



# Open Secret

Terry  
Berlier

Curated by Aimee Le Duc  
Commissioned by the San Francisco Arts Commission Gallery

Exhibition Dates: July 15 - August 27, 2011  
Available for viewing 24 hours a day, seven days a week

SFAC Storefront Installation Site  
155 Grove Street  
San Francisco, CA 94102  
[www.sfartscommission.org/gallery/](http://www.sfartscommission.org/gallery/)  
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Terry Berlier

For the 2011 exhibition program, I invited Terry Berlier to install work in the San Francisco Arts Commission's window installation site at 155 Grove Street, located in the south side shadows of City Hall. This 20' x 26' space was the original location of the Arts Commission until after the Loma Prieta earthquake. Before that the building housed an auto repair shop. In its current iteration as an art site, viewers cannot enter the space, but instead access the work through the window only, creating a distance between the work and the viewer that can be the space's biggest challenge as well as one of its most appealing features. Grove Street is also a laboratory, a site of experimentation and at times failure but more often it is a site of grand discovery, which is why 155 Grove Street made a striking backdrop for Terry Berlier's installation Open Secret. Berlier's practice relies on experimentation, invention and trial and error. These actions are ever present in her work and just as 155 Grove Street still holds the markings of its past identities and uses, Berlier uses subtle markings as well as sophisticated tactics to communicate her honest approach to the memories that define us, to the histories we try to forget and to the greatest challenges we confront.

As a multi-disciplinary artist, Terry Berlier uses and reuses found objects and simple tools in concert with machinery and woodworking to create kinetic sculptures and installations that employ humor, word play and simple interactions as strategies for breaking apart major social and political issues ranging from environmental disasters to queer identity.

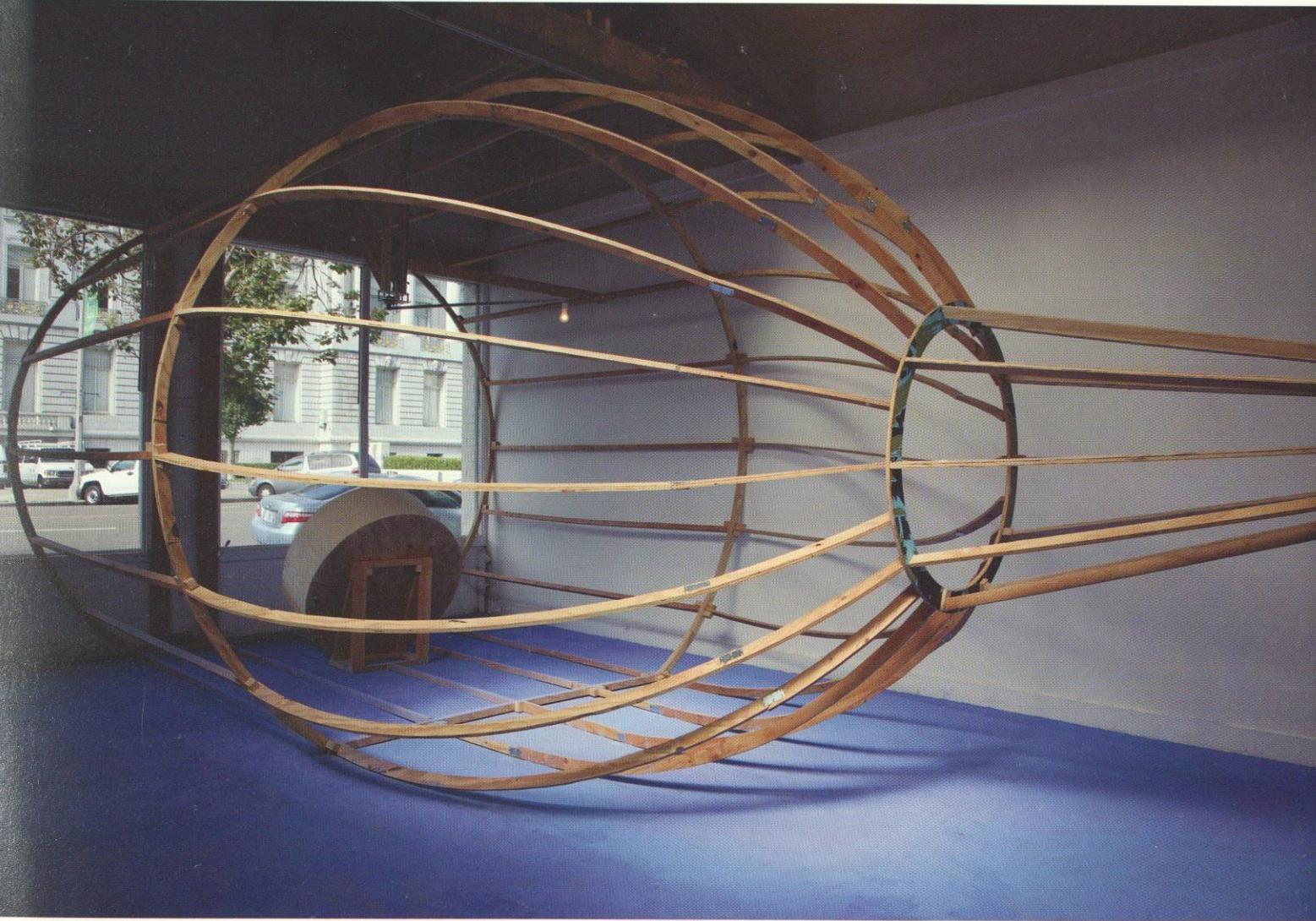
In Open Secret, Berlier has installed a wooden frame in a dome like shape on its side conjuring up images of the dome of City Hall or the long deep towers of nuclear power plants. In the foreground is a mirror lined metal drum with a blue neon spiral inside. A single light bulb rotates above the drum and around the wooden structure. In the back corner, a toy monkey clangs his symbols on top of a red light. The entire floor is covered with a thin layer of blue chalk.

According to Berlier's statement, Open Secret is "partially a response to the recent nuclear plant catastrophe in Japan and in consideration of the United States massive storage of over 65,000 metric tons of nuclear waste. The installation uses visual elements drawn from found web images of spent nuclear storage facilities. The installation is not meant to be a literal representation of this imagery but rather an interpretive experience that considers the confluence of "open secrets"; dependent cycles of man-made energy and the incapacity to fathom the time that is calculated when accounting for the storage of nuclear waste. Playing with notions of time and space, via the illusion of extended space created by a blue neon sculpture with mirror, implies infinity and the time needed for nuclear rods to become harmless. Other sculptural elements physically and metaphorically reference the fuel rod containment systems. Sculptural elements, including a standard household light bulb that performs a kinetic loop suspended from the ceiling, act as a silent reminder of the cyclical nature of energy consumption, waste and invention."

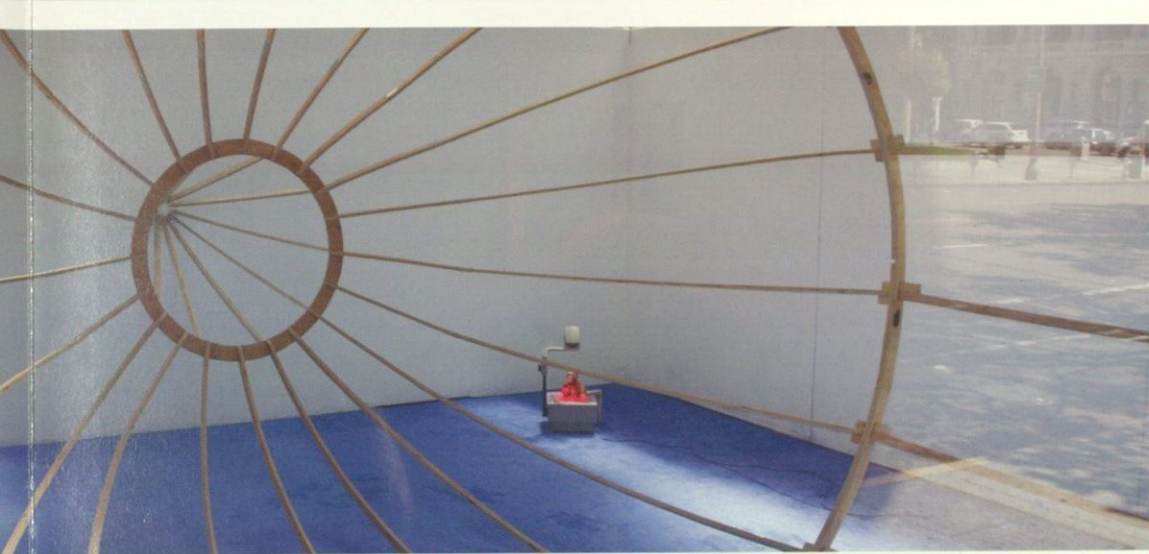
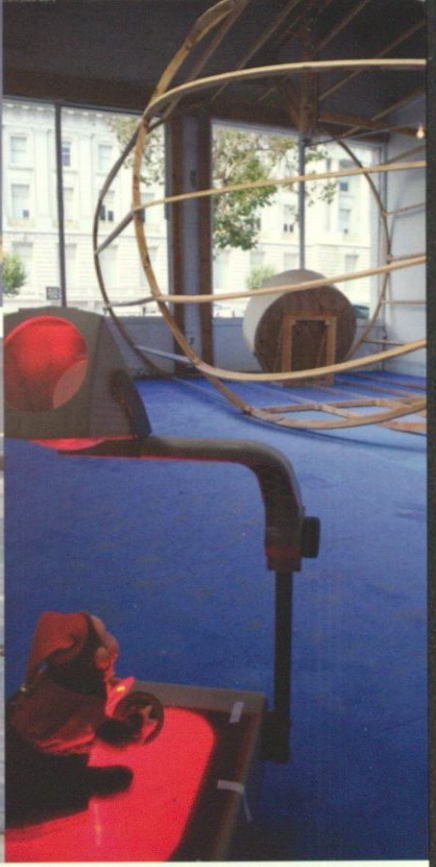
Open Secret aptly consumes the volume of Grove Street with both the objects that are there and not there. The singular light sources, simple colors and small movements are a way to draw viewers toward the window, but the overall piece is not a literal illustration of a nuclear plant catastrophe. It is instead as a gesture toward living with these catastrophes and their threats and consequences over the last fifty years. This is not a simple idea and Berlier's work never lets the viewer walk away with one convenient interpretation. Viewers are instead invited to give voice to this 'open secret', to ask questions about the world's dependence on nuclear power and how it is and is not regulated.

Open Secret is not merely an indictment of Japan and the United States using nuclear energy. It is not only a criticism of the media's short-term interest in nuclear and other environmental disasters, it is all of these in part, but also a call for participation in Berlier's dedication to the process of discovery through the conversations that occur in the space between the viewer and the work.

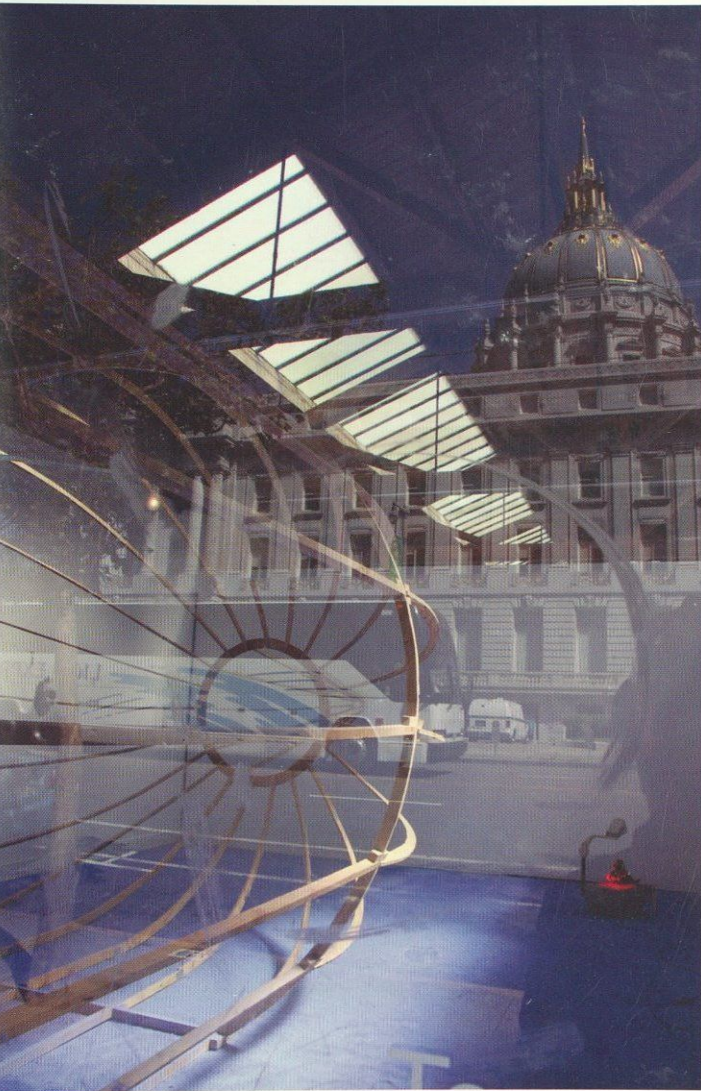
Aimee Le Duc  
Gallery Manager, SFAC Gallery











Terry Berlier is an interdisciplinary artist who works primarily with sculpture and expanded media. Her work is often kinetic, interactive and/or sound based and focuses on everyday objects, the environment, ideas of nonplace/place and queer practice. She has exhibited in solo and group shows both nationally and internationally including the Contemporary Jewish Museum of San Francisco, Richard L. Nelson Gallery in Davis CA, Center for Contemporary Art in Sacramento, Kala Art Institute Gallery in Berkeley, San Francisco Arts Commission Gallery, Natural Balance in Girona Spain and FemArt Mostra D'Art De Dones in Barcelona Spain. Her work has been reviewed in the BBC News Magazine, San Francisco Chronicle and in the book 'Seeing Gertrude Stein' published by University of California Press. Her work is in several collections including the Progressive Corporation in Cleveland Ohio, Kala Art Institute in Berkeley California and Bildwechsel Archive in Berlin Germany. She has received numerous residencies and grants including the Zellerbach Foundation Berkeley, Arts Council Silicon Valley Artist Fellowship, Michelle R. Clayman Institute for Gender Research Fellow at Stanford University, Recology San Francisco, Hungarian Multicultural Center in Budapest Hungary, Exploratorium: Museum of Science, Art and Human Perception in San Francisco, Arts Council Silicon Valley Artist Fellowship, California Council for Humanities California Stories Fund and the Millay Colony for Artists. She received a Masters in Fine Arts in Studio Art from University of California, Davis and a Bachelors of Fine Arts from Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. She currently is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Art and Art History at Stanford University.