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Alan Bean: Painting Apollo

By Alan Bean

“These paintings capture the spirit of our highest hopes and aspirations. As a nation we set our sights to accomplish a near-impossible goal of walking on the moon. Only one artist was present to bear witness and tell the story.”

—Buzz Aldrin

“Alan Bean and his astroartistry recreate the drama and excitement of man’s exploration of the moon as could only be chronicled by one who had been there.”

—Neil A. Armstrong

“What one must understand about Al Bean is he is the only artist to have ever walked on the moon. No poet has ever been to the lunar surface, nor any journalist, architect, nor songwriter. In the realm of the arts, it has fallen upon Bean to be the one moonwalker to turn hard data brought back from the moon into something other than numbered photographs. The images that Al has committed to canvas, then, are important, inspiring, and priceless works of art.

Not only has he painted the moon, he has been there.”

—Tom Hanks

Released to coincide with the 40th anniversary of the Apollo 11 moon landing, *Alan Bean: Painting Apollo* is a one-of-a-kind study of humanity’s near spiritual drive to explore the limits of our imagination and technical capabilities. As the fourth man and only artist to have walked on the Moon, Alan Bean brings to canvas vistas that most of the world will only ever glimpse second-hand.

After leaving NASA to concentrate on his painting full-time in 1981, Bean began looking for ways to communicate his unique experiences without the filter of a camera.

He found that a paintbrush could help safeguard his memories and enrich his story more profoundly than any equipment he or NASA would ever work with. By making the remote accessible to all, Bean's art is truly universal.

With 107 luminous paintings, *Alan Bean: Painting Apollo* is an adventure in both scientific and artistic innovation. The first artist to set foot on another world invites us to walk on the Moon with him, recounting playful moments, spiritual experiences, the beauty of the alien landscape, and its wondrous views of Earth. Bean captures his companions on Apollo 12 like Pete Conrad and Dick Gordon as well as others like Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin, re-envisioning their experiences as they made history and inspired a nation. With equal precision, Bean details the travails involved in exploring the moon's surface and managing equipment and territory that few before had ever experienced. Coloring technical and historical accuracy with elements of whimsy and imagination, Bean depicts the lure of possibility and the thrill of discovery.

Essays from experts in a range of fields supplement the pieces and analyze Bean's contributions to the visual arts and beyond. Legendary art critic Donald Kuspit, cultural geographer William Fox, and museum director Louis Zona place Bean's paintings in the context of contemporary art and landscape painting, while Apollo flight director extraordinaire Gene Kranz recalls the historical drama of the era from his eyewitness perspective on the ground. Each reveals layers of significance that texture Bean's artistic testimony.

This volume serves as a companion to the exhibition at the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum, which features approximately forty of Bean's original drawings and paintings, and runs from July 16, 2009 until January 13, 2010. It will be the largest exhibition of Bean's work to date.

About the author

Alan Bean is an American legend. Famous as the lunar module pilot on Apollo 12 and the fourth man to set foot on the moon, Bean also served as Commander of the 59-day Skylab 3 Space Station mission. Alan Bean lives in Houston, Texas.

About the book

Title: *Painting Apollo: First Artist on Another World*

Author: Alan Bean

Price: \$39.95 / Pages: 224

ISBN: 978-1-58834-264-5

Smithsonian Books