

# *The Colors I Cannot Explain*

A Project by Brandon Bauer



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

## Overview

The exhibition *The Colors I Cannot Explain* features a two-channel video installation critically examining the 1945 atomic bombing of Hiroshima, as well as work which has been drawn from archival photo documentation of above-ground nuclear tests conducted by the United States, and a single-channel video of the Russian AN602 Hydrogen Bomb test, the largest artificial explosion in human history. The exhibition was devised with a desire to create a more nuanced, contemplative, and anti-spectacular image of nuclear weapons.

---

## Artist Statement

The works included in the exhibition *The Colors I Cannot Explain* are drawn from recent projects critically examining the history of nuclear weapons, and creating work based upon material sourced from public archives. The works include the two-channel video installation *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 which 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:

*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 of the attack when confronted with the eyes of the survivors of the bombing.

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 the United States. Of the over 1000 nuclear tests conducted by the United States, approximately 200 were tested above ground between 1945 and 1962. With the passage of the Partial Test Ban Treaty in 1962, all nuclear testing was regulated underground by signatory nations. 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 flashpoint 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 (2014)

### ***AN602: Tsar Bomba***

Single Channel Video - 03:21 color/sound (Looped) (2014)

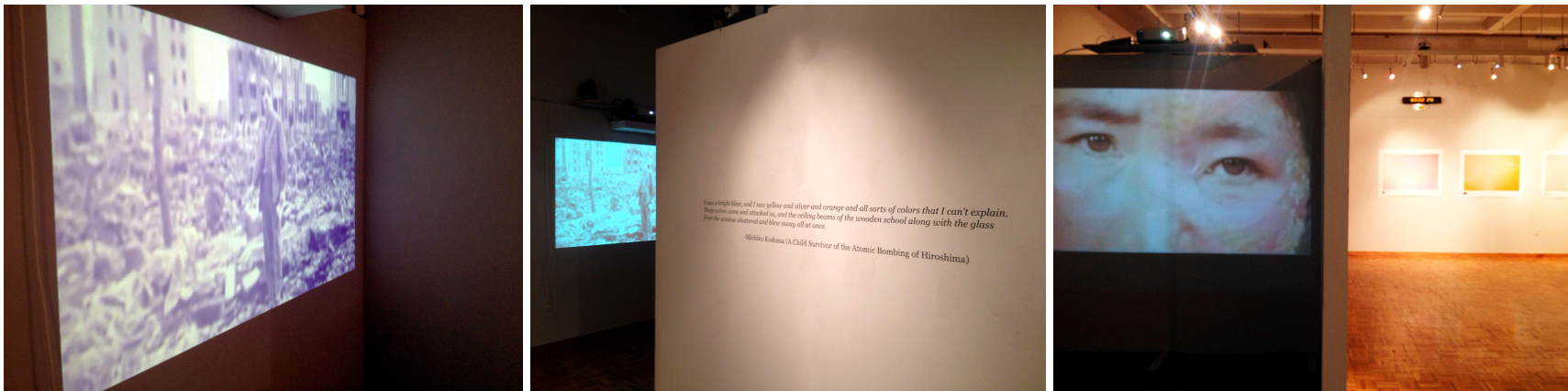
### **Prints from the 1000 Suns Series**

Each Image 32"x44" Archival Giclée Print on Canvas (2014 - Ongoing)

#### **1000 Suns Prints Included:**

- + Trinity/Trinity, July 16, 1945
- + Operation Sandstone/Yoke, April 30, 1948
- + Operation Greenhouse/George, May 8, 1951
- + Operation Buster-Jangle/Charlie, October 30, 1951
- + Operation Tumbler-Snapper/Fox, May 25, 1952
- + Operation Tumbler-Snapper/How, June 5, 1952
- + Operation Upshot-Knothole/Harry, May 19, 1953
- + Operation Castle/Romeo, March 26, 1954
- + Operation Teapot/Ess, March 23, 1955
- + Operation Teapot/HA, April 6, 1955
- + Operation Plumbbob/Boltzmann, May 28, 1957
- + Operation Plumbbob/Franklin, June 2, 1957
- + Operation Plumbbob/Hood, July 5, 1957
- + Operation Plumbbob/Diablo, July 15, 1957
- + Operation Plumbbob/Stokes, August 7, 1957
- + Operation Plumbbob/Fizeau, September 14, 1957
- + Operation Hardtack I/Fig, August 18, 1958
- + Operation Dominic/Frigate Bird, May 6, 1962
- + Operation Dominic/Chama, October 18, 1962
- + Operation Fishbowl/Tightrope, November 4, 1962

## The Colors I Cannot Explain Two-Channel Video Installation



The Colors I Cannot Explain Installation, University of Wisconsin Oshkosh Annex Gallery, Oshkosh, WI (2014)

### ***The Colors I Cannot Explain Installation***

Two-Channel Video Installation - Channel One (The Hibakusha): 04:41 color/sound (Looped) / Channel Two (USSBS): 04:41 color/silent (Looped) + Wall Text (2014)

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 of the attack when confronted with the eyes of the survivors of the bombing.

### **Equipment Needed:**

Two video projectors, two media players, & stereo speakers. Wall text may be vinyl attached to the wall, or optionally can be hand-painted directly on the wall.



The Colors I Cannot Explain Installation Diagram 1



The Colors I Cannot Explain Installation Diagram 2

***The Colors I Cannot Explain Installation details:***

The two channels must be projected on opposite walls from one another so that the viewer is caught between the two projections. The wall text may be included in the installation on a third wall between the two screens, or it may be located outside of the installation near the entrance if there is only one entrance and exit for the installation.



## Select Images from the 1000 Suns Series



### About the 1000 Suns Series:

The 1000 Suns series is an ongoing project of archival photo documentation of above-ground nuclear tests conducted by the United States. The series began in 2014. 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 blast with a reference image of the mushroom cloud produced by each test. The project was initiated with a desire to create a more nuanced, contemplative, and anti-spectacular image of nuclear weapons. The minimal images of these explosions, visually and metaphorically address the limits of vision inherent in the development and deployment of these weapons.



Trinity / Trinity  
July 16, 1945  
White Sands Proving Grounds, New Mexico, USA  
Test Type: Atmospheric (Tower Delivery)  
Yield: 20 Kilotons of TNT



Operation Sandstone/Yoke  
April 30, 1948  
Eniwetok Atoll, Marshall Islands  
Test Type: Atmospheric (Tower Delivery)  
Yield: 49 Kilotons of TNT





Operation Tumbler-Snapper / Fox  
May 25, 1952  
Nevada Test Site, Nevada, USA  
Test Type: Atmospheric (Tower Delivery)  
Yield: 11 Kilotons of TNT



Operation Upshot-Knothole / Harry  
May 19, 1953  
Nevada Test Site, Nevada, USA  
Test Type: Atmospheric (Tower Delivery)  
Yield: 32 Kilotons of TNT

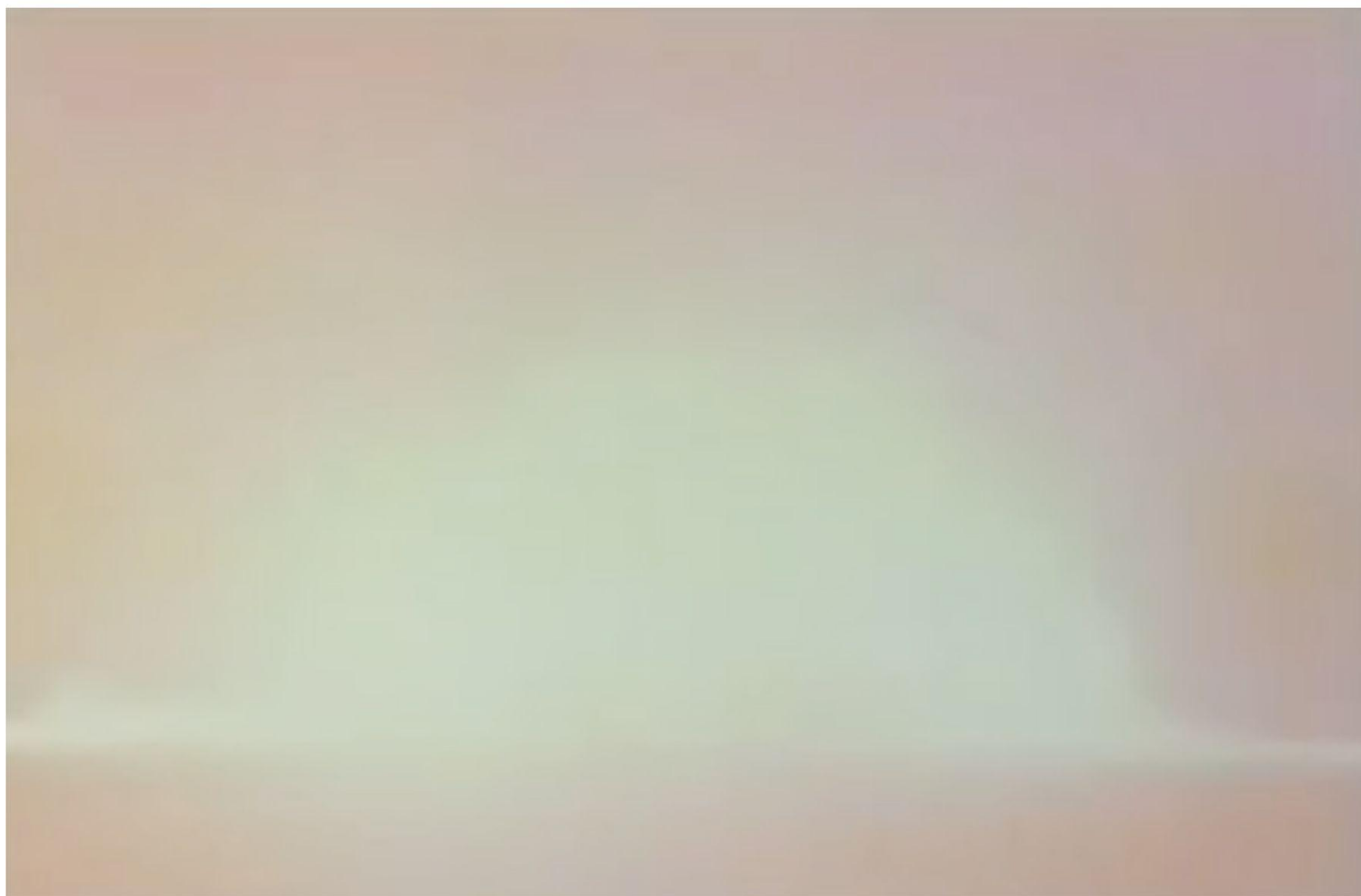


Operation Teapot/Ess  
March 23, 1955  
Nevada Test Site, Nevada, USA  
Test Type: Surface (Gratering)  
Yield: 1 Kilotons of TNT

Operation Teapot/Ess, March 23, 1955



Operation Teapot/HA  
April 6, 1955  
Nevada Test Site, Nevada, USA  
Test Type: Atmospheric (High Altitude - Parachuted)  
Yield: 3.2 Kilotons of TNT



Operation Plumbbob / Diablo  
July 15, 1957  
Nevada Test Site, Nevada, USA  
Test Type: Atmospheric (Tower Delivery)  
Yield: 17 Kilotons of TNT



Operation Hardtrack I/ Fig  
August 18, 1958  
Enewetak Atoll, Marshall Islands  
Test Type: Surface (Dry)  
Yield: 20 Tons of TNT

Operation Hardtrack I/ Fig, August 18, 1958





Operation Dominic / Frigate Bird  
May 6, 1962  
Johnston Atoll, US Minor Outlying Islands  
Test Type: Atmospheric (High Altitude - Rocket)  
Yield: 600 Kilotons of TNT

Operation Dominic/Frigate Bird, May 6, 1962



Operation Dominic / Chama  
October 18, 1962  
Johnston Atoll, US Minor Outlying Islands  
Test Type: Atmospheric (High Altitude - Parachuted)  
Yield: 1.6 Megatons of TNT

Operation Dominic/Chama, October 18, 1962

## Artist Information

**Brandon Bauer** MFA is an Associate Professor of Art at St. Norbert College in De Pere, WI. He uses art as a space for ethical inquiry exploring issues relating to nuclear abolition, terrorism, and the climate crisis by examining critical histories embedded in cultural ephemera. His work utilizes photography, video, digital graphics, and installation. Brandon's work has been exhibited and screened internationally including at the Aces(s) electronic media festival, Pau, France; the European Media Arts Festival, Osnabruck, Germany; the Carnival of e-Creativity, Shillong, India. He has published in journals such as Media-N, Hz, and Arts & International Affairs. His work can be found in several collections including the Center for the Study of Political Graphics (Los Angeles) and the Museum of Contemporary Photography (Chicago).

## Exhibition Technical Information

**Total Insurance Value:** \$2000.00

**Space Requirements:** Approximately 200 Running Feet

**Technical Requirements:** (3) looping media players, (1) flat-panel monitor, (2) projectors (Video support can be flexible based upon the gallery and installation considerations)

**Publication:** (1) Poster publication - A poster publication with an artist statement, exhibition checklist, and images.

**Accompanying Materials:** 50 copies of the poster publication are provided. Additional copies can be provided at \$200 for 50.

**Contact:** Brandon Bauer | [brandon.bauer@snc.edu](mailto:brandon.bauer@snc.edu)

**For More Information:** [brandonbauer.org](http://brandonbauer.org)