

# “Day for Night”: Tech Crown of the City

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When Godzilla comes to San Francisco, he is certain to take a swipe at the Golden Gate Bridge, a cable car, or the top of the TransAmerica tower. He knows (or at least his film directors do) a good icon when he sees one.

But since May 22, 2018, he is as likely to venture a bite from the dazzling new public art piece, recently alit at the top of the Salesforce Tower. Delicate as a butterfly, “Day for Night” shimmers with subtle images of sunsets, waves, and crowds. These images captured by day via remote cameras sprinkled throughout the city are released at night through the unique work of local art star Jim Campbell, making the tower a beacon for the city as mesmerizing as a bonfire.

At 1,070 feet tall, the Salesforce Tower is never far away, as reassuring as any obelisk. As I walk along Market, sit on my deck, or drive across the bridge, Salesforce provides a visual lighthouse that locates me in space. On its own, however, the tower itself is not quite ready to compete for Godzilla’s swipe. It is after all, not quite the tallest building this side of the Mississippi, and not quite that visibly different from the earlier Gran Torre Santiago by Pelli Clarke Pelli.

Cities, like architecture, are the stage sets of our reality show, and the good ones tell a story. But ever since William Pereira designed the TransAmerica building in 1972, the San Francisco skyline has favored a wallflower approach, lacking buildings with a distinctive personality worthy of an appearance in the latest revue at “Beach Blanket Babylon.” In 1985, “the Downtown Plan” was adopted by the San Francisco City Planning Commission, including Article 13.2, which sought to “foster sculpturing of building form to create less overpowering buildings and more interesting building tops, particularly the tops of towers.”

Is Salesforce less overpowering due to the delicate taper at the tip? Maybe. But “Day for Night” surely puts the twinkle

in the crown by providing a tangible and poetic anchor to this time and place.

Its creator, Jim Campbell, is a manifestation of Bay Area culture, as unique as the Grateful Dead, Levi’s, or Facebook. MIT-trained in engineering, Campbell arrived in the Bay Area to work in technology. Once here, his love of film led him to experiment with his prodigious engineering skills to create unique video art pieces, resulting in more than a dozen patents along the way. Key curators in the Bay Area embraced this new art form and did much to legitimize the genre.

Todd Hosfelt, founder and principal of Hosfelt Gallery, which represents Campbell’s artwork, opined, “‘Day for Night’ is a reflection of the importance of digital technology and San Francisco’s place in that culture and economy. Campbell’s piece atop the Salesforce Tower will not only be an icon of the San Francisco skyline, it will come to be a symbol of this place, at this particular moment in history.”

Exactly. Just stay away, Godzilla! ■

## About the Author



Donna Schumacher is the founder and creative director of Donna Schumacher Architecture (DSA), a boutique architecture practice for small-scale commercial tenant improvements, retail, and residential work in the Bay Area. DSA projects range from one-of-a-kind signature elements for architectural interiors, utilizing Donna’s background in the fine arts, to complex projects requiring multiple permits, tapping into her 30 years of experience with the San Francisco building department. DSA has recently introduced architecture writing to its roster of services. Donna is the founding editor of the tri-chapter the VIEW and its executive editor since 2016.