

Cave Art Continuum: 2009 – present

Cave Art Continuum is a meditation on the transcendence of time between the hidden surfaces and symbols beneath 1960's era launchpads and the similarities to those uncovered in pre-historic caves. It is one of my long-term analog film projects that compliments my series on tools used in space as sculpture.

Far from public access at NASA's Kennedy Space Center, restricted launch pad infrastructures dot along a costal beach and natural wildlife landscape as though they were Richard Serra sculptures. Never contemplated for historic or philosophical meaning other than for their launch functionalities, I began, with rare access, to photograph within the obscure, cave-like, brick and steel flame trenches under various launch pads. Multi-story high scorched surfaces that represented the unintended signatures from the machines that had first begun transporting space probes, humans and their tools off these cement and steel gateways into the time and distance of our solar system.

Connecting with the meaning of these imperfect, frozen-in-the-moment layers of charred, rusting, metamorphosed surfaces was akin to my looking-up-to-the-stars with wonder and mystery. Imperfect surfaces etched from the cumulative mix of exhaust fire, sun-like heat, water and weather from over a half century of rocket launchings.

Within one of those flame trenches were also imperfectly shaped $\sim \triangle \cup \square \bigcirc + \circ \circ * \dots$ spray painted by engineers 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 on the southern coast of South Africa.

Abstracting these surfaces and symbols devoid of scale evoke a sense of time, distance, and memory between our pre-historic past and contemporary present. From an era in time when humans had expressed themselves on the stone surfaces of fire-lit caves to tens of thousands of years later to stone-like surfaces transfigured by man-created fire and the unexpected discovery of hand-painted symbols.

Transcendence.

As a result, the photographs from this series have been printed mural size. They are printed at large scale to both evoke a meditative connection and convey a sense of the sadness and loss I experience towards those fleeting signatures from the Apollo moon and Space Shuttle era that could not be physically preserved.

Some years after I had begun my documentation, I found out that the historic flame trench I had been photographing was going to be demolished for reasons having less to do with preservation and art, and more to do with engineering pragmatism. It's as though a "Lascaux" of the space age had been unintentionally created, accidentally discovered, then ...

Now more than a decade later, I continue exploring time and distance connections by photographing the altered surfaces of other launch pads. Most recently within another former Apollo era pad that has been repurposed into a 21st century gateway. A departure point scorched by the signatures from the machines that will loft space robots, humans and their tools off Earth to explore the moon's surface, and perhaps discover meaning in some of its yet to be uncovered caves.