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# Q, the podcast-CBC Radio One:Interview of Release of "BERLIN" clue. #  
# URL: [http://podcast.cbc.ca/mp3/podcasts/qpodcast\\_20101123\\_41607.mp3](http://podcast.cbc.ca/mp3/podcasts/qpodcast_20101123_41607.mp3) #  
# # #  
# Interviewer: ?? #  
# JS: Jim Sanborn #  
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# Please report any boo boo's to jew\_lee@hotmail.com #  
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**42:58**

**Segway:** [This is Q, the podcast! We're on CBC Radio One, twice each weekday, 10am and 10pm -- 10:30 in Newfoundland. Or check out, Q with Pictures...QTV, at YouTube.com/QTV.]

**43:10**

**Interviewer:** Well, if you've ever been to the CIA Headquarters in Langley, Virginia, you may have noticed one of its best kept secrets, an encryption sculpture, that stands in the courtyard. The 12-ft high sculpture called Kryptos, contains secret codes hidden in the letters, carved out of its 4 panels of curved copper. And since the work of art was erected in 1990, cryptographers have been obsessed with trying to decipher the messages. Now the first 3 panels were solved by 1999, but the final panel, has remained a complete mystery. Now after 20 year it's creator, Jim Sanborn, has final revealed a clue, but will it be enough to help crack the code? Sculpture and cryptographer Jim Sanborn joins me by phone from Washington D.C. this morning. Hello sir.

**44:01**

**JS:** Hi. How are you?

**44:02**

**Interviewer:** [Laughing] I am very well...this is a very fascinating tale you have to tell. So you finally revealed a clue to Kryptos in Sunday's New York Times. You decoded characters 64 through 69 of the final panel. Uh .. For those who haven't read the article yet. What was the clue?

**44:20**

**JS:** I divulged the word...or... place, berlin, B-E-R-L-I-N.

**44:26**

**Interviewer:** And why did you decide to reveal the clue now?

**44:29**

**JS:** Well, this is the month that ..uh..Kryptos was dedicated 20 years ago. It was dedicated on the 5th of November, 20 years ago. and ..ah...it's also my birthday month. And ...um...there are several other

reasons as well. I've been dealing with people calling me, sending emails, appearing on my doorstep, and a whole variety [Interviewer laughs] of things..um..coming to bring their decode of the final panel of Kryptos, the 97 characters, infamously known as K4, for 20 years now and so...I also wanted to try to streamline the system and to make it easier on myself, for telling someone whether they'd cracked the code or not..

**45:14**

**Interviewer:** Well, so...[Stammering]..One of the reasons, if.. ah..I am reading between the lines of what you just said, that you are exhausted by people not decoding your... [Interviewer laughs] ...your puzzle, right? [Stammering]..Ar-Are you surprised no one had cracked the entire puzzle-b-puzzle by now? it's been 20 years, right?

**45:29**

**JS:** Yeah, I am surprised. I mean I had h--I had hoped the final K4 section would last for a very long time. And I designed it in such a way that, you know, that..I-I figured it might. Um...The other sections, which were decoded, still took, you know, several years, I mean almost 8 years to decode. I thought it would take a matter of days or weeks, but it took a very long time to even decode the simplest sections. So, Yes! I've been pleasantly surprised, but as far as I am concerned, if you're an artist, and your-your building an artwork..um...I think if you don't build an artwork that has a lot of content or something that remains in person- in a person's mind, or sticks with them, I don't personally find any reason to make it.

**46:14**

**Interviewer:** So-so Jim ah..ah...this is a very famous piece you've created, but there are people probably listening and have no idea what we are talking about.so take me back...you erected Kryptos, which means hidden in Greek. outside the CIA Headquarters in 1990. What was the purpose of this piece, in the first place?

**46:31**

**JS:** Yeah, I-I mean I entered a competition, and pre-prior to this-and prior to this body of work, or prior to Kryptos, I had been working with the invisible forces of the Earth. Like the magnetic force of the Earth...uh...Coriolis force and various other invisible forces. So the panelist, I think, made a conceptual leap and decided that I was um...qualified to do something with the invisible forces of mankind i.e. something on the Agency's grounds. So I did choose to do a coded piece for the Agency...uh...something to stump the agency and also something to peak the interests of ...ah...viewers.

**47:11**

**Interviewer:** Sheesh and I know you spent four months devising these codes with...ah...the help of a retired CIA cryptographer. I-y-y-you talk about the response you had, especially lately, and over the last few years people...ah...harassing... [Interviewer laughs]... you to a certain extent. Ah...Asking whether they've actually decoded it or not. I mean over the years many have attempted to solve the panel's

codes...some having success with the first three by 1999, as we said, including one CIA physicist, who solved them with only a pen and paper, apparently, on his lunch breaks. What kind of responses have you had from Kryptos code breakers and fans in general?

**47:47**

**JS:** W-W-Well, it's extremely varied. I mean for example, it crosses all sorts of social-economic barriers. It crosses all barriers of race and culture and it's become something of a global phenomenon. And-For example there are apparently...um...persons who have become...uh...disabled...ah...by brain injury and things like this. Kryptos is offered up as a way to recreate the brain.

**48:16**

**Interviewer:** Hmm..

**48:16**

**JS:** and so it is used apparently in many sites in order to...ah... to heal people. And I thought that was a wonderful... [SB laughs]...use of Kryptos.. [Interviewer laughs].and at the same time- I am not sure if you are familiar with the ne-movie "The Beautiful Mind" or the book.

**48:31**

**Interviewer:** Sure.

**48:32**

**JS:** but there is a [Break] -Cryptography, is not dissimilar from the arts. In that the..um..th-the mental state of the ..ah..artist or the cryptographer,..um..is receptive to inspiration during stressful periods and so it's a very much of a savant kind of endeavor. And I'm not really ever- and I d-don't have any of those qualities I mean I can't do any math at all I can't do an algorithm. I can't do anything, but the people who are truly skilled in these areas, are able to do it, but it also--it tends to appeal to a fringe group that are very intense. And so these people get involved, extremely involved, in decoding these things. Th-There are lives that have been wrecked, there are businesses that have gone bankrupt, there are people who have gone on pilgrimages to Kryptos' sites, you know, around the world. Um... things like this and so the audience has just mushroomed..um.. over the decades and I have been very surprised at that response.

**49:37**

**Interviewer:**

And a-And a woman has shown up at your door? Convinced you're--

**49:40**

**JS:** Yeah i mean, people show up at my door step.. [Interviewer laughs]...um..thinking that they had to be there that day to confront me and tell me what they said the code was.

**49:49**

**Interviewer:**

[Laughing]...right..

**49:50**

**JS:** I get copious letters and ...and strange packages, that I kinda [sic] leave outside, or gingerly open from a distance. Because I just...I never know. I mean i never know what...weather...what is going to be sent to me is threatening- I mean, having a secret is having power, and there are a lot of people that resent people who have power, and I-and its...um...I've had threatening emails...Um, on the other hand, I've had emails that are just, you know,- shower me with praise, which is fine but it's, just, you know, it's a challenge and it-it does occupy a portion of my time.

**50:25**

**Interviewer:** As I mentioned, the first three panels have already been decoded. The first is a poetic phrase, composed by you. The second, are to first former CIA Chief William Webster and the third is a passage of the opening of..ah.. King Tut's tomb. I-I mean is there a message behind all this work, in terms of how it relates to the CIA? Is the message that...that a secret holding this secret is power? As you just said?

**50:50**

**JS:** Well it really started out - I mean -I ha- I had an early background in archeology and...ah...things hidden from view always fascinated me. And so I guess a lot of this, especially the King Tut passage was a passage that I have been fond of my whole life. and..um.. my father was a-a directory of exhibitions with the Library of Congress for 30 years, and so I was...I was often given material that was not available to most people. I mean I was able to see it even touch the Dead Sea scrolls. So these kinds of mysteries were always fascinating to me, and so as a result, I chose to use mystery and things hidden from view as part of the CIA Project.

**51:33**

**Interviewer:** Jim, the bestselling author, Dan Brown, has referred to Kryptos in his novels: The Di Vinci Code and the Lost Symbol. What did you make of that publicity?

**51:43**

**JS:** That is -that is actually been very difficult for me. Um... the work that I do and the work that I have always done, exists in a world...um...in the world of contemporary art. And those- that world of contemporary art and the world of...uh...more commercialize popular culture, which is the world in which Dan Brown exists...um...don't have [break] there is not a whole lot of overlap there. I mean the two-the two cultures -I mean one might think the other is an elitist one might think the other is low brow and so, I have...um...in some ways, been pulled into a [break] been pulled into a realm and a meaning for Kryptos which I didn't intend. And...um...so at this point he hasn't done me any favors...

[\*Both talking at the same time]

**52:26**

**\*JS:** ...by...by doing that.

**\*Interviewer:** ...What is that meaning? What's that meaning you didn't intend?

[/\*]

**52:30**

**JS:** Well I've-, the work that I've done fo-for almost a decade now, has been science-based. And so I basically I have come from a science [Stammering]. The work is science is science based. It deals with the reality. I what-I'm w-what I c-call a non-fiction artist

**53:46**

**Interviewer:** Um Hmm..

**53:49**

**JS:** Dan Brown is a fiction artist. It's in- it's in a very different ilk. Now, Kryptos has a meaning of its own. It has-it has Howard Carter, it has the prose, more or less, that I wrote. Um...and it has a mystery and it has a life of its own, and it moves along through time. And I-I want that to remain Kryptos'. I don't necessarily want it to be drawn into pseudo-science, which is one of Mr. Brown's favorite topics. Um... The masonic ...You know, the masonic illusions, in the Lost Symbol. And t-the in-institutional religion that he brings up in the Di Vinci Code. I mean, th-there-there is a tough thing, that when on television...ah... Mr. Brown refers to WW, which is part of my code, in which I intended to be -mean William Webster. Who was the former director of the CIA, and then he- Mr. Brown states that "Oh, no that's actually, MM, Mary Magdalene.

**53:52**

**Interviewer:** Hmm.

**53:53**

**JS:** So you can see how the meaning of something that I have intended can be completely twisted around and turned into something else. And so that's what's being difficult for me to handle.

**54:02**

**Interviewer:** Right, even if it has brought you more of...ah...fame or publicity, as an artist.

**53:53**

**JS:** Is has brought more publicity, but as I've said, the two worlds sort of collide, the two different worlds...

**54:12**

**Interviewer:** Mmmm.

**54:13**

**JS:** ...and my w- the world that I exist in, mostly in being in the contemporary art world, more or less scorns you know the popular culture aspect. And so in some ways its-it's been a negative for me.

**54:25**

**Interviewer:** Ah...ah...Where do you think this is going to go, now since you shared the clue "BERLIN"...um...

**54:30**

**JS:** Right.

**54:31**

**Interviewer:** Which I certainly don't know wh-what that means, other than one of my favorite cities in the world, but...ah...Do you expect that we'll see the code broken anytime soon?

**54:39**

**JS:** It's wha- It 6 of 97 characters. The odds...the odds of getting the rest--I mean if you're a very good cryptographer, your odds are certainly improved. But the odds of-of-of filling in the lines in text around it, you know, are-it's still difficult and very challenging code, I must say. And...um...That's not to say won't give another-, in another decade, when I am 75 [Interviewer laughs] I might give another clue. And maybe when I am 85, I will give another clue. And all these clues, perhaps, will add up to something that, you know, is-is infinitely crack-able. Um...I started this piece the in 1988, and installed it in like 1990. And...um...During that period of time, the Berlin Wall fell.

**55:21**

**Interviewer:** Right.

**54:22**

**JS:** So, i-it was something that was on everyone's mind, and to say that I was not affected by it is..uh, you know, would not be true.

**55:29**

**Interviewer:** Well, when this [Break] Well, the...Maybe you just gave us another clue!? I'm..people [SB Laughs] ju..I hope that people are listening to this. That...Ah...um...That, in fact, everything that you say is a clue, I-I am even convinced.

**55:39**

**JS:** Well, yes, there is-there is a serious, [Interviewer laughs] sort of, forensic..um..[SB laughs] [Interviewer laughs] dissection ...

**55:46**

**Interviewer:** [Interviewer laughs] I'm sure.

**55:46**

**JS:** ...of just about every word that I utter.

**55:49**

**Interviewer:** I have no doubt! Yeah. [Interviewer laughs]

**55:50**

**JS:** Yeah.

**55:52**

**Interviewer:** I-I am listening intently. The-It-When this fourth and final panel falls, if you will, the-the when its decoded, when the puzzle is solved, ah...whether it's in a couple of weeks, or when you are 75 or when you're 85. Uh...What will the successful code breaker get? I mean, after all this, is there a award? Is there-Is it just glory? Or do you...mmm...have some...you know, a bottle of champagne, some pistachios? What do they get?

**56:16**

**JS:** Well it's interesting, because...uh...there is a multitude of motivations for the people that want to crack this code. And you're right. I mean, people are regarding this as the Holy Grail, somehow. I am not quite sure...w...how I am going to thank them, or how the world will thank them, for [SB laughs] cracking this code. Um...to tell you the truth, I have no idea. [Interviewer Laughing] I mean, the people that-that try to crack this, are so concerned about their-their answer to this code that they don't really don't even want to tell me, ...

**56:47**

**Interviewer:** [Interviewer Laughing] Right.

**56:48**

**JS:** ...what their answer is. Because what if I am not who I am? They're giving it to the world, right? Or s- someone else is going to find out what their answer is, and they're going to make something out. And they're going to become famous..

**56:58**

**Interviewer:** Right. Right.

**56:58**

**JS:** ...and make, you know, a million dollar off of it. So, I even have to protect the people who bring their answers to me, in-in such a way that I don't know what their whole code says, until, you know, they pass test to do it. And so it's very interesting....because...um...Yeah, its very very serious business for- for a lot of people, but I don't know what the payoff is.

**57:22**

**Interviewer:** Well, you might want to keep a, you know, cupcake, in the cupboard, or something..

**57:27**

**JS:** Yeah a cupcake in the cupboard. [SB laughs] I mean.. [SB laughs]

**57:29**

**Interviewer:**

[ Interviewer Laughing] cas...case somebody surprises you.

**57:29**

**JS:** The other people that try to crack the code have websites of their own and um...have made some money from-from running and operating these websites, and so, then there are other people...um...who run websites, who have made, you know, made a life from that. There is a multitude of people who have benefited from-from the association and from their work on Kryptos. And I think that's all the de-good.

**57:55**

**Interviewer:** It's a fascinating puzzle, uh...and I thank you very much for...ah... for joining us this morning.

**58:01**

**JS:** Well, I-Very welcome for your asking. Thank you very much.

**57:04**

**Interviewer:** Bye-bye sir.

**58:05**

**JS:** Thanks. Bye-bye.

**58:06**

**Interviewer:** That was sculpture and cryptographer, Jim Sanborn. He's the artist behind Kryptos. This past weekend, he divulged another secret, for the fourth panel of the only one that hasn't been unveiled or decoded...ah...he gave it to the Sunday New York Times...um...so take it away folks... [ Interviewer Laughing] There could be a cupcake in it-in it for you. He joined me by phone, from Washing D.C., this morning.

**58:28**

**Segway:** [Alright, you've been listening to, Q, the podcast! You can hear Q, the program ever weekday morning and evening at 10am and 10pm on CBC Radio One on Sirius Satellite 137 -- I'm Gion Gumeshi [sp?]. Thanks for listening.]