

JIM SANBORN

American, b. 1945, Washington, DC
Lives and works in Alexandria, VA and Piney Point, MD

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Jim Sanborn's *Analog Projections* series made throughout the American West and Ireland during the late 1990s juxtapose the vastness of the natural landscape with the comparative blip of human technological development. Using a high-powered projector that he designed and built, Sanborn traveled to remote locations where light generated by centers of human population could not be seen. An assistant would project a computer-generated geometric image onto geological formations. Sanborn then photographed these projections, sometimes reaching up to 2000-feet high by 3000-feet wide, with an analog large-format camera, exposing film anywhere from ten to forty-five minutes.



Jim Sanborn, *Kilkee County Claire, Ireland*, 1997, large format projection, digital print.

Unlike the land art of other artists including Michael Heizer's *Double Negative* and James Turrell's *Roden Crater*, Sanborn's intervention is temporary and leaves natural sites unaltered. While Sanborn emphasizes the fundamental geometries that structure Earth's topography, art, and engineering alike, he seems to comment on the overwhelming discrepancy between the slow, enduring continuity of our planet's geology and the short, intense flare of human civilization. There are striking resemblances between some of Sanborn's compositions and those of Impressionist works in the Kreeger collection (see, for instance, Claude Monet's *The Rock Needle and the Porte d'Aval Seen from the West*) which reflect the ongoing inspiration that land and sea have held both as formal subjects and more conceptual registers of time and scale.

Jim Sanborn, whose work has been featured in numerous exhibitions, as well as in prominent public art commissions in the United States and abroad, gained international acclaim with his work *Kryptos*, commissioned in 1988 by the General Services Administration's prestigious Art in Architecture Program for the CIA headquarters in Langley, VA. Emblematic of Sanborn's commitment to research and rigorous fabrication processes, *Kryptos* has captivated audiences for decades with a still unbroken coded message exactly cut into a configuration of copper, granite, and lodestone.

During the 1990s and 2000s, Sanborn continued to explore and expand these questions with work anchored in the landscape and history of the American West, such as *Analog Projections*, *Atomic Time*, and *Terrestrial Physics*. The latter two series explored the cultural impact and devastating psychological trauma of the nuclear age through uncanny recreations of the Manhattan Project laboratory and the first fission of uranium with a massive particle accelerator. In 2016, Sanborn, who studied archeology, turned his focus to the ethical repercussions of the commercial exchange of looted Cambodian antiquities, resulting in the multi-faceted body of work *Without Provenance*.