

The Field Museum – Visited by CTPA on March 25, 2013

SCENES FROM THE STONE AGE: The Cave Painting of Lascaux AND CREATURES OF LIGHT: Nature's Bioluminescence

On Monday, March 25, a group of twenty-three CTPA members including Certified and Candidate Guides, DMCs, and Friends were privileged to experience two special exhibits at Chicago's Field Museum. (Sadly, there were several last minute cancellations due to illnesses.) The visit is the result of the efforts of CTPA's Educational Committee headed by CTG's Sharon Sylvester and Albert Walavich with the cooperation of the Field Museum's Tourism & Group Sales Coordinator, Heather Scholl. This is one of the benefits of belonging to CTPA and makes the "price of membership" truly a bargain!

The Field Museum is the first North American venue for **Scenes from the Stone Age**, organized by the General Counsel of Dordogne, France. "**Scenes**" lets us discover the amazing artwork of our earliest ancestors in full-scale reproductions of some of the cave walls in Lascaux, France.

From depictions of animals to actual live animals, **Creatures of Light** introduces eager CTPA attendees to fish, insects, and fungi that illuminate the darkness. All of us probably remember seeing and chasing fireflies during summer evenings, but "**Creatures**" presents a whole host of organisms that create their own luminescence.

SCENES FROM THE STONE AGE: The Cave Painting of Lascaux

Scenes from the Stone Age opened on **March 20 and runs through September 8, 2013.**

In September 1940, four teenage friends entered the Lascaux Cave complex in Southwestern France and stumbled upon an astonishing priceless treasure. They discovered highly sophisticated paintings and engravings of animals lining the cave walls—artwork made by the hands of our human ancestors nearly 20,000 years ago.

Lascaux attracted over one million visitors between 1948 and 1963 before the French government closed the cave to the public in order to preserve the ancient masterpieces. "**Scenes**" presents monumental recreations of the cave walls with full-size replicas of paintings including the Hall of Bulls, the Black Cow, the Crossed Bison and more.

The CTPA attendees walked through an immersive environment and discovered depictions of Pleistocene animals—including deer, horses, wild cattle properly titled "aurochs" and bison. Most of these are either extinct or are no longer native to France. Many of these panels have NEVER BEEN REPRODUCED BEFORE and are being shown in the exhibition for the first time. Simulated oil lamp and torch light illuminate the paintings to make them appear as the ancient artists would have seen them.

Sculptor Elisabeth Daynes, who has a well-deserved world-wide reputation, has created an incredibly lifelike stone-age family figures that CTPA attendees and their tour clienteles will encounter inside the exhibition's intimate setting. The family includes an old man, an adolescent, a woman, and a child who are dressed in clothing and ornaments made of materials available 200 centuries ago. These people were not the "cave peoples" of popular imagery. Rather they were hunter-gatherers (remember anthropology 101?) who lived in a structured society with a culture that was much more sophisticated and refined than most of us imagine.

Interactives and videos explain how Paleolithic people lived, hunted, ate, and clothed themselves. Multimedia presentations and interactive stations reveal the paintings' complexities and provide insight into the talent required to have created them nearly 20,000 years ago. In a wall projection, CTPAers observed the BLACK COW panel as it is constructed and deconstructed, uncovering engravings, hidden animals, and symbols. This presentation allowed us to discover how the Lascaux artists took advantage of the cave's surfaces to create perspective and illusions of movement.

Despite 70 years of research and analysis, the exact meaning and purpose of the Lascaux cave paintings remain a mystery to all. This is not haphazard artwork but masterful and complex compositions that were created with great effort and a clear purpose, although that purpose is currently unknown to us.

This is a terrific exhibit that should be encouraged by DMCs, Certified and Candidate Guides. IMHO, "CAVES" will attract, enlighten, and amaze adults, seniors, international visitors, teens and children of all ages. This exhibit is the Field Museum at its finest.

CREATURES OF LIGHT: Nature's Bioluminescence

"Creatures of Light: Nature's Bioluminescence" opened on **March 7 and runs through September 8**. This exhibition allowed CTPA attendees to explore a series of recreated environments, from the familiar to the extreme, to discover the variety of ways in which organisms use light to attract a mate, lure unsuspecting prey, or defend against predators. We discovered glowing mushrooms, communicated with fireflies, watched glowworms trapping prey, walked through a lagoon filled with dinoflagellates (good word for crossword puzzle addicts and scientists—tiny organisms that create a glowing halo around anything that moves through the water), and become familiar with many more creatures of light.

The ability to create light is actually relatively rare among organisms that live on land but through a chemical reaction is much more common in the oceans, where up to 90 percent of animals at depths below 2,300 feet are bioluminescent, and where scientists continue to discover bizarre new bioluminescent species. CTPA members, associates and friends learned through the exhibit that pollution, overfishing, and global climate change is resulting in many of these organisms being in danger of disappearing, some even before they have been discovered and studied. One of this reporter's "faves" were live flashlight fish, that harbor bioluminescent bacteria in an organ under their eyes and use the bacterial light to communicate, avoid predation, and attract prey.

A second favorite of the group were the crystal jellyfish that combine blue bioluminescence with biofluorescence to emit flashes of green light. A protein found in its light organs has become a critical tool in cellular and developmental biology.

"Creatures of Light" shows the diversity of animals that marine biologists have captured on camera in recent years, including a squid that suddenly sheds its glowing skin when threatened and a viperfish whose fangs are so long they don't fit inside its head. The exhibit features large-scale models that portray a diverse array of deep-sea creatures including a female anglerfish with her own built-in fishing rod.

Throughout **"Creatures of Light"** there is the ability to interact with iPads that offer videos, animations, and photographs. Additional interactive components and videos allow CTPA members and their clientele opportunities to meet scientists whose work contributes to the exploration of bioluminescence.

"Creatures of Light" is an exhibition that will appeal to children, teens, adults who are interested in science and the subject of bioluminescence. I do not think that seniors will be as eager to see "Creatures" as to experience the "Caves." The interior of "Creatures" is extremely dark and I would be afraid of those who may be less frail than others of stumbling and injury. Also, the descriptors are very difficult to read because of the exhibit's lighting.

Both exhibits should be on the “must see and experience” list of DMCs, Certified and Candidate Guides between March and September 8, 2013. If I had to advise a group to choose one or the other—“Caves ” is my choice.

Both exhibits funnel the visitor out via the gift shops. All museums do this and it is important to their bottom lines. I am a member of the Field Museum but did not bring my membership card with for the visit. I wanted to make a purchase in the gift shop but wanted my member discount. Field staff working in the shops are not able to look up member numbers on their computers/registers to accommodate members who like me do not carry their card. Result, lost sales or a return visit (not a bad idea).

The Field Museum of Natural History at South Lake Shore Drive and East Roosevelt Road on the Museum Campus was originally designed by Daniel H. Burnham and Company (until 1912); Graham, Burnham & Company (1912-1917); Graham, Anderson, Probst & White (1917-1920). The Field features renovations by Harry Weese and Associates (1978).

The museum’s white marble exterior was inspired by classical Greek temples. Its grand neoclassical central hall, surrounded by Ionic columns, is filled with equally grand artifacts including elephants, dinosaurs, totem poles and SUE. In 1976, the landmark building was placed in the National Register of Historic Places. The origin of the museum’s name, Field, is the result of a \$1 million donation to erect the museum. The name honors Marshall Field, who founded the Chicago department store company that is now part of Macy’s.

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