjuco’s photograph “*Total Transparency Filter (Portrait of N)*” about an undocumented immigrant.

