

**Erin Devine**

***Contrab®and***

durational performance with video installation and sound

*The site of the Torpedo Factory in Alexandria has a long and complex story. This performance reflects on Alexandria's intersecting histories of slavery and the manufacturing of weapons, both of which are arguably unified by the objectives of power, resources, and capitalism.*

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**THE HISTORY**

During the Civil War, thousands of slaves made their way to Union-occupied Alexandria for sanctuary. To avoid violation of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, and to safe keep against their concern that slaves would be used militarily against them, the Union Army held them as "contraband." This defined these refugees as a supply gained through war and lawful to withhold from use, emphasizing their status as property.

In 1918, along the same banks of the Potomac River where thousands of escaped slaves had camped in a shanty town riddled with disease, the Torpedo Factory was built to sell armaments to the allies fighting in World War I. It is estimated that 10,000 torpedoes were manufactured, and sunk an estimated 1500 ships during World War II.

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**THE PERFORMANCE**

Beginning earlier today, the artist drags a crate for a total of **4500 yards** -- the launch range of the torpedoes made at the factory. ***Viewers are invited to assist the artist in the completion of this memorializing act.***

The crate is filled with rock and detritus -- suggestive of the scuttled ships and "fill in" (wooden crates filled with debris) that make the framework of banked out land where the factory sits. Emblems of capitalism in the crate also serves as fill-in to indicate the ongoing moral struggles resultant of our economic system.

The sound element includes seismic recordings from submarines and Pacific Ocean waves, in sync with projections of historic photos from Alexandria's public archives.

The artist's performance, in its simplicity and duration, is a memorial to the lives lost as a result of slavery, particularly those in the shanty town who died from disease, and those who were killed at sea by the torpedoes made here, while recognizing the transformation of the factory into a center for art in 1970.