

December 15, 1989

Dear Agency Employees:

I am writing this letter to give you an idea of what I am up to at the Agency, and to explain those big tilted slabs of stone.

The stonework in the courtyard and at the entrance to the new building serves two functions.

First, it creates a natural framework for the project as a whole and is part of a landscaping scheme designed to recall the natural stone outcroppings that existed on this site before the Agency, and that will endure as do mountains.

Second, the tilted strata tell a story like pages of a document. Over the next several months, a flat copper sheet through which letters and symbols are cut will be inserted between these stone "pages." This code, which includes certain ancient ciphers, begins as International Morse and increases in complexity as you move through the piece at the entrance and into the courtyard. Its placement in a geologic context reinforces the text's hiddenness as if it were a fossil or an image frozen in time.

An installation in the courtyard further explores this theme. On the paved surface, supported by a petrified tree, will stand a curved, vertical copper plate. Approximately 2000 letters of the alphabet are cut through this plate (a process which requires four months of work). The left side of the plate is a table for deciphering and enciphering code, developed by Blaise de Vigenere in 1570.

Approved for Release
Date JAN 1993

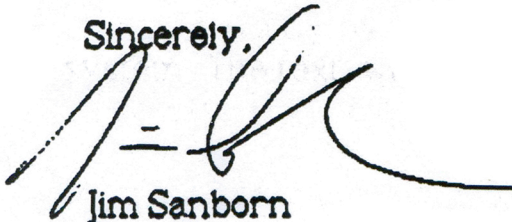
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The right side is a text that can be partly deciphered by using the table and partly by using a potentially challenging encoding system. The text, written in collaboration with a prominent fiction writer, is revealed only after the code is deciphered.

My choice of materials, like code, conveys meaning. At the entrance, a lodestone (a rock naturally magnetized by lighting) refers to ancient navigational compasses. The petrified tree recalls the trees that once stood on this site and that were the source of materials on which written language has been recorded. The copper, perforated by text, represents this "paper." I also use another symbol; water. In a small pool on the plaza, partly surrounded by the copper plate, water will be turbulent and provocative, constantly agitated into standing waves. In the other pool, located among trees in the courtyard and between two massive outcroppings, water will be calm, reflective, contemplative. Other materials around the site - large stones, ornamental grasses, and small trees - are designed to make the natural features surrounding the Agency more visually interesting and thought provoking.

My work at Langley is approximately two thirds complete. If you see me or my apprentices working, please don't hesitate to ask questions about the work.

Sincerely,



Jim Sanborn