

RICHARD LOHMANN

RECENT WORK



San Francisco Bay. Port of San Francisco.

Avenue 25 Gallery Presents:
Richard Lohmann--Recent Work

With Support from the Luminous Landscape Endowment

Exhibit Dates: 9.10.09–11.06.09

Artist Reception: Saturday September 12, 1:00–3:00

Avenue 25 Gallery, 32 West 25th Ave, Second Floor, San Mateo. 94403

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Richard Lohmann – Recent Work

For the last several years Richard Lohmann has been making photographs that explore Maritime themes. These photographs are organized into suites of images that include: *Harbors and Ports, Shipyards and Dry Docks, Wrecks and Salvages and Waterways and Shipping Lanes.*

These photographs reside comfortably between the boundaries of documentary and interpretative landscape photography.

The photograph “*The Wapama, The Last of the Pacific Steam Schooners,*” describes a ship that has sat on a barge since 1979 as property of the San Francisco Maritime Museum. It is no longer sea worthy because it suffers from catastrophic dry rot. Accordingly the Wapama is not useful as a working vessel, and may be too expensive to restore. This and other photographs from the suite *Wrecks and Salvages*, explore ships that fall into a category Richard describes as “the broken and the damned” — where these ships become a metaphor for mortality.



Wapama. The Last of the Pacific Steam Schooners.



Wapama. Port Side. Richmond, CA.



Ghost Fleet, Benicia, CA.

A reserve fleet is a collection of naval ships equipped for service but not currently needed. They are partially or fully decommissioned. A reserve fleet is informally said to be “in mothballs”; an equivalent expression in unofficial modern U.S. Naval usage is “ghost fleet”. In British usage, these ships were said to be “*laid up in ordinary*”. Such ships are stored in reserve for a time when they may be needed for service.

After Pearl Harbor, when much of the U.S. fleet was destroyed, it was considered prudent to preserve ships no longer in use. But with the changes in modern warfare these ships are now hopelessly obsolete. Anchored in Suisun Bay like they are frozen in time.

The fleet was painted with lead based paint, which is now exfoliating and collecting at the bottom of Suisun Bay. A 2007 study by the federal Maritime Administration had concluded that as much as 19 tons of paint has flaked off the sides of these ships and contaminated nearby sediments. Federal scientists have concluded that the mothball fleet in Suisun Bay has contaminated shellfish and bay mud with toxic heavy metals such as lead, zinc, copper and other toxic materials such as PCBs.

Ghost Fleet, Benicia, CA, describes old ships long past their useful lives that are now polluting the bay—shown against a backdrop of oil refineries.



Leaving the Golden Gate, Facing the Farallon Islands. San Francisco, CA.

From the suite Waterways and Shipping Channels, the photograph: *Leaving the Golden Gate, Facing the Farallon Islands. San Francisco, CA.*

Looking carefully at the print one can see a tiny ship that is headed to open sea. It's dwarfed by ocean and stormy skies. One can see the faint light of a lighthouse beacon glowing in the distance.



Beyond the Golden Gate, Facing the Farallon Islands. San Francisco, CA.

From the suite Waterways and Shipping Channels, the photograph: *Beyond the Golden Gate, Facing the Farallon Islands. San Francisco, CA.*

Some 60 minutes past the exposure of the previous photograph *Leaving the Golden Gate*, the ship is no longer visible and it has begun its journey to sea.



Drydock #1, San Francisco.

While the photographs literally describe ships, harbors and dry docks, they also employ the use of visual metaphor—which as the architect of comparison creates links between old and the new.



Drydock #2, San Francisco.

Richard Lohmann – Background

As an undergraduate student at San Francisco State University in 1980, Richard took a course called Art and Labor. It was taught by a poet and Longshoreman named Robert Carson. He had organized the Waterfront Writers Association and edited a book of poems and short stories inspired by worker's experience on the docks.

In that class Richard discovered the rich history of the San Francisco waterfront that included the general strike of 1934, and in 1980 came to understand the cataclysmic changes that were taking place in every modern port in the world—the transition from hand-loading cargo to full industrial mechanization.

For the first time Richard saw San Francisco's Embarcadero, China Basin and Hunters Point as historic places undergoing dramatic change; and wanted to create a visual record of those places in transition.

Then, he wandered around piers and docks carrying a big camera and tripod. Free to explore he found amazing things.

In 2006, after sixteen years of making photographs of the natural landscape, Richard found the Wapama sitting on the same barge that was now floating in the Point Richmond harbor. Upon seeing what he considered an old friend, he decided to resume making images containing Maritime themes, but planned to approach the subject with a broader scope than his original photographs.

This exhibit was made possible with the financial support of the Luminous Landscape endowment. Richard Lohmann's photographs can also be seen at the Serat and Ansel Adams Galleries.