

Jan. 30, 2023

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:

Constance Walter, Communications Director
Sanford Underground Research Facility
605.722.4025 (office); 402.560.6116 (cell)
cwalter@sanfordlab.org

SURF selects pair of artists for 2023 Artist-in-Residence Program

Artists Nicholas Kahn and Richard Selesnick will create a body of work inspired by the Sanford Underground Research Facility

LEAD, SD— The Sanford Underground Research Facility (SURF) has selected Nicholas Kahn and Richard Selesnick as the 2023 SURF Artists-in-Residence (AiR). A collaborative artist team working together since the early 1980s, Kahn and Selesnick combine photography, sculpture, costume, and installation art to create scenes that evoke a sense of otherworldliness.

“Kahn & Selesnick have decades of experience creating whimsical artworks that have ties to the real world,” said Gina Gibson, coordinator of the SURF AiR program. “They are able to take a grain of an idea and go off in extraordinarily imaginative directions. I am very excited thinking about the work they will create as a result of their experience at SURF.”

This summer, Kahn and Selesnick will complete an intensive four-week residency at SURF, the deepest underground laboratory in the United States. The artists will visit surface and underground spaces of the facility and explore the scientific concepts being researched. These experiences will inspire a body of artwork, culminating in a public exhibition and outreach presentation in the fall of 2023.

Among themes of time travel, the carnivalesque, fabricated histories and mythology, science is a prominent subject explored in Kahn and Selesnick’s works. In “Apollo Prophecies,” Kahn and Selesnick reimagine the history of the Apollo missions. In this version, 1960s astronauts arrive on the Moon only to discover that Edwardian-era space explorers were already there. In a series commissioned by NASA’s art program, Kahn and Selesnick place a family of featureless characters midst a Martian landscape, using real, high-resolution footage retrieved by NASA rovers.

“We use art as a way to explore all our fascinations, which include science and particle physics,” Kahn said.

“We see ourselves at the intersection of magic and science,” Selesnick said. “Science gets so bizarre at the far ends that it almost resembles magic. The weirder the science, the better.”

Having explored the extraplanetary backdrops of both Mars and the Moon, the artist team is excited to discover a new setting, one deep below the surface of the Earth.

“What goes on underneath [at SURF] is so interesting,” said Selesnick. “And we are interested to explore the landscape above ground as well. It’s these two different, strange, interconnected worlds that reflect each other.”

Kahn and Selesnick have participated in over 100 solo and group exhibitions worldwide and have work in over 20 collections, including the Brooklyn Museum of Art, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Houston Museum of Art, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and the Smithsonian Institution. In addition, they have published four books: *Scotlandfuturebog*, *City of Salt*, *Apollo Prophecies*, and *100 Views of the Drowning World*.

Since 2019, the SURF AiR program has invited artists to create work inspired by SURF. The SURF AiR program leverages the unique characteristics of SURF and the science experiments it hosts to create awareness and encourage interdisciplinary work. SURF will select one piece from the exhibit to become part of the SURF AiR’s permanent collection. This residency is modeled after various programs offered by government, science and industry including the National Park Service, CERN, and Fermilab.

For more information, visit the [SURF AiR program webpage](#).

Sanford Underground Research Facility is operated by the South Dakota Science and Technology Authority (SDSTA) with funding from the Department of Energy's Office of Science. Our mission is to advance world class science and inspire learning across generations. Visit SURF at www.sanfordlab.org.