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scaffold & access magazine

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INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION

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Permanent Installation

SMOKING SUCCESS

Scaffolding takes
center stage in
colorful display



SMOKING SUCCESS

BrandSafway recently erected a 30-foot-tall trapezoidal scaffold for a one-of-a-kind art performance. **SA** reports.

Some artists work with paint and others sculpt clay. But Judy Chicago works with colored smoke and scaffolding.

That's right: Scaffolding.

In the fall of 2021, BrandSafway crews erected Systems Scaffold in front of San Francisco's de Young Museum for one of Judy Chicago's most-stunning atmospheric art performances: *Forever de Young*. The scaffold was center stage for the event, which was part of the artist's first-ever retrospective, *Judy Chicago: A Retrospective*.

SCAFFOLDING AS ART

Judy Chicago is an artist, author, educator, feminist and humanist whose work and life have redefined art and raised awareness of women's rights to freedom of expression. She is a passionate advocate for the environment and animal rights and has gained world-wide recognition for her stunning use of nontraditional media – including fireworks and scaffolding.

Forever de Young is a site-specific, outdoor atmospheric performance that used fireworks and colorful, non-toxic smoke released into the air from a series of timed canisters positioned on a 30-foot-high trapezoidal scaffold, erected by BrandSafway. Clouds of colorful smoke billowed into the air, the sky serving as the artist's canvas. Spectators were treated to the nine-minute artistic performance that took place on October 16, 2021. The performance also was livestreamed and is available for replay online.

BrandSafway also provides event services for festivals, concerts, sporting events and the theater – but having its scaffold be part of art itself was a first. In collaboration with Chicago's team and Pyro Spectaculars of Rialto, California, the project was laid out and designed by BrandSafway's Steve Baldassarre, project manager-sales; Arnold Moya, foreman; and Edwin Ascencio, construction manager—all based out of the Burlingame, California branch office.



Artist and activist Judy Chicago prepares for the *Forever de Young* performance.

A 1,000-piece scaffold system was created by BrandSafway.

BrandSafway was selected for this unique project because of a long-standing relationship with the de Young Museum. The company provided the exterior perimeter scaffold when the museum was built and has engineered access solutions for maintenance and other work on the property throughout the years.

VERSATILE, SAFE AND BEAUTIFUL

Judy Chicago selected the shape of the scaffold structure for aesthetic and practical reasons. After considering several options, she picked the trapezoidal design because it best matched her artistic vision, especially

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The project was the first time in BrandSafway's history that its Systems Scaffold product was part of the art itself.

when juxtaposed with the museum and surrounding landscape.

“The decision to use scaffolding over another type of support structure was largely based on its functionality,” said Judy Chicago’s Studio Manager Megan Schultz. “The modular system of the scaffolding allowed for flexibility of design and was easy to adapt, which we actually needed to do once we arrived on site and realized that some of the parts needed to be raised.”

NAVIGATING CHALLENGES

The terrain at the installation site was less than ideal. It was uneven and damp, which created concerns about safety and structural integrity. The BrandSafway team worked closely with the artist’s team, museum staff and Pyro Spectaculars to design a solution that was sturdy, sound and safe. Adjustable jacks would keep the structure level and wood plank “sleepers” would prevent the jacks from sinking into the ground. The sleepers helped provide a level base and evenly distributed the weight of the structure.

Because Chicago’s art uses live fireworks, using a fire-safe structure was essential. Flame-retardant scaffolding was safer than other alternatives. The pyrotechnics crew devised a simple method for easily mounting the smoke product on the structure.

Together, the teams took appropriate measures to ensure the structure, museum and surrounding area would not be damaged. The end result: a solid, safe and fire-resistant scaffold structure that was 30-feet-high, 54-feet-wide and 32-feet-deep. It took four crew members four days to build the nearly 1,000-piece scaffold, which was dismantled a few days after the performance.

A TRULY UNIQUE PROJECT

The BrandSafway team enjoyed working with the artist and pyrotechnics company, which was quite a departure from their usual work.

“It was very easy and a great experience working with the BrandSafway team,” said Schultz. “

“Our crews enjoyed it,” said Baldassarre. “It was a break from the usual buildings and jobsites. Plus, we enjoyed answering questions from passersby. People were curious about the exhibit, and it was exciting to play such an important role. We received VIP passes, and a few of us attended the performance and had a wonderful time.” **sa**

“People were curious about the exhibit, and it was exciting to play such an important role. We received VIP passes, and a few of us attended the performance and had a wonderful time. It was amazing to see.”

STEVE BALDASSARRE,
Project manager-sales, BrandSafway.