

# The Colors I Cannot Explain

A project by Brandon Bauer

*I saw a bright blast, and I saw yellow and silver and orange and all sorts of colors that I can't explain. Those colors came and attacked us, and the ceiling beams of the wooden school along with the glass from the window shattered and blew away all at once.*

-Michiko Kodoma (A Seven Year Old Survivor of the Atomic Bombing of Hiroshima)

In the video installation *The Colors I Cannot Explain*, two screens loop archival footage of the aftermath of the U.S. atomic bombing of Hiroshima. On one screen is footage of atomic survivors with a repeated close-up of a survivor's eyes, as well as details of documentation of survivor's wounds. On the other is footage from the United States Strategic Bombing Survey (USSBS), of a man from the US Military standing in the rubble of Hiroshima pointing at the ground. This footage repeats as the man looks up and down, and the color of this footage shifts several times as the loop cycles. The viewer becomes positioned between the documentation of the aftermath, and facing the witnesses, when confronted with the eyes of the survivors of the bombing. The audio within the installation is comprised of ambient wind and the alarm vocalizations of the Japanese red-crowned crane, creating a haunting yet hopeful atmosphere in the installation.

The works on display from the *1000 Suns* series are part of an ongoing project of archival photo documentation of above ground nuclear tests conducted by United States. Of the over 1000 nuclear tests conducted by the United States, approximately 200 were tested above ground between 1945 and 1962. Using archival test film, the *1000 Suns* project captures images of above ground nuclear tests at the moment of the brightest explosive flash. Each print in the series pairs the minimal image of the explosive flash with a reference image of the mushroom cloud produced by each test. The minimal images of these explosions, visually and metaphorically address the limits of vision inherent in the development and deployment of nuclear weapons.

The work *AN602: Tsar Bomba* is a single-channel video of manipulated archival footage from the Russian AN602 Hydrogen Bomb Test. This test remains the largest artificial explosion in human history. The flash point of the explosion from the test footage has been slowed down and re-edited to pulsate and go through subtle color shifts before the footage resumes and the mushroom cloud appears. The color shifts coincide with aspects of color found in the prints from the *1000 Suns* project. The work also offers a minimal and meditative reading about the limits of vision inherent in the development and deployment of these weapons.

## Works In The Exhibition

- *The Colors I Cannot Explain*, Two-Channel Video Installation - Channel One (The Hibakusha): 04:41 color/sound (Looped) / Channel Two (USSBS): 04:41 color/silent (Looped) + Wall Text
- *AN602: Tsar Bomba*, Single Channel Video (Looped), 03:21 color/sound
- Selections from the *1000 Suns* Series, Each Image 32"x44" Archival Pigment Print on Canvas

## About The Artist

Brandon Bauer is a multi-disciplinary artist based in Wisconsin. His work explores themes of social justice, democracy and war, as well as critical histories embedded in cultural ephemera. Brandon has exhibited his work nationally and internationally.

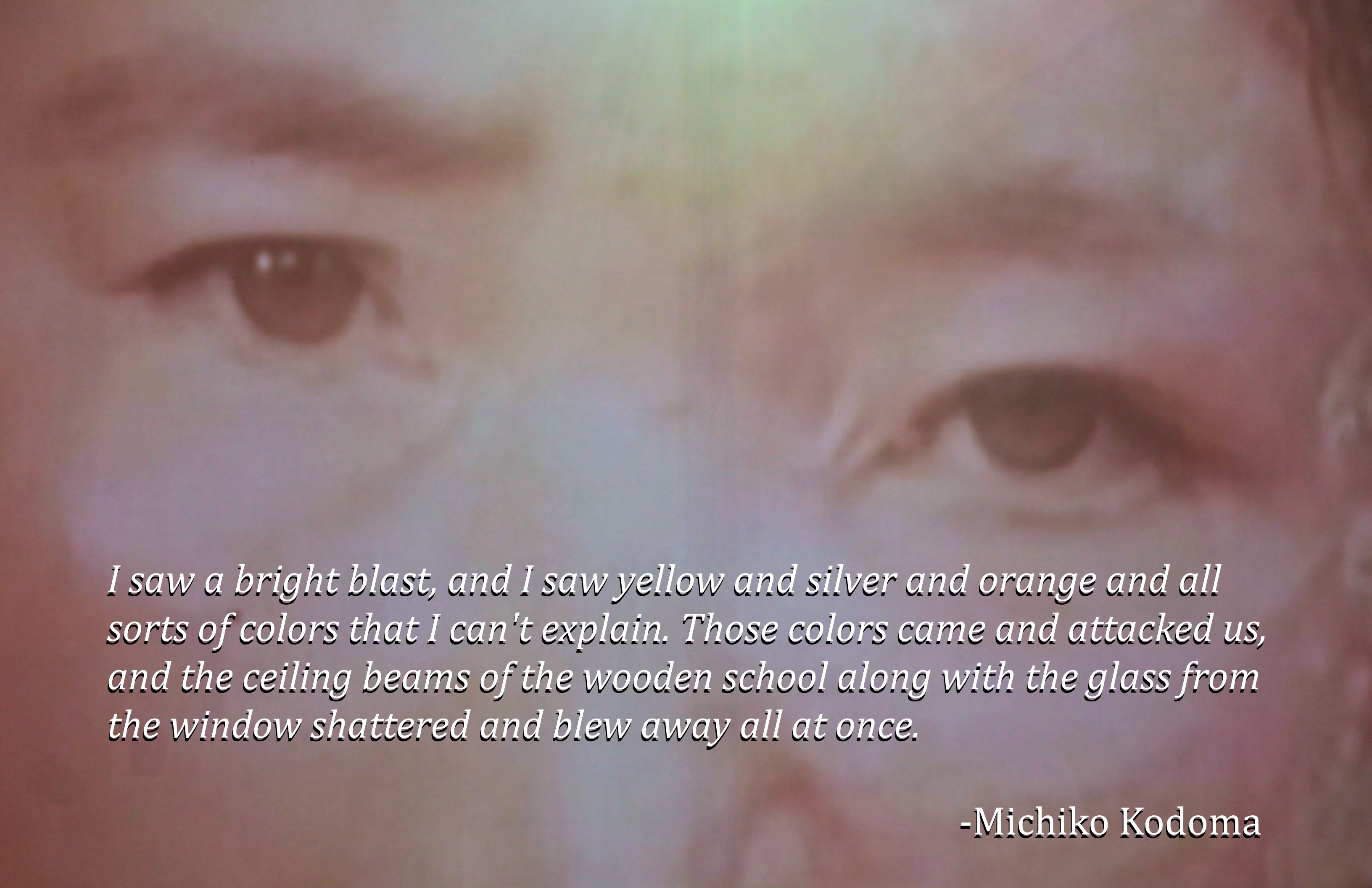


Installation Views of *The Colors I Cannot Explain*, Horowitz Center for the Visual & Performing Arts, HCC, Columbia, MD (2015)

## The Colors I Cannot Explain

The works included in the exhibition *The Colors I Cannot Explain* are drawn from recent projects critically examining of the history of nuclear weapons, and creating work based upon material sourced from public archives. The projects include a two-channel video installation titled *The Colors I Cannot Explain*, a selection of work from the *1000 Suns* series, and a single channel video work titled *AN602: Tsar Bomba*. Conceptually the works are brought together through the text that is an element of the two-channel video installation. This quote visually connects the works, and the inexplicable nature of these weapons becomes addressed in differing ways in the works on display.





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**-Michiko Kodoma**