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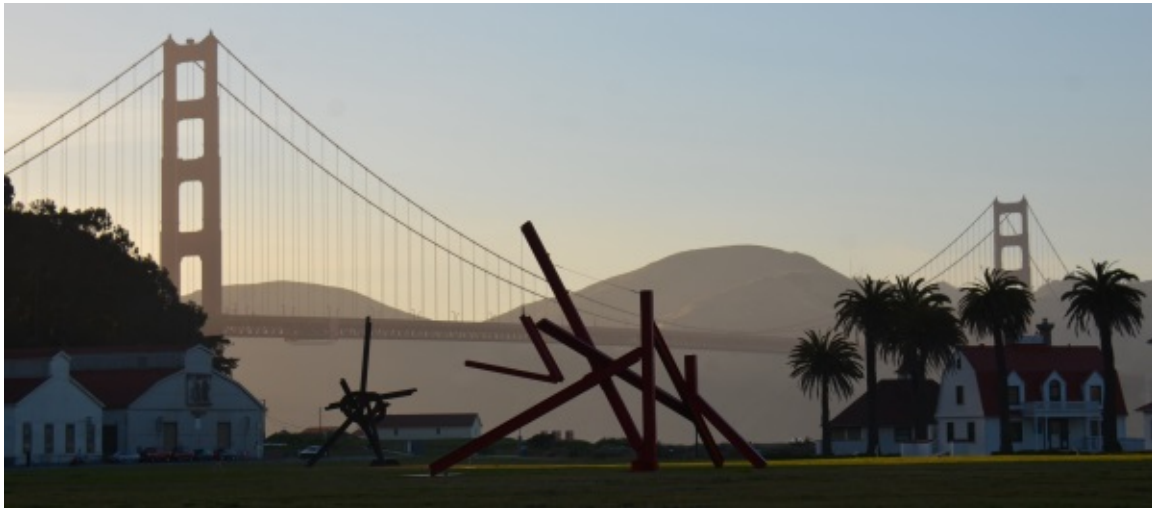
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In awe of Mark di Suvero at Crissy Field

MODERN ART NOTES

Art-focused Journalism by Tyler Green

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From along Lincoln Blvd., a hundred feet above Crissy Field, the eight sculptures look like Mark di Suvero tiddly-winks. They were installed here by the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the first of numerous shows the museum is launching beyond its walls while it's closed for expansion until 2016. The di Suveros remain on view for a year, through May 26, 2014. This is not a full retrospective or a scholarly investigation of an oeuvre. It's a fireworks show, a museum flexing its muscles, an opportunity both created and seized. [Image via Flickr user Steve Rhodes.]

That's fine. The installation, organized by SFMOMA director Neal Benezra, is jaw-dropping. It briefly surveys 45 years of di Suvero's large-scale steel sculpture, from the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden's magnificent 1967 *Are Years What? (for Marianne Moore)* to Magma, which di Suvero fabricated last year.

The sculptures are spread out along Crissy Field, more or less evenly spaced between the western end of the ground, near the Golden Gate Bridge, and the eastern side, where downtown and the Palace of the Legion of Honor rises behind them. The setting is impossibly dramatic — you could probably install 10 big Damien Hirst dot paintings in the seemingly sunken stage between the hilly Presidio and Alcatraz Island and they'd look good — but the di Suveros more than hold their own.



What does that mean, *hold their own*? As I walked around the sculptures on Saturday, a persistent fog leaving only the barest sliver of Golden Gate Bridge roadbed visible, I found myself repeating sentences like that as if its meaning was self-evident: *The di Suveros really hold the space. They stand up to it.* And yet one of the pleasures of the installation is that from a distance, be it from Lincoln Blvd. or from a hundred yards away, a 14.5-ton di Suvero looks impossibly accidental, like Paul Bunyan had blown the fluff off a massive di Suveran dandelion onto Crissy Field. The sculptures seemed simultaneously light and eternal, immense and self-contained, solid and in-motion. (Which, in fact, they were — the wind coming off the fog was moving parts of several sculptures). [Image via Flickr user [Steve Rhodes](#).]

Perhaps the best testimony to how the di Suveros ‘hold their own’ here is how they insist on being looked at despite the intense competition around them. Crissy Field is one of America’s — heck, the world’s — most dramatic urban spaces. There’s lots to look at: the Golden Gate, the Marin headlands, the bay, Mount Diablo rising above the East Bay hills, the sudden verticality of downtown, but I found myself mostly staring at the di Suveros, wondering how every I-beam seemed to be attached to the ground or to another I-beam at an angle that made perfect sense, that kept the whole tight and concentrated, while still extending steel into space in a way that opened up the composition — and with it possibility. The famous orange of the Golden Gate Bridge seemed borrowed from di Suvero, not the other way around.