

## Evidence of Human Spaceflight: (2005 – ongoing)

I photographically document the less obvious and delight in seeking the abstract.

Although I have interests in planetary geology, astronomy and anthropology, I have been influenced by the art and thinking of minimal artists like the photographers Minor White and Aaron Siskind, and the sculptor Richard Serra. As a result, my current film based photographs reveal evidence from the human and robotic exploration of space ... under an historic launch pad on Earth.

For nearly half a century, the world's most powerful rocket systems lofted man from NASA's Kennedy Space Center's launch pad complex 39A to the surface of the moon, to orbit to assemble a space station or to repair a telescope. There I discovered the less obvious and most hidden from public view: *underneath* the launch pad was a flame trench with two cave-like walls that revealed a sublime record from the decades of rocket exhaust flames from the Saturn V and Space Shuttle eras.

The length of a football field, the flame trench's concrete walls and refractory brick floor revealed decades of layer upon layer of briefly melted, "frozen-in-the-moment" abstractions. These were, I felt, a kind of embedded signature from the machines that have taken man to space. Although the "moments" on these walls would change slightly from launch to launch, they were all created from transformed ablative concrete and brick resulting from the cumulative combination of both massive amounts of water and the sun-surface like heat generated at ignition from the fiery exhaust of ascending rockets.

With extraordinary access during the twilight years of the Space Shuttle era, I visited and revisited this launch pad's flame trench. Depending on the quality of daylight on the flame trench walls, typically before or after a shuttle launch, always revealed a different symphony of layered muted water-color-like organic shapes. And towards the open end of the flame trench walls were the remnants of fading, peeling black layers of exhaust residue from the Saturn-Apollo era launches to the moon.

Like the Paleolithic paintings preserved on the ancient cave walls of *Lascaux*, or *El Castillo* there were also human markings. Engineers and technicians had hand painted lines, squares, circles, crosses and ellipses on the flame trench walls, floor and blast shield. Although these markings referenced needed repairs after a space shuttle launch, I recognized the historic context of these space era walls to the painted evidence of early human expression on ancient stone walls and caves throughout the world.

In mid 2014, NASA leased launch pad complex 39A to SpaceX for twenty years. Unfortunately, between late 2014 and 2015, the walls, flooring and blast shield of this historic flame trench were completely gutted and replaced with new ablative materials.

My flame trench imagery is the only documentary evidence of what had been the cave-art like signatures expressed from both man-made machines and man in the pursuit of the human exploration of space.

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