

An Artist's Journey Through the Valley of Fire

ORLANDO, FL, UNITED STATES, June 24, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- There are places that speak – not in words, but in the quiet way the land holds memories. The Valley of Fire is one of those places. Its red stone formations, carved by the winds of time, feel like a living cathedral.

For artist [John Francis Peters](#), the Valley of Fire spoke with a creative calling that he couldn't ignore. It felt less like choosing a subject to paint and more like being chosen.



John Francis Peters enters a corridor of stone and time

Peters describes his first steps into the landscape with the attention reserved for sacred spaces. As he recalls, "Walking with deep respect, I entered a trail nestled between bright red rocks that created a hallway. Along the wall and high above in rock overhangs were hundreds of petroglyphs. They are the work of the Ancestral Pueblo people."

A natural corridor carved from the earth conjures the reverence that calls people to slow their pace and lower their voice. The Valley of Fire invites travelers to be present and pay attention. It's a place that remembers.

And then there are the petroglyphs. These symbols made by human hands long ago are messages. They are evidence of lives lived with purpose and community.

Artist John Francis Peters on the handprint that reached across 4,000 years

Among the carvings, Peters is stopped in his tracks by one profoundly human image. "I stopped and focused on a handprint carved into the wall. The hand of a person who lived over 4,000 years ago and left me this sign of their visit."

The handprint's interpretation is clear even without an expert anthropologist. It says, "I was here."

I touched this world. I mattered enough to leave a trace.”

In that carved hand, Peters feels a connection. He feels the presence of someone who stood where he stands, with their own worries and hopes, with their own reasons for making meaning.

A beautiful mystery that demands a painting

Of course, any encounter with petroglyphs raises questions. Why were they made? Were they spiritual? Practical? Personal?

Peters holds space for all of it, refusing to flatten the past into a neat explanation. He says, “There are many thoughts on the reason behind the petroglyphs, but in actual fact, it remains a beautiful mystery. For me, they touched my mind and heart. I felt the spirit of the people who left them and realized this would be a very special painting.”

Great art begins there, at the point where something moves a person beyond logic. It’s the act of receiving an experience so deeply that the artist can’t help but respond.

John Francis Peters is creating more than a copy: When painting becomes a spiritual practice Peters wasn’t interested in producing a postcard version of the Valley of Fire. “My objective was never to paint a copy of this amazing site,” he explains. “I had an intensely spiritual need to create an image that would tell a deeper story.”

A photograph documents what a place looks like. But a masterful painting reveals what a place feels like. It shows what $\square$ space awakens in the human soul.

To tell that deeper story, Peters studied the native people and their environment. And then, he made the intimate choice to change his physical process. “I felt that while I created this painting, I would paint sitting on the floor.”

Peters’ position was a posture of humility. It was an attempt to remove the distance between modern artists and ancient makers. It was Peters’ means to create in a way that was grounded and reverent.

And crucially, Peters doesn’t replicate the valley’s ancient carvings. “The petroglyphs in the painting are not copies,” he explains. “They are creations that tell my own story as a human being.”

Peters’ work is more than a landscape. It’s a bridge that spans millennia. Most importantly? It shows that human hands carve into stone or lift a brush, all to make connections. It’s the enduring truth that humans have always tried to leave something behind that says, “I was here, and this meant something.”

Lara Rosales
OtterPR
[email us here](#)

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