

# INCOGNITUM

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The Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky region played a significant role both in the origins of American paleontology as well as the current climate of a polarized political landscape. Several museums and cultural attractions in the area embody these extremes.

Twenty five miles southwest of this gallery, mastodon bones were discovered near the sulfur springs at Big Bone Lick. The term *incognitum*, Latin for “unknown,” was used to describe what at the time was believed to be a carnivorous monster. The Incognitum was touted by early Americans, including then President Thomas Jefferson, as evidence of the young nation’s powerful and ancient past. Thirty miles west stands the Creation Museum. Employing fossils and other artifacts, the exhibits are devoted to the ideology of “Young Earth” creationism—a very different story about Earth’s origins.

This exhibition, culled from an ongoing body of work, draws inspiration from the fields of natural history, religion, museological display and education. Using an array of sculptural and image-based work, I aim to produce an evocative environment yet whose subject remains out of reach. The exhibition includes book covers on scientific and religious topics with all text erased, collages of evolutionary trees, and images from various regional museums. By combining multiple sources, the work collapses competing motives and ideologies into an ambiguous space verging on abstraction. The work blurs the lines between each field and their respective system of answering the question, how does one make sense of the world?

Dominic Guarnaschelli