

Cave Art Continuum: 2009 – present

Cave Art Continuum is an analogue photography project of abstract patterns and manmade notations found within obscure, cave-like brick and steel flame trenches located beneath mostly 1960's era launchpads. It explores the metaphysical connection between pre-historic human expression created on the walls of fire-lit caves with space age surfaces transfigured by rocket-powered fire.

With more than several decades of exceptional access into NASA's Kennedy Space Center, I have been photographing long-term stories on human and robotic spaceflight. During this time, I became fascinated with the restricted launch pad infrastructures whose massive, weather-worn steel structures dot along its coastal wildlife landscape like Richard Serra sculptures.

Abstracting these cave-like spaces devoid of scale, I visually explored multi-storied, highly scorched flame trench surfaces that were created from the cumulative mix of exhaust fire, sun-like heat, water and steam from more than a half century of rocket launchings.

Save for a slight sea breeze and the occasional kee-yah sounds from sea gulls, I experience mystery, historic memory, wonder and loss while documenting these imperfect, frozen-in-the-moment layers of metamorphosed surfaces. Charred and rusting, surfaces created during the Apollo Moon and Space Shuttle eras. Cave-like surfaces that represent the unintended signatures from the machines that had first begun transporting humans and their tools off these earthly cement and steel gateways into the time and distance of our solar system.

These surfaces also revealed unintended cave art-like symbolism.

Within one of these flame trenches were imperfectly shaped $\square \circ + \circ \circ * \dots$ spray painted by engineers typically in ocher, black and white to designate fractured surfaces. Contextually, they were nearly identical to the color schemes and geometric markings either drawn or painted by early humans more than 40,000 years ago at Paleolithic sites like Lascaux, Chauvet, and El Castillo in Europe, and the Blombos Cave in South Africa.

Unfortunately, one of the Apollo era flame trenches has been demolished for reasons having less to do with historical memory and more to do with commercial space pragmatism. As a result, some of my images are the only representation of those historic surfaces. It's as though a "Lascaux" of the space age had been unintentionally created, accidentally discovered, and then just vanished.

These images, ideally exhibited on large scale mural size prints, both challenges and hopefully connects the viewer with a memory of, and an appreciation for the creativity and symbolic thought in human cave art to our here-and-now aspiration for exploring the mysteries of the solar system and beyond.

Meanwhile, I continue photographically exploring these ideas within the hidden, altered surfaces beneath historic and recently constructed launch pads. Among them is another former Apollo era pad that has been repurposed into a 21st century gateway for the Artemis lunar missions. A departure point of surfaces that has begun to be scorched with the signatures from the fire of modern-era machines that are lofting humans and their tools off Earth to explore the moon's billions-of-years-old surfaces of craters, hills, and caves ...