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'Crosses' Photographs on Display at the Library

By Cathy Tyson



Photo Cathy Tyson

When the first of many crosses started to sprout on a Lafayette hillside opposite the Lafayette BART station in 2006, there was an outcry from both supporters and opponents - some calling the growing art/memorial installation undignified and others seeing it as a poignant reminder of U.S. service members who made the ultimate sacrifice. Perhaps the passage of time has slightly dimmed the novelty of the "Crosses," even as the actual number of them, along with Stars of David and other markers symbolizing soldiers who have died in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, has grown. The memorial has attracted national attention and contains a running count of the number of deaths on the prominently displayed sign that's visible from Hwy 24.

Now roughly eight years since their debut, the "Crosses" are the subject of famous artist Binh Danh's Daguerreotype photographs that are currently on display in the Lafayette Library and Learning Center

gallery through March 21.

It seems only fitting that the very images that represent a painful part of our history have been captured by an artist whose work focuses on heritage, memories, and conflict. Dahn came to the United States from Vietnam when he was only 2 years old. His early work documented his investigation of the Vietnam War using a creative technique to transfer the faces of soldiers who had died in that conflict onto leaves. This collection of 18 Daguerreotype photographs captures similar themes of death, memory, and war. Despite the subject matter, they offer a unique perspective of a very visible Lafayette landmark, taken in a way that emphasizes their historical nature.

The exhibit, "The Crosses: a Protest Against Forgetting," is located in the gallery space in the Lafayette Library and Learning Center's Community Hall. The gallery is open most Monday evenings; call the library for more details at (925) 385-2280.

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