

Evidence of Space Exploration ... On Earth

The Flame Trench Series: 2009 – 2014

I am a documentary photographer who explores obscure locations, objects and micro cultures. My current film-based project is an exploration of surfaces and symbols under a historically restricted Apollo era launch pad in context to cave art.

Through decades of fire and water, the burn marks from the launches of the Saturn V and Space Shuttle resulted in layers of fleeting, frozen-in-the-moment abstract forms, shadowed shapes and textured surfaces that, while often appearing like aerial views of mysterious planetary landscapes, are essentially the unrecognized signatures from decades of forgotten launches that forcefully lofted man and his tools above Earth into the time and space of the universe.

So when ever I entered this cave-like flame trench and documented its unintended art, there were moments that felt like the jump-cut in Kubrick's *2001 A Space Odyssey* where a million years of human evolution was compressed between an ascending animal bone just tossed by an ape-like human across a blue sky that cuts to a bone shaped like satellite orbiting in the blackness of space above blue earth.

Transcendence.

While the rockets (as tools) had left their signature on the surfaces of the transfigured trench walls and blast shield, there was also evidence of human signage. Although technicians had hand painted imperfect + O 0 ▽ □ □ — to reference structural changes or utilitarian repairs before or after a shuttle launch, their geo-archaeological context to early human cave art became evident.

It's as though a modern era Lascaux of the space age had been created and nobody noticed.

Because of the scale and natural lighting within the flame trench, I intentionally photographed the length of its walls sequentially in order to print varying scaled montages and panoramas. The resulting visualizations aren't that much different in approach than those first adopted by planetary scientist during the analog era of space exploration. Essentially assembling overlapping prints of images from either a space probe's sequential or non-linear reconnaissance over a planet or a moon.

Late in 2014, NASA leased this historic launch pad to the commercial aerospace firm, SpaceX. Unfortunately the flame trench walls, flooring and blast shield were destroyed and replaced with newer ablative materials.

Nothing was saved. Its fleeting shadows gone ...

Flame Trench Series: 2009 – 2014 is the only film and digital based evidence of the “cave-art” like signatures created from both the machine tools and man's hand during the initial first explorations of transporting humans from Earth to space.

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