

Putting Their Stamp on the Moon

by guest author Chris Calle, with Paul Calle

On July 20, 1994, the United States Postal Service issued two stamps to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the first landing on the Moon; one stamp intended for use on express mail and the other a 29 cent commemorative stamp. The stamps were the third and fourth in a sequence directly related to the first manned moon landing and issued over a span of 25 years. These four issues, however, are linked by more than their theme – each stamp was designed by an artist with the surname “Calle.”



Paul Calle's interest in Space Art dates back to his early years as an illustrator painting and using a black and white scratch board technique on covers for such Science Fiction magazines as *Galaxy* and *Amazing Stories*. In the 1950s these magazines told of far away galaxies and space travel that at the time seemed light years away. In October of 1958 the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) was created "to provide for research into the problems of flight within and outside the earth's atmosphere". The reality of the Space Age had arrived.

In 1962 Paul Calle was chosen as one of the first eight artists of the newly established NASA Art Program. The purpose of the program was to record for history, space exploration through the eyes of artists. At 35 years of age, Paul was the youngest of the group. Beginning with Gordon Cooper's Project Mercury flight in May of 1963, Paul Calle has documented the action surrounding Projects Mercury, Gemini, Apollo and the Space Shuttle from the launch facilities of Cape Kennedy to the aircraft carriers in the South Atlantic.

Paul recalls "sometime in the early 1960s I received a letter from Dr. Lester Cooke,

curator of painting at the National Gallery of Art informing me they would invite artists to cover various launch and training facilities at Cape Canaveral. The drawings, sketches and paintings would be become part of the National Art Collection. I had been selected as one of the original 8 artists to take part in the project. He listed the names of the artists. Some were my fellow illustrators included Lamar Dodd, Peter Hurd, Andrew Wyeth...and Paul Calle...you can imagine my disbelief, Paul Calle and Andrew Wyeth! I assumed that my friends at the Society of Illustrators were playing a joke and I dismissed the entire idea! About a week before we were to meet at the Cape I received a phone call from Dr. Cooke. He wanted make sure I had received the letter and was coming to the Cape. The invitation was real! And so began my involvement with the NASA Art Program.



When we assembled arrangements were made to be photographed, badges issued and we were made aware of protocols to be followed. We traveled as a group and visited the various locales of interest. One day I saw an interesting building ringed by radar dishes and antennae. I thought this would make an interesting picture. Being a free spirit I wandered from the group and made my way through the tall grass and bushes and found a nice clearing with some great views of the complex. I unpacked my paints, pencils and pens and set about working on my drawing.

After about half an hour I saw coming through the tall grass what I later found out was the security police. I laughed and said I was wondering how long it would take you to find me. They did not laugh and told me they had been watching me. "I have to tell you the truth", I said. "I'm a spy from a very poor country. We can't afford cameras so they sent me here with



pencils and paper to make some drawings". It seemed funny at the time but the next thing I knew I was being escorted to the security building to find someone at NASA who could identify me. Jim Dean, our contact, came and cleared up the misunderstanding. While walking to the car Jim said, "Paul, stay with the group". It turned out I was in a highly sensitive area. The building was a destruct complex that would destroy any rocket going off course."

"One of the sites I visited was a long ramp that led up to the Atlas Rocket. You could get extremely close to the Rocket that would send Gordon Cooper into space. While doing my drawings I was conscious of the many engineers that were on the ramp preparing for Cooper's flight. I was fascinated with their activities and asked how they knew the craft would go where they wanted it to go. They explained with all the information loaded in the computers they knew exactly where the rocket would go. They asked if I could explain how I looked up at the rocket, rolled that image around in my brain, passed it down through my arm to my hand, fingers holding the pencil and put that image on a blank piece of paper. They were as fascinated by us as we were with them.

"Being around my fathers' artwork had always been exciting," Chris remarked. "I welcomed any ideas he might have regarding the design of the stamp". Growing up his studio was in our home so my siblings and I had free range to explore his artwork. Space travel was so new and exciting that I absorbed as much of the excitement of the times and my fathers involvement that I could. In 1965 when he was working on a painting titled, Knights Armor- End of the Beginning, NASA send Gordon Cooper's spacesuit, gloves and helmet to my father to use as reference for his painting. My dad set the suit, helmet and gloves up in the garage as a still life to paint and for weeks my brother and I would sneak in there when nobody was around to wear the helmet and try on the gloves. My parents recall that one of us actually got into the space suit without anyone knowing and surprised them by lifting the arms as if the spacesuit was alive.

In 1967 Paul Calle had the unique privilege of designing the first Twin Space stamp in the history of the Postal Service. The stamp depicted the first US space walk of Ed White. The First Day of Issue was at Cape Canaveral. Paul recalls, "At the luncheon after the Ceremony I was sitting next to a real astronaut, Michael Collins who was the third US space-walker. I asked Mike what it was like to walk in space. He said that it was so crowded in the spacecraft

