Cave Art Continuum (2009 – present)

Cave Art Continuum is an analog photography project that explores a metaphysical arc between prehistoric human expression on the walls of fire-lit caves and modern space-age surfaces transfigured by rocket-powered fire.

Since 2009, I have had access to the miles of highly restricted launch pad infrastructures at NASA's Kennedy Space Center — weather-worn steel structures that rise along the coastal landscape like Richard Serra sculptures. My connection to this landscape began with the discovery of crude geometric symbols on the cave-like surfaces in a flame trench beneath a space shuttle bound for the Hubble Space Telescope.

On these surfaces were imperfectly shaped ▱ ○ + ˚˚˚ * … spray painted by engineers, typically in ocher, black and white to designate structural flaws. They were nearly identical to the color schemes and geometric markings made by early humans up to 40,000 years ago at Paleolithic sites like Lascaux, Chauvet, and El Castillo in Europe.

Working on color negative film, I abstracted these charred, tactile, metamorphosed surfaces devoid of scale, as though they were otherworldly landscapes. Yet they were structural surfaces on Earth, created from the acoustic and thermal violence of water and fire from over a half-century of rocket launches. My intent is to print them on mural-scale fine art papers, so a viewer meets them as cave walls.

Reading Giorgio Agamben's essay "*What is the Contemporary?*" offered a critical lens on what I had been photographing: the unlit underside of the space age's most historic explorations. Here the oldest human gestures reappear on cave-like surfaces as unintended signatures from the machines that first carried humans and their tools into the time and distance of our solar system.

I continue photographically exploring these ideas within the hidden, altered surfaces beneath other launch infrastructures like the gateway for the Artemis lunar missions. But the Apollo-era flame trench I had been working in for several years has been demolished. As a result, some of my images are its only record. A "Lascaux" of the space age was unintentionally created, accidentally discovered, and has vanished ...

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