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San Francisco galleries to join #J20 Art Strike

By Leah Garchik

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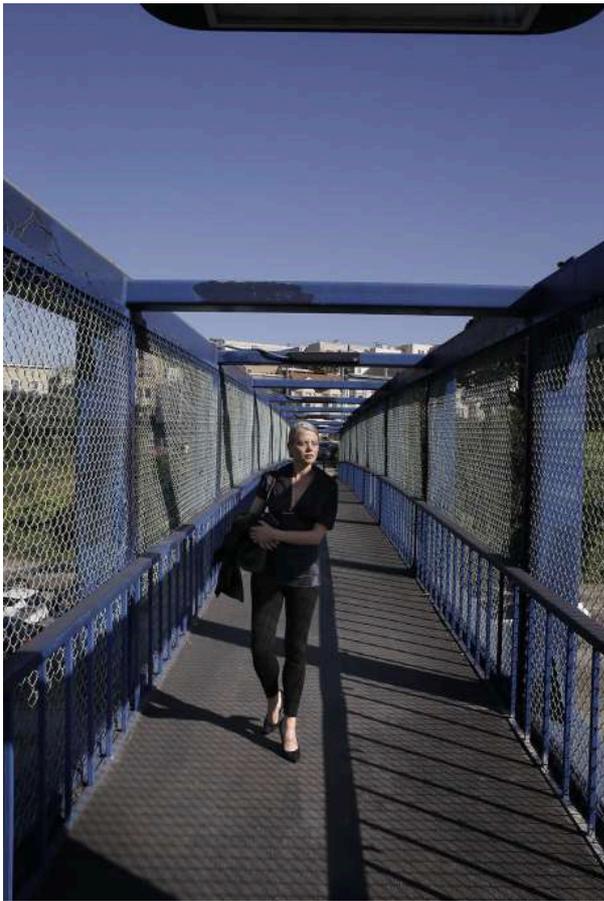


Photo: Michael Macor, The Chronicle

“In solidarity with the brave demonstrators who are marching on Washington and peacefully protesting in their own cities,” said an email from Altman Siegel Gallery at the Minnesota Street Project, the gallery will be closed on Saturday, Jan. 21. “As a cultural institution committed to fighting the sexism, racism and xenophobia expressed by the incoming administration, Altman Siegel invites its community to assemble and take action on this upcoming inauguration weekend.”

On Saturday, the day of the Women’s March in San Francisco, only five of the 17 galleries at Minnesota Street will be open. The closings are in keeping with the #J20 Art Strike first organized in New York, which is formally about closing on Inauguration Day Jan. 20, but extends to Saturday in order to allow gallery workers to participate in the marches.

“If we lose you as a supporter,” said an email from **Eleanor Harwood** about the decision to close her gallery, “I am sorry to see you

go. I really do wish you the best, even if we politically disagree; however, I can not be silent.”

Some San Francisco art dealers who, while agreeing with the need to express discontent with a new administration they feel will be hostile to supporting fine art and the arts in general, wonder whether being closed is the right tactic. “He would like to shut down contemporary art,” said **Catharine Clark**, whose gallery in the nearby DoReMi district on Utah Street will be closed Saturday to allow staff to march.

The George Lawson Gallery on Potrero Avenue will close Friday and Saturday, “as an expression of concern and dismay over the policies and position of the incoming administration,” and the Brian Gross Gallery, also on Utah Street, will be closed on Friday “in solidarity” with the strike, said Gross. But “I’m wondering if we aren’t cutting off our nose to spite our face,” said Clark. “What I want to do is for all of us to show up at artists’ studios,

museums and performances. ... It is our duty to give voice to divergent opinions.” Clark added that she doesn’t want to do what she thinks the new administration “wants us to do, to be quiet.”

Southern Exposure art space will also be closed Friday and Saturday in solidarity with the strike. But after discussing the matter via email, administrators of Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Museum of the African Diaspora and the Contemporary Jewish Museum decided to remain open. “We wanted to create places for people to come to,” said YBCA’s **Deborah Cullinan**. (YBCA will be free on Friday and Saturday; MoAD and CJM will be free on Friday.)