Expressing geology by art: from Leonardo to Geopark Naturtejo merchandising

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Abstract: Since Leonardo times, art has been a passionate way to express Geology. In fact, as evidenced by numerous examples of „Geological Art”, the artistic language presents Geology with a warm and emotional look. In Visual Arts Leonardo is one of the
most representative artist dealing with Geology, but he
was not the only Naturalist to cover Earth Sciences:
fossils and minerals were widely described and
depicted by Gesner, Agricola and Aldrovandi.
Notwithstanding the importance of the Naturalists,
Geology and Art are connected since Paleolithic times
while vertebrate fossils are represented by
Mesopotamic and Greek-Roman cultures and
Portuguese popular religion.
In more recent times, Earth Scientists themselves
inspired works of art: Spitzberg’s „geologist” is a
Romantic masterpiece. The geologists of the 18th-19th
century were frequently pictured (i.e. Bone Wars
watercolours) and their discoveries inspired
outstanding lithographies, like the primeval landscapes
of Riou and Harder.
The career of many palaeontologists started with the
evocative paintings of Moraveč and Burian, pillars of
contemporary „Geological Art”, which nowadays is
very diversified: we have visionary sights (i.e. Troll,
McClabby), realistic ones (i.e. Bakker, Martin, Carr)
and even humoristic approaches. In fact the geologist
and artist Ortolani is the author of the character
„RatMan”, nowadays ruling the Italian comic scenes.
Geological Art is not only Visual Art: many musicians
took inspiration from Geology, covering very assorted
genres, going from blues (i.e. „Devonian Blues” by
Troll) and classic ones („Burgess Shale” by Steiger,
„Earthquake Quartet“ by Michael) to heavy metal
(„Trilobite” by Mastodon). Fossils shape and
stratigraphic sequences have been sonified by Ekdale
(„Palaeontological sonification“), Montanari and
Rossetti („Geofonia“, „Dance with Earth“).
The examples show how Art can communicate
Geology appealingly: therefore, strongly visual (and
audio) elements have been proposed for the
merchandising of the Geopark Naturtejo. Walking
along the line of continuity between Science and Art is
an emotional way to express the geology of the
Geopark.
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